

Do not forsake my teaching: child-rearing in Proverbs 1-9

A.E. Liphadzi

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at the Potchefstroom campus of the North-West University**

Promoter: Prof. H.F. van Rooy

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DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to the late Elder G.M. Ramabulana of the Reformed Church Nzhelele, who constantly reminded me during my pastoral visits of the importance of children in the life of the family, community and the country. He once said: *Children do not know that they are their parents' inheritance*. His words were the humble beginning of this exegetical study of Proverbs 1-9 with the intention to interrupt the forces that promote the dysfunctionality of the family in African communities.

DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the analysis of DO NOT FORSAKE MY TEACHING: CHILD-REARING IN PROVERBS is my work. This information is submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree *Philosophiae Doctor* at the North-West University (Potchefstroom Campus).

A.E. LIPHADZI

OPSOMMING

MOET NIE MY ONDERRIG VERLAAT NIE: DIE OPVOEDING VAN KINDERS IN SPREUKE 1-9

Die doel van hierdie studie is om Spreuke 1-9 te interpreteer om die betekenis, waarde en relevansie daarvan vir die Christelike kerk van vandag te bepaal. Die proefskrif is in sewe hoofstukke verdeel. Hoofstuk 1 stel die probleem teen die agtergrond daarvan en gee 'n uiteensetting van die navorsingsmetodologie en die benadering wat gevolg word. Hoofstuk 2 gee 'n oorsig oor die literatuur oor Spreuke 1-9. Dit kyk na die vorm, sosiale konteks en die doel van Spreuke 1-9. Dit ondersoek ook die verhouding tussen Spreuke 1-9 en die Ou Nabye-oosterse wysheid. Hoofstuk 3 bestudeer die vorm- en literêre analise van Spreuke 1-9. Dit gee aandag aan die twee literêre genres in Spreuke 1-9, naamlik instruksies en wysheidsredes. Die proefskrif stel in hierdie hoofstuk dat die fokus van hierdie studie gerig is op die instruksies van ouers in Spreuke 1-9. Dit ontleed die struktuur van hierdie instruksies. Hoofstuk 4 bevat 'n eksegetiese studie van Spreuke 1-9. Die fokus in hierdie hoofstuk is op die eksegeese van die instruksies van ouers in Spreuke 1-9. Hoofstuk 5 berus op die eksegeese gedoen in Hoofstuk 4 deur temas oor die opvoeding van kinders te identifiseer wat Christen-ouers kan help in hul opvoeding van hul kinders. Hoofstuk 6 bied 'n samevatting van die gegewens en doen enkele aanbevelings vir die verdere bestudering van Spreuke 1-9.

Die sentrale teoretiese argument is dat Spreuke 1-9 die deel van die Woord van God is wat lig kan werp op teenwoordige probleme oor die opvoeding van kinders waarmee die kerk vandag te doen kry. Hiermee saam kom die argument dat Spreuke 1-9 'n onontbeerlike bron is vir die kerk in die begeleiding van ouers om hul kinders na behore op te voed.

SLEUTELWOORDE:

Spreuke 1-9; die opvoeding van kinders; ouerlike instruksies; onderrig

ABSTRACT

DO NOT FORSAKE MY TEACHING: CHILD-REARING IN PROVERBS 1-9

The aim of this study is a quest into the interpretation of Proverbs 1-9 to learn its meaning, i.e., its significance, value and relevance for the Christian church today. This thesis is divided into six chapters. Chapter 1 sketches the problem that is to be researched and its background and the research methods and approach in this study. Chapter 2 investigates the review of literature on the exegesis of Proverb 1-9. It looks at the form, social setting and the purpose of Proverbs 1-9. It also investigates the relationship between Proverbs 1-9 and the Ancient Near Eastern wisdom. Chapter 3 investigates the form and literary analysis of Proverbs 1-9. It deals with the two literary genres in Proverbs 1-9, namely instructions and the wisdom speeches. The thesis argues in this chapter that the focus of this study is on the parental instructions in Proverbs 1-9. It analyses the structure of all the parental instructions. Chapter 4 deals with the exegetical study of Proverbs 1-9. The focus of this chapter is on the exegesis of the parental instructions in Proverbs 1-9. Chapter 5 is built on the outcome of the exegesis dealt with in Chapter 4 by extracting themes on child-rearing that will help Christian parents in their task of child-rearing. Chapter 6 summarises the findings and makes some recommendations on the further study of Proverbs 1-9.

The central theoretical argument was that Proverbs 1-9 is the Word of God that needs to shed its light onto the contemporary issues on child-rearing that the church is facing. In conjunction with this central theoretical argument was the argument that Proverbs 1-9 is an indispensable resource for the church in her task of guiding parents with regard to rearing their children properly.

KEY TERMS:

Proverbs 1-9; child-rearing; parental instruction; teaching

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- The MMD family has played an invaluable role in how I could make this study relevant to African realities by opening my eyes to these realities and to the need of the Gospel to shed light onto these realities. I hope this study will serve as part of the solution to the pains of our mother continent, Africa.
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ABBREVIATIONS OF THE BOOKS OF THE BIBLE AS IN RSV:

OLD TESTAMENT

Gen	Genesis	Ecc	Ecclesiastes
Ex	Exodus	Song	Song of songs
Lev	Leviticus	Is	Isaiah
Num	Numbers	Jer	Jeremiah
Deut	Deuteronomy	Lam	Lamentations
Josh	Joshua	Ezek	Ezekiel
Judg	Judges	Dan	Daniel
Ruth	Ruth	Hos	Hosea
1 Sam	1 Samuel	Joel	Joel
2 Sam	2 Samuel	Amos	Amos
1 Kgs	1 Kings	Obad	Obadiah
2 Kgs	2 Kings	Jon	Jonah
1 Chr	1 Chronicles	Mic	Micah
2 Chr	2 Chronicles	Nah	Nahum
Ezra	Ezra	Hab	Habakkuk
Neh	Nehemiah	Zeph	Zephaniah
Esth	Esther	Hag	Haggai
Job	Job	Zech	Zechariah
Ps	Psalms	Mal	Malachi
Prov	Proverbs		

NEW TESTAMENT

Mt	Matthew	1 Tim	1 Timothy
Mk	Mark	2 Tim	2 Timothy
Lk	Luke	Tit	Titus
Jn	John	Phlm	Philemon
Acts	Acts	Heb	Hebrews
Rom	Romans	Jas	James
1 Cor	1 Corinthians	1 Pet	1 Peter
2 Cor	2 Corinthians	2 Pet	2 Peter
Gal	Galatians	1 Jn	1 John
Eph	Ephesians	2 Jn	2 John
Phil	Philippians	3 Jn	3 John
Col	Colossians	Jude	Jude
1 Thes	1 Thessalonians	Rev	Revelation
2 Thes	2 Thessalonians		

OTHER ABBREVIATIONS

AKJV	Authorised King James Version
ANET	Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament, ed. J.B. Pritchard, 1969
BHK	Biblia Hebraica Kittel, edited by Kittel, 1937
BHS	<i>Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia</i> , edited by Elliger & Rudolph, 1967/77
<i>cf</i>	<i>confer</i> (compare)
IB	The Interpreter's Bible, 1956
LXX	Septuaginta

MMD	More Than a Mile Deep
MT	Mas(s)oretic Text
NBC	New Bible Commentary
NEB	New English Bible
NIDOTTE	New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis edited by Van Gemeren, 1997
NIV	New International Version
<i>s.a.</i>	<i>sine anno</i> (without a year of publication)
<i>s.l.</i>	<i>sine loco</i> (without a place of publication)
<i>s.n.</i>	<i>sine nomine</i> (without a name of a publisher)
TDOT	Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament edited by Botterweck & Ringgren, 1990

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 BACKGROUND AND FORMULATION OF THE PROBLEM

1.1.1 Background

South Africa, indeed, is in a state of moral decay. The State President, Nelson Mandela, and his deputy (State of the Nation Address, February 1998) have echoed each other in affirming that South Africa needed a soul reconstruction and development programme. The country is faced with all kinds of social ills such as crime, divorce, corruption and nepotism, teen pregnancy, children born out of wedlock, violence in schools, and dysfunctionality of the household.

The irony of the whole picture is that more than seventy-nine percent of the population of South Africa claim to be Christians (South African Yearbook, 2006/2007:5). If this were so, what went wrong in the Christian churches? In the Reformed Church (*Gereformeerde Kerke in Suid-Afrika (GKSA)*) among Blacks, covenant children, i.e., those ranging from age twelve to eighteen, are leaving the local churches in large numbers. Those who have remained, are mainly inactive members of the church, because they do not take positions of leadership as they grow up neither do they support the ministry of the church with their resources. Persons of the same age who have converted and who have no Christian background, i.e., they do not come from Christian families, are the ones who are taking positions of leadership, such as elders and ministers of the congregations in local churches.

This paradox has incited me to listen more carefully to Proverbs 1-9 in order to determine its message for today on how Christian households are to bring up their children. It would appear that the application of the message of Proverbs 1-9 has not received adequate attention from scholars of wisdom literature. The consequences of such a neglect, as Johnson writes, is "a society of intellectual giants who are pygmies in the art of living" (Johnson, 1987:420), because children are not taught how to live at home. In African communities, there are

political and economic reasons why families fail to live up to the expectation to raise their children. Past racial policies of the country have negatively affected the African family. By the 1930s, migratory labour had become a pronounced feature of the economy. A migratory worker had to be paid a bachelor's wage because his family was not allowed to accompany him, and it was accepted that his family found its support in the reserves. Migratory workers were encouraged to visit their families in rural areas on an annual basis. This was made possible by the co-operation of chiefs with the settlers (Giliomee, 1991:16-17). In fact, it was during the thirties that the family-based African work force was stopped in the towns, and preference was given to migrants (Giliomee and Sclemmer, 1991:19). This meant the breakdown of the African family structure in the sense that husbands who were migrants could not head their families. Children grew up under the supervision of their mothers only. This dysfunctionality of families has hugely contributed to the socio-economic challenges we are facing as a continent and particularly as a country. Proverbs 1-9's message may be crucial in the rebuilding of African families that were made dysfunctional for many decades by racial and labour policies instituted in the laws of the country. The Western culture has also influenced the upbringing of the African child in a negative way. The centre of the Western cultural paradigm is the self, which can be explained as follows: "I am because I, the individual hero, dream and do" (Mbigi, 2005:216). This is the paradigm that shaped the education that was given to African children through school education. This was a contradiction of the African cultural paradigm, which emphasises solidarity and interdependence (Mbigi, 2005:219). In Africa, it takes a whole village to raise a child. Consequently, African families lost a foundation upon which they are to build their parenting. They became neither Western nor African. They adopted a halfway-house identity¹. This is the dilemma facing African families. If the Government were serious with its

¹ The prevalent behaviour in African communities is that each family has to look after its own children, whereas the worldview of seeing a child as a child of the community has not yet changed. It is still in the veins of Africans to raise children as a community, but that is not what they are taught by the institutions of knowledge. It is this situation that makes parenting very difficult in African communities.

reconstruction and development programme, the rebuilding of the African family structure should be a priority². A community that undermines the welfare of the family is doing that at its own peril. It is society's duty to provide the right conditions for raising children to be godly. However, the question of the worldview upon which the behaviour of rearing a child is to be founded is a critical one. The church has the role to provide our communities with the Biblical worldview, which is both critical and affirms the culture of our communities. This is what this study will attempt to do.

This researcher hopes that the end result of this thesis will bring new practical insights for Christian households on how to raise their children. If Christian families were more functional in raising their children, we may be hopeful for a better society. Greenham, as quoted by Hill, wrote: "If ever we would have the church of God to continue among us, we must bring it (discipline) into our households, and nourish it in our families" (Hill, 1986:443).

1.1.2 Statement of the problem

Proverbs 1-9 is a section from an Old Testament book on which one may pose the question regarding its validity for being used as a resource book for child-rearing today. The validity for its being used for education today is unquestionable, because Yahweh, who inspired the sages then, is the same God who commands parents in Ephesians 6:4 and Deuteronomy 6 to raise children as covenant children³. Proverbs 1-9 is full of vital Biblical lessons on nurturing character, integrity, prudence and all the practical issues of life. Parents and communities are still charged with the duty of carefully training their children with godly wisdom in all such matters (MacArthur, 1998:69). Admonitions from

² The Government can address this question by promoting the Africanisation of the education system. This will be a process in which the education system and its outcomes align with who we are as African people. Of course, this does not mean that we will not learn from other cultural paradigms, but we will have what we call ours.

³ Covenant children refer to those children whose parents are in a covenant relationship with God. God has shown his salvation to these parents. They are therefore expected to nurture their children as that relationship requires from them.

Proverbs 1-9 are the Word of God, which applies to our children. Therefore, Proverbs 1-9 is a fitting resource for Christian parenting.

This research stems from the conviction that the primary context of the teaching of Proverbs 1-9 is that of a home, not a school. This is clearly proven by the language used in the text. The text is full of references to a father instructing his son, while the son is instructed to listen to his mother. This indicates that both parents were involved in child-rearing⁴. Clements (1992:129) confirms the same point when he says: "Nevertheless, in spite of all the clues and hints which point to the elements of a formal educational system having developed in Israel and Judah, the primary context of the teaching of Wisdom that is to be found in the Book of Proverbs is that of the home."

The main focus of this research is to determine the message of Proverbs 1-9 and its relevance for today. What does Proverbs 1-9 teach us about child-rearing? The following individual questions will be dealt with in this research:

- How was Proverbs 1-9 interpreted in history?
- What is the form and genre of Proverbs 1-9?
- What is the message of Proverbs 1-9?
- What are the themes on child-rearing that can be extracted from the exegesis of the text, from which parents learn how to raise their children?

1.2 AIM AND OBJECTIVES

1.2.1 Aim

Articles, monographs and books have been written on Proverbs 1-9. Much of this literature concentrated on the relationship between Proverbs 1-9 and Egyptian

⁴ This does not mean that child-rearing is exclusively for parents. Grandparents also have a role in child-rearing. The community also plays an important role in child-rearing.

literature, literary form analysis and its *Sitz im Leben* (Whybray, 1965; Nel, 1982). Very little has been produced on the significance of Proverbs 1-9 for today (Estes, 1997; Johnson, 1987).

The factor that could have contributed to the dearth of literature that concentrates on the significance of Proverbs for today could have been the assumed a-historical and a-cultic aspects of wisdom literature. This could have led to the marginalisation of the wisdom books in the study of Old Testament theology. Martin (1995:91) writes that this could have been because of "their [wisdom literature] lack of interest in Israel's salvation history or the cult of the temple, they have been felt to have little or nothing to contribute to the general theological perspectives of the Old Testament." This suggestion by Martin was proven to be wrong by scholars, who argue that wisdom literature drinks from the same fountain as other parts of the Hebrew canon (see Waltke, 1979:303-317). Wilson (1990:69) further argues that the wisdom material "must be given a fair hearing, and its distinctiveness taken seriously. It has its own legitimacy as scripture and does not need to be included under a theme like covenant in order to become authoritative. They focus our thought on the regularities and continuities in daily living that need to be heard as well as God's mighty acts". This scholarly consensus on the place of wisdom literature in Old Testament theology has led to the analysis of the various parts of the book of Proverbs (see Fox, 1994:233-243; Moss, 1997:426-439; Estes, 1997). One can also cite the influence of the historical-critical method in the twentieth century as a factor that has led to the failure of applying the message of the book of Proverbs to contemporary society. With regard to the historical-critical method, Kaiser (1994:32) argues that it had concerned itself with identifying the literary sources and social settings rather than the normativity of the text for contemporary readers and for the church. The method does not promote the use of the text in the devotional-theological enterprise of Christians.

Scholars who did analyses of Proverbs 1-9 concurred that Proverbs 1-9 has to do with parental instruction. For example, Fox (1994:233-243) on the pedagogy

of Proverbs 2 in an article writes about the educational theory as expounded in that text. He was followed in this by Estes, who wrote a monograph on the pedagogy of Proverbs 1-9 in which he stated his aim as "to synthesize the unorganised data from a portion of the book of Proverbs into a more systematic statement of the pedagogical theory that underlies its teaching" (Estes, 1997:13). These two endeavours of Fox (1994) and Estes (1997) however, fail to deal with the teachings of Proverbs 1-9 through an exegetical study of the text and the application of the meaning of the text for the Christian church today.

Thus, this research will be a quest into the interpretation of Proverbs 1-9 to learn its meaning, or as Kaiser (1994:26) puts it, its significance, value and relevance for the Christian church today.

1.2.2 Objectives

The specific objectives of the study are the following, namely to:

- Study how Proverbs 1-9 was interpreted in history;
- analyse the structure and literary genre of Proverbs 1-9;
- do an exegesis of the selected parts of Proverbs 1-9; and
- extract themes on child-rearing from the selected parts of Proverbs 1-9.

1.3 CENTRAL THEORETICAL ARGUMENT

Proverbs 1-9 is the Word of God that needs to shed its light on the contemporary issues that the Christian church is facing. It has to be studied in such a way that a contemporary reader sees its relevance and significance in resolving questions related to child-rearing. The reason for this assertion is that in the history of the interpretation of Proverbs 1-9, the task of the Biblical text as an instrument to build the Christian community was not highly valued. It will therefore be maintained in this research that Proverbs 1-9 is an indispensable resource from

which we can take principles that will give direction and guidance to Christian parents in their noble task of child-rearing.

1.4 METHODOLOGY AND PRESUPPOSITIONS

As has been shown in the above paragraph, the interest of this study is not merely on the text itself, but on the relevance of the text to issues that Christian parents are facing in their everyday lives with regard to their responsibility of child-rearing. It is therefore assumed in this regard that the text that we are *working with*, as Brueggemann (1982:4) argues, is in itself a theological statement of a normative kind, i.e. it is Yahweh's revelation that is binding on the covenant people. It is part of the canon that determines the life and the faith of the church. The text is here engaged as the living Word of God that gives vitality to the community, and which continues to have vitality, authority and relevance for new generations in new circumstances (Brueggemann, 1982:6). Thus, this foundation will determine the kind of methodology that will be used in the engagement with the text. Although the interest of the study is on the light that the text can shed on contemporary parental issues, the proof text methodology will be avoided at all costs because of its ignorance of the intention, grammar and historical background of the text (Kaiser, 1994:32). The method that will be used in the understanding of the text is the syntactical-theological method. This method takes seriously the syntactic and theological relationship that exists between words and concepts in the text (Kaiser, 1994:33). However, this method does not imply that the historical background of the text and the original meaning of the text (what the text meant to the author and the first recipients of the text) are unimportant. But as Barr (1995:9) says, they are important in the analysis of the text, but they do not take a central position in the analysis of the text. By central position, we mean that what the text meant to the author and to the original receivers should not become the end goal of the exegesis of the text. However, we have to concur with Kaiser (1994:45) that the legitimate significance in all contemporary applications of the text is to be found in the identification of all valid relationships that exist between the intended sense of

the author and contemporary issues. Syntactical and theological approach implies that any results of the exegesis is to be defined as bridge building; as closing the gulf between the ancient text and the contemporary church. John Stott (1982:138) sees the task of preachers as to enable God's revealed truth to flow out of Scriptures into the lives of men and women of today. Consequently, to achieve the proper results of the syntactical and theological methodology, the following analyses of the text are to be carried out, i.e., contextual, syntactical, verbal, theological and homiletical analyses (Kaiser, 1981:69-164). Thus, this methodology will help in achieving the goal that is set for this study, which is to find the meaning and significance of the parental instructions in Proverbs 1-9 to contemporary Christians, primarily in the African communities in South Africa. In this approach exegesis and theology are closely connected (Kaiser, 1994:259).

The study of relevant literature will be done when surveying the interpretation⁵ of Proverbs 1-9 in history.

The form-literary method as described by McKnight (1969) and Habel (1971) will be followed in examining the literary and structural aspects of the text. This method studies the sayings and pericopes of the Bible in order to determine their original forms and to assign those forms to their proper context. This method will help us in understanding the structure and the literary genre of Proverbs 1-9. It is important for the exegesis of our text to comprehend the composition of the text. This is helpful in the sense that we would have laid a foundation for the better comprehension of the text.

1.5 CHAPTER DIVISIONS AND METHOD OF PRESENTATION

Chapter 1: Introduction

Chapter 2: Review of literature on the exegesis of Proverbs 1-9

⁵ By the history of the interpretation of the text, reference is being made to how the text has been interpreted in history. This has nothing to do with the historical-critical method.

Chapter 3: Form and literary analyses of Proverbs 1-9

Chapter 4: Exegesis of parental instructions in Proverbs 1-9

Chapter 5: Themes extracted from the exegesis of the parental instructions in Proverbs 1-9

Chapter 6: Summary, conclusions and recommendations

1.6 SCHEMATIC REPRESENTATION OF THE CORRELATION BETWEEN POINTS 2, 3 AND 5

Research Questions	Aim and Objectives	Methodology
What does Proverbs 1-9 teach us about child-rearing?	The main aim of this study is to do an exegetical study of Proverbs 1-9 to discover its meaning on child-rearing.	Syntactical-theological method.
How was Proverbs 1-9 interpreted in history?	The study of how Proverbs 1-9 was interpreted in history.	Survey of the relevant literature.
What is the form and genre of Proverbs 1-9?	Analysis of the form and literary genre of Proverbs 1-9	Form-literary methods will be followed in examining form and literary genre of the text.
How to do an exegetical	Doing an exegesis of	Syntactical-theological

study of Proverbs 1-9.	Proverbs 1-9	method will be followed.
What are the themes that can be extracted from the exegesis of Proverbs 1-9?	Extraction of themes on child-rearing from Proverbs1-9.	Listen carefully to the outcomes of the exegetical study of Proverbs 1-9 and then extract themes.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE ON THE EXEGESIS OF PROVERBS 1-9

2.1 INTRODUCTION

This study is not the first in searching the meaning and the contribution of Proverbs 1-9 in the life of the community that is shaped by the Biblical text. Various scholars and interpreters have interpreted Proverbs 1-9, as other parts of the Biblical literature, throughout history. This chapter is the recognition of those endeavours in the past upon which the meaning of the text for the contemporary community will be evaluated and tested. It further builds the affirmation in Chapter 1 that here we have a text that has been interpreted in history by various faith communities from which we can extract meaning that is relevant to the questions and issues we are facing.

The history of the interpretation of Proverbs 1-9 will be constructed from the sources used in this chapter in accordance with the chronology of their dates of publication.

The history of the interpretation of a text is an important part of any given study of this nature. As mentioned above, it is an acknowledgement of the fact that this study of the text is not the first of its kind. Other scholarly works on Proverbs 1-9 have also been done. Thus, this study ought to be seen as a mere laying of a brick on the foundation already laid by other scholars. Knowing how the text was interpreted in history affirms the necessity of the present study in the sense that the text has to shed light on the life of the contemporary faith community. It has to be allowed an opportunity to contribute in the advancement of the faith community. It also helps contemporary interpreters on how they can shape their interpretation in such a way that the text can bring forth its contribution to contemporary life.

Due to our focus on the meaning of the text to the contemporary community, this will not be a detailed study of the history of the interpretation of Proverbs 1-9. In determining how the text has been interpreted in history, our focus will be on the

form, the social setting, the purpose of Proverbs 1-9, the relationship of Proverbs 1-9 to other Ancient Near-East literature, and the relationship between the instructions and the wisdom speeches in the text. This is not a detailed study of the above-mentioned aspects of the text, because the focus of this study is on the meaning of the text. These aspects of the text form a basis upon which an exegesis of the text is to be done.

2.2 A BRIEF ANALYSIS OF THE FORM OF PROVERBS 1-9

This section is merely a highlight on what scholars have said on the form of Proverbs 1-9. In the next chapter, a detailed study on the form of Proverbs 1-9 will be done. By the form of the text, the reference is to the literary type or genre of the text (Stuart, 1980:29). In any practice of exegesis, it is important to know the general and specific literary type of the text (Stuart, 1980:30).

The distinction between Proverbs 1-9 and the rest of the book is an obvious one even from a superficial reading of the text. The distinction is easily picked up by interpreters of the book of Proverbs. Toy (1899: vii) argues that the distinction of Proverbs 1-9 from the rest of the book is indicated by its tone and content. Indeed, style, character and to a certain extent the intention of Proverbs 1-9 are quite different from that of Proverbs 10-29 (Whybray, 1995:62). Proverbs 1-9 contains what McKane calls multi-verse units, whereas Proverbs 10-29 contains what he calls either one-limbed or multi-limbed verse (McKane, 1970:2). The wisdom sentence is the basic element of the form of the text (McKane, 1970:2)⁶. An evolutionistic understanding of the book of Proverbs has led some scholars to conclude that since Proverbs 1-9 represents an advanced stage in the history of a process of formal development based on the wisdom sentence, it must be regarded as the latest part of the book of Proverbs (McKane, 1970:4). Kaiser (1978:379) says, "The collection of Proverbs 1-9 contains for the most part admonitory sermons. Since these display what is a long way the form-critically

⁶ Examples of what is being argued here: One-limbed verse: No one is established by wickedness (Proverbs 12:3a). Multi-limbed verse: Go to the ant, O sluggard; consider her ways, and be wise. Without having any chief, officer, or ruler, she prepares her food in summer and gathers her food in harvest.

most developed literary genre in the book, the collection must be regarded as the latest.”

Influenced by the same evolutionistic understanding of the book of Proverbs, Whybray (1965) concluded that the original text of Proverbs 1-9 has gradually expanded to its present form. The original text was purely human and mundane teaching, whereas the existing text has theological additions to supplement and modify the view that was expressed in that earlier stage of expansion (Von Rad, 1972:8). Gerhard von Rad distinguishes between older wisdom found in Proverbs 10-29, and theological wisdom in Proverbs 1-9 (Von Rad, 1972:11). This distinction has led scholars like Gerhard von Rad to argue that while, indeed, Israel's faith is historical⁷; it has nothing to do with creation⁸ (Von Rad, 1972:56). This understanding was taken up and advanced by numerous scholars, who even went to the extent of making a distinction between ethical and cultic categories. This is, of course, unacceptable, because the action of God in history and his action in creation are in relation to one another. Creation and history arise out of the same origin, which is Yahweh, and move towards the same goal, which is glorifying him as God (Brueggemann, 1972:94). To summarise the argument made here, we can say that Proverbs 1-9, because of the theological interest of the redactors, is the late expansion of Proverbs 10-29.

McKane (1970:7) therefore argues against this understanding of Proverbs 1-9 in order to keep the integrity of the text. According to McKane (1970:7), “... the formal structure of Proverbs 1-9; 17:22 – 24:22 and 31:1-9 is that of an international instruction genre and that it is not the consequence of a process of form-critical evolution involving the agglomeration of wisdom sentences”. McKane's argument helps us to take the text as it is rather than see it as

⁷ With regard to historical, reference is made to the fact that the faith of Israel has much to do with what God has done and is doing in history. It is primarily linked to religious traditions such as the exodus, Sinai covenant and the prophets (Clifford, 1999:9). Consequently, we can talk about God's commandments and statutes. The implication is that this is not to be found in the wisdom literature, because it deals with human experience.

⁸ Referring to creation we mean the creation of man, in which man is treated like a king: valued, powerful, and free if he were to accept the responsibility that wisdom places upon him to choose life for himself and his fellows (Brueggemann, 1972:102).

dependent on other old forms of text. The instruction is a separate genre from the wisdom sentence and the form-critical argument for the lateness of these sections of the book of Proverbs. The assumption that their basic formal unit is the wisdom sentence therefore falls apart.

For Clifford (1999:8), instructions and sayings co-existed in early instruction. Therefore, it is invalid to argue that the long poems are of a later date than the brief sayings. Collins (1980:4) says, "Comparison with Egyptian wisdom literature has shown that even the longer instructions in Proverbs 1-9 are not necessarily late." Brueggemann (1997:681) summarises the argument as follows:

As natural theology, this deposit of sustained reflection is indeed revelatory; it reveals and discloses the God who creates, orders, and sustains reality. Thus natural theology as revelation does indeed mediate Yahweh who is seen to be a generous, demanding guarantor of a viable life-order that can be trusted and counted on, but which cannot be lightly violated. The wisdom teachers, for the most, do not speak directly about God, but make inferences and invite inferences about God from experience discerned theologically.

Therefore, the distinction between human and theological wisdom in the book of Proverbs is an assumption unguided by a close reading of the text, but by an understanding that views wisdom as an adopted child in Israel from the Ancient Near East milieu. Diane Bergant (1984:42) does not see the difference between the Torah of the priest and the word of the prophet and the counsel of the wise. Her argument is that "all groups of spiritual leaders call upon divine directives as motivation for conformity, even though they call upon them in different ways. The search for wisdom was but another way in one's journey to God" (Bergant, 1984:42). Waltke (1979: 302-317) has clearly demonstrated that the sages and the prophets were true spiritual yoke-fellows sharing the same Lord, religious system, faith, hope, anthropology and epistemology. They speak with the same authority, making similar religious and ethical demands on their hearers.

A redactional reading⁹ of Proverbs 1-9 is founded on the presupposition that it is possible to separate ethics from theology. The two are inseparable, however. A reading of Proverbs 1-9 should always put the two together. This implies that Proverbs 1-9 should never be seen and understood as a theological interpretation or reflection of mundane wisdom sayings.

Therefore, we can conclude this section by asserting that the form of Proverbs 1-9 is not the result of the latter theological interpretation of the one-limb proverbs. The form of our text is to be accepted as original and authentic. We are therefore affirming the full Scriptural integrity of Proverbs 1-9. It is the Word of God that drinks from the same fountain as prophetic and legal books. This is the foundation upon which the text will be interpreted.

2.3 THE SOCIAL SETTING OF PROVERBS 1-9

The *Sitz im Leben* of any text is important for understanding the text's meaning and purpose in a concrete way (Stuart, 1980:31). Knowing the social setting of Proverbs 1-9 will definitely aid its interpretation, because it will be clear to the interpreter how the text was used and understood in the original context¹⁰, and that will help the interpreter in the application of the text in his own context. Scholars do not agree on the social setting of Proverbs 1-9. Various settings such as royal court, school and home are suggested as possible social context of the book of Proverbs. There is an assumption based on the nature of the book of Proverbs that it owes its formation to the royal court (Humphreys, 1978:177). It is assumed that there was an educated and literate group in Israel during the reign of Solomon that was responsible for writing down the proverbs (Dell, 2000:25). Some have even suggested the Hezekian royal court (Proverbs 25:1) when they could not deny the evidence that the book of Proverbs could not have been

⁹ Redactional analysis of the text assumes that the text has a prehistory, which can be reconstructed (Hayes and Holladay, 1982:94). In this case, the understanding is that parental instructions as we have it in our text were originally one-sentence proverbs like the proverbs we have in Proverbs 10-29.

¹⁰ However, it should be clear that the text has an original setting, and that setting is open for adaptation and re-use in other secondary settings. The balance between the two should always be dealt with sensitively (Stuart, 1980:31).

written during the reign of Solomon. This assumption has led some scholars to conclude that there was a group of educated people who gave instructions to those who had the potential to be leaders of society (Dell, 2000:24). However, this assumption has been built on the assumption of Heaton (1974:28) that the scribes of Solomon's court were deliberately adopting the literary conventions of their peers in Egypt. Thus, it can be argued that this is a forced assumption based on the comparative studies of wisdom literature in Israel and in Egypt. This is unacceptable, because there are few if any clear references to court schools in the Old Testament. Dell (2000:26) concludes this discussion by saying that the court context in general is thought by some recent scholars as to have been overstressed. Therefore, this study will not entertain the royal court as a possible social setting of Proverbs 1-9.

The second possible setting of Proverbs 1-9 that was suggested in its history of interpretation is that of a school. This implies that there were schools in ancient Israel, that is, a professional education, which involved both reading and writing, at a specific location to which young people came and for which fees were paid to a teacher (Crenshaw, 1995:236), whose primary task was to transmit knowledge from teachers to pupils. For this reason Proverbs 1-9 was evidently composed for use as a textbook in such schools (Whybray, 1974:37).

Von Rad (1972:17), in his argument for a school as a social context of our text concludes: "In Israel, too, writing was known. But writing has to be taught. Handwriting, however, was never taught without accompanying teaching material. It follows from this that there must have been schools of different types in Israel." Von Rad, however, fails to bring forth concrete evidence either from the text itself or from the history of Israel for the existence of schools in Israel.

Whybray (1974: 35-36) adduces four arguments for supporting his theory for the existence of schools in Israel. Firstly, he argues that the existence of Hebrew literature presupposes the existence of schools. Prophetic and wisdom literature could not have come into existence without a strong background of the existence of schools. Secondly, he argues that the existence of schools in neighbouring

countries such as Egypt and Babylonia presupposes that the influence of these schools might have reached Israel. Thirdly, he argues that the complexity of the royal administration necessitated administrators. Thus, there might have been schools in Israel to train the administrators of the government. Fourthly, Whybray's argument is based on the similarities that are evident between Old Testament wisdom literature and the Ancient Near-East wisdom literature. On the question of the relationship between the two literatures, Harris (1995:8) argues that as wisdom literature was used in neighbouring countries as textbooks at schools, it might also have been the case with Proverbs 1-9 in Israel. In conclusion, Whybray agrees that his arguments are entirely inferential. There is no strong evidence in the Old Testament for the existence of schools in ancient Israel.

Moss (1972: 429) argues that a supposition of the school milieu in Proverbs 1-9 is intrusive and unhelpful. The text itself does not provide us with evidence to prove that the school was the social setting of Proverbs 1-9. Crenshaw (1985:601) concludes that there is a deficiency of hard evidence on education in ancient Israel.

We are, therefore, compelled to conclude against a school as the *Sitz im Leben* of Proverbs 1-9. We are not denying that the same kind of wisdom material might have been used as the textbooks in other neighbouring cultures. However, we do not have the evidence either from the text itself or from other parts of the Old Testament that justifies the argument that considers school as *Sitz im Leben* of Proverbs 1-9. Of course this should not be understood as an indication that all education occurred in the home. As Crenshaw (1995:248) argues, special scribal training may have been provided in Hezekiah's court for the chosen few. Lemaire's argument that in discussing education in Ancient Israel scholars should make a distinction between oral and written proverbial material (Lemaire, 1984:70) opens up a possibility of discussing this question in a flexible manner. However, our concern here is the social setting of our text in which we do not have a reason to argue for a school as described above as its social setting.

The third possible social setting for Proverbs 1-9 is that of a household or a family. This simply means that it was the responsibility of a family through parents to impart knowledge, as we have it in Proverbs 1-9, to children (Proverbs 1:8-19; 2:1-27; 3:1-12; 3:21-35; 4:1-27).

Perdue (1981:114-126) and Van Leeuwen (1990:111-144) suggest liminality as a social setting of Proverbs 1-9. They were simply saying that the instructions in Proverbs 1-9 were used to guide a child from childhood to adulthood. A child is helped to pass from one stage to another and is given rules and guidelines for successfully meeting his new responsibilities. The road ahead to adulthood is full of temptations, peer-group pressure and bad influences from the immoral members of the community (Perdue, 1981:119). Therefore, through these instructions, the parents, both mother and father, are trying to entice the untutored to a wisely ordered and godly life (1:7, 29).

From the text itself there is evidence of a parent giving numerous instructions to his or her son (2:2; 3:13; 5:1; 7:4). This evidence led Murphy (1981:7) to conclude as follows: "The frequent address, 'my son', is not merely stylistic and indicative of a teacher-pupil relationship in scholastic instruction. It reaches back into the family, where a responsible relationship between parents and children would have first emphasized." In the text itself we read words like "father", "son", and "mother"¹¹. I do not see any reason for not understanding these words literally as expressing family relation, and not a relationship between a teacher and his pupil. The moment we start to understand them otherwise, it is an indication that we are not faithful to the text but are bowing to the external pressures of comparative studies of wisdom literature. In comparative studies the

¹¹ The use of these terms in our pericope raises some hermeneutical questions that need to be addressed here. It is clear from our text (Proverbs 1-9) that instructions are clearly addressed to men. Longman III (2006:72) says: "Most are speeches of a father speaking on behalf of himself and his wife and addressing his son or son." Should the content of our text be applied on the lives of daughters or it has nothing to do with daughters? Should mothers be involved in the education of their children? The content of our text should also be applied to the lives of girls, because they are also simple and young (Proverbs 1:4). They also need to grow in righteousness and justice; knowledge and understanding. The book of Proverbs is the Word of God that binds all God's people, including our girls. It can therefore be read and appropriated by both girls and boys (Longman III, 2006:73). Therefore, in this research, the pronouns he, she, her, his were used despite the fact the text is directed at sons. Sometimes the concept "young person" is used to denote both genders. It is assumed in this research that mothers are part of what fathers are saying to their children.

milieu of the book of Proverbs is the same as the milieu of other wisdom literature from the Ancient Near East. This is assumed with no evidence from the text itself. Moss (1997:429) goes to the extent of suggesting that the three references to the father and the mother in the setting of household teaching (1: 8-9; 4:1-4 and 6:20-21) demarcate these three sections of parental teaching, which indicate to the reader that the instructional poems are set within the Israelite family. Brueggemann (1997:683) also points out that the use of the term מוֹסֵר in Proverbs expresses the enterprise of nurture, admonition, and socialisation. מוֹסֵר is to be understood as an instrument of guidance and protection that is given to a growing child by a family. For Brueggemann, a family is a decisive socialising agent, which constructs a world of limit and choice, of symbol and imagination, in which the child may safely live (1997:682).

It is in the family, not at school, where children are taught to love and choose life, and that their destiny lies in their choice (Groome, 2003:206). This was also the case in Israel. From the book of Proverbs it is clear that in Israel, children were taught by their parents to ensure their eventual success (Proverbs 13:24; 22:6,15). Hagerdon (2000:113), referring to parenting in Israel, says, "Since it was a disgrace for the father to have brought up a son badly, so it was that the parents sought to control and direct the child. This is exactly what is advocated by Proverbs, which stresses the importance of guiding the son on the right path and the son is well advised to listen to the authority of the father." Family, as a social setting in which a child is helped in his or her journey to adulthood, confirms God's instruction to parents that they are the primary source for the impartation of knowledge and moral values in their children. Parents play an important role in the formation of their children's worldview and values (Tripp, 1995: xix). Tripp (1995: xix) views the role of the parent as a child's guide and as a shepherd. He argues that this shepherding process helps a child to understand himself and the world in which he lives. The parent shepherds a child to assess himself and his responses. He shepherds the child to understand not just the "what" of the child's actions but also the "why".

In Deuteronomy 6:7 God instructs parents as follows: "Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up"¹². God gives the same instruction to parents in Ephesians 6:4.

Therefore, we conclude in this study that Proverbs 1-9 contains instructions from parents to their children. This happens in the setting of the family. Proverbs 1-9 brings forth the inescapable conclusion that the family is a basic building block of any community that seeks life and its humanness. This is relevant to the contextual issues that we want to shed light on with this study.

2.4 THE PURPOSE OF PROVERBS 1-9

In this section, we will determine how various scholars understood the main aim or purpose of Proverbs 1-9. These verses are marked by one purpose, i.e., an educational one. McKane agrees that Proverbs 1-9 has to do with education, although his focus was on the impartation of intellectual knowledge to children. McKane (1970:265) says: "The educational process was more occupied with developing mature intellectual attitudes than with morality. Its concern was to impart negotiating skills, to nurture soundness of judgement and to produce a weighty and effective individual. It did not educate men to change the existing world into something better, but to make their way successfully in the world as it was." Brown rightly refutes McKane's assessment of the purpose of Proverbs 1-9, as it has to do with the development of intellectual attitudes. Brown (1996:43) argues that Proverbs 1-9 is concerned with both the intellectual and moral attitudes of a child. According to Brown, to dichotomise intellectual and moral values is to miss the point of Proverbs 1-9, and that dichotomy was never in the mind of an ancient sage. Brown is right in his refutation of McKane's assessment, because the sayings contained in Proverbs 1-9 also teach a young man how to

¹² In Deuteronomy 6 parents are called to teach their children the commandments of Yahweh that He gave them at Sinai as a result of the Sinaitic covenant. As has been argued above, the wisdom literature in Israel does not operate on a worldview from other parts of the Old Testament, such as the Pentateuch and the prophets. Therefore, it can be argued that the instructions that parents are to teach to their children in Proverbs 1-9 are founded on the Law of Yahweh.

live his life in such a way that he can promote peace in the community, e.g., Proverbs 5:15-23; 6:1-6; 6:12-15.

Whybray (1974:11) says: "This is all pedagogical material, designed to be used in the preparations of boys or young men to face the problems and dangers of the adult world so that they may become wise and responsible members of it." For Whybray (1994:24), Proverbs 1-9 has to do with the preparation of boys and girls in the upper class of society for adulthood. Whybray's conclusion is unacceptable, because there is no such indication in the text itself that its concern lies with children from the upper class. It is evident that he is working from the presupposition that Proverbs 1-9 is fulfilling the same task as the Egyptian instruction. Harris (1995:8), in his assessment of Whybray's understanding of Proverbs 1-9's relationship with an Egyptian lesson book, argues that according to Whybray, Proverbs 1-9 has its roots in the Egyptian lesson book. The lesson book was appropriated by the wise men of Israel. Whybray uses Egyptian instruction as a procrustean bed for Proverbs 1-9. This is unacceptable, because the context of each text is of primary importance in its interpretation.

Fox (1997:619-620) also suggests that the wisdom that the father is teaching his son is more than intellectual. He regards that wisdom as a power that resides in the learner as an inner light that guides a person through life. This wisdom cannot, therefore, be defined as erudition or unusual intellect, but is a kind of wisdom that will help a child to withstand temptations and seduction posed on his way by sinful men and women, and to discern right from wrong, and the desire to pursue right. For Fox (1997:620), the greatest goal for education, also in Proverbs 1-9, is to foster moral character in the child. Brown wrote a monograph entitled "Character in crisis" in which he emphasised that building the moral character of a child is one of the greatest goals of wisdom literature in the Old Testament, especially of Proverbs 1-9. Brown (1996:33-34) indicates that where wisdom is received, we will experience what he called communal values such as righteousness, justice and equity. This implies, therefore, that those who receive

the father's instruction or wisdom become responsible and productive citizens of the community and whose identity is built upon the foundation of righteousness and justice founded by the past generation.

Estes (1997) devotes a whole chapter to the goals of education in Proverbs 1-9. Estes was fully convinced that we have educational material in Proverbs 1-9. He says: "It is evident that the transmission of knowledge from one generation to the next is an integral part of what education is seeking to accomplish. Knowledge, however, is not viewed as an end itself, but is only the foundation for more significant goals such as understanding and application" (1997:63). According to Estes, there are some six educational goals in Proverbs 1-9.¹³ The first goal that Estes regarded as foundational to all of the goals of education in Proverbs 1-9, is the development of the personal commitment of the learner. This is a commitment to diligence, discipline and devotion to wisdom. The learner should commit himself to reproduce what he learns from wisdom in his everyday life. Secondly, Estes argues that another educational goal in Proverbs 1-9 is the formation of godly character in the learner. This character will enable a child to function well with regard to personal discipline, in interpersonal relationships, in the family, at work, and within the community. If this character has been truly formed in the life of a child, he will uphold the teachings of the wisdom teacher in every circumstance. Thirdly, education in Proverbs 1-9 strives to develop in a child independent competence, the skill necessary to function well in Yahweh's cosmos. This goal implies that if a child were well taught, he will cope with the harsh realities of this life. Fourthly, the goal of education in Proverbs 1-9 is for a child's protection. The wisdom teacher is very clear about the fact that evil exists in the world. Therefore, a child's acceptance of wisdom teaching will bring protection for him or her, because wisdom teaches how the dangers in life can be avoided. Fifthly, wisdom teaching brings prosperity in the life of a child. The

¹³ It is necessary here to elaborate on Estes' educational goals, because his' monograph is not an exegetical study of Proverbs 1-9. Therefore, it will contribute to this study to compare its findings with what Estes had established. Estes indicated in his study how each goal was developed in Proverbs 1-9. It is not our duty now to elaborate on how each goal was developed. That will be done in the coming chapters. Here, we will simply mention Estes' goals.

learner may become prosperous across the broad range of life. This goal is well understood within the reality that the body of wisdom literature pictures that life is at times mysterious and unpredictable because the ways of Yahweh are inscrutable to humans. Lastly, Estes agrees that the ultimate goal of Proverbs 1-9 is the knowledge of Yahweh. He says: "Education, then, should produce in the learner more than just a sense of achievement; it should also cultivate reverence for Yahweh and an intimate fellowship with him" (1997:84).

From the goals mentioned above, it is clear that education in the family is really a foundation of life in the community. Therefore, we may correctly conclude that the betterment of an individual child is not of primary importance in Proverbs 1-9, but the betterment of the community. Parents are not raising children for families *per se*, but for the entire community. Children are going to live their lives in communities. Thus, a family is a fountain that has to take good waters to the communities for its survival. Brown (1996:40) says: "The family provides the foundation and training ground for responsible communal life. Family life offers a microcosm of the community." If the community experiences social ills in its midst, it needs to revisit the life of the family in order to rebuild its structures. Brueggemann (1972:15) reminds us that "in Israel and the ancient world generally, the hope for life intimately links a person to his fellows, so that the promise of life applies to the community in which he lives". This connection between an individual and the community is well stated in Proverbs 11:10-11: "When it goes well with the righteous, the city rejoices; and when the wicked perish, there are shouts of gladness. By the blessing of the upright a city is exalted, but it is overthrown by the mouth of the wicked." Hence, Brueggemann (1972:15) argues: "...the life which wisdom sees as the goal and meaning of human existence is the well-being of the community and each of its members, i.e., *shalom*".

