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## Can *Ahiqar* Tell Us Anything about Personified Wisdom?

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Bezalel Porten and Ada Yardeni's third volume of *Textbook of Aramaic Documents* (TAD:3) provides a highly regarded edition of the Aramaic *Ahiqar* narrative and proverbs that has implications for how scholars of wisdom literature incorporate *Ahiqar* into discussions of personified Wisdom. The most intriguing result of the new arrangement centers on the two lines of what was traditionally called Saying 13 (TAD:3 lines C1.1.79 and C1.1.189). The two lines of Saying 13 have been crucial for the view that personified Wisdom is in *Ahiqar*. The unity of the saying has been disrupted, and it seems clear that the respective lines have very different meanings. Based on this evidence, it is my contention that personified Wisdom cannot be found in *Ahiqar*. I argue, therefore, that *Ahiqar* no longer has a place in discussions of personified Wisdom and that the relationship between *Ahiqar* and the biblical wisdom literature must be reassessed in light of this new evidence.

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The Aramaic *Ahiqar*, a fifth-century B.C.E. document from the Jewish military colony at Elephantine, has fascinated scholars of wisdom literature for nearly a century.<sup>1</sup> Many of *Ahiqar*'s sayings share formal and thematic similarities with the biblical wisdom literature, especially the book of Proverbs.<sup>2</sup> Among the parallels,

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<sup>1</sup>Unless otherwise specified, references to *Ahiqar* passages are from text C1.1, "Words of *Ahiqar*," in Bezalel Porten and Ada Yardeni, *Textbook of Aramaic Documents from Ancient Egypt*, vol. 3, *Literature, Accounts, Lists* (Texts and Studies for Students; Jerusalem: Hebrew University Press, 1993). For convenience, I will provide only the line numbers, e.g. *Ahiqar* 79 = TAD:3, C1.1.79.

<sup>2</sup>As in Proverbs 10–31, most of the individual sayings employ some form of parallelism. There are also a number of "my son" (Ar. בְּרִי) sayings, which are paralleled by the presumed social setting of Proverbs 1–9 (e.g., Prov 6:20). *Ahiqar* has one example of a numerical saying

perhaps the most outstanding is a hymn that seemingly praises a divinely exalted and possibly personified Wisdom. Scholars of wisdom literature, therefore, have drawn on *Ahiqar* to make claims about the origins and character of personified Wisdom, and some have even pointed to *Ahiqar*'s personified Wisdom as evidence for a direct relationship between *Ahiqar* and the biblical Proverbs.

The papyri, though, are highly fragmentary and the reconstruction is not certain. In 1993, Bezalel Porten and Ada Yardeni published the third volume of *Textbook of Aramaic Documents* (TAD:3), which provides a new reconstruction of the *Ahiqar* text, as well as a different arrangement of the columns. This highly regarded edition of the *Ahiqar* narrative and sayings has serious implications for how scholars of wisdom literature incorporate *Ahiqar* into their discussions. The most intriguing result of the new arrangement—at least for scholars of wisdom literature—centers on the two lines of what was traditionally called Saying 13.<sup>3</sup> In their new edition, the unity of the saying has been disrupted, and it seems clear that the respective lines have very different meanings. Based on this evidence, it is my contention that personified Wisdom cannot be found in *Ahiqar*.

I argue, therefore, that *Ahiqar* no longer has a place in discussions of personified Wisdom and that the relationship between *Ahiqar* and the biblical wisdom literature should be reassessed. In this article I will first briefly review

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(187–188), which can be compared to Prov 6:16–19 and those in the Words of Agur (Prov 30:18–19, 21–31). The following are just a few examples of thematic correspondence: discipline of children (*Ahiqar* 175–177; Prov 13:24; Sir 30:1–13); behavior around/obedience to a king (*Ahiqar* 84–87; Prov 20:2; Sir 7:5); and the righteous vs. wicked (*Ahiqar* 103–104; Prov 2:21–22; Sir 32:16–17). Two of the sayings have even been identified as almost exact parallels with their biblical counterparts: *Ahiqar* 176 = Prov 23:13–14 and *Ahiqar* 206b = Jer 9:22. H. L. Ginsberg's comments about the first pair are worth noting: "Though parental discipline and the desirability of corporal punishment are common enough themes in wisdom literature, the close verbal similarity . . . is greater than could be accounted for by similarity of theme alone. It cannot be claimed that either saying is borrowed from the other, but it is likely that some common oral or written tradition underlies both" ("The Words of *Ahiqar*," *ANET*, 487). Although the conclusion is missing, the narrative portions of *Ahiqar* are reminiscent of the court tales genre found in both Egyptian and biblical literature, especially the Joseph narrative. One may also compare Job, Daniel, Esther, Tobit, and Nehemiah. The Egyptian Demotic text *The Instruction of Ankhsheshonq* may also be likened to these. For comparison between *Ahiqar* and *Ankhsheshonq* see Miriam Lichtheim, *Late Egyptian Wisdom Literature in the International Context: A Study of Demotic Instructions* (OBO 52; Freiburg, Schweiz: Universitätsverlag, 1983).

<sup>3</sup>Saying 13 consists of lines 94b–95 (= 189 and 79 in TAD:3) in James M. Lindenberger's edition (*The Aramaic Proverbs of Ahiqar* [Johns Hopkins Near Eastern Studies; Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1983]). The Proverbs of *Ahiqar* were first divided into lines by A. Cowley (*Aramaic Papyri of the Fifth Century B.C.* [1923; repr., Osnabrück: Otto Zeller, 1967]), and most have followed this convention. In 1961 Pierre Grelot applied a numbering system to just the proverbs papyri, which was followed by Lindenberger (et al.), hence "Saying 1, 2, 3, etc." ("Les proverbes araméens d'*Ahiqar*," *RB* 69 [1961]: 178–94). Further discussion of the numbering systems will be made below in the section on the arrangement of the fragments.

how *Ahiqar* has been used by scholars of wisdom literature, focusing primarily on discussion surrounding the figure of personified Wisdom. Then I will present Porten and Yardeni's arrangement of the columns and their reconstruction of the lines in question. Here I will offer some analysis and interpretation of each line and its importance for understanding the concept of *wisdom* in *Ahiqar*. Finally, I will conclude by summarizing what can be said about *Ahiqar*'s relationship to the personified Wisdom tradition.

## I. SCHOLARLY DISCUSSION OF *AHIQAR* AND PERSONIFIED WISDOM

Over the past century a great deal of scholarship on the biblical wisdom literature has centered on the figure of personified Wisdom.<sup>4</sup> Much of that effort has been to search for her origins among the Canaanite, Egyptian, or Assyrian pantheons.<sup>5</sup> Others avoided talk of divinity or hypostatization and have taken rhetorical or even sociological approaches to the text, suggesting that Wisdom is merely a metaphor or that she is modeled on real, *wise* women.<sup>6</sup> Some have

<sup>4</sup>Namely, the character in Prov 1:20–33; 8:1–9:11 and the similar figures in Job 28, Sirach 24, Baruch 3, and Wisdom of Solomon 7–8.

