

## ECHOES OF WISDOM IN THE LORD'S PRAYER (MATT 6:9–13)

RICK W. BYARGEON\*

A brief comment by R. N. Whybray regarding Prov 30:7–9 led to my exploration of the present topic: “The inclusion of this prayer, a genre unique in Proverbs, suggests that, like the Lord’s Prayer, which may have been partly based on it, it has a didactic purpose: that it is intended as a model prayer, composed by a pious man for imitation and reflection.”<sup>1</sup> The idea of a link between Prov 30:7–9 and Jesus seems even more intriguing in light of a spate of works over the last several years that connect Jesus to the wisdom tradition of the OT and Judaism.<sup>2</sup> I am therefore proposing that significant echoes of Prov 30:7–9 occur in the Lord’s prayer as recorded in Matt 6:9–13. The echoes do not preclude Jesus’ redaction of traditional Jewish expressions of prayer in the Lord’s prayer. The similarities between Prov 30:7–9 and Matt 6:9–13 in terms of content and genre, however, suggest more of a wisdom echo in the Lord’s prayer than previously thought.

### I. TRADITIONAL PERSPECTIVES ON THE BACKGROUND OF THE LORD’S PRAYER

Over the years the general consensus among many NT scholars has been that the Lord’s prayer is very similar to and perhaps even based upon first-century synagogue prayers. Therefore this section of the paper will examine the possibility that Jesus used current Jewish prayers as a model.

\* Rick Byargeon is professor of Old Testament and Hebrew at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, 3939 Gentilly Boulevard, New Orleans, LA 70126-4858.

<sup>1</sup> R. N. Whybray, *Proverbs* (NCB; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994) 441.

<sup>2</sup> W. A. Beardslee, “The Wisdom Tradition and the Synoptic Gospels,” *JAAR* 35 (1967) 231–240; C. E. Carlston, “Proverbs, Maxims, and the Historical Jesus,” *JBL* 99 (1980) 87–105; C. Deutsch, “Wisdom in Matthew: Transformation of a Symbol,” *NovT* 32 (1990) 13–46; J. Kloppenborg, “Wisdom Christology in Q,” *LTP* 34 (1978) 129–147; S. J. Patterson, “Wisdom in Q and Thomas,” *In Search of Wisdom: Essays in Memory of John G. Gammie* (ed. L. G. Perdue; Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1993) 187–222; L. G. Perdue, “The Wisdom Sayings of Jesus,” *Forum* 2 (1986) 3–35; R. A. Piper, *Wisdom in the Q-tradition: The Aphoristic Teachings of Jesus* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1989); R. Pregeant, “Wisdom Passages in Matthew,” *Treasures New and Old: Recent Contributions to Matthean Studies* (ed. D. R. Bauer and M. A. Powell; Atlanta: Scholars, 1996); R. Reisner, *Jesus als Lehrer* (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1984); B. B. Scott, “Jesus as Sage: An Innovating Voice in Common Wisdom,” *The Sage in Israel and the Ancient Near East* (ed. J. G. Gammie and L. G. Perdue; Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1990) 399–416; “The Gospel of Matthew: A Sapiential Performance of an Apocalyptic Discourse,” *In Search of Wisdom* (ed. Perdue) 245–262; M. J. Suggs, *Wisdom, Christology, and Law in Matthew’s Gospel* (Cambridge: Harvard University, 1970); J. G. Williams, *Those Who Ponder Proverbs* (Sheffield: Almond, 1981); B. Witherington, III, *Jesus the Sage: The Pilgrimage of Wisdom* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1994).

1. *The Qaddish prayer.* J. Dunn reflects the scholarly consensus regarding the connection between the Lord's prayer and Jewish synagogue prayers by stating that "the *Qaddish* is of particular interest to Christians, since it may well have been used by Jesus in formulating the Lord's Prayer."<sup>3</sup> The reason scholars affirm such a relationship is based on two expressions within the prayers. The *Qaddish* begins with the phrase "Exalted and hallowed be his great name," which parallels "hallowed be your name" in Matt 6:9. The second expression shared between the two prayers is related to the coming kingdom. The *Qaddish* states: "May he establish his kingdom in your lifetime." This parallels the expression "your kingdom come" in Matt 6:10. These parallels led David de Sola Pool to argue that there is an exact equivalence between the Lord's prayer and the *Qaddish* except for the difference of person.<sup>4</sup> J. Heinemann, however, argues that one should not so readily dismiss the difference in person between the two prayers: "One prayer addresses God directly and unhesitatingly in the second person, and another speaks of Him indirectly without even identifying Him by name or epithet—especially when, in place of the Paternoster's direct address of God, we find the Kaddish turning to the congregation in the second person plural ('and say [ye], Amen')."<sup>5</sup>

The most basic issue in determining the relationship between the *Qaddish* and the Lord's prayer is not the obvious similarities between the two but whether the *Qaddish* was in use in the first century and, if so, in what form. The *Qaddish* prayer may have existed in a very basic form during the time of the Tannaim,<sup>6</sup> but it is not mentioned as part of the synagogue service in the Mishna or Talmud. Indeed, the first references to the liturgical use of the *Qaddish* do not occur until ca. AD 600 in the post-Talmudic tractate known as *Sopherim*.<sup>7</sup> Therefore in spite of similarities between the *Qaddish* and the Lord's prayer it seems tenuous and perhaps anachronistic to argue that some sort of borrowing took place between the two, since it is not absolutely certain when the *Qaddish* originated<sup>8</sup> or what form it may have had in the first century and since it did not become a fixed element within the worship of the synagogue until well after the first century. Furthermore B. Graubard asserts: "Not only is a proof missing, but the habit, widely known

