



# **Wise King, Royal Fool: Semiotics, Satire and Proverbs 1-9 (The Library of Hebrew Bible/Old Testament Studies)**

*Johnny Miles*

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This study focuses on a reading of Proverbs 1-9 as satire and argues that it alludes to two points of critique against Solomon: his political policy of socio-economic injustice and his numerous sexual (in)discretions. That Solomon abandoned his divinely proscribed duty only evinces his lack of "fear of Yahweh". First, Solomon demonstrates his lack of discernment by an inability to rule with righteousness, justice and equity because of administrative policies that bled the innocent dry of their resources for his own self-aggrandizement. Second, Solomon's sexual behavior reflects his need of Wisdom as the personification of eroticism.

The absence of the "fear of Yahweh" in Solomon prompts the poet's reproof in Proverbs 1-9 that he should resume his proper role of Torah meditation. How the "son" responds to the decision posed to him remains decidedly open-ended, since satire generally offers no denouement to its plot. Nevertheless, the signs of this satiric poetry intimate the wise king as a royal fool.

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