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A GLEANER FOLLOWING THE GRAPE-PICKERS:

THE JEWISH SCRIBE, BEN SIRA,  
AS INTERPRETER OF BIBLICAL TRADITION  
IN PRE-MACCABEAN HELLENISTIC JUDEA

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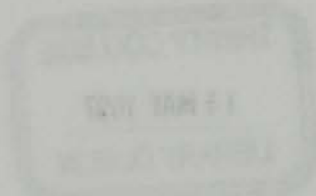
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THE JEWISH SCRIBE, BEN SIRA,  
AS INTERPRETER OF BIBLICAL TRADITION  
IN PRE-MACCABEAN HELLENISTIC JUDEA**

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**Submitted in Fulfilment of Requirements for the Degree of Ph.D.**



**University of Dublin**

**School of Hebrew, Biblical and Theological Studies**

**April 1997**

A GLEANER FOLLOWING THE GRAPE-PICKERS:  
THE JEWISH SCRIBE, BEN SIRAH,  
AS INTERPRETER OF BIBLICAL TRADITION  
IN PRE-MACCAEAN HELLENISTIC JUDEA

Chris O'Connell, B.A., B.S., M.A., Ph.D.

Submitted in fulfillment of requirements for the Degree of Ph.D.



THESIS

4441

School of History, Archaeology and Theological Studies

1997

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Ciarán O'Callaghan C.Ss.R.

## SUMMARY

The advent of Hellenism brought many influences to bear on pre-Maccabean Judea, establishing within that Temple-State highly bureaucratic, administrative and fiscal systems which prompted the further evolution and expansion of the Jewish scribe's role. Hellenism also facilitated the development of limited Jewish autonomy under the High Priest and Judean Senate while opening up Judea to the cultural influences of Greek education, philosophy and religion. Thus, pre-Maccabean hellenistic Judea offers a richly complex cultural and religious backdrop against which to examine the development of Jewish scribalism as portrayed by Ben Sira. This study attempts, in four stages, to sketch the profile of Ben Sira as a Jewish scribe and interpreter of biblical tradition. Chapter One locates him against the background of ancient Near Eastern, pre-exilic Israelite and post-exilic Judean scribalism in general, and pre-Maccabean hellenistic Judean scribalism in particular. Chapter Two examines Ben Sira's own attitude to scribalism through an analysis of his *Poem on the Ideal Scribe* and of a selection of autobiographical texts. Chapter Three investigates his interpretation of Israel's biblical traditions, and finally, Chapter Four endeavours to understand the role he played as scribe within his own social world by drawing on theories about ancient societies derived from the social sciences.

The study pays particular attention to the methodological difficulties involved. Archaeological and numismatic sources for the period only permit access to Ben Sira's world in a very generalized and sparse manner, while his concept of the Jewish scribe is restricted to the *Poem on the Ideal Scribe* and to a number of autobiographical texts, the language and terminology of which are quite obscure. Furthermore, the complexity of the text of Sirach does not allow for fixed or clear text-critical rules. Since Ben Sira did not explicitly cite biblical material, but simply alluded to it, the reliable identification of biblical allusions directly intended



by him is problematic, as is the identification of an appropriate method of analysis and interpretation of his exegetical techniques. The methodological approach, therefore, is highly eclectic, adopting and adapting the work of previous scholarship, both related and unrelated, to the needs of this study. Particular attention is given to literary and archaeological sources, textual criticism, intertextuality, inner-biblical exegesis and social-scientific urban theory. Each step in this methodological approach is thoroughly evaluated and justified prior to its application.

The study's major conclusions are that Ben Sira was not simply an educator and a bureaucrat, but a sage who, although not a priest, functioned under the management of the Temple priesthood. He understood his principal scribal role as that of prophetic interpreter of Israel's biblical tradition, and his aggadic reinterpretation of scripture locates him firmly on a trajectory from scribalism *en route* to rabbinism. As a scribal retainer, he served the Judean priestly ruling class, legitimating their authority while, more importantly, protecting Jewish tradition by actualizing it and advocating its superiority over hellenistic liberalism. In this manner he helped to broker the relationship between YHWH and the Jerusalem community on the eve of great cultural and religious transformation. As a divinely inspired, almost prophet-like interpreter of Israel's biblical traditions, he retained sufficient independence from the priestly ruling class to allow him to criticize the social injustice of the wealthy and powerful, and to articulate singularly non-aristocratic views. As a conservative Jew, he opposed any assimilation of Judaism to hellenistic liberalism and used his considerable intellectual skill to defend and maintain the ancestral Jewish faith, demonstrating the possibility of confidently articulating religious belief in the language and concepts of an antagonistic and powerful culture.

## DEDICATION

לרבי

ולכל-המשפחתו

אוהב אמונה אוהב תקוף ומוצאו מצא הון:  
לאוהב אמונה אין מחיר ואין משקל לטובתו:  
צרור חיים אוהב אמונה ירא אל ישיגם:  
כי כמוהו כן רעהו וכשמו כן מעשיו:

ישוע בן אלעזר בן סירא

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## ABBREVIATIONS

The abbreviations followed in this study for the names of biblical books, of the Qumran Literature and related texts, of rabbinical works, of periodicals, reference works and series are those in use in the periodical *Biblica*, "Instructions for Contributors," *Bib* 70 (1989): 577-594. Further abbreviations used in this study are as follows:

### QUMRAN LITERATURE

2Q18	Fragments of the text of Sirach from Qumran Cave 2
4QDibHam	Dibrê Ham-M <sup>e</sup> ôrôt from Qumran Cave 4
4QM <sup>a</sup>	First Copy of War Scroll Fragments from Qumran Cave 4
4QOrd	Ordinances from Qumran Cave 4
4QPB	The Patriarchal Blessings from Qumran Cave 4
4QpHos <sup>a</sup>	First Copy of the Hosea Peshier from Qumran Cave 4
4QpHos <sup>b</sup>	Second Copy of the Hosea Peshier from Qumran Cave 4
4Qplsa <sup>a</sup>	First Copy of the Isaiah Peshier from Qumran Cave 4
4Qplsa <sup>b</sup>	Second Copy of the Isaiah Peshier from Qumran Cave 4
4Qplsa <sup>c</sup>	Third Copy of the Isaiah Peshier from Qumran Cave 4
4Qplsa <sup>d</sup>	Fourth Copy of the Isaiah Peshier from Qumran Cave 4
4QpNah	The Nahum Peshier from Qumran Cave 4
4QpPs 37	The Ps 37 Peshier from Qumran Cave 4
4QSI40	Strugnell 40 from Qumran Cave 4
4QTLevi	The Testament of Levi from Qumran Cave 4
6QD	Fragments of the Damascus Document from Qumran Cave 6
11QPs <sup>a</sup>	The Psalms Scroll from Qumran Cave 11
11QTemple	The Temple Scroll from Qumran Cave 11

## BOOKS, PERIODICALS AND SERIES

<b>ABD</b>	<i>Anchor Bible Dictionary</i>
<b>ABRL</b>	Anchor Bible Reference Library
<b>ANES</b>	Ancient Near Eastern Studies
<b>ATR</b>	<i>Anglican Theological Review</i>
<b>BTFT</b>	<i>Bijdragen: Tijdschrift voor Filosofie en Theologie</i>
<b>CRINT</b>	Compendia Rerum Iudaicarum ad Novum Testamentum
<b>Erlsr</b>	Eretz-Israel
<b>FOTL</b>	Forms of the Old Testament Literature
<b>Hen</b>	<i>Henoch</i>
<b>HBS</b>	Herder Biblische Studien
<b>JSS</b>	<i>Journal of Semitic Studies</i>
<b>JSP</b>	Journal for the Study of the Pseudepigrapha
<b>NJBC</b>	<i>The New Jerome Biblical Commentary</i>
<b>SCL</b>	Studies in Classical Literature
<b>SJOT</b>	<i>Scandinavian Journal of the Old Testament</i>
<b>SVTG</b>	Septuaginta: Vetus Testamentum Graecum
<b>WZKM</b>	<i>Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde des Morgenlandes</i>

## MISCELLANEOUS ABBREVIATIONS

<b>A</b>	<i>Codex Alexandrinus</i>
<b>Ad Aen.</b>	Servius' commentary on <i>The Aeneid</i>
<b>Ant.</b>	Josephus' <i>Jewish Antiquities</i>
<b>B</b>	<i>Codex Vaticanus</i>
<b>BCE</b>	Before the Common Era
<b>Bell.</b>	Josephus' <i>Jewish War</i>
<b>C</b>	<i>Codex Ephraemi Rescriptus</i>
<b>c.Ap.</b>	Josephus' <i>Against Apion</i>
<b>CE</b>	Common Era
<b>De Deor. Nat.</b>	Cicero's <i>De Deorum Natura</i>
<b>Eth</b>	The Ethiopic Version of Sirach
<b>Eth →</b>	Text of Sirach Emended from Ethiopic version
<b>G</b>	The Greek Version of Sirach
<b>GI</b>	The Unexpanded Greek Version of Sirach
<b>GII</b>	The Expanded Greek Version of Sirach
<b>Heb</b>	The Hebrew Text of Sirach
<b>HebI</b>	The Unexpanded Hebrew Text of Sirach
<b>HebII</b>	The Expanded Hebrew Text of Sirach

<b>L'</b>	Lucianic Recension of LXX
<b>LXX</b>	Septuagint Text
<b>MsB</b>	The Hebrew Text of Sirach: Cairo Geniza Scroll B
<b>MsB<sup>mrg</sup></b>	Marginal note in MsB
<b>MsB<sup>txt</sup></b>	The Text of MsB (as opposed to marginal note)
<b>MsD</b>	The Hebrew Text of Sirach: Cairo Geniza Scroll D
<b>MsE</b>	The Hebrew Text of Sirach: Cairo Geniza Scroll E
<b>MsF</b>	The Hebrew Text of Sirach: Cairo Geniza Scroll F
<b>MsM</b>	The Hebrew Text of Sirach: Masada Scroll
<b>MT</b>	Massoretic Text
<b>O</b>	Origen's Recension of LXX
<b>S</b>	<i>Codex Sinaiticus</i>
<b>Sirl</b>	The Unexpanded Text of Sirach
<b>SirlI</b>	The Expanded Text of Sirach
<b>SVF</b>	Hans von Arnim's <i>Stoicorum Veterum Fragmenta</i>
<b>Syr</b>	The Syriac Version of Sirach
<b>Syr→</b>	The Text of Sirach Emended from Syriac version
<b>Vg</b>	Vulgate
<b>VL</b>	Vetus Latina

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ברכת אל גרל צדיק ובעת תקותי תפרח