<sup>3</sup> J. D. G. Dunn, "Prayer," *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels* (ed. J. B. Green, S. McKnight and I. H. Marshall; Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1992) 617–625. Other scholars who affirm an influence from synagogue prayers include I. Abrahams, *Studies in Pharisaism and the Gospels* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1924) 101; W. D. Davies and D. C. Allison, Jr., *The Gospel According to Saint Matthew* (ICC; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1988) 1.595; R. H. Gundry, *Matthew: A Commentary on His Literary and Theological Art* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982) 104.

<sup>4</sup> D. Pool, *The Kaddish* (New York, 1964) 112.

<sup>5</sup> J. Heinemann, "The Background of Jesus' Prayer," *The Lord's Prayer and Jewish Liturgy* (ed. J. J. Petuchowski and M. Brocke; New York: Seabury, 1978) 81. One should not assume, however, that Heinemann argues against an influence from the *Qaddish*. Instead he seems to argue that the Lord's prayer is related to Jewish private prayer with a significant influence from the *Qaddish* (p. 88).

<sup>6</sup> According to Heinemann the nucleus of the prayer during the Tannaitic period may have consisted of "Let His great name be blessed," "Magnified and sanctified be His great name," and "May He establish His kingdom." J. Heinemann, *Prayer in the Talmud* (New York: de Gruyter, 1977) 256.

<sup>7</sup> B. Graubard, "The Kaddish Prayer," *The Lord's Prayer* (ed. Petuchowski and Brocke) 60.

<sup>8</sup> H. D. Betz, *The Sermon on the Mount* (Hermeneia; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1995) 373.

to us from ancient times, of adapting and adjusting existing forms and formulae to different purposes, makes it unlikely that one prayer should be clearly dependent on another."<sup>9</sup> At best one can only conclude that the Lord's prayer and the *Qaddish* share a similar theological perspective.

2. *The Eighteen Benedictions.* The other major contender among Jewish prayers for having an impact upon the Lord's prayer is the Eighteen Benedictions (*Shemoneh Esreh*), which may be the quintessential prayer of Judaism. One of its titles is *hattēpillâ* ("The Prayer"),<sup>10</sup> and it was prayed three times a day.<sup>11</sup> According to Jewish tradition the Eighteen Benedictions were compiled and standardized by Gamaliel at Jamnia after the destruction of the temple near the end of the first century.<sup>12</sup> But only the components of the prayer and their sequences were fixed, not the wording. Debates related to the actual content or precise wording in the Eighteen Benedictions continued from the sixth century until the end of the eleventh century among the Geonim, the heads of the Jewish academies in Babylon.<sup>13</sup>

The supposed parallels between the Lord's prayer and the Eighteen Benedictions are based on a variety of reasons. First, the two prayers seem to have similar content:

*Benediction 6*

Forgive us, our Father, for we have sinned against You. Blot out and remove our transgressions from before Your sight, for Your mercies are manifold. You are praised, O Lord, who abundantly pardons.

*Matt 6:13*

And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

*Benediction 9*

Bless, O Lord our God, this year for us, and let it be good in all the varieties of its produce. Hasten the year of our redemptive End.

*Matt 6:11*

Give us this day our daily bread.

Grant dew and rain upon the face of the earth, and satiate the world out of the treasuries of Your goodness; and grant a blessing to the work of our hands.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>9</sup> Graubard, "Kaddish" 62; Heinemann, *Prayer in the Talmud* 63.

<sup>10</sup> J. Petuchowski, "The Liturgy of the Synagogue," *The Lord's Prayer* (ed. Petuchowski and Brocke) 56.

<sup>11</sup> G. J. Bahr, "The Use of the Lord's Prayer in the Primitive Church," *JBL* 84 (1965) 159; *m. Ber.* 4:1.

<sup>12</sup> Petuchowski, "Liturgy" 47.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>14</sup> Davies and Allison, *Matthew* 1.595-596.

The second reason is the supposed similarities between the consonantal endings of each prayer. K. G. Kuhn argues that if one translates the Lord's prayer back to its supposed original form in Aramaic, one finds a rhyme in the first part of the prayer based on the second-person singular suffix and in the second part based on the first-person plural suffix. According to Kuhn, this is similar to what occurs in the Eighteen Benedictions.<sup>15</sup>

The third reason is the similarity in the overall structure between the two prayers. G. J. Bahr argues that the Eighteen Benedictions have a tripartite pattern consisting of praise (1–3), petition (4–15) and thanksgiving (16–18). In similar fashion, according to Bahr, the Lord's prayer follows a tripartite outline with an emphasis on praise in Matt 6:9–10, on petition in vv. 11–13 and on thanksgiving in v. 13.<sup>16</sup> Furthermore according to W. D. Davies and D. C. Allison the ninth benediction, which asks for God's blessing in terms of sustenance, acts as a hinge within the Eighteen Benedictions just like the call for daily bread in Matt 6:11.<sup>17</sup>

