

**AGE AS CORRELATE OF WISDOM IN ISRAELITE AND YORUBA WISDOM  
TRADITIONS**

**BY**

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## ABSTRACT

The relationship between chronological age and wisdom has been preserved in Israelite and Yoruba wisdom traditions. Previous studies on Israelite and Yoruba wisdom traditions focused on their origin, development, attributes, purpose and sources. However, the similarities between Yoruba understanding of wisdom and age, and that of Israelite literary traditions have not been adequately explored. The perspectives of wisdom and age in Yoruba and Israelite traditions were compared with a view to identifying the divergence and convergence in the two traditions.

Adamo's African Cultural Hermeneutics, which relates biblical texts to the African context, provided the framework. Hokmah (Books of Ecclesiastes, Proverbs and Job), referred to as Israelite wisdom literature, and 30 purposively selected Yoruba wisdom proverbs were the primary data. Biblical texts were subjected to exegetical analysis while Yoruba proverbs were transliterated. Historical-critical method was utilised in the interpretation of both Hokmah and the selected Yoruba proverbs.

The correlation between age and wisdom is theological in Israelite wisdom literature, but communal in traditional Yoruba sociocultural setting. In Israelite wisdom literature, wisdom is generated in a rabbi-pupil relationship grounded in the fear of God (Proverbs. 1:7 and 15:33), while in Yoruba tradition it is generated within the ambit of family down to the entire community. Israelite wisdom tradition situates elderly wisdom within chronological and sapiential framework, but Yoruba tradition extends it to the assemblage of ancestral forces and spiritual agents operative in the life of a young person. Israelite wisdom literature provides three plausible arenas where sages work - the home, school and court, but Yoruba sages work only in the home and court. Israelites do not have the youth among the rabbi, but the Yoruba often accommodate and incorporate young people with *oye* (insight) into the council of elders and courts of the Oba. The two traditions consider wisdom as product of experience, sacrosanct in recognising an elder. While Israelite wisdom tradition says wisdom is with the aged and understanding in the length of days (Job 12:12), Yoruba tradition confirms that '*b'-m[d3 bq lqs[ b7 zgbz, k0 l4 lqk87sz b7 zgbz*' (if a child has as many cloths as the elder, he cannot have as many rags). Both traditions, however, affirm that the accumulation of experience does not automatically activate wisdom in adulthood. Israelite wisdom tradition confirms that great men are not always wise; wisdom could also be found in the youths (Job 32: 9; Ecclesiastes.4:13). Yoruba tradition also establishes that '*zgbz 0 k'[gb-n*' (age does not define wisdom) and that '*[m[d3 gb-n zgbz gb-n la fi dq Il2]If2*' (the collective wisdom of the aged and young led to the founding of Ife). Wisdom depends on the individual's ability to integrate life experiences in a reflective manner, which is not determined by age.

Age is not the sole determinant of wisdom in Israelite and Yoruba wisdom traditions; the integration of experience and reflection is paramount. The virtuous qualities in youths and elders should be harnessed for the benefit of society.

**Keywords:** Age and wisdom, Hokmah, Yoruba wisdom proverbs

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**May, 2019**

## **CERTIFICATION**

I certify that Iyanda Abel Olatoye, in the Department of Religious Studies, University of Ibadan, carried out this work under my supervision.

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**Date**

## **DEDICATION**

This work is dedicated to the Trinity: God, the father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>Titles</b>	<b>Pages</b>
Title Page	i
Certification	ii
Dedication	iii
Acknowledgements	iv
Abstract	vi
Table of Contents	vii
<b>Chapter One: General Introduction</b>	
<b>1.0</b> Background to the study	1
<b>1.1</b> Statement of the Problem	3
<b>1.2</b> Purpose of the Study	4
<b>1.3</b> Significance of the Study	4
<b>1.4</b> Scope of the Study	5
<b>1.5</b> Research Method	5
Theoretical Framework	
<b>1.6</b> Clarification of Terms	9
<b>1.6.1</b> Wisdom//Wisdom Literature	9
<b>1.6.2</b> Age: Mental/Chronological	10
<b>1.6.3</b> Hebrew/Israel/Jew	11
<b>Chapter Two: Literature Review</b>	
<b>2.0</b> Introduction	13
<b>2.1</b> Origin and Development of Wisdom in Israel	13
<b>2.2</b> Wisdom among the Yoruba People	32
<b>2.3</b> Conclusion	47

### **Chapter Three: Historical Background of Israelite Wisdom Tradition**

<b>3.0</b>	Introduction	49
<b>3.1</b>	The Ancient Near East as Possible Background for Israel's Wisdom Tradition	49
<b>3.2</b>	The Origin and Development of Wisdom Tradition in Ancient Israel	51
<b>3.3</b>	Wisdom Literature in Ancient Israel	60
<b>3.4</b>	Conclusion	62

### **Chapter Four: Analysis of the Book of Job and Proverbs in Relation to Age and Wisdom**

<b>4.0</b>	Introduction	63
<b>4.1</b>	Literary Background of the Books of Job and Proverbs	63
<b>4.2</b>	Age and Wisdom in Job and Proverbs: An Exegetical Exploration	72
<b>4.3</b>	Conclusion	78

### **Chapter Five: Wisdom in Yor6bq Context**

<b>5.0</b>	Introduction	80
<b>5.1</b>	Origin of the Yor6bq People	80
<b>5.2</b>	Wisdom in Yor6bq Perspective	82
<b>5.3</b>	Conclusion	96

### **Chapter Six: Age as Correlate of Wisdom in Israelite and Yor6bq Wisdom Traditions**

<b>6.0</b>	Introduction	98
<b>6.1</b>	Possible Historical Origin of Hebrew and Yor6bq Cultural Affinities	98
<b>6.2</b>	Age as Correlate of Wisdom in Israelite and Yor6bq Wisdom Traditions	101
<b>6.3</b>	Implication of the Traditional Belief for Modern Perspective	103
<b>6.4</b>	Data Analysis and Discussion of Findings.	104



6.5	Conclusion	123
-----	------------	-----

## **Chapter Seven: Summary, Conclusion and Recommendation**

7.0	Summary of Study	124
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7.1	General Conclusion	131
-----	--------------------	-----

7.2	Recommendation	131
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### **Bibliography**

### **Appendix(s):**

Appendix I: List of Subjects Interviewed

Appendix II: A Sample of Interview Questions

Appendix III: A Sample of Questionnaire

Appendix IV: List of Selected Yoruba Wisdom Proverbs.

## CHAPTER ONE

### GENERAL INTRODUCTION

#### 1.0 Background to the Study

Wisdom is not only in existence with mankind but it is also peculiar to humanity<sup>1</sup>. One of the most interesting features of Old Testament is its remarkable diversity of content. It is a selection from a wider literature, the rest of which have perished.<sup>2</sup> The literature, as Bernhard remarks, reflects the life and faith, the religious experience, and thought of the historical Israel.<sup>3</sup> The dominant theme of these sacred writings is the election of Israel.<sup>4</sup> However, in spite of Israel's awareness of her unique history,<sup>5</sup> within the same canon of sacred scripture stands a different theme in a smaller group of writings known as the wisdom books.<sup>6</sup>

The people of ancient Israel, like the people of the surrounding nations, had developed literary works known as Biblical Wisdom Literature, which contains many wise sayings. These sayings were the fruit of experience, having a lesson for everyone, but were used especially to prepare the young people to help them avoid falling into the many pitfalls that life presents. This is done by instructing them how to live in such a way to find personal fulfillment<sup>7</sup> and to contribute to the welfare of the community. Israelite Wisdom Literature is marked by the peculiarity of ignoring the special providential guidance of Israel and their extraordinary relation to their God. It confines itself more to the general revelation of God in nature and in the history of mankind.<sup>8</sup> However, in doing this, it regards the fear of God as the beginning of wisdom,<sup>9</sup> and at all times has the practical purpose of exhorting to a moral and God-pleasing life.

What makes this concept of wisdom an outstanding one is that it is uniquely ubiquitous and perennial, and every culture, as Victor and James observed, produces its own

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<sup>1</sup> W. A. Bernhard. 1957. *The Living Word of Old Testament*. London: Longmans, Green and co. 466

<sup>2</sup> R. B. Y. Scott. 1971. *The Way of Wisdom in the Old Testament*. New York: Macmillan Publishing Co. Inc. 1

<sup>3</sup> W. A. Bernhard. 1998. *Understanding Old Testament*. New Jersey: Prentice Hall, Inc. 512.

<sup>4</sup> S. I. Ogunsakin-Fabarebo. 2000. *Religious Periscope*, Vol. III. Ibadan: Revelation Books. 59.

<sup>5</sup> W. A. Bernhard. 1998. *Understanding Old Testament*. 512.

<sup>6</sup> V. S. Gary. 1991. *Old Testament Survey, Part 2- Job-Malachi-Broadening Your Biblical Horizon*. Wheaton: ETA. 18

<sup>7</sup> A. B. Julius. 1933. *The Literature of the Old Testament*. New York: Columbia University Press. 310.

<sup>8</sup> J. S. Samuel. 1960. *The Old Testament Speaks*. New York: Harper & Row Publishers. 279.

<sup>9</sup> David Guzik. 2001. "Hosea 4 – Israel's Sin and God's Remedy".

<http://www.enduringword.com/commentaries/2004.htm>. Retrieved, May 16<sup>th</sup>. 2014.

store of wisdom.<sup>10</sup> Interestingly, there are vast number of considerable parallels between Israelite Wisdom tradition and that of the Yoruba people. In other words, the Israelite concept of wisdom and its importance in the life of the people is also a unique phenomenon among the Yoruba. Like in the ancient Israel, Yoruba people see wisdom as precious diadem, and are fully aware of its colossal value. Wisdom is highly esteemed and can never be compared with money or other valuable possessions. Aligned with this submission, Tola Akogun added that:

It is pertinent to mention here the most cherished worldview of the Yoruba. Money which is worshipped by many cultures occupies bottom position in the Yoruba scale of value system. Wisdom, knowledge, and intelligence known as *{gb-n, \*m=, )ye* top the scale to be followed closely by valour.<sup>11</sup>

From the above observation, it is evident that, to the Yoruba people, wisdom is above every other thing man can possess in life.

Meanwhile, having examined the existing works of various scholars on wisdom among the above mentioned cultures and discovered the puzzling, but exciting, affinities between the Yoruba socio-cultural heritage and the way of life in ancient Israel,<sup>12</sup> a fundamental issue arose to which much attention has not been directed. The issue bothered on the relevance of chronological age identified with wisdom in Israel and among the Yoruba. Traditionally among the duo, elder,<sup>13</sup> aged<sup>14</sup> or parents<sup>15</sup> were taken to be repositories of wisdom, but today people hold different opinions, and lively conversation has ever been conducted on this traditional belief. Though, one may consider this as ordinary conflict of interest, and perhaps many scholars who have written on wisdom in ancient Israel and among the Yoruba were therefore silent about it, it attracts further investigation in the light of modern development the outcome of which could occasion valuable academic consequences.

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<sup>10</sup> H. M. Victor & C. M. James. 1997. *The Old Testament-Text and Context*. Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers, Inc. 177.

<sup>11</sup> T. A. Akogun. 2011. "Culture, Identity and Emancipation: Challenge to the Yoruba Race". [www.google.com](http://www.google.com). Retrieved May 14, 2015.

<sup>12</sup> A. O. Dada Lectures in the Department of Religious Studies, University of Ibadan. He said this while Lecturing 2011/2012 M.A. Students on Africans and Africaness in Old Testament Studies.

<sup>13</sup> Manu Ampim. 2003. "The Five Major Institution Rite" *Africana Studies*. [www.google.com](http://www.google.com). Retrieved May 14, 2015.

<sup>14</sup> S. A. Aderemi. 2006. The Changing Perception of Ageing in Yoruba Culture and its Implication on the Health of the Elderly. [www.google.com](http://www.google.com). Retrieved June 20, 2015.

<sup>15</sup> Walter Brueggemann. 1997. *Theology of the Old Testament-Testimony, Dispute, Advocacy*. Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress. 682. See also Proverbs.1:8ff.

## 1.1 Statement of the Problem

Previous studies on Israelite and Yoruba wisdom traditions focused on its origin, development,<sup>16</sup> attribute,<sup>17</sup> purpose and sources.<sup>18</sup> However, the similarities between Yoruba understanding of wisdom and age and that of Israelite literary traditions have not been adequately explored. In their extreme resemblance, Yoruba culture agrees with the biblical accounts on the nexus between chronological age and wisdom. Consider these:

Wisdom is with the aged, and understanding in the length of days (Job 12:12)

What do you know that we do not know? What do you understand that is not clear to us? Both the grey-haired and the aged are among us, older than your father (Job 15:9-10).

I said 'Let days speak, and many years teach wisdom.' (Job 32:7)

My son, be attentive to my wisdom, incline your ear to my understanding; that you may guard knowledge. (Proverbs 5:1)

From the above excerpts, it could rightly be deduced that, to the Jews, chronological age goes along with the acquisition and application of wisdom. In line with this, Fayemi argued that Yoruba people cherished human experience, that comes through age and this accounts for the proverb: *b'-m[d3 bq lqx[ b7 zgbz, k0 l4 lqk87sz b7 zgbz,*<sup>19</sup> (if a child has as many cloths as the elder, he cannot have as many rags). The word 'rag' in this context symbolizes 'experience' or 'wisdom' which is sacrosanct in recognising an elder. In more developed sense, Ad3r2m7 argued that the old people, among the Yoruba, are generally considered as the repositories of memories, experience, authority and wisdom. Therefore, the Yoruba say that: *zgbz k0 s7, 8l5 bzj1, baq13 il3 k5, il3 dahoro,*<sup>20</sup> (without an elderly person, community and villages collapse). Antithetically, for some people, this cultural belief appears spurious as well as oppressive, and various objections have been advanced in the modern scholarship.

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<sup>16</sup> J. L. Crenshaw. 1976. *Studies in Ancient Israelite Wisdom*. New York: KTAV Publishing House. Inc. 6.

<sup>17</sup> R.B.Y. Scott. 1971. *The Way of Wisdom in the Old Testament*, London: Longmans, Green and Co, P3.

<sup>18</sup> John Tullock. 1981. *The Old Testament Story*. New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc. 347

<sup>19</sup> A. K. Fayemi. "Agba (elder) as Arbitrator: A Yoruba Socio-Political Model for Conflict Re-solution"- A Review of Lawrence O. Bamikole - *Journal of Law and Conflict Resolution*, Vol. 1 (3), August, 2009.

<sup>20</sup> S. A. Aderemi. 2006. "The Changing Perception of Ageing in Yoruba Culture and its Implication on the Health of the Elderly". [www.google.com](http://www.google.com). Retrieved June 20, 2015.

Ray<sup>21</sup> argued that wisdom often comes through time and experience; however, it should not be assumed that old age equals wisdom. Quoting from Ecclesiastes 4:13 and Job 32:6, 9, he concluded therefore that “great men are not always wise neither do the aged understand judgment”. In line with this, it is equally said among the Yoruba that: *zgbz k0 kan [gb-n* (age does not define wisdom). Julian and Antonia<sup>22</sup> agreed with Ray, saying that wisdom is not something that automatically comes with passing years. To them, some of the skills that make us wise can be cultivated.

From the foregoing, it is well established that this traditional belief has become a thorny issue heralding series of thoughts among people of different persuasions, which needs to be investigated.

## **1.2 Purpose of the Study**

The objective of this study is to assess the correlation between age and wisdom in Israel’s Wisdom tradition and traditional Yoruba context with a view to identifying the differences and similarities between Yoruba understanding of wisdom and age and that of Israel’s literary tradition. In other word, the work aimed at:

- exploring the differences and similarities between Yoruba understanding of wisdom and age and that of Israel’s wisdom tradition.
- assessing the correlation that exists between age and wisdom as preserved in Hebrew and Yoruba wisdom traditions.
- establishing whether age actually determines wisdom.

## **1.3 Significance of the Study**

This work is considered significant in that:

- it will make some contributions to the body of knowledge.
- it gives a room for using Yoruba culture to elucidate the Bible

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<sup>21</sup> Ray, Andrew. “Age Does Not Equal Wisdom-Ecclesiastes 4:13”. [www.google.com](http://www.google.com). Retrieved June 20, 2015.

<sup>22</sup> B. Julian and M. Antonia 2004. “What is Wisdom?” *Financial Times*.

<http://googleleads.g.doubleclick.net/pagead/view-throughconversic>. Retrieved June 20, 2015.

- it will assist people of different cultures to ascertain whether age determines wisdom.
- it will assist reducing controversy on wisdom in relation to age and thereby improving socio-cultural stability.

#### **1.4 Scope of the Study**

This work examines age as correlate of wisdom in Israelite and Yoruba wisdom traditions. Though Israelite Wisdom Literature is replete with passages that contain this traditional belief, the book of Job and Proverbs remain our choice in this study. The reason is that, of all the Israelite Wisdom books, Job and Proverbs seem to be outstanding about the correlation between age and wisdom.<sup>23</sup> Besides, there are many passages where reference is made to this issue in the book of Job and Proverbs, but Job 12:12 and Proverbs 5:1 were considered in this work as template.

To facilitate easy coverage and thorough study, )gb9m=s-, +y- town, in +y- State, and Il3sz township of +xun State, in Southwest Nigeria, remain the focus of this work. The reason for selecting these places is that the people of +y- and +xun States are among the core Yoruba people and are noted as those who are well grounded in Yoruba culture.

#### **1.5 Research Method**

Since the biblical text remains the primary data of the study, we engaged the historical-critical method, which takes into cognizance the different socio-cultural forces that shaped the biblical texts until it reached its final fixed form. Some Yoruba wisdom proverbs that have bearing on the issue at stake were purposively selected. Biblical texts were subjected to exegetical analysis while Yoruba proverbs were transliterated. Also, structured and unstructured oral interview were conducted. This is the most common and most effective means of getting raw information from the original source. The interview was conducted in both Yoruba and English language because of the locality and the nature of the subject matter. This enabled the respondents to feel free while speaking and expatiating on issues relating to this work. The translation of responses from the Yoruba interviewees however was carefully carried out to avoid misinterpretation as well as misrepresentation of facts. Different kinds of people such as the {ba, chiefs, elders and youths were purposively selected and interviewed. Eighty people from +y- town, )gb9m=s- and Il3xz, were interviewed. The areas

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<sup>23</sup> R.K. Harrison. 1969. *Introduction to the Old Testament*, U.S.A: WMB. Eerdmans publishing company, 1004

selected have availed the researcher the opportunity to visit higher institutions, particularly the Department of Psychology, Yoruba and Religious Studies to elicit relevant information.

Copies of Questionnaire were also administered in order to elicit needed information. These were administered to community leaders, the elites particularly teachers in both primary and secondary schools. The data collected from the questionnaire were calculated by using descriptive statistics, which is the simple percentage and frequency count formula:

$$\frac{N}{TN} \times 100$$

“N” stands for Number of respondents; “TN” represents Total Number of respondents per statement of question. The “N” was multiplied by 100 and the total obtained was divided by the “TN” to give the percentage to each variable that was tested.

### **BIOGRAPHIC DATA OF THE RESPONDENTS**

#### 1. Gender Distributions

**Table 1: Gender Distribution of the Respondents**

<b>Variables</b>	<b>No of Respondents</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Male	127	39.7
Female	193	60.3
<b>Total</b>	320	100

This table indicates that 127 (39.7%) of the respondents are male, 193 (60.3%) of the respondents are female. The table reveals that the number of female is higher than the male. Suggesting by the statistics that the population of female is more than that of the male in the studying areas may be misleading. However, the table shows that female are more accessible than the male ones.

## 2. Age Distributions

**Table 2: Age Distribution of the Respondents**

<b>Variables</b>	<b>No of Respondents</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
40-50	226	70.6
50-60	70	21.9
60 above	24	7.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>320</b>	<b>100</b>

This table reveals that 226(70.6%) of the respondents are between the age bracket 40-50 years, 70(21.9%) of the respondents are between age 50-60 years while 24(7.5%) of the respondents are above 60 years old. The table indicates that majority of the respondents are above their middle age. The implication of the large concentration of those who are above their middle age is that it will afford this study to gather information from people who are mature enough to understand the concept of wisdom in relation to age.

## 3. Marital Status

**Table 3: Martial Distribution of the Respondents**

<b>Variables</b>	<b>No of Respondents</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Married	248	77.5
Single	52	16.3
Widow	14	4.4
Widower	6	1.9
<b>Total</b>	<b>320</b>	<b>100</b>

Table 3 shows that 248 (77.5%) of the respondents are married, 52 (16.3%) of the respondents are single, 14(4.4%) of the respondents are widows while 6 (1.9%) of the



respondents are widowers. The implication of this is that majority of the respondents are married.

#### 4. Religious Distribution

**Table 4: Religious Distribution of the Respondents**

<b>Variables</b>	<b>No of Respondents</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Christianity	222	69.4
Islam	79	24.7
African Traditional Religion	19	5.9
<b>Total</b>	<b>320</b>	<b>100</b>

Table 4 shows that 222 (69.4%) of the respondents are Christians, 79 (24.7%) of the respondents are Muslims while 19 (5.9%) of the respondents are adherents of African Traditional Religion (ATR). This indicates that majority of the respondents are Christians.

#### 5. Academic Qualifications

**Table 5: Academic Qualifications Distribution of the Respondents**

<b>Variables</b>	<b>No of Respondents</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Primary School	20	6.3
Secondary School	55	17.2
Higher Institution	245	76.6
<b>Total</b>	<b>320</b>	<b>100</b>

The above table shows that 20 (6.3%) of the respondents did not go beyond primary school level, 55 (17.2%) of the respondents have secondary school education while 245 (76.6%) of the respondents attended higher institution. This indicates that majority of the

respondents went beyond secondary school level. The table also shows that all the respondents acquired western education at different levels.

## **Theoretical Framework**

This study was premised on what Adamo calls African Cultural Hermeneutics. African Cultural Hermeneutics means rereading the scripture from a premeditatedly Afrocentric perspective.<sup>24</sup> This is very similar to what Ukpong calls “Evaluative Hermeneutics”, which relates the biblical texts to the African context. The theory of biblical interpretation according to Ukpong “involves the study of the local situation in the light of biblical witness, and the historical method is used in analysing the biblical text.”<sup>25</sup>

### **1.6 Clarification of Terms**

#### **1.6.1 *Wisdom/Wisdom Literature***

The word *Wisdom* is mentioned two hundred and twenty two times in the Bible and it was regarded as one of the highest virtues in Israel along with ‘kindness’ and ‘justice’.<sup>26</sup> Wisdom, as defined by American Heritage Dictionary of English Language, is the ability to think and act, using experience, knowledge, understanding, common sense, and deep insight. It is also seen as an accumulated knowledge, erudition, or enlightenment as well as a wise saying or teaching or soundness of mind.<sup>27</sup> It is defined as the quality of being wise, sagacity, discernment, scholarly knowledge or learning.<sup>28</sup> Therefore, based on these definitions, wisdom can be considered as mental ability to acquire and apply knowledge<sup>29</sup> based on its expected positive or negative result. *Wisdom Literature* is the traditional work, different from the many passages that contain wisdom theme in the Bible.<sup>30</sup> The literature could be called Wisdom Book, Sapiental Book or Wisdom Literature, that is, any of the

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<sup>24</sup> D. T. Adamo. 2001. *Exploration in African Biblical Studies*. Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers. 9-39

<sup>25</sup> Justin S. Ukpong. 1999. “Can African Old Testament Scholarship Escape the Historical Critical Approach?” *Newsletter on African Old Testament Scholarship*, Vol. 7. 3

<sup>26</sup> N/A. Wisdom. From Wikipedia, the free encyclopaedia-[www-google.com](http://www.google.com). Retrieved April 5th, 2015.

<sup>27</sup> Osire Johnson. Acting Dean, School of Education, Osun State College of Education, Ilesa Osun State, Nigeria. Interviewed, April 25, 2017.

<sup>28</sup> P.A. Adelowokan, Lecturer, Department of Educational Foundation, Osun State College of Education, Ilesa Osun State, Nigeria. Interviewed, April 25, 2017.

<sup>29</sup> M.O.. Ogunboyede, Lecturer, Department of Educational Foundation, Adeyemi College of Education, Ondo, Ondo State, Nigeria. Interviewed, May 10, 2015,

<sup>30</sup> H. M. Victor and C. M. James. 1997. *The Old Testament-Text and Content*. 177

biblical wisdom books (Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Songs, Wisdom of Solomon, and Ecclesiasticus) that are considered to contain wisdom.<sup>31</sup>

In essence, it should be noted that either wisdom or wisdom literature is mentioned in reference to wisdom tradition, irrespective of any culture in this study, emphasis is equally on the concept of wisdom.

### 1.6.2 *Age: Mental/Chronological*

*Age* could be viewed in different ways. It could be seen as the length of time in which a being or thing existed. It could be seen as period of human life that can be measured by years from birth, usually marked by a certain stage or degree of mental or physical development which involves legal responsibility and capacity.<sup>32</sup> It could also be seen as a period of history, as distinguished from others; a historical epoch such as the Age of Pericles, the Stone Age, etc. When someone is considered as ‘of age’ or ‘over age’, it refers to the particular period of life at which the person becomes naturally or conventionally qualified or disqualified for anything.<sup>33</sup> **Chronological age** is a measure of an individual’s age based on the calendar date on which he or she was born. This is calculated on most psychological test and it is measured in days, months, and years.<sup>34</sup> **Mental age** is a measure of an individual’s mental attainment based on the chronological age in which an average individual reaches that same level of attainment.<sup>35</sup> Mental age is the degree of mental development of an individual in terms of the chronological age of the average individual of equivalent mental ability; specifically, a score derived from intelligence test.<sup>36</sup> Summarily, while mental age is based on the intellectual development, chronological age is based on the calendar date on which one was born. Mental age, at times, can be the same with chronological age, or mental age higher than chronological age or vice versa.

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<sup>31</sup> J.O. Akao. “Leadership Ethics in Wisdom Literature from African Perspectives” in J.O. Akao, et al (Eds). 2009. Biblical Studies and leadership in Africa. A publication of The Nigerian Association for Biblical Studies (NABIS) - Biblical Studies Series, Number 7, 204.

<sup>32</sup> R.C. Agokei. Lecturer, Department of Educational Foundation, Adeyemi College of Education, Ondo, Ondo State, Nigeria. Interviewed, May 9, 2017.

<sup>33</sup> R.C. Agokei. Lecturer, Department of Educational Foundation, Adeyemi College of Education, Ondo, Ondo State, Nigeria. Interviewed, May 9, 2017

<sup>34</sup> Yolanda Williams. “Chronological Age: Definition & Explanation”. <http://study.com/academy/topic/psychosocial-development-in-middle-adulthood-tutoring-solution.html>. Retrieved April 8th, 2015.

<sup>35</sup> Yolanda Williams. “Chronological Age: Definition & Explanation”. <http://study.com/academy/topic/psychosocial-development-in-middle-adulthood-tutoring-solution.html> Retrieved April 8th, 2015.

<sup>36</sup> N/A. “Mental Age”. “Dictionary, Encyclopedia and Thesaurus”. The Free Dictionary-[www.google.com](http://www.google.com). Retrieved April 8th, 2015.

### 1.6.3 *Hebrew/Israel/Jew*

The first person to be called *Hebrew* was Abraham, and the name commonly refers to his descendants, known as the Jewish people.<sup>37</sup> The word for Hebrew used in the Bible, is *Eber*, meaning “of or pertaining to *Eber*”. One tradition held that the word *Eber* means “opposite side”.<sup>38</sup> Thus, Abraham who believed in one God stood on one side, and the entire world with man-made gods stood on the other side. Another tradition referred to *Eber* as the great-great-grand son of Noah, ancestor of Abraham, who was one of bearers of the monotheistic tradition. So, because Abraham descended from him, he (Abraham) is called *Eber*.<sup>39</sup> Another tradition held that the word is in reference to the fact that Abraham came from the other side of the river and was not a Canaanite. So, Hebrew means the one who is opposed, on the other side, and different from all others. Abraham was a solitary believer in a sea of idolatrous people.<sup>40</sup> *Israel* is a biblical given name.<sup>41</sup> It is the name given to Jacob during his encounter with the Angel of God at the river Jabbok (Gen 32:28).<sup>42</sup> He was named Israel after he had wrestled with God. This name is a combination of the Hebrew words for “wrestle” and “God”- “because you have wrestled (Sareta) with God (el) and men (anashim), you will be called *yisrael*.”<sup>43</sup> The word *Jew* (Yehudi) comes from the name of Judah (Yehuda) as pronounced in Hebrew.<sup>44</sup> Yehuda was the fourth son of Jacob (Yaakov).<sup>45</sup> The word Jew may have originally applied only to Judah’s descendants, who comprised of one of the twelve tribes of Israel.<sup>46</sup> David was from the tribe of Judah. But after the death of Solomon, David’s son, a civil dispute split the twelve tribes of Israel into two: the kingdom of Judah (Judah and Benjamin, some Levites and Priests) in the south and the kingdom of Israel in the north which comprised of ten other tribes (I King 12; II Chronicles 10).<sup>47</sup> In 5th century BCE, the Kingdom of Israel was conquered by Assyria, and ten tribes were exiled and lost, leaving

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<sup>37</sup> Menachem Posner. 2015. “Who are the Hebrew-chabad-Lubavitch?” Media Centre-Chabad.org. Retrieved April 8th, 2015.

<sup>38</sup> S.I. Ogunsakin Fabarebo, Lecturer, Department of Religious Studies, Adeyemi College of Education, Ondo, Ondo State, Nigeria. Interviewed, July 24 2017

<sup>39</sup> S.I. Ogunsakin Fabarebo, Lecturer, Department of Religious Studies, Adeyemi College of Education, Ondo, Ondo State, Nigeria. Interviewed, July 24 2017

<sup>40</sup> N/A. Menachem Posner. 2015. “Who are the Hebrew?”. Retrieved May 10th, 2015.

<sup>41</sup> N/A. Israel (Name)-From Wikipedia, the free Encyclopedia. Retrieved May 10th, 2015.

<sup>42</sup> N/A. Israel meaning/Israel etymology-Abarim publication-www.google.com. Retrieved May 10th, 2015.

<sup>43</sup> Dictionaries-Baker’s Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology-Israel. Retrieved May 10th, 2015.

<sup>44</sup> D. B. Rabbi. 2015. “Insight into the Hebrew Language: The Word ‘Jew’- why are the Jews called ‘Jew?’” Aish.com-Your Life, Your Judaism. Retrieved May 10th, 2015.

<sup>45</sup> D. B. Rabbi. 2015. “Insight into the Hebrew Language: The Word ‘Jew’- why are the Jews called ‘Jew?’” Aish.com-Your Life, Your Judaism. Retrieved July 2nd, 2015.

<sup>46</sup> N/A. “Who is a Jew? Origin of the Words ‘Jew’ and ‘Judaism’ ”. www.google.com.Retrieved May 8th, 2015.

<sup>47</sup> Rochel Chein. 2015. “What is the meaning of the name ‘Jew?’”- chabad-LubavitchMediaCentre-[www.google.com](http://www.google.com). Retrieved May 10th, 2015.

only the tribes in the kingdom of Judah to carry on Abraham's heritage. These people of the kingdom of Judah were generally known to themselves and to other nations as Yehudim (Jews), and the name came to refer to all the Israelites, regardless of their tribal ancestry.<sup>48</sup>

From the foregoing, it could be observed that Abraham's descendants are commonly referred to as the "Hebrew", "Israel" (or Israelite) and the "Jew". Therefore, in this study, either Jewish, Hebrew or Israelite Wisdom or Wisdom Literature is mentioned, considered them as the same, regardless of their social, theological or chronological peculiarities.

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<sup>48</sup> Rochel Chein. 2015. "What is the meaning of the name 'Jew'?" [www.google.com](http://www.google.com). Retrieved May 10th, 2015.

## CHAPTER TWO

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### 2.0 Introduction

Biblical scholars,<sup>49</sup> anthropologists<sup>50</sup> and archaeologists<sup>51</sup> have written profusely on wisdom literature in the ancient Near East and among the Israelites. Several volumes have also been written on this same issue from the Yoruba perspective. While it is not possible to review the works of all the authors on our subject matter, the researcher however reviewed the works of some prominent authors, paid attention to their opinions and analysed them for the purpose of this study. The essence of doing this is to have a wider range of knowledge and to come out with new idea.

The materials reviewed were grouped into two main classes: the first group is on the origin and development of Israelite wisdom literature while the second group deals with wisdom among the Yoruba.

#### 2.1 Origin and Development of Wisdom in Israel

A casual glance at the origin and development of wisdom in ancient Israel reveals that the history and religion of Israel cannot be studied and understood in isolation from the overall context of the ancient Near East.<sup>52</sup> Scholars have written to establish that Israel, in many ways, reflects in her socio cultural, political and religious life aspects of the cultures in the ancient Near East. The review of works of these scholars becomes imperative because they explored extensively the parallels between the wisdom traditions underlying the Babylonia, Assyria, Mesopotamia, Egypt and Hebrew culture, as well as the larger Near Eastern background which they share. Some of the literatures were suggested, by these scholars, as having a common tradition.

Therefore, looking at the origin and development of wisdom in Israel, two areas are going to be covered, that is, the Eastern background of Israelite Wisdom Literatures as well as Wisdom in Israel.

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<sup>49</sup> L. A. Gleason. 1964. *A Survey of Old Testament introduction*. Chicago: Moody Press. 503

<sup>50</sup> J. W. Rogerson. 1979. *Anthropology and the Old Testament*. USA: John Knox Press. 1

<sup>51</sup> B. P. James. 1958. *Archaeology and the Old Testament*. London: Oxford University Press. 206

<sup>52</sup> J. Walton. 1990. *Ancient Israelite Literature in its Cultural Context*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House. 13.

## The Eastern Background of Israelite Wisdom Literature

James L. Crenshaw,<sup>53</sup> in his work titled *Studies in Ancient Israelite Wisdom*, confirmed that the Bible itself recognises Israelite kingship with her neighbours in the area of wisdom tradition. He said that the Wisdom of Solomon, as Bible claimed, surpasses that of all the peoples of the East and Egypt. Israelite wisdom compares herself to that of Edom and Egypt; however in case of Edom, little is known but Egyptian influence upon the Bible is remarkably acknowledged. There is general agreement, as James posited, that the Israelite author of Proverbs 22:17-24:22 borrowed from an Egyptian source, even more than the actual appropriation of sayings from the Amen-em-opet.<sup>54</sup> He added that the Israelite practice of addressing the pupils as ‘my son’ is derived from Egyptian instruction, in which the father teaches his son all he has learned about life. Commenting on the Mesopotamian influence, James opined that the Mesopotamian relationship with Israelite literature differs in kind if not in degree, and that the literary prototype of Proverbs, Job, and Qoheleth point more to a commonality of ideas than direct literary relationship. In the attempt to explain the historical background of these affinities, James reflected on how Israelites came in contact with Egyptian and Mesopotamian Wisdom literature. Scholars, as he argued, have assumed the royal court of Solomon and Hezekiah as points of contact, where both foreign scribes and Israelite counselors would have worked, the latter of whom may have received their training in foreign court. However, the evidence for an institution of wise men at the court, as James observed, is by no means conclusive.<sup>55</sup>

In a similar vein, James B. Pritchard<sup>56</sup> in his work *Archaeology and the Old Testament*, confirmed the biblical description of the great Wisdom of King Solomon as excelling “all the wisdom of Egypt.” He appreciated the decipherment of Egyptian hieroglyphs and the recovery of the papyri of which the Egyptian wise men wrote their sayings. To him, the aptness of the reference to the Wisdom of Egypt is now documented by a wealth of instructions and precepts that attests the reputation which Egypt had for this type of literature. Pritchard argued further that the oldest example of Egyptian wisdom is a collection of wise sayings from about fifteen hundred years before the time of Solomon. It bears the name of Ptah-hotep, the vizier of a king of the fifth Dynasty, and was addressed to his son who was to succeed him as the king’s chief counselor. Having reached the ideal age

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<sup>53</sup> J. L. Crenshaw. 1976. *Studies in Ancient Israelite Wisdom*. New York: KTAV Publishing House. Inc. 6.

<sup>54</sup> J. L. Crenshaw. 1976. *Studies in Ancient Israelite Wisdom*. New York: KTAV Publishing House. Inc. 7.

<sup>55</sup> J. L. Crenshaw. 1976. *Studies in Ancient Israelite Wisdom*. New York: KTAV Publishing House. Inc. 8.

<sup>56</sup> B. P. James. 1958. *Archaeology and the Old Testament*. London: Oxford University Press. 288

of one hundred and ten years, Ptah-hotep looked back on a long and successful life in the king's service and offered his son what he had learned about wisdom and about the rules of good speech. Ptah-hotep reminded his son that "There is no one born wise". Pritchard observed that this document, like many of the proverbs in the Bible, is a guide for success. Besides, in his shrewd observation, Pritchard attested to the fact that the frequent themes of the biblical book of Proverbs also find their analogue in the Babylonian and Assyrian instructions of wisdom. He concluded therefore that in the light of the recent archaeological discoveries, it is no discredit to ancient Israel to assert that the Israelites were indebted to Babylon for certain concepts of law and authority, and that her wise men may well have had their wits sharpened by frequent contact with both Egyptian and Babylonian wisdom.

In line with this submission, Bernhard,<sup>57</sup> in his work *The Living World of the Old Testament*, claimed that the love of wisdom was not a monopoly of any people of antiquity. The wisdom tradition, as he said, is far more ancient than Socrates or anything found in the Old Testament. He argued that wisdom movement was essentially international. Wisdom writings circulated widely and had an influence far beyond the country of their origin. Since Israel was situated at the cultural crossroad of the Fertile Crescent, the wisdom of the East influenced her thought at an early period. Solomon, for instance, is said to have exchanged proverbs and riddles with the Queen of Sheba and Hiram of Tyre (I King 10:1). Bernhard argued that there was a kind of timeless value of and quality to wisdom. Hence, sages appeared to be detached completely from the limitations of time and culture. Sages often reflected on the problems of society just as familiar with them. These problems were mostly human problems which could be found in various forms in the societies. Emphasizing the relevance of the ancient Near Eastern cultures in the development of wisdom in ancient Israel, Bernhard disclosed that wisdom literature falls into two groups: Prudential literature, which is illustrated by the Egyptian Teaching of Amen-en-ope, the Babylonian book of proverbs, and the maxims collected in the Old Testament book of Proverbs. Prudential literature consists of practical advice to the young persons on how to live a good and successful life. The second group is Reflective Literature which consists of reflective probing into the depth of man's anguish about the meaning of life, often in a skeptical mood. However, both types of wisdom literature, as Bernhard observed, isolate the problem of man from the particularities of history and thereby stand in contrast to most of the literatures of the Old Testament. Modern sages, according to him, insist that the best way to solve the problem

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<sup>57</sup> W. A. Bernhard. 1957. *The Living Word of Old Testament*. London: Longmans, Green and co. 466



of world unity is to concentrate on man whose needs and aspirations are generally the same in all situations, and to rule out the memories, loyalties, and cultural peculiarities that make for human diversity and conflict. Bernhard also claimed that Egyptian wisdom made a deep impression on Israel's thought, from at least the time of King Solomon who established close diplomatic ties with Egypt. He repeated that the close similarities between the wisdom of Amen-em-ope and Proverbs 22: 12 – 23:14 shows that the Israelite writings relied heavily on the Egyptian writings.

Speaking within the same line of thought, that is, on the international connections of Hebrew wisdom, Johnson<sup>58</sup> attested to the considerable parallels between the Hebrew wisdom writings and that of Israel's neighbours, particularly Egypt and Babylon. To him, a wide range of parallels may be seen between Israel's wisdom literature and that of other Near Eastern peoples because Palestine was a corridor for the passage of peoples, with their ideas as well as with their armies. Thus it should not be surprising to discover that statements of general or universal truth that are found in Israel also are found in the literature of her neighbours. It is evident that the Old Testament itself recognises the existence of wisdom outside Israel. Solomon's wisdom is said to have been superior to that of "the people of the East" indeed of "all men" (I Kings 4:30-31; Gen. 41:8; Isaiah 19:11-12; Jeremiah 4:9:7)

Johnson argued that the records of Egyptian wisdom dated back to at least six hundred years before Abraham left Ur of the Chaldea. He claimed that numerous examples of ancient Egyptian wisdom writing have been discovered within the past century, but of the special interest to the Old Testament students is "The instruction of Amen-em-ope". The reason why they are interested in this piece of Egyptian wisdom writing is that it bears striking similarities to proverbs 22:17-24:22. Johnson asserted that though it is impossible to determine which writing came first, the Egyptian or the Hebrew, the connection between the two has been observed by a wider range of modern Old Testament scholarship. However, Johnson agreed that while there are unquestionable similarities between Egyptian and Hebrew wisdom there are also important theological differences.

Contributing to what other scholars have said so far, Beebe<sup>59</sup> in his work *The Old Testament*, reported that wisdom writers in the Old Testament borrowed extensively from other culture in the Ancient Near East. He opined that Canaanites, Edomites, and Arabs had

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<sup>58</sup> L. D. Johnson. 1975. *Israel's Wisdom: Learn and Live*. Tennessee: Broadman Press. 17.

<sup>59</sup> H. K. Beebe. 1970. *The Old Testament*. California: Dickerson Publishing Company, Inc. 405

traditions of wisdom which were assimilated by the Hebrew (Jer. 49:7; Obad 8; Job 1:1). To Beebe, some of the aphorisms in the book of Proverbs have their origin in the literature of Canaan, as far back as the Late Bronze Age (1500-1200B.C). The style of an ancient Canaanite proverb matches that of the Old Testament. Beebe argued further that the belief among Hebrew sages that wisdom was God's first act of creation was learned from Canaanite wisdom literature. He said that the book of proverbs carries several direct borrowings from the Old Canaanite wisdom. He also said that the Hebrew sages took over the Instruction of Amen-em-ope almost intact. Stressing the relevance and the universal trait of wisdom across different cultures, Beebe asserted that wisdom appealed to people widely spread throughout Near East. It furnished a cultural quality which crossed political line and religious expression. The polytheists and the monotheists could use the same wisdom sayings, and with only slight adjustments, fit them into their own religious contexts. Though Old Testament Priests and Prophets might have rejected alien form of worship and beliefs, as Beebe observed, the Israelite sage welcomed wisdom from Canaan, Egypt, and Mesopotamia<sup>60</sup>.

Indeed, these scholars have done a thorough job, and they have all possibilities and potentials to convince their audience. They offered necessary information needed on wisdom literature in the ancient Near East in relation to wisdom in Israel. What is most interesting about their works is their ability to harmonize our thoughts by pinpointing, with examples, the exact areas of assimilation between the two cultures. However, their works are not reliable enough because there are minor, but fundamental, irregularities in their submissions. For instance, Bernhard argued that the affinities between the book of proverbs and Ras Shamra literature suggested that Israel assimilated wisdom material from Canaanite environment, which she stamped with her faith. Conversely, James Crenshaw claimed that Ras Shamra, the most widely recognised literature among the Canaanites, gave minimal support to the theory that Canaanites mediated wisdom tradition to ancient Israel. This is because the Epithet about El as wise and the only wisdom text of Babylonian origin offer little encouragement to the notion that Canaanites mediated wisdom to Israel. Another problem is that Johnson and Beebe also could not agree on the theological peculiarity of Israel's wisdom. Johnson, in line with what Bernhard has said, argued that Israel's wisdom has upon it the peculiar mark of covenant relationship with God. But Beebe tactfully denied this and depicted wisdom as being universal with a cultural quality cutting across political

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<sup>60</sup> H. K. Beebe. 1970. *The Old Testament*. California: Dickerson Publishing Company, Inc. 409.

lines and religious expression. He claimed that the polytheists (Canaanites) and the monotheists (Israelites) could use the same wisdom saying, and to him, this problem of acceptance has ever been causing dissonance in religious experience between Israel's wisdom writers and her official functionaries of religion. It should also be noted that nothing was said, by these scholars, about the relevance of 'Age' identified with wisdom in the two mentioned cultures.

Therefore, in the light of the above listed shortcomings, it is essential to combine the works together and compare them with other relevant materials so as to have unified and reliable information on wisdom literature in both the ancient Near East and Israel.