## INTRODUCTION

Pre-Maccabean hellenistic Judea of the Late Ptolemaic and Early Seleucid period<sup>1</sup> offers a unique vantage-point from which to explore critical developments in the evolution of Jewish scribalism, particularly in its relationship to biblical interpretation. The importance of the period may be underscored in the emphasis of three complementary determining factors. First, in terms of Jewish scribalism, the period is one of relative obscurity as the bulk of the biblical sources is concerned with the various roles of pre-exilic Israelite scribes, and with Ezra, who as a post-exilic priestly-scribe, had a significant role in the interpretation of Torah. Non-biblical sources, while not concerned directly with scribalism, focus on its educational and administrative aspects. Any comprehension of the development of scribalism in the two centuries between Ezra (398 BCE) and Ben Sira (180 BCE) is diminished by the dearth of source material for the period. However, the book of Sirach presents Ben Sira as an emerging personality,<sup>2</sup> who managed a בית המדרש in Jerusalem,<sup>3</sup> and who offered a specific portrait of the Jewish scribe

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<sup>1</sup> Many important studies of this period of Judean history have been undertaken. Among the more important are: Elias **Bickerman**, *From Ezra to the Last of the Maccabees: Foundations of Post-Biblical Judaism* (New York: Schocken, 1962); *idem*, *The Jews in the Greek Age* (Cambridge, MA/London: Harvard University Press, 1988); John **Bright**, *A History of Israel*, 3rd ed. (London: SCM, 1980); Lester L. **Grabbe**, *Judaism From Cyrus to Hadrian: Volume One - The Persian and Greek Periods* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991); Martin **Hengel**, *Judaism and Hellenism* (London: SCM, 1974); Mikhail **Rostovtzeff**, *The Social and Economic History of the Hellenistic World*, vol. 1 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1941); Abraham **Schalit**, ed., *The Hellenistic Age: Political History of Jewish Palestine from 332 B.C.E. to 67 B.C.E.* (Jerusalem/New Brunswick, NJ: Masada Publishing/Rutgers University Press, 1972); Victor **Tcherikover** [V. Tscherikower], "Palestine Under the Ptolemies (A Contribution to the Study of the Zenon Papyri)," *Mizraim* 4-5 (1937): 1-90; *idem*, *Hellenistic Civilization and the Jews* (New York: Atheneum, 1979); *idem*, and Alexander **Fuks**, ed., "The Jews of Palestine," in *Corpus Papyrorum Judaicarum* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1957), 115-130.

<sup>2</sup> Sir 50,27.

<sup>3</sup> Sir 51,23-28.

### *Introduction*

of the period,<sup>4</sup> all of which suggests a new development in Jewish scribalism which warrants further investigation. Second, the creative period of the fifth and fourth centuries BCE witnessed scribal redaction activity which led to the formation of the final form of the Torah and prophetic corpus which in pre-Maccabean Judea were established as binding texts of scripture subject to interpretation at the hand of skilled exegetes. While Ben Sira typified the skilled exegete of the period, equating תּוֹרָה and חֻמְרָה,<sup>5</sup> his use and reinterpretation of Israel's scripture also merit deeper inquiry. Third, the period of pre-Maccabean Judea is largely characterized by an openness to Hellenism concomitant with faithfulness to traditional Judaism. Certainly the advent of Hellenism brought many secular influences to bear on Judea, establishing within it a system of administration and taxation which, with its dependence on an army of bureaucrats, expanded the importance of the scribe's role. It also facilitated the development of the autonomy of the Judean Temple-State under the High Priest and Judean Senate. Culturally, the influence of Hellenism was enormous.

The Greek language became known to the Judean aristocracy by 260 BCE. Greek education infiltrated Judea, reaching its culmination in 175 BCE with Jason's establishment of the gymnasium. Greek schools must certainly have existed in Judea prior to this date to permit such a cultural step and may have fostered the development of a scribal counter-movement concerned to uphold and defend Jewish culture and tradition. The period is characterized by the existence of a variety of wisdom schools, the majority of which attempted a fusion of traditional

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<sup>4</sup> Sir 38,28-39,11.

<sup>5</sup> Sir 19,20.

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Judaism with international wisdom,<sup>6</sup> while others were universalist and critical,<sup>7</sup> and yet others, such as the Hasidic schools, were defensive of the prophetic tradition. The challenge offered Judaism by Hellenism was the choice between Jewish tradition and an openness to the new spirit of the times. The response to that challenge is evident in the period of pre-Maccabean hellenistic Judea which marked the end of the initial encounter between Judaism and Hellenism and the beginning of the former's repudiation of the latter. Indeed, pre-Maccabean hellenistic Judea offers a rich cultural and religious backdrop of great complexity against which to examine the development of Jewish scribalism of the period as exemplified by Ben Sira. The task of this study is therefore to attempt to present the profile of Ben Sira as Jewish scribe, by situating him in the context of the evolution of Jewish scribalism, by characterizing his use and interpretation of Israel's scripture and by locating him within the social world of pre-Maccabean hellenistic Judea.

There are a number of significant methodological difficulties involved in such a study. The first of these is a sources-related problem as the literary (non-biblical), archaeological and numismatic source material does not permit immediate access to Ben Sira, but does allow for an interpretation of the political, religious, cultural and social background against which to view him. Nonetheless, we are endowed with a most valuable source for Ben Sira. While he may not have produced a biography, he has left behind an account on his work and teaching which calls for a careful reading strategy in order to discern a more accurate profile of his scribal role. However, the particular source material which deals directly with

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<sup>6</sup> Prov 1-9; Ps 119; Sirach.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. the books of Job and of Qohelet whose scepticism closely parallels the hellenistic critique of traditional wisdom.



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Ben Sira's concept of the Jewish scribe is restricted to his *Poem on the Ideal Scribe*<sup>8</sup> and to a number of autobiographical texts,<sup>9</sup> the language and terminology of which can be quite obscure.

A second methodological difficulty has to do with the exceeding complexity of the text of Sirach. The Hebrew text of Sirach (Heb) is extant for well in excess of two-thirds of the book and is found in two recensions, the original text of Ben Sira (HebI) and an expanded text of one or more recensions (HebII). The Greek (G) version exists in two forms, the Greek translation (GI) made by Ben Sira's grandson and an expanded Greek version (GII) based on HebII. The Old Latin (VL) version is an important witness to GII, while the Syriac version (Syr) is based on a *Vorlage* which has fused HebI and HebII while guided by GII. Heb has been corrupted in many places by scribal errors, particularly dittography, haplography, misspellings and misreadings of the Hebrew exemplar being copied, and in places Heb has been retroverted from Syr. While GI is the most reliable form of the entire book of Sirach, it has also been corrupted by scribal errors and the grandson's poor understanding of the original Hebrew. The consequence of this complicated situation is that there are no fixed or clear rules about the textual criticism of Sirach. Rather, the text-critical task is one of taking all the difficulties into account and making a reasonable judgement about the text under consideration.

This study will attempt to understand Ben Sira's scribal role, particularly in terms of his interpretation of biblical tradition. It will not merely dwell on texts which refer to Israel's biblical heritage, but seek to examine the manner in which Ben Sira referred to and actualized that tradition. However, since Ben Sira did not explicitly cite biblical material, but simply alluded to it, a third methodological

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<sup>8</sup> Sir 38,24-39,11.

<sup>9</sup> Sir 24,30-33; 33,16-18; 34,12-13; 39,12; 50,27; 51,13-30.

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difficulty arises: the intertextual reading of Sirach against the biblical tradition with a view to identifying those biblical allusions directly intended by Ben Sira. The fourth methodological difficulty is exegetical and arises directly from the third: the identification of an appropriate method of analysis and interpretation of Ben Sira's exegetical techniques. The final methodological difficulty to be encountered is the manner of locating Ben Sira, as scribe and interpreter of biblical tradition, within his own social world by means of the conscious application of an appropriate and justified social-scientific model. It is not proposed to enter into discussion of these methodological difficulties and offer solutions at this point. They will be discussed in detail at appropriate stages during this study. Nonetheless, it is sufficient to indicate that the methodological approach must be highly eclectic, adopting and adapting the work of previous scholarship, both related and unrelated, to the needs of this particular study. The work of Elias Bickerman, Martin Hengel and Victor Tcherikover, in particular, will be used when considering the sources for the period, while the studies of Sirach undertaken by the widest range of scholars (G. H. Box, Alexander A. DiLella, Josef Haspecker, Johannes Marböck, W. O. Oesterley, Gian Luigi Prato, Otto Rickenbacher, Patrick W. Skehan, R. Smend, Helge Stadelmann, Yigael Yadin and J. Ziegler) will be employed to resolve difficult text-critical issues. A modified version of Richard B. Hays' work on intertextual allusions in the Pauline Epistles will be used to identify Ben Sira's biblical allusions, while elements of Michael Fishbane's concept of inner-biblical exegesis will be applied to Ben Sira's interpretative technique. Finally, urban theory, particularly as advocated by Gerhard Lenski, will be used to understand how Ben Sira functioned as scribe and exegete in the social world of pre-Maccabean Judea.

The study will read Sirach against the background of Judean history, particularly in the period 221-175 BCE, which is delimited by two important events: the first abortive Seleucid attempt, under Antiochus III Megas (223-187 BCE), to

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invade Palestine (221 BCE) and the deposition of Onias III (196-174 BCE) as High-Priest in Jerusalem in the very early stages of the rule of Antiochus IV Epiphanes (175-164 BCE) on the eve of the hellenistic reform (175 BCE). This period, covering late Ptolemaic and early Seleucid rule in Judea, is the one in which Ben Sira wrote his work, for which the commonly accepted date of composition is 195-175 BCE. This dating has been arrived at by a combination of analysis of the Prologue and by conjecture.<sup>10</sup> Ben Sira's grandson arrived in Egypt in the thirty-eighth year of the reign of a king named Euergetes:

Ἐν γὰρ τῷ ὀγδόῳ καὶ τριακοστῷ ἔτει ἐπὶ τοῦ  
Εὐεργέτου βασιλέως παραγενηθεὶς εἰς Αἴγυπτον καὶ  
συγχρονίσας εὐρῶν οὐ μικρᾶς παιδείας ἀφόμοιον.<sup>11</sup>

The expression τῷ ὀγδόῳ καὶ τριακοστῷ ἔτει refers to the year of the king's reign and not to the grandson's age.<sup>12</sup> The epithet Εὐεργέτου could refer to two Ptolemaic kings: Ptolemy III Euergetes I (246-221 BCE) and Ptolemy VII Physkon Euergetes II (170-164.145-117 BCE). The grandson's reference could only be to the latter king, as the former ruled for about twenty-five years only. The

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<sup>10</sup> For a detailed account of the difficulties associated with dates in the Prologue see A. Haire Forster, "The Date of Ecclesiasticus," *ATR* 41 (1959): 1-9. Forster is highly pessimistic about solving any of the difficulties associated with the dating of Sirach.

<sup>11</sup> Prologue 27-29. The verse enumeration of the Prologue is that used in *Ecclesiastico: Testo Ebraico con Apparato Critico e Versioni Greca, Latina e Siriaca*, ed. F. Vattioni, Pubblicazioni del Seminario di Semitistica, Testi 1 (Naples: Istituto Orientale di Napoli, 1968), 2-3.