With such seemingly overwhelming evidence it may be foolish to dispute the idea that there is a close and conscious connection between the Lord's prayer and the Eighteen Benedictions. There seems to be just cause for raising some questions about the above conclusions, however. First, the exact form of the Eighteen Benedictions in the first century is not known. While there have been many attempts to reconstruct the origin and form of the Eighteen Benedictions,<sup>18</sup> it may be best to agree with Heinemann that certainly some form of the prayer existed in the first century but that source material to determine the original form is lacking.<sup>19</sup> Heinemann argues instead that the various forms of benedictions uncovered by scholars suggest that there were probably various benedictions used in different synagogues. Therefore the development of the Eighteen Benedictions resulted from "an organic process which sprang up among the people themselves, in their synagogues and houses of worship (as well as in the Temple, where certain prayers grew up around the sacrificial cult)."<sup>20</sup> The role of the rabbis at Jamnia was to provide the editing and arranging of the Eighteen Benedictions so that the primary subject of each benediction was fixed as well as their overall sequence.<sup>21</sup>

It thus seems unlikely that previous arguments based on the structure of the Eighteen Benedictions in relationship to the Lord's prayer carry much weight, unless one argues that the Lord's prayer is a later composition by the Matthean church sometime after Jamnia.<sup>22</sup> Furthermore, issues related

<sup>15</sup> K. G. Kuhn, *Achtzehngebet und Vaterunser und der Reim* (Tübingen, 1950) 38.

<sup>16</sup> Bahr, "Lord's Prayer" 158.

<sup>17</sup> Davies and Allison, *Matthew* 1.595–596.

<sup>18</sup> Heinemann lists seven various attempts at uncovering the origin and form of the Benedictions (*Prayer in the Talmud* 219–220).

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.* 219.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.* 224.

<sup>22</sup> This seems to be the logic behind Bahr's argument that the Lord's prayer is a Christian alternative to the Eighteen Benedictions ("Lord's Prayer" 153–159); cf. also W. D. Davies, *The Setting of the Sermon on the Mount* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1964) 4–5, 310.

to content again are suspect in terms of influence since there is no way of knowing which list of the Eighteen Benedictions Jesus may have been aware of. In any event the content is so general between the Lord's prayer and the Eighteen Benedictions that to argue for dependence seems to push the general similarities between the two beyond the evidence. In regard to the Aramaic endings and the rhyming of suffixes, this view is based on the unsure foundation of a reconstructed Aramaic original of the Lord's prayer as well as an understanding of the original sounds of that text.<sup>23</sup>

## II. A POSSIBLE WISDOM BACKGROUND TO THE LORD'S PRAYER

In this section of the paper I will attempt to demonstrate that the overall setting of the sermon on the mount should be understood in the context of wisdom and that therefore the Lord's prayer should also be viewed in that light. From this perspective I will seek to demonstrate that a significant echo of wisdom from Prov 30:7–9 can be heard in the Lord's prayer.

1. *Wisdom context of the sermon on the mount.* Concerning the presentation of the sermon on the mount in Matthew's gospel B. Witherington states: "The so-called Sermon on the Mount, which in both Matthew and Luke is presented as a paradigmatic homily revealing the essence of the teaching of the sage, not only contains sapiential material but, as Bultmann pointed out, almost nothing else."<sup>24</sup> The evidence suggesting that the "sermon" may be better understood as a "teaching" can be derived from a variety of sources.

The first indication that one encounters a sapiential setting in Matthew 5–7 is the frame of the text. Davies and Allison point out an *inclusio* that frames the sermon on the mount. It is reflected in the similarity of wording in 5:2 (ἐδίδασκεν αὐτοὺς λέγων) and 7:29 (ἦν γὰρ διδάσκων αὐτούς).<sup>25</sup> Thus the overall context of the sermon is in reality a teaching session by the quintessential teacher or sage.<sup>26</sup> Some, however, might wish to argue against

<sup>23</sup> Betz, *Sermon* 374–375. Betz argues that the only text the Church has is Greek, and therefore to speculate and try to formulate a Hebrew or Aramaic original is useless. Much of scholarship, however, supports an Aramaic *Urtext* for some or all of the gospel of Matthew; see M. Black, *An Aramaic Approach to the Gospels and Acts* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1967). Others argue for a Hebrew *Urtext*; see G. Howard, *The Gospel of Matthew According to a Primitive Hebrew Text* (Macon: Mercer, 1987); J. Carmignac, *Recherches sur le "Notre Pere"* (Paris: Letouzey & Ané, 1969).

<sup>24</sup> Witherington, *Jesus the Sage* 224.

<sup>25</sup> Davies and Allison, *Matthew* 1.426.