<sup>5</sup>W. F. Albright at one time claimed that Wisdom was a hypostatization of the Canaanite god El (“The Goddess of Life and Wisdom,” *AJSL* 36 [1920]: 258–94). Bernhard W. Lang connected the image of Wisdom in Proverbs with a Syrian/Israelite goddess who was the patron saint of scribes (*Wisdom and the Book of Proverbs: A Hebrew Goddess Redefined* [New York: Pilgrim, 1986], 131). See also Lang, “Wisdom,” *DDD* (2nd ed.), 1692–1702. Christa Kayatz saw the Egyptian Ma’at as the model of Wisdom (*Studien zu Proverbien 1–9: Eine form- und motivgeschichtliche Untersuchung unter Einbeziehung ägyptischen Vergleichsmaterials* [WMANT 22; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1966]). W. J. Knox (“The Divine Wisdom” *JTS* 38 [1937]: 230–37) drew parallels between the hellenized Isis and Wisdom in Proverbs, and the same was done with the Wisdom figure in the Wisdom of Solomon (John S. Kloppenborg, “Isis and Sophia in the Book of Wisdom,” *HTR* 75 [1982]: 57–84) and Sirach (Martin Hengel, *Judaism and Hellenism: Studies in Their Encounter in Palestine during the Early Hellenistic Period* [Philadelphia: Fortress, 1974], 157–60). Mark Smith suggested the goddess Asherah as the model of Wisdom (*The Early History of God: Yahweh and Other Deities in Ancient Israel* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002], 133–37).

<sup>6</sup>See, e.g., Claudia V. Camp, “Woman Wisdom as Root Metaphor: A Theological Consideration,” in *The Listening Heart: Essays in Wisdom and the Psalms in Honor of Roland E. Murphy* (ed. Kenneth G. Hoglund et al.; JSOTSup 58; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1987), 45–76; or Christine Roy Yoder, *Wisdom as a Woman of Substance: A Socioeconomic Reading of Proverbs 1–9 and 31:10–31* (BZAW 304; Berlin/New York: de Gruyter, 2001). The examples here and in the previous footnote are only a few of the theories concerning the figure of personified Wisdom. For a lengthier discussion of these examples and others, see Michael V. Fox, *Proverbs 1–9: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (AB:18A; New York: Doubleday, 2000), 331–45; Alice M. Sinnott, *The Personification of Wisdom* (SOTSMS; Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2005), 10–52; or Judith Hadley, “Wisdom and the Goddess,” in *Wisdom in Ancient Israel: Essays in Honour of J. A. Emerton* (ed. John Day, Robert P. Gordon, and H. G. M. Williamson; Cambridge:

maintained that personified Wisdom is a uniquely Israelite phenomenon.<sup>7</sup> While there is still much debate about the figure in Proverbs 8 and her origins, many of those discussions have relied, to some extent, on the Aramaic Proverbs of *Ahiqar* from Elephantine.

The two lines that make up Saying 13 in *Ahiqar* have been crucial for the view that there is a personified or hypostatized Wisdom figure independent of the biblical wisdom tradition.<sup>8</sup> J. M. Lindenberger's translation of *Ahiqar* in James H. Charlesworth's *Old Testament Pseudepigrapha* is the most accessible and continues to be influential. His translation of Saying 13 reads as follows:

From heaven the peoples are favored;  
Wisdom is of the gods.  
Indeed, she is precious to the gods;  
her kingdom is *et[er]nal*.  
She has been established by Shamayn;  
yea, the Holy Lord has exalted her.<sup>9</sup>

While scholars have debated exactly what this text is saying about Wisdom, most have understood the figure here to be comparable to Woman Wisdom of Proverbs

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Cambridge University Press, 1995), 234–43. As is evident, there is no consensus on the matter. Part of the problem is the lack of evidence for a wisdom figure—whether divine, hypostatized, or personified—outside the biblical texts.

<sup>7</sup>Michael D. Coogan argues that personified Wisdom is an Israelite phenomenon and represents the legitimization of goddess worship in Israel and Judah (“The Goddess Wisdom—Where Can She Be Found?” in *Ki Baruch Hu: Ancient Near Eastern, Biblical, and Judaic Studies in Honor of Baruch A. Levine* [ed. Robert Chazan, William W. Hallo, and Lawrence H. Schiffman; Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1999], 203–10). In response to Coogan, Hadley says, “It is my opinion that the apparent apotheosis of Lady Wisdom in the biblical literature is not a legitimization of the worship of ‘established’ goddesses, but rather is a literary compensation for the eradication of these goddesses” (“Wisdom and the Goddess,” 236).

<sup>8</sup>Saying 13, as it stands in Lindenberger's edition, does not exist in Porten and Yardeni's reconstruction. When I mention Saying 13 I am referring to Lindenberger's edition.

<sup>9</sup>Lindenberger, “*Ahiqar*,” *OTP* 2:499. This was (and, in some respects, continues to be) the standard English translation on which most scholars have relied since 1985. Many also rely on Lindenberger's monograph *The Aramaic Proverbs of Ahiqar*, which has the same translation. Before the publication of *OTP*, the most accessible English translation was by Ginsberg (*ANET*, 498–507), and some still use it. Cowley's *Aramaic Papyri of the Fifth Century B.C.* was the “classic” edition. Still, some have relied on their own reconstructions and translations based on Eduard Sachau's facsimiles of the manuscripts, whose quality is such that they are still useful today. The standard edition in French scholarship has been Grelot's (1961). Grelot has since published two revisions, in 1972 (“Histoire et sagesse d'Ahiqar l'Assyrien,” in idem, ed., *Documents araméens d'Égypte* [LAPO 5; Paris: Cerf, 1972], 427–52) and in 2001 (“Les Proverbes d'Ahiqar” *RB* 108 [2001]: 511–28), the latter edition following TAD:3 closely. German scholarship has been heavily influenced by Ingo Kottsieper's monograph *Die Sprache der Ahiqarsprüche* (BZAW 194; Berlin/New York: de Gruyter, 1990). See also Kottsieper's important article “Die Geschichte und die Sprüche des weisen Achiqar,” *TUAT* 3.2 (1991), 320–47.

8 (et al.). The correspondence becomes increasingly significant if the fifth-century Elephantine text faithfully represents the supposed eighth-/seventh-century Syrian original.<sup>10</sup> Thus, not only would we have an extrabiblical Wisdom figure, but one that is not Israelite/Jewish and may even predate Proverbs.<sup>11</sup> The presence of such a figure outside the Israelite or Jewish wisdom traditions has influenced scholarly constructions of personified Wisdom and has shaped the way scholars understand the relationship between *Ahiqar* and the biblical wisdom literature.