<sup>12</sup> G. H. Box, and W. O. Oesterley, "Sirach," in *The Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament*, ed. R. H. Charles, vol. 1 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1911), 293. See also Forster, "Ecclesiasticus," 5-7 who questions this scholarly consensus. The expression ἐν γὰρ τῷ ὀγδόῳ καὶ τριακοστῷ ἔτει could refer to the thirty-eighth year of Ptolemy VII Euergetes II's reign (132 BCE) or to the grandson's age. The latter possibility depends on reading ἐν τῷ as a possessive pronoun, which is extremely rare in Greek. On this Forster concludes: "If it is my 38th year, then the date of Ecclesiasticus is up in the air." *Ibid.*, 7.

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thirty-eighth year of the reign of Ptolemy VII was 132 BCE and scholars agree that this is the date of the arrival of the grandson in Egypt.

Scholarship does dispute, however, the date of publication of the grandson's translation and tends to argue along three distinct lines of thought. First, there is the argument of Box-Oesterley that the work was published in the period 132-116 BCE.<sup>13</sup> This argument rests on the meaning of συγχρονίσας<sup>14</sup> which is translated as "and continued there" with the implication that the grandson remained in Egypt only during the reign of Euergetes II. A second position is that adopted by Peters,<sup>15</sup> who argues that the phrase ἐπὶ τοῦ Εὐεργέτου βασιλέως,<sup>16</sup> along with the precise reference to τῷ ὀγδόῳ καὶ τριακοστῷ ἔτει,<sup>17</sup> suggests that the king was no longer alive at the time of writing. Hence the work was published after 117 BCE. The argument must be rejected as there are biblical texts which violate the pattern ἐπί used with the name of a deceased king in the context of an exact time reference.<sup>18</sup> The third position, followed by this study, is that of Smend who

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<sup>13</sup> Box-Oesterley, "Sirach," 317.

<sup>14</sup> Prologue 28.

<sup>15</sup> N. Peters, *Das Buch Jesus Sirach Oder Ecclesiasticus*, EHAT Series 25 (Münster: Aschendorff, 1913), xx-xxi.

<sup>16</sup> Prologue 27.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>18</sup> The biblical texts are: ἐν τῷ δευτέρῳ ἔτει ἐπὶ Δαρείου (Hag 1,1); τῷ δευτέρῳ ἔτει ἐπὶ Δαρείου τοῦ βασιλέως (Hag 1,15); ἔτους δευτέρου ἐπὶ Δαρείου (Hag 2,10); ἐν τῷ ὀγδόῳ μηνὶ ἔτους δευτέρου ἐπὶ Δαρείου (Zech 1,1); ἐν τῷ δευτέρῳ ἔτει ἐπὶ Δαρείου (Zech 1,7); ἐν τῷ τετάρτῳ ἔτει ἐπὶ Δαρείου τοῦ βασιλέως (Zech 7,1). In each case ἐπί is used with the  
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argues for a publication date after 117 BCE.<sup>19</sup> This is based on the meaning of *συγχρονίσας*, correctly translated as "while there at the same time (as Euergetes was king)." This implies that the grandson was in Egypt for the remainder of Euergetes' reign and completed his work after 117 BCE. Allowing that Ben Sira may have been up to sixty years older than his grandson, the most likely period for the original writing of the work is 200-180 BCE, a date supported by a poem in praise of Simon II (219-196 BCE).<sup>20</sup> It is highly likely that Ben Sira was an eyewitness to the type of events he describes in the poem. Finally, there is no reference in the book to the events under Antiochus IV Epiphanes (175-164 BCE). These considerations would tend to support the commonly accepted date of composition as 195-175 BCE.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>18</sup>(...continued)

name of a king in the context of an exact time reference. However, in each case the reference is to the *reigning* king, Darius.

<sup>19</sup> R. Smend, *Die Weisheit des Jesus Sirach, Hebräisch und Deutsch* (Berlin: Reimer, 1906), 3-4.

<sup>20</sup> Sir 50,1-21.

<sup>21</sup> The modern consensus suggests an earlier date of 190 BCE. This is based on the assumption that there was a span of sixty years between the grandson's period of life and that of Ben Sira. However, Hengel, *Judaism and Hellenism*, I, 131-134 does not accept this dating. He suggests that the work may have been written in the period 190-175 BCE, and may have been completed by September 175 BCE when Antiochus IV ascended the throne. The argument is based on Sir 7,4-7 which Hengel regards as an emphatic plea for the Oniads. However, he is probably reading too much into these verses. According to D. S. Williams, "The Date of Ecclesiasticus," *VT* 44 (1994): 563-565, the earlier date of 190 BCE is problematic as it implies that the grandson was an old man on arrival in Egypt and very elderly when completing his translation, a possible but unlikely scenario. However, the later date of 175 BCE implies that the grandson was in his forties on arrival in Egypt and was approximately sixty when he completed the translation. In any case 195-175 BCE corresponds roughly to the Late Ptolemaic and Early Seleucid Periods.

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Writing in this period, Ben Sira described himself *כמו עולל אחר הבוצרים*,<sup>22</sup> and was acutely aware that his role had to be seen as the ultimate stage in an ongoing evolutionary process.<sup>23</sup> Chapter One, entitled *Ben Sira and the Evolution of Jewish Scribalism*, will adopt Ben Sira's evolutionary perspective as the appropriate one with which to begin to examine his concept of scribe. Accordingly, it will locate Ben Sira's concept of the scribe against the background of ancient Near Eastern scribalism, and in particular with its Egyptian, Sumerian and Akkadian emphasis on the educational and administrative aspects of the scribal role. Scribalism in pre-exilic Israel and Judah will be examined by considering the range of meanings of the terms *γραμματεύς* and *סֵפֶר* in the biblical sources. The consideration of the post-exilic Persian period in Jerusalem will centre on the figure of Ezra, the priestly-scribe, entrusted with the role of Torah-interpretation and will seek to discover whether the scribalism of this period represented a radical development and reorientation towards exegesis. If so, can Ben Sira's concept of scribe be seen as merely another example of the development in scribalism characterized by Ezra, or does he represent yet a new stage in Jewish scribalism, namely a movement away from priestly Torah-interpretation towards some form of non-cultic, pneumatic, wisdom exegete engaging with the entire panoply of Israel's traditions? The chapter will then proceed to attempt to answer this question by considering the political and socio-religious background of Late Ptolemaic Judea through a detailed investigation of the Zenon and Rainer papyri, the numismatic evidence from the so-called Yehud coins and relevant archaeological evidence. For the Early Seleucid period particular attention will be given both to the edicts of

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<sup>22</sup> Sir 33,16b.

<sup>23</sup> Sir 33,16-18.

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Antiochus III Megas and the *Legend of the Tobiads* as recorded by Flavius Josephus. The final section of the chapter will consider the role of the scribe in pre-Maccabean hellenistic Judea on the basis of what can be known from the above-mentioned sources, as well as evidence from the pseudonymous Jewish-Greek *Letter of Aristeas to Philocrates* and from the educational context of the period.

Chapter Two, entitled *Ben Sira and the Ideal Scribe*, will examine the concept of scribe evidenced directly in the text of Sirach. It will begin with a discussion of the text-critical issues relevant to the original Hebrew text of Sirach and its ancient versions, and proceed to establish, in some detail, a critical text of the *Poem on the Ideal Scribe* (Sir 38,24-39,11) which is one of the most famous texts in Jewish literature offering a description of the scribe's role and activity. While this poem has been extensively analysed in the works of Josef Haspecker, Johannes Marböck, Otto Rickenbacher, Helge Stadelmann and Gian Luigi Prato, whose conclusions will be critically surveyed in the chapter, recent scholarship has in fact ignored a number of issues which are critical for an understanding of Ben Sira's concept of scribe, particularly in relation to biblical interpretation. These issues are twofold: the failure to analyse the process by which Ben Sira's ideal scribe interpreted Israel's traditions, leaving undefined the terminology used in the poem to characterize the ideal scribe's engagement with those traditions; and the willingness to assume, but not establish convincingly, that the poem is autobiographical, thereby offering not merely a profile of Ben Sira's concept of the ideal scribe, but a portrait of Ben Sira as the ideal scribe. This chapter will establish that the poem is indeed autobiographical by comparing it structurally and philologically to texts in Sirach which are clearly so<sup>24</sup> and will demonstrate that the

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<sup>24</sup> Sir 24,30-33; 33,16-18; 34,12-13; 39,12; 50,27; 51,13-30.

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language used in it to characterize the scribe's interpretation of biblical traditions is a highly generalized description of Ben Sira's working of Israel's traditions.

Various scholars (S. Schecher and L. Taylor, J. L. Koole, and J. G. Snaith) have tabulated long lists of possible biblical allusions in the text of Sirach, without however, systematically testing them and studying the manner of Ben Sira's interpretation of them. Chapter Three of this study, entitled *Ben Sira and Biblical Interpretation*, will attempt to do this by identifying some of Ben Sira's biblical allusions, by classifying his interpretative techniques and by correlating his actual reinterpretation of biblical allusions with the generalized description of the exegetical process given in the *Poem on the Ideal Scribe*. Chapter Three will begin by identifying the target text to be studied as the *Works of God in Creation* (Sir 42,15-43,33), whose suitability as such will be justified on the basis of its conformity to relevant methodological requirements. Once a detailed, critical text of the poem is established, the study will then proceed to identify within that text a representative sampling of Ben Sira's biblical allusions, using a modified version of Richard B. Hays' study of intertextual echoes in the Pauline writings. Michael Fishbane's concept of inner-biblical exegesis will be applied to the chosen allusions, paying particular attention to the exegetical technique used by Ben Sira and the circumstances in pre-Maccabean hellenistic Judea which occasioned it. Finally, Ben Sira's actual biblical interpretation will then be compared to his idealized description of himself as biblical exegete.

The final element in the profile of Ben Sira as Jewish scribe and biblical exegete, namely, the role played by him in second century BCE Judean society, will be discussed in Chapter Four, entitled *Ben Sira and the Social World of Pre-Maccabean Hellenistic Judea*. Once again previous scholarship has debated this issue in some detail. R. Gordis has argued that Ben Sira was a conservative aristocrat and a teacher to the sons of the wealthy aristocracy, a conclusion based



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on the assumption that the social context for literary wisdom in Judea was aristocratic and elitist. Helge Stadelmann has argued that Ben Sira must be seen as a priestly-scribe who functioned as a teacher of the upper-middle classes [*sic*]. Stadelmann's thesis is established largely by inference from the book of Sirach and other Jewish sources. Harold Van Broekhoven has applied Mary Douglas' anthropological group-grid model to Ben Sira's social world with conflicting results. While these three approaches will be examined critically in Chapter Four, this study, given the intrinsic connection between hellenization and urbanization, will apply an urban model to Ben Sira's social world in an effort to achieve a better understanding of his role in Judean society. The choice of Gerhard Lenski's model of the urban agrarian society will be justified and will be applied to pre-Maccabean hellenistic Judea, as reflected in the *Poem on the Ideal Scribe* and the *Works of God in Creation*, and will establish that the model of scribal retainer is the most appropriate for understanding Ben Sira.

