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Metaphorical and literal readings of aphorisms in the Book of Proverbs

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Abstract

Starting with a recently proposed thesis that the key to recognizing the coherence of Proverbs' discourse is seen in an appreciation of the text's figurative interpretive possibilities, it is here argued that criticism of the Book of Proverbs is not well served by an "overly figurative" reading. A detailed analysis of the text substantiates the argument that even as a hermeneutical key to the anthology as a whole, it does not warrant a reading of aphorisms. It is further contended by means of illustrations from aphorisms within the poem that difficulties arise when such a reading is attempted on any appreciable scale. As a corollary, illustrations of literal readings are necessary, so that such an overriding hermeneutical perspective cannot be convincing. Reading metaphorically is another, notably a creative act independent of whether its "correctness" is argued from the redactional frame or the possible relationship of the collected aphorisms to folk sayings.

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A FEW NOTES ON [Hdotu]UNAYN'S TRANSLATION AND IBN AL-NAF S'

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