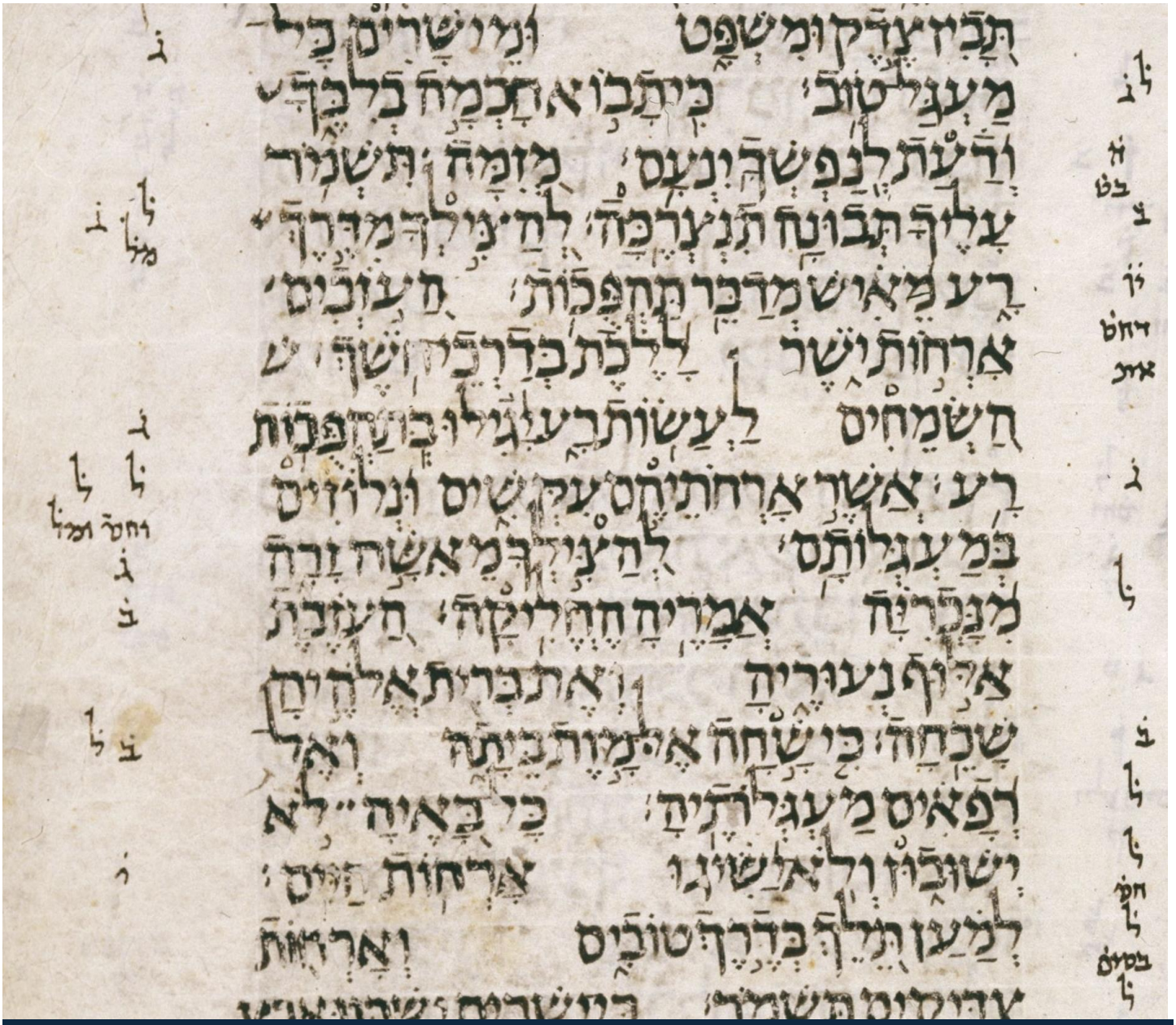

The Semantics of Strangeness

A Semantic and Exegetical Analysis of Outsider Terminology in Proverbs and the Pentateuch

Wiljo Bakker

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MTA Oude Testament
(TU Utrecht)

The Semantics of Strangeness:

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in Proverbs and the Pentateuch

Wiljo Bakker

Student number: 19010

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First supervisor: Prof. Dr. K. van Bekkum (TU Utrecht)

Second supervisor: Prof. Dr. C. Ziegert (FTH Gießen)

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The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom,

and knowledge of the Holy One is understanding

(Proverbs 9:10 NIV)

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List of Abbreviations

AB	Anchor Bible; Anchor Yale Bible
ATD	Das Alte Testament Deutsch
BCOT	Baker Commentary on the Old Testament
BHQ	*Biblia Hebraica Quinta*
BHS	*Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia*
BKAT	Biblischer Kommentar Altes Testament
ESV	*English Standard Version*
FE	Frame Element
HALOT	*The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*
HC	Holiness Code
HCOT	Historical Commentary on the Old Testament
LXX	Septuagint
MT	Masoretic Text
NCBC	New Century Biblical Commentary
NICOT	New International Commentary on the Old Testament
NIDOTTE	*New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis*
NIV	*New International Version*
NIVAC	The NIV Application Commentary
OT	Old Testament
OTL	Old Testament Library
POT	Prediking van het Oude Testament
THAT	*Theologisches Handwörterbuch zum Alten Testament*
TWOT	*Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*
T&T	Tekst en Toelichting
VL	De Voorzeide Leer
WBC	Word Biblical Commentary

1. Introduction

Who is the stranger? It seems like an easy question, but the answer is far from straightforward. A recent incident in The Netherlands, which caused some controversy, makes the complexity of the question clear. In an April 2024 parliamentary debate, Labour MP Habtamu de Hoop (who is black) called for increased funding for teaching the Frisian language.[1] A politician arguing for funding for education in a local minority language would have been unremarkable, if his words had not been attacked by talk show host Johan Derksen on the prime time show *Vandaag Inside.* Derksen made this about race and ethnicity. He said: "He's not a Frisian, right, come on! [...] He has no right to speak about the Frisian language because he was not born there." When he was called out, he doubled down on his remarks: "I just saw an African guy promoting the Frisian language."[2] De Hoop was born in Ethiopia but adopted by a Frisian family when he was a few months old. Frisian is his mother tongue. Still, Derksen bluntly dismissed him as a stranger. People in the area where De Hoop grew up were outraged. He lived there all his life with his adoptive parents, speaks the language, and knows the culture and local customs. He is one of them! He is *their* representative in parliament! And anyway, was Derksen not from the province of Drenthe? That is not Friesland, so who *is* the stranger in this case?

These complicated and dynamic insider-outsider relationships are not only modern. They are not alien to the world of the Bible. They have been around since time immemorial. The Old Testament (OT) regularly thematizes the stranger, the 'outsider.' In the Biblical text, strangers come in many forms and shapes. They are present from primaeval history to eschatological future. Who are they? That again seems like an easy question, but just like in the contemporary example above, the answer is far from straightforward. As in the example, the reality on the ground is complicated. And as in the example, texts produced from within the social constellation they describe may seem confusing for readers from other contexts, who lack the background knowledge to comprehend what is going on. This much is clear: 'The stranger' in the OT is a challenging topic riddled with difficulties. Many scholars have risen to the challenge, attacking the problem from multiple angles. What all of them agree on is that the OT does not have one overarching concept of

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[1] An official minority language from the province of Friesland, in the north of The Netherlands.

[2] nos.nl, "Aangifte tegen Johan Derksen vanwege racistische uitspraak," last modified April 11, 2024, https://nos.nl/artikel/2516367-aangifte-tegen-johan-derksen-vanwege-racistische-uitspraak [Own translation].

'stranger.' The OT uses multiple Hebrew words to describe those not part of the in-group. The most important of them are גֵּר (occurring 92x in the OT), נָכְרִי / בֶּן־נֵכָר (together occurring 85x in the OT), and זָר (occurring 70x in the OT). Each of these words is connected to a certain attitude towards the outsider, ranging from typically positive (גֵּר) to typically hostile (זָר).[3] But beyond these basics, much is debated.[4] Depending on the texts foregrounded and the methodology used, the results of previous studies differ considerably.

A remarkable oversight in research is the lack of attention to the book of Proverbs. Although this book contains around 15 instances of 'outsider terminology', most overview studies of the stranger in the OT do not even mention them. Most studies construct their image of the stranger based on the Pentateuch. The data from these fundamental books consciously or unconsciously become the lens by which instances of 'outsider terminology' in other texts are judged. The one study that does mention Proverbs, only mentions that these texts are not relevant for research because they are not about strangers coming from another country.[5] With other words, Proverbs was such an outlier that it could not be accommodated. That sparked my interest.

Two tendencies in Western Biblical scholarship converge here, leading to a blind spot for the possible contribution of Proverbs to the image of the stranger in the Old Testament. First, the importance of Wisdom literature (Proverbs, Job and Ecclesiastes) for Old Testament theology was downplayed. From the 19th century onwards, these books were often isolated from the rest of the canon. They were seen as carriers of their own worldview, unconnected to that of other Old Testament books.[6] Because of that separation, biblical-theological explorations of a certain theme excluded the wisdom books' point of view *or* focused exclusively on them. This resonates with Will Kynes' description of genre as an echo chamber, where "similarities between the texts within [the genre] are magnified, while the connections of those texts with others outside are

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[3] Lianne van der Zee, *De vreemdeling in ons midden: Een Bijbelse ontdekkingstocht* (Zwolle: Scholten, 2023), 15-18.

[4] Previous research will be reviewed in more detail in Chapter 3.

[5] Van der Zee, *De vreemdeling in ons midden,* 116.

[6] Cf. Katherine J. Dell, "Studies of the Didactical Books of the Hebrew Bible/Old Testament," in *Hebrew Bible/Old Testament, Volume III/1: The Nineteenth Century,* ed. Magne Sæbø (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2013), 611-614.

muffled."[7] This is unfortunate. The book of Proverbs' bottom-up approach, not relying on top-down revelation of God's words to humanity but reporting the experiential knowledge (*Erfahrungswissen)* of faithful Israelites on their path through life, offers a unique perspective which might add a new dimension to the image of the stranger in the Old Testament.

Second, because these scholars' experience was shaped by living in Westphalian nation-states, their minds have been conditioned to see the native-stranger dichotomy on the state level. Therefore, their default interpretation of any text containing outsider terminology is that the prototypical stranger is a citizen of a different state, a member of a different ethnic group, and a speaker of a different language. Biblical authors did not share that mental framework. Uncritically imposing it on biblical texts distorts the meaning of the texts, misreading Scripture with modern, Western eyes. If Proverbs does not use outsider terminology to speak about strangers coming from another country, that should not be a reason to dismiss its relevance for research. On the contrary, that should make the researcher stop and wonder whether their conceptualization of the stranger aligns with the texts they are researching. A detailed analysis of outsider terminology in Proverbs can contribute to that process.

This study attempts to fill this gap by analysing all texts in the book of Proverbs containing outsider terminology to determine the contribution of these texts to the conceptualization of the stranger in the Old Testament. It pays special attention to the conceptual framework behind the words in question, using a combination of methods from cognitive linguistics and historical-grammatical exegesis. The cognitive-linguistic approach is especially suited for this study because of its insistence on the embeddedness of linguistic knowledge in knowledge of the world, and its practice of distilling meaning from actual language use. This should prevent me from falling into the trap of imposing my own experiences of living in a Westphalian nation-state system on the textual data.

This study purposely looks at the conceptualization of the stranger in Proverbs in a wider canonical context. The book is not regarded as an isolated work, but is approached as a part of the canonical corpus of the Old Testament. In order to situate the results of this study within that corpus, a comparison with the conceptualization of the stranger in another part of the OT is undertaken. Because of the limited scope of the study, there is

[7] Will Kynes, *An Obituary for "Wisdom Literature"* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), 111.

not enough space to compare the results with the OT as a whole. The Pentateuch is chosen as conversation partner because of its foundational role in the theology of the OT. Other parts of the OT often either explicitly refer to, interact with, or assume the validity of, the narratives and laws of the Pentateuch. Moreover, the Pentateuch contains over 40% of all 'outsider terminology' in the OT (102 of 247 instances). Therefore, given the limitations of this study, a comparison with the Pentateuch is the most effective way to embed the results from Proverbs in their canonical context.

The research question guiding this study is: How does the contribution of the book of Proverbs to the conceptualization of the stranger (זָר / נָכְרִי / גֵּר) in the Old Testament compare to the contribution of the Pentateuch? This question is divided into four sub-questions:

a) What is the state of research regarding the stranger in the Pentateuch?
b) What is the conceptualization of the stranger in the book of Proverbs?
c) How do the genre and *Sitz im Leben* of Proverbs influence the way that the results of b) should be interpreted?
d) How is the conceptualization of the stranger in Proverbs related to the conceptualization of the stranger in the Pentateuch?

This leads to the following structure of the rest of this study:

1) Chapter 2 describes the methodology of this study. To answer the research question, methods from cognitive linguistics (frame semantics) (2.1-2.2) will be combined with the historical-grammatical exegesis (2.3) of a selection of texts from Proverbs.
2) Chapter 3 gives an overview of recent earlier research on the perception of the stranger in the Pentateuch, giving a first impression of the cultural categories associated with גֵּר, נָכְרִי and זָר. At the end of the chapter, the outcomes of this literature study will be used to construct provisional semantic frames evoked by these words.
3) Chapter 4 zooms in on the book of Proverbs, sketching its historical and literary context. The chapter covers genre (4.1), authorship and date (4.2), and *Sitz im Leben* (4.3) This chapter forms the necessary background for the detailed study of individual proverbs in Chapter 5.

4) In Chapter 5, a selection of texts from Proverbs is analysed,[8] using a combination of historical-grammatical exegesis and frame semantics. The texts were selected based on the occurrence of the words גֵּר, נָכְרִי and זָר. Based on the detailed analysis of the selected texts, I will again construct one or more semantic frames, this time only based on information from Proverbs.
5) Chapter 6 relates the results of Chapter 3 and Chapter 5 to each other, investigating how the frames evoked by 'outsider terminology' in Proverbs contribute to the framing of outsiders in the Old Testament.

[8] Proverbs 2:11-19, 5:1-4, 5:8-12, 5:15-18, 5:20-21, 6:1-5, 6:23-24, 7:1-5, 11:15, 14:10, 20:16, 22:14, 23:26-28, 27:2, 27:13.

2. Methodology

To answer the research question, this study will use methods from cognitive linguistics (frame semantics) (2.1.-2.2.), combined with the historical-grammatical exegesis (2.3.) of a selection of texts from Proverbs.[1]

2.1. Cognitive Linguistics

This thesis adopts a cognitive-linguistic theoretical framework. Since this theory is not widely used in Biblical studies,[2] it is beneficial to start this chapter with a brief outline of the principles of cognitive linguistics.

Linguist Dirk Geeraerts summarizes the principles of cognitive semantics in the following way:

- Meaning is perspectival: it is not an objective representation of the world but a conceptual strategy to shape experiences of the world.
- Meaning is dynamic and flexible: new experiences and changes in environment cause people to adjust the categories through which they interpret the world.
- Meaning is encyclopaedic, non-autonomous and experience-based: linguistic knowledge is not separate from knowledge of the world but is integrated with other human cognitive abilities.
- Meaning is culturally and socially bound: a language embodies the historical and cultural experiences of speaker groups and individuals.
- Meaning is usage-based: the meaning of a word is not its dictionary definition; meaning cannot be separated from the context of the utterances in which it is used.[3]

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[1] Proverbs 2:11-19, 5:1-4, 5:8-12, 5:15-18, 5:20-21, 6:1-5, 6:23-24, 7:1-5, 11:15, 14:10, 20:16, 22:14, 23:26-28, 27:2, 27:13.

[2] Although several studies have used the insights of cognitive linguistics in Biblical Hebrew lexicology (most importantly Reinier de Blois' *Semantic Dictionary of Biblical Hebrew*, accessible online at https://semanticdictionary.org/semdic.php?login.php#) and Biblical scholarship (e.g. Ellen van Wolde, *Reframing Biblical Studies: When Language and Text Meet Culture, Cognition, and Context* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2009)), in addition to several PhD theses applying these theories at a particular Biblical Hebrew lexeme from a cognitive-linguistic perspective (e.g. Tiana Bosman's study of אהב and Jürgen Schulz's study of בוש), and a series of articles by Carsten Ziegert.

[3] Dirk Geeraerts, "Cognitive Semantics, " in *The Routledge Handbook of Cognitive Linguistics,* ed. Wen Xu & John R. Taylor (Abingdon: Routledge, 2021), 24-25.

The most fundamental insight of cognitive semantics is that language does not stand on its own but is integrated with other human cognitive abilities. Therefore, linguistic knowledge cannot be separated from knowledge of the world (encyclopaedic knowledge). "Meaning" is the central concept of this approach. Meaning is not inherent to a word or phrase, but language is the means by which a speaker represents the world as he or she perceives it.[4] As Jürgen Schulz sharply put it: "Words evoke worlds."[5] Words denote human experiences and the "mental images" people have formed of them.[6] Those mental images are embedded in individual past experiences and the shared experiences, values and social conventions of the group to which a person belongs.[7] In other words, language use is culturally embedded, part of the common life of a community. This does not mean that a linguistic utterance can only be understood by those who are part of that community. It does entail that linguistic knowledge is tied to encyclopaedic knowledge, so information about the world (and the community) is necessary for a full appreciation of the meaning of an utterance.

This immediately raises a problem for the exegesis of Old Testament texts. Biblical Hebrew is a dead language; there is no living community of speakers that can provide information about the cultural connotations of certain words and expressions. There is no huge database of living language use; there is only the limited textual corpus of the Old Testament, supplemented by a small number of inscriptions and scrolls. So it is not possible to distil meaning from actual usage for Biblical Hebrew in the same way as for a living language. Researchers can only examine texts to obtain as much information as possible.[8] Stephen Shead aptly calls this "the ancient language problem."[9] There are limited opportunities to obtain information about the cultural-historical context and the

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[4] Jürgen Schulz, "Shame [בוֹשׁ and Cognates] in the Hebrew Bible and Akkadian Texts with Main Focus on the 10th to 6th Centuries: A Linguistic Study and Its Implications," PhD diss. (Evangelische Theologische Faculteit Leuven, 2023), 55.

[5] Ibid., 144.

[6] Stephen Shead, *Radical Frame Semantics and Biblical Hebrew: Exploring Lexical Semantics.* (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 33.

[7] Christo H.J. van der Merwe, "Biblical Hebrew and Cognitive Linguistics: A General Orientation," in *New Perspectives in Biblical and Rabbinic Hebrew,* ed. Aaron D. Hornkohl & Geoffrey Khan (Cambridge: University of Cambridge and Open Book Publishers, 2021), 650.

[8] Carsten Ziegert, "What is חֶסֶד? A frame-semantic approach," *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 44 (4), 2020: 721.

[9] Shead, *Radical Frame Semantics and Biblical Hebrew,* 181.

experiential framework of speakers, making it difficult for biblical scholars to apply insights from cognitive linguistics properly.[10]

However, this does not mean that cognitive-linguistic methods are useless for the study of Biblical Hebrew. On the contrary, if cognitive-linguistic insights about the nature of language and meaning are correct, ignoring them would be methodologically improper.[11] That leaves only two possibilities: either one approaches an ancient text with (limited) background knowledge about the ancient world, or one reads modern realities into the ancient text.[12] This difficulty is not created by cognitive linguistics; rather, cognitive-linguistic methods provide a way to deal with the problem with integrity.[13] Despite the incomplete nature of the data, these methods allow interpreters to analyse Old Testament texts in a way that recognizes their embeddedness in the life of a particular linguistic community. That is the context in which the texts received their original meaning. The modern interpreter enters into a worldview and a way of thinking that is not theirs. For exegesis, that means that attention to the social, cultural and historical background of a text is indispensable. In that process, both attention to written sources and "the 'silent witnesses' of archaeology, geography, etc."[14] is necessary.

2.2. Frame Semantics

A notion from cognitive linguistics that helps reveal the "mental image" behind a particular word is the *semantic frame.* This term comes from the theory of *frame semantics,* developed in the 1980s by American linguist Charles J. Fillmore (1929-2014).

2.2.1. Theory

A semantic frame is a systematic presentation of speakers' knowledge of the meanings of words,[15] an abstract representation of the real-world scene to which the word refers.[16] A frame is not the definition of a single word, but it is an overarching mental framework

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[10] Shead, *Radical Frame Semantics and Biblical Hebrew*, 183.

[11] Ibid., 182.

[12] Schulz, "Shame in the Hebrew Bible and Akkadian Texts," 74.

[13] Shead, *Radical Frame Semantics and Biblical Hebrew*, 184.

[14] Schulz, "Shame in the Hebrew Bible and Akkadian Texts," 52.

[15] Hans C. Boas, "Construction Grammar and Frame Semantics," in *The Routledge Handbook of Cognitive Linguistics,* ed. Wen Xu & John R. Taylor (Abingdon: Routledge, 2021), 45.

[16] Charles J. Fillmore, "Frame Semantics," in *Linguistics in the Morning Calm: Selected Papers from SICOL-1981,* ed. The Linguistic Society of Korea (Seoul: Hanshin, 1982), 117.

that can be *evoked* by several words, containing a sketch of the prototypical situation with which these words are associated.[17] To understand any part of the frame, one must understand the whole; and when a part of the frame appears in a text, the other parts are automatically activated.[18] Every *lexical unit* (a word paired to one of its meanings) evokes a frame and identifies a part or aspect of that frame *(profiling).*[19] That every occurrence of a word activates its entire frame in the background means that background information always plays a part in the interpretation of words and texts. Fillmore even describes the interpretation process as "retrieving or perceiving the frames evoked by the text's lexical content and assembling this kind of schematic knowledge [...] into some sort of 'envisionment' of the 'world' of the text."[20]

The information required for this task is not always explicitly expressed and is often so obvious to native speakers that it is difficult to become aware of it.[21] Frames can be evoked without the explicit presence of an associated lexical unit, when a pattern of information (known independently from the text) usually associated with the frame is present in the text.[22] "Frames are motivated not just by words, then, but by [the speaker's] stereotypes about customs, practices, institutions, and games."[23]

Each frame consists of several frame elements (FEs): the persons, things and properties that can or should be present whenever a frame is evoked.[24] Each of these elements has a *slot* in the frame's structure: an abstract characterization that is to be filled by information from a particular utterance *(fillers).*[25] The elements are in a fixed relationship to each other

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[17] Charles J. Fillmore & Collin Baker, "A Frames Approach to Semantic Analysis," in *The Oxford Handbook of Linguistic Analysis,* ed. Bernd Heine & Heiko Narrog (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 316.

[18] Fillmore, "Frame Semantics," 111.

[19] Fillmore & Baker, "A Frames Approach to Semantic Analysis," 317.

[20] Fillmore, "Frame Semantics," 122.

[21] Fillmore & Baker, "A Frames Approach to Semantic Analysis," 318.

[22] Charles J. Fillmore, "Frames and the Semantics of Understanding." *Quaderni di Semantica* 6 (2), 1985: 232.

[23] Jean-Mark Gawron, "Frame Semantics," in *Semantics: An International Handbook of Natural Language Meaning, volume 1,* ed. Claudia Maienborn, Klaus von Heusinger & Paul Portner (Berlin: De Gruyter Mouton, 2011), 467.

[24] Fillmore & Baker, "A Frames Approach to Semantic Analysis," 324.

[25] Carsten Ziegert, "Beyond Barr – Biblical Hebrew Semantics at its Crossroads," *European Journal of Theology* 30 (1), 2021: 30, cf. Schulz, "Shame in the Hebrew Bible and Akkadian Texts," 67-69.

(constraints) that determines the function they have within the frame.[26] The number of *slots* and their functions are not universal; they are independently determined in each frame. Some frame elements are compulsory (*core FEs),* while other frame elements are optional and provide extra information, for example about place, time, manner and circumstances of the scene (*peripheral FEs).*[27] When certain elements are not explicitly expressed, the listener fills in the frame with default values, which represent the prototypical, most frequent values for that element (in the experience of the listener).[28]

How does this abstraction relate to concrete linguistic data? A verb evokes an entire frame. This makes *frame semantics* ideally suited to the study of verbs, and this is therefore the most common type of frame semantic research.

The relationship between nouns and semantic frames (as examined in this research) is more complicated. Kazuho Kambara distinguishes three types of nouns. *Common nouns* (e.g. 'dog') are not tied to one particular frame and can appear as elements in different event frames.[29] In Lawrence Barsalou's version of frame semantics, each of these nouns has a frame of its own, a *concept*. A noun's conceptual frame consists of "a cooccurring set of attributes",[30] a set of aspects that contain the necessary information to create a cognitive image of the noun. In theory, the set of attributes is unlimited and flexible, but Barsalou posits that there are core attributes that "may be active for most if not all exemplars."[31] Without these core attributes, the concept is impossible to understand.[32] Like in event frames, the attributes of a concept are in a fixed relationship with each other (*constraints).*[33] When dealing with common nouns, I will create a conceptual frame with the core attributes and constraints. Additionally, I will analyse in which event frames the concept is used in my data.

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[26] Schulz, "Shame in the Hebrew Bible and Akkadian Texts," 122.

[27] Fillmore & Baker, "A Frames Approach to Semantic Analysis," 325.

[28] Lawrence W. Barsalou, "Frames, Concepts, and Conceptual Fields," in *Frames, Fields, and Contrasts: New Essays in Semantic and Lexical Organization,* ed. Adrienne Lehrer & Eva F. Kittay (Hillsdale: Erlbaum, 1992), 47-49.

[29] Kazuho Kambara, "A Frames Approach to the Semantics of Nouns, " *Papers in Linguistic Science* 25, 2019: 47, 59.

[30] Barsalou, "Frames, Concepts, and Conceptual Fields," 30.

[31] Ibid., 35.

[32] Ibid., 35.

[33] Ibid., 37.

Role nouns are relational nouns that are a fixed element in a particular frame. The referent of these nouns only exists in relationship to other entities.[34] For instance, a 'son' is always the son of his parents. The meaning of 'son' cannot be understood without understanding the concept of 'parenthood.' In this way, role nouns always evoke the frame of which they are a part.[35] When dealing with role nouns, I will present the event frame with which the noun is associated, indicating which frame element is profiled by the noun.

Event nouns are nouns containing an internal event. Just like verbs, they refer to a process or an event (e.g. 'destruction'). So, just like verbs, they evoke an entire frame, with all its constituent frame elements.[36] The slots of the evoked frame will be filled by contextual information from the rest of the sentence (or surrounding sentences). For example, in the phrase "the destruction of Jerusalem by the Babylonians" the agent and patient of the 'destruction event' are indicated by prepositional phrases, filling two core elements of the accompanying frame. Event nouns are treated as equivalent to their associated event.