Ben Sira's own self-awareness evident in the text of Sirach attests to his importance in the evolution of the role of the Jewish scribe as interpreter of tradition. He understood himself as a prophetic figure who poured forth wisdom from the heart, using vivid similes to describe himself. He was like a rivulet flowing from the river of Israel's tradition, but which was transformed into a vast ocean. He was replete with teaching, like the full moon. However, the most powerful manner in which he saw himself was as one who stood at the end of a line of those immersed in Israel's traditions. He was as the last on watch; like one who gleaned after the grape-gatherers and who filled his wine press not just for himself alone, but for all those who, in his day and after it, sought instruction.

# CHAPTER ONE

## 1.0 BEN SIRA AND THE EVOLUTION OF JEWISH SCRIBALISM

### 1.1 Ancient Near Eastern and Biblical Scribalism

#### (a) The Ancient Near East

Since scribes are referred to in the literature of many ancient Near Eastern societies, a brief survey of the Egyptian, Sumerian, Akkadian and Mesopotamian concept is useful in establishing the context within which to examine the emergence and development of biblical scribalism. In Ancient Egypt<sup>1</sup> learned scholars were crucial to the development of civilization. This is particularly evident in their role as educators of aristocratic children in the period of the Old Kingdom. Their function was primarily literary as "the learned scribes of the Old Kingdom and First Intermediate Period who first attempted to put their thoughts and convictions into writing made remarkable progress in creating literary forms suitable to their purpose."<sup>2</sup> However, they also exercised a wide range of other functions: magician, interpreter of dreams, adviser, diplomat, problem solver, physician, government official and counsellor.<sup>3</sup>

The Sumerian<sup>4</sup> educational system was organized centrally around the role of the *umma* ('sage') who was head of the *edubba* ('tablet-house'), the place of learning where students completed their training prior to assuming important

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<sup>1</sup> Ronald J. Williams, "The Sage in Egyptian Literature," in *The Sage in Israel and the Ancient Near East*, ed. John G. Gammie and Leo G. Perdue (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1990), 19-30.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 30.

<sup>3</sup> Ronald J. Williams, "The Functions of the Sage in the Egyptian Royal Court," in *The Sage in Israel and the Ancient Near East*, 95-98; *idem*, "Scribal Training in Ancient Egypt," *JAOS* 92 (1972): 214-221.

<sup>4</sup> Samuel Noah Kramer, "The Sage in Sumerian Literature: A Composite Portrait," in *The Sage in Israel and the Ancient Near East*, 31-44.

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responsibilities as temple or palace officials. Part of the *edubba*-education involved copying and studying proverbs, precepts and maxims. It was the responsibility of the *ummiā* "not only to imbue the students with proper ethical and practical values ... but also to help them apprehend and comprehend the ambiguous nature of the human condition ..." <sup>5</sup> Another component of this education system was the *disputation* by which the *ummiā* presented his reflections on the human scene and on the world in general. <sup>6</sup> The students of the *edubba* were all from the upper strata of society, who subsequently as *edubba*-graduates became temple functionaries. Thus it was "the far-famed *ummiās* and the top temple functionaries trained and educated by them who originated and developed the intellectual constructs and spiritual concepts that provided the ground work and framework of the religious thought and practice of the Sumerians." <sup>7</sup> Equally the *ummiās* were responsible for shaping and developing the political and symbolic ideology that dominated the palace.

Akkadian<sup>8</sup> literature containing an extensive wisdom vocabulary, applies the

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<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 32.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 34-35. Typical disputations of the period are the *Disputation between the Hoe and the Plough* and the *Disputations between Silver and Mighty Copper*. The hoe is regarded as superior to the plow as it is more useful, has a longer working life and can be easily repaired. Copper is valued over silver in that it has a wider range of uses while silver is only used for decoration. Examples from the animal kingdom (fish *versus* bird), the vegetable kingdom (tree *versus* reed) and from both (cattle *versus* grain) were also used. The moral of the disputations was that one should not judge between appearances.

<sup>7</sup> Kramer, "Sumerian Literature," 38.

<sup>8</sup> Ronald F. G. Sweet, "The Sage in Akkadian Literature," in *The Sage in Israel and the Ancient Near East*, 45-65.

term *wise* to a broad range of people in society including: the king, craftsmen,<sup>9</sup> architects, builders, soldiers, cult officials, diviners, exorcists, musicians, physicians, scribes and teachers. Wisdom terminology is most often applied to the scribe.<sup>10</sup> Textual evidence from tablets excavated at Mari, Assur, Kalhu and Nineveh indicate that many scribes were necessary for the Mesopotamian royal administration. Their work involved the preparation of routine administrative records, collections of laws, king lists, chronicles and many literary texts.<sup>11</sup> The most important royal official in administrative terms was the palace scribe, usually under the command of the Grand Vizier or highest minister. Mesopotamian society may have had three classes of scribe: the bureaucrat, the poet and the scholar.<sup>12</sup> The bureaucrat and poet were probably located in the administration of either palace or temple, while the scholar lived without any institutional support. Similar administrative and bureaucratic roles were performed by scribes at Ugarit.<sup>13</sup> In conclusion, this brief survey suggests that in the Ancient Near East the term *scribalism* denoted a wide range of functions, but primarily those of educator and administrator.

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<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 57-58. The typical craftsmen mentioned are: carpenters, blacksmiths, potters, metal-workers, stone-cutters, copper-smiths and seal-cutters. The term *wisdom* used of these, denotes expertise in specialist manual skills.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 61-62.

<sup>11</sup> Ronald F. G. Sweet, "The Sage in Mesopotamian Palaces and Royal Courts," in *The Sage in Israel and the Ancient Near East*, 99-107.

<sup>12</sup> A. L. Oppenheim, "The Position of the Intellectual in Mesopotamian Society," *Daedalus* 104 (1975): 37-46.

<sup>13</sup> Loren R. Mack-Fisher, "The Scribe (and Sage) in the Royal Court at Ugarit," in *The Sage in Israel and the Ancient Near East*, 109-115; Anson F. Rainey, "The Scribe at Ugarit: His Position and Influence," *Proceedings of the Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities* 3 (1969): 126-146.

**(b) Pre-Exilic Israel and Judah**

As in the societies of the Ancient Near East, scribalism in pre-exilic Israel and Judah was equally multifaceted.<sup>14</sup> Thus, the essentially bureaucratic and administrative functions of ancient Near Eastern scribalism are found also in pre-exilic Israel and Judah, and are reflected in the etymology of *scribe* in both biblical Greek and Hebrew. In Greek, γραμματεύς evolved from the word γράμμα (a written letter) to denote the writer of such letters, while a similar evolution in Hebrew took place whereby סֹפֵר (the writer of a message) is derived from סֵפֶר (the written message). The Hebrew term סֹפֵר, as with γραμματεύς, denoted a middle-level government bureaucrat.<sup>15</sup> The pre-exilic royal court depended on many officials, including scribes, whose profession was essential in the United Kingdom as in the other societies of the Ancient Near East which had developed systems of writing.<sup>16</sup> In this period the scribe was one among many important state officials. They are all named,<sup>17</sup> and found in association with significant and

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<sup>14</sup> See Michael **Fishbane**, *Biblical Interpretation in Ancient Israel* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985), 24-36 on pre-exilic Israelite scribalism.

<sup>15</sup> Anthony J. **Saldarini**, *Pharisees, Scribes and Sadducees in Palestinian Society: A Sociological Approach* (Wilmington, DE: Michael Glazier, 1988), 241-242. See Bickerman, *Last of the Maccabees*, 54-71 on the significance of the scribe in Eastern culture and also M. **Hadas**, *Hellenistic Culture: Fusion and Diffusion* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1972), 59-71.

<sup>16</sup> R. N. **Whybray**, "The Sage in the Israelite Royal Court," in *The Sage in Israel and the Ancient Near East*, 133-139.

<sup>17</sup> Some of David's scribes were Seraiah (2 Sam 8,17), Shiya (2 Sam 20,25), Shusha (1 Chron 18,16), Shemaiah (1 Chron 24,6) and Jonathan (1 Chron 27,32). The two scribes mentioned during the reign of Solomon are Elihaph and Ahijah (1 Kgs 4,3).

influential royal officials.<sup>18</sup> However, their specific roles are bureaucratic and secretarial and are devoid of any explicit religious or tradition-related function.

In the period after the collapse and partition of the United Kingdom, scribes are only mentioned in association with the kings of Judah, where again most are named.<sup>19</sup> As in the period of the United Kingdom, the scribe is associated with significant royal administrators and religious officials.<sup>20</sup> Under the kings of Judah the role of the scribe expanded. While the secretarial function remained, the scribe became responsible for both military and fiscal matters.<sup>21</sup>

Pre-exilic Israelite scribes also had significant literary functions in that they collated, entitled and indexed literary records.<sup>22</sup> Most of the literature composed

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<sup>18</sup> These are: army commander (2 Sam 8,16; 1 Chron 18,15; 27,34), מְזַכֵּיר (2 Sam 8,16; 1 Chron 18,15), כְּהֲנִיִּים (2 Sam 8,17; 20,25; 1 Chron 18,16; 24,6), commander of Cherethites and Pelethites (2 Sam 8,18; 1 Chron 18,17), שָׂרִים (1 Chron 24,6), וְרֵאשֵׁי הָאֲבוֹת (1 Chron 24,6), יוֹעֵץ לְמֶלֶךְ (1 Chron 27,33), רֵעַ הַמֶּלֶךְ (1 Chron 27,33). In 1 Kgs 4,2 such people are considered Solomon's high officials (הַשָּׂרִים אֲשֶׁר־לוֹ).

<sup>19</sup> These are: Jeiel, scribe to Uzziah (2 Chron 26,11), Shebna, scribe to Hezekiah (2 Kgs 18,18.37; 19,2; Isa 36,2.22; 37,2), Shaphan, scribe to Josiah (2 Kgs 22,3.8; 2 Chron 33,13; 34,15.18.20; Jer 36,10), Elishama (Jer 36,12) and Jonathan (Jer 37,15.20), scribes during Jehoiakim's reign. Other scribes remain unnamed (2 Kgs 25,19; Jer 52,25).

<sup>20</sup> These are: הַכֹּהֵן הַגָּדוֹל (2 Chron 24,11), שׁוֹטֵר (2 Chron 26, 11), שָׂרֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ (2 Chron 26,11), אֲשֶׁר־עַל־הַבַּיִת (2 Kgs 18,18.37; 19,2; Isa 36,2), מְזַכֵּיר (2 Kgs 18,18.37; Isa 36,2.22), זִקְנֵי הַכְּהֲנִיִּים (2 Kgs 19,2; 22,12; Isa 37,2), עֲבַד־הַמֶּלֶךְ (2 Chron 33,13), שָׂרִים (Jer 36,12), אֲנָשִׁים מֵרְאֵי פְנֵי־הַמֶּלֶךְ (2 Kgs 25,19; Jer 52,25), שֵׁר הַצָּבָא (2 Kgs 25,19; Jer 52,25).