This study, therefore, maintains the conclusion that the purpose for transmission and impartation of wisdom teaching by a parent to a child is to foster a worldview and moral character in the life of a child, so that he/she may be able to discern right from wrong, and to create and maintain life in all its fullness, and to become

a responsible citizen of the community. This is important for the purpose of this study, because individualism is the norm of the day in child-rearing. Community is no longer a focus in child-rearing nowadays. The focus is now on what a child can achieve in life, for example, in becoming a medical doctor, lawyer, or celebrity. It does not matter whether one's success is detrimental to the community. It is not surprising that in our communities, there are intellectual giants, but the same people are pygmies in moral character.¹⁴ Crimes that are devastating our country are mainly white-collar crimes.¹⁵ Those that commit them are the intellectual giants of our society. It is, therefore, imperative for Christian churches to revisit Proverbs 1-9 in order to help families in Christian communities and beyond on how to raise children. A church that ignores the teachings of the book of Proverbs in her catechetical instructions, preaching and pastoral work is doing that at its own peril and to the demise of the community.

2.5 THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PROVERBS 1-9 AND OTHER ANCIENT NEAR EASTERN WISDOM LITERATURE

The instructions in Proverbs 1-9 are not an island. They are related to the wisdom literature of the neighbouring countries such as Egypt and Mesopotamia. Scholars agree that Israelite wisdom was greatly influenced by wisdom literature of her neighbours, but they do differ on the extent of that influence (Whybray, 1965; McKane, 1970; Clifford, 1999). Several hermeneutical questions are brought forth by this relationship. Did Israelite wisdom teachers merely copy wisdom sayings from their neighbours? Is it true that Yahwistic thinking in Proverbs 1-9 was a later addition to the secular proverbs from Israel's

¹⁴ Our country has many graduates, but they are often the ones who are implicated in crimes that are tearing our country apart.

¹⁵ White-collar crimes refer to crimes that are committed by those who wear white shirts and a tie or the so-called high-profile crimes. These are the people who should be giving direction to the country. Examples are the arms deal scandal and the Scorpions' investigation of high-profile personalities.

neighbouring countries? Does the relationship help us in our understanding and interpretation of Proverbs 1-9?

It is true that the instructions of Proverbs 1-9 and the Egyptian instruction influenced each other. Features of Proverbs 1-9 comparable with the Egyptian instruction include an emphasis on the importance of hearing or obeying the teaching, the significance of the heart as the centre of the human will, and the parallel between wisdom and *ma'at* as the source of life and as governing the minds of the authorities (Whybray, 1995:64). There are also differences between the two literatures. In Egyptian instructions, there is no constant employment of the expression "my son", and the mother and father are not associated together in the teaching of their son. This clearly proves that one text cannot be used as a procrustean bed of another text. We may, therefore, agree with McKane who argues for an international instruction genre in the Ancient Near East (McKane, 1970:7). Thus it is probable that the Israelite writing remained an Israelite writing for Israel. It was not copied from another culture. It never adopted any specifically Egyptian belief or vocabulary, but used what it was familiar with (Whybray, 1965:69). It is, therefore, invalid for any interpreter to see the Proverbs 1-9-text as full of Yahwistic additions. Such an assertion is a denial of the fact that Proverbs 1-9 is part of the Israelite pedagogical tradition that did not necessarily need to borrow from any other culture. Still, it probably did borrow. It is of great significance in the interpretation of Proverbs 1-9 to study it in the context of the Ancient Near East. This helps to understand how proverbs were used and understood not only in Israel, but also in the neighbouring countries. In turn, we are enabled to interpret our text. Clifford (1999:8-9), in his study of proverbs within the context of the Ancient Near East, spells out three assumptions of ancient wisdom that are so crucial for our understanding of Proverbs 1-9. The first assumption is that wisdom had to do with practical rather than theoretical knowledge. A husband is wise because he knows how to look after his wife (Clifford, 1999:8). This is how wisdom was understood, not only in Israel, but also in the whole region of the Ancient Near East. This is opposed to the understanding of wisdom in the 21st century. Wisdom is understood as something

that has to do with the amount of knowledge one possesses. However, this is not how Biblical wisdom is to be understood. Thus, we are provided here with hermeneutical parameters within which we are to understand and interpret Proverbs 1-9. Wisdom is how one lives one's life, not the quantity of knowledge in one's mind.

The second assumption is that wisdom belonged to the gods (Clifford, 1999:8-9). Human beings needed wisdom from the gods to be civilised and to be good servants of the gods. This clearly tells us that wisdom was never a strange fellow in the religious worldview of the Ancient Near East. Wisdom was always a part of the religious worldview of the Ancient Near East. It is important to stress this point here because of certain scholars (e.g., Von Rad, 1972) who viewed Biblical wisdom as secular in its origin, but that it became religious through an evolutionistic development. This implies that our interpretation of Proverbs 1-9 must take into consideration other parts of the Old Testament, such as the Pentateuch, historical and prophetic books. Wisdom theology does not give us something different from what we have in other parts of the Old Testament. Harris, (1995:24) argues for the relationship between wisdom literature and other parts of the Old Testament as follows: Even though Proverbs 1-9, for example, does not overtly refer to any characters in Israel's history, embedded in the various speech patterns in Proverbs 1-9, we can detect historical representations based upon other canonical traditions. A bridge is thus formed between Proverbs and Israel's historical traditions via discourse. Thus we can conclude that wisdom teaching is very much in line with the religious worldview of the Old Testament.

The third assumption that Clifford (1999:9) points out is that heavenly wisdom comes to the human race mediated by earthly institutions or authorities, such as the king, scribes, and heads of families. This is important for this study, because it points to the crucial role of those who are authorities, such as parents. Children cannot be wise by themselves; they are to be led towards wisdom. In adulthood, children will reflect on what have they received from parents in their childhood. The only way that God has devised to impart knowledge to children is by using parents and others that are in authority, such as teachers and pastors.

It is, therefore, maintained in this study that Proverbs 1-9 is to be studied and interpreted in the Ancient Near Eastern context because it provides us with hermeneutical parameters. Parsons (1993:151-170) includes the interpretation of the book of Proverbs in the light of the historical-cultural context of extra-Biblical wisdom literature as his fifth guideline. He cited two reasons for the guideline:

First, Solomon was not the sole author of all the Proverbs but the inspired editor or collector of wise sayings from other cultures. Second, the Book of Proverbs shares the literary forms of the proverbial and wisdom literature of the Ancient Near East. This common literary background may help the interpreter achieve one of the purposes of the proverbs, namely, to understand the various types of wisdom literature... (1993:161-162).

2.6 THE INTERPRETATION OF WISDOM SPEECHES IN PROVERBS 1-9

It has been long recognised that Proverbs 1-9 consisted of two main blocks of material: a series of instructions given by a father to a son, and speeches delivered by wisdom depicted as "Lady Wisdom" (Moss, 1997:426; Whybray, 1995:63; Fox, 1997:613-633). The following sections in Proverbs 1-9 are known as wisdom speeches: Proverbs 1:20-33; 3:13-20; 8:1-36 and 9:1-18. Two interesting questions need to be addressed in this section: What is the personified wisdom in Proverbs 1-9? How does a father relate to his son the speeches of the personified wisdom to the instruction?

In tracking down the identity of Lady Wisdom, scholars have proposed various hypotheses. Some argued that Lady Wisdom is a hypostasis of Yahweh, whereas others have seen wisdom as a pure literary personification (Clifford, 1999:23).¹⁶ Whybray (1995:63) makes a very significant contribution in identifying the nature of the personified wisdom in Proverbs 1-9. He argues that the discussion on the nature of the personified wisdom should be done within the context of Proverbs 1-9, because it is clear from their contents that they are not

¹⁶ As it is not the purpose of this study, we will not go into all the details of those hypotheses. Our focus will be on the answers to the above-mentioned questions.

isolated fragments that have found their way into Proverbs 1-9 by chance. Their theme is closely related to the teaching of other chapters. Fox explains this relationship as follows: "What the father says about wisdom in the lectures, Wisdom says about herself in the interludes. Even the way the father derides sinners and fools is echoed in Wisdom's mockery of the arrogant. The two voices, though heard distinctly, are now entwined. Wisdom's words are overtones of the father's wisdom" (1997:130). The language that the personified wisdom uses is the same language that a human father uses to instruct his son. From the text itself, it is very clear that the personified wisdom is after the hearts of human beings. She wants them to listen. That is also the struggle of the human father in instructing his son. He wants to win the son's heart. Moss (1997:432-433) says, "Wisdom's description of her cosmic origins in Proverb 8:22-31 and her claims to be the life and happiness of all who keep her ways (8:32-36) re-express the parental teaching in 3:19-20 and 3:13-18, respectively. Also, Wisdom's words in 8:17-21 reflect what the wise father had taught about Wisdom's gifts are conditioned to her (4:1-9)". We may, therefore, conclude that the purpose of the personification is nothing more than an attempt by the parent to give a lively character to his teaching by presenting it in personal terms (Whybray, 1965:14). Wisdom speeches were intended to form part of the teaching given to the young child who is addressed by his father in the instructions.

Was it not enough for instructions to be on their own rather than coupled with wisdom speeches? Moss (1997:434) says the following:

Wisdom's intimacy with God and Wisdom's cosmic setting intimate that the parental teaching is in profound harmony with the order of the cosmos and has the backing of the Lord of creation. Both the form of parental teaching in which instruction is given and the dignity and authority given to the wisdom figure would seem to express the need and desire to place particular stress on the social and religious functions of the individual Israelite household.

From Moss's response one may simply conclude that the fact that wisdom speeches and instructions are put together, is a stern reminder to families that failure in instructing children is contrary to the creation order. It amounts to disobedience to Yahweh. Thus, wisdom theology reminds families to instruct their children with seriousness. Parents are reminded to take their covenant vows very seriously. Parents are to instruct their children because it is a divine order without which there will be no life in the family and in the community.

2.7 CONCLUSION

The goal of this chapter was to determine how various scholars interpreted Proverbs 1-9. There is general consensus among scholars that Proverbs 1-9 is an educational instruction from parents to children. There is also an agreement that these verses are mainly for building up a worldview and moral character of a child so that he or she may live a successful life as an adult. Parents who fail to impart these instructions to their children are acting contrary to the order of Yahweh. They should not expect a good life in their families and in the community. Proverbs 1-9 does not bring something new from what we have learnt from other parts of the Old Testament. Therefore, it needs to be interpreted within the contexts of the Old Testament, the Ancient Near East and the wisdom speeches.

CHAPTER 3

FORM AND LITERARY ANALYSIS OF PROVERBS 1-9

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The form and literary analyses of our text form a significant part of this research. This analysis provides us with a tool to better understand our text. It further enables us to have a firm foundation upon which a solid exegesis of our text will be laid. Thus, form and literary analyses are indispensable for the accomplishment of this research project. Form analysis investigates the structure of our text, describes the genre of the text, looks for a *Sitz im Leben* for the text in general, and further determines the function of the text (Armerding, 1983:49; Tucker, 1971:11). Literary analysis, on the other hand, analyses the literary features of the text to determine its literary character (Habel, 1971:6). Armerding (1983:23) defines the task of literary analysis as to discern the structural arrangements of the text, literary history of separate units and the stylistic features of those units.

These methods are followed here with the assumption that we are not the first listeners to the text. The text had an origin. Better understanding of the text has to consider that original background. Tucker (1971:16) says: "Just as every genre arises in a particular situation, it also arises in order to fulfil some particular purpose, and it survives because it continues to be needed for that purpose." It is, therefore, crucial for us to have this historical background in mind in our explanation and interpretation of the text. This will, in a great measure, help us not to impose the text upon today's listeners, but carefully and consciously apply it after listening to what it meant yesterday. It is also assumed here that form and literary analyses offer fascinating bits of insight into what the text meant in terms of its own contemporary culture and customs. These bits of insight are crucial in fulfilling the most important task of Biblical scholarship, which is to state what the permanently valid and divinely authoritative meaning of the text is for all times and for all conditions of men (Woudstra, 1968:127). Therefore, form and literary

analyses are the essential instruments that need to be used in order to achieve our result, which is to listen to the divine message as expressed in Proverbs 1-9 for today's Christian community.

This chapter will try to answer the following questions. How is Proverbs 1-9 structured? What is the literary genre of Proverbs 1-9? What is the intention of Proverbs 1-9? These questions will be answered by considering what other wisdom scholars have said. However, evidence from the text itself will be our main source of information.

3.2 IDENTIFICATION OF TWO LITERARY GENRES IN PROVERBS 1-9

There is scholarly consensus that the book of Proverbs is composed of distinct sections. Scholars also agree that Proverbs 1-9 is also distinguishable from the rest of the book (Dillard and Longman, 1994:237). Whybray (1995:62) argues: "The commentators of the latter half of the nineteenth century were aware of the differences in style, and to some extent in character and intention between chapters 1-9 and the sentence literature of 10:1ff". Skehan's (1947:190) structural analysis of Proverbs 1-9 shows that these chapters form a distinct section from the rest of the book. He argues that Proverbs 1-9 is composed of seven columns or pillars. Seven columns are seven poems of uniform length that extend between chapters 2 and 7 (Skehan, 1947:190). He views chapters 1, 8 and 9 as the framework within which the seven columns stand. Skehan, in his structural analysis of Proverbs 1-9, fails to provide convincing evidence of proving how chapters 1 and 8, 9 form an *inclusio*. A literary analysis of the text itself does not clearly indicate that these chapters form an *inclusio*. Thus, it seems necessary to rethink the conclusions reached by Skehan. Dillard and Longman (1994:239) says: "The most serious difficulty with Skehan's interpretation is that there is no reason for taking what appeared to be two separate discourses in the first chapter (1:8-19; 1:20-33) as part of a frame." Later interpreters like Whybray and Fox, seriously differ with Skehan in their structural analysis of Proverbs 1-9.

Whybray (1965:31), in his structural analysis of Proverbs, identifies two types of literary forms that are distinguishable from each other. The first literary form is that in which the wisdom teacher addresses his pupil and offers his own human teaching. Here Whybray identifies ten instructions or discourses. He argues that these instructions have been deeply influenced by the Egyptian genre of wisdom literature known as "instruction" (Whybray, 1965:61-71). Whybray's research result was widely accepted by various scholars (Fox, 1997:613-633; Clifford, 1999). Whybray (1965:32) identifies the following portions as his ten instructions: (1) 1:8-19; (2) 2:1, 9, 16-17; (3) 3:1-10; (4) 3:21-24, 27-31; (5) 4:1-5; (6) 4:10-18; (7) 4:20-26; (8) 5:1-8, 21; (9) 6:20-25, 32; and (10) 7:1-5, 25-27. These ten discourses are put together as a unit due to characteristics they share. Each discourse is preceded by an introduction in which a father exhorts his son to pay attention to his words and points out the advantages that will accrue from doing so. Whybray identifies the following as the common characteristics of these introductory verses:

- ❖ They are all addressed to my son (sons).
- ❖ Pupils are commanded to hear, receive and not forget the instructions that follow.
- ❖ They all assert the personal authority of the speaker, the father or teacher.
- ❖ They all assert the great value and utility of the father's words.
- ❖ There is no reference to any authority beyond that of the father himself.
- ❖ The word "wisdom" refers to ordinary human wisdom.

In his analysis, Whybray makes extensive deletions to recover the original form of the discourses. He deletes certain verses, because he views them as an expansion of the original form (Whybray, 1965:41). Whybray (1965:52) says: "In the course of the analysis of these chapters, it has been suggested that some of the secondary material was added in order to modify the teaching of the discourses by equating the words of the wisdom teacher with an objectified or

personified wisdom, of which there is no mention in the discourses themselves, to attribute the salutary effects of obeying them.”

It appears to this researcher as if Whybray (1994) in his later works was greatly influenced by McKane's distinction of secular proverbs that are considered to be original and genuine, from sacred proverbs that are considered as late expansions. It was evident in the previous chapter that this argument does not hold water. Michael Fox and other scholars have rejected Whybray's deletion of certain verses of the text (Fox, 1997:614). Whybray himself appears to have changed his position in his later discussion of the composition of Proverbs 1-9 (Whybray, 1994). In his later discussion, he included verses, which were earlier described as expansions, as part of the original instructions.

The second literary form that Whybray identifies is what he termed wisdom poems. In these poems, a personified wisdom, claiming to possess divine authority makes a direct appeal to men (Whybray, 1965:31). These poems (1:20-33; 3:13-20; 8:1-36) differ both in form and substance from the ten discourses. Wisdom is no longer spoken of in the third person as in the discourses. In the wisdom poems, she is portrayed as a speaker (Whybray, 1994:35).

Fox (1997:613-633) analyses the composition of Proverbs 1-9. In his structural analysis, he points out that it is composed of two literary forms that consist of ten lectures and five interludes. The ten lectures are as follows: (1) 1:8-19; (2) 2:1-22; (3) 3:1-12; (4) 3:21-35; (5) 4:1-9; (6) 4:10-19; (7) 4:20-27; (8) 5:1-23; (9) 6:20-35; (10) 7:1-27 (Fox, 1997:614). These lectures are marked by three characteristics that are common to all lectures. They all have an introduction that is comprised of an address, exhortation and motivations. The second characteristic is a lesson to the audience. The third one is a conclusion that is a summary statement generalising the principle of the lesson. This characteristic is not always traceable in all instructions. The following is an example of how a lecture is structured:

First lecture: Proverbs 1:8-19

1. Introduction: (a) Address... v.8. שְׁמַע בְּנִי

(b) Exhortation... v.8 שְׁמַע בְּנִי מוֹסֵר אָבִיךָ

וְאַל-תִּפְּטֹשׁ תוֹכַת אִמְךָ

(c) Motivation...v.9 כִּי לִנְיַת חַן הֵם לְרֹאשֶׁךָ

וְעֲנָקִים לְגִרְוֹתֶיךָ

2. Lesson or counsel: verses 10-18

3. Conclusion: verse 19

Fox's structural analysis shows evidence that unlike Whybray his analysis is not influenced by his knowledge of the instruction genre from other cultures, but that he relied heavily on the information from the text itself.¹⁷ The five interludes that according to Fox form part of the structure of Proverbs 1-9, are the following: 1:20-33; 3:13-20; 6:1-19; 8:1-36; 9:1-18. Interludes are quite different from the lectures. The lectures present themselves as addressed by a father to a son. The wisdom interludes either address people generally or people identified in the text (Fox, 1997:617). They depict wisdom in female terminology.

Scholars that analysed the structure of Proverbs 1-9 had a problem with Proverbs 6:1-19, namely whether it should be regarded as an interlude. This problem is highlighted by Whybray when he says: "It is generally agreed by the commentators that these verses lay outside the pattern of the father's instructions and wisdom poems which characterize chapters 1-9; and in particular that they interrupt the series of instructions about the danger posed by the adulteress which is otherwise the common theme of chapters 5-7. There is a sense in which they could be regarded as loosely appended to Chapter 5, but the subjects with which they deal are quite distinctive, and the forms into which they are cast are uncharacteristic of these chapters; they have much greater affinities with other parts of the book of Proverbs" (Whybray, 1994:48-49). McKane does not know where to place these verses. He argues that in this section there is material that is formally different from anything in the earlier chapters and which,

¹⁷ The researcher regards his omission of 6:1-19 as a lecture as unfortunate. He appears to have worked with the text using predetermined methods that impose their thinking and conclusions on the text. It is the researcher's contention that Proverbs 6:1-19 should form part of the lectures. This will be discussed later in detail.

because it lacks imperatives, is certainly not instruction (McKane, 1970:320). He identifies verses 12-15 and 16-19 as verses that are far from being identified as instruction. He has a problem with verses 1-5 and verses 6-11, which have certain characteristics of the instruction. Verses 6-11 are introduced by the imperative, but its form is hardly consistent with parental instruction. For verses 1-5, McKane clearly argues that they are instruction and are dominated by imperatives. Thus, McKane's position on where to place 6:1-19 is unclear. Garrett agrees with McKane on the structure of 6:1-19. It is composed of four teachings (verses 1-5, 6-11, 12-15, 16-19) (Garrett, 1993:95). Garrett clearly states that these teachings have neither wisdom appeal nor a paternal exhortation (1993:95). However, he could not avoid the fact that the first teaching, verses 1-5, have a similarity with the paternal exhortation in that it uses vocative בְּנִי. However, he further elaborates that it lacks a distinctive characteristic of the paternal appeal, namely the plea for the son to heed the father's words, and it has no thematic unity (Garrett, 1993:95). The question remains: what should we then do with Proverbs 6:1-19? Should we throw it away as an unnecessary addition to Proverbs 1-9?

Clifford's response to these questions sheds some light on how Proverbs 6:1-19 should be accommodated in the structure of Proverbs 1-9. Clifford (1999:72) says: "This section cannot, however, be judged intrusive solely on the grounds that it is not instruction, for ancient anthologies did not always live up to modern standards of symmetry." Clifford has a point here that was missed by scholars. Proverbs 1-9 was approached with a set of modern standards of structural analysis undermining the fact that they are dealing with an ancient text with a specific intention to achieve. For Clifford, 6:1-19 is part of Proverbs 1-9 and is to be interpreted within this context. He argues for a close relationship between 6:1-19 and the rest of Proverbs 1-9 as follows: "A case can be made that the material has a function in chapters 1-9. Thematically, it shows the inner obstacles to acquiring wisdom in contrast to the extrinsic ones of violent men and seductive women. These inner obstacles include faults from one's own character (poor

judgment, verses 1-5, and laziness, verses 6-11). The sketches of the wicked types (verses 12-19) fill out the catalog of the wicked in 1:8-19; 2:12-15; 4:14-19".

Young (1949:306), in his analysis of Proverbs 1:1-9:18, includes 6:1-19 in his description of Proverbs 1-9 as "an instruction of a father", which consists of practical admonitions of a father to his son. All who take an existing text seriously should welcome Young's position. Despite the fact that 6:1-19 does not follow the same pattern of structure as other instructions, it is an instruction from a father to a son. Our clue is in the words בְּנִי which is repeated twice within the range of five verses. In verses 3-5 a son is exhorted to be faithful to promises he made to his neighbour. V.5, which says: הִנָּצַל בְּצָבִי מִיָּד וּבְצַפּוֹר מִיָּד יָקוּשׁ, includes an exhortation together with the motivation for being faithful. If one were faithful to his promises, he will live a life that is free from danger. Laziness (vv.6-12) and all other kinds of wickedness mentioned in verses 12-19 are part of the lesson from a father to his son. These lessons are also very crucial in the upbringing of a child. Therefore, Proverbs 6:1-19 forms part of the instruction. It is a mistake to regard it as an interlude or as if it is not part of Proverbs 1-9. Proverbs 6:1-19 will therefore be expounded here as part of the instruction genre.

The question that we need to address now is whether the two literary blocks that form part of Proverbs 1-9 will be part of the syntactical-grammatical analysis in the next chapter. There is an intimate relationship between the parental instructions and wisdom speeches. Nevertheless, due to the scope of this research that focuses on the rearing of a child, only parental instruction will undergo the syntactical-grammatical analysis. They are the instructions from parents to children. Thus, they are more relevant to our topic than wisdom poems, which are addressed to men in general. This posture of focusing on the parental instructions will open the door for future research on the relationship of the teachings of parental instruction and wisdom poems.

3.3 CHARACTERISTICS OF THE INSTRUCTION GENRE IN PROVERBS 1-9

Proverbs 1-9 is composed of two genres, i.e., instructions and wisdom poems. McKane (1970:7) says, "My own investigation will show that Proverbs 1-9 is largely made up of: (a) pieces which are strictly instruction (1:8-19; 3:1-12, 21-35; 4; 5; 6:1-5, 20-35; 7:1-5, 24-27; (b) those in which there is a development and slackening of the formal structure of the instruction (2; 3:13-20; 6:6-11; 7:6-23)." Our focus here will be on what distinguishes the instruction genre from the wisdom poem, because it is the intention of this research to find out what the instructions in Proverbs 1-9 say about child-rearing.

Syntactically, the imperative form dominates the instruction genre. The instruction commands, and exhorts, and gives reasons why its directives should be obeyed (McKane, 1970:3). This is a clear indication that these instructions are not forced upon children. However, children are persuaded to embrace them. Hubbard (1989:21) says, "More often than not, they gave solid reasons, cogent motivations, in support of their instruction". Parents go to the extent of using their experience as a foundation of their call to right behaviour (4:2-3). Instructions are earnest pleas for a good and meaningful life from parents to their children.

All instructions in Proverbs 1-9 have the same form.¹⁸ An instruction is made up of three components, i.e., a call, motive, and lesson or counsel (Bergant, 1997:80). A call is usually a command or admonition, and it is imperitival. In this call a child is commanded or admonished to take to heart the teaching given by parents. A call serves as an introduction to the instruction. The second component of an instruction is motivation. A child is given reasons or motivations for heeding parental instructions. The motive clause is usually introduced by *כִּי*. A motive clause asserts the great value and utility of the father's words. The final or

¹⁸ Certain scholars like as Whybray (1994) and Clifford (1999) argue that there are certain sections in Proverbs 1-9, that are part of the Instruction genre. However, they have the same form as other instructions. Proverbs 2 and 6:1-19 are identified as teaching material that do not show the same form as other instructions.

purpose clause is also used to expound the consequences of following the parental instructions. The third component of an instruction is a teaching in which a child is counselled to choose wisdom and avoid folly. He is also counselled about the consequences that will follow one's choice. The last component of an instruction is a conclusion. It is not easy to determine the conclusion of every instruction. There is no uniform pattern for concluding the instruction. Whybray (1994:13) says, "The points at which the instructions concluded are more difficult to determine than are their beginnings. In several instances a verse or a short group of verses (1:19; 2:21-22; 3:35; 4:18-19; 5:21-23) that speaks in general terms of the respective fates of the wicked and/or the righteous, appears to mark a conclusion, but this is not necessarily the conclusion of the original instruction..."

Whybray works with the presupposition that the instructions that we have in Proverbs 1-9 are not the original ones. Original instructions were expanded with what he terms "Wisdom and Yahweh additions". It appears that Whybray is working with McKane's notion of distinguishing secular instructions from religious instructions. This distinction is a denial of the religious background of the book of Proverbs. It is, therefore, affirmed here that the so-called additions to instructions are an original part of the text. The conclusion of each section is obviously determined by the beginning of another instruction section.

Whybray (1965) and Clifford (1999) argue for ten lectures of instruction in Proverbs 1-9. As the current researcher has previously argued, Proverbs 6:1-19 should be taken as part of the instructions in Proverbs 1-9. Thus, we have the following sections as our instruction: 1:8-19; 2:1-22; 3:1-12; 3:21-35; 4:1-9; 4:20-27; 5:1-23; 6:1-19; 6:20-35; 7:1-27. The remaining part of this section of our chapter will be spent on an explanation of how different characteristics of the instruction genre are revealed in various instructions. The explanations will definitely prepare us for the syntactical-grammatical analysis of our text, which will form part of our next chapter.

3.4 THE INSTRUCTION GENRE IN PROVERBS 1-9

3.4.1 Proverbs 1:8-19

This is the first parental instruction. This instruction is demarcated from other sections within the chapter. It is clearly preceded by an introduction of the whole book as well as of Proverbs 1-9. Verse 20 starts with a new section, which is a wisdom speech. After an introduction of the instruction, and before its conclusion, verses 11 and 18 form an *inclusio*. In verse 11, we have the following words נִצְפָנָה נִצְפָנָה, which are repeated in verse 18, though different in forms (Garrett, 1993:69). This clearly shows that our instruction is a unit.

Verses 8-9 serve as an introduction of the instruction. In this introduction, the most used form of the verb is imperative: "Listen... and do not forget". With this introduction, a child is exhorted to take seriously מוֹסֵר and תּוֹרַת of parents. In verse 9, an exhortation in verse 8 is accompanied by a motive clause, which is introduced by כִּי. The motive clause reinforces the imperatives with argument. In verse 9, a child is given a motivation for heeding to the מוֹסֵר and תּוֹרַת of parents. He is promised that if he listens to his parents' teachings, they will be like לוֹיֵית חֵן (gracious garland) to his head and עֲנָקִים (necklace) to his neck.¹⁹

Verses 10-19 form part of a parent's counsel to a child. The danger against which the child is warned is expressed in conditional clauses in verses 10-11. McKane (1970:267) rightly argues that the function of the conditional clause in this position is to define the circumstances in which the command is applicable. In these circumstances, the gang appeals to the young man to join them with a promise of easy money (vv. 11-14). Verses 15-18 expound upon the prohibition with the warning that the gang members are all headed for an early grave. The imperative clause dominates verse 15, whereas verse 16 is expressed in a

¹⁹ Garrett (1993:69) indicates that עֲנָקִים and לוֹיֵית חֵן symbolise health and prosperity.

motive clause (Garrett, 1993:69). This instruction is concluded by verses 17-19 that describes the fate of gang members, which is self-destruction.

Clifford (1999:39) summarises the teaching of the first instruction as follows: "In summary, the inexperienced person, as yet untaught by wisdom, is instructed about the two paths in life, one characterised by seductive words and glittering prizes (though in reality strewn with traps), while the other path is honourable and safe. Voices summon to each. One voice tells lies, saying nothing about the danger of sudden death. The other is truthful. The real topic is the two ways lying before every person."

3.4.2 Proverbs 2:1-22

This instruction's structure does not follow the form pattern of the other instructions. McKane (1970:278) hesitates to assert its legitimacy as an instruction. McKane argues that the absence of the imperatives that communicate directives authoritatively is improper for instruction. In Proverbs 2:1-22, imperatives are replaced by conditional clauses, and then followed by motive and final clauses. McKane (1970:278) further says, "The other reason why I hesitate to describe this as instruction is that there is a lack of concrete, authoritative instruction on specific matters in this passage."

Whybray (1994:49-50) indicates that the complex structure of Proverbs 2:1-22 is further coupled by the doubling or even tripling of the basic clauses. It is also characterised by repetitions in verses 2-11. Wisdom and its equivalents are mentioned twelve times and in verses 12-22 the word for "path" occurs nine times. Whybray (1994:50) calls this repetition "a wearisome repetition of the same thought". Hence, Whybray concludes that this chapter is an expansion of an originally much shorter instruction.²⁰ Fox (1994:235) argues that Proverbs

²⁰ Whybray is still working with the distinction between secular sayings (original) and Yahwist sayings, which are considered an expansion of the original ones. This distinction undermines the originality of the Yahwistic sayings. This might have been used for emphasis sake.

2:1-22 is a real instruction that has been structured differently from other instructions. He divides the chapter into three sections, i.e., firstly, verses 1-11 as an introduction. In this introduction there is a call to a son, which is followed by a conditional clause, which describes the circumstances in which the child will find himself if he accepts his father's instruction. Verses 1-4 form the protasis of the conditional clause, whereas verses 5-11 form the apodosis. Verses 12-19 form part of section two, which is composed of counsels or lessons to a child. In this section a child is counselled that understanding, insight and commandments will save him from the wicked men (vv. 12-15) and from wicked women (vv. 16-19). The instruction has a conclusion (vv. 20-22) in which the fates of the upright and the wicked are made known. The upright will inhabit the land, whereas the wicked will be cut off from the land.

Murphy (1998:14) concludes on the status of Proverbs 2:1-22 as follows: "In form, this is an instruction, but it has the air of program or paradigm, providing themes that will be developed in the instructions that follow". Proverbs 2:1-22 is the instruction like other instructions in Proverbs 1-9, but it is structured in a different way. Proverbs 2:1-22 is an instruction in which the father encourages his son to persevere in his search for wisdom by holding out promises of great wisdom and closeness to God. These promises will enable one to avoid all dangers to the moral life, and attain a secure existence.

3.4.3 Proverbs 3:1-12

Proverbs 3:1-12 is an independent unit. Proverbs 2, which is an independent unit, precedes it. Proverbs 3:13-20, which is a wisdom poem, follows it. Proverbs 3:1-12 is well-structured as other instructions in Proverbs 1-9. Proverbs 3:1-12 consists of three sections: verses 1-4, verses 5-10 and verses 11-12. Verses 1-4 are an introduction, which is an appeal to the young man to heed parental teaching. The father commends his own teaching, promising that obedience to it will ensure longevity and favour with God and people. The call to a son is expressed in an imperfect tense, which is translated as an imperative. Verses 2-4 express the motive clause, which is introduced by a conjunction **וְ**. The second

section is the body of the instruction, which is a lesson to a son (verses 5-10). This is an admonition to a son. This admonition consists of three parts: verses 5-6, verses 7-8 and verses 9-10. The main concern of this admonition is with the relationship of a son to Yahweh. He is admonished to trust, fear God in whatever he does, and then he will be rewarded with success in life, good health and material wealth (Dell, 2006:36). Verses 11-12 appear to be concluding remarks of the instruction to a son. It does not have the same characteristics as the conclusion in 1:8-19. It appears to be another admonition in which a child is adjointed to submit to Yahweh's discipline (Clifford, 1999:52). Yahweh's discipline is always beneficent and an expression of his love.

3.4.4 Proverbs 3:21-35

There is no scholarly consensus on the unity of this instruction (McKane, 1970:297). However, Whybray (1994:69) argues for the unity of this instruction based on form and content analysis. Garrett (1993:57) cites four reasons for regarding Proverbs 3:21-35 as a single literary unit: (1). A section that is a unit, i.e., verses 13-20, which is a wisdom poem, precedes Proverbs 3:21-35. (2). בְּנִי in verse 21 marks the beginning of a new section. (3). The admonitions in verses 27-35 require an introduction. (4). הַשְׁקֵה וְיִצְמַח have an operational sense well suited to the highly specific exhortations in verses 27-35. Thus, we conclude that Proverbs 3:21-35 is a unit.

Verses 21-24 form the introduction of the instruction. In this instruction, the father does not indicate, as in other introductions, that he is exhorting the child to accept his own teaching. In this instruction, the child is exhorted to keep תְּשִׁיחָה and מוֹמָה, which will give him life and security.

The second section of this instruction starts with verse 25. This section (verses 25-31) is a counsel or lesson to a son. It consists of a series of six negative admonitions expressed in the jussive preceded by אַל. In this instruction, a son is admonished to be a good neighbour. Verse 26, which is introduced by כִּי, serves as a motive clause of the admonition given in verse 25. Verse 32 is also

introduced by כִּי, which expresses a motive clause. This motive clause serves as a motivation for heeding instructions in verses 27-31.

Verses 33-35 summarise the fate of the righteous and the wicked. God shows favour and honour to the righteous, to the humble and to the wise, whereas his curse is on the wicked, fools and scorners. Therefore, verses 33-35 serve as a conclusion of the whole instruction.

3.4.5 Proverbs 4:1-9

Proverbs 4:1-9 is a unit. This instruction in its present form is delimited by the instructions that immediately precede (Proverbs 3:21-35) and follow it (Proverbs 4:10-19) (Whybray, 1994:21). The introduction (verses 1-3) follows the pattern of introductions found elsewhere. The instruction begins with a call to pay attention to the father's teaching. The call, contrary to other introductions, is not directed to a "son" but to the "sons". With this kind of introduction, it is presumed that the use of the plural shows that the "father" refers here to the professional teacher in a school (Whybray, 1994:76). The context of the instruction, in which a mother is mentioned, and the grandfather's teaching is passed on to the child, suggests nothing else but the home as the setting of the instruction.

The second section of the instruction is characterised by the father's reminiscence of his own education. He uses the lesson that he received from his father as an instruction to his son. Garrett notes that this section can be divided into two, verses 4-5, in which the father's words are highlighted as the objects of the son's search, and verses 6, 8-9, in which the father's words are no longer mentioned and wisdom itself becomes an active agent (Garrett, 1993:60).

Verse 9 concludes this instruction by pointing out the consequences of embracing wisdom and the father's instruction. From this instruction, we learn that the father (and mother) has the most profound responsibility and opportunity to lead a young man in the right way. No other person, either a teacher or pastor, can implore the young man to do what is right with the depth of love and concern displayed in the instruction (Garrett, 1993:86). This instruction also shows us the importance of wisdom in the life of the family. The family that would survive for

generations is the family that embraces wisdom. If the way of wisdom were rejected, the results will be disastrous for the family.

3.4.6 Proverbs 4:10-19

Proverbs 4:10-19 shows all characteristics of being an instruction. Toy (1899:90-91) defines it as a separate discourse, consisting of an exhortation to obey the sage's instruction (verses 10-13), and to avoid the way of the wicked in view of their character (verses 14-17), with a description of the path of the righteous and the wicked (verses 18-19). This instruction is delimited by the previous and the following instructions. It is preceded by 4:1-9 and followed by 4:20-27. The instruction consists of three main sections: verses 10-13 (introduction), verses 14-17 (lesson) and verses 18-19 (general conclusion) (Clifford, 1999:63).

In the introduction, a son is summoned to accept the words of his father and to walk in his father's path. The result of the acceptance of the teaching of the parent is a long and healthy life. The lesson singles out the path of the wicked as something to be avoided at all costs (verses 14-15) and describes the wicked as people devoted to harm their neighbour (verses 16-17). Their greatest satisfaction is their making others fall. In verse 17 a child is given a motivation for avoiding the wicked in his company. They are in danger of sudden retribution; they form a doomed group (Clifford, 1999:64). Verses 18-19 conclude the instruction by describing the paths of the righteous and the wicked.

3.4.7 Proverbs 4:20-27

Proverbs 4:20-27 is the seventh instruction. It has the basic characteristics of an instruction. It is a unit. It is preceded by Proverbs 4:10-19, which is a well-structured instruction, and it is followed by Proverbs 5, which is also an instruction in itself. It has a simple structure. Verses 20-22 form an introduction, in which the son is summoned to total attention and concentration on the father's words. The introduction consists of a call to the son, which is introduced by imperatives, and the motive clause, which is, introduced in verse 22 by כִּי. The father's instructions are life and a healing to those who embrace them.

Verses 23-27 form part of the main section, which is parental counsel to a child. The teaching consists of five admonitions. In verse 23, a son is admonished to keep his heart with all vigilance because man's heart is his life, prosperity and health (Murphy, 1998:28). McKane (1970:310) explains the importance of keeping heart as follows, "It is in the heart that teaching is retained, revitalized and so assimilated that it belongs to a man as his inalienable possession. So the mind is a first charge on vigilance; it is the fountain-head from which issue vitalizing and fructifying springs."²¹

Thus all other sense organs such as eyes, ears, mouth, feet and hands are affected by what is in the heart. All other organs enable the child to express the teaching contained in the heart.

Unlike other instructions in Proverbs 1-9, this instruction does not have a conclusion. Whybray (1994:81) views the absence of a conclusion as a confirmation of the view that this instruction was originally an independent one, and there are no expansions.

Proverbs 4:20-27 is concerned not simply with external actions but with the inner disposition from which external action springs and which determines the whole direction of one's life. This instruction is so important in this research, because a responsible parent should strive to win the child's heart.

3.4.8 Proverbs 5:1-23

There is general commentators' agreement that Proverbs 5:1-23 is a fully-fledged instruction, like other instruction in Proverbs 1-9 (McKane, 1970:311). It has a thematic unity. McKane (1970:312) says, "The chapter is dominated by a single theme and it should not be supposed that the division into sections is anything more than a convenience." It takes up the theme that was announced in Proverbs 2:16-19, and recurs in 6:20-35 and 7:1-27.

²¹ McKane translates לב with "mind" instead of "heart". This translation is acceptable, because לב was never used here to denote a physical organ, but as the intellectual and ethical centre. Fabry (1995:412) defines this concept as follows: The *leb* functions in all dimensions of human existence and is used as a term for all the aspects of a person: vital, affective, noetic and volutative.

Verses 1-2 are an introduction in which a child is exhorted to give ear to his father's understanding and knowledge. In other instructions with the same theme (2:16-19; 6:20-35; 7:1-2), an introduction is immediately followed by a verse that introduces a theme asserting that the instruction about to be given will save the son from the strange woman (Whybray, 1994:84). This is not the case with this instruction. It immediately jumps from the introduction to the main theme. However, verses 12 and 13 imply that discipline and reproof from the instructors could save the son from a strange woman.

The main section of the instruction is introduced by a description of זרה. She is described as a deadly threat (verses 3-6). She is someone other than the man's wife. Relationship to זרה results in anguish, disillusionment and emotional and even physical death. The son is then by means of formal instructions (verses 7-14) admonished to avoid her or face a deadly end. Verse 7 is not the beginning of the new instruction, but the continuation of the same instruction with the same theme. The repetition of the call to the sons in verse 7 appears to be an emphasis made by the parent in which he shows his seriousness with the instruction he is giving to his son. The admonition gathers strength in verses 15-20 by urging the delights of fidelity to one's own wife. The child is here advised to devote himself to the love of his own wife.

Verses 20-23 form a suitable conclusion to the poem. The universal supervision of God is cited as a general reason for carefulness in conduct. The man who indulges in adultery will stagger to his own destruction.

3.4.9 Proverbs 6:1-19

Commentators of Proverbs 1-9 agree that Proverbs 6:1-19 does not have the features of an instruction (Whybray, 1994:48-49). Its position disrupts the theme that starts in Chapter 5 and continues in 6:20-35. Toy (1899:119) says, "The first half consists of four brief sections wholly different in style from the rest of this division (chapters 1-9). In tone, these closely resemble 22:17 – 24:34 and 30:11-31, with which they obviously belong. Since they interrupt the course of thought in chapters 1-9, it is not likely that they were here inserted by the author of the

division". Toy does not accept that Proverbs 6:1-19 forms part of the instruction based on its style, tone and its theme. McKane follows Toy's line of thinking. However, he was not quite certain of this position. He argues, "The opening verses (verses 1-5) are emphatically instruction and are dominated by imperatives" (McKane, 1970:320). However, Whybray (1994:49-50) argues that verses 1-5 bear a superficial resemblance to the instructions, but is probably instructional in the same way as some of the proverbs in Proverbs 10-29. Whybray's position is unacceptable because proverbs in Proverbs 10-29 are not directly addressed to a "son" as it is the case with Proverbs 6:1-19. Although there are differences in tone and style, Proverbs 6:1-19 contains a theme that is relevant and crucial in the upbringing of a child. It is, therefore, logical to accept its present position as part of instructions in Proverbs 1-9.

Proverbs 6:1-19 consists of four brief units: verses 1-5; 6-11; 12-15; 16-19. Verses 1-5 opens with בְּנִי, which is immediately followed by a conditional clause, and it is not followed by imperatives that urge the hearer to keep the father's words. The father is pleading with his son to avoid standing surety for someone outside the family. Verses 6-11 starts with a new theme, which is unrelated to the theme in verses 1-5. Animal behaviour is used here as a model to be imitated by the son. It is a call to the lazy persons to stir them to activity (Whybray, 1994:50). Laziness leads to inescapable poverty and ruin. The son is urged to learn from ants, which are models of diligence. They work very hard in spite of having no taskmaster. This section has to do with a robust work ethic, which should form part of the child's upbringing.

Verses 12-15 come up with another theme. This section gives us a description of a wicked man and the disaster that will fall upon him. The verses describe the wicked person, in his essence (verse 12a), demeanour (verses 12b-13), inner life (verse 14a), effect upon society (verse 14b) and destiny (verse 15) (Clifford, 1999:76). אֶדְוֶם קָלִיעַל is someone who works to undermine social and personal relationships for his own benefit. This person does not have a successful conclusion. He will be broken beyond healing. This is a model that a child is

urged to avoid in his life. This is also an important lesson in the upbringing of a child.

Verses 16-19 come up with various types of anti-social behaviours that are hateful to Yahweh. They are contrary to proper religion. A child is urged to avoid them. These behaviours include pride, deceitfulness and a violent character. These behaviours break bonds of friendship and promote the decay of public justice. The community is then led to chaos.

3.4.10 Proverbs 6:20-35

Scholars agree that Proverbs 6:20-35 shows all features that belong to the instruction. Referring to Proverbs 6:20-35, Toy (1899:132) says, "We here return to the material proper to this division (chapters 1-9)". Proverbs 6:20-35 continues with the theme of adulterer that was raised in chapter five. This instruction in Proverbs 6:20-35 is a unit. It is preceded by 6:1-19, which does show common characteristics of an instruction, and it is followed by Proverbs 7:1-27, which reveals features of being a unit.

Verses 20-23 are the introduction of this instruction. It has all the features that introductions of other instructions possess. The child is exhorted to keep his father's commandments and not to forsake his mother's teaching. Verses 23-24 are the motive clause, which is introduced in verse 23 by כִּי. The child is motivated to heed his parents' teaching, because they will light his path and protect him from an adulterous affair.

In the main section of the instruction, a child is warned against an affair with a married woman. The penalty for such behaviour is not death, as in the other instructions, but financial ruin, dishonour and physical violence inflicted by the wronged husband (Murphy, 1994:25). Verses 32-35 may also serve as a conclusion of our instruction. These verses expose the fate of an adulterer; the ruin that the adulterer brings on himself.

3.4.11 Proverbs 7:1-27

This is the last parental instruction in Proverbs 1-9. It is also the fourth of five explicit warnings against the forbidden woman. The other three are Proverbs 2:16-19, Chapter 5 and 6:20-35. Proverbs 7:1-27 exhibits the conventional characteristics of an instruction. Form analysis shows that Proverbs 7:1-27 consists of three sections: introduction (verses 1-5), lesson (verses 6-23) and conclusion (verses 24-27) (Toy, 1899:144; McKane, 1970:332; Murphy, 1998:42).

Verses 1-5 are an introduction to this instruction. The son is urged to keep his father's commands. The son is again urged to write his father's instruction in his heart. The son has to internalise his father's teaching. The teaching should be internal, part of the son's character and personality, rather than an external requirement (Garrett, 1993:102). The son is motivated to accept his father's teaching, because it will preserve him from the loose woman.

Verses 6-23 form the body of the instruction. This section has the character of an eyewitness report, and this suggests that it serves as a typical example story to boost the instruction of the father (Murphy, 1998:42). It details the description of the seductive arts of the adulteress and of their fatal result. Garrett (1993:104) describes her seductive acts and their consequences:

She uses the pretext of religious devotion in order to assuage the young man's conscience about going to her. Having dealt with his moral qualms, she devotes the rest of her seduction to a promise of a night of luxurious love-making (verses 15-20). At last, the man yields. He is both docile, like the ox going to slaughter, and stupid, like a deer or bird going into a trap (verses 21-23). He is about to pay the full fee for her services - his life.