2.2.2. Example: Frame Semantics and Biblical Hebrew

An extended example may help to clarify how *frame semantics* can be applied to Biblical Hebrew. After an analysis of the word חֶסֶד in the Old Testament Carsten Ziegert designed a frame of the "חסד event" (figure 1). He analyses חֶסֶד as an *event noun* (class 3 in Kambara's categorization).

Frame: חסד event		
Slots:	:	Fillers:
A: Agentive, +human	:	
B: Benefactive, +human	:	
D: Danger / Risk		
Constraints:		
B is in danger or experiences a critical impairment (D)		
B is not able to avert D		
A is able and willing to avert D from B		

Figure 1: Example of a semantic frame (חֶסֶד)[37]

[34] Kambara, "A Frames Approach," 60.

[35] Ibid., 47, 60-61.

[36] Ibid., 47, 61-62.

[37] Carsten Ziegert, "What is חֶסֶד? A Frame Semantic Approach," *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 44 (4), 2020: 721.

The frame consists of three elements: an agentive (A; the person who performs the action), a benefactive (B; the receiver of the action) and the circumstance of the scene, a danger or risk (D). These three relate to each other in the following way: the receiver is in danger and cannot avert that danger; the agent is able to avert the receiver's dangerous circumstances and is also willing to do so. In every instance of חֶסֶד, this structure is (implicitly) present, filled from the perspective of a particular situation. Take, for example, Genesis 40:14, where the imprisoned Joseph asks Pharaoh's cupbearer, who has been released: וְעָשִׂיתָ־נָּא עִמָּדִי חָסֶד (NIV: "show me kindness"). Ziegert fills the חֶסֶד frame from this text and the surrounding context, leading to the following result (figure 2):

Frame: חסד event, Gen. 40.14 (constraints on slots according to חסד frame in section 4.1)		
Slots:		Fillers:
A: Agentive, +human	:	cupbearer
B: Benefactive, +human	:	Joseph
D: Danger / Risk	:	Joseph stays and probably dies in prison
referent of חסד	:	cupbearer gets Joseph out of prison by mentioning him to Pharaoh

Figure 2: A filled semantic frame[38]

2.2.3. The Use of Frame Semantics in This Study

This study will use frame semantics alongside historical-grammatical exegesis to analyse the meaning of outsider terminology (גֵּר, נָכְרִי, and זָר) in the Pentateuch and Proverbs. It will mainly be used to illuminate the meaning of the events and concepts behind these lexemes, resulting in the construction of one or more semantic frames for each of them. However, where necessary for a deeper understanding, this study will also construct frames for events or concepts that are consistently associated with these lexemes (i.e. that often co-occur with these lexemes in my corpora). This association can either be lexical or non-lexical (through the presence of information patterns connected to those frames).

2.3. Historical-grammatical Exegesis

The combination of a method from contemporary linguistics with a rather traditional philological method like historical-grammatical exegesis might seem odd at first sight. However, there are several reasons why they work together. First of all, cognitive-

[38] Ziegert, "What is חֶסֶד," 723.

linguistic approaches and traditional philological approaches share an encyclopaedic conception of meaning, connecting linguistic meaning to events and entities 'in the world'.[39] *In concreto,* both methods aim to understand the meaning of a text in light of its historical-cultural context. Furthermore, the historical-grammatical emphasis on carefully analysing the syntactic structure of texts fits well with the cognitive-linguistic adage: "Meaning arises from usage." Grammatical features structure the relationship between lexemes in an utterance, conditioning how those lexemes are used – thereby conditioning their meaning.[40] These two points show that these methods can be mutually enriching.

The method serving as a starting point for the historical-grammatical exegesis of the selected texts is the "twelve steps of exegesis," developed by Gert Kwakkel, Jaap Dekker and Myriam Klinker-De Klerck.[41] Several elements of the method will be used as points of attention in my research (without necessarily completing them in order):

- Sketching the historical context of Proverbs, paying attention to date and authorship and *Sitz im Leben* of the book.
- Describing the literary context of the text (for pericopes from Proverbs 2-9) and the genre.
- Detailed text-critical and syntactical analysis of the text.
- Investigation of literary forms (stylistic devices, structure and flow of the text).
- Attention to intertextuality and the specific contribution of a text to a wider biblical-theological theme.
- Engagement with recent scholarship in the form of commentaries, theological dictionaries, articles and monographs about the texts under consideration.

Using this method ensures balanced attention to the historical background, literary context, and syntactic and stylistic elements of each text under consideration. In this way, a solid appreciation of the meaning of each text in context will be achieved before filling the semantic frames under consideration in this study.

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[39] Ziegert, "Beyond Barr", 34.

[40] Cf. William W. Klein, Craig L. Blomberg & Robert L. Hubbard Jr., *Introduction to Biblical Interpretation* (Third edition) (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2017), 346.

[41] Gert Kwakkel, *Leren interpreteren: Informatie en instructies met betrekking tot hermeneutiek en exegese van het Oude Testament* (Kampen: Theologische Universiteit Kampen, 2021), 97-99.

3. The Stranger in the Pentateuch: Directions from Previous Research

In this chapter, a preliminary set of semantic frames evoked by 'outsider terminology' in the Pentateuch will be constructed, based on a literature review of recent research on this topic. The data from these studies is divided into three subsections:

1) Fundamental theological themes from primaeval history
2) גֵּר in the Pentateuch
3) נָכְרִי, זָר, and the nations in the Pentateuch

At the end of each subsection, the frame(s) evoked by the data from that particular subsection are constructed. Finally, these frames will be connected to each other, presenting an overall view of the framing of foreigners in the Pentateuch.

3.1. Fundamental Theological Themes from Primaeval History (Genesis 1-11)

3.1.1. The Image of God (Gen. 1:26-27)

Many studies include a consideration of a few fundamental theological themes in their treatment of 'the foreigner in the OT.' Especially the creation of man in the image of God is a popular theme. [1] Based on Genesis 1:26-27, many interpreters stress that – whatever else will be said about the 'foreigner' – their status as humans created in the image of God ensures that the other can never be fully alien to us.[2] Every human being shares in this essential fact of creation, and thus every human being has "a singular standing before God

[1] M. Daniel Carroll R., *The Bible and Borders* (Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2020), 10-17; M. Daniel Carroll R., "The Image and Mission of God: Genesis as a Lens for a Biblical Discussion of Migration", in *Global Migration & Christian Faith,* eds. M. Daniel Carroll R. & Vincent E. Bacote, (Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 2021), 37-52; Sam George, "Motus Dei (The Move of God): A Theology and Missiology for a Moving World", *Global Migration & Christian Faith,* eds. M. Daniel Carroll R. & Vincent E. Bacote, 166-182; Yvette Santana, "Imago Dei: The Image of God and the Immigrant", in *The Church and Migration,* eds. Daniel Montañez & Wilmer Estrada Carrasquillo (Cleveland: Centro para Estudios Latinos Press, 2022), 25-36; Lianne van der Zee, *De vreemdeling in ons midden* (Zwolle: Scholten, 2023), 22-25; Markus Zehnder, *The Bible and Immigration* (Eugene: Pickwick, 2021), 55-56; Markus Zehnder, *Umgang mit Fremden in Israel und Assyrien* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 2005), 291-292.

[2] Van der Zee, *De vreemdeling in ons midden,* 25; Zehnder, *The Bible and Immigration,* 55; Zehnder, *Umgang mit Fremden,* 292.

and in the world."[3] This is seen as a foundational value, establishing the fundamental equality of humanity on a creational level.[4]

What does it mean that humanity is created 'in the image of God'? That question is too complicated to answer within the confines of this study, but a short sketch of one interpretation is in order. Genesis 1:26-27 uses two words to express this reality: צֶלֶם ('image') and דְּמוּת ('likeness'). In the view of Randall Garr, these words each add a slightly different nuance. "Ostensibly, humanity is envisioned to be, and created as, a token of divine presence and participation in the world. The nouns suggest that, in two respects at least, humanity will resemble, replicate, or mimic God and his divine community."[5]

צֶלֶם implies that humanity shares in God's authority to rule over creation. They will "have dominion [...] over the whole earth, and over everything that moves on the earth" (Gen. 1:26). This is possible because they are made in God's image. "Through its 'image', the human race will master the world as a majestic, executive, and triumphant power."[6] Humans are co-regents with God. It is surprising that this authority is not limited to the king (as in Egyptian and Mesopotamian royal ideology), but extended to every human being. Daniel Carroll remarks that "Genesis announces the democratization of the divine image, whereby all individuals have this status. There is no hierarchy of superiority among persons and social relationships."[7]

דְּמוּת highlights a different aspect of humanity's God-likeness. Connecting Genesis 1:26 with Genesis 5:3, where Adam is said to father a son "in his likeness" (בִּדְמוּתוֹ), Garr interprets דְּמוּת as the likeness children have to their parents through birth. In creation, God created human beings to be like Him, and that 'likeness' is passed down from generation to generation as humans *pro*create.[8] What the exact content of this 'likeness' is, remains unclear, but it is clear that it points to the interconnectedness of God and humanity, and the interconnectedness of all humans.

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[3] Carroll, *The Bible and Borders,* 12.

[4] Carroll, "The Image and Mission of God," 38-39; Van der Zee, *De vreemdeling in ons midden,* 24-25.

[5] W. Randall Garr, *In His Own Image and Likeness: Humanity, Divinity, and Monotheism* (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 117.

[6] Ibid., 157.

[7] Carroll, "The Image and Mission of God," 41.

[8] Garr, *In His Own Image and Likeness,* 125-132.

For this reason, every human being should be treated with respect. The primaeval stories teach that there is no room for racism in a biblical worldview: from a creation perspective, no people group is superior to another; all human beings are traced back to the same ancestors, all human beings are infinitely valuable in God's eyes (Gen. 9:6), and the whole of humanity is included in a covenant with God (Gen. 9:1-17).[9] In this light, some interpreters even consider oppressing fellow image-bearers as an act of blasphemy, "tantamount to spitting in the face of God."[10]

3.1.2. Creation, Migration and Ethnicity

While generally agreeing with the assessment above, Markus Zehnder places some critical remarks. He notes that 'the image of God' should be interpreted on an individual level. That every individual is made in the image of God does not preclude making distinctions between peoples.[11] He underscores his point by highlighting the table of nations in Genesis 10. Even within the universal primaeval history of Genesis 1-11, there is a place for a genealogy of nations. In his view, Genesis 10 shows the fulfilment of the creation mandate to be fruitful and multiply (Gen. 1:28, 9:1). It does so in the form of a list of *peoples*, showing that ethnic diversity is part of God's creation.[12] That implies that distinctions between ethnic groups are intended in God's plan for the world. He even goes so far as to say that the constituent elements of ethnic groups (land, language, and common descent (Gen. 10:5)) are "a foundational creational element of the definition of ethnic identity and nationhood."[13] In combination with Deuteronomy 32:8, where it is said that God divided all mankind and set up boundaries for the peoples, Zehnder interprets Genesis 10 as saying that the division of humanity into different peoples, each within their own borders, is in accordance with God's will. "Differentiation and variety, not a unitary system, is God's purpose [...] also in the realm of people, including the political dimensions of this realm."[14]

Koert van Bekkum tones down Zehnder's focus on differentiation in his interpretation of Genesis 10. He notes that although borders and physical and linguistic differences are observable, they are flexible over time, not essentially fixed. Essential to Genesis 10 is

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[9] Zehnder, *Umgang mit Fremden,* 291-292.

[10] Desmond Tutu, as quoted in Santana, "Imago Dei: The Image of God and the Immigrant," 29.

[11] Zehnder, *The Bible and Immigration,* 56.

[12] Ibid., 58.

[13] Ibid., 60.

[14] Ibid., 60.

instead that the whole world is one family, descending from Noah's offspring.[15] Referring to Herman Bavinck's view, he asserts that "although in a broken way, the plurality of humanity reflects God's glory and can only fully bear the image of God as a unity."[16] This unity in plurality is emphasized by the fact that Genesis 10 uses terms of family relations and kinship to describe the nations.[17] However, essential unity does not mean uniformity. In the family of nations, each member does have its own character. This diversity is appreciated by the text. "[N]ot only Noah's offspring itself, but also their rich plurality should be regarded as the fulfilment of God's blessing "to be fruitful and multiply.""[18] It should be noted that the family relations between the nations are viewed in terms of Israel's social structure. In this presentation, Israel has a special place in the family as God's means of blessing the nations.[19] A form of exceptionalism (Israel is different than the others) without asserting Israel's ethnic or racial superiority; the other nations are still on God's radar. Van Bekkum's reading is a welcome corrective to Zehnder's overly essentialist interpretation of Gen. 10:5, which fixes in creation order what arises in the course of history (as God's involvement in the creation of *new* ethnic groups in Genesis 11 and 12 makes clear). At the same time, this reading confirms the value of Gen. 10 for reflection on the nature of nations (and thus by extension foreigners) in the Bible.

3.1.3. Frames

The themes reviewed in Genesis' primaeval history reveal a basic dynamic regarding the framing of foreigners. On the most basic level, these texts are dealing with the process of grouping human beings, an act of categorization (Figure 3). This is the most fundamental event in play every time someone is designated as 'same' or 'different'. Categorization is always a conscious act of an Agentive (A), who observes an Item (I) (in the case of the categorization of humans, another person), and places that item in a certain Category (C). When he places the item in a category to which he also belongs, he is establishing similarity. When he places the item in a category to which he does not belong, he is establishing difference.

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[15] Koert van Bekkum, ""These are the Clans of the Sons of Noah": Ethnic and Cultural Diversity in the Table of the Nations (Genesis 10)," in *Meaningful Meetings with Foreigners in the World of the Bible,* ed. Marjo Korpel & Paul Sanders (Leuven: Peeters, 2024), 297-98.

[16] Ibid., 289.

[17] Ibid., 292.

[18] Ibid., 298.

[19] Ibid., 295

Categorization event

Slots:

A Agentive

I Item

C Category

Constraints:

A construes **I** as belonging to **C**

Figure 3: Categorization event[20]

On the one hand, the motif of the image of God shows that all human beings have something in common. In this way, this motif is used to establish belonging to the same category (establishing similarity). In Genesis 1:26-27, experiencers are grouped together based on something they share. Humanity as a whole is created in God's image and likeness. That is something they have in common with each other and something they have in common with God. I have called the frame associated with this situation the דמה (D) frame ("compare, liken", evoked by the word דְּמוּת in v. 26).

דמה (D) event

Slots:

A Agentive

E Experiencer

C Comparative

P Property

Constraints:

A compares **E** to **C** based on **P**

A finds **E** and **C** to be the same regarding **P**

Figure 4: Frame for establishing similarity (דמה)

[20] Based on data from FrameNet (https://framenet.icsi.berkeley.edu/frameIndex)

This frame consists of four FEs. In addition to the Agentive (A) and the Experiencer (E; the person who experiences an event), two more roles are added, the Comparative (C) and the Property (P). The Comparative is "the person or thing to which another person or thing is compared,"[21] and the Property is the quality which is compared between the Experiencer and the Comparative. When the Agentive compares the Experiencer and the Comparative based on the Property, he finds that they are similar in that regard. A, E and C are not necessarily three different persons. One referent may take two of the three roles (i.e. the Agentive may compare himself to someone else, or someone else to himself). Applied to the primaeval history in Genesis (in Randall Garr's interpretation), one sees that God (A) compares His human creation (E) to Himself (C) based on their ruling role over the rest of creation (צֶלֶם), and a vaguely defined genealogical family likeness to Him that He bestowed on them, that they are enabled to pass on to the next generation (דְּמוּת) (P). In this way, He notes an analogy between Himself and humanity. Humanity as a whole - and by extension each individual human being - shares in that analogy, so it can be said that all of humanity is made in God's image and likeness.

On the other hand, the differentiation of humanity into diverse ethnic groups and nations in Genesis 10 shows that not all human beings are the same, thus establishing belonging to different categories (establishing difference). For the frame-semantic analysis of the second side, Carsten Ziegert's work on space-related Biblical Hebrew lexemes is very useful.[22] His frame for the meaning of פרד ("separate") fits the situation described by Genesis 10. After all, the verb is used twice in the chapter (10:5, 32). Therefore, this frame is adopted as the frame for establishing difference (figure 5).

[21] Thompson & Brannan, *Lexham Glossary of Semantic Roles.*

[22] Carsten Ziegert, "Framing Space: Determining the Meaning of Space-Related Biblical Hebrew Lexemes," *Protokolle zur Bibel* 33(1), 2024: 7-27.

פרד event

Slots:

A Agentive

E Experiencer

Constraints:

E consists of different entities

A creates physical space between the entities of **E**

E entities experience the creation of physical space between them

Figure 5: Frame for establishing difference (פרד) [23]

The structure of the frame is relatively simple. It consists of two Frame Elements: the Agentive (A) and the Experiencer (E). The Experiencer is a compound that includes multiple individual entities. These individual entities are separated from each other through the action of the Agentive. The entities of E consciously experience the resultant physical space between them. Applied to Genesis 10, one sees that humanity (E) is divided into multiple nations (entities of E) through the dividing actions of God (A). Note that this frame is secondary to the דמה frame described above. Even though the nations are divided into different entities based on land, language and common descent, the fundamental unity of humanity is still professed, as witnessed by the use of kinship terms for the relationship between different nations.

3.2 גֵּר in the Pentateuch

The Old Testament uses different words when speaking about foreigners. One of the most widely used ones (92x) is the word גֵּר, derived from the root גור (defined as "to dwell as alien and dependant").[24] The noun has been defined in various ways, including as somebody "who (alone or with his family) leaves village and tribe because of war (2 Sam. 3:2, Is. 16:4), famine (Ru. 1:1), epidemic, blood guilt etc., and seeks shelter and residence at another place, where his right of landed property, marriage and taking part in

[23] Ziegert, "Framing Space," 14.

[24] Ludwig Koehler & Walter Baumgartner, *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Leiden: Brill, 2001), s.l. I גור.

jurisdiction, cult and war has been curtailed."[25] Another definition extends the possible reasons for this type of migration to any political, economic or other circumstances.[26] José Ramírez Kidd's more concise definition describes the גֵּר as "a person who, in order to protect his life and family, looks for a new home."[27] In any case, a גֵּר is someone who settles amongst people who are not their kin, and therefore lives outside the normal social structures of protection and privilege.[28]

3.2.1. The Patriarchs and Israel as גֵּרִים

The narrative portions of the Pentateuch devote ample attention to the experiences of Israel and their ancestors as גֵּרִים. Time and again, Genesis emphasizes that the patriarchs lived as גֵּרִים in Canaan. They had no place to call their own but dwelled among the Canaanites as resident aliens. Abraham's identity as a sojourner receives particular attention. From the moment God called Abraham away from his country and his family in Mesopotamia to "the land I will show you" (Gen. 12:1), he became a "hybrid person",[29] at home neither here nor there. The man who would become the father of all Israel lived his life as "a foreigner until his death."[30] At God's beck and call, he had traded all certainties of his previous life (religion, societal status, family support system, prospective inheritance, etc.)[31] for an uncertain life on the road, chasing after God's promises. He had become a גֵּר for God's sake. Likewise, his descendants Isaak and Jacob lived in a country that was not their own, not claiming ownership of the land, but living where God granted them a place to stay. The echo of this radical gesture of dependence on God still resounded centuries later, when the Israelites collected their first harvest in their 'own' country (Deut. 26:5).

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[25] Koehler & Baumgartner, *HALOT,* s.l. גֵּר.

[26] Robert Martin-Achard, "גור ," *THAT* I:410

[27] Quoted in Reinhard Achenbach, "*gêr – nåkhrî – tôshav – zâr:* Legal and Sacral Distinctions regarding Foreigners in the Pentateuch," in *The Foreigner and the Law: Perspectives from the Hebrew Bible and the Ancient Near East,* ed. Reinhard Achenbach, Rainer Albertz & Jakob Wöhrle (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2011), 29.

[28] Rieuwerd Buitenwerf & Clazien Verheul (ed.), *Ballingen, buren en buitenlanders: De vreemdeling in de Bijbel* (Heerenveen: NBG, 2007), 43.

[29] Sarita Gallagher Edwards, "My Father was a Wandering Aramean, " *Missiology: An International Review* 50(1), 2022: 41.

[30] Ibid.

[31] cf. Gallagher Edwards, "My Father was a Wandering Aramean," 44, and Daniel G. Groody, *A Theology of Migration* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 2022), 72-73.

A second foundational narrative for Israel's image of the גֵּר is the Exodus narrative. Again, Israel is reminded that they are not natives of the land they live in. They lived as oppressed slaves and גֵּרִים in Egypt, and their existence as a nation is only due to YHWH's liberating action. They should never forget that. Israel's collective memory of oppression in Egypt became a motivation for their treatment of the גֵּרִים within their borders. "You shall not oppress the sojourner; you know the heart of the sojourner (וְאַתֶּם יְדַעְתֶּם אֶת־נֶפֶשׁ הַגֵּר), for you were sojourners in the land of Egypt" (Exod. 23:9 ESV). "In remembering, Israel must decide to equate their ancestors' sojourn in Egypt with the experiences of others now sojourning in Israel itself."[32] Their own experience of being strangers should lead to compassion towards the strangers in their midst, and their own experience of redemption should lead to gratefulness towards the liberating God, making itself known in a just and loving treatment of the גֵּר (cf. Lev. 19:34, Deut. 10:18-20).[33]

These narratives entrench in Israel's collective consciousness that the foreigner is not just 'them', but also 'us.'[34] 'We' are also גֵּרִים not fully belonging to the land 'we' live in. This is a constant reminder that differences between the in-group and the out-group are never absolute.

3.2.2. גֵּר in the Pentateuchal Legal Codes

Laws concerning the treatment of the גֵּר are widespread in the Pentateuchal legal codes. In Israel, the גֵּר has a special legal status with certain rights and duties. This is a remarkable contrast with the surrounding nations, which lack specialized legal stipulations about foreigners. For instance, Assyria does not know the 'sojourner' as a category of people that are protected by law.[35] So, these laws are an important site to find distinctive elements in Israel's dealings with foreigners. As a consequence, they have been widely studied. Because synchronic and diachronic studies of the topic have yielded widely differing results, they will each be treated separately in the following paragraphs, after a survey of the relevant biblical data.

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[32] Mark W. Hamilton, *Jesus, King of Strangers: What the Bible Really Says about Immigration* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2019), 64.

[33] Zehnder, *Umgang mit Fremden,* 301-302.

[34] Marius van Leeuwen, "Een vreemdeling ben ik, bij u te gast...," in *De vreemdeling en de Bijbel,* ed. Sijbolt Noorda et al. (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2007), 31.

[35] Zehnder, *Umgang mit Fremden,* 312, 550-551.

3.2.2.1. The Biblical Data

The גֵּר is mentioned in nearly every collection of laws in the Pentateuch. He has even found his way into the ***Ten Commandments***, the 'constitution' of the Sinai covenant. In both versions of the Decalogue, the גֵּר is included in the Sabbath commandment. The גֵּר should get one day of rest, just like the native-born Israelite (Exod. 20:10, Deut. 5:14). That the גֵּר is called גֵּרְךָ ("your גֵּר") shows that he was dependent on an Israelite household.[36] The commandment is addressed to the free citizens: do not let the stranger who depends on you do the work for you.[37] The Deuteronomic version of the Decalogue expands the motivation for giving rest to the גֵּר by reminding Israel of its own experience of slavery in Egypt (cf. 3.2.1).

In the ***Covenant Code*** (Exod. 20:22-23:19) the גֵּר is mentioned six times in three verses (22:20, 23:9, 23:12).[38] In all cases, he is seen as someone in a vulnerable position, who should receive social protection and charity,[39] alongside the widow and the orphan (22:21), the poor (23:7) or the slave (23:12). The Covenant Code does not clarify the ethnic origins of the גֵּר. This leaves open the possibility that he might not necessarily be a non-Israelite. He could also be someone who resides far from his home village and tribe who is still an Israelite.[40] Whatever his ethnicity, the גֵּר had left his kinship network behind, and thus lacked the indispensable support of the family in times of drought, crop failures, disease, and death.[41] He had no land of his own but had to work on the fields of local landowners.[42] That made him an easy target for abuse and oppression. Hamilton aptly summarizes the גֵּר's situation: "The migrant flies without a safety net."[43] The law recognizes this and offers protection for the גֵּר, alongside others in similarly vulnerable situations.[44] The repeated command not to oppress the גֵּר (Exod. 22:20, 23:9), forms an *inclusio* around the social laws of the Covenant Code, showing that the lawmakers

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[36] Hamilton, *Jesus, King of Strangers,* 92; Zehnder, *Umgang mit Fremden,* 313.

[37] Zehnder, *Umgang mit Fremden,* 314.

[38] Martin-Achard, "גור," *THAT* I:410.

[39] Rainer Albertz, "From Aliens to Proselytes: Non-Priestly and Priestly Legislation Concerning Stranger," in *The Foreigner and the Law: Perspectives from the Hebrew Bible and the Ancient Near East,* ed. Reinhard Achenbach, Rainer Albertz & Jakob Wöhrle (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2011), 53.

[40] Hamilton, *Jesus, King of Strangers,* 85.

[41] Carroll, *The Bible and Borders,* 65-66; Hamilton, *Jesus, King of Strangers,* 84.

[42] Achenbach, "*gêr-nåkhrî-tôshav-zâr,"* 30.

[43] Hamilton, *Jesus, King of Strangers,* 84.

[44] Carroll, *The Bible and Borders*, 66.

considered the oppression of גֵּרִים a serious problem.[45] 'Oppression' should probably be understood broadly here, including both the economic and the judicial domain.[46]

The ***Holiness Code*** (Lev. 17-26) highlights a different aspect of the status of the גֵּר. In these texts, he is not the dependent relying on charity,[47] but relatively equal to the native-born Israelite.[48] The code envisages the possibility of a גֵּר who is economically independent, having enough money to bring his own sacrifices (Lev. 17:8) and being able to lend money or to own slaves (Lev. 25:47).[49] In short, the גֵּר in the Holiness Code is a responsible subject instead of a passive beneficiary.[50] The prevalent contrasting of the גֵּר with the אֶזְרָח, the אָח and the בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל (terms reserved for native-born Israelites) shows that the Holiness Code conceives of the גֵּר as someone with a different ethnicity.[51] The Holiness Code mainly deals with the participation of the גֵּר in the cultic life of Israel. In cultic law, the גֵּר was usually granted the same rights and duties as the native Israelite, with the difference that participation in the cult was voluntary for the גֵּר.[52] The road to far-reaching integration in Israel's cultic community is open to the גֵּר, and if he chooses to participate, he can do so on the same terms as all other Israelites (Lev. 24:22, cf. Exod. 12:49, Num. 15:16).[53] That means that the גֵּר who opts for religious integration in Israel should also be circumcised and keep the food laws. However, he is only *obliged* to observe basic religious duties when non-compliance to those rules would cause disturbance of the Israelite societal order or the moral and ritual defilement of the land.[54]

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[45] Albertz, "From Aliens to Proselytes," 54.

