

EGYPTIAN PERSONAL PIETY AND ISRAEL'S WISDOM LITERATURE

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ABSTRACT

This article evaluates the movement of Egyptian personal piety and its relation to Israelite wisdom texts. Hymns and prayers of personal piety developed in the New Kingdom at the same time as “heretic” Harpers’ songs and love songs. The personal piety affected also the genre of instructions. The instruction of Amenemope had not only a literary effect on “The Words of the Wise” but also a theological impact on its view of god. Amenemope and Qoheleth agree in the acknowledgement of a god with an awesome power but Qoheleth doesn’t develop a personal piety. The hymns of personal piety didn’t have an independent effect on Qoheleth. The hymns of personal piety share vocabulary and motifs with the Egyptian love songs, which in turn had an effect on Song of Songs. An acquaintance of Song of Songs with texts of personal piety outside of Egyptian love songs did not exist.

1. INTRODUCTION

Comparative studies of Egyptian texts and the Old Testament have fascinated scholars, pastors and laypersons ever since Egyptology became famous. The rediscovery of the forgotten Amarna period and its troublesome king Akhenaton, which had been extinguished from the conscious memory of the people, produced wild speculations without sustainable reasoning. For example, S Freud in his book *Der Mann Moses und die monotheistische Religion* claimed that Israel’s monotheism derived from Akhenaton’s reforms. On the other hand a serious scholarship developed, looking with scrutiny into texts and artefacts, showing the different facets of relatedness. In this article I hope to contribute to the later.

The question is, if the Egyptian movement of personal piety has had any influence in Israel’s wisdom literature. This question arises because three Egyptian groups of texts, which have been influential on Israel’s wisdom literature, have their roots in the same circumstances as the Egyptian move-

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ment of personal piety. These are the Egyptian Love Songs, the “heretical” Harpers’ Songs and to a certain extent the Instruction of Amenemope. All three became famous in the Ramesside period but have their roots in the Amarna Period.²

Fox has shown “that some, perhaps much, literary transmission occurred” (1985:191) between Egyptian Love Songs and Song of Songs. The same has been proved for the “heretic” Harpers’ songs and Qoheleth (Humbert 1929, Assmann 1977, Uehlinger 1997, Fischer 1999), and the Instruction of Amenemope and The Words of the Wise in Proverbs 22:17-24:22 (Erman 1924). Further, the generic and structural similarity between Akhenaton’s Great Hymn to the Aton and Psalm 104 may be added (Aufret 1981:137seq).

The “heretical” Harpers’ songs occur from the late 18th dynasty onwards, the love songs appear in the 19th and 20th dynasty and the Instruction of Amenemope in the late 20th dynasty. Even if there is no consensus on the dating of the biblical texts they are later than this. Therefore, the way of borrowing will always have been from Egypt to Israel.³

The movement of personal piety was boosted by the persecutions of Akhenaton (Assmann 1991:258ff) and influenced the Instruction of Amenemope. The movement of personal piety as well as Love Songs and Harpers’ Songs were motivated by the persecutions of Akhenaton. Therefore, the question arises if the movement of personal piety influenced not only Amenemope but also Love and Harpers’ Songs. Further we have to ask if the movement of personal piety had an effect on the biblical texts. Römheld (1989) looked in his doctoral thesis into the Instruction of Amenemope and The Words of the Wise (Prov 22:17-24:22) and answered this question negatively. The elements of personal piety are said to have been dropped for theological reasons. This result will have to be re-examined. For Qoheleth and Song of Songs this study has yet to be done.

2 Lichtheim (1997a:48) recently defended an earlier dating of the “heretic” Harpers’ Songs in the Middle Kingdom. For the dating in the New Kingdom see Fischer (1999:140-42).

3 Lange (1925:14) and Oesterley (1927:105) had promoted an Egyptian dependence from a Semitic original.

2. PERSONAL PIETY

2.1 Definition

Personal piety is piety of the heart. It is a manner of relating to a god by having an individual relationship. This god or goddess is not an impersonal supernatural being but has a name that defines and identifies his or her personality. The god is the one who directs the thoughts and decisions of the individual. The believer interprets his own history or fate as the will of the personal god he worships (Assmann 1991:265). The believer turns to a god for divine guidance and forgiveness of failings (Lichtheim 1997c:46). The god in return cares personally for the worshipper.