#### *A. Scholarly Analysis of Wisdom in Ahiqar before Publication of TAD:3 (1911–1993)*

Almost immediately after its first publication by Sachau in 1911, scholars of wisdom literature have brought *Ahiqar* into their discussions about personified Wisdom.<sup>12</sup> In 1920, W. F. Albright referenced the *Ahiqar* passage before remarking, “Aramaic *Hokmeta* ‘wisdom,’ is evidently the source of Jewish *Hokma*.”<sup>13</sup> Herbert Donner, in 1957, was the first to make a strong argument for a direct connection between the wisdom figure in *Ahiqar* and the one in Proverbs 8. He understood the *Ahiqar* figure to be the “connecting link” between the Egyptian Ma’at and the fully developed personified Wisdom in Proverbs.<sup>14</sup>

Later, Bernhard Lang suggested that the figure in Proverbs referred to an Israelite patron goddess of wisdom who was one among many in the early Israelite pantheon. His thesis was heavily criticized because he offered little solid evidence for this claim, except he did suggest that the *Ahiqar* text “refers to a goddess who bears the same name [as the one in Proverbs, and] perhaps the Aramaic-speaking scribes shared the cult of Wisdom with their Hebrew-speaking colleagues.”<sup>15</sup>

<sup>10</sup>The provenance and original language of *Ahiqar* have been heavily debated. Recently, however, consensus is building around Aramaic as the original language (as opposed to Akkadian or Hebrew) and probably a Syrian (or, perhaps, western Assyrian) provenance in the late eighth or early seventh century. Kottsieper’s works are significant (*Die Sprache* and “Die Geschichte”). See also discussion in Lindenberger, *Aramaic Proverbs of Ahiqar*, 16–20; Jonas C. Greenfield, “The Wisdom of *Ahiqar*,” in Day et al., *Wisdom in Ancient Israel*, 43–52; and Kottsieper, “The Aramaic Tradition: *Ahikar*,” in *Scribes, Sages, and Seers: The Sage in the Eastern Mediterranean World* (ed. Leo G. Perdue; FRLANT 219; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2008), 109–24.

<sup>11</sup>This latter point depends on one’s date of Proverbs. Most date the prologue (chs. 1–9) to the postexilic period.

<sup>12</sup>Sachau, *Aramäische Papyrus und Ostraka aus einer jüdischen Militär-Koloni zu Elephantine* (Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1911).

<sup>13</sup>Albright, “Goddess of Life and Wisdom,” 285. He also noted that *Ahiqar*’s depiction of Wisdom’s “exaltation” resembles the mythological ascent of Wisdom in *1 Enoch* 42.

<sup>14</sup>Donner, “Die religionsgeschichtliche Ursprünge von Prov. Sal 8,” *ZÄS* 82 (1957): 8–18.

<sup>15</sup>Lang, *Wisdom and the Book of Proverbs*, 129–31. For examples of criticism of Lang’s thesis, see J. A. Emerton, review of B. Lang, *Wisdom and the Book of Proverbs*, *VT* 37 (1987): 127; and John Day, “Foreign Semitic Influence on the Wisdom of Israel,” in Day et al., *Wisdom in Ancient Israel*, 69.

In 1983, Lindenberger published the first monograph-length English translation of *Ahiqar* with commentary. Shortly thereafter his translation with a brief commentary appeared in *OTP*, wherein he said the following:

The saying is evidently a hymn in praise of wisdom, praising her divine origin, her benefits to mankind, and her exaltation by the gods. Though the saying does not go so far to personify wisdom explicitly, it is nevertheless the closest non-Jewish parallel to the biblical and post-biblical poems in praise of wisdom and is probably older than any of them.<sup>16</sup>

Lindenberger's assumptions about the nature of Wisdom's description, her foreign origin and the text's early dating have been very influential on subsequent scholarship and consensus about *Ahiqar*.<sup>17</sup>

### ***B. Scholarly Analysis of Wisdom in Ahiqar after Publication of TAD:3 (1994–Present)***

A decade later Porten and Yardeni published the third volume of the *Textbook of Aramaic Documents from Ancient Egypt*. In this volume they included the Aramaic *Ahiqar*, but their arrangement of the papyri and their reconstructions of the text were quite different from Lindenberger's edition.<sup>18</sup> The problem, however, is that very few wisdom scholars have adopted Porten and Yardeni's edition and have continued to rely on Lindenberger's presentation of Saying 13. Consequently, scholarly assumptions about *Ahiqar* and personified Wisdom have changed very little. The consensus in recent scholarship seems to be that *Ahiqar* has a Wisdom figure that is at least somewhat related to personified Wisdom in Proverbs. The implications of this assumption are significant.

On the one hand, some scholars presume that personified Wisdom is not unique (or even indigenous) to Israel. John Day's statements are telling: "since Wisdom appears to be already personified outside Israel in the Wisdom of *Ahiqar*, lines 94b–95, one may perhaps envisage it as an appropriation and development of the West Semitic Wisdom tradition."<sup>19</sup> Utilizing Lindenberger's edition, Day takes for granted that personified Wisdom *is* in *Ahiqar* and, therefore, is not original to Israel.

<sup>16</sup>Lindenberger, "Ahiqar," *OTP* 2:485.

<sup>17</sup>For other notable references to *Ahiqar* in discussions of personified Wisdom, see Roland E. Murphy, *The Tree of Life: An Exploration of Biblical Wisdom Literature* (ABRL; New York: Doubleday, 1990), 159; and Nili Shupak, *Where Can Wisdom Be Found? The Sage's Language in the Bible and in Ancient Egyptian Literature* (OBO 130; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1993), 269.

<sup>18</sup>See discussion of these differences below.

<sup>19</sup>John Day, *Yahweh and the Gods and Goddesses of Canaan* (JSOTSup 265; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000), 67. For his thesis about a "West Semitic Wisdom tradition," see Day, "Foreign Semitic Influence," 62–70.

Moreover, the assumption that *Ahiqar* contains personified Wisdom has influenced scholarly opinion about *Ahiqar*'s relationship to the biblical wisdom literature. Michael V. Fox suggests a direct relationship between *Ahiqar* and Proverbs.<sup>20</sup> He identifies four thematic and literary features that were unique to these two texts (i.e., features that he does not find in Egyptian wisdom literature and that are not present/common in Mesopotamian wisdom literature).<sup>21</sup> The very first element Fox presents is the personification of Wisdom.<sup>22</sup> Then, after listing some of the strongest parallels between individual *Ahiqar* sayings and corresponding passages in Proverbs, Fox draws this conclusion: "Some of the above are less clearly instances of dependency, but overall the evidence indicates that the sages of Proverbs knew the book of *Ahiqar*."<sup>23</sup>

In sum, for the past century, most scholars have confidently assumed that *Ahiqar* has a personified or hypostatized Wisdom that is parallel to the biblical figure, and this notion has even led a few scholars to suggest a direct literary or *traditionsgeschichtliche* relationship between *Ahiqar* and Proverbs.<sup>24</sup> Moreover, regardless of how strong or weak her/his conclusions, each scholar's arguments about the figure of personified Wisdom in *Ahiqar* depend on Saying 13 according to Lindenberger's edition. The problem, however, is that if we look at Porten and Yardeni's edition critically, there is no Saying 13.

## II. ARRANGEMENT, RECONSTRUCTION, AND INTERPRETATION OF THE *AHIQAR* PAPYRI

Eleven sheets of papyri containing fourteen columns of the *Ahiqar* text are extant. Four of the sheets (A–D) and five columns (1–5) contain narrative portions;

<sup>20</sup>Fox, *Proverbs: 10–31: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (A[Yale]B 18B; New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), 761. Fox also attributes the "high frequency of Aramaisms" in the biblical Proverbs—especially in the "Words of the Wise" (22:17–24:22)—to influence from *Ahiqar*. He suggests that the author of the "Words of the Wise" compiled sayings from various sources including *Ahiqar* (pp. 505, 706).