### **Wisdom in the Ancient Israel**

Scholars have written on Israelite Wisdom Literature. However, to do justice and be mindful of their peculiarities as well, the works to be reviewed were classified under two headings: the overview of Israelite Wisdom Literature and the various Biblical books of wisdom, with particular reference to the book of Job and Proverbs as template. The peculiarity of these materials, as earlier said, is to show that, though the authors worked towards the same goal, some were more detailed on specific issue regarding wisdom in Israel than other. So, there is the need to group them according to this peculiarity.

### **Israelite Wisdom Literature: A Basic Overview**

There is no quick and simple answer to the question of what wisdom means in the writings of the Bible. Scott<sup>61</sup> confirmed that wisdom has many facets, coming as it does from a long time and by no means static tradition. If the student would understand its wealth of meaning he must know something about the story of the wisdom movement, or school of thought, and ponder the ideas associated with it and the literature it produces. Scott stressed further that wisdom is the fine fruit of a tradition originally rooted in the more of family and tribe and local community, and hence, to a degree, was as old as the society itself. He argued that the wisdom tradition was beyond the flowering of proverbial utterances among the common people. The wisdom movement was a powerful factor in Israelite religious culture which had insufficient recognition for other factors have preempted the foreground. The wise men or elders, in Jeremiah 18:18 and Ezekiel 7: 28 were named along side with the priests and

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<sup>61</sup>R.B.Y. Scott. 1971. *The Way of Wisdom in the Old Testament*, London: Longmans, Green and Co, P3.

prophets as of the three sources of authoritative guidance possessed by the community. The priests were to conduct the cult of sacrifice and festival, to proclaim the fundamental beliefs and to instruct in the consequent obligations of the responsibilities of the true prophets of God. The spokesmen of wisdom however have little or nothing to say about institutional religion or a unique relationship between Yahweh and Israel, either in the past or present. Besides, they do not address the collective Israel as the prophets do, nor appeal to the authority of revelation. They dealt with men as individuals in line with their social relationships and their private thoughts. The counsel of the wise is based on how men ought to behave in the society. The authority with which they speak is derived from their moral experience and trained intelligence. Counsel and instruction was their method, while persuasion and debate was later added. Reflecting on the terms “wise” and “wisdom”, Scott posited that the term “wisdom” is used in a technical sense for a cultural and religious phenomenon in the life of ancient Israel. This, he claimed, had its distinctive ways of thought and forms of expression. However, there will be confusion if we fail to differentiate among the various senses in which the word “wisdom” is used in several contexts, especially in the Old Testament. Scott made some striking illustrations on this by referring to Solomon’s wisdom which includes: (a) his cunning to settle David’s old grudge against Joab (1Kings 2:1 – 2, 5 – 6) (b) His moral discernment to administer true justice (1Kings 3:9, 12) (c) the intellectual brilliance and encyclopedic knowledge found in his thousands of proverbs and songs (1Kings 4: 29 – 34) (d) the unique competence of a ruler and administrator (1Kings 5: 7, 12). Nevertheless, the primary meaning of “wisdom”, according to Scott, is “superior mental ability or special skill” which has nothing to do with moral rectitude. The moral and religious sense is a later development in the meaning. Parents, as found in the words of Scott, were the earliest instructors of children in the customs, traditions and moral standard of a family oriented society. The teachers of young people admonished them to heed their fathers’ instruction and not to reject the teaching of their mothers. Scott observed that the ethical and religious perspective of wisdom is quiet predominantly preserved in Job, Proverbs, Psalms and Qoheleth (Ecclesiastes). The wisdom traditions span the length of Israel’s history and the wisdom theme runs throughout the biblical text, which is woven into nearly every narrative and literally springs from the tongues of characters in scene as varied as historical annals and private discussions.

In their work titled *The Old Testament-Text and Context*, Victor and James<sup>62</sup> argued that the wisdom theme is especially common in the sayings of prophets and in the books traditionally known as “Wisdom Literature”. To them, connections exist between the wisdom literature produced in ancient Egypt, Mesopotamia, and Israel; these connections, however, do not indicate the total dependence of Israel upon her neighbours. Rather, the wealth of available material was utilised and reworked to reflect regional, ethical, and chronological differences. Thus proverbs 22:20, according to Victor and James, can speak of “thirty” admonitions, perhaps in direct reference to the Egyptian “Instructions of Amen- em-ope”, but that does not mean that all the subsequent wisdom writings have to employ this strict literary framework. A turn of phrase, or even direct borrowing of entire saying can be seen as acceptance of the validity of wisdom literature in general, wherever it may have originated. The most commonly shared concept in wisdom, as Victor and James observed, include (i) the need for children (embodied in the image of clients, slaves, apprentices, and offspring) to listen to and obey the commands of parent (embodied in the image of employers, masters, and biological parents); (ii) that a man needs to exercise discretion in dealing with woman outside his immediate family; and (iii) that honesty is the best policy. Plagiarism of these principles was the highest form of cultural flattery. They argued further that some biblical proverbs reflect distinctively Israelite culture and thought, especially on the character of Yahweh and the concept of justice. To them, these reinforce the concept of the divine origin of wisdom. Proverbs 8:22-31 celebrates wisdom as the first product of Yahweh’s action in creation<sup>63</sup>. This establishes the authority of wisdom and identifies it as female. The origin of this gender designation, as they observed, is most likely the fact that the woman is the first teacher of her children. It is her first responsibility to instills within them the principles of Israelite culture and religion.

In most general sense, Mark R. Sneed,<sup>64</sup> in his work *The Social World of the Sages – An introduction to Israelite and Jewish Wisdom Literature*, spoke extensively on Israelite Wisdom. Basically, according to him, wisdom is a skill, gift, or ability. In a nutshell, it is intelligence, especially high cognitive ability. Reflecting on the concept of wisdom within the Israelite perspective, Mark identified various types of wisdom. These, according to him, include Amateur Wisdom, Divine Wisdom, Royal Wisdom, Professional or Technical

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<sup>62</sup>H.M. Victor and C.M. James. 1997. *The Old Testament-Text and Context*, P 178

<sup>63</sup> H. M. Victor and C. M. James. 1997. *The Old Testament-Text and Context*. 181

<sup>64</sup> M.R. Sneed. 2015. *The Social World of the Sages – An Introduction to Israelite Wisdom Literature*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press. 1-16

Wisdom, Mantic Wisdom and Literary or Aesthetic Wisdom. The Hebrew word for “wisdom”, as Mark argued, is *chokmah* while its adjectival for “wise” is *chakam*. This implies amateur, common, or non-technical wisdom, and can be interpreted to mean “cleverness” or “cunning”. Giving scriptural example of this, Mark talked about the woman that saved her city from Joab (2Sam. 20:15 – 22). Through her wisdom, she convinced Joab that it would be more reasonable to kill one person rather than many in her city. Destroying the whole city would definitely result in killing those who were innocent. Abigail was another woman who displayed this type of wisdom to rescue her life and family from being slaughtered by David whom Nabal, her husband, insulted (1Sam.25). She was able to convince David of the injustice in killing many innocent people as a result of one’s moral laxity. David later pronounced, “Blessed is your discretion”, because she had restrained him from shedding the blood of the so called innocent. Mark also talked about Divine Wisdom which he considered a more specialised and fundamental. This is because the source of such wisdom is deities. Mark observed that this is very similar to what was obtainable among the ancient Near Eastern people. He said that the gods in the ancient Near East were often described as being wise. El, the head of the Canaanites pantheon, was considered “wise” and “old”, the characteristics often found together. The god of Enki (Ea), in Mesopotamia, is the god of wisdom and magic who could counsel other god as well. Besides, *Marduk*, the great god among the Babylonians, is described as wise<sup>65</sup>. In the same vein, *Thorth*, in Egypt, is the god of wisdom who was portrayed with the head of an ibis, or baboon. That was also considered as the gods of the scribes. According to Mark, *Thorth* is often depicted as holding a *wand* in hand, which symbolized power, and an *ankh* symbol in the other, which represented life. He argued further that *Thorth* was married to *Ma’at*, whose head dress held a feather. *Ma’at*, according to Mark, represented truth, justice, balance or order. In the Mesopotamia lore, *Ea* was in charge of creating human being. He also bestowed wisdom which he passed to seven divine sages, whose knowledge and culture were equally transmitted to humans before the flood. Following these seven, were four semi-divine sages and some of them were kings. In Mesopotamia as well, scribal teachers transmitted knowledge to their students. Getting around the problem of transmitting knowledge and culture from before the flood to after it, a version of the Epic of Gilgamesh has the Babylonian “Noah” – A Babylonian text, “*The instruction of Shurupak*” claimed to be among the instructions for human culture in *Sippar*. Cain and his genealogy (Gen. 4:17 -24) parallel

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<sup>65</sup> M.R. Sneed. 2015. *The Social World of the Sages – An Introduction to Israelite Wisdom Literature*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press. 1-16

these explanations.<sup>66</sup> The descendants of Cain are the bearers of culture and civilization to the antediluvian world. Wisdom, as Mark observed, is personified as Woman Wisdom which was created earlier.

In Israel, the Lord was very wise and with him are wisdom and strength<sup>67</sup>. The book of proverbs reveals that wisdom can be generated from the study of several aphorisms in the book. However, the book equally portrays God as the ultimate source of wisdom. In other words, wisdom has divine origin, traceable to God. Speaking on Royal Wisdom, Mark claimed that kings were considered along with the gods. This explicitly explains the reason why King Solomon asked for an understanding mind to rule the Israelites. He desired wisdom above honor, wealth, or power over his enemies (1Kings 3).<sup>68</sup>

Mark observed that, God was happy and thus gave Solomon everything. In Israel, a king could force his people to submit through his power; however, this is costly and less effective than using his wisdom to win their solidarity. People prefer following a leader who is persuasive and wise than to submit to the one who rules with force. The Wisdom of Solomon made him compose 3000 proverbs and 1005 songs (1Kings 5: 9 – 12).<sup>69</sup> Solomon was also portrayed as having knowledge similar to that of Egyptian Onomastica. In his submission, Mark argued that Professional or Technical Wisdom has to do with skill in some trade or field of study. He cited the example of Hiram whom was hired by King Solomon to work for him on the building of the Temple as a result of his skill. Another example was the woman from Tekoa whom was described as “wise” (2Sam. 14:2). *Mantic Wisdom and Magic* is found in the Babylonian tradition. Daniel and others were trained as mantic sages in Babylon. He was among the Babylonian captives who were taken to exile by King Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon.<sup>70</sup> In spite of Daniel’s broad training in this lore, his expertise was in the interpretation of dreams, the ability he received from God (Dan. 2: 28). Joseph also functioned in this capacity in the land of Egypt. Joseph and Daniel were even excelled in this type of divination than their pagan colleagues and competitors. Magical

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<sup>66</sup>M.R. Sneed. 2015. *The Social World of the Sages – An Introduction to Israelite Wisdom Literature*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press. 1-16

<sup>67</sup> M.R. Sneed. 2015. *The Social World of the Sages – An Introduction to Israelite Wisdom Literature*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press. 1-16

<sup>68</sup> M.R. Sneed. 2015. *The Social World of the Sages – An Introduction to Israelite Wisdom Literature*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press. 1-16

<sup>69</sup> M.R. Sneed. 2015. *The Social World of the Sages – An Introduction to Israelite Wisdom Literature*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press. 1-16

<sup>70</sup> M.R. Sneed. 2015. *The Social World of the Sages – An Introduction to Israelite Wisdom Literature*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press. 1-16

wisdom is also related to mantic wisdom.<sup>71</sup> Pharaoh summoned and ordered the magicians to imitate Moses and Aaron in turning their rods into serpents (Exod. 7:11). Magic was a significant part of Egyptian and Mesopotamian religion and politics. Officially, it was seldom found in Israel. Speaking about political wisdom, Mark cited the example of a poor but wise man in a besieged city who was able to save the city as a result of his expertise in military strategy (Eccl. 9: 13 – 16). In line with this, the political advice of Ahithophel, David’s counselor, is also described as “according to a man who asked concerning the word of God” (2 Sam. 16:23). Jonadab, David’s nephew, is also describe as a “very wise man” (2 Sam. 13:3), who advises his cousin, Ammon, on how he might trap his beautiful half-sister, Tamar, Absalom’s full sister, to rape her without being punished. This could however be regarded as subtlety and not wisdom in the real sense of it. It even resulted in the death of Ammon, as he was later killed by Absalom. *Rhetorical Wisdom* is a special type of wisdom which involves being expertise in rhetoric. David was skillful in musical instrument. That was why he was recommended for King Saul as a lyre-player to soothe the evil spirit that God sent upon him.<sup>72</sup> David displayed his sagacity in speech by defeating the Philistine giant, Goliath (1Sam. 17: 41 - 51). He tactfully takes Goliath’s own words to confound him. Book of Proverb emphasizes the importance of the art of rhetoric and the value of gracious speech. Similar to this is the Egyptian text “Tale of the Eloquent Peasant” composed to instruct young scribes in the relevance of persuasive speech. The narrative bears the records of a poor farmer who could convince Pharaoh and his noblemen to side with him against a high steward who had wronged him. *Literary or Aesthetic wisdom*, according to Mark, is the last category of wisdom which involves literary subtlety. Reference to “to understand an aphorism and figure, the words of the wise and their riddles” found in proverb 1: 6, is said to be purposeful.<sup>73</sup> It implies that comprehending wisdom literature is not always straight forward and that training is necessary. It also means that it is not just the content of wisdom that is significantly relevant but its medium, the package it is placed in.

Exploring the semantic domain of wisdom, Mark affirmed that words for “wisdom” and for “being wise”, in the Hebrew Bible, are often paired along with noun for “knowledge”, “understanding”, “instruction” and “advice”, and verbs like “to know”, “to instruct” “to

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<sup>71</sup> M.R. Sneed. 2015. *The Social World of the Sages – An Introduction to Israelite Wisdom Literature*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press. 1-16

<sup>72</sup> M.R. Sneed. 2015. *The Social World of the Sages – An Introduction to Israelite Wisdom Literature*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press. 1-16

<sup>73</sup> M.R. Sneed. 2015. *The Social World of the Sages – An Introduction to Israelite Wisdom Literature*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press. 1-16



prescribe” and “to advise”. He posited that wisdom is often connected with “instruction”. In his observation about the sages in ancient Israel, Mark established that there were professional sages who had undergone special training and education, appearing in group and forming a type of vocational guild. However, according to him, there were also amateur sages who trained themselves or had a unique innate abilities or assumed specific roles in the society. The most basic and archetypal role of sage in ancient Israel, as Mark claimed, would be that of parents. Parents are the quintessential teacher who passed on their life experiences and wisdom to their children to ensure they are productive members of the family and citizens in the entire community.<sup>74</sup> Children were also taught by their parents’ skills and general knowledge that would assist them to be successful in their lives and vocations. It is therefore reasonable to say that wisdom begins in the home in ancient Israel. In the wisdom literature of the Hebrew Bible, the voice of the parent is well pronounced. In the books of Proverbs and Ecclesiastes, the vocative “my son” is employed to address the supposed audience. However, most scholars argued that the usage is metaphorical and used as a personal address to a student by his teacher. Elders, in ancient Israel, were also considered as sages. Mark, in his work referred to above, saw the relevance of the ancient Near Eastern culture in this idea. He said that in the Ancient Near East, being old or having grey hair was connected with wisdom. As a person aged in the ancient world, his or her honour and prestige increased correlatively, and they were valued for their wisdom and knowledge that had accrued over the years. Thus, younger people were expected to go to the elders for counsel. Village or city elder was the most basic kind of elders in ancient world. Considering the wisdom of the elders in ancient Israel, Mark identified three main functions of an elder in the community. Firstly, elders served as peacemakers, adjudicating conflicts among members of the families. They were also chosen by the community based on their honour and value for impartiality and for placing the interest of the community above their own. Besides, their older age, numerous life experiences and accumulated wisdom enabled them to serve effectively. Secondly, elders served as representatives for their village or city in the larger gathering, festivals and in judicial cases that involved various clans. Thirdly, elders served as judges in the city or village in which they lived. Apart from the village or city elders, there were also national or tribal elders who would be from the most prestigious families that represent regions and would meet regularly. Judges, in ancient Israel, were also identified as sages. Though, elders could serve as judges in the society as earlier observed, there were also

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<sup>74</sup> M.R. Sneed. 2015. *The Social World of the Sages – An Introduction to Israelite Wisdom Literature*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press. 1-16

judges who were governmental officials. Kings also served as sages in Israel, just like in the ancient Mesopotamia where their kings demonstrated great wisdom and piety in building of temples for gods. In the Hebrew Bible, Solomon is portrayed as a sage and it is no surprise that the authorship of the book of Proverbs is ascribed to him. In the same vein, Hezekiah is said to have instructed his officials to collect the Proverbs of Solomon (Prov. 25:1). Mark noted that both the Kings of Israel and other ancient Near Eastern nations were expected to be paragons of virtue, power and wisdom. Closely connected with the wise king are his courtiers and counselors who could also be referred to as sages. These were also scribes, though not very often. There were also mantic sages and magicians. Daniel and his three friends served as mantic sages for the Babylonians.<sup>75</sup>

In his own submission, Julius<sup>76</sup> referred to wisdom as one of the most interesting and important elements in the development of Judaism. He argued that the wise men or sages take their place beside the priests as teachers of youth in ethics and religion. The interest of these wise men was not in Jewish but in human life, and they have therefore been called humanists. Nothing could be seen more clearly than the fact that they recognized wisdom as universal. Julius disclosed that there are striking parallels to our biblical Proverbs, Job and Ecclesiastes among the ancient Egyptians and Babylonians as well as among other nations. However, to him, this does not mean that Jewish wisdom was dependent upon any of these, but that wisdom is international; everywhere the fruit of life's experience is expressed in this manner, it is of universal application. Julius claimed that there are three wisdom books, Proverbs, Job and Ecclesiastes. He said that others, like the story of Ahikar, the book of Jesus Ben Sirach or Ecclesiasticus, and the Wisdom of Solomon are still extant, but they were not included in the Hebrew canon. The teaching of the wise men, as Julius observed, dealt with the whole range of life; with personal affairs, including good manners as well as good morals; with family relations, including parents, children, and servants; with social relationship, between friends and enemies, between rich and poor; with professional and business matters; and with public life and its interests. There is a wealth of wisdom, of sober and realistic observation, of sharp epigrammatic characterization, of kindly humour and biting sarcasm, of warm personal exhortation and urgent appeal that makes the book of Proverbs a veritable mine of good counsel for the art of right living. The great motive of wise living is always personal happiness.

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<sup>75</sup> M.R. Sneed. 2015. *The Social World of the Sages – An Introduction to Israelite Wisdom Literature*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press. 1-16

<sup>76</sup> A. B. Julius. 1933. *The Literature of the Old Testament*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Julius considered wise men as profoundly religious because their principle of morals and religion is that goodness is rewarded, wickedness is punished. The wise men, as he observed, tried to inculcate the principle of worthy life by glorifying wisdom as its secret and source. Looking through the various books of wisdom, Julius concluded that the book of Proverbs was the work of orthodox men, who assumed that the righteous and the wicked are rewarded according to their deserts. But the validity of this doctrine was challenged and denied by the authors of Job and Ecclesiastes, who could not reconcile it with the fact of life.<sup>77</sup>

Reflecting on the relevance of Israelite wisdom tradition in a popular context, John<sup>78</sup> opined that Israelites contributed several things to the entire world; even in the modern days, the people are still making invaluable contributions to human society. To him, of all her literatures, the most widely admired and acceptable was the words of her sages and the songs of her singers. Her proverbs and metaphors are reflected in the speech of many lands. The book of Job, which is her greatest literary masterpiece, ponders on the mystery of some of life's deepest and unanswered questions. Her Psalms also reflect the full range of human emotion, from abject misery to ecstatic praise. The explicitness of her love songs challenges both the Jewish and Christian interpreters. Though the teacher of wisdom was said to be seldom mentioned in the Old Testament outside the wisdom literature, John confirmed that they were considered alongside the priest and prophets as found in Jeremiah 18:18. However, interest in wisdom in Israel, as John claimed, was much older than the time of Jeremiah. Wisdom does not know political and international boundaries. Its teachings were of two types: practical wisdom, which was concerned with the problems of everyday living; and secondly, the use of easily remembered literary forms like proverbs, fables and short poetic discourses on human problem, which could be committed to memory.

John argued further that in the postexilic period, the wise men became the school men in Israel. Perhaps the most famous of them was Ben Sirach, whose teachings were collected in the apocryphal book of Ecclesiasticus. Wisdom of a different kind was found in Ecclesiastes (not Ecclesiasticus, the wisdom of Ben Sirach) and the book of Job. These books belonged to the realm of philosophical or speculative wisdom. These were extended discussions which involved many of the deepest questions that confront man as he tries to live in the world. They challenged many of the widely held ideas of the time. They

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<sup>77</sup> A. B. Julius. 1933. *The Literature of the Old Testament*. New York: Columbia University Press. 316.

<sup>78</sup> John Tullock. 1981. *The Old Testament Story*. New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc. 347

questioned several things that most people would never dare to question. They, indeed, posed many unanswerable questions and challenged many traditional beliefs and values.

In line with the above stated challenges, and mindful of their colossal consequences, Michael<sup>79</sup> reported that wisdom literature offers theological and religious reflections that are remarkably relevant to the issues and concerns addressed by contemporary studies in religion: a broad ecumenical scope of religions, the cosmopolitan interrelationship among world religion, questions of doubt, the relationship between the natural environment and humankind, and human autonomy and material progress. The heart of Michael's message is that the wisdom movement is the least understood and appreciated by the biblical scholars because its focus was not consistent with the traditional biblical theology and its stress on the role of the Mosaic covenant at Sinai. Not that alone, many biblical scholars faulted wisdom movement for its fundamental reliance on order of cosmos. In other words, with its insistence on order and stability, it seemed diametrically opposed to the radical challenge presented in the rest of the Hebrew Bible. The Hebrew wisdom tradition was also devalued because of its striking similarity, in content and literary form, to tradition in contemporary pagan nations, especially Egypt: how could there be divine revelation in material that was obviously borrowed and secular? There could be similarities but their origins are mutually different.

Another problem with the wisdom tradition is the development of Hebrew canon of scripture that provided another force that worked against the acceptance of this tradition. Besides, the difficulty that scholars encountered in trying both to define the term wisdom and to delimit its extent in the Bible is another problem that has hindered investigation of the Israelite wisdom tradition. Michael disclosed further that efforts to trace and detect the influence of this biblical movement have been equally controversial. However, in spite the dissonance, some scholars still enjoy the nexus between the wisdom tradition and other books of the Bible. Beebe<sup>80</sup> even confirmed that some of the choicest passages in all the Old Testament are found in the writings call wisdom.

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<sup>79</sup> B. D. Michael. 2008. *Reading the Old Testament-An Inductive Introduction*. Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers, Inc. 277-27.

<sup>80</sup> H. K. Beebe. 1970. *The Old Testament*. California: Dickerson Publishing Company, Inc. 404

## Israelite Wisdom Literature: The Book of Job and Proverbs

Scholars have written on different books of wisdom in Israel such as Job,<sup>81</sup> Psalms, Proverbs,<sup>82</sup> Qoheleth,<sup>83</sup> etc. However, the works of the authors who wrote on the book of Job and Proverbs were reviewed in this study.

### The Book of Job

The book of Job was recognized as one of the supreme classic in the whole range of literature. It is one of the profoundest of all writings. It has probably inspired as much popular and critical writing as any Old Testament book. Its artistic brilliance makes it an attractive subject for literary scholars. In his contribution, Gareth<sup>84</sup> disclosed that the book of Job has been the subject of a great deal of discussion. Many Bible scholars, according to him, regard it as the oldest book of the Bible. Others date it as late as the Babylonian exile. Gareth argued further that the author of Job is unknown, and that the name of the author is nowhere mentioned either in the book itself or elsewhere in the Bible, so his identity cannot be determined with any certainty. There may be a hint in chapter 32 that Elihu, who remonstrated with Job and his three friends, wrote down the record, but as we have repeatedly noted, certainty about the divine authorship is the point that really matters. The book of Job, as Gareth confirmed, holds its rightful place in the canon of the scripture.

Gary,<sup>85</sup> in his own submission, said that although Job had many children and was a wealthy herdsman like some of the patriarchs in Genesis, this kind of lifestyle existed during the time of King David and was still common in the remote areas of the ancient Near East up until the 20<sup>th</sup> century A.D. Since wisdom literature in Israel was associated with the life and time of Solomon and Hezekiah (I Kings 3:3-14; 10:6, 7, 23-25; Prov. 1:1; 25:1; Eccl. 1:1), many believe the book of Job came from that period. Gary explained that the author of Job reveals information concerning the unseen spiritual battles that go on in the world. Some of these events are mysteries to mankind; it is impossible for people to always understand the reason why God allows certain things to happen. Job was a righteous man who feared God

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<sup>81</sup> R. B. James and B. N. William. 1982. *Old Testament Survey The Message, Form, and Background of the Old Testament*. USA: W. M. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co. 471.

<sup>82</sup> C. H. Bullock. 1979. *An Old Testament Poetic Books - The Wisdom and Songs of Israel*. Chicago: Moody Press. 155.

<sup>83</sup> R. D. Philip and R. John. 2005. *The Old Testament Word*. USA: West Minster John Knox Press. 192-193

<sup>84</sup> Gareth Crossley. 1975. *The Old Testament-Explained and Applied*. USA: Evangelical Press. 424-425

<sup>85</sup> V.S. Gary. 1991. *Old Testament Survey, Part 2- Job-Malachi-Broadening Your Biblical Horizon*. Wheaton: ETA. 19

but God allowed Satan to test him. However, Job remained faithful to God and did not blame God, even though his wife suggested that he should curse God and die (2:9,10).

Job's three friends, Eliphaz, Bildad and Zophar, came to comfort and restore him, but after the initial period of mourning and silence was observed, a pattern of alternating speeches developed. The theological stance taken by these men throughout the dialogue was that when people fall into sin, God reproves to redeem them; Job should therefore repent and ask God for forgiveness. Elihu, another character, was later introduced who defended the justice of God. He refuted Job's claim of seeing God as unjust and also reaffirmed the various aspect of the world that showed the wonders of God's sovereign rule. However, God eventually revealed that Job's friends were wrong while Job was correct. Job was not suffering for the evil he had committed. The friends therefore confessed their wrong and Job prayed for them. Commenting on the theological significance of the book of Job, Gary encouraged the readers to be patient and faithfully wait for God's passion in any case.

The work of James, P. Berkeley<sup>86</sup> is also relevant to this study. In his work, James classified the book of Job as part of the wisdom books whose author was one of the sagest of sages. To him, Job is a unique book; there is none like it in the Bible or elsewhere. God used an exceptional genius in this exceptional dramatic writing. It is rightly called "the Drama of Job". Its theme is the problem of the suffering of the innocent. This theme, as James posited, perplexes the mind of man, because it raises a question concerning the righteousness of God. This is a persistent theme throughout the Old Testament, because the Old Testament, as a whole, tells the story of a people who suffered many tragedies. Job, a man who "was blameless and upright, one who feared God and who turned away from evil" (Job 1:1), suffered the loss of his property, his family, and his health. James disclosed that the book of Job, in dramatic dialogue, pictures Job in his agony of mind and in extreme affliction. Israel's problem of suffering, as James observed, is concentrated in this most acute case. Why does an innocent and pious man who obeys God's commandments suffer? The case in the book of Job, then, is the case of an innocent man, who does not merit the loss he suffered. Involved in the dialogue are three friends who have come to mourn with Job-Eliphaz, Bildad and Zophar. Later, there is a young fellow named Elihu. These friends wanted to help Job, but they did

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<sup>86</sup> P. Berkeley James. 1954. *Knowing the Old Testament*. USA: The Judson Press. 147

not. Rather, they proved “miserable comforters”<sup>87</sup> who only increased his agony. However, in the conclusion, the Lord condemned them.

Salient in James’s submission is the stress on Job’s deepest distress, the perplexity of mind and his plea for vindication, the repudiation of the three friends in the dialogue, the debate on the law of retribution as well as the Lord’s answer to Job’s case. James concluded that, being an ancient story, the book of Job needed a happy ending which demands dramatic reading. He said that the speeches need to be read in the spirit of those who are speaking. Each of the friends, as James argued, is distinct in personality and each one’s word should be read according to his mood.<sup>88</sup>

### **The Book of Proverbs**

To make this research an outstanding one, the works of some scholars like Kevin,<sup>89</sup> Werner,<sup>90</sup> Harrison<sup>91</sup> and others were duly consulted. Kevin, in his view about the book of Proverbs, described the book as the foundational wisdom book of the Bible which teaches the ABCs of wisdom and introduces more complex issues that are further elaborated in Ecclesiastes, Job and the wisdom teaching of the New Testament, such as the Sermon on the Mount. Kevin argued that, in an extraordinary way, Proverbs raises the theological question of the relation of ordinary life in the cosmos to God, the Creator. Moreover, according to Kevin, the complexity of interpreting Proverbs has implications for biblical hermeneutics as a whole.

To drive home his points, Kevin divided his work into four different parts namely ‘History of Interpretation’, ‘Message of the text’, ‘Canon and the Theological significance for the church’. Kevin argued that a history of reading Proverbs remains to be written, partly because the use of short sayings in Jewish and Christian literature is widely scattered, and a systematic exposition of the book in Christian circles was rare until the period of Melancthon’s translation and three commentaries in the sixteenth century. He said that Proverbs was often exploited for its pithy wisdom by writers while its use in theological debates was sporadic even if it was spectacular. Generally, allegorical reading of Proverbs

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<sup>87</sup> P. B. James. 1954. *Knowing the Old Testament*. USA: The Judson Press. 148

<sup>88</sup> P. B. James. 1954. *Knowing the Old Testament*. 152

<sup>89</sup> J. V. Kevin. 2005. *Theological Interpretation of the Old Testament — A Book by Book Survey*. Great Britain: Baker Academic. 171.

<sup>90</sup> H. S. Werner. 2008. *Old Testament Introduction*. USA: West Minster John Knox, Press. 371

<sup>91</sup> R. K. Harrison. 1969. *Introduction to the Old Testament*. USA: W.M.B Eerdmans Publishing Company. 1010

(apart from the short sayings in Chs 10-29), as Kevin observed, dominated its use by the church and synagogue until the reformation, when the great shift to exclusively “literal” reading began. The 1923 publication of the Egyptian Teaching of Amen-em-ope (with parallels to Proverbs 22:17-23:14) gave rise to a resurgence of scholarly interest in Proverbs, focusing on the international character of wisdom. Speaking on the message of the text, Kevin confirmed that to discern the “message” of Proverbs is complex because the book is a collection of collections that grew over time. The book contains a variety of genres, “lectures” and “speeches” (Chs 1-9), short “sayings” and “admonitions” (Chs 10-29), brief poem ,including a prayer (Chs 30), maternal instruction and a “Hymn to a valiant Woman” (Chs 31). Yet the book forms an edited whole, with an introduction and a hermeneutical prologue (1-9), which provide the world-view within which the smaller genres that follow are to be understood.

In addition, Proverbs 10-15, according to Kevin, teaches the elementary pattern of facts and consequence, while 16-29 develop the exception to the rules. But the complexity of the book’s interpretation, as Kevin opined, especially of the short sayings whose contextual relation are not always clear, has implication for the reading of scripture as a whole, since the Bible itself is a collection of books composed over time. Looking at the canon of the book, Kevin exposed the exaggeration about the differences between Proverbs and the rest of the books in the Bible. For example, as he argued, the lack of salvation history in Proverb is a function of its genre and purpose, rather than of differences in worldview and theology. In conclusion, Kevin disclosed that Proverbs, significantly, guides the church in serving God wisely and righteously in all its doings and interactions with creatures (12:10) and fellow human alike (14:31).<sup>92</sup>

Werner, in his work *Old Testament Introduction*, added that the purpose of wisdom is to ward off problems and harm and to show the way to an upright, respected and successful life (Prov. 13:14; 15:24). Like others, he reflected on the international connection of proverbs, especially with Egypt, which show that wisdom was not first known in postexilic Israel. Sapiential thinking, as Werner said, has a long history, extending from individual proverbs that express life experience (I Sam 24:14; Prov. 10:1ff; 25:1ff) down to the extensive theological reflections in Job or Qoheleth and even outside the canon to Sirach and the Wisdom of Solomon. Apart from the individual proverb, there is one group of proverbs

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<sup>92</sup> J. V. Kevin. 2005. *Theological Interpretation of the Old Testament — A Book by Book Survey*. Great Britain: Baker Academic. 177.



that “the men of Hezekiah, King of Judah copied” (Prov. 25:1). Werner, Harrison,<sup>93</sup> and Philip and Regerson agreed on the fact that wisdom was taught not only by the father but also by the mother as well as the teachers, and the son listens (Prov 1:8; 4:1ff; 6:20; 31:26; cf Exod. 12:26; 13:14; e.t.c); for it behoves a son to honour his parents (Prov. 10:1;20:10; etc.). The appellations “father” and “son”, as Werner observed, may reflect the relationship between teacher and pupil (Prov 1:1ff). In pursuit of its goal, which is the transmission of experience, Proverbs uses various kinds of methods such as sayings, images or similes, exhortations, etc. The book of Proverbs of Solomon, like the prophetic books or the Psalter, consists of individual collection or parts of collections.<sup>94</sup>

The scholars who have written on Israelite wisdom literature, especially those whose works were reviewed in this study, have done a good job in giving us the needed information on the subject matter. However, their works contain no information about ‘Age’ as a determinant factor for wisdom as preserved in many of the Hebrew wisdom books. Besides, in their works, they could not account for any resemblance between Israelite concept of wisdom and that of the Yoruba. In other words, their works have nothing to do with wisdom in African context talkless of such issue among the Yoruba.

## **2.2 Wisdom among the Yoruba People**

In order to avoid any nuance, the materials reviewed in this part were grouped into two: the first group deals with Historical Analysis of Hebrew and Yoruba Cultural Affinities while the second group is on Wisdom in Yoruba perspective.

### **Historical Analysis of Hebrew and Yoruba Cultural Affinities**

It would be romantic to expect that Yoruba wisdom tradition would remain static in a dynamic world. Nonetheless, correct education and appreciation of Yoruba world-view, which is composed of the people’s cosmological beliefs and practices, religions and philosophy are basic and crucial to understanding of Africa and Africans, their history and cultural contact, particularly to the cultural, religious, economic, military, and political life of ancient Israel. In his work, *Africa and the Africans in the Old Testament*, Adam<sup>95</sup> argued that

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<sup>93</sup> R. K. Harison. 1969. *Introduction to the Old Testament*. 1012

<sup>94</sup> H. S. Werner. 2008. *Old Testament Introduction*. 376

<sup>95</sup> D. T. Adamo. 2005. *Africa and the Africans in the Old Testament*. Benin City: Justice Jeco Press & PublishersLtd. 3.

though the Hebrew Bible is primarily the record of, and a witness to the vertical and horizontal revelation of God within the history and experience of a peculiar people (Israel), it cannot but recognize God's involvement with other nations, which have contact with these "chosen people". This is because Israel had to struggle for her survival among the people in ancient Near East. She had to fight against the Amorites, Canaanites and several other peoples, even on getting to the promise land the struggle did not end. She came in contact with traders, soldiers, priests and prophets of powerful nations such as the Philistines, the Phoenicians, the Assyrians, the Babylonians, and others. The religions of these nations, as Adam[ observed, also became "a never-ending threat to the faith of Israel". Adam[ argued further that as Israel came in contact with these foreign nations, she was forced to acknowledge the reality of their presence, and to redefine her own identity in the light of God's plan. Although some of these nations sometimes played a secondary role in shaping the political, religious and economic history of ancient Israel, as Adam[ confirmed, others played a major role. Therefore, in order to understand properly the Old Testament, it is important to understand the life and thought of the people who have played major or minor roles in Israel's destiny.<sup>96</sup>

Indeed, Adam[ could be justified because in many ways, the African and Jewish cultures are very much alike. In his systematic commentary on Genesis 1-11, Modupe Oduy[ye<sup>97</sup> described the affinities between the African socio-cultural heritage and the way of life in ancient Israel. Revealing the secrets behind these affinities, Mary et al.<sup>98</sup> disclosed that the indebtedness of the Hebrew to Africa is acknowledged throughout the Old Testament, from the perspective of religion, economic, politics, military, history, aesthetics, ethnics, and kingship. They argued that Egypt is depicted as the country of refuge and bounty for Abraham and his descendants. Joseph, the son of Jacob, became the instrument for the rescue of his family from starvation. Eventually, the descendants of Abraham settled in Egypt, and the drama unfolds in the book of Pentateuch.

Therefore, nudged by these scholars, it could be inferred that there are various issues in the Old Testament through which Africans, particularly the Yoruba people, have regarded the Old Testament as an affirmation of their cultural and religious heritage. Thus, having read

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<sup>96</sup> D. T. Adamo. 2005. *Africa and the Africans in the Old Testament*. Benin City: Justice Jeco Press & Publishers Ltd. 3.

<sup>97</sup> Modupe Oduyoye. 1998. *The Son of Gods and the Daughters of Men – An Afro-Asiatic Interpretation of Genesis 1-11*. Ibadan: Daystar Press. 8.

<sup>98</sup> Mary Getui et al. 2000. *Interpreting the Old Testament in Africa*. Nairobi: Action Publishers. 8.

or heard the biblical story, Yoruba converts have discerned the continuity and affinity between the biblical ways of life and their own. The scholars whose works were reviewed in this section have done a good job in revealing to us the secret behind the Hebrew and Yoruba cultural affinity. However, their works lack information about the relevance of chronological age in Hebrew and Yoruba wisdom traditions.

### Wisdom in Yoruba Perspective

Just as in the ancient Israel, the concept of wisdom is one of the most highly cherished phenomena among the Yoruba. The Yoruba people consider wisdom, known as *{gb-n*, as precious diadem one must possess for living a fulfilled or successful life. One Yoruba maxim says: *Cni 9 gb-n abi w5rz n7k6n*,<sup>99</sup> (He who is wise has gold in his belly). In his shrewd observation, Ak[gun],<sup>100</sup> while identifying the most cherished world-view of the Yoruba, confirmed that money which is worshipped in many cultures occupies bottom position in the Yoruba scale of value system, but wisdom, knowledge and intelligence known collectively as *{gb-n*, *\*m=* and *)ye* top the scale to be followed closely by valour. According to him, integrity comes third while industry comes fourth. It is after wisdom and the other attributes would have taken their seat would the man with money and materials wealth be considered. One Yoruba adage says: *Ow9 la f7 n ra csin, [gb-n la f7 n g6n 5n*<sup>101</sup> (We use money to buy a horse but use wisdom to ride on it).

Regarding the sources of wisdom among the Yoruba, oral traditions, as Oyeronke<sup>102</sup> opined, constitute the starting point of any investigation into Yoruba thought system. Oyeronke stated that Yoruba oral genres include *:)we* (Proverb), the *Ifq* corpus, *Or7k8* (lineage and individual praise poetry) and *\*jqlq* (hunter's poetry), etc. Other sources include: Songs, Stories, Riddles and Taboos,<sup>103</sup> etc. In agreement with this, Bamidele,<sup>104</sup> Faycmi,<sup>105</sup>

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<sup>99</sup> Elizabeth Idowu. Arowosegbe Compound, Ijeru Oba, Ògbómòsò, Oyo State, Nigeria, 86 years — Interviewed, April 28th, 2015.

<sup>100</sup> T. A. Akogun. 2011. "Culture, Identity and Emancipation: Challenge to the Yoruba Race". [www.google.com](http://www.google.com). Retrieved May 14th, 2015.

<sup>101</sup> S. A. Adeniji, Arowosegbe Compound, Ijeru Oba, Ògbómòsò, Oyo State, Nigeria, 75 years – interviewed in Egboha Village, Ovia South Local Government, Edo State. Retrieved May 2nd, 2015.

<sup>102</sup> Oyeronke Olajubu. "The Documentation and Propagation of Ifa Corpus and Challenge of Modern Information Technology: The Internet as a Focus". *Orita*, Ibadan.

<sup>103</sup> O. O. Familusi. 2009. "The Threat to Taboo as a Means of Inculcating Ethics in Yoruba Society". *Orita Ibadan Journal of Religions Studies*, Vol. XL1/11. 102

<sup>104</sup> Bamidele. 2003. "The History and Tradition of the Yoruba People". Panorama-TakingITGlobal. Retrieved May 8th, 2015.

<sup>105</sup> A. K. Fayemi. "Agba (Elder) as Arbitrator: A Yoruba Socio-Political Model for Conflict Resolution" - A Review of Lawrence O. Bamikole – *Journal of Law and Conflict Resolution*, Vol. 1(3), August, 2009.

Babatunde,<sup>106</sup> Ad3r8nt=<sup>107</sup> and others confirmed the value and the use of proverbs in traditional Yoruba society. For instance, Bamidele in his work, *The History and Tradition of the Yoruba people*, disclosed that among the Yoruba people, proverbs and adages form a significant part of everyday language, and are used extensively in every form of communication<sup>108</sup>. This submission was developed by Faycmi who argued that the Yoruba accord great respect for intelligent and expert use of language, especially the appropriate use of proverbs and, as such, the *zgbz* (elder) is expected to exhibit or display this capacity. Faycmi, however, said that the capacity for exhibiting this expert use of language is not solely based on old age as there are some youths, who are witty in the genre of proverbial communication and intelligent use of language.<sup>109</sup> In the Yoruba thought pattern, displaying sagacity in the use of spoken word is the sign or herald of being cultured. It is equally a distinctive characteristic of conversational prudence and the epitome of intellectual maturity.

Babatunde, in her work, *The Effect of Globalization on the Yoruba Language and Culture*, agreed with Oyeronke on proverb as a source of wisdom in traditional Yoruba community. She argued that, in Yoruba culture, it is a mark of wisdom to interlace one's expression or utterance with proverbs. According to her, proverbs are appreciated as the vehicle for words, and therefore a Yoruba proverb puts it: *we lcsin =r=, b7 =r= bq s=n6 Owe la 9 f8 wq a*, (proverbs are the horses for words, for when words are lost we use proverbs to seek them out).<sup>110</sup> Following others' submissions, Babatunde said that proverbs are highly valued in Yoruba culture and individuals who are skilled in proverbs are highly revered in the Yoruba community because they have ability to get to the heart of a matter through the use of appropriate proverbs. Proverbs, as she claimed, have time and context of application. She concluded that proverbs enrich or enhance human's speech and they are exclusively the preserved of elders. Within this understanding, Ad3r8nt= also submitted that the Yoruba people believe in the efficacy of proverbs in message deliver, and to imprint on the minds of their fellow people carefulness, so that people can live a fruitful and problem free life.<sup>111</sup> He expressed further that the Yoruba people cherished the use of proverbs. Proverbs, according

<sup>106</sup> S. A. Babatunde. 2013. *The Effect of Globalization on the Yoruba Language and Culture*. A Long Essay Submitted to the Department of Linguistics and African Language, Faculty of Arts, OAU Ile-Ife.

<sup>107</sup> S. I. Aderinto. 2014. "The Social Implications of Some Nigerian Yoruba and Ibo Proverbs on Carefulness". *European Journal of English Language and Literature Studies*, Vol. 2, No 2.

<sup>108</sup> Bamidele. 2003. *The History and Tradition of the Yoruba People*.

<sup>109</sup> A. K. Fayemi. "Agba (Elder) as Arbitrator: A Yoruba Socio-Political Model for Conflict Resolution" - A Review of Lawrence O. Bamikole.

<sup>110</sup> S. A. Babatunde. 2013. "The Effect of Globalization on the Yoruba Language and Culture".

<sup>111</sup> S. I. Aderinto. 2014. "The Social Implications of Some Nigerian Yoruba and Ibo Proverbs on Carefulness". *European Journal of English Language and Literature Studies*, Vol. 2, No 2.

to him, can be used as weapons to put people on the right track in matters relating to behaviour. Carefulness, as a most sensitive and extremely important virtue among the Yoruba people, is diligently conveyed by the appropriate use of proverbs.