This section opens our eyes to the importance of experiential knowledge in the upbringing of children.

Verses 24-27 conclude the instruction. The father concludes his instruction by urging his son to avoid the woman's way that leads to *sheol*, the place of the dead.

3.5 THE PURPOSE OF THE INSTRUCTION GENRE IN PROVERBS 1-9

Form and literary analysis of the text clearly shows that the text is about the relationship between a parent and a son. It has to do with the father-son relationship, in which teaching-learning activity is taking place. In this relationship, a son is urged to adhere to his father's commandments and discipline. A parent gives his instructions in a second-person address to a "son" or "sons". This indicates a close relationship and love that exist between a parent and a child. His instructions are described as wisdom, which a child has to strive very hard in order to find in this life, because they determine the course of his life.

The instruction genre contains themes that indicate that these instructions have to do with the life of a child that is growing in the household. A child is warned against peer-group pressure that might entice him to join gang members, whose purpose is to destroy other people's lives in the community. In order to become a responsible community member, he is to seek wisdom like a silver or hidden treasure. Wisdom will teach a child the way of righteousness, equity and justice. It will also save him from the loose woman (2:1-22), who leads her victims to Sheol, and from the way of the wicked, who will not live long. A parent's instructions teach a child not to rely on his sight, but to rely and trust in the Lord. This implies that his relationship to Yahweh is essential for his success and prosperity in life. His relationship to Yahweh is a basis upon which a child can build a good relationship with his neighbours. In Proverbs 4:20-27, a father's instructions are described as a healing to all flesh. This means that if a son adheres to the teaching of his father or mother, he will save himself from several social ills that can affect his life. The father's instruction will help him to look after his heart and to be faithful to the wife of his youth. Estes (1997:69) says, "The Hebrews viewed the heart as the centre of the rational and emotional life. Because the heart controls all of life, it is the key to personal success or failure."

Consequently, the teacher challenges the son to guard it carefully, lest his whole life be ruined. The heart, representative of the character, inevitably affects the outcome of the total person.”

Therefore, we may conclude together with Bergant (1997:93) that the instruction genre is a general motivation urging compliance to the accepted mores and customs of the society.²² The young child is admonished to listen to his elders and to pattern his life after theirs. Success and prosperity are placed before him as incentives to conform; the threat of failure and deprivation is meant to deter him from unacceptable behaviour. Estes (1997:86) views the ultimate purpose of the instruction genre as the impartation of the knowledge of Yahweh, which is a supreme goal that draws all of education and life together into an integrated whole.

The instruction genre in Proverbs 1-9 also develops a doctrine of the importance of the household as a place of piety and education. Both parents are involved in this kind of education in the household. This is confirmed by the fact that both mother and father are mentioned in the instruction genre as people who are responsible for child-rearing. Hence, the household is regarded in this genre as the most basic and primary functioning unit of the community (Clements, 1992:126). Thus, we learn from the instruction genre how covenant households can raise their children for their covenant God.

3.6 CONCLUSION

Based on the form and literary analysis of our text, we have confirmed what other scholars have said about Proverbs 1-9. We discovered that Proverbs 1-9 is composed of two literary forms, i.e., the instruction genre and the wisdom poem. The two are closely related, though distinct. The instruction genre is composed of parental instructions, in which a child is urged to accept the way of wisdom. A

²² Instruction's aim cannot be limited to compliance to mores and customs of the society. Instructions clearly state that one's life in the community has to do with his relation with Yahweh. Proverbs 1:7 says: "The fear of Yahweh is the beginning of knowledge". It can, therefore, be mentioned that the main aim of instructions in Proverbs 1-9 is to lead a child to an inward relationship with God, which will enable him to live within the creation order. Yahweh's way of wisdom leads to well-being, success, stability, wealth, health, honour and satisfaction.

child's success in life depends on his acceptance of the commandments and discipline of his parents, which is described as wisdom in Proverbs 1-9.

CHAPTER 4

EXEGESIS OF PARENTAL INSTRUCTIONS IN PROVERBS 1-9

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The exegetical study of the text is an important part of this study, without which the meaning of our text cannot be properly and relevantly applied to today's context. An exegetical study is an attempt to determine the meaning of the historical text. By historical text, we mean that we are dealing with text that has been dealt with and studied previously. There is also a history in the text itself, i.e., the situation or situations described in the text itself. This means that the text was written in a certain environment. An exegesis has to appreciate this nature of the text so that it may benefit from the insights from the historical analysis of the text. However, it is not an easy task to date the book of Proverbs, as it appears to be a collection of different writings. We cannot say much about the identities and dates of the composers and editors of the book (Longman III, 2006:26). Thus, it will not be easy to elaborate on the environment in which the text originated. This is due to the nature of the pericope under discussion. The meaning of the historical text clarifies and enriches how the text should be understood and applied in a specific context. Steck (1998:4) argues that historical exegesis corrects arbitrary exploitation of the text, indicates the central subject matter of the text and exposes the text's particular impulses, which the present application needs. Thus, it can be concluded that the present understanding and application of our text is not viable apart from the historical understanding of the text.

The syntactical-theological method²³ of exegesis will be followed in the quest for the meaning of the text. This implies that the extant original Hebrew text is of the

²³ In this method the historical and grammatical analysis of the text is followed by a study of its meaning that shows its theological relevance (Kaiser, 1994:33). Two questions that are important in this analysis are the following: What it meant? What it means? The text is to be interpreted within its own immediate context as well as the broader context (Virkler, 1981:117).

utmost importance in our understanding and application of Proverbs 1-9. A syntactical-theological analysis of the text will form the core of this chapter. From this analysis, there will be a quest for the theological meaning of the text. The study is not merely interested in displaying the magnitude of the syntactical analysis of the text, but is more interested in what the text meant then and also what it means now. Textual-critical remarks will be considered, but will be followed where it is evident that there is a distortion in the presentation of the original text.

The following steps will be followed in this chapter: The first step is the presentation of the Hebrew text of each parental instruction. It will not be presented on a verse basis; the text of the entire instruction will be presented. Secondly will follow a structural analysis of the parental instructions. This will be a schematic presentation of the structural analysis done in the previous chapter (Chapter 3). This approach will enable the reader to easily compare the Hebrew text and its English translation, and then follow the syntactical-theological analysis of the instruction genre in Proverbs 1-9. Thirdly, the English translation²⁴ will follow the schematic presentation of the structure of the parental instruction. Translation of the text will be done together with the explanation of the textual-critical remarks where necessary. Textual-critical remarks that have serious implication on the meaning of the text will be discussed. The fourth step is the syntactical-theological analysis of the text. Important concepts and phrases will be explicated to determine the meaning of the text. Due to the nature of this thesis, not all words in the parental instructions will be analysed. We will mainly concentrate on the words and phrases that have direct bearing on our theme. The grammar of the relevant words and phrases will be analysed. We will also indicate how the words and phrases have been used in other Biblical contexts and how they have been interpreted by different interpreters, and then determine what the word or phrase mean in our own context. Lastly, the syntactical-

²⁴ This will be this researcher's own translation of the Hebrew text as found in the BHS.

theological analysis of each text will be followed by a summary of the instruction analysis. This summary will briefly introduce us to the message of a particular parental instruction.

4.2 EXEGESIS OF THE RELEVANT TEXTS

4.2.1 Instruction I: Proverbs 1:8-19

4.2.1.1 Hebrew text of Proverbs 1:8-19

8 שְׁמַע בְּנִי מוֹסֵר אָבִיךָ וְאֶל־תַּפְשׁ תּוֹרַת אִמֶּךָ:

9 כִּי לִוִּית חֵן הֵם לְרֹאשֶׁךָ וְעֲנָקִים לְגִרְגְּרֹתֶיךָ:

10 בְּנִי אִם־יִפְתּוּךָ חֲטָאִים אֶל־תֵּבֵא:

11 אִם־יֹאמְרוּ לָכֹה אֶתָּנוּ נִאֲרָבָה לָדָם נִצְפְּנָה לְנָקִי חָנָם:

12 וּבְלָעֵם כְּשֹׂאוֹל חַיִּים וְתַמִּימִים כִּי־וֹרְדֵי בּוֹר:

13 כָּל־חֹן יִקָּר גִּמְצָא גִמְלָא בְּתִינוּ שָׁלַל:

14 גּוֹרְלֶךָ תִּפְּיֵל בְּתוֹכֵנוּ כִּי־ס אֶחָד יִהְיֶה לְכָלֵנוּ:

15 בְּנִי אֶל־תִּלְךָ בְּדֶרֶךְ אֶתָּם מִנֵּעַ רִגְלֶךָ מִנְּתִיבָתָם:

16 כִּי רִגְלֵיהֶם לָכֹעַ יִרְוּצוּ וַיִּמָּהְרוּ לְשֹׁפְךְ־דָּם:

17 כִּי־חָנָם מִזֹּרֶה הִרְשֵׁת בְּעֵינֵי כָל־בַּעַל כָּנָף:

18 וְהֵם לְדָמָם יֶאֱרָבוּ יִצְפְּנוּ לְנִפְשֵׁתָם:

19 כֵּן אֲרָחוֹת כָּל־בָּצֵעַ בָּצֵעַ אֶת־נַפְשׁ בְּעָלָיו יִקַּח: פ

4.2.1.2 *Schematic presentation of the structure of Proverbs 1:8-19*

- I. Introduction: Verses 8-9: Call to a son (v.8)
Motivation for a call (v.9)
- II. Lesson: Verses 10-18: Resist the gang's temptation.
 - a. Summary statement (v.10)
 - b. Gangs/sinners' temptation (vv.11-14)
 - c. Father's warning (vv.15-18)
- III. Conclusion: Verse 19²⁵

4.2.1.3 *English translation of the Hebrew text of Proverbs 1:8-19*

The researcher will give an English translation of every Hebrew text that will be exegeted in this chapter. This will be his literal translation of the text, which will be compared to other translations in considering meanings of the words and phrases. The translation of the Hebrew text connects the exegesis and the text so that the findings of the exegesis should be based on the text itself.

(8). Hear, o my son, the discipline of your father! And do not forsake the teaching of your mother.

(9). For they are a wreath of favour upon your head and necklaces on your neck.

(10). My son, if sinners entice you, do not consent.

(11). If they say, come with us, let us lie in wait for blood, let us ambush the innocent for naught.

(12). Let us swallow them alive like *sheol*, and completely like those who go down to the pit,

(13). We will find all precious goods; we will fill our houses with spoil.

²⁵ Cf. p. 50-51.

(14). You throw your lot among us; it will become one purse for all of us.

(15). My son, do not walk in the way with them, withhold your foot from their path.

(16). For their feet run to evil, and they make haste to shed blood.

(17). For in vain a net is spread before the sight of any bird.

(18). But these men lie in wait for their own blood; they hide for their own lives.

(19). Thus are the ways of all who make large profit; it takes the life of its possessor.

4.2.1.4 Grammatical-theological analysis of Proverbs 1:8-19

The analysis will be done verse by verse and important words and phrases will be explicated.

מוֹסֵר in verse 8 is related to the verb יָסַר which means “to chasten, correct, instruct” (Koehler *et al.*, 1985:387). It has a sense of communicating knowledge in order to shape specific conduct. It is usually addressed to a child (Branson, 1990:129). In noun form it can be translated as “chastisement, correction, learning or discipline” (Brown *et al.*, 1906:416). It denotes correction that results in education (Harris *et al.*, 1980:386). This word has been widely used in the Old Testament, thirty-six times in the book of Proverbs (Harris *et al.*, 1980:387). In the Pentateuch, it denotes God’s corrective discipline that seeks the reformation of people (Lev. 26:18, 28; Deut. 11: 2). מוֹסֵר as used here refers to a God- centred way of life that parents are to instil in the hearts of their children (Harris *et al.*, 1980:387). It has to do with learning by exhortation and example (Merrill, 1996:480). As מוֹסֵר and תּוֹכָה are used together in verse 8, which is the introduction to the instruction, they refer to the entire instruction in verses 8-19. This is the parental teaching that the son is encouraged not to forsake and to which he should give heed (Keil, 1989:60; Toy, 1899:14).

וַיַּעַל הַטֵּשׁ is a *qal* imperfect of the verb נָטַשׁ, which means “to leave, abandon” (Koehler *et al.*, 1985:613-614). When the imperfect tense is negated by לֹא, it

expresses a negative imperative, which is an immediate, specific command (Gesenius, 1910:321; Lambdin, 1971:114). נָטַשׁ means to abandon or to leave intentionally. This is how it was used in Proverbs 17:14 (Koehler *et al.*, 1985:614). It has been used in the Old Testament describing God forsaking or casting off his people (Deut. 35:15; Is. 2:6). As it is used here in parallel with שָׁמַע, it gives us the idea that young men are to retain the parental instructions in their hearts. They are to take them seriously and live in obedience to what their parents say, otherwise the youth will ruin their lives and become an element of corruption to fester in the heart of society (Arnot, 1978:25).

Verse 9 is closely linked to verse 8. It is introduced by the particle כִּי, which introduces a motive clause (Williams, 1976:89). Verse 9 is the motivation of the instruction given in verse 8. לָנֶיִת חַן means “wreath of favour”, or “a fair garland” (Brown *et al.*, 1906:531). הֵם refers back to מוֹסֵר and תּוֹרָה in verse 8. Parental instructions are a wreath of favour (Brown *et al.*, 1906:531). The metaphor signifies the benefits of learning and thus bolsters the exhortation to pursue and retain wisdom (Fox, 2000:83). Parental instructions are essential for the wellbeing of the young person.²⁶ They decorate his life and promote the attractiveness of his character (McKane, 1970:268).

In verse 10, בְּנִי is repeated, and there is emphasis upon this word (Waltke, 2004:189). It is in a vocative form. The emphasis suggests the earnestness of parental communication. אֲזַם is an adverb that introduces a conditional clause (Williams, 1976:74). It is used with the piel imperfect יִפְתּוֹךְ in the protasis to express condition (Gesenius, 1910:495). Thus, verse 10 is a prohibition in two parts: verse 10a is the protasis, and verse 10b the apodosis (Garrett, 1993:69). יִפְתּוֹךְ is piel imperfect third person plural with second person masculine singular suffix. The verbal root is פִּתַּח, which means “to seduce, entice, and deceive” (Brown *et al.*, 1906:834). The meaning of this verb is “to be open, spacious,

²⁶ Cf. footnote 13, p. 24.

wide”, and it is used here in relation to immaturity and simplicity of one who is open to all kinds of enticement, not having developed a discriminating judgement as to what is right or wrong (Harris *et al.*, 1980:742). חַטָּאִים means “sinners”. The word describes a habitual sinner that is subject to punishment because of his or her practices (Fox, 2000:85). Keil and Delitzsch (1989:60) define the nominal pattern of this word as signifying men to whom sin has become a habit, thus vicious and wicked. Fox (2000:85) defines these people as habitual, dyed-in-the-wool offenders, criminals and not occasional sinners.

In verse 11, נִצְרָה is a *qal* cohortative first person common plural. It is in cohortative form, which expresses a sense of persuasion; a strong desire of the speaker (Gesenius, 1910:130; Waltke, 1990:173). It is from the verbal root אָרַב which means “to lie in wait for” (Koehler *et al.*, 1985:82). The enemies of the pious are frequently described as those who “lurk”; who lie in wait for the unsuspecting (cf. Ps. 10:9; 59:3). This verb also describes the action of criminals before they strike (cf. 1 Sam. 22:8, 13). The criminals are planning to do these sinful things to people who are innocent, and they are urging the young person to join them. The father warns his son against such actions.

In verse 12, נִבְלָעַם is from the verbal root בָּלַע, which means “to swallow down, to engulf” (Koehler *et al.*, 1985:130). It is frequently used as a symbol of destruction and ruin (cf. Lam. 2:2, 5, 8). The antecedent of the suffix “them” refers back to נָקִי (innocent man) in verse 11. Though the “innocent man” is in the singular; the suffix is resumed by the plural תְּמִימִים. תְּמִימִים are the same as נָקִי in verse 11. They are the morally innocent, not the physically sound (Fox, 2000:86-87). שְׁאוֹל is a place beneath the earth’s surface to which people descend at death (Merril, 1997:6). *Sheol* is an abode of the dead, good and bad, a cheerless place whose citizens have no occupation and who have no relation with Yahweh (Wachter, 2004:246). Descent to *sheol* is a misfortune, because man is deprived of his happiness (Toy, 1899:15-16). The intentions of the sinners, which are to be avoided by the young person, are to bring unhappiness and misfortune to innocent people; to hurt those who are supposed to be protected.

הון in verse 13 is a masculine singular noun that means “wealth, plenty” (Koehler *et al.*, 1985:228). The meaning of the noun is “goods” or “substance” in sufficient quantity to be considered “riches” or “wealth” (Harris *et al.*, 1980:213). Wealth is usually considered as something necessary to make life easy (Domeris, 1997c:1020). However, in the Old Testament, material wealth is accompanied by two dangers, i.e., the danger of failing to acknowledge that the source of wealth is God (Deut. 8:17-18) and also the danger of trusting in riches (Ps. 52:7). The latter is the danger facing the robbers in our text. The wealth here is described by an adjective יקר. Its meaning conveys the idea of “heavy”, “honour” and “dignity”. Something is considered יקר either because of its intrinsic worth or its rarity (Harris *et al.*, 1980:398). The preciousness of the wealth is further emphasised by the verb מצא, which describes the result that came after some time of searching (Grisanti, 1997:1061). Criminals think that they will get something that will make their lives easier.

Verse 14 contains a promise from the gang to the young person that the proceeds of the proposed robberies will not be kept by an individual, but will be distributed fairly among all members. The lot will be counted as property common to the gang and gathered into one purse before being distributed to individuals (Whybray, 1994:40). The young person then becomes a partner and full participant in their guilt. He will be cemented in the group, and his lips will be sealed so that he cannot inform on them without implicating himself (Fox, 2000:87).

In verse 15, the father issues a very solemn warning to his son that he should not walk in their (criminals) way. He should not listen to their smooth words. The reason for this stern warning to the young person is given in verse 16.²⁷ He should not listen to their call, because they are out to shed blood.

²⁷ Verse 16 is lacking in some manuscripts of the Septuagint. It is considered a later addition to the MT. This cannot be denied, but the verse works well in the context and reinforces the message of the passage. It explains verse 17, which is not easy to interpret.

Various commentators like Toy (1899:17-18) and Murphy (1998:10) concur as to the obscurity of verse 17. It is not only difficult to translate from the Hebrew text, but even more because of its interpretation. Toy (1899:17) connects verse 17 to verse 18. He sees verse 17 as an introductory statement to verse 18, and the meaning of verse 17 is fixed by its relation to verse 18. However, Murphy (1998:10) connects verse 17 to both verses 16 and 18. He argues that it is a kind of parenthetical remark in the context of sinners hastening to evil (verse 6) and to self-destruction (verse 18). The ambiguity of the verse also rests on its meaning and reference. Two meanings are possible. The trap fails because the bird sees it and avoids it, or the bird sees the net and foolishly plunges into it. This brings us to the question: to whom is the verse addressed? There is consensus among scholars that the verse is addressed to the wicked or murderers mentioned in verses 16 and 18, and not to the son (Murphy, 1998:10; Waltke, 2004:195). Whybray (1994:41) outlines the interpretation of verse 17 as follows. It is “the murderers who, even though they must know according to generally received wisdom that ‘sinners’ come to a bad end, go ahead and, like the stupid bird are caught”. These words continue to instil in the heart of the young person the fear of following in the footsteps of the wicked, because they will be trapped like a stupid bird that foolishly rushes to its own destruction.

In verse 18, יִאָרְבוּ is a *qal* imperfect third person masculine plural from the verb אָרַב which means “lie in wait for”, “to lie in ambush” (Brown *et al.*, 1906:70). The word is used in describing the action of a person who is going to attack another person unaware (Konkel, 1997:490). יִצְפֹּנוּ is from the root צָפַן, which means “to hide, store up, treasure” (Brown *et al.*, 1906:860). It means to conceal something with a definite purpose, either for protection or with a sinister intention (Harris *et al.*, 1980:774). It is used here for a sinister intention as in verse 11. The wicked hide to put the lives of other people in danger, but in turn they are putting their own lives in danger.

The demonstrative adjective masculine plural הֵם; third masculine suffixes with the words דָּם and נַפְשָׁם refers back to הַפְּעָאִים in verse 10. The intention of the wicked is to

spill the blood of their victims. But in verse 18 there is an irony. The designs of the wicked are turned against them; their own evil brings them down. Toy (1899:18) defines this irony as follows: "Their criminal procedure begun for their profit turns out to be a plot against themselves; they overreach themselves and become the executors of their own doom." This is also well said in 2 Peter 2:3: "In their greed these teachers will exploit you with stories they have made up. Their condemnation has long been hanging over them, and their destruction has not been sleeping." Through these words, the parent is warning his child that being part of the wicked plans, one is plotting against one's own life. Thus, he is encouraged to remain committed to instructions from his parents, because they have the promise of a good future life.

Verse 19 is nothing else but an emphasis of verse 18. It confirms that those who make large profits at the expense of a human life are doing it at their own peril. The young person is advised to love human life more than money. If human life is taken for money sake, it is, therefore, the price of blood. The gain is filthy. In fact robbery and murder bring destruction on the perpetrators, and they must therefore be avoided (Waltke, 2004:197).

4.2.1.5 Brief summary of Proverbs 1:8-19

This instruction confronts us with the truth that children, as they grow up, are to make decisions on the direction that their lives are to take. However, a parent realises that his son is a *נער* i.e. young, inexperienced and easily seduced. He is faced with temptations and traps in the choice he has to make. There are evil men that are working very hard to win his companionship. They want to work with him to fulfil their own sinful intentions in life. Thus, a parent presents this instruction to his son for the development of his ethical character and to foster the right moral stance in the face of inducements to sin. A parent warns his son that if he joins sinners, he is to be certain of his destruction. Alternatively, his son is to adhere to his instructions, and that will bring honour in his life. Parents are here reminded that their children are faced with various pressures as they grow up, and it is the responsibility of parents to develop a strong ethical character in

their children. Children will then be able to evade sinful enticements from wicked men in life and from their peer group in particular. Parents are, therefore, to know their children in such a way that they can be of assistance in helping the child to face pressures that he or she encounters as he or she grows up. Parents should make time to sit down with their children in order to teach them moral standards.

Two lessons are clear in this instruction: (1). Avoid the wicked, because their ways lead to destruction. (2). Avoid the wicked means of wealth accumulation. In the first lesson, we are reminded of what we read in Psalm 1. Those who walk in the counsel of the wicked have no future. A bright future belongs to the adherents of the law of the Lord. Parents are therefore to warn them of the dangers that they face in life. By doing so, they will give their children weapons to avoid the wicked and their enticements.

In the second lesson, we are reminded that there are proper and improper ways of wealth accumulation. Parents are to instil in their children the will to avoid wicked means of wealth accumulation. What is to be avoided in this instruction is to kill someone in order to grab his wealth. One has to work to accumulate wealth. One has to avoid quick-rich schemes (Proverbs 13:11), corruption, nepotism (Proverbs 15:27) and bribery as a means of wealth accumulation.

4.2.2 Instruction II: Proverbs 2:1-22

4.2.2.1 Hebrew text of Proverbs 2:1-22

2 ¹ בְּנֵי אִם־תִּקַּח אִמְרֵי וּמִצֻּתַי תִּצָּפֶן אֹתָךְ:

2 ² לְהִקְשִׁיב לְחִכְמָה אֲזַנְךָ תִּשָּׂא לִבְךָ לְתַבּוּנָה:

3 ³ כִּי אִם לִבִּינָה תִקְרָא לְתַבּוּנָה תִתֵּן קוֹלְךָ:

4 ⁴ אִם־תִּבְקֶשְׁנָה כַּסְף וְכַמְשֻׁמוֹנִים תִּחְפְּשֶׁנָּה:

5 ⁵ אֲזִי תִבִּין יִרְאֵת יְהוָה וְדַעַת אֱלֹהִים תִּמְצָא:

⁶ כִּי־יִהְיֶה יִתֵּן חֲכָמָה מִפִּי וְדַעַת וְתְבוּנָה:

⁷ וְצִפֵּן לַיִּשְׂרָאֵל תּוֹשָׁיָה מִגֵּן לְהִלְכֵי תָם:

⁸ לִנְצֹר אַרְחוֹת מִשְׁפָּט וְדֶרֶךְ חֲסִידָיו יִשְׁמֹר:

⁹ אִזְ תָּבִין צֶדֶק וּמִשְׁפָּט וּמִיִּשְׂרָאֵל כָּל־מַעְגַּל־טוֹב:

¹⁰ כִּי־תָבוֹא חֲכָמָה בְּלִבְךָ וְדַעַת לִנְפֹשְׁךָ יִנָּעַם:

¹¹ מִזִּמָּה תִּשְׁמֹר עָלֶיךָ תְבוּנָה תִּנְצֹרֶכָה:

¹² לְהַצִּילְךָ מִדֶּרֶךְ רָע מֵאִישׁ מְדַבֵּר תַּהֲפֹכֹת:

¹³ הַעֲזֹבִים אַרְחוֹת יֵשֶׁר לִלְכֹּת בְּדַרְכֵי־חֹשֶׁךְ:

¹⁴ הַשְׁמַחִים לַעֲשׂוֹת רָע יִגִּילוּ בְּתַהֲפֹכֹת רָע:

¹⁵ אֲשֶׁר אַרְחֲתִיהֶם עֲקָשִׁים וְנִלְוִזִּים בְּמַעְגְלוֹתָם:

¹⁶ לְהַצִּילְךָ מֵאִשָּׁה זָרָה מִנְּכֹרֶיהָ אֲמַרְיָה הַחֲלִיקָה:

¹⁷ הַעֲנֹבֶת אֱלוֹף נְעוּרֶיהָ וְאֶת־בָּרִית אֱלֹהֶיהָ שָׁכַחָה:

¹⁸ כִּי שָׁחָה אֶל־מֹות בֵּיתָהּ וְאֶל־רַפָּאִים מַעְגְלוֹתֶיהָ:

¹⁹ כָּל־בָּאֶיהָ לֹא יִשׁוּבוֹן וְלֹא־יִשְׁיגוּ אַרְחוֹת חַיִּים:

²⁰ לְמַעַן תִּלְךָ בְּדֶרֶךְ טוֹבִים וְאַרְחוֹת צְדִיקִים תִּשְׁמֹר:

²¹ כִּי־יִשְׂרָאֵל יִשְׁכְּנוּ־אֶרֶץ וְתַמִּימִים יִוָּתְרוּ בָּהּ:

4.2.2.2 Schematic presentation of the structure of Proverbs 2:1-22

The structure of Proverbs 2:1-22 is a problematic one. Some commentators view Proverbs 2:1-22 as diffused and unstructured (Fox, 2000:125). The introduction, which is supposed to be very brief, comprises about eleven verses. This is indeed unusual. There are no imperatives in the body of the instruction, as is usual. Verses 1-11 are to be seen as a unit, because they form a conditional clause. Verses 1-4 form an *if* clause (protasis), whereas verses 5-11 form a *then* clause (apodosis) (Clifford, 1999: 46; Garret, 1993:75). This feature cements the unity of verses 1-11.

1. Introduction (1-11)

A. *if* you attend to my teachings (1-4)

B. *then* you will attain true piety (5)

1. *because* it is God who gives wisdom (6)

2. and this will protect you (7-8)

C. *then* you will know the right behaviour (9)

1. *because* you will have received wisdom (10)

2. and this will protect you (11)

II. Body (12-20)

A. *in order* to save you from wicked men (12-15) and

B. *in order* to save you from the wicked woman (16-19)

C. *so that* you will go on the right path (20)

III. Conclusion (21-22): *for that is the salvation of the righteous*²⁸

4.2.2.3 *English translation of the Hebrew text*

1. My son, if you receive my words, and treasure up my commandments with you,
2. Making your ear attentive to wisdom, inclining your heart to understanding,
3. Indeed, if you cry out for insight, you raise your voice to understanding,
4. If you seek it like silver, and search it like a hidden treasure,
5. Then you will understand the fear of Yahweh, and you will find the knowledge of the Lord.
6. For Yahweh gives wisdom, from his mouth (comes) knowledge and understanding.
7. He stores up deliverance for the upright, (he is) a shield to those who walk in integrity.
8. Guarding the paths of justice, and he keeps a way of his saints.
9. Then you will understand righteousness, justice and equity, every good path.²⁹
10. For wisdom will come into your heart, and knowledge will be pleasant to your soul.
11. Discretion will keep over you; understanding will guard you.

²⁸ This design was taken from Fox (2000:125-126). This is not a superficial or a forced design, but is based on the text. The structure of Proverbs 2:1-22 is a problematic one. Some commentators view Proverbs 2:1-22 as diffused and unstructured (Fox, 2000:125). The introduction, which is supposed to be very brief, comprises about eleven verses. This is indeed unusual. There are no imperatives in the body of the instruction, as is usual. Verses 1-11 are to be seen as a unit, because they form a conditional clause. Verses 1-4 are an *if* clause (protasis), whereas verses 5-11 are a *then* clause (apodosis) (Clifford, 1999: 46; Garret, 1993:75). This feature cements the unity of verses 1-11. Cf. P. 51-52.

²⁹ There are several suggestions that the phrase *לִלְמַד וְלִיָּדָה* is to be deleted or amended, because it is alleged not to make sense as it is (Driver, 1951:174). However, the MT is to be maintained, because this phrase serves as an apposition (Fox, 2000:115). Suggestions for emendation are reading Proverbs 1:3 in this verse. This is so for rhythmical reasons (Toy, 1899:39).

12. To save you from the way of evil, from a man who speaks perversity.
13. Those who forsake the way of uprightness, to walk in the ways of darkness.
14. Who rejoice in doing evil, they delight in evil perversity.
15. Whose paths are morally crooked, and they are devious in their paths.
16. To save you from a strange woman; from a foreigner whose words are smooth.
17. Who forsakes a companion of her youth, and she abandoned the covenant of her God
18. For her house is a pit³⁰ to death, and her paths to the shades.
19. All who go to her do not come back, and they do not reach/attain the paths of life.
20. Thus you will walk in the way of good men, and you will keep the paths of the righteous.
21. For the upright will inhabit the land, and the blameless will be spared in it.
22. And the wicked will be cut from the land; and the unfaithful will be rooted out from it.

4.2.2.4 Grammatical-theological analysis of Proverbs 2:1-22

אִם in verse 1 is a hypothetical particle, which introduces the protasis of the conditional clause. This particle is also found in verses 3 and 4. This implies that verses 1-4 form the protasis of the conditional clause, which describes the qualities that the young person has to possess so that he may get wisdom.

In verse 1, the young person is enjoined to receive and to treasure up the teachings and the commandments of the parents. The two verbs that are used

³⁰ Various scholars have noted the difficulty of translating verse 18. Some have proposed various emendations (Toy, 1899), which require considerable changes in the text or questionable grammar. Emerton (1979:157) suggests vowel alterations in the word נִקְמָה as solution to the problem. He suggests that the pointing of נִקְמָה become נִקְמָה meaning "pit". In other words the verb is changed to a noun form, but without any consonantal change. Reading verse 18 together with Proverbs 22:14; 23:27 solidifies this solution.

here, לקח and צפן imply that the young person has to accept the teachings and commandments from his parents as his own. לקח is used by sages and prophets, referring to the taking or not taking of the commandments or instructions (Proverbs 1:3; Jeremiah 5:3) (Els, 1996:816). צפן primarily means to hide or conceal either for good or for something worse (Hill, 1996:840). However, it is usually used in the book of Proverbs, and particularly in this verse referring to the memorisation of the parental instructions. Therefore, for a young person to acquire wisdom, one must be willing to learn to take seriously the parental instructions. Aitken (1986:26), emphasising the fact that the road to wisdom is not an easy one, argues as follows: "Wisdom is an object for earnest quest, a goal for diligent pursuit, the end and prize of a difficult course." The word that was used in verse 1 to describe the words of the parents is מצוה, which means "a precept or commandment". מצוה is always issued by a superior in a position of power, usually by God or the king (2 Kings 18:36) (Harris *et al.*, 1980:757). This implies that the words of the parents are not mere words, but are authoritative, and they are to be obeyed. They are to be treasured up; they are to be heard and remembered. The young person has to possess an attentive ear and a retentive memory. The verb נטה in verse 2, which means "to incline" (Koehler *et al.*, 1985:611), suggests that the young person is to listen obediently to the instruction given by the parent. The young person is also expected to show eagerness to do what he or she is instructed to do. Learning wisdom is to be characterised by deep reflection and hard thinking on the part of the young person.

Verses 3 and 4 also indicate that the young person has to be willing to work hard, like a miner of silver or gold. He must yearn for wisdom in a way analogous to that of the supplicant pleading to God or the king for deliverance from trouble (Garrett, 1993:75). This is made clear by the verb that has been used in verse 4, בקש whose meaning does not refer to a mere seeking, but to a seeking with the intention to find what is sought after (Harris *et al.*, 1980:126). It describes the activity that has in view the finding of an object that really exists or that is thought to exist (Wagner, 1990:229). The noun (the masculine plural of the root ממשך) in

verse 4 means “a hidden treasure” (Koehler *et al.*, 1985:517). It is used here to portray the preciousness of the parental instruction, which the young person seriously has to seek.

In conclusion, for the young person to pluck the fruits of wisdom, he or she has to work hard in embracing wisdom. There should be commitment and dedication on his or her part in the process of learning wisdom.

The main clause of the conditional sentence is introduced by *אֲנִי* in verse 5. Here we are introduced to the rewards that will follow the young person's dedication to the search for wisdom.

The first reward in verse 5a is expressed in this phrase *תִּבְיִן יִרְאֵת יְהוָה*. *תִּבְיִן* is a *qal* imperfect second person masculine singular from the root *בִּין*, which means “to understand” (Fretheim, 1997:652). There are two well-known Hebrew words that can be translated as “to understand”, *בִּין* and *יָדַע*. The two verbs can be distinguished from each other, but they can also be synonymous. *בִּין* can be used to refer to the insight that comes from knowing (Fretheim, 1997:652). It refers to knowledge, which is superior to the mere gathering of data. It refers to the power of judgment and perceptive insight and is demonstrated in the use of knowledge. (Harris *et al.*, 1980:103). On the other hand, *יָדַע* merely describes the process whereby one gains knowledge. What the young person will understand in this case is *יִרְאֵת יְהוָה*. This phrase is repeated several times in the book of Proverbs, e.g., Proverbs 1:7; 9:10. It is, in fact, regarded as the motto of the entire book (Fox, 2000:67). Fear of Yahweh implies a life of humble obedience to God. Thus, in fear of Yahweh one is to hate evil, which is related to piety and righteous living. The young person who devotes himself to the teachings of the parents will be able to judge between right and wrong. The second reward is the finding of *דַּעַת אֱלֹהִים*, which is in parallel with *יִרְאֵת יְהוָה*. Knowledge of God implies a right relationship with God. Where there is knowledge of God, God is confessed and obeyed as God. There is a commitment to his will (Clifford, 1999:47).

כי in verse 6 introduces a motive clause in which the young person is motivated that his or her diligent search for wisdom will be rewarded. כי introduces both the argumentation and explanation for the son to know the Lord (Waltke, 2004:223). The position of יהוה in verse 6 indicates an emphasis on the word. Verses 6 and 7 clearly indicate that Yahweh is the giver of that which the young person is urged to seek (Whybray, 1994:52). It is not solely his efforts and commitment that will bring wisdom in his life; wisdom is a gift from the Lord.

In verse 7 God is described as a shield to הַם. לְהִלָּכִי הֵם is a masculine noun from the root תָּמַם, which means “to be complete” (Koehler *et al.*, 1985:1032). The noun form is mostly translated as “integrity” or “completeness”. It is used here with the participial form of the verb הִלֵּךְ which means “to walk”. Their combination indicates blameless or innocent conduct (Ps. 26:1; Prov. 28:6). The phrase is used here in parallel with יִשְׁרָיִם, which means “righteous”, and it describes the innermost desire of living in harmony with God and man (Toy, 1899:360). We can, therefore, conclude that wisdom calls all those who possess it to live in communion with God, who protects the wise by guarding their behaviour. This proves that Israelite wisdom does not stand against the general Israelite thought. It is rooted in the general worldview of the Israelite (Fox, 2000:71). Waltke (2004:224) says: “The sage here claims inspiration and authority along with Moses and his prophetic successors (cf. Deut. 5:23-31; 18:16-18).”

We also learn here that nurturing a child is a co-operative effort of a child, parents, and God. God and parents collaborate with the youngster in the shaping of his or her moral character, which will remain a reliable source of protection (Fox, 1994:243). The parent serves as an instrument in the hands of God that takes the instructions to the child. The child has an obligation to listen to the parent, because what the parent is giving is from the Lord. If the child fails to listen to the parent, he has disobeyed God Himself whose favour he needs to succeed in life.

Verses 9-11 are the second part of the apodosis of the conditional sentence, which starts in verse 1. These verses contain the consequences of a diligent

search for wisdom. צֶדֶק in verse 9 is a masculine noun, which means “righteousness” (Koehler *et al.*, 1985:794). This term describes a certain kind of behaviour, which is in accordance with some standard (Harris *et al.*, 1980:752). From the first apodosis, it can be assumed here that the behaviour that meets the standard set by God is a righteous behaviour. צַדִּיק is a person who discerns Yahweh’s order for his community and who brings his or her way of life into harmony with it. Thus, righteousness can be defined as the state of the man who walks in Yahweh’s ways (Reimer, 1997:757).

מִשְׁפָּט refers to general conduct in accordance with legal decision assumed to be morally right. Failure to live according to these decisions brings judgement on the people (Enns, 1997:1142). מִישָׁרִים has to do with straightness, straightforwardness of conduct as opposed to the crooked ways of those who abandon the guidance of moral truth. It serves to illuminate certain aspects of the theological concepts of freedom, justice, reconciliation and forgiveness (Olivier, 1997:565).

Those who diligently search for wisdom receive a strong sense of personal ethics: they will know what is right, just and fair. They will deal with other people with integrity and with even-handedness (Garrett, 1993:75). We learn here that children learn about justice, righteousness and equity from the instructions of parents. Thus, parental instructions are important in the making of responsible citizens for tomorrow. When wisdom is embraced in one’s heart, its knowledge becomes pleasant in one’s life. There will be an interest in gathering more knowledge. In this way, one receives protection from making decisions that will later bring only regret. The young person will encounter pressures in life. For him to conquer, he needs wisdom, which he will be able to gather through obedience to parental instructions.

In verse 12, the word לְהַצִּילָהּ is made up of the preposition לְ with a *hiphil* infinitive construct, with a second person masculine singular suffix of the root נָצַל, which means “to deliver” or “to save” (Koehler *et al.*, 1985:630). An infinitive construct with the preposition לְ expresses a purpose clause (Williams, 1976:86). The

young person is faced with dangers and pressures from those who hold an evil world and life view, which would lead him on the way of death. It is his or her mature religious capacity and ethical knowledge that will tear him away from those dangerous moral powers (Waltke, 2004:229).

מִדֶּרֶךְ רָע is a phrase that means "from an evil way". דֶּרֶךְ in Proverbs refers to the manner or course of life (Merrill, 1997:990). רָע describes whatever does not conform to a norm. It is the opposite of טוֹב (Baker, 1997:1154). Here, the phrase means a morally bad way of life (Toy, 1899:42). Deliverance, which will be rendered, will be from the manner of life that does not conform to the God-given norm.

מֵאִישׁ מְדַבֵּר תְּהוֹמָכּוֹת means "from man who speaks perversity". מְדַבֵּר is a piel participle, which can be translated as a relative clause. תְּהוֹמָכּוֹת means "perversity" (Koehler *et al.*, 1985:241) and refers to words that are morally crooked (Toy, 1899:42). Garrett (1993:76) defines the "man who speaks perverse words" as the one who justifies his way of life with a distorted set of values in order to persuade others to join him. McKane (1970:284) defines this person as a person who turns Yahweh's order (מִשְׁפָּט) upside down and who tries to draw others into his wrong-headedness and confusion by creating ethical chaos.

In verse 13 the phrases אֶרְחוֹת יֵשֶׁר "the path of uprightness" and בְּדֶרֶךְ-חֹשֶׁךְ "in the ways of darkness" are in contrast. The first phrase refers to ethical straightness. Good behaviour is imagined as a straight and safe path. Ways of darkness are wicked ways in which men are led blindfold by ignorance and error. In his explanation of verse 13, Toy (1899:43) indicates that forsaking the path of uprightness does not imply that those who forsake it had once followed right paths, but only that they have chosen other paths. However, we should not undermine the fact that the evildoers themselves were trained in the paths of uprightness but shook off the influences of their education. They broke off their hopeful beginnings to walk in the ways of darkness.

למח in verse 14 means “to rejoice, be glad, to delight in”. It describes a feeling or attitude of joy, with a possible focus on making an outward expression of that joy (Swanson, 1997:8523). This word was used in the same way in Deuteronomy 27:7. The verb גיל describes joy that can be expressed in songs and shouts. Verse 14 points out that wicked men not only deliberately choose wicked ways, but also take pleasure in them. Wrongdoing becomes a source of enjoyment because of the momentary good result, not from the consciousness of committing an unlawful or unrighteous deed (Toy, 1899:43-44).

In verse 15, עקשים is an adjective that functions as a predicative (Lambdin, 1971:13). It is, therefore, translated as “whose paths are morally crooked”. It signifies the opposite of the straight path (Waltke, 2004:230).

Verses 12-15 are concerned with the danger faced by the youngster who is commanded to follow his parents’ instructions. He is made aware that there are people outside who are ready to tempt him to follow their wicked ways. He is warned against the wicked man whose life is dominated by crookedness, in word, thought and deed (Fox, 2000:117). The wicked man’s speech is corrupt, and it corrupts those who take time to listen to him. Its aim is to allure the youth to join him in his perversity. Aitken (1986:32) defines wicked people as follows: “They plough a crooked furrow through life, abandoning straight and level ways for dark ways that twist and turn in all directions.” Thus, they lead those who follow them into a wilderness of confusion (Garrett, 1993:76). Another characteristic of the life of the wicked man is his joy in doing evil. They become rich out of their perverseness. They do their evil deeds for pleasure and profit. These are the people that a young person has to avoid in his or her life. Parents are therefore to help their children learn how to avoid these people.

זרה in verse 16 is a *qal* participle of the root זור, which means “to be estranged” (Thompson, 1997:1092). The participle here serves as an adjective qualifying the noun אשה. The basic thought is of non-acquaintance or non-relatedness (Harris *et al.*, 1980:238). The word נכריה which means “foreigner or stranger” (Koehler *et al.*, 1985:618), is used of that which is alien and to be excluded. The foreigner

designated by this term is usually perceived as dangerous or hostile. In Proverbs, the strange woman is the adulteress who has betrayed her husband and family (Fretheim, 1997:108). הַחֲלִיקָה is a *hiphil* perfect from the root verb חָלַק which means “to be smooth or slippery” (Koehler *et al.*, 1985:305). The verb refers to smooth speech meant to seduce another person. This use of the tongue is always condemned, as in Psalm 5:9 (Harris *et al.*, 1980:671). In the book of Proverbs, smooth speech characterises a seductive woman who is to be avoided. Fox (2000:119) explains why the woman with smooth speech is to be avoided. He says that it “sets a trap, and brings ruination. It is hypocritical and may conceal malice. It is often a quality of deceits...” אֶלְיוֹהָ in verse 17, which means “companion, friend or mate”, has been understood at different levels. From his reading of Jeremiah 13:21, McKane (1970:286) concludes that אֶלְיוֹהָ does not refer to the woman’s marriage, but to her early education. She has abandoned the teachings of her father. Thus it is to be translated as a “teacher of her youth”. Garrett (1993:76) rejects McKane’s translation. He suggests that אֶלְיוֹהָ should be translated as “companion”, referring to the woman’s husband. Toy (1899:47) confirms his support for the latter translation by saying that “the conception of the marriage relation in this verse (and throughout the book) is a high one”. When reading אֶלְיוֹהָ in the context of this verse and of the entire book of Proverbs, we can conclude that it refers to the woman’s husband. שָׁכַח in verse 17 does not mean to forget something once known, but to put something out of one’s mind, or to dismember oneself from one’s former allegiance (Waltke, 2004:231). To forget God is to ignore his commandments. The woman here is not absent-minded; she is insolent, deliberately scorning the covenant of her God (Harris *et al.*, 1980:922; Fox, 2000:120).

Verses 16-19 contain the second warning to the young person against the temptation from the strange woman. In the study of the book of Proverbs it has been difficult to pin down the identity of the strange woman. She has been identified as a foreign cult prostitute, a social outsider, a prostitute (not

necessarily foreign), or someone else's wife (Fox, 2000:138). She is also seen as an evil counsel.³¹ This woman is to be simply identified as a strange woman in the sense that she belongs to someone else sexually. She is a wife of another person. She is married, but she goes out to other men that are strangers to her. This woman represents a threat to the youth, a threat that is of a sexual nature. She is characterised by her smooth talk or seductive words to inflate the ego of her victim and draw him in (Garrett, 1993:76). This woman is charged with adultery, because she has left the companion of her youth; she has forgotten the covenant of her God. The covenant of her God refers to the marriage bond as a sacred covenant in which God serves as a witness, as we read in Malachi 2:14. Therefore, the strange woman is an adulterous woman, who draws her victims into her house. Her house is a gateway to death. Those who enter the house of the immoral woman find only the ghosts of those who preceded them (Garrett, 1993:77). They will also not come back (McKane, 1970:287). Young persons are warned that in her house they will find a pit into which they will fall to their death (Emerton, 1979:157). Arnot (1978:78) describes the pain by those who will find themselves in the company of the licentious men as follows: "When you get down into their company, you are among the dead: they move about like men in outward appearance; but the best attributes of humanity have disappeared, the best affections of nature have been drained away from their hearts." Thus, death that is referred to in verse 18 does not only refer to physical death, but also to spiritual death, because they step outside the framework of Yahweh's order (McKane, 1970:288). The path of wisdom taught by parents is the only way that can preserve the life of the young person. If he turns a blind eye to parental instructions, it will mean his death.