<sup>21</sup> On the *secretarial role* see 2 Kgs 18,18.37; 19,2; 22,3.8; 2 Chron 33,13; 34,15.18.20; Isa 36,2.22; 37,2; Jer 36,10; 37,15.20. On the *military role*, see 2 Chron 26,11. On the *fiscal role*, see 2 Kgs 12,11; 2 Chron 24,11.

<sup>22</sup> Fishbane, *Biblical Interpretation*, 27-28. These roles are indicated by many references in the books of the Kings and Chronicles to the literary archives of Israel and Judah. Further literary (continued...)

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during this period (annals, historical narratives, poetry, laws, cultic material and proverbs) can in all likelihood be attributed to them.<sup>23</sup> Some further information about scribal literary activity may be derived from Prov 25,1 which may witness to court-sponsored scribal activity in pre-exilic Judah.<sup>24</sup> The text describes how officials of king Hezekiah (אַנְשֵׁי חֻזְקִיָּה) engaged with proverbial sayings in a process which is described by the phrase הִעֲתִיקוּ. It remains unclear if transmission or transcription of literary sources is indicated, and the אַנְשֵׁי חֻזְקִיָּה are not designated as scribes. However, the literary process involved may have been part of a larger religio-national restoration concerned with the preservation of Israelite literature and cultic reform suggested in 2 Chron 29-30.

Pre-exilic Israel and Judah probably had scribal schools.<sup>25</sup> Their precise nature, however, remains unclear since there are no direct references to scribal schools in the Hebrew Bible, and the only references to education are few and imprecise.<sup>26</sup> The existence of such schools requires the assumption of a definite scribal class. Wisdom literature reflects pre-exilic Israelite scribal activity similar to

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<sup>22</sup>(...continued)

scribal practices may also be deduced from annotations to priestly regulations in the books of Leviticus and Numbers.

<sup>23</sup> Whybray, "Israelite Royal Court," 137.

<sup>24</sup> Fishbane, *Biblical Interpretation*, 33.

<sup>25</sup> Gerhard von Rad, *Wisdom in Israel* (London: SCM, 1978), 17.

<sup>26</sup> J. L. Crenshaw, "Education in Ancient Israel," *JBL* 104 (1985): 601-615 offers a few cautious references. But see also André Lemaire, "The Sage in School and Temple," in *The Sage in Israel and the Ancient Near East*, 165-181, who on the basis of the existence of schools in neighbouring cultures, a few paleo-Hebrew inscriptions, some suggestive biblical hints and the literary character of certain biblical texts, argues that schools did exist in Israel in the First Temple period.

that of Egypt and Mesopotamia. Analysis of the Joseph stories suggests significant points of contact between early wisdom literature and pre-exilic Israelite educational ideals and patterns for human living.<sup>27</sup> Certainly pre-exilic Israelite scribes were concerned with such wisdom traditions and ideals. It may well be that such scribes were associated with the Temple and their main function was to instruct the priests and levites, who in turn instructed the people and made judgments on the basis of law and tradition. A possible relationship between scribes, priests and levites, can be argued for.<sup>28</sup>

What distinguishes pre-exilic Israelite scribalism most from its international ancient Near Eastern roots, is the engagement by scribes in religious activities. Jer 8,8b is a very obscure biblical text<sup>29</sup> which points to such scribal religious activity in pre-exilic Judah. The text must be seen in the context of Josiah's reform (621 BCE) and refers to a particular social group of persons, who represent traditional

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<sup>27</sup> Gerhard von Rad, "The Joseph Narrative and Ancient Wisdom," in *The Problem of the Hexateuch and Other Essays* (London: SCM, 1984), 292-300. Von Rad argues that the Joseph saga was written in the early monarchic period. The saga is linked to the spiritual outlook of that period and is closely related to the educational ideal of the early wisdom writings.

<sup>28</sup> Hengel, *Judaism and Hellenism*, I, 78-80. This might well include an overlap of their functions.

<sup>29</sup> אֵכֶן הִנֵּה לְשֶׁקֶר עָשָׂה עִט שֶׁקֶר סִפְרִים reads literally: "Truly, behold, to falsehood it has done, the false pen of the scribes." Since there is ambiguity about the subject and object of the phrase, various interpretations have been offered. Robert P. Carroll, *Jeremiah: A Commentary*, OTL Series (London: SCM Press, 1986), 228-229 argues that the text represents prophetic condemnation of scribal activity which has falsified teaching: "The *tōrāh* is false in the sense of having being falsified by the scribal activity which produced it (both *tōrāh* and the scribes' pen are qualified by the term *šeqer*, 'false'). What precisely this means is not clear from the text. The *tōrāh* may be false because it is written, or because this particular group's scribal activities have somehow made it false. Whether by interpretation, additions or commentary can only be speculated about." An alternative understanding is offered by Fishbane, *Biblical Interpretation*, 33-36 who regards Jeremiah's statement as a condemnation, not of any inherent falsity in scribal teaching, but of their insincere piety.



wisdom values and who have invested religious teaching with a particular ideology:

They presumably took advantage of the cultural vacuum created by the renewal of Judean independence after Assyria's collapse, and the cultic elevation of Jerusalem as the dominant national-royal shrine after the fall of Samaria, to propagate their adjustment of old wisdom traditions to the ancient, sacred teachings of Moses - a foretaste of Ben Sira centuries later.<sup>30</sup>

### (c) The Persian Period: Ezra

The post-exilic Persian period in which the Torah was formed and the prophetic corpus framed was another key moment in which the office of scribe underwent further development and radical reorientation.<sup>31</sup> The period is dominated by Ezra,<sup>32</sup> to whom several texts refer specifically mentioning his capacity as scribe.<sup>33</sup> In particular Ezra 7,6 describes Ezra as follows:

וְהוּא סֹפֵר מְהִיר בְּתוֹרַת מֹשֶׁה אֲשֶׁר-נָתַן יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל ...

Ezra's function as סֹפֵר is related to תּוֹרָה by the adjective מְהִיר which denotes scribal skill, which in turn is related to knowledge, interpretation and

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<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 35-36.

<sup>31</sup> On the whole issue of scripture production and interpretation in Second Temple Judaism see Martin Hengel, "The Scriptures and their Interpretation in Second Temple Judaism," in *The Aramaic Bible: Targums in their Historical Context*, ed. D. R. G. Beattie and M. J. McNamara, JSOTSS 166 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1994), 158-175.

<sup>32</sup> Other scribes are also mentioned. These are: סֹפֵרֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ (Est 3,12; 8,9); Shimshai, secretary to Rehum, Persian governor of Samaria (Ezra 4,8-9.17.23); Zadok, scribe to Nehemiah (Neh 13,13). The roles were essentially secretarial, although Zadok's was also fiscal. See Joseph Blenkinsopp, *Ezra-Nehemiah: A Commentary*, OTL Series (London: SCM, 1988), 136-139; *idem*, "The Sage, the Scribe, and Scribalism in the Chronicler's Work," in *The Sage in Israel and the Ancient Near East*, 307-315.

<sup>33</sup> Ezra 7,6.11-12; Neh 8,4.9; 12,26.36.

application of Torah.<sup>34</sup> Ezra's role as scribe is further developed in Ezra 7,11-12:

לְעֹזֵרָא הַכֹּהֵן הַסֹּפֵר סֵפֶר דְּבָרֵי מִצְוֹת־יְהוָה וְחֻקֵּי  
עַל־יִשְׂרָאֵל. ...  
לְעֹזֵרָא כֹהֵנָא סֵפֶר דְּתָא דִּי־אֱלֹהֵי שְׁמַיָא גְמִיר וְכַעֲנָת.

Ezra is described as both priest and scribe,<sup>35</sup> but it is his role as scribe which is elaborated on. The subject matter of his scribal activity is clearly Torah along with its commandments and statutes. Finally, in Ezra 7,21 he is described as follows:

עֹזֵרָא כֹהֵנָא סֵפֶר דְּתָא דִּי־אֱלֹהֵי שְׁמַיָא ...

The texts suggest that

if Ezra was originally a Persian court officer he must have been skilled in the scribal art, that is, in the knowledge of Jewish affairs. The Chronicler considered him well versed in the law of Moses, which he had investigated thoroughly and intended to teach so that it might be carried out among his people.<sup>36</sup>

The classical interpretation of Ezra's title<sup>37</sup> understands the designation *scribe* as "an official title, taken over from Assyrian and Babylonian usage (cf. Akkadian *šāpiru*), designating the holder as charged with special responsibility for law

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<sup>34</sup> The word *מְהִיר* occurs in only two other biblical texts: Ps 45,2 (סוֹפֵר מְהִיר) and Prov 22,29 (אִישׁ מְהִיר). See William McKane, *Proverbs: A New Approach*, OTL Series (London: SCM Press, 1970), 380 who considers that the adjective denotes "mental nimbleness and adroitness." The parallel with the *Instruction of Amen-em-opet* suggests that this quality is essentially a scribal one. See *ANET*, ed. James B. Pritchard (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1955), 424. See also Blenkinsopp, *Ezra-Nehemiah*, 137-138. The adjective *מְהִיר* denotes a level of scribal competence which in turn is further described and developed in Ezra 7,10 in terms of Ezra's dedication to Torah and teaching of statutes and ordinances in Israel.

<sup>35</sup> Neh 8,9; 12,26.

<sup>36</sup> Jacob M. Myers, *Ezra-Nehemiah: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, AB Series 14 (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1979), 61. See also Hengel, "Scriptures and their Interpretation," 162.

<sup>37</sup> H. H. Schaefer, *Esra der Schreiber* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1940), 39-59.

observance within his jurisdiction."<sup>38</sup> This interpretation understands Ezra's role in terms of bureaucratic responsibility for Jewish affairs, and points to a particularly Jewish form of the scribal office, with emphasis on expertise and instruction in Torah, and "in this capacity Ezra marked the beginning of the process leading to Judaism as we know it, characterized above all by study, teaching, and observance of Torah."<sup>39</sup> This theory, however, relies heavily on the authenticity of Artaxerxes's memorandum and the historical accuracy of the description of Ezra in Ezra 7,12.21. Blenkinsopp has correctly noted that

While it is generally acknowledged that the decree was redacted by a Jewish functionary at the court, it is also possible that it has been subsequently touched up in the course of its transmission and incorporated into the book. The combination of priest and scribe must especially arouse suspicion, since this is how Ezra is described at other points in the narrative ...<sup>40</sup>

What seems to have happened is that the Chronicler's *own understanding* of Ezra's role has influenced the formulation of the decree. A second possible interpretation, however, is that the portrait of Ezra, while containing a basic historicity, has been extensively edited by the Chronicler who has attributed to Ezra the status of Torah-scribe.<sup>41</sup> It is not possible to be certain that the type of Torah-interpretative scribalism attributed to Ezra existed prior to his mission to Jerusalem. Blenkinsopp argues that there is some suggestion of a Torah-

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<sup>38</sup> Blenkinsopp, "Scribe and Scribalism," 312.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>40</sup> Blenkinsopp, *Ezra-Nehemiah*, 137.