In a more comprehensive way, Akin[*lq*,<sup>112</sup> in his work on ‘Gerontology and Juvenility as Portrayed in Yoruba Philosophical Proverbs’ emphasised the significance of proverb in Yoruba traditional setting. Speaking on the language and harmony of the Yoruba proverbs, Akin[*lq*, observed that, in the social life of the Yoruba people, proverbs constitute a powerful device for shaping moral beliefs, opinions and consciousness. The poetics of Yoruba proverbs form a major aesthetic aspect of its nature. Thus, an individual Yoruba who is deeply cultured employs proverbs when making speeches in daily activities. These proverbs are always appropriately applied to correlate with the specific subject matter of discourse in the context of use. Yoruba proverbs are very unique, marked out from ordinary maxims and are expressed in figurative mode.<sup>113</sup> Reflecting on the Yoruba proverbs and moral instruction, Akin[*lq*, added that many Yoruba proverbs explored local, traditional and cultural world view, history as well as the social values of the Yoruba people to press home their decisions on moral directives to the youths. That was why proverbs are described as the poetry and moral science of the Yoruba nation. Many Yoruba proverbs are used to portray traditional observations on the nature of things.<sup>114</sup> They emanate from what the aged people observed from natural phenomena and incidences of the past which could be didactic in orientating the youths. The content of Yoruba proverbs include social charters, praising what the people cherish and consider as virtue as well as condemning bad practices. Among the acceptable virtues in Yoruba proverbs are respect for elders, humility, hard works consideration for others, truthfulness and respect for vows, pledges or promises. Idleness and busy bodies are parts of the vices condemned in Yoruba proverbs. Elders among the Yoruba, use proverbs to embellish and support arguments in their conversation. Proverbs could also be used in any other oratory events. Elders, according to Akin[*lq*., are the people considered to possess this convicting power ability.<sup>115</sup> Proverbs, therefore, are domicile to the aged people because they

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<sup>112</sup> B. Akinola. 2016. “Gerontology and Juvenility as Portrayed in Yoruba Philosophical Proverbs” in Kammelu N.C., Akinola B., Onuegbu M.C. (eds). 2016. *Forms and Functions of Proverbs in Nigerian Languages*, Ibadan: Educational Publishers & Printers, 262

<sup>113</sup> B. Akinola. 2016 “Gerontology and Juvenility as Portrayed in Yoruba Philosophical Proverbs” in Kammelu N.C., Akinola B., Onuegbu M.C. (eds). 2016. *Forms and Functions of Proverbs in Nigerian Languages*, 262

<sup>114</sup> B. Akinola. 2016 “Gerontology and Juvenility as Portrayed in Yoruba Philosophical Proverbs” in Kammelu N.C., Akinola B., Onuegbu M.C. (eds). 2016. *Forms and Functions of Proverbs in Nigerian Languages*, 262

<sup>115</sup> B. Akinola. 2016 “Gerontology and Juvenility as Portrayed in Yoruba Philosophical Proverbs” in Kammelu N.C., Akinola B., Onuegbu M.C. (eds). 2016. *Forms and Functions of Proverbs in Nigerian Languages*, 262

quote them effortlessly from the reservoir of their acquired knowledge. Among the Yoruba people, proverbs are considered the wealth of knowledge gathered for several years by the elders on the basis of their past experiences and the study of natural phenomena of life. In his explanation on the use of Yoruba proverbs, Akin[*lq*], also talked about the relevance of the youths in traditional Yoruba community. He said that, in spite of the considerable number of Yoruba proverbs that portray the aged people as the repository of wisdom and experience, there are other Yoruba proverbs that reveal the youth as equally wise, strong, creative, caring, intelligent, helpful and very relevant in the progress of their family and the society at large. Nevertheless, some Yoruba proverbs encourage the youths to seek the help of elders. In line with this, wisdom, as observed in the words of Akin[*lq*], is always characterized by the judicious use of proverbs among the Yoruba people. There are several proverbs which are meant to glorify the wisdom of the elderly person, calling the youth who might want to take such for granted to order.<sup>116</sup> The Yoruba people considered the elders as the authority figures, custodians of society's history and tradition whose wealth of knowledge is equal to a well-stocked archive and whose demise is tantamount to setting a rich library ablaze. Elders are those who are capable of explaining to younger generation the ancient events that had happened in the past and their implication for the present time through proverbs. Many of these proverbs are directed to the younger people, admonishing them to tap from the wealth of experience of the aged people. Some Yoruba proverbs also reveal cautions against elder's misdemeanor. The exalted and honourable position of the elders in the Yoruba society is highly cherished. Many Yoruba proverbs describe the uniqueness and enviable virtues of the elders; and therefore warn against misconduct.<sup>117</sup> The reason is that elders are the people on which the moral rectitude as well as the ethical standard of the community is hung. They are expected to guild, help, support and control the youth in adhering strictly to moral values of the Yoruba community. As a guild or individual, an elder is therefore not expected to mislead the innocent youths. In order to sustain their exalted position, elders are expected to be firm, factual and truthful. They must be people of their words, and not to be double tongue, liars, deceivers or fraudulent persons.<sup>118</sup>

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<sup>116</sup>B. Akinola. 2016 "Gerontology and Juvenility as Portrayed in Yoruba Philosophical Proverbs" in Kammelu N.C., Akinola B., Onuegbu M.C. (eds). 2016. *Forms and Functions of Proverbs in Nigerian Languages*, 262

<sup>117</sup>B. Akinola. 2016 "Gerontology and Juvenility as Portrayed in Yoruba Philosophical Proverbs" in Kammelu N.C., Akinola B., Onuegbu M.C. (eds). 2016. *Forms and Functions of Proverbs in Nigerian Languages*, 262

<sup>118</sup>B. Akinola. 2016 "Gerontology and Juvenility as Portrayed in Yoruba Philosophical Proverbs" in Kammelu N.C., Akinola B., Onuegbu M.C. (eds). 2016. *Forms and Functions of Proverbs in Nigerian Languages*, 262

Adding to what others have said on the Yoruba proverbs, Ad3j6b12<sup>119</sup> in his work, “Portrayal of Womenfolk in Yoruba proverbs”, submitted that proverb is considered one of the most prominent forms of the folklores. He observed that proverb could be considered the most enduring oral or verbal art whose widespread usage has been popularly recognised through the print and electronic media. Unlike ‘tales in moonlight’ and ‘ground parents’ folktales’ which are gradually going into extinction, proverb continues to be well used, and judiciously constitutes part of Yoruba daily living. Yoruba proverbs could be seen as the essential foundation, considerable for social and cultural wisdom. In line with what Akin[lq,, had said, Ad3j6b12 stressed that proverbs among the Yoruba people, serve as powerful rhetorical means of shaping ethical beliefs, opinions and consciousness of the people. In order to press home his point on the relevance of proverbs in communication, Ad3j6b12 made some etymological analyses of the word ‘proverb’. He established that the word ‘proverb’ is taken from the Latin word ‘proverbium’. ‘Pro’, as he said, means ‘in front of’, while ‘verbium’ means ‘word’. This, according to Ad3j6b12, implies that proverb takes the place of ordinary words. The indispensable role of Yoruba proverbs in communication is deeply illustrated. In other words, proverbs are employed in the place of ordinary daily expression so as to reveal deeper meaning. Through proverbs, collective wisdom and worldview are sustained and transmitted from one generation to the other.<sup>120</sup> Proverbs are short pithy sayings with implicit moral truths. They are distillations of the wisdom of the people acquired and accumulated over the years from everyday experiences. Proverbs proffer the essence of a particular conversation in a brief and unmistakable manner, by clarifying vividly the subject matter<sup>121</sup>. So proverb, according to Ad3j6b12 can be seen as a very rich source of imagery and succinct expression on which more elaborate forms can be derived.

Fqxeħ6n,<sup>122</sup> in her work, “Proverbial Exposition of the Aesthetic Sensibilities of the Yoruba Race”, posited that proverbs are variously used for many purposes. According to her, there are different types of proverbs designed for every situation in life. Yoruba people have proverbs that are deliberately attached to almost everything in their physical and cultural environment. Similar to what others have said, Fqxeħ6n disclosed that Yoruba proverb is all-

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<sup>119</sup> S. Adejube. 2016. “Portrayal of Womenfolk in Yoruba Proverbs” in Kammelu N.C., Akinola B., Onuegbu M.C. (eds). 2016. *Forms and Functions of Proverbs in Nigerian Languages*,

<sup>120</sup>S. Adejube. 2016. “Portrayal of Womenfolk in Yoruba Proverbs” in Kammelu N.C., Akinola B., Onuegbu M.C. (eds). 2016. *Forms and Functions of Proverbs in Nigerian Languages*,

<sup>121</sup>S. Adejube. 2016. “Portrayal of Womenfolk in Yoruba Proverbs” in Kammelu N.C., Akinola B., Onuegbu M.C. (eds). 2016. *Forms and Functions of Proverbs in Nigerian Languages*,

<sup>122</sup> M.A. Fasehun. 2016. “Proverbial Exposition of the Aesthetic Sensibilities of the Yoruba Race” in Kammelu N.C., Akinola B., Onuegbu M.C. (eds). 2016. *Forms and Functions of Proverbs in Nigerian Languages*,

embracing and encompassing because it is taken out of various activities in the society, natural objective and phenomena. She agreed with Akin[*lq*], in that there are classes of proverbs that indicate ideas about beliefs in respect of what is good and beautiful in the Yoruba community. However, unlike Akin[*lq*], and others, she argued that aesthetics which is central in the proverbial ideology of the Yoruba people means different things to different people. She noted, for example, that to some people, it is the beauty of face and body while to others, it is what is inside that makes a person beautiful. Nevertheless, irrespective of the way aesthetics had been considered, emphasis is quite laid on the relevance of the Yoruba proverbs. Fq<sup>xeh6n</sup> argued that the use of proverb is a worldwide phenomenon that is highly cherished right from the ancient past to the present age. The study of the Yoruba proverb, as she said, commenced in 1852 during the year Samuel Ajayi Crowther collected several Yoruba proverbs in his book titled “The vocabulary of Yoruba language”.<sup>123</sup> Speaking on the aesthetics of Yoruba proverbs, Fq<sup>xeh6n</sup> maintained that a major aesthetic quality of Yoruba proverbs is their poetic language and imagery. These reflect, most often, the characteristics of the Yoruba domestic animals, hunting activities, folklore, beliefs, religions, social institutions, forms of natural life and objects, and many others.<sup>124</sup> Great and invaluable importance is accorded the use of proverbs among the Yoruba people. This is done mainly to sustain, control and most significantly to preserve them for accurate utilisation. Though many of them were not written down, every serious-minded user of Yoruba proverbs is deeply conscious of the standard and adheres strictly to the regulations so as to keep the sanctity of the proverbs from abuse and reckless use.<sup>125</sup> Fq<sup>xeh6n</sup> added that proverbs are imbued with unassailable truths as many of them cannot be easily faulted. They are usually encapsulated in coded forms and as a result, it is very difficult for those who are not witty to decode. The relevance of Fq<sup>xeh6n</sup>’s work is summed up in her submission that Yoruba proverbs seem to be the exclusive preserve of the elders as younger people are not expected to use them while talking without the initial permission by the elders or by certain apologetic remarks which

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<sup>123</sup> M.A. Fasehun. 2016. “Proverbial Exposition of the Aesthetic Sensibilities of the Yoruba Race”. S. Adejube. 2016. “Portrayal of Womenfolk in Yoruba Proverbs” in Kammelu N.C., Akinola B., Onuegbu M.C. (eds). 2016. *Forms and Functions of Proverbs in Nigerian Languages*,

<sup>124</sup> M.A. Fasehun. 2016. “Proverbial Exposition of the Aesthetic Sensibilities of the Yoruba Race”. S. Adejube. 2016. “Portrayal of Womenfolk in Yoruba Proverbs” in Kammelu N.C., Akinola B., Onuegbu M.C. (eds). 2016. *Forms and Functions of Proverbs in Nigerian Languages*,

<sup>125</sup> M.A. Fasehun. 2016. “Proverbial Exposition of the Aesthetic Sensibilities of the Yoruba Race”. S. Adejube. 2016. “Portrayal of Womenfolk in Yoruba Proverbs” in Kammelu N.C., Akinola B., Onuegbu M.C. (eds). 2016. *Forms and Functions of Proverbs in Nigerian Languages*,



might come up either before the speech or immediately after the statement.<sup>126</sup> Proverbs, according to Fqxeḥ6n, help to proffer certain pointedness and clarity of focus to a dialogue. They are romantic, having entertainment values, in terms of spicing up speech or in the area of making them more exciting to listeners. Fqxeḥ6n concluded that proverbs are the storehouse of the wisdom of the Yoruba people.

Faturoti,<sup>127</sup> in his work “An Insight into Ethical and Behavioural Patterns in Yoruba Proverbs”, also opined that proverb is one of the oldest and most striking genres of the Yoruba oral literature. Proverbs, among the Yoruba, are highly valued and considered as the wisdom lore. No wonder why speakers, writers and general users of the Yoruba language use proverbs as significant means of communication in all their quotidian activities.<sup>128</sup> Proverbs, as Faturoti observed, are also employed to articulate their views, to educate, encourage and facilitate their wheel of interaction. One may not be able to participate meaningfully in a critical communal discussion if one is not witty in quoting and understanding the meaning of proverbs relevant to the context of communication in Yoruba society.<sup>129</sup> Proverbs are incontrovertibly inherent in Yoruba life and this explicitly explains why they are usually accentuated as viable instruments of communication, after being considered to be persuasive and convincing enough.<sup>130</sup> Faturoti stressed that Yoruba people glorify proverbs as the ‘horses’ for words at different level of expression. In other words, if a word is lost, a proverb is used to find it. The ‘words that are lost’ in this context means ‘ambiguous or complex expressions’ while ‘horses’(proverbs) are the channels through which communication is made possible. According to Faturoti, proverbs have been described as succinct sayings of folk intelligence, often compressed in form, with deeper meaning and roundly used in giving credence to expression. Proverbs, as a speech act, are meaningful and abridged expressions, laced up with age long lexemes and construction. They are said be pithy sayings of folk wisdom that uses structural variations with colourful manifestations of language.<sup>131</sup> Faturoti

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<sup>126</sup> M.A. Fasehun. 2016. “Proverbial Exposition of the Aesthetic Sensibilities of the Yoruba Race” and S. Adejube. 2016. “Portrayal of Womenfolk in Yoruba Proverbs” in Kammelu N.C., Akinola B., Onuegbu M.C. (eds). 2016. *Forms and Functions of Proverbs in Nigerian Languages*,

<sup>127</sup> O.R. Faturoti 2016. “An Insight into Ethical and Behavioural Patterns in Yoruba Proverbs” in Kammelu N.C., Akinola B., Onuegbu M.C. (eds). 2016. *Forms and Functions of Proverbs in Nigerian Languages*,

<sup>128</sup> O.R. Faturoti 2016. “An Insight into Ethical and Behavioural Patterns in Yoruba Proverbs” in Kammelu N.C., Akinola B., Onuegbu M.C. (eds). 2016. *Forms and Functions of Proverbs in Nigerian Languages*,

<sup>129</sup> O.R. Faturoti 2016. “An Insight into Ethical and Behavioural Patterns in Yoruba Proverbs” in Kammelu N.C., Akinola B., Onuegbu M.C. (eds). 2016. *Forms and Functions of Proverbs in Nigerian Languages*,

<sup>130</sup> O.R. Faturoti 2016. “An Insight into Ethical and Behavioural Patterns in Yoruba Proverbs” in Kammelu N.C., Akinola B., Onuegbu M.C. (eds). 2016. *Forms and Functions of Proverbs in Nigerian Languages*,

<sup>131</sup> O.R. Faturoti 2016. “An Insight into Ethical and Behavioural Patterns in Yoruba Proverbs” in Kammelu N.C., Akinola B., Onuegbu M.C. (eds). 2016. *Forms and Functions of Proverbs in Nigerian Languages*,

further revealed that proverbs x-rayed the life and ethical ideas of the certain society and in some cases act as regulating rules of life. They are the guiding oracles that man has discovered for himself in the great business of how to be, to do and to do without. Therefore, proverbs are allowed to dictate the values through which every member of the community lived. In order to offer formidable impetus to the value and the indispensability of proverbs, as Faturoti observed, the Yoruba people intentionally promote them to the realm of being difficult to violate to restrict the users to the specific sphere of societal etiquette. This purpose has been achieved maximally in the pre-literate Yoruba society. However, the contemporaneous society is repugnantly disinclined to proverbs acceptability,<sup>132</sup> practicability and functionality. Faturoti said that proverbs, nowadays, have stopped to be employed as the unwritten regulations and tools of social guide like before. He said this probably because of cultural influence from the western world. Faturoti could be justified because many people today, particularly the youths, cannot speak or write Yoruba language correctly. In fact, in some schools nowadays, offering Yoruba language as a subject has been made optional.

As a result of this shortcoming, prevailing self destructing normative values and degenerating psyche in the midst of cultural degeneration and social gridlock are appearing in a cascading order. The values of the ancient times when people craved for good names and therefore imbibed the aesthetic traits of good characters, using proverbial sayings with moral underpinnings as the guide is no more vibrant in present Yoruba society.<sup>133</sup> In addition to what he has said earlier, Faturoti said that there are several proverbs, among the Yoruba, that are rendered in various dialects across the entire Yoruba linguistic landscape. In other words, every Yoruba tribe has its own set of proverbs that may not be understood by the non-speaker of the dialect.

In his own work titled “Semiotics Representations and Socio-cultural value of Yoruba Proverbs on Parenting and Child Rearing”, Ojo<sup>134</sup> argued that Yoruba has rich culture and in the realm of their oral literature, there exist songs, stories, recitation, fables, poetry and proverbs. To him, proverbs are well rooted in Yoruba culture and almost every Yoruba

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<sup>132</sup> O.R. Faturoti 2016. “An Insight into Ethical and Behavioural Patterns in Yoruba Proverbs” in Kammelu N.C., Akinola B., Onuegbu M.C. (eds). 2016. *Forms and Functions of Proverbs in Nigerian Languages*,

<sup>133</sup> O.R. Faturoti 2016. “An Insight into Ethical and Behavioural Patterns in Yoruba Proverbs” in Kammelu N.C., Akinola B., Onuegbu M.C. (eds). 2016. *Forms and Functions of Proverbs in Nigerian Languages*,

<sup>134</sup> I.F. Ojo. 2016. “Semiotics Representations and Socio – Cultural Value of Yoruba Proverbs, on Parenting and Child Rearing” in Kammelu N.C., Akinola B., Onuegbu M.C. (eds). 2016. *Forms and Functions of Proverbs in Nigerian Languages*

person who grows up in a village, becomes familiar with proverbs. The proverbial language has a rich collection of words, combination of words, phrases, symbols, pictures, allusions, associations, and comparison. Ojo stressed that proverbs are taken in such a way that every part of the society is wholly portrayed in them. Indeed, proverbs themselves are symbols of communication which are cleverly packed into brief sentences<sup>135</sup>. They could be expressed in an anecdotes and stories. Sometimes, they could be carved on words in reference to several materials and could be sung, danced or acted. What is fascinating in Ojo's submission is his argument that many proverbs act as catalysts of knowledge, philosophy, ethics, morals and wisdom. Proverbs, as he claimed, also call for attention to dangers in human relations. Interesting about proverbs is that they equally appeal to human emotions even beyond mere reflection.<sup>136</sup> Proverbs are considered along ethical issues and not restricted to the head but also to conscience. They arouse human conscience, giving assurance and help in the course of deciding between good and evil, justice and injustice, right and wrong, etc. Within the Yoruba context, the relevance of proverbs cannot be exaggerated.<sup>137</sup> Proverbs are deeply valuable and their enormous advantages are unanimously cherished in the traditional Yoruba society. Ojo observed further that proverbs could be used as a means of training and teaching the children as well as creating harmonious relation in different respect of life. Some of the issues considerable in proverbs include sacredness of life and its preservation, communal cooperation, respect for elders, solidarity, virtues like kindness, bravery, unity, justice, generosity, friendship, hard-works, strength, trust, love, fairness, and mutual relationship.<sup>138</sup> Like any other African people, Yoruba people use proverbs as ingredient in language. In recent time, people find it difficult to understood and interpret proverbs because the elderly ones in the community are those commonly using proverbs.<sup>139</sup>

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<sup>135</sup> I.F. Ojo. 2016. "Semiotics Representations and Socio – Cultural Value of Yoruba Proverbs, on Parenting and Child Rearing" in Kammelu N.C., Akinola B., Onuegbu M.C. (eds). 2016. *Forms and Functions of Proverbs in Nigerian Languages*

<sup>136</sup> I.F. Ojo. 2016. "Semiotics Representations and Socio – Cultural Value of Yoruba Proverbs, on Parenting and Child Rearing" in Kammelu N.C., Akinola B., Onuegbu M.C. (eds). 2016. *Forms and Functions of Proverbs in Nigerian Languages*

<sup>137</sup> I.F. Ojo. 2016. "Semiotics Representations and Socio – Cultural Value of Yoruba Proverbs, on Parenting and Child Rearing" in Kammelu N.C., Akinola B., Onuegbu M.C. (eds). 2016. *Forms and Functions of Proverbs in Nigerian Languages*

<sup>138</sup> I.F. Ojo. 2016. "Semiotics Representations and Socio – Cultural Value of Yoruba Proverbs, on Parenting and Child Rearing" in Kammelu N.C., Akinola B., Onuegbu M.C. (eds). 2016. *Forms and Functions of Proverbs in Nigerian Languages*

<sup>139</sup> I.F. Ojo. 2016. "Semiotics Representations and Socio – Cultural Value of Yoruba Proverbs, on Parenting and Child Rearing" in Kammelu N.C., Akinola B., Onuegbu M.C. (eds). 2016. *Forms and Functions of Proverbs in Nigerian Languages*

*Ifq* corpus is another remarkable source of wisdom in traditional Yoruba society. Peel,<sup>140</sup> Adegboyega,<sup>141</sup> Farinade,<sup>142</sup> K1mi,<sup>143</sup> Ifal[lq,<sup>144</sup> Ab7nb-lq,<sup>145</sup> Lai<sup>146</sup> among others, have attributed the corpus of wisdom to *Ifq* Peel, in his work “Yoruba Religion: Seeing it in History, Seeing it Whole”, examined the relevance of *Ifq* in the course of Yoruba wisdom. He considered *Ifq* as occupying a central position in Yoruba religion. According to him, a large family of divination systems that extends across many cultures of Africa and Asia belongs to *Ifq*. *Ifq* in Peel’s submission is an extraordinary cultural artifact. Within the basic framework of 16 options is organised a vast corpus of proverbs, myth, moral reflection, sage philosophy, theological rationalisation. In line with Peel’s argument, one can deduce that *Ifq* in reference to its divine origin is the central creative force in Yoruba religion. This is connected with *Ol9d6mar4*, (God) himself. In Yoruba theology, *Ir5nm/l2* (spiritual forces) are messengers of *Ol9d6mar4*, ruling over all the existing phenomena in heaven and the earth. So, the ancient Yoruba *Ifq* doctrine considered the universe as a perfect creation of *Ol9d6mar4*, (God). There is no exaggeration in saying that *Ifq* corpus could be considered as the text of Yoruba religion which contains cultural wisdom. In other words, it could be deduced that the Yoruba cultural wisdom is contained in *Ifq*

Adegboyega, in her work title “The Metaphysical and Epistemological Relevance of Ifq Corpus”, reflected extensively on the place of *Ifq* Corpus in Yoruba wisdom tradition. She acknowledged the existence of other divinations such as *Clr8nd7nl9g5n* and *Zgb8gbz*; she however observed that *Ifq* is often preferred above any other forms of divination by the Yoruba people. *Ifq*, according to her, is one of the most important deities. She opined that without *Ifq*, the value of the Yoruba gods would diminish. The Yoruba people believed that when God is punishing a man, the only way to ascertain and pacify such is to consult *Ifq* and

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<sup>140</sup> J.D.Y. Peel. 2008. “Yoruba Religious: Seeing it in History, Seeing it whole” in *Orita-Ibadan Journal of Religious Studies*. Vol. 41. 11

<sup>141</sup> O.O. Adegboyega. 2017, “The Metaphysical and Epistemological Relevance of Ifa Corpus” in *International Journal of History and Philosophical Research* Vol. 5, No.1. 28-40.

[www.eajournals.org/historyandphilosophicalresearch/hlm](http://www.eajournals.org/historyandphilosophicalresearch/hlm). Retrieved August 13, 2018.

<sup>142</sup> Farinade Olokun. “Cowrie Shell Divination and Ifa Spiritual Tools”. <https://farinadeolokun.com>. Retrieved, August 13, 2018.

<sup>143</sup> Kemi Atanda Ilori. “Ifa: The Yoruba god of Wisdom – A long Tradition of Hierarchical Priesthood and a Web of Folklore” – The African Guardian. March 13, 1986 – Academia. <https://www.academia.edu.org>

<sup>144</sup> Ifalola Sanchez. 2007. “Ifa Yesterday, Ifa Today, Ifa Tomorrow: The Ever Expanding Corpus of Wisdom we Call Ifa”. [www.google.com](http://www.google.com). Retrieved May 8th, 2015.

<sup>145</sup> Wande Abimbola. “The Bag of Wisdom: Osun and the Origin of the Ifa Divination”. [www.google.com](http://www.google.com). Retrieved June 4th, 2015.

<sup>146</sup> Lai Olurode. 2007. “Ifa, the Deity of Wisdom, and Importance of Work among the Yoruba People”. *Journal of Enterprising Communities: People and Places in the Global Economy*, Vol. 1 ISS: 2. Retrieved May 8th, 2015.

if a community is to make sacrifice to god, that can also be known by consulting *Ifq*.<sup>147</sup> Thus *Ifq* is considered the only active mouth piece of Yoruba traditional religion.<sup>148</sup> Adegboyega stated further that wisdom, knowledge and understanding made *+r5nm8lz* serve as a link between him and other gods. Besides, his wisdom, knowledge and understanding cover the past, present and the future. *+r5nm8lz* is known to be instrumental to the foundation of the earth, the creation of human beings and their journey into the world.<sup>149</sup> He is identified with the knowledge of all things and therefore described as an inexhaustible repository of knowledge. *+r5nm8lz* is believed to have knowledge and unquestionable answers to the intractable problems of human beings.<sup>150</sup> Consulting *Ifq*, the Yoruba people have access to the meaning and purpose of events in the past, present and future. Knowing everything about human beings, *Ifq* can supply adequate information about them since he was a witness to every human's choice of destiny.<sup>151</sup>

In the similar vein, Fár8nqdé, in his work “Cowrie Shell Divination & Ifa Spiritual Tools”, added that it is impossible to separate the subject of *Od6 Ifq* (Ifa signatures) from the Yoruba culture and traditions. He argued that the soul and heart beat of the Yoruba people as a whole resides within the oral corpus of the *Ifq* divination and worship system. The Yoruba science, cosmology, metaphysics, medicine and wisdom, according to Fár8nqdé, are traceable to *Ifq* corpus. *Ifq* is believed to embody the wisdom of life, truth and the revelation of human destiny and destination.<sup>152</sup> Fár8nqdé posited that *Ifq* is the living body of wisdom which was delivered by *Ol9d6mar4* to *+r5nm8lz* who is the only witness to human destiny in the spiritual realm before birth. *+r5nm8lz* used this wisdom to heal and to resolve all human problems.<sup>153</sup> He stressed further that the *Od6* (signatures) and *csc* (verse (s)) of *Ifq* are road

<sup>147</sup> O.O. Adegboyega. 2017, “The Metaphysical and Epistemological Relevance of Ifa Corpus” in *International Journal of History and Philosophical Research* Vol. 5, No.1. 28-40.

[www.eajournals.org/historyandphilosophicalresearch/hlm](http://www.eajournals.org/historyandphilosophicalresearch/hlm). Retrieved August 13, 2018.

<sup>148</sup> O.O. Adegboyega. 2017, “The Metaphysical and Epistemological Relevance of Ifa Corpus” in *International Journal of History and Philosophical Research* Vol. 5, No.1. 28-40.

[www.eajournals.org/historyandphilosophicalresearch/hlm](http://www.eajournals.org/historyandphilosophicalresearch/hlm). Retrieved August 13, 2018.

<sup>149</sup> O.O. Adegboyega. 2017, “The Metaphysical and Epistemological Relevance of Ifa Corpus” in *International Journal of History and Philosophical Research* Vol. 5, No.1. 28-40.

[www.eajournals.org/historyandphilosophicalresearch/hlm](http://www.eajournals.org/historyandphilosophicalresearch/hlm). Retrieved August 13, 2018.

<sup>150</sup> O.O. Adegboyega. 2017, “The Metaphysical and Epistemological Relevance of Ifa Corpus” in *International Journal of History and Philosophical Research* Vol. 5, No.1. 28-40.

[www.eajournals.org/historyandphilosophicalresearch/hlm](http://www.eajournals.org/historyandphilosophicalresearch/hlm). Retrieved August 13, 2018.

<sup>151</sup> O.O. Adegboyega. 2017, “The Metaphysical and Epistemological Relevance of Ifa Corpus” in *International Journal of History and Philosophical Research* Vol. 5, No.1. 28-40.

[www.eajournals.org/historyandphilosophicalresearch/hlm](http://www.eajournals.org/historyandphilosophicalresearch/hlm). Retrieved August 13, 2018.

<sup>152</sup> Farinade Olokun. “Cowrie Shell Divination and Ifa Spiritual Tools”. <https://farinadeolokun.com>. Retrieved, August 13, 2018.

<sup>153</sup> Farinade Olokun. “Cowrie Shell Divination and Ifa Spiritual Tools”. <https://farinadeolokun.com>. Retrieved, August 13, 2018.

maps that can guide one in details through life towards the things that all human beings cherish such as family, children, health, long life, love, money, freedom from loss, victory over sickness and death.<sup>154</sup>

In her own opinion, K1mi posited that *Ifq* is highly honoured among the Yoruba. This is done not only for its redemptive power but also for the cultural link it provides between man and the other gods. *Ṣx6*, who had been the erratic god, occupies a place in *Ifq* divination rites.<sup>155</sup> By these rites, the Yoruba mind communes with its environment in terms of phenomena like drought, fire, wind, earth and other things. K1mi observed that *Ifq* is also called *+r5nm8lz* and was one of those gods that journeyed from heaven to earth to found the ancient Yoruba city called *Il3-if2*. In *If2*, he fathered eight children, practiced successfully his profession as seer and solver of all problems.<sup>156</sup> He founded a cult of diviners, gathered a band of disciples and was won to wander from city to city in the course of his profession. But due to the impertinence of his youngest son, *{l-w=*, *+r5nm8lz* was annoyed and the god of wisdom decided to part ways with earthlings and journeyed back to heaven by the much climbed ‘palm tree’.<sup>157</sup>

Commenting on the same wisdom of *Ifq*, *Ifq[l]q*, in his work titled “*Ifq* yesterday, *Ifq* today, *Ifq* tomorrow: The ever expanding corpus of wisdom we call *Ifq*”, argued that within *Ifq* is housed all the wisdom and knowledge of the world past, present, and future. However, the work of *Ifal[l]q* was basically on the expansion of this Yoruba oral tradition. While considering the intimate connection of *+sun* with *Ifq* divination, *Ab7nb-lq* considered *Ifq* as bag of wisdom but *Lai*, in his own opinion, referred to it as the deity of wisdom. In whatever way it may have been depicted, *Ifq* corpus remains a notable source of wisdom among the Yoruba people.

Puzzling, but exciting, in Yoruba wisdom tradition is the ascription of wisdom to the elderly people. Wisdom is highly considered as sacrosanct in recognising elderly people in Yoruba world-view. In line with this, Adebeye,<sup>158</sup> in her work titled “The Changing

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<sup>154</sup> Farinade Olokun. “Cowrie Shell Divination and Ifa Spiritual Tools”. <https://farinadeolokun.com>. Retrieved, August 13, 2018.

<sup>155</sup> Kemi Atanda Ilori. “Ifa: The Yoruba god of Wisdom – A long Tradition of Hierarchical Priesthood and a Web of Folklore” – *The African Guardian*. March 13, 1986 – Academia. <https://www.academia.edu.org>

<sup>156</sup> Kemi Atanda Ilori. “Ifa: The Yoruba god of Wisdom – A long Tradition of Hierarchical Priesthood and a Web of Folklore” – *The African Guardian*. March 13, 1986 – Academia. <https://www.academia.edu.org>

<sup>157</sup> Kemi Atanda Ilori. “Ifa: The Yoruba god of Wisdom – A long Tradition of Hierarchical Priesthood and a Web of Folklore” – *The African Guardian*. March 13, 1986 – Academia. <https://www.academia.edu.org>

<sup>158</sup> Adebeye Adefunke. “The Changing Conception of Elderhood in Ibadan, 1830 – 2000” *Nordic Journal of African Studies* 16(2): 261 – 278 (2007), 265.

Conception of Elderhood in Ibadan, 1830 – 2000”, stressed that old people were expected to possess wisdom, tact and maturity accumulated through experiences over the years. These were collectively called *[gb-n zgbz* (elderly wisdom). The respect enjoyed by the elders and social recognition they had, as Adeboye noted, did not imply that the youths were considered irrelevant. At the level of discourse, the Yoruba idea was that there should be mutual respect and cooperation between the elders and the youths. However, in reality, the philosophy behind these ideas was seldom followed. Within the lineage, elders acted largely as if they had a monopoly of wisdom. Thus, their views were rarely to be challenged, and dissenting opinions from the youths were condescendingly treated as impulsive behaviours or as outright affront and disrespect, which sometimes attracted heavy punishment depending on how ‘young’ the ‘offender’ was, and on his past ‘record of offence’.

Adeboye’s submission is not tenable as it cannot be defended successfully. One can ask, at what point in the cultural history of the Yoruba was that moral approach noticed? Are the youths not prone to exuberance? Should such laxity be allowed without caution? The Yoruba philosophy, as laid down in their proverbial sayings, holds the two views: *Cnu zgbz lob8 ti n gb9* (it is in the mouth of the elders that the matured kolanut tastes better) and *{m[d3 gb-n zgbz gb-n la fi dq il3 if2* (the collective wisdom of the aged and young led to the founding of Ife). It is generally believed among the Yoruba that: *{m[d3 gb-d= m[ [w- w2 k7 9 t9 l4 bq zgbz jcun* (a child must know how to wash his hand (well- behaved) before he can eat (be privileged) with the elder).

Speaking on the role of elders in relation to wisdom, Manu<sup>159</sup> viewed elders as representing the tradition and the wisdom of the past. He however made a distinction between “elder” and “older” person. According to him, older person has simply lived a longer life than most of the people, but is not considered as one who deserves high praise and respect because his life has not been positive example for the community. He said older person could be a thief or drunkard, an evil person or somebody who never married and had children. An elder, on the other hand, is someone who is given the highest status generally in African culture because he or she has lived a life of purpose, and there is nothing more respected than living a purposeful life. Manu concluded that an elder is given the highest status because he represents the closest link to the wisdom of the spirit world.

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<sup>159</sup> Manu Ampim. 2003. “The Five Major Institution Rite-African Studies”. [www.google.com](http://www.google.com). Retrieved May 8th, 2015.

Manu's conclusion was developed by Aderemi<sup>160</sup> who disclosed that, among the Yoruba, the old people are noted as the repositories of experience, memories, authority and wisdom, and thus, among them, it is said that: *zgbz k0 s7 n'7l65, 8l5 bzj1, baql3 il3 k6, il3 di ahoro*, (without the elderly people, community and villages will collapse). In his own contribution, {lqy7nkq<sup>161</sup> added that, traditionally, the older persons are those playing leadership roles in the society and were seen as repositories of wisdom. He said that the elderly people in Nigerian society carry out traditional roles of guardians of the ancestral values, chief custodians of society's treasures and upholders of history, customs, folklores, cultural values, and wisdom. {lqy7nkq argued further that older persons settle dispute and conflicts arising from members of the family, based on their position, skill, knowledge, wisdom, vision and experience acquired along the journey to old age.

The works of the above mentioned scholars are highly commendable. In fact, this shows that there is no dearth of scholars who are capable of delving into the Yoruba culture. Though great treasuries of facts are locked away in their works, they seem to have barely scratched the surface for those who would be interested in studying the Yoruba life and culture. The weakness of their positions, however, is that they could not relate Yoruba wisdom tradition to that of the Hebrew. Besides, some of them, Ak[gun, Bámidélé, Ad3r8nt=Fáycmí Ifál[lá, Abínbólá and Lai to be precise, could not see, perhaps overlooked, the relevance of chronological age in Yoruba wisdom tradition. Fáycmí acknowledged the use of proverb among the elders but, to him, the expert use of it is not based on old age. He failed to realise that, in traditional Yoruba society, the younger people must have had their speech approved by the elders before saying anything, especially when it involves the use of proverbs. In other words, the use of a Yoruba proverb by a young person is prohibited in the presence of an older person without prior permission to do so.<sup>162</sup>

### 2.3 Conclusion

The literature reviewed so far has revealed various scholarly works done by the people to press home their relevance to this new work. Based on their submissions, it is discovered that the origin of Israelite wisdom literature could be traced to the ancient Near

<sup>160</sup> S. A. Aderemi. 2006. "The Changing Perception of Ageing in Yoruba Culture and its Implication on the Health of the Ederly". [www-google.com](http://www-google.com). Retrieved June 20, 2015.

<sup>161</sup>Olayinka Ajomale. 2007. "Country report: Ageing in Nigeria-Current State, Social and Economic Implications". *African Gerontological Society, Ages International, Nigeria, ISA RC11, Sociology of Ageing-[www.google.com](http://www.google.com)*. Retrieved June 4th, 2015.

<sup>162</sup>Yoruba People and Culture-African Studies Institute, University of Georgia-[www.google.com](http://www.google.com). Retrieved May 10th, 2015.



East, and that it could therefore not be studied in isolation from this background. Other scholars whose works were reviewed concentrated on wisdom or wisdom literature in ancient Israel. The third group of scholars focused on the indebtedness of Hebrew to Africa in relation to wisdom as well as the nature, the sources and the values of Yoruba wisdom tradition. Though their works are highly commendable, the gaps left untouched in their works were filled in this study.

## CHAPTER THREE

### HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF ISRAELITE WISDOM TRADITION

#### 3.0 Introduction

This chapter traces the historical origin of Israelite Wisdom Tradition, focusing on the relevance of Ancient Near Eastern cultures in the development of wisdom in ancient Israel. The Ancient Near East comprises of groups of several heterogeneous geographical areas clustered around the point where Asia, Africa and Europe meet which includes Palestine,<sup>163</sup> Syria, Mesopotamia,<sup>164</sup> Egypt,<sup>165</sup> and others. In the Ancient Near East, we have diverse kingdoms, nations, religions and cultures each of which had their socio-cultural and religious peculiarities.<sup>166</sup> However, in the light of the broadness of the region, it is only extant literature on cultures which have bearing on wisdom traditions in ancient Israel that will be examined.

#### 3.1 The Ancient Near East as Possible Background for Israel's Wisdom Tradition

The history and religion of Israel, as earlier noted, cannot be studied and understood in isolation from the overall context of the ancient Near East.<sup>167</sup> Magnus Magnusson confirmed that:

The Bible does not exist in a vacuum. It was written long after the early events it purports to record, and only by understanding of the cultural context in which it was written, and the society for which it was written, can we gain a clearer understanding of the work as a whole. To this end, we must study the peoples and civilizations around ancient Israel and not just the story of the 'Holy Land' alone.<sup>168</sup>

This position is well reinforced by Alfred in his observation that:

When the Hebrews moved into Palestine they settled on the land bridged between Egypt and Mesopotamia, the major power bases in the ancient Near East. Consequently, Israel was exposed not only to local Canaanite culture but also to

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<sup>163</sup> K.G. Norman. 1985. *The Hebrew Bible- A Socio – Literary Introduction*, Philadelphia: For trees press, 40, 51

<sup>164</sup> K.J. Oludahunsi. 2007. *The Israelite- from Abraham to the Birth of Jesus Christ*.

<sup>165</sup> Edward M. Blaiklock, R.K. Harrison, David R. Douglass (eds). 1983. *The New international Dictionary of Biblical Archaeology*, Michigan: Zondervan corporation, 171.

<sup>166</sup> W.A Bernhard. 1998. *Understanding the Old Testament- Abridge Fourth Edition*, USA: prentice Hall 511

<sup>167</sup> A.O. Dada. 2003. *Critical introduction to Old Testament*, Ibadan: Distance Learning Centre (DLC), University of Ibadan,60.

<sup>168</sup> Magnus Magnusson. 1977: *The Archaeology of the Bible Lands*, London. The Bodly Head Ltd adna BBC,8.

the cultural and political pressures of neighboring nations. Israel did not function within a vacuum, and as the interrelationship with different cultures are further revealed through archaeological discoveries, the implications of many Bible texts may become cleared.<sup>169</sup>

From the above observations, it is well established that the origin of the Israelites, the formation and crystallization of the nation, her history, and the growth of her spiritual culture and social organization are to be discussed in detail against the backdrop of his historico-cultural developments in the land of the Bible.<sup>170</sup> Of a truth, the historical fate of the Israelites was to a large extent determined by geographical factors. The birth place and homeland of Israelite culture is located in the Fertile Crescent – a broad region in the great expanse of countries constituting the Near East. Israelites have been clinging to Palestine since early antiquity.<sup>171</sup>

It is widely observed that the discovery of the Ancient Near East has shed significant light on the biblical stories.<sup>172</sup> Beginning long before the first biblical writings, the peoples of the Ancient Near East developed extensive literatures. These literatures from Egypt, Mesopotamia, Iran, and Anatolia were written in the favoured languages of the literate circles where they were composed. There are sizeable bodies of texts in the Egyptian, Sumerian, Akkadian, Old Babylonian, Assyrian, Neo-Babylonian, Persian, Aramaic, and Hittite languages. These texts employ a striking variety of literary forms or types, so that the range of literary types in the Hebrew Bible can be illustrated with plentiful examples from other national literatures contemporary with the Bible.<sup>173</sup> It is therefore not an exaggeration that primary data specifically relevant to the writing of a history of ancient Israel, apart from biblical texts, were derived from both the Ancient Near Eastern documents and artifacts uncovered by archaeologists.<sup>174</sup> Thus, critical scholarship contends that Israel borrowed her religious ideas and institutions from her Near Eastern neighbours.<sup>175</sup> Though, it is not always possible to arrive at a conclusive interpretation of the similarities and differences that exist between the two cultures, there is no doubt that in the process of interaction Israel must have

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<sup>169</sup> J.H. Afred. 1998. *Archaeology and the Old Testament*, Michigan: Baker Academic, 17

<sup>170</sup> Yohanan Aharoni. 1979. *The land of the Bible – A Historical Geography*, London: Burns & Oates, 111

<sup>171</sup> Benjamin Mazar, Eliyahu Feldman, Alexander Peli (eds). 1970. *The World History of the Jewish People, Israel: Jewish History Publication (Israel – 1961) Ltd.* Preface.

<sup>172</sup> B.P James. 1958. *Archaeology and the Old Testament*, London: Oxford University Press. Vi

<sup>173</sup> Norman K. Gottwald. 1985. *The Hebrew Bible – A Socio – Literary Introduction*, Philadelphia : Fortress Press, 80

<sup>174</sup> A.K. Douglas and M.T. Gene (eds) 1985. *The Hebrew Bible and its Modern interpreters*. USA: Scholars Press, 1

<sup>175</sup> Hobert E. Freeman. 1968. *An introduction to the Old Testament Prophets*, Chicago: Moody Press, 17

been influenced, and that an excursion into the wisdom tradition in the ancient Near Eastern cultures will surely be insightful for our understanding of wisdom in ancient Israel.<sup>176</sup>

### 3.2 Origin and Development of Wisdom Tradition in Ancient Israel

Wisdom and allied phenomena, as earlier observed, had long been known in some Ancient Near Eastern cultures before it surfaced in Israel. Paul R. House added that Job, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes and Song of Solomon are part of the ancient Near Eastern wisdom traditions.<sup>177</sup> As it was stated in the comments on I Kings 4:29-34, Solomon and other Israelites participated in this intellectual and literary school of thought. Long before Israel was a nation, Egypt, Babylon and other countries were writing description of natural world, helpful proverbs, enigmatic proverbs, and statements about how to serve royalty, disputes over the meaning of life's tragedies and comments about seemingly unfair situations.<sup>178</sup>

Without doubt, there is no exaggeration in the submission that wisdom literature in the Ancient Near East reflects a broad ranging cultural milieu, not isolated cultural pockets.<sup>179</sup> In fact, literature flourished throughout the ancient Near East, with Egyptian (Exod. 7:11; I Kings 4:30:19:11:12) and Babylonian (Dan 1: 20:4:6:7)<sup>180</sup> examples, dating back to before the middle of the 3rd millennium B.C.E. It revolved around professional sages, or wise men, and scribes in the service of the court, and consisted primarily in maxims about the practical intelligent way to conduct one's life and speculations about the very worth and meaning of human life.<sup>181</sup> There are connections between the wisdom literature that was found in ancient Egypt, Mesopotamia and Israel. The Egyptians seem to have discerned value in *ma'at*<sup>182</sup> and *Sebayit*<sup>183</sup> which were similar to those affirmed in Israel for "wisdom".<sup>184</sup>

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<sup>176</sup> Helmer Ringgeren. 1973- *Religion of the Ancient Near East*, London & Southampaiton: Camelot press ltd, Preface.