<sup>21</sup>Fox is informed by the influential article by Day ("Foreign Semitic Influence"), who drew heavily from *Ahiqar*, Ugaritic material, and the biblical Proverbs to suggest a "West Semitic Wisdom tradition." Day relies on *Ahiqar* as support for arguing a Semitic origin for personified Wisdom, and he compares the *Ahiqar* figure with Sir 24:4 and *1 En.* 42:1–2; 69–70. See also Bryan Estelle, "Proverbs and *Ahiqar*: Revisited," *Biblical Historian* 1 (2004): 1–19.

<sup>22</sup>Fox, *Proverbs 10–31*, 767. The other features are the address to "my son" (Egyptian literature uses only "son"; Babylonian literature also has "my son"), the graded numerical sequence and the righteous–wicked antithesis. For his view on personification of Wisdom in *Ahiqar*, Fox refers readers to the first volume of his commentary (*Proverbs 1–9*, 332–33).

<sup>23</sup>Fox, *Proverbs 10–31*, 767.

<sup>24</sup>For further comment on the relationship between *Ahiqar* and the biblical wisdom literature, see n. 2 above and section IV below.

seven sheets (E–L) and nine columns (6–14) have sayings.<sup>25</sup> The conclusion to the narrative is missing, and so also is the beginning of the sayings. Much of the text is fragmentary, which has led to debate throughout the past century concerning arrangement of the *Ahiqar* papyri. Although the content of the narrative columns makes their order certain, the arrangement of the sayings columns is problematic.

Consequently, almost every new edition had a different order of the sayings columns. As result, scholarship on the Aramaic *Ahiqar* can be challenging. Michael Weigl aptly describes the situation:

One of the most annoying aspects of dealing with the Aramaic sayings is the wide range of different reference systems. Virtually every new edition introduced a new numbering of the proverbs, partly because of the different views about the sequence of the columns on the papyrus, partly because of a new syntactical segmentation of individual proverbs.<sup>26</sup>

For this reason, on the next page I provide a synoptic chart with the editions of *Ahiqar* pertinent to this discussion.

Although the editions differ widely, two features have been consistent throughout each edition. First, every arrangement places sheets H and L last among the sayings. Both sheets are heavily deteriorated, indicating that they were among the outermost sheets and thus contain the last sections of the text.<sup>27</sup> Second, and most important for our discussion, every edition (except for Porten and Yardeni's) positioned sheet E immediately after J thereby maintaining the unity of Saying 13, which is made up of the last line of J and the first line of E.

<sup>25</sup>When the Aramaic documents arrived in Berlin, Hugo Ibscher, the restorer of papyri at the Berlin Museum, arranged and alphabetized the sheets with little consideration of content. Sachau reordered the sheets as follows: A–D, J, E–G, K, H, L (there is no sheet I). Except for the narrative portions and the sheets with multiple columns, there was little textual basis for the arrangement of the remaining columns. Details in this section are drawn primarily from *TAD:3* (23); Michael Weigl, "Compositional Strategies in the Aramaic Sayings of Ahikar," in *The World of the Aramaeans* (ed. P. M. Michèle Daviau, Paul-Eugène Dion, and Michael Weigl; 3 vols.; JSOTSup 324–26; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2001), 3:26–32; Grelot, "Les Proverbes" (2001), 511–28; and Kottsieper, "Aramaic Tradition," 109–24.

<sup>26</sup>Weigl, "Compositional Strategies," 30 n. 16.

<sup>27</sup>Also, the *Ahiqar* text is a palimpsest, but the erased text is not found on either H or L; that is, the scribe used clean sheets of papyrus. So the thought goes: the scribe began his thrifty undertaking by erasing the previous text (or buying used papyri); however, much to his chagrin, the scroll was not long enough. He had to purchase and attach a new scroll. He could not use the other sides of the papyri because apparently this was his second attempt at transcribing the *Ahiqar* story! He had started copying the *Ahiqar* text on the verso, but he stopped after three columns then switched to recto. Grelot guessed that it could be on account of an orthographic mistake in line 19 of the third column. The copy text is the same on the recto as verso with the mistake corrected. For further discussion, see Grelot, "Les Proverbes" (2001), 516; and below.

CHART 1. SYNOPTIC TABLE OF NUMBERING SYSTEMS FOR SAYINGS COLUMNS

TAD:3 Line #	TAD:3 Col.	Lindenberger Saying #	Lindenberger Line #	Kottsieper Col.	Sachau Papyrus	Sachau Page/Col. #
79–94	6	13b–28	95–110	X	E	54/45
95–108	7	68–77	159–172	VII	K	57/48:1
109–125	8	78–92	173–190	VIII	K	57/48:2
126–141	9	39–53	126–141	V	G	56/47:1
142–158	10	54–67	142–158	VI	G	56/47:2
159–173	11	29–38	111–125	XII	F	55/46
174–189	12	1–13a	79–94	IX	J	53/44
190–206	13	93–109	191–207	XV	H	58/49
207–222	14	110–(125)	208–223	XVI	L	59/50

In fact, by 1983 Lindenberger had been so accustomed to reading the end of J with the beginning of E that, when discussing the arrangement of the papyri, he considered their sequence to be “confirmed,” even though he admitted, “in the case of the proverbs . . . the arrangement is largely arbitrary.” With respect to J and E specifically, he said, “their juxtaposition is based solely on similarity of content.”<sup>28</sup> Because of the fragmentary nature of the sayings, however, using content to determine the order is largely speculative and can be unhelpful. On the other hand, using textual evidence was problematic because there did not seem to be any clear pattern of foldings and almost every margin was missing.

In 1993, Porten and Yardeni offered, in their *Textbook of Aramaic Documents*, a textual basis for arranging the *Ahiqar* papyri: they had uncovered and reconstructed the text that underlies *Ahiqar*.<sup>29</sup> Scholars had long known that *Ahiqar* was a palimpsest, but until the publication of TAD:3 virtually none of the underlying text had been deciphered.

Porten and Yardeni, with the aid of various advanced images of the papyri such as infrared photography, were able to trace out the erased text beneath *Ahiqar*. The underlying text is a customs account that lists the duties collected on both the exports and imports from ships over a ten-month period in 475 B.C.E. Yardeni summarizes their *modus operandi* and findings:

The reconstruction of the scroll was based on several factors: the chronological, papyrological, and textual data—the months’ order on both sides of the scroll,

<sup>28</sup>Lindenberger, *Aramaic Proverbs of Ahiqar*, 11, 69.