[46] Zehnder, *Umgang mit Fremden,* 317.

[47] Although this aspect is not completely absent (cf. Lev. 19:9-10, 23:22, 25:6-7), the Holiness Code usually refers to strangers in this position as תּוֹשָׁב instead of גֵּר. The fact that the Holiness Code does use the word גֵּר with this connotation belies Christoph Bultmann's hypothesis (as quoted in Albertz, "From Aliens to Proselytes," 58) that the meaning of גֵּר in the Holiness Code is completely distinct from other law codes (mainly Deuteronomy).

[48] Christophe Nihan, "Resident Aliens and Natives in the Holiness Legislation," in *The Foreigner and the Law: Perspectives from the Hebrew Bible and the Ancient Near East,* ed. Reinhard Achenbach, Rainer Albertz & Jakob Wöhrle (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2011), 113.

[49] Albertz, "From Aliens to Proselytes," 58; Nihan, "Resident Aliens and Natives," 117-119.

[50] Zehnder, *Umgang mit Fremden,* 319, 349.

[51] Zehnder, *Umgang mit Fremden,* 324.

[52] Van der Zee, *De vreemdeling in ons midden,* 33; Zehnder, *Umgang mit Fremden,* 327.

[53] Zehnder, *The Bible and Immigration,* 26., *contra* Nihan, "Resident Aliens and Natives," 120, who restricts the application of this rule to those cases where it is explicitly mentioned.

[54] Van der Zee, *De vreemdeling in ons midden,* 33; Zehnder, *Umgang mit Fremden,* 327.

An interesting accent (unique to the Holiness Code) is the admission that the land does not belong to the Israelites. Instead, YHWH is the true owner of the land. YHWH chose to distribute the land among the families of Israel, but in reality, the Israelites are not the owners, but only גֵּרִים who may use the land (Lev. 25:23). This also has consequences for גֵּרִים who settled in Israel from outside. Because the land is a gift from YHWH, it cannot be sold outside the family which received it. Use of the land will always be linked to the original family. The גֵּר is not part of this system. Consequently, he cannot own land of his own.[55] Therefore, "the land remains the central foundation for the legal distinction between Israelites and resident aliens [in the Holiness Code]."[56]

In the laws of ***Numbers*** (considered part of the ***Priestly Code***), the גֵּר is not a major theme. Where the גֵּר is mentioned, it is usually in the same vein as in the Holiness Code, focusing on the religious integration of God-fearing גֵּרִים into the cultic community.[57] Positively, they are given the opportunity to participate in the Passover (Num. 9:1-14), and they can bring grain offerings, drink offerings (Num. 15:1-19) and sin offerings (Num. 15:24-29). Negatively, they should refrain from blasphemy (Num. 15:30-31) and keep the purity laws (Num. 19:10).

More than the other legal codes, ***Deuteronomy*** distinguishes between different types of strangers. In Deuteronomic law, there are not only commandments about the גֵּר, but also about the נָכְרִי and the זָר (cf. 3.3.). Like in the Covenant Code, laws about the גֵּר are mainly concerned with economic and judicial protection. The laws from the Covenant Code are expanded with additional ethical and religious motivations and more detailed distinctions.[58]

An important difference with the Covenant Code is Deuteronomy's theological foundation for the social protection of the גֵּר. Israel's gracious attitude towards the גֵּר is grounded on the character of their God.[59] YHWH is described as the protector of the marginalized (Deut. 10:17-19). Regarding the גֵּר, the text uses the phrase אֹהֵב גֵּר (with a participle,

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[55] Markus Zehnder (*Umgang mit Fremden,* 326) hypothesizes that גֵּרִים might obtain land by being adopted by an Israelite tribe or family, but this scenario remains largely conjectural. For a possible example, see the inclusion of Caleb the Kenizzite and his family in the tribe of Judah (Num. 13:6) (Firth, *Including the Stranger,* 33-38).

[56] Nihan, "Resident Aliens and Natives," 124.

[57] Albertz, "From Aliens to Proselytes," 64-65

[58] Achenbach, "*gêr-nåkhrî-tôshav-zâr,"* 31-32.

[59] Van der Zee, *De vreemdeling in ons midden,* 41.

showing the continuous character of YHWH's loving acts). His people must show the same loving attitude. God's love for His people (Deut. 10:15) does not come at the expense of other peoples: "Particularism and universalism go hand in hand."[60] The Deuteronomic law thus moves beyond the negative prohibition against oppression to an active, positive call to love (cf. also Lev. 19:33-34), made practical in material help, economic support and judicial equality.[61] The deep-seated theological motivation for the love for the marginalized (including the stranger) is underlined by the covenant curses from the ceremony at Mount Gerizim and Mount Ebal (Deut. 27:11-26). One of the curses says: "Cursed is anyone who withholds justice from the foreigner [גֵּר], the fatherless or the widow. Then all the people shall say, "Amen!" (Deut. 27:19). Refraining from right behaviour towards the גֵּר was one of the sure-fire ways for Israel to lose the blessings of the covenant that YHWH bestowed on them.

Deuteronomy also goes beyond other law codes in the inclusion of the גֵּר in the Israelite covenant community. גֵּרִים are present at the covenant renewal on the plains of Moab (Deut. 29:10), and at the reading of the law at the Feast of Booths (Deut. 31:12). In this way, Israel is reminded of its duties towards the גֵּר. The גֵּר is in turn made to be a witness to the covenant and possibly even a member of the covenant community.[62] All these extensions of the law show the depth of Deuteronomy's commitment to the protection of the גֵּר, ensuring that גֵּרִים participate alongside native Israelites in economic, social and religious life.[63]

3.2.2.2. Conclusions of Synchronic Research

Scholars working within a synchronic framework have used the biblical data described above to create an overall image of the גֵּר in the Pentateuch.[64] The general tendency in this research is to stress the positive and gracious way in which Israel was to treat the stranger in their midst.[65] The conclusions of the following three scholars are typical for the range of views in this type of research.

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[60] Zehnder, *Umgang mit Fremden,* 367 [Own translation].

[61] Zehnder, *Umgang mit Fremden,* 367.

[62] Zehnder, *Umgang mit Fremden,* 368.

[63] Hamilton, *Jesus, King of Strangers,* 91.

[64] The studies by Carroll, Hamilton, Van der Zee and Zehnder fit this description.

[65] The exception is Anne van der Meiden ("Het besmette beeld van de vreemdeling," 70), who thinks that the protection of the גֵּר in Israel originated from selfish, economic motives.

Mark Hamilton concludes that "Israelite law trends in the direction of openness towards migrants and away from a narrow, self-protective vision of Israel as a community. The migrant does not appear in the law as a problem, but as a welcome guest that, if anything, gives the redeemed people opportunity to demonstrate their gratitude to YHWH for the exodus and to each other their commitment to generous, ethical lives."[66] He stresses that outsiders receive the same rights as Israelites, while they have the duty to avoid idolatry and praise YHWH, and the opportunity to participate fully in Israel's cultic life.[67]

Daniel Carroll reaches similar conclusions. He writes that "it is because of Israel's special story and the character of the Lord that they were commanded to treat the sojourner in such a caring manner. Their concern for the vulnerable from another land was fundamental to their witness and life as the people of God."[68] At the same time, this is not the full story. "Israel's law assumes that there is movement on the part of the sojourner towards the host culture (Israel): learning its ways and its language and respecting its laws and taboos, even coming to believe in its God."[69] In short, the Pentateuchal laws demonstrate two fundamental tendencies: openness to outsiders and concern for their well-being on the part of the Israelites, and a positive response to the "invitation to enter the world of Israel"[70] on the part of the גֵּר.

Markus Zehnder puts comparatively most weight on the גֵּר's duty to integrate in Israelite society. He stresses the correspondence between the degree of integration and the degree to which a stranger enjoys equal rights and duties in the judicial and cultic domain.[71] Where the גֵּר is socially weak, he is protected by law (without receiving free handouts), but his position is never fully equal to that of a native Israelite. Religiously, he cannot openly practice 'deviant' cultic practices, and he is obliged to obey the basic precepts of Yahwism, while having the opportunity to become a more active participant in Israel's cult.[72]

The contributions by different scholars show considerable agreement, but they still differ in a few significant ways. All of them recognize two sides to the image of the גֵּר in the

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[66] Hamilton, *Jesus, King of Strangers,* 97.

[67] Hamilton, *Jesus, King of Strangers,* 96-97.

[68] Carroll, *The Bible and Borders,* 77.

[69] Ibid., 83.

[70] Ibid., 84.

[71] Zehnder, *Umgang mit Fremden,* 384.

[72] Zehnder, *The Bible and Immigration,* 26-27.

Pentateuch, but the weight they give to each side is different. In sum, I think that Carroll's conclusions are most balanced. Whereas Hamilton overemphasizes social acceptance and Zehnder religious integration, Carroll gives equal weight to both of them. Yes, Israel should care for the גֵּר, but that is not a one way street: in turn, the גֵּר should also care about Israel and its God. These two aspects of the socio-religious situation of the גֵּר will be given attention to in the semantic frames about the גֵּר (3.2.3).

3.2.2.3. Conclusions of Diachronic Research

In contrast to the studies described in the previous paragraph, scholars working within a diachronic framework have been more concerned with analysing historical developments in the description of the גֵּר in the Pentateuch. They took their starting point in the reconstructed chronology of the Pentateuch from the historical-critical paradigm.[73] In this reconstruction, the Covenant Code is the oldest collection in the Pentateuch (late 8th century BC), followed by Deuteronomy (7th-6th century BC), the Holiness Code (early 5th century BC), and later additions to the Priesty Code (2nd half 5th century BC to early 4th century BC).[74] These scholars take this Wellhausenian schema as the 'assured results' of historical-critical research, and assume it as background for their attempts to reconstruct how the image of the גֵּר has changed over time.[75]

In its most simplistic form, this type of research produces over-simplified development schemas, as illustrated by the following quote from Martin-Achard:

> Originally a foreigner who settled in Israel or in one of the tribes and as such placed under YHWH's protection (Covenant Code), the [גֵּר] already merits special treatment in Deut. alongside the widow and the orphan, indeed, on the basis of a salvation-historical concept:

[73] The studies by Achenbach, Albertz, Glanville, Martin-Achard and Nihan fit this description.

[74] Dates taken from Albertz, "From Aliens to Proselytes."

[75] Recently, the historical-critical consensus about the relative chronology of the law corpora of the Pentateuch has been challenged, for instance by Benjamin Kilchör's study *Mosetora und Jahwetora* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2015), who concludes, based on a detailed analysis of laws appearing in multiple corpora, that Deuteronomy should be regarded as the youngest part of the Pentateuch, combining, expanding and explaining commands from the other corpora (in line with the synchronic presentation of the text). No diachronic studies of the גֵּר have been conducted based on this (or any other) alternative chronology.

> Israel itself was once [גֵּר]. Finally, the priestly tradition practically makes the stranger a member of the community by imposing precise requirements upon him.[76]

This conclusion does not do justice to the data. As seen above (3.2.2.1), the association of the גֵּר with the widow and the orphan and the grounding of Israel's treatment of the גֵּר in their own experiences in Egypt are not Deuteronomic innovations. These motifs already occur in the Covenant Code. Martin-Achard can only maintain this developmental schema by asserting (without motivation) that Exodus 22:20 and 23:9b are secondary additions to the Covenant Code.[77] Likewise, the integration of the stranger in the community, which he sees as a development from the priestly tradition, is already visible in some Deuteronomic texts (e.g. Deut. 16:11, 14).

More recent research has moved away from the schematized form of the 'from alien to proselyte' thesis. The interplay of the biblical text and the reconstructed historical context of the final redaction has become more important for interpreters using diachronic methods. For instance, Rainer Albertz connects the treatment of the גֵּר in the different law codes with historical circumstances from the reconstructed date of composition. If the Covenant Code is to be dated in the late 8th century BC, the גֵּר is probably a war refugee, driven out of their country by invading Assyrian forces. In Judah, they suffered discrimination and xenophobia. The lawmakers wanted to prevent that aversion to the stranger by reminding the Judeans of their own status as גֵּרִים in Egypt.[78] Deuteronomy (7th/6th century BC) furthered the social integration of strangers and started the process of religious integration.[79] Although Deuteronomy stressed the election of Israel more than before, this did not lead to a rejection of the גֵּר. Even more, in Deuteronomic theology "the social care for the aliens who lived within Israel became a feature of Israel's religious identity."[80] According to Albertz, the more cultic emphasis of the Holiness Code arose from changes in the social makeup of Persian Yehud in the 5th century BC. In this multi-ethnic, multi-religious province, Jews and non-Jews lived side by side. To cope with this situation, lawmakers created laws that emphasized the religious identity of the Jewish majority and offered an ordered way to co-exist with the non-Jewish inhabitants of the

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[76] Martin-Achard, "גור," *THAT* I:411 (German original). Quoted from the translation by Mark E. Biddle, *Theological Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1994), 424-425.

[77] Martin-Achard, "גור," *THAT* I:412.

[78] Albertz, "From Alien to Proselyte," 54.

[79] Ibid., 55.

[80] Ibid., 55.

province.[81] In Albertz's design, the focus on religious integration deepened in the latest layers of the Pentateuch (until the 4th century BC). "The main interest seems now to be simply to include the [גֵּר] in all those ritual innovations that had been developed after the implementation of the Holiness Code."[82] So, the main thesis of development from a more social conception of the גֵּר to a more religious one is still alive in historical-critical research, but in a more nuanced form that is aware of the overlap between these conceptions.[83] Still, what synchronic research sees as two sides of the same phenomenon is viewed here as points on a diachronic continuum.

Mark Glanville's diachronic study of the גֵּר is notable for the different direction it takes.[84] He still posits a development in the image of the גֵּר, but differs in his identification of the גֵּר. Departing from scholarly consensus, his view is that the גֵּר in the Covenant Code and Deuteronomy is not necessarily an ethnic stranger, but a vulnerable person living outside his kinship group.[85] "Deuteronomy does not conceive of identity in exclusively 'national' or 'ethnic' categories that yield a simple binary distinction: Israel/not-Israel. Indeed, Deuteronomy most often refers to the גֵּר in relation to the household [...] and the clan [cf. Deut. 16:11,14]."[86] The גֵּר as a non-Israelite is a later development from the Holiness Code.[87] Although his argument opens intriguing possibilities for reading many גֵּר texts from a non-national perspective, a major weakness is that texts in Deuteronomy that *do* point to the גֵּר as an ethnic other are consigned to later redactional layers.[88] In a more sophisticated manner, this study repeats the mistake of the 'from alien to proselyte thesis': data that do not fit the mould are explained away with an appeal to diachrony.

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[81] Ibid., 62-63.

[82] Ibid., 64.

[83] See especially Nihan, "Resident Aliens and Natives in the Holiness Legislation," for a study demonstrating this awareness.

[84] Mark R. Glanville, *Adopting the Stranger as Kindred in Deuteronomy* (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2018); Mark R. Glanville, "חרם (ḥērem) as Israelite Identity Formation: Canaanite Destruction and the Stranger (גר, gēr)," *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 83 (2021): 547-570.

[85] Glanville, *Adopting the Stranger as Kindred,* 267.

[86] Glanville, "חרם (ḥērem) as Israelite Identity Formation," 549.

[87] Glanville, *Adopting the Stranger as Kindred,* 41.

[88] See p. 61 for a glaring example, where the mention of the גֵּר 'in your land' (בְּאַרְצְךָ) in Deut. 24:14 is termed a "late harmonization", because "all Israel becomes an important motif in the frame of Deuteronomy, which is dated to Dtr and to post-Dtr." (note 75).

Ultimately, this is a recurring problem with such diachronic studies: they are speculations based on historical reconstructions that go against the grain of the text in its final form. If the reconstructed diachrony is right, they provide a plausible explanation. If it is not, the whole hypothesis fails. Benjamin Kilchör highlighted an important problem with the standard Wellhausenian chronology adopted by the scholars reviewed above: it is incompatible with a synchronic reading of the text. If the Holiness Code and the Priestly Code were meant to expand, correct and replace Deuteronomic commandments, why were they placed *before* Deuteronomy? And why would Deuteronomy present itself as a Mosaic explanation of the Yahwistic Torah of Exodus-Numbers? These questions are usually not discussed by proponents of Deuteronomic precedence, while they do cause significant problems for their hypothesis.[89] If Deuteronomic precedence were rejected, the diachronic development of image of the גֵּר would look completely different.

Because there is too much doubt about the validity of the relative dating of the law codes, and it is beyond the confines of this study to investigate it further, it is hard to use the outcomes of these studies fruitfully. Therefore, the current study will use the biblical data from the final form of the text, in combination with results from synchronic studies, to construct the semantic frames for this section (3.2.3).

3.2.3. The גֵּר Frame

What does the conceptualization of the גֵּר in the Pentateuch look like in frame-semantic terms? The word גֵּר is a role noun, a word that evokes a specific frame and constitutes an element of that frame. More specifically, it instantiates the agentive of the גור event (figure 6). In this event, an Agentive (A, the גֵּר) leaves his Community of Origin (O). The Community of Origin denotes home, a place of belonging and kinship, the family network in which the Agentive grew up and where he is an integral part of the social fabric. Due to a Calamity (C) - which could be a natural disaster, war, economic malfortune, judicial trouble, or even a divine command uprooting one's life (in the case of Abraham) – the Agentive is forced to leave. As a result, he has to settle in a Community of Destination (D), where he takes up (semi-)permanent residency among the members of that community. The event is seen from the perspective of the Community of Destination. When one is a גֵּר, one always is a גֵּר *in* D, someone who is associated with another place and another kinship group who came to live in D. One additional aspect should be noted.

[89] Cf. Kilchör, *Mosetora und Jahwetora,* 12-21.

The גֵּר is not simply someone who relocated from one place to another. Additionally, both the גֵּר and the community of D make an effort to enable the גֵּר to attain a certain degree of social Integration (I). That can take different shapes (see the related frames below, figure 7 & 8).

גור event

Slots:

A Agentive

O Place of origin

D Place of destination

C Calamity

I Integration

Constraints:

A leaves **O** behind because of **C**

A settles in **D** and lives there for an extended period of time

A is socially integrated (**I**) in **D**

Figure 6: The גור frame

The frame is not only used for those who experienced migration personally, but also for their descendants, in some cases many generations after the גור event referred to took place (cf. Exod. 23:9, Lev. 19:34b Deut. 10:19b). Every time that the גֵּר is mentioned in the Pentateuch, this whole scene is evoked.

The two major contexts with which the גֵּר is associated in the Pentateuchal legal codes (social protection and cultic integration) are not to be explained by positing multiple frames for the גור event itself. There is no need for multiple frames leading to multiple definitions. Instead, the clustering of occurrences of גֵּר in these two contexts can be explained in terms of frame relationships. Sentences can evoke multiple frames, especially when they contain a role noun (like גֵּר) as one of their constituents.[90] In this case, a pattern becomes visible in which two other frames are often related to the גור frame by the frequent use of גֵּר as a filler in the structure of these frames.

[90] Cf. Kambara, "A Frames Approach to the Semantics of Nouns," 57.

'Social protection'

Slots:

P Protector

R Recipient

M Misfortune

C Care

Constraints:

R is in a socially inferior position to **P**

R is in danger of suffering from **M**

P provides **C** to **R** to soften the consequences of **M**

Figure 7: 'Social protection' frame

The structure of the 'social protection' scenario envisions a Protector (P) and a Recipient of protection (R). The Protector is either a free male citizen (a head of a patriarchal household) or the whole of a local community as a collective 'person'. The Recipient is a vulnerable person, who is not a natural part of a household or extended kinship network that can provide for his or her social needs. As a consequence, they are in danger of suffering Misfortune (M), which could take the shape of an inability to provide for sufficient means to survive, or of active maltreatment by ill-meaning members of the local community, taking advantage of their vulnerable position. The Protector prevents this situation by providing Care (C) to the Recipient, in the form of economic support or the opportunity to work in their household. That the גֵּר is one of the default fillers of the Recipient slot (alongside the widow and the orphan)[91] indicates two important things about the perception of the גֵּר. First, the גֵּר had the opportunity to participate in the local community. Although he did not originate there, he was considered to belong in a certain sense, and provisions were made to enable him to meet an acceptable standard of living. Second, although he is part of the local community, he remains a *marginal member.* He

[91] These three are associated with each other so often that they are grouped together as "the triad of the vulnerable" (Hamilton) or the "*personae miserae"* (Achenbach, Zehnder) in research.

is not part of the fabric of society, but is in a precarious position, and often depends on the charity of wealthier and more powerful members of the community to secure his place.

'Cultic integration'
Slots:
N Newcomer
G Cultic group
D Duties
B Benefits
Constraints:
N is originally not part of **G**
N has the intention to associate with **G**
G accepts **N** as an associate
N is entitled to **B**
N has to perform **D**

Figure 8: 'Cultic integration' frame

The 'cultic integration' scenario is concerned with the entrance into a Cultic group (G), a group whose membership is determined by their practice of religious worship.[92] Their practice comes with certain Duties (D), and their group membership gives them certain Benefits (B). A Newcomer (N), who was not born into the group (and so is not a member of it) shows interest in associating with the group. The reasons for this interest are often unexpressed. The reviewed texts speaking about the cultic integration of the גֵּר simply assume it as a given. In the background, the advantages of membership in the cultic group and the desire to share in these benefits undoubtedly play a role (cf. Deut. 4:6b-8, which does not mention the גֵּר, but does show admiration of the עַמִּים for Israel's way of life). The group accepts the newcomer as an associate (the degree of association varies from very limited adherence to full membership). As a result, the newcomer shares in the rights and duties of membership (in varying degrees). In the case of the גֵּר, references to cultic

[92] To develop this frame fully, constructing a parent frame of 'Religious worship' would be necessary. This is beyond the confines of this study.

integration are numerous, but the texts never hint at full membership (with the possible exception of Deut. 29:10 and 31:12). As newcomer, the גֵּר typically has a moderate degree of association with the Israelite community. They do not share in all rights of membership (e.g. they are never said to share in YHWH's election of Israel, and therefore they never share in the accompanying land inheritance). At the same time, they also do not have to perform all duties (e.g. participation in cultic feasts is voluntary). The גֵּר can integrate into the Israelite cultic community to a degree that would make him an 'associate member' of the community.

The perception emerging here is very similar to the one emerging from the 'social protection' frame, but now from a cultic point of view. It remains unclear how these two spheres of associate membership were interrelated in real life. There is no textual evidence that a certain degree of cultic integration was a prerequisite for receiving social protection. However, not every stranger in Israel is a גֵּר who could enjoy social protection (see 3.3.). So, there must have been some way to establish who was a גֵּר and who was not. Cultic integration is a possible criterium, but seeing that it is always presented as a voluntary scenario, in which the גֵּר could (but was not obliged to) fulfil the role of newcomer in the cultic group, it can impossibly have been the sole defining factor.

In addition to the 'social protection' and 'cultic integration' contexts, the word גֵּר is also used in sentences evoking the דמה frame discussed earlier (3.1.3.). This is the case in the repeated saying that there shall be one law for the native and the stranger (e.g. Exod. 12:49, Num. 15:16) or the admonition to love the גֵּר as oneself (Lev. 19:33-34, Deut. 10:18). Despite not being fully equal to the Israelite in all senses, the גֵּר is always framed in terms of similarity to, rather than in terms of absolute difference with the Israelite.

3.3. נָכְרִי, זָר, and the Nations in the Pentateuch

3.3.1. נָכְרִי and זָר

The גֵּר is not the only type of stranger on the pages of the Pentateuchal legal codes. The words נָכְרִי and זָר are also used. Because these words are near-synonyms, and are often used to refer to the same people, they are treated together. The word נָכְרִי is typical for Deuteronomy, referring to a stranger who did not come to Israel to settle there. He may enjoy hospitality temporarily, but he usually does not intend to reside permanently in the

area where he is present.[93] Sometimes נָכְרִי is used as a neutral description, but it often has a negative connotation of a foreigner that is "perceived as dangerous or hostile."[94] A נָכְרִי is not fully integrated into the life of the Israelite community. He remained emotionally, culturally and religiously distanced from Israel.[95] Part of his otherness resides in the fact that he clung to his own religious and cultural customs (an undesirable feature in a theocratic society like ancient Israel).[96]

The נָכְרִי was not protected in the same way as the socially more vulnerable גֵּר (cf. Deut. 14:21, 15:3). For instance, the נָכְרִי was excluded from debt remittance laws (Deut. 15:1-3), and when he borrowed money from an Israelite, it was allowed to charge interest (Deut. 23:20). Because of the continuing economic ties to his home country, the נָכְרִי was not dependent on the situation in Israel.[97] Therefore, he did not need to be included in social protection laws. Instead, business dealings with a נָכְרִי were regulated by internationally acceptable standards common to the ancient Near East.[98]

The נָכְרִי is not in view in cultic law, because he is not seen as a possible member of the religious community.[99] In fact, the adjective נֵכָר is often used for 'strange gods' (e.g. Deut. 31:16, 32:12), highlighting the link between the נָכְרִי and religious otherness. These gods do not belong to Israel, but to foreign peoples. In Deuteronomy, there is a reciprocal association between illegitimate cultic practices and the non-Israelite נָכְרִי.[100] For that reason, the נָכְרִי is often perceived as a threat to the community, and is treated with caution and suspicion.

The word זָר can be used fairly neutrally as "that which belongs to another." However, like נָכְרִי, it usually has a negative connotation of hostility or illegitimacy.[101] The זָר is not necessarily an ethnic other. It might also be an Israelite who made him- or herself 'other' by behaving in ways that are out of step with the rules of the family (Deut. 25:5) or the

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[93] Achenbach, "*gêr-nåkhrî-tôshâv-zâr,"* 44.

[94] August H. Konkel, "נֵכָר," *NIDOTTE* 3:109.

[95] Van der Zee, *De vreemdeling in ons midden,* 16-17; Zehnder, *Bible and Immigration,* 29.

