Abstract for short paper, OTSEM II meeting in Skálholt, September 2010
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Reflections of Heuristic Learning in Psalm 73

Even though Psalm 73 is well rooted as a wisdom text and its didactic function has become essential to most of the scholars working with it, the question "what sort of learning does this psalm reflect?" still needs answering. In Psalm 73 the "I" person is clearly the subject of learning, an uncommon find when working with education in ancient Israel. Most of the educational discussions have been based on work done on the Proverbs and other texts like the Proverbs where the subject of learning never responds to the instructions given by the teacher. In Psalm 73 we find a subject of learning without a teacher. This stands in remarkable contrast to other didactic wisdom texts, where we normally hear the teacher's voice while the student's voice is missing.

When constructing an image of how education worked in ancient Israel, the thought of a silent (or missing) subject of learning has suited the idea of a school-like system in ancient Israel very well. Scholars have created a picture of how education took place where the teacher has absolute authority and the student is forced into silence. This picture may be right for some texts, but if we include Psalm 73 when working on education in ancient Israel, the idea of a school-like system is perhaps too narrow. And do we really need a school system to find or place a process of learning? The answer is of course no. Albeit we might find a school-like system reflected in the Proverbs, we might nevertheless find reflections of heuristic learning in Psalm 73. In this paper I will therefore read Psalm 73 looking for reflections of heuristic learning for two reasons: firstly to start building a text base for my PhD project - a project currently titled "In Search of the Missing Voice". Secondly: to enter into the discussion on education in ancient Israel, this time based on texts revealing the subject of learning.