<sup>41</sup> Blenkinsopp, "Scribe and Scribalism," 313 offers a series of indications which suggest that this is the case.

interpretative role for priests prior to Ezra's mission.<sup>42</sup> Accordingly, the need to interpret written law, and hand down decisions based on these interpretations, become priestly concerns. It is probable that Ezra's office developed along both the line of scribe and of priest and that "it seems reasonable to conclude that in the postexilic period we are dealing with a specialization of the priestly function created by the need to interpret legal texts and hand down decisions in keeping with these interpretations."<sup>43</sup> Thus by the Persian period the role of scribe, at least in one particular instance, had developed to the point that it now transcended secretarial, fiscal and military matters in favour of the study and interpretation of Torah.

The crucial question to be asked here is whether the Persian period marks a moment of genuine innovation in the development of scribalism.<sup>44</sup> Clearly there is evidence of a *novum* in the Persian period in that

Ezra is a priestly scribe who teaches the received, written revelation through his inspired study of it. In the process, the Torah traditions undergo a corresponding refiguration. No dead letter, the ancient divine words become the very means of new instruction through their proper inquiry and interpretation.<sup>45</sup>

It has been argued that "a comparable, contemporary instance marking the transformation of Torah learning occurs in the teachings of Ben Sira,"<sup>46</sup> who is simply another example of the development with respect to Torah exegesis

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<sup>42</sup> Deut 31,10-11; Jer 18,18.

<sup>43</sup> Blenkinsopp, *Ezra-Nehemiah*, 138.

<sup>44</sup> Michael Fishbane, "From Scribalism to Rabbinism: Perspectives on the Emergence of Classical Judaism," in *The Sage in Israel and the Ancient Near East*, 439-456.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, 441. See also Hengel, "Scriptures and their Interpretation," 163.

<sup>46</sup> Fishbane, "Scribalism to Rabbinism," 441.

exemplified by Ezra whereby with "divine revelation now embodied in a written Torah, the sage seeks from God the grace of an *ongoing revelation* through the words of scripture itself - as mediated *through exegesis*."<sup>47</sup> This assertion needs to be addressed. Ben Sira's concept of scribe is the first one meets after Ezra. The fact that his collection of writings were presented under his own name may indeed signal a new era.<sup>48</sup> Is Ben Sira's concept of scribe merely another example of the development clearly evident in Ezra? Or is there a further evolutionary development in the scribal role, from inspired priestly interpreter to inspired exegete not associated with the Temple cult; from interpreter of Torah to exegete of a much wider body of religious tradition? If so, what circumstances brought about such evolution? Fishbane<sup>49</sup> argues that a parallel movement towards inspired exegesis of texts occurs in the Book of Daniel with respect to the interpretation of the Prophets:

Ecstasy induced in conjunction with the study of old prophecies has thus produced a new type of 'prophetic' figure - a pneumatic exegete, guided by divine inspiration into the true meaning of ancient oracles. Exegetical revelation has thus replaced the radical *novum* of unmediated divine communication to a prophet. At the same time, such exegetical illumination has become a new mode of access to God for a new type of community - formed around teachers and the texts they authoritatively interpret. This was the earlier situation with Ezra, too, where the reconstruction of the people around Torah study led to formulations of a true community *on the basis of exegesis* performed by authoritative leaders

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<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, 442-443.

<sup>48</sup> Hengel, "Scriptures and their Interpretation," 164.

<sup>49</sup> Fishbane, "Scribalism to Rabbinism," 443-445. This is based on a comparison of selected vocabulary in the book of Daniel with the prophetic commission texts Isa 6 and Ezek 1-3.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, 445.

This is an interesting and well argued position for prophetic exegesis. While Fishbane is very quick to allow for comparable parallels between Ezra and Ben Sira in their respective Torah-interpretation, he does not seem to be aware of the possible parallels between the development he argues in respect of the book of Daniel, and the book of Sirach.<sup>51</sup> Given that the book of Daniel was written after the book of Sirach,<sup>52</sup> is it not possible that development towards pneumatic exegesis of prophetic texts occurred first in Sirach? One very useful insight of Fishbane's is his model of a trajectory from scribalism to rabbinism. The rabbinic ideal in respect of Torah<sup>53</sup> may be summed up in the understanding that

God's manifold grace flows to those sincerely occupied with Torah - who study it without precondition or presumption. Such pure study is divinely requited by gifts of humility and piety, sage counsel and righteousness, and insights into the mysteries of the Law. Such a person can only be called a beloved companion, a friend of God and all creatures. To this one is revealed a revelation from the very depths of the revelation, the written Torah. Devoted study of God's Word thus opens up the flood of divine Wisdom, so that one, in turn, may become a font of divine teachings.<sup>54</sup>

In the light of the perceived similarity of their roles, Ben Sira's total silence on Ezra is a *crux interpretum* to which various unconvincing solutions have been proposed. The first proposed solution is the non-availability of biblical material on Ezra to Ben Sira.<sup>55</sup> However, Höffken has pointed out that this argument is tenuous as Sir

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<sup>51</sup> Sir 39,1b.6.

<sup>52</sup> The date for Daniel is almost universally accepted as *circa* 165 BCE.

<sup>53</sup> Av 6,1.

<sup>54</sup> Fishbane, "Scribalism to Rabbinism," 455.

<sup>55</sup> Although the Ezra tradition is strong in our present biblical text, there is evidence that there were other traditions. It is clear that a strong Nehemiah tradition also existed which assigned many activities associated with Ezra in the MT, to Nehemiah (cf. 2 Macc 1,18-2,13). Lester L.

(continued...)

45,17 appears to reflect the description of Ezra in Ezra 7,10.<sup>56</sup> The second proposed solution is that of Höffken<sup>57</sup> who argues that Ben Sira's silence on Ezra is deliberate and motivated by ideological concerns arising from the fact that both Ezra and Ben Sira approach the theological understanding of Israel from very different points of view. The basis of the ideological difference is that the Chronicler's Ezra is a champion of Levitical interests, while Ben Sira is concerned with a return to an older Priestly tradition. This is reflected in the different theologies found in Ezra 9 and Sir 36. Ben Sira's anti-Levitical stance is thus manifested in the omission of Ezra from the list of Israel's heroes. Höffken's thesis has been well criticized by Begg<sup>58</sup> who is correct in arguing that the non-mention of significant Israelite heroes by Ben Sira cannot be presumed to be from a negative stance. Furthermore, a Levitical basis to any presumed ideological difference between Ben Sira and Ezra must be cast in doubt by the presence in the *Laus Patrum* (Sir 44-50) of Israelite heroes who were decidedly pro-Levite.<sup>59</sup> Finally, Ben Sira could not have had any ideological difference of significance with

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<sup>55</sup>(...continued)

**Grabbe**, "Josephus and the Reconstruction of the Judean Restoration," *JBL* 106 (1987): 231-246, examines Josephus' use of such traditions in his reconstruction of Judean history from Nehemiah to Alexander. Thus, Ezra may have been omitted because the tradition available to Ben Sira may have been the non-Ezra tradition. See also G. **Garbini**, *Storia e Ideologia nell'Israele Antico*, Biblioteca di Storia e Storiografia dei Tempi Biblici 3 (Brescia: Paideia, 1986), 65-71.

<sup>56</sup> P. **Höffken**, "Warum Schweig Jesus Sirach über Esra?," *ZAW* 87 (1975): 184-201, at 192.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, 184-201.

<sup>58</sup> Christopher **Begg**, "Ben Sirach's Non-mention of Ezra," *BN* 42 (1988): 14-18, at 15-17.

<sup>59</sup> These are: David (Sir 47,2-11), Hezekiah (Sir 48,17-25), Josiah (Sir 49,1-3), Zerubbabel (Sir 49,11), Jeshua (Sir 49,12) and Nehemiah (Sir 49,13).

Ezra as both were priestly scribes.<sup>60</sup> The third proposed solution to the *crux interpretum* is Begg's own thesis that in Ben Sira's concern to depict the post-exilic period as a whole, he did not exclude Ezra on the basis of ideological concerns but wished

... his readers to view Zerubbabel, Jeshua and Nehemiah above all in their capacity as "forerunners" of Simon who carries forward their building endeavors in comprehensive fashion, just as he intends to see the latest period of Jewish history he records as a time characterized by the "physical" reconstruction and securing of Temple and city - thus making possible the undisturbed celebration of cultic occasions as described in the continuation of Sirach's depiction of Simon 50,5-21. In terms of such intentions, however, the Ezra known to Sirach from his Biblical sources would - all his sympathetic features notwithstanding - have appeared to him as simply "unusable" seeing that those sources relate nothing of a building activity by Ezra.<sup>61</sup>

Begg's thesis is not convincing. It assumes, rather audaciously, that since both Ezra and Ben Sira were priestly scribes in the same mode, the former was a sympathetic figure for the latter and that no ideological difference could exist between them. Furthermore, the argument that Ben Sira reluctantly did not use the figure of Ezra the *priest-scribe* in his depiction of the post-exilic period because he was not a *builder*, is curious.

This study argues that Ben Sira's silence on Ezra is both deliberate and ideologically based. In the list of heroic deeds offered in the introduction to the *Laus Patrum*, scribal-type activity is alluded to (Sir 44,4cd), yet when it comes to celebrating the heroes of post-exilic Judea, Ezra the scribe *par excellence* of the period, is omitted. This is further underscored by the praise offered Nehemiah (Sir 49,13):

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<sup>60</sup> Begg, "Non-mention of Ezra," 17.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, 18.



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The warmth of the terms with which Ben Sira speaks of Nehemiah contrasts significantly with his silence regarding Ezra; apparently the latter did not occupy so high a place of estimation within the circle of the scribes to whom Ben Sira belonged ... [who] were profoundly affected by the spirit of the Wisdom-Literature, and had an altogether wider outlook.<sup>62</sup>

The ideological basis to Ben Sira's silence may be that scribalism had so further evolved by Ben Sira's time, that it could not identify itself with the less developed pattern associated with Ezra and may point to possible tensions between Ben Sira and the priest-scribes of his own day. Perhaps Ben Sira's era, two centuries after Ezra, represents a significant moment of development in the scribe's role *en route* from scribalism to rabbinism, namely, from a priestly group of Torah-interpreters to a powerfully prestigious class of possibly non-cultic, pneumatic, wisdom exegetes concerned with a fuller range of Israel's religious traditions.<sup>63</sup> At the same time, Ben Sira's scribe may also point to future developments, whereby the student of the scriptures becomes an intimate of God and a font of teachings for others. If this is possibly so, then the political, social and religious background to Ben Sira's work must be now examined with a view to determine what factors could bring about such an evolutionary development in the scribal role and locate Ben Sira's type of scribalism at a key point *en route* towards rabbinism.

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<sup>62</sup> Box-Oesterley, "Sirach," 506.