<sup>29</sup>Sachau had identified a few words on both the recto and verso of the papyri, but efforts to decipher the rest were unfruitful until Porten and Yardeni began the arduous task in the late 1980s. At that time, all that was known about the erased text, according to Lindenberger, was that it appeared “to have been a commercial document” (*Aramaic Proverbs of Ahiqar*, 13–14).

the width of the papyrus sheets, and the repeated formulae—as well as on arithmetical calculations of the duty collected from the different items in comparison with the total summation preserved almost intact at the end of the list. This made it possible to estimate the original size of the scroll as well as the sizes of damaged and missing columns of both the list and the *Ahiqar* text. As the result of the reconstruction the order of the *Ahiqar* columns has been changed.<sup>30</sup>

Given the consistency of the formulae describing the arrival/departure dates of imports/exports and the frequency of their movement, Porten and Yardeni were able to establish the original length and order of the scroll and even estimate the number of missing columns and their locations.<sup>31</sup> In other words, because the order of the erased customs account can be determined, so also can the *Ahiqar* text. The new order is as follows: A–D (columns 1–5), then four missing columns, E (6), K (7–8), G (9–10), one missing column, F (11), J (12), one missing column, H (13), L (14) and one possible, final missing column.<sup>32</sup>

Porten and Yardeni appear to have provided a resolute answer to the century-long question about the proper order of the *Ahiqar* columns. Significantly, with the exception of H and L still being at the end, their arrangement is almost entirely different from any previous edition. Most notably, for the first time since Sachau's 1911 edition, sheets J and E are no longer juxtaposed. According to Porten and Yardeni, E is first among the extant sayings papyri and J is fifth. Thus, Saying 13, which was made up of the last line of J and the first line of E, no longer exists. Because the unity of the saying has been disrupted, the two lines (189 and 79) must be reassessed independently of each other.

### A.1 Reconstruction and Translation of C1.1:187–189

[ ] תרתין מלן שפירה וזי תלתא רחימה לשמש ש[תה] חמרא ויניקנהי כבש חכמה [ ]<sup>(187)</sup>

[ ] וישמע מלה ולא יהחזה \* הא זנה יקיר [קד]ם שמש וזי ישתה חמרא ולא [ ]<sup>(188)</sup>

[ ] וחכמתה אבדה ו[ ] כנ [ ] מן חזה [ ] מן שמין [ ° ° ° ] ינו עממא ו[ח]כמת[ה] [ ] אלהיא ה[ ]<sup>(189)</sup>

<sup>(187)</sup> Two things are beautiful but the third is cherished by Shamash: one who dr[inks] wine and pours a libation; one who grasps wisdom and [...]

<sup>(188)</sup> And he who might hear a word but will not make (it) known & Behold! This is precious be[fore] Shamash! But he who might drink wine and does not [...]

<sup>30</sup>Ada Yardeni, "Maritime Trade and Royal Accountancy in an Erased Customs Account from 475 BCE on the *Ahiqar* Scroll from Elephantine," *BASOR* 293 (1994): 68.

<sup>31</sup>For examples of the formulae and a more detailed discussion of the length of the original scroll, see Yardeni, "Maritime Trade," 69–71; and Grelot, "Les Proverbes" (2001), 513–15.

<sup>32</sup>It cannot be determined where the narrative ends and the proverbs begin in the four missing columns after plate D. H and L do not contain the erased customs account. Because of L's deterioration, they assume that it was very close to the end (i.e., outside) of the scroll. Hence, they conservatively suggest only one more column at the end, though it is possible there could have been more.

(189) And whose wisdom fails and [...] who declares [...] from the skies (or Shamayn) [...] the people and [*their wi*]sdom, the gods the [...] <sup>33</sup>

### A.2 *Brief Commentary on Cl.1:187–189*

Lines 187–189 are the final three lines of column 12 (sheet J).<sup>34</sup> Although only the second half of line 189 was considered to be the beginning of Saying 13 (= line 94b in Lindenberger’s edition), lines 187–189a provide a context, which is important for understanding the reconstruction and interpretation of 189b.

The type of saying beginning in line 187 is a numerical proverb, a recognized proverbial form in ancient literature, including the Hebrew Bible.<sup>35</sup> The saying has two parts divided by a “lapidary” or “archaic” *aleph*.<sup>36</sup> Each half contains three elements—wine, wisdom, word—which are repeated in the same order, providing a sound parallel structure. Although parts of the lines are fragmentary, reconstruction and subsequent interpretation are aided by the parallelism.<sup>37</sup>

<sup>33</sup>The reconstruction and translation here are an emended version of TAD:3, 48–49.

<sup>34</sup>The subsequent comments are by no means a thorough analysis of the textual, philological, thematic, or literary issues involved with these lines. My remarks will deal primarily with the implications for understanding the passage in light of a discussion about personified Wisdom in *Ahiqar*.

<sup>35</sup>In the Hebrew Bible, most of the numerical sayings are among the Words of Agur in Proverbs 30. The closest parallels to *Ahiqar* 187–189a are Prov 6:16–19 and a Ugaritic text (*KTU* 1.4.III.17–21; for translation, see Day, “Foreign Semitic Influence,” 64). Notably, all three have to do with the things a deity hates/cherishes. Some other numerical sayings not found in the wisdom literature are Hos 6:2 and Amos 1:3–2:8. For a lengthy discussion of numerical proverbs in ancient literature, see Riad Aziz Kassis, *The Book of Proverbs and Arabic Proverbial Works* (VTSup 74; Leiden: Brill, 1999), 234–40.

<sup>36</sup>The *aleph*, designated in TAD:3 by an asterisk, is the scribal sign primarily used to divide the end of one saying and the beginning of another in the middle of a line. As Kottsieper points out, the *aleph* is in one sense a “real commentary” (“Aramaic Tradition,” 115). The authorial intent of the scribe is plain: he is telling us where he pauses his thought. The *aleph* in line 188 functions as the divider between two parallel sets of ideas. Each half begins with an appeal to the things that are favorable to Shamash. Thus, שפירה and רחימה in line 187 are parallel to יקיר in line 188. Note also that the name of Shamash is also repeated, further reinforcing the parallelism. Lindenberger understands this repetition to be looking back and summarizing the previous positive points. He therefore takes the latter half of the passage in a negative sense, thereby making the *aleph*’s present location awkward. Instead of suggesting an alternate interpretation of the evidence, he accuses the author of making a mistake and supposes that the dividing mark was meant to be placed immediately after שמש (*Aramaic Proverbs of Ahiqar*, 67). Such a suggestion is unwarranted without strong evidence, which, in light of the fragmentary nature of the text, we do not have.

<sup>37</sup>For example, only a  $\psi$  is present in the first strophe of the first saying in line 187 followed by the word “wine.” We can reasonably reconstruct the verb שתה (in participle form) by comparing the parallel strophe in the second half, where the imperfect form of the verb is visible with “wine” as its object. The repetition of language and the parallelism, as Ginsberg points out, are “frequently found in biblical and ancient Near Eastern literature” (*ANET*, 499 n. t).

Wisdom is the middle element between wine and words, but the sense of the message about wisdom is not entirely clear. In the first list, “wisdom” is preceded by the verb כבש. The verb is unattested in earlier forms of Aramaic except here and again in *Ahiqar* (line 152).<sup>38</sup> Scholars have suggested numerous meanings such as “one who restrains,” “one who keeps,” or “one who hides.” Lindenberger recommends “one who masters,” referencing the *pael* form of the later Syriac verb, which is “used of taming animals and of subduing one’s own body.”<sup>39</sup> Grelot suggests “to hold,” but adds that it may also convey the sense of “to grasp” or even “to acquire.”<sup>40</sup> While the exact meaning is obscure, the sense of the saying at least implies that wisdom is something that should be cherished. It can be gained but can also be lost.