<sup>177</sup> Paul.R. House . 1998. *Old Testament Theology*, USA: intervasiy Press, 424-425

<sup>178</sup> Paul.R. House . 1998. *Old Testament Theology*, USA: intervasiy Press, 424-425

<sup>179</sup> H.M.Victor and C.M James. 1997. *The old Testament- Text and comtext* ,180

<sup>180</sup> V.S. Gary . 1991. *Old Testament Survery, part 2 job malchi – Broading your Biblical Horizonl* .Wheaton:ETA, 18

<sup>181</sup> N/A. "Wisdom Literature", <http://www.britannical.com/artwisdomliterature> Retrieved December 20,2015.

<sup>182</sup> From the general world- view of Egyptian wisdom literature, ma'at is used in reference to "justice" or "order". See also Leo G. perdue. 1977. *Wisdom and Cult – A critical analysis of the views of cult in the Wisdom Literatures of Israel and the ANE*, Montana: Scholars Press, 19

<sup>183</sup> This word has been written in different forms such as *sebayt*, *sebayit* or *sboyet*, etc. The cause of this variation is known only to users. Nevertheless, it is used in reference to "instruction".

<sup>184</sup> K. w. Bruce. 1979. *The Book of proverbs and Ancient Wisdom Literature*, Dallas theological Seminary <https://www.faculty.gordon.edu/hulbi/ted> Retrieved, December 20,2015

Modern Egyptologists categorize Egyptian texts into genres, for example “laments/discourses” and narrative tales. The only genre of literature which was named as such by the ancient Egyptians was the “teaching” or *sebajt* genre. The “instruction” or teaching genre, as well as the genre of “reflective discourses”, can be grouped in the corpus of wisdom literature found in the ancient Near East. The genre is didactic in nature and is considered to have formed part of the Middle Kingdom Scribal education syllabus.<sup>185</sup> However, teaching texts always incorporate narrative elements that can instruct as well as entertain. The key words found in teaching texts include “to know” and “to teach”. The texts often adopt the formulaic title structure of “the instruction” of X made for Y, where “X” can be represented by an authoritative figure (such as vizier or king) providing moral guidance for his son(s). It is sometime difficult to determine how many fictional addressees are involved in these teachings, since some texts switch between singular and plural when referring to their audience.<sup>186</sup> The literary structure of the Egyptian *sebajt* genre includes three elements:(a) a title – “the beginning of the instruction of X which he composed for his son Y”;(b) a prose or poetic introduction – the setting forth of the details of why the instruction is given; and (c) the content – the linking together of admonitions and sayings in mutually independent sections of very diverse nature.<sup>187</sup> Examples of the Egyptian “teaching” genre include the maxim of Ptahhotep, Instructions of Kagemin, Teaching for King Merykare, Instructions of Amenemhat, Instruction of Hardjedef, Loyalist Teaching, and Instructions of Amenemope.<sup>188</sup>

In Mesopotamia (Sumerian, Akkadian, Babylonian and Assyrian empires), the concept of wisdom may also be applied to the dexterity of the magicians, the manual skills of the craft man in metal, and the organising abilities of the priest. While the basic usage was most probably utilitarian, it appears being uniformly connected with specific abilities, and as the result of priestly interests, it becomes associated with religious activities at a comparatively early period.<sup>189</sup> In Mesopotamian society, people regarded their kings as possessing large measure of gods-given wisdom, and was considered to display that wisdom by performing deeds pleasing to the gods, particularly the building of the temples. The Israelite tradition of King Solomon, the wise king, whose greatest achievement was the

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<sup>185</sup>N/A. “Ancient Egyptian Literature” [www.gogle.egyptianancientliterature.com](http://www.gogle.egyptianancientliterature.com). Retrieved, December 20,2015

<sup>186</sup>N/A. “Ancient Egyptian Literature” [www.gogle.egyptianancientliterature.com](http://www.gogle.egyptianancientliterature.com). Retrieved, December 20,2015

<sup>187</sup> K. w. Bruce. 1979. *The Book of proverbs and Ancient Wisdom Literature*, Dallas theological Seminary <https://www.faculty.gordon.edu/hulbi/te/> Retrieved, December 20,2015

<sup>188</sup>N/A. “Ancient Egyptian Literature” [www.gogle.egyptianancientliterature.com](http://www.gogle.egyptianancientliterature.com). Retrieved, December 20,2015

<sup>189</sup> R.K. Harrison, 1969. *Introduction to the old Testament*, USA:WMB Eerdmans Publishing company, 1004

building of a temple, reflects a similar point of view.<sup>190</sup> In Mesopotamia, it was believed that their kings and queens descended all away from the city of gods, but unlike the ancient Egyptians, they never believed their kings were real gods. Most of the kings named themselves “king of the universe” or “great king” or “shepherd”.<sup>191</sup>

Sumerian wisdom, which has come to be translated and understood only in recent times, contains far more genres than those that are found in Israel. Such genres include: proverbs, fables, parables, folktales and miniature “essay”, riddles, tensions (wisdom disputations), precepts, satirical dialogues, etc. This literature is explicitly inclusive than the collection that was preserved for us in the bible.<sup>192</sup> The preservation of these sayings, and indeed of all ancient Mesopotamian literatures, is due to the fact that they were written on clay tablets. The immortality of these tablets, however, was secured by the strenuous activities of the Sumerian and Babylonia scribes. In the *eduba* (tablets house, or school), the ancient works (epics, omen literature, prayers, etc., as well as the wisdom corpus) were perfectly and diligently copied by the scribes, who were themselves organised in a kind of guild system and deeply imbued with the idea of tradition. The school were associated with temple and palace, and served the purposes of these institutions. The scribes have been characterized as a “poor aristocracy”, but their learning was formidable. It is likely that their very wide contact with the scribes came from their transmission of popular sayings. In course of time, the sayings came to be preserved in bilingual texts (Sumerian and Akkadian). In addition to sayings, there was also the “instructions”, such as the counsels of wisdom. These “counsels” are moral exhortations presumably of a high courtier to his son, and the typical phrase, “my son”, is used. They resemble proverbs of the Israelites and also the Egyptian *Sebayit*, and the familiar sapiental topics are treated. Avoidance of bad companions, improper speech, kindness to the needy, women, conduct at court, friendship, etc. are examined. There are frequent commands and prohibitions.<sup>193</sup> However, unlike the Egyptians, Sumerian scribes arranged proverbs in separate anthologies. At least twenty-four collections have survived, though their meaning is not yet as clear as one would wish. The Instruction of Suruppak, the

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<sup>190</sup> John Meade, “Kingship and Wisdom in Mesopotamia”, [www.google.com](http://www.google.com). Retrieved, December 20, 2015

<sup>191</sup> N/A. “Mesopotamia” – [www.google.com](http://www.google.com) Retrieved, December 20, 2015

<sup>192</sup> E.M.Roland and O.Garn. 1988. *Wisdom Literature – Job – Proverbs, Ruth, Canticles, Ecclesiastes and Esther*, USA:WMB. Eerdmans publishing Company c. 9

<sup>193</sup> E.M.Roland and O.Garn. 1988. *Wisdom Literature – Job – Proverbs, Ruth, Canticles, Ecclesiastes and Esther*, USA:WMB. Eerdmans publishing Company c. 10

survivor of the flood in Sumerian lore, resembles Egyptian wisdom teachings, even to the extent of the formal feature of father and son, as teacher and instructed one.<sup>194</sup>

Therefore, based on what has been examined so far, it seems laudable and reliable enough to trace the Origin of Israel's Wisdom tradition to a larger tradition found among her neighbours who lived before Israel was a nation. This is because, a close study on Israel's wisdom tradition reveals that it employs the characteristic language of all Near Eastern nations that portrays wisdom as available and applicable to all people.<sup>195</sup>

### **Beginning of Wisdom Tradition in Ancient Israel**

The origin of Israelite wisdom movement is lost in the haze of the early oral traditions.<sup>196</sup> And any attempt to trace the history of this tradition is handicapped by the relative paucity and selective nature of Old Testament historical sources.<sup>197</sup> However, it is an inevitable reality that there was a vigorous wisdom among the Canaanites from whom it was carried over to Israel in the period before monarchy. In Israel, wisdom tradition preceded and outlasted the prophetic movement, and reached its peak of development only after prophecy had declined.<sup>198</sup> Though the tradition behind the composition and the prophetic interpretation of Israelite history<sup>199</sup> from the conquest of Canaan to the Babylonian exile and thereafter excluded reference to the activities of the sages, with exception of what is said about the Wisdom of Solomon, it is certain that folk wisdom is earlier among other traditions in Israel. This is evident in the popular proverbs quoted here and there in the narrative and prophetic books, and the distinctive wisdom literature that emerged from the tradition in its later stages. The proverbs, the riddle (Judge 14:4), and the fable (Judge 9:8-15) are products of the earliest period of Israel's oral traditions, which is an ancient type of oriental wisdom that were gradually integrated into Israel's heritage.<sup>200</sup>

The activities of sages became known and well respected in Israel by the time of the early monarchy.<sup>201</sup> As monarchy was firmly established, an organised administrative

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<sup>194</sup> J. I. Crenshaw . 1971. *Old Testament Wisdom Introduction*, Atlanta :John Knox press 228.

<sup>195</sup> N/A. "Ancient Wisdom Literature and the Bible" –www.google.com. Retrieved, December 20,2015.

<sup>196</sup> L.M. Steven and John kaltner. 1989. *The Old Testament – its Background, Growth & Content*, Nashville: Absingdon press, 304

<sup>197</sup> RBY Scott. 1971. *The Way of Wisdom in the Old Testament*, New York: MacMillan Publishing col, Inc,12

<sup>198</sup> W.A.Bernhard.1957. *The living World of Old Testament*, London: Longman, Green and co,469

<sup>199</sup> Hobart E. Freeman. 1968. *An introduction to the Old Testament Prophets*, Chicago: Moody Press,11

<sup>200</sup> W.A.Bernhard.1957. *The living World of Old Testament*, London: Longman, Green and co,469

<sup>201</sup> W.A.Bernhard.1957. *The living World of Old Testament*, London: Longman, Green and co,469

structure became indispensable to maintain social order, to adjudicate disputes, and to assist the king in forming and carrying out his policies. The royal counselors became cabinet officers. Local sages were also consulted for advice. Hushai and Ahithophel, in the court of David (2 Sam 16:23), are perfect examples of this royal function. A “wise woman” from Tekoa<sup>202</sup> (2 Sam 14: 1-21), another wise woman who negotiated with Joab (2sam 20: 14 – 22), and others are examples of the local sages. Though local sages, as mentioned above, were found in Israel, “the wise” as a group of counselors, thinkers, teachers, and writers probably began with the consolidation and sophistication of the monarchy, especially, under Solomon.<sup>203</sup> Solomon’s court vastly multiplied the administrative structure of his predecessors and among those surrounding the royal court were functionaries called Recorder, Secretary, and the king’s Friends (1kings 4: 1-6). Such officers of the royal court were probably the precursors of the wise.<sup>204</sup>

The next glimpse of the continuing wisdom tradition is in the eighth and seventh century B.C when King Hezekiah reigned over Judah,<sup>205</sup> that was the time of classical Prophet. Scholars unanimously reported that “there are additional proverbs of Solomon which the men of Hezekiah copied out and transmitted”.<sup>206</sup>

In any case, sapiential thinking in Israel has a long history and wisdom did not first surface in post-exilic period.<sup>207</sup> Wisdom tradition spans the length of Israelite history,<sup>208</sup> and wisdom was a continuous factor in the common life and consciousness of the people through more than a millennium of her history in Canaan. However, as time went on, there were many changes in the socio-political, cultural and religious environments by which the wisdom tradition was played upon by many cultural forces.<sup>209</sup>

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<sup>202</sup> James I.Crenshaw .1985.”The Wisdom Literature” in Dougl A. Knight &gen M.Tucker (Eds) .*The Hebrew Bible and it sModern interpreters*, USA : Scholars Press, 373.

<sup>203</sup> L.D.Johnson. 1975. *Isreal’s Wisdom: learn and live*. Tennessee :Broadman Dress, 11

<sup>204</sup> L.D. Johnson. 1975. *Israel’s Wisdom: learn and live*. Tennessee : Broadman Press, 11

<sup>205</sup> E.H. Scheffler. 2000. *Fascinating Discoveries from the Biblical World*, Pretoria: Bible a Publishers, 99.

<sup>206</sup> RBY Scott. 1971. *They Way of Wisdom in the Old Testament*, New York: MacMillan Publishing col, Inc, 16

<sup>207</sup> Werner H.Schmidt. 2008. *Old Testament production*, USA: the crossroad publishing company,372

<sup>208</sup> Werner H.Schmidt. 2008. *Old Testament production*, USA: the crossroad publishing company,372

<sup>209</sup> Werner H.Schmidt. 2008. *Old Testament production*, USA: the crossroad publishing company,372



## The Nature of Israel's Wisdom and Its Practitioners

The word *Hokmah*,<sup>210</sup> ‘wisdom’, has several dimensions in Old Testament usage. The word is used in a moral sense or in a purely pragmatic sense just as the word “good” could be used. Referring to somebody as a “good teacher” may have no moral connotation but may imply skill or proficiency.<sup>211</sup> Wisdom is often used in the Old Testament to denote technical skill or dexterity (Exod. 28:3; 35:25; 36:43; 2 Chronicles 2:2; Ps 107:27; I King 5:7,112).<sup>212</sup> It is also used to denote craftiness, shrewdness, cunning or cleverness (2 Sam.13:3:14: 1 Kings 2:6). Besides, wisdom is used in the sense of intellectual acumen and encyclopedic knowledge (I Kings 4:29-34; 10:6-7). However, the far more frequent meaning of the word in the Old Testament is “moral discernment” (1 Kings 3:9; 12: Deut. 1:13). This means that wisdom is regarded not only as the capacity for good decision making but also as having a moral quality. Wisdom is not merely insight into “how to be successful” but “how to do right”.<sup>213</sup> When this moral quality of wisdom is combined with the concept of reverence for the lord, wisdom has fully flowered, and the occasions of such usage in the wisdom writing of the Old Testament are many. The progressive trend in the meaning of wisdom in the Old Testament could now be noticed – from “skill and manual dexterity” to “cleverness” through “intellectual acumen” and on to “moral discernment”, then finally to “reverence for the lord and obedience to his commandment”:<sup>214</sup>

Mark R. Sneed<sup>215</sup> and other scholars categorised Israelite wisdom into various types, namely: Amateur Wisdom, Divine Wisdom, Royal Wisdom, Professional or Technical Wisdom, Mantic Wisdom or Magic and Rhetorical Wisdom, etc. Amateur wisdom denotes common (non-technical) wisdom which means “cleverness” or “cunning”. A scriptural example of this is the woman that saved her city by begging Joab, the military commander of David, that he should not destroy it (2Sam. 20:15 – 22). Through her wisdom, she was able to convince Joab that it would be more reasonable to kill one person rather than many in her city. Destroying the whole city would definitely result in killing of the innocent ones. Thus, the woman threw the culprit’s head which Joab desired over the wall of that city. That settled

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<sup>210</sup> W. I. Seow. 1987. *A grammar for Biblical Hebrew*, USA: Abingdom Press, 19

<sup>211</sup> L.D.Johnson. 1975. *Israel's Wisdom: learn and live*. Tennessee : Broadman Press, 9

<sup>212</sup> Gerhard Von Rad. 1962. *Old testament theology* . vol. 1 – the theology of Israel is Historical Traditions, USA: prince press, 418

<sup>213</sup> L.D.Johnson. 1975. *Israel's Wisdom: learn and live*. Tennessee : Broadman Press, 9

<sup>214</sup> L.D.Johnson. 1975.. *Israel's Wisdom: learn and live*. Tennessee : Broadman Press, 10

<sup>215</sup> M. R. Sneed. 2015 . *The Social World of Eh sages – An Introduction to Israelite and Jewish Wisdom literature*, Minneapolis Fortress Press, 1-16

the case. Abigail was another woman who displayed this type of wisdom in saving her life and her family from being slaughtered by David whom Nabal, her own husband, insulted (1Sam.25). She quickly met with David, offered him and his followers some gifts. She convinced David of the injustice in shedding the blood of innocent people. David later pronounced, “Blessed is your discretion”, because she had restrained him from shedding the blood of the innocent. Divine Wisdom originated from the deities. Israelites claimed that wisdom is from God; and that the lord is very wise, with whom are wisdom and strength, having advice and discernment (Job 12; 13). The book of Proverbs reveals that wisdom can be generated from the study of several aphorisms in the book by hard work and effort (Prov. 1: 2- 6, 8, 23 – 25). However, the book equally portrays God as the ultimate source of wisdom. In other words, wisdom has divine origin, and hence, traceable to God. This is very similar to what was obtainable among the ancient Near Eastern people.

The gods in the Ancient Near East were often considered to be wise, in addition to their power, as well as being immortal, majestic and just. El, the head of the Canaanites pantheon, was considered “wise” and “Old”, the characteristics often found together. The god of *Enki (Ea.)*, in Mesopotamia, is known as the god of wisdom and magic who could counsel other deities as well. Besides, the great god in Babylon, *Marduk*, was also portrayed as wise. In the same vein, *Thoth* in Egypt is the god of wisdom who is portrayed with the head of an *ibis*, or *baboon*. This is also considered the gods of the scribes. *Thoth* is often depicted as holding a *wand* in hand, which symbolized power, and an *ankh* symbol in the other, which represented life. He argued further that *Thoth* was married to *Ma'at*. *Ma'at* represented truth, justice, balance or order. This is considered very great and common theme of the Egyptian texts. In Mesopotamia lore, *Ea*. was said to be in charge of creating human beings. He also bestowed wisdom which he passed to seven divine sages, whose knowledge and culture were equally transmitted to humans before the flood. Following these seven, were four semi-divine sages and some of them were Kings. In Mesopotamia as well, scribal teachers transmitted knowledge to their students. Getting around the problem of transmitting knowledge and culture from before the flood to after is a version of the Epic of Gilgamesh in the “Babylonian Noah”. A Babylonian text, “The instruction of *shurupak*”, claimed to be among the instructions for human culture in *Sippar*. Cain and his genealogy (Gen. 4:17 -24) is applicable to these explanations. The descendants of Cain are the bearers of culture and civilization to the antediluvian world. Wisdom is personified as woman wisdom which was created earlier in Proverbs chapter 8, functioning in a similar way, just as the bearer of culture. This may even be called the Hebrew Prometheus.

In Israel, kings were seen as the representatives of God who were appointed and anointed to fulfill the purpose of God for people. Israelite kings were considered along the gods, who possessed wisdom, power, authority, justice and majesty. Mindful of this Royal wisdom, Solomon at Gibeon, asked for it to rule over the people of Israel as their king. He asked for an understanding mind instead of wealth, honour, long-life, and even the lives of his enemies (I Kings 3:5-13).<sup>216</sup> Therefore, God was happy and gave him, even more than what he requested. In Israel, a king could force his people to submit through his power; however, this is costly and less effective than using his wisdom to win their solidarity. People prefer following a leader who is persuasive and wise than to submit to the one who rules with force. The Wisdom of Solomon extended far beyond legal or political astuteness. He was described as Polymath, who had much literary skills in composing 3000 proverbs and 1005 songs (1Kings 5: 9 – 12). Solomon was also portrayed as somebody having encyclopedic knowledge which is closely similar to that of Egyptian Onomastics, or Catalogs of things in line with their kinds. Professional Wisdom involves skills, and being expertise in some practices like that of Hiram, the king of Tyre , whom Solomon hired to work for him in the building of the Temple as a result of his uncommon skill in artisan work (1 Kings 7: 13 – 45).

Another example was the woman from Tekoa who was considered to have displayed great wisdom (2 Sam. 14:2); and as a result of her wisdom, she was able to convince David to let his son, Absalom, return from the exile. Also, King Solomon became popular for the wisdom demonstrated to ascertain the true mother of the living baby in the narratives about the two harlots (1Kings 3). *Mantic Wisdom* is found in the Babylonian traditions which involved divination. Daniel, along with others, was trained as a mantic sage in Babylon. He was among those that Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, took away from Israel. The young men were without blemish, handsome and wise concerning all wisdom, knowledge and intelligence, who were able to stand in the king's court and in order to teach them the literature and language of Babylon (Dan. 1: 4). In spite of Daniel's broad training, his skill was in the interpretation of dreams, and this ability was given by God (Dan. 2: 28). Joseph also functioned in that capacity in the land of Egypt. Joseph and Daniel even excelled in this type of divination than all of their pagan colleagues and competitors. God compared the power and authenticity of his prophet with Babylonian mediums (Isa. 44:24 -28). Magical wisdom is also related to mantic wisdom. Pharaoh called on the wise men as well as the sorcerers, asking them to turn their rods to serpents just as Moses and Aaron did before them

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<sup>216</sup> Edmond Ugochukwu Okoli. 2008. *Essential Christian Religious Knowledge- for Senior Secondary Schools*, Ibafo: Tonad Publishers Ltd, 52

(Exod. 7:11). Also significant in Egyptian and Mesopotamian religious and political terrain is magic. Officially, that was seldom found among the Israelites. Political Wisdom was highly cherished among the Israelites. Example of this is the poor wise man in the besieged city who had been able to save his city as a result of his experience in military strategy, (Eccles. 9: 13 – 16).

In line with this, the political counsel of Ahithophel,<sup>217</sup> the adviser of King David, is described as someone asking concerning the word of God (2 Sam 16:23). Rhetorical Wisdom is another type of wisdom which involves being skillful in rhetoric. David was skillful in this capacity. That was why he was recommended for King Saul as a lyre-player to relieve him of the evil spirit that was sent from God. David was described as someone who knows how to play an instrument, and who is very strong; a valiant man of war, well knowledgeable in speech, very handsome, and the Lord is with him (1Sam. 16: 18).<sup>218</sup> David displayed his sagacity in speech before defeating Goliath, the Philistine giant (1Sam. 17: 41 - 51). He tactfully held Goliath's own words to confound him. The Proverbs emphasise the importance of the art of rhetoric and the value of gracious speech. Similar to this is "Tale of the Eloquent peasant", the Egyptian text, which was composed to teach young scribes in the relevance of persuasive speech. The narrative bears the records of one poor farmer who could convince Pharaoh and his noblemen to support him against a steward who had offended him. *Literary (Aesthetic)* wisdom is the last set of wisdom which has to do with literary subtlety. It implies that understanding wisdom literature is not often straight forward and so training is highly required. It equally means that it is not just the content of wisdom that is significantly relevant but the medium, and the manner in which it is found operative.

Reflecting on the context and social location for wisdom in ancient Israel, it has become conventional among scholars to suggest three plausible arenas in which the sages worked.<sup>219</sup> The first widely accepted social circle for this mediation is the clans or family. This is a decisive socialising agent, which constructs a world of limit and choice of symbol and imagination, in which the child may safely live. In Israel, the family was one locus of instruction, especially for the youth. The second arena for sapiential mediation in Israel is in the school where a teacher - student relation would be found. With the schools established in both Mesopotamia and Egypt, and considering the great influence of the Egyptian court upon

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<sup>217</sup> E.J Brill. 1960. *Wisdom in Israel and in the Ancient Near East*, Netherlands : vetus Testament,44

<sup>218</sup> M. R. Sneed. 2015. *The Social World of Eh sages – An Introduction to Israelite and Jewish Wisdom literature*, Minneapolis Fortress Press, 15

<sup>219</sup> Walter Bridgeman . 1997. *Theology of old Testament –testimony ,dispute, advocacy* , Minneapolis fortress press 682

that of Jerusalem, scholars argued that the administrative offices established in the period of David and Solomon were borrowed from the Egyptian bureaucracy: the secretary, the herald, the house minister, and probably the Scribal school. The third context in which wisdom was practiced in Israel was in the royal court.<sup>220</sup> Kings in Israel have advisors and counselors who were able to bring large perspective to policy issues that needed to be decided

Considering the Sages and their roles in ancient Israel, it is evident that some Israelites were regarded as sages, specially qualified and assumed sapiential roles. They possessed gifts and abilities, being expertise in craft, skill and knowledge. Some of them might have undergone special training and education, and thereby appeared as a vocational guild. Besides, some Israelites trained themselves or had special innate abilities that were referred to as amateur sages in the society.<sup>221</sup> In Israel, parents, elders, judges, kings, priests and prophets were considered as sages who were responsible in teaching the arts of wisdom.

### **3.3 Wisdom Literature in Ancient Israel**

Wisdom Literature is a notable product of the ancient Hebrew religious culture that consists of a group of writings whose theme has been found different from that of the rest of the Old Testament literatures. In the Canonical writings, it includes the book of Proverbs, Job, Ecclesiastes and certain of the Psalms, particularly those that are dealing with the topic of wisdom. In the extra- canonical literature, it is represented by works like Ecclesiasticus, the Wisdom of Solomon, Tobit, 4 Maccabees, and portions of other Apocrypha compositions.<sup>222</sup> These writings preserved, in one form or the other, the maxims and observations of generation of sages, which fostered among the Jews a didactic tradition, having its root in the Ancient Near Eastern Culture. Israelite Wisdom Literature, as in the Ancient Near East, falls into two classes: prudential literature and reflective literature.<sup>223</sup> Prudential literature consists of practical advice to the young people on how to attain a successful and good life. Reflective literature, consists of reflective probing into the depth of mans anguish about the meaning of life, always in a skeptical mood.

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<sup>220</sup> Michael B. Dick. 2008. *Reading the old Testament ;an inductive introduction*, Massachusetts: Hendrickson publishers 823

<sup>221</sup> Mark R. Sneed. 2015 . *The Social World of Eh sages – An Introduction to Israelite and Jewish Wisdom literature*, Minneapolis Fortress Press, 20

<sup>222</sup> R.K. Harrison .1969. *Introduction to the old Testament* ,USA: WMB Eerd, an Publishing 100,4

<sup>223</sup> W.A.Bernhard.1957. *The living World of Old Testament*, London: Longman, Green and co, 466

Following Davies' and Rogerson's<sup>224</sup> classification, there are four noticeable types of wisdom literature in Israel which include Instructions, Argument, Narrative and Manticism. The genre of *instructions* which contains practical advice for successful living is found in Israelite wisdom literature. These are believed to have originated from the court, written by or for kings or their senior administrators. It has long been recognised that Proverbs 22:17-24 (the word of the wise) was borrowed from the instruction of Amen-em-ope, dating from about 100BC, and the whole book of Proverbs is also ascribed to the court of King Solomon. The instructions are frequently addressed to 'my son', with the probable implication that the royal successor will inherit the divinely endowed wisdom of his father. Another literary genre which takes us into the arena of the "wise man", the scribes, is *dialogue*. Job and Ecclesiastes (Quoheleth) do not offer definitive statements of a proverbial kind, but rather explore, through dialogue or extended monologue, the limits of human knowledge and challenge the confident belief in a divinely sustained order. There were similar kinds of writings in Mesopotamia and Egypt often referred to as the 'Babylonian Job' or 'Babylonian Quoheleth' which consist of a dialogue between a sufferer and a friend from whom he unsuccessfully seeks comfort. *Narrative* is another genre of wisdom literature, which is also connected with scribal and court circle in Israel. The narrative is interpreted with wisdom sentences. There are several examples in the Bible and Apocrypha of stories whose heroes are honourable men of the scribe/sage class and who, by various stratagems and despite setbacks, achieve the place they deserved. The stories of Tobit in Apocrypha, Daniel 1-6, Esther and Joseph are good examples. These stories seem to be didactic in purpose showing that virtue will always achieve its due reward. *Manticism* which involves divination as well as the ability to interpret dreams has produced a vast amount of literature. This Literature contains observation of 'signs' predication of future and prescription of preventive action.

Biblical Wisdom Literature is unique, comparing to other Old Testament literatures.<sup>225</sup> It seems to stand apart from the rest of the books. It focuses on the individual. Israelite wisdom literature isolates the human problem from the particularities of history and stands in contrast to most of the literature of the Old Testament. Modern sages insist that the way to solve the problem of world unity is to concentrate on man, whose needs and

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<sup>224</sup> Philip R. Davies and John Rogerson. 2005. *The old Testament World*, Kenturcy :WJK press 184-189,

<sup>225</sup> V.S Gary. 1991. *Old Testament survey, part 2-Job- Malachi- Broading your Biblical Horizon*, Wheaton: ETA, 18

aspirations are fundamentally the same in all situations, and to rule out the memories, loyalties and cultural peculiarities that make for human diversity and conflict.<sup>226</sup>

### **3.4 Conclusion**

The historical background of Israelite wisdom tradition has been explored in this chapter. The study reveals that the history, religion and culture of Israel cannot be studied and understood in isolation from the overall context of the ancient Near East. Also in this chapter, attempt has been made to examine the beginning and the nature of the sapiential movement as well as the literature produced by this wisdom tradition in ancient Israel.

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<sup>226</sup> W.A.Bernhard.1957. *The living World of Old Testament*, London: Longman, Green and co, 466

## CHAPTER FOUR

### ANALYSIS OF THE BOOKS OF JOB AND PROVERBS IN RELATION TO AGE AND WISDOM

#### 4.0 Introduction

This chapter focused on the analysis of the books of Job and proverbs in relation to age and wisdom. It examined literary background of the books, including the exegetical exploration of the selected verses.

#### 4.1 Literary Background of the Books of Job and Proverbs

##### The Book of Job

The name Job (יֹבָב, in Hebrew) probably comes from a root meaning “come back”, or “repent”, and hence may signify “one who turns back” (to God).<sup>227</sup> This interpretation is based on the Arabic *āba*, “repent”<sup>228</sup> or “go back” (often followed by the phrase *‘Ila’ Ilāhi*, “God”). Another possible etymology for *יֹבָב* is “the assailed one”, from the Hebrew *āḇēb*, “to be persecuted, hated or be at enmity”,<sup>229</sup> or else, “object of enmity”.<sup>230</sup> But for the fact that Job was a native of North Arabia and the whole setting of the story is Arabic rather than Hebrew, the Arabic etymology is greatly favoured.<sup>231</sup>

The book of Job is considered the greatest monument of wisdom literature in the Old Testament. Through the centuries, the book has received the highest of praise.<sup>232</sup> Not only that, it has been recognised as one of the greatest poetic productions of all times. Among the Hebrew writers, the author of the book displays the most extensive vocabulary and he is known to be Shakespeare of the Old Testament.<sup>233</sup> Exhibited in the book are vast resources of knowledge, a superb style of forceful expression, explicit profundity of thought, excellent command of language, noble ideas, a high standard of morality, and a genuine love for nature. Its religious and philosophical ideas have claimed the consideration of the greatest

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<sup>227</sup> N/A. “The amazing name Job: Meaning and etymology” <http://www.abarim-publications.com/amazingname/job> Retrieved, Feb. 24, 2017

<sup>228</sup> N/A. “Meaning: Job has two possible meanings: (i) Hebrew: “The Persecuted one (ii) Arabic: “Repentant One” <http://www.christianadulteducation.com/persecution/job> Retrieved, Feb. 24, 2017

<sup>229</sup> N/A. “Behind the Name: Meaning, Origin and history of the name Job” [www.behindthename.com](http://www.behindthename.com). Retrieved, Feb. 24, 2017

<sup>230</sup> N/A. “Job Definition and Meaning” –Bible Dictionary. [www.google.com/jobmeaning/hlm](http://www.google.com/jobmeaning/hlm)

<sup>231</sup> L. A. Gleason 1964. *A survey of Old Testament introduction*. Chicago: Moody Press. 503

<sup>232</sup> W. A. Bernhard 1957. *The Living World of Old Testament*. London: Longmans, Green and co., 484

<sup>233</sup> W. A. Bernhard 1998. *Understanding Old Testament*. New Jersey: Prentice Hall, Inc., 530



theologians and philosophers down to the present day.<sup>234</sup> The book of Job is a part of the wisdom corpus and stands in counterpoint to Proverbs' insistence on the fact that the world is regular and ordered, due to the presence of wisdom at creation (Prov. 8:22-31; 3:14-20). It does not protest against proverbs but against a fossilised misunderstanding of retribution that had misrepresented the mainstream wisdom tradition of Proverbs.<sup>235</sup> The book of Job has different literary structures like some other ancient compositions. Prologue (Prose), main body (poetry) and epilogue (prose), revealing a creative composition, not an arbitrary compilation.<sup>236</sup> In other words, its literary structures, that is, a prose framework- prologue and epilogue-which encloses the intricate poetic body, is part of the almost architectonic symmetry of the book which is also evident in the body.<sup>237</sup>

The theoretical problem of pain and disaster in the life of the godly is the theme of the book.<sup>238</sup> Why does God allow bad things to happen to good people?<sup>239</sup> In other word, human suffering is the age-old problem discussed in the book of Job. However, this question has continued to be one of human unsolved problems.<sup>240</sup> The purpose of the book was to probe the vast regions and recesses of the justice of God in the world. Besides, it provides an example of extreme suffering, and precisely its reality (as well as the profound faith of it hero) has been a source of comfort and reassurance to those who have suffered through the ages. The book teaches that during the times when believers suffer innocently, their relationship with God can still remain unbroken. God has neither forsaken them, nor is he angry with them. The book of Job reveals the truth that believers should continue to trust God even when underserved suffering occurs in their lives.<sup>241</sup> Not only that, there are some things that are truly mysterious about nature and suffering that believers are just not meant to know. The book of Job probes the hearts of believers, exposing the reasons why they follow God.

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<sup>234</sup> J.S. Sammed. 1960. *The Old Testament speaks*. New York: Harper & Row Publishers. 279

<sup>235</sup> J.S. Sammed. 1960. *The Old Testament speaks*. New York: Harper & Row Publishers. 279

<sup>236</sup>N/A. "Introduction to Job" – Biblical – The International Bible Society- [www.biblical.com](http://www.biblical.com). Retrieved, Feb. 21, 2017

<sup>237</sup> W. P. Gregory. 1981 – "The Structure and Purpose of Job" – *Bibliotheca Sacra* 138 (550) 139 – 157. Dallas Theological Seminary. Retrieved, Feb. 21, 2017

<sup>238</sup> N/A. 2017. "Book of Job 'Theme of Pain and Suffering' – shmoop university, [www.shmoop.com](http://www.shmoop.com). Retrieved, Feb. 21, 2017

<sup>239</sup> K. Richard 2014. "What are the Meanings and themes of the Book of Job?", [www.quora.com](http://www.quora.com). Retrieved, Feb. 21, 2017

<sup>240</sup> J.S. Sammed. 1960. *The Old Testament speaks*. New York: Harper & Row Publishers. 279

<sup>241</sup> B.H. Robert & J.C. Laney. 1990. *Tyndale Concise Bible Commentary*. USA: Tyndale House Publisher, 186

Most significantly, in the book, Job, Satan and Job's so-called comforters were also taught lessons, especially on the incomprehensible nature and the person of God.<sup>242</sup>

The book of Job does not indicate its author, and there is no consistent tradition whatsoever, even in the rabbinic circles, about the writer of the book. The Talmud only makes an attempt to suggest that the writer must be someone who lived prior to the time of Moses. The commentator, Jacques Bolduce (1637), suggested that it may be secondarily the work of Moses himself, when he found it in an original Aramaic form and felt it worthwhile to translate into Hebrew. Thought it can scarcely be said that there is anything Mosaic about the style of Job, this theory at least accounts for: (1) its being possessed by the Hebrew (2) its attaining a canonical status (3) its patriarchal flavour and setting, and (4) the Aramaic flavour in some of the terminologies and mode of expression exhibited by the text.<sup>243</sup> Robert argued that theories of authorship of Job range from Job himself (date unknown), to Moses (around 1440 B.C), to Solomon or someone of his time (around 950 B.C), and to an unknown writer who lived around 200B.C.<sup>244</sup> Other suggested writers include Elihu,<sup>245</sup> Isaiah, Hezekiah,<sup>246</sup> and Baruch, who was Jeremiah's scribe.<sup>247</sup> Bullock posited that the author was a Hebrew or an Israelite who adopted pure monotheism and whose faith in the Omnipotent and just God was unshakeable.<sup>248</sup> Bernhard disagreed with this, claiming that the home of the book is not an Israelite but an Edomite Seir from the land of Uz, which was evidently found in the Southeastern part of Palestine around Edom (cf Gen. 31:2; Jer. 25:19-24; Lam 4:21), the area from which Job's friends came (Job 2:11).<sup>249</sup> Studies reveal that Job's homeland was the land of Uz.<sup>250</sup> The district of Uz in which the action took place was said to have been located in northern Arabia. The Septuagint refers to it as the land of the Asitai, a people whose Ptolemy the geographers located in the Arabian Desert, adjacent to the Edomites of Mount Seir. Job's friends, Eliphaz, came from Teman, a well-known locality in Edom. Elihu came from the Buzites, who probably lived adjacent to the Chaldeans in Northeast Arabia<sup>251</sup>. However, the hypothesis that the author of Job was a foreigner has not been convincingly proved. It is

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<sup>242</sup> B.H. Robert & J.C. Laney. 1990. *Tyndale Concise Bible Commentary*. USA: Tyndale House Publisher, 186

<sup>243</sup> B.H. Robert & J.C. Laney. 1990. *Tyndale Concise Bible Commentary*. USA: Tyndale House Publisher, 186

<sup>244</sup> L.A. Gleason. 1964. *A Survey of Old Testament Introduction*. Chicago. Moody Press, 505

<sup>245</sup> B.H. Robert & J.C. Laney. 1990. *Tyndale Concise Bible Commentary*. USA: Tyndale House Publisher, 186

<sup>246</sup> N/A. 2017. "Book of Job – Bible survey" <http://www.gotquestions.org/bookofjob> Retrieved, Feb. 20,2017

<sup>247</sup> H.I. Hester. 1994. *The Heart of Hebrew History- A Survey of the Old Testament*. Missouri: The William Jewell Press. 198

<sup>248</sup> A. C. Mark 2009. "The Book of Job – Introduction" [www.ccel.org-contrib-job-01](http://www.ccel.org-contrib-job-01). Retrieved, Feb. 20, 2017

<sup>249</sup> C.H. Bullock. 1979. *The Old Testament Poetic Books - The Wisdom and Songs of Israel*. Chicago: Monday Press, 69

<sup>250</sup> W. A. Bernhard. 1957. *The Living World of Old Testament*. New Jersey: Prentice Hall, Inc., 488

<sup>251</sup> J.S. Sammed. 1960. *The Old Testament speaks*. New York: Harper & Row Publishers. 281

plausible to assume that the author was an Israelite sage who lived perhaps in the outskirts of Palestine.

Dating the book of Job, like its authorship, has always been a crux,<sup>252</sup> because there is nothing in the text fixing its date.<sup>253</sup> This difficulty is suggested by the wide range of date that had been assigned to it, extending from the patriarchal period to the post exilic age.<sup>254</sup> The dating of the poem of the book is greatly difficult to determine because the author of Job does not give us hint about the historical circumstance at his time. Like that of Ecclesiastes, he was not interested in the existing traditional motifs of Israel's faith, such as Yahweh's activity in history and the election of Israel. The fact that Edomites are pictured in a favourable light seems to indicate that the Hebrew version of Job folktale arose in the post-exilic period, because beginning with the 6th century B.C. when the Edomites encroached upon Judea territory, the Jews view their southern neighbours with bitter hatred (Cf Obad. 10-14). The prose story, at least, probably would not have been written during this period of animosity. As to the poetic section of Job, however, there is no general agreement on whether it should be assigned to the period of the exile or to sometime in the post-exilic period.<sup>255</sup> However, striving to locate the book at an approximate place in the historical continuum, some probable dates have been suggested. Not only that, a distinction between the historical period when Job lived and the time when the record of his ordeal was composed was briefly stressed. The book might be considered to have been written immediately after the events themselves. However, there is divergent opinion on this point.

Talking of the date of composition, there are five main views maintained by biblical scholars today. These are (1) in the patriarchal age,<sup>256</sup> (2) in the reign of Solomon, (3) in the reign of Manasseh, (4) in the generation of Jeremiah and (5) during<sup>257</sup> or after the exile.<sup>258</sup> The proponents of pre-Mosaic date, which is in the Patriarchal era, claim that, if Job's career took place before the time of Moses, the book itself must date back to the same era.<sup>259</sup> They

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<sup>252</sup> L.A. Gleason. 1964. *A Survey of Old Testament Introduction*. Chicago: Moody Press, 505

<sup>253</sup> N/A. "The Date of the Book of Job" N/A. 2017, *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, Cambridge.org. Retrieved, Feb. 2017

<sup>254</sup> L.D. Johnson. 1975. *Israel's Wisdom: Learn and Live*. Tennessee: Broadman Press, 69

<sup>255</sup> C.H. Bullock. 1979. *The Old Testament Poetic Books - The Wisdom and Songs of Israel*. Chicago: Monday Press, 66

<sup>256</sup> W. A. Bernhard. 1957. *The Living World of Old Testament*. New Jersey: Prentice Hall, Inc., 488

<sup>257</sup> Rick Brentliger. 2017. "When was the Book of Job Written?", [www.gaychristian101](http://www.gaychristian101). Retrieved, Feb. 21, 2017

<sup>258</sup> Shmuel Vargon. 2001. "The Date of Composition of the Book of Job in the context of S.D Luzzatto's Attitude to Biblical Criticism" – *The Jewish Quarterly Review – Center for Advanced Judaic Studies, University of Pennsylvania*. Vol. 91, No. 3/4

<sup>259</sup> K. G. Norman 1985. *The Hebrew Bible – A Socio-Literary Introduction*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 575

anchored their submission on the facts that: (a) Job indicates a patriarchal family-clan type of organization for more reminiscent of Abraham's time than post-Exodus conditions (b) the offering of sacrifice by the head of the family rather than by an official priesthood would also be pre-Mosaic and (c) the mentioning of *qesita* as a piece of money (Job 42:11) suggests a date at least as early as Joshua (of Joshua 24:32), if not the patriarchal period (cf Gen 33:19). But if the scene was in the North Arabia near Edom, a clan type of society may have persisted alongside the official tribal priesthood till the time of Hebrew monarchy.<sup>260</sup> However, the fact that the events took place on non-Israelite soil makes the period of composition difficult to date with any precision. The reign of Solomon was also favoured as the possible date. The ground adduced for this dating are as follow: (a) Solomon's age was prosperous<sup>261</sup> in which literary pursuits were practiced against the background of national self-realization (b) Solomon's age devoted particular interest to *chokma* 'wisdom' and pondered the deepest practical problem of life; (c) there is a similar examination of godly wisdom in proverbs 8 to that which appears in Job 28; (d) a fairly extensive knowledge of foreign countries, or at least of conditions which existed throughout the Near East generally, indicates a wide acquaintance with the contemporary world than North Arabia conditions would presuppose.<sup>262</sup> However, this opinion can not be regarded as conclusive because the four features mentioned are reconcilable with an earlier date as well. Those who argued for the reign of Manasseh (7th century B.C) based their argument on the fact that it was an age of moral laxity and social injustice. It was a time when questions concerning divine providence would call for anxious scrutiny, with error on the throne and truth on the scaffold. Therefore, the prominence is given to the suffering of the innocent and prevalence of misfortune and calamity. "The earth is given into the hands of the wicked" (Job 9:24), accords with the time of King Manasseh.<sup>263</sup> However, there is no suggestion whatsoever that national misfortune are referred to or that what is afflicting Job is intended to be parabolic for the distress of Israel generally. The period of Jeremiah (Late 7th century B.C) was also suggested as the date in which the book of Job was written. What attracted the advocates of this date is the striking similarity in both content and language between Job and Jeremiah (cf Jer. 12:1-3 and Job 21:7; Jer. 20:14-18 and Job 3:3). According to them, that the land of Uz is mentioned outside of Job only in Jer. 25:20 and Lam 4:21, is significant.<sup>264</sup> This position, however, is

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<sup>260</sup> L.A.Gleason. 1964. *A Survey of Old Testament Introduction*. Chicago. Moody Press, 507

<sup>261</sup> L.A.Gleason. 1964. *A Survey of Old Testament Introduction*. Chicago. Moody Press, 505

<sup>262</sup> E. Scheffler. 2001. *Politics in Ancient Israel*. Pretoria: Biblical Publishers, 87

<sup>263</sup> L.A.Gleason. 1964. *A Survey of Old Testament Introduction*. Chicago. Moody Press, 507

<sup>264</sup> L.A.Gleason. 1964. *A Survey of Old Testament Introduction*. Chicago. Moody Press, 507

not convincing enough because the similarities referred to are quite vague in character and consist of common place sentiments which can be found in the writings of many authors. The Babylonian exile, (6th century B.C) is also favoured as the possible date of composition. The book of Job was classified as mere legend if not outright fiction.<sup>265</sup> The book was considered as reflecting at least indirectly long imprisonment and eventual release of King Jehoiachin. It should be noted, however, that Jehoiachin's career bears little analogy to that of Job; there is no evidence that Jehoiachin was, anyway, godlier than his wicked father, Jehoiakin, nor was he restored to his Kingdom at any time prior to his death. He was simply granted more pleasant conditions during his confinement in Babylon.