2.2 Personal piety in Israel

Albertz (1994) pointed out possible roots of personal piety in Israel and locates it in the family. Israel's history is presented as the history of a nomadic family. The patriarch of a family has a nearness to God the others are lacking. Therefore we don't find a division between an official cult and family piety but have the piety of an individual who is the first in his family. The family members are following a God who is presented as their God who protects and cares for them (Gen 26:3,22). Personal piety is "orientated on family experiences, especially the father/mother-child relationship" (Albertz 1994:19). In Israel's religion this personal element never ceased. In the time of the kings as Israel had grown into a state the function of officials, that is the priests and the kings, was strengthened but the people were not cut off from participating. All kinds of people could be called into the prophetic office. An individual, like Hannah, could not only participate in the religious feast,⁴ but could also speak personally to her God (1 Sam 1:13-15).

In the exilic and postexilic periods Israel the nation was reduced to a family basis. Therefore, family history of the patriarchs was a welcome basis for identification (Albertz 1994:404) and personal piety found its way in the exilic liturgy of lamentation (Albertz 1994:401) referring back to creation and fathership:

Yet, o Yahweh, you are our Father; we are the clay, and you are our potter; we are all the work of your hand⁵ (Is 64:7).

⁴ These were orgiastic feasts. Probably that is why Eli thought that she was drunk.

⁵ Here, the Egyptian image of the god Chnum who is forming mankind on the potter's wheel is in the background.

The loss of the temple and land after the fall of Jerusalem (586 BC) did not only encourage the recording of Israel's history and covenant relationship but fostered also the personal piety as it can be seen in several exilic and postexilic psalms. The one who puts his trust in God is not disappointed:

Yahweh is my portion, says my soul, therefore I will hope in him
(Lam 3:24).

He makes the experience of salvation and loving care:

I called on your name, o Yahweh, from the depths of the pit; you heard my plea, Do not close your ear to my cry for help, but give me relief! You came near when I called on you; you said, do not fear! You have taken up my cause, Yahweh, you have redeemed my life (Lam 3:55-58).

Personal piety is not the result of a crisis but a crisis can provide a fertile ground for it because it provokes a reaction towards the old *status quo*. A crisis can lead into the abandoning of faith, that is nihilism, and the accusation of an arbitrary god, or into a personal piety that focuses on the inner relationship. The believer trusts that God directs the world and the fate of him as an individual in an unpredictable way.

In the Old Testament these two different crises reactions are well known from the book of Job (Fischer 2000:35-39). Job's wife has a nihilistic approach and proposes to curse God. For her, piety without reward is of no value (Job 2:9). Instead, Job gradually develops a deeper personal piety. He changes into a believer, who realizes that his former worship was without a personal relationship to God (Job 42:5.6). This inner relationship of loving and trusting God despite the outside facts is also expressed in Psalm 73:25-26:

Whom have I in heaven but you? And there is nothing on earth that I desire other than you. My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever.

In Israel it is evident that individualistic tendencies are not necessarily a late stadium of religion (Albertz 1994:9). Albertz (1994:402) suggests that

in the exilic period ... what were once family liturgies of thanksgiving could develop into ingredients of the main cult in which someone who had been saved told his story in public (Albertz 1994:402).

The continued presence of personal piety in Israel makes her at all times open for a reception of familiar thoughts. Therefore, it will have to be investigated, if those Egyptian texts from the Ramesside period that Israel bor-

rowed from Egypt were also influential in the field of personal piety which developed at that time in Egypt.

2.3 Personal piety in Egypt

For the Egyptians expressions of the personal worship of gods always existed. Sinuhe (156-164) called for mercy and the change of his fate from God. The Shipwrecked Sailor gave a burnt offering after he had been saved and found plenty of food (55). Both experience God in a foreign country. In Egypt this personal nearness was not important as long as the king was the representative of God and the cult was functioning (Assmann 2000:44). Nevertheless, old examples of religious expressions are personal names, graffiti on temple walls, and amulets. However, the religious phenomenon of personal piety was boosted by the persecutions of the Amarna Period. Akhenaton's monolatric reforms banned the other gods and their worship. Their temples were closed and the believers were chased into the underground. The cult with its extensive feasts was abandoned. The political impact of the religion was gone (Assmann 1991:265). Worship without cult lead to an emphasis on the personal trust in a god. At the same time Akhenaton's worship of Aton had a long lasting effect, influencing the personal piety as well. A common scene of the Amarna art shows the change that took place through Akhenaton's monolatric reforms. Akhenaton and his family worship before Aton, who is merely presented as a sun disc (there were no cultic images), and holds before each one's nose an ANKH, the symbol of life (Schneider 1996:97).⁶ The art of Akhenaton expresses the intimacy of the royal family and Aton, showing that "Aton's influence extended to personal emotions" (Fox 1985:183). This personal relationship became part of the personal piety. The personal prayers and hymns of the Ramesside period express feelings of love, gratitude and reference to god more extensively than other periods. Therefore, the movement of personal piety was ambivalent. It was a development into deeper, personal faith but it was also the decline of religion, because it withdrew into privacy. Helck (1986:71) concludes:

Es entsteht das, was wir beschönigend 'persönliche Frömmigkeit' nennen; in Wahrheit ist es die Aufgabe des Strebens nach Recht und Gerechtigkeit und die Übergabe der Person und des Lebens an den unausforschlichen Ratschluß eines Gottes. Hier kapituliert man vor den übermächtigen chaotischen Kräften innerhalb der ägyptischen Gesellschaft.