<sup>26</sup> Some scholars have warned that one should not draw too fine a distinction between preaching the gospel and teaching (cf. Matt 4:23); see D. A. Carson, "Matthew," *Expositor's Bible Commentary* (ed. F. E. Gaebelin; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984) 129. But there is actually no need for a distinction to be made between teaching and preaching in order to see the sermon on the mount as sapiential literature since Matthew seems to present Jesus as a prophetic sage who might offer new revelation in a sapiential format; see Witherington, *Jesus the Sage* 158–159. Witherington does point out, however, that when teaching is mentioned in Matthew in conjunction with preaching and healing (4:23; 9:35; 11:1), teaching always is cited first, which may imply emphasis (*ibid.* 345).

this position based on the parallels between the life of Moses and the early

life of Jesus depicted in Matthew 1–4.<sup>27</sup> One might argue that Jesus is actually being portrayed as a new Moses in the sermon on the mount in light of its setting. If so, then the antitheses represent Jesus' giving of the law in Matt 5:17–48. But one should keep in mind that since the time of Ben Sira the concepts of wisdom and law began to be blended together until they were virtually indistinguishable.<sup>28</sup> So even if there is a parallel between Moses and Jesus it does not violate the idea of a sapiential perspective such as that found in Sirach.

The second indication that the sermon on the mount is a sapiential text is the variety of forms within the sermon that are indicative of sapiential literature. The first form one encounters is the beatitudes in Matt 5:3–12. There is little doubt that this genre derives from wisdom literature.<sup>29</sup> The only difference, according to Witherington, is that the beatitudes in the wisdom tradition emphasize blessedness on the basis of practical wisdom being followed in a current situation whereas Jesus emphasizes blessedness in a rather paradoxical way. According to Jesus, one is blessed who is "poor in spirit" or is being "persecuted for my name's sake." Witherington maintains that this is unique to Jesus.<sup>30</sup> I am reminded, however, of the paradoxical nature of wisdom sayings in Qoheleth's writings, and I wonder if Jesus is not in reality reflecting a countercultural wisdom that is resonant with those writings. Other examples of the wisdom genre in the sermon on the mount include proverbial material (cf. Matt 5:13–16; 6:22, 24, 34), rhetorical questions (cf. 5:46–47; 7:16), admonitions (cf. 5:16; 7:6), and instruction (cf. 5:23–25, 34–37; 6:3–4, 17–18, 19–21, 35–38; 7:7–11).<sup>31</sup>

The third indication is the continued emphasis at the end of the sermon on antithetical approaches to kingdom living (7:13–27). Toward the end of the sermon the reader is struck by contrastive approaches to the teachings of Jesus: two ways (7:13–14), two kinds of fruit (7:15–20), two foundations (7:24–27). While there are certainly examples of this kind of expression in various genres in the OT and in Judaism,<sup>32</sup> it may be that wisdom literature provides the best parallel to these antithetical examples that sum up

<sup>27</sup> Davies and Allison, *Matthew* 1.427.

<sup>28</sup> J. G. Gammie, "The Sage in Sirach," *The Sage in Israel* (ed. Gammie and Perdue) 369; A. A. Di Lella, "The Meaning of Wisdom in Ben Sira," *In Search of Wisdom* (ed. Perdue) 135–136.

<sup>29</sup> Beatitudes appear in wisdom texts in Egypt as well as in the OT and Judaism; see J. Assmann, "Weisheit, Loyalismus und Frömmigkeit," *Studien zu altägyptischen Lebenslehren* (ed. E. Hornung and O. Keel; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1979) 12–72; R. Kieffer, "Wisdom and Blessings in the Beatitudes of St. Matthew and St. Luke," *SE VI* (1973) 291–295; Betz, *Sermon* 94.

<sup>30</sup> Witherington, *Jesus the Sage* 182.

<sup>31</sup> Perdue, "Wisdom Sayings" 3–35.

<sup>32</sup> Davies and Allison, *Matthew* 1.695–696. Texts mentioning two kinds of actions in terms of choice include Deut 11:26; 30:15; Jer 21:8; Ps 1:6; Prov 28:6, 18; Sir 2:12; 15:11–17; 21:10. As one can see, examples come from broad categories of law, prophets and wisdom literature in the OT and Apocrypha.

the teachings of the sermon on the mount.<sup>33</sup> Further evidence that supports a sapiential emphasis in the sermon is Jesus' teaching regarding the actions of the wise (7:24) and the foolish (7:26). These individuals are typical character types found in wisdom literature.<sup>34</sup> The man who will listen to the words of Jesus (v. 24), which may apply to the whole sermon,<sup>35</sup> is truly wise.

2. *Echoes between Prov 30:7–9 and the Lord's prayer.* Since the Lord's prayer is found within a sapiential context, perhaps the best place to look for possible influence is in a sapiential work. Indeed the possibility of influence is higher if one can demonstrate that Matt 6:9–13 shares a similar context, genre and content with an antecedent text. This seems to be the case with Prov 30:7–9.<sup>36</sup> Both Prov 30:7–9 and Matt 6:9–13 are prayers. Both share a common sapiential context, though the context of Prov 30:7–9 is an entire book whereas Matt 6:9–13 is a major pericope within a sapiential setting. Furthermore one should note that the immediate contexts of the two passages are similar. L. G. Perdue argues that the sayings of Agur (Proverbs 30) are primarily concerned with the issue of pride and arrogance.<sup>37</sup> In similar fashion the preceding material before the Lord's prayer (Matt 6:1–8) concerns issues of arrogance in regard to expressions of piety.<sup>38</sup> In conjunction with the underlying issue shared between Prov 30:7–9 and the Lord's prayer there is the added consideration that almsgiving, fasting and prayer are often matters of concern in sapiential texts found in later Judaism.<sup>39</sup> In addition, both the Lord's prayer and the prayer of Agur are similar in terms of content (e.g. a prayer for bread, emphasis on the name of God, wanting to avoid temptation).