<sup>63</sup> Joseph **Blenkinsopp**, "Interpretation and the Tendency to Sectarianism: An Aspect of Second Temple History," in *Jewish and Christian Self-Definition*, ed. E. P. Sanders, A. I. Baumgarten and Alan Mendelson, vol. 2 (London: SCM, 1981), 1-26.

## 1.2 The Political and Socio-Religious Profile of Pre-Maccabean Hellenistic Judea

### (a) The Late Ptolemaic Period

With the death of Alexander the Great (323 BCE), Palestine was caught up in the wars of the Diadochi. In the division of Alexander's empire after the battle of Ipsus (301 BCE) Coele-Syria was given to Seleucus, since Ptolemy had not participated in the battle. However, Ptolemy seized southern Syria and Palestine<sup>64</sup> which remained in Ptolemaic control until about 200 BCE. The course of Palestinian history in this period is vague as the literary sources are either incomplete or inadequate as historical documents.<sup>65</sup> Accordingly, the main sources of information for the Late Ptolemaic period are the Zenon papyri, containing the correspondence of Zenon and a papyrus from the Rainer collection of papyri in Vienna. Zenon was the agent of Apollonius, the finance minister of Ptolemy II Philadelphus (283-246 BCE). His principal occupation was the management of Apollonius' estate at Philadelphia. Prior to this work he spent the period January 259 - March 258 BCE in Palestine and Phoenicia.<sup>66</sup> On his return to Egypt he

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<sup>64</sup> Direct evidence for the Ptolemaic seizure of Palestine is found in Josephus' reference to the taking of Jerusalem on a sabbath (*Ant.*, 12 §§3-10; *c.Ap.*, 1 §§209-212). Josephus states further that Ptolemy took many captives from Judea and Samaria and brought them to Egypt, leading to rivalry between the two groups over the question of which temple should receive their offerings. No date for the capture of Jerusalem is indicated, nor Ptolemy's reasons for doing so.

<sup>65</sup> Tcherikover, "Zenon Papyri," 1. Josephus' account of the Tobiad family (*Ant.*, 12 §§157-236) is not a completely reliable historical source and needs to be used very critically. 3 Macc is completely worthless historically.

<sup>66</sup> On the dating of Zenon's journey to Palestine see Tcherikover, "Zenon Papyri," 3-4. For a detailed description of Zenon's travels see Hengel, *Judaism and Hellenism*, I, 40-41. Zenon certainly visited the Ammanitis, Marisa, Gaza and the Phoenician cities. See also Tcherikover, "Zenon Papyri," 6.

brought with him his records and letters.<sup>67</sup> He maintained contact with Egypt while in Apollonius' employ, and his correspondence with Palestine during this period also forms part of the collection. This material not only relates to the time of his visit to Palestine, but to many years afterward. Out of 1200 notes discovered in the collection, about forty relate to Palestine, providing significant information for the period 300-220 BCE. The Rainer papyrus<sup>68</sup> (circa 261 BCE) contains the orders (προστάγματα) of Ptolemy II Philadelphus on the return (ἀπογραφή) to be made by the people of Syria-Palestine of their movable property for taxation purposes and on the question of slaves.<sup>69</sup> The papyrus offers a glimpse of the significant reorganization by the Ptolemies of the economic and social life of Syria-Palestine and thus completes the information derived from the Zenon papyri.

Studies of the Zenon and Rainer papyri offer a vignette of political and socio-religious trends in Late Ptolemaic Palestine.<sup>70</sup> The common name for the territory which included Palestine was *Syria*.<sup>71</sup> As occupied territory, all the major

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<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, 7. The bulk of the letters in Zenon's archives are addressed to him and date mainly from the period 258-257 BCE.

<sup>68</sup> For a detailed discussion of the Rainer papyrus fragments, see Rostovtzeff, *Hellenistic World*, I, 340-351.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, I, 340.

<sup>70</sup> Hengel, *Judaism and Hellenism*, I, 18-57; Tcherikover, *Hellenistic Civilization*, 60-73. For the publications of the papyri used by Tcherikover, see *ibid.*, 427-428n.53 and 428n.54. See also Rami Arav, *Hellenistic Palestine: Settlement Patterns and City Planning, 337-31 B.C.E.*, BAR International Series 485 (Oxford: BAR, 1989), 121-136 and Bickerman, *Jews in the Greek Age*, 69-80.

<sup>71</sup> Tcherikover, *Hellenistic Civilization*, 61. Officially the name of the country was *Syria and Phoenicia*, but was popularly known as *Syria*; *idem*, "Zenon Papyri," 24-28 for a detailed discussion of the possible borders of Ptolemaic Syria.

cities of Syria-Palestine were probably protected by garrisons.<sup>72</sup> Ptolemaic Syria-Palestine was administered by a διοικητής resident at Alexandria who was responsible for the finances, economy and administration of the country. There was also a special διοικητής resident in Syria-Palestine, who was the most important government official in the country. The administrative capital was probably Acco. The Ptolemaic Empire was divided into *hyparchies* (ὑπαρχίαι), which were further subdivided into *nomes* (νόμοι) within which the smallest administrative unit was the village.<sup>73</sup> It is not known whether Syria-Palestine was divided into several hyparchies, or was considered a single hyparchy.<sup>74</sup> The population consisted of Greeks (royal officials, soldiers, and Greek immigrants) as well as λαοί or native people. Important local officials were the στρατηγός and the οἰκονόμος. The former was responsible for military matters, while the economic life of the hyparchy was the responsibility of the οἰκονόμος. Along with these there was also a vast bureaucracy of administrative and economic officials.<sup>75</sup> In short, the impression given in the papyri is one of a highly bureaucratic administration of Syria-Palestine which was in essence

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<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, 28-29. The only evidence is for Tripolis which contained στρατιῶται and a ἵππάρχης. Presumably Tripolis was a typical frontier city.

<sup>73</sup> Tcherikover, *Hellenistic Civilization*, 428n.58; Rostovtzeff, *Hellenistic World*, I, 341.

<sup>74</sup> Grabbe, *Judaism*, I, 191.

<sup>75</sup> Tcherikover, *Hellenistic Civilization*, 429n.61. One of these was certainly the γραμματεύς. Unfortunately Zenon only refers to the officials' names and not their titles.

*Chapter One: Ben Sira and the Evolution of Jewish Scribalism*

... a miniature of the Egyptian officialdom, and it may be legitimate to suppose that they [the Ptolemies] had transferred to Palestine the whole Egyptian bureaucracy with all the defects which we know so well from the papyri of that country. This had brought not only the defects, however; we also detect among the Ptolemaic officials of Palestine the great diligence of the Ptolemaic government offices, the same enforcement of the law of the state in the remotest corners, the same strict official surveillance over the life of the private individual.<sup>76</sup>

In Palestine the Ptolemies built three lines of Greek cities, mainly for strategic and military purposes. One line of these cities was from Gaza to Phoenicia. A second line was established east of the Jordan, while the third stretched south of Idumaea. Some of these cities kept their native names, while others received new dynastic names.<sup>77</sup> The process of transformation of Palestinian cities into πόλεις without change of name is difficult to determine from the Zenon papyri.<sup>78</sup> Certainly the cities of Gaza, Dor, Stratonos, Pyrgos, Samareia and the cities of the Dekapolis were organized as πόλεις. The ending -ιτες or -ιτις was the regular way of naming new cities based on where they were located (Trachonitis, Auranitis, Gaulanitis, Moabitis, Galaaditis, Ammanitis).<sup>79</sup> Since Ptolemaic policy in Syria did not involve the type of colonization by Greek settlers found in Egypt, their custom was to rename existing Syrian cities. Only two such Ptolemaic names survive: Ptolemais and Philadelphia. One can conclude that "the only Ptolemaic foundation which might have been a genuine colony is Philoteria on the sea of Galilee,

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<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, 62.

<sup>77</sup> Rostovtzeff, *Hellenistic World*, I, 346-347.

<sup>78</sup> Tcherikover, "Zenon Papyri," 35-36, argues that this process certainly began in the third century BCE under the Ptolemies.

<sup>79</sup> A. H. M. Jones, *Cities of the Eastern Roman Provinces*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971), 238-241.

mentioned by Polybius as being an important town at the end of the third century B.C. ... Two other foundations may be plausibly ascribed to the Ptolemies, Heliopolis (Baalbek) and Scythopolis (Bethsan).<sup>80</sup> Along with these, the Ptolemaic administration recognized four ἔθνη (Jews, Idumeans, Gazeans, Azoteans) as having a certain loose independence. Judea was thus regarded as both an ἔθνος and a temple-state.<sup>81</sup> Just as the sanctuaries of Egypt were tightly controlled by the crown, so too the Temple at Jerusalem. The High Priest was regarded as the head of the Jewish ἔθνος, but was probably assisted by a state-appointed financial administrator.<sup>82</sup> In allowing the High Priest nominal leadership of Judea, the Ptolemaic administration allowed the country a certain degree of political and religious autonomy. The High Priest exercised both civil and religious leadership.<sup>83</sup> During the period of Ptolemaic rule the institution of the γερουσία evolved. While the exact period in which this body emerged remains unclear, it was composed of Judea's principal priests,<sup>84</sup> wealthy aristocracy, large landowners, heads of clans, and perhaps some γραμματεῖς. While this body probably curtailed somewhat the

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<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*, 240.

<sup>81</sup> See Hengel, *Judaism and Hellenism*, I, 23-29 on the Ptolemaic administration of the Jewish temple-state.

<sup>82</sup> Rostovtzeff, *Hellenistic World*, I, 349. Josephus (*Ant.*, 12 §§157-159) suggests that the High Priest had a role as a general contractor responsible for royal revenue in Judea. Josephus gives the impression that the tax relates to the High Priest's private wealth. Rather the reference is to a tax derived from public funds. See also Grabbe, *Judaism*, I, 192. Such revenue was probably supplemented by other royal taxes. The Tobias legend (*Ant.*, 12 §§157-236), to be considered below, suggests that the fiscal role of the High-Priest was taken from Onias II and transferred to Joseph Tobiad and subsequently to his son Hyrcanus.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*, I, 216.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.* The priest performed other functions such as the role of judge.

power of the High Priest, it remained subordinate to him.<sup>85</sup>

"The foundations of Ptolemaic politics rested above all on economic considerations, which had precedence over pure power politics."<sup>86</sup> The basis of the economy was agricultural, especially by the cultivation of wheat.<sup>87</sup> This necessitated the exploitation of land, its fertilization as well as projects of land reclamation. A second source of economic wealth was the royal monopoly on oils,<sup>88</sup> linen, metals, salt and spices. Private business was allowed, but under very strict government control. Control of coinage and bank accounts also provided the state with a source of revenue.<sup>89</sup> The fundamental principle of Ptolemaic economic policy, and indeed political policy, was that the whole kingdom was the personal estate (οἶκος) of the king.<sup>90</sup> He had power over the empire, the land, its resources and inhabitants. For purposes of defense of their empire, the Ptolemies had stationed garrisons in the towns of Syria-Palestine and set up cleruchies.