[96] Carroll, *The Bible and Borders,* 63.

[97] Van der Zee, *De vreemdeling in ons midden,* 47; Zehnder, *Bible and Immigration,* 30; Zehnder, *Umgang mit Fremden,* 370-371.

[98] Zehnder, *Bible and Immigration,* 30.

[99] Achenbach, "*gêr-nåkhrî-tôshâv-zâr,"* 43.

[100] Rainey, *Religion, Ethnicity and Xenophobia,* 103-104.

[101] Martin-Achard, "זָר," *THAT* I:521.

wider community.[102] They are "unwarranted persons who encroach upon religious rights",[103] people who are incompatible with YHWH.[104] In the cultic domain, it can also be used to distinguish between priests/Levites and non-priests/Levites (Exod. 29:33; Lev. 22:10, 12-13; Num. 1:51, 17:5, 28:4, 7). The זָר is the layman, who is not dedicated for the service of YHWH, and is therefore not allowed to perform cultic duties, under penalty of death. They are considered separate from the priests and Levites. "The Aaronites, set apart by origin, consecration and daily function, and in a wider sense also the Levites consider the people as a community living in another world distant from them, like זָר, deviating, strange."[105]

3.3.2. Specific Nations

Sometimes, foreigners are not referred to by using one of the words for 'stranger', but by using a gentilic. When this happens, they are usually viewed similarly to the נָכְרִי, which is why this phenomenon is covered here.

A remarkable example is the law of exclusion from the assembly of YHWH (קְהַל יהוה) (Deut. 23:2-9). In this law, several groups of people who are not allowed to gain entry to the 'assembly of YHWH' are named. Several ethnic groups that are to be excluded for three (Edomites and Egyptians) or ten generations (Ammonites and Moabites) are explicitly mentioned. Note that exclusion from the 'assembly' is not about the right of residence in Israel, but about full citizenship in the politico-religious community of Israel.[106] These people lived among Israel, but could only become full members of society after a significant amount of time had passed. Note also that Israelite law did not adhere to modern non-discrimination principles: it made distinctions between ethnic groups. Some groups had a shorter road to citizenship than others. These distinctions are founded on historical relations with Israel and perceived ethnic proximity.[107] The Moabites and the Ammonites are barred from entry into the assembly because of their treatment of the Israelites during the time that they dwelled in the desert (Deut. 23:4-7). The Edomites receive a milder treatment because they are seen as 'related' to Israel (being descendants of Esau) (Deut. 23:8a). The Egyptians get a shorter road to inclusion because they showed

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[102] Achenbach, "*gêr-nåkhrî-tôshâv-zâr,*" 45, footnote 60.

[103] Ibid., 43.

[104] Martin-Achard, "זָר," *THAT* I:522.

[105] Lambertus A. Snijders, *The Meaning of זָר in the Old Testament* (Leiden: Brill, 1953), 151.

[106] Zehnder, *Umgang mit Fremden,* 374.

[107] Ibid., 377.

hospitality to Israel in the time of Joseph by taking them in as גֵּרִים (Deut. 23:8b). Interestingly, Egypt is characterized as a host instead of an oppressor in this verse. However, the negative side of Israel's stay in Egypt is not forgotten, as seen in the fact that the Egyptian's inclusion in the assembly is not immediate, but can only take effect after three generations.[108]

The image of the Midianites in the Pentateuch is fraught with ambiguity. On the one hand, Midian was the place where Moses found refuge after he had to flee the wrath of the pharaoh (Exod. 2:11-22). He even enters kinship ties with the Midianites by marrying into a prominent Midianite priestly family (Exod. 2:21-22). Later, Moses' father-in-law, Jethro, had free access to Moses and when he visited the camp of the Israelites, he was treated as an honoured guest (Exod. 18:7, 12). His advice even played an important role in shaping the organization of Israel (Exod. 18:17-26). This story of Jethro, the kinsman-foreigner, might have been placed after the story of Israel's destructive war against the Amalekites (Exod. 17) deliberately. By the juxtaposition of the wicked Amalek and the righteous Jethro, the Israelites learn to make distinctions between different kinds of outsiders.[109] On the other hand, the general sentiment against the Midianites was still hostile. If the figure of Jethro served to teach Israel to make distinctions between benevolent and malevolent outsiders, that lesson did not extend to his whole ethnic group. The narratives of Numbers 25 and 31 are prime examples of hostility against Midianites. Numbers 25 is a composite narrative, consisting of two scenes. In the first scene the Israelites "began to whore with the daughters of Moab" (Num. 25:1) leading to their worship of foreign gods, after which the chiefs of the people are executed (Num. 25:1-5) and a plague breaks out among the people. At that exact time, an Israelite man brings a Midianite woman "to his family" (implying not just sexual intercourse but the intention of intermarriage).[110] Phinehas the priest becomes so angry at this that he kills both. He is commended for this action for having turned back God's wrath from the people of Israel (Num. 25:11). At the end of the pericope, these two stories are connected when Moses is commanded to "harass the

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[108] Markus Zehnder, "Anstösse aus Dtn 23,2-9 zur Frage nach dem Umgang mit Fremden," *Freiburger Zeitschrift für Philosophie und Theologie* 52(1-2), 2005: 306.

[109] Adriane Leveen, "Inside Out: Jethro, the Midianites and a Biblical Construction of the Other," *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 34 (4), 2010: 404-405.

[110] Joseph Blenkinsopp, "The Baal Peor Episode Revisited (Num 25,1-18)," *Biblica* 93 (1), 2012: 90.

Midianites and strike them down" (Num. 25:17-18) because of *both* incidents.[111] In this passage, the danger of apostasy from YHWH is tied up intricately with liaisons with foreign women. By associating with outsiders, Israel's 'marriage vows' with YHWH are broken.[112] These strangers are perceived as dangerous because of the accompanying threat of apostasy. This threat is perceived as a great enough danger to engender the most extreme and gruesome measures against the Midianites. Ironically, the same type of mixed union which was no problem for Israel's leader becomes a major taboo after the Baal Peor incident.

In the Israelite worldview, one ethnic group is in a league of its own as the ultimate other: the Canaanites.[113] If the Israelites are the elect people of God, and other nations are non-elect, the Canaanites are the anti-elect.[114] The Canaanite is the nadir of otherness to which other nations cannot even come close. The commands about the annihilation of the Canaanites (Exod. 23:23-33, Deut. 7:1-6, 20:17-18) are the clearest examples of extreme negativity towards foreigners in Pentateuchal law. Israel is commanded to completely totally destroy (הַחֲרֵם תַּחֲרִים) the Canaanites (Deut. 7:2). The hif'il of the verb חרם denotes actual destruction, not merely social separation.[115] "It is about killing people (cf. the parallel נכה hif.), which creates a separation between Israel ('good') and the people of Canaan ('evil')."[116] This extreme measure is connected to the Canaanites' perceived religious threat to the existence of Israel. The fear is that the Canaanites "turn your children away from following me to serve other gods, and the LORD's anger will burn against you and quickly destroy you" (Deut. 7:4). The idolatry of the nations and the accompanying threat of taking Israel along in that idolatry is indeed the most-mentioned reason for their condemnation in Deuteronomy (e.g. Deut. 6:14, 7:4, 7:16, 12:30, 20:17-18, 29:15-16). Additionally, their general 'wickedness' is noted (e.g. Deut. 9:4-5). It should

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[111] The conflation of Moabites and Midianites in this text can be explained by the close association between these two ethnic groups that is evidenced by the Bileam cycle in the preceding chapters (Num. 22-24).

[112] Zehnder, *Umgang mit Fremden,* 451.

[113] It is beyond the scope of this study to cover the historicity of the conquest of Canaan and the annihilation of the Canaanites; this section focuses on the portrayal of the Canaanites in the final form of the biblical text.

[114] Joel S. Kaminsky, "Did Election Imply the Mistreatment of Non-Israelites?," *Harvard Theological Review* 96(4), 2003: 398-399.

[115] *Contra* Glanville, "חרם as Israelite Identity Formation," 555.

[116] Arie Versluis, *Geen verbond, geen genade: Analyse en evaluatie van het gebod om de Kanaänieten uit te roeien (Deuteronomium 7)* (Zoetermeer: Boekencentrum, 2012), 62.

be noted that this vilification of the Canaanites is not directly bound up with their ethnicity: Israel is warned that Israelite towns that turn to idolatry (in effect becoming like Canaanites) will suffer the same fate (Deut. 13:13-19).[117]

The Holiness Code contains an equally scathing condemnation of the behaviour of the Canaanites (and the Egyptians) in Leviticus 18. Israel should stay far away from their 'statutes', and follow YHWH's way (Lev. 18:3-4). After this general command, a list of sexual 'abominations' that Israel should avoid follows, concluding with the statement that "by all these the nations that I am driving out before you have become unclean" (Lev. 18:24). The nations are vilified by suggesting that breaking sexual taboos was part of their way of life.[118] According to the HC, 'ritual and moral pollution'[119] became so widespread and troubling that the land "vomited them out" (Lev. 18:28). "Because of their abominations, it is no longer 'their' land, nor are they its rightful inhabitants. Its possession has passed to another, more deserving nation."[120] In turn, Israel should avoid these practices to save them from the same fate. The use of the word תּוֹעֵבָה ("abomination, abhorrence") indicates that these things should be seen as offences against YHWH in the realm of religious purity.[121] So, even when the social practices of the Canaanites are condemned, they are still judged in a religious light.

Both in Deuteronomy and the Holiness Code, the separation between the Israelites and the Canaanites can be conceptualized as an outworking of Israel's election and their 'holiness' as the people of YHWH. The goal of these commands is "the preservation of the own identity, which is the only thing – at least in the long term – that enables Israel to perform their "service" to the nations commissioned by YHWH, as indicated in Exod. 19:6 by the keyword מַמְלֶכֶת כֹּהֲנִים ("kingdom of priests")."[122] This does not mean that exclusivist violence is the only natural endpoint of such election theology. Joel Kaminsky rightly noted that "election did not simply imply that every non-Israelite was doomed for destruction. Far from it. The vast majority of non-Israelites are better labelled the "non-

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[117] Zehnder, *Umgang mit Fremden,* 391.

[118] Rainey, *Religion, Ethnicity and Xenophobia in the Bible,* 174.

[119] Saul Olyan, "Stigmatizing Associations: The Alien, Things Alien, and Practices Associated with Aliens in Biblical Classfication Schemas," in *The Foreigner and the Law: Perspectives from the Hebrew Bible and the Ancient Near East,* ed. Reinhard Achenbach, Rainer Albertz & Jakob Wöhrle (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2011), 21.

[120] Rainey, *Religion, Ethnicity and Xenophobia in the Bible,* 186.

[121] Cf. Koehler & Baumgartner, *HALOT,* s.l. תּוֹעֵבָה IIc

[122] Zehnder, *Umgang mity Fremden,* 396 [Own translation].

elect, [in contrast to the Canaanites as anti-elect], and they often assumed a very important and positive place in Israel's understanding of the divine economy."[123] The paragraph about גֵּר above (3.2) already made that clear. The treatment of the Canaanites is not the rule, but the exception. These guidelines were limited to one moment in history and seven particular nations. Still, the destructive treatment of the Canaanites is also a part of Israel's inventory of rhetoric about the stranger. However troubling for modern readers, that is a reality that cannot be ignored.

3.3.3. Frames

What are the semantic frames evoked by the texts about the נָכְרִי, the זָר, and the nations? Like גֵּר, נָכְרִי and זָר are always used in relation. When someone is נָכְרִי or זָר, one is נָכְרִי or זָר to another individual or group of people. However, the framing of these words is less straightforward than the framing of גֵּר for two reasons. First, they are also used adjectivally, and adjectives are much trickier to describe in frame-semantic terms than nouns. Second, the semantic relationship of נָכְרִי and זָר to their verbal roots (respectively I נכר 'recognize' and II זור 'turn aside') is much looser than that of גֵּר. A process of semantic drift appears to have taken place that precludes analysing them as a fixed element in a נכר or זור event. Thus, another approach is needed. In this case, it seems best to analyse נָכְרִי and זָר as concepts in the sense of Lawrence Barsalou, framing "the descriptive information that people represent cognitively for a category."[124] This conceptual frame consists of multiple defining attributes, describing aspects of the concept, which form the core of the mental frame associated with it. Because both words are synonyms, being used interchangeably to refer to the same realities, only one conceptual framework will be constructed. Occurrences of gentilics are taken to be concretized instances of the same concept, applied to one particular group of people. After all, the identity of 'the nations' in the OT is always constructed against the identity of the Israelites. In other words: what defines a Canaanite or an Egyptian in Biblical speech is ultimately that he is *not* an Israelite, i.e. a נָכְרִי / זָר.

[123] Kaminsky, "Did Election Imply the Mistreatment of Non-Israelites?," 408.

[124] Barsalou, "Frames, Concepts, and Conceptual Fields," 31.

זָר / נָכְרִי

Attributes:

E Experiencer

G Group of speaker

M Marker of group membership

S Separation

Constraints:

E is conceived by the speaker as outside **G** because of a lack of **M**

As a result, the speaker should practice **S**

Figure 9: Conceptual frame for זָר / נָכְרִי

The זָר / נָכְרִי is always framed from the perspective of the in-group of the speaker (G). The speaker encounters another person (E, the נָכְרִי or זָר), who is conceived as standing outside this in-group because they lack a defining marker of group membership (M). This Marker attribute should be understood broadly. Its possible values are not limited to ethnic origin (group membership based on common land, language and descent). Religion (group membership based on worship of a common deity) or kinship (group membership based on direct family ties) are also possible markers of group membership. Because the experiencer lacks this marker, the speaker decides that they should separate themselves (S) from the experiencer, mentally and socially distancing themselves from the experiencer.

The 'separation' aspect of the זָר / נָכְרִי frame needs more explanation. This event has a frame of its own, that can be captured by one of the frames of בדל ("separate") defined by Carsten Ziegert (figure 10). This frame is often not expressed lexically, but implicitly, the words נָכְרִי and זָר evoke the Experiencer element of this frame.

בדל event

Slots:

A Agentive

E Experiencer

T Totality

P Purpose

Constraints:

E is part of **T**

A defines **E** as an entity on its own by mentally separating **E** from **T**

P is intentionally realized by means of mentally separating **E** from **T**

Figure 10: בדל frame (#1)[125]

When the בדל scenario is applied to the reviewed texts, Israel is the Agentive (A). They are inhabitants of the land Israel/Canaan, the Totality (T). Other people present in the same area (whether designated as נָכְרִי or זָר or referred to with a gentilic) are the Experiencers (E) of this event. Israel defines the others as a separate entity from itself by mentally separating them from themselves as the 'true' inhabitants of the land, realizing the Purpose (P) of setting themselves apart as a holy community dedicated to YHWH. The mental separation created in this event can be enacted in different ways, ranging from disassociating religiously and socially and making negative judgments about the behaviour of E (in the case of the נָכְרִי), to erecting legal barriers against full inclusion in the community (in the case of the Ammonites, the Moabites, the Edomites and the Egyptians) and even offensive warfare and total elimination (in the case of the Canaanites).

3.4. Conclusion

Based on a review of recent research on the 'outsider' in the Pentateuch, a varied image of the 'outsider' arises. Different frames are used for different types of outsider.

[125] Ziegert, "Framing Space," 19.

On a fundamental level, I propose that all instances of 'outsider terminology' in the Pentateuch evoke the parent frame of the 'human categorization event'. Different particular words in turn evoke different child frames of this 'human categorization event', described as 'establishing distinction' and 'establishing similarity'. From the narratives from primaeval history in Genesis, frames for these events were constructed on the basis of Hebrew lexemes (פרד and דמה). The פרד event (based on Genesis 10) creates space between different entities, who also experience that space. The דמה event (based on Genesis 1:26-27) makes a comparison between entities based on a certain property and concludes that both entities share that property. This group of frames is the most general level in play in the categorization of strangers in the Pentateuch.

More specifically, the Pentateuch uses different frames to categorize individual outsiders with which Israel has dealings. They are characterized by the lexemes גֵר and נָכְרִי / זָר.

The גֵר is framed in terms that lean towards establishing similarity. He is the agentive of a גור event, which entails that he left his community of origin (denoting a place of belonging and kinship) due to a calamity. He settles in a community of destination (in Pentateuchal texts always referring to the Israelite covenant community), lives there for an extended period of time, and is eventually integrated in that community to a certain extent. The גֵר is mainly associated with two contexts: social protection and cultic integration. As a marginal member of the community, the גֵר has a weak social position, and is in danger of suffering from all kinds of misfortune. Therefore, he is in need of social protection. A member of the Israelite community (or the community as a whole) takes up the role of protector, providing care to the גֵר to soften the consequences of that potential misfortune. The second context associated with the גֵר frame is 'cultic integration'. When living among the Israelites for an extended time, the גֵר may express interest in associating more fully with the Israelites' religious life. This is a possibility. As newcomer in the cultic community, the גֵר is entitled to certain benefits, and has to perform certain religious duties in return. As in the social domain, they do not become full members of the community, but remain 'associate members.' The general pattern in the framing of the גֵר across both contexts is as follows: his integration stops short of full equality, but does tend towards a measure of similarity between the Israelite and the erstwhile outsider.

In contrast, the נָכְרִי / זָר is framed in terms that tend towards establishing difference. He is excluded from measures of social protection and cultic integration in which the גֵר is included. When categorizing someone as נָכְרִי / זָר, the Israelite emphasizes otherness based

on the perceived lack of a marker of group membership. The group under consideration can either be Israel as an ethnic group (marking the נָכְרִי / זָר as a foreigner from a different country, speaking a different language, having a different culture), Israel as a religious community (marking the נָכְרִי / זָר as someone serving other gods than YHWH), or the kinship unit (marking the נָכְרִי / זָר as someone not related by blood). This difference is regarded negatively, and becomes a reason to separate mentally from the נָכְרִי / זָר. This mental separation can be made visible in different ways, ranging from mere negative judgment about behaviour to annihilation. What all these separation strategies have in common is that they erect boundaries between an in-group and an out-group.

4. The Book of Proverbs

The book of Proverbs is unique in the Old Testament. Its bottom-up character, dealing with down-to-earth realities of human experience rather than the normative voice of divine inspiration, sets it apart from the Law and the Prophets. Its seemingly random collection of isolated two-line sayings (at least in Chapters 10-31) makes it hermeneutically challenging. Its connections to extrabiblical Near Eastern wisdom literature and its lack of connections to the great events of Israel's history (patriarchal narratives, the Exodus, Sinai covenant) make it simultaneously intriguing and problematic for biblical theologians who like to stress Israel's uniqueness and its special role in God's salvation history. No wonder it has often been treated as the ugly duckling of biblical theology; interpreters did not know what to make of this quirky book. Was it even properly Israelite and properly Yahwistic, or was it an alien intruder, a *Fremdkörper* in the Old Testament?

This reluctance to engage with Proverbs is also visible in research about the stranger in the Old Testament. The book is rarely mentioned, and where it is, it is usually quickly dismissed as irrelevant.[1] This need not be the case. This study aims to unearth the contribution of the book of Proverbs to the perception of the stranger in the Old Testament. With such a research objective, the choice for a more canonically embedded view of Proverbs is obvious. The lack of explicit references to the foundational events in salvation history is not necessarily evidence that the compilers of Proverbs were unaware of salvation history. It could just as well mean that salvation history is the unarticulated presupposition behind their work.[2] "Proverbs is engaged in a conversation with the rest of the Old Testament, a conversation that points to the common ground that lies between the covenant God made with Israel and God's instruction in wisdom found in Proverbs."[3] Proverbs is an integral part of the canon of the Old Testament, and is intertextually related to many other texts in the Old Testament (especially the Torah) through verbal echoes and allusions.[4] In light of all these links it is defensible to investigate the contribution of the book of Proverbs to a biblical-theological notion, as this study does.

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[1] Van der Zee, *De vreemdeling in ons midden,* 116.

[2] Roger N. Whybray, *Proverbs.* New Century Bible Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994), 10.

[3] Paul E. Koptak, *Proverbs.* The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2003), 36.

[4] Bernd U. Schipper, *Sprüche (Proverbia) 1-15.* Biblischer Kommentar Altes Testament (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2018), 8. For more detail, cf. Kynes, *An Obituary for "Wisdom Literature,"* 218-244.

4.1. Genre

4.1.1. Wisdom Literature

What kind of book is Proverbs? In the Jewish tripartite division of the Hebrew Bible, it is one of the 'writings' (כְּתוּבִים). In the Christian division of the Old Testament, it is generally classed among the wisdom books, alongside Ecclesiastes and Job.

What does 'wisdom literature' mean? On the most basic level, these are the books most concerned with 'wisdom' (חָכְמָה). But what is this 'wisdom'? It cannot be equated to intellectual knowledge. It cannot be taught from books. A highly educated person can still be a fool, while 'simple folk' can still be wise. It is a broad concept, including disparate skills – from the practical to the social. "Wisdom is basically skill in living, in how to order one's life so as to achieve desirable goals."[5] It is a form of experiential knowledge (*Erfahrungswissen*[6]): by observing and experiencing real life, the wise person learns to understand patterns and incidents in the course of life, and learns to respond appropriately to the vicissitudes of the ordinary. Wisdom shapes a worldview fitting to life's circumstances. The wise person knows how to act and when to act.

> With the exception of a few passages, [wisdom] treats everyday life, not the grand affairs of state, history, cult, or law. It gives guidance in challenges we all face: how to get along with people, how to be a good and decent person, how to make the right choices in personal and business affairs, how to win God's favour and avoid disaster – all issues of great importance, but still modest and prosaic ones.[7]

Craig Bartholomew and Ryan O'Dowd name four essential features of Biblical wisdom.

1) Wisdom begins with the fear of YHWH.
2) Wisdom is concerned with the general order and patterns of living in God's creation.
3) Wisdom provides discernment for the particular order and circumstances of our lives.

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[5] David G. Firth & Lindsay Wilson, "Introduction," in *Exploring Old Testament Wisdom: Literature and Themes,* ed. David G. Firth & Lindsay Wilson (London: Apollos, 2016), xiv.

[6] Term by Gerhard von Rad, *Weisheit in Israel* (Neukirchen: Neukirchener Verlag, 1970), passim.

[7] Michael V. Fox, *Proverbs 1-9: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary.* Anchor Bible (New York: Doubleday, 2000), 7.

4) Wisdom is grounded in tradition.[8]

That wisdom begins with the fear of YHWH (Prov. 1:7, 9:10) means that it is a fundamentally theological enterprise. The older distinction between 'secular' and 'religious' wisdom cannot be maintained. There was no secular wisdom that gradually morphed into more theologically aware religious wisdom. From the start, YHWH, Israel's covenant God, is present in the worldview of Israel's sages. Life with Him is the foundation of true wisdom. Even where His name is not explicitly mentioned, He is still there in the background. Despite its experiential character, wisdom is not a purely empirical enterprise. It is experience shaped by the lens of faith, not autonomous reason flying free (cf. Prov. 3:5-7). It is reason restrained by the reins of Yahwistic piety. As such, Old Testament wisdom is not presuppositionless, nor is it detached from the rest of the canon. It is an integral part of the canon, giving "a perspective in which the world of everyday activities constitutes the terrain where the fear of the Lord is lived out."[9]

Second, wisdom is concerned with the general order and patterns of living in God's creation. It assumes that the world is an ordered whole, designed according to the will of the Creator God. Reality obeys to the laws and patterns which God put in it. That such an order exists is an axiom in the book of Proverbs.[10] The wise person is the one who attentively listens to the voice of reality, so he can discern this God-given order in creation. "When the sages speak, they speak of order. Which means that they call for order."[11]

Third, wisdom provides discernment for the *particular* order and circumstances of our lives. Wisdom does not peddle general truths, but is geared towards particular circumstances. It is about finding the right course of action for the situation that you are in, providing guidance to make right decisions for daily living.

Finally, wisdom is grounded in tradition. The experience in which it is grounded is collective experience, stretching across generations. Proverbial wisdom is fundamentally conservative. It does not pride itself in innovation. Instead, it notes and transmits values and courses of action that are conventionally recognized as good within the community

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[8] Craig G. Bartholomew & Ryan P. O'Dowd, *Old Testament Wisdom Literature: A Theological Introduction* (Nottingham: Apollos, 2011), 24-30.

[9] Loader, *Proverbs 1-9* (HCOT), 12-13.

[10] The books of Job and Ecclesiastes do seem to challenge the existence and character of that order, without ultimately denying the principle of an ordered world.

[11] James Alfred Loader, "Speakers Calling for Order," *Old Testament Essays* 10(3), 1997: 438.

in which it circulates, using artful rhetoric to express those goods in a convincing and memorable way.

Recently, the idea of wisdom literature as a distinct genre has been criticized. Will Kynes argues that 'wisdom' was not a category that arose from the source texts, but was imposed from outside from the 19th century onwards. It was defined negatively, by its lack of references to revelation, covenant with YHWH, Torah, and God's intervention in history on behalf of His people. Conversely, it was secular, empirical, humanistic, international and universal.[12] He claims that this characterization was a reflection of its 19th century German context, which exaggerated the similarities between Proverbs, Job and Ecclesiastes, and obscured their links to the rest of the Old Testament. Genre categorizations influence interpretation: by deciding the other texts to which a text relates, they decide where meaning is to be found. Hence, genre becomes an echo chamber: similarities within the genre are highlighted, while connections to texts outside the genre are muffled.[13] "Things are grouped together for a reason, but, once they are grouped, their grouping causes them to seem more like each other than they otherwise would. That is, the mere act of classification reinforces stereotypes. If you want to weaken some stereotype, eliminate the classification."[14] Kynes argues that the 'wisdom books' should no longer be viewed as a fixed corpus. Instead, the texts should be studied as part of a broader canonical intertextual network. "As the Wisdom corpus is laid to rest in the dust, network of canonical constitutive elements from which it came, it will reintegrate, as bodies do, into those same elements. From canon it was and to canon it will return."[15] Despite Kynes' overblown rhetoric about the death of wisdom literature (after all, the features that caused these books to be grouped together are still useful heuristic lenses on their character), his point about canonical intertextuality is well-taken. This study follows his lead in that regard, and connects the book of Proverbs to its wider canonical context.

4.1.2. מָשָׁל

The Hebrew title of the book is מִשְׁלֵי. This could be translated as 'proverbs', but that would miss a lot of the nuances of the Hebrew word מָשָׁל. It is more than the short, pithy dose of folk wisdom, packaged in sharp turns of phrase, that is usually associated with the word

[12] Kynes, *An Obituary,* 30-31, 83.

[13] Ibid., 111.