6 He is the one who creates and keeps somebody alive. Cf Gen 2:7.

Personal piety strengthened the role of the individual. Individuality, and not the community or the cult, was the place of religion. The service and loyalty to the king as the one who guaranteed the world order was secondary to the service and loyalty to the god.

2.3.1 TT 139 — an example of personal piety

The main genre revealing texts of personal piety is the hymn. It is the typical form of speech of an explicit theology (Assmann 1991:194). Hymns and prayers of personal piety show that what began as an underground movement gradually gained acceptance after the persecution. The instruction genre, as represented by Amenemope joins in partly. It doesn't have any praise of the god but agrees in its view of god.

A non-cultic prayer from TT 139 is an example of personal piety. It was written down in the time of Semenckare, the son in law and successor of Akhenaton. Nevertheless, it still reflects the time of persecution. This text has already incorporated the emotional affectedness typical for the art of Amarna but expresses also the individual trust of the personal piety. The priest prays to Amun:

...My heart (desires) to see you, lord of the Persea trees,
 when your heart receives flower-wreaths!
 You give saturation without eating,
 you give drunkenness without drinking.
 My heart longs for seeing you, joy of my heart,
 Amun, you fighter for the poor!
 You are the father of the motherless,
 the husband of the widow.
 How lovely it is, to mention your name,
 he is like the taste of life.
 he is like the taste of bread for a child,
 (like) clothing for the naked,
 like the fragrance of a flower-twig
 at the time of the summerheat ...
 You are like [...] with [...] his father [...]
 You are like the taste of [...] of the ruler
 the breath for the one, who has been in prison.
 Graceful [...]

Turn again to us, you Lord of the eternity,
 you were here as nothing had come into existence
 you will be here when they have come to an end.
 You let me see darkness, which you give -
 shine to me, that I see you.
 As truly as your Ka continues, your beautiful face continues,
 you will come from a distance
 and give that the servant, the scribe Pawah, will see you ...
 Expel the fear. Give joy
 into the heart of the people!
 How rejoices the face that sees you, Amun!
 It is in a feast day by day (ÄHG 147).⁷

This hymn to Amun expresses a faith that focuses on the god for his own sake and praises his superiority above and priority before all. The worshipper hopes for a change of the situation. He is longing for a feast, that is a public celebration of Amun, where his statue is wreathed. But as long as this is not the case he still praises his god and celebrates a daily feast in his heart.

3. PERSONAL PIETY AND THE FEAST

The feast played an important role for the personal piety. The religious feasts were occasions for ordinary people to participate in the cult. The official cult before the Amarna period was exclusive. The king and an upper class were involved in it. Individuals got involved as part-time priests or temple servants but this was not for the ordinary people. In the official religion, which found its expression in cult, cosmos and myth, intimacy existed. It was only limited to a certain group of people who were allowed to enter into the temple, that is the priests and the king and sometimes also his family.⁸ The king represented the god on his behalf and guaranteed the prosperity of the nation. Who followed his laws participated in the cult and prospered.

But this official religion should not make us think that the ordinary people didn't express their piety in a festive way. It would be wrong to assume a religious unity (Baines 1987:80). The contrast between official reli-

⁷ All hymns and prayers with ÄHG as source are translated from Assmann 1975.

⁸ In the Amarna period as well as in Assyria, the queen and other family members were allowed to join (Berlejung 1998:82).

gion and personal piety was not an absolute one. At the public feasts the ordinary people could participate in the official religion and create non-formal ways of relating to a god. The processions of the gods in their statues were the occasions when the gods could be seen. Assmann (1996:261) thinks that the prayer-ostraca from Thebes were put on the way the gods would take in their procession on the occasion of the Beautiful Festival of the Valley. The gods were present in their statues and the people tried to find ways of communicating with them.

The priest in TT 139 longed for the public worship of Amun but he had internalized the feast. He found “saturation without eating” and “drunkenness without drinking”. In his heart he had joy and celebrated Amun in a “feast day by day”.