In verse 20, לַמַּעַן is a telic particle, which can be translated as "so that, thus, so". Syntactically, it introduces a purpose clause that completes the entire poem (Williams, 1967:61). It can be connected to verses 1-5 and to an infinitive

³¹ LXX of Proverbs 2:17 translates *strange woman* as *evil counsel*. This appears to be the practice of interpreting and defining the concept from one language to another (Giese, 1993:295).

constructs in verses 12 and 16. For the young person to walk in the paths of good men and to keep to the paths of the righteous (v. 20), he has to turn his ear to wisdom and search understanding as a hidden treasure (vv. 1-5). Wisdom will, therefore, save him from the way of wicked men (v. 12) and from the adulteress (v. 16).

The *niphal* form of the verb יָהַר in verse 21 pertains to not being in a condition of danger. Toy (1899:52) argues that the verb implies that certain persons are destroyed from the land, in which in all catastrophes the righteous are maintained or spared. Various scholars like McKane (1970:288) and Toy (1899:52) argue that the use of the word אֶרֶץ refers to the Promised Land or the land of Israel. McKane (1970:288) says: "In Deuteronomy, Israel's faithlessness and disobedience are seen as a threat to her continued possession of the land of Canaan. The promise can be put in jeopardy, and its continuing validity depends on Israel's response to the proclamation of the law." However, Fox (2000:123) correctly notes that the concern for the land of Israel is absent in these verses and in Biblical wisdom literature. The sage envisages a reward or punishment not to the entire nation, as is the case in the Deuteronomistic history, but to individuals. Thus אֶרֶץ is to be translated as "earth" and not as "land". The message of the sage to the youth is that living wisely assures that one will remain on this earth rather than descending to the underworld before one's time (Clifford, 1999:49).

תְּמִימִים in verse 21 means the blameless ones. The verb תָּמַם conveys the meaning of that which is complete, blameless, just, honest, perfect and peaceful. It, therefore, describes a state of moral goodness in a life (Olivier, 1997:306). Here it refers to those who embrace the teaching of the sage and live by God's divine order in life. The use of the verbs כָּרַת and נָסַח implies that those who will not embrace the teachings of the sage will not live fruitfully in this life. They will experience exclusion and expulsion in this life (Toy, 1899:53).

Verses 20-22 serve as a conclusion to the entire chapter. The sage comes back in two contrasting ways of life, the righteous and the wicked ways. The path that the righteous follows is the way of life. Upright and blameless are the ones who

follow it. They are the ones who will inhabit the land and be spared in this life. The result of this way is life and happiness. The opposite path is the way of death, which is followed by the wicked, foolish and unfaithful. The result of this way is landlessness and death. The young person is encouraged here to embrace wisdom, which will protect him against deceptive words of wicked women and men.

4.2.2.5 Brief summary of Proverbs 2:1-22

The main intent of this instruction is to provide the young person with encouragement to pay attention to parental instructions. The young person is encouraged to be patient in his learning of the parental instructions, which are wearisome at the beginning, but to work through them in order to arrive at lasting satisfaction, joy and happiness (Fox, 2000:132). This instruction reminds us that the child has an important role to play in the learning process. Learning begins with the acquisition of the parental instructions and culminates in thought and analysis. The parent also has to walk with the child patiently, showing him the dangers that are before him. This instruction reminds us that for the parent to inculcate instructions of life in the heart of the young person, he needs time with him, good knowledge of the child and of the pressures that the child is facing outside.

We are also reminded in this instruction that there is close co-operation between parents, God, and the child himself in the shaping of moral character, which will provide reliable guidance and protection throughout his life (Fox, 2000:133).

Two dangers face the young person in his life: (1). Wicked men who may use the young person to achieve their wicked goals in life. There are many young people who are used by older people to sell drugs on our streets and to steal. (2). There are seductive women who may seduce a young person to sexual immorality. Young girls are used as sex slaves all over the world. If a young person bows to these pressures, he will destroy his life. Parental instructions help the young

person to overcome these pressures. It is, therefore, important that parents have good knowledge of these pressures and how young people can overcome them.

4.2.3 Instruction III: Proverbs 3:1-12

4.2.3.1 Hebrew text of Proverbs 3:1-12

¹ בְּנֵי תוֹרָתִי אֶל-תִּשְׁכַּח וּמִצּוֹתַי יִצַּר לִבָּךְ:

² כִּי אֶרְךָ יָמִים וְשָׁנוֹת חַיִּים וְשָׁלוֹם יוֹסִיפוּ לָךְ:

³ חֲסֹד וְאַמֶּת אֶל-יַעֲזֹבֶךָ קִשְׁרָם עַל-גִּרְגְּרוֹתֶיךָ כְּתָבָם עַל-לוּחַ לִבָּךְ:

⁴ וּמִצָּא-חַן וְשִׁכְל-טוֹב בְּעֵינֵי אֱלֹהִים וְאָדָם: פ

⁵ בָּטַח אֶל-יְהוָה בְּכָל-לִבָּךְ וְאֶל-בִּינְתְּךָ אֶל-תִּשְׁעֵן:

⁶ בְּכָל-דְּרָכֶיךָ דָּעְהוּ וְהוּא יִישַׁר אֲרָחוֹתֶיךָ:

⁷ אֶל-תְּהִי חָכָם בְּעֵינֶיךָ יִרְא אֶת-יְהוָה וְסוּר מִרָע:

⁸ רַבָּאוֹת תְּהִי לְשֹׁרֶךְ וְשִׁקּוּי לְעֲצָמוֹתֶיךָ:

⁹ כִּבֵּד אֶת-יְהוָה מִחוּנָךְ וּמִרְאשִׁית כָּל-תְּבוּאָתְךָ:

¹⁰ וְיִמָּלְאוּ אֲסָמֶיךָ שִׁבְעָה וְתִירוֹשׁ יִקְבִּיךָ יִפְרֹצוּ:

¹¹ מוֹסֵר יְהוָה בְּנֵי אֶל-תִּמְאָס וְאֶל-תִּקְלָץ בְּתוֹכָתוֹ:

¹² כִּי אֵת אֲשֶׁר יֶאֱהָב יְהוָה יוֹכִיחַ וְכָאֵב אֶת-בֶּן יִרְצֶה:

4.2.3.2 Schematic presentation of the structure of Proverbs 3:1-12

I. Introduction (verses 1-4)

- A. Retain my teaching (verse 1)
- B. Then you will have [a]long life and peace (verse 2)
You will have favour with God and man (verse 3a)
- A. Retain my teaching (verse 3bc)
- B. Then you will receive favour and regard, divine and human (verse 4).

II. Lesson (verse 5-12)

- A. Trust God, not yourself (verse 5)
Then He will smooth your path (verse 6)
- B. Do not think yourself wise, but avoid evil (verse 7)
Then you will have good health (verse 8)
- C. Give offerings to God (verse 9)
Then you will enjoy affluence (verse 10)
- D. Do not reject divine chastisement (verse 11)
For God does this out of love (verse 12)

III. Conclusion: No conclusion³²

4.2.3.3 English translation of the Hebrew text

1. My son, do not forget my teaching; let your heart keep my commandments.
2. For they will add to you length of days and years of life and peace.

³² Cf. p. 53

3. Let kindness and truthfulness not forsake you, bind them on your neck; inscribe them on the tablet of your heart.³³
4. And you shall find favour and good reputation in the eyes of God and man.
5. Trust the Lord with all your heart, and do not rely upon your understanding.
6. In all your ways, know him, and He will make your paths straight.
7. Do not become wise in your own eyes, fear the Lord, and turn away from evil.
8. It will be a healing to your flesh³⁴, and refreshment to your bones.
9. Honour the Lord with your wealth, and with the first fruits of all your produce.
10. And your barns will be filled with corn, and your vats will burst with new wine.
11. My son, do not despise the discipline of the Lord, and do not hate his reproofs.
12. For the Lord reproves whom he loves, and as a father to the son in whom he delights.

4.2.3.4 Grammatical and theological analysis of Proverbs 3:1-12

תּוֹרָתִי in verse 1 is a feminine singular noun with the first common singular suffix, derived from the noun תּוֹרָה. It is to be translated as “my teaching”. The noun means teaching either from the wise parent or from God to his children of Israel (Harris *et al.*, 1980:404). The noun is used here to refer to the teachings given by parents to their children. The teachings received from parents give insight into all aspects of life so that the young person may know how to conduct himself and to

³³ The last phrase of verse 3 is lacking in the Septuagint and other manuscripts. It is suggested by the critical remark that it should be deleted. It also marks the symmetrical distichal form of the paragraph. However, it can be retained here as a gloss taken from Proverbs 7:3.

³⁴ The Septuagint and Peshitta suggest the emendation of the Masoretic Text. שֶׁר (navel) is to be replaced by בָּשָׂר (flesh). Whybray (1994:631), following McKane, argues that the emendation is unnecessary, because שֶׁר can also mean “strength” or “health”. Garrett (1993:81) then says that if נֶשֶׁר taken to mean “strength” rather than “body”, it probably implies overall soundness of body and mind rather than just physical health. However, Fox (2000:151) rightly argues that the emendation is necessary, because שֶׁר was never used in the Old Testament in the meaning of “body” or “health”. If “health” is accepted as suggested by McKane (1970:293), we will have a repetition in our translation. It will read as follows: “It will be a healing to your health”. שֶׁר and עֲצָם are word pairs used not only here but also in Genesis 2:23, Psalm 38:4, and Job 33:22.

live a long blessed life (Harris *et al.*, 1980:404). The teachings are authoritative, and they are never meant just for suggestion or recommendation. The young men are not morally free to weigh and dismiss parental instruction (Fox, 2000:143). Instructions are to be followed if one were to thrive in this life. They are aimed at enabling the young person to find his way in the world and make a success of life (McKane, 1970:290). The verb שכח means "to forget" (Koehler *et al.*, 1985:969). This word does not refer to natural slippage of memory, but to wilful neglect and diversion of attention (Fox, 2000:142). "To forget" in this case means to undermine the parental teaching and adhere to the opposite (Waltke, 2004:240). The child is warned against this intentional diversion of attention.

מִצְוָתִי is in parallel with תּוֹרָתִי, and they are synonymous. The verb נָצַר, means "to watch, guard and to keep" (Schoville, 1997:147). This verb suggests the idea that a young person is urged to look after what he has received from his parents as a treasure. Fox (2000:142) notes that the word is used in the sense of protection, maintenance (Deut. 33:9), nurturing (Deut. 32:10) and cultivation (Is. 27:3). The verb suggests the continued attention to parental instructions. This is further strengthened by the use of לֵב, which Greenstone (1950:24) describes as an organ of understanding, which grasps the instruction and preserves it for future use.

כִּי in verse 2 is a conjunction particle that introduces a causal clause. Thus it serves as a connector of verses 1 and 2. The attainment of what is contained in verse 2 depends on the fulfilment of verse 1 (Murphy, 1998:20).

אָרְךְ יָמִים וְשָׁנוֹת חַיִּים וְשָׁלוֹם ... "Length of days and years of life and peace". The three phrases are put together here as a result or reward for heeding the call of wisdom (Toy, 1899:57).

אָרְךְ יָמִים refers to a long life, which is regarded in Exodus 20:12 as a special blessing and a reward for righteousness. שְׁנוֹת חַיִּים is synonymous with אָרְךְ יָמִים. However, it refers to happiness, richness of life, life worth living (Perowne, 1916:51). This is not a strict promise but a promise in a general sense. If the

instruction is followed and obeyed, life will go better for the person, generally speaking (Fretheim, 1991:232).

שְׁלֹמִים means “wholeness, completeness of condition” (Harris *et al.*, 1980:931). It implies a life that is healthy in every way (Garrett, 1993:79). This word is used in various contexts to describe the completeness of condition (e.g., Gen. 29:6; Judg. 4:17). In Genesis 29:6 it describes a bodily health and political concord in Judges 4:17. Here, it describes a general condition of freedom from danger and disturbance (Waltke, 2004:240). יִסְבֹּי is a *hiphil* imperfect third person masculine plural with second masculine singular suffix of the root יָסָב which means “to increase, to do more” (Koehler *et al.*, 1985:387). The plural form of the verb refers back to תּוֹרָתִי and מִצְוֹתִי in verse 1. It is, therefore, the teachings and commandments from parents that will give more days, years of life and peace in young men’s life. This will have a positive result in the life of the community, as it will be composed of people who have a long life ahead to serve it and who are its inhabitants. This verse serves as a source of inspiration for keeping to parents’ teaching (Garrett, 1993:79). In these two verses, the young person is encouraged to know that a long and peaceful life depends on obedience to parental instructions. Disobedience implies a short life (Exodus 20:12).

הָסֵד וְאַמֶּת אֵל-יִעֲזָבֶךָ is a sentence in verse 3, which is not easy to interpret. יִעֲזָבֶךָ is in a jussive form. It is the volitional form, in which the parent intends to impose his or her will upon the young person (Waltke *et al.*, 1990:565). The young person is inducted here not to allow הָסֵד וְאַמֶּת to forsake him. Scholars (e.g., Aitken (1986), Clifford (1999), Farmer (1991), Fox (2000) differ in their interpretation of the two Old Testament concepts, הָסֵד וְאַמֶּת. The controversial question here is whether הָסֵד וְאַמֶּת are the virtues that the young person possesses within himself, or are the virtues that belong to God. Aitken (1986:36) and Clifford (1999:51) describe them as virtues that also belong to the young person. Farmer (1991:35) says: “The psalms repeatedly praise the Lord for having manifested this pair of attributes. But God’s chosen people were also expected to respond to the love they had been given by showing הָסֵד and אֶמֶת to each other.” Delitzsch (1874:85)

describes חסד as a virtue that belongs to both God and man. However, Fox (2000:144) has a different opinion. He argues that חסד here can only be God's kindness toward the pupil, not the pupil toward others (Fox, 2000:144). He further argues that as a person's own virtue חסד and אמת would not be said to abandon him. Thus, חסד cannot be the young person's attitude toward God or others, because a superior always confers חסד upon an inferior. Hence, Fox (2000:144) defines חסד in this context as God's gift of a long life. He finds a connection between verses 2 and 3. Toy (1899:58) defines אמת as steadfastness; fidelity to one's word. This has to do with truthfulness. The young person is here enjoined not to forget what God can do for him, and he should strive towards what God offers through his mercy. He should not allow that to abandon him.

קשורם על-גרוהיך... "bind them on your neck" (Waltke, 2004:241). The first word here is a *qal* imperative with third masculine plural suffix (Koehler *et al.*, 1985:860). This suffix refers back to חסד ואמת which is a gloss to מצוה and תורה in verse 1. The imperative form of the verb expresses that the teachings of parents, which are kindness and truthfulness, are to be carried with him always, and they are always to be remembered. They are to be worn as a necklace. Perowne (1916:52) argues that this phrase refers to the cultivation of these teachings for outward exhibition. They are to characterise the young person's life.

כתבם על-לוח לבך "write them on the tablet of your heart". This expression is also found in Proverbs 7:3 and Jeremiah 17:1. If one has to understand this phrase, a reference is to be made to the writing of God's commands on foreheads, hands, doorposts and hearts in Deuteronomy 30:14 and Jeremiah 31:33. Thus one has to agree with Fox that the phrase refers to the holding of the teachings permanently in the young person's memory. He is commanded to make them an indelible part of his character. Fox (2000:146) concludes his explanation of verse 3 as follows: "Together, then, the imagery of 3:3bc teaches that wisdom is to be possessed externally, as if it were written on the heart; that is to say, it is preserved and realised in action and thought."

Verse 3 emphasises devotion to parental instructions. The young person is to adorn his life with these teachings. His external and internal life is to be characterised by what he learned from his parents.

מִצֵּץ is a *qal* imperative from the verb מִצָּץ, which means “to find” (Wagner, 1997:469). Delitzsch (1874:86) calls this imperative an admonitory imperative, which can be translated as an imperfect or perfect consecutive. In fact, the imperative is in logical dependence upon a jussive form in verse 3, and it ensures the consequences of that verb in verse 3 (Gesenius, 1910:324).

The meaning of שְׂכָל is “insight” or “understanding” (Harris *et al.*, 1980:877; Whybray, 1994:61). Greenstone (1950:260) argues that “insight” or “understanding” does not fit the context of verse 3, because it cannot be regarded as a reward but as a cause of the blessing as in Proverbs 13:16. It is used here as a synonym of תָּהָא, and is to be taken in the sense of causing others to admire you. However, Fox (2000:146) says, “Here שְׂכָל (similar to תָּהָא) indicates the way others see you, their perspective or attitude.” Toy (1899:59) went so far as to suggest that the Hebrew can be slightly changed to שֵׁם, which means “name”. Garrett (1993:77) follows Toy in this direction. This change is unnecessary, because the meaning that they are looking for is already in the word שְׂכָל (Whybray, 1994:61). שְׂכָל can then be translated here as a “regard, reputation,” as in Psalm 111:10.

To have someone’s favour is to be acceptable, approved and well thought of. This is the reward of right doing. A person who characterises his life with חֶסֶד וְאֱמֻנָה will be approved by both God and man. This implies friendship, protection and aid from both God and man to the faithful young person.

בְּטַח אֶל־יְהוָה בְּכָל־לִבְךָ – “Trust the Lord with all your heart”. The verb בָּטַח expresses that which is central in people’s relationship with God. To trust God is to regard him as the source of wisdom and power, the guide in the moral life, and in all other ways (Toy, 1899:59-60). בָּטַח means to lean with the whole body on something, in order to rest upon it. Thus, the young person is commanded to place his confidence upon God, because from God alone comes true prosperity

and true help (Waltke, 2004:244). "With all your heart" means that the total personality is to be committed to God who has care (Garrett, 1993:80). Delitzsch (1874:87) defines heart as the central seat of all spiritual soul-strength. For him to love God with the whole heart is to concentrate the whole inner life on the active contemplation of God and the observance of his will. Greenstone (1950:26) defines heart as an inner conviction. Therefore, all the departments of the young person's life are to be conducted in such a way that God's will is being fulfilled.

וְאַל-בִּינְיָהֶךָ אֶל-הַשֶּׁנַּן "Do not rely upon your understanding." שֶׁנַּן has the general meaning of leaning on something or someone. However, in the context of dealing with persons it moves into the semantic field of relying on or trusting in (Harman, 1997:202). It is used here in parallel with בָּטַח, and thus there is no clear distinction to be drawn between the two. The young person is urged not to trust his own understanding, because human understanding is not always reliable and has to look for support in the form of divine guidance (Greenstone, 1950:27). Toy (1899:60) further argues that man is fallible and does not always know what is best to do. In Isaiah 5:21 those who are wise in their own eyes are listed among those who have rejected the law of God. He who relies upon his own understanding lacks humility before the Lord. This saying does not deny the ability of the human intellect to analyse and comprehend the ways of the world, but he is cautioned not to entrust his life upon this knowledge.

בְּכָל-דִּרְכָיֶיךָ יָדָעֵהוּ "In all your ways know him." In this sentence, there is an emphasis on "in all your ways" because of its position in verse 6. יָדַע means "to acknowledge, having an intimate acquaintance with" (Koehler *et al.*, 1985:365). The young person is called to acknowledge God in his way of life. His entire walk is to be permeated with the consciousness of God. The "paths" refer to different aspects of life such as social, commercial, political, and religious (Waltke, 2004:244). In all these aspects of life, God's divine will is to be acknowledged (Fox, 2000:148). This eradicates the dualistic worldview in parenting, in which God has to feature in certain aspects of life. The holistic

worldview in which God is the foundation of all the aspects of life, is viewed here as a foundation upon which parenting is to be based.

וְיֵשֶׁר אֲרֻחֶיךָ – “And he will make your ways straight”. יֵשֶׁר alludes to that which is legally and ethically right (Waltke, 2004:98). Toy (1899:60) argues that יֵשֶׁר is derived from the preparations of a highway, as in Isaiah 40:3. This implies that God will remove hindrances in the life of those who acknowledge him in their lives. Verse 6b is a kind of a motive clause upon which verses 5 and 6a are built. The young person is reminded here that he will experience God’s blessings in his life, if he acknowledges him in his way of life.

Verses 5 and 6 underline the fact that the search for wisdom is to be founded on the trust of the Lord. The young person has to accept God’s will for his life. This implies that the parental instructions are also to be based upon the commandments of the Lord. The goal of parental instructions is to lead the young person to live a life that honours God and his revealed truth, and consequently, he will experience blessings in his life.

Verse 7 is almost a repetition of verse 5. For its explanation, see comments made on verse 5.

רִפְאוֹת in verse 8 is a noun from the root רָפָא, which means “to heal” (Koehler *et al.*, 1985:903). The word is used when referring to human healing (Gen. 50:2) and to healing and forgiveness of Gentile nations (Is. 19:22). Thus, the meaning of this word has to do with healing and restoration (Harris *et al.*, 1980:857). The meaning of the word שֶׁר is not clear in verse 8. In this context, the word means “umbilical cord or a navel”. It has been translated in various ways. The Septuagint translated it as “body”, whereas McKane (1970:293) translated it as “strength”. One solution to the meaning of שֶׁר is to accept the emendation on the basis of the Septuagint and Peshitta, which propose that the word should become בָּשָׂר which means, “flesh”. שֶׁר may be mistaken for בָּשָׂר (Murphy, 1998:20). עֲצָמוֹתֶיךָ is from the noun עָצָם, which means “bones” (Brown *et al.*, 1951:782). In the book of Job, the bones were often viewed as the seat of one’s physical strength and health (Job 20:11; 21:24). Whybray (1964:63) argues that

the word refers to the bodily frame or the body as a whole. Brown (1906:782) also indicates that where the word “bone” and the word “flesh” are used together, they mean “body”. As to the meaning of verse 8, Toy (1899:61-62) has this to say: “The sense of the verse is that obedience to the law of God secures for a man a thoroughly healthy and happy condition of being. The happiness is primarily freedom from bodily and other outward ills, but necessarily involves inward peace.”

כָּבֵד is a *piel* imperative from the root כבד which means “to honour” (Collins, 1997:577). The verb was used here as it was used in Judges 9:9 and in Numbers 24:11, implying the giving of gifts or benefits, but with its usual implication of showing respect.

The meaning of הוֹן is “wealth or possession” (Koehler *et al*, 1985:228). In Ezekiel 27:12, 18, 23, this word is defined as a valuable metal; movable wealth apart from agricultural produce (Fox, 2000:151). Greenstone (1950:28) defines it as all that one possesses, including all personal talents and accomplishments. רֵאשִׁית describes the quality of the תְּבוּאָה (Waltke, 2004:247). The agricultural produce that is to be offered to God must be of the highest quality. The young person is admonished in this verse that practical application of the wisdom that one has acquired implies honouring God with the best quality of all what one has in his possession.

Verse 10 teaches that those who honour the Lord with their wealth and produce will be blessed with more than enough wine and corn. Verses 9 and 10 teach the young person the way in which he can invest his possession in this life. The best investment that the wise person can make in this life is to honour God with his or her possessions. He or she has to see God as the one who blesses him or her and then serve him in return with the wealth in his or her possession.

תִּקְצֹץ is a *qal* imperfect from קצץ which means “to reject, refuse, despise” (Koehler *et al*, 1985:490). The same word is used by Eliphaz in Job 5:17 describing blessings on those who do not despise God’s discipline. The young person is exhorted here not to reject the discipline of the Lord, because his correction,

though painful, is intended to convey valuable lessons. Discipline comes from God and has a good purpose, though one is unable to discern it. קָרַח, in the second part of verse 11 means “to feel disgust, feel an aversion of, loathe, hate” (Koehler *et al.*, 1985:833). It has the nuance of weariness with something that causes revulsion (Harris *et al.*, 1980:794-795). The son is encouraged to endure the pain of obeying God’s commandments.

The *hiphil* form of the verb יָכַח, in verse 12 can be translated as “argue, judge, reprove, correct, and show the right way” (Koehler *et al.*, 1985:380). The one who reproves (in this case, God) has the insight and authority to address the faulty behaviour. The consequence of reproof is the development of one’s character. For, the Lord reproves his children with their benefit in view.

Verses 11 and 12 reveal that God does not only bless his children with prosperity and good health, but also with sufferings. The young person is to learn that suffering is God’s way of discipline. In suffering, there is always a lesson to be learned and a blessing to be received (Aitken, 1986:43-44). Clifford (1999:53) also confirms the fact that suffering is purposeful education.

4.2.3.5 Brief summary of Proverbs 3:1-12

This instruction proves that there cannot be any separation between wisdom and piety. Wisdom has to do with one’s relationship with God. Piety is the apparent theme of this instruction. It teaches humility, faith in God, fulfilment of cultic duties, and loving submission to divine discipline (Fox, 2000:154). These are important themes in the shaping of the young person’s attitude and moral character. Parents are reminded here that in nurturing their children, they should not neglect their children’s relationship with God. A relationship with God is foundational to all of life.

A dualistic worldview that propagates the exclusion of God in parenting is totally rejected in Proverbs 3:1-12. The goal for parenting is to bring up godly men and women who may be doctors, farmers, pastors or engineers (Adei, 1991:34). Parents are to raise their children for the glory of God. They are to become God’s

instruments in realising his plan for salvation of the whole world. This has to happen in all spheres of life.

4.2.4 Instruction IV: Proverbs 3:21-35

4.2.4.1 Hebrew text of Proverbs 3:21-35

²¹ בְּנִי אֶל־יִלְזוּ מֵעֵינֶיךָ נָצַר תַּשְׁיָה וּמִזְמָה:

²² וַיְהִיו חַיִּים לְנַפְשְׁךָ וְחַן לְגִרְגְּרֹתֶיךָ:

²³ אַז תֵּלֵךְ לְבִטָּח בְּרֶכֶךָ וְכִגְלֶךָ לֹא תִגּוֹף:

²⁴ אִם־תִּשְׁכַּב לֹא־תִפְחַד וְשִׁכְבְּתָּ וְעָרְבָה שְׁנָתְךָ:

²⁵ אֶל־תִּירָא מִפֶּחַד פֶּתְאִים וּמִשְׁאַת רָשָׁעִים כִּי תִבֹּא:

²⁶ כִּי־יִהְיֶה יְהִיָּה בְּכִסְלֶךָ וְשֹׁמֵר כִּגְלֶךָ מִלֶּכֶד:

²⁷ אֶל־תִּמְנַע־טוֹב מִבְּעַלְיוֹ בְּהִיּוֹת לְאֵל יִדְּךָ לַעֲשׂוֹת:

²⁸ אֶל־תֹּאמַר לְרַעֲךָ לֵךְ וְשׁוּב וּמַחֲרֵ אֶתֶּן וַיֵּשׂ אֶתְךָ:

²⁹ אֶל־תִּחְרַשׁ עַל־רַעֲךָ רָעָה וְהוּא־יֹשֵׁב לְבִטָּח אֶתְךָ:

³⁰ אֶל־תִּרְיֵב עִם־אָדָם חָנָם אִם־לֹא גִמְלָךָ רָעָה:

³¹ אֶל־תִּקְנֵא בְּאִישׁ חָמָס וְאֶל־תִּבְחַר בְּכָל־דְּרָכָיו:

³² כִּי תִזְעַב־תִּהְיֶה נָלוּז וְאֶת־יִשְׁרָיִם סוּדוֹ:

³³ מֵאֶרֶת יְהִיָּה בְּבֵית רָשָׁע וַיִּגַּה צְדִיקִים יִבְרַךְ:

אִם-לִלְצִים הוּא-יִלְיָץ וְלַעֲנֻיִם יִתֶּן-חֵן: ³⁴

כְּבוֹד חֲכָמִים יִנָּחֵל וְכִסְיֵיהֶם מֵרִים קָלוּן: ³⁵

4.2.4.2 Schematic presentation of the structure of Proverbs 3:21-35

I. Introduction (verses 21-26)

- A. Retain my teachings (verse 21)
- B. And you will receive blessings (verses 22-25)
- C. Because God will protect you (verse 26)

II. Body (verses 27-31)

The main lesson consists of five admonitions, which all begin with the negative “don’t”. It also includes the motivation for embracing the admonitions in verse 32.

- A. Don’t withhold benefits (verse 27)
- B. Don’t delay in giving back what you owe (verse 28)
- C. Don’t devise to harm another unjustly (verse 29)
- D. Don’t quarrel unjustly (verse 30)
- E. Don’t envy the lawless man (verse 31)
- F. Motivation: God’s friendship with the righteous (verse 32)

III. Conclusion (verses 33-35): The wise are blessed, the foolish are cursed.³⁵

³⁵ Cf. p. 55.

4.2.4.3 *English translation of the Hebrew text*

21. My son, do not let (my instructions) slip from your sight, keep sound wisdom and discretion.

22. And they will be life to your soul, and grace to your neck.

23. Then you will walk safely on your way, and your foot will not stumble.

24. If you lie down, you will not tremble, and when you lie down your sleep will be sweet.

25. Do not be afraid of a sudden terror and the ruin of the wicked when it comes.

26. For the Lord will be your confidence, and he will keep your foot from being caught.

27. Do not withhold good from its owner when it is in the power of your hand to do so.

28. Do not say to your neighbour, go and come again, and tomorrow I will give, when you have it with you.

29. Do not plan evil against your neighbour, he who dwells confidently with you.

30. Do not contend with a man for no reason, if he has not done you harm.

31. Do not envy a man of violence, and do not choose any of his ways.

32. For the perverse man is God's abomination, and the upright is his friend.

33. God's curse is in the house of the wicked, but he blesses the abode of the righteous.

34. He scorns the scorners, but he gives favour to the humble.

35. The wise will inherit honour, but fools (are those who) get/exalt disgrace.

4.2.4.4 *Grammatical and theological analysis of Proverbs 3:21-35*

לֹא־תִשָּׁחַק is a *qal* jussive from the verb לָחַק which means "to turn aside, to lose, to slip" (Ringgren, 1995:478). Therefore, the verb may be translated here as a plea from

the father to his son. The father encourages his son that he should not allow his instructions³⁶ to slip from his sight.

הַשִּׁיחַ is defined as a sound judgement; wisdom that leads to practical success (Harris *et al.*, 1980:413). Greenstone (1950:18) explains this concept as common sense. McKane (1970:282) defines it as power, competence and capacity. It is an inner resource that helps one to deal with a crisis (Fox, 2000:163). It is a virtue that a parent exhorts his child to look after. הַחָכְמָה is defined as discretion (Waltke, 2004:263). It is used here in the sense of cleverness (Clifford, 1999:57). It may also be defined as an ability to discern between right and wrong; virtue that preserves a person from pursuing an evil path.

These two virtues are the gifts that God gives to those who seek wisdom in their lives. They connote clear thinking about acting in situations (Clifford, 1999:57), especially on the journey through life. This journey is more treacherous and fraught with danger (Aitken, 1986:50). For the young person not to stumble, he must not let the parental instructions slip from his eyes (Murphy, 1998:23). He must keep with him discretion and sound wisdom.

Verse 22 refers back to הַשִּׁיחַ וְהַחָכְמָה in verse 21. The two virtues are said to be חַיִּים (life) and חֵן (grace, ornament) in verse 22. They become part of the youth's life. They adorn and preserve his life (Garrett, 1993:83). חַיִּים וְחֵן conveys the idea that the two virtues will confer a long life to the youth, which is indeed a supreme blessing (Toy, 1899:74). He will not only receive long life but also attractiveness of his character (Toy, 1899:75). His character will be like what a necklace is to the neck (Murphy, 1998:23). It expresses permanency and beauty. McKane (1970:298-299) summarises verses 21-22 as follows: "Constant attention must be given to competence and resourcefulness; no detail bearing on them is ever

³⁶ In the MT, the verb לוֹ does not have a subject. Several scholars (Toy, 1899:74; Greenstone, 1950:32; Whybray, 1994:70) suggest that the solution may be found by transposing the two clauses in verse 21. The implication will be that הַשִּׁיחַ וְהַחָכְמָה becomes the subject. This appears to be a simple solution, but it does not have the support of any ancient version. However, Fox (2000:163) argues that this verse may be read together with Proverbs 4:20, 21. The same verb has been used in Proverbs 4:21, 22 with the subject that might have slipped in verse 21. Thus, it is assumed that parental instructions are the ones that the young person is exhorted not to let slip from his sight, because they have a tendency to slip away.

to be overlooked or neglected. Such constant and rigorous attentiveness is a necessity of life; an indispensable source of vitality, but it also adds lustre to a man. Competence and resourcefulness adorn him; they will make him attractive just as the brilliance of a necklace adorns the throat”.

הִגֹּךְ is a *qal* imperfect second masculine singular from the verb נָגַךְ which means, “to strike, injure, or to stumble against” (Brown *et al.*, 1906:619). This verb is used metaphorically in the figure of striking one’s foot against a rock, which expresses misfortune and divine judgement (Isaiah 8:14). In verse 23, it expresses the fact that in following wisdom, a secure path is warranted, as against stumbling over the rock of life (Swart, 1997:26).

תִּפְדֹּךְ is a *qal* imperfect second masculine singular from the verb פָּדָה which means, “to tremble, to be afraid” (Koehler *et al.*, 1985:757). In the *qal* form it describes the shaking that can result from either extreme terror or joy. In verse 24, trembling is a result of the attack from wicked people.

עָרְבָה is a *qal* perfect third feminine singular from the verb עָרַב, which means, “to be pleasing, to be pleasant” (Koehler *et al.*, 1985:732). The verb is here in parallelism (or parallel to) לֹא-תִפְדֹּךְ – “you will not tremble”, which implies that one is at peace. The verb has a moral component to it, as is the case here in verse 24. The sleep is pleasant, not simply because of the sleep itself, but because one has kept the two virtues of wisdom, discretion and competence (Waltke, 2004:264).

מִפְתָּאֵד פְּתָאֵם – “sudden terror” (Toy, 1899:75). It is a terror that will strike without warning. Fox (2000:164) says: “Suddenness in biblical usage implies unexpected timing and is almost associated with disaster.”

וּמִשְׁאַת רָשָׁעִים – “the ruin or calamity of the wicked”. This phrase refers to the calamity that will come upon the wicked people. It is stored up for them, but they do not know the timing (Fox, 2000:164).

Verse 26 expresses a ground for hope for those who keep wisdom. Their safety is guaranteed, not because of their cleverness, but because they put their

confidence on God (Waltke, 2004:265). God is the strength and refuge for all who put their confidence in him (Bridges, 1846:36).

וּמִיָּדָה in verse 27 is a *qal* imperfect from the verb מָנַע which means, "to hold back, withhold, keep from" (Brown *et al.*, 1906:586). It is the opposite of giving in the sense that someone who has it in his power to give does not give (Martens, 1997:990). מִקְדָּלָיו literally means "from its possessor" (Toy, 1899:77). בַּעַל is one who possesses something by right, but in this case, does not currently hold the item (Fox, 2000:164). Here we have a picture of a labourer who has worked for his pay, the poor who rightly pleads for help, and those who are calling out for justice (Toy, 1899:78). The young person is exhorted to embrace such people. He must offer his helping hand if it is within his power to do so. This is essential for the cohesion and sound working of society (McKane, 1970:300).

Verse 28 is thematically connected to verse 27. It warns against delay when someone comes to claim what is rightfully his. McKane (1970:299) says, "If you encounter a request for help, meet it instantly and cheerfully and do not seem too hesitant or grudgingly in your acquiescence."

וְיֵשׁ אִתְּךָ – "there is with you" implies that the object that belongs to another person is in one's holding (Murphy, 1998:23). Thus, giving it is not a merciful act, but is justice because it belongs to another person (Aitken, 1986:50).

רֵעֵךְ often refers to an intimate, a friend or lover (Deut. 13:7; Song. 5:16) (Koehler *et al.*, 1958:897). It also refers to another person to whom there is no personal attachment, but who is in the same context or vicinity (Fox, 2000:165-166). Therefore, doing justice should not be limited to one's intimates, but to all people who appear before one's face looking for justice.

In verse 29 the young person is exhorted not to devise evil plans against his neighbour. The neighbour is described as וְהוֹאֵלֵךְ לְבֶטֶח אִתְּךָ – "he who lives in confidence with you". This phrase means to live confidently with a sense of security (Waltke, 2004:268). The neighbour finds himself in this situation. He does not suspect any evil plan from anyone else because he knows he is at peace with his fellow residents. This is illustrated by Jezebel's conspiracy against

Naboth (1 Kgs. 21) and Haman's designs on Mordecai in the book of Esther (Garrett, 1993:84). McKane (1970:300) says: "Such premeditated malice is not only a crime against the neighbour, but is a betrayal of the relation of trust itself and trust is an indispensable condition of community." The young person is warned here that he should play safe with the trust his neighbours have in him. Trampling upon that trust brings disorder in society.

תִּקְרִיב is from the verb קָרַב which means "to strive, quarrel or to contend" (Bracke, 1997:1105). The verb refers to human conflict and to any unfriendly disputation. The young person is to avoid unnecessary conflict, especially with those who are harmless towards him (Waltke, 2004:269). One may get into conflict with another man with reason or adequate justification.

תִּקְנֵא is a piel imperfect from the verb קָנָא, which means "to be envious, to be jealous" (Brown *et al.*, 1906:888). The word can occur in both the positive and negative sense. One becomes envious when one's rights or honour is infringed (Peels, 1997:938). In this case, one may become envious when one observes the prosperity of violent men (cf. Ps. 37). As a solution to this problem, one has to insist on the inevitability of the punishment awaiting them because God abhors evildoers (Fox, 2000:166). The command not to envy sinners in the sense of choosing their way of life is also found in Proverbs 23:17 and 24:1, 19 (Clifford, 1999:58).

Verse 32 serves as a basis for the action the young person is implored to take. He is not to be envious of wicked people because they are an abomination to God. Abomination refers to anything that is repulsive to God (Greenstone, 1950:35). Any person, who turns against God and despises him and his path, is abominable to God, and his or her destruction is inevitable (Baker, 1997b:770). The young person is also assured of God's intimacy with the upright. סֵדֶר implies intimate, secret, and confidential intercourse (cf. Ps. 25:24; Job 29:4) (Greenstone, 1950:35). The reward to the upright is a close relationship with God (McKane, 1970:301).

מְאָרָה in verse 33 is a noun formed from the verb אָרַר which means “to curse” (Koehler *et al.*, 1985:89). It is used here in parallel with בֵּרַךְ which means “to bless” (Koehler *et al.*, 1985:153). The curse from God is upon the house of the wicked, whereas his blessing is upon the house of the righteous. Delitzsch (1874:102) reminds us of the implication of curse and blessing as follows: “The curse is merely a deprivation of external goods which render life happy and the blessing is not merely the fullness of external possessions; the central point of the curse lies in the continuous disquiet of conscience, and that of the blessing in the happy consciousness that God is with us, in soul-rest and peace which is certain of the grace and goodness of God.” Fox (2000:168) also reminds us that the family of the cursed or blessed is also affected; it shares the consequences of his action. This is well illustrated in Esther 8:11 and in Joshua 7:24-25. The young person is to turn away from the evil ways of the wicked because of the consequences that he will face. He is also reminded that the consequences of his action will affect his family.

Verses 34 and 35 reiterate the meaning of verse 33. The fate of the wise is honour, whereas the fate of the wicked is disgrace. Thus, the young person is to endure in his search for wisdom.

4.2.4.5 *Brief summary of Proverbs 3:21-35*

Proverbs 3:21-35 starts by promising favour, life and security to those who find wisdom in their life. The intention of the instruction is to teach that social relationships are to be cultivated in the nurturing of the young person. A person cannot have a successful life if he has distorted relationships with other people. A young person is instructed here that he should exercise fair and generous treatment of other people. Parents too are reminded of the importance of social ethics³⁷ in the nurturing of their children. If children are not nurtured in building skills for social relationship, we cannot have communities in which we can experience healthy development and prosperity.

³⁷ Social ethics refer to how a person lives with other human beings.

Society is a web of relationships. Parents prepare their children to live in those relationships. Adei (1991:49) writes: "The art of learning to live in society and to respect other persons as well as to establish relationships at home, at church, at school and later in life at work constitutes an important part of living." Through relationships we bring vitality to other people. We affirm other people's dignity and they become what God intended them to become. This is what is lacking in our world because the home is failing to nurture children in this regard.

4.2.5 Instruction V: Proverbs 4:1-9

4.2.5.1 Hebrew text of Proverbs 4:1-9

¹ שְׁמָעוּ בָנִים מוֹסֵר אָבִי וְהִקְשִׁיבוּ לְדַעַת בִּינָה:

² כִּי לָקַח טוֹב נָתַתִּי לָכֶם תּוֹרָתִי אֶל־תַּעֲזֹבוּ:

³ כִּי־בֵן הָיִיתִי לְאָבִי רַךְ וְיָחִיד לִפְנֵי אֲמִי:

⁴ וַיְהִינִי וַיֹּאמֶר לִי יְתֻמָּךְ־דְּבָרִי לְבָךְ שְׁמֹר מִצְוֹתַי וְחַיָּה:

⁵ קָנָה חֲכָמָה קָנָה בִּינָה אֶל־תִּשְׁכַּח וְאֶל־תֵּשׁ מֵאֲמַר־יָפִי:

⁶ אֶל־תַּעֲזֹבָהּ וְתִשְׁמָרָךְ אֶהְבָּהּ וְתִצְרָךְ:

⁷ רֵאשִׁית חֲכָמָה קָנָה חֲכָמָה וּבְכָל־קִנְיָנֶךָ קָנָה בִּינָה:

⁸ סִלְסִלָּהּ וּתְרוֹמָמָךְ תִּכְבְּדָךְ כִּי תַחֲבִקְנָהּ:

תִּתֵּן לְרֵאשִׁיךָ לְוִיתָחַן עֲשֶׂתָהּ תִּפְאָרֶת תִּמְנֶנֶךָ:

4.2.5.2 Schematic presentation of the structure of Proverbs 4:1-9

Proverbs 4:1-9 is an instruction that consists of an introduction and a body, but lacks a conclusion. Its structure can be laid down as follows:

I. Introduction (verses 1-2)

- A. Listen to my instruction (verse 1)
- B. Do not forsake them (verse 2b)
- C. For they are sound learning (verse 2a)

II. Body (verses 4-9)

- A. Source of the instruction: Father's house (verses 3-4a)
- B. Content of the instruction: Get wisdom, she will honour you (verses 4b-9)

There is no apparent conclusion.³⁸

4.2.5.3 English translation of the Hebrew text of Proverbs 4:1-9

1. Listen, my sons, to the discipline of the father; and be attentive to gain understanding.
2. For I give you sound learning, do not forsake my teaching.
3. For I was a son to my father, tender and the only child of my father.
4. And he taught me, and said to me, let your heart hold fast my words, keep my commandments and you will live.
5. Get wisdom, get understanding, do not forget and do not turn away from the words of my mouth.
6. Do not forsake her, she will keep you, love her and she will guard you.
7. The first step to wisdom is: get wisdom! With all you possess, get understanding.

³⁸ Cf. p. 56.

8. Hold her in esteem and she will exalt you; you embrace her, and she will honour you.

9. She will set a garland of grace on your head and present you with a crown of splendour.

4.2.5.4 Grammatical and theological analysis of Proverbs 4:1-9

שְׁמַעו בְּנִים – “Listen, my sons.” This phrase is in plural form. This is unusual, because most of the introductions to the instructions are in singular form (Murphy, 1998:27). This has led scholars like Toy (1899:84) to conclude that the sage addresses himself to a circle of hearers and that he was in a school context. This cannot be the case, because the setting of the instructions is that of the family context (see Chapter 2). Fox (2000:172) argues that such fluctuations show that the father-son address in Proverbs is a generic convention. The father is speaking to his son, while through him the author is actually addressing all children. The mention of the mother in verse 3 also confirms that we are dealing here with the family context, not a school context (Garrett, 1993:87; Aitken, 1986:53). The son is indeed called here to pay attention to the father’s instruction. Listening is the first step in acquiring wisdom (Clifford, 1999:61).

מוֹסֵר אָב – “discipline of the father”. מוֹסֵר denotes correction, which results in education (Harris *et al.*, 1980:386). The phrase suggests earnestness. Someone who cares and has the interest of the son at heart gives the teaching (Fox, 2000:172). He continues to display his love to the young person by appealing for his close attention, so that he may acquire understanding in his life.

כִּי in verse 2 introduces a causal clause (Williams, 1967:72), which states the reason or ground for paying close attention to parental instruction (Waltke, 2004:277). The young person is to pay attention because parental instructions are sound learning, and they are important for the well-being of the growing person (Toy, 1899:85).

In verse 3, the parent goes back to his childhood experience. He brings to his child what he has learnt from his parents (Aitken, 1986:53). Fox (2000:173)

argues that what the parent does here heightens his own authority and the value of his teachings.

בֶּךָ וְיָחִיד means "tender and alone" and it expresses the situation in which the parent finds himself when he was taught by his parents (Toy, 1899:86). בֶּךָ means "soft, tender or delicate" (Fox, 2000:173). It probably refers to the inexperience and youthfulness of the parent (Waltke, 2004:278). Thus, in verse 3, the parent is transmitting the teaching that he has acquired from his parents at an early age (McKane, 1970:303). Parents are reminded here that they do not have to wait up to a certain age to teach their children. They have to start as early as possible (Aitken, 1986:53). יָחִיד means "only one, alone, unique" (Fox, 2000:173). This word reveals the preciousness of the child, the love of the parents for the child, and the focused affection and attention on the child from the parents (Waltke, 2004:278). Love for the child implies that one should have time to teach them, because wisdom is an inheritance that preserves the wellbeing of generation after generation (Garrett, 1993:86).

