PROVERBS VIII 22-31 AND ITS SUPPOSED PROTOTYPES

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B. Gemser in his commentary on Proverbs remarks that viii 22-31 is reminiscent of the style of a creation hymn, and that especially vv. 24-26, in which wisdom asserts in a series of negative clauses that she was born before the depths, mountains and fields had been created, have their prototype ¹) in Egyptian and Babylonian creation poems and in Gen. i 2; ii 5 ²). H. Ringgren expressed a similar opinion: these verses (24-31) are expressed "in words which remind one of Egyptian and Babylonian texts of creation" ³). It is our purpose here to test the correctness of these statements by comparing the texts to which Gemser and Ringgren refer with one another and with Prov. viii 22-31 with regard to their form, content and purpose ⁴).

Gemser and Ringgren between them mention 5 texts: the Egyptian Book of the Apophis (ANET, p. 6 ⁵)); Enuma Eliš Tab. I, lines 1-8 (9) (translations in ANET, p. 60 f.; A. Heidel, The Babylonian Genesis, Chicago, 1951, p. 18); a bilingual account of the creation of the world by Marduk (Heidel, op. cit., p. 62 f.; AOT ⁶), p. 130 f.) ⁷); and the two biblical passages Gen. i 1-3; ii 4b-7. There are others which could have been included in the list; but these will suffice for our present purpose. The relevant passages are as follow:

¹) ‚Vorbild‘.
⁴) The other numerous problems of viii 22-31 will not be considered here except in so far as they are relevant to this question. For my views on the passage as a whole and in particular on the concept of wisdom here see my book, Wisdom in Proverbs (SBT), London, 1965, p.p. 99 ff.
⁶) H. Gressmann, Altorientalische Texte zum alten Testament, Berlin and Leipzig, 1926. The relevant passage is lines 1-17.
⁷) For editions of these texts and bibliography see Heidel and ANET, ad loc.
The All-Lord said, after he had come into being: I am he who came into being as Khepri. When I had come into being, being (itself) came into being, and all beings came into being after I came into being. Many were the beings which came forth from my mouth, before heaven came into being, before earth came into being, before the ground and creeping things had been created in this place. I put together (some) of them in Nun as weary ones, before I could find a place in which I might stand. It (seemed) advantageous to me in my heart; I planned with my face; and I made (in concept) every form when I was alone, before I had spat out what was Shu, before I had sputtered out what was Tefnut, and before (any) other had come into being who could act with me.

**Enuma Eliš**

1) E. A. SPEISER'S translation in *ANET*.

2) HEIDEL'S translation. Lines omitted (for the sake of space) are merely repetitive or otherwise not significant for a study of the form or content of the text. The text continues with a detailed description of Marduk's creation of the world: mankind, wild animals, Tigris and Euphrates, vegetation, domestic animals, cities, with some repetition and lack of logical arrangement.