The feast was not only an occasion for personal piety but also the means of transmission for handing down Love Songs and “heretic” Harpers’ Songs (Fischer 1999:233-234).

4. PERSONAL PIETY IN ISRAEL’S WISDOM TEXTS

Qoheleth acknowledges God as the creator (Eccl 3:11,20) and speaks in a general term about the fear of God (Eccl 5:6). He propagates a festive joy, which may be enjoyed in the fear of God and be increased because of the vanity and transitoriness of life (Eccl 11:9seq) but he doesn’t develop a personal piety.

The Words of the Wise (Prov 22:17-24:19) are instructions for young men deriving from the observation of the world. At first glance, they seem to have nothing to do with personal piety but with the knowledge of the rules and orders of this world. Surprisingly, the purpose of The Words of the Wise is to create trust in Yahweh. “Apply your mind to my teaching... so that your trust may be in Yahweh” (Prov 22:17b,19a). Therefore, deeper research is needed to explain the piety of The Words of the Wise.

That Song of Songs found its way into the canon has been much disputed because of its secularism. Song of Songs refers to God only two times and both in a hidden way. First in an oath to the gazelles and wild, which alludes to the two names of God: “Zebaoth” and “El Shadday” (2:7)⁹ and second in adding “Yah” as the source of love: love is a flame of Yah(weh)

9 For an explanation see Murphy 1990:133.

(8:6). In Song of Songs no personal piety is evident but the role between the lovers is close to a person and his or her God.

Qoheleth, The Words of the Wise, and Song of Songs are not counted as texts of personal piety but the following research is now undertaken to find out if this view can be maintained.

5. EGYPTIAN TEXTS OF PERSONAL PIETY AND BIBLICAL WISDOM TEXTS

5.1 Personal piety in Amenemope and The Words of the Wise

In the traditional concept of world order the gods would support or re-establish the Ma'at. The gods were present to put up the Ma'at against chaotic powers. The chaotic circumstances of the first and second intermediate period created some doubt about a closed retributive concept. The crisis of Akhenaton's politics added to it. Hence, we find in Amenemope a different approach, contrasting the old Ma'at conception. Ma'at is not anymore a fixed world-order but a gift of god: "Ma'at is a great gift of god, he gives it to whom he wishes" (Amenemope XXI.5.6).

In this new understanding of Ma'at the individual no longer fits in a world-order but in the will of god, who maintains the world-order. Amenemope looks for orientation in this world on the basis of personal piety as it had developed in the New Kingdom (Lichtheim 1997:42-43). God is unpredictable but also caring. Contingency and change belong to life but Amenemope puts his confidence in god:

Do not lie down in fear of tomorrow:
Comes day, how will tomorrow be?
Man ignores how tomorrow will be;
God is ever in his perfection,
Man is ever in his failure
The words men say are one thing,
The deeds of the god are another (XIX 10-16).

In the personal piety the natural causality of a world immanent connective justice is replaced by connectivity according to god's will. Therefore, obedience and humility before god have taken the place of solidarity and integration in the community.

Don't tease a man who is in the hand of god,
 Nor be angry with him for his failings.
 Man is clay and straw,
 The God is his builder.
 He tears down, he builds up daily,
 He makes a thousand poor by his will,
 He makes a thousand men into chiefs (XXIV 11-17).

God directs the individual as it is exemplified with the tongue:

Keep firm your heart, steady your heart,
 do not steer with your tongue;
 If a man's tongue is the boat's rudder,
 the Lord of all is yet its pilot (XX 3-6).

Amenemope puts his trust in god. Because there is no proper term for "trust" in Egyptian, this is expressed in the metaphor of being silent before god (Assmann 1996:264), sometimes in connection with another metaphor namely seeking rescue in the arms of god.

Indeed you do not know the plans of god,
 and should not weep for tomorrow;
 Settle in the arms of the god,
 your silence will overthrow them (XXII 5-9; ditto XXIII 8-11).

For this kind of piety the heart is important. Amenemope views the heart as the god that dwells in man (Lichtheim 1997b:116 n.1): "The Instructions for well-being ... to let his heart enter his shrine." (Amenemope I.2.9). Also here, Amenemope stands in the continuation of the Amarna theology. That god lives in the heart of a person is part of the intimacy is expressed in Akhenaton's Great Hymn to Aton: "And you are in my heart; there is no other who knows you except for your son, Akhenaton."¹⁰ It becomes common in Ramesside inscriptions. The one who leads a good life is he "who has placed Amun in his heart."¹¹ The ideal is the heart, which is guided by god (Assmann 1996:260).¹²

10 From the tomb of Ay. No 45 in Foster 1995:106.

11 KRI VII 410.13-14, quoted from Lichtheim 1997c:56. Prayer of Karo to Re, Mut and Khonsu.

12 A cube statue of Nebneteru, a priest of Amun from Karnak, dating from the third intermediate period (Osorkon II, 22. Dynasty) reveals another play on the

The Words of the Wise agree in the trust in God and in the importance of the heart:

So that your trust may be in Yahweh, I have made them known to you today — yes, to you (Prov 22:19).