Verse 4 starts with the lesson that the father received from his parents, which he is now passing over to his own son. He was taught to grasp firmly to his father's words with his heart. He was taught that to experience a full and happy life, he should not forget his father's teaching (Waltke, 2004:278).

The message in verse 5 is clear. There is no need to give heed to changes suggested by various scholars like Toy (1899:87). The present construction of the verse indicates the earnestness of the parent in his effort to impress his son with the importance of acquiring wisdom (Greenstone, 1950:39). The word קָנָה, which means "to acquire, buy" (Koehler *et al.*, 1985:843) is used here to indicate the importance of obtaining wisdom (Van Leeuwen, 1997:940). The parent indicates to his son that it was stressed in the instruction that he received from his parents that he should strive to get wisdom. He should not forget his obligation of acquiring wisdom. Thus verse 5 is an appeal to the young person to

attain wisdom above everything else. He should not allow himself to forget or to turn away from the words of his father's mouth (Toy, 1899:87).

In verse 6, the parent continues with the teaching to his son about the importance of wisdom. Wisdom is not to be forsaken, it is to be loved and sought after, because it keeps and guards anyone who possesses it (Waltke, 2004:280). The verb אהב suggests that there should be a close relationship between the young person and wisdom (Murphy, 1998:27). McKane (1970:305) explains this relationship as follows: "In return for protection which she bestows, wisdom requires of her devotees constancy of allegiance and affection. She must be followed steadfastly and loved without fickleness."

Verse 7 is difficult to translate because of its syntactical structure. The imperative of the verb קנה is an awkward predicate in a nominal sentence (Fox, 2000:175). It can be translated as follows: "The beginning of wisdom: get wisdom." Fox (2000:175) tries to make this verse easier to understand by saying that the first חכמה mentioned is wisdom of the sort possessed by a wise individual; the second is a content of the knowledge being taught. This distinction has led him to conclude that the first step towards becoming a wise man is to imbibe the teachings, even before understanding, and applying them (Fox, 2000:175). We are, therefore, reminded that before our children appreciate wisdom and love it, they are to absorb the wisdom teaching by rote.

וּבְכָל-קִנְיָנְךָ expresses the importance of wisdom in one's life (Waltke, 2004:281). One should give all that he possesses to attain wisdom (Greenstone, 1950:39). The preposition כִּי denotes the price reference: give all for wisdom. No price is too high.

We are here reminded of the Kingdom of God as we read in Matthew 13:44, 46. Just like the Kingdom of God, wisdom is to be cherished like a treasure for which we can give away everything we have in order to obtain it. It is a precious thing.

In verse 8 סִלְסַל is a pilpel imperative from the root סלל, which means "to extol, esteem" (Harman, 1997:264). It is metaphorically used here where the parent

commands his son to hold wisdom in high esteem. There is reward for embracing wisdom. Delitzsch (1874:108) says: "Wisdom exalts her admirers, honours her lovers, and makes a man's appearance pleasant, causing him to be revered when he reproaches."

Verse 9 continues to elucidate the rewards or benefits that the young person will gain if he acquires wisdom in his life. לְיִתְרוֹן עֲטֹרַת הַפָּאֶרֶת – "a fair garland and beautiful crown" are metaphors that are used here to express the authority, personal dignity and the beauty that will accompany those who embrace wisdom as a friend (Waltke, 2004:283). The reward that wisdom offers here is public esteem (Fox, 2000:176).

4.2.5.5· *Brief summary of Proverbs 4:1-9*

This instruction is unique in the sense that it is ascribed to the grandfather. This ascription strengthens the authority of the exhortation. It is also a reminder that parental instruction must take place from one generation to another generation. If the present generation has a heart for the future generation, then it has to double its efforts in imparting wisdom, understanding and knowledge in its children. The survival of the coming generation depends on what the present generation does. This brings into focus the important role that a family plays in the shaping and nurturing of the future generation. Wilson (1997:11) says, "...children should view the home as not simply the place where they eat and sleep, but where they are taught and shaped. They should view home as the centre of their world. They should see it as their primary culture and always view the larger culture in the light of what they have learned from home". The family does this as a way of building a strong foundation upon which the future generation can be built (Aitken, 1986:54). Hence, the father is able to tell his child that what he is teaching him, he had received from his father.

A successful and secure life depends on obedience to wise parental instructions from generation to generation. For the young person to experience this kind of life, he has to embrace wisdom as his father did.

4.2.6 Instruction VI: Proverbs 4:10-19

4.2.6.1 Hebrew Text of Proverbs 4:10-19

¹⁰ שְׁמַע בְּנִי וְקַח אֲמָרֵי וִירְבוּ לְךָ שָׁנוֹת חַיִּים:

¹¹ בְּדֶרֶךְ חֲכָמָה הִרְתִּיךָ הִדְרִכְתִּיךָ בְּמַעְגְלֵי־יֵשׁוּר:

¹² בְּלִכְתְּךָ לֹא־יִצַּר צַעֲדְךָ וְאִם־תָּרוּץ לֹא תִכָּשֶׁל:

¹³ חֲזֹזֶק בַּמוֹסָר אֶל־תִּתְּרֶךָ נֶאֱדָרָה כִּי־הִיא חַיִּיד:

¹⁴ בְּאַרְחַ רְשָׁעִים אֶל־תֵּבֵא וְאֶל־תֵּאֲשֹׁר בְּדֶרֶךְ רָעִים:

¹⁵ פִּרְעֵהוּ אֶל־תַּעֲבֹר־בּו שְׁטָה מִעָלָיו וְעִבּוֹר:

¹⁶ כִּי לֹא יִשְׁנֻ אִם־לֹא יָרְעוּ וְנִגְזְלָה שְׁנָתָם אִם־לֹא יִכָּשִׁילוּ

¹⁷ כִּי לֶחֱמוֹ לֶחֶם רָשָׁע וַיֵּין חֲמָסִים יִשְׁתּוּ:

¹⁸ וְאַרְחַ צַּדִּיקִים כְּאוֹר נֶגַה הוֹלֵךְ וְאוֹר עַד־נֶכּוֹן הַיּוֹם:

¹⁹ דֶּרֶךְ רְשָׁעִים דָּאִפְלָה לֹא יָדְעוּ בַּמָּה יִכָּשִׁלוּ:

4.2.6.2 Schematic presentation of the structure of Proverbs 4:10-19

Proverbs 4:10-19 has all the qualities that characterise an instruction, namely the introduction, content and conclusion.

- I. Introduction (4:10)
 - A. Listen/ accept my words

B. Increase your lifespan

II. Lesson (4:11-17)

A. The way of wisdom (4:11-13)

B. The way of evil (4:14-17)

III. Conclusion (4:18-19)

A. Righteous path: light of brightness

B. Wicked path: darkness³⁹

4.2.6.3 *English translation of the Hebrew Text*

10. Hear my son, accept my words; they will increase (to you) years of life.

11. I taught you in the way of wisdom; I led you in the path of wisdom; I led you in the paths of uprightness.

12. When you walk your steps will not be impeded; even when you run, you will not stumble.

13. Keep hold on instruction; do not let go, guard her, for she is your life.

14. Do not enter into the path of the wicked; do not walk in the way of the evildoers.

15. Avoid it, do not pass through it, turn aside from it, and pass on.

16. For they cannot sleep, unless they did evil, and they are robbed of their sleep, unless they caused someone to stumble.

17. For they eat the bread of wickedness and they drink the wine of violence,

³⁹ Cf. p. 57.

18. And the path of righteousness is like the light of brightness that shines brighter and brighter until full day.

19. The way of the wicked is like darkness; they do not know over what they stumble.

4.2.6.4 Grammatical and theological analysis of Proverbs 4:10-19

Verse 10 is an introduction of the sixth instruction in which the parent asks from his son attentiveness and willingness to appropriate his teachings in his life. It follows the structure of other introductions that we have dealt with before, i.e. in 2:1, 3:1. The phrase שְׁנוֹתַיִם (years of life) refers to the consequences of giving heed to the parental instruction. It does not merely refer to the duration of life, but to the enjoyment of life (Longman III, 2006:151). The emphasis on a long life is also found in Deuteronomistic theology (Murphy, 1998:27).

הִרְבֵּיתִי⁴⁰ is a *hiphil* perfect first person common singular, with second person masculine singular suffix, from the root ירה which means “to teach, instruct” (Merrill, 1997:538). The verb ירה occurs in practical context such as the giving of directions in travel (Genesis 46:28) and instruction in arts and crafts (Exodus 35:34). It is used in verse 11 for parental guidance in life (Merrill, 1997:538). The parent declares here that his instruction is in the way of wisdom.

הִדְרִכְתִּי is a *hiphil* perfect first person common singular from the root דרך, which means “to lead in the path of” (Koehler, *et al.*, 1985:218). The second person masculine singular suffix, as in the previous verb, refers to the youth who is under parental guidance. The verb refers to the pursuit of a manner of life or practice (Merrill, 1997:992). This implies that the parent is not simply repeating

⁴⁰ Greenstone (1950:41) argues that the two verbs in verse 11 are to be translated as perfects, not as present or future, because they refer to rules of life given at an earlier period, which are repeated here. In other words, this instruction is still based on what the teacher has learnt from his own father. Fox (2000: 179) concedes to Greenstone's line of thinking. Toy (1899:91) on the other hand argues that the two verbs refer to the present instructions. They are to be translated as they are in the present tense. Whybray (1994:79) took a middle way, which is more acceptable. He argues that the perfect tense in verse 11 refers not to past-completed actions, but to actions already begun but envisaged as intended to continue (see Gesenius, Kautsch and Cowley, 1910:311). This implies that the parent is not simply repeating what he had received from his father, but that what he is giving now is his own, of course based on what he had received from his parents as a young person.

what he had received from his father, but that what he is giving now is his own. This is of course based on what he had received from his parents as a young person. The son is guided in the “way of wisdom” and in the “paths of uprightness”. The two phrases refer to a good moral life, which will protect the life of the young person from the wicked ways (Longman III, 2006:152).

In verse 12 **בְּלִכְתֶּךָ** consists of preposition **בְּ** with the infinitive construct of the root **לָךְ**, which means “to walk, go” (Koehler *et al.*, 1985:232). This construction introduces a temporal clause, which expresses a point of time (Williams, 1967:44). **יָצַר** is a *qal* imperfect third person masculine singular from the verb **צָרַר** which means “to be narrow, cramped, scant, impeded, restricted” (Koehler *et al.*, 1985:818). It is used here in relation to the fear and frustration of the one who rejects the unimpeded path of wisdom and righteousness in favour of folly and wickedness, which leads only to restriction, darkness and death (Swart *et al.*, 1997:854).

וְאַם-תָּרוּץ expresses a sense of danger that might happen. When the young person is more likely to fall, he will not fall, because he is on the safe path. The ethical path alone is the safe one (Fox, 2000, 179). The young person is assured here that if he behaves wisely and honestly, he will move through life smoothly, without stumbling. McKane (1970:308) says: “Those who pay heed to the teacher are on a road where they can walk rhythmically and even break into a run without fear of being tripped up by unpredictable obstacles.”

In verse 13, the young person is further enjoined to show strength in his devotion to wisdom. Wisdom is life, and it must be embraced with great passion.

In verse 14, the parent singles out the path of the wicked as something to be avoided at all costs. **רָשָׁע** denotes the kind of life that is the opposite of God’s character (Harris *et al.*, 1987:863), whereas **רָע** refers to the habitually wicked, those whose very nature it is to work evil and to hurt others (Perdue, 2000:116). Both groups are to be avoided by a wise young person. **תָּבֹא** means “to come in, to enter” (Brown *et al.*, 1907:97). The wise young person is told not to take even the first step towards the way of the wicked. If he finds himself in that way, the

second verb suggests that he should not proceed in that way. This implies that the way of the wicked is to be avoided at all costs. McKane (1970:308) says: "Let him dismiss it from his thoughts and as a single-minded man pursue his journey along a safe road..."

Verse 15 echoes verse 14. The young person is emphatically urged to avoid the wicked way. The parent is doing this with great intensity, because of the enticements that accompany the wicked way that can lure the young person. This is important for parents to note, because the wicked way is coated with enticements that are attractive to young people. It is not easy for young people to resist this temptation.

וְלֹא יִשְׁנוּ – "for they do not sleep". The verbal plural form refers back to רָשָׁעִים and רָעִים. Verse 16 continues to characterise the wicked and evildoers. This phrase characterises them as people who cannot sleep unless they commit evil. יַרְעֵו is a *hiphil* imperfect third person masculine plural of the root רָעַע, which means "to be bad, displeasing, look evil, hurt, injure, bring calamity" (Baker, 1997:1154). The root meaning of the verb concerns action that is detrimental to life and its fullness (Baker, 1997:1154). The detriment can be among others physical or moral. The verb describes the departure from that which is ideal and desired for fullness and enjoyment of life (Baker, 1997:1154). The wicked are also described in this way in Micah 2:1 and Psalm 36:5. Fox (2000:181) says: "The wicked have a need to cause harm; their peace of mind depends upon it." Bringing misery onto other people is the wicked man's goal in life. It is his diet. He is corrupt from within. Thus, anyone who associates himself with these people cannot escape the danger involved. The young person is exhorted to avoid their ways. Enjoyment and happiness in life is for those who shun the ways of the wicked, but strive to embrace the parental instructions.

Verse 17 is connected to verse 16, because it continues with the description of the wicked. According to verse 17, the wicked do not only do evil things; they

live for them. They nourish the very roots of their existence with evil things (McKane, 1970:308). They obtained their means of life through wicked manipulations and violence (cf. Proverbs 1:10-19, especially verses 15 and 19).

Verses 18 and 19 serve as a conclusion to the sixth instruction. Two concepts are contrasted here, i.e. "light and darkness". Light signifies happiness, prosperity and life, whereas "darkness" signifies misery, defeat and death (Whybray, 1994:80). A righteous life is accompanied by happiness and good fortune, whereas a wicked life is accompanied by misery and disaster.

וְאִנְךָ צַדִּיקִים refers to the life course of the righteous, which is guided by the light that grows constantly brighter. Saadia (quoted in Greenstone, 1950:43) says: "The righteous are like the light of the morning that keeps on increasing, and not like the afternoon light which is constantly diminishing."

אֶפְלָה means "darkness, gloominess, calamity" (Brown *et al.*, 1907:67). The same word is used for the gloomy darkness of Egypt (Exodus 10:22) and for darkness of the blind who grope at noon and cannot find their way (Deut.28:29) (Waltke, 2004:292). It refers to literal darkness; to the darkness of night in which pestilence and plague stalk their prey (Price, 1997: 479). This does not only refer to the darkening of the intellect and the hardening of the conscience, but to outward uncertainty and misfortune, such as death and loss of wealth (Toy, 1899:94). לֹא יָדְעוּ בְּקֹחַ יִפְשְׁלוּ implies the thickness of the darkness that the wicked cannot know that which is awaiting them. Their fall is sudden and the cause of it is hidden, so that they are unable to take adequate precaution.

4.2.6.5 *Brief summary of Proverbs 4:10-19*

The main message of this instruction is to choose the right path and avoid the evil one (Fox, 2000:183). The paths of the wicked and the evildoers are to be avoided, because these paths are addictive. The wicked cannot sleep unless they have done wrong. Once tasted, wickedness becomes one's staple food. All that one gains, he gains through wickedness and violence (Farmer, 1991:39). The son is encouraged to obey the directives of his parents. His parents taught him the path of the righteous, which gets brighter and brighter as they travel

along it. Instead of discussing the specifics of each way, the parent is here creating an environment of receptivity to wisdom by the young person. From the instruction itself, one can deduce eagerness and commitment on the part of the parent to talk to the young person, instilling love for the path of righteousness. This instruction cautions parents about the great danger that young people are facing. Wicked people are out to win young people. Their way appears to be attractive in the mind of a young person. Therefore, parents are to work with young people knowing that it is not easy for them to follow the righteous way. Parents are to make the righteous way attractive to young people.

4.2.6 Instruction VI: Proverbs 4:20-27

4.2.6.1 Hebrew text of Proverbs 4:20-27

²⁰ בְּנֵי לְדַבְרֵי הַקְשִׁיבָה לְאִמְרֵי הַטֹּאֲזֹנֶה:

²¹ אֶל־יְלִיזֹו מַעֲיִנֶה שְׁמֶרֶם בְּתוֹךְ לְבָבְךָ:

²² כִּי־חַיִּים הֵם לְמַצְאֵיהֶם וְלִכְל־בְּשָׂרוֹ מִרְפָּא:

²³ מִכָּל־מִשְׁמָר נִצָּר לְבָבְךָ כִּי־מִמֶּנּוּ תוֹצֵאוֹת חַיִּים:

²⁴ הָסֵר מִמֶּךָ עֲקֻשׁוֹת פֶּה וּלְזוֹת שְׁפָתַיִם הִרְחַק מִמֶּךָ:

²⁵ עֵינֶיךָ לִנְכַח יְבִיטוּ וְעַפְעָפֶיךָ יִישְׁרוּ נִגְדֶּךָ:

²⁶ פֶּלֶס מַעְגָּל רִגְלְךָ וְכָל־דֶּרֶכְךָ יִכְנוּ:

²⁷ אֶל־תִּשְׁתַּיְמִין וּשְׂמֹאזֹל הָסֵר רִגְלְךָ מִרָע:

4.2.6.2 Schematic presentation of the structure of Proverbs 4:20-27

- I. Introduction (verses 20-22)
 - A. Hold fast my words (verses 20-21)
 - B. For they give healing and life (verse 22)
- II. Body (verse 23-26): Behave carefully and honestly
- III. Conclusion (verse 27): Walk straight ahead⁴¹

4.2.6.3 English translation of the Hebrew text of Proverbs 4:20-27

20. My son, be attentive to my words, incline your ear to my saying.
21. Do not let them slip from your eyes; keep them within your heart.
22. For they are life to him who finds them, and a healing to all his flesh.⁴²
23. With⁴³ all vigilance keep/guard your heart, for the issues of life (are) from it.
24. Get rid of crookedness of mouth from you; and put away perversity of lips from you.
25. Let your eyes look straight/appropriately; and glance of your eyes/gaze be upright/straight before you.
26. Make level the path of your feet, and all your ways will be established.
27. Do not swerve to the right or to the left; turn your foot away from evil.

4.2.6.4 Grammatical and theological analysis of Proverbs 4:20-27

Verse 20 is an introduction in which the parent continues to seek attentiveness and retentiveness from his son. Important phrases such as "attention to

⁴¹ Cf. p. 58

⁴² לִפְתָּיִם and בְּקָרְבִי do not correspond, because the former is in plural form, whereas the latter is in singular form. One of them must be changed. Peshitta and Targums have מִן in singular form. This emendation is unavoidable in order to have a consistent translation of the text. Cf. BHS footnote a and b.

⁴³ The Septuagint, Peshitta and Vulgate have the equivalent of בְּ instead of עִם of the Masoretic text. Both prepositions refer to the act of guarding, thus they have more or less the same general sense.

instructions” and “retention of instructions” in this verse have already been explained in other introductions (cf. Proverbs 3:21; 4:1, 10).

יָלִיּוּ is a *hiphil* third person masculine plural of the verb לָו, which means “to turn aside, depart or to slip” (Brown *et al.*, 1906:531). For further explanation of this word, see the explanation at Proverbs 3:21. The objects of this verb are דְּבָרֵי and אֲמָרֵי. The son is here urged not to allow the “sayings and words” of the parents to slip from his eyes. He should fix his eyes on what he has heard from his parents (Murphy, 1998:28).

With regard to לֵב in the second part of verse 21, scholars argue that it should be translated as “mind”, instead of, “heart” (Toy, 1899:97; McKane, 1970:310; Whybray, 1994:81). McKane (1970:310) says: “It is concentration and tenacity of memory which are desired and recommended as a means to life and a therapy for the body.”

Verse 21 is still connected to verse 20 in the sense that it continues to call on the son not to neglect his father’s instructions, but to remember them always and to live them. They are to become part of his being (Aitken, 1986:59).

In verse 22, the conjunction כִּי connects verse 22 and verses 20-21. It introduces a causal clause (Waltke *et al.*, 1990:640), which provides the reason for the injunctions found in verses 20-21. The result of paying attention and retention of the father’s instructions in memory is חַיִּים. Life, as we have seen in 2:21; 3:2, 22; 4:14, refers to a long and happy life (Greenstone, 1950:43). It also includes physical health as well as material prosperity (Whybray, 1994:81; Toy, 1899:97). בָּשָׂר is not used here merely to refer to the human flesh, but it refers to the entire being (cf. Prov 3:8) (Greenstone, 1950:43). מְרַפָּא is from the verb רָפָא, and it means, “a healing” (Koehler *et al.*, 1985:903). Toy (1899:97) argues that healing involves deliverance from the evils of life. The young person is here told that if he keeps his father’s instruction and lives according to them, prosperity as well as a happy and long life will be his reward. Delitzsch (1874:114) says: “Nothing preserves soul and body in a healthier state than when we always keep before our eyes and carry in our hearts the good doctrines; they give to us true guidance

on the way of life". We are here reminded of what Paul says in 1Timothy 4:8. He says: "...godliness has value for all things, holding promise for both the present life and the life to come".

מְקַל־מִשְׁמֶר in verse 23 is not simple to translate. Literally, it can be translated as, "more than every guarding", which does not make any sense in this context. Garrett (1993:88), following the reading of the Peshitta, Septuagint and Vulgate, emended מכל to בכל, which is translated as "with all vigilance". The alternative reading makes a sense, which rightly fits into the context.

נָצַר לְקֶדֶד means "guard your heart". נָצַר is an imperative form of the verb נָצַר, which is equivalent in semantic value to שָׁמַר (Schoville, 1997:148). The entity upon which a מִשְׁמֶר is placed is always a creature that must be restrained, such as a prisoner (Lev 24:12) or a dragon (Job 7:12), rather than a valued item that is to be protected (Fox, 2000:185). The young person's heart is an object of נָצַר. As we observed in verse 22, לֵב does not here refer to a physical organ, but to the whole personality of an individual (Garret, 1993:88). Whybray (1994:82) says: "Heart is here the inner man or self." Thus "to guard one's heart", here means to be circumspect; to be careful with what comes from one's life.

מִמֶּנּוּ-מִשְׁמֶר means "for from it". Toy (1899:98) argues that the suffix "it" refers to מִשְׁמֶר in the first part of the sentence. It refers to vigilance that is to be exercised upon one's heart. However, the context leads us to conclude that the suffix refers to the heart, not to the "guarding". Waltke (2004:298) says: "The antecedent of *from it*, an ablative of source, is the heart that governs all the activity, not the watching."

תוֹצְאוֹת is from the root יָצָא and means "outlets, extremities, escapes" (Merrill, 1997:498). In many instances this word was used as a geographical term, which is not appropriate here (Fox, 2000:186). The word should be understood as an action of departure. Thus it can be translated as a "source" or "outgoing". Consequently, the heart is viewed as a source of all the issues that come out of

one's life. Greenstone (1950:44) translated it as "the issues of life" or "manifestations of life". The image is of a water source from which life erupts (Murphy, 1998:28). Life has not only its fountain in the heart; the direction that it takes is determined by the heart. Thus, from this spring of life should not go forth a caricature of life, but a true life well pleasing to God (Delitzsch, 1874:116).

The young person is implored to guard what become of his life. He has the power to suppress what is inappropriate and destructive in his life.

In verse 24, הָסֵר is a *hiphil* imperative of the verb סָר, which means "to take away, to remove" (Koehler *et al.*, 1985:653). A common meaning for this verb is "to turn aside" physically from what one is doing (Ex. 3:4). Here, it has to do with the moral direction one is taking (Thompson *et al.*, 1997:238). סָר has been used in the wisdom literature addressing the necessity of turning away from evil (Snijders, 1999:207). The young person is urged to get rid of עֲקָשׁוֹת פִּי. עֲקָשׁוֹת means, "crookedness" (Brown *et al.*, 1906:786). The phrase refers to "crookedness of mouth". It refers to the mouth when what it speaks is disfiguring and deforming. The phrase expresses the contrast of the truth (Delitzsch, 1874:116). וּלְזוֹת שִׁפְתָּיִם means "the perversity of speech" or, "devious talk". It refers to unacceptable speech (Baker, 1997:770). Speech is here taken as one of those outgoings of heart. According to Whybray (1994:82), "Speech was regarded in the wisdom literature both of the Old Testament and of the Ancient Near East as revealing the inner thoughts of a person..." Thus the young person is commanded to keep lies away from his life. He has to suppress the evil inclination of falsehood, such as lying, deception, insensitivity, hurting, disfiguring, disproportion, and brutality in the human heart (Waltke, 2004:300).

Verse 25 admonishes the young person to have determination in what he wants to accomplish in life. It counsels unswerving directness toward a fixed goal, without turning aside the eye toward that which is profitless and forbidden (Delitzsch, 1874:116). The young person is called to singleness of mind and purpose in life. He should have ideals that he cherishes in life and which he is prepared to die for.

פָּלַס in verse 26 is a *piel* imperative of the verb פָּלַס, which means “to make smooth” or, “to prepare a surface”, with the focus on the fact that this action provides relative ease for movement (Brown *et al.*, 1906:814). One prepares the way by the removal of that which prevents unhindered progress and makes the way insecure (Delitzsch, 1874:117). One does this by removing all that can become a moral hindrance or a dangerous obstacle in our life course. A young person is called here to self-retrospection of his life and to remove everything that can impede him from becoming what he ought to become. Hence, Fox (2000:188) argues, “One’s life course, as understood here, is not laid out in advance; rather, one must level and pave it himself as he moves along, removing obstacles to moral progress.” This re-evaluation of the self will help the young person to have an established course of life.

Verse 27 serves as a conclusion of this instruction, in which the son is urged to have a position and to turn away from evil. A young person has to stay on the path that he has chosen in life.

4.2.6.5 *Brief summary of instruction VII in Proverbs 4:20-27*

This instruction envisages a single path in which the young person is to walk, i.e. the path of wisdom. He has to walk straight in this way, without deviating to either side, as there are temptations. Parts of the human body are used here to instil in the mind of the young person that an inner sense of straightness is to permeate all his thoughts, words and actions. Ambiguity in moral character is discouraged. The young person is encouraged to incorporate in his life a sense of being straightforward and unequivocal. This instruction spells out that a young person has responsibility to fulfil in the process of moral character formation.

4.2.7 **Instruction VII: Proverbs 5:1-23**

4.2.7.1 *Hebrew text of Proverbs 5:1-23*

¹ בְּנִי לְחִכְמָתִי תִקְשִׁיבָה לְתִבּוּנָתִי תִשְׁ-אַזְנֶךָ:

- ² לְשֹׁמֵר מִזְמוֹת וְדַעַת שְׁפָתֶיךָ יִנְצְרוּ:
- ³ כִּי נִפְתַּח תַּטְפָּנָה שְׁפָתַי זָרָה וְחָלַק מִשְׁמָן חֶכְמָה:
- ⁴ וְאַחֲרֵיתָהּ מָרָה כָּל־עֲנָה חֲדָה כְּחֶרֶב פִּיּוֹת:
- ⁵ רִגְלֶיהָ יִרְדּוּת מְנוֹת שְׁאוֹל צָעָדֶיהָ יִתְמַכּוּ:
- ⁶ אֲרַח חַיִּים פֶּן־תִּפְלֹס נָעוּ מִעֲגֻלְתֶּיהָ לֹא תִדָּע:
- ⁷ וְעָתָה בָּנִים שָׁמְעוּ־לִי וְאַל־תִּסּוּרוּ מֵאֲמַר־יָפִי:
- ⁸ הִרְחַק מֵעֲלֶיהָ דְּרָכָךְ וְאַל־תִּקְרַב אֶל־פֶּתַח בֵּיתָהּ:
- ⁹ פֶּן־תִּתֵּן לְאַחֲרִים הוֹדְךָ וּשְׁנִיתֶיךָ לְאַכְזוּרִי:
- ¹⁰ פֶּן־יִשְׁבְּעוּ זָרִים כֶּחָךְ וַעֲצָבֶיךָ בְּבֵית נִכְרִי:
- ¹¹ וְנִחַמְתָּ בְּאַחֲרֵיתָךְ בְּכָל־זֶה בְּשָׂרָךְ וּשְׂאֲרָךְ:
- ¹² וְאַמְרָתָ אֵיךְ שָׁנֵאתִי מוֹסֵר וְתוֹכַחַת נָאֵץ לְבִי:
- ¹³ וְלֹא־שָׁמַעְתִּי בְּקוֹל מוֹרִי וְלִמְלַמְדִּי לֹא־הִטִּיתִי אָזְנִי:
- ¹⁴ כִּמְעֹט הָיִיתִי בְּכָל־רָע בְּתוֹךְ קָהָל וְעַדָּה:
- ¹⁵ שְׁתַּחֲמִים מִבּוֹרְךָ וְנִזְלִים מִתּוֹךְ בְּאֶרֶץ:
- ¹⁶ יִפּוּצוּ מִעֲיִנְתֶּיךָ חוּצָה בְּרַחֲבוֹת פִּלְגֵי־מַיִם:

¹⁷ יְהִי־יֹלֵךְ לְבִבְךָ וְאֵין לְזָרִים אֶתְּךָ:

¹⁸ יְהִי־מְקוֹרְךָ בְּרוּךְ וּשְׂמֵחַ מֵאֲשֶׁת נְעוּרֶיךָ:

¹⁹ אֵילָת אֲהָבִים וְיַעֲלֶת־חַן כַּדִּיהָ יִרְנֶה בְּכָל־עֵת בְּאַהֲבָתָהּ

תִּשְׁגָּה תָּמִיד:

²⁰ וְלָמָּה תִּשְׁגָּה בְּנִי בְּזָרָה וּתַחֲבֹק חֵק נָכְרִיָּה:

²¹ כִּי נֹכַח עֵינַי יִהְיֶה דְרָכֵי־אִישׁ וְכָל־מַעֲגִלָּתוֹ מִפְּלִס:

²² עוֹנוֹתָיו יִלְכְּדֵנוּ אֶת־הַרְשָׁע וּבְחִבְלֵי חַטָּאתוֹ יִתְמָד:

²³ הוּא יָמוּת בְּאֵין מוֹסֵר וּבָרַב אֲנִלָּתוֹ יִשְׁגָּה:

4.2.7.2 Schematic presentation of the structure of Proverbs 5:1-23

- I. Introduction (verses 1-2): Attend to my teaching
- II. Lesson (verses 3-20): Avoid the adulterous woman and stay with your own wife
 - A. The strange woman is deadly (verses 3-6)
 - B. Avoid her, or you will pay a severe price (verses 7-14)
 - C. Rather, take your sexual pleasures with your wife (verses 15-20)
- III. Conclusion (verses 21-23)
 - A. God sees all (verse 21)

B. So wickedness is punished (verses 22-23)⁴⁴

4.2.7.3 *English translation of the Hebrew text of Proverbs 5:1-23*

1. My son, be attentive to my wisdom; incline your ear to my understanding.
2. So that you may keep discretion, and your lips may guard knowledge.
3. For the lips of the strange woman drip honey, and her palate is smoother than oil.
4. However, her end is bitter as wormwood, sharp as a double-edged sword.
5. Her feet go down to death, her steps hold fast to *sheol*.
6. Lest, she goes straight (in) the path of life, her ways wander, (but) she does not know (it).
7. Now, my sons, listen to me, and do not depart from the words of my words mouth.
8. Put your way away from her, and do not go near to the door of her house.
9. Lest you give your glory to others, and your years to the merciless.
10. Lest the strange take their fill of your strength, and your labour to the house of an alien.
11. And you groan in the end of your (life), when your flesh and body are consumed.
12. Moreover, you say, how I have hated discipline, and my heart despised reproof.
13. And I did not listen to the voice of my teachers, and I did not incline my ear to my instructors.
14. I was almost in utter ruin in the assembly and congregation.

⁴⁴ Cf, p. 59-60.

15. Drink water from your own cistern, and flowing water from your own well.
16. Should your springs be scattered abroad, streams in the streets?
17. Let them be for you alone, and not for strangers with you.
18. May your fountain be blessed, and rejoice in the wife of your youth.
19. A lovely hind and graceful gazelle let her love constantly satisfy you, go astray with her love always.
20. And my son, why are you going astray with a strange woman, and embracing the bosom of an alien.
21. For the ways of man (are) before the eyes of the Lord, and He makes level all his paths.
22. His iniquities ensnare him, and he is caught in the cords of his sin.
23. He dies for lack of discipline, and because of his great folly, he is lost.

4.2.7.4 *Grammatical and theological analysis of Proverbs 5:1-23*

Verse 1 serves as the introduction of the entire instruction in which the son's attentiveness is required. The son is called to pay attention to his father's wisdom and to his words of insight. Delitzsch (1874:118) observes, "It is the father of the youth who here requests a willing ear to his wisdom of life, gained in the way of many years' experience and observation." Delitzsch's observation also explains the question that has consistently troubled the commentators of this section. They did not understand why the father is caling wisdom and understanding his own, whereas it was never done elsewhere in the instructions.

תְּבוּנָה is from the verb בִּין, which means, "to understand" (Brown *et al.*, 1906:746). In nominal form it means "understanding" (Koehler *et al.*, 1985:107). It describes an insight, which includes what is right, just, and fair, every good path, wisdom (Prov. 10:23), patience (Prov. 14:29), keeping the law (Prov. 28:7), and shunning evil (Job 28:28) (Fretheim, 1997:652).

לְשׁוֹר in verse 2 is composed of the preposition לְ with a *qal* infinitive construct of שָׁמַר, which means "to keep". The infinitive construct with the preposition לְ

introduces a consequential clause (Williams, 1976:36). It expresses the consequences of paying attention to the father's wisdom and understanding. Attentiveness to the father's wisdom will result in *מְנוּחָה* in the life of the young person. *מְנוּחָה* is a feminine plural noun from the root *נ.ח.ה*, which means "to ponder, consider, devise" (Koehler *et al.*, 1985:259). In the nominal form it means "cleverness and discretion" (Koehler *et al.*, 1985:510). It is a trait that accompanies the wise character (Hartley, 1997:1112). One who has discretion acts only after careful deliberation (Greenstone, 1950:46).

The second consequence is that the young person's lips shall guard the knowledge. His lips will distil knowledge, which will protect him against honey-lip (Delitzsch, 1874:119). This also implies that the son will be guided in his speech by knowledge, and not by the impulse of the moment (Greenstone, 1950:46).

In verse 3, *כִּי* introduces a causal clause (Williams, 1976:72), which states the reason why the young person should keep discretion and guard knowledge as stated in verse 2. Discretion and knowledge will protect the young person from the strange woman whose lips drips with honey. *זָרָה* is from the root *ז.ר.ה*, meaning, "to turn aside" (Koehler *et al.*, 1985:253). In the nominal form, its synonym is *כְּרִי* "stranger, foreigner" (Grisanti *et al.*, 1997:1092). This refers to that which is alien and to be excluded. Here the strange woman is the adulteress who has betrayed her husband (Murphy, 1998:31). Thus we cannot describe this woman as a prostitute (McKane, 1970:314; Toy, 1899:104), but as another man's wife (Delitzsch, 1874:119; Fox, 2000:191; Garrett, 1993:91). Her lips drip with honey, and her palate is smoother than oil. Here we have images that describe the delight of her pleasures that she used to allure the young person. They also describe the power of speech (Murphy, 1998:31). In verse 2, the young person is enjoined to have discretion and knowledge in order to withstand the deceptive words of the strange woman. McKane (1970:314) describes her speech as follows, "She speaks in accents which ooze seductive charm, and her voice, which is smoother than oil, draws her victim irresistibly towards mystery,

excitement and delight.” The smoothness of her speech denotes flattery or hypocrisy.

What parents are reminded of here is the nurturing of their children’s discernment, because speech is a powerful tool that the wicked use to bring destruction to the lives of the young ones.

In verse 4, אֶתְרִיחָהּ is feminine noun with third person feminine singular suffix. It can be translated as “her end” (Kidner, 1964:69). The suffix refers back to זֹרָה. This word, then, refers to the end or conclusion of the actions of the strange woman (Waltke, 2004:309). This is the end of smoothness and sweetness of her speech. This verse can be interpreted in comparison with Prov. 23:32, which describes the after-effects of wine. It says, “In the end it bites like a snake and poisons like a viper.” The concern of the parent here is not the end of the woman as such, but the fate she brings upon the youth who gives in to her lures (Fox, 2000:192, Greenstone, 1950:47). אֶתְרִיחָהּ expresses the final result of a relationship with a strange woman (Waltke, 2004:309).

מָרָה means, “bitter” (Waltke, 2004:309). It refers to the sour taste of wormwood, or the bitter herbs (Ex. 12:8, Num 9:11) eaten at Passover (Smith, 1997:1110). Bitterness is the result of giving in to the allurements of the strange woman (Waltke, 2004:309). The end result is as bitter as לְעֵנָה (wormwood). This plant is known for its bitterness. It is used in the Bible figuratively for bitterness and sorrow. Toy (1899:104) argues that wormwood is a symbol in the Old Testament of suffering as the result of man’s injustice (Amos 5:7, 6:12). In Amos 6:12, “wormwood” was used in parallel with “poison”. Therefore, for the young person who gives in to the temptation of the strange woman, his life will end being characterised by bitterness of the wormwood instead of the sweetness of honey (Aitken, 1986:63).

The end of the strange woman will be sharp as a double-edged sword. חֶרֶב פִּיּוֹת expresses the anguish and disillusionment that will be experienced by those who heed the call of the strange woman (Garrett, 1993:91). חֶרֶב פִּיּוֹת literally means a “sword of mouths” (Waltke, 2004:309). The blade of a sword is

thought of as a mouth that eats its victims (Fox, 2000:192). Delitzsch (1874:120) concludes his comment on this verse as follows, "The end in which the disguised seduction terminates is bitter as the bitterest and cutting as that which cuts the most."

Verse 5 continues with the consequences that follow the life of a strange woman. The woman's manner of life is represented as fatal to earthly wellbeing. Entering into relations with her is to go the way that shortens one's days (Toy, 1899:104). Her way of life leads to death or to *sheol*. Her way may look good and attractive, but at the end, there is no life (Aitken, 1986:63). Clifford correctly argues that death comes prematurely to those who become her disciples, for the evil life she advocates invites retribution (Clifford, 1999:70).

It is not easy to translate and to interpret verse 6. The first difficulty lies in the fact that it is not easy to determine the person of the two verbs in the sentences, i.e. *וְהָיָה* and *וְהָיָה*. They are either a third person feminine or a second person masculine. Secondly it is not easy to translate *וְ*. The conjunction *וְ* introduces a subordinate clause that states an undesired state (Fox, 2000:193). It expresses fear or precaution (Williams, 1976:75). The question of the person to whom the verbs refer, can be solved by interpreting verse 6 as part of verses 4 and 5, in which the future of the strange woman is the focus. Thus, the two verbs refer to the strange woman. Fox, (2000:193) says, "Verse 6a looks into the adulteress's mind, exposing motives she herself is unaware of, just as verse 6b tells us what she does not know."

וְ was used here elliptically, and we have to take verse 5b as its main clause. Then it can be translated as follows, "Her steps hold fast to sheol, lest she goes straight (she refuses to go straight) in the path of life." It is the strange woman's wish to avoid going on the path of life. She does not merely blunder onto sheol's path; she chooses it and holds to it resolutely. She loves it (Fox, 2000:193).

וְ describes the course of her life, which does not have direction. Its outcome is death. This seems to mean that she moves about to lead the young man astray (Ringgren, 1998:294). However, she does not know that her course of life leads

to death (Van Leeuwen, 1997:67). This is the case with all the evildoers and all who follow them; they do not know on what they may stumble. The young person is warned here that he will have the same fate if he listens to the words of the strange woman (Garrett, 1993:91).

In verse 7, **וְעַתָּה** is a logical particle that connects the previous verse and the following one (Waltke, 2004:311). In verses 1-6 the description of a strange woman was given, and in verse 7 the father, as a matter of urgency, emphasises the importance of his son paying attention to his words. The addressees here are in the plural: “sons” instead of the singular “son”. (For explanation, see comment on Proverbs 4:1).

In verse 8, **הִרְחַק** is a *hiphil* imperative second person masculine singular from the root **רחק**. In the *qal* form the verb means “to be distant”, while the *hiphil* form means “to put away” or “to remove” (Koehler *et al.*, 1985:887). The word may be used to indicate someone’s complete absence (Lam. 1:16a). It may also be used in the sense of abstaining from something (Ex. 23:7a) (O’Connell, 1997:1100). The son is commanded here to follow a way far from the strange woman. He is counselled to keep at a distance so as not to expose himself to the temptation from the strange woman (Greenstone, 1950:48). The second part of the sentence emphasises the meaning of the first part in which he is told not to go near to her house’s door. Therefore, one can conclude that the young person is to avoid any possible contact with the strange woman (Van Leeuwen, 1997:67). Avoidance is, therefore, a way that the parents propagate for fighting temptation.

Verses 9 and 10 will be studied together here, because they share the same semantic and syntactical features (Waltke, 2004:311). They are both negative telic clauses, introduced by **כִּי**, which is a particle that introduces a negative final clause (Waltke *et al.*, 1990:639). These two verses stipulate the loss that the young person will experience if he fails to give heed to his father’s counsel. He will lose his **הוֹד** (vigour, glory), **שָׁנוֹת** (years), **כֹּחַ** (strength) and **אֲצִבִּים** (things gained with pain). He will lose these things to **אֲחֵרִים** (others), **אֲכֹזְרִים** (cruel or merciless people), **נָכְרִים** (strangers) and **נִכְרִי** (aliens).

הַיּוֹד is a word that is commonly used for kings and for God, but here it refers to a young person's manly vigour, labour, wealth and health (Collins, 1997:1016). שְׁנוֹתָיִךְ should be read as a synonymous parallel of הַיּוֹד in the first part of verse 9, referring to "years of life", in which the young person is to display his magnificence.

כֹּחֲךָ (your strength) may refer to potency; capacity to produce. This may be expressed in sexual terms (Job 40:16, Gen. 49:3), or it may express the product of the earth's potency (Gen. 4:12; Job 3:39). It may also refer to physical strength (Judg. 16:5) and to the general ability to cope with situations (Harris, *et al.* 1980:437). Here the reference may be to the sexual products of the young person, i.e., he will not have his own children, who may be born because of adultery (Fox, 2000:195).

עֲצָרְךָ refers to laborious activity or a pain-filled labour. It may also refer to the product of toil, that is to say, wealth (Fox, 2000:195).

נָכְרִי, אֲכֻזִּי, אֲחֵרִים and נָכְרִי are synonyms, meaning another person; one not in your family. They are merciless and dangerous to the young person's life and they are to be avoided. The young person is seriously warned here of the consequences that will follow a relationship with a strange woman. The consequences are that he is destroyed, personally and socially. He loses his dignity and the respect of his neighbour. He wastes all his resources on foreigners (Aitken, 1986:63). Due to a young person's relationship with a strange woman, he will not become what he ought to become in the community. He shall lose his offspring, wealth, and dignity to strangers. Strangers will benefit from his wealth, not his own community or family.

In verse 11, נִהְחָה is a *qal* imperfect second person masculine singular of the verb נָחַח which means "to growl, groan" (Koehler *et al.*, 1985:599). נָחַח refers to the hollow roaring of the sea (Is. 5:30) and growling of the lion (Prov. 28:15). It also describes the groaning of the disillusioned profligate and the exiles' response in grief at Jerusalem's fall (Ezek. 24:23). McKane (1970:317), in his explanation of

נחם says, "What is envisaged is an extremity of destitution and exhaustion which evokes an elemental, animal cry of anguish."

בְּאַחֲרֵי־יָדְךָ in your end" is interpreted in various ways. The concept refers to the future, not to the death of a young person. Toy (1899:109) argues that it refers to the time when the results of the young person's behaviour show themselves. There will be regrets and remorse at the end, but it will be too late because his health and wealth will be gone by then. The second part of verse 11 paints the same picture given in verses 9 and 10 of losing all that makes life enjoyable (Toy, 1899:109). Fox (2000:195) also argues that losing one's flesh and body refers to disease.

Thus, if the son failed to listen to his father's instruction, his future will be characterised by regret and remorse, and even by disease.

Verses 12 and 13 echo the groaning mentioned in verse 11. In his regrets, he will be surprised to see how he hated and rejected corrections and instructions from his parents, and he will be ashamed of his foolishness. These verses impart the understanding in the mind of a young person that one has to take seriously the instruction given by parents, because they will save the life of a young person from an unhappy fate. For a young person to embrace instructions and sound correction from his parents requires humility and acknowledgement of personal weakness.

It is not easy to interpret verse 14, as it is not easy to fathom what is behind the verse. What appears to be the idea of the verse is that public disgrace will follow he who follows the way of the strange woman. The community will also condemn him. Hubbard (1989:92) concludes the following from verse 14: "Made public, adultery brings personal shame, humiliation to loved ones, and loss of respect in the larger community."

In verse 15, the verb of the phrase שָׁתֵּה מִיַּם is a *qal* imperative of שָׁתָה, "to drink" (Koehler, *et al.*, 1985:1014). The phrase should not be interpreted literally. It is a metaphor for sexual pleasure, as in Proverbs 9:17 (Fox, 2000:199). בּוֹר is a pit that has been dug in the ground for storing water (Lev. 11:36), grain and other

dry goods (1 Sam. 19:22). Here it refers to a cistern that was used to hold rainwater in a metaphorical sense, referring to one's wife (Beyer *et al.*, 1997:620-21). באר is another form of a cistern. It refers to a source of water continually replenished by underground springs. It contains flowing water. It is also used here as a metaphor for one's wife (Fox, 2000:199; Hubbard, 1989:92). The same images are used in the Song of Songs. In the Song of Songs 4:12b and 4:15 the lover calls his wife, "spring sealed", "a garden spring", and, "a well of living water" (Fox, 2000:199). A well is a source of refreshment. McKane (1970:318) argues that verse 15 teaches the young person that he should have sexual intercourse with his wife alone. The young person is given a remedy for avoiding the strange woman in his life. For the young person to avoid strange women in his life, he should strive to maintain a genuine relationship with his wife and to confine his sexual gratification to intercourse with his own wife. This is the way towards personal security, sexual delight and blessing (Van Leeuwen, 1997:69).