The topic of wisdom in lines 187–88 affects the reconstruction of line 189, which is much more fragmentary than the preceding lines. Conspicuously, the word “wisdom” in 189b has been almost completely reconstructed. There is no trace of the supposed ה or כ. The –מת–are almost certain, and the ה is probable. In addition, part of the fragment is freestanding. The similar fibers make placement here unquestionable, but the piece could be shifted a few millimeters either direction.<sup>41</sup> Presently I offer no other suggestions for this lacuna and am satisfied with reading “wisdom” here. It is not surprising, given the scribe’s penchant for clustering sayings around certain themes and/or catchwords, that line 189b would be the beginning of another saying related to the topic of wisdom.<sup>42</sup>

The deterioration of the papyrus leaves little hope for understanding what line 189b is saying about wisdom, however. There is a short lacuna between the words “wisdom” and “gods,” making it difficult to determine how the two function syntactically.<sup>43</sup> The word שמינ is nearly certain, but it is noticeable that this would be an extremely rare (in fact, only the second) appearance of שמינ in its

<sup>38</sup>In line 152 the direct object of כבש is missing, but some have suggested חכמה in light of line 188.

<sup>39</sup>Lindenberger, *Aramaic Proverbs of Ahiqar*, 232 n. 125. As an example, Lindenberger quotes *Pirqe Avot* 4:1, “Who is mighty man? He who subdues his evil nature” (his translation). Porten and Yardeni also suggest “to master” (TAD:3, xxxvii).

<sup>40</sup>Grelot, “Les Proverbes” (2001), 525.

<sup>41</sup>Lindenberger, *Aramaic Proverbs of Ahiqar*, 233 n. 133.

<sup>42</sup>For a detailed analysis and bibliography on compositional strategies in *Ahiqar*, see Weigl, “Compositional Strategies,” 23–82. See also Andreas Scherer, “Vielfalt und Ordnung: Komposition in den biblischen Proverbien und in den aramäischen Ahiqarsprüchen,” *BN* 90 (1997): 28–45.

<sup>43</sup>Lindenberger supplies מן, but there is hardly room and virtually no textual basis. According to my observation there are two very small ink spots that may in fact be the twin downstrokes of the מ and a faint mark of the downstroke of an ן. Incidentally, there is far less ink here than those “traces” in the earlier lacuna between וחכמתה and אבדה, which Lindenberger pointed out but made no suggestions (*Aramaic Proverbs of Ahiqar*, 69, 233 n. 130).

absolute rather than emphatic state (שמ״א) in either Old or Biblical Aramaic (see KAI 266:3).<sup>44</sup> Another lacuna follows, wherein two or three letters could fit. The text picks back up with the ending of what is most likely a plural verb: ינוּ-. Lindenberger’s suggested reading, following Grelot, “are favored” (the *peil* of חנוּ) is a complete guess.<sup>45</sup>

To sum up, the evidence in line 189b is unclear. We can identify most of the parts, but how they function together is uncertain. At the very best we can say that wisdom is associated with the “gods” and the “people,” but we know little to nothing of how they relate. Most importantly, there is no evidence in line 189b or in the previous lines for the personification of Wisdom. In the previous line, wisdom is indeed “precious” to the deity Shamash, but it, as a concept, is no more outstanding than discretion in speech.

### B.1 Reconstruction and Translation of C1.1.79

אף לאלה יק[י]רה הי ענ[° ° ° °] ל[° °] מלכותא בשמ[י]ן שימה הי כי בעל קדשן  
[ ] נשא

<sup>(79)</sup> Also to the gods she is precious [...] to [...] the kingdom is placed in the skies  
for the Lord of Holiness lifted [...]

### B.2 Brief Commentary on C1.1.79

According to Porten and Yardeni, this column is first among the extant sayings columns. There are probably four missing columns between the narrative and this one, but on which column the narrative ends and the sayings begin is unknown. Line 79 begins the column but is incomplete. The outstanding problem has to do with the saying’s subject, which is not identified and can presumably be found in the beginning of the saying on the previous missing column.<sup>46</sup> The feminine personal pronoun indicates that the subject of the text is female, but to whom or to what the pronoun refers is unspecified in the extant portions of the saying. Because of the line’s earlier connection to line 189, interpreters have traditionally understood wisdom to be the subject; however, as Weigl correctly

<sup>44</sup>Alternatively it has been suggested that it is a form of the verb שׁים (“to place”). Lindenberger points out the rarity of “Shamayn/heaven” in the absolute (*Aramaic Proverbs of Ahiqar*, 68). For further discussion, see Takamitsu Muraoka and Bezalel Porten, *A Grammar of Egyptian Aramaic* (HO 1, The Near and Middle East 32; Leiden: Brill, 1998), 61.

<sup>45</sup>Lindenberger, *Aramaic Proverbs of Ahiqar*, 68.

<sup>46</sup>Yet we cannot rule out that the subject is in the lacuna after הַי. According to Weigl, the scribe seems to dislike carrying a saying over from one column to the next (“Compositional Strategies,” 31–32).

points out, “without a direct juxtaposition between the end of column 12 and the beginning of column 6 there is no indication as to the subject of the hymn in 6.79 (1) whatsoever.”<sup>47</sup> If the subject is not wisdom, then who is it? The present text provides little help.

Over 80 percent of line 79 is extant, but the lacunae come at some critical points. The first words **הי אלהן יק[י]רה הי** are mostly undamaged. The following segment is most troublesome. The manuscript breaks off after an **ע** and what is probably a **א**.<sup>48</sup> A three to four cm lacuna follows, but there is a floating scrap of the manuscript on which is clearly a **ל**. Lindenberger provides a speculative reconstruction in his translation, but it has no textual basis and probably could not fit in the lacuna.<sup>49</sup> Weigl, following Kottsieper, suggests the following reading: “With her master she shares kingship.”<sup>50</sup> Again, the reading is purely conjectural, and to offer another reading seems unwise and misleading. The papyrus resumes with the emphatic/determinate noun **מלכותא** (“kingdom”), with the remainder of the line mostly intact.<sup>51</sup>

Regardless of the reconstruction or translation, the “lofty language” of this line is not typical to most of the sayings of *Ahiqar*. Weigl, on the basis of a stylistic analysis, has suggested that line 79 may be compared to the sayings about the king (lines 91/92) found at the bottom of the same page, which read: “A king is like the Merciful; moreover, his voice is high. Who is there who can stand before him, but he with whom El is? // Beautiful is the king to see like Shamash and precious

<sup>47</sup>Weigl, “Compositional Strategies,” 33.

<sup>48</sup>Lindenberger, following Cowley, reads the partial letter as a **ד**, possibly in parallel with the **ע** in the line below. As alternatives he suggests either a **ר** or a **פ** (*Aramaic Proverbs of Ahiqar*, 69). In my opinion, the downstroke, which extends below the line, is more similar to that of a **א**, or even a **כ**.

<sup>49</sup>This should be taken as a warning to all scholars or casual readers who consult *OTP* without looking at the Aramaic themselves. See Lindenberger, “*Ahiqar*,” *OTP* 2:499.

<sup>50</sup>Weigl, “Compositional Strategies,” 33; see also Kottsieper, *Die Sprache*, 12.