[14] Kynes, *An Obituary*, 112.

[15] Ibid., 254.

'proverb' in English. That is included, but there is more to the מָשָׁל. The מָשָׁל is a broad category, encompassing many forms: from straightforward one-liners (outside the book of Proverbs; 1 Sam. 10:12, Jer. 31:29, Ezek. 18:2) and poetical sayings with two parallel lines (the dominant form in Proverbs 10-31) to long educational speeches (the dominant form in Proverbs 1-9). Although the latter would not usually be recognized as 'proverbs' by English speakers, they are also מְשָׁלִים. The character of the מָשָׁל is so varied that Roger Whybray remarked that "the only common feature of the מָשָׁל as it is understood in Proverbs is that it is an utterance proper only to the 'wise': in the mouths of fools it is ludicrously inappropriate (26:7, 9)."[16] This might be slightly exaggerated: despite the variety in form, מְשָׁלִים are bound together by a common purpose. As sayings of the wise, מְשָׁלִים are meant to provoke the mind. They invite the reader to ponder about the piece of reality that they describe and challenge him to apply the sound directions of wisdom to their own lives.

מְשָׁלִים are hermeneutically open: their interpretation is not self-evident, and although they might be cryptic at first, they will shed new light on a situation as soon as they are understood.[17] They are not universally valid, but are only true when they are spoken at the right time in the right circumstances. Therefore, you should not only know the proverb itself. You should also be able to read people and circumstances, so you know which proverb is fit for the occasion.[18] "A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in settings of silver" (Prov. 25:11 (ESV)). Michael Fox highlights the implications of this feature of the מָשָׁל. Proverbs originated in oral use. They were meant for performance, for use in daily life. Every time the proverb was used, the user created new 'performance-meaning.'[19] That element disappears as soon as the proverb is added to a collection. "The editors have [...] detached the sayings from actual use and assembled them [...] in readiness for deployment in a limitless variety of new contexts."[20] In the context of a collection, a proverb is "alive

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[16] Whybray, *Proverbs* (NCBC), 13; Roland Murphy even claimed that מָשָׁל is such a general term that it is not useful as a classification (*Proverbs* (WBC), xxii).

[17] William McKane. *Proverbs.* Old Testament Library (London: SCM Press, 1970), 23.

[18] Tremper Longman III, *Proverbs.* Baker Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2006), 31; Bruce K. Waltke, *The Book of Proverbs: Chapter 1-15.* The New International Commentary of the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004), 57.

[19] Michael V. Fox. *Proverbs 10-31: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary.* Anchor Yale Bible (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), 484.

[20] Ibid, 484.

only as potential": it will only really come to life when it is applied to a particular situation.[21]

As the book of Proverbs is written in poetry, the מְשָׁלִים share in the common traits of Hebrew poetry: parallelism, terseness and imagery. The first of these, parallelism, is the most characteristic and defining one. Each line of poetry is divided into two halves (cola), which are semantically closely related to each other. Typically, three types of parallelism are recognized.

1) Synonymous parallelism: the second colon repeats the thought of the first colon in different words.
2) Antithetical parallelism: the second colon states the opposite of the first colon
3) Synthetical parallelism: the second colon continues the train of thought by picking up the thought of the first colon and moving beyond it.

Illustrated with examples from the book of Proverbs:

1) "For a whore is a deep pit, and a foreign woman a narrow well" (Prov. 23:27).
2) "One will suffer harm when he stands surety for a stranger, but he who hates those who strike deals is carefree" (Prov. 11:15).
3) "A heart knows its own bitterness, and in its joy a stranger cannot get involved" (Prov. 14:10).

The second feature of Hebrew poetry is terseness. Biblical poets used their words sparingly. Much is said in few words. Grammatical markers and conjunctions like הַ, אֶת, וְ or אֲשֶׁר are often omitted, and the second colon of a bicolon is often elliptical (the verb from the first colon is reused without being written again).[22]

Finally, Hebrew poetry is rich in imagery. The poets use language designed to provoke the senses. They adhere to the famous piece of writers' lore: "Show, don't tell." Their language is vivid and visual, not abstract and cerebral. As Frans van Deursen wrote about Proverbs in particular: "Reading Proverbs is watching pictures: of lazy farmers and

[21] Fox, *Proverbs 10-31* (AB), 484.

[22] Wolter Rose, "Hebrew Poetry: A Short Introduction" (Kampen: TU Kampen, 2018).

quarrelling wives, joyless and joyful people, the tight-lipped and the big-mouthed, judges and witnesses. It is like the sages constantly tap us on the shoulder and say: Look, there!"[23]

4.1.3. A Tale of Two Halves

The book of Proverbs is a tale of two halves. The first nine chapters have a completely different character than the following twenty-two chapters. Where chapters 1-9 consist of extended speeches by a father urging his son to walk in the way of wisdom, chapters 10-31 are seemingly unorganized collections of (mainly) two-line proverbs about the whole messy spectrum of life. The former are generally considered to be an introduction to the latter. Frans van Deursen used striking imagery to describe this relationship: "If we compare Proverbs to a palace, in Proverbs 1:1-7 we enter into the hallway. Then, with Proverbs 1:8-9:18 we come in a beautiful corridor which leads us to Proverbs 10-31. There, we find the throne room and different side rooms."[24] In this image, Proverbs 1-9 is the road we need to take to learn how to read Proverbs 10-31.

Proverbs 1-9 is a set of 10 extended 'lectures' from father to son, interspersed by 5 poetic interludes about the nature of wisdom.[25] The lectures circle around a limited number of themes, that are repeated over and over again (e.g. the fear of YHWH, the call to follow wisdom, and (important for this study) the warning against strange women). They are written as direct address, with 2nd person jussive and imperative forms being grammatically dominant.[26] The frequent form of address "my son" implies a parental setting, although some scholars see the father-son terminology as a cipher for a teacher-student relationship (see 4.3.). The son, an inexperienced young man (פֶּתִי), receives fundamental instruction to "navigate life successfully."[27]

The character of Proverbs 10-31 is very different. Here, the reader encounters independent sayings, each expressing a complete thought without obviously linking to the other sayings in their literary context. "This asyndeton creates the impression that the sayings are disparate, atomistic, and without coherence."[28] The direct address and the familial

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[23] Frans van Deursen. *Spreuken.* De Voorzeide Leer (Barendrecht: Liebeek & Hooijmeijer, 1979), 15 [Own translation].

[24] Van Deursen, *Spreuken* (VL), 38 [Own translation].

[25] Fox, *Proverbs 1-9* (AB), 44, 323-324.

[26] Magne Sæbø, *Sprüche.* Das Alte Testament Deutsch (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2012), 10.

[27] Craig G. Bartholomew, "Old Testament Wisdom Today," in *Exploring Old Testament Wisdom: Literature and Themes,* ed. David G. Firth & Lindsay Wilson (London: Apollos, 2016), 6.

[28] Waltke, *The Book of Proverbs: Chapter 1-15* (NICOT), 47.

setting have disappeared, descriptions in the 3rd person indicative are now dominant.[29] And instead of treating a few themes at length, the scope of the section's subject matter is as wide as life itself. Proverbs are not grouped thematically, but proverbs about the same theme are spread out all over the book. This lack of thematic organization might be intentional: "The random collection of proverbs reflects the messiness of life."[30]

4.2. Authorship and Date

The headings in Proverbs 1:1, 10:1 and 25:1 identify King Solomon as the author of the main collections of Proverbs. According to 25:1, one collection of Solomon's proverbs was "compiled by the men of Hezekiah king of Judah." Other, minor collections consisted of "sayings of the wise" (22:17, 24:23), "the sayings of Agur, the son of Jake" (30:1) and "the sayings of king Lemuel" (31:1).[31] The book is a 'collection of collections' with a long and complicated history of at least 200 years (but probably much longer still).

Today, hardly any scholars interpret the headings to mean that Solomon personally thought out and wrote down those proverbs.[32] If they connect Proverbs to Solomon at all, they usually do so in a much more limited fashion, as patron of the collection of wisdom in Israel.[33] As proverbs arose in an oral setting, it is hard to speak of the 'author' or 'composer' of individual proverbs.[34] At best, one can speak of the 'redactor', 'compiler' or 'collector' of proverb collections. This role could have been taken by Solomon, probably by commissioning the collection of proverbs. The mention of Solomon's name in the heading signals his authorization and patronage of the Israelite wisdom tradition.[35]

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[29] Sæbø, *Sprüche* (ATD), 10.

[30] Longman, *Proverbs* (BCOT), 40.

[31] For the current study it is interesting to note that Agur and Lemuel are non-Israelites, and that the 'sayings of the wise' of 22:17-24:22 are closely related to the Egyptian Instruction of Amenemope. This points to the international provenance of ancient near Eastern wisdom literature (Sæbø, *Sprüche* (ATD), 6).

[32] With the exception of some very conservative commentators like Van Deursen (*Spreuken* (VL), 29-36), who rejects any results from historical-critical research. Waltke (*The Book of Proverbs: Chapter 1-15* (NICOT, 31-37) also assumes Solomonic authorship, although he does grant that Solomon's work was updated by anonymous redactors up until the late Persian or the Hellenistic era (c. 5th or 4th century BC).

[33] Longman, *Proverbs* (BCOT), 23-25; Sæbø, *Sprüche* (ATD), 9; Evert Tuinstra, *Spreuken deel 1.* Prediking van het Oude Testament (Baarn: Callenbach, 1996), 14.

[34] Longman, *Proverbs* (BCOT), 24.

[35] Sæbø, *Sprüche* (ATD), 9; Schipper, *Sprüche (Proverbia) 1-15* (BKAT), 11.

Even more scholars regard the attribution of Proverbs to Solomon as pseudepigraphic. They assert that the book in its present form has no meaningful discernible connection with Solomon at all. Instead, it is seen as "a sampling of the collective wisdom of ancient Israel."[36] The origin of individual proverbs in the collection is impossible to ascertain. Some of the proverbs might date back to the mists of time, being transmitted orally from times way before Solomon.[37] Others might be new coinings from late monarchical, exilic or post-exilic times. Given the fact that some of the proverbs assume the monarchy is a current reality, a pre-exilic origin for at least a part of the proverbs is probable.[38] From the note in 25:1 ('more Proverbs of Solomon') it can be deduced that a collection of proverbs attributed to Solomon already existed in some form in the time of Hezekiah (late 8th century BC).[39] Because the deuterocanonical book Ben Sira (2nd century BC) is clearly influenced by the canonical form of Proverbs, the final redaction of Proverbs must have taken place sometime before its creation.[40]

Especially Proverbs 1-9 is generally regarded as a late (post-exilic) composition. Because of its introductory character, it is taken to be the final part of the book, written after the other collections were compiled to guide the reader on his reading journey.[41]

What is my own position? While I think that it is unlikely that Solomon personally thought up and penned down all the proverbs in the book, I also refuse to consider the Solomonic ascription of the book as nothing more than pseudepigraphy. I think it is likely that the collection of proverbs in Israel originated in some form during the reign of Solomon under royal auspices. The changing social situation in Israel during that time made the codification of traditional wisdom necessary. This was the start of a centuries-long process, extending all the way to post-exilic times, in which the book of Proverbs gradually took on its current form. Internal evidence shows that the book is a collection of collections from different times and social locations. Comparison with the LXX confirms that different versions of the book – mainly differing regarding the organization of the

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[36] Fox, *Proverbs 1-9* (AB), 6.

[37] Tuinstra, *Spreuken deel 1* (POT), 11; Whybray, *Proverbs* (NCBC), 6.

[38] Fox, *Proverbs 1-9* (AB), 6.

[39] Tuinstra, *Spreuken deel 1* (POT), 11. Fox, *Proverbs 10-31* sees lexical hints for this dating: the text of Prov. 10-31 contains multiple Aramaisms, fitting an 8th-7th century BC setting in which the Israelite elite spoke Aramaic (504).

[40] Fox, *Proverbs 1-9* (AB), 6; James Alfred Loader, *Proverbs 1-9.* Historical Commentary on the Old Testament (Leuven: Peeters, 2014), 9; Tuinstra, *Spreuken deel 1* (POT), 12.

[41] Fox, *Proverbs 1-9* (AB), 6; Murphy, *Proverbs* (WBC), xix-xx; Tuinstra, *Spreuken deel 1* (POT), 11.

material - were still circulating around the 2nd century BC.[42] That shows that redactional processes were still ongoing, centuries after Solomon's death. Hence, speaking of one author or date does not fit the character of the book. Solomon might have fired the starting gun, but Israelite families had been training their sons through some of these proverbs for generations, and the redactional race did not run its course until long after his death.

4.3. Sitz im Leben

The *Sitz im Leben* of Proverbs has been a source of considerable scholarly controversy. Some scholars maintain that the book reflects a school setting, and was used for the formal education of scribes. Others disagree, and find evidence for a folk setting. In their view, the proverbs reflect the life of an agricultural household, and consist of folk wisdom transmitted from generation to generation.

4.3.1. The School Hypothesis

One of the main proponents of the school hypothesis is André Lemaire. In his view, the book of Proverbs was written down in a school setting. The book was used for writing exercises for the training of future scribes. He sees indirect evidence for the existence of scribal schools in pre-exilic Israel. He finds biblical allusions to royal, prophetic and priestly schools throughout the books of Samuel, Kings and Chronicles (e.g. 1 Sam. 3; 1 Kgs. 12:8,10; 2 Kgs. 6:1-2, 12:3; 1 Chr. 27:32; 2 Chr. 17:7-9).[43] None of these references are explicit about the type of education in view, but their number makes it probable that some kind of formal education existed in monarchical Israel.[44] This probability is strengthened by comparative research. Neighbouring countries like Egypt had elaborate schooling systems. Given the strong political, economic and cultural contacts between Egypt and Israel in monarchical times (cf. 1 Kgs. 3:1, 7:8, 9:16, 24, 11:1), it is plausible that Solomon organized his administration in ways resembling the Egyptian system.[45] This included employing a class of scribes, who needed to be educated in schools. Direct evidence of these royal schools is lacking, but it is clear from archaeological evidence that the use of Paleo-Hebrew inscriptions and seals increased dramatically from the 10th century BC to the 8th/7th century BC, pointing at increased literacy rates.[46] It is unlikely

[42] Loader, *Proverbs 1-9* (HCOT), 11.

[43] André Lemaire, "Sagesse et écoles," *Vetus Testamentum* 34 (3), 1984: 274.

[44] Lemaire, "Sagesse et écoles," 275.

[45] Ibid., 276.

[46] Ibid., 279-280.

that such an increase would have taken place in the absence of some sort of systematic education.[47]

Many scholars have adopted a form of this hypothesis,[48] while others have remained sceptical of the 'school hypothesis' in all its forms.[49] They point at the weakness of this hypothesis: its lack of direct evidence. There is no mention of teachers or schools in the book of Proverbs itself. In fact, the oldest Jewish text speaking about schools in a wisdom setting is Ben Sira, from the 2nd century BC (Ben Sira 51:23 mentions the בֵּית מִדְרַשׁ).[50] Archaeological evidence that directly points to schools in Israel in pre-exilic times is very scarce (limited to a small number of possible elementary school exercises found at Kuntillet 'Ajrud and Qadesh Barnea, including only one example of a proverb).[51] Therefore, the hypothesis mainly relies on logical inferences and comparative evidence from Egypt, Mesopotamia and Canaan.

In the light of this situation, Knut Heim's conclusion about the topic seems warranted. "[There] is no strong evidence for the existence of schools in early Israel. Arguments for the existence of schools remain inferential, and the existence of schools is likely (but not certain) based on analogies from Israel's neighbours. Widespread implications should not be drawn from arguments based on the existence of schools in ancient Israel."[52] In short, it is likely that there was some type of formal education in Israel, and that school could even be the setting for Proverbs, but it is unwise to put too much weight on that possibility.

4.3.2. The Family Hypothesis

On the other side of the debate, many have argued for a family setting for the book of Proverbs. They do not see formal education at the royal court as the provenance for

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[47] Ibid., 280.

[48] E.g. McKane, *Proverbs* (OTL); Plöger, *Sprüche Salomos (Proverbia)* (BKAT); Schipper, *Sprüche (Proverbia) 1-15* (BKAT).

[49] E.g. Koptak, *Proverbs* (NIVAC); Longman, *Proverbs* (BCOT); Tuinstra, *Spreuken deel 1* (POT); Whybray, *Proverbs* (NCBC).

[50] Longman, *Proverbs* (BCOT), 27.

[51] Lemaire, "Sagesse et écoles," 278; William M. Schniedewind, *The Finger of the Scribe: How Scribes Learned to Write the Bible* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), 134.

[52] Knut M. Heim, "The Phenomenon and Literature of Wisdom in Its Near Eastern Context and in the Biblical Wisdom Books," in *Hebrew Bible/Old Testament, volume III/2: The Twentieth Century,* ed. Magne Sæbø (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2014), 580.

Proverbs, but rather informal acquisition of wisdom in the context of the middle-class, rural household. Wisdom is handed down through the generations, passing from father to son. The widespread address "my son" in Proverbs 1-9 fits in that situation. Michael Fox finds the same address in Egyptian wisdom literature (e.g. in the Instructions of Ptahhotep, Merikare, Amenemhet and Amenemope), leading him to hypothesize that the family is the standard setting for teaching wisdom in the ancient Near East.[53] The home as educational setting is also assumed in other biblical texts (cf. Deut. 6:7-9). The fact that not only the father, but also the mother is named (Prov. 4:3, 6:20, 23:25, 31:1, 31:26-28, cf. Exod. 20:12, Lev. 19:3, Deut. 5:16, Deut. 21:18-21) shows that these references should be taken literally.[54] While proverbs were used didactically, they were part of an informal mode of education.

According to J.A. Loader, "many of Israel's sayings now found in the Book of Proverbs could certainly have originated among people in the villages and on the farms, since many proverbs do reflect a familial, rural and agricultural background."[55] These families were not 'simple' subsistence farmers,[56] but households led by "men who owned land or ran businesses that would call for diligence and enterprise, who might take or offer loan guarantees, who might send others as messengers; men who if they are not yet rich may be striving, even overstriving, for wealth."[57] It is important to note that this household is not a nuclear family in the modern sense of the word. It is an extended family, consisting of grandparents, parents, and grown children with their families. In many cases, servants and slaves (and sometimes גֵּרִים (cf. 3.2.)) were also considered part of the household.[58] In these households, the father handed over the wisdom of the family to his son(s), who took it to heart as guidelines for daily life. Somewhere along the line these sayings were collected and written down, but that was only the final step of a long tradition history.

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[53] Fox, *Proverbs 1-9* (AB), 9; *contra* Dell, *The Book of Proverbs in Social and Theological Context,* 23, who mistakenly claims that references to 'my son' are lacking in the Egyptian texts.

[54] Waltke, *The Book of Proverbs: Chapters 1-15* (NICOT), 62.

[55] Loader, *Proverbs 1-9* (HCOT), 18; cf. Loader, "Wisdom by (the) people for (the) people," 232.

[56] *Contra* Friedemann W. Golka, "Die Israelitische Weisheitsschule oder "Des Kaisers neue Kleider," *Vetus Testamentum* 33 (3), 1983:258-270, and Friedemann W. Golka, "Die Königs- und Hofsprüche und der Ursprung der Israelitischen Weisheit," *Vetus Testamentum* 36 (1), 1986: 13-36.

[57] Fox, *Proverbs 10-31* (AB), 505.

[58] Joseph Blenkinsopp, "The Family in First Temple Israel," in *Families in Ancient Israel,* ed. Leo G. Perdue, Joseph Blenkinsopp, John J. Collins & Carol Meyers (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1997), 52.

4.3.3. Evaluation

Is it necessary to choose between these two hypotheses about the *Sitz im Leben* of Proverbs? Tremper Longman III rightly remarks that "the book seems to collect wise sayings from many different settings": some proverbs clearly originate in the royal court (23:1-3), others are right at home in an agrarian society (10:5).[59] In this regard, it seems unwise to put all one's eggs in a single basket. Both the school setting and the folk setting might have had a role in the development of Proverbs. The book is clearly educational in character, but whether that education took place in a school or in a family or family-like apprenticeship setting is impossible to determine. The book as a whole is more reflective of an upper-class, educated setting, but many of the proverbs on everyday matters probably emerged in folk contexts among ordinary people. So, both the court and the family hypotheses show a part of the bigger picture. Interpreters cannot assume one context for all proverbs, but must consider the context that best fits each proverb individually.[60]

As described below in chapter 5, the kinds of strangers in Proverbs fit best in a family context. The own kinship unit is the likely reference point, so the 'stranger' can be anyone outside that group. They are individual strangers who you encounter in daily life in the local community, not necessarily ethnic others. The outsider to the family can just as well be an Israelite from another clan. Therefore, I will assume that these proverbs originated as part of an informal mode of education in a family setting.

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[59] Longman, *Proverbs* (BCOT), 28.

[60] I recognize the difficulty of determining the *Sitz im Leben* of individual proverbs from their subject matter. The social context spoken about does not always correspond to the social context of origin. In the memorable formulation of Roland Murphy: "One cannot prohibit country folk from cultivating 'king' proverbs, or upper class individuals from reflecting on rural and farming concerns" (*Proverbs* (WBC), xxix). Still, this is the best we can do in absence of direct information about the origin of individual proverbs.

5. The Stranger in the Book of Proverbs

This chapter discusses the framing of the stranger in the book of Proverbs. Interestingly, the only outsider terminology appearing in Proverbs is the co-referring and near-synonymous pair זָר / נָכְרִי (in 15 verses scattered throughout the book). The גֵּר is never mentioned. Each of the verses containing זָר / נָכְרִי is analysed in this chapter. The instances of these words can be divided into three categories: the 'strange woman' (5.1.), economic proverbs (5.2.) and the stranger as other (5.3.). Each of these categories corresponds to a different set of semantic frames.

5.1. The Strange Woman (אִשָּׁה זָרָה / נָכְרִיָּה)

The enigmatic figure of the 'strange' (זָרָה) or 'foreign' (נָכְרִיָּה) woman looms large in the instructions of Proverbs 1-9. No less than four of the instructions mention her (Prov. 2, 5 (3x), 6 and 7), and multiple commentators consider Lady Folly (Prov. 9:13-18) to be synonymous to her. Additionally, she is mentioned once in the first Solomonic collection (Prov. 22:14), and once in the 'words of the wise' (Prov. 23:26-28).[1] Often, these texts use the words זָרָה and נָכְרִיָּה in synonymous parallelism, with the exception of Proverbs 6:24 (where נָכְרִיָּה is paired with אֵשֶׁת רָע 'evil woman') and Proverbs 23:27 (where נָכְרִיָּה is paired with זוֹנָה 'whore').

5.1.1. Exegesis

Proverbs 2:11, 16-19

11	*Discretion will watch over you,*	מְזִמָּה תִּשְׁמֹר עָלֶיךָ
	understanding will guard you	תְּבוּנָה תִּנְצְרֶכָּה:
	[...]	
16	*To deliver you from the strange woman,*	לְהַצִּילְךָ מֵאִשָּׁה זָרָה
	from the foreign woman [who] smoothened her words,	מִנָּכְרִיָּה אֲמָרֶיהָ הֶחֱלִיקָה:
17	*who abandoned the chief[2] of her youth,*	הָעֹזֶבֶת אַלּוּף נְעוּרֶיהָ
	and she forgot the covenant of her God.	וְאֶת־בְּרִית אֱלֹהֶיהָ שָׁכֵחָה:
18	*For her house sank to death,*	כִּי שָׁחָה אֶל־מָוֶת בֵּיתָהּ
	and her tracks to the shades	וְאֶל־רְפָאִים מַעְגְּלֹתֶיהָ:

[1] Although the word נָכְרִיָּה is also used in Prov. 27:13, this proverb will be covered in 5.2 because of its economic theme.

[2] Alternatively: companion.

19	*All who go to her*[3] *will not return,* *and they will not reach the paths of life.*	כָּל־בָּאֶיהָ לֹא יְשׁוּבוּן וְלֹא־יַשִּׂיגוּ אָרְחוֹת חַיִּים׃

Proverbs 2 shows the benefits of seeking wisdom. Listening to paternal instruction benefits the young son in several tangible ways. An important virtue resulting from seeking wisdom is the ability to resist temptation. In the verses 12-19, temptation gets two human faces: the "man saying perversities" (אִישׁ מְדַבֵּר תַּהְפֻּכוֹת, vv. 12-15) and the strange or foreign woman (אִשָּׁה זָרָה, נָכְרִיָּה, vv. 16-19). Both of them are types for different kinds of temptation, against which wisdom will guard you. The syntax of the verses 12-15 and 16-19 is very similar. Both start with an identical infinitival clause (לְהַצִּילְךָ מִן) governing two prepositional complements. That signals that the sage puts the threat of the 'man saying perversities' and the 'strange/foreign woman' at the same level. Discretion (introspection and the ability to think for oneself) and understanding (in the sense of practical good sense) are needed to keep both of them at bay.[4]

For this study, the characterization of the 'strange/foreign woman' in vv. 16-19 is most relevant. She is mainly identified by her smooth talk (v. 16). This is a recurring motif in the 'strange woman' texts (Prov. 5:3, 6:24, 7:5). Her flattering, deceitful tongue entices the young man to go astray, to leave behind the way of wisdom and step on the destructive road of folly. For this reason, some interpreters have seen her as an embodiment of folly (synonymous with Woman Folly of Prov. 9:13-18).[5]

A *crux interpretum* in this passage is the interpretation of אַלּוּף נְעוּרֶיהָ (v. 17). This rare collocation (only occurring once more in the OT, in Jer. 3:4) is often analysed as deriving from I אַלּוּף ('familiar, pet; close friend'). In this scenario, the אַלּוּף נְעוּרֶיהָ is the 'companion of her youth', that is: the husband she married when she was young. Pointing to the linguistic similarities between Proverbs 2:17 and Malachi 2:14-16, Nancy Nam Hoon Tan says that "the language is that of depicting the dissolution of marriage in connection with

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[3] Alternatively: all who enter her.

[4] Fox, *Proverbs 1-9* (AB), 116.