Verse 16 is difficult to translate due to textual and syntactical difficulties.⁴⁵ In considering the context, especially verse 15, one is led to agree with those who suggest that verse 16 should be translated as an interrogative sentence.

מְטַהֲרִים and פְּלִיגְרִים are obviously used as a continuation of the sexual imagery begun in verse 15 (Whybray, 1994:90). Verse 16 is a warning against adultery that can be committed by the young person. Springs and streams symbolise sources of enjoyment. Therefore, the young person is dissuaded from seeking his sexual pleasure from the streets (Toy, 1899:113) and encouraged to satisfy himself at home with his own wife.

Verse 17 appears to emphasise the meaning of verse 16, namely that his sexual pleasures belong to himself alone; they are not to be shared with strangers. This implies that the young person is to be faithful to his wife and share sexual love with her alone. He is advised to spend his sexual energy at home, producing children, rather than giving himself to strangers (Ross, 1991:929).

⁴⁵ The Masoretic text suggests that particle וְ be inserted in order to make the sentence a negative final clause.

Verse 18 continues with the emphasis made in verses 15-17, in which the young person is encouraged in faithfulness in his marital relationship. יהי is a *qal* jussive third person masculine singular of the verb היה (Koehler *et al.*, 1985:292). The jussive here expresses a wish or a prayer for a continual blessing (Waltke, 2004:320). The phrase יהי מקורך ברוך, “may your fountain be blessed”, is understood in various ways. McKane (1970:319) understands that it refers to the blessing of the wife who bears many children. In other words, “blessings” here refer to the children who will be produced by his wife. Fox (2000:202) argues that the term “blessed” shows that the reward promised is fertility rather than erotic pleasure. McKane and Fox’s arguments introduce a new theme, which is alien in this context. There is no mention of fertility in this context. Moreover, the second part of verse 18 continues with the theme of sexual enjoyment and fulfilment as in verses 15-17. Toy (1899:114) argues, in contrast to McKane and Fox, that the fountain may be regarded as blessed when it is enjoyed in accordance with the laws of God and man, that is, in the marriage relation. This is in line with the theme emphasised in this context. In addition, it is further supported by the second part of verse 18, in which the young person is urged to enjoy the wife of his youth. The young person is therefore advised that the proper course of action is to find pleasure in a fulfilling marriage. One should therefore rejoice in the wife who has from the vigour of youth shared the excitement and satisfaction, the joy and the contentment of a divinely blessed, monogamous relationship (Ross, 1991:930).

In verse 19, אֵילַת אֲהָבִים (a hind of love) and יְעִלְתָּן (a gazelle of grace) are phrases that compare the love of the young person’s wife to these two animals (Waltke, 2004:321). Delitzsch (1874:131) says, “These animals are commonly used in Semitic poetry as figures of female beauty on account of the delicate beauty of their limbs and their sprightly black eyes.” In the Song of Songs 2:9, 17, the young girl describes her lover as a gazelle. In this song (4:5), he compares her breasts to the fawns of the gazelle, which connote grace, tenderness and affection. Thus, the love of the young person’s wife is described here as graceful, lovely, and sexy (Fox, 2000:202). This is further confirmed by the word אֲהָבִים

which refers to a sexual relationship (Koehler *et al.*, 1985:16). *חֲדָיָהּ* is a plural of a rare word in the Old Testament, which means “breast”. The Septuagint vocalised the consonants as follows *חֲדָיָהּ*, which means “her love”. However, the sense that is required by a new vocalisation of the MT can be acquired, even if the MT reading is retained, because the idea of a woman’s breasts fulfilling the sexual desire of her lover is not strange in the Old Testament and in other Ancient Near East wisdom literature.

יִכְנֹךְ is a piel form, with a causative sense of the verb *כָּנָה*, which means “to be satiated or have one’s fill” (Harris *et al.*, 1980:835).

בְּכָל־עֵת, “in all the time”, means constantly, or, “on a regular basis”. This is how it was used in Proverbs 6:14. Thus, we have here a father’s call to his son to find his satisfaction or the fulfilment of his sexual desire in his wife. His wife should regularly satisfy him.

בְּצֵאתָּ בְּתֶהָהּ הַנְּשִׂיָּה תִכְוִיד, “go astray in her love always”. The verb *שָׁגָה* actually means “to go astray” (Koehler *et al.*, 1985:948), and it always refers to moral error. However, here it means “to go astray”, but without any reference to imperfection or impropriety (Fox, 2000:203). Delitzsch (1874:131) explains his understanding of *שָׁגָה* as follows: “*שָׁגָה* properly signifies to err from the way, therefore figuratively, with *כָּ* of a matter, to be wholly captivated by her, so that one is no longer in his own power, can no longer restrain himself”. Van Leeuwen (1997:69) argues that the verb conveys the unfettered passion of love. The son, therefore, is admonished not to go astray with strange women, but to find marital pleasure with his own wife. In the marriage bed, inhibitions are to be left behind; one has to get drunk on lovemaking (Fox, 2000:203). *חֲמִיד* emphasises that the young person should always, on a regular basis, get drunk on lovemaking with his wife alone.

Verse 20 is built on verse 19. The rhetorical question that is asked here is based on the explanation given in verse 19. In verse 19 the son is told to get drunk on lovemaking with his wife, to find his fulfilment and satisfaction from his wife alone. If one is satisfied with one’s wife, there will be no need to find satisfaction from

the strange woman. Wandering with a strange woman is simply folly (Van Leeuwen, 1997:69).

Verses 21-23 serve as a conclusion to the entire instruction. They seem to lack thematic unity within themselves, but what they contain serves as a conclusion. The conclusion reinforces the lesson in its entirety. Verse 21 states that every human deed is exposed before the eyes of the Lord. This implies that human deeds will be followed by retribution expressed through the direct action of God (Clifford, 1997:72). It is clear from the second part of verse 21 that God weighs and judges all that a man does. Yahweh sees every person's way of conduct, unlike the woman who did not see her own path (verse 6).

Verse 22 reveals the second way in which retribution is expressed, i.e., it is expressed through the inherent self-correcting action of the universe. The sinner brings punishment upon himself through his way of life.

Verse 23 reveals the end of the wicked, which is his death. This is his fate, because he lacks *מוסר* which means that he failed to internalise the instruction from his parents. Thus he lacks moral discipline and self-control, which are the consequences of paying attention to parental instruction.

4.2.7.5 *Brief summary of Proverbs 5:1-23*

This instruction deals with one of the serious temptations that young people meet in life, i.e., sex. The young person is taught in this instruction how to behave sexually. The instruction introduces the third character, which is the wife of the young person. If her husband appreciates her, she is the best protection from the seductive woman. Van Leeuwen (1997:71) says, "If males heeded the parental advice to be faithful in marriage and to avoid illicit liaisons, female prostitution and adultery would obviously cease."

The central contrast of the poem is between the wrong woman (verses 3-14) and the right woman (verses 15-19). The foreign woman is depicted here as a danger from outside. She takes away the man's strength and resources, whereas the wife is depicted as a security from inside. We, therefore, learn here that adultery

can lead to the loss of health, family wealth, reputation, and become the cause of bitter regret. The losses can be beyond recovery, whereas the remedy is one's love to his wife, and be gladdened by her beauty.

Here we also observe the openness of the parent to his son about sexual matters. He is not shy to explain to his son what sex is all about, because of his passion for his son's well-being. He is aware of the dangers facing his son if he is not well prepared in sexual matters.

4.2.8 Instruction VIII: Proverbs 6:1-19

There is general agreement among scholars that Proverbs 6:1-19 does not form part of the instruction genre in Proverbs 1-9. However, this section is included here as part of the instruction genre, because it contains material that is important in the upbringing of a child. It contains inner obstacles, such as poor judgement and laziness, which hinder the younger person to acquire wisdom. Thus, it is of fundamental importance that we look into this section in our search for a way of rearing children. The section is composed of four sections, i.e., 6:1-5; 6:6-11; 6:12-15; and 6:16-19⁴⁶.

4.2.8.1 Proverbs 6:1-5

4.2.8.1.1 Hebrew text of Proverbs 6:1-5

¹ בְּנֵי אִם־עֲרֻבָה לְרֵעֵךְ תִּקְעֶתָ לֹרֶךְ כַּפֶּיךָ:

² נֹקְשֶׁת בְּאִמְרֵי־פִיךָ נִלְכְּדָה בְּאִמְרֵי־פִיךָ:

³ עֲשֵׂה זֹאת אִפּוּא בְּנֵי וְהִנָּצַל כִּי בָאתָ בְּכַף־רֵעֶךָ לֶךְ הַתְּרַפֶּס

וְרָחַב רֵעֶיךָ:

⁴⁶ Cf. pp. 60-62.

אַל־תִּתֵּן שָׁנָה לְעֵינֶיךָ וְתִגְדָּלָה לְעַפְפֶּיךָ:⁴

הַנִּצֵּל כַּצֶּבִי מִיַּד וּכְצִפּוֹר מִיַּד יִקּוּשׁ⁵

4.2.8.1.2 Schematic presentation of the structure of Proverbs 6:1-5

This epigram does not have all the characteristics of an instruction, such as an introductory call to attention and a formal conclusion. However, it can be structured as follows:

- A. Circumstances: If you have gone surety (verses 1-3b)
- B. Advice: Beseech your neighbour to release you (verses 3c-5)

4.2.8.1.3 English translation of Proverbs 6:1-5

1. My son, if you go surety on behalf of your neighbour, and you shake your hands for a stranger,
2. (If) you are scared by the words of your mouth and are caught by the words of your mouth.
3. Then, do this, my son, save yourself for you have entered into the hand of your neighbour, go, trample and storm against your neighbour.
4. Do not give sleep to your eyes, and light sleep to your eyelids.
- 5 Rescue your self like a gazelle from the hand⁴⁷ of the hunter, and like a bird from the hand of the fowler.

4.2.8.1.4 Grammatical and theological analysis of Proverbs 6:1-5

All four clauses in verses 1 and 2 are parallel conditional clauses governed by a single אִם in verse 1.

⁴⁷ There is no need to change the text as suggested by various interpreters (Walke, 2004:326), because 5a finds its meaning when interpreted within the context of 5b.

עֲרַבְתָּ is a *qal* perfect second person masculine singular of the root verb עֲרַב which means “to enter (under one’s authority), stand bail for, go surety for, stand up for, go surety for in behalf of” (Koehler *et al.*, 1953:731-732). The verb עֲרַב literally means “to intervene” with a creditor on behalf of a debtor (Clifford, 1999:75). The verb occurs several times in the book of Proverbs (6:1, 11, 15; 17:18 & other verses) that warn of the grave dangers involved in gambling away one’s financial security by pledging to cover another’s possible business losses (Wakely, 1997:512). Fox (2000:212) describes the verb as to mean, “to take responsibility” or, “to make a commitment”. He further argues that it refers here to giving surety for a loan. רַע and זֶר do not refer to two groups of people that one has dealings with, but to any person with whom one has dealings with (Toy, 1899:120). Delitzsch (1874:135-36) argues, “The parallels 11:15, 20:16, where זֶר denotes the person whom one represents, show that in both lines one and the same person is meant; זֶר is in the Proverbs equivalent to אָחֵר. Thus, both רַע and זֶר denote him to whom one stands in any kind of relation. McKane (1970:321) describes both terms as referring to a neighbour who is disorientated with respect to his own community and is a social misfit.

תִּקְעָה is a *qal* perfect second person masculine singular, from the root תִּקַּע meaning “to blow” (Brown *et al.*, 1906:1075). When the root verb is used with כַּף (hand), it means “to shake hands” (to pledge one’s words) (Koehler *et al.*, 1985:1039). The word has been formed in imitation of the sound it describes, e.g. in Genesis 31:25 it describes the pitching of Jacob’s tent. In Psalm 47:1, 2 it is used to denote the sound of clapping hands (Klingbeil, 1997:329). In this case, the striking of hands signifies the legal action of pledging oneself to another party (Klingbeil, 1997:330). תִּקַּע has the same meaning as עֲרַב. Fox, (2000:212) points out that תִּקַּע signifies the conclusion of an agreement.

נִקְשָׁה in verse 2 is a *niphal* form of the root יָקַשׁ, which means “to be snared or caught” (Domeris, 1997b:525). The *niphal* form here suggests an action of tripping someone up by the words of his mouth. In other words, he has committed himself to act on behalf of his neighbour, and in doing so it calls him to

fulfil his promise. It is impossible for him to be released unless he fulfils his promise.

Verse 3 is an apodosis of the conditional clause. It spells out what the young person should do if he is guarantor of a debtor that is not in a position to pay back his debt.

הִנָּצֵל is a *niphal* imperative, which means, "to be rescued or saved" (Koehler *et al.*, 1985:630). The *niphal* has the reflexive sense "to deliver oneself or escape" (Koehler *et al.*, 1985:630). The young person is urged here to save himself from an unwise verbal promise to a neighbour (Hubbard, 1997:142). כִּי introduces a reason why he should save himself. The reason is that he has come under the authority of his neighbour (literally in the hand of his neighbour). He is under the authority of the person he has promised to pay back if the debtor should default. The creditor may decide to take all his possessions if he does not fulfil his promise.

הִתְרַבֵּס is a *hitpael* imperative form of רָבַס, which in the *qal* means "to trample" with the sense of troubling the object. The *hitpael* should be translated here in this sense. It does not mean "trample your self" here, because it has to be translated in parallel with רָהַב, which means "to storm against". Thus, the young person is advised "to trample" and "to storm against" the neighbour who has betrayed the trust placed in him (Giese, 1992:406). Giese (1992:406) summarises the main point of verse 3 as follows: "The point here is that when facing personal damages from the forfeiture of the debtor, all is not lost. Instead of a resignation to present circumstances, the debtor should make aggressive efforts to move into the action of fulfilling his responsibility." The imperative לֵךְ implies that one has to do that as a matter of urgency and that one should try to resolve the issue as soon as possible.

Verses 4 and 5 add emphasis to what has been said in verse 3, namely the immediateness of the matter. He should not delay, but act promptly.

4.2.8.1.5 Brief summary of Proverbs 6:1-5

In this instruction the father warns his son against rushing into ill-considered pledges on behalf of other people, because it puts one's property and even one's person under the power of another person (Prov. 22:26-27). The practice of surety is, in fact, viewed as folly by other sayings in the book of Proverbs (11:15, 17:18, and 20:16). However, our instruction here indicates that one can practise surety, but that one should not give surety beyond one's means. One should pledge an amount that is within one's means to pay. The son is also urged that he should pay back what he had pledged to the creditor as soon as possible (Ross, 1991:932). If he fails, he has to sit down with the creditor and find a way of releasing himself from the agreement. Personal freedom is what the parent wants to see his son enjoying in his life. Honesty and faithfulness are virtues that parents instil in the mind of the child, because they will protect him or her in life.

4.2.8.2 Proverbs 6:6-11

4.2.8.2.1 Hebrew text of Proverbs 6:6-11

⁶ לֹךְ-אַל-נִמְלֶה עָצֹל רֹאֵה דְרָכֶיהָ וַחֲכָם:

⁷ אֲשֶׁר אֵין-לָהּ קֶצֶין שֹׁטֵר וּמַשִּׁל:

⁸ תָּכִין בְּקִיץ לַחֲמָה אֲגִרָה בְּקֶצֶיר מֵאֲכָלָהּ:

⁹ עַד-מָתִי עָצֹל תִּשְׁכַּב מָתִי תִקּוּם מִשְׁנָתִי:

¹⁰ מָעַט שָׁנוֹת מָעַט תְּנוּמוֹת מָעַט חֶבֶק יָדַיִם לְשֹׁכֵב:

¹¹ וּבֹא-כְמֹהֶלֶךְ רֹאשֶׁךְ וּמַחֲסֶרֶךְ כְּאִישׁ מִגֵּן:

4.2.8.2.2 Schematic presentation of the structure of Proverbs 6:6-11

This instruction has a straightforward structure.

- A. The ant's behaviour and its consequences (verses 6-8)
- B. The lazy person's behaviour and its consequences (verses 9-11)

4.2.8.2.3 English translation of Proverbs 6:6-11

6. Go to the ant, O' sluggard, observe her ways and become wise.
7. There is no chief, officer or ruler over her.
8. She prepares her food in summer and gathers her food in the harvest.
9. How long, O' sluggard, will you sleep! When will you rise from your sleep!
10. Little sleep, little slumber, little folding of hands to sleep.
11. Your poverty will come like a vagabond, and your want like an armed man.

4.2.8.2.4 Grammatical and theological analysis of Proverbs 6:6-11

In verse 6, עֲצֵל means "sluggard" (Brown *et al.*, 1906:782). The word is found in the wisdom literature in discourses about sloth and laziness. The description of the sluggard usually entails ridicule and censorship, especially as a motivation to the young person and other people to avoid a life characterised by laziness (Fox, 2000:216). The sluggard makes ridiculous excuses, imagining the worst should meet him if he ventures out (Prov. 26:13, 22:13). The irritation that the sluggard brings to the employer is like vinegar to the teeth and like smoke to the eyes (Prov. 10:26).

Verse 6 does not imply that the young person, who is the audience, is a sluggard, but that he is enjoined to fight laziness in his life. He is warned against such behaviour by listening to the chastisement of a sluggard (Fox, 2000:216). The sluggard is sent to learn, to get wisdom from the ant. By observing the way of the ant, he will be ashamed of himself and learn wisdom. The ant's way shows self-discipline, foresight and prudent industry (Waltke, 2004:336).

In verse 7 three words are used, which refer to leadership, מֶשֶׁל and קָצִין, טֶמֶר and מֶשֶׁל. Toy (1899:123) describes how the three words are used in the Old Testament. He argues that קָצִין refers both to civil and military leaders (Judg. 11:6; Is. 3:6). טֶמֶר

refers to a roll-officer, who keeps a list of names and supervises the men at their work (Ex. 5:6, Deut. 20:5), whereas מַלְאךְ is a general term for a ruler. The point here is that ants are a model of diligence and hard work, despite the fact that they do not have a structural sense of organisation like human beings. The parent is here impressed by the self-motivation of the ants, which he wants to see in the life of his child. If the ant, a lesser creature, performs its tasks without coercion and supervision, humans can and should do no less (Fox, 2000:216).

Two clauses in verse 8 repeat the same idea with different words. Verse 8 exposes the diligence and wisdom of the ants, which the son has to emulate. Summer is a season of harvest, and thus a wise son gathers food in the summer (Prov. 10:5) as does the industrious ant. The productivity and diligence of ants are praised here for the son to embrace.

Verse 9 contains a rebuke to the sluggard. The rebuke is introduced by עַד־מָתַי as in the case in Proverbs 1:22, Ex. 10:3, and 1 Sam. 1:14. עַד־מָתַי is a combination of a preposition and an adverb, which serve as an interrogative article. It introduces the question, "how long" (Koehler *et al.*, 1985:680). This rhetorical question admonishes the sluggard to repent of his foolish laziness and to get up quickly and redeem the time before it is too late (Waltke, 2004:338). He is rebuked from indulgence in too much sleep, which prevents him from being a hard worker. Concerning sleep Van Leeuwen (1997:75) says: "Sleep, like sexual desire and ambition for gain, must be kept within its proper limits, lest opportunity fly away and one come to poverty."

Verse 10 describes what the sluggard says and does when he is aroused from his sleep. When the sluggard is aroused from sleep to go and work, instead of waking up, he asks for more sleep. Drowsiness is the natural ally of sloth (McKane, 1970:324).

יָעַם חֶבֶק יָדַי לְשֹׁכֵב is the second clause of verse 10, which Toy (1899:124) describes as meaning "to lie comfortably, or to compose one's self to sleep". In Ecclesiastes 4:5 the same phrase is used to signify stupid activity. The

preposition ל before the infinitive construct form of שכב expresses a purpose (Gesenius, 1910:348). He folds his hands to go to sleep again.

Due to the carelessness of the sluggard, he does not have the alertness and foresight to anticipate difficulties ahead of him and to devise a means to counter them. He is not aware that laziness will bring destitution and poverty on him. Poverty will come upon the sluggard like קהלֹךְ. קהלֹךְ is a piel participle of the root הלך, which means, "to walk about", and in the nominative it means "wanderer" or "vagabond" (Fox, 2000:216). Toy (1899:125) describes קהלֹךְ as a "highwayman" whose purpose on the highway is always bad: it is to rob the road users. איש־מִגֵּן, meaning "armed man", is used here in parallel with קהלֹךְ. It also expresses the danger that is awaiting the sluggard. Poverty, because of laziness, is depicted here as a powerful and ruthless enemy who destroys one's substance (Toy, 1899:125). The young person is shown this reality that he avoids sloth and laziness in his life. He is called to characterise his life by hard work and diligence.

4.2.8.2.5 Brief summary of Proverbs 6: 6-11

In this section the parent discourages laziness in his son. The son is asked to observe how ants work, because their work is characterised by diligence and commitment, even though there is no leader. The young person's life is to be adorned with diligence. Laziness leads to shameful poverty and ruin, because it is a subset of folly (Van Leeuwen, 1997:78). The sluggard does not realise that circumstances in life change, opportunities come and pass, and that one has to act in the present to ensure one's wellbeing in the future (Van Leeuwen, 1997:78).

4.2.8.3 Proverbs 6: 12-15

4.2.8.3.1 Hebrew text of Proverbs 6:12-15

אָדָם בְּלִיעַל אִישׁ אֶן הוֹלֵךְ עֲקֻשׁוֹת פָּה:²

קָרַץ בְּעֵינָיו מִלֵּל בְּרָגְלוֹ מִרְחַ בְּאַצְבָּעָתָיו:¹³

14 תִּהְפֹּכֹת בְּלִבּוֹ חֲרָשׁ רָע בְּכָל־עֵת מִדִּינִים יִשְׁלַח:

15 עַל־כֵּן פִּתְאֹם יָבוֹא אִידּוֹ פֶּתַע יִשָּׁבֵר וְאֵין מְרַפָּא:

4.2.8.3.2 Schematic presentation of the structure of Proverbs 6:12-15

- I. Man of depravity (verse 12a)
- II. His behaviour (verses 12b-14)
 - A. He walks with perversity of mouth (verse 12b)
 - B. He winks with his eyes (verse 13a)
 - C. He scrapes with his feet (verse 13b)
 - D. He points with his fingers (verse 13c)
 - E. He devises evil with perversity in his heart (verse 14a)
 - F. He continually sows discord (verse 14b)
- III. Punishment of the man of depravity (verse 15)

4.2.8.3.3 English translation of the Hebrew text of Proverbs 6:12-15

12. Man of depravity⁴⁸ walks about (with) perversity (crookedness) of mouth.
13. He winks with his eyes, scrapes with his feet⁴⁹, and points with his fingers.
14. He devises evil with perversity in his heart, he continually sow discord.
15. Therefore, his calamity will suddenly come, in a moment, he will be broken, and there will be no healing.

⁴⁸ אִישׁ אֶדְוָה אֶדְוָה אֶדְוָה are put together in translation, because they are synonymous.

⁴⁹ The Hebrew writing form of the word is in singular form, but translated here as the plural form, because that is its reading form, and it makes sense in the context in which it is translated.

4.2.8.3.4 Grammatical and theological analysis of Proverbs 6:12-15

In verse 12, in the phrase אָדָם בְּלִיעַל the word בְּלִיעַל is used to describe a wide variety of evil-doers, such as rapists (Judg. 19:22), perjurers (1 Kgs. 21:10, Prov. 19:28), and drunkards (1 Sam. 1:16). It was also used to describe the sons of Eli (1 Sam. 2:12) (Fox, 2000:219). The word refers to a person who has become so wicked and corrupt that he is a detriment to society (Wegner, 1997:661). It defines a person who is wicked and agitates against all that is good (Waltke, 2004:342). בְּלִיעַל, therefore, refers to deep depravity, not mere worthlessness (Toy, 1899:125-126). Fox (2000:216) describes בְּלִיעַל as “to be of shoddy moral character, prone to wickedness and simple nastiness, and devoid of good sense and moral compunction.” Delitzsch (1874:143) and Toy (1899:125) view בְּלִיעַל as synonymous with אָנָן, and together they express general depravity. Van Leeuwen (1997:76) argues that בְּלִיעַל refers to persons who disrupt the social and moral order.

For the explanation of עֲקֻשׁוֹת פֶּה see an explication of Proverbs 4:24. The phrase עֲקֻשׁוֹת פֶּה describes the character of the wicked or perverse person. The wicked person goes about with crooked speech. Crooked speech twists reality upside down and inside out, and it breaks relations among people in the community (Van Leeuwen, 1997:76).

In verse 13 in the phrase קִרְץ בְּעֵינָיו, “he narrows his eyes”, קִרְץ is a *qal* active participle of the root קִרַץ (Kohler *et al.*, 1985:857). In the *qal* stem the root is associated with an insidious malicious gesture (Waltke, 2004:343). The translation of the root as “wink” is a very light or superficial translation, as it sometimes refers to happiness rather than hostility (Ps. 35:19). Here the reference is to a deceitful and malicious look. It is used here in the same sense that is used in Proverbs 10:10, where that kind of gesture causes sorrow. The same word was used in Proverbs 16:30 to describe a person who plans perverse things. He is described as the one who “shuts his eyes” and “bars his lips”. The intention here is a depiction of a harsh man whose eyes are closed to others’ trouble and who bars his lips in hard cruelty (Harris *et al.*, 1980:817). Thus, Fox

(2000:220) translates קרן as meaning “squint”. He further argues that squinting is thought to indicate a dishonest personality. Apart from crooked speech as the characteristic of the wicked man, he is again characterised here as a person with a personality disorder. מלל is a *qal* active participle of מלל, which means “to rub, to scrape”. Here it means to make signs with the foot (Koehler *et al.*, 1985:532). Fox (2000:221) argues that מלל is a movement that is to be understood as a restless shifting and shuffling; a sign of inner disquietude. מרה is a *hiphil* participle of מרה, which means “to direct, teach” (Koehler *et al.*, 1985:403). Here it means making signs with his fingers or finger-pointing, which expresses derision and derogation (Waltke, 2004:344). Toy (1899:126) explains verse 13 as follows: “The verse is a lively description of the silent, underhand procedures of mischief makers, the hints, suggestions, provocations, and signals that are effective in hatching quarrels or giving insults.”

Verse 14 continues with the description of the wicked person. From his perversity, he plans harm that affects other people and he causes discord among people. His wickedness infects others and spoils relationships all about him.

Verse 15 expresses the result of the mischief of the wicked person. The stress is laid on the suddenness of the calamity that will overtake him. Suddenness is usually associated with disasters and intensifies their severity. There will be no healing on the calamity that befalls the wicked. It will be of permanent nature. His end is an eternal death (Waltke, 2004:345).

4.2.8.3.5 Brief summary of Proverbs 6:12-15

This section describes the wicked person. It picks up and amplifies the description of the evil man given in Proverbs 2:12-15 (Aitken, 1986:67). The description signals both exterior and interior characteristics. The crooked mouth characterises him as a liar (Murphy, 1998:38). He is also described as a person with a dishonest personality. Fox (2000:222) summarises these verses as follows: “The enumeration of the outward marks and evil effects of the worthless man implies a warning to avoid him and the danger he presents.” The young person is encouraged not to belong to the category of the wicked person. The

wicked person's end will be sudden. He will experience destruction in his life. Therefore, the young person should avoid his way. The wicked person does not work for good social relations; he sows conflicts and discord among people.

4.2.8.4 Proverbs 6:16-19

4.2.8.4.1 Hebrew text of Proverbs 6:16-19

¹⁶ שֵׁשֶׁת־הָנָה שָׂנֵא יְהוָה וְשִׁבְעַת הַזֹּעֵבֹת נִפְשׁוּ:

¹⁷ עֵינַיִם רָמוֹת לְשׁוֹן שָׁקֶר וַיָּדַיִם שֹׁפְכוֹת דָּם־נָקִי:

¹⁸ לֵב חָרַשׁ מַחְשְׁבוֹת אָוֶן רַגְלִים מְמַהְרֹת לְרוּץ לְרָעָה:

¹⁹ יָפִיחַ כְּזָבִים עֵד שָׁקֶר וּמַשְׁלִחַ מְדֹנִים בֵּין אַחִים:

4.2.8.4.2 Schematic presentation of the structure of Proverbs 6:16-19

What God hates (verse 16):

- A. Haughty eyes (verse 17a)
- B. Lying tongue (verse 17b)
- C. Hands that shed innocent blood (verse 17c)
- D. A heart that devises evil plans (verse 18a)
- E. Feet that haste to run to evil (verse 18b)
- F. A person who breathes out lies (verse 19a)
- G. A person who sows discords among brothers (verse 19b)

4.2.8.4.3 English translation of Hebrew Proverbs 6:16-19

16. There are six things that the Lord hates and seven [that are] an abomination to him:

17. Haughty eyes, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood,

18. A heart that devises evil plans; feet that haste to run to evil,

19. [One] who breathes lies, [gives] false witness and sows discord among brothers.

4.2.8.4.4 Grammatical and theological analysis of Proverbs 6:16-19

In verse 16, the phrase *שש...שבע* - "six...seven" is a rhetorical device in Hebrew poetry indicating an indefinite number of classes within a certain category (Greenstone, 1950:61). The meaning of this phrase is that there are six or seven things the Lord hates (Fox, 2000:223). This poetic expression is also found in Job 5:19, Amos 1-2, and Ecclesiastes 11:2.

הועֲבֵרָה which means abomination (Koehler *et al.*, 1985:1022), refers to things or behaviour that are disgusting to God. They are contrary to what God wants to see from his people (Preuss, 2006:593).

Verse 17 *עֵינַיִם רְמוֹת* - 'haughty eyes'. *רְמוֹת* is a *qal* active participle of the root *רם* that means "to be high, exalted, proud" (Koehler *et al.*, 1985:879). *רם* is used here with "eyes" to signify attitude (Allen, 1997:1079). The attitude here is of pride and arrogance. Greenstone (1950:62) points out that arrogance is often identified with the disregard of human rights and the denial of divine authority (Is 2:11-17; 10:33; Job 21:22, 38:15; Ps 101:5). Garrett (1993:98) describes this attitude as an attitude that reflects haughtiness before God and refusal to reckon with one's finitude and creatureliness. A person with this kind of behaviour is not only arrogant towards other people, but also towards God. He shows his arrogance to God by not living by his commands. God hates people who lift up their eyes in pride (Ps. 131:1) and He will humble the haughty (Ps. 18:27 [28]).

In the phrase לשון שקר - "a lying tongue", the root שקר is tied to the world of false behaviour and words of deception and deceit (Carpenter, 1997:248). A person with a lying tongue is a person that has no regard for truth; he distorts the reality for his personal purposes and ambitions (Garrett, 1993:98). He avoids living by the normal rules of life (Garrett, 1993:98).

In the phrase, יָדַיִם שֹׁפְכוֹת דָּם-נָקִי, - "hands that shed innocent blood", שָׁפַךְ refers to bloodshed in the context of either murder or warfare (Wolf *et al.*, 1997:222). It is an intentional killing (Waltke, 2004:347). This phrase describes the violent personality that leads to the killing of another person. Garrett (1993:98) argues that the phrase implies a lack of control over anger.

In verse 18 the phrase לֵב חָרַשׁ מַחֲשָׁבוֹת אָוֶן - "heart that devises evil plans" describes a person who only thinks of himself. External rules and values are used when it is beneficial to do so, but are disregarded when they are inconvenient (Garrett, 1993:98). This person takes advantage of other people in order to achieve his own sinful plans.

The phrase כַּנְגָלִים מְמַהֲרֹת לָרוֹץ לָרָעָה - "feet that hasten to run to evil" refers to an eagerness to do what is evil. This person enjoys doing what is evil and does it with great eagerness and zest (Waltke, 2004:347).

In verse 19, יִפְיֵחַ is a *hiphil* imperfect third person masculine singular of the verb פָּיַח, which means "to blow, blast" (Brown *et al.*, 1906:806). Here it refers to the hateful utterances of the false witness, much more injurious than the lying tongue. The false witness does not stand for justice; he subverts justice by his witness.

The last thing that Yahweh hates is the sin of causing discord among people. The phrase וּמַשְׁלֵחַ מִדֻּנָּיִם בֵּין אָחִים refers to a person who does not want to see people living in peace and harmony. He always attempts to break apart the bonds that hold a society together (Garrett, 1993:98).

4.2.8.4.5 Brief summary of Proverbs 6:16-19

This section lists seven sinful things that Yahweh hates. The practical purpose of this section is to move the young person to align his attitude and behaviour to what God wants. The young person is told here what to avoid in his life so that he may be wise. He should strive for good social relationships with other people and to promote social cohesion and unity in the community (Van Leeuwen, 1997:77). It is the responsibility of the parents to instil these values in the life of children.

4.2.9 Instruction IX: Proverbs 6:20-35

4.2.9.1 Hebrew text of Proverbs 6:20-35

²⁰ נִצֹר בְּנֵי מִצְוֹת אָבִיךָ וְאַל־תִּטַּשׁ תּוֹרַת אֲמֶיךָ:

²¹ קִשְׁרָם עַל־לִבְךָ תָּמִיד עֲנָדָם עַל־גִּרְגְּלֶיךָ:

²² בְּהִתְחַלֵּקְךָ תִּנָּחַח אֶתְךָ בְּשֹׁכְבְּךָ תִּשְׁמָר עָלֶיךָ וְהִקְיִצוּתָּ

הִיא תִשְׁיָחֶךָ:

²³ כִּי גַר מִצֹּנָה וְתוֹרָה אֹר וְדֶרֶךְ חַיִּים תוֹכָחוֹת מוֹסֵר:

²⁴ לְשֹׁמְרֶךָ מֵאִשֶׁת רָע מִחֻלָּקַת לָשׁוֹן נִכְרִיָּה:

²⁵ אַל־תִּחְמַד יִפְיָהּ בְּלִבְּךָ וְאַל־תִּקְנֶחָּ בְּעַפְעָפִיָּהּ:

²⁶ כִּי בְעֵד־אִשָּׁה זֹנֶה עַד־כָּפַר לָחֶם וְאִשֶׁת אִישׁ נֶפֶשׁ יִקְרָה תִצּוֹד

²⁷ הִיחָתָה אִישׁ אִשׁ בְּחִיקוֹ וּבִגְדָיו לֹא תִשָּׁרְפָנָה:

²⁸ אִם־יִחַלֵּךְ אִישׁ עַל־הַגִּחָלִּים וְרִגְלָיו לֹא תִכְוִינָה:

²⁹ כֵּן הָבֵא אֶל־אִשְׁתּוֹ רַעְהוּ לֹא יִנָּקָה כָּל־הַנִּגְעָה בָּהּ:

³⁰ לֹא־יָבוֹזוּ לַגָּנֵב כִּי יִגְנוֹב לְמַלְא נַפְשׁוֹ כִּי יִרְעֵב:

³¹ וְנִמְצָא יְשִׁלֵּם שְׁבַע־תַּיִם אֶת־כָּל־הוֹן בֵּיתוֹ יִתֵּן:

³² נֶאֱרָא אִשָּׁה חֲסֵר־לֵב מִשְׁחִית נַפְשׁוֹ הוּא יַעֲשֶׂנָּה:

³³ נִגְעֵ־וְקִלּוֹן יִמָּצֵא וְחִרְפָּתוֹ לֹא תִמָּחָה:

³⁴ כִּי־קִנְיָנָהּ חֲמַת־גֹּבֵר וְלֹא־יִחְמוֹל בְּיוֹם נָקָם:

³⁵ לֹא־יִשָּׂא פָנָי כָּל־כֹּפֶר וְלֹא־יֵאָבֵה כִּי תִרְבֶּה־שָׁחַד:

4.2.9.2 Schematic presentation of the structure of Proverbs 6:20-35

I. Introduction (vv. 20-24)

- A. Keep wisdom with you always (verse 20-21)
- B. *Because* it is a light (verse 22)
- C. *Because* it will give you guidance (verse 23)
- D. *Because* it will save you from the strange woman (verse 24)

II. Lesson: Adultery destroys its perpetrator, so avoid the adulteress (verses 25-33)

- A. Do not let the strange woman catch you (verse 25)
- B. *Because* she is lethal (v. 26)
- C. *Because* of the painful consequences of adultery (verses 27-33)

III. Conclusion: Punishment is guaranteed by the husband's anger (verses 34-35)⁵⁰

4.2.9.3 English translation of Proverbs 6:20-35

20. My son, keep your father's commandment and do not forsake your mother's teaching.

21. Bind them always upon your heart; tie them around your neck.

22. When you walk, it will lead you, when you sleep, it will watch over you, and when you awake, it will commune with you.

23. For the commandment is a lamp, and the teaching is a light, and reproofs of instruction are the way of life.

24. To keep you from the evil woman, from the smoothness of the tongue of the foreign woman.

25. Do not desire her beauty in your heart, and do not let her capture you with her eyelashes.

26. For the price of a harlot is a loaf of bread, whereas the wife of another man will hunt your precious life.

27. Can a man take fire in his bosom and his clothes not be burned?

28. Or can a man walk upon burning charcoal, and his feet not be scorched?

29. So is he who goes to his neighbour's wife; anyone who touches her will not go unpunished.

30. People do not despise a thief when he steals to fill his soul when he is hungry.

31. But if he is found, he will pay sevenfold; he will give all the goods in his house.

⁵⁰ Cf. p. 63

32. He who commits adultery lacks heart; he who does it destroys himself.
33. He will get affliction and shame, and his disgrace will not be wiped away.
34. For jealousy makes man furious and he will not have compassion on the day of vengeance.
35. He will not accept any compensation, and he will not be appeased though you multiply gifts.

4.2.9.4 *Grammatical and theological analysis of Proverbs 6:20-35*

In verse 20, as in Proverb 3:1, 4:2, the son is urged to keep and not to forget the teachings and commandments from his parents (Van Leeuwen, 1997:80). It is assumed here that parents are wise and they are expected to nurture their children in the way of wisdom. For a child to disobey his parents, he is, in a way, revolting against wisdom itself. This is the assumption that we have in all commands to honour and obey parents (Toy, 1899:133). It is clear here that parents are the source of the teaching for their children, as in Proverbs 1:8 and it is further an indication of the family as a setting of the instruction genre in Proverbs 1-9 (Clifford, 1999:80). Ross (1991:936) argues that a good home life where a father and mother share the rearing of the children will go a long way to prevent the youth from falling into immorality.

In verse 21 קָשַׁרְהֶם is a *qal* imperative third person masculine singular, with a third person masculine plural suffix. The root verb is קָשַׁר, which means “to tie” (Koehler *et al.*, 1985:860). The meaning of this verb is synonymous with the meaning of the second verb עָנַד. The third plural masculine suffixes with the verbs refer to “commandments” and “teaching” in verse 20. The son is, therefore, commanded to bind his “father’s commandments to his heart, and to tie his mother’s teaching around his neck”. Verse 21 is metaphorical, as in Deuteronomy 6:8-9, in which God instructed Israel to bind his laws to their foreheads and hands (Van Leeuwen, 1997:80). The meaning here is to keep them before one’s eyes (Clifford, 1999:80). Thus the young person’s thoughts and actions were to be governed by these commandments and teachings. They are vital for the young

person's survival. A young person is, therefore, urged to decorate his life with these commandments and teachings from his parents. Hence, McKane (1970:327) argues that the commandments should be valued and guarded like the most highly prized personal treasure that a man possesses.

In verse 22, בְּהִתְהַלֵּךְ is composed of preposition בְּ with the *hithpa'el* infinitive construct of הָלַךְ, which means "to walk, to go" (Koehler *et al.*, 1985:234). The *hithpa'el* is used in this context to emphasise the continuity of the action (Waltke, 2004:351). It gives us an impression of a process, "always when one walks, to walk with and to commune with" (Waltke, 2004:351).

תִּנְחֶה is a *hiphil* imperfect third person feminine singular, from the root נָחָה, which means "to lead, guide" (Koehler *et al.*, 1985:606). This root is sometimes synonymous with נָחָה, which means "to herd to predetermined destination", e.g., to lead away captives (Job 12:23), or to herd or lead a flock (Ps. 78:53). It is also synonymous with נָחַל, which means "to lead/guide tenderly out of trouble" (Ps. 31:3). The subject of the verb נָחָה and other verbs in verse 22 is in the singular feminine form, which has no antecedent in this context. Greenstone (1950:63) argues that the singular feminine subject refers back to the commandment or teaching in verse 20. However, the problem is that "commandments" and, "teachings" in verse 20 are in the plural form. Fox (2000:229) argues that "precepts" and "teachings" together constitute wisdom, which is the implicit subject of the verbs in this verse (cf. Delitzsch, 1874:149). This is a more understandable explanation of the problem in verse 22. Wisdom here refers to the internalised parental principle as stated in verse 20 (Fox, 2000:229). The young person is urged here to see parental instruction, which is wisdom as a friend, protector and teacher. Wisdom will accompany the young person at all times, protect him from danger, and provide him with worthy and valuable thoughts (Waltke, 2004:351). Wisdom will remind the young person to reflect on God's works and his word. For the young person to overcome the temptation from an adulterous woman, he is to embrace the parental instruction as a companion. Toy (1899:135) summarises verse 22 as follows: "Wisdom will guide

thee in thy active life of the day, guard thee while thou liest helpless in sleep, and at thy awaking be with thee to utter words of advice.”.

Verse 23 is a further explanation of verse 22. The commandment and teaching given by parents are described as a lamp and light respectively. Here life is viewed as a journey through a dark and pitted landscape. Thus, a lamp is needed for the young person to see his path. Disciplinary reproofs from parents are viewed here as a way of life. There is no life for young people whose parents do not give him corrections and discipline.

Verse 24 is introduced with the preposition *ל* together with an infinitive construct, which introduces a final clause (Gesenius, 1910:381). It spells out the benefits of embracing wisdom. Wisdom will protect the young person from an evil woman who will seduce him to illicit sexual intimacy.

In verse 25, *תִּחְמַד* is a *qal* jussive second person masculine singular of the root *חמד*, which means “to desire, delight in” (Talley, 1997:168). The verb can be used either in a positive or negative sense. Positively it can refer to God’s desire for Jerusalem as his abode (Talley, 1997:168). It is used here in a negative sense, as it is used in the tenth commandment in Exodus 20:17 and Deuteronomy 5:21 (Ross, 1991:937). It refers here to an inordinate, ungoverned, selfish desire (Harris *et al.*, 1980:295). The young person is urged not to desire the beauty of the evil woman. The young person has responsibility to overcome the seductiveness of the evil woman. He has to avoid the desire for the beauty of the evil woman in his heart. He is to watch over his heart as well as refuse to be caught by her eyes (Murphy, 1998:39). The only way for the young person to avoid being seduced by an evil woman is to embrace parental instructions as companion and bind them to his heart.

בְּעֵצְפֵי הָיָהּ, with her eyelashes” refers to seductive devices employed by the woman by her glances (Whybray, 1994:105). The young person is urged not to allow himself to be captivated by these sinful devices but to overcome them.

It is not easy to translate verse 26⁵¹ (Van Leeuwen, 1997:80). Thus, it is clear that this verse has to do with the contrast between the price that one has to pay if one embraces a harlot or a married woman respectively. זונה is a *qal* participle, which refers to a prostitute, especially when preceded by זונה (Hall, 1997:1123). לחם has been translated in a variety of ways in the New International Version, such as “some bread” (Judg. 8:5), “crust of bread” (1 Sam. 2:36), and “loaf of bread” (1 Sam. 10:3). This indicates the difficulty of finding a precise English equivalent. However, the intention of the phrase is to indicate the small fee that one has to pay for embracing a harlot.

The meaning of the whole verse is that the price paid to a harlot is very small, i.e. a loaf of bread, while embracing a married woman demands a much higher price; life itself (Ross, 1997:937). Murphy (1998:39) notes the following: “It seems to warn the youth about the practical difference between harlotry and adultery. The price that one pays for harlotry is as nothing, a mere loaf of bread, compared to the price for adultery, one’s very life.” The young person is thus warned about the folly of adultery.

There is an interrogative particle at the beginning of verse 27 that introduces a direct question in verses 27-28 (Williams, 1976:91). The verb חתך is usually used for taking flaming coals from a fire to start other fires (Tomasino, 1997:322). Verses 27-28 contain rhetorical questions (Van Leeuwen, 1997:81) that ask for obvious answers (Habtu, 2006:756). From these rhetorical questions, the young person is to recognise in them the rule that one cannot avoid the natural consequences of his actions (Fox, 2000:233). The young person is warned here that adultery is like playing with fire. Just as touching a fire hurts, so will touching another man’s wife hurt. He is, therefore, encouraged to remain faithful to his wife, as stated in Proverbs 5.

⁵¹ It has to be assumed that it is elliptical. Ancient versions such as the Septuagint, Targums and Vulgate follow this translation: “For the price of a harlot is a loaf of bread” or “In exchange for a harlot [one gives] a loaf of bread” (Toy, 1899:136).

Verse 29 is a clearer explanation of verses 27-28. It states that he who goes to his neighbour's wife will be punished. *נִגַּע* is a participle of *נגע*, which means "to touch" (Harris *et al.*, 1980:551). To touch a woman is an euphemism for having sexual relations with her (Gen. 20:6) (Waltke, 2004:357). A person who does that will not be acquitted from that guilt.