### III. THE ECHO OF DAILY BREAD

The one echo that many commentators recognize between Prov 30:7–9 and the Lord's prayer is the request for daily bread.<sup>40</sup> In Prov 30:8 the phrase reads *הקי להם לחם* ("Let me eat my appointed/apportioned bread").

<sup>33</sup> R. Guelich, *The Sermon on the Mount* (Dallas: Word, 1982) 383–384. In light of the last contrast in Matt 7:24–27 see Prov 10:25; 12:7; 14:11; cf. Davies and Allison, *Matthew* 1.719.

<sup>34</sup> Betz, *Sermon* 558; Gary A. Tuttle, "The Sermon on the Mount: Its Wisdom Affinities and Their Relation to Its Structure," *JETS* 20 (1977) 214–218.

<sup>35</sup> Davies and Allison, *Matthew* 1.720.

<sup>36</sup> In assuming that there is an echo between Prov 30:7–9 and the Lord's prayer in Matthew, one must ask concerning which tradition or text Matthew may be alluding to. According to Gundry there is compelling evidence that Matthew was alluding to the MT since the use of *δίδωμι* may go back to the use of *נתן* in Prov 30:8; see R. H. Gundry, *The Use of the Old Testament in St. Matthew's Gospel: With Special Reference to the Messianic Hope* (Leiden: Brill, 1967) 75.

<sup>37</sup> L. G. Perdue, *Wisdom and Creation: The Theology of Wisdom Literature* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1994) 116; cf. R. van Leeuwen, "Proverbs 30:21–23 and the Biblical World Upside Down," *JBL* 105 (1986) 599–610.

<sup>38</sup> Davies and Allison, *Matthew* 1.576.

<sup>39</sup> Betz, *Sermon* 338. One should note that emphases on fasting, prayer and almsgiving are found in Sir 34:13–36:17; Tob 12:6–10.

The verb is a *Hiphil* imperative with God as the causative agent. The translation “Let me eat” is based on the permissive function of the *Hiphil* in a context of request for an inanimate object.<sup>41</sup> The noun  $\text{קָן}$  reflects the idea of something prescribed, such as a task, action, or decree. But it can also suggest an allotment of food, which is its meaning here as well as in Prov 31:15.<sup>42</sup> The sense seems to be what is sufficient for the day. This interpretation is substantiated by the LXX rendering of the text:  $\sigma\upsilon\nu\alpha\zeta\omicron\nu\delta\epsilon\ \mu\omicron\iota\ \tau\acute{\alpha}\ \delta\acute{\epsilon}\omicron\nu\tau\alpha\ \kappa\alpha\iota\ \tau\acute{\alpha}\ \alpha\upsilon\tau\acute{\alpha}\rho\kappa\eta$ .<sup>43</sup> Whybray argues that Prov 30:7–9 stands alone in its perspective toward poverty and wealth since there is a rejection of both.<sup>44</sup> Indeed Agur seeks a balance between wealth and poverty by putting the focus upon one’s needs. The same balance is reflected in the structure of the text. The two extremes  $\text{וְעֹשֶׂה\ וְעָרֵב}$  (v. 8b) are expanded upon by the two result clauses introduced by  $\text{כִּי}$  (v. 9), which suggest what could happen to the rich and the poor in relationship to God. In the middle of this nicely structured text is the prayer for apportioned bread.<sup>45</sup>

While it is fairly easy to determine the meaning of Prov 30:8c, that is not the case with Matt 6:11. Controversy through the centuries has swirled around the proper interpretation of  $\epsilon\pi\iota\omicron\upsilon\sigma\iota\omicron\nu$ . Most scholars choose from three options regarding its meaning: (1)  $\epsilon\pi\iota\omicron\upsilon\sigma\iota\omicron\nu$  is derived from  $\epsilon\pi\iota$  and  $\omicron\upsilon\sigma\iota\alpha$  (thus “for existence”).<sup>46</sup> Therefore  $\alpha\tilde{\rho}\tau\omicron\varsigma\ \epsilon\pi\iota\omicron\upsilon\sigma\iota\omicron\nu$  means bread necessary for survival or existence. This understanding of  $\epsilon\pi\iota\omicron\upsilon\sigma\iota\omicron\nu$  coincides with Prov 30:8. Some dismiss this view, however, because the  $\iota$  is not elided and because of the supposed redundancy with  $\sigma\eta\mu\epsilon\rho\nu$  at the end of the verse.<sup>47</sup> (2)  $\epsilon\pi\iota\omicron\upsilon\sigma\iota\omicron\nu$  is derived from  $\epsilon\pi\iota$   $\tau\eta\nu$   $\omicron\upsilon\sigma\alpha\nu$   $\eta\mu\acute{\epsilon}\rho\alpha\nu$  (“for the current day”). Once again, this translation seems redundant.<sup>48</sup> (3)  $\epsilon\pi\iota\omicron\upsilon\sigma\iota\omicron\nu$  is derived from  $\epsilon\pi\iota\acute{\epsilon}\nu\alpha\iota$ , which means “forthcoming.” This could suggest a prayer the night before for bread the following day or a prayer in the morning for the necessary bread for the day at hand.<sup>49</sup> An alternative interpretation is that the “forthcoming day” is eschatological and that the prayer is for bread to be shared at the messianic banquet.<sup>50</sup> Of the above options, scholarship seems to prefer the third—especially in an eschatological context.