From the study so far, it is well observable that there is simply no way to determine who wrote the book of Job and the time when it was written. However, this is not critical for our interpretation of the book, just like any other poem. Like wisdom literature in general, it deals with a human situation that cannot be confined to any particular time.

### **The Book of Proverbs**

The book of Proverbs, in Hebrew *Mishle (Shlomoh)*, "Proverbs (of Solomon)", is the second book of the third section (writings), of the Hebrew Bible.<sup>266</sup> When it was translated into Greek and Latin, the title took on different forms: in the Greek Septuagint (Lxx), it becomes *paroimia* "proverbs"; in the Latin vulgate, the title was *proverbai*, from which the English name is described. However, "Proverbs", translated from *Mashal*, has a wider range of meaning than the short catchy saying implied by the English word. Thus proverbs is not merely an anthology but a "collection of collections" relating to a pattern of life which lasted for more than a millennium.<sup>267</sup> Being collection sayings, each collection has its own literary style, form, and ethical emphasis. Five literary units form the book of proverbs.<sup>268</sup> The first part is composed of ten discourses, seven poems of various lengths, and four of brief maxims (ch 1-9). Each of the discourses is introduced by the address "Hear, my son". The second part is a collection of proverbs attributed to Solomon. These sayings are unorganised as to subject matter. Each one is two lines long (10:1-22:16). The third part corresponds in some of its sayings with "The instruction of *Amen-em-ope*". The title "saying of the wise" at 24:23-34 is a kind of appendix to the larger collection (22:17-24:22). The fourth part is a second

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<sup>265</sup>L.A. Gleason. 1964. *A Survey of Old Testament Introduction*. Chicago. Moody Press, 507

<sup>266</sup>N/A. "Book of Proverbs", <http://en.m.wikipedia.org.www.google.com> Retrieved August 22, 2017

<sup>267</sup>N/A "Book of Proverbs", <http://en.m.wikipedia.org.www.google.com> Retrieved August 22, 2017

<sup>268</sup>H.K. Beebee. 1970. *The Old Testament*. California: Dickerson Publishing Company, Inc. 410

collection attributed to Solomon and gathered under Hezekiah's patronage. The sayings are of the same order, style, and subject matter as the earlier collection attributed to Solomon (25-29). The fifth part is a miscellaneous assortment. "The Dialogue of a skeptic" may be a good title for 30:1-9. Various warnings and numerical sayings make up 30:10-33. The wise words of a queen are preserved in 31:1-9. A song about the ideal wife is an acrostic poem whose alphabetical arrangement is perfectly preserved. (31:10-31).<sup>269</sup>

Considering the purpose of the book, it consists largely of short incisive statements that could be employed with greatest effect in the communication of behavioural, moral and spiritual truths.<sup>270</sup> They were developed over many generations into a variety of forms with the overall aim of inculcating certain behavioural principles by means of associating and contrasting certain facts of everyday experience. As with other elements of wisdom corpus, the purpose of the book was to furnish instruction for a particular class of young men.<sup>271</sup> In ancient Israel, it was customary for young children to be instructed within the family circle and in adolescence the girls normally followed the pattern of domestic duties while the boys came increasingly under paternal tutelage. In the upper-class families, the young men were given more specific schooling, aiming at the development of character and the furthering of success in life.<sup>272</sup> This programme of education forms the basic principles inherent in proverbs and similar books. From the content of proverbs, it is evident that such instructions were intended for a rather restricted section of the adolescent male population. The teachings were not intended for the edification of young women and certainly not for young children if the caution against the adulterous woman is any criterion. The concerned addressees were predominantly the youths of upper classes, since they alone would be most likely to be able to afford the kind of excesses described in proverbs and similar gnomic literature.<sup>273</sup> In essence, the purpose of the book of proverbs is to instruct in the principles of wisdom. There are three terms for wisdom employed throughout the book: *hokmâ*, *binâ*, and *tôšiyâ*.<sup>274</sup> *Hokma* is a kind of "wisdom" that involves a proper discernment between good and evil, between virtue and vice, between duty and self-indulgence. It also includes prudence in secular matters and a skill in the accomplishment of business affairs and in interpersonal

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<sup>269</sup> H.K. Beebee. 1970. *The Old Testament*. California: Dickerson Publishing Company, Inc. 410

<sup>270</sup> R.K. Harrison. 1969. *Introduction to Old Testament*, 1011

<sup>271</sup> N/A "The Purpose of Proverbs" Learn The Bible, [www.learnthebible.org](http://www.learnthebible.org). Retrieved, August 23, 2017

<sup>272</sup> N/A "Proverbs 1:2 – 12 NLT, Their Purpose is to teach people wisdom and discipline".

[www.biblestudytools.com](http://www.biblestudytools.com). Retrieved, August 23, 2017

<sup>273</sup> R.K. Harrison. 1969. *Introduction to Old Testament*, 1011

<sup>274</sup> L. A. Gleason. 1964. *A Survey of Old Testament Introduction*. Chicago: Moody Press, 516

relationships. It means an ability to apply theory to practice in real life situation. *Bina*, which means “understanding”, connotes the ability to discern intelligently the difference between sham and reality, between truth and error, between the spacious attraction of the moment and the long-range values that govern a truly successful life. The root ideas of this term is found in the related preposition *bên*, meaning “between;” hence, there is always an analytical or judgmental factor involved and the ability to distinguish between the valid and the invalid, the false and the true. *Tôšîyyâ* means “sound wisdom, efficient wisdom”, or in a derived sense, “abiding success”. This term conceives wisdom as an authentic insight into or intuition of spiritual or psychological truth. It focuses upon the ability of the human mind to rise from below to a grasp of divine reality above, so to speak, rather than the wisdom of a prophetic revelation that comes down supernaturally from heaven. Meanwhile, it should be noted from the above expression that the characteristic type of *māshāl* or “proverbs” in this book is the balance antithesis which incisively contrasts the wise and the fool, the good man and the wicked, true value and false appearance, in such away as to set forth the two sides of the truth in clearest opposition to each other and thus perform an incisive didactic function. The constant preoccupation of the book is with the elemental antinomies of obedience versus rebellion, industry versus laziness, prudence versus presumption, and so on. These are so presented as to put before the reader a clear-cut choice, leaving him no ground for wretched compromise or vacillating indecision.<sup>275</sup>

The problems of authorship and date of the book are intimately bound up with the composite nature of the book. In other words, the book of proverbs includes materials from several authors. Solomon, the King of Israel, is the primary source of the wise sayings in the book. Other lesser authors are “the wise” (Prov 22:17), Agur (Prov 30:1), and Lamuel (Prov 31:1).<sup>276</sup> This position is well articulated by Gareth who argued that:

The book itself contains indication of its authorship:

‘The Proverbs of Solomon, the son of David, King of Israel’ (1:1; cf 10:1)

‘The words of the wise’ (22:17; 24:23; cf Ethan, Herman, etc. in 1 kings 4:31).

‘These also are proverbs of Solomon which the men of Hezekiah King of Judah copies’ (25:1)

<sup>275</sup>L. A. Gleason. 1964. *A Survey of Old Testament Introduction*, Chicago: Moody Press, 516

<sup>276</sup>B. H. Rebert, & J. C. Laney. 1990. *Tyndale Concise Bible Commentary*. USA: Tyndale House Publishers, 225

These proverbs were added to the collection about two hundred years after Solomon's death in 930B.C. The 'men of Hezekiah' may have included the words of prophet Isaiah and Micah, who were engaged in their ministries at that time.

'The words of Agur the son Jakeh, his utterance' (30:1).

'The words of King Lamuel, the utterance which his mothers taught him' (31:1)<sup>277</sup>.

From the above excerpts, it was observed that the book of proverbs is not the work of a single man but is rather a collection of proverbs covering a long periods of time.<sup>278</sup> Indeed, scholars speak of the book as a collection of collections of sayings. Thus, in views of the general tendency of Hebrew antiquity, which ascribed anything involving wisdom to Solomon, the traditions concerning him in I Kings 4:32 have been called to question. More radical critics have gone as far as to deny that he had any responsibility at all for the literary material attributed to him in proverbs. However, competent scholars still hold that Solomon was the greatest maker of proverbs in the book than many others. The collection of sayings in Proverbs 10:1 to 22: 16 is specially ascribed to Solomon and it is possible that he is the author of other parts of the book as well. Adding to this submission, Gareth disclosed that Solomon was responsible for composing or compiling the majority of the proverbs' pithy sayings that the book contains. According to him, it was King Solomon, son of King David, who spoke three thousand proverbs, and his songs were one thousand and five (I Kings 4:32). Solomon probably had this collection of proverbs in mind when he wrote elsewhere that ----- 'because the preacher was wise, he still taught the people knowledge; yes, he pondered and sought out and set in order many proverbs' (Eccl. 12:9).<sup>279</sup>

There is no definitive evidence to date the book of proverbs to either during the late monarchy or the Persian period.<sup>280</sup> So, there will always be a certain amount of speculation involved in this issue. Some scholars opined that the book was originally composed in the days of Solomon (971-931 BC; see 1:1) and it was completed in the days of Hezekiah (between 715 and 686 B.C; See 25: 1).<sup>281</sup> However, a glance at this material is enough to show the diversity of the book. It is evident that, "The Proverbs of Solomon" (Prov 1-9; 10:1-

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<sup>277</sup> Gareth Crossley. 1975. *The Old Testament Explained and Applied*. USA: Evangelical Press, 468

<sup>278</sup> H.I. Hester. 1949. *The Heart of Hebrew History – A Study of the Old Testament*. Missouri: The William Jewell Press, 205

<sup>279</sup> Gareth Crossley. 1975. *The Old Testament Explained and Applied*. USA: Evangelical Press

<sup>280</sup> R. S. Mark. 2015. *The Social World of the Sages – An Introduction to Israelites Wisdom Literature*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 302

<sup>281</sup> Gareth Crossley. 1975. *The Old Testament Explained and Applied*. USA: Evangelical Press



22:16), ‘The words of the wise’ (Prov. 22:17-24:22), ‘The sayings of the wise’ (Prov. 24:23-34) and ‘The proverbs of Solomon collected by the men of King Hezekiah’ (Prov. 25-29), belong to the tradition of Solomon.<sup>282</sup> The remainder of the book is of foreign origin. And within these collections, most scholars regard 10:1-22:16 as the oldest portion of the book. The first collection, that is Prov. 1-9, is often regarded as the latest, but in view of the Canaanite elements in this section, some scholars regard at least part of it as belonging to the pre-exilic tradition. Meanwhile, all we can say for sure is that the book of proverbs represents a complex tradition extending throughout almost the whole of the Old Testament period.

In the process of Old Testament Canonization, some books were initially rejected. These books, in Old Testament canonical studies, are referred to as antilegomena (from the Greek “to speak against”).<sup>283</sup> The book of proverbs was amount the classified Antilegomena. The reasons for the initial rejection centered on a few rather apparently contradictory precepts. For examples, ‘Answer not a fool according to his folly..... answer a fool according to her folly’. This statement definitely reasoned that it is the circumstance that determines one’s response to a fool. When you are in the midst of fools, it is futile responding to a fool, the difference will not be evident. But when you are in the midst of the wise, if you are in the midst of the wise, if you respond to a fool, the difference will be clear. This, as some scholar opined, was probably what the people realized and the book was finally included in the cannon of the Old Testament.<sup>284</sup>

#### **4.2 Age and Wisdom in Job and Proverbs: An Exegetical Exploration**

This section deals with exegetical analyses of selected passages in the books of Job and Proverbs. The general and immediate contexts out of which the texts are born are considered. Masoretic Text as well as the English translations is presented. The structural flow through which the exegeses have been done with syntactical units and the streams that join them together are discussed.

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<sup>282</sup> N/A. “Introduction to the Proverb” [www.angelfire.com/nt/theology/proverbs.html](http://www.angelfire.com/nt/theology/proverbs.html). Retrieved August 23, 2017

<sup>283</sup> A.O. Dada. 2003. *Critical Introduction to Old Testament*. Ibadan: Distance Learning Centre (DLC), University of Ibadan, 20

<sup>284</sup> H.K. Beebee. 1970. *The Old Testament*. California: Dickerson Publishing Company, Inc. 418

## Historical and Exegetical Analysis of Job 12:12

There are divergent views about the date in which the book of Job was written. However, a fascinating suggestion about dating the book is that, the post-exilic world was the life situation for the book as it was for the book of proverbs, just when in the post-exilic age it came into being scholars do not agreed.<sup>285</sup> The book of Job has three distinct parts: a prologue (chp 1:1-2:13), a series of dialogues (chp 3:1-42:6) and epilogues (chp 42:7-17). The prologue and epilogues are in prose, while the dialogues are in poetry.<sup>286</sup> The author of the dialogues may have drawn upon Jeremiah 20:14-18 “*cursed be the day on which I was born*”, so that the dialogue section would have been written not before the early 6th century B.C.<sup>287</sup> The opening and closing narrative is from folk tale whose style is similar to stories in Genesis and Judges. It is earlier than Ezekiel, at any rate, because Ezekiel knew of a pious Job (Ezek. 14:14). There is no sure way of deciding upon the date of Elihu and the Job speeches. The dialogue section was created by a person who knew international wisdom literature when it had fully influenced Hebrew thought.<sup>288</sup> The Edomitic background is recognisable in the hero’s origins. He is from the land of Uz in North Arabia.<sup>289</sup> The use of Eloah, the Edomitic word for God – appeared in thirty-five times in the dialogues, argues along with reference to Tema and Sheba (Job 6:19), for Edomitic influence on the author.<sup>290</sup>

## Context and Structure of the Text

The text under study literarily belongs to Job 12:1-14:22 which narrated the conclusion of Job’s first round of talks with a lengthy discourse in response to Zophar and his friends. These are three speeches of alphabetic length which are the longest speeches in the dialogues. Based on the topical dialogue motifs within the periscope, the unit has been structured into three smaller units for easy comprehension, namely: chp 12:1-25; chp 13:6-28 and chp 14:1-22. This is done through taking into cognisance of the basic structural seams and units that join the entire grammatical units into a whole. The intended meaning of the speaker lies in the nexus of grammatical, syntactical and historical facts in the texts.

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<sup>285</sup>L.M. Steven and John Kaltner. 2007. *The Old Testament – It Background, Growth & Content*. Nashville: Abingdom Press, 304

<sup>286</sup>H.K. Beebee. 1970. *The Old Testament*, California: Dickerson Publishing Company, Inc. 418

<sup>287</sup>H.K. Beebee. 1970. *The Old Testament*, California: Dickerson Publishing Company, Inc. 418

<sup>288</sup>H.K. Beebee. 1970. *The Old Testament*, California: Dickerson Publishing Company, Inc. 418

<sup>289</sup>L. A. Gleason. 1964. *A Survey of Old Testament Introduction*. Chicago: Moody Press, 516

<sup>290</sup>H.K. Beebee. 1970. *The Old Testament*. California: Dickerson Publishing Company, Inc. 418

## Job Chapter 12:1-25

The selected verse for exegetical analysis (Job 12:12) belongs to this unit. In this unit, Job's response is presented, serving as introductory section (v1). Upon the litigation process (that is, ridicule of opponents (v2), Job's claim to wisdom (v3), and proof that his opponents are wrong (v4-6), followed an argument in wisdom style. This sets a stage for a hymnic celebration of God's wisdom and power (vv13-25). The proof of Job's claim to wisdom was revealed in which he acknowledged that, even, animals and other natural beings know the hand of God (vv7-10). He also spoke about human experience, that is, something man had heard and tasted about the sovereignty and supremacy of God (v11). Wisdom was believed to reside with the aged (v12). This is a normative tradition among the Hebrews (chp 15:10), and was respected. The reason for Elihu's unanticipated appearance is explained in his opening speech (chp 32:6-7). The fact is that he was young and defected to older men in matters of such importance.<sup>291</sup>

### Text and Translation of Job 12:12

ḥn" ) WbT . ~ymiäy" %r<aοβw> hm' \_k . x'

~yviîyviyB (BHS – 4<sup>th</sup> ed)

“Wisdom is with the aged, and  
Understanding in length of days” (RSV, 1952)

### Exegesis of the Text

Our text begins with the use of an adjective masculine plural absolute ~yviîyviyB “with elderly or very aged”. Here, the particles inseparable preposition B . “with” is attached to vyviy" “elderly” or “very aged”. This word probably has syntactical connection with the word *sheba* “gray hair” because !qeZ" is the word for “elder” or “old man”.<sup>292</sup> The

<sup>291</sup> C. H. Bullock. 1979. *An Old Testament Poetic Books – The Wisdom and Songs of Israel*. Chicago: Moody Press, 77

<sup>292</sup> J.O. Ann Hackett. 2005. *A Basic Introduction to Biblical Hebrew*. Cambridge, Mass. 29

noun  $hm'_{k.x}$  ' "wisdom"<sup>293</sup> is also introduced, serving as the subject of the sentence  $hm'_{k.x} \sim yvi\dot{y}viyB. . . .$  "Wisdom is with the elderly or aged".  $hm'_{k.x}$  can also mean "technical skill" "aptitude" "experience" "good sense", "worldly wisdom" as well as "Godly wisdom".<sup>294</sup> In the ancient world, being old or having gray hair was generally connected with wisdom.<sup>295</sup>

The  $W >$  'and' conjunction was intended to maintain the narrative sequence. It was also used to compound the two sentences. Besides, the conjunction was introduced to link  $hm'_{k.x}$  "wisdom" with  $hn''WbT$  "understanding" showing that they are words of equal status and similar function. Words, in reference to "wisdom" or "being wise", are frequently paired with nouns for "knowledge", "understanding", "instruction" and "advice", and verbs like "to advise", in Hebrew bible".<sup>296</sup>  $\%r, a$  "length", in connection with  $\sim ymi\ddot{a}y$  "days" or "times" means long life. The words are employed to maintain parallelism.  $\sim ymi\ddot{a}y$  " $\%r < a$  "length of days" which is chronologically connected with  $vYviy$  "the elderly" or "very aged" was intended to echo the thought of the first line of the verse in the second. Parallelism is a most unique feature of Old Testament poetry.<sup>297</sup> Job 12:12 is a synonymous parallelism, aiming at engraving strong impression and indelible picture of the correlation that exists between "age" and "wisdom" as preserved in Israel's wisdom tradition.

### Historical and Exegetical Analysis of Proverbs 5:1

The problem of authorship and date of proverbs as earlier noted, are intimately bound up with the composite nature of the book.<sup>298</sup> However, scholars have generally viewed chapter 1-9 of proverbs as a late composition, possibly, post – exilic.<sup>299</sup> Bernhard argued that much of the wisdom literature was produced in the post-exilic period, when Israel was deeply

<sup>293</sup> R.A. Martin. 2009. *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew*. Bangalore: Theological Publications, India, 148

<sup>294</sup> M. R. Sneed. 2015. *The Social World of the Sages – An Introduction to Israelite Wisdom Literature*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 17

<sup>295</sup> M. R. Sneed. 2015. *The Social World of the Sages – An Introduction to Israelite Wisdom Literature*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 17

<sup>296</sup> M. R. Sneed. 2015. *The Social World of the Sages – An Introduction to Israelite Wisdom Literature*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 17

<sup>297</sup> A.O. Dada. 2003. *Critical Introduction to Old Testament.*, Ibadan: Distance Learning Centre (DLC), University of Ibadan, 53

<sup>298</sup> R.K. Harrison. 1969. *An Old Testament*. 1012

<sup>299</sup> C. H. Bullock. 1979. *Understanding the Old Testament* 158

conscious of being a worshipping community.<sup>300</sup> Adding to this, Johnson submitted that chapter 1-9 of proverbs is believed to have been the last section to be composed.<sup>301</sup> Scholars generally agree that there is no real support for the claim of Solomonic authorship of proverbs. It has already been noted that the book contains a number of collections that are already marked by titles or superscriptions. Even though some of the headings are associated with Solomon, these attributions are from a later period and should not be dated to his reign. These collections were compiled at various times and joined together during a complex process of growth and editorial work.<sup>302</sup> Rebert and Laney, however, posited that the book was originally composed in the days of Solomon (971 -931 B.C.) and then completed in the days of Hezekiah (between 715 and 686 B.C.).<sup>303</sup> Though it is difficult to ascertain the author and the time in which the text under study had been written, it is in no way time-bound or culture-bound.<sup>304</sup>

### **Context and Structure of the Text**

The next under study literarily belongs to Proverbs 1:1 – 9: 18 which bears the title “the Proverbs of Solomon, Son of David, king of Israel”.<sup>305</sup> This part is composed of then discourses, seven poems of various lengths and four selections are introduced by the address “Hear, my son”.<sup>306</sup> For easy understating, the section was divided into two units: ch 1:1 – 7 and ch 1: 8 – 9: 18. To locate our text as well as making it more accessible, the later unit was also structured into smaller units namely: 1:8 – 19; Ch 1: 20 – 33; Ch 2: 1 – 22; 3: 1- 12. 3: 13 – 24; 3: 25 – 35; 4: 1 – 9; 4: 10 – 27; 5: 1 -23; 6: 1 – 19; 6: 20 – 35; 7: 1 – 27; 8: 1 - 36; 9: 1 – 18. It should be noted that all these smaller units have their various titles within the larger unit.

### **Proverbs 5: 1 – 23**

Our text for exegesis falls into this unit. The verse appears to be introductory part of the eighth instructions of a father appealing to his son (or teacher to his student) to accept his wisdom (vv1 – 2). The primary intention is to urge the son (student) towards wisdom and the

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<sup>300</sup> W.A. Bernhard. 1966. *Understanding the Old Testament* – Second Edition, USA: Prentice Hall, Inc, 490

<sup>301</sup> L.D. Johnson. 1975. *Israel's Wisdom: Learn and Live*. Tennessee: Broad man Press, 31

<sup>302</sup> L.M. Steven and John Kaltner. 2007. *The Old Testament – It Background, Growth & Content*. Nashville: Abingdom Press, 312

<sup>303</sup> R.B. Hughes, J. Carl Laney. 1990. *Tyndale Concise Bible Commentary*. USA: Tyndal House Publishers, 225

<sup>304</sup> Gareth Crossley. 1975. *The Old Testament – Explained and Applied*. USA: Evangelical Press, 469

<sup>305</sup> L.M. Steven and John Kaltner. 2007. *The Old Testament – It Background, Growth & Content*. Nashville: Abingdom Press, 312

<sup>306</sup> H.K. Beebee. 1970. *The Old Testament*, California: Dickerson Publishing Company, Inc. 410

praise of wisdom is to be seen in this light. This is the significant parallelism between wisdom and Egyptian *Ma'at*.<sup>307</sup> Besides, this instruction betrays a flavor of training within the family. The wisdom teacher speaks as parent to a child, thus “listen, my son”.<sup>308</sup> The parent (or teacher) describes the “strange woman” (adulteress) and her way (vv3 – 6), which comprises of introduction (v7). Series of commands and prohibitions, with motive clauses, that concern avoidance of strange woman (vv8 – 14), and fidelity to one’s wife (vv15 -20) were also given. This seems to be one of the most vivid passages in proverbs that contain the warning against consorting with an adulteress. Her smooth and seductive speech sounded sweet, but it led to death.<sup>309</sup> The best thing to do was to keep as far away from her as possible, for she could only bring ruin. Instead, a man should “drink water” from his own well and love the wife of his youth.<sup>310</sup> The Lord’s eyes were on men, so the wicked man could not escape the consequences of his sin (vv21 – 23). This statement of retribution for the wicked from the Lord forms the concluding part of this unit.

### **Text and Translation of Proverbs 5:1**

ʾ<sup>^</sup>n<) z>a' -jh; yti<sup>a</sup>n" Wbt.li÷ hb' yvi\_q.h;  
 ytiäm'k.x'l. ynIB (BHS – 4<sup>th</sup> eds)

*My Son, be attentive to my wisdom, incline your ear to my understanding* (RSV, 1952)

### **Exegesis of the Text**

The text begins with a direct command from the father to his son in the vocative sense. This is done by the use of noun common masculine singular with pronominal suffix ynIB “my son”. In Israel, learning about wisdom is set forth in a teacher – pupil or father – son relationship with the listener frequently addressed as ynIB “my son”.<sup>311</sup> Werner confirmed that the appellations “father” and “son” may reflect the relationship between teacher and pupil.<sup>312</sup> Kitchen saw it as one of the sufficient number of biblical allusions to

<sup>307</sup>L. G. Perdue. 1977. *Wisdom and Cult – A Critical Analysis of the views of Cult in the Wisdom Literatures of Israel and the Ancient Near East*, Missoula. Montana: Schools Press, 19

<sup>308</sup>Walter Brueggemann. 1997. *Theology of the Old Testament – Testimony, Dispute, Advocacy*. Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress. 682

<sup>309</sup>L.D. Johnson. 1975. *Israel’s Wisdom: Learn and Live*. Tennessee: Broadman Press, 43

<sup>310</sup>John Tullock. 1981. *The Old Testament Story*. New Jersey: Prentice –Hall. Inc., 352

<sup>311</sup>J.S. Samuel. 1960. *The Old Testament Speaks*. New York: Harper & Row Publishers. 291

<sup>312</sup>H.S. Werner. 2008. *Old Testament Introduction*. USA: West Minster John Knox Press. 373

prove the influence of ancient Near Eastern culture upon the life of Israel.<sup>313</sup> The teacher addresses the pupil as his son and maintains a parental tone throughout.<sup>314</sup> Parents were the child's earliest instructors in the customs, moral standards, and traditions of a family – oriented society.<sup>315</sup> Proverbs speaks from the perspective of chronological age. It is as if wise and gentle people were sharing their years of experience with the younger generation.<sup>316</sup>

The actual command is compelled in *hb' yviq]h*; “listen”, or “give attention” or “be attentive”. The father bluntly commands the son “be attentive” or “listen”.<sup>317</sup> The object of the imperative is *hm' k. x'* “wisdom”, which in actual sense refers to “fidelity to one's wife”. One should embrace one's wife, only one's wife, for God watches over everyone's ways and will judge the adulterer (5:21).<sup>318</sup> Besides, the practical benefits of the way of wisdom are numerous for those disciplined enough to wait in the path of knowledge and understanding. The way of wisdom results in understanding the fear of the Lord and finding the knowledge of God, thus fostering covenant relationship with him (2:5).<sup>319</sup> The use of *l* . preposition with pronominal suffix is to present a parental dimension of the command. It is used not only to show the gravity and the effects of the commands but also to emphasis the inevitable benefit of walking in the way of wisdom.

The instruction still continues as the son was told *^n<) z>a' -jh* “stretch or turn your ear” to *hn"wbT*. “understanding”. Wisdom, knowledge and understanding are heirlooms, more precious than jewels<sup>320</sup>, gold and silver. It is therefore imperative for young people to listen, receive, and obey the teachings of the elders, the sage, and especially their parents.<sup>321</sup> Wisdom and understanding, as earlier said, are words of similar function. The words, in line with *hb' yviq]h* “listen” and *^n<) z>a' -jh* “stretch”, “turn” or “incline” are intended as a matter of emphasis, and thereby forming synonymous parallelism. Here, the thought of the first line of the verse is found re-echoing in the second line.

<sup>313</sup>K.A. Kitchen. “Proverbs and Wisdom Books of Literary Form” – the Tyndal Biblical Archaeology Lecture, 1976. Tyndal Bulletin 28 (1977) 69 – 114, 82

<sup>314</sup>J. R. Battenfield and W.B. Nelson. 1982. *Old Testament Survey – The Message, Form, and Background of the Old Testament*. USA: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 461

<sup>315</sup>R.B.Y. Scot. 1971. *The Way of Wisdom in the Old Testament*. London: Longmans, Green and Co. 8

<sup>316</sup>R.B. Hughes, J.C. Laney. 1990. *Tyndal Concise Bible Commentary*. USA: Tyndal House Publishers, 230

<sup>317</sup>W.B. David. and T.A. Bill. 1999. *The Face of Old Testament Studies – A Survey of Contemporary Approaches*. Grand Rapids: Baker Books. 300

<sup>318</sup>P. R. House. 1998. *Old Testament Theology*. USA: Intervarsity Press, 443

<sup>319</sup>A. E. Hill and J. H. Walton. 1991. *A Survey of Old Testament*. USA: Zondervan, 359

<sup>320</sup>E.J. Brill. 1960. *Wisdom in Israel and in the Ancient Near East*. Netherlands: Vestus Testamentus, 69

<sup>321</sup>A.E. Hill and J. H. Walton. 1991. *A Survey of Old Testament*. USA: Zondervan, 359

### **4.3. Conclusion**

The analysis of the book of Job and Proverbs has been explored. The literary background of the books: the themes, the purposes, the date and authorship have been discussed. The study revealed that there is no way to determine specifically who wrote the books and the time when they were written. However, this is not critical for our interpretation of the books, just like any other poem or narrative. The books, like wisdom literature in general, deal with a human situation that cannot be confined to any particular time. They represent a complex tradition, extending throughout almost the whole of the Old Testament period. In this chapter also, the exegetical exploration of Job 12:12 and Proverb 5:1 was carried out. The study, through the historical and exegetical work, confirmed that wisdom has been considered more valuable than any other worldly possession. Besides, wisdom is believed to reside with the elders or aged persons. It is therefore imperative for young people to listen, receive and obey the teaching of the elders, the sages and especially parents. This emphasises the correlation that exists between “Age” and “wisdom” identified with Jewish wisdom tradition.



## CHAPTER FIVE

### WISDOM IN YORUBA CONTEXT

#### 5.0 Introduction

This chapter explored the concept of wisdom in the Yoruba context. It traced the historical origin of the Yoruba people. Besides, the nature and the place of wisdom in the Yoruba cultural world-view were duly examined. The study also considered the sources of Yoruba wisdom as well as the correlation between age and wisdom.

#### 5.1 Origin of the Yoruba People

The Yoruba people occupy a large area in Southwestern Nigeria like +xun, Lagos, +y-, )g6n, Kwara, Kog7, \$k8t8 and Oñdó.<sup>322</sup> However, pockets of them are found scattered in other parts of Nigeria and some other West African countries.<sup>323</sup> Besides, Yoruba communities can also be found across the Atlantic, as far as the Caribbean and South-America, particularly in Cuba and Brazil.<sup>324</sup> The Yoruba people are known to be a single near-homogenous and semi-independent people loosely linked by history, geography, language, culture and religion. In Togo, the Yoruba people are known as Anago, Tsha and Ife to the North.<sup>325</sup> In Liberia and Sierra Leone, they are referred to as ‘AKU’ or ‘CKU’.<sup>326</sup> The Yoruba people are one of the three main ethnic groups that make up Nigeria. They constitute approximately twenty one percent of Nigeria’s total population and around forty million individuals.<sup>327</sup> The Yoruba people were predominantly farmers and highly skilled artists with a polytheistic religion centered on pantheon of divinities serving as intermediaries between man and the Supreme God. This Yoruba indigenous religion held an unchallenged sway until about the middle of the 17th Century when Islam was introduced to Yoruba society. Towards

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<sup>322</sup> O. S. Titus. 2015. “Socio-Cultural Music As a Tool for the Promotion of Peaceful Coexistence Among Religious Organisations in Yorubaland” In *Religion and Security Issues (Proceedings of 2013 Biennial International Religious Studies Conference)*, Vol. 5, 334

<sup>323</sup> A.O. Dada. 2003. “Christology from Below: A Reflection on Christological Elements in Selected Selected Yoruba Gospel Song”. *A Publication of the Nigerian Association for Biblical Studies (NABIS) – Biblical Studies Series 2*, 261.

<sup>324</sup> A.O. Dada. 2009. “Harnessing Traditional Yoruba Communal Values and Ideals for Self – Reliance and Development” in *Orita – Ibadan Journal of Religious Studies*, Vol XLI/11. 36

<sup>325</sup> N/A. “Yoruba People and Culture” – African Studies Institute, University of Georgia. [www.google.com/peopleandculture](http://www.google.com/peopleandculture) Retrieved, May, 2015

<sup>326</sup> Olumide Bassir. 1954. “Marriage Rites Among the Aku (Yoruba) of Freetown” – *Africa: Journal of the International African Institute*, Vol. 24, No. 3, Published by Cambridge University Press. <http://www.jstor.org/akumarriagerites.html>

<sup>327</sup> Oluwaseun Osewa. 2016. “A Short History of Yorubaland with Picture –culture”. *Nairaland*. [www.nairaland.com/historyofyoruba](http://www.nairaland.com/historyofyoruba) Retrieved, Dec. 6, 2016.

the second half of the 19th century, Christianity was also brought to Yoruba land.<sup>328</sup> The effect of these newly introduced religions, especially on the Yoruba belief in divinities, ancestral spirits, magic and medicine and moral order, is quite fundamental. This development brought about religious Syncretism because those who were converted to Islam and Christianity still held on to some of the traditional religious beliefs.<sup>329</sup>

The origin of the Yoruba in Nigeria cannot be clearly deciphered,<sup>330</sup> and, the time of their migration to their present location is highly debatable and variously speculated. One tradition holds that *Od6duwz*, the primary ancestor of the Yoruba people, came from Egypt.<sup>331</sup> Another story has it that he migrated from Mecca because of his belief in deities, which caused him to be expelled from his abode. He came to settle in Il3-If2 and started a dynasty, which was further expanded by his seven sons.<sup>332</sup> Similarly, there are many variants of the myths on how the Yoruba people came to be. *Od6duwz* is the legendary progenitor of the Yoruba .<sup>333</sup> There are two variants of the story of how he achieved the feat. The first is cosmogonic, while the second political.<sup>334</sup> The cosmogonic version also has two variations. According to the first variant of the cosmogonic myth, *r8xzqlq* (*{bztqlq}*) was the arch-divinity who was commissioned by *OI9d6mar4*, the Supreme Deity, to create a solid land out of the primordial water that constituted the earth and to populate the land with human beings.<sup>335</sup> *{bztqlq}* descended from *=run* (heaven) into *ay3* (earth) on a chain, carrying a snail shell, full of earth (soil) , palm kernels and a five- toed chicken. He was to empty the content of the snail shell on the water after placing some pieces of iron on it, and then to place the chicken on the earth to spread it over the primordial water. According to this version of the story, *r8xzqlq* completed the task to the satisfaction of *OI9d6mar4*. He was then given the task of making the physical body of human beings after which *OI9d6mar4* would give them *43m7* (the breath of life). He also completed the task and that was the reason why he was

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<sup>328</sup> N/A. "Yoruba People and Culture" – African Studies Institute, University of Georgia.

[www.google.com/peopleandculture](http://www.google.com/peopleandculture) Retrieved, May, 2015

<sup>329</sup> J.K. Ayantayo. 2010. "The Phenomenon of Change of Name and Identity in Yoruba Religious Community in the light of Social Change" in *Orita – Ibadan Journal of Religious Studies*. Vol. XLII/1,5

<sup>330</sup> Mathew Defusco. 1994. "The Yoruba". African Postcolonial. Literature in English.

[www.postcolonialweb.org/nigeria/yorubamf.html](http://www.postcolonialweb.org/nigeria/yorubamf.html)

<sup>331</sup> N/A. "Yoruba History". Nairaland Forum. [www.google.com/yorubahistory](http://www.google.com/yorubahistory) . Retrieved, May 3, 2015

<sup>332</sup> O.S. Bamidele 2003. "The History and Tradition of the Yoruba people". United Kingdom.

[www.google.com/yorubahistoryandtradition.html](http://www.google.com/yorubahistoryandtradition.html) Retrieved, May 3, 2016

<sup>333</sup> O.S. Bamidele 2003. "The History and Tradition of the Yoruba people". United Kingdom.

[www.google.com/yorubahistoryandtradition.html](http://www.google.com/yorubahistoryandtradition.html) Retrieved, May 3, 2016

<sup>334</sup> N/A "Yoruba History". Nairaland Forum. [www.google.com/yorubahistory](http://www.google.com/yorubahistory) . Retrieved, May 3, 2015

<sup>335</sup> Awo Dino. 2009. "African Traditional Religion: The Yoruba Metaphysical concept of Ori"  
[www.google.com/yorubametaphysical.html](http://www.google.com/yorubametaphysical.html)

given the title of *{bar8sz*; that is, the king of *Or8sz*.<sup>336</sup> The other variant of the cosmogonic myth does not credit *{bztqlq* with the completion of the task. While it indicates that *{bztqlq* was given that task, it avers that *{bztqlq* got drunk with palm wine even before he got to the earth and fell asleep. Therefore, he was unable to do the job. *Ol9d6mar4* got worried when he did not return on time, so he sent *Od6duwz*, *{batala*'s younger brother, to find out what was going on. When *Od6duwz* found *{bztqlq* drunk, he simply took over the task and completed it. Thus, *Od6duwz* created the land. The spot on which he landed from heaven that turned from water to become land is called I13-if2 and is now considered the sacred and spiritual home of the Yoruba.<sup>337</sup> The second version of the myth, which is political, holds that there was a pre-existing civilization at I13-if2 before the invasion by *Od6duwz* and his followers. This group, *Od6duwz* and his people came from the east where they had been persecuted on the basis of religious differences. They came to I13-if2, fought and conquered the pre-existing Igbo (unrelated to the present day Igbo people of Eastern Nigeria) inhabitants led by *r4l5er4* (*{bztqlq*). Upon the death of *Od6duwz*, there was the dispersal of his children from I13-if2 to found other kingdoms. These original founders of the Yoruba nation include Olówu of )wu, Alqk3tu of K3tu, {ba of Benin, +rznq5n of \*lq, On7szqb1 of Szqb1, Olúpópó of Pópó, and +rznm7yzn of +y-. Each of these made a mark in the subsequent urbanization and consolidation of Yoruba confederacy of kingdoms, with each kingdom tracing its origin to I13-if2.<sup>338</sup>

## 5.2 Wisdom in Yoruba Perspective

### The Nature and the Place of Wisdom in Yoruba Cultural Setting

The word *{gb-n* (wisdom), has several usages within the Yoruba cultural world view.<sup>339</sup> The word could be used to denote success or positive outcome of any decision, attitude or deed in various dimensions.<sup>340</sup> Within this understanding, the Yoruba people

<sup>336</sup> Awo Dino. 2009. "African Traditional Religion: The Yoruba Metaphysical concept of Ori" [www.google.com/yorubametaphysical.html](http://www.google.com/yorubametaphysical.html) Also. "Yoruba History". Nairaland Forum. [www.google.com/yorubahistory](http://www.google.com/yorubahistory) . Retrieved, May 3, 2015

<sup>337</sup> Awo Dino. 2009. "African Traditional Religion: The Yoruba Metaphysical concept of Ori" [www.google.com/yorubametaphysical.html](http://www.google.com/yorubametaphysical.html) Also. "Yoruba History". Nairaland Forum. [www.google.com/yorubahistory](http://www.google.com/yorubahistory) . Retrieved, May 3, 2015

<sup>338</sup> N/A. "Yoruba History". Nairaland Forum. [www.google.com/yorubahistory](http://www.google.com/yorubahistory) . Retrieved, May 3, 2015

<sup>339</sup> S.O. Omobolade, Principal Assistant Registrar. Division of Academic Affairs, Adeyemi College of Education, Ondo, ondo State. Interviewed, September 26, 2016

<sup>340</sup> S.A. Adeniji. Arowosegbe Compound, Ijeru Oba, )gb9m=s-, +y- State. 75years. Interviewed, May 2, 2016

believe the end justifies the means. One Yoruba proverb says: *Cni k0k9 2 y4 l9 m= - l-*<sup>341</sup> (someone whose planted cocoa germinates is the one that knows how to plant it). In the Yoruba cultural philosophy, one could be considered wise for being successful in life endeavours. And this makes such a person a point of reference and a source of wisdom for others. However, this kind of wisdom is attributed to the Supreme Being.<sup>342</sup> Therefore, being aware of its divine origin and knowing fully that any deficiency in this regard may not be self-inflicted, those who are endowed with such wisdom are warned to shun pride. That is why it is said among the Yoruba that: *Cni 9 gb-n {l-run l9 n7 9 gb-n, cni 9 g= {l-run l9 n7 9 g=,*<sup>343</sup> (it is God that allows the wise to be wise and the foolish to be foolish). One Yoruba proverb says: *Atare r'Ini t5n 8d7 2 se 9 n fi Ob6r9 s2s7n, Ob6r9 k8 bq r'Ini t5n 8d7 2 se k8 bq szn ju atare lf* (alligator pepper has someone to take care of it and is mocking *Ob6r9* plant, if *Ob6r9* plant had someone to tend it like the alligator pepper, it would be more valuable than alligator pepper).<sup>344</sup>

The ethical assessment, that is, the qualitative judgment of how positive one's attitude is to the norms of the family and the mores of the entire community is another consideration for wisdom among the Yoruba.<sup>345</sup> In the Yoruba thought pattern, one is considered wise for being morally upright. One Yoruba proverb says: *{mf t9 bq m'lw- w2 y90 bq zgbz jcun* (a child that knows how to wash his hand (well-behaved) will eat with (enjoy as) the elder). This moral rectitude is characterized by self-denial, self discipline and self-examination that always result in an enduring and overcoming life. Moral uprightness is a major aesthetic quality enviable among the Yoruba people.<sup>346</sup> Thus every parent, in the Yoruba community, always seeks to have children whose appropriate life style will bring glory and honour to them. And that is why you hear Yoruba people saying:

<sup>341</sup> Elizabeth Idowu, Arowosegbe Compound, Ijeru Oba, )gb9m=s-, +y- State, 86years. Interviewed, April 28, 2015

<sup>342</sup> Sanni Rasheedat, No 2B3, Bolorunduro Il3sz, +sun State. 39years. Interviewed April 25, 2017

<sup>343</sup> O. A. Olapade. Moya Compound, Gaa-Lagbedu, Ilogboo, )gb9m=s-, +y-State. 72 years. Interviewed February 24, 2017

<sup>344</sup> Adejube Sunday. Lecturer, Department of Yoruba Language, Adeyemi College of Education, Ondo. Ondo State. Interviewed September 26, 2016

<sup>345</sup> Oyedele J. O. Onileowo compound, Osupa Elékò, )gb9m=s-, +y- State Interviewed on February 24, 2017

<sup>346</sup> Abigael Babalola. Arayasaagun (now Arayeagbadura) Compound, Akata No. 1, )gb9m=s-, +y- State. Interviewed on February 17, 2017

*Kz kz k7 n b7 cgbzq =b6n*

*Ma k5k5 b7 =kan xoxo =gq*

*Ma r9hun p9n arqy3 l9j5*

*Ma r9hun gb3raga.....*

*(Instead of giving birth to two thousand foolish (not smart) children*

*.I prefer to give birth to a virtuous and enviable one*

*With whom I may boast before men*

*With whom I may display my pride.....)*

Like in the Jewish world, *[gb-n* (wisdom) is also used to denote technical skill or dexterity, cleverness, intellectual acumen and moral discernment. However, cleverness can only be considered as fruit of wisdom among the Yoruba if it is in line with the mores of the community; otherwise, it will be considered as *zr3k3rek4* (subtlety). That is why you hear Yoruba people saying: *@tzn k8 7 x' [gb-n<sup>347</sup>* (deceit is not wisdom).