<sup>51</sup>Although the **י** is absent and the **נ** is partial, the reading **בשמין** is likely. The margin ends with the majority of the **א** present. As for the suggested final **ה**, if it is indeed a third masculine singular *peal* verb, then it would need an object to work syntactically, and, given the small amount of space on the lost margin, a pronominal suffix is both practical and could fit the context of the sentence. The word **כי** regularly appears as a causal conjunction in *Ahiqar* but is rare in Imperial Aramaic, where the usual **בזי** (among others) is to be expected, or perhaps **על זי** as in the narrative portions of *Ahiqar*. For discussion of the use of causal conjunctions in *Ahiqar* and the Achaemenid period, see M. L. Folmer, *The Aramaic Language in the Achaemenid Period: A Study in Linguistic Variation* (OLA 68; Leuven: Peeters, 1995), 735 (n. 120 also provides a list of occurrences of **כי** in the proverbs of *Ahiqar*). See also Muraoka and Porten, *Grammar of Egyptian Aramaic*, 94. Lindenberger, in pointing out this peculiarity, proposes the following: “The use of the word here may correspond to a specialized usage in Ug and Heb poetry, the ‘emphatic *ki*,’ in which the word introduces a stressed clause whose verb comes at the end” (*Aramaic Proverbs of Ahiqar*, 70).

is his glory to those who tread the earth.”<sup>52</sup> Besides sharing similar vocabulary, both these lines and line 79 have a hymnic quality. Perhaps the subject of line 79 is the kingdom/kingship of the king, which is cherished by the gods because it has been established by the Lord of Holiness. Or, alternatively, the passage may be the final words from a catalogue of praises toward a deity or monarch and his/her attributes, as we find in 91/92.<sup>53</sup>

Weigl’s most recent discussion of this passage is unique and deserves comment. He follows the order of TAD:3, acknowledging that lines 79 (= Weigl’s saying 1) and 189 (= Weigl’s saying 97) are separated, yet he still makes a case for wisdom as the subject of line 79. Based on some verbal and thematic correspondences between 79 and biblical wisdom literature—in particular those passages related to personified Wisdom such as Job 28; Ben Sira 1; 24; and Proverbs 3; 8—Weigl argues: “Vor dem Hintergrund alttestamentlicher Rede über die Weisheit ließe sich also die Auflösung der verlorenen Referenz von (1) (= line 79) sachlich plausibel rechtfertigen.”<sup>54</sup>

His primary example of a verbal link lies with the term יקירה. Granted, wisdom is described as “precious” (Hebrew יקרה; Greek τίμιος) in the biblical wisdom literature; however, in *Ahiqar* יקירה functions more broadly.<sup>55</sup> In the numerical saying in lines 187–189a, wisdom is among the elements that are considered “precious” to Shamash, but wisdom is the middle of three and no special emphasis on wisdom is apparent. Most notably the other appearance of יקירה in *Ahiqar* is found on the same page as line 79. There it describes the “glory” of the king (line 92). The combination of the term “kingdom” or “kingship” with “precious” in both sayings is noteworthy. A handful of sayings on this column speak to the concept of kingship, a motif that, as Weigl admits, is not prominent in the personified Wisdom tradition.<sup>56</sup>

Weigl then focuses on the locational and temporal aspects of Wisdom. He takes בשמין to mean that Wisdom, as the missing subject, is lifted up and established in heaven. The function of “in the heaven” is not clear, and it is just as likely that מלכותא is the subject of שימה. Nevertheless, Weigl compares this locational qualifier with similar statements concerning personified Wisdom in Prov 8:22–31; Ben Sira 1:1; 24:1–8; and Job 28:12–28. The problem with these comparisons is that in *Ahiqar* 79 it appears as if Wisdom starts among humans and later is raised up to the heavenly sphere. In the biblical wisdom texts, the movement is consistently downward. Weigl counters by pointing to line 189b,

<sup>52</sup>My adapted translation from TAD:3, 37.

<sup>53</sup>Weigl, “Compositional Strategies,” 33–34.

<sup>54</sup>Weigl, *Die aramäischen Achikar-Sprüche aus Elephantine und die alttestamentliche Weisheitsliteratur* (BZAW 399; Berlin/New York: de Gruyter, 2010), 79.

<sup>55</sup>For examples of יקרה/τίμιος as a quality of wisdom in the wisdom literature, see Prov 3:15; 8:11, 19 LXX; Job 28:16.

<sup>56</sup>See Weigl, *Die aramäischen Achikar-Sprüche*, 78–79.

where Wisdom, according to his reading of this line, originates “from heaven.” Still, even if “wisdom” is a reliable reconstruction in 189b—and it is far from clear that it is—the sense of the line is completely unknowable without a reconstruction of the missing verb(s) by the interpreter.<sup>57</sup>

It becomes clear that Weigl’s evaluation of *Ahiqar*’s concept of Wisdom and its resonances with the biblical tradition relies heavily on reading *both* 79 and 189 together, without offering justification for continuing to do so and despite acknowledging their textual separation. Moreover, his analyses are based on earlier unfounded and reaching reconstructions of the Aramaic texts by scholars who saw a unified saying and presumed a connection to the personified Wisdom tradition.<sup>58</sup> Weigl’s evidence for suggesting wisdom as the missing subject for line 79 becomes scarce if we take away 189b and any presumption about reading 79 with the personified Wisdom traditions in the biblical texts.<sup>59</sup>

At present, there is no clear or compelling evidence to posit “wisdom” as *the* missing subject, and continuing to think so would seem to be the result of scholarly inertia. One wonders whether anyone would have suggested wisdom had the two lines never been juxtaposed. Perhaps with more analysis a defensible proposal will be made, but for now we are left with uncertainty.

### C. *The Reception of Porten and Yardeni’s Edition*

Porten and Yardeni’s edition of the *Ahiqar* text has become the standard for almost every paleographer, Aramaicist, and *Ahiqar* specialist.<sup>60</sup> Notable *Ahiqar* scholars like Grelot, Herbert Niehr, and Weigl have all followed Porten and

<sup>57</sup> See the discussion above concerning the extant parts of line 189.

<sup>58</sup> The excessive reconstructions have led to unwarranted claims about what the *Ahiqar* passage conveys about wisdom. For example, Weigl’s argument that “die Offenbarung der Weisheit durch die Götter an die Menschheit *das* zentrale Thema darstellt” (emphasis original) completely overstates the textual evidence. See n. 43 above and Weigl, *Die aramäischen Achikar-Sprüche*, 78 n. 30.

<sup>59</sup> To be sure, Weigl has provided an immensely important commentary on *Ahiqar* and has considerably widened the conversation. All future discussions of *Ahiqar* must begin with him.

<sup>60</sup> The esteemed linguist and Aramaicist Jonas C. Greenfield is a good example of a scholar who adapted his continuous research into *Ahiqar* according to the most current edition. In 1971 Greenfield relied on the standard editions of Ginsberg (English, *ANET*) and Grelot (French, *RB*) for his comments on *Ahiqar* (“The Background and Parallel to a Proverb of *Ahiqar*,” in André Dupont-Sommer, *Hommages à André Dupont-Sommer* [Paris: Adrien-Maisonneuve, 1971], 49–60). In a later article (“Two Proverbs of *Ahiqar*,” in *Lingering over Words: Studies in Ancient Near Eastern Literature in Honor of William L. Moran* [ed. Tzvi Abusch, John Huehnergard, and Piotr Steinkeller; HSS 37; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1990], 195–202), Greenfield conferred with the then standard translation of Lindenberger; however, in an article that was published *only two years* after the release of TAD:3 Greenfield engaged the *Ahiqar* text as represented by Porten and Yardeni (“The Wisdom of *Ahiqar*,” in Day et al., *Wisdom in Ancient Israel*, 43–52).