<sup>40</sup> Betz, *Sermon* 398; Carson, “Matthew” 171; Davies and Allison, *Matthew* 1.607; Gundry, *Matthew* 108; F. Bruner, *Matthew, A Commentary, Volume 1: The Christbook: Matthew 1–12* (Dallas: Word, 1987) 250.

<sup>41</sup> B. K. Waltke and M. O’Connor, *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1990) 433–436, 445.

<sup>42</sup> BDB 349.

<sup>43</sup> E. M. Yamauchi, “The ‘Daily Bread’ Motif in Antiquity,” *WTJ* 28 (1966) 148.

<sup>44</sup> R. N. Whybray, *Wealth and Poverty in the Book of Proverbs* (Sheffield: JSOT, 1990) 114.

<sup>45</sup> W. McKane states that Barucq and Gemser both considered v. 8c as superfluous and to be regarded as a secondary expansion (*Proverbs* [OTL; Philadelphia: Westminster, 1970] 649).

<sup>46</sup> Betz, *Sermon* 398.

<sup>47</sup> C. Hemer, “ $\epsilon\pi\iota\omicron\upsilon\sigma\iota\omicron\nu$ ,” *JSNT* 22 (1984) 92; U. Luz, *Matthew 1–7: A Commentary* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1989) 381; D. A. Hagner, *Matthew 1–13* (WBC; Dallas: Word, 1993) 149.

<sup>48</sup> Luz argues that  $\eta\ \omicron\upsilon\sigma\alpha$  is never used with  $\eta\mu\acute{\epsilon}\rho\alpha$  to express the “present day” (*Matthew 1–7* 382).

<sup>49</sup> Hemer, “ $\epsilon\pi\iota\omicron\upsilon\sigma\iota\omicron\nu$ ” 81–94; Davies and Allison, *Matthew* 1.609.

<sup>50</sup> J. Jeremias, *The Lord’s Prayer* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1964) 25.



If the third option is in fact the best, then one must ask how it fits in with the first option and the apparent allusion to Prov 30:8. In terms of overall

meaning, most scholars do not drive a wedge between the first and third options. Regardless of its derivation, ἐπιούσιος focuses upon the need for bread during the coming day, which assures one's continued existence. D. A. Hagner states: "The prayer *is* nevertheless a prayer for bread. And there is a sense in which the bread (by synecdoche, 'food') we partake of daily is an anticipation of the eschatological banquet."<sup>51</sup> So it seems that one could argue for an echo between Prov 30:8 and Matt 6:11. But one could object to any wisdom allusion between the two texts because of the discontinuity between the overall context of Prov 30:7–9 and the Lord's prayer: Agur is praying to avoid riches or poverty, while Jesus' followers are to pray regarding the coming and present reign of God's eschatological kingdom. To answer this concern one could argue with G. Bornkamm that Matthew does in fact connect the Lord's prayer with issues related to riches and poverty as current concerns, if one assumes that the Lord's prayer is the basis of the literary structure of Matt 6:19–7:12.<sup>52</sup>

In addition to a parallel of content, one might also argue for an interesting parallel in regard to structure. Much like the prayer for apportioned bread in Prov 30:8c, the prayer for bread in Matt 6:11 seems to stand at the center of the Lord's prayer. This is based upon the observation that after the introductory address to God (v. 9b) a triad of statements all ending with σου precedes the petition for bread. Furthermore, on the other side of Matt 6:11 one encounters two verses that are parallel to each other and joined by καί. This leaves Matt 6:11 operating as a bridge between both the vertical dimension of vv. 9–10 (emphasizing second-person singular pronouns) and the horizontal dimension of vv. 12–13 (emphasizing first-person plural pronouns):

Πάτερ ἡμῶν ὁ ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς

ἀγιασθήτω τὸ ὄνομα σου

ἐλθέτω ἡ βασιλεία σου

γενηθήτω τὸ θέλημα σου

ὡς ἐν οὐρανῷ καὶ ἐπὶ γῆς

τὸν ἄρτον ἡμῶν τὸν ἐπιούσιον δὸς ἡμῖν σήμερον

καὶ ἄφεσις ἡμῖν τὰ ὀφειλήματα ἡμῶν

<sup>51</sup> Hagner, *Matthew 1–13* 150; see also Davies and Allison, *Matthew* 1.609–610; J. Jeremias, *New Testament Theology* (New York, 1971) 200.

<sup>52</sup> G. Bornkamm, "Der Aufbau der Bergpredigt," *NTS* 24 (1977–78) 419–432. According to Bornkamm, the emphasis upon one's treasure in Matt 6:19–21 echoes v. 10 and vv. 25–34 echo v. 11. One cannot but notice that the emphasis throughout this section of elaboration on the Lord's prayer reflects a contrast between riches (vv. 19–21, 24) and poverty (vv. 25–34). This certainly is similar to the emphasis in Prov 30:7–9 on trusting God's provision rather than following the road to riches or worrying about poverty.