My child, give me your heart, and let your eyes observe (delight in) my ways (Prov 23:26).

Of course, similar expressions are used elsewhere in Proverbs: “Trust in Yahweh with all your heart, and do not rely on your own insight” (Prov 3:5). However, the difference is that in these wisdom texts Yahweh is predictable, reliable, and comprehensible because he acts in accordance to his rules.¹³ Contrarily, in Amenemope and The Words of the Wise, despite all rules, an unpredictable element remains:

Do not rejoice when your enemies fall and do not let your heart be glad when they stumble, or else Yahweh might see it and be displeased, and turn away his anger from them... My child, fear Yahweh and the king, and do not disobey either of them; for disaster comes from them suddenly, and who knows the ruin that both can bring? (Prov 24:17,18,21,22)

Here, the fixed retributive concept of a world order has already been replaced by the possibilities of an unpredictable God. “God will repay a man as his deeds deserve” (24:12) but poverty is not a misfortune and worldly success no blessing in itself. Important are other values, namely humbleness before God, and kindness. Therefore, God might intervene and defend a person in misfortune:

Do not remove an ancient landmark or encroach on the fields of orphans, for their redeemer is strong; he will plead their cause against you (Prov 23:10,11).

word pair heart and god. It brings the proximity of Amun into connection with the festive enjoyment of life, fulfilling one’s own wishes of the heart:

Lucky the one who spends his lifetime following his heart in the grace of Amun ... Give reward to the one who is following his heart! A god is the heart, his chapel the stomach; he rejoices when his limbs are celebrating feasts (Cairo CG 42225, German translation in Jansen-Winkel 1985:122).

This is not a personal piety as we met in the Amarna Period.

13 Most interpreters date Prov 1-9 late. It should not be forgotten that Kayatz (1966) and Kitchen (1977) did comparative studies with Egyptian instructions and brought forward arguments for an early dating and Egyptian influence.

In Amenemope actions against a person are also directed against god:

If you see someone who cheats,
 Keep your distance from him.
 Do not covet copper,
 Disdain beautiful linen;
 What good is one dressed in finery,
 If he cheats before the god?
 Faience disguised as gold,
 Comes day it turns to lead (XVIII 8-14).

Römheld (1989:180-81) did not find personal piety in Prov 22-24. In his view there is nothing pointing to a personal relationship with God. According to him the center of strength for life lies in the individual and not in his God. Römheld does not see that individuality derives from the breakdown of a fixed world-order. To fear Yahweh is the main theological concern¹⁴ but doesn't develop into a personal relationship. Amenemope and Proverbs differ from the classic retributive concept and develop a new perspective on God, who intervenes for the sake or punishment of an individual. In Amenemope the care of the god for the individual is developed more strongly than in The Words of the Wise:

You shall pray to the Aten when he rises,
 Saying: "Grant me well-being and health";
 He will give you your need for this life,
 And you will be safe from fear (X 12-15).

5.2 Personal piety in Qoheleth

5.2.1 Personal piety, Amenemope and Qoheleth

Qoheleth reflects a crisis in the wisdom movement, which might be the result of a change of political circumstances. A mechanistic *Tun-Ergeben-Zusammenhang* failed as well as a retributive concept of God who blesses or punishes according to a world order. Still, Qoheleth does not turn to nihilism. He observes the vanity of life but keeps talking about God. Vanity and God are keywords of Qoheleth. As in traditional instructions Qoheleth presents

¹⁴ In the Words of the Wise the fear of Yahweh comprises a theological inclusion (22:19; 24:12).

many proverbs for teaching his disciples but his main concern is to show the failure of wisdom and from there to turn to a fear of God. The deeds and plans of people are vanity but this judgement is not applied to God. Qoheleth emphasizes the fear of God. He does not complain against God but acknowledges that God has the world at his disposal (Pfeiffer 1965:138).

In Amenemope and Qoheleth god is not the *deus absconditus*, who stands distanced from his world but he rules the world out of his will, while men can't figure it out. Qoheleth observes chaotic unpredictable circumstances but also shows that an unpredictable God stands behind it.

There is an evil that I have seen under the sun, and it lies heavy upon humankind: those to whom God gives wealth, possessions, and honour, so that they lack nothing of all that they desire, God does not enable them to enjoy these things, but a stranger enjoys them (Eccl 6:1,2).