The concept of wisdom is crucial and very fundamental among the Yoruba people. Wisdom, as earlier noted, is highly esteemed and can never be compared with money or any other valuable possessions.<sup>348</sup> In the Yoruba society, the virtuous qualities and benefits associated with wisdom are vital and indispensable for self-realization, social survival, development and integration.<sup>349</sup> This is explicitly articulated in some Yoruba wise sayings like: *{gb-n ju agbqra l[* (wisdom is more than power), *Cni 9 gb-n a bi w5rz n7k6n<sup>350</sup>* (He who is wise has gold in his belly); etc. One Yoruba proverb even says: *Ow9 la fi n ra csin, [gb-n la fi n g6n 5n<sup>351</sup>* (We use money to buy horse but use wisdom to ride on it). In the Yoruba people's thought system, lack of wisdom, or inability to apply it as when due, is dangerous, and even deadly. One Yoruba proverb says: *{m[ g= cn7 9 mq k65, k7 l9 pa ni b7 0 xe ag=,<sup>352</sup>* (the child is foolish (not smart) and you say he should not die, is it not foolishness that kills?). The subject of wisdom is significant in the Yoruba understanding of

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<sup>347</sup> Abigael Babalola, Arayasaagun (now Arayagbadura) Compound, Akata No. 1, )gb9m=s-, Òyó State.

Interviewed on February 17, 2017

<sup>348</sup> T.A. Akogun. 2011. "Culture, Identity, and Emancipation: Challenge to the Yoruba Race".

[www.google.com/culture.html](http://www.google.com/culture.html) Retrieved, May 14, 2105

<sup>349</sup> P.A.O. Ayomide, Lecturer, Department of Yoruba Language, +sun State College of Education, Ilesa, Osun State. Interviewed, April 25, 2017

<sup>350</sup> Adebisi Kehinde. Iyalode Compound, Ilogbo, )gb9m=s-, Oyo State

<sup>351</sup> Alice Omotoso. Ajegunle Owode, Ala, Owode, Kwara State. Interviewed, May 13, 2012. Also, S.A. Adeniji. Arowosegbe Compound, Ijeru Obá, )gb9m=s-, Oyo State. Interviewed on February 17, 2017

<sup>352</sup> Adejube Sunday. Lecturer. Department of Yoruba Language. Adeyemi College of Education, Ondo. Ondo State. Interviewed on May 26, 2017

life. Those who lack wisdom are described variously as *Om6g=*, *asiw4r4*, *0p4*, *s62gb2*, *nz qn s'1ni 9 g=*, *af-fun-gb3-mu*, *gb2w6-dqn7*, *k'1ran-mq jcl3*, etc. (foolish) among the people.

### **The Origin and the Sources of Yoruba Wisdom**

The sources of Yoruba wisdom could be broadly divided into three: the Tradition of the Fathers, Personal Experience and the Gift of *O19d6mar4* (God). Comparatively, this is very similar to what is obtainable in the Jewish wisdom tradition.<sup>353</sup>

### **The Tradition of the Fathers**

Reflecting on the sources of wisdom among the Yoruba people, oral tradition, as some scholars argued, constitutes the starting point of any investigation into Yoruba though pattern.<sup>354</sup> Oral tradition is a means through which a society's history, culture, religious beliefs, etc. are passed down from one generation to the other. It is basically communication through the word of mouth. The Yoruba Oral genres include: *0we* (proverb), the *Ifq* corpus, folktales, [*f=*, *zyqj-* (incantation), *ck5n 8yzw9* (a bride's lamentation at marriage), *or7k8* (lineage or individual praise recitation) and *8jqlq* (hunter's chant).<sup>355</sup> Other genres include: *orin* (song), *zsl- on7tzn* (story), *zsl- zpam=* (riddle) and *44w=* (taboo).<sup>356</sup> In the context of wisdom, the most commonly used of all these today are *0we*, *Ifq* corpus, song and folktales. Proverb is a brief familiar maxim of folk wisdom, usually compressed in form, often involving a bold image and frequent jingle that catches the memory.<sup>357</sup> It is a literary form that expresses people's philosophy, beliefs, values, world-view, taboos,<sup>358</sup> etc. Proverb is as old as man and it is one of the most highly and deeply cherished genres or categories of literatures.<sup>359</sup> African proverb is the foundation of social and cultural wisdom and therefore

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<sup>353</sup> J.L. Crenshaw. 1976. *Studies in Ancient Israelite Wisdom*. New York: KTAV Publishing House Inc. 79

<sup>354</sup> Falade Adeoye Dennis. 2013. "Oral Tradition in Africa: Poetry As A Means of Preserving Cultural Heritage and Egendering Social Change Among the Yoruba" [www.academia.edu/oraltradition.html](http://www.academia.edu/oraltradition.html) Retrieved, December 15, 2016

<sup>355</sup> Falade Adeoye Dennis. 2013. "Oral Tradition in Africa: Poetry As A Means of Preserving Cultural Heritage and Egendering Social Change Among the Yoruba" [www.academia.edu/oraltradition.html](http://www.academia.edu/oraltradition.html) Retrieved, December 15, 2016

<sup>356</sup> O.O. Familusi. 2009. "The Threat to Taboo as a Means of Inculcating Ethics in Yoruba Society. *Orita-Ibadan Journal of Religious Studies*. Vol. XLI/11.102

<sup>357</sup> Z.O. Ogunwole. 2016. *Current Affairs for General Knowledge Seekers, Jamb and Post – Jamb Examination – National and International Perspective*, Ondo: Amos O.J. Global Ventures. 6

<sup>358</sup> C.C.Nndi. 2016. "Feminist and Semiotic Analysis of Female in Igbo Proverbs" in Kammelu N.C., Akinola B, Onuegbu M.C. (eds). 2016. *Form and Functions of Proverbs in Nigerian Languages*. 74

<sup>359</sup> N.C. Kammelu. 2016. "Male Chauvinism: Reflections from Igbo Proverbial Expressions" in Kammelu N.C., Akinola B, Onuegbu M.C. (eds). 2016. *Forms and Function of Proverbs in Nigerian Languages*. 3

serving as the basis for formulating concepts that govern social relationship.<sup>360</sup> Proverb is appreciated in the Yoruba culture. Thus it is commonly said among the Yoruba that: *Owe lcsin =r=, b7 =r= bq sfn6 Owe lz q fi wq a.* (Proverbs are the horses for words, for when words are lost we use proverbs to seek them out).<sup>361</sup> The Yoruba people have a myriad of sayings, adages and proverbs to capture the essence of any subject matter. In his study of the traditional culture of the Yoruba people, and citing relevant sources, Roland Hallgren, as reported in the work of Batlyc said that:

The Yoruba language . . . is exceptionally rich in proverbs (Owe) ... Proverbs are one of the storehouses of collective wisdom of the Yoruba fore fathers; so, accurate transmissions of a correct use of proverbs are important features of the Yoruba culture.<sup>362</sup>

Yoruba proverbs are among the supreme collective intellectual achievements of Yoruba culture. They are quintessential to the collective wisdom of the Yoruba people and are usually expressed in language of astonishing beauty, power and subtlety.<sup>363</sup> The value placed on proverbs extends to those who are well-skilled in their use. They are honoured in the community because they have the ability to get into the heart of a matter through the use of appropriate proverb. Proverbs have various times and contexts of application.<sup>364</sup> Proverb, as used among the Yoruba, is an embodiment of wisdom and beauty. In other words, proverb could be seen as expressing wit, philosophy,<sup>365</sup> vision and wisdom that strikes with its beauty which resulted from senses. And mostly, proverbs, among the Yoruba people, are considered a prerogative of the elders.<sup>366</sup>

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<sup>360</sup> C.C.Nndi. 2016. "Feminist and Semiotic Analysis of Female in Igbo Proverbs" in Kammelu N.C., Akinola B, Onuegbu M.C. (eds). 2016. *Form and Functions of Proverbs in Nigerian Languages.* 74

<sup>361</sup> S.M. Raji. Lecturer. Department of Yoruba Language. Adeyemi College of Education, Ondo. Ondo State. Interviewed on November 1, 2016

<sup>362</sup> B.O. Bateye. Rethinking Women, Nature and Ritual Purity in Yoruba Religious Traditions, in A.O. Dairo et al (eds). *Biblical studies and Environmental Issues in African.* Nabis West Biblical Studies 1, 218.

<sup>363</sup> B.O. Bateye. Rethinking Women, Nature and Ritual Purity in Yoruba Religious Traditions, in A.O. Dairo et al (eds). *Biblical studies and Environmental Issues in African.* Nabis West Biblical Studies 1, 218.

<sup>364</sup> Segun Gbadegesin. "Aspect of Yoruba Oral Tradition: Importance, Richness and limits" Assata Shatur. Forums. [www.assatashatur.org](http://www.assatashatur.org). Retrieved, December 15, 2016.

<sup>365</sup> A.O. Chukwu. 2016. "A chritical Analysis of Igbo Proverbs on Peace and Conflict Management" in Kammelu N.C., Akinola B, Onuegbu M.C. (eds). 2016. *Forms and Functions of Proverbs in Nigerian Languages.* 136

<sup>366</sup> B. Akinola. 2016. "Gerontology and Juvenility as Portrayed in Yoruba Philosophical Proverbs" in Kammelu N.C., Akinola B, Onuegbu M.C. (eds). 2016. *Forms and Functions of Proverbs in Nigerian Languages.* 263

In the Yoruba socio-cultural setting, wisdom is also generated from *Ifq* corpus which is considered a central creative force in Yoruba religion.<sup>367</sup> There is a timeless connection between *O19d6mzr4* (God) himself who is the creator of all *Ir5nm[l2 ()r8sz* - that is, spiritual forces) and the *Ifa* corpus. In Yoruba theology, *Ir5nm[l2* (spiritual forces) are messengers of *O19d6mzr4*, ruling over all the existing phenomena in heaven and the earth. So, the ancient Yoruba *Ifq* doctrine considered the universe as a perfect creation of *O19d6mzr4*.<sup>368</sup> A large family of divination systems that stretches across many cultures of Africa and Asia belongs to *Ifq*.<sup>369</sup> *Ifq* is an extraordinary cultural artifact. Within the basic framework of 16 options, as earlier observed, is organised a vast corpus of myths, proverbs, moral reflections and sage philosophy,<sup>370</sup> etc. The wisdom of *Ifq* is for the entire world to drink.<sup>371</sup>

Yoruba language culture is very rich in song and music and every situation has a corresponding song, which is inspiring and educating.<sup>372</sup> Indeed, Yoruba indigenous folksongs are veritable sources for revitalising moral education. These songs are used to correct and educate both the young and the old, female and male, literate and illiterate.<sup>373</sup> Songs belong to a subcategory of oral Yoruba poetry which is distinguished by its highly musical mode of rendition different from the recitative mode. There are various types of songs among the Yoruba rendered by women (or men) to boost the moral life of people.<sup>374</sup> Some of the Yoruba chants are sung while some are spoken.<sup>375</sup> Storytelling is another oral genre. In many old traditions, it is synonymous with song, chant, music or epic poetry, especially in the bardic traditions.<sup>376</sup> African stories draw upon the collective wisdom of folk people, expressed their structures, feelings, and thoughts, and thus serve important social and

<sup>367</sup> N/A. "Yoruba Religion – Ifa Basis" [www.yorubaorganization.com](http://www.yorubaorganization.com). Retrieved, December 8, 2016

<sup>368</sup> S.K. Olaleye. 2013. "African Indigenous Knowledge as a cure to the Security Problem in the Nigerian Contemporary Society" in Ayantayo J.K. and Fatokun S.A. (eds). 2015. *Religious and Security Issues* (Proceedings of 2013 Biennial International Religious Studies conference), Vol. 15. 59

<sup>369</sup> J.D.Y.Peel. 2008. "Yoruba Religious: Seeing it in History, Seeing it whole" in Orita-Ibadan Journal of Religious Studies. Vol. 41. 10

<sup>370</sup> J.D.Y.Peel. 2008. "Yoruba Religious: Seeing it in History, Seeing it whole" in Orita-Ibadan Journal of Religious Studies. Vol. 41. 11

<sup>371</sup> N/A. "The Wisdom of Ifa-Omo Oodua" [www.ooduarere.com.html](http://www.ooduarere.com.html) Retrieved December 8, 2016

<sup>372</sup> "Yoruba Music". Yorupedia-yorupedia.com. Retrieved, January 19, 2017

<sup>373</sup> C. O. Odejobi. 2014. "Yoruba Indigenous Folksongs as a veritable Source for Revitalizing Moral Education Among Pre-School Children in +sun State of Education Among Pre-School Children in +sun State of Nigeria". *International Journal of Innovation and Applied Studies* ISSN 2028 – 9324. Vol. 9. No. 4, December, 201. 1786-1792. <http://www.ijias.issr-journals.org>. Retrieved January 19, 2017

<sup>374</sup> Oladele Caleb Orimoogunje. 2014. "The Place and Role of Some Songs in the Yoruba Indigenous Healthcare System" *South Africa Journal of African Language*. 57. [www.tandfonline.com](http://www.tandfonline.com) Retrieved, January 19, 2017

<sup>375</sup> Taofeek Ayeyemi 2016 "Folk Songs and Chants In Indigenous Yoruba Culture. How Much Do You know?" [www.carebrallemon.com](http://www.carebrallemon.com). Retrieved, January 19, 2017

<sup>376</sup> "Traditional Storytelling in African" [www.timsshepard.co.uk](http://www.timsshepard.co.uk). Retrieved, January 19, 2017



ethical purposes.<sup>377</sup> In the Yoruba society, storytelling helps preserve the knowledge, wisdom, and techniques which are parts of the society.<sup>378</sup> Take for instance, there was a story leading to the Yoruba proverb: *{gb-n [l[gb-n k8 7 j1 k7 q p4 zgbz n7 w4r4* (It is because of wisdom borrowed from others that we cannot call an elder a fool). As the story goes, there was a man in the community who had properties and many slaves, but had only one son. The man had preserved a will on how his properties should be shared when he died. Upon his death, people could not bridle their emotions when the content of the will was read. The will allowed the son to choose only one property, indicating that the remaining should be given to his chief slave. People considered the decision as a deliberate and calculated insult and risk. They saw it as a callous opinion to disinherit his son of his properties. However, such was a welcome ideal for the chief slave, who had been jubilantly celebrating in advance. Full of despair, the son started going from one elder of the town to another, seeking for their advices. Unfortunately, none of them was able to help him out until the eve of the appointed day. On the morning of the occasion, he remembered he deliberately left one poor wretched elder unvisited and quickly went there. Getting there, the man gave kudos to his father for such ingenious decision and encouraged him to cheer up. He advised him to choose nothing out of his father's properties but the chief slave himself. He said "*Cni t9 ni cr5 l9 ni cr6*" (He who owns the slave owns the properties). Then, after the occasion, people began to wonder, asking him where he got that wisdom. Being aware of the source of that wisdom, people affirmed that: *{gb-n [l[gb-n k8 7 j1 k7 q pe zgbz n7 w4r4* (It is because of wisdom borrowed from others that we cannot call an elder a fool). The story teaches some valuable virtues such as humility, obedience, hope, courage, patience, respect for elder, making good decision, etc.

### **Personal Experience**

Personal experience is another important source of Yoruba wisdom, hence they say: *\*r7r7 l[gb-n* (experience is wisdom). In the Yoruba understanding, experience means being exposed to, or having direct and indirect contact with various situations of life. It is essentially imperative for would-be custodian of wisdom to undergo situations that punctuate human existence.<sup>379</sup> Though these may not all be negative, they are taken to be capable of reproducing in man moral and sapiential values. And that is why one hears Yoruba people

<sup>377</sup> Cora Agatucci. 2010. "African Storytelling". <http://web.cocc.edu/cagatucci/classes/hum211/afirstory>. Retrieved, January 23, 2017

<sup>378</sup> Octavia Utlay. 2017. "Keeping the Tradition of African Storytelling Alive". Yale National Initiative, Yale University. [www.teacher.yale.edu](http://www.teacher.yale.edu). Retrieved, January 23, 2017.

<sup>379</sup> Octavia Utlay. 2017. "Keeping the Tradition of African Storytelling Alive". Yale National Initiative, Yale University. [www.teacher.yale.edu](http://www.teacher.yale.edu). Retrieved, January 23, 2017.

saying: \*r7r7 x'zgbz [gb-n,<sup>380</sup> (experience is more important than wisdom). Old people, among the Yoruba, are usually regarded as the repositories of wise experience with adequate insight into things. One Yoruba proverb says: *Oj5 zgbz t9 j8n 9 n7 ohun t9 r7* (the sunken eye of an elder must have seen something). However, by exposure, a young person can also have experience, even at times, more than the so-called elder. Thus, it is said among the Yoruba people that: *Lqr8nnzkq k8 7 x'cgb1 abew5* (a wide-traveller is more experienced than a gray-haired).<sup>381</sup>

### **The gift of God**

From the various usages of *ogb-n* (wisdom), it is well observable that the Yoruba people also acknowledge the divine origin of wisdom. To them, if a man usually acquires sagacity and knowledge from various traditions and experiences by the way of learning and chastisement, there is also the possibility of extraordinary endowment with the gift of wisdom. This is a divine endowment. It is an innate intellectual ability of an individual. The Yoruba people believe that every gift comes from *Ol9d6mar4*. Thus it is said among them that: *Cni 9 gb-n {l-run l9 n7 9 gb-n, cni 9 g= {l-run l9 n7 9 g=,*<sup>382</sup> (it is God that allows the wise to be wise and the foolish to be foolish). One Yoruba proverb says: *Zt4t4 m5gb9 k8 7 s'=gq, or7 l9 mzgbz llgzn,*<sup>383</sup> (getting to the forest earlier does not make one the head (leader) of the farmers, it is *or7* (fate or destiny) that determines such).

### **Correlation between Age and Wisdom in Yoruba Context**

In traditional Yoruba society, as earlier mentioned, wisdom is highly considered as a product of experience, and hence, sacrosanct in recognising an elderly person.<sup>384</sup> The Yoruba people believe that elder must have gathered over the years the wealth of knowledge on the basis of their past experiences and the study of natural phenomena of life.<sup>385</sup> One Yoruba proverb says: *K3ker3 ni bzbq fi j6 [mf l], k87 s'=r= og5n [d5n* (though a father is said to be

<sup>380</sup> Octavia Utlay. 2017. "Keeping the Tradition of African Storytelling Alive". Yale National Initiative, Yale University. [www.teacher.yale.edu](http://www.teacher.yale.edu). Retrieved, January 23, 2017.

<sup>381</sup> Octavia Utlay. 2017. "Keeping the Tradition of African Storytelling Alive". Yale National Initiative, Yale University. [www.teacher.yale.edu](http://www.teacher.yale.edu). Retrieved, January 23, 2017.

<sup>382</sup> Octavia Utlay. 2017. "Keeping the Tradition of African Storytelling Alive". Yale National Initiative, Yale University. [www.teacher.yale.edu](http://www.teacher.yale.edu). Retrieved, January 23, 2017.

<sup>383</sup> Octavia Utlay. 2017. "Keeping the Tradition of African Storytelling Alive". Yale National Initiative, Yale University. [www.teacher.yale.edu](http://www.teacher.yale.edu). Retrieved, January 23, 2017.

<sup>384</sup> G.A. Faleye. No F6, Eruguru Street, Il3sz, Òsun State Nigeria. Interviewed, April 25, 2107

<sup>385</sup> Kayode Oyedele. No. 78, Ereguru Street, Il3sz, Òsun State Nigeria. Interviewed, April 25, 2017. Also, Chief Alade David Ajayi, Baale of Biiru Okiki, Surulere Local Government, Ógbómòsò, Òyó State, Nigeria. Interviewed, April 9, 2017.

little older than his son, that ‘little’ is not a matter of twenty years). However, reflecting on the wisdom of the elders among the Yoruba, there is the need to examine the Yoruba indigenous understanding of eldership as well as the sapiental role of elders.

### **Eldership among the Yoruba**

The Yoruba word *zgbz*, which is translated as ‘elder’, is socially and philosophically interpreted from three ends: the ontological-supernatural, the chronological, and mental-ethical evaluative.<sup>386</sup> The ontological-supernatural explains the existence of certain people in the Yoruba community who are believed to possess supernatural power and are supersensible, capable of identifying what happens in the metaphysical realm. Adeboye described them as an assemblage of ancestral forces, witches and wizards, and other spiritual agents that ruled the Yoruba universe, and whose powers exceeded those of ordinary mortals.<sup>387</sup> These people are referred to as *zgbz* among the Yoruba, regardless of their chronological age. Because of their extraordinary nature, they could be consulted for solution in time of difficulties. When there is a problem, especially the one that defiles all natural solutions, one could be encouraged thus: *T[ zw[n zgbz l[*,<sup>388</sup> (go and consult the elders). Besides, in order to live a secured and a successful life, one could be advised thus: *Fi or7 m-zw[n zgbz lly8n*,<sup>389</sup> (walk closely with the elders). In the Yoruba thought system, offending these kind of *zgbz* could greatly be consequential and therefore, people are warned that: *Mq se tc as.◊ zgbz m-l2*,<sup>390</sup> (don’t step on elder’s garment). This means, one should not take such *zgbz* for granted. Being aware of the danger of offending these *zgbz*, the Yoruba people always say a prayer that: *O ko n7 xc zw[n zgbz* (may you not offend the elders). A young person that is found among this group would be referred to as *zgbz [m[*,<sup>391</sup> (an elderly child). This means a child that is possessed, having diabolic power. Also, *zgbz [m[* can be used to

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<sup>386</sup> Funso Fatokun, Lecturer. Department of Yoruba Language, Federal College of Education (Special), Òyó, Òyó State, Nigeria. Interviewed, April 27, 2017.

<sup>387</sup> Adeboye Adefunke. “The Changing Conception of Elderhood in Ibadan, 1830 – 2000” *Nordic Journal of African Studies* 16(2): 261 -278 (2007), 262.

<sup>388</sup> Suara Rafatu. Alajue Compound. Aruru, Ede, +sun State, Nigeria. Interviewed, May 2, 2012.

<sup>389</sup> Olaniyan Abayomi. MOF8, Alejelowo, Imo Street, Il3sz, +sun State, Nigeria. Interviewed, April 25, 2017.

<sup>390</sup> Funso Fatokun, Lecturer, Department of Yoruba Language, Federal College of Education (Special), Òyó, Òyó State Nigeria. Interviewed, April 27, 2017. Also. Adeniyi Ayodele, Mabolaje, Oko Oba, Òyó. Òyó State, Nigeria. Interviewed, April 27, 2017.

<sup>391</sup> Elizabeth Idowu, Arowosegbe Compound, Ijeru Oba, Ogbomoso, Òyó State, 86years. Interviewed, April 28, 2015. Also: Kule Ajibola (a.k.a. Sir Kuluu). Oyo Premier Club, Òyó Òyó State Nigeria. Interviewed, April 27, 2017

refer to a young person with highly mental and ethical abilities.<sup>392</sup> However, this is different from *[m] =d= zgbz* (a child that lives with elder) and *[m] zgbz* (a child of elder). The Yoruba name *[m] =d= zgbz* is conceived within the ambit of moral and sapiential framework, having nothing to do with metaphysical realm. In other word, moral rectitude, accumulated life experiences and wisdom are paramount in the use of *[m] =d= zgbz*. But the use of *[m] zgbz* is in line with the first implication of *zgbz [m]*. *Zgbz [m]* is simply an elder, belonging to the assemblage of ancestral forces, witches and wizards, and other spiritual agents that ruled the Yoruba universe; whereas, *[m] zgbz* only belongs to this group in the physical realm, but have their backing in some matters of life. Within this understanding, there can be *cran zgbz*, *igi zgbz*, e.tc. Being under the influence of *zgbz*, *[m] zgbz*, *cran àgbà* and *igi zgbz* can behave in a supernatural way.

The second usage of the word *zgbz* has chronological implication.<sup>393</sup> When the Yoruba people say: *Oj5 zgbz t9 j8n 9 n7 ohun t9 r7* (the sunken eye of an elder must have seen something), emphasis is on chronological age. Other Yoruba proverbs in references to chronological age include: *B'-m[d3 bq lqs] b7 zgbz, k0 l4 lqk87sz b7 zgbz*,<sup>394</sup>(if a child has as many clothes as the elder, he cannot have as much rags); *{w- [m[d3 0 t9 pcpc t'zgbzlagbz 0 w] k4r4gb4* (the child's hand does not reach up to the shelf while that of the elder does not enter into the gourd);<sup>395</sup>*Zgbz t9 jc zjc2w2y8n ni y90 r6 igbq r2 d3l3* (an elder that fails to leave the left-over (of meal) for the child will himself pack the empty plates),<sup>396</sup> etc. The Yoruba people use the word *zgbz* for older people in the society. Similar Yoruba nomenclatures for *zgbz* are: *zgbzlagbz* (elder), *ar5gb9* (aged person) and *abew5* (gray-haired).

The third usage of the word *zgbz* has to do with mental-ethical assessment. This explains the *zgbz* (elder), who are respected individual, identified by age or other natural qualities, which mark them out of their families, communities, nations, religions and the

<sup>392</sup> Ladigbolu Adepoju. No. 5. Ayo Ladigbolu, Agodongbo Layout, Òyó, Òyó State, Nigeria. Interviewed, April 27, 2017. Also, OlaIya Afeez, Owode Garage, Òyó, Òyó State, Nigeria. Interviewed, April 27, 2017.

<sup>393</sup> Adebare Areo, Oko, Oba Area, Òyó, Òyó State, Nigeria. Interviewed, April 27, 2017.

<sup>394</sup> Bola Akinola. 2011. "Defective Language and Culture: A Sociolinguistic Analysis of the Effects of Foreign Languages on Yoruba cultural Values in Western Nigeria" in *Journal of Research in Education, Science, Technology and Humanities (JORESTH)*. Vol. 1 (1), 480.

<sup>395</sup> Bola Akinola. 2011. "Defective Language and Culture: A Sociolinguistic Analysis of the Effects of Foreign Languages on Yoruba cultural Values in Western Nigeria" in *Journal of Research in Education, Science, Technology and Humanities (JORESTH)*. Vol. 1 (1), 480.

<sup>396</sup> B. Akinola. 2016. "Gerontology and Javelinility as Portrayed in Yoruba Philosophical Proverbs" in Kammelu N.C., Akinola B, Onuegbe M.C. (eds). 2016. *Forms and Functions of Proverbs in Nigerian Languages*. 263

world.<sup>397</sup> These are the true elders and are given highest status in the community because they have lived a life of purpose. Besides, they are respected because their lives are in the best tradition of the community.<sup>398</sup> These *zgbz* are considered indispensable in the Yoruba societies.

In line with the above observations, some scholars have made a distinction between the ‘elder’ and the ‘older’ person.<sup>399</sup> They argued for the possibility of being an older person but not truly being an elder. Speaking from the perspective of African culture, Manu Ampim,<sup>400</sup> as noted before, argued that there is a fundamental distinction that should be made between an “elder” and “older” person. According to him, an older person has simply lived a longer life than most of people, but he may not be considered one who deserves high praise and respect. This happens if the older person’s life has not been a positive example for the community. The older person could be a thief or drunkard, an evil person, or could be someone who never married and had children, and thus these examples would certainly prevent a person from being considered a respected elder. An elder, on the other hand, is someone who is given the highest status in African culture because s(he) has lived a life of purpose, and their is nothing more respected than to live a purposeful life. The life of an elder is centered in the best tradition of the community, and is a living model for the other groups in the society to emulate. Interestingly, this position seems tenable and quite fascinating as it happens, even in this contemporary time. However, it should be noted that in the traditional Yoruba understanding of *zgbz*, every older person was expected to possess the attributive qualities of a true elder. To the Yoruba people, wisdom, knowledge, perspective, discernment, insight and intellectual capabilities are the domains of the aged people.<sup>401</sup> Failure to display these qualities is considered abnormal, ridiculous and unwelcomed. That is why such a person will not be respected in the community, and could be ridiculously referred to as *Adzgbz mq gb---n* (though aged but not wise), *Adzgbz mq dan5* (though aged but not matured), *Adzgbz mq k5r0 lqr0b9* (though aged but childish), etc.

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<sup>397</sup> A.K. Fayemi. “Agba (Elders) as Arbitrator: A Yoruba Socio-Political Model for Conflict Resolution”. A Review of Lawrence O. Bamikole. *Journal of Law and Conflict Resolution*. Vol. 1(3). August, 2009.

<sup>398</sup> Manu Ampim. 2003. “The Five Major Institutions. Rite-African Studies”. [www.google.com](http://www.google.com). Retrieved, May 8, 2015

<sup>399</sup> Manu Ampim. 2003. “The Five Major Institutions. Rite-African Studies”. [www.google.com](http://www.google.com). Retrieved, May 8, 2015

<sup>400</sup> Manu Ampim. 2003. “The Five Major Institutions. Rite-African Studies”. [www.google.com](http://www.google.com). Retrieved, May 8, 2015

<sup>401</sup> Funso Fatokun. Lecturer. Department of Yoruba Language, Federal College of Education (Special), Òyó, Òyó State, Nigeria. Interviewed, April 27, 2017.

## The Role of Elder among the Yoruba

Like in most cultures of the world, the Yoruba society is composed of various classes of people such as *[m/d3* (child), *èwe* (teenager), *òdò* (youth) and *àgbà* (elder or aged person). However, these set of people can be grouped into two: the young and the old. Each of the groups is considered vital and indispensable for communal value and progress.<sup>402</sup> This thought is clearly stated and deeply demonstrated among the people. Yoruba culture, most often, extols the qualities inherent in the two different classes of people, particularly in the context of wisdom. One Yoruba proverb says: *{m/d3 gb-n zgbz gb-n la fi dq il3 if2,*<sup>403</sup> (the collective wisdom of the aged and young led to the founding of Ife). Confirming that wisdom and foolishness is not always determined by chronological age, it is said among the Yoruba that: *{m/d3 ñ bc n7n5 zgbz, zgbz ñ bc n7n5 [m/d3,*<sup>404</sup> (childishness lives in the elder and elderliness resides in the child). The Yoruba people believe that one could acquire knowledge as a result of accumulated experiences through exposure to various life situations. That is why the people say: *\*r7r7 x'zgbz [gb-n* (experience is more important than wisdom).<sup>405</sup> Putting it in another way, it is said that: *Lqr8nnzkq k8 7 xcgb1 abew5* (a wide-traveller is more experienced than a gray-haired).<sup>406</sup> In summary, the Yoruba people acknowledge the fact that a young person who has been exposed to different circumstances of life could be more experienced, and even, wiser than the so called elder or aged person. This accounts for the popular truism among the Yoruba people: *Zgbz k0 kan [gb-n,*<sup>407</sup> (age does not define wisdom).

However, a close study of the Yoruba cultural philosophy reveals that the elders are seen as the custodians of wisdom, and also the class of people known for acceptable behaviour in the society.<sup>408</sup> The Yoruba people say: *Cnu zgbz lob8 t7 ñ gb9* (it is in the mouth of the elders that the matured kolanut tastes better). It is also said that: *Zgbz l9 t9r0 9 l=, [ba*

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<sup>402</sup> K.F. Akinlose, Lecturer, Department of Geography, Òşun State College of Education, Ilésà, Òşun State, Nigeria. Interviewed, April 25, 2017

<sup>403</sup> B. Akinola. 2016. "Gerontology and Juvenility as Portrayed in Yoruba Philosophical Proverbs" in Kammelu N.C., B. Akinola, Onuegbe M.C. (eds). 2016. *Forms and Functions of Proverbs in Nigerian Languages*. 263

<sup>404</sup> Adebayo Victoria. No. 2121, Iyemogun, Il3sz East, Il3sz, Òşun State, Nigeria. Interviewed, April 25, 2017

<sup>405</sup> B. Akinola. 2016. "Gerontology and Juvenility as Portrayed in Yoruba Philosophical Proverbs" in Kammelu N.C., Akinola B, Onuegbe M.C. (eds). 2016. *Forms and Functions of Proverbs in Nigerian Language* .263.

<sup>406</sup> B. Akinola. 2016. "Gerontology and Juvenility as Portrayed in Yoruba Philosophical Proverbs" in Kammelu N.C., Akinola B, Onuegbe M.C. (eds). 2016. *Forms and Functions of Proverbs in Nigerian Languages*. 262

<sup>407</sup> Sanmi Rasheedat, No. 2B3, Bolorunduro, Il3sz, Òşun State, Nigeria. Interviewed, April 25, 2107

<sup>408</sup> B. Akinola. 2016. "Gerontology and Juvenility as Portrayed in Yoruba Philosophical Proverbs" in Kammelu N.C., Akinola B, Onuegbe M.C. (eds). 2016. *Forms and Functions of Proverbs in Nigerian Languages*. 263

19 t9 ey7n erin ffn (only the elder can swear by the cult, and only a king is capable of blowing the elephant's horn).<sup>409</sup> Elders are considered the only set of people, capable of handling difficult issues; they are matured people who possessed shock-absorber for difficult situations. That is why it said by the Yoruba that: *Dzhd9g9 k[jq zb7n5dq, ztzr7 zjznzk5 k8 7 s'cr6 [m[d3*. (*Dzhd9g9*<sup>410</sup> is not easily made and elephant's head is not a load for a small child). Another proverb says: *\*tzk6n t9 fl se b7 zn=m-, b7 9 bq so b7 zn=m- k0 l4 ta b7 zn=m-, b7 9 bq ti2 ta b7 zn=m-, k0 l4 d6n b7 zn=m-*.<sup>411</sup> (A creeper that wants to sprout like sweet potatoes, if it bears fruits like sweet potatoes, it cannot form (produce tuber) like sweet potatoes, and even, if it forms like sweet potatoes, it cannot be as sweet as sweet potatoes). The Yoruba people believed that no matter how exposed and experienced, smart or wise a young person is, he is still prone to childishness dictated by his age. One Yoruba proverb says: *B'-m[d3 bq fl xe b7 zgbz [j- or7 k0 n7 j1*,<sup>412</sup> (a child may desire to behave like an adult but his age will not allow him). The tendency for youthful exuberance is emphasised in one Yoruba proverb that says: *B'-gb-n [m[d3 bq f0 igba igi 2y8nk6l3 ag= ni 9 padz s[l2 s7*,<sup>413</sup> (if the wisdom of a child flies over two hundred trees, it will eventually land at the backyard of foolishness). Revealing the pre-eminence of the elderly wisdom above the youthful exuberances, it is said among the Yoruba that: *Gbogbo [gb-n t7 ahun bq gb-n 2y8n ni y90 mqa t[ 8gb7n* (no matter how wise (smart) the tortoise is, he will still be trailing behind the snail). One Yoruba proverb says: *B7 9 ti w6 k7 [m[d3 9 gb-n t9 2y8n ni y90 mqa t[ 8yq r2* (no matter the wisdom of the child, it will not surpass that of his mother), as it is usually said: *K3ker3 ni bz bq fi j6 [m[ l[ k8 7 s'=r= og5n [d5n* (though a father is said to be little older than his son, but that 'little' is not a matter of twenty years).

The role of elders is taken to be indispensable and the absence of their wisdom can lead to a total moral decay and non-adherence to law and order in the society.<sup>414</sup> Hence, it is said among the Yoruba that: *Zgbz k0 s7 8l5 bzj1, baql3 il3 k5 il3 dahoro* (without an elderly

<sup>409</sup> B. Akinola. 2016. "Gerontology and Juvenility as Portrayed in Yoruba Philosophical Proverbs" in Kammelu N.C., Akinola B. Onuegbu M.C. (eds). 2016. *Forms Functions of Proverbs in Nigerian Languages*, 263

<sup>410</sup> O. R. Akolawole teaches Hausa Language in Adeyemi College of Education, Demonstration Secondary School, Ondo, Ondo State, Nigeria. Interviewed, January 23, 2018. *Dzhd9g9* is a Yoruba borrowed word from two Hausa words: *Dan* 'boy' and *Dogo* 'tall'. The Yoruba People use the word in reference to 'long wear' which is not meant for everybody, particularly, young person. The word is also used metaphorically in the context of maturity where the pre-eminence of the elders above the youthful exuberance is deeply emphasised.

<sup>411</sup> A.O. Iyanda. 2017. "*Ojú ló pé sí*", Ibadan: Lecoba Publishers. 39

<sup>412</sup> Elizabeth Idowu, Arowosegbe Compound, Ijeru Oba, Ògbómòsò, Òyó State, Nigeria. 86years. Interviewed, April 28, 2015. Also; Asaolu Oluwafemi. No: ALD23. Stadium, Il3sz, Òsun State, Nigeria.

<sup>413</sup> Adeleke David, Ikolaba Oba Compound, Ijeru Oba, Ògbómòsò. Also Oyedele Joseph Oyewole, Onileowo

<sup>414</sup> Bamidele Hannah. No. 2X04. Guru, Lomilagbala Street, Il3sz, +sun State Nigeria. Interviewed, April 25. 2017

people, communities and villages will collapse).<sup>415</sup> In the Yoruba society, elders are seen as the corrective instruments, as it is said among them that: *Zgbz k8 7 wz l-jz k7 or7 [m[ titun 9 w-* (the elder in a market place would not allow a baby's neck (at the back of the mother) to be wrongly placed).<sup>416</sup> It is also said: *B7 ow9 bq r5 [m[d3 l9j5, q s8 f5n zgbz kz* (if a child is confused in the act of counting money, he will give it to the elder to count). In the Yoruba world-view, the virtues and endowment of strength, wisdom and experience attached to the elders, especially the older person, are meant to help, support, guide or control the youth in a way that their exuberance will be judiciously curtailed and acceptable character be extolled through them in the society.<sup>417</sup> These sapiential roles of elders in traditional Yoruba community are explicitly established by {láyínká Aj[male.<sup>418</sup> Traditionally, according to him, the older person heads the family and the extended clan that dominates the Yoruba communities. They represent their families in any Council of Elder's meetings where decisions are taken to regulate and promote the general interest of citizens and to manage the affairs of their communities. In other word, they always play leadership roles in the society and are seen as repositories of wisdom. The elders in the society carry out traditional responsibilities of guardians of the ancestral values, chief custodians of Society's treasures and upholders of history, cultural values, customs, folklores, and wisdom. {láyínká stated further that older person settle disputes and conflicts arising from members of the family, based on their position, knowledge, skill, vision, experience and wisdom acquired along the journey to old age. They are considered to be custodians of the justice and the political institutions through which the society's orderliness and progress is sustained. Besides, the older persons have remained traditional orthodox medical and health service delivery especially in the areas where Primary Health Care is non-existent.

From the foregoing, it is well observable that, among the Yoruba people, elders are responsible for continually contemplating about the good and the right in the community.<sup>419</sup> In line with their eldership status, they are not or should not be driven by personal, desires

<sup>415</sup> Ogunmola Bosede, Okutu Ope, Il3sz, +sun State, Nigeria. Interviewed, April 25, 2017. Also A. A. Adebayo. HOD, Department of Yoruba Language, +sun State College of Education, Ilesa, Nigeria. Interviewed, April 25, 2017.

<sup>416</sup> S.A. Aderemi. 2006. "The Changing Perception of Ageing in Yoruba Culture and its Implications on the Health of the Elderly" [www.google.com](http://www.google.com) Retrieved, June 20, 2017

<sup>417</sup> Olatunbosun Olaitan. No. 2L36. Bolounduro, Il3sz, +sun State, Nigeria. Interviewed, April 25, 2017. And Olowookere Abisola, MoZK45, Oke-Aanu, Il3sz, +sun State, Nigeria. Interviewed, April 25, 2017.

<sup>418</sup> Olayinka Ajomale. 2007. "Country report: Ageing in Nigeria-Current State, Social and Economic Implications". *African Gerontological Society, Ages International, Nigeria, ISA RC11, Sociology of Ageing-* [www.google.com](http://www.google.com). Retrieved June 4th, 2015.

<sup>419</sup> Waheed Hazezee, Ode Mogba, Isale +y-, +y- State, Nigeria and Ramon Alubata, Jabata, +y-, +y- State, Nigeria. Interviewed, April 27, 2017.



gains or individual rewards. Elders, in traditional Yoruba community, cannot be seduced, tempted or influenced by appeals to favourism, personal desires or selfish interest. In fact, this eldership status places them above the needs of manipulation. Their singular goal is to guide and guarantee the cooperate good and collective advancement. The judgment and decisions of elders are always consistent with their community's cultural integrity and directed toward truth and justice. Elders are guardians of the culture, traditions and history of the people's wisdom, integrity, generosity, and articulateness. Hence, being listened to and respected by others are often all qualities of a true and responsible elder.<sup>420</sup> With eldership, one's status and value in the Yoruba community rises. Although, the primary work of the elder is to advice, guide and oversee the living in the community, their fundamental value and purpose lie in teaching the young people what it means to be human. The elders know the historical traditions, values, beliefs and cultural laws that are inviolate. The experience and wisdom of the elder is readily sought and freely shared with others. Elders are charged with the task of understanding both the material and spiritual requisites of life. In fact, just like in the Jewish world (Pro.15:9-10), to have elders live with you, and for you to have available their daily guidance, is considered a great blessing and advantage.<sup>421</sup> Being in the presence of an elder is even considered as honour. The elders serve as a link between the past and the present while guaranteeing that our way of life is extended into the future. Elders devote themselves to the full-time pursuit of wisdom: the understanding and application of high values and traditions of the community and the spiritual meaning of being human.<sup>422</sup> However, there is dearth of this model of *zgbz* (elder) in our contemporary world. This is because the present generation of elders has been influenced by the prevalent consumerist nature of contemporary political system.<sup>423</sup>

### 5.3 Conclusion

The origin of the Yoruba people had been examined. The study revealed that the people descended from *Od6duwz* who migrated from the East. The concept of wisdom in Yoruba perspective had also been studied. The nature and the place of wisdom among the

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<sup>420</sup> Oladeji Amos, Olapade, Moya Compound, Gaa-Lagbedu, Ilogboo, )gb9m=s-, +y- State, Nigeria. Interviewed, February 24, 2017. Also, Adedayo Femi, Kosobo Lay-out, +y-, +y- State, Nigeria. Interviewed, April 27, 2017.

<sup>421</sup> Chief Samuel Sobalaje Otolorin, Aare – Ago of )gb9m=s-land, )gb9m=s-, +y- State, Nigeria. Interviewed, April 27, 2017

<sup>422</sup> E. O. Popoola, Baale Ijeru of Ògbómòsóláland, )gb9m=s-, +y- State, Nigeria. Interviewed, April 10, 2017.

<sup>423</sup> A.K. Fayemi. "Agba (Elders) as Arbitrator: A Yoruba Socio-Political Model for Conflict Resolution". A Review of Lawrence O. Bamikole. Journal of Law and Conflict Resolution. Vol. 1(3). August, 2009.

Yoruba were considered. In the study, it was discovered that elders are seen as the custodians of and are responsible for teaching wisdom in the Yoruba cultural setting.

## CHAPTER SIX

### AGE AS CORRELATE OF WISDOM IN ISRAELITE AND YORUBA WISDOM TRADITIONS

#### 6.0 Introduction

This chapter assessed the correlation that exists between age and wisdom as preserved in Israelite wisdom literature and among the Yoruba. The study traced the historical origin of Hebrew and Yoruba cultural affinities. The relevance of chronological age in Israelite and Yoruba wisdom traditions was also examined. It focused on the implication of the traditional belief for modern perspective. Data analysis and discussion of findings were also carried out.

#### 6.1 Possible Historical Origin of Hebrew and Yoruba Cultural Affinities

There are vast number of considerable parallels between Israelite cultural tradition and that of the Yoruba people. These puzzling, but exciting, affinities had been presupposed and taken for granted by the contemporary readers of the bible.<sup>424</sup> The similarities between Israelite cultural heritage and that of the Yoruba is acknowledged from the perspectives of religion, economics, politics, history, aesthetics, ethics, military and kingship. This is much more than casual or occasional correlates.