Verses 30-31 are both connected to the previous verses (verses. 27-29) and the following verses (verses. 32-35). They are to be interpreted within this context. The meaning of these verses is that although people have compassion for a thief who steals out of hunger, he is required to repay his victim seven times over. If a crime that draws sympathy from people is punishable, how much more is a crime that arouses universal revulsion (Fox, 2000:234). Sevenfold in this context is a round number, which is probably a way of saying "a great deal". The intention of these verses is to indicate that the adulterer, whose motives are indefensible and whose behaviour is loathsome will not be able to escape the painful fate waiting for him. This is another way of discouraging the young person to do away with the seductiveness of the evil woman. He is warned of the painful consequences that will follow any adulterous action.

In verses 32-33 he who commits adultery is described as *חסר-לב* - "one who lacks heart". Although no one is capable of functioning without a physical heart, it is used here as metaphor describing those who exhibit irrational behaviour. To lack heart means an inability to discriminate between a reasonable and an unreasonable course of action (Meier, 1997:227). This characterises a person who commits adultery. Adultery is a way of destroying one's life. The adulterer destroys himself; because he has set himself on the path to death.

Verse 33 makes explicit the ruin that the adulterer brings on himself. He brings upon himself wounds, insults and disgrace. This implies that he will not only be avenged by the husband of the wife, but other people in the community will inflict wounds and insults upon him (Waltke, 2004:359). Adultery brings public shame and humiliation upon him who commits it. These consequences are spelt out

here so that the young person may strive to distance himself from the evil woman.

הַקֶּזֶה in verse 34 refers to the wrath of a man who has caught another man with his wife. He will not exercise compassion towards the guilty party. He will not refrain from vengeance. He will definitely seek revenge for the wrong inflicted upon him. The adulterer will face the physical blows and wrath of the aggrieved husband. הַקֶּזֶה means “to lift up face” (Waltke, 2004:360). This phrase means “to show favour”. There will be no escape by means of bribery or gifts.

The young person is warned here that taking another man’s wife evokes feelings of jealousy, which will lead the husband of the wife to seek revenge. These feelings cannot be appeased by any gift. Thus, the safest way for the young person is to find his own wife and to be faithful to her.

4.2.9.5 *Brief summary of Proverbs 6:20-35*

The main point of this instruction is the inevitability of the adulterer’s punishment (Fox, 2000:237). The young person is taught here to avoid illicit sexual relations because it will reduce his life to nothing. The young person is warned to keep away from another man’s wife, because he will not be able to endure the wrath of the aggrieved husband. There is no mention here of ethical or religious motives for avoiding this sin; practical consequences are the basis of this instruction. It is important for the young person to know the practical consequences of an illicit sexual relationship. He should know that he cannot evade, the punishment for adultery, although it is the most secret of sins. This should form part of the parents’ education to their children in the formation of their moral character. Young persons are to be warned of the fatal consequences of taking another man’s wife, and encouraged to remain faithful to their own wives, as we are taught in Proverbs 5. A parent who does not address this important issue is doing a great disservice to his own children.

4.2.10 Instruction X: Proverbs 7:1-27

4.2.10.1 Hebrew text of Proverbs 7:1-27

¹ בְּנֵי שֹׁמֵר אֶמְרִי וּמִצּוֹתַי תִּצְפֹּן אֶתָּךְ:

² שֹׁמֵר מִצּוֹתַי וְחַיָּה וְתוֹרָתִי כְּאִישׁוֹן עֵינֶיךָ:

³ קִשְׁרָם עַל-אַצְבְּעֹתֶיךָ כְּתָבָם עַל-לֹחַ לִבְךָ:

⁴ אֲמַר לַחֲכָמָה אַחֲתִי אֵת וּמִדָּע לְבִינָה תִקְרָא:

⁵ לְשֹׁמְרֶךָ מֵאִשָּׁה זָרָה מִנְּכֹרֶתָהּ אֶמְרֶיהָ הִחֲלִיקָה:

⁶ כִּי בַחֲלוֹן בֵּיתִי בָּעֵד אֲשַׁנְּבִי וְשִׁקְפֹתַי:

⁷ וְאֶרְאֶה בַּפִּתְאִים אֲבִינָה בְּבָנִים נָעֵר חֶסֶד-לֵב:

⁸ עֹבֵר בַּשּׁוּק אֲצַל פִּנָּה וְדֶרֶךְ בֵּיתָהּ יִצְעֵד:

⁹ בְּנִשְׁף-בָּעָרָב יוֹם כְּאִישׁוֹן לִילָה וְאַפְלָה:

¹⁰ וְהִנֵּה אִשָּׁה לִקְרָאתוֹ שֵׁית זֹנֶה וְנִצְרַת לֵב:

¹¹ חֲמִיָּה הִיא וְסִרְרַת בְּבֵיתָהּ לֹא-יִשְׁכְּנוּ רַגְלֶיהָ:

¹² פַּעַם בַּחוּץ פַּעַם בְּרַחֲבוֹת וְאַצַּל כָּל-פִּנָּה תֵּאָרֵב:

¹³ וְהִחֲזִיקָה בּוֹ וְנִשְׁקָה-לּוֹ הֵעֵזָה פָּנֶיהָ וְהֵאמֵר לוֹ:

[illegible]

כִּרְכִּי שְׂאוֹל בֵּיתָהּ יִרְדּוּת אֶל־חֲדָרֵי־מָוֶת:²⁷

4.2.10.2 Schematic presentation of the structure of Proverbs 7:1-27

- I. Introduction (verses 1-5)
 - A. Keep the teaching (verses 1-3)
 - B. Make wisdom and understanding your friend and neighbour (verse 4)
 - C. *Because* they will protect you against a strange woman (verse 5)
- II. The lesson: The seduction of the simpleton (verses 6-23)
 - A. The observation of the teacher (verses 6-13)
 - B. Seduction: the woman's utterances (verses 14-20)
 - C. Submission by the young person (verses 21-23)
- III. Conclusion: The adulteress is deadly (verses 24-27)
 - A. Exhortation: Listen to me, not to her (verses 24-25)
 - B. Reason: *Because* she is deadly (verses 26-27)⁵²

4.2.10.3 English translation of the Hebrew text of Proverbs 7:1-27

1. My son, keep my words and treasure my commandments.
2. Keep my commandments and live and my teachings like an apple of your eye.
3. Bind them on your fingers; write them on the tablet of your heart.
4. Say to wisdom, you are my sister, and call understanding a kinsman.
5. To preserve you from the adulteress, from the stranger whose words are smooth.
6. For at the window of my house, I have looked down through my lattice.

⁵² Cf. pp. 63-64.

7. And I have seen among the simpletons, I have perceived among the youths the young man who lacks heart.
8. Crossing over the street near her corner, he stepped on the way towards her house.
9. At twilight, in the evening, in the middle of night and darkness.
10. Behold, a woman to meet him (with) clothes of a prostitute and a guarded heart.
11. She is noisy and rebellious; her feet do not stay at her house.
12. Now in the street, now in the public markets and near every corner she lies in ambush.
13. And she seizes him and kisses him, and she makes her face strong, and she says to him.
14. I had to offer sacrifices of peace; today I have fulfilled my vows.
15. Thus, I have come to meet you, to seek your face eagerly, and I have found you.
16. I have prepared my bed with coverings; with coloured Egyptian linen.
17. I have perfumed my bed with myrrh, aloes and cinnamon.
18. Come, let us be saturated of love until morning, let us enjoy ourselves with love.
19. For, my husband is not at home; he went in a long journey.
20. He took with him a bag of money; he will come home at full moon.
21. She persuades him with the greatness⁵³ of her speech; she seduces him with the smoothness of her lips.

⁵³ Fox (2000:249) in his translation of the verse emended רַב, which means "soft, smooth". He argues that the emendation makes better sense because it is not the quality (רַב) of the woman's words that seduces the boy, but their soft, slippery quality. Fox's emendation is unacceptable, because both qualities are mentioned in verse 21. The emendation is just a repetition of what is in the text already. If one clearly listens to verses 14-20, one can agree with the Masoretic text, describing the speech as characterised by the greatness of persuasiveness.

22. All of a sudden, he went after her like an ox going to slaughter, like a stag/deer⁵⁴ bounding to bonds,
23. Till an arrow pierces her liver, like a bird rushing into a snare.
24. And now my sons listen to me, pay attention to the words of my mouth.
25. Do not let your heart turn aside to her ways; do not stray onto her paths.
26. For many are the victims she has brought down, and numerous are those she has slain.
27. Her house is a way to *sheol*, going down to the chambers of death.

4.2.10.4 Grammatical and theological analysis of Proverbs 7:1-27

In verse 1, הִצִּיף is a *qal* imperfect second masculine singular from the root צָפַן, which means “to hide” (Koehler *et al.*, 1985:813). The root צָפַן primarily means “to hide” or “conceal” either for purposes of protection and safety or for more sinister reasons, such as an ambush (Ex. 2:3; Prov. 1:11, 18) (Hill, 1997:840). However, it has been used here as meaning “to hide”, but in the sense of “treasure up”, “store up” or “to reserve” (Hill, 1997:840). צָפַן is in parallel with שָׁמַר, which means “to keep”. This parallelism indicates that שָׁמַר cannot be simply understood as meaning “to keep” in the sense of obedience. It should rather be understood in the sense of retaining the father's words and his commandments (Fox, 2000:239). The son is exhorted to absorb and retain the parent's teaching. We have encountered this kind of plea in Proverbs 2:1 and 3:1. This also indicates the importance of retention of what has been learned in the process of nurturing a child.

In verse 2, the son is again enjoined to keep the commandments of his father. He is asked to keep these commandments as a תִּשְׁוּיָה of his eye. Fox (2000:239) argues: “The pupil of one's eye is always before and near him, in the centre of his vision. It is dear to its possessor, who will reflexively protect it from attack,

⁵⁴ Verse 22c of the Masoretic text is incomprehensible. The emendation, which is supported by the Septuagint, is to be accepted here. The emendation is as follows: “like a stag bounding to bonds”. This is in harmony with verse 22b.

and as such, it is the epitome of something protected diligently.” As is clear from Fox’s argument, *אֶפְסוֹד* suggests the idea of something precious to be guarded jealously (Deut. 32:10). If one fails to protect the apple of his eye, he is consigned to the world of darkness (Waltke, 2004:368). So is the young man who fails to keep the teachings and commandments of his parents: he will have no guidance for the conduct of his life. We are reminded of this fact in Proverbs 6:23a where we read that the parent’s commandments and teachings are a light or lamp.

חַיִּים is consequential upon the imperatives in verses 1 and 2. The consequence of retaining parent’s instructions is life, whereas disobedience leads to death. McKane (1970:333) rightly argues this point as follows: “At any rate, it is evident that life is more than breath and that death is not just when the heart stops and the pulse ceases to beat. There is a living death, and so “life” in the fuller sense has qualitative aspects, and it is this more abounding vitality that is said to have consequences for keeping the commandments.”

Verse 3 provides images that we have observed in Proverbs 3:3 and 6:21. Proverbs 3:3 says that the young person must bind the commandment around his neck; and in Proverbs 6:21 he is to tie them around the heart. The picture that one sees from these verses, gives a sense of beauty or ornament. Here the commandments are to be bound on the fingers. The figure of a hand as a reminder was used in Deut. 6:8 and 11:18. Thus, Toy (1899:144) argues that “as the hands are always in sight, the finger is a fit reminder place”. The idea expressed here is that of closeness and intimacy between the young person and the parental instruction. He has to assimilate the parental instructions as a way of life (Waltke, 2004:369).

The second figure of writing commandments on the tablet of the heart was explained in Proverbs 3:3. It refers to the internalisation of the parental instruction. It is a figure that enjoins the inward assimilation of the commandments of the parents (Jones, 1961:91). These instructions are to be assimilated as a way of life, in such a way that they shape fundamental attitudes

in the life of the young person and make him what he ought to be (McKane, 1970:333).

Verse 4 explains further the relationship that has to exist between the young person and parental instructions. He has to view parental instructions as a, “sister” or a “friend”. These two concepts express the intimacy and affection that has to exist between the young person and parental instructions. The young person is expected to love parental commandments and teachings as he loves his own sister or a close relative. It is this association that will keep him away from associating with strange women (Habtu, 2006:757).

Verse 5 is a transition to what follows in verses 6-23. If the young person follows what he is commanded to do in verses 1-4, verse 5 spells out the reward that he will get because of obedience. Parental instruction will protect him from an adulterous woman whose speech is deceitful. Wisdom, which the young person has to embrace, will guard him against the temptations of the strange woman; the married woman who is unfaithful to her husband (Greenstone, 1950:69). The young man is enjoined here to love Wisdom rather than the immoral woman.

Verses 1-5 are an introduction to this last instruction. It counsels a young person to have a true appreciation of the well-considered life rules of wisdom (Delitzsch, 1874:156). This introduction also reveals to us that the best advice is useless against strong temptation unless it were thoroughly taken to heart and translated into habits (Kidner, 1964:75). If the young person embraces the parental instructions as his own, he will overcome the seduction of the evil woman, no matter how sweet her tongue is.

The main verb of verse 6, *רָאָה* which means “to look down upon (from above; point of the view of the looking)”, is in the *niphal* form (Koehler *et al.*, 1985:1009). The basic idea inherent in this form is that of “looking down from a height” (Waltke, 2004:371). In Num. 21:20 it refers to looking down from a mountain. In addition, it indicates an extended watching, rather than a brief glance. This gives us an idea that for the drama that the parent will narrate in this section, the parent has had enough time for observation. The parent spent time peering down

from his upper-story window in curiosity and is going to narrate what he has observed (Fox, 2000:242).

Through the window, the parent saw פְּתָאִים (a simpleton) among other young people. פְּתָי in the book of Proverbs is one who lacks prudence (Prov. 1:4; 8:5), wisdom (Prov. 21:11), and discernment (Prov. 9:6). In verse 7 the word is in parallel with חֲסֵר-לֵב “lack of heart”. Thus, פְּתָי is close to one who lacks heart. This person is unable to discern truth from falsehood. He does not know how to detect danger and avoids it; he goes straight to it and suffers for it (Prov. 22:3; 27:12). פְּתָי is an ignorant and simple-minded person. He is often portrayed as being young and in need of instruction and education. He has no capacity to deal with life situations in such a way that he can protect himself from danger (Mosis, 2003:166).

Verse 8 depicts the youth as aimlessly walking in the street where there is a house of an adulterous woman. He is walking on the way leading to her house, but not with the intention of entering it. He is just strolling with other young people in the street, but has no practical wisdom to see the risk he is running into (Jones, 1961:92).

In verse 9 the reference is to the time when the young person is observed walking down the street. He starts his strolling about sunset, the night falls, and it becomes very dark while he is still in the street. As פְּתָי, he is not aware of the danger that will engulf him.

Verses 10-13 describe the action of the adulterous woman. In verse 10 the speaker sees the woman approaching and we are made to see the entire scene through the eyes of the speaker. The woman is described with the following phrases: שֵׁית זֹנָה and נִצְרֶת לֵב. שֵׁית זֹנָה describes this woman as having the attire of a harlot. She is dressed like a prostitute (Alden, 1997:101) in order to attract attention (Greenstone, 1950:71). נִצְרֶת לֵב, “guarded heart” (Waltke, 2004:374) describes this woman as someone whose plans are not clear to anybody else, including the young person, who is aimlessly walking down the street. The phrase can be used either in a positive or negative sense. In Proverbs 4:23,

guarding one's heart is a virtue, but here it is immoral because it refers to concealment of one's evil plans to hurt others. This is so with the adulterous woman in verse 10. She has evil intentions that are not divulged to other people. In verse 11, the woman is described as הִמְיָה "noisy", "boisterous" and בִּרְבָּה "rebellious", "defiant." הִמְיָה as a verb means "to make noise, uproar" (Koehler *et al.*, 1985:237). It usually describes an inharmonious noise that might either attract or disturb the ear and lacks true meaning (Domeris, 1997a:1043). The reference is to the woman's restlessness and her passionate talk and actions (Greenstone, 1950:71). These characteristics are quite opposite to the gentle modesty of a true homemaker. בִּרְבָּה is a *qal* participle from the verb סָרַר, which means "to be stubborn, to be rebellious" (Koehler *et al.*, 1985:668). It is used to refer to a person incorrigibly defiant to proper authority, such as a parent's authority (Deut. 21:18), and God's authority (Is. 31:1; 65:2), (Fox, 2000:244). The woman is here described as one who cares less about God's demands for personal purity and little for her husband's authority. The last phrase in verse 11, "her feet do not dwell in her house", refers to her insubordination and restlessness (Waltke, 2004:375).

Verse 12 continues with the description of the restlessness of the woman in verse 11. She does not remain in one place. She is found in the streets, public markets and in every corner. The aim of her restlessness is expressed by the word תִּצְרֹב, from the verb צָרַב, which means "to lie in wait, ambush" (Konkel, 1997:490). Fox (2000:245) describes this action as aggressive action, expected of a hunter, a lion, an army, or robber. The aim of this woman is to put the life of the young person in danger. She is a predator of young men. Verse 13 describes what the adulterous woman does to the young man when they meet. She shamelessly holds him and kisses him in public. She is also described as הַעֲזִיזָה פָּנֶיהָ, i.e. someone "who makes one's face strong". This phrase describes a person who is devoid of proper human sensibilities such as mercy, humility and shame (Waltke, 2004:376). The adulteress is not ashamed of her actions.

Verses 14-20 describe the seductive words of the adulteress to win over the young person to follow her ways.

In verse 14, the phrase זָבַחַי שְׁלָמִים עָלַי describes the obligation that was upon the strange woman. She had an obligation to offer the peace offering. When she had finished her obligation, she came home with the rest of the sacrifice, which was to be consumed by the concerned person with her family and the invited guest, all of whom had to be in a state of ritual purity when partaking of the sacrifice (Greenstone, 1950:72). The second part of verse 14 indicates that she is pure, as she has fulfilled her vows. The young person is invited as a guest in this festival. Her evil intentions are not clear to the young person; he believes that he is invited to an innocent feasting.

Verse 15 gives the reason for her presence in the street. She is out to meet the young person so that he may share with her the fine meal that she has prepared. The phrase לְשֹׁהַר פָּנֶיךָ “to seek your face” - indicates that the reason was more than the enjoyment of the festival. She was out in the street to seduce the young person for sex. This seduction for sex becomes known in verses 16-20. In verse 16, she describes her bed. עֶרְשׁ is a natural place for sexual relations, and it became the symbol for such activity (Song. 1:16). Her bed is covered with imported and expensive coverings. Fox (2000:274) summarises her description as follows: “The woman describes her bed with its expensive, imported coverlets, creating an air of sumptuous indulgence. The boy can picture himself luxuriating in her plush, fragrant bedding, all his senses pampered”. In verse 17, she tells the young person that her bed was also perfumed with imported and expensive perfumes. Myrrh, aloes and cinnamon are evocative of sweet delights, emotional and physical.

Verse 18 spells out the real reason for the woman to go into the street. Her real purpose was to seduce the young person. She calls the young person to enjoy sex with her. וְדָרִים and אֶהְבֶּבֶם refer to physical lovemaking - from a caress to sexual intercourse (Fox, 2000:248).

In verses 19 and 20 the woman gives the assurance to the young person that he should not be afraid to go into her house, because her husband is on a business trip. He will take time before he comes back home. *צָרוֹר־הַכֶּסֶף* “bag of money” in verse 20a indicates his intention to stay away for a long period.

In verse 21 the two verbs that are used, the *hiphil* forms of *נָסָה* and *נָדָה*, refer to the deflection of someone from the right path. *נָסָה* in the *hiphil* form means “to turn round” or “to seduce” (Koehler *et al.*, 1985:612), whereas *נָדָה* means “to turn from the way”, “to mislead” and “to seduce” (Koehler *et al.*, 1985:597). This implies that the young person is taken away from the right path by the action of the adulterous woman. He is enticed to do that. He is not abandoning the right path at his own will. The adulteress is using *רַב לִקְחָהּ* “greatness of her persuasiveness” and *חֶלֶק שְׁפָתֶיהָ* – “the smoothness of her lips”. These two phrases refer back to the speech of the adulterous woman in verses 14-20. Her speech reveals the greatness of her persuasiveness and the smoothness of her lips.

Verses 22-23 reveal that the young man finally succumbs to the seduction of the woman. He follows her into her house. He goes in unawareness of the consequences of the course he is following. He does not realise the consequences of being seduced by a prostitute. This point is further emphasised by the comparison of the young person to an ox, stag and a bird in the moment before they are slaughtered. None of the animals are aware that it is about to die. Like the youth, they are unsuspecting, and they pay for their simplicity with their lives (Clifford, 1999:88).

In verses 24-25 the father turns to his son, urging him to avoid the woman’s street and not to imitate the youth in the story. The plural “sons” in verse 24 indicates that the father’s instruction is not only for his own son, but also to other young people. The plural “sons” is further explained in Proverbs 5:1, 24.

Verses 26-27 serve as a conclusion to this instruction. They affirm the fact that the young person must avoid the way of the adulterous woman. The reason given is that many have already died at the woman’s hands and that the way to

her house leads to *sheol*. The house where the youth engages in the rites of love with the woman turns out to be an entry to death.

4.2.10.5 Brief summary of Proverbs 7:1-27

In this last parental instruction, the young person is urged to embrace Wisdom as his sister. He has to protect Wisdom as the apple of his eye. Wisdom is important for his survival. Wisdom will enable him to prevail over those who are out to hunt him down. Wisdom will help him not to succumb to the seduction of an adulteress. Wisdom will give him courage to flee from temptation, as Joseph did. He who undermines the call of Wisdom will die like an animal destined for slaughter. This instruction reminds parents that they are important pillars in the lives of their children. It is their responsibility to arm their children with the necessary weapons to fight against the enemies of their precious life. There are temptations that face every child and it is the duty of the parent to help the child to overcome those temptations. In this instruction, a parent is very clear to his child about the sexual temptations in life. He explains to his child how they will come and how he has to avoid them. His openness about sexual matters to his child is to be emulated by all parents who care for the future of their children.

CHAPTER 5

THEMES EXTRACTED FROM THE EXEGESIS OF THE PARENTAL INSTRUCTIONS IN PROVERBS 1-9

5.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter deals with themes on child-rearing extracted from the exegesis done on Proverbs 1-9 in the previous chapter. The main aim for extracting these themes is to ascertain the teaching of parental instructions in Proverbs 1-9 about child-rearing. It is, therefore, possible to argue for a theology on child-rearing in Proverbs 1-9. These themes will enable us to apply the teachings of Proverbs 1-9 in the present context. This should be the ultimate goal of the exegetical study of any book in the Old Testament. Any theological research and study should serve the faith community; the church. The Scriptures are given to the church for correction, teaching, reproof, and training in righteousness (2 Tim. 3:16). Hence, the church will be enriched and more empowered in her understanding of child-rearing by the theological wealth from Proverbs 1-9.

The theology of child-rearing in Proverbs 1-9 will serve as a foundation upon which the understanding of child-rearing in African Christian families will be evaluated and critiqued. Of course, this will be done with great sensitivity in order to avoid the imposition of one context upon another. Africans were raising children, and they were doing that effectively, long before they embraced Christianity. Listening to the African view of child-rearing will enhance the deepening of the Biblical understanding of child-rearing in African Christian families. A theology on child-rearing rooted in the parental instructions of Proverbs 1-9 and in the African soil will be a great boost in deepening the roots of Christian faith in Africa. The latter is often and rightly described as a thousand miles wide, but less than an inch deep.

The following themes were extracted from Proverbs 1-9:

- 1 The worldview upon which the parental instructions are founded: This theme will introduce the underlying view of reality upon which the parental

instructions are founded. Parental instructions were not taught in a vacuum, they had a particular view that they wanted to instill in the life of children. Estes (1997: 19) argues: "for every literary text is shaped by historical, cultural and sociological factors. Even more influential are the ideological assumptions, or worldview, of the author". It is, therefore, essential that the assumptions behind the parental instructions be comprehended for the relevant application of parental instructions in another context.

2. The "what" of parental instructions: This theme deals with the content of the parental instructions. What is it that parental instructions are imparting in the lives of children? Important issues that parents need to discuss with their own children as they grow are discussed here.
3. The "how" of parental instructions. Here we are looking into the question of a methodology for child-rearing. Parents use different methods in rearing their children. Methodology is an important element of any learning process, because it determines the outcome of the learning experience.
4. The "why" of parental instructions. Here the focus is on the reason behind the learning experience in Proverbs 1-9. What is it that the learning experience wants to produce in the life of a child? What the learning experience has to impart in the life of a child has to help the child to live as a responsible adult before God and in the community. Adei (1991:39) in his discussion on the goals of parenting ask two questions that help in understanding what will be discussed under this theme. "What is the highest ideal for parenting? What should be our goal as parents in bringing up our children?"

5.2 CATEGORIES ACCORDING TO WHICH THEMES EXTRACTED FROM PROVERBS 1-9 CAN BE CLASSIFIED

5.2.1 The worldview from which the parental instructions in Proverbs 1-9 emanate

For a better understanding and application of the parental instructions in Proverbs 1-9 it is essential that the question of the worldview underlying the instructions be considered here.

Parental instructions were not taught in a vacuum and they should never be considered as neutral. Parental instructions in Proverbs 1-9, as any other parental instructions from other cultures, are taught from a specific perspective of life.

It is, therefore, important to discuss in a brief note our understanding of the worldview. In *The Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy*, worldview is defined as follows: "A worldview constitutes an overall perspective on life that sums up what we know about the world, how we evaluate it emotionally, and how we respond to it volitionally" (Adams, 1995:236). One can, therefore, conclude that a worldview has much to do with how one views life. A worldview helps to answer fundamental questions of life. Every human being acts in relation to how he or she views life. One can conclude one's worldview from one's actions. However, it is not always the case that human beings act consciously according to their worldview. Van der Walt (1997:22-23) puts it in this way:

Although we are mostly unaware of the fact that we are acting in accordance with a specific worldview or that we are continuously articulating it (unless it is questioned), it is still present in each and every human being. And it is essential. It can be compared to a window, which opens onto the world for us, or a pair of spectacles to see with. It is a map, which orientates us in our often confusing circumstances. It is a compass, which prevents us from getting lost, and which offers direction to our lives.

It is a sieve, which helps us to separate the wheat from the chaff and to understand what is important and what is not important. It is a gauge to provide us with normative criterion for making choices. It is a key, which helps us to interpret events and phenomena. It is a dynamo, which motivates us to an awareness of our calling and responsibility towards service and reformation. Finally, it is a bulwark, which provides stability, a sense of security, inner peace and joy.

Van der Walt, in his description of the word *worldview*, uses concepts such as window, spectacles, map, compass, gauge, key, dynamo, and bulwark. These concepts underline the fact that a worldview is inseparable from one's life. The actions of our lives bring to light what our worldview is. A worldview gives us answers to fundamental cosmological and anthropological questions we encounter in life.

As mentioned above, it is crucial that we interrogate the worldview of the parental instructions in Proverbs 1-9 for our better understanding and appropriate application of the instructions in our context. This exercise will also serve us in understanding any discrepancy that we may observe between the theology of parental instructions and what Christian parents are doing in child-rearing. Incongruity in this case will have much to do with the difference in worldviews held by the two parties.

What characterises the worldview of parental instructions in Proverbs 1-9? Parental instructions in Proverbs 1-9 do not just speak about parenting as a relationship between parents and a child. It is more than that. Parents are to raise their children so that their children may live according to the God-given order in life. It is, therefore, fundamental in the worldview of the parental instructions that Yahweh created the entire universe. The universe belongs to Yahweh. This is well expressed in the following verses (3:19-20):

¹⁹ By wisdom the LORD laid the earth's foundations,
by understanding he set the heavens in place;

²⁰ By his knowledge the deeps were divided, and the clouds let drop the dew.

It is clear from these verses that wisdom literature has the same worldview as the Pentateuch, the prophetic and historical divisions of the Hebrew Bible, as to who created the universe (Harris, 1995:24). God employed wisdom to lay the foundations of the earth (Prov. 3:19), and it is the same wisdom that the parent is urging his child to seek and to find so that he may have a blessed life.

In Proverbs 3:5 a parent urges his child to search for understanding and insight. The search for this understanding and insight is to know the fear of the Lord and to find the knowledge of the Lord. God has created the universe. He sovereignly owns it and determines life within it. Hence, the goal of the parent is to lead the child to God rather than to anyone else.

From Proverbs 2:1-22 it is clear that parents see themselves as instruments in the hands of God to lead children to him. They urge their children to heed their instructions. Their instructions will lead children to a good relationship with God and in turn that relationship will protect them from the wicked men.

Estes (1997:25) discusses the implications of the worldview of the parental instructions. He argues that implicit in the assumption that the universe is Yahweh's creation, is the conviction that meaning in human life is found only in relationship to the Creator. Thus a relationship with the Creator becomes the ultimate goal of parenting. Tripp (1995:22) argues with regard to parenting: "The child is interacting with the living God. He is either worshipping, serving and growing in understanding of the implications of who God is or he is seeking to make sense of life without a relationship with God." This worldview, therefore, dictates to parents to see their task as to shepherd the child as a creature who worships, pointing her to the One who alone is worthy of her worship. It is in relationship with Yahweh that the child can find fulfilment and happiness in Yahweh's universe.

Another implication that this worldview confronts us with is the fact that as God has created the whole creation, He has control over all creation. The modern dichotomy between secular life and religious faith is foreign to the worldview of

parental instructions (Estes, 1997:25). From Proverbs 3:1-12 it is clear that the parent is urging the child to receive his teachings, which is God's wisdom. If the child embraces the parent's teachings, she will not only build his relationship with God, but she will have fruitful relationships with other human beings and with the natural world. He will become prosperous in all areas of life. McKane (1970:290) argues that the teachings enable the young person to find his way in life and make a success of life. It can, therefore, be argued that a child's success and development in life is founded on the child's relationship with Yahweh, who is the creator of the universe. This serves as a reminder to parents that they should never leave God out of their parental responsibilities. They are to raise their children for God's glory, then their children will live meaningful lives in all areas of life. As the people of Israel, parents are called by the instructions of Biblical wisdom to distinguish their parental role by the supreme importance they place on their relationship with Yahweh (Whitfield, 1949:15). If they fail to do this, they are putting their children up for sale to other gods. Whitfield (1949:15) reminds us of this struggle in the history of Israel as follows: "One of the most famous stories of the Old Testament is concerned with the desperate conflict which eventually arose between those who wished to include the local baalism in the religion of Israel and those who refuse to tolerate any adulteration of the worship of Yahweh." This quote sounds a warning bell to parents that if they see their children with a materialistic understanding⁵⁵, they will likely lose them to worldly gods.

From Proverbs 3:27-35 and 5:1-23 it is clear that Yahweh watches over activities such as holding back good from a neighbour, plotting against a neighbour, accusing a neighbour with no reason, and the activities of a wicked woman. This omniscient character of Yahweh reveals that all of life is viewed as seamless fabric (Estes, 1997:25). Yahweh is sovereignly controlling the universe. He is the

⁵⁵ By a materialistic understanding of a child I am referring to a situation where a child is merely viewed as a physical body. What is important in this view is to provide a child with food, clothes, toys and money for education. A child's relationship with God is ignored or is not nurtured.

head of the world. The world is not driven by accidental forces, but is directed by the order that Yahweh had established at the creation. This is God's will for his creation (Brueggemann, 1972:23).

Proverbs 1:8-19 shows that as a result of this order, there is a predictable relationship between acts and consequences. If a child accepts an invitation of those who want to kill innocent people in order to take their valuables from them, he is accepting an invitation to his own death. There is an order in life with which everybody has to abide. This order is knowable and can be observed as human beings are urged to go and watch the ants in Proverbs 6:6. This order that parents are to help their children discover, is imbedded in God's creation. Failure to act in accordance with God's order in creation is disobedience to God, and amounts to death. The inference that God has put his order in his creation, which needs to be observed and embraced for fruitful life in the world, has huge implications for African Christian parents. Due to imperialism, colonialism and apartheid, Africans were robbed of their instruments to understand and investigate the order imbedded in creation. For most African children there is a discrepancy between the language of their schooling and the world of their immediate environment in the family and the community. Colonial languages become a means of transporting culture. Ngugi wa Thiongo (1986:17) reminds us of this sad truth as follows: "For a colonial child, the harmony existing between the three aspects of language as communication was irrevocably broken. This resulted in the disassociation of the sensibility of that child from his natural and social environment, what we might call colonial alienation. The alienation became reinforced in the teaching of history, geography, music, where bourgeois Europe was always the centre of the universe." Language is an instrument that we use to understand the world. In order for African Christian parents to face this challenge, they must start to promote the use of their own languages in church services and in the education of their children. If we fail to face this challenge, we will continue to rob our children of the means to understand the world from within their own context. How will they become responsible human beings to God and to their communities if they are alienated from their own environment?

Another element that is prevalent in the worldview of the parental instructions in Proverbs 1-9 is the sense of community. By sense of community we refer to the fact that a child is made aware through teaching that he is living in a community where there are other human beings that he has to take care of. A child is expected to live in such a way that his actions promote the wellbeing of other community members. This is clear in Proverbs 3:21-35 where the child is urged to exercise fair and generous treatment towards his neighbours. Murphy (1998:23) argues that verses 27-30 are prohibitions and commands dealing with one's relationship with neighbours. Garret (1993:85) describes neighbours as labourers who have earned their pay, the poor who rightly plead for help or suppliants at the city gates who call for justice. This element of the worldview of parental instructions has grave implications for Biblical parenting. Biblical parenting's focus is not solely on the wellbeing and development of an individual, but also on social cohesion. Children are to be raised, of course as individuals, but also raised to become responsible, mature members of the community. Children are to learn from home that they are to define their individuality within the wider community. Therefore, the members of the family in this wider sense have an obligation to help and to protect one another (De Vaux, 1961:21). The advancement of life in the community rests on the shoulders of all individuals in the community. In Israel, this understanding was well-expressed by an institution called גֹּאֵל of which we read in the book of Ruth.⁵⁶ The גֹּאֵל was a redeemer, a protector, a defender of the interests of the individual and of the group (De Vaux, 1961:21).

However, we are to acknowledge that we are living in times in which individualism is a dominant worldview (Wells, 1994:204)⁵⁷. Parental instructions in Proverbs 1-9 affirm our rejection of Rene Descartes' saying: "I think, therefore I

⁵⁶ Ruth and her mother-in-law Naomi were widows who had come back from Moab to Israel. They had nobody to look after them. They were redeemed from this situation by Boaz, who became their גֹּאֵל

⁵⁷ Wells (1994:204) defines an individualistic worldview as a belief that individuals are in the centre of their world and in charge of their destinies. Individuals are seen as transcending all social forces and are personally responsible for all of their achievements and failures.

exist" (Mbigi, 2005:81), and our embrace of the African saying: "I am because we are; and since we are, therefore I am" (Mbiti, 1969:108). Mbiti (1969:108) further argues: "In traditional life, the individual does not and cannot exist alone except corporately. He owes his existence to other people, including those of past generations and his contemporaries. He is simply part of the whole. The community must therefore make, create or produce the individual, for the individual depends on the corporate group." This should never be interpreted as meaning that one's individuality is not recognised within the community. However, it means that one's individuality is to be realised and interpreted within the community. One's individuality is to serve the good of the entire community.⁵⁸ This point was well argued by Tiberondwa (1998:5), who says:

Both formally and informally, traditional education prepared the young members of a community for specific responsibilities they were going to shoulder in maturity. It was education for life with all its complexities, aimed at satisfying personal needs, promoting the growth of personal talents and serving the community in which the recipient of that education lived. This way the culture of one generation was transmitted to the succeeding generation.

Thus, we can conclude by affirming that parents should raise their children to play a meaningful role in building the social cohesion of the community.

According to parental instructions found in Proverbs 1-9, meaningful learning takes place when both parent and child play their role in the learning process. Meaningful learning is not an either/or experience, but a both/and experience. This truth is imbedded in the conceptualisation of the learning process in the

⁵⁸ However, it should be mentioned here that family or community concern should not become tyrannous. It should not be imposed but spontaneous. Imposition of family loyalty has hindered the development in Africa in the sense that Africans are not savers, and they usually abscond partnership to meet immediate family need (Calderisi, 2007:83).

parental instructions. For learning experience to achieve its intended outcome, it is essential that both parties play their roles in an effective way.⁵⁹

As has been discussed in the previous chapter,⁶⁰ each instruction starts by a parental call to a child.⁶¹ From the parent's call, it is clear that the parent's role is distinguished by passion and love for the child and the community.⁶² Without parental involvement in the life of the child by means of teaching, the child will not acquire knowledge and understanding to discern good from evil. In Proverbs 2:4 the parent's teaching is described as silver and a hidden treasure. This description reveals the importance of the role of the parent in the life of the child. Parents are like God's representative through whose teaching children will understand the fear and the knowledge of the Lord. For the child to become wise in her decisions and choices in life, he needs guidance from her parents. Fox (1997:621), in explaining the role of the father, argues as follows: "The father's pedagogical rhetoric aims at guiding desire: fostering the right ones, suppressing the wrong. Imparting information is not enough, for moral character cannot grow from static cognition." Perdue (2000:95) also sees the involvement of the parent in the child's life as to enable the youth to come to knowledge of God; to live a moral life; and to experience divine protection and blessings. From Fox and Perdue's arguments we can, therefore, conclude that the primary aim of the parents' involvement in the life of the child is the formation of his moral character. Failure to do this is death both to the life of the child and the community. Consequently, the parent unapologetically intervenes with authority in the life of the child. He strongly urges the child to listen to his instructions. His authority is

⁵⁹ This truth has been clearly acknowledged by D.J. Estes in his book, *Teaching and learning in Proverbs 1-9* (1997) in which he devoted two chapters to the roles of both a parent and a child. He investigates how both the parent and the child play their role in the parental instruction in Proverbs 1-9 for learning to happen.

⁶⁰ I am here referring to Chapter 4 in which the literary structure of each parental instruction was discussed.

⁶¹ Check the following verses: 1:8; 2:1; 3:1, 21; 4:1, 10, 20; 5:1; 6:1, 20; 7:1.

⁶² Hagedorn (2000:112) connects the involvement of the parent in the life of the child with the community by arguing that raising children serves as a key to the behaviour of the adult members of a society

based on the fact that he is knowledgeable and is the transmitter of tradition. The voice of the teacher goes beyond his individuality.⁶³ The teacher's voice is the voice of the tradition (Estes, 1997:126). For the parent fruitfully to fulfil his role, he needs to be prepared to pay the cost of establishing a firm relationship with the child. This relationship comes with sacrifice of the parents' time, career and entertainment.

As mentioned above, a child also has a role to play in the learning process. The role of the child has been well-articulated in the instructions that we have studied. In Proverbs 1-9 for the child to become wise, he has to submit himself to the authority of the parent. Thus, the parent urges his child to listen (1:8); to accept (2:1); not to forsake (4:6) and to pay attention (4:1) to the teachings he is giving him. What a child is asked to do here is to appropriate and retain the parents' instructions in his memory (McKane, 1970:282). Continual possession of the parental instructions is encouraged here, which implies both hearing and heeding of the parental instructions (Estes, 1997:141). It must, therefore, be clear that for learning to happen, a child should play his role wholeheartedly in receiving parental instructions. There cannot be meaningful nurturing of a child if parental instructions were rejected and scorned. A child has to receive the instructions and make them part of his outlook of life. In emphasising the role of the child, Derek Kidner (1964:75) argues that "the best advice is useless against strong temptation unless it is thoroughly taken to heart and translated into habits".

Appropriation, retention and assimilation of the parental instructions can only happen if a learner were to appreciate the value of the parental instructions in his or her life. A learner has to say to wisdom: "You are my sister" (7:4). He has to come to an understanding that parental instructions are there for his own good and wellbeing. He has to tie his wellbeing to the parental instructions. Wisdom

⁶³ Parents and teachers are to be reminded now and then of their crucial role in the lives of their children. They are the transmitters of tradition. They are to be well equipped with the knowledge of the tradition they represent. For Christian parents this means that they should fully identify themselves with the Christian faith in their words and actions. For African Christian parents this means an intensification of the struggle to understand the Christian faith within their identity as Africans.

brings forth riches, honour, enduring wealth, prosperity, righteousness and justice. If these fruits of wisdom become a learner's yearning in life, then he or she will appreciate and value the wisdom.

For the child to fulfil his role, he has to work hard. He has to search for wisdom as one would search for a life companion (Cox, 1982:126). Cox (1982:126) further argues: "If this involves sacrifice, and indeed it will, count it well made. Once acquired, wisdom will be joy forever, only bind it to yourself by fidelity, care and love."

In conclusion, one can therefore argue that a learner in being helped by a parent can only develop a comprehensive and coherent worldview through receiving, responding, valuing and assimilating parental instructions. It is, therefore, important that this ground for a parent and a learner to understand their roles be levelled before the pedagogical experience could take place. Appropriate child-rearing cannot take place if there is neglect of the roles to be played by both stakeholders in the pedagogical process.

In this section we learn that the pedagogical process as seen in parental instructions is built on a worldview. It is built on the understanding that a child's relationship with God and with other human beings is to be nurtured during child-rearing. A child cannot be what he ought to be if this relationship were ignored. For this relationship to be nurtured, both parent and child are to play their roles in the pedagogical process. There cannot be child-rearing where parents abscond from their responsibility to teach children with passion and love and where children undermine and reject their parent's instruction.

5.2.2 The "what" of the parental instructions in Proverbs 1-9

This theme deals with what parents are to teach their children by way of nurturing them. The content of any education system is crucial because it determines the expected outcome upon which the life of the community is built. It is, therefore, important that we examine on a continuous basis the content of our formal and informal education of our children. The content that we give to our children does not only determine the future of their individual lives, it also determines the future

of the church and of the entire community. What is given to children in the form of a body of knowledge will shape the rational and emotional aspects of their lives.

Hence it is important for us to examine here the content of parental instructions. It will then be possible for us to know what we are to teach our children in our endeavours to build God's Kingdom in our own context.

From this researcher's reading of parental instructions, he has discovered that the content that is to be taught to children has to contain three essential elements. The first element relates to the child's relationship with God (Prov. 3:5-9). The second element entails the child's social relationships with other human beings (Prov. 3:21-35). The last element comprises the pressures and temptations that young people face in life (Prov. 1:8-19).

5.2.2.1 The child's relationship with God

There is a noticeable emphasis in the parental instructions on one's relationship with God. A relationship with God is the foundation upon which one can understand oneself and one's own world. This relationship in the book of Proverbs is well-described by the concept *יראת יהוה*. The book of Proverbs is framed by this concept (Van Pelt *et al.*, 1990:531). One finds this concept at the beginning of the book (1:7) and it serves as an introduction to the entire book. At the end of the book (31:30) it serves as conclusion to the book (Van Pelt *et al.*, 1990:531). *יראת יהוה* is viewed as the beginning of the acquisition of knowledge. This refers to the primacy of the fear of Yahweh in the acquisition of wisdom. It, therefore, means that the fear of Yahweh is the one true foundation of the wisdom we must teach our children (MacArthur, 1998:78). We can conclude, therefore, that whatever education we give to our children is to be built on the foundation of *יראת יהוה*.

However, the question that we need to look at is the meaning of the concept *יראת יהוה*. Gerhard von Rad made a valuable contribution by giving us a clear definition of this concept. Von Rad (1972:66) defines *יראת יהוה* as obedience to the divine will, as the commitment to God. Von Rad sees a polemic intention in the repetition of the phrase in the book of Proverbs. There are various

foundations upon which education for children can be found, but not all of them are helpful in the promotion of the wellbeing of children and of the community. There is a particular foundation upon which education in Israel has to be built. That foundation is the fear of Yahweh. Von Rad (1972:67-68) sees the meaning of the phrase as follows:

... there lies behind the statement an awareness of the fact that the search for knowledge can go wrong, not as a result of individual, erroneous judgements or of mistakes creeping in at different points, but because of one single mistake at the beginning. One becomes competent and expert as far as the orders in life are concerned only if one begins from knowledge about God. To this extent, Israel attributes to the fear of God, to belief in God, a highly important function in respect of human knowledge. She was, in all seriousness, of the opinion that effective knowledge about God is the only thing that puts a man into a right relationship with the objects of his perception that enables him to ask questions more pertinently, to take stock of relationships more effectively and generally to have a better awareness of circumstances.

The basic argument from this quote is that for a man to understand and to explore his world responsibly, understanding and exploration are to be founded on the fear of Yahweh. Fear of Yahweh in the Old Testament is closely associated with Yahweh's worship, which is characterised by obedience to Yahweh's decrees and commandments (Ps. 119:63). The fear of Yahweh also entails appropriate moral conduct (Ex. 1:17, 21; Lev. 25:36, 43) (Van Pelt *et al.*, 1990:530). All of life is to be determined by יראת יהוה. There is no dichotomy between the secular and the sacred; between knowing and believing. Faith, therefore, is not a substitute for knowledge. Faith is the precondition of knowledge (Newbigin, 1994:72). This is a total contradiction of the idea that there is a body of objective, value-free facts against which all religious claims have to be tested.

Parents are, therefore, reminded here to teach their children as creatures who worship, pointing them to the One who alone is worthy of their worship. Children are to be nurtured as creatures made in the image of God, and then they can find fulfilment and happiness only as they know and serve the living God (Tripp, 1995:23).

Thus one can argue that the primary task of parents is to shepherd their children's hearts that they may have faith in the God who created them. Consequently, Steve and Valerie Bell (2001:20-21) argue:

Next to faith, all other blessings are pale. Faith is life's most outstanding asset. It gives the greatest leg up in life. A trusting relationship with God is life's greatest treasure... Life without faith is bleak. You can have all the financial advantages this world can offer, but without faith, your life is challenged as impoverished in soul as any homeless person is lacking materially while living on the streets. Spiritually neglected children suffer a serious form of impoverishment regardless of their material blessings. The long range implications may be more damaging than any other form of neglect a child can suffer.