[5] E.g. Tuinstra, *Spreuken deel 1* (POT), 81; Waltke, *Proverbs 1-15* (NICOT), 124; On the basis of an analysis of the (highly liberal) LXX translation of Proverbs 1-9, Johann Cook, "אִשָּׁה זָרָה (Proverbs 1-9 Spetuagint): A Metaphor for Foreign Wisdom?," argues that the translator made a deliberate parallel between the presentation of the strange woman and foreign wisdom. He assumes that this also "applies to a large extent to the author of the Hebrew as well" (474) without providing arguments that this notion was already present in the term אִשָּׁה זָרָה instead of being a contextualized reinterpretation by the LXX translator.

apostasy."[6] Bruce Waltke reaches a similar conclusion with regards to the dissolution of marriage, but interprets "forgetting the covenant of her God" as another way of saying that she did not keep the obligations of her marriage covenant, to which God was witness and guarantor (cf. Ezek. 16:18, Mal. 2:14).[7] For him, apostasy is not part of the picture. Jean-Jacques Lavoie derives אַלּוּף from the same root, but offers a different interpretation. He says that "because this term never denotes the husband in the Bible, one cannot see this 'intimate friend' as the first husband of an adulterous woman."[8] Instead, he proposes that the term refers to God, based on the parallel with Jeremiah 3:4, where Israel addresses God as אַלּוּף נְעֻרַי.[9]

However, it is also possible to derive אַלּוּף from a different root, II אַלּוּף ('tribal chief'). Although Loader dismisses this reading out of hand as "hardly appropriate"[10], many ancient versions (the LXX, Symmachus, Aquila, Theodotion, the Vulgate and the Syriac Peshitta) do support it. Although II אַלּוּף is mainly used for Edomite leaders (Gen. 36 *passim,* Exod. 15:15, 1 Chr. 1:51-54), it is sometimes used in an Israelite context (specifically for Judah's tribal leaders in Zech. 12:5). So, it was not a specifically Edomite title. It probably refers to the leader of an אֶלֶף, "protective association of families" (differing in nuance from the term מִשְׁפָּחָה 'extended family, clan' because of the idea of military cooperation that it includes).[11] This reading can also be harmonized with the other instance of the collocation in Jer. 3:4. Although Jer. 3:1a pictures YHWH as a husband left by His adulterous wife Israel, the imagery in this pericope is rather muddled. Vv. 1b-3 characterizes Israel as a common prostitute (זוֹנָה), and immediately preceding the word אַלּוּף, Israel calls YHWH 'father' (v. 4). In the light of that close context, is it not more likely that אַלּוּף נְעֻרַי, as an apposition to 'my father', refers to the strong, protective *pater familias* under whose authority Israel lived since the days of her youth? If this is indeed the kind of אַלּוּף that the 'strange woman' abandoned in Prov. 2:17 (as I think it is), she should be envisioned as a woman who left the protection of her tribe and her cultic

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[6] Nancy Nam Hoon Tan, *The 'Foreignness' of the Foreign Woman in Proverbs 1-9: A Study of the Origin and Development of a Biblical Motif* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2008), 87.

[7] Waltke, *Proverbs 1-15* (NICOT), 231.

[8] Jean-Jacques Lavoie, "Aux origines de l'interdit des mariages mixtes: Quelques réflexions exégétiques et historiques à partir de Proverbes 2,16-22," *Theoforum* 43 , 2012: 258 [Own translation].

[9] Ibid., 259.

[10] Loader, *Proverbs 1-9* (HCOT), 128.

[11] Carol Meyers, "The Family in Early Israel," in *Families in Ancient Israel,* ed. Leo G. Perdue, Joseph Blenkinsopp, John J. Collins & Carol Meyers (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1997), 13.

community. In other words, she is an independent, socially unbound and unordered woman. In a patriarchal ancient Near Eastern society, someone who has no fixed place in the system like that is suspicious. She is strange in the sense that she does not belong to any kinship network and religious community, and thus free to ensnare the young man with her words. That threatens the order of the community.

There are some hints that her enticement is probably sexual in nature (most importantly the ambiguous verb בָּאֶיהָ in v. 19), but that is not explicitly expressed in this passage. In any case, she is threatening enough for the son to be associated with death (v. 18). If he would fall for her, he would meet an untimely end. The fatal consequences of an encounter with her cannot be reversed. She may rightly be called a *femme fatale.*

Proverbs 5:1-4

1	*My son, listen attentively to my wisdom,*	בְּנִי לְחָכְמָתִי הַקְשִׁיבָה
	extend your ear to my understanding	לִתְבוּנָתִי הַט־אָזְנֶךָ:
2	*so you keep*[12] *discretion,*	לִשְׁמֹר מְזִמּוֹת
	and your lips will guard knowledge,	וְדַעַת שְׂפָתֶיךָ יִנְצֹרוּ[13]:
3[14]	*for the lips of a strange woman are dripping honey*	כִּי נֹפֶת תִּטֹּפְנָה שִׂפְתֵי זָרָה
	and her palate is smoother than oil	וְחָלָק מִשֶּׁמֶן חִכָּהּ:
4	*but her end is bitter as wormwood,*	וְאַחֲרִיתָהּ מָרָה כַלַּעֲנָה
	sharp as a double-edged sword.	חַדָּה כְּחֶרֶב פִּיּוֹת:

Once again, the father warns his son against the seductive speech of the strange woman. He presents his son with a choice: will you listen to paternal wisdom and understanding or to the smooth words of the seductress? The father purposely contrasts the lips of the young man and the lips of the strange woman. The young man's lips should 'guard knowledge', meaning that he should speak in conformity to the ethical and religious

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[12] Infinitive of purpose (Joüon & Muraoka, *Grammar of Biblical Hebrew,* § 124l).

[13] The lack of agreement between שְׂפָתֶיךָ (feminine dual) and יִנְצֹרוּ (3mp) is no big problem. Joüon & Muraoka (*Grammar of Biblical Hebrew)* note that "there is a certain tendency to ignore the feminine, whether the fem. sg. or especially the fem. pl." (§150b) with regards to agreement of the verb. "There is no 3rd fem. pl. form in the perfect (§ 42f). This fact may have contributed to the neglect of the 3rd fem. pl. in the future This form is often replaced by the 3rd masc. pl. form." (§150c).

[14] The LXX adds an extra clause at the front of this verse: μὴ πρόσεχε φαύλῃ γυναικί ('do not pay attention to a worthless woman'), which can be traced to a midrash on Proverbs 5:3 (בני הזהר מאשה זונה) (Jan de Waard, *Biblia Hebraica, quinta editione cum apparatu critico novis curis elaborato: משלי (Proverbs)* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2008), 34*).

teachings of his father.[15] That keeping discretion and guarding knowledge is needed to withstand the strange woman's speech shows that her proposals are genuinely alluring to the young man. "She speaks in accents which ooze seductive charm, and her voice, which is smoother than oil, draws her victim irresistibly towards mystery, excitement and delight."[16] It is not easy to be immune to that kind of charm. You need a well-formed character to pull that off.

The sexual innuendo, that was already present in subdued tones in 2:16-19, becomes more noticeable in this passage. The image of lips dripping with honey appears more often in erotic poetry, both in Israelite and in Egyptian love songs.[17] There is a strong intertextual connection with Song of Solomon 4:11, where the lips of the bride are also 'dripping honey' (נֹפֶת תִּטֹּפְנָה שִׂפְתוֹתַיִךְ). Similarly, the palate (חֵךְ) is not only involved in speech production, but is also associated with a lover's kisses (cf. Song 5:16, 7:10).[18] Possibly, the author included wordplay between חֵךְ (v. 3) and חֵק ('bosom', v. 20). In that case, "the words denoting the beginning love affair are a faint foreshadowing of what is to come."[19] All of this makes it clear that the erotic appeal of the strange woman is in view here. No wonder that the LXX pictured her as a harlot (γυνη πόρνης). However, the context of the entire instruction (esp. 5:8-14, 15-21) shows that the scenario envisioned here is not prostitution, but sexual relationships with someone else's wife.

After the sweetness of the moment subsides, a different taste overtakes your palate. When verse 4 speaks about 'her end' being bitter as wormwood, this is a subjective genitive: the end that this woman prepares for the young man who gave in to her seduction.[20] The words of her mouth draw you into an affair that pierces you like a sword. The rare form חֶרֶב פִּיּוֹת ('double-edged sword', more commonly חֶרֶב פִּיפִיּוֹת) underlines that. Probably, the author chose the unreduplicated form for its clearer association with the word פֶּה ('mouth'; plural פִּיּוֹת). It carries the suggestion of "the mouth as a destructive organ eating the flesh of victims."[21] Although a liaison with the strange woman seems appealing at first, it is appalling in the end, leaving you with a very bitter taste indeed.

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[15] Waltke, *Proverbs 1-15* (NICOT), 307.

[16] McKane, *Proverbs* (OTL), 314.

[17] Schipper, *Sprüche (Proverbia) 1-15* (BKAT), 343.

[18] Loader, *Proverbs 1-9* (HCOT), 235.

[19] Tuinstra, *Spreuken deel 1* (POT), 136.

[20] Fox, *Proverbs 1-9* (AB), 192; Loader, *Proverbs 1-9* (HCOT), 236.

[21] Loader, *Proverbs 1-9* (HCOT), 236.

Proverbs 5:8-11

8	*Keep your way far from her,*	הַרְחֵק מֵעָלֶיהָ דַרְכֶּךָ
	and don't approach the door of her house,	וְאַל־תִּקְרַב אֶל־פֶּתַח בֵּיתָהּ:
9	*lest you will give your splendour to others,*	פֶּן־תִּתֵּן לַאֲחֵרִים הוֹדֶךָ
	and your years to a cruel one;	וּשְׁנֹתֶיךָ לְאַכְזָרִי:
10	*lest strangers are sated by your strength,*	פֶּן־יִשְׂבְּעוּ זָרִים כֹּחֶךָ
	and your toil will be in a foreigner's house	וַעֲצָבֶיךָ בְּבֵית נָכְרִי:
11	*and you will groan in the end,*	וְנָהַמְתָּ[22] בְּאַחֲרִיתֶךָ
	when vanishing in your flesh and your body.	בִּכְלוֹת בְּשָׂרְךָ וּשְׁאֵרֶךָ:

This passage is instructive, because it describes the social consequences of associating with the strange woman in two pairs of clauses (v. 9-10). First of all, it entails giving away your 'splendour' and your 'years' (v. 9). What does this mean? The word הוֹד has been interpreted in multiple ways. It has sometimes been associated with sexual vigour. The young man who fell for the strange woman "surrenders his offspring and the wealth they will produce to the man whose wife he impregnates. The cuckold will possess the adulterer's children as his own and benefit from their labour."[23] This interpretation is not supported by the text. Pregnancy and children are never mentioned, and it remains unclear from where they were imported. Moreover, הוֹד is never used with the meaning 'sexual vigour' in other texts.[24] A more likely interpretation of v. 9 puts it in the realm of honour-shame language. Often literally applied to a king's regnal majesty, הוֹד is also used metaphorically for the bloom of a person's life.[25] It is the profit of the best years of a person's life, the experience of the wonder and joy of life.[26] It might not be "primarily the respect and honour others feel towards its possessor, but rather an inner power that inspires these feelings."[27] By giving in to the seduction of the strange woman, this inner dignity is lost, leading to a loss of honour in the local community.

That makes sense of the first half of verse 9, but what does the second half mean? What does it mean to 'give your years to a cruel one'? While a single commentator thinks the

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[22] Variant reading (supported by LXX and Peshitta): וְנִחַמְתָּ ('and you will repent').

[23] Fox, *Proverbs 1-9* (AB), 194.

[24] Loader, *Proverbs 1-9* (HCOT), 240.

[25] Koehler & Baumgartner, *HALOT,* s.l. I הוֹד 3.

[26] Dieter Vetter, "הוֹד," *THAT* I:473.

[27] Fox, *Proverbs 1-9* (AB), 194.

'cruel one' (אַכְזָרִי) is a metaphorical description of illness or death (implying a kind of naturalized deed-consequence nexus)[28], the fact that the other three warnings deal with consequences in the interpersonal domain renders that highly unlikely. The singular form of אַכְזָרִי makes it impossible to equate it with the 'others' from v. 9a. Given the fact that the gender of this nominalized indeclinable adjective is indeterminate,[29] it is plausible to equate the 'cruel one' with the strange woman instead. Who else in this scenario can genuinely said to be cruel? The "lack of compassion and insensitivity"[30] that this word denotes fits her perfectly.

The second pair (v.10) warns about the economic consequences of giving in to the strange woman. Your material wealth, that you worked so hard to attain, will not benefit your own family, but will befall strangers. The results of your toil will end up in a foreigner's house. The terms זָר and נָכְרִי (here used in accordance with the frame constructed in 3.3.3., figure 9) probably do not denote foreigners in an ethnic sense.[31] Rather, this word pair is deliberately used to recall the double designation of the strange/foreign woman as זָרָה / נָכְרִיָּה. Although the זָר and נָכְרִי in this verse are male, the negative wish particle פֶּן connects them to the warning against the strange woman in v. 8. The זָרִים and the בֵּית נָכְרִי of verse 10 are her people, her kinship group.[32] Why will they end up reaping the fruits of the son's toil? Loader notes that "it is quite thinkable that he would have to toil for the husband of the strange woman, who would be entitled to damages for having had his marital rights violated."[33] In this scenario, the young man who had an illicit sexual relationship is forced (either through blackmail or through a judicial process) to surrender his wealth to the strange woman's family. A problem with this reading is that the Torah demands the death penalty for adultery (Lev. 20:10) instead of financial compensation of the aggrieved husband. Additionally, in Proverbs 6:34-35 the father warns his son that a jealous husband will not accept any compensation, and will not have mercy when he takes revenge (implying the risk of an honour killing). Both variants of this scenario are thus not in line with other texts dealing with a similar situation. Still, it remains the most likely reading of verse 10. Considering the diversity in human behaviour, the blackmail scenario seems

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[28] Tuinstra, *Spreuken deel 1* (POT), 141.

[29] Koehler & Baumgartner, *HALOT,* s.l. אַכְזָרִי

[30] John N. Oswalt, "כזר," *TWOT*, 436.

[31] *Contra* Tan, *The Motif of the Foreign Woman,* 90, who connects 5:10 to texts where Israel's possessions are plundered by (ethnic) foreigners (Lam. 5:2, Obad. 11, Isa. 61:5).

[32] Rainey, *Religion, Ethnicity and Xenophobia in the Bible,* 103.

[33] Loader, *Proverbs 1-9* (HCOT), 241.

to be preferred. Based on experiential knowledge, the sage might present his son with multiple alternative responses of the wronged husband, each of them leading to the adulterer's ruin in a different way. Some families, instead of taking revenge or pushing for legal prosecution, might settle the matter of adultery by extortion, pressing the adulterer to hand over his property to them to prevent them from taking further, lethal steps. Although much remains uncertain, this seems to be the scenario the sage is referring to.

Proverbs 5:20-21

20	*Why go astray, my son, because of a strange woman and embrace the bosom of a foreign woman?*	וְלָמָּה תִשְׁגֶּה בְנִי בְזָרָה וּתְחַבֵּק חֵק נָכְרִיָּה:
21	*For before the eyes of the LORD are a man's ways, and He is observing all his tracks.*	כִּי נֹכַח	עֵינֵי יְהוָה דַּרְכֵי־אִישׁ וְכָל־מַעְגְּלֹתָיו מְפַלֵּס:

At the end of chapter 5, the father's warning becomes more straightforward. After the praise of 'the wife of your youth' (5:18-19, cf. 5.3.1.) he asks the rhetorical question of v. 20, with an expected negative answer. If the relationship with your own wife is so satisfying and her love so intoxicating (v. 19), there is no reason to seek pleasure with a strange woman. Given this contrast, it is clear that the strange/foreign woman is not strange or foreign in an ethnic sense. She is strange in the sense that she is someone else's (made explicit in the LXX, which translates with τῆς μὴ ἰδίας 'not your own'). She is bound to another family unit, not to yours. She belongs to another husband (or, if she is unmarried, to another *pater familias*), and therefore she is out of bounds for the son. That is an absolute prohibition; even if nobody would ever find out about the illicit relationship, God still sees. Because the verb פלס includes a dimension of assessment, the implication is that God also judges all actions of man, even those committed in secret.[34] Fundamentally, the father's warning to keep away from the strange woman is not just grounded on negative social consequences, but on theological reasons: God upholds righteousness, and He put an order in creation that ensures those who transgress will perish (v. 22-23).

Proverbs 6:23-26

[34] Loader, *Proverbs 1-9* (HCOT), 248.

23	*For commandment is a lamp and instruction is light,* *and the reproach of discipline is a way of life*	כִּי נֵר מִצְוָה וְתוֹרָה אוֹר וְדֶרֶךְ חַיִּים תּוֹכְחוֹת מוּסָר:
24	*to keep you from the evil woman,* *from the smoothness of the tongue of the foreign woman.*	לִשְׁמָרְךָ מֵאֵשֶׁת רָע[35] מֵחֶלְקַת לְשׁוֹן נָכְרִיָּה:
25	*You must not desire her beauty in your heart,* *and she should not take you with her eyelids.*	אַל־תַּחְמֹד יָפְיָהּ בִּלְבָבֶךָ וְאַל־תִּקָּחֲךָ בְּעַפְעַפֶּיהָ:
26	*For the price of a prostitute is a loaf of bread,* *but a man's wife will hunt your precious life.*	כִּי בְעַד־אִשָּׁה זוֹנָה עַד־כִּכַּר לָחֶם וְאֵשֶׁת אִישׁ נֶפֶשׁ יְקָרָה תָצוּד:

In some respects, this text is very similar to 2:11, 16-19, reminding the young man of the need for sapiential virtues to be protected from the wiles of the strange woman, and warning him against the dire consequences of ignoring his father's call.

However, the descriptions in these verses add important details to the semantic image of the foreign woman. Instead of the ordinary pair זָרָה and נָכְרִיָּה , the parallel to נָכְרִיָּה in this verse is אֵשֶׁת רָע ('evil woman'), explicitly linking the נָכְרִיָּה with a negative moral qualification. The LXX read the Hebrew text differently, as witnessed by the translation ἀπὸ γυναικὸς ὑπάνδρου ('from a married woman'). This variant can be traced back to the same Hebrew consonantal text, which was either unvocalized and interpreted differently by the translator or vocalized differently (אֵשֶׁת רֵעַ). In that case, the verse would be another warning to stay away from someone else's wife. In this reading, the נָכְרִיָּה is a woman belonging to another kinship unit, and is not necessarily associated with evil. Both readings fit the context, with the MT reading supported by the author's claim that this woman 'will hunt your precious life' (v. 26bβ, an obviously evil activity), and the LXX reading by the fact that this woman is referred to as 'a man's wife' in v. 26bα. Therefore, it is impossible to decide between these two possible readings. Both will be taken into account.

Two more aspects of this passage stand out. First of all, this is the only 'strange woman' passage mentioning her beauty. While she is usually characterized by her flattering speech only, v. 25 additionally cautions against desiring her for her physical attractiveness (exemplified by her arresting gaze). Secondly, verse 26 is the clearest indication that the

[35] Alternatively: אֵשֶׁת רֵעַ ('a neighbour's wife'), supported by LXX ἀπὸ γυναικὸς ὑπάνδρου.

'strange woman' is not conceptualized as a prostitute, but as someone else's wife. Remarkably, the father does not condemn prostitution with the same vigour. He seemingly tolerates it, noting that all that is lost is the prostitute's wages ('a loaf of bread'). He is seemingly not that worried about his son's sexual purity or monogamy *per se.* His warning is quite pragmatic and utilitarian. When one desires someone else's wife (the strange/foreign woman) and acts on those desires, the consequences are much greater, even potentially fatal (cf. 2:18-19, 6:34-35). Another man has marital rights on her sexuality, and will hunt the young man down if his violation comes to light. For that reason, wisdom demands the son to be disciplined and stay within the boundaries of the traditional instruction and commands in which he has been initiated. A rather pragmatic approach to virtue indeed.

Proverbs 7:1-5

1	*My son, keep my words,* *and you must store my commands with you.*	בְּנִי שְׁמֹר אֲמָרָי וּמִצְוֹתַי תִּצְפֹּן אִתָּךְ׃
2	*Keep my commands and live,* *and my instruction must be like the apple of your eyes.*	שְׁמֹר מִצְוֹתַי וֶחְיֵה וְתוֹרָתִי כְּאִישׁוֹן עֵינֶיךָ׃
3	*Tie them to your fingers,* *write them on the tablet of your heart.*	קָשְׁרֵם עַל־אֶצְבְּעֹתֶיךָ כָּתְבֵם עַל־לוּחַ לִבֶּךָ׃
4	*Say to wisdom: "you are my sister",* *and understanding you must call a relative,*	אֱמֹר לַחָכְמָה אֲחֹתִי אָתְּ וּמֹדָע לַבִּינָה תִּקְרָא׃
5	*so they keep you*[36] *from the strange woman,* *from the foreign woman who smoothened her words*	לְשִׁמְרְךָ מֵאִשָּׁה זָרָה מִנָּכְרִיָּה אֲמָרֶיהָ הֶחֱלִיקָה׃

Like Prov. 2:11, 16-19 and Prov. 6:23-26, this passage contains an admonition to guard parental wisdom in order to be protected from the smooth-talking strange woman. This passage stands out from the other two through its extensive introductory admonition full of allusions to Deuteronomy. The father speaks about his commands (מִצְוֹת) and instruction (תוֹרָה) in terms reminiscent of YHWH's commands to Israel. They will be a source of life if you keep them (cf. Deut. 4:40, 5:16, 5:29, 5:33, 6:2, 6:24). The son must guard them like the apple of his eyes (cf. Deut. 32:10). He must tie them to his finger and write them on the tablet of his heart (cf. Deut. 6:6-8, 11:18). An intertextual link of this

[36] Infinitive of purpose (Joüon & Muroka, *Grammar of Biblical Hebrew,* § 124l).

strength cannot be coincidental; the author deliberately echoes the words of divine Law. Bernd Schipper rightly deduces from this that "by this intertextual allusion, the מִצְוָה [and the תּוֹרָה] of the father [...] comes close to the תּוֹרָה and מִצְוָה of God. Even if they appear in the textual strategy of Proverbs as a parental instruction, this instruction refers to the will of YHWH."[37] The Deuteronomic motifs all stress how important this instruction is to immunize the son against the strange woman's seduction. The אִישׁוֹן (literally: 'the little man (in the eye)' = 'pupil') symbolizes what is most dear to you, it "epitomizes what needs the most diligent protection."[38] The metaphor of 'tying to the fingers' and 'writing on the tablet of the heart' symbolizes total alignment with instruction in thought and action.[39] Using a familiar educational metaphor, the father points his son to the ultimate goal of his education: he should learn his lessons by heart, being shaped by paternal instruction and living according to it.[40] Heart and hands must remember the father's *torah.*

Using kinship terms for wisdom and understanding, verse 4 doubles down on that point. When wisdom and understanding are close family members, the strange woman from outside your family can no longer seduce you. A legitimate kinship bond with wisdom and understanding is the counterpoint to the illegitimate relationship with the strange woman described in v. 5 and vividly depicted in the story of vv. 6-23.[41]

Given the emphasis on wisdom and instruction in the introduction of this passage, it is worth considering at this point whether the figure of the strange woman points beyond herself to folly. Is she synonymous with Woman Folly of Proverbs 9:13-18? There are intertextual links between Prov. 9:13-18 and several strange woman texts. Like the strange woman in the example story of 7:6-23, Woman Folly is unruly (המה, 7:11, 9:13) and

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[37] Bernd U. Schipper, "When Wisdom is not Enough! The Discourse on Wisdom and Torah and the Composition of the Book of Proverbs," in *Wisdom and Torah: The Reception of 'Torah' in the Wisdom Literature of the Second Temple Period,* ed. Bernd U. Schipper & David A. Teeter (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 60.

[38] Waltke, *Proverbs 1-15* (NICOT), 368.

[39] Schipper, *Sprüche (Proverbia) 1-15* (BKAT), 446.

[40] Koert van Bekkum, "Schrijven, schrijvers en auteurs in de oudheid," in *Nieuwe en oude dingen: Schatgraven in de Schrift,* ed. Koert van Bekkum, Rob van Houwelingen & Eric Peels (Barneveld: Vuurbaak, 2013), 128.

[41] Fox, *Proverbs 1-9* (AB), 240; although he considers 'sister' to be a term of endearment for the beloved (as in Song of Solomon 4:9-10, 12; 5:1-2). The passage has the same rhetorical effect without this move. Moreover, when 'sister' is used in this way, it is usually accompanied by a second term of endearment to clarify that a biological sister is not meant. Therefore, I do not follow Fox on this detail, but I do agree with the gist of his interpretation.

seduces the simple (פֶּתִי, 7:6, 9:16). As the strange woman in 23:28 (see below), she is associated with water (9:17). And as the strange woman in 2:18, she leads to the 'shades' (רְפָאִים, 9:18, a rare word). The cumulative strength of these links shows that these two women are indeed linked. This does not mean that all warnings against associating with the strange woman in the sexual domain should be read exclusively metaphorically.[42] Adultery and fornication is certainly not "too incidental or narrow or banal a danger to warrant such solemn and extended admonitions," given its enormous consequences (shown many times throughout this chapter).[43] Instead, the threat of the strange woman might operate on two levels. The intertextual links and the composition of 1-9 indicate that the sexual temptation of the actual strange woman is a symptom of a deeper problem: departing from the ways of wisdom and fleeing into the arms of folly.

Proverbs 22:14

14	*The mouth of strange women is a deep pit,*	שׁוּחָה עֲמֻקָּה פִּי זָרוֹת
	he who is cursed by the LORD will fall there	זְעוּם יְהוָה יִפָּול־שָׁם:

This is the only 'strange woman' proverb in the first Solomonic collection (10:1-22:16). In line with most others, her mouth is envisioned as the greatest threat. A notable addition in comparison to other 'strange woman' proverbs is the mention of the curse of YHWH. Apparently, God can use the seduction of the strange woman as an instrument to punish those whom He has already cursed for some other reason (presumably because they are already sinners who stand under His judgment).[44]

Proverbs 23:26-28

26	*My son, give me your heart,*	תְּנֶה־בְנִי לִבְּךָ לִי
	and your eyes must guard my way	וְעֵינֶיךָ דְּרָכַי תִּרְצֹנָה:
27	*for a whore is a deep pit,*	כִּי־שׁוּחָה עֲמֻקָּה זוֹנָה
	and a foreign woman a narrow well.	וּבְאֵר צָרָה נָכְרִיָּה:
28	*She even lies in ambush like a robber,*	אַף־הִיא כְּחֶתֶף תֶּאֱרֹב
	and she adds to the treacherous among humanity.	וּבוֹגְדִים בְּאָדָם תּוֹסִף:

[42] *Contra* Cook, "אִשָּׁה זָרָה," Tan, *The Foreignness of the Foreign Woman,* 101-102, and Tuinstra, *Spreuken deel 1* (POT), 81-84.