Yardeni's arrangement of the papyri for their respective translations/editions.<sup>61</sup> Weigl, for example, has called TAD:3 "the final and unquestionably authoritative edition."<sup>62</sup>

Porten and Yardeni's volume should have become the standard edition among wisdom scholars as well. Yet most scholars of wisdom literature have not taken the (not-so-new) edition into consideration, and the transition away from Lindenberg's now-outdated edition has been slow.<sup>63</sup> While TAD:3 is bulky, inaccessible to many, and lacks the (still) valuable textual and philological commentary that one finds in Lindenberg, the problem remains that Lindenberg's translation, though convenient, does not represent the latest scholarship from the Aramaicists and paleographers. This creates a particular problem with respect to personified

<sup>61</sup>See the following: Grelot, "Les Proverbes" (2001); Herbert Niehr, *Aramäischer Ahiqar* (JSRZ n.F. 2.2; Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 2007); and Weigl, *Die aramäischen Achikar-Sprüche*.

To my knowledge, only Kottsieper has seriously challenged the arrangement of Porten and Yardeni. In a recent article he comments, "Though [Porten/Yardeni's] readings are ingenious, they still are often uncertain or ambiguous and leave the possibility that, before eliminating the original text, the papyrus may have been split into smaller sections, which would have been more easily washed off, and afterwards joined together again in a new order" ("Aramaic Tradition," 109–11). He also contests some of the readings of dates and points to a couple of textual oddities. One oddity is the presence of an upside-down word in the middle of a sheet. He uses this as evidence to argue that the scribe first split up the customs account and, after erasing the text, used the papyri as notes on his desk. The scribe later erased his notes "sloppily" before transcribing the *Ahiqar* text. The most notable result of his arrangement has to do with the narrative. He maintains that it provides a frame for the sayings—as in the later editions. Kottsieper refers to the height of the columns as well as the sequence of folding to argue for such an arrangement.

The problem, however, is that Kottsieper's analysis primarily applies to the narrative portions and not the sayings columns. Moreover, his interpretation of the evidence concerning the narrative sections is questionable. One might take into consideration that the dates on the erased text of the narrative sections are consistent with the order of the *Ahiqar* narrative. It would be quite a coincidence if the scribe just happened to use consecutive papyri from the customs account for the *Ahiqar* narrative but split them up and arbitrarily inserted between them the remaining erased papyri and at least two brand-new sheets. (This latter point raises the question: Why would the scribe use two brand-new sheets before using all of the older ones?) The fact that the chronological sequence of the erased customs account matches the narrative order of the *Ahiqar* text can hardly be coincidental.

<sup>62</sup>Weigl, "Compositional Strategies," 30 n. 16. See also the review of TAD:3 by Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *JAOS* 115 (1995): 710–11.

<sup>63</sup>Some have made the switch, but most wisdom scholars still use Lindenberg, e.g., James L. Crenshaw, *Old Testament Wisdom: An Introduction* (rev. ed.; Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1998); Richard J. Clifford, *Proverbs: A Commentary* (OTL; Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1999); and Fox, *Proverbs 1–9*. Note that Fox did switch to using TAD:3 in his 2009 commentary on Proverbs 10–31 (see discussion of Fox's commentaries on Proverbs below).

Wisdom, since, as we have seen, Lindenberger's Saying 13 and lines 79 and 189 in TAD:3 tell completely different stories.

Even among the few wisdom scholars who have adopted Porten and Yardeni's edition, references to personified Wisdom in *Ahiqar* continue. Fox is a revealing example. In his commentary on Proverbs 1–9, published in 2000, he relied exclusively on Lindenberger when dealing with *Ahiqar*. In the section "Origins of Personified Wisdom" he included a segment titled "A Foreign Personification of Wisdom." After providing Lindenberger's translation, he remarked, "Only once in foreign wisdom literature is wisdom personified—in the Aramaic *Ahiqar*, ll. 94b–95."<sup>64</sup> Ten years later, in the second volume of his commentary (on Proverbs 10–31), Fox says, "For the present volume, I use the *definitive* edition of Porten and Yardeni."<sup>65</sup> He professes to have made the transition from Lindenberger's edition to Porten and Yardeni's. Later in that volume, when Fox discusses the relationship between *Ahiqar* and the biblical Proverbs, he still identifies a personified Wisdom in *Ahiqar* and simply refers the reader to his observations in the earlier commentary.

### III. SUMMARY: *AHIQAR* AND THE BIBLICAL WISDOM TRADITION

Porten and Yardeni's arrangement of the Aramaic *Ahiqar* columns has serious implications for understanding *Ahiqar*'s conception of wisdom. Saying 13, according to Lindenberger's edition, was crucial for attesting the view that personified Wisdom is in *Ahiqar*. However, as result of the new order of the columns in TAD:3, the two lines that made up Saying 13 are no longer juxtaposed. The now-separated lines 79 and 189 in TAD:3 do not provide any evidence for a personified Wisdom figure. Yet, since the publication of Porten and Yardeni's edition, the majority of wisdom scholars have continued to use Lindenberger's edition. Even the most recent scholarship on the biblical wisdom literature has been influenced by the continuing assumption that *Ahiqar* contains personified Wisdom. The near ubiquitous presence of *Ahiqar* and Saying 13 in conversations about personified Wisdom belies the ambiguity of the reconstructed text and the supposed images it portrays.

As a result, scholarly consensus about personified Wisdom being present in *Ahiqar* has not significantly changed, and this assumption has shaped the way scholars discuss personified Wisdom and *Ahiqar*'s relationship to the biblical wisdom literature. Part of the problem, though, is that the exact relationship between *Ahiqar* and the biblical wisdom literature is still vague. The question of their connection remains uncertain because until very recently it had not been

<sup>64</sup>Fox, *Proverbs 1–9*, 332–33.

<sup>65</sup>Fox, *Proverbs 10–31*, xvii (emphasis mine). Notably in the very next line, Fox says that he will continue to use Lindenberger's numbering system! Granted, this may have been an effort to maintain some continuity with the first volume of the Proverbs commentary.

seriously taken up at length.<sup>66</sup> In the past few years new and important publications have appeared that will certainly change our understanding of *Ahiqar*'s place in the ancient wisdom literature tradition, and it is clear that this wisdom text has much more to offer than has been previously realized. Nevertheless, in light of the new data and a fresh assessment of the material, it seems evident that the Aramaic book of *Ahiqar* cannot tell us about personified Wisdom.

<sup>66</sup>Weigl's 2010 publication is the first monograph-length volume that purports to take up the issue about the relationship between *Ahiqar* and the biblical Wisdom literature directly. His comments about the state of affairs on *Ahiqar* scholarship up to that point are telling: "One noted admittedly there were certain selections in some cases very close 'parallels' with the Old Testament Wisdom literature—above all to the book of Proverbs—but a more substantial comparative analysis has not yet come up. The research continues to stand across a long stretch around the discussion of the philological, lexical and paleographical problems, and it pushed forward from there only rarely and rudimentarily toward over-reaching literary questions" (*Die aramäischen Achikar-Sprüche*, 32 [my translation of the German]).