It is upon this understanding that we can comprehend the parental instructions in Proverbs 3:5-9, in which children are enjoined to trust the Lord and not to rely on their own understanding. God is viewed as the source of their life, and without him life is meaningless. Children are also urged to show their trust to the Lord with their wealth. They are not to put their trust on their material wealth. They are given wealth as a means of worship of their true living God. Biblical parenting has to nurture children in such a way that they see God in everything they are and do.⁶⁴

⁶⁴ In describing the objective of the Christian parents, Wayne Mack (1977:121) defines the objective and the outcome of Biblical parenting as follows: "Our objective should be to so train them that their thoughts and attitudes and actions begin to reflect and manifest a likeness to the lifestyle of a Christian described in the Word of God. Whether they become successful in business, whether they become good athletes or musicians, whether they are handsome or beautiful, whether they get As in school are matters of little consequence in comparison with the matter of becoming holy and godly and mature Christians." However, this is not what we are observing among the majority of Christian parents. They are unwilling to forsake the benefits of modernity even when they are wrapped in corrupt values (Wells, 1994:55).

The content for Biblical parenting as we see it in the parental instructions in Proverbs 1-9, brings a great challenge to African Christian parents in African communities. It challenges them to consciously look again and study the African worldview, which concurs with the Biblical worldview in its rejection of the dichotomy between sacred and secular, between knowing and believing, and between public life and private life (Benezete, 2001:102). By doing this, we can also criticise the content of our parental instructions that in many ways reject *ידאָת ידוה* as the basis of the nurturing of our children. If the church fails to discover this truth, it will remain a lame duck. It will continue to fail to challenge the secular Western view of life that is continuing to ravage all cultures in the world (Newbiggin, 1995:6).

5.2.2.2 The child's relationship with other human beings

The question of the relationship between an individual and the community has raised perennial debates in the history of Biblical theology and of the Christian faith (Benezete, 2001:75; Shapiro, 1999:109; Dunning, 1998:85). This question is crucial for our analysis here because it is explicitly mentioned in the parental instructions, and it also determines the moral direction that society takes. What we are experiencing in our communities is largely founded on the relationship between an individual and society. Shapiro (1999:109) argues: "Our moral legacy will be distinguished primarily by the manner in which we have treated others." It is important, therefore, that this crucial topic has to be dealt with while children are growing up, because the quality of their lives is measured by the quality of their relationship with other human beings in the community (Shapiro, 1999:109).

What do parental instructions teach us about an individual's relationship to other people in the community? The topic has been thoroughly dealt with in the parental instructions in Proverbs 1-9 (Prov. 3:21-35; 4:20-27; 6:1-5, 16-19).

From Proverbs 3:21-35 we learn that children are to be taught to develop willingness within them to help their neighbour and to stand up for their neighbour. They are always to be ready to offer a helping hand when a neighbour is in need. Consequently, a child has to avoid starting fights and planning evil against his or her neighbour. From this parental instruction, we can safely conclude that an individual within the community is expected to live for the wellbeing of other human beings. A child has to find happiness in the happiness of neighbours in the community.

In the following proverbs (4:20-27; 6:1-5; 6:16-19) the child is enjoined to exercise diligence in fulfilling what has been promised to the neighbour. One should willingly fulfil what he promised to do for the neighbour. For good neighbourliness, a child is instructed in these proverbs to avoid pride, lying, murder, an evil heart, and sowing strife. All these evils, which are to be avoided, have much to do with an individual's relationship with other human beings within the community. We are, therefore, to argue here that it is according to the spirit of these proverbs that the quality of one's life in the community is not measured by his autonomous being but by what he does unto others. One has to become one's sister's keeper. Community harmony and social cohesion have to be built on the social ethics of an individual (Dunning, 1998:86).

In Proverbs 6:6-11 a child is urged to observe the ants in how they work hard, even though they do not have leaders. These instructions teach the child to become hard-working, diligent and productive in his own life. He has to do this not only for his life, but also for other people.

We can conclude, therefore, that according to these parental instructions one has to define one's individuality within the community. Dunning (1998:86) argues that this understanding of an individual is built on an understanding of how God created human beings. Being created as male and female and the command to be fruitful and multiply shows that a human being was intended to be a communal being enjoying personal fellowship with his fellow human beings (Dunning, 1998:86). Dunning (1998:86) further argues that, in fact, the

community is an essential feature of God's redemptive intention. This understanding further confirms that the worldview of the wisdom literature is no different from the worldview of the rest of other Biblical books.

From parental instructions, we can deduce that the child is not expected to strive for good relationships with other community members on the basis of what he can get from the relationship. This relationship is based on the authentic concern for the other person's wellbeing. Neighbours are not to be treated as a means by which one can attain selfish goals. Shapiro (1999:118) argues: "It is morally wrong to treat people only as a means to the satisfaction of our own desires because doing so denies not only their humanity, but our own as well."

For Christian parents, instilling these instructions in the lives of their children means nothing else but the application of the golden rule. Parents are to teach their children to value kindness, mercy and compassion (MacArthur, 1998:102). Consequently, we will have communities of people who have a high regard for human life. In fact, this is how Christian families can contribute positively in addressing social ills such as crime, corruption and racism, which have such as devastating impact on our communities. Christian parents are to view themselves as catalysts of change in their communities as they teach their children to respect the human dignity of every person, for we are all created as *imago dei*.

We are experiencing a high level of crime and juvenile delinquency. For society to deal with these moral questions, we have to come up with concrete ways of establishing a good foundation for families. If families teach children as they are expected to do, society can better deal with this problem.

How relevant is the teaching of the parental instructions on the relationship of an individual to the community to parents in the African community? Can their teaching be directly applied in the African context?

The parental instructions' understanding of this relationship has much in common with the African understanding of how an individual relates to the community. In African ethics the individual has to conform to the social group in order to preserve the unity of human relationships (Kigongo, 2002:56). In explaining how

an individual relates to the community, Mbiti (1969:108) says: "It is only in terms of other people that the individual himself is conscious of his own being, his own duties, his privileges and responsibilities towards himself and toward other people: I am because we are, and since we are, therefore I am." This understanding as articulated by Mbiti is contrary to an emphasis on an individual's sense of self, autonomy or being. This is the self that does not place much value on the social relationship (Kigongo, 2002:57). The latter understanding of the relationship is contrary to what we learn from the parental instructions. It can, therefore be concluded that the African understanding of this relationship can easily conform to what we learn from the parental instructions. However, we have to concede to the fact that they did not have an opportunity to interact and to learn from each other due to intrusion of colonial culture in the African culture.⁶⁵

In conclusion, parents are to teach their children the importance of being good citizens of their communities. They do that by defining their individuality within their communities. They are to view themselves as pillars to build the community. A community cannot be what it ought to be without the involvement of individuals. Parents, therefore, are to teach their children to love God and their communities.

5.2.2.3 Pressures and temptations that children face as they grow up

Children, as they grow, face many challenges that they need to overcome. From parental instructions, it is clear that parents need to be aware of what their

⁶⁵ As a result we have to argue further that the intrusion of the colonial culture in Africa hindered the reciprocity between the African worldview and the Biblical worldview concerning the relationship between an individual and the community. The colonial culture wrongly argues that African culture cannot conceive of the human person as an independent being standing on his own. The individual is necessarily an individual adhering to the clan (Benezete, 2000:86). Of course, an individual in the African community who wants to develop himself independently of the community, is frowned upon, because no one can realise himself as a person all by himself: one becomes a person only in relationship to others. An individual has his or her position in the community as an individual. There are many African fairytales and proverbs that clearly articulate the position of an individual in the community. According to these stories, an individual is not expected to show blind obedience to the crowd, because a community into which the individual is absorbed destroys itself. Life in the community demands alertness and the maintenance of one's individuality (Benezete, 2000:88). Benezete (2000:93), therefore, concludes: In the light of what has been said here, an accusation often leveled against the African idea of community must be considerably modified. The impression is often given that community solidarity in Africa leads to the dissolution of individual identity. However, we have to concede that the accusation that Benezete is refuting is also based on the experience of the reality in African communities where people keep quiet while people in authority are ripping off the communities. African communities are generally characterised by autocratic rulers, corruption, incompetency and economic management, but there are few voices of protest.

children are going through (Prov. 1:8-19). Consequently, it should be the parents' concern that children are well-armoured to face the challenges and pressures of life. Parents play an important role in helping their children to face the world of pressures and temptations. There are many negative and powerful forces that are thrown at our children from all angles of life, and it is from home that children are to pick up tools to deal with these external forces or to succumb to them (Adei, 1991:13). Parents, as agents of socialisation, play a crucial role in how children acquire a sense of right and wrong (Shaffer *et al.*, 1981:83). Groome (2003:206) argues: "For it is the ethos of the home, the shared life as a family that is most educational... Parents are to consciously attend to the value system, worldview and self understanding of children that can only be mediated through the whole family milieu." This is how the role of a parent is depicted in the parental instructions. It is the role of the parent to attend to issues related to a value system, worldviews and to the self-understanding of a child. Nobody can do this better than parents. However, in African communities we are faced with huge challenges that alienates parents from the education of their children to such an extent that they think it is the responsibility of the school and the church to raise children. President Julius Nyerere (1967:2-3) articulates the cause of this attitude as follows: "The education provided by the colonial government was not designed to prepare young people for the service of their country; instead, it was motivated by a desire to inculcate the values of the colonial society and to train individuals for the service of the colonial state." So, this is the reality we are dealing with today. Parents are still confused with regard to the role they have to play in the lives of their children.

According to parental instructions in Proverbs 1-9, parents are to play an important role in helping their children to face the world that is full of pressures and temptations. Parents have to give their children instruments to deal with the temptations of this world. Children cannot cope on their own; they need their parents. Thus, children are enjoined to pay attention to the teachings of their parents (Prov. 1:8; 2:1). Tripp (2001:41), in his affirmation of the fact that the family plays a crucial role in child-rearing, interprets Deuteronomy 6 in this way.

God essentially says this, "I have designed the family to be my primary learning community. There is no better context to teach the truths that need to be taught so that my people would live the way they should live." Groome (2003:204) laments the nullification of the sense of parents as primary educators by the school. Adei (1991:112) attributes the nullification to the busy schedules and the contemporary-life demands upon parents. Groome (2003:204) further argues that parents have the most influence on who their children become, and nothing teaches with greater effect than the ethos and example of the home. Nzimande (1987:42) argues: "The major family responsibility is to socialize its new members and help them to integrate with social systems adequately." This can only take place properly if the family unit were functioning normally. The continuation of society is assured only in well-functioning families.

However, parents are to realise that there is a cost to be paid in equipping their children to face challenges of this life. It is not something that can happen overnight. It will require their time (Adei, 1991:40). It will impact on their career and ascent on the corporate ladder. It will mean that they cannot develop every interest that comes along (Tripp, 1995:101). Parental involvement in the lives of their children intimates that children are not born morally and ethically neutral. Children have hearts of folly that need correction (Tripp, 1995:105).

According to parental instructions, there are two groups of people that the young person has to be helped by parents to avoid in life. These are the people who bring temptations into the young person's life. In these instructions, the child is taught how to deal with these people. The first group is of the evil men, who delight in doing evil and rejoice in the perverseness of evil (Prov. 2:1-22). Their delight is in bringing destruction into someone's life (Prov. 4:10-19; 1:8-19). What does this group bring to the young person? In Proverbs 1:8-19, this group encourages young people to acquire their livelihood by stealing from other people. They do not mind murdering people in order to acquire their possessions. In Proverbs 2:12 the evil man is portrayed as the one who brings crookedness and perversity into the life of the young person. The young person is encouraged to live by a lie. There is no truth in their speech (Fox, 1994:240). If the child

succumbs to the pressures that these people bring to bear, his or her life will be miserable. The child will fail to serve as an instrument to bring social cohesion and unity in the community (Bland, 1998:228). Consequently, he will bring chaos and misery into the community.

The second group that needs to be avoided by a young person through the help of the parents is the group of immoral women or adulteresses. The young man is warned against the evil women in Proverbs 5:1-5, 6:20-35, and 7:1-27. In all these Scriptural texts, these women are characterised as women whose lips drip with honey, whose speech is smoother than oil (Prov. 5:3; 6:20; 7:5). This description reveals the seductive nature of the adulterous woman. It should, therefore, be clear to a young man and to his parents in particular that they are faced with a monstrous danger out there. It will not be easy for a young man to resist sexual temptations from wicked women. A young man should be well-equipped and empowered morally in dealing with this temptation. This moral empowerment has to happen at home, where parents instruct young people how to deal with sexual pressures that they face in their daily experiences.⁶⁶

In these instructions, a young person is also introduced to the consequences and dangers of illicit sex.⁶⁷ In Proverbs 5 the parent teaches what will happen if her child follows the steps of the adulterous woman. If the young person follows the wicked woman, the destiny is described as bitter as wormwood, and sharp as a two-edged sword (5:4). She will lead the young person to death (5:5). From Proverbs 5:8-13, it is clear that the young person will pay heavily if he follows that path of the wicked women. The young person will give his honour to strangers, and his years of productivity to the merciless and to the foreign house (verses 9-10). In Proverbs 6:20-35 following the path of a wicked woman and having sex with her is described as carrying a fire in one's chest (verse 27) and as walking on burning or hot coals (verse 28). His life will be characterised by wounds,

⁶⁶ McKane (1970:268) argues in favour of the home as the place in which the foundation of civilised behaviour is built, as follows, "The home is the primary educational agency, and it is there that the foundations of civilized behaviour and general excellence are laid."

dishonour and disgrace (verse 33). He will experience jealousy and revenge of the woman's husband (verse 34). From this reading, it is clear that fornication can be fatal (McArthur, 1998:91). Omartian (1995:161) says: "Next to catastrophic injury, death, and eternal death, sexual immorality is the most dreaded for our children." The point that needs to be emphasised here is that sexual sin has devastating consequences on the life of the young person and of the community. Omartian (1995:161) argues that there is no way out of sexual immorality without consequences. She mentions social ills such as abortion, out-of-wedlock children, infidelity, homosexuality, HIV and AIDS as consequences of sexual sin (Omartian, 1995:161). Sexual sin does not affect the young person's physical life, but it also invades his soul.⁶⁷ In 1 Peter 2:11 we are urged to abstain from fleshly lusts that war against the soul. The community also suffers a great deal because of the sexual sins of the members of the community. In South Africa we are paying heavily because of sexually transmitted diseases such as HIV and AIDS.⁶⁸ The state provides social grants to over six million children up to the age of 14.⁶⁹ These are enormous resources we could be using in developing other areas of community life if households could have instilled Biblical sexual morality in the minds of their children as they grew up.

Parental instructions do not only reveal the seductive nature of the wicked woman and the consequences of the illicit sexual relationship, they also reveal what parents should instruct their children about a sexual relationship. In Proverbs 5:15-20 the young person is instructed to find the pleasure and joy of a sexual relationship within the walls of the marriage covenant. He is instructed to drink water from his own cistern (v. 15), to rejoice in the wife of his youth (verse 18), and to be delighted by her breasts (v. 19). Commenting on this parental

⁶⁷ In his articulation of the consequences of sexual sin, Adei (1995:109) argues that the child must be made aware that sex is not just an act; it has physical, psychological, moral and social consequences.

⁶⁸ Based on the Department of Health's national antenatal survey involving anonymous testing of pregnant women at state health facilities, an estimated 4.5-million South Africans were living with HIV in the year 2000. Cf. http://www.southafrica-info/ess-info/sa_glance/health/aids.htm.

⁶⁹ http://www.southafrica-info/ess-info/sa_glance/health/aids.htm

instruction, McArthur (1998:96) chasten parents to teach their children to channel their youthful passions towards righteous ends. Adei (1991:109) sees one of those ends as practising sex within the context of marriage. In other words, young people are to be instructed to reserve their sexual passions for their spouses alone, and to be faithful in marriage. This is what the apostle Paul reminds us of in 1 Thessalonians 4:3-5: "For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you abstain from sexual immorality, that each one of you know how to control his own body in holiness and honour, not in the passion of lust like the Gentiles who do not know God." Parents should instil in the lives of their children that sex is a good thing, created by God. However, it cannot be practised anywhere as one wishes; God intended it to be part of a total relationship of love, friendship and romance (Adei, 1991:109). Parents are not only to teach this truth by word of mouth, they are to live this truth in their own marriage. Children are to see this truth lived as they grow in the family. Parents are to take it upon their shoulders to teach their children about sexuality and not to wait for the church or the school. From parental instructions, it is clear that it is the responsibility of parents to teach children about sexuality. However, this is not the case in many African Christian families. Children learn about sex from their peers, the media and schools.

From this section, it is clear that parents have a duty towards their children. However, they have to know what they have to instil in children's lives. Parents need to understand why they are a family and what they need to impart in the lives of children. Families are to know what their children are going through in life in order to appropriately help them.

5.2.3 The "how" of parental instructions in Proverbs 1-9

This section deals with ways parents used to achieve their intention in the teaching of children. For parents to achieve their goals, they use certain types of strategies. It is, therefore, important to listen to what parental instructions say about the method of child-rearing. Strategies discussed here are not imposed from the outside, they emanate from an analysis of the text itself. It is important

to listen to the text carefully to find out what parental instructions teach parents about raising children. Thus we can avoid the danger of imposing our strategies on the text.

As we are dealing with poetic literature, rhetorical devices used in the text are helpful in determining the strategies that parents use to teach children. McKane (1970:7) argues this point as follows: "The form of Proverbs 7.6-23 affords greater imaginative and descriptive scope than the didactic employment of imperatives and motive clauses in order to inculcate authoritative instruction. There is rather a reliance on descriptive power in order to win acquiescence for the point which is being made." From this argument, it is clear that the text itself reveals the kind of strategy that parents use in teaching children. We will, therefore, analyse the text of some instructions to determine the strategy for learning in these instructions.

In analysing the text of Proverbs 1:8-19 and of Proverbs 7, we discover that the text has several features that are crucial in understanding the parent's strategy in the learning process, illustrations, verbs in the imperative mood, the motive clauses and rhetorical questions. These features are helpful in determining methods that parents employ in teaching their children.

In Proverbs 1:8-19 a parent gives an illustration of the group of wicked men who entice the young man to join them to ambush the innocent. A parent describes clearly to the open ears of the young person the fate of these sinners. The fate of the wicked men will be the fate the young man if he joins them.

In Proverbs 7 the illustration of an innocent young man who is seduced by an adulterous woman who leads him to her house to sleep with her. The young man walks innocently in the streets, while the woman lies in wait for him. The young man's fate is described as death. The reason for the illustration is to make a young man realise what is happening in the real world in order to pursue wisdom (Estes, 1997:115). Estes (1997:116) argues: "The illustrations employ the rhetorical strategy of pathos, for the teacher moves the learner to action by the intentional heightening of emotions." The strategy that a parent uses in these

instructions is of being concerned about the future of a young adult, and then comes back to him with pathos if he joins those who have no future. We can, therefore, connect these parental instructions with the command given to parents in the book of Deuteronomy 6 in which parents are to teach their children God's commandments so that they may have a long life in the Promised Land. Their enjoyment of the Promised Land does not depend on what they are doing today, but on what their children will do in the future. It is important for parents to clearly articulate to their children today what will hinder them to stand in the face of all difficulties to testify to what they know and in whom they believe (Adej, 1991:15). Thus, we can conclude that parents can use examples and stories of other people in life to illustrate the truth that children need to keep in their hearts. What happens to other children in our communities may be used by parents in teaching their children.

We see the next strategy that parents use in the learning process in Proverbs 3:1-12, 4:20-27, and 5:7-23. When we analyse the text of these passages, it is clear that we have commands that are followed by reasons why a child should obey. Let us look at Proverbs 4:20-22:

20. My son, be attentive to my words; incline your ear to my saying.

21. Do not let them slip from your eyes; keep them within your heart.

22. For they are life to him who finds them, and a healing to all his flesh.

Here the son is commanded to be attentive and to incline his ears to his father's words and sayings. He should keep them in his heart. The reason given is that the parent's words and sayings are life and a healing to the child. McKane (1970:78) sees this arrangement as an indication that there is an intrinsic balance between authority and reasonableness in the parental instructions. Parental instructions are not imposed on children; children are given responsibility to act reasonably. Estes (1997:111) argues for this balance as follows: "Rather than demanding compliance based only upon the authority of the teacher, commands bolstered by reasons direct the learner toward right thinking. In doing this, the teacher brings the learner face to face with the issue at hand."

Children are taught to think for themselves in how they have to live their lives. In his observation of this parental strategy in the parental instructions, Melchert (1992:150) correctly comments that this approach to teaching expects the learner to be the primary actor, not the teacher. The learner must see; the teacher cannot do the seeing for the learner. This approach helps us to define the role of the parent in the learning process. The parent's position is no longer that of an authoritative expert, but a persuader; one who challenges the learner to think through issues (Estes, 1997:115).⁷⁰ Paul Tripp (2001:128), in his exhortation to parents of teenagers, argues that as parents prepare their children to go out into the darkened, fallen world to live a godly life, it is mandatory that parents make the development of internalised convictions one of their primary goals. Children need a commitment of the heart in doing God's will, regardless of the consequences.

For parents to achieve the goal of developing the internalised convictions, parents need to have time to listen to their children and the world they are living in. Parents are to empower children by not enforcing their own will on them, but rather to give them something to live and die for. Children are to be given space to think through issues that are before them. Thus they will develop a capacity to critically engage the world they are living in. According to these instructions, we can therefore conclude that parents are to furnish children with reasons for the commands they are teaching them. Children are to understand the importance of following a certain direction in their lives.

⁷⁰ The approach to learning that we see here in the parental instructions is well articulated by Paulo Freire in his book *Pedagogy of the oppressed*. This approach challenges the way that many parents are doing their parenting in which the parent chooses and enforces his choice, and the child complies. Freire (2000:72) describes this kind of learning as the banking concept of education. He describes it as follows: "Education thus becomes an act of depositing, in which the students are the depositories and the teacher is the depositor. Instead of communicating, the teacher issues communiqués and makes deposits which the students patiently memorize, and repeat. This is the banking concept, in which the scope of action allowed to the students extends only as far as receiving, filing and storing deposits" (Freire, 2000:72). This is the kind of education that has been promoted in South Africa among the Africans by colonial and Apartheid regimes. It was also embraced by parents, and particularly by those who were in the church. Freire (2000:73) describes the horrible consequences of this approach in learning as follows: "The more students work at storing the deposits entrusted to them, the less they develop the critical consciousness which would result from their intervention in the world as transformers of that world. The more completely they accept the passive role imposed on them, the more they tend simply to adapt to the world as it is and to the fragmented view of reality deposited in them." However, in the parental instructions, we see parenting that allows children to develop their power to perceive critically the way they exist in the world. They are encouraged to see the world as a reality in process; one in transformation.

For African Christian parents to succeed in parenting, they are to look back and learn how education took place in the African communities. Knowledge was used as a means towards a better life for all in the community.

In Proverbs 1:8-9, 2:1-4, and 5:1-6, it is clear that commands are followed by resultant consequences.

In Proverbs 1:8-9 the child is commanded to hear the discipline of the father and also not to forsake the teaching of his mother. The resultant consequences are that embracing discipline of the father and the teaching of the mother decorate the life of the child and promote the attractiveness of the child's character.

In Proverbs 2:1-4 the child is commanded to run after wisdom and understanding and to search for wisdom as if he is searching for silver or a hidden treasure. The resultant consequence of the search is an understanding of the fear of the Lord.⁷¹

In Proverbs 5:1-6 the child is commanded to attend to the father's wisdom and to incline his ears to his understanding. The father's wisdom will save him from the woman whose lips drip with honey and whose end is bitter as wormwood and sharp as a double-edged sword.

What we observe in these instructions is that a parent presents issues and explains what consequences can be expected, while the decision is left with the child (Estes, 1997:118). The child has to make a decision regarding his life after all facts have been presented to him. Fox (1994:241) says: "This approach enables the teacher to guide the learner through the logical process that will equip him to make wise judgments." It is clear here that the strategy that parents use is geared toward building the child from within rather than from the outside. Parents are to equip their children to discern on their own what is appropriate and inappropriate, and to stand their ground facing the challenges of life. This

⁷¹ Estes (1997:119) analyses Proverbs 2 as follows: "If the learner accepts wisdom enthusiastically (2:1-4), then he will understand the fear of Yahweh (2:5) and he will have understanding for life (2:9). In addition, wisdom will give protection from both the evil man (2:12-15) and the evil woman (2:16-19)."

approach helps children to own their value judgments and to defend them in the absence of their parents.⁷²

Another approach that parental instructions use to instill teaching in the life of a young person is that of coupling commands with rhetorical questions. Rhetorical questions are based on the commands. This is well-illustrated in Proverbs 6:20-35. In this parental instruction, a young person is commanded to bind his father's commandment to his heart and to tie his mother's teaching around his neck (vv. 20-21). Father's commandment and mother's teaching are to be highly prized as a personal treasure (McKane, 1970:327). It is, therefore, argued as a reason for this command that parental wisdom will protect the young person from an evil woman who will seduce him to illicit sexual intimacy (verse 24).

In verses 27-28 we find the following rhetorical questions: Can a man take fire in his bosom and his clothes not be burned? Can a man walk upon burning charcoal, and his feet not be scorched? Through these rhetorical questions, it is put to a young person that he will not be able to avoid the natural consequences of his actions (Fox, 2000:233). He will definitely reap what he has sown in life. In explaining this approach, Estes (1997:119) correctly argues that the young person is brought to the place of personal decision. The reality is well-presented before the young person; he has, therefore, to make his own decision on the matter at hand. The young person has to choose whether to act in accord with the obvious answers to the questions or in conscious rejection.

In this approach we learn that in teaching children, parents are to present reality as it is before the face of children. The consequences of children's actions are to be well-articulated by parents. Natural consequences of the child's actions are

⁷² What we are observing at our institutions of higher education is that young Christians are easily swept away by the spirit of worldliness. They are unable to defend their faith when they face challenges from the surrounding environment. Parents are puzzled when they find out that their children are no longer what they thought they were. One of the reasons that Christian families are losing their children to the world is that they were not shaped in such a way that they live their faith from within, but as something to impress their own parents. Parents are therefore reminded with this approach that they are to raise their children in such a way that they achieve internal ownership of the parental teachings. Children are to be taught in such a way that they are allowed to take decisions that they will defend before everybody, rather than to blindly follow their parents in order to impress them.

not to be hidden from his face. He has to know them. He has therefore to come to a personal decision by himself. He should not be forced. He has to be convinced of his course of action and the consequences thereof. This approach calls parents to be open with their children in their instructions so that children may be prepared to take decisions that they understand and that will benefit them.

In conclusion, we can argue that in training children, parents are not to enforce their teaching without proper explanation and grounding to their children. Children are to understand and willingly accept teaching from their parents. Parental instructions are to be taught in such a way that they become a foundation upon which children can build their lives. Parents need time to do this training.

Parents are also to be open to their children about the natural consequences of their actions in life. It should always be clear to children what the result of their actions will be on their own lives and in the community.

5.2.4 The “why” of the parental instructions in Proverbs 1-9

Goals and aims are an important part of any type of learning. The quality of learning is measured by the results it produces in the lives of the individuals and in the life of the community. Hence, the parental instructions in Proverbs 1-9 are meant to achieve certain goals in the lives of young people. What are the aims of parental instructions? We will answer this question by listening to what the instructions say to us, not by imposing theories from outside the text.

From the following instructions, we can correctly construe that the aim of parental instructions is to build the moral character of the young person.

- For they are a wreath of favour upon your head, and necklaces on your neck (Prov. 1:9).
- Esteem her, and she will exalt you; embrace her, and she will honour you (Prov. 4:8).

- She will set a garland of grace on your head and present you with a crown of splendour (Prov. 4:9).
- With all vigilance keep/guard your heart, for the issues of life (are) from it (Prov. 4:23).

These proverbs give us a picture of what parental instructions can do for a young person, i.e., what they bring into his or her life. Parental instructions are defined here as a wreath of favour; as a necklace. They are further described as something that will set a garland of grace on one's head and that will present a young person with a crown of splendour. These are the rewards to those who heed parental instructions (Clifford, 1999:38). McKane (1970:268) describes the rewards of parental instructions as follows: "Parental instruction embellishes and adorns and promotes an attractiveness of manner and bearing." From what McKane says, we can, therefore, conclude that parental instructions are essential for the wellbeing of the young person. They decorate his or her life and promote the attractiveness of his or her character. However, for the young person to enjoy these rewards, he has to guard his heart, because it contains the words from the parents (Clifford, 1999:65). This clearly shows that the capacity to live with joy and vigour ultimately comes from within and not from external circumstances (Garrett, 1993:88). Concurring with what Garrett has said, Estes (1997:69) argues that the heart controls all of life; it is the key to personal success or failure. The young person's future is determined by what is in the heart. Thus, parents are to strive to find and know their children's hearts.

Consequently, we can argue that the goal of parental instructions is not simply the transmission of a body of facts into the mind of the young person, but the development of the moral character of the young person. This moral character or maturity is essential in functioning well in personal disciplines, in interpersonal relationships, in the family, at work and within the community (Estes, 1999:69). For the wellbeing of the family and society, we need individuals whose moral character is well-developed. Character development cannot be expected to happen at school, but rather at home. In South Africa where we are experiencing

moral degeneration, we are to look upon parents to develop the moral character of their children so that we may have good life and safety in society. On the front page of *City Press* (22 July 2007), there were news headlines such as, “R2 b housing scandal: crooked developers leave state with finance headache,” “Doc in the dock on R10m medical aid fraud charges,” “Vavi to marry his mistress,” “End the silence on women abuse,” “Where black life is cheap.” These articles portray South Africa as suffering from moral degeneration. People who are involved in these scandals are well educated, financially well-to-do people and people who have high positions in society. It should, therefore, convince us that as a society we need to put the focus on the rebuilding of families in all our communities in which the moral development of our children will be a priority. Of course, the foundation upon which the moral development is to be built is יראת יהוה, as we are taught in the parental instructions.

Parental instructions are to prepare a young person to live responsibly and competently in this present world. A young person grows into an adult who has to make life liveable in this world. For a young person to live as a responsible adult, he has to acquire competency skills at home. It is, therefore, another goal of parental instructions to instil competence in the young person to live responsibly in the community. Here are some of the parental instructions that indicate to us that indeed competence is one of the skills that a young person needs to have:.

- Then you will understand the fear of Yahweh, and you will find the knowledge of the Lord (Prov. 2:5).
- Then you will understand righteousness, justice and equity - every good path (Prov. 2:9).
- Go to the ant, o sluggard, observe her ways and become wise (Prov. 6:6).

From these parental instructions it is obvious that education by parents is more than knowledge accumulation. It is a means towards a better understanding of the complex world and how to navigate in that complexity. Knowledge is useful in

helping a young person to understand the created world and to cope with human existence (Estes, 1997:70).⁷³ However, according to Proverbs 2:5, the young person's understanding of the world is founded on the *יִרְאַת יְהוָה* and *כִּשְׁת אֱלֹהִים*. What is described here is the great insight that comes from wisdom, which emphasises an understanding of God and his ways (Garrett, 1993:75). The search for wisdom brings one into a right relationship with Yahweh (Clifford, 1999:47). It is in this relationship that the young person gains a critical capacity that helps him or her to discriminate wisely and take well-considered actions (Estes, 1997:70). This is the skill that a young person needs in order to live a responsible life, which he can appropriately receive at home.

In Proverbs 2:9 we are told that those who have embraced wisdom by paying attention to parental instructions will understand that their relationship with their neighbours is to be adorned by righteousness and justice. In their relationship with the created order, they will know what is right and just and fair (Garrett, 1993:75). Parental instructions give them the power of judgement and perceptive insight. They will be able to judge between right and wrong. The judgement and perceptive insight that one needs as an adult in his relationship with the created order have to be nurtured at home by the parents. This further confirms the vital role that parents play in the life of their children. Children are to learn about righteousness and justice, which are crucial in the socio-economic and political life of every nation, from home. If we undermine the role of the family, we are at the same time undermining the life of the community.⁷⁴

⁷³ This is the kind of education that will empower individuals in the community to reflect and act on their own context or reality. It will enable young people to reject domestication by their own reality, but to emerge from it and turn upon it in order to be humans (Freire, 2000:44). [not clear what is meant here – language editor]

⁷⁴ According to Stats SA Report -03-07. 2004, South Africa had 31,768 divorces in 2004 (p. 9). According to this report, these divorces had a profound effect not only on the living arrangement of minor children, but also on their socio-economic and psychological wellbeing. A total of 29,597 minor children were involved in these divorces (p. 11). The question that comes to one's mind is whether these children will receive the necessary life skills that were supposed to be given by their families. The apparent answer is that they will not receive them, which they would if they were being raised by both parents. This trend should remind local churches in local communities to work closely with parents in how children should be raised and to come up with strong premarital counselling programmes to prepare young people before they get into marriage. Failure to do this equals the undermining of our own lives in society.

In Proverbs 6:6 we learn that parental instructions are essential for the young person's wellbeing in the world. Parental instructions give him discipline and prudence that are indispensable for his well-being. This parental instruction enjoins the young person to observe the lifestyle of an ant. The ant is held up as a model of self-discipline and systematic industry (McKane, 1970:323). Ants are models of diligence and they work without any supervision of a taskmaster (Garrett, 1993:96). Diligence and industriousness are skills that a young person has to learn so that he may be able to become aware of his environment and to harness his world to useful and beneficial ends (McKane, 1970:324). Through this skill that a young person has to learn at home, he develops alertness and foresight to anticipate difficulties ahead and make provision against them. We are again reminded that entrepreneurial skills are to be nurtured at home. Home is the center of the life of every society. It is important, therefore, that we oppose all factors in our society that promote any dysfunctionality of the family.⁷⁵ If families are well-prepared for their role in the lives of their children, they will be able to deal with issues such as debt that are ravaging the lives of our people.

Another reason for the importance of parental instructions is that they bring protection into the life of a young person. Without parental instruction, the life of a young person can be easily devastated or polluted. The following parental instructions reveal to us what they can do in the life of a young person if they were embraced:

- For length of days and years of life and peace, they will add to you (Prov. 3:2).
- And you shall find favour and good reputation in the eyes of God and man (Prov. 3:4).

⁷⁵ In this case one can think of the worldview that underlies the recently passed law called Child Act 2007. According to this law a child of twelve years can use condoms and terminate pregnancy without the consent of the parents. A youth of eighteen years can get into marriage without parental consent. This law truly militates against the role of parents in the lives of their children. It is clear that the law is based on the individualistic Western understanding of a child. This law does not promote the role of the family in the growth of a child; a child is viewed as a mature Independent person at the age of twelve.

- It will be a healing to your flesh and refreshment to your bones (Prov. 3:8).
- And they will be life to your soul, and grace to your neck (Prov. 3:22).
- Then you will walk safely on your way, and your foot will not stumble (Prov. 3:23).
- If you lie down, you will not tremble, and when you lie down your sleep will be sweet (Prov. 3:24).
- When you walk, it will lead you, when you sleep, it will watch over you, and when you awake, it will commune with you (Prov. 6:22).
- For the commandment is a lamp, and the teaching is a light, and reproofs of instruction are the way of life (Prov. 6:23).
- To keep you from the evil woman, from the smoothness of the tongue of the foreign woman (Prov. 6:24).
- To preserve you from the adulteress, from the stranger whose words are smooth (Prov. 7:5).

These parental instructions remind us that a young person as he grows up is faced with challenges and pressures from within himself and from outside. For a young person to overcome these challenges and pressures he needs guidance and wisdom from his parents. A young person cannot survive in this turbulent world without guidance from parents.

The parental guidance that parents give to their children as they grow up is defined as a healing to the flesh and refreshment to the child's bone (Prov. 3:8), and as life to his soul and grace to his neck (Prov. 3:22); and again as a lamp, light and a way of life (Prov. 6:23). Words that are used in these descriptions clearly show that a child cannot thrive without parental guidance. For a young person to enjoy a healthy and happy condition of being and to have inward peace in his life, he has to embrace instructions from his parents (Toy, 1899:62). Thus, he will avoid bodily and outward ills in his life. Garrett (1993:81) correctly argues that health naturally proceeds from the peaceful and well-ordered life that has

submitted to God. From Proverbs 3:22 we can conclude that parental instructions, if embraced, can benefit a young person with a preservation of life and the attractiveness of character. It is important, therefore, to note that parental instructions are crucial for the entire life of a young person. They are crucial for his physical and spiritual wellbeing. He cannot survive without these instructions from parents. This is how parents should understand their role in the lives of their children. Thus, parents should not allow anybody or anything to alienate them from the lives of their children.⁷⁶

Parental instructions will also protect a young person from fear and anxiety. Wicked people are always in fear of punishment or revenge from those whom they have wronged or from the authorities. It is not like that to those who have embraced wisdom by listening to parental instructions. They are, therefore, described as people whose feet will not stumble (Prov. 3:23) and whose sleep will be sweet (Prov. 3:24). Wisdom accompanies the young person at all times, protects him from danger, and provides him with worthy and valuable thoughts.

Parental instructions protect a young man from wicked men who entice him to harmful things, and from the wicked woman who seduces him with her smooth words towards an illicit sexual relationship. These are harmful dangers that face the young man as he grows up. If not avoided by listening to his parents, there is a great possibility that a young man can lose his life at a tender age. Avoidance of these dangers also protects a young man from diseases that are killing young people.⁷⁷ Consequently, Estes (1997:79) argues: "Wisdom, then, has a defensive goal: the protection of the learner from harmful influences that could easily lead to disaster."

⁷⁶ Alienation is common these days due to the heavy schedules that parents have in their employment, and due to a belief that the school or church can replace parents in teaching children. A church and a school are there for supporting parents. Parents are the primary educators of their own children.

⁷⁷ According to statistics found in the <http://www.avert.org/safricastats.htm>, there is a prevalence of HIV and AIDS of 8% among 15-49 year-olds. This means that 5,5 million South Africans were living with HIV at the end of 2005, including 240,000 children under 15 years old. This is a real crisis in the life of our nation. However, we can effectively avert this crisis if we affirm the position of parents in the lives of their children. God has given parents the wisdom to protect children from these dangers.

5.3 CONCLUSION

From the discussion of these themes, it is obvious that the church today should take parental instructions seriously. They are part of the canon upon which we are to measure our faith and life as God's people. They can correct and give guidance to parents today that are struggling with parenting. For the church to address concretely the serious concern of the dysfunctionality of the household, those lessons that we have learnt from parental instructions are to be taken seriously and taught to parents. These themes guide parents as to the foundation upon which learning in the family is to be built. It teaches them how that learning should take place, what parents should teach their children and the goals that they need to achieve through teaching their children.

These instructions clearly make a point that parenting is not about the accumulation of the body of facts, but about preparing a child to live in this complex world as God intended him to live. For a child to live meaningfully in the world, he has to come to a correct relationship with the Creator and other human beings. A child should define himself within these relationships and not as an independent individual. This understanding should remind families to raise their children within communities and for the wellbeing of those communities, not for their own individualistic wellbeing as we are experiencing in our own communities.⁷⁸

These parental instructions also remind us of the essential role that a family plays in the life of children. A family is a primary source of the child's education in life. Other institutions build on the foundation laid by the family. This contradicts the modern notion that places the education of children in the hands of the church and the school. Parents are to reclaim the education of their children if we were to have communities that will promote humanity, because the child can

⁷⁸ What we are experiencing is that children are raised and educated for selfish reasons and not for the *wellbeing* of the community. When you ask most parents why they are spending a lot of money on the education of their children, their responses reveal that they want their children to become successful in terms of material possessions. This notion undermines the morality that enhances and gives meaning to the life of the community.

learn about humanity at home. Therefore, we are all reminded that if we were to build a society that promotes humanity, we are to find ways of building strong families in our communities.

CHAPTER 6

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 SUMMARY

The main focus of this research is to determine the message of Proverbs 1-9 and its relevance for today. It is argued that Proverbs 1-9 has to be studied in such a way that a contemporary reader can see its relevance and significance in questions related to child-rearing in the contemporary world. This was done by dealing with the following questions:

- How has Proverbs 1-9 been interpreted in history?
- What is the form and genre of Proverbs 1-9?
- What is the message of Proverbs 1-9?

In the history of interpretation of Proverbs 1-9, it has been ascertained that Proverbs 1-9 is an educational instruction from parents to children to build the worldview and moral character of children. Consequently, the child will live a successful life as an adult. Though Proverbs 1-9 has been interpreted by many scholars as ahistorical and acultic. It has been established in this research that Proverbs 1-9's message concur with the message from other parts of the Old Testament. It has therefore to be interpreted within the context of the Old Testament books. It has the same message as those books in the Old Testament considered as historical and cultic.

From the form and genre analysis of Proverbs 1-9, it has been confirmed that Proverbs 1-9 is composed of two literary forms, i.e. the instruction genre and as wisdom poem. The two are related but distinct. The focus of this research is on the instruction genre, which comprises parental instructions in which the child is urged to accept the way of wisdom. This is the foundation upon which the child's success in life is built.

From the exegesis of the relevant texts in Proverbs 1-9 the following categories of themes were extracted:

- The worldview of the parental instructions;
- the content of the parental instructions;
- the methods for teaching parental instructions; and
- the goals for parental instructions

From these themes, it is clear that parental instructions are part of the canon upon which the church of God has to measure her faith and life. It is therefore important for the contemporary church to listen to these instructions in order to build family structures in our communities.

It is a clear teaching of these instructions that a primary source of the child's education in life is the home.

This is the Word of the Lord for the church in Africa. It is the instrument in the hands of the church here in Africa to reconstruct the family structure that has been devastated.

Child-rearing, as it has been discussed in this paper, is the foundation of any society on the face of the earth. As people, we are concerned for the future of our communities. Thus, we are responsible to build the foundation of those communities. Consequently, child-rearing should become the primary preoccupation of every community, especially in those communities where there is dysfunctionality of the family structure.

6.2 CONCLUSIONS

The central question that should be asked in this conclusion is: What can the Christian community do in our midst to promote the Biblical child-rearing that will enhance the transformation of our communities? The Christian community, wherever it is placed, has to become conscious of her identity as an alternative society that needs to be different from the world. Thus, the Christian community shows commitment to the Word of God and to the needs of the local community (Dawn, 1997:188). The Christian church in the African community needs leaders that are themselves committed to the Word of God and to their communities.

They are to teach parents in their communities to model parental instructions and to invite their children to an active application of the instructions in their communities.

Thus parental instructions in Proverbs 1-9 are an indispensable resource to the Christian community to fulfil her role of child-rearing. Parental instructions provide Christian parents and communities with the worldview upon which parental teaching is built. Parents are guided that they should not allow their children to choose whatever they want in life; that there are ethos and principles that are to be cultivated in the children as they grow up. For this reasons, parental instructions give parents a sense of responsibility regarding the growing up of their children. Children are not to be left on their own. They cannot raise themselves. They need parental guidance in the home.

Parental instructions in Proverbs 1-9 provide parents as well as the Christian community in general with values and teachings that need to be instilled in the minds and hearts of children. Parents are not left alone in the confused jungle of ideas about parenting. Parents are provided with what they need to teach their children.

Parental instructions in Proverbs 1-9 help parents with how they should parent their children. Parents are to develop a critical consciousness in children so that they can think through issues themselves in order to build their environment or world to live in as transformers of that world (Freire, 2000:73). Proverbs 1-9 discourages parents to see children as a bank to deposit knowledge and values. Children are to be respected as individuals and given room to make mistakes and to learn from them. They are also to be respected in the sense that parents are to give their children reasons for their instructions. Children should not obey parents out of fear, but out of a heart-felt commitment to God and to the community. According to Proverbs 1-9, good parenting should develop commitment of the heart in a child.

Proverbs 1-9 provides Christian parents with reasons to endure in the work of parenting. When children are well raised, parents are assured of peace and unity

in families and communities. People will respect each other in the community. Thus parenting becomes a vehicle of addressing socio-economic and political challenges such as oppression, racism, tribalism and materialism that are ravaging our communities.

Thus, we can conclude without hesitation that the parental instructions in Proverbs 1-9 are indispensable resources for Christian parents and communities in their task of child-rearing. Hence this research is a wake-up call to Christian parents and communities to look around and see how God has blessed us with the book of Proverbs and to take it back to its rightful place. It has to occupy a central place in our journey of preparing our children for future roles in their homes and communities. Christian parents and communities neglect the book of Proverbs 1-9 at their own peril.

How can the book of Proverbs be used in the ministry of the Christian church? The book of Proverbs as the Word of God is primarily meant to build the church. Its study - whether academic or otherwise - has to serve that purpose of building the church.

It can therefore be unashamedly recommended to church leaders as they develop various ministries in the church to seriously consider the book of Proverbs. It can be meaningfully used in developing programmes such as premarital counselling, family enrichment, catechetical classes and Vacation Bible School.

In the Christian home, parents are to make sure that they have studied the book of Proverbs with their children several times before they leave home.

The book of Proverbs can become a tool in the reconstruction of family structure in our communities.

6.3 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

This research has contributed to building a Biblical theology of child-rearing. It brings in the perspective from the book that has been given less attention than it deserves in Biblical theology. It has been viewed as if it had nothing to do with

the history and the cult of Israel. It has been confirmed here that the book of Proverbs is rooted in the history and the cult of Israel. It does not contradict in any way the message of other Old Testament books; it affirms it. It is therefore important for the contemporary church to look at it as the Word of God in which God has revealed His will for His church in the 21st century and particularly here in Africa.

However, this research did not address all issues that need to be addressed here. Further research can be built on this research. The following areas are therefore suggested for further research:

- Comparison of the messages of the parental instructions and wisdom poems in Proverbs 1-9;
- understanding of the African view of child-rearing as a way of deepening Biblical understanding of child-rearing in African Christian families;
- evaluation of the African understanding of child-rearing according to the parental instructions in Proverbs 1-9;
- investigation of the role played by African initiation schools and the formal (Western) schools in building the African communities in the light of the parental instructions in Proverbs 1-9;
- historical survey on how Proverbs 1-9 has been used by churches in Africa in addressing dysfunctionality of family structure in African communities; and
- developing a family devotional manual for Christian families in Africa.

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