ὡς καὶ ἡμεῖς ἀφήκαμεν τοῖς ὀφειλέταις ἡμῶν  
καὶ μὴ εἰσενέγκῃς ἡμᾶς εἰς πειρασμόν  
ἀλλὰ ῥῦσαι ἡμᾶς ἀπὸ τοῦ πονηροῦ

The question that must be asked is why a seemingly innocuous prayer regarding bread functions as the pinnacle in the central pericope of the sermon on the mount.<sup>53</sup> As a first step in answering this question it is possible that, in light of the wisdom perspective of the sermon, Matthew is reflecting a typical wisdom concern in the placement of v. 11 within 6:9–13. Wisdom theology maintained that true wisdom is achieved when one lives life in submission to God (Prov 1:7). The truly wise person is able to live in the tension between the sovereignty of God and the vagaries of human existence. Perhaps that is the theological emphasis being made in the Lord's prayer and in the placement of Matt 6:11: Seek the bread of today; be content in waiting for God's will on earth and seeking it in relationship to persons and circumstances (cf. 6:19–7:12).

#### IV. THE ECHO OF SANCTIFYING THE NAME

The second echo that I see between Prov 30:7–9 and the Lord's prayer is the emphasis in both texts concerning the name of God (cf. Prov 30:9; Matt 6:9). The emphasis upon the name comes at the conclusion of the wise man's prayer as a reminder to the reader of what will happen if the person in poverty steals to stay alive. While one might expect the use of the verb חלל ("to profane")<sup>54</sup> or one of its synonyms,<sup>55</sup> instead one finds a syntactical combination that appears once in the OT: ותפשוני שם אלהי.

The verb תפשוני means "to grab hold of."<sup>56</sup> It describes the grasping of a tool, weapon, or instrument (Gen 4:21; Amos 2:15). It can also indicate the capture of people or towns in warfare (Josh 8:8). In addition, the word is used to describe God seizing the hearts of people and imparting fear (Ezek 14:5). The only use of תפשוני in relationship to God's name, however, is found in Prov 30:9.<sup>57</sup> The reason may be based on the context. The poverty-stricken per-

<sup>53</sup> Many scholars have maintained that the Lord's prayer is the approximate center of the sermon on the mount; see W. Grundmann, *Das Evangelium nach Matthäus* (THKNT; Berlin: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 1968); Betz, *Sermon* 64. Whether the Lord's prayer is indeed the center of the sermon is not crucial. Nevertheless it is significant that the petition for bread reflects a strong syntactical discontinuity in regard to the use of the imperative within the sermon. Generally the imperative is placed as close to the beginning of a sentence or clause as possible, but in Matt 6:11 it is the fifth word of the sentence. Does this suggest that Matthew is marking the significance of this petition?

<sup>54</sup> The use of the verb חלל and its derivatives appears with שם numerous times in the OT (cf. Lev 18:21; 19:12; 20:3; 21:6; 22:2, 32; Jer 34:16; Ezek 36:20, 22). In conjunction with Prov 30:9, profaning the name is associated with breaking the commands of God in Lev 19:11–12.

<sup>55</sup> Synonyms include בזה ("despise"), בלע ("swallow"), גאל ("defile"), געל ("abhor"), פרר ("violate"), חם ("foul"), טמא ("be unclean") and נאץ ("spurn").

<sup>56</sup> BDB 1074.

son is not simply grabbing an object that does not belong to him. He is in effect “seizing the name of God.”<sup>58</sup> Therefore the verb תפש is used to personify the theological consequence of stealing, which is a profaning of God’s name. Since stealing is mentioned in Lev 19:11–12 as an act that “profanes” (חלל) God’s name, חלל and תפש share a common ethical context. In that light the antonym of חלל—namely, קדש (cf. Lev 22:32)—could also function as the implied opposite of תפש in Prov 30:8. So the positive implication of Agur’s prayer in 30:7–9 is that living in contentment and trust between the extremes of poverty and wealth is a way of sanctifying the name or character of God.<sup>59</sup>

Is there any connection between the element of trust and obedience expressed in Prov 30:9 and the call for God’s name to be sanctified in Matt 6:9? The answer depends upon which interpretation one might emphasize regarding the two positions often associated with the meaning of ἀγιάσθητω τὸ ὄνομα σου. The first position suggests that the petition should be interpreted as a divine passive.<sup>60</sup> Only God can sanctify his name. Man has no part in the process. This perspective emphasizes the aorist passive imperative form as a primary indication that God is the implied subject of the verb.<sup>61</sup> This naturally leads to an eschatological perspective of the first petition, as well as the following two. The implication is that God alone must intervene in this world in order for his name to be sanctified.<sup>62</sup> This approach is supported by selective OT texts regarding the sanctifying of God’s name in the context of deliverance from one’s enemies (cf. Ezek 36:20–22; 39:7, 25; Pss 106:47; 145:21; 1 Chr 16:35).

The second position argues that the opening petition of the Lord’s prayer is not primarily a divine passive but implies the involvement of mankind in sanctifying the name through obedience to God. This position is based on several pieces of evidence. First, the aorist passive imperative may simply be a form of address in prayer, and therefore the more natural subject of the verb is the one who prays.<sup>63</sup> Second, there are several texts in the OT that connect the sanctification of God’s name with obedience to his moral demands (cf. Exod 20:7; Lev 20:3; 22:32; Ezek 20:39; 43:7–8; Amos 2:7; Isa 29:23).