[43] Fox, *Proverbs 1-9* (AB), 262.

[44] Fox, *Proverbs 10-31* (AB), 702; Waltke, *Proverbs 1-15* (NICOT), 214.

Although the collection of 'words of the wise' (Prov. 22:17-24:22) is often said to be based on the Egyptian Instruction of Amenemope, this eighteenth saying of the collection has no parallel in Amenemope. Another Egyptian wisdom text, the Instruction of Ani (16th-13th century BC) does contain a fairly close parallel, with several overlapping elements (the strange woman as a source of sexual temptation, the water metaphor, and the ensnarement of the youth):

> *Beware of a woman who is a stranger, one not known in her town;*
> *Do not stare at her when she goes by, do not know her carnally.*
> *A deep water whose course is unknown, such is a woman away from her husband.*
> *"I am pretty," she tells you daily, when she has no witnesses;*
> *She is ready to ensnare you, a great deadly crime when it is heard.*[45]

In addition, the seductive use of words - a common motif in the 'strange woman' proverbs which is not present in this proverb – is also found in the Egyptian parallel. Ani's explicit conceptualization of the strange woman's strangeness also agrees with the conceptualization across Proverbs. She is not a stranger in an ethnic sense, but someone from another local community who belongs to another man. This can also be seen in 'strange woman' proverbs throughout the book of Proverbs (see above). So, in addition to the internal evidence presented in this chapter, the framing of the אִשָּׁה זָרָה / נָכְרִיָּה in this study is also supported by external evidence in the form of a text in the same genre from a neighbouring culture. This shows that a local, non-ethnic conception of the 'strange woman' aligns with ways of speaking from Israel's ancient Near Eastern context.

Regarding content, this proverb stands out as the only 'strange woman' proverb explicitly connecting the נָכְרִיָּה and the זוֹנָה ('whore') in v. 27. Whereas Prov. 6:23-26 distinguished between these two figures (see above), they are conflated here. Based on the LXX (ἀλλότριος), some commentators propose to emend זוֹנָה to זָרָה, restoring the common pairing זָרָה - נָכְרִיָּה and harmonizing this verse with 22:14.[46] However, the external evidence for this harmonization is weak. The LXX of 23:27 diverges so much from the MT that it

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[45] Translation by Miriam Lichtheim, in *The Context of Scripture: Canonical Compositions from the Biblical World,* ed. William W. Hallo & K. Lawson Younger, Jr. (Leiden: Brill, 1997), 1:111.

[46] E.g. Fox, *Proverbs 10-31* (AB), 738; Plöger, *Sprüche Salomos (Proverbia)* (BKAT), 276; Waltke, *Proverbs 15-31* (NICOT), 247.

is a different proverb altogether,[47] so it cannot be used to support the emendation of one particular word. Moreover, other ancient versions support the MT (Symmachus: πορνη, Vulgate: *meretrix*). Both images in v. 27 make the same point: if you fall into the trap of having sexual relations with a whore or a 'foreign woman' you cannot get out. The 'narrow well' might have an additional layer of meaning when it is correlated to the image of your wife as your well in Prov. 5:15-18 (see below, 5.3.1.). In contrast to the ever-flowing streams of pleasure that flow from loving one's rightful wife, the foreign woman cannot satisfy one's thirst. Her well is narrow, making the water frustratingly hard to reach, and once you fall down, you are stuck.[48]

Verse 28b contains an intriguing clause: וּבוֹגְדִים בְּאָדָם תּוֹסִף׃. What does it mean that the strange woman 'adds to the treacherous among humanity'? This verse does more than simply stating that *she* is treacherous. Rather, it implies that all who go to her become traitors. The root בגד, when used in the domain of marriage, connotes acting against a duty that is demanded by law or by an existing relationship of loyalty.[49] Such a duty or relationship did not exist between the young man and the strange woman. Therefore, "the bonds that are violated by the 'traitors' must be marriage vows, and the victims must be their own wives."[50] With that, this proverb exhibits a sensitivity to the woman's rights in marriage that is quite unusual in the Old Testament.[51] It points beyond the usual utilitarian arguments against associating with the strange woman, to a man's moral duty to remain faithful to his wife. Trading her in for another woman (whether a prostitute or another man's wife) breaks the relationship of loyalty between marriage partners, and is thus a form of treason.

5.1.2. Framing the 'Strange Woman'

Before considering the conceptual frame evoked by the word pair אִשָּׁה זָרָה / נָכְרִיָּה it is good to note some common scholarly opinions about the identity of the 'strange woman' that

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[47] It reads πίθος γὰρ τετρημένος ἐστὶν ἀλλότριος οἶκος, καὶ φρέαρ στενὸν ἀλλότριον ('Because a foreign house is a pierced wine-jar, and narrow is a foreign cistern'). The only thing this text has in common with the MT is that there is something narrow connected to something foreign.

[48] Waltke, *Proverbs 15-31* (NICOT), 261.

[49] Martin A. Klopfenstein, "בגד," *THAT* I:262.

[50] Fox, *Proverbs 10-31* (AB), 739; cf. Tuinstra, *Spreuken deel 3* (POT), 34.

[51] Fox, *Proverbs 10-31* (AB), 739.

were *not* supported by the analysis of the linguistic data. They rely on outside information imposed on the text or inferences that go beyond actual usage.

First of all, there is no support for the theory that the 'strange woman' necessarily refers to an ethnic stranger, nor that her rhetorical function is to discourage the practice of mixed marriages.[52] None of the 'strange woman' passages discuss marriage between the young man and the strange woman. In fact, the context of two of the passages indicates that the strange woman was already married (6:32-35; 7:19), and the young man may also be married (or at least be urged to save his sexuality for his future wife) (5:18). So, in no way are these passages reminiscent of the mixed marriage polemics in Ezra-Nehemia (Ezr. 9-10, Neh. 13). Although the final redaction of the book of Proverbs may have taken place in the time of that controversy, it does not address the same problem.

Neither is there a strong connection between the 'strange woman' and apostasy. Given the fact that King Solomon's apostasy in old age was blamed on his love for נָשִׁים נָכְרִיּוֹת in 1 Kings 11:1-8, this could have been expected in a book ascribed to Solomon. But in fact, only Prov. 2:17 possibly points in that direction. So, if this notion is present at all, it is only marginal, and the association is not strong enough to define the 'strange woman' as an idolater leading impressionable young men to apostasy. The more specific hypothesis, originating with Gustav Boström's 1935 study *Die Weisheit und das fremde Weib*, that the strange woman is the wife of a foreigner living in Jerusalem who is devoted to the cult of Ishtar, has no support in the text at all and should be rejected as speculation.

The common association between the 'strange woman' and prostitution is likewise marginal in the texts. Only Prov. 23:27 makes this connection, but in a limited context. It equates prostitution and frequenting the strange woman as treason against previous marriage commitments. Again, the association is not strong enough to make this a core element of the semantic frame of the 'strange woman.'

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[52] Joseph Blenkinsopp, "The social context of the "Outsider Woman" in Proverbs 1-9," *Biblica* 72, 1991: 457-473; Lavoie, "Aux origines de l'interdit des mariages mixtes"; Tan, *The 'Foreignness' of the Foreign Woman*.

From the exegesis of all 'strange woman' passages in Proverbs, the following frame is constructed. The אִשָּׁה זָרָה / נָכְרִיָּה is more than simply the female version of the זָר / נָכְרִי. Rather, אִשָּׁה זָרָה / נָכְרִיָּה evokes its own frame, which specifies and narrows down certain features of the זָר / נָכְרִי frame, and may thus be regarded as a daughter frame of זָר / נָכְרִי (figure 11), being part of the same conceptual field. In comparison to the זָר / נָכְרִי, the potential fillers for the Experiencer (E) slot are limited to females (referred to as the אִשָּׁה זָרָה / נָכְרִיָּה), and the type of Marker of Group Membership (M) is narrowed down to marital and/or kinship ties.

אִשָּׁה זָרָה / נָכְרִיָּה

Attributes:

E Experiencer (+female)

G Group of speaker

M Marital/kinship ties

S Separation

Constraints:

E is conceived by the speaker as outside **G** because of a lack of **M**

As a result, the speaker should practice **S**

Figure 11: אִשָּׁה זָרָה / נָכְרִיָּה frame

Three events are particularly associated with the אִשָּׁה זָרָה / נָכְרִיָּה in the book of Proverbs. The first is the שׁמר מִן event. It is explicitly expressed in Prov. 6:24, 7:5, very similar terms are used in Prov. 2:16, and it can be said to stand in the background of all warnings against the strange woman. Generally, the verb שׁמר is used for the keeping or guarding of someone or something. When used with the preposition מִן, it means "to protect from something."[53] It corresponds to the following semantic frame (figure 12).

[53] Koehler & Baumgartner, *HALOT,* s.l. שׁמר.

שׁמר מִן event

Slots:

A Agentive

B Benefactive

D Danger

Constraints:

B faces a potential danger **(D)** in the future

If nothing happens, **D** will cause harm to **B**

B does nothing to prevent **D**

A takes action to prevent **D**

Figure 12: שׁמר מִן event

This frame evokes a scenario in which one person, the Benefactive (B), faces a prospective dangerous situation (D). He is not yet caught up in this situation, but if nothing changes he will end up in that situation, causing him severe harm. He might not be aware of the consequences, and therefore sees no reason to change his ways. Or he underestimated the danger of the situation, and is unwilling to change his behaviour. Another person, the Agentive (A), witnesses the situation and judges that the danger is great enough to take action on behalf of the benefactive, aiming to prevent the danger from harming him. This basic pattern is visible in nearly all 'strange woman' proverbs. The young man (B) is potentially sexually tempted by strange woman (D). Giving in to that temptation will cause him all kinds of harm (e.g. loss of honour (Prov. 5:9), loss of property (Prov. 5:10), or even death (Prov. 2:18-19, 6:32-35, 7:27), but because of his youthful inexperience he might be unable to see that (Prov. 7:7). Therefore, his father (A) takes action to protect him, inculcating his wisdom in the boy, so he develops the tools to withstand the temptation of the strange woman. It is clear that the אִשָּׁה זָרָה is a common filler in this frame in the instructions of Proverbs 1-9.

A second event with which the אִשָּׁה זָרָה / נָכְרִיָּה is almost invariably associated in Proverbs is the חלק אֲמָרִים ('smoothening words') event (figure 13). More precisely, she is presented as the agentive of that event. The verb חלק or a derivative is explicitly used in 2:16, 5:3, 5:10, 6:24 and 7:5, and this event is the background of 22:14. In 5:20-21, the frame is not evoked lexically. However, seeing that it is the concluding admonition of a chapter in which multiple instances of the frame were present, it is not unreasonable to assume that the reader is supposed to activate the frame in this instance as well. Proverbs 23:26-28 is the only 'strange woman' passage that contains no contextual cues to activate this frame.

חלק אֲמָרִים event

Slots:

Ag Agentive

Ad Addressee

S Sin / Illegal activity

Constraints:

Ag uses misleading speech to make **S** seem attractive or positive to **Ad**

Figure 13: חלק אֲמָרִים event

This scenario is all about the misleading use of words. The Agentive (Ag) uses words that seem attractive at first sight, but when one thinks them over, they really refer to a sin or illegal activity (S). Taking the 'smooth words' at face value leads the Addressee (Ad) to unrighteous behaviour, and thus takes him away from the way of wisdom and righteousness which is so central in Proverbs.

נאף event

Slots:

A Adulterer

W Wife

H Husband

Constraints:

W is married to or betrothed to **H**

A has sexual relations with **W**

With that, **A** violates **H's** marital rights

and **W** breaks her marriage commitment with **H,**

(possibly) leading to legal and societal problems for **A** and **W** (if **H** finds out)

Figure 14: נאף event

Although the root נאף is never used in the 'strange woman' proverbs, the event associated with the frame ('committing adultery', figure 14) is constantly implicitly present in the warnings against the strange woman.[54] It is closest to the surface in 5:20, and very visibly present in the literary context of 6:24 (6:32-35) and 7:5 (7:6-27). Other texts contain more oblique allusions to this frame (cf. the exegesis in 5.1.1.). The scene envisioned by this frame is the following. It involves three different participants: the Husband (H), the Wife (W) and the Adulterer (A). The Husband and the Wife are legally bound to each other in marriage or betrothal. That entails a commitment to sexual exclusivity by both Husband and Wife. This commitment is broken by the Wife if she engages in sexual relations with the Adulterer. The Adulterer in turn violates the Husband's exclusive right to enjoy intimacy with his Wife. If the Husband finds out, this might lead to legal and societal problems for both Adulterer and Wife. This includes at least a loss of honour and standing in the local community (cf. Prov. 5:9), but can extend to economic damage (cf. Prov. 5:10)

[54] Note that a frame can be evoked without using the actual lexeme, by "describing a situation that matches salient facts" of the associated event (Gawron, "Frame Semantics," 667.), cf. 2.2.1. I argue that this is the case here.

or even loss of life through judicial or extra-judicial killing (cf. Lev. 20:10, Prov. 6:34-35). Because of the seriousness of these consequences, the sage-father in the book of Proverbs spends a lot of energy warning his son never to take the role of Adulterer in the נאף event.

The אִשָּׁה זָרָה / נָכְרִיָּה is the prototypical Wife in the נאף scenario (figure 14), who is extra dangerous because she uses her seductive speech to downplay its consequences (see figure 13 above). She is strange in the sense that she belongs to another man, and is thus sexually out of bounds for the young man. And she is dangerous because she invites the young man to ignore that reality at his own peril. This combination explains why the אִשָּׁה זָרָה / נָכְרִיָּה is conceived as the Danger in the שמר מִן frame (see figure 12 above), against which the son needs to be protected.

Extended metaphorically, these frames are also at play when dealing with folly (as suggested by the intertextual links between Prov. 9:13-18 and the 'strange woman' passages). This level of interpretation does not override the literal interpretation, but stands alongside it. On this metaphorical level, you should separate yourself from Woman Folly (sharing the אִשָּׁה זָרָה frame of figure 11), whose words sound attractive, but who will lead you to death in the end (cf. figure 13). She is a danger against which you should be protected (cf. figure 12), because she will lead you away from your God-given partner for a good life, Woman Wisdom.

5.2. Economic Proverbs

A second group of four proverbs discussing the זָר / נָכְרִי are situated in the economic domain. Although details differ, all of them treat the same basic scenario: all of them serve as warnings to refrain from standing surety for a stranger. Like the 'strange woman' proverbs, these surety proverbs are scattered across different collections (Prov. 6:1-5, Prov. 11:15, Prov. 20:16, Prov. 27:13). The synonymous parallelism of נָכְרִי and זָר that was typical of the 'strange woman' proverbs also occurs here, in 20:16 and 27:13, but 6:1 pairs the זָר with the רֵעַ ('neighbour, friend') instead.[55]

5.2.1. Exegesis

Proverbs 6:1-5

1	*My son, if you stand surety for your neighbour,*	בְּנִי אִם־עָרַבְתָּ לְרֵעֶךָ
	[if] you shake hands with a stranger	תָּקַעְתָּ לַזָּר כַּפֶּיךָ׃

[55] In 11:15, זָר in the first colon has no parallel in the second colon.

2	*you are ensnared in the words of your mouth,* *you are trapped in the words of your mouth.*	נוֹקַשְׁתָּ בְאִמְרֵי־פִיךָ נִלְכַּדְתָּ בְּאִמְרֵי־פִיךָ:
3	*Then do this, my son, and be delivered,* *for you came in the hand of your neighbour:* *Go, weary yourself, and press your neighbour!*	עֲשֵׂה זֹאת אֵפוֹא בְּנִי וְהִנָּצֵל כִּי בָאתָ בְכַף־רֵעֶךָ לֵךְ הִתְרַפֵּס וּרְהַב רֵעֶיךָ:
4	*You shall not give sleep to your eyes,* *and slumber to your eyelids.*	אַל־תִּתֵּן שֵׁנָה לְעֵינֶיךָ וּתְנוּמָה לְעַפְעַפֶּיךָ:
5	*Save yourself like a deer from the hand of the hunter,* *like a bird from the hand of the fowler.*	הִנָּצֵל כִּצְבִי מִיָּד צַיָּד[56] וּכְצִפּוֹר מִיַּד יָקוּשׁ:

Proverbs 6:1 evokes ערב ('standing surety') as a situation in which potential dealings with a זָר take place. The scenario envisioned in Proverbs 6:1-5 pictures the זָר in the role of debtor, and the son as a potential filler in the role of guarantor. Because this scenario is in the background of all economic proverbs mentioning the stranger, it is useful to clarify it by constructing its frame (figure 15).

De Blois defines the Qal of ערב as an "action by which humans [...] take responsibility for someone else, taking upon themselves that person's obligations or vouching for that person's security."[57] It is a complex economic transaction involving three human parties: the Creditor (C), the Debtor (D) and the Guarantor (G), and two material entities: the Loan (L) and the Pledge (P). It starts as a basic indebtment scenario. The creditor gives a loan (in money or goods) to the debtor, who is in an economically dire situation. The debtor is obliged to pay back the loan after a set period. The ערב scenario comes into play when a third person enters the scene, the guarantor. The guarantor acts as a buffer between the creditor and the debtor.[58] He takes legal responsibility for the repayment of

[56] The MT of verse 5a seems incomplete. הִנָּצֵל כִּצְבִי מִיָּד "Save yourself like a deer from the hand" is not a complete sentence. Either there is a word missing, or the final word should be a different one. The reading מִיַּד צַיָּד ("from the hand of the hunter") seems the most likely original reading. The word צַיָּד was probably lost early in the transmission history due to homoioteleuton ("the close presence of words whose endings are either identical or similar in spelling" (Ellis R. Brotzman & Eric J. Tully, *Old Testament Textual Criticism: A Practical Introduction* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2016), 122.)). In this reconstructed text, the parallelism with the second colon is restored.

[57] De Blois, *Semantic Dictionary of Biblical Hebrew,* s.l. ערב.

[58] Tuinstra, *Spreuken deel 1* (POT), 153.

the loan.[59] If the debtor is unable to repay his debt, the guarantor pays a substitute of equal value (the pledge) to protect the debtor from having his property confiscated or even being sold into debt slavery.

ערב event
Slots:
C Creditor
D Debtor
G Guarantor
L Loan
P Pledge
Constraints:
L is property of **C**
D borrowed **L** from **C**
D is obliged to return **L** to **C**
G takes legal responsibility for **D**
G promises to **C** that **D** will return **L**
G allows **C** to take **P** as a substitute for **L** in case **D** does not return **L**

Figure 15: ערב frame

The grammatical structure of Proverbs 6:1-5 is contested. It is clear from the use of אִם that verse 1a starts a conditional sentence. However, it is unclear where the protasis ends and where the apodosis starts. Does the apodosis start in v. 1b, as in the LXX translation Υἱέ, ἐὰν ἐγγυήσῃ σὸν φίλον, παραδώσεις σὴν χεῖρα ἐχθρῷ ("Son, if you give surety to your friend, you will give your hand to the enemy")?[60] Or does אִם extend its force to a second (or even a third) protasis, with the apodosis starting in verse 3, signalled by אֲפָוֹא ("then").[61] How one understands the structure of this clause influences the interpretation.

[59] The idiom תקע כַּף (v. 1b) evokes the symbolic shaking or striking of hands accompanying this sub-event.

[60] Defended by Snijders, *The Meaning of* זָר, 83.

[61] Joüon & Muraoka, *Grammar of Biblical Hebrew,* § 167p. Multiple commentators (a.o. Fox (AB), Schipper (BKAT) and Loader (HCOT)) defend this option.

In the first case, verse 1 would imply that standing surety for a neighbour is in reality striking a deal with a stranger. In this reading, the contrast between 'neighbour' and 'stranger' relies on a negative view of outsiders. The thought that his goods or money finally end up in a stranger's pockets should repel the reader enough to abstain from standing surety for his neighbour. If outsiders are not viewed with suspicion, this effect is lost. This is made explicit by the LXX, which speaks about an 'enemy' (ἐχθρος) instead of a 'stranger'.

In case the apodosis starts in v. 3, two interpretations are possible. On the one hand, the text could be a general warning against standing surety. In that case, the identity of the רֵעַ and the זָר do not matter, they could even be the same person.[62] However, given the fact that this is the only place in Proverbs where רֵעַ and זָר are paired, this seems unlikely. This unusual pairing was probably intentional. Alternatively, standing surety for a neighbour and standing surety for a stranger are two different ways in which you can be ensnared in hasty commitment. In this scenario the pair זָר-רֵעַ is synthetic parallelism.[63] Do not vouch for someone you know, let alone for someone outside your community. Standing surety is already risky when you know the debtor. When the debtor is someone from outside your social circle, you cannot know whether he is trustworthy. Naively assuming that your pledge is safe with an outsider is rushing in as only fools can do.

The form הִתְרַפֵּס (v. 3b) is very obscure. The Hithpa'el of רפס only occurs once more in the OT (Ps. 68:31), in a very different context. HALOT does not even provide a definition, and proposes emendations for both texts. However, this is not necessary in this verse. There are multiple options to make sense of the Masoretic Text as it is. One either considers the Hithpa'el an intensive and reflexive form of the Qal רפס ('trample, tread') with the meaning 'totally trample oneself down' (metaphorically: 'humble oneself')[64] or connects it with the Akkadian cognate *rapāsu,* with the meaning 'weary oneself'.[65] I choose the second option, because that fits best in the context of the verses 3-5. If the son foolishly decides to be a guarantor for an (untrustworthy) stranger, he must do everything in his power to free himself from the shackles of his obligations. He must press the debtor constantly, exhausting himself and not getting rest until the matter is settled.

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[62] So Snijders, *The Meaning of* זָר, 83-84; Waltke, *Proverbs* (NICOT), 331.

[63] Tuinstra, *Spreuken deel 1* (POT), 154.

[64] Loader, *Proverbs 1-9* (HCOT), 259; Schipper, *Sprüche* (BKAT), 381.

[65] With the critical apparatus of the BHS and Tuinstra, *Spreuken deel 1* (POT), 155.

In any case, the father admonishes his son to stay far away from this situation, using colourful metaphors to get his point across. Whoever stands surety places himself in a position of double dependence. On the Creditor, who can stake a claim on his property, and on the Debtor, who can get him in trouble by wilfully refusing to repay his debt. "Once you have given surety, the earlier relationship of equality is warped because you have given your neighbour [...] power over you."[66] That situation should be avoided.

Proverbs 11:15

15	*One will suffer harm when he stands surety for a stranger,*	רַע־יֵרוֹעַ כִּי־עָרַב זָר
	but he who hates those who strike deals is carefree.	וְשֹׂנֵא תֹקְעִים בּוֹטֵחַ׃

This proverb does not add any new information compared to 6:1-5. The text evokes the same ערב frame (constructed above, figure 15). It repeats the warning against the risky business of standing surety for someone you do not know. Doing so will have negative consequences. Therefore, it is better to err on the side of caution, and avoid striking deals (to be a guarantor) entirely. There is no evidence that זָר has any ethnic connotation in this verse.

Proverbs 20:16 and 27:13

20:16	*Take his garment,*	לֻקַח־בִּגְדוֹ
	for he stood surety for a stranger,	כִּי־עָרַב זָר
	and seize it for foreigners.	וּבְעַד נָכְרִיָּם חַבְּלֵהוּ׃
27:13	*Take his garment,*	קַח־בִּגְדוֹ
	for he stood surety for a stranger,	כִּי־עָרַב זָר
	and seize it for a foreign woman.	וּבְעַד נָכְרִיָּה חַבְּלֵהוּ׃

These two verses are nearly identical. The only differences are the form of the infinitive (לֻקַח vs. קַח) and the benefactor of the 'seizing' in the second colon (נָכְרִים vs. נָכְרִיָּה). The first difference is purely morphological, but the second one is interesting for the current research. Who will receive the unfortunate guarantor's garment, 'foreigners' or 'a foreign woman'? These verses have often been harmonized. The Masoretes (through a Ketiv-Qere) and the Targum have made both verses about the 'foreign woman, while the Vulgate has

[66] Fox, *Proverbs 1-9* (AB), 213.

gone in the other direction, making both verses about foreigners. The bidirectionality of harmonization shows that the scribes were aware of the repetition, but it also shows that both verses were originally not identical. I will follow the consonantal MT in both cases.

The question remains whether the variation is deliberate and meaningful. Snijders thinks it is not. In his view the reading נָכְרִיָּה in 27:13 was caused by confusion between the 'surety proverbs' and the 'strange woman proverbs.'[67] This is unlikely, given the fact that there are no other 'surety proverbs' or 'strange woman proverbs' in the second Solomonic collection (Prov. 25-29). It seems more likely that these are two independently recorded variants of an oral proverb, in which the variations provide different nuances of meaning. Fox's suggestion that 27:13 implies that the debtor owes a prostitute her wages is far-fetched,[68] given the marginal role of common prostitution in the framing of the foreign woman (see 5.1.). Instead, נָכְרִיָּה in 27:13 should be interpreted as an intensification of the otherness of the נָכְרִים of 20:16 (synthetic parallelism instead of synonymous parallelism). Not only is she someone who is foreign to your social group, but she is also other in terms of gender.

This proverb pair looks at the ערב event from another angle. Fox thinks it quotes the judge or creditor giving the command to seize the guarantor's pledge.[69] He also notes the logical gap between cause and effect. The author goes straight from standing surety for a stranger to seizing the pledge. The intermediate term (the stranger did not repay his loan) is missing. This might be intentional. "The author wants us to think of the act of providing surety as the immediate cause of the confiscation [...] The tightness of the causality is reinforced by omitting the intermediate step, the stranger's default on the loan."[70]

Alternatively, the imperative in 20:16a (27:13a) should not be interpreted as a judge's command, but as a direct command by the sage to his pupil. If the pupil sees someone who stood surety for a stranger, who is not bound by the obligations of kinship, he can just as well take the pledge straight away. After all, the stranger has no incentive to make any effort to repay his loan. He might not care one bit for the guarantor's fate; at least, he is not socially pressured to do so.[71] The stranger has nothing to lose. He cannot lose face

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[67] L.A. Snijders, *Spreuken: Een praktische Bijbelverklaring.* Tekst & Toelichting (Kampen: Kok, 1984), 171.

[68] Fox, *Proverbs 10-31* (AB), 809.

[69] Fox, *Proverbs 10-31* (AB), 669.

[70] Fox, *Proverbs 10-31* (AB), 669-670.

[71] Snijders, *Spreuken* (T&T), 134.

and cannot put his family to shame.[72] If the hasty guarantor is stupid enough not to see that, he must bear the consequences. That is the harsh logic of this line of interpretation.