When I applied my mind to know wisdom, and to see the business that is done on earth, how one's eyes see sleep neither day nor night, then I saw all the work of God, that no one can find out what is happening under the sun. However much they may toil in seeking, they will not find it out; even though those who are wise claim to know, they cannot find it out (Eccl 8:16,17).

Qoheleth does not develop a personal piety based on a trust and love relationship to God but he acknowledges the awesome power of an unpredictable God. This element gets greater emphasis than in The Words of the Wise, which, like Amenemope, still tries to develop a positive instructional wisdom.

5.2.2 Personal piety, Harpers' songs and Qoheleth

Joy, sorrow and *memento mori*

Hymns of personal piety and Harpers' songs have some elements in common, which they share with Qoheleth: the call for joy in view of the shortness of life and the avoidance or forgetting of sorrow. The believer commits himself to God to receive from him a good life despite the shortness of life.

I make myself a good stay until my time is full
 By committing myself totally to him, he is my landing-peg¹⁵...
 I committed myself to Amun and found the good...
 One says, there is no friendliness.
 The other one says there is no community.
 Trample the need into the ground. Give joy!
 A good time without sorrow of the heart!
 How short is the lifespan! She passes away (ÄHG 186:3,4,7,15-18).

The “heretic” Harpers’ Songs take up the same motifs but celebrate for the opposite reasons. They call for a good day until death comes.¹⁶

Follow your heart as long as it is. Celebrate a good day, honorable.
 Overlook all evil and remember the joy until the day comes that you arrive in the land that loves silence (Paser, TT 106).

Heap up your joys, let your heart not sink! Follow your heart and your happiness (Intef).

... that they spent their good hours in joy ... the period that eats the people ... Think about the day you are going to the land that mixes the people. (Follow your heart) intensively. One who went doesn’t return (Neferhotep I).¹⁷

Not a god but ones own heart is the guideline for decision making. This stands in contrast to the personal piety where a god, as we have seen, lives in the heart of the individual.

The festivity of Qohelet’s call for joy is similar. He combines a reminder of death (*memento mori*) with the call to follow the heart.

Even those who live many years should rejoice in them all; yet let them remember that the days of darkness will be many. All that

15 The landing-peg was a common metaphor for death and was also used in the “heretic” Harpers’ songs: “We do not detest the landing-peg” (Ra’ia in Saqqara quoted in Fischer 1999:175).

16 For translations and commentary on “heretic” Harpers’ Songs see Fischer 1999:150-175.

17 Cf “Eat, drink; do not let your heart be anxious” (Wenamun 2.70). “Follow the good day. Forget the sorrow.” (The dispute between a man and his Ba). In the Roman period the stela of Taimhotep (B M 147) states:

Make yourself a good day! Follow your heart by day and night! Let no sorrow in your heart. Value the years spent on earth.

comes is vanity. Rejoice, young man, while you are young, and let your heart cheer you in the days of your youth. Follow the inclination of your heart and the desire of your eyes, but know that for all these things God will bring you into judgment (Eccl 11:8,9)

Saturation and Poverty

Saturation without food is expressed in Amenemope favoring the relationship with god before earthly success. This develops into a new teaching of poverty as an acceptable state of a blessed person, if it is taken as a gift of god.

Better is a bushel given you by the god,
than five thousand through wrongdoing (IIX 19-20).

Better is poverty in the hand of the god,
than wealth in the storehouse;
Better is bread with a happy heart
than wealth with vexation (IX 5-9).

Qoheleth uses not only the form of a Tov-saying but also favours the poor: "Better is a poor but wise youth than an old but foolish king, who will no longer take advice" (Eccl 4:13). His whole teaching leads to a piety that accepts the good gifts of life as taken from the hand of God.

There is nothing better for mortals than to eat and drink, and find enjoyment in their toil. This also, I saw, is from the hand of God. "For apart from me who can eat or who can have sorrow?" For to the one who pleases him God gives wisdom and knowledge and joy; but to the sinner he gives the work of gathering and heaping, only to give to one who pleases God. This also is vanity and a chasing after wind (Eccl 2:24-26).

Qoheleth develops a teaching about the poor but he doesn't replace earthly satisfaction and saturation by the nearness of God. God remains present in the world, intervenes into the life of an individual but does not come into an intimate relationship with an individual. Texts of personal piety and Harpers' Songs have elements in common with Qoheleth. Where the Harpers' Songs differ from the texts of personal piety, Qoheleth agrees with the Harpers' Songs and differs from the texts of personal piety.