<sup>57</sup> R. F. Youngblood, “תפש,” *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament* (ed. R. L. Harris; Chicago: Moody, 1980) 2.978.

<sup>58</sup> P. Franklyn, “The Sayings of Agur in Proverbs 30: Piety or Scepticism?,” *ZAW* 95 (1983) 251.

<sup>59</sup> The parallelism between the two lines of text in Prov 30:9 bears out this interpretation. Not acknowledging the name because of wealth is parallel to profaning the name because of poverty. In the end, the middle way of contentment and trust would be a sanctifying of the name of God.

<sup>60</sup> Davies and Allison, *Matthew* 1.602; Guelich, *Sermon* 289.

<sup>61</sup> Guelich states: “The aorist imperative connotes an event, an action in point of time rather than repeated action of a present tense. The Old Testament background, the Jewish prayers, and the immediate context point to the eschatological character of this petition. One prays for God’s once-for-all hallowing of his name” (*Sermon* 289).

<sup>62</sup> R. E. Brown, “The Pater Noster as an Eschatological Prayer,” *TS* 22 (1961) 187; Jeremias, *Lord’s Prayer* 21–22.

<sup>63</sup> Luz, *Matthew* 1–7 378.

To be fair, it seems that most scholars today affirm that both the eschatological and the moral imperative are intertwined in the first petition.<sup>64</sup> This certainly seems possible if one assumes that the second and third petitions are synonymous to the first not only in form but also in content.<sup>65</sup> Furthermore, when one examines Matthew's application of the second and third petitions the emphasis is upon the present reality of life. This is observable in Matt 6:33 where Jesus asserts that seeking the kingdom is synonymous with seeking the righteousness of God in the midst of the poverty of Palestine.<sup>66</sup> The third petition seems to be echoed in Jesus' prayer in Gethsemane (cf. 26:39).<sup>67</sup>

If Matthew tends to combine theological concepts that seem foreign to wisdom (e.g. eschatology) and concepts that are congruent with wisdom (e.g. obedience) in the first petition of the Lord's prayer, then how can one hear a consistent wisdom echo? Perhaps by realizing that, in the evolution of Jewish theology, wisdom writers began to incorporate aspects of eschatology in their works. For example, Sir 36:4 emphasizes the eschatological dimension in God's defeat of Israel's enemies. This assertion is in a sapiential context, though perhaps not explicitly impacted by wisdom theology. In Wis 6:20, however, there is a blending of sovereignty and wisdom. D. Winston states: "The desire for wisdom has been shown to make one near to God, and it is this divine intimacy which is the true source of all sovereignty, both spiritual and earthly."<sup>68</sup> So perhaps the sanctifying of the name in an eschatological perspective is not completely foreign to wisdom literature when one looks at the development of wisdom during intertestamental times.

Finally, the moral implication in sanctifying the name seems to reflect a correlation with Prov 30:9. Agur's prayer is for the ability to avoid riches or poverty in order to live a life of trust and contentment before God, which is one of the primary themes of wisdom literature. In similar fashion the first part of the Lord's prayer reminds the disciples of their responsibility to reflect righteousness in this world (compare Matt 6:9–10 with vv. 19–33), whereas the second half of the Lord's prayer urges the disciples to trust God's sovereignty in the intersections of daily living. This interplay of man's response and God's sovereignty in the context of the Lord's prayer mirrors the essence of true wisdom.

## V. CONCLUSION

This paper has sought to demonstrate the possibility that the Lord's prayer contains significant allusions to Prov 30:7–9. The allusions are not

<sup>64</sup> Betz, *Sermon* 389–390; Carson, "Matthew" 170; Davies and Allison, *Matthew* 1.603; Hagner, *Matthew 1–13* 148; Luz, *Matthew 1–7* 379–380.

<sup>65</sup> Guelich, *Sermon* 289; Davies and Allison, *Matthew* 1.603; B. Gerhardsson, "The Matthaean Version of the Lord's Prayer (Matt. 6:9b–13): Some Observations," *The New Testament Age: Essays in Honor of Bo Reicke* (ed. W. C. Weinrich; Macon: Mercer, 1984) 1.209–210.

<sup>66</sup> Bornkamm, "Aufbau" 426–427.

<sup>67</sup> Luz, *Matthew 1–7* 380.

<sup>68</sup> D. Winston, *The Wisdom of Solomon* (AB; Garden City: Doubleday, 1979) 156.

simply related to the concept of daily bread but also to the issue of sanctifying God's name. It is even possible that one could argue for an allusion between avoiding wealth and poverty in Prov 30:7-9 and the last petition of the Lord's Prayer: "And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from evil." If that allusion could be confirmed, then one discovers that an inversion of the elements of Prov 30:7-9 are found in the Lord's prayer with the axis (the petition for bread) remaining the same:

*Prov 30:7-9*

Keep deception and lies far from me  
 Feed me my apportioned bread  
 I may profane the name of my God

*Matt 6:9-13*

May your name be sanctified  
 Give us this day our daily bread  
 Do not lead us into testing

This structural phenomenon should not be construed as an indication of literary dependence between the two texts. The ability to prove such a connection is impossible. The most I wish to affirm is that a significant echo of wisdom, both in terms of structure and theology, can be heard in the Lord's prayer.