However, this should not be too surprising because there had been some geographical connections, from antiquity, between the Yoruba and the Israelites. In an attempt to explain the historical background of these affinities, scholars have reflected, many times, on how the Israelites, as far back as the patriarchal era, came in contact with the Egyptians. It is generally conclusive that the cultural heritage of Upper Egypt is much older than that of the Mosaic code.<sup>425</sup> The formative ideas of both Judaism and Christianity are derived largely, though not exclusively, from the African (Egyptian) cultural and religious heritage. Abram migrated to Egypt when there was a famine in Canaan.<sup>426</sup> It could be expected that during his sojourn in Egypt, Abram must have learnt a great deal, through both default and example.<sup>427</sup> Besides,

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<sup>424</sup> Jesse Mugambi. 2000. "Africa and Old Testament" in Mary Getui et al. 2000. *Interpreting the Old Testament in African*. Nairobi: Action Publishers. 7

<sup>425</sup> Jesse Mugambi. 2000. "Africa and Old Testament" in Mary Getui et al. 2000. *Interpreting the Old Testament in African*. Nairobi: Action Publishers. 7

<sup>426</sup> The Holy Bible (RSV) and Ogunakin S.I. Fabarebo. 2000. *Religious Periscope*. Vol.III. Ibadan: Revelation Book, 2

<sup>427</sup> Jesse Mugambi. 2000. "Africa and Old Testament" in Mary Getui et al. 2000. *Interpreting the Old Testament in African*. Nairobi: Action Publishers. 8

the story of migration and settlement of the descendants of Abraham in Egypt<sup>428</sup> is much more than a contrivance of fiction for entertainment or intrigue.<sup>429</sup> It depicts an intimate and symbolic relationship between these peoples. The book of Exodus portrays Moses as a leader whose socio-political and cultural values were formed under Egyptian high culture. Having been brought up and educated as an Egyptian prince, Moses internalised the moral and religious values of his imperial Egyptian foster parents before he became a leader, liberator and law-giver of his own ethnic group. Thus, there is no doubt that the ethos and ethics of Israelites were formed in Egypt.<sup>430</sup> Though the portrayal of Egypt, in the Pentateuch and former prophets, included a place of suffering and humiliation,<sup>431</sup> it is an inevitable reality that Israelite cultural heritage could be traced to Egypt.

In a similar vein, the origin of the Yoruba people could be traced to Egypt. It is believed that *Od6duwz*, their primary ancestor, came from Egypt.<sup>432</sup> Many oral traditions are replete with these stories. Impressed by the similarities between the Yoruba and the ancient Egyptian culture, religious observation, work of arts, burial and other customs, many scholars have claimed that all the Yoruba customs were derived from the Egyptians.<sup>433</sup> Even, many traditional Yoruba have always claimed Egypt as their original abode, and that their monarchical tradition was derived from Egypt. Language similarities also exist between the Egyptians and the Yoruba people. Commenting on these similarities, Olomu and Eyebira claimed that the Yoruboid were one of the largest inhabitants of Egypt, and it will be expected that a good percentage of their language will be Yoruboid.<sup>434</sup> They further expressed their positions on these cultural and linguistic affinities in the table below:

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<sup>428</sup> Kwesi A.D. 1970. *An Introduction to the History and Religion of Israel. From Abraham to the Early Days of Israel in the Promised Land*. London: Darton, Longman & Todd Ltd. 30

<sup>429</sup> Jesse Mugambi. 2000. "Africa and Old Testament" in Mary Getui et al. 2000. *Interpreting the Old Testament in Africa*. Nairobi: Action Publishers. 8

<sup>430</sup> Jesse Mugambi. 2000. "Africa and Old Testament" in Mary Getui et al. 2000. *Interpreting the Old Testament in Africa*. Nairobi: Action Publishers. 8

<sup>431</sup> Marta Hoyland Lavik. 2000. "The African Texts of the Old Testament and Their African Interpretations" in Mary Getui et al. 2000. *Interpreting the Old Testament in Africa*. Nairobi: Action Publishers. 44

<sup>432</sup>N/A "Yoruba History". Nairaland Forum. [www.google.nairaland/yoruba/history](http://www.google.nairaland/yoruba/history) Retrieved: December 17, 2017.

<sup>433</sup> Olomu and Eyebira. 2007. "Yoruba: the Egyptian Connection" – *Race and History Forum*, [www.google.com/yorubaegyptian](http://www.google.com/yorubaegyptian) Retrieved: December 18, 2015

<sup>434</sup> Olomu and Eyebira. 2007. "Yoruba: the Egyptian Connection" – *Race and History Forum*, [www.google.com/yorubaegyptian](http://www.google.com/yorubaegyptian) Retrieved: December 18, 2015

<b>Egypt</b>	<b>Yoruba</b>
Wu (rise)	W5 (rise)
Ere (python/serpent)	Er4 (python/serpent)
Ta (sell/offer)	Tz (sell/offer)
Hika (evil)	*kz (evil)
Pa (open)	Pa (suddenly break into two)
Bi (to become)	B7 (to give birth or to become)
Omi (water)	Omi (water)
Oni (title of Osiris)	+ni (title of the King of Ife)
Budo (dwelling place)	B6d9 (dwelling place)
Dudu (black image of Osiris)	D5d5 (black person or thing)
Ra (possess)	Rz (possess/buy)
Po (many)	P= (many/cheap)
Beru(force of emotion)	B2r6 (fear )
Khu (to kill)	K5 (die)
Kot (build)	K- (build)
Fa (carry)	Fz (pull)
Kaf (pluck)	Kq (pluck)
Ta (spread out)	Ta (spread out)
Ro (talk)	R0 (talk)
Ke (hill)	)k4 (hill)
Sueg (a fool)	S62gb2 (a fool)
Ma or Mi (to breath)	M7 (to breath)
Enru (fear/terrible)	@r6 (fear/terrible)
Feh (to go away)	F1 (to blow away)
Mu (water)	Mu (water)
Ak (male)	Ak[ (male)
Se (to create)	Se (to create)
Kan (one)	+kan (one)

The table above shows a possible cultural contact between the Yoruba people and the Egyptians. The implication of this is that Egypt, being one of the few countries in Africa where civilization first started,<sup>435</sup> has claimed much cultural remnants elsewhere. In other words, suggesting an origin of the Yoruba and the Israelites cultural heritage in the Near Eastern world,<sup>436</sup> particularly Egypt, is not a fallacious dismissal of major self-acclaimed original traditions. In essence, Egypt could be taken as the original home of many Hebrew and Yoruba cultural traditions.

## 6.2 Age as Correlate of Wisdom in Israelite and Yoruba Wisdom Traditions

The similar nature and forms of expression in Israelite and Yoruba wisdom traditions happily provide a wealth of comparative data. There are philosophical theories that extol the efficacy of youth's strength and physical dynamism among the Israelites and the Yoruba people. However, the supremacy of intellectual capacity, mental insight and life experiences of the elders are highly cherished. In fact, wisdom is strictly considered as product of experience and sacrosanct in recognising an elder. Elders, among the Israelites, could be parents.<sup>437</sup> Parents are the quintessential teachers who passed on their life experiences, skill, and wisdom to their children in order to enable them to be productive member of the family and citizens in the broader world.<sup>438</sup> The voice of the parents (father and mother) is significant for the wisdom literature of the Hebrew Bible. In both the book of Proverbs (e.g. chapter 1:18 and throughout chapter 1-9) and Ecclesiastes 12:12, the vocative "my son" is used to address the intended audience.<sup>439</sup> Most scholars argued that this usage is metaphorical and employed as a personal address to a student by his teacher.<sup>440</sup> This is more than that in proverbs 1-9 because the voice of the parents, including the maternal voice (1:8b; 6: 20b), is used rhetorically to persuade the children to obtain wisdom and understanding. Hence, it should be noted that the connection between wisdom and parental responsibilities, in this context, has been found having chronological consideration. Under normal circumstance,

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<sup>435</sup> G.F. Ibrahim. 2013. *Modern Approach to Cultural Creative Arts – with 150 objective questions and answers – for Junior Secondary Book Three*, Akure: Folib Publishers. 11

<sup>436</sup> Dierk Lange. "Origin of the Yoruba and 'The Lost Tribes of Israel'" – *Anthropos* 106. 2011: 579 -595. [www.google.com/origin/yorubisrael](http://www.google.com/origin/yorubisrael) . Retrieved June 20, 2015

<sup>437</sup> M. R. Sneed. 2015. *The Social World of the Sages – An Introduction to Israelite and Jewish Wisdom literature*, Mennepolis Fortress Press, 21

<sup>438</sup> M. R. Sneed. 2015. *The Social World of the Sages – An Introduction to Israelite and Jewish Wisdom literature*, Mennepolis Fortress Press, 21

<sup>439</sup> M. R. Sneed. 2015. *The Social World of the Sages – An Introduction to Israelite and Jewish Wisdom literature*, Mennepolis Fortress Press, 21

<sup>440</sup> Werner H. Schmidt. 2008. *Old Testament Introduction*, USA: The Crossroad Publishing Company. 373

parents are definitely older than their children. However, if any teacher of wisdom could be regarded as parent, it should be to emphasize the relevance of chronological age identified with Israel's wisdom tradition. The fact is that teacher must have spent some periods of time acquiring what to teach. Like in the ancient Near East, being old or having grey hair was connected with wisdom.<sup>441</sup> As person aged in ancient Israel, their honour or prestige increased correlatively, and they were valued for their wisdom and knowledge that had accrued over a lifetime. Younger persons would go to the elders for advice and counsel. The older age, numerous life experiences, and accumulated wisdom enable them to serve effectively in the community.<sup>442</sup> So, surveying the whole course of wisdom tradition in ancient Israel, it is obvious that chronological age had been deeply emphasized.

This traditional belief offers an illuminative contact point for Israelite and Yoruba cultural affinities. Traditionally among the Yoruba people, older persons are seen as repositories of wisdom.<sup>443</sup> They often carry out the traditional roles of guardians of the ancestral values; they are the chief custodians of society's treasures as well as the upholders of history, customs, and folklore, cultural values and wisdom.<sup>444</sup> Wisdom is to the elder; and proverbs are the most generally recognised sources of the Yoruba wisdom. They are considered as wise sayings and traditional rhetorics. Thus only the elder or old people are regarded as repositories of proverbs.<sup>445</sup> A young speaker using a proverb is expected to give reference to his listeners, particularly the elders. Doing this, the speaker says: *Yoruba b= w-n n7...* (The Yoruba people conclude that...) or *B7 9 bq j[ Owe, k7 9 j1 ti 2yin zgbz o* (if it sounds like a proverb, let it be the elders') or *T9 t9, 9 xe b7 Owe o* (Permission to speak in proverb in the presence of the elders),<sup>446</sup> etc. Elders are those who are qualified to explain to younger generation the deeds of old and their implications for the present time in proverbs, riddles, songs, stories, and even taboos.<sup>447</sup> Among the Yoruba people, high premium is

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<sup>441</sup> M. R. Sneed. 2015. *The Social World of the Sages – An Introduction to Israelite and Jewish Wisdom literature*, Mennepolis Fortress Press, 22

<sup>442</sup> M. R. Sneed. 2015. *The Social World of the Sages – An Introduction to Israelite and Jewish Wisdom literature*, Mennepolis Fortress Press, 22

<sup>443</sup> Olayinka Ajomale. 2007. "Country report: Ageing in Nigeria-Current State, Social and Economic Implications". *African Gerontological Society, Ages International, Nigeria, ISA RC11, Sociology of Ageing-[www.google.com](http://www.google.com)*. Retrieved June 4th, 2015.

<sup>444</sup> Olayinka Ajomale. 2007. "Country report: Ageing in Nigeria-Current State, Social and Economic Implications". *African Gerontological Society, Ages International, Nigeria, ISA RC11, Sociology of Ageing-[www.google.com](http://www.google.com)*. Retrieved June 4th, 2015.

<sup>445</sup> O.O. Olatunji. 1984. *Features of Yoruba Oral Poetry*. Ibadan: University Press Ltd. 170

<sup>446</sup> B. Akinola. 2016. "Gerontology and Juvenility as Portrayed in Yoruba Philosophical Proverbs" in Kammelu N.C., Akinola B. Onuegbu M.C. (eds). 2016. *Forms Functions of Proverbs in Nigerian Languages*, 263

<sup>447</sup> Muhammad Adisa. Fegbe Compound, Idode, +y- Town, +y- State, Nigeria. Interviewed, April 27, 2017

accorded the wisdom of the elders and, thus, the youth who might want to take such for granted would be unanimously called to order.<sup>448</sup>

### 6.3 Implication of the Traditional Belief for Modern Perspective

The previous section of this chapter has afforded us the opportunity to establish the relevance of 'age' in Hebrew and Yoruba wisdom traditions. Through careful probing of records, 'correlation between age and wisdom' as one of the most ancient unifying cultural beliefs had been deliberately preserved among the Jews and the Yoruba people. The pervasive nature of this institutionalized cultural belief has made it a convincing, but possibly credulous, idea. This, as noted before, has become a thorny issue, heralding series of thoughts among people of different persuasions in contemporary society.

Culled out of and interpreted from the cultures being studied, the implication of this belief is that wisdom is an inevitable fruit of experience,<sup>449</sup> achievable along the journey of old age. Thus, elders or aged people had been noted as custodians of wisdom and from them young people are to source their own. This submission is well celebrated among the scholars who view elders as the authority figure, custodians of society's history and traditions. In their own opinions, elders' wealth of knowledge is equivalent to a well stock archive and whose death is tantamount to setting a rich library ablaze.<sup>450</sup> To them, elders are the ones who are qualified to explain to the younger generation the deeds of old and their implications for the present time. Hence, the youths are always encouraged to tap from the wealth of experience of the elders. Conversely, other scholars disagree, considering the submission as a mere tragic fruit of ignorance about the meaning, sources, and universal attributes of wisdom across various cultures.<sup>451</sup> Assuming that old age is equal to wisdom, according to these scholars, it would be a threat and a very inimical phenomenon to development in this modern age.

Sincerely speaking, the above submission should not be taken as a derogatory comment. Discovered from the available data, it looks indeed incongruent, damaging and

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<sup>448</sup> Elizabeth Idowu. Arowosegbe Compound, Ijeru Oba, )gb9m=s-, +y- State, 86 years. Interviewed, April 28, 2015

<sup>449</sup> B. Akinola. 2016. "Gerontology and Juvenility as Portrayed in Yoruba Philosophical Proverbs" in Kammelu N.C., Akinola B. Onuegbu M.C. (eds). 2016. *Forms Functions of Proverbs in Nigerian Languages*, 262

<sup>450</sup> B. Akinola. 2016. "Gerontology and Juvenility as Portrayed in Yoruba Philosophical Proverbs" in Kammelu N.C., Akinola B. Onuegbu M.C. (eds). 2016. *Forms Functions of Proverbs in Nigerian Languages*, 262

<sup>451</sup> Ray Andrew. "Age Does Not Equal Wisdom – Ecclesiaste 4:13". [www.google.com](http://www.google.com). Retrieved, June 20, 2015. Also, B. Julian and M. Antonia. 2004. "What is Wisdom? Financial Times. <http://googleads>. Retrieved, June 20. 2015



very injurious to assume that elders are the sole custodians of wisdom. Mindful of the existing traditions, some scholars tactfully argued that the respect enjoyed by the elders and the social recognition that they had, among the Hebrew and the Yoruba people, did not imply that the youth were considered irrelevant. They stressed further that, at the level of discourse, their traditional idea was that there should be mutual respect and cooperation between the elders and the youths.

#### 6.4 Data Analysis and Discussion of Findings

This section looks at the analysis of the questions in the questionnaire. There is general belief, as found among the Hebrews and the Yoruba people that correlation exists between age and wisdom. In other word, it means age defines wisdom. This was investigated in the study, and the Tables below reflect the opinions of the respondents on this issue.

##### Question 1: One becomes wise through studying philosophy (formally or informally).

**Table 6**

<b>Responses</b>	<b>Respondents</b>	<b>% of Respondents</b>
Agree	162	50.6%
Disagree	97	30.3%
Strongly Agree	25	7.8%
Strongly Disagree	36	11.3%
<b>Total</b>	<b>320</b>	<b>100%</b>

Source: Field Survey, 2017

Table 6 assesses the means of acquiring wisdom. In assessing the means of acquiring wisdom, the respondents were asked to indicate whether it could be acquired through studying philosophy. A total of 58.4% (A = 50.6%; SA = 7.8%) of the respondents affirmed that wisdom can be acquired through studying of Philosophy. Whereas, 41.6% (D= 30.3%; SA = 11.3%) were of the opinion that wisdom can not be sourced through studying philosophy. This result shows that one can be wise through studying philosophy.

**Question 2: One becomes wise through a broad spectrum of positive and negative experience**

<b>Responses</b>	<b>Respondents</b>	<b>% of Respondents</b>
Agree	177	55.3%
Disagree	62	19.4%
Strongly Agree	47	14.7%
Strongly Disagree	34	10.6%
<b>Total</b>	<b>320</b>	<b>100%</b>

Source: Field Survey, 2017

Table 7 shows the relevance of personal experience in acquiring wisdom. From the table above 70.0% (A = 55.3%; SA = 14.7%) of the respondents indicated that one can be wise through a broad spectrum of positive and negative experience. Whereas, a total of 41.6 (D = 19.4%; SD 10.6%) were of the opinion that wisdom can not be acquired through such means. This result shows that one can acquire wisdom through a broad spectrum of positive and negative experience.

**Question 3: One becomes wise through confronting uncertainty.**

**Table 8**

<b>Responses</b>	<b>Respondents</b>	<b>% of Respondents</b>
Agree	149	46.6%
Disagree	86	26.9%
Strongly Agree	39	12.2%
Strongly Disagree	46	14.4%
<b>Total</b>	<b>320</b>	<b>100%</b>

Source: Field Survey, 2017

Table 8 indicated whether one becomes wise through confronting uncertainty or not. The table shows that 58.8% (A = 46.6%; SA = 12.2%) of the respondents affirmed that

wisdom can be sourced through confronting uncertainty. But 41.3 (D = 26.9%; SD = 14.4%) of the people disagreed. This means that confronting uncertainty can also make one wise.

**Question 4: One becomes wise through guided spiritual steps.**

**Table 9**

<b>Responses</b>	<b>Respondents</b>	<b>% of Respondents</b>
Agree	189	59.1%
Disagree	52	16.3%
Strongly Agree	71	22.2%
Strongly Disagree	8	2.5%
<b>Total</b>	<b>320</b>	<b>100%</b>

Source: Field Survey, 2017

Table 9 assesses the possibility of acquiring wisdom through guided spiritual steps. This table shows that 81.3% (A = 59%; SA = 22.2%) of the respondent affirmed that one can become wise through guided spiritual steps. But 18.8% (D = 16.3%; SD = 2.5%) of the people indicated that wisdom can not be acquired through that means. By this result, it can be said that one can acquire wisdom through guided spiritual steps.

**Question 5: One becomes wise through confronting human mortality**

**Table 10**

<b>Responses</b>	<b>Respondents</b>	<b>% of Respondents</b>
Agree	135	42.2%
Disagree	85	26.6%
Strongly Agree	32	10%
Strongly Disagree	68	21.3%
<b>Total</b>	<b>320</b>	<b>100%</b>

Source: Field Survey, 2017

Table 10 indicates whether wisdom can be acquired through confronting human mortality or not. The table above shows that 52.2 (A = 42.2%; SA = 10%) of the respondents

agreed that wisdom can be acquired through confronting human mortality. Whereas, 47.8% (D = 26.6%; SD = 21.3%) of the people disagreed. This implies that wisdom can be sourced through confronting human mortality.

**Question 6: One becomes wise through learning from wise individuals.**

**Table 11**

<b>Responses</b>	<b>Respondents</b>	<b>% of Respondents</b>
Agree	176	55%
Disagree	35	10.9%
Strongly Agree	92	28.8%
Strongly Disagree	17	5.3%
<b>Total</b>	<b>320</b>	<b>100%</b>

Source: Field Survey, 2017

Table 11 shows whether wisdom can be learnt from others that are wise. The table reveals that 83.8% (A = 55%; SA = 28.8% of the respondents agreed that one can acquire wisdom through learning from wise people. However, 16.3% (D = 10.9%; SD = 5.3%) of the people indicated that one can not be wise though learning from wise individuals. So, the result shows that wisdom can be acquired through learning from wise individuals.

**Question 7: One becomes wise through growing older**

**Table 12**

<b>Responses</b>	<b>Respondents</b>	<b>% of Respondents</b>
Agree	181	56.6%
Disagree	76	23.8%
Strongly Agree	41	12.8%
Strongly Disagree	22	6.9%
<b>Total</b>	<b>320</b>	<b>100%</b>

Source: Field Survey, 2017

Table 12 indicates whether wisdom can be sourced through growing older. The table reveals that 69.4% (A = 56.6%; SA = 12.8%) of the respondent agreed that wisdom can be acquired

through growing older. Whereas, 30.6% (D = 23.8%; SD = 6.9%) of the people disagreed. By this, it can be said that wisdom could be sourced through growing old.

**Question 8: One becomes wise through enduring and overcoming highly negative events**

**Table 13**

<b>Responses</b>	<b>Respondents</b>	<b>% of Respondents</b>
Agree	180	56.3%
Disagree	62	19.4%
Strongly Agree	53	16.6%
Strongly Disagree	25	7.8%
<b>Total</b>	<b>320</b>	<b>100%</b>

Source: Field Survey, 2017

Table 13 indicates whether one can be wise through enduring and overcoming highly negative events. The table shows that 72.8% (A = 56.3%; SA = 16.6%) of the respondents indicated that wisdom can be sourced by enduring and overcoming highly negative events. But 27.2% (D = 19.4%; SD = 7.8%) of the people disagreed. The table therefore shows that wisdom could be sourced through enduring and overcoming highly negative events.

**Question 9: One becomes wise through religious (Spiritual) experiences**

**Table 14**

<b>Responses</b>	<b>Respondents</b>	<b>% of Respondents</b>
Agree	204	63.8%
Disagree	26	8.1%
Strongly Agree	70	21.9%
Strongly Disagree	20	6.3%
<b>Total</b>	<b>320</b>	<b>100%</b>

Source: Field Survey, 2017

Table 14 shows whether wisdom can be sourced through religious or spiritual experiences. The table indicates that 85.6% (A = 63.8%; SA = 21.9%) of the respondents considered religious or spiritual experiences as one of the means of acquiring wisdom.

However, 14.4% (D = 8.1%; SD = 6.3%) of the people disagreed. The result reveals that one can acquire wisdom through religious or spiritual experience.

**Question 10: Self-reflection and Self-Criticism are attributes of a wise person**

**Table 15**

<b>Responses</b>	<b>Respondents</b>	<b>% of Respondents</b>
Agree	158	49.4%
Disagree	94	29.4%
Strongly Agree	40	12.5%
Strongly Disagree	28	8.8%
<b>Total</b>	<b>320</b>	<b>100%</b>

Source: Field Survey, 2017

Table 15: self-reflection and self-criticism as attributes of a wise person. This table reveals that 61.9% (A= 49.4%; SA = 12.5%) of the respondents indicated that a wise person can be recognised by self-reflection and self-criticism. But, 38.1% (D = 29.4%; SD = 8.8%) of them disagreed. This shows that self-reflection and self-criticism are possible attributes of a wise person.

**Question 11: Orientation towards goodness is an attribute to a wise person**

**Table 16**

<b>Responses</b>	<b>Respondents</b>	<b>% of Respondents</b>
Agree	220	68.8%
Disagree	45	14.1%
Strongly Agree	51	15.9%
Strongly Disagree	4	1.3%
<b>Total</b>	<b>320</b>	<b>100%</b>

Source: Field Survey, 2017

Table 16 indicates that orientation towards goodness is an attribute of a wise person. The table shows that 84.7% (A = 68.8%; SA = 15.9) of the respondents opined that a wise person could be identified by orientation towards goodness. Whereas 15.3% (D = 14.1%; SD =

1.3%) of the people disagreed. The result shows that orientation towards goodness is an attribute of a wise person.

**Question 12: Knowledge and life experience is an attribute of a wise person**

**Table 17**

<b>Responses</b>	<b>Respondents</b>	<b>% of Respondents</b>
Agree	119	62.2%
Disagree	26	8.1%
Strongly Agree	82	25.6%
Strongly Disagree	13	4.1%
<b>Total</b>	<b>320</b>	<b>100%</b>

Source: Field Survey, 2017

Table 17 shows that knowledge and life experiences are the attributes of a wise person. The table reveals that 87.8% (A = 62.2%; SA = 25.6%) of the respondents indicated that knowledge and life experiences are the attributes of a wise person. But, 12.2 (D = 8.1%; SD = 4.1%) of the respondents did not consider knowledge and life experiences as the attributes of a wise person. The above result shows that knowledge and life experiences are the attributes of a wise person.

**Question 13: Love for humility is an attribute of a wise person**

**Table 18**

<b>Responses</b>	<b>Respondents</b>	<b>% of Respondents</b>
Agree	182	56.9%
Disagree	49	15.3%
Strongly Agree	76	23.8%
Strongly Disagree	13	4.1%
<b>Total</b>	<b>320</b>	<b>100%</b>

Source: Field Survey, 2017

Table 18 assesses whether love for humility is an attribute of a wise person. This table indicates that 80.6% (A = 56.9%; SA = 23.8%) of the respondents agreed that love for humility is also an attribute of a wise person. Whereas, 19.4% (D = 15.3%; SD = 4.1%) of the

people did not consider love for humility as an attribute of a wise person. The result reveals that love for humility is an attribute of a wise person.

**Question 14: Acceptance of other’s perspective and values is an attribute of a wise person**

**Table 19**

<b>Responses</b>	<b>Respondents</b>	<b>% of Respondents</b>
Agree	162	50.6%
Disagree	45	14.1%
Strongly Agree	94	29.4%
Strongly Disagree	19	5.9%
<b>Total</b>	<b>320</b>	<b>100%</b>

Source: Field Survey, 2017

Table 19 examines whether acceptance of other’s perspective and values is an attribute of a wise person. This table shows that 80.0% (A. 50.6%; SA = 29.4%) of the respondents indicated that acceptance of other’s perspectives and values are attributes of a wise person. But 20.0% (D = 14%; SD = 5.9%) of them disagreed. This means that acceptance of other’s perspectives and values are attributes of a wise person.

**Question 15: Ability to understand complex questions and relationships is an attributes of a wise person.**

**Table 20**

<b>Responses</b>	<b>Respondents</b>	<b>% of Respondents</b>
Agree	177	55.3%
Disagree	40	12.5%
Strongly Agree	56	17.5%
Strongly Disagree	47	14.7%
<b>Total</b>	<b>320</b>	<b>100%</b>

Source: Field Survey, 2017



Table 20 shows whether understanding complex questions and relationships is an attribute of a wise person. The table shows that 72.8% (A = 55.3%; SA = 17.5%) of the respondents indicated that understanding complex questions and relationships is an attributes of a wise person. However, 27.2% (D = 12.5%; SD = 14.7%) of the people disagreed. The result shows that to understand complex questions and relationships is equally an attribute of a wise person.

**Question 16: There is relationship between mental age and chronological age**

**Table 21**

<b>Responses</b>	<b>Respondents</b>	<b>% of Respondents</b>
Agree	225	70.3%
Disagree	52	16.3%
Strongly Agree	33	10.3%
Strongly Disagree	10	3.1%
<b>Total</b>	<b>320</b>	<b>100%</b>

Source: Field Survey, 2017

Table 21 assesses the relationship that exists between mental age and chronological age. This table reveals that 80.6% (A = 70.3%; SA = 10.3%) of the respondents indicated that relationship exists between mental age and chronological age. But 19.4% (D = 16.3%; SD = 3.1%) of them disagreed. The result is that relationship exists between mental age and chronological age.

### Question 17: Mental age increases with chronological age

**Table 22**

<b>Responses</b>	<b>Respondents</b>	<b>% of Respondents</b>
Agree	200	62.5%
Disagree	54	16.9%
Strongly Agree	50	15.6%
Strongly Disagree	16	5.0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>320</b>	<b>100%</b>

Source: Field Survey, 2017

Table 22 examines whether mental age increases with chronological age. This table reveals that 78.1% (A = 62.5%; SA = 15.6%) of the respondents indicated that mental age can increase with chronological age. But 21.9% (D = 16.9%; SD = 5.0%) of the people disagreed. The result is that mental age can increase with chronological age.

### Question 18: Mental age can be higher than chronological age

**Table 23**

<b>Responses</b>	<b>Respondents</b>	<b>% of Respondents</b>
Agree	181	56.6%
Disagree	61	19.1%
Strongly Agree	60	18.8%
Strongly Disagree	18	5.6%
<b>Total</b>	<b>320</b>	<b>100%</b>

Source: Field Survey, 2017

Table 23 assesses whether mental age can be higher than chronological age. This table shows that 75.3% (A = 56.6%; SA = 18.8%) of the respondents indicated that mental age can be higher than chronological age; whereas, 24.7% (D = 19.1%; SD = 5.6%) of the people disagreed with this submission. This means that mental age can be higher than chronological age.

**Question 19: Chronological age can be higher than mental age**

**Table 24**

<b>Responses</b>	<b>Respondents</b>	<b>% of Respondents</b>
Agree	149	46.6%
Disagree	89	27.8%
Strongly Agree	59	18.4%
Strongly Disagree	23	7.2%
<b>Total</b>	<b>320</b>	<b>100%</b>

Source: Field Survey, 2017

Table 24 assesses whether chronological age can be higher than mental age. The table above shows that 65.0% (A = 46.6%; SA = 18.4%) of the respondents agreed that chronological age can be higher than mental age. However, 35.0% (D = 27.8%; SD = 7.2%) of the people disagreed. This shows that chronological age can be higher than mental age.

**Question 20: Environment can affect mental age**

**Table 25**

<b>Responses</b>	<b>Respondents</b>	<b>% of Respondents</b>
Agree	217	67.8%
Disagree	29	9.1%
Strongly Agree	60	18.8%
Strongly Disagree	14	4.4%
<b>Total</b>	<b>320</b>	<b>100%</b>

Source: Field Survey, 2017

Table 25 shows whether environment can affect mental age. This table reveals that 86.6% (A = 67.8%; SA = 18.8%) of the respondents agreed that environment can affect individual's mental age. But 13.4% (D = 9.1%; SD = 4.4%) of these people disagreed. This means that environment can affect mental age.

### Question 21: Exposure can affect mental age

**Table 26**

<b>Responses</b>	<b>Respondents</b>	<b>% of Respondents</b>
Agree	210	65.6%
Disagree	38	11.9%
Strongly Agree	63	19.7%
Strongly Disagree	9	2.8%
<b>Total</b>	<b>320</b>	<b>100%</b>

Source: Field Survey, 2017

Table 26 indicates whether exposure can affect mental age. The table shows that 85.3% (A = 65.6%; SA = 19.7%) of the respondents agreed that exposure can affect mental age. However, 14.7% (D = 11.9%; SD = 2.8%) of the people disagreed. The result is that exposure can affect mental age.

### Question 22: Correlation exists between age and wisdom

**Table 27**

<b>Responses</b>	<b>Respondents</b>	<b>% of Respondents</b>
Agree	202	63.1%
Disagree	57	17.8%
Strongly Agree	48	15.0%
Strongly Disagree	13	4.1%
<b>Total</b>	<b>320</b>	<b>100%</b>

Source: Field Survey, 2017

Table 27 assesses whether there is correlation between age and wisdom. The table shows that 78.1% (A = 63.1%; SA = 15.0%) of the respondents indicated that correlation exists between age and wisdom. But 21.9% (D 17.8%; SD = 4.1%) of the people disagreed.

This result shows that there is correlation between age and wisdom. It reveals that age is relevant in acquisition of wisdom.

**Question 23: Chronological Age determines wisdom**

**Table 28**

<b>Responses</b>	<b>Respondents</b>	<b>% of Respondents</b>
Agree	92	28.8%
Disagree	131	40.9%
Strongly Agree	34	10.6%
Strongly Disagree	63	19.7%
<b>Total</b>	<b>320</b>	<b>100%</b>

Source: Field Survey, 2017

Table 28 assesses whether age determines wisdom. The table shows that 39.4% (A = 28.8%; SA = 10.6%) of the respondents agreed that age determines wisdom. Whereas, 60.6% (D = 40.9%; SD = 19.7%) of the people indicated that age does not determine wisdom. From this analysis, the result is that age does not determine wisdom.

**Question 24: Wisdom is found only among the aged people**

**Table 29**

<b>Responses</b>	<b>Respondents</b>	<b>% of Respondents</b>
Agree	83	25.9%
Disagree	125	39.1%
Strongly Agree	31	9.7%
Strongly Disagree	81	25.3%
<b>Total</b>	<b>320</b>	<b>100%</b>

Source: Field Survey, 2017

Table 29: assesses whether wisdom is found only among the aged people. The table shows that 35.6% (A = 25.3%; SA = 9.7%) of the respondents agreed that wisdom is found

only among the aged people. But 64.4% (D = 39.1%; SD = 25.3%) of the people disagreed. This means that wisdom is found not only among the aged people but also among the younger ones.

**Question 25: Young People can also be wise, qualified for leadership position.**

**Table 30**

<b>Responses</b>	<b>Respondents</b>	<b>% of Respondents</b>
Agree	175	54.7%
Disagree	23	7.2%
Strongly Agree	109	34.1%
Strongly Disagree	13	4.1%
<b>Total</b>	<b>320</b>	<b>100%</b>

Source: Field Survey, 2017

Table 30 shows whether young people can also be wise and can be considered qualified to take up leadership position. The table reveals that 88.8% (A = 54.7%; SA = 34.1%) of the respondents indicated that wisdom can also be found among the young people. Whereas, 11.3% (D = 7.2%; SD = 4.1%) of them disagreed. The result shows that young people can also be wise. This emphasis is quite noticeable, indicating that wisdom could be found among both the aged and the young people.

**Question 26: Wisdom of the aged people is different from that of the young people**

**Table 31**

<b>Responses</b>	<b>Respondents</b>	<b>% of Respondents</b>
Agree	171	53.4%
Disagree	83	25.9%
Strongly Agree	53	16.6%
Strongly Disagree	13	4.1%
<b>Total</b>	<b>320</b>	<b>100%</b>

Source: Field Survey, 2017

Table 31 assesses whether wisdom of the aged is different from that of the young people. The table reveals that 70.0% (A = 53.4%; SA = 16.6%) of the respondent indicated

that wisdom of the aged people is different from that of the young ones. Whereas 30.0% (D = 25.9%; SD = 4.1%) of the respondents disagreed. Form this, it can be inferred that wisdom of the aged people is different from that of the young people.

**Question 27: Wisdom does not necessarily come by age**

**Table 32**

<b>Responses</b>	<b>Respondents</b>	<b>% of Respondents</b>
Agree	177	55.3%
Disagree	43	13.4%
Strongly Agree	89	27.8%
Strongly Disagree	11	3.4%
<b>Total</b>	<b>320</b>	<b>100%</b>

Source: Field Survey, 2017

Table 32 shows whether wisdom does not come by age. The table indicates that 83.1(A = 55.3%; SA = 27.8%) of the respondents agreed that wisdom does not come by age. But, 16.9% (D = 3.4%; SD = 3.4%) of them opined that wisdom comes by age. This result shows that wisdom does not come by age.

**Question 28: Wisdom comes naturally**

**Table 33**

<b>Responses</b>	<b>Respondents</b>	<b>% of Respondents</b>
Agree	162	50.6%
Disagree	44	13.8%
Strongly Agree	93	29.1%
Strongly Disagree	21	6.6%
<b>Total</b>	<b>320</b>	<b>100%</b>

Source: Field Survey, 2017

Table 33 indicates whether wisdom comes naturally or not. The table reveals that 79.7% (A = 50.6%; SA = 29.1%) of the respondents indicated that wisdom comes naturally. However, 20.3% (D = 13.8%; SD = 6.6%) of the people disagreed. This means that wisdom comes naturally.

**Question 29: Wisdom is a divine endowment**

**Table 34**

<b>Responses</b>	<b>Respondents</b>	<b>% of Respondents</b>
Agree	166	51.9%
Disagree	26	8.1%
Strongly Agree	110	34.4%
Strongly Disagree	18	5.6%
<b>Total</b>	<b>320</b>	<b>100%</b>

Source: Field Survey, 2017

Table 34 indicates whether wisdom is a divine endowment or not. It shows that 83.6% (A = 51.9%; SA = 34.4%) of the respondents agreed that wisdom is a divine endowment. But 13.8% (D = 8.1%; SD = 5.6%) of the people did not see wisdom as a divine endowment. This implies that wisdom is a divine endowment.

**Discussion**

The tables above clearly reveal the opinions of the respondents about the questions asked them. They affirmed that wisdom can be generated through studying philosophy and through a broad spectrum of positive and negative experience. They also claimed that one can acquire wisdom through confronting uncertainty as well as human mortality; or through guided spiritual steps. The respondents opined that learning from wise individuals can generate wisdom. To them, wisdom can also be sourced through growing older, enduring and overcoming highly negative events, and through religious or spiritual experiences. There was clear cut position concerning the attributes of a wise person. A considerable number of the respondents agreed that self-criticism and self-reflection, orientation towards goodness, love for humility as well as knowledge and experience are qualities of a wise person. Besides, they



agreed that acceptance of others' perspectives and values, and ability to understand complex questions and relationships are also attributes of a wise person. A good number of the people agreed that there is relationship between mental age and chronological age. They claimed that mental age can increase with, be higher or lower than, chronological age. The respondents also agreed that environment and exposure can affect individual mental age.

Assessing the correlation between age and wisdom, there was high number of positive response. Majority of the respondents affirmed that correlation exists between age and wisdom. They, however, disagreed with the position that age determines wisdom and that wisdom is found only among the elders or aged people. Though the respondents agreed with the submission that young people can also be wise, they claimed that wisdom of the aged people is different from that of the young people. This could be in the area of maturity and application of the acquired wisdom, and thereby follows a characteristic pattern of wisdom tradition among the ancient people. Nevertheless, and even surprisingly, a large number of the respondents affirmed that wisdom does not come by age. They indicated that wisdom is a divine endowment that comes naturally.

### **Summary of Findings/Contributions to Knowledge**

The results of the finding are quite incisive, revealing the differences and similarities between Yoruba understanding of wisdom in relation to chronological age and that of the Israelites. A research painstakingly carried out is expected to contribute something new to scholarship. This contribution to knowledge makes such a research a significant one. Hence, the findings of this work have contributed the following to knowledge:

a .Wisdom in relation to chronological age is theological in Israelite wisdom tradition, but communal in Yoruba wisdom tradition. Israelite wisdom tradition has upon it the peculiar mark of covenant relationship with God. Though Israel assimilated wisdom material from the ancient Near East, she stamped it with her faith. Consequently, Israelite sages believed that wisdom was God's first act of creation. In Israelite wisdom literature, "the fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge" (Proverbs 1:7). Elders, in Israel, were accountable to God since mediating wisdom in the community implies fulfilling divine mandate (Proverbs 15:33). Traditionally among the Yoruba people, older persons are seen as repositories of wisdom. They carry out the traditional roles of guardians of the ancestral values; they are the chief custodians of society's treasures as well as the upholders of history, customs, and folklore,

cultural values and wisdom. While transmitting wisdom amounts to fulfilling divine mandate in Israelite tradition, it is done to have aesthetic and an ideal society among the Yoruba.

b. Israelite wisdom literature employs a rabbi-pupils relationship, whereas Yoruba wisdom tradition focuses largely on parents, operating in a family oriented society. In Israelite wisdom literature, learning about wisdom is set forth in a rabbi-pupil relationship and thereby forming a vocational guild. The Israelite practice of addressing pupils as 'my son' was derived from Egyptian instruction, in which the father teaches his son all he has learned about life. Yoruba wisdom betrays a flavour of training within the family down to the entire Yoruba community.

c. The older age, numerous life experiences, and accumulated wisdom are considerable for eldership in Israel, but the ancestral forces and spiritual agents, whose power exceed those of ordinary mortals, were added to that of the Yoruba. In other word, referring to someone, especially the younger person, as 'elder' due to his supernatural nature is quite alien in Israelite wisdom tradition.

d. Israelite wisdom literature speaks from the ancient Near Eastern perspective, but Yoruba wisdom operates within the Yoruba traditional world-view. In ancient Near East, being old or having grey hair was connected with wisdom. Similarly, as person aged in ancient Israel, their honour or prestige increased correlatively, and they were valued for their wisdom and knowledge that had accrued over a lifetime (Proverbs 15:9-10). Younger persons would go to the elders for advice and counsel. Yoruba wisdom tradition is expressed through the traditional method of oral sources like proverbs, stories, songs, folklores and inferences from the study of natural phenomena.

e. There are vast number of considerable parallels between Israelite cultural tradition and that of the Yoruba people. These puzzling, but exciting, affinities had been presupposed and taken for granted among many competent Old Testament scholars. The similarities between Israelite cultural heritage and that of the Yoruba are acknowledged from the perspectives of wisdom, religion, politics, history, economics, military, ethics, aesthetics, kingship, etc.

f. Wisdom of the elders is ethical, aesthetic and imperative in both traditions. The basic and archetypal role of elders in relation to wisdom, in Israelite and Yoruba wisdom traditions, is that of parents. Wisdom was taken to be a product of experience and sacrosanct in recognising an elderly person. The people believed that elder must have gathered over the

years the wealth of knowledge on the basis of their past experiences and the study of natural phenomena. Therefore, every older person was expected to possess the attributive qualities of a true elder. To them, wisdom, knowledge, perspective, discernment, insight and intellectual capacities are the domains of the aged people. Failure to display these qualities was considered abnormal, ridiculous and unwelcomed. That was why such a person would not be respected in the community. Confirming this, it is explicitly said among the Jews that: “Better is a poor and wise youth than an old and foolish king, who will no longer take advice” (Ecclesiastes 4:13). This accounts for some Yoruba terms like *Adzgbz mq gb--n* (though aged but not wise), *Adzgbz mq dan5* (though aged but not matured), *Adzgbz mq k5r0 lqr0b9* (though aged but childish), etc.

g. In Israel and among the Yoruba, there are philosophical theories that extol the efficacy of youth’s strength and physical dynamism. Though elders are considered to be repositories of wisdom in the studying cultures, it is said comparatively among the Jews that: “great men are not always wise neither do the aged understand judgment” (Proverbs 32:9), and that: *zgbz k0 k’[gb-n* (age does not define wisdom), among the Yoruba. This idea is even more comprehensive in Yoruba wisdom tradition as it is said that: *{m[d3 gb-n zgbz gb-n la fi dq il3 if2* (the collective wisdom of the aged and young led to the founding of Ifè) and that *{m[d3 n bc n7n5 zgbz, zgbz n bc n7n5 [m[d3* (childishness lives in the elder and elderliness resides in the child).

h. Chronological age does not determine wisdom. Wisdom can also be found among the young people. Environment and exposure can affect mental age. Environmental factors, such as family, education, socio-economic status, culture, and religion, are involved in generating the milieu in which the personal sapiential value system develops. Thus, many of these factors influence how individual’s wisdom is decided. This wisdom relies on one’s ability to generate a mental representation of the self (cognitive, emotional and physical), in the external world and the dynamic relationship of the self with that world.

i. Age can be relevant only in the application of God - given wisdom. Several reasons exist as to why wisdom may be associated with growing old. Though, as we aged, there is a continued growth in crystallised pragmatics, including language and knowledge, resulting from life experiences. Thus many partly explain why older adults tend to be more skilled than younger ones in some tasks of cognitive reasoning, especially those involving social and practical problem solving. However, the accumulation of life experiences does not

automatically activate wisdom in adulthood. Instead, wisdom depends on individual's innate ability to integrate experiences in a reflective manner. This innate ability has nothing to do with chronological age; it is a divine endowment.

## **6.5 Conclusion**

Age as correlate of wisdom in Israelite wisdom literature and among the Yoruba had been explored. The study examined the historical origin of Hebrew and Yoruba cultural affinities. It also considered the correlation that exists between age and wisdom as preserved in the Jewish and Yoruba wisdom traditions. The work equally examined the implication of the traditional belief for modern perspectives. Data analysis and discussion of findings were also carried out. The study revealed that there are vast number of considerable parallels between Israelite cultural tradition and that of the Yoruba people. These similarities between Israelite cultural heritage and that of the Yoruba is acknowledged from the perspectives of wisdom, religion, politics, history, economics, military, ethics , aesthetics, kingship, etc. The work revealed that the Egyptian background of many Hebrew and Yoruba cultural traditions had been greatly favoured. Some differences were also identified. Looking at the relevance of age in Hebrew and Yoruba wisdom traditions, wisdom had been considered as a fruit of life experience, achievable along the journey of old age. Thus, aged people had been noted as the custodians of wisdom. However, the findings of this study revealed that age, in both Israelite and Yoruba traditions, does not determine wisdom. Age can be relevant only in the application of God- given wisdom. Wisdom is a divine endowment.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

### SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### 7.0 Summary of the Study

This chapter summarises and states the conclusion of the study. It also gives recommendations based on the findings for solving the problems of the study and for further study. The study examined the correlation between age and wisdom in Israelite and Yoruba traditions. The objective of the study is to explore the differences and similarities between Yoruba understanding of wisdom and age and that of Israel's wisdom tradition. It also aims at assessing the correlation that exists between age and wisdom as preserved in Hebrew and Yoruba wisdom traditions. The findings of this research are considered significant in that: (i) it contributes to the body of knowledge. (ii) The work also gives a room for using Yoruba culture to elucidate the bible. (iii) It will assist people of different cultures to ascertain whether age actually defines wisdom. In essences, it will assist reducing controversy on wisdom in relation to age and thereby improve socio-cultural stability. From the Old Testament perspective, the work was carried out within the ambit of wisdom literature, using the book of Job and Proverbs as template. And from the perspective of the Yoruba culture, )gb9m=s-, +y- town, in +y- State, and Il3sz Township, in +sun State, Southwest Nigeria, were selected for field work.