5.3 Personal piety, Egyptian love songs, and Song of Songs

In the personal piety the believer seeks to be near to God. He talks to God. Elements of outer satisfaction are internalized. The presence of God leads to celebration and gives saturation. The believer longs for the appearance of the beauty of God so that the time of outer separation may be over. The believer longs with all his heart for the presence of God. All these are elements of a personal relationship that may also be found in a human relationship. Therefore, we can expect to find them in Egyptian love songs and in Song of Songs. If we take into account that personal piety and Egyptian love songs prosper at about the same time, that is in the post Amarna period of the New Kingdom, we have to ask, if a relationship can be seen.

5.3.1 Prayer and the application of divine attributes to the beloved one

Love songs and Song of Songs were presented for the entertainment of an audience and had a non-cultic setting. Personal piety instead belonged to a religious sphere but these two groups meet in the feast. Feasts in Egypt even if they were celebrated for non-religious reasons were always in the sphere of religion. Even the secular love songs refer to gods.

In the Amarna period individualism developed, which was expressed in the personal piety as the relationship of the individual with a god. Also the love songs show a stronger consciousness of the individual not only in expressing their love to each other but also in their relation to a god. In the personal piety god directs the fate of a person and is accessible through prayer. This is also applied in the field of love. It is not a god but the experience of love, which is the superior element, the loving ones are subordinating to (Hermann 1959:84). Nevertheless, a god may join in as the one who supports the loving ones.

A young man is going to meet his beloved and says: I'll say to Ptah, the Lord of the Truth: "Give me my sister tonight!" (no 5).¹⁸ A woman prays: "I say to my heart within me in the prayers: Give me my prince tonight." (no 13).

This praise song also applies divine attitudes and characteristics to the beloved as she longs for his presence:

18 Papyrus Harris 500. The love songs are numbered according to Fox 1985.

For are you not health and life (itself)?
 The approach [of your face
 will give me j]oy for your health,
 (for) my heart seeks you (no 13).

5.3.2 Elements of attraction: The presence of God instead of the feast

The believer longed for the feast with its intoxicating elements touching all senses.

Bring me into the city, Amun
 because I love her.
 I love your city more than bread and beer, Amun,
 more as clothes and anointing oil.
 The ground of your place
 I love more than the nard of another country (ÄHG 185:12-15)

Sweeter is the bread of the one who is in her
 as a sea of sand full of the fat of a goose
 sweeter for her is ... as honey
 drinking of her until drunkenness (ÄHG 183:7-10).

Bread and beer do more than satisfying thirst and hunger; they fill up. Nard and anointing oil touch the senses of smell and feeling. Honey touches the sense of taste and drunkenness affects all senses of the body. The worshipper longed for the feast and the place, that is Thebes, where such feasts were celebrated. Song of Songs turns the connection of these festive, orgiastic elements with the beloved city and her god Amun, into a feast with the beloved woman:

I gather my myrrh with my spice, I eat my honeycomb with my honey, I drink my wine with my milk. Eat, friends, drink, and be drunk with love (Song of Songs 5:1).

5.3.3 Saturation

The element of saturation is primarily not linked to a place, that is Thebes, but to a god. Amun gives saturation. The inner experience of the relationship with the god overcomes and replaces the need. The believer has saturation without food, drunkenness without a drink: "You give saturation without eating, you give drunkenness without drinking" (ÄHG 147).

The motif of saturation continued after the persecution. A praise of Ramses III for Amun Re says:

Who turns around to see you, his eye is sparkling, you let him be saturated by your beauty, which is in heaven (ÄHG 196, line 65-66).

The same is expressed in Egyptian love songs:

Could I see you with every glance, it would be better for me than to eat or drink (no. 18). Your form revives¹⁹ hearts. Desire ... your voice, which makes (my) body strong, ... (no 20A).

Song of Songs has the same motif but no similarity in the words. There it is part of the praise of the lady. Her affection is valued higher than food:

Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth! For your love is better than wine (1:2). The king has brought me into his chambers. We will exult and rejoice in you; we will extol your love more than wine ... (1:4). How sweet is your love, my sister, my bride! How much better is your love than wine, and the fragrance of your oils than any spice! Your lips distill nectar, my bride; honey and milk are under your tongue; the scent of your garments is like the scent of Lebanon (4:10,11).

5.3.4 Seeing and praising the Beauty (Appearance and feast)

The believer trusts that god will come. His appearance will cast out fear and lead to celebration:

You will come from a distance
and give that the servant ... will see you...
Expel the fear. Give joy
Into the heart of the people
How rejoices the face that sees you, Amun:
It is in a feast day by day (ÄHG 147).