No matter the precise interpretation, this proverb pair once again reinforces the connection between being guarantor for a stranger and negative consequences. Indeed, standing surety for a stranger will lead to total financial ruin. The mention of the garment (בֶּגֶד) as pledge is deliberate, recalling Exodus 22:25-27 and Deuteronomy 24:10-13, where taking a piece of clothing as pledge is associated with extreme poverty. If someone's garment has to be taken, that means there is nothing else left to take. If such a vivid depiction will not deter the reader, nothing will.

5.2.2. Framing the Stranger in the Economic Proverbs

זָר / נָכְרִי

Attributes:

E Experiencer

G Group of speaker

M Marker of group membership

S Separation

Constraints:

E is conceived by the speaker as outside **G** because of a lack of **M**

As a result, the speaker should practice **S**

Figure 16: Conceptual frame of זָר / נָכְרִי

The image of the זָר / נָכְרִי in the economic proverbs is consistent with the conceptual frame of these words constructed above (3.3.3., repeated in figure 16). The level of group membership with regards to which the זָר / נָכְרִי is an outsider is not expressed explicitly in these proverbs, but because of their daily life setting of loaning property it is plausible that the micro-level of the kinship group or the local community is in view. There are no direct indications that the stranger should be seen as a stranger in the ethnic sense. The proverbs consistently stress the need for separation from the זָר / נָכְרִי in the economic domain, especially in matters of surety (the scenario evoked by the ערב frame). This appeal

[72] Snijders, *Spreuken* (T&T), 230.

is reinforced by negative judgments about their trustworthiness. Standing surety for a stranger will lead to financial ruin. When you take responsibility for the debts of someone from outside your social circle, he is not bound by the obligations of kinship. He does not feel the incentive to do everything he can to repay you, and might forfeit his payment without any regrets.[73] For that reason, caution is advisable. Being a guarantor is ill-advised in general (cf. Prov. 17:18), but especially when a נָכְרִי or זָר fills one of the other slots of the ערב event.

5.3. The Stranger as 'Other'

The third and smallest category of texts uses the words נָכְרִי/זָר to refer to the stranger as 'other' (Prov. 5:17, 14:10, 27:2). In these texts, anyone except the speaker himself could be זָר or נָכְרִי.

5.3.1. Exegesis

Proverbs 5:15-18

15	*Drink water from your cistern,*	שְׁתֵה־מַיִם מִבּוֹרֶךָ
	flowing out of your well	וְנֹזְלִים מִתּוֹךְ בְּאֵרֶךָ:
16	*Should your sources flow over outside,*	יָפוּצוּ מַעְיְנֹתֶיךָ חוּצָה
	and your water channels on the squares?	בָּרְחֹבוֹת פַּלְגֵי־מָיִם:
17	*May they be for you alone,*	יִהְיוּ־לְךָ לְבַדֶּךָ
	and not for strangers with you	וְאֵין לְזָרִים אִתָּךְ:
18	*May your spring be blessed,*	יְהִי־מְקוֹרֶךָ בָרוּךְ
	and take pleasure from the wife of your youth.	וּשְׂמַח מֵאֵשֶׁת נְעוּרֶיךָ:

The syntactical structure of verse 16 is debated. Three ways of reading the verse have been proposed. Some commentators choose to emend the verse, adding a negation (אַל or פֶּן) to יָפוּצוּ, in line with several manuscripts of the LXX.[74] Others read the verse as an affirmative statement.[75] The problem with this reading is that the water imagery is completely changed from verse 15 to verse 16, and is reversed again in verse 17. In verse 15 and 17, the water should be contained, while verse 16 in the affirmative reading makes the water

[73] Snijders, *Spreuken* (T&T), 134.

[74] E.g. Fox, *Proverbs 1-9* (AB), 200.

[75] E.g. Robert B. Chisholm Jr., ""Drink Water from Your Own Cistern": A Literary Study of Proverbs 5:15-23," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 157, 2000: 407; Snijders, *The Meaning of זָר*, 93; Tuinstra, *Spreuken deel 1* (POT), 144.

flow freely. A third group reads the verse as an unmarked rhetorical question, expecting a negative answer.[76] The weakness of this reading is that an interrogative particle like הֲ would be expected in that case.[77] However, the use of the interrogative is not obligatory, and it is in fact sometimes omitted.[78] In context, this reading is most plausible, because it keeps the metaphor of keeping your water for yourself intact.

Verse 18b is the hermeneutical key to this passage. The water imagery of v. 15-17 is a metaphor for marital bliss and sexual enjoyment within the boundaries of marriage. Similar imagery is used in the Song of Solomon: the woman is a well (Song 4:15) and the man drinks when he makes love to her (Song 7:9, 8:2).[79] But the miracle of love can only be enjoyed fully in a context of mutual exclusivity. The man is reminded to drink water from his own cistern (v. 15), that is: to find sexual pleasure and satisfaction only with his own wife.[80] That is more than enough for him, as the water is *streaming* from his well, which the medieval rabbi HaMeiri (1249-1315) takes to be an allusion to "the constant daily renewal and increase of love between him and her."[81] Similarly, she must also be exclusively committed to him. Her sexuality should not overflow on the streets and on the public squares (v.16).[82] It should be kept private, it is for him alone, not for other men (v. 17). The זָרִים in verse 17 are thus all men except the own partner, i.e. everyone who is a stranger to the marriage bond between husband and wife. Husband and wife are members of an exclusive group of two, to which no other members should be admitted.

Proverbs 14:10

10	*A heart knows its own bitterness,*	לֵב יוֹדֵעַ מָרַת נַפְשׁוֹ
	and in its joy a stranger cannot get involved.	וּבְשִׂמְחָתוֹ לֹא־יִתְעָרַב זָר

This proverb limits the reference group over against which the זָר is defined even more. It consists only of one individual: the self. All others are זָרִים, the stranger as non-self. The

[76] E.g. Schipper, *Sprüche (Proverbia) 1-15* (BKAT), 360.

[77] Fox, *Proverbs 1-9* (AB), 200, sees that as sufficient reason to reject this reading. I do not concur.

[78] Joüon & Muraoka, *A Grammar of Biblical Hebrew,* § 161a.

[79] Loader, *Proverbs 1-9* (HCOT), 243.

[80] Chisholm, "Drink Water from Your Own Cistern," 407.

[81] Cited in Fox, *Proverbs 1-9* (AB), 199.

[82] For modern readers, it is strange that the woman is not directly addressed in v. 16-17, but is still referred to as 'your sources' and 'your water channels', from the perspective of the man. However, this fits in a patriarchal society, in which husbands were responsible for guarding the chastity of their wives.

proverb asserts that all human beings are actually strangers to each other in some sense. They might belong to the same nation, the same tribe, the same kinship group, or even the same nuclear family, but at the inner-most level, they are still 'other' to each other. There are parts of the self that are separated from the experience of others; they do not feel what I feel and will never have unmediated access to the processes of my psyche. As Bruce Waltke puts it: "One's emotional-intellectual-religious-moral motions are too complex, too inward, and too individualistic to be experienced by others or even to represent them adequately to others (cf. 1 Cor. 2:11). Only God ultimately knows the human heart (Prov. 15:11; 16:2; 21:2; 24:12)."[83]

Proverbs 27:2

2	*Let a stranger praise you, and not your own mouth;* *a foreigner and not your own lips.*	יְהַלֶּלְךָ זָר וְלֹא־פִיךָ נָכְרִי וְאַל־שְׂפָתֶיךָ׃

At first sight, it seems like זָר and נָכְרִי are both used in the individual sense (discussed above in Prov. 14:10). You should not praise yourself, but let someone else praise you. However, whereas זָר is sometimes used in that way, it would be unique for נָכְרִי to be used for a 'stranger to a group of one' (another individual). If this was meant, רֵעַ would have been more likely as a parallel for זָר in the second colon. Therefore, it is possible that both terms refer to the stranger as someone outside the family. They are people who have no vested interest in praising you – they have no kinship ties or dependency relationships to honour – so if they do praise you, that is all the more meaningful.[84] Praise from outsiders signals a quality of character so great that even those who are not connected to you notice it, while self-praise is nothing but vanity. Still, the salient comparison in this proverb is between praise of self and praise by 'strangers', so the broad interpretation of זָר / נָכְרִי as generic 'other' is also plausible.

5.3.2. Framing the stranger as 'other'

The frame of the זָר / נָכְרִי as someone outside the speaker's reference group from whom the speaker separates himself (figure 16, 5.2.2.) remains intact. Although not obvious at first sight, the process of separation still functions in these proverbs. By referring to people as זָר / נָכְרִי, the speaker emphasizes that there is distance between them. There is

[83] Waltke, *Proverbs 1-15* (NICOT), 590.

[84] Snijders, *Spreuken* (T&T), 170.

something that separates the נָכְרִי / זָר from the speaker and the reference group he belongs to. However, that separation from the stranger does not necessarily correspond to negative judgment about that stranger's character. The stranger might just be an 'other' in the neutral sense. The marker of group membership on the basis of which the stranger is separated from the speaker/experiencer is not necessarily a positive trait which the other lacks. Just the bare fact of non-inclusion in a marriage covenant (5:17) or your closest family circle (possibly 27:2), without accompanying negative stereotypes, is enough to be considered a זָר. Even non-identity with yourself as person (see 14:10, possibly 27:2) suffices. In that case, the זָר's otherness is defined against a reference group of one: the individual speaker. Separation between self and non-self is a fact of life that cannot be ignored, showing that strangeness and separation are not negative in themselves. זָר can be a neutral, descriptive way to refer to any other who is not you.

5.4. Conclusion

In the book of Proverbs, the stranger has three faces. All of them are connected to the נָכְרִי / זָר, the stranger from whom you should separate yourself. Two of them are negative, the other is neutral. The more positive side of strangeness in the Pentateuch, the גֵּר, has no counterpart in the book of Proverbs. The stranger in Proverbs is:

- The אִשָּׁה זָרָה / נָכְרִיָּה, a strange and dangerous woman. She is strange because she belongs to another kinship group, or is married to another man, and is therefore out of bounds. She is dangerous, because she invites you to cross that boundary, and thus threatens the order of life. If you engage in sexually transgressive behaviour with her, you are in danger of a) losing your reputation in your own community, b) losing your wealth to her husband's kinship network, and c) losing your precious life. Therefore, you should stay far away from her. The strange woman frame can also function as a metaphor for the danger of folly.
- The זָר, someone from another kinship network, whom you should approach with caution in the economic domain. More precisely, you should refrain from standing surety for him. You do not know him, and he is not bound to you by ties of kinship, so you do not know whether he can be trusted. The safe course of action – so the sage advises – is to assume that he cannot. Do not take responsibility for his debts, because that will lead to financial ruin.
- The זָר, the 'other' as non-self. זָר in this sense is a neutral term, just used to distinguish between those inside and outside the speaker's inner circle. This is

strangeness at the smallest scale: the stranger as someone other than your direct family, your marriage partner, or even yourself.

6. The Contribution of Proverbs to a Conceptualization of Strangeness in the OT

Not all strangers are the same. An analysis of the conceptualization of the stranger in the Pentateuch (chapter 3) and the book of Proverbs (chapter 5) showed that the Old Testament contains multiple semantic frames for strangers, with considerable differences between the corpora. In this concluding chapter, the frames from both corpora are compared, with particular attention to the contribution of Proverbs to the conceptualization of the stranger in the Old Testament. After a short recap of the results of this study (6.1.), the similarities and differences between the stranger in the Pentateuch and Proverbs are evaluated (6.2.), after which an overview of different levels of strangeness is presented (6.3.). The chapter ends with some suggestions for further research (6.4.).

6.1. Recap: The Stranger in the Pentateuch and Proverbs

6.1.1. The Stranger in the Pentateuch

The Pentateuch distinguishes between two kinds of strangers: the גֵּר (framed as the Agentive of the גור frame, figure 17) and the זָר / נָכְרִי (framed in figure 18).

גור event

Slots:

A Agentive

O Community of origin

D Community of destination

C Calamity

I Integration

Constraints:

A leaves **O** behind because of **C**

A settles in **D** and lives there for an extended period of time

A is socially integrated (**I**) in **D**

Figure 17: The גור frame

The גֵּר is an outsider moving in (cf. 3.2.). Circumstances (e.g. war, famine, economic misfortune) force him to leave his home community and kinship network and settle in another community. He lives in that community semi-permanently, and adapts to the local customs and way of life. The community of destination integrates him into their social fabric as a marginal community member. Secondary semantic frames with which the גֵּר is often associated (social protection and cultic integration, cf. 3.2.3.) fill in that picture. In concrete terms, a גֵּר in Israel is regarded as socially vulnerable because he lacks a self-evident, natural social network on which he can rely for support (similar to the widow or the orphan). For that reason, the Israelites were not allowed to oppress גֵּרִים, and גֵּרִים have access to several economic support measures (e.g. gleaning). Another aspect of the integration of the גֵּר is a series of measures that allow גֵּרִים to participate in Israel's cultic life. Most Israelite feasts and cultic sacrifices are open to גֵּרִים on a voluntary basis, if they first meet basic rules of religious observance. Although the גֵּר is an ethnic other, the texts witness to a dynamic making him increasingly similar to the native-born Israelite, without fully erasing differences.

זָר / נָכְרִי
Attributes:
E Experiencer
G Group of speaker
M Marker of group membership
S Separation
Constraints:
E is conceived by the speaker as outside **G** because of a lack of **M**
As a result, the speaker should practice **S**

Figure 18: The זָר / נָכְרִי frame

The other type of stranger, the נָכְרִי or זָר, is the outsider that should stay outside (cf. 3.3.). He is perceived as standing outside the covenant community of Israel, and therefore should be kept at a distance. A נָכְרִי or זָר is usually an ethnic and religious other. The adjectival form נֵכָר is used to refer disparagingly to 'foreign gods'. Given the strong

emphasis on exclusive worship of YHWH, this reflects negatively on this type of stranger. Foreign nations are often associated with social and religious practices that are reprehensible in the eyes of the Israelites (e.g. idolatry and breaking sexual taboos). The Pentateuch uses this rhetorical strategy to ensure a maximum of separation between the Israelites and the נָכְרִי or זָר. They are strangers threatening the order of the community. Therefore, Israel should keep itself mentally (and physically) apart from them. Israel should protect its identity as YHWH's covenant community. Hostility towards strangers who are not willing to adapt to their way of life is a by-product of that worldview.

6.1.2. The Stranger in Proverbs

An analysis of the framing of the stranger in Proverbs (chapter 5) yielded a different image. Proverbs has no counterpart of the גֵּר. Only instances of נָכְרִי and זָר are found. Those instances are grouped in three types (in descending order of prevalence): the strange woman (cf. 5.1.), the stranger as debtor (cf. 5.2.), and the stranger as 'other' (cf. 5.3.). The second and third types evoke the same frame as the זָר / נָכְרִי in the Pentateuch (see figure 18 above), but the level of group membership is different.

The 'surety proverbs' envision a situation where it is possible to enter into economic bonds with strangers. The sage cautions against standing surety for a זָר, making yourself responsible for his debts. This זָר could be anyone from outside your local community or kinship network. It is someone who you do not know, who is not bound to you by the obligations of kinship. In the economic domain, זָר has a negative connotation. Because he is unknown, he has not earned your trust, and therefore you should avoid doing business with him.

In the 'stranger as other' proverbs, the reference group shrinks even further. A זָר or נָכְרִי can be an outsider to the marriage covenant between husband and wife (Prov. 5:17) or even any other as non-self (Prov. 14:10, 27:2). In this group of proverbs, outsider terminology is used neutrally, without any negative connotation.

The figure of the strange woman evokes a slightly different frame. The אִשָּׁה זָרָה / נָכְרִיָּה frame (figure 19) is a daughter frame of the זָר / נָכְרִי frame, sharing in multiple of its attributes. An אִשָּׁה זָרָה / נָכְרִיָּה is out of bounds because she belongs to another man. She has marital and kinship ties to another, and falls under the authority of her husband. In Proverbs 1-9, she consistently acts as a filler in three events. She is framed as a danger against which young men should be protected (cf. the שמר מִן frame, 5.1.2.). She is

characterized by her misleading, flattering speech, which makes sin seem like an attractive possibility (cf. the חלק אֲמָרִים frame, 5.1.2.). And the sin she is particularly associated with is adultery (cf. the נאף frame, 5.1.2.). In sum, she is a woman belonging to someone else who entices a young man to commit adultery with her. For that reason she is considered strange in the negative sense; an outsider with whom you should not associate. Her strangeness is not connected to her ethnicity, but to the fact that she stands outside the sphere of legitimate social relationships and threatens to break in.

אִשָּׁה זָרָה / נָכְרִיָּה

Attributes:

E Experiencer (+female)

G Group of speaker

M Marital/kinship ties

S Separation

Constraints:

E is conceived by the speaker as outside **G** because of a lack of **M**

As a result, the speaker should practice **S**

Figure 19: אִשָּׁה זָרָה / נָכְרִיָּה frame

6.2. Evaluating the Differences

The preceding summary reveals several key differences between the conceptualization of the stranger in the Pentateuch and Proverbs. Genre is an important factor in the explanation of these differences. Most of the references to the stranger in the Pentateuch are found in legal material. This is a top-down genre, designed to regulate Israel's behaviour. Presented as divine revelation, the Pentateuchal laws give guidelines how Israel should live as YHWH's covenant community. They are YHWH's elect who are to be holy, set apart from other nations, and keeping the commandments is the way to accomplish that. That set of circumstances shapes the texts' view on strangers. Israel as covenant community is the reference group providing the standard of evaluation for outsiders, who are mainly presented as the ethnic or religious other. Written from the perspective of Israel as an ethno-religious community, most of its discussion of the stranger revolves around questions of community identity. Who is the insider and who is the outsider? How should

the insiders treat the outsiders? How does one change one's status from outsider to insider? To what extent is that even possible? The answers to these questions are nuanced: it depends on who the stranger is and how he/she relates to Israel and its God. When speaking about the stranger, the Pentateuch tends the fences of Israel as YHWH's covenant community.

On the other hand, Proverbs is not interested in maintaining the boundaries of the community; it does not care how the community determines who is in and who is out. Israel as covenant community remains out of view. The proverbs about the stranger look at strangeness on a smaller scale, in the local community. This is in line with its genre. Wisdom literature is concerned with navigating everyday life, finding the right course of action in particular circumstances (cf. 4.1.1.). Much of its content arose from parental education: a father teaching his son what was wise, good, and proper (cf. 4.3.2.-4.3.3.). However, that does not mean that it is not theological. These proverbs relate to God as the creator and upholder of creation order, who is in control of the course of things (cf. Prov. 16:4, 9, 33; 20:24; 21:30-31). Life in a community is perceived as an ordered system, and a good life is lived in accordance with that order (cf. 4.1.1.).

The image of the stranger in Proverbs should also be considered against this background. The stranger in Proverbs is not the ethnic other, but the stranger on a micro-level: someone outside your extended kinship network and local community; someone who is not part of your social inner circle. These are the strangers you can meet every day on the street, calling for your attention in a negative way. The book's focus is on those strangers who threaten God's order in the everyday community. It is concerned with the appropriateness of relations within the system of life. Therefore, the general tenor of its advice is cautious, or even hostile: guard yourself when dealing with them. In that way, the reader is reminded to be careful to live with the grain of creation order, as it presents itself in the structure of the local community. Proverbs has no place for the stranger as an *abstractum.* Its image of the stranger is tailored to small-scale, particular encounters.

However, the conspicuous absence of the גֵּר in Proverbs still remains. The social universe of Proverbs seemingly does not include the גֵּר as a category. Why are individual encounters with גֵּרִים never thematized in Proverbs? Do they not have a place in the order of the community? While there are many texts discussing social protection (cf. figure 7, 3.2.3.) in Proverbs (e.g. Prov. 13:23, 14:21, 14:31, 15:25, 17:5, 19:17, 21:13, 22:9, 22:16, 22:22, 28:27, 29:7, 29:14, 31:9, 31:20), none of them have the גֵּר as its subject. Remarkable

indeed, given the fact that the גֵּר is one of the default fillers of the benefactive slot in Pentateuchal social protection laws. Maybe the גֵּר's absence can be explained by the fact that nearly all proverbs dealing with social protection describe its benefactive in very general terms (דַּל 'low, poor, helpless, powerless, insignificant' or אֶבְיוֹן 'poor').[1] Instead of concluding that the authors of Proverbs were opposed to providing social protection to גֵּרִים, it seems better to hypothesize that the גֵּר was included in these general categories. That hypothesis is supported by the lack of instances of the other default fillers of the benefactive slot of the social protection frame (the orphan and the widow). In the end, this can be connected to the bottom-up perspective of the book of Proverbs. When viewed through the lens of individual right behaviour in daily life, a needy person's exact social standing in the community does not matter much. What matters is that he or she suffers an acute, pressing need that needs to be met. The fact that social protection and care should be given is more important than the legal distinctions of who is worthy to receive that care. Those distinctions might function in the background, but they are not put in the spotlight. Future research is needed to substantiate this line of thinking further.

6.3. Levels of Affiliation

Research on the stranger in the Old Testament tends to equate the OT view of the stranger with the dualistic, ethnicity-based image from the Pentateuch.[2] Occurrences of outsider terminology in other parts of the OT are usually only discussed insofar as they conform to this image. By looking at the contribution of the book of Proverbs in detail using historical-grammatical exegesis and frame-semantic analysis, this study has shown that the conceptualization of the stranger in the OT is much broader than that. Far from being irrelevant, the book of Proverbs deepens our understanding of who the stranger is in the OT. Much more than the Pentateuch, it shows that strangeness is not synonymous with ethnic otherness. Proverbs does not follow the paradigm of the modern Westphalian nation-state. However, instead of universalizing – an epithet often attached to the book – Proverbs particularizes the stranger. Local affiliations play an important role in determining who is an insider and who is an outsider. This is the most important contribution of Proverbs to the conceptualization of the stranger in the Old Testament.

[1] Except 15:25, which refers to the widow.

[2] With the exception of L.A. Snijders' 1953 PhD thesis *The Meaning of זָר in the Old Testament.*

This should serve as an incentive to research whether this local level is also present in other parts of the Old Testament.[3]

Strangeness is non-inclusion in a sphere of affiliation, but the reference group is fluid. Strangeness and familiarity exist on a spectrum, stretching from the most private level of the self to the all-encompassing level of humanity (Figure 20). All of these levels play a role in defining one's identity. That means every person you meet is an insider and an outsider at the same time. Which of those two sides is foregrounded, depends on the situation.

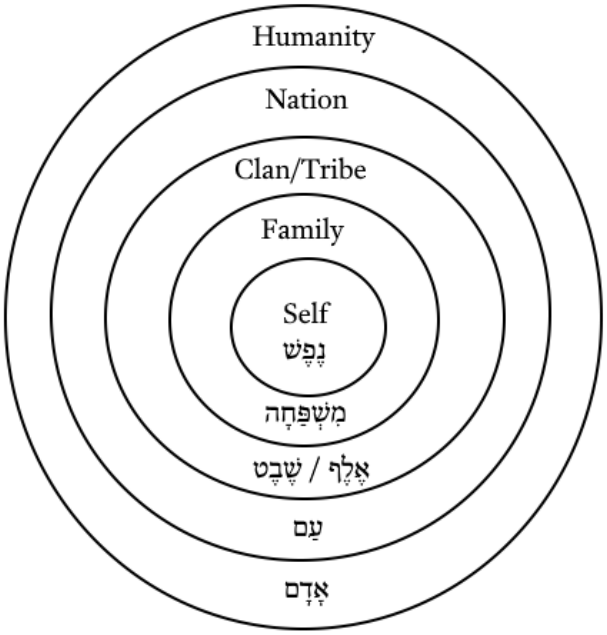

Figure 20: Levels of affiliation

Theologically, this concept can be tied to the typical wisdom notion of creation order. It reminds us that this order is not a monolith, but a multi-faceted, multi-dimensional whole. God ordered His creation in such a way that multiple spheres of community and affiliation are present in it. On each of these levels, different dynamics of inclusion and exclusion are at play. Proverbs directs our attention to the smaller-scale levels, but these levels are embedded in a larger whole. They function as part of a system in which all of humanity is created in God's image (cf. 3.1.1.), yet is divided into nations (cf. 3.1.2.). They also function as part of a system in which God elected Israel as His covenant people, yet

[3] As Mark Glanville, *Adopting the Stranger,* has already done for the גֵּר in Deuteronomy.

keeping its borders open to outsiders in need who are willing to share in life with YHWH (cf. 3.2.), while separating itself from those who are hostile to YHWH's ways (cf. 3.3.). Proverbs' cautionary advice about keeping distance from strangers who are potentially dangerous to the structure of the local community can only be understood within that context.

6.4. Suggestions for Further Research

- Because of time constraints, this study was limited to a comparison of two biblical corpora. To complete the canonical image of the stranger in the Old Testament, similar frame-semantic studies of the conceptualization of the stranger in the rest of the Writings, the Former Prophets, and the Latter Prophets should be conducted. For Christian Biblical theologians, an extension of this type of research to the conceptualization of the stranger in the New Testament could also be desirable.
- Comparison with extrabiblical sources from the ancient Near East is useful to highlight where Israel's conceptualization of the stranger agreed with common ancient Near Eastern practice, and where the Old Testament is distinctive.[4]
- Recognizing the role of more local levels in the dynamics of strangeness in the Old Testament opens up new avenues to include texts that were previously rarely discussed. One could think, for example, about the recurring topic of estrangement between close family members in the patriarchal narratives (Abraham and Lot, Isaak and Ishmael, Jacob and Esau, Joseph and his brothers), texts discussing the relationships between the Israelite tribes (e.g. Num. 32 & Josh. 22), or the special position of the priests and the Levites within Israel. If such texts are analysed through the lens of strangeness and correlated with texts about ethnic strangers, that could give a more multifaceted image of the concept of strangeness. Additionally, some texts that were generally thought to be about the ethnic stranger may be open to a more local reading as well. A detailed analysis of the role of more localized levels of affiliation (family, clan, tribe) in insider-outsider dynamics outside the book of Proverbs is therefore desirable.
- The insider-outsider dynamics researched in this study do not stand on their own. They are part of the broader social dynamics of the world of the Old Testament.

[4] Part of this work has already been done by Markus Zehnder, *Umgang mit Fremden,* 542-554, who compares the way Israel and Assyria treated (ethnic) foreigners.

Placing this research in this broader context, especially focusing on how different books of the Old Testament thematize social inequality, would deepen the understanding of the meaning of the different conceptualizations of the stranger within the social universe of the text.

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