The study is premised on what Adamo calls African Cultural Hermeneutics. African Cultural Hermeneutics is rereading the scripture from a premeditatedly Afrocentric perspective.<sup>452</sup> This is very similar to what Ukpong calls "Evaluative Hermeneutics", which relates the biblical texts to the African context. The theory of biblical interpretation, according to Ukpong, "involves the study of the local situation in the light of biblical witness, and the historical method is used in analysing the biblical text."<sup>453</sup>

Since the biblical text remains the primary data of the study, the researcher engaged the historical-critical method, which takes into cognizance the different socio-cultural forces that shaped the biblical texts until it reached its final fixed form. Some Yoruba proverbs that have bearing on the issue at stake were purposively selected and descriptively applied. Also, structured and unstructured oral interview was conducted. This is most common and most

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<sup>452</sup> D. T. Adamo. 2001. *Exploration in African Biblical Studies*. Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers. 9-39

<sup>453</sup> Justin S. Ukpong. 1999. "Can African Old Testament Scholarship Escape the Historical Critical Approach?" *Newsletter on African Old Testament Scholarship*, Vol. 7. 3

effective means of getting raw information from the original source. The interview was conducted in both Yoruba and English language because of the locality and the nature of the subject matter. That enabled the respondents to feel free while speaking and expatiating on issues relating to this work. The translation of responses from the Yoruba interviewees however was done with carefulness to avoid misinterpretation as well as misrepresentation of facts. Different kinds of people such as the Oba, the Chiefs, the elders and the youths were purposively selected and interviewed. Eighty people were interviewed in the three places visited: Ibadan town, Oshogbo town, and Ilorin. Copies of Questionnaire were also administered in order to elicit needed information. These were administered to community leaders, the elites, particularly teachers in both the primary and the secondary schools. The data collected from the questionnaire were calculated by using descriptive statistics, which is the simple percentage and frequency count formula.

To effectively address the issues at stake, relevant literatures were thematically reviewed in chapter two of this work. The origin and development of wisdom in Israel was examined. The basic overview of Israelite wisdom tradition was part of the review. The researcher also reviewed the works of some reliable authors from Yoruba perspective, paid attention to their opinions and analysed them for the purpose of this study.

Chapter three of this work delved into the historical background of Israelite wisdom tradition, emphasising the relevance of ancient Near East in the development of wisdom and wisdom literature in ancient Israel. It was discovered that the history and religion of Israel cannot be studied and understood in isolation from the overall context of the ancient Near East. Israel, in many ways, reflects in her socio-political and religious life aspects of the cultures in the ancient Near East. Wisdom and allied phenomena were said to have been known in some ancient Near Eastern cultures before they surfaced in Israel.<sup>454</sup> This work also revealed that wisdom tradition spans the length of Israel's history,<sup>455</sup> and wisdom theme runs throughout the biblical text. This wisdom theme is common in the saying of Prophets and in the books traditionally known as "Wisdom Literature". Looking at the Nature of Israel's wisdom and its practitioners, the word 'wisdom', in Israel, could be used in moral sense or in a purely pragmatic sense. Israel's wisdom had been categorised into various type such as Amateur, Divine, Royal, Professional or Technical, Mantic or Magic Wisdom. The clan or family, the school and the royal court were possible context and social location for wisdom in

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<sup>454</sup> Magnus Magnusson. 1977: *The Archaeology of the Bible Lands*. London: The Bodly Head Ltd adna BBC.

<sup>455</sup> W. H. Schmidt. 2008. *Old Testament production*. USA: the crossroad publishing company,372

ancient Israel. In Israel, some people were regarded as sages ranging from Parents, Elders, Judges, Kings, and Priests to Prophets. Israelite wisdom literature includes the book of Proverbs, Job, Ecclesiastes and certain of the Psalms. In the extra-canonical literatures, it is represented by works like Ecclesiastics, the Wisdom of Solomon, Tobit, 4 Maccabees, and portions of other Apocrypha. There are four noticeable types of wisdom literature genres in Israel which include Instruction, Argument, Narrative and Manticism.

The origin of Israelite wisdom movement was said to be lost in the haze of the early oral traditions.<sup>456</sup> Any attempt to trace the history of these traditions is handicapped by the relative paucity and selective nature of Old Testament historical sources. However, the activities of the sages became well-known and respected in Israel by the time of the early monarchy.<sup>457</sup> In any case, wisdom had been said to be a continuous factor in the common life and consciousness of the Israelites through more than a millennium of her history in the land of Canaan. But as time went on, there were many changes in the socio- political, cultural and religious environment by which the wisdom traditions was played upon by many cultural forces.<sup>458</sup>

The analysis of the books of Job and Proverbs in relation to age and wisdom was discussed in chapter four of the study. The chapter examined literary background of the books, including the exegetical exploration of the selected verses. The book of Job was considered the greater monument of wisdom literature in the Old Testament. The author of the book displays the most extensive vocabulary and therefore known as the Shakespeare of Old Testament.<sup>459</sup> Exhibited in the book are vast resources of knowledge, a superb style of forceful expression, profundity of thought, excellent command of language, noble ideas, a high standard of ethics, and a genuine love for nature. The theoretical problem of pain and disaster in the life of the godly and righteous is the theme of the book.<sup>460</sup> Why does God allow bad things to happen to good people? Hence, Human suffering is the age-long problem discussed in the book of Job.

The purpose of the book was to probe the vast region and recesses of the justice of God in the world. It also provides a real example of extreme suffering and thereby serves as a

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<sup>456</sup> L.M. Steven and John kaltner. 1989. *The Old Testament – its Background, Growth & Content*. Nashville: Abingdom press, 304

<sup>457</sup> W.A.Bernhard.1957. *The living World of Old Testament*, London: Longman, Green and co,469

<sup>458</sup> W. H. Schmidt. 2008. *Old Testament production*. USA: the crossroad publishing company,372

<sup>459</sup> W. A. Bernhard. 1998. *Understanding Old Testament*. New Jersey: Prentice Hall, Inc., 530

<sup>460</sup> Samuel, J. S. 1960. *The Old Testament Speaks*. New York: Harper I Row Publishers

source of comfort and reassurance to those who suffered through the ages. The book of Job does not indicate its author, and there is no consistent tradition about the writer. Scholars argue that theories of authorship of Job range from Job himself to Moses, to Solomon, or someone of his time and to an unknown writer who lived around 200 B.C.<sup>461</sup> Other scholars even included Elihu,<sup>462</sup> Isaiah, Hezekiah and Baruch, Jeremiah's scribe.<sup>463</sup>

Some of these scholars argued for Israelite origin of the author while some disagreed. Dating the book of Job, like its authorship, had been a crux because there is nothing in the book fixing its date.<sup>464</sup> There are five main views maintained by biblical scholars today regarding the date of composition. These are: in the patriarchal age; in the reign of Solomon; in the reign of Manasseh; in the generation of Jeremiah; and during or after the exile. Though it is difficult to ascertain who wrote the book and the time it was written, interpreting the book can not be hindered because it deals with human situation in general that can not be confined to any particular time.

The book of Proverbs is the second book of the third section of the Hebrew Bible.<sup>465</sup> "Proverbs", translated from *Mashal*, has a wider range of meaning than the short catchy saying implied by the English word. It is not merely an anthology but a "collection of collections" relating to a pattern of life which lasted for more than a millennium.<sup>466</sup> Each collection has its own literary style, form, and ethical emphasis. Five literary units form the book of Proverbs.<sup>467</sup> The first part is composed of ten discourses, seven poems of various length and four of brief maxims (ch 1-9). The second part is a collection of Proverbs attributed to Solomon (Ch 10: 1-22:16). The third part corresponds with instruction of Amen-em-opet (ch 22:17 – 24: 22). The fourth part is a second collection attributed to Solomon which was gathered under King Hezekiah's patronage (25 – 29). The fifth part is a miscellaneous assortment (ch 30 -31). The purpose of the book is to communicate behavioral, moral and spiritual truths.<sup>468</sup> The problem of authorship and date of the book are considered along the composite nature of the book. This is because the book of Proverbs includes

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<sup>461</sup> L.A. Gleason. 1964. *A Survey of Old Testament Introduction*. Chicago. Moody Press, 505

<sup>462</sup> B.H. Robert & J.C. Laney. 1990. *Tyndal Concise Bible Commentary*. USA: Tynadale House Publisher, 186

<sup>463</sup> H.I. Hester. 1994. *The Heart of Hebrew History- A Survey of the Old Testament*. Missouri: The William Jewell Press. 198

<sup>464</sup> N/A. 2017, "The Date of the Book of Job" *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, Cambridge.org. Retrieved, Feb. 2017

<sup>465</sup> N/A. "Book of Proverbs", <http://en.m.wikipedia.org.www.google.com> Retrieved August 22, 2017

<sup>466</sup> N/A. "Book of Proverbs", <http://en.m.wikipedia.org.www.google.com> Retrieved August 22, 2017

<sup>467</sup> H.K. Beebee. 1970. *The Old Testament*, California: Dickerson Publishing Company, Inc. 410

<sup>468</sup> R.K. Harrison. 1969. *Introduction to Old Testament*. 1011



materials from several authors. There is no definitive evidence to date the book either during the late monarchy or the Persian period. Some scholars argued that the book was originally composed in the days of Solomon (971 -931B.C.) and it was completed in the days of Hezekiah (between 715 and 686B.C).<sup>469</sup> However, it should be noted that the book of Proverbs represents an extremely complex tradition, extending throughout almost the whole of the Old Testament period.

Initially, the book was among the classified antilegomena and was rejected, but was later reconsidered and included in the canon of the Old Testament.<sup>470</sup> In chapter four also, the exegetical exploration of Job 12:12 and Proverbs 5:1 was carried out. The study confirmed that wisdom is more valuable than any other possession. Wisdom is believed to reside with the elders, and it is imperative for young people to listen, receive and obey the elders, including their parents.<sup>471</sup>

Wisdom in Yoruba perspective was discussed extensively in chapter five. The work focused on the origin of the Yoruba people as well as wisdom in their cultural world-view. The Yoruba people occupy a large area in southwestern Nigeria like +xun, Lagos, +y-, )gùn, Kwara, Kog7, \$k8t8 and Oòdó.<sup>472</sup> They are also found scattered in other parts of Nigeria and some other western African country.<sup>473</sup> Yoruba communities can also be found across the Atlantic as far as the Caribbean and South-America, particularly in Cuba and Brazil.<sup>474</sup> The Origin of the Yoruba in Nigeria is highly debatable and variously speculated. One tradition holds that, *Od6duwz*, the primary ancestor of the Yoruba people, came form Egypt while another story has it that he migrated from Mecca. There are two variations in the story of how *Od6duwz* became the legendary progenitor of the Yoruba. The first is cosmogonic and the second is political. The cosmogonic myth reveals how *Od6duwz* achieve the feat as a result of his involvement in the creation of physical body of human being and land which *Obztqlq* failed to do. The spot on which he landed from water to become land is called I13-If2. The second version of the story, which is political, holds that *Od6duwz* and his group came from

<sup>469</sup> Gareth Crossley. 1975. *The Old Testament Explained and Applied*. USA: Evangelical Press

<sup>470</sup> H.K. Beebee. 1970. *The Old Testament*. California: Dickerson Publishing Company, Inc. 418

<sup>471</sup> A. E. Hill and J. H. Walton. 1991. *A Survey of Old Testament*. USA: Zondervan, 359

<sup>472</sup> O. S. Titus, 2015. "Socio-Cultural Music As a Tool for the Promotion of Peaceful Coexistence Among Religious Organisations in Yorubaland" In *Religion and Security Issues (Proceedings of 2013 Biennial International Religious Studies Conference)*, Vol. 5, 334

<sup>473</sup> A.O. Dada. 2003. "Christology from Below: A Reflection on Christological Elements in Selected Yoruba Gospel Song" *.A Publication of the Nigerian Association for Biblical Studies (NABIS) – Biblical Studies Series 2*, 261.

<sup>474</sup> A.O. Dada. 2009. "Harnessing Traditional Yoruba Communal Values and Ideals for Self – Reliance and Development" in *Orita – Ibadan Journal of Religious Studies*, Vol XLI/11. 36

the east, invaded the pre-existing civilised If2 – If2 and occupied the place. Upon his death, there was the dispersal of his children from If2 – If2<sup>475</sup> to found another kingdom. Considering wisdom in Yoruba perspective, emphasis was laid on the nature, the place, the origin and the sources of wisdom in Yoruba cultural setting. The study also assessed correlation between age and wisdom as preserved among the Yoruba people. Wisdom, known as *gb-n* among the Yoruba, has several usages. It can be used to denote success, or positive outcome of any decision or deed. That is why you hear Yoruba people saying that: *Cni k0k9 2 y4 l9 m= - l-* (someone whose planted cocoa germinates is the one that knows how to plant it). Yoruba people also measure *gb-n* (wisdom) from ethical perspective. Thus, the Yoruba people says: *{m[ t9 bq m[ [w- w2 y90 bq zgbz jcun* (a child that knows how to wash his hand (well – behaved) will eat with (enjoy as) the elder). *gb-n* can also denote technical skill or dexterity, cleverness, intellectual acumen and moral discernment. *gb-n* (wisdom) is highly esteemed and can never be compared with money or any other valuable possession among the Yoruba people. The Yoruba people source wisdom from three notable domains, namely: the tradition of the fathers, personal experience and from *Ol9d6mar4* (God).

In traditional Yoruba communities, wisdom was believed to reside with the elders.<sup>476</sup> However, the word *Zgbz* translated as ‘elder’ can be socially and philosophically interpreted from three ends: The ontological-supernatural, chronological and mental-ethical evaluative. The Yoruba acknowledge the relevance of the youth in the community. That is why it is said that: *{m[d3 gb-n zgbz gb-n la fi dq il3 if2,*<sup>477</sup> (the collective wisdom of the aged and young led to the founding of If2) and that: *{m[d3 n bc n7n5 zgbz, zgbz n bc n7n5 [m[d3,*<sup>478</sup> (childishness lives in the elder and elderliness resides in the child). But, the role of elders had been taken to be indispensable. Elders are the guardians of the people’s culture, traditions, history, integrity, generosity, wisdom and articulateness. The Yoruba people say: *Cnu zgbz lob8 t7 n gb9* (it is in the mouth of the elders that the matured kolanut tastes better). It is also said that: *Zgbz l9 t9r0 9 l=, [ba l9 t9 ey7n erin ffn* (only the elder can swear by the cult, and only a king is capable of blowing the elephant’s horn).<sup>479</sup> Elders are considered the only set of people, capable of handling difficult issues; they are mature people who possessed shock-absorber for difficult situations. Another proverb says: *\*tzk6n t9 fl se b7 zn=m-, b7 9 bq so*

<sup>475</sup> N/A. “Yoruba History”. Nairaland Forum. [www.google.com/yorubahistory](http://www.google.com/yorubahistory) . Retrieved, May 3, 2015

<sup>476</sup> G.A. Faleye. No F6, Eruguru Street, If2sz, +sun State, Nigeria. Interviewed, April 25, 2107

<sup>477</sup> B. Akinola. 2016. “Gerontology and Juvenility as Portrayed in Yoruba Philosophical Proverbs” in Kammelu N.C., Akinola B. Onuegbu M.C. (eds). 2016. *Forms Functions of Proverbs in Nigerian Languages*, 263

<sup>478</sup> Adebayo Victoria. No. 2121, Iyemogun, If2sz East, If2sz, +sun State, Nigeria. Interviewed, April 25, 2017

<sup>479</sup> B. Akinola. 2016. “Gerontology and Juvenility as Portrayed in Yoruba Philosophical Proverbs” in Kammelu N.C., Akinola B. Onuegbu M.C. (eds). 2016. *Forms Functions of Proverbs in Nigerian Languages*, 263.

*b7 zn=m- k0 l4 ta b7 zn=m-, b7 9 bq ti2 ta b7 zn=m-, k0 l4 d6n b7 zn=m-,*<sup>480</sup> (A creeper that wants to sprout like sweet potatoes, if it bears fruits like sweet potatoes, it cannot form (produce tuber) like sweet potatoes, and even, if it forms like sweet potatoes, it cannot be as sweet as sweet potatoes). The Yoruba people believed that no matter how exposed and experienced, smart or wise a young person is, he will still display childishness. One Yoruba proverb says: *B'-m[d3 bq fl se b7 zgbz [j- or7 k0 n7 j1,*<sup>481</sup> (a child may desire to behave like an adult but his age will not allow him). This delinquency is emphasised in one Yoruba proverb that says: *B'-gb-n [m[d3 bq f0 igba igi 2y8nk6l3 ag= ni 9 padz s[l2 s7,*<sup>482</sup> (if the wisdom of a child flies over two hundred trees, it will eventually land at the backyard of foolishness). Elders are charged with the task of understanding both the material and spiritual requisites of life.

Chapter six of the study discussed age as correlate of wisdom in Israelite and Yoruba wisdom traditions. It explored the historical origin of Hebrew and Yoruba cultural affinities, considering Egypt as a notable contact-point. The work revealed that, Israelites, as far back as the patriarchal era, came in contact with the Egyptians.<sup>483</sup> In the same vein, the origin of the Yoruba could be traced to Egypt.<sup>484</sup> It was believed that Od6duwz, their primary ancestor, came from Egypt. The chapter also discussed the correlation that exists between age and wisdom as observed in Israelite wisdom literature and the Yoruba tradition. It revealed the implication of the belief for modern perspective. Data analysis was also carried out in this chapter.

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<sup>480</sup> A.O. Iyanda. 2017. *"Oju lo pe si"*. Ibadan: Lecoba Publishers. 39

<sup>481</sup> Elizabeth Idowu, Arowosegbe Compound, Ijeru Oba, Ògbómòsò, +y- State, 86years. Interviewed, April 28, 2015. Also; Asaolu Oluwafemi. No: ALD23. Stadium, Ilesa, Osun State, Nigeria.

<sup>482</sup> Adeleke David, Ikolaba Oba Compound, Ijeru Oba, Ògbómòsò. Also Oyedele Joseph Oyewole, Onileowo

<sup>483</sup> A.D. Kwesi. 1970. *An Introduction to the History and Religion of Israel. From Abraham to the Early Days of Israel in the Promised Land*. London: Darton, Longman & Todd Ltd, 30

<sup>484</sup> Olomu and Eyebira. 2007. "Yoruba: the Egyptian Connection" Race and History Forum. [www.google.com](http://www.google.com). Retrieved, December 18. 2015.

## **7.1 General Conclusion**

This study assessed the correlation that exists between chronological age and wisdom as preserved in Hebrew and Yoruba wisdom traditions. Traditionally among the people, old people were taken to be repositories of wisdom. However, today, people hold different opinions which therefore attract further investigation in the light of modern development. Wisdom is peculiar to humanity; and, it is a concept that is unique, ubiquitous and perennial. Every culture produces its own store of wisdom. Israelite wisdom tradition had long been traced to the ancient Near Eastern cultures. This is because wisdom and allied phenomena had long been known in the ancient Near East before it surfaced in Israel. The similar nature and form of expression in Israelite and Yoruba wisdom traditions, as earlier noted, happily provide a wealth of comparative data. The supremacy of intellectual capacity, mental insight and experience of the elders, among the duo, are highly cherished. In their thought pattern, wisdom is considered as product of experience and sacrosanct for recognising an elder. This traditional belief offers an illuminative contact point for Israelite and Yoruba cultural affinities. Concerted efforts have been made to ascertain the origin of these similarities. Thus, Egypt had been suggested as the original home of Israelite and Yoruba wisdom traditions.

Besides, the relevance of chronological age in Hebrew and Yoruba wisdom traditions has been challenged and critically investigated. The essence of doing this is to test and establish the veracity of the traditional belief. Does age really determine wisdom? In line with the available data, the study revealed that age does not determine wisdom. It can be relevant only in the application of God-given wisdom.

## **7.2 Recommendations**

In view of the overall submission made on age as correlate of wisdom in Israelite and Yoruba wisdom traditions, the following recommendations are made:

- a.* The Yoruba socio-cultural heritage should continuously be used to elucidate the bible. It is interesting, rich, reliable, and deeply incisive to use Yoruba culture to elucidate the bible. There are various concepts in the bible which are also unique among the Yoruba people and can well be understood from their thought pattern. Reading biblical texts in the light of African culture will assist the readers to see the relevance of the texts across various cultures. This is what Adamo calls ‘African Biblical Study’. African Biblical Study is the biblical interpretation that makes “African social

cultural context a subject of interpretation”. It is the rereading of the Christian scripture from a premeditatedly Afrocentric perspective. It also involves the analysis of the biblical texts from the perspective of African world-view and culture. The purpose is to understand the Bible and God in our African experience and culture. Besides, it is to break the hermeneutical hegemony and ideological stranglehold that Eurocentric biblical scholars have long enjoyed. There is therefore an urgent need for further research in this area.

- b. Chronological age is not a sole determinant of wisdom in both Israelite and Yoruba wisdom traditions; other extraneous and innate factors should also be put into consideration. In other words, assessing individual level of intelligence or intellectual ability should not be based on chronological age. Age can only assist the possessor to judiciously apply God-given wisdom. Wisdom is a divine endowment.
- c. There should be mutual interdependence between the aged and young people. Every society is composed of these two age groups. The qualities and benefits associated with each group are vital and indispensable for societal survival, development and integration. So, the adults need to cooperate and appreciate the contributory efforts of the youths in societal emancipation and prosperity as each group has something to lend the other.
- d. The relevance of youth, in any human community, should be acknowledged. In line with the above submission, the efficacy of youth’s strength and dynamism should adequately be extolled. The youth, like adult, should also be seen as wise, creative, intelligent, strong, caring, helpful, and as critical pillars in the progress of their family and society at large.
- e. There should be social equality. Individual should be given equal opportunity to make use of their God-given wisdom, particularly in the modern socio-political setting.
- f. Elders should be well respected in the society. No matter the wisdom, no matter the applause given to the youths, they must always show respect and dignity to the elders. Any youth who wants to grow to become an elder must show respect and honour to the elders. Besides, elders are the age group on which the moral standard of the nation is hung. They are to help, support, guide, and control the young ones in upholding

moral values. Thus, it becomes an aberration and also sacrilegious for youths to disrespect the elders.

- g. Two extremes should be avoided. The two extremes to be avoided, as observed in this work, are: that elders are the sole custodians of wisdom or that there is nothing sapiential to learn from the elders because wisdom has nothing to do with age.

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## APPENDIX I

### Lists and Particulars of Interview Respondents

S/N	NAMES	PARTICULARS	AGE	DATE
1.	Abigael Adeniji (Mrs.)	Arowosegbe Compound, Ijeru Oba, Ogbomoso, Oyo State	75	13/05/2017
2.	Abigael Babalola (Mrs.)	Arayasaagun (now Arayagbadura) Compound, Akata No.1, Ogbomoso, Oyo State	73	17/02/2017
3.	Abiodun Sunday (Mr.)	Department of Business Administration, Lagos State Polytechnic, Lagos	43	25/04/2017
4.	Adamu Oluwasogo (Mr.)	J115, Oke-Oye, Ilesa, Osun State	48	25/04/2017
5.	Adebare Areo (Mr.)	Oko-Oba Area, Oyo, Oyo State	43	27/04/2017
6.	Adebayo A.A. (Mr.)	H.O.D., Department of Yoruba Language, Osun State College of Education, Ilesa, Osun State	51	25/04/2017
7.	Adebayo Femi (Mr.)	Kosobo Layout, Oyo, Oyo State	53	27/04/2017
8.	Adebayo Victoria (Mrs.)	No. 212, Iyemogun, Ilesa, Osun State	43	25/04/2017
9.	Adebisi Kehinde (Mrs.)	Iyalode Compound, Ilogbo, Ogbomoso, Oyo State	74	10/04/2017
10.	Adejube Sunday (Mr.)	Lecturer, Department of Yoruba Language, Adeyemi College of Education, Ondo, Ondo State	56.	26/09/2017
11.	Adeleke David (Mr.)	Ikolaba Oba Compound,	88	10/04/2017

		Ijeru, Ogbomoso, Oyo State		
12.	Adeniji Peter (Mr.)	Teacher, Ori-Oke Grammar School, Ogbomoso, Oyo State	51	10/10/2017
13.	Adeniji S.A. (Pa)	Arowosegbe Compound, Ijeru Oba, Ogbomoso, Oyo State	75	02/05/2017
14.	Adewale P.A. (Mr.)	Lecturer, Department of Educational Foundation, Osun State College of Education, Ilesa, Osun State	52	25/04/2017
15.	Agokei R.C. (Dr.)	Lecturer, Department of Education Foundation, Adeyemi College of Education, Ondo, Ondo State	42	27/04/2017
16.	Ajani Sunday O. (Mr.)	The Secretary to the Soun of Ogbomosoland, Ogbomoso, Oyo State	42	10/04/2017
17.	Ajao Ishmael (Mr.)	Mabolaje Street, Oyo, Oyo State	46	27/04/2017
18.	Akinloye K.F. (Dr.)	Lecturer, Department of Geography, Osun State College of Education, Ilesa, Osun State	48	25/04/2017
19.	Akinnubi Rufus T (Dr.)	Lecturer, Department of Physics, Adeyemi College of Education, Ondo, Ondo State`	40	10/10/2017
20.	Akintokun Sunday (Mr.)	LG 30, Oke-Alaafia, Iloro Street., Ilesa, Osun State	51	25/04/2017
21	Alade David Ajayi (Chief)	Baale Biiro Okiki, Surulere L.G., Ogbomoso, Oyo State	72	09/04/2017

22.	Alade Jimoh (Mr.)	Biuro Okiki, Ogbomoso, Oyo State	71	10/04/2017
23	Alice Omotoso (Mrs.)	Ajegunle Owode, Ala, Owode, Kwara State	86	13/05/2017
24.	Amuda Odutona (Chief)	The Abese of Ogbomosoland, Ogbomoso, Oyo State	71	10/04/2017
25.	Aniyi Ayodele (Mr.)	Mabolaje Street, Oyo, Oyo State	43	27/04/2017
26.	Asaolu Oluwafemi (Mr.)	ALD 23, Stadium, Ilesa, Osun State	46	25/04/2017
27.	Ayomide P.A.O. (Mr.)	Lecturer, Department of Yoruba Language, Osun State College of Education, Ilesa, Osun State	49	25/04/2017
28.	Bamidele Hanaah (Mrs.)	No. 2x04, Guru Lomi-Lagbala Street. Ilesa, Osun	38	25/04/2017
29.	Comfort Ilufoye (Mrs.)	Ayegun Compound, Laka, Ogbomoso, Oyo State	67	10/04/2017
30.	David Adeniran (Chief)	Ikolaba Of Ogbomosoland, Ogbomoso, Oyo State	72	25/04/2017
31.	Dorcas Fajimi (Mrs.)	Atupoloko Compound, Gaa Lagbedu, Ogbomoso, Oyo State	67	10/04/2017
32.	Elijah Olaniyi Popoola (Chief)	Baale Ijeru of Ogbomosoland, Ogbomoso, Oyo State	71	10/04/2017
33.	Elizabeth Idowu (Mrs)	Arowosegbe Compound, Ijeru Oba, Ogbomoso, Oyo State	86	02/05/2017
34.	Falaye G.A. (Mrs.)	No. F6, Erefuru Street, Ilesa, Osun State	63	25/04/2017
35.	Funso Fatokun (Mr.)	Lecturer, Department of	65	27/04/2017

		Yoruba Language, Federal College of Education (Special) Oyo, Oyo State		
36.	Gbadebo Adeoba (Chief)	Baale Mosifa of Ogbomosoland, Ogbomoso, Oyo State.	65	27/04/2017
37.	Jacob Oyetunde Iyanda (Chief)	Aare Alaasa of Ogbomosoland, Ogbomoso, Oyo State	68	10/04/17
38.	James Ilufoye Alagbe (Chief)	Baale Ikosi of Ogbomosland, Ogbomoso, Oyo State	79	10/04/17
39.	James Oyetunji	Baale Pakiotan of Ogbomosoland, Ogbomoso, Oyo State	67	10/04/17
40.	Jide Oke (Mr.)	Lecturer, Department of Educational Foundation, Osun State College of Education, Ilesa, Osun State	69	25/04/2017
41.	Joseph Adebawale (Mr.)	Ounsa Compound, Isale Ilogboo, Ogbomoso, Oyo State	72	13/05/2017
42.	Joseph Oyewale Ojo (Chief)	Baale Yaku of Ogbomosoland, Ogbomoso, Oyo State	75	10/04/17
43.	Kayode Oyedele (Prince)	No. F8, Ereguru Street, Ilesa, Osun State	73	25/04/2017
44.	Kilani, Akinpelu (Chief)	Baale Taraa of Ogbomosoland, Ogbomoso, Oyo State	71	10/04/17
45.	Kunle Ajibola (Mr)	(A.K.A. Sir Kuluu), Oyo Premier Club, Oyo, Oyo State	53	27/04/2017
46.	Ladigbolu Adepoju (Mr.)	No. 5, Ayo Ladigbolu Street,	44	27/04/2017

		Agodongbo Lay-Out, Oyo, Oyo State		
47.	Muhammad Adisa (Mr.)	Ile Fagbe, Idode, Oyo, Oyo State	76	10/04/2017
48.	Mukaila Oyedeji (Chief)	Baale Abede of Ogbomosoland, Ogbomoso, Oyo State	68	10/04/2017
49.	Oba (Dr.) Oladuni Oyewumi (His Royal Majesty)	Ajagungbade III, JP, CON, CFR, Soun of Ogbomosoland, Ogbomoso, Oyo State	91	10/04/2017
50.	Ogunboyede M.O. (Dr.)	Lecturer, Department of Educational Foundation, Adeyemi College of Education, Ondo, Ondo State	51	25/04/2017
51.	Ogunsakin S.I. Fabarebo (Dr.)	Lecturer, Department of Religious Studies, Adeyemi College of Education, Ondo, Ondo State	68	25/04/2017
52.	Ogunwola Bosede (Mrs.)	Okutu Ope, Ilesa, Osun State	35	25/04/2017
53.	Ogunwole Z.O. (Mr.)	Lecturer, Department of Religious Studies, Adeyemi College of Education, Ondo, Ondo State	61	11/04/2017
54.	Ojo Amos (Mr.)	Arowosegbe Compound, Ijeru Oba, Ogbomoso, Oyo State	46	10/04/2017
55.	Oladeji Amos Olapade	Moya Compound, Gaa- Lagbedu, Ilogboo, Ogbomoso, Oyo State.	72	24/04/2017
56.	Olaiya Afeez (Mr.)	Owode Garage, Oyo, Oyo State	48	27/04/2017

57.	Olaniyan Ayobami (Mrs.)	No. F8, Alejolowo ,Imo Street, Ilesa, Osun State	67	25/04/2017
58.	Olatunbosun Olaitan (Mrs.)	No. ZL 36, Bollounduro, Ilesa, Osun State	38	25/04/2017
59.	Olayimika Serah Ariyo (Mr.)	Odeyemi Street, Iloko Ijesa, Ilesa, Osun State	62	25/04/2017
60.	Olowookere Abiola (Miss)	No. ZK45, Oke-Aanu Street,Ilesa, Osun State	28	25/04/2017
61.	Omobolade S.O. (Mr.)	Principal Assistant Registrar, Division of Academic Affairs, Adeyemi College of Education, Ondo, Ondo State	51	24/02/2017
62.	Osire Johnson (Dr.)	Acting Dean, School of Education, Osun State College of Education, Ilesa, Osun State	62	25/04/2017
63.	Oyedede Ruth (Mrs.)	No. AL 10, Iloro Street, Ilesa, Osun State	61	25/04/2017
64.	Oyedele Ariori (Chief)	Baale Osupa of Ogbomosoland, Ogbomoso, Oyo State	76	10/04/2017
65.	Oyedele Joseph Oyewole (Mr.)	Onileowo Compound, Osupa Eleko, Ogbomoso, Oyo State	44	24/02/2017
66.	Oyegoke Maria (Mrs.)	Ologbo Alagbede Compound, Ijeru Oja, Ogbomoso, Oyo State	81	10/04/2017
67.	Oyetade C.O. (Mrs.)	No. ZX04, Guru, Ilesa, Osun State	43	25/04/2017
68.	Oyewole Abigail (Mrs.)	Atupoloko Compound, Gaa Lagbedu, Ogbomoso, Oyo State	77	10/04/2017
69.	Raji S.M. (Dr.)	Lecturer, Department of	71	01/11/16

		Yoruba Language, Adeyemi College of Education, Ondo, Ondo State		
70.	Ramon Alubata (Mr.)	Jabata, Oyo, Oyo State	49	27/04/2017
71.	Salau Ajadi (Chief)	Jagun of Ogbomosoland, Ogbomoso, Oyo State	74	10/04/2017
72.	Samuel Sobalaje Otolorin (Chief)	Aare-Ago of Ogbomosoland, Ogbomoso, Oyo State	72	10/04/2017
73.	Sanni Rasheedat (Mrs.)	No. ZB 3, Bolounduro Street, Ilesa, Osun State	40	25/04/2017
74.	Saratu Amadu (Mrs.)	Ogakunrin Compound, Ile-Oniyangi Street, Ilorin, Kwara State	83	13/05/2017
75.	Shitu Kolade Ilori (Chief)	Balogun of Ogbomosoland, Ogbomoso, Oyo State	73	10/04/2017
76.	Sikiru Usamatu (Mr.)	Takin Ruwa, Sabongeri, Gusau, Zanfara State.(Interviewed in Owode, Oyo, Oyo State)	76	27/04/2017
77.	Solomon Olukunle (Chief)	Baale Aguodo of Ogbomosoland, Ogbo	71	10/04/2017
78.	Suara Rafatu (Mrs.)	Alajue Compoun, Aruru, Ede, Osun State.	84	13/05/2017
79.	Tijani Abisoye (Chief)	Bara of Ogbomosoland, Ogbomoso, Oyo State	78	10/04/2017
80.	Waheed Hazaaz (Mr.)	Ode Mogba, Isale Oyo, Oyo, Oyo State	49	27/04/2017



## APPENDIX II

### STRUCTURED ORAL INTERVIEW GUIDE

#### **Introduction**

The researcher will formally introduce himself to the interviewees and seek the latter's permission before commencing the interview. The purpose of the research would be made known to the respondent(s), while confidentiality would be guaranteed by the researcher

#### **A. Socio-demographic details**

1. Name:
2. Age:
3. Sex:
4. Level of Education:
5. Occupation:
6. Marital status
7. Location:
8. Date of interview

#### **B. Questions**

1. How does one become wise?
2. What are the attributes of a wise person?
3. Is there any relationship between Mental Age and Chronological Age?
4. What are the variables that can affect Mental Age?
5. Is there any correlation between Age and Wisdom?
6. Does Age determine Wisdom?
7. What are the universal attributes of wisdom?
8. Does wisdom vary or change along cultural context?

### APPENDIX III

**DEPARTMENT OF RELIGIOUS STUDIES  
UNIVERSITY OF IBADAN  
IBADAN, NIGERIA.**

**RESEARCH QUESTIONNAIRE ON AGE AS CORRELATE OF WISDOM IN  
ISRAELITE AND YORUBA WISDOM TRADITIONS**

Dear Respondent,

This research Questionnaire is designed to examine the validity of the correlation between age and wisdom as observed in Israelite wisdom tradition and among the Yoruba people. The research is a Doctoral Thesis to be submitted to the Department of Religious Studies, University of Ibadan, Ibadan, Oyo State. Kindly express your opinion, and your response will be treated as strictly confidential.

Thanks for your anticipated co-operation.

*Yours faithfully,*

**A. O. Iyanda.**

#### **SECTION A: RESPONDENTS' PERSONAL DATA**

(Please, tick (✓) or fill each section correctly as applicable)

1. Name: (Optional)
2. Sex: Male ( ) Female ( )
3. Age: 40-50 ( ) 50-60 ( ) 60-70 ( ) 70 and above ( )
4. Martial Status: Married ( ) Single ( ) Widow ( ) Widower ( )
5. Religion Status: Christianity ( ) Islam ( ) African Traditional Religion ( )
6. Academic Qualification: Primary School ( ) Secondary School ( ) Higher Institution ( )

## SECTION B

Key: A-Agree, D-Disagree, SA-Strongly Agree, SD-Strongly Disagree

### A How one becomes wise

S/N	ITEMS	A	D	SA	SD
1.	Through studying philosophy				
2.	Through a broad spectrum of positive and negative experience				
3.	Through confronting uncertainty				
4.	Through guided spiritual steps				
5.	Through confronting human mortality				
6.	Through learning from wise individuals				
7.	Through growing older as such				
8.	Through enduring and overcoming highly negative events				
9.	Through religious/spiritual experiences				

### B The Attributes of a wise Person

S/N	ITEMS	A	D	SA	SD
1.	Self-reflection and self-criticism				
2.	Orientation towards goodness				
3.	Knowledge and life experience				
4.	Love for humility				
5.	Acceptance of other's perspectives and values				
6.	Ability to understand complex questions and relationships				

### C Relationship Between Mental Age and Chronological Age

S/N	ITEMS	A	D	SA	SD
1.	There is relationship between mental age and chronological age				
2.	Mental age can increase with chronological age				
3.	Mental age can be higher than chronological age				
4.	Chronological age can be higher than mental age				
5.	Environment can affect mental age.				
6.	Exposure can affect mental age				

### D Age as correlate of Wisdom

S/N	ITEMS	A	D	SA	SD

<b>S/N</b>	<b>ITEMS</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>SA</b>	<b>SD</b>
1.	Correlation exists between Age and Wisdom				
2.	Age determines wisdom				
3.	Wisdom is found only among the aged people				
4.	Young people can also be wise, qualified for leadership position				
5.	Wisdom of the aged people is different from that of the young people				
6.	Wisdom does not necessarily come by age				
7.	Wisdom comes naturally				
8.	Wisdom is a divine endowment				

## APPENDIX IV

### LIST OF SELECTED YORUBA WISDOM PROVERBS

- 1) *B'-m[d3 bq lqs[ b7 zgbz, k0 l4 lqk87sz b7 zgbz* (If a child has as many cloths as the elder, he cannot have as many rags).
- 2) *Àgbz k0 s7, 8l5 bzj1, baql3 il3 k5, il3 dahoro*, (Without an elderly person, community and villages collapse).
- 3) *Cni 9 gb-n a bi w5rz n7k6n* (He who is wise has gold in his belly).
- 4) *Cni k0k9 2 y4 l9 m= - l-* (Someone whose planted cocoa germinates is the one that knows how to plant it).
- 5) *Ow9 la f7 n ra csin, [gb-n la f7 n g6n 5n* (We use money to buy a horse but use wisdom to ride on it).
- 6) *Ƶwe lcsin =r=, b7 =r= bq s=n6 0we la 9 f8 wq a*, (Proverbs are the horses for words, for when words are lost we use proverbs to seek them out).
- 7) *Atare r'Ini t5n 8d7 2 se 9 n fi 0b6r9 s2s7n, 0b6r9 k8 bq r'Ini t5n 8d7 2 se k8 bq szn ju atare l[* ( Alligator pepper has someone to take care of it and is mocking *0b6r9* plant, if *0b6r9* plant had someone to tend it like the alligator pepper, it would be more valuable than alligator pepper).
- 8) *{m[ t9 bq m'[w- w2 y90 bq zgbz jcun* (A child that knows how to wash his hand (well-behaved) will eat with (enjoy as) the elder).
- 9) *@tzn k8 7 s'[gb-n* (Deceit is not wisdom).
- 10) *\*r7r7 x'zgbz [gb-n*, (experience is more important than wisdom).
- 11) *{gb-n ju agbqra l[* (Wisdom is more than power).
- 12) *{m[ g= cn7 9 mq k65, k7l9 pa ni b7 0 se ag=*, (The child is foolish (not smart) and you say he should not die, is it not foolishness that kills?)
- 13) *\*r7r7 x'zgbz [gb-n* (Experience is older than wisdom).

- 14) *Oj5 zgbz t9 j8n 9 n7 ohun t9 r7* (The sunken eyes of an elder must have seen something).
- 15) *Lqr8nnzkq k8 7 x'cgb1 abew5* (A wide-traveller is more experienced than a gray-haired).
- 16) *Zt4t4 m5gb9 k8 7 s'=gq, or7 l9 m' zgbz llgzn* (Getting to the forest earlier does not make one the head (leader) of the farmers, it is *or7* (fate or destiny) that determines such).
- 17) *K3ker3 ni bzbq fi j6 [m[ l], k8 7 x'=r= og5n [d5n* (Though a father is said to be little older than his son,s that 'little' is not a matter of twenty years).
- 18) *{w- [m[d3 0 t9 ppc t'zgbzlagbz 0 s8 w[ k4r4gb4* (The child's hand does not reach up to the shelf while that of the elder does not enter into the gourd).
- 19) *Zgbz t9 jc zjc2w2y8n ni y90 r6 igbq r2 d3l3* (An elder that fails to leave the left-over (of meal) for the child will himself pack the empty plates).
- 20) *{m[d3 gb-n zgbz gb-n la fi dq il3 if2,* (The collective wisdom of the aged and young led to the founding of Ife).
- 21) *{m[d3 n bc n7n5 zgbz, zgbz n bc n7n5 [m[d3* (Childishness lives in the elder and elderliness resides in the child).
- 22) *\*r7r7 s'zgbz [gb-n* (Experience is older than (old) age).
- 23) *Zgbz k0 kan [gb-n* (Age does not define wisdom).
- 24) *Cnu zgbz lob8 t7 n gb9* (It is in the mouth of the elders that the matured kolanut tastes better).
- 25) *Zgbz l9 t9r0 9 l0, {ba l9 t9 ey7n erin ffn* (Only the elder can swear by the cult, and only a king is capable of blowing the elephant's horn).
- 26) *Dznd9g9 k[jq zb7n5dq, zt7r7 zjznk5 k87 s'cr6 [m[d3,* (*Dznd9g9* is not easily made and elephant's head is not a load for a small child).
- 27) *\*tzk6n t9 fl se b7 zn=m-, b7 9 bq so b7 zn=m- k0 l4 ta b7 zn=m-, b7 9 bq ti2 ta b7 zn=m-, k0 l4 d6n b7 zn=m-* (A creeper that wants to sprout like sweet potatoes, if it

bears fruits like sweet potatoes, it cannot form (produce tuber) like sweet potatoes, and even, if it forms like sweet potatoes, it cannot be as sweet as sweet potatoes).

- 28)** *B'-m[d3 bq f1 se b7 zgbz [j- or7 k0 n7 j1* (A child may desire to behave like an adult but his age will not allow him).
- 29)** *B'-gb-n [m[d3 bq f0 igba igi 2y8nk6l3 ag= ni 9 padz s[l2 s7* (If the wisdom of a child flies over two hundred trees, it will eventually land at the backyard of foolishness).
- 30)** *Gbogbo [gb-n t7 ahun bq gb-n 2y8n ni y90 mqa t[ 8gb7n* (No matter how wise (smart) the tortoise is, he will still be trailing behind the snail).
- 31)** *B7 9 ti w6 k7 [m[d3 9 gb-n t9 2y8n ni y90 mqa t[ 8yq r2* (No matter the wisdom of the child, it will not surpass that of his mother).
- 32)** *Zgbz k8 7 wz l-jz k7 or7 [m[ titun 9 w-* (The elder in a market place) will not allow a baby's neck (at the back of the mother) to be wrongly placed).
- 33)** *B7 ow9 bq r5 [m[d3 l9j5, q s8 f5n zgbz kz* (If a child is confused in the act of counting money, he will give it to the elder to count).
- 34)** *{gb-n [l[gb-n k8 7 j1 k7 q pe zgbz n7 w4r4* (It is because of wisdom borrowed from others that we cannot call an elder a fool).