The believer is longing to see god's beauty. The life spending power of the sun god Re stands behind the importance of the appearance.

19 Or: "nourishes". See Fox 1985:33.

May he grant me, that my eyes will see his beauty (ÄHG 148:10).
 I praise your beauty - be graceful to me (ÄHG 157:5).
 May you give that I see your beauty, as often as you appear (ÄHG 163:13).
 You are beautiful at every hour; mankind lives from your sight (ÄHG 195:130).

In the love songs and in Song of Songs the distance of the lovers and the overcoming of separation is a common theme (Song of Songs 2:9,10,13; 3:1), as well as the praise of her beauty.

How beautiful you are, my love, how very beautiful! (Song of Songs 4:1).
 You are beautiful as Tirzah, my love, comely as Jerusalem, terrible as an army with banners. Turn away your eyes from me, for they overwhelm me! (Song of Songs 6:4,5).

5.3.5 Longing

The *paraclausytron*, the lover waiting outside for the beloved, is well known from Egyptian love songs (nos 7, 46, and 47) and from Song of Songs (Fox 1985:282):

I passed by her house in a daze. I knocked, but it was not opened to me. A fine night for our doorkeeper! (Chester Beatty I, Fox no 47).

Song of Songs states:

My beloved is like a gazelle, or a young stag. Behold, there he stands behind our wall, gazing in at the windows, looking through the lattice (Song of Songs 2:9). I slept, but my heart was awake. Listen, my beloved is knocking. "Open to me, my sister, my love, my dove, my perfect one; for my head is wet with dew, my locks with the drops of the night" (Song of Songs 5:2).

In the religious setting of personal piety this sounds:

My body stayed overnight in the shade of your face, I spent the night in your outer court (ÄHG 155:16,17). I spent the day walking about in the (temple) court. I spent the night [...]. (ÄHG 176).²⁰

20 This fragmentary stanza is missing in Assmann's translation and quoted from Fox 1997:47.

5.3.6 Lovesickness and the role of the heart

In texts of personal piety and in love-songs lovesickness is expressed as the fainting of the heart, because of strong affection the heart can leave a person.

My heart it is not in my body. All my bodyparts are not well:
My heart is tired of seeing, My ear it doesn't hear ... (ÄHG 184:12-13).

A love song from Chester Beatty I states:

My heart quickly scurries away when I think of your love. It does not let me act like a (normal) person - it has leapt out of its place (Fox no 34)

The lover in Song of Songs makes the same experience:

You have ravished my heart, my sister, my bride, you have ravished my heart with a glance of your eyes, with one jewel of your necklace (Song of Songs 4:9)

He differs in his focus, which has moved from the mere emotional state to the relationship, which has affected him (Fox 1985:326). This text surprises because in Israel the heart is not the place of emotions or love but of decision-making (Schroer & Staubli 1998:47). That lovesickness affects the whole body is also expressed in Song of Songs 5:5: "I am faint with love." This is reminiscent of "I passed by her house in a daze" (Love Songs no 47).

6. CONCLUSION

This study has provided deeper insight into the influence the Egyptian movement of personal piety had on the instruction of Amenemope and love songs, as well as in a counter reaction on the "heretic" Harpers' songs. No direct link between the movement of personal piety and Israelite piety could be shown. However, the element of personal piety, being a fundamental part of Israelite faith, was open for its reception. Texts of personal piety, Egyptian love songs, and Song of Songs agree in the usage of festive vocabulary. They long for a festival but prioritize the fellowship, unification, or at least the presence (=seeing) of the one they are yearning for. There they find satisfaction and saturation.

In Egypt, the movement of personal piety permeated the society of the Post-Amarna period and had an effect on its literary witnesses — in particular the instruction of Amenemope but also on texts which initially were linked to feasts, that is love and Harpers' songs. The instruction of Amenemope had not only a literary effect on *The Words of the Wise* but

also a theological impact on its view of God. They agree in the view of God as being unpredictable and to be feared.

Amenemope and Qoheleth agree in the acknowledgement of a god with an awesome power but Qoheleth doesn't develop a personal piety. The hymns of personal piety take up festive elements, which Qoheleth also propagates. These elements are also known from the Harpers' songs. The hymns of personal piety didn't have an independent effect on Qoheleth. It is similar with Song of Songs. The hymns of personal piety share vocabulary and motifs with the Egyptian love songs. This can be explained by the *Zeitgeist* of the post-Amarna period. The borrowing from religious expressions of devotion to a beloved person is a human phenomenon. This was the case between hymns of personal piety and love songs. An acquaintance of Song of Songs with texts of personal piety outside of Egyptian love songs cannot be confirmed.

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