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<sup>85</sup> 1 Macc 12,6: Ἰωναθαν ἀρχιερεὺς καὶ ἡ γερουσία τοῦ ἔθνους καὶ οἱ ἱερεῖς καὶ ὁ λοιπὸς δῆμος τῶν Ἰουδαίων Σπαρτιάταις τοῖς ἀδελφοῖς χαίρειν. The ordering in the text suggests that the γερουσία was the second most powerful institution in Judea after the High-Priest at the time of the Maccabees.

<sup>86</sup> Hengel, *Judaism and Hellenism*, I, 38.

<sup>87</sup> See Tcherikover, "Zenon Papyri," 12-14 on the grain trade between Syria and Egypt. The trade was strictly controlled by the government, with merchants acting as middlemen.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*, 14-15 on the oil trade. Again it was a government monopoly with merchants acting as middlemen.

<sup>89</sup> See Hengel, *Judaism and Hellenism*, I, 41-47 for a detailed account of Ptolemaic economic policy.

<sup>90</sup> Most land in Palestine was designated as βασιλικὴ χώρα indicating that the Ptolemies considered conquered land outside Egypt to be their own personal property. Arav, *Hellenistic Palestine*, 127-129; Tcherikover, "Zenon Papyri," 39.

These latter were headed by local princes who had considerable influence over the local population including control of their own lands.<sup>91</sup> This policy, unique to Ptolemaic Syria-Palestine, of allowing local princes to control land, which in any other part of the empire would have belonged to the king, made of Palestine an atypical case. Furthermore, the Greek cities (πόλεις) controlled the land of the villages around them.<sup>92</sup> While the concept that the country was the king's οἶκος was alien to the πόλεις, they collaborated with Ptolemaic economic policy because it gave them a significant role in the development of the empire and a share in the fruits of the economy. Thus in Syria-Palestine it suited imperial economic policy to recognize the authority of local princes and cities over land which would normally have been the king's. While not known with certainty, it is probably the case that temple and sacred lands were left in the hands of the priests. Furthermore, lands not controlled by autonomous groupings such as local princes, πόλεις or priests, were regarded as the property of the king; such royal lands were leased to royal peasants.<sup>93</sup> Control of trade between Syria-Palestine and Egypt was subject to rigorous government control. Thus, Ptolemaic policy regarded Syria-Palestine both as a unique entity within the empire and as an integral part of that empire.

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<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*, 41.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>93</sup> Arav, *Hellenistic Palestine*, 131-134. Archaeological evidence from Khirbet el-Ras, a few miles southwest of Jerusalem and Ein Yahu nearer the city, suggests that peasant farms were small with limited corral space for about a dozen livestock. Both sites contain evidence of a wine and olive oil industry, suggesting that in the hellenistic period these products were manufactured on site. The agricultural innovations of the period were the millstone, the treadmill and the plough.



The papyri also allow a glimpse of the beginnings of the hellenization of Palestine. This gradual process had two main sources. First, there was the intermarriage of foreign soldiers garrisoned in Palestine with local women. Second, was the contact between Ptolemaic government officials and the local population. These sources of contact facilitated a "superficial external Hellenization."<sup>94</sup> Of particular interest is Zenon's contact with the Jews of Palestine.<sup>95</sup> These were all upper-class Jews, who collaborated with the Ptolemaic rulers in matters of social and economic policy, and who were proponents of hellenization.<sup>96</sup> These constituted

A relatively small, but rich and powerful upper class, which moreover had the confidence of their Greek masters and their immediate neighbours, faced on the one hand the representatives of a theocracy faithful to the Law, which was predominantly recruited from the lower priesthood and the Levites and whose conservative, legalistic and cultic attitude is manifested above all in the work of the Chronicler, and those who revised it, together with Ben Sira ...<sup>97</sup>

The temptation on the part of those faithful to the theocracy to compromise with the upper class and its predilection towards the emerging hellenism, generated socio-religious conflicts and contrasts which may be reflected accurately in some

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<sup>94</sup> Tcherikover, *Hellenistic Civilization*, 71. This is reflected in the adoption of Greek names and the use of pagan formulae such as πολλὴ χάρις τοῖς θεοῖς, and probably the learning of Greek. For a detailed discussion of the effects of early hellenism on Palestinian Judaism, see Hengel, *Judaism and Hellenism*, I, 47-55.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*, I, 48. His main contact was with Tobias, the only non-Greek to be mentioned frequently in the sources. He also had contacts with other Jews: Jeddus, Simon, Hoshea and Hannan.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*, I, 29-32.

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.*, I, 49-50.

biblical texts.<sup>98</sup> Zenon and the διοικητής Apollonius are typical of the entrepreneurial spirit of late Ptolemaic Syria-Palestine. The economic trend of early hellenism, its limitation to the local upper classes and the πόλεις, led to a very relaxed life-style which is roundly condemned in biblical literature.<sup>99</sup>

This description based on the Zenon and Rainer papyri suggests that the Ptolemies did not attempt to govern Syria-Palestine in the same rigid manner they controlled Egypt. While Egypt was characterized by a uniform peasant population maintained in a situation of servitude, Syria-Palestine was made up of different peoples and tribes, each with their own ancestral traditions. Such peoples demonstrated aspirations to freedom and independence, which in a war situation could have meant support for the enemies of the Ptolemaic empire. This was of crucial concern to the Ptolemies as their control of Syria-Palestine was not recognized by international law nor accepted by the Seleucids. Ptolemaic policy safeguarded control of Syria-Palestine by a two-fold strategy of military occupation and concessions to the local population. Accordingly, the Ptolemies favoured the path of concession, allowing local princes and the πόλεις considerable political authority in the country:

Thus, we see that the Ptolemies adopted in Palestine the same policy as did their enemies and rivals, the Seleucids, at the beginning, in their Asiatic kingdom. Nevertheless, that which was the rule for the Seleucids was an exception for the Ptolemies; for, this entire policy was most strikingly opposed to the fundamental principles of administration customary in Egypt.<sup>100</sup>

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<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*, II, 39n.394-398.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*, II, 40n.411.

<sup>100</sup> Tcherikover, "Zenon Papyri," 47.

However, Palestine was regarded, as with the rest of the empire, as part of Egypt.<sup>101</sup> As such it was ruled by a highly bureaucratic officialdom. The description based on the Zenon and Rainer papyri suggests that the Jews continued to have the same status under the Ptolemies as they had under their Persian overlords, so long as they paid their taxes. Like the other peoples of Syria-Palestine they were submissive to the Ptolemies and enjoyed great peace, although popular aspirations to liberty and autonomy remained. The concessions made by the Ptolemies to the peoples of Palestine were not large enough

... to attach them permanently to Egypt; yet, they were sufficient to foster the active movements for autonomy in the country. Out of these movements there developed later, in the second century, the great national-political current which directed their objective against Hellenism.<sup>102</sup>

The profile of hellenization in Late Ptolemaic Judea offered by the Zenon and Rainer papyri can be nuanced further by relevant numismatic and archaeological data for the period.<sup>103</sup> Coins began to be used in Palestine in the mid-sixth century

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<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*, 48. This is reflected in: the administration of Syria-Palestine from Alexandria, as with all Egyptian νόμοι; state control of trade; the amount of land designated βασιλική χωρά and granted as δωρεά; and finally, the vast bureaucracy required to administer Syria-Palestine.

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*, 48-49.

<sup>103</sup> Scholarship is divided on the usefulness of this data in understanding the process of hellenization in Late Ptolemaic Judea. See Tcherikover, "Zenon Papyri," 1 who argues that archaeology fails to provide any useful information, while numismatics furnishes inconsequential data. See also Bright, *History of Israel*, 414n.22 on the information available on coins and jar stamps and who is content merely to state that the data attests to the Ptolemaic continuation of the administrative system inherited from the Persians without any attempt to relate the data to the actual process of hellenization. See Arav, *Hellenistic Palestine*, 134-136 for a discussion of the Ptolemaic monetary system. See also Robert **Harrison**, "Hellenization in Syria-Palestine: The Case of Judea in the Third Century BCE," *BA* 57 (1994): 98-108 who argues convincingly that the archaeological and numismatic evidence must be considered in any realistic effort to understand the complexity of the hellenization of Judea.

BCE and were used widely in the hellenistic period. Judean coins of the Ptolemaic era fall into two types: Palestinian coins from the major Ptolemaic mints and the so-called Yehud coins, minted in Judea, probably in Jerusalem.<sup>104</sup> Thirty coins inscribed with Aramaic or Hebrew letters have been examined. Of these Yehud coins nine pertain to the Ptolemaic period. They were part of a continuous series which began *circa* 350 BCE. Some of the coins bear the Athenian owl motif, while others bear the impression of Ptolemy I Soter (301-283 BCE), his consort Bernice and the Ptolemaic eagle. While the order and date of these coins remain disputed, it is clear that they attest to the existence of *Judean* coinage in the mid-third century BCE and bear the clear stamp of hellenistic influence. Yehud coins of the Persian era bore the name and title of the governor of the Achaemenid satrapy of Yehud. The absence of such detail on the Yehud coins of the hellenistic period suggests a shift in monetary authority from the regional στρατηγός to the Jewish High Priest and temple officials. While these hellenistic Yehud coins of small denominations (silver *hemidrachms*, *hemiobols*, and *tetartmoiron*)<sup>105</sup> testify to the speed with which Ptolemaic rule had taken control of the Judean economy and its insignificant mint, they do not bear witness to Judean administrative autonomy nor political independence.<sup>106</sup> The coins do attest to a form of judaized hellenistic numismatic convention, and to the increasingly important financial role of the High Priest. To date, such coins have only been discovered at sites which were of financial or military significance to the Ptolemaic administration, but no discoveries have been made in the Judean highlands. Sites of financial significance were ports

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<sup>104</sup> *Ibid.*, 100.

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*, 101.

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.* The denominations were so small, and the privilege of minting so insignificant that they cannot be seen as symbolic of Judean political or administrative autonomy.

and commercial installations: Tel Michal, Acco, Sidon, Ein Gedi. Military sites were those along the frontiers: Lachish, Beth Zur, Ramat Rachel and Shechem.<sup>107</sup> In short, "the numismatic evidence suggests that Judea proper had not yet come face to face with its conquerors on any large-scale economic, social, or cultural level."<sup>108</sup>

Archaeological excavations at Tel Dor have provided further information relevant to the understanding of hellenization in the Late Ptolemaic period. Dor was occupied early in the hellenistic period and subsequently fortified extensively in the reign of Ptolemy II. Two finds are of particular relevance. The first is the city wall, built in the mid-third century BCE in the Greek style, while the second was of an important group of jar handles. The implications of these finds is that hellenization began to establish itself on the coast by the mid-third century BCE, but did not reach the inner Judean highlands until the mid-second century BCE. Two other individual groups of finds in Palestine are relevant. The first is a bilingual ostrakon found at Khirbet el-Qôm.<sup>109</sup> The ostrakon, discovered in 1971 CE, records a loan between an Idumean commercial figure and a Greek business partner in the year 277 BCE (the sixth year of the reign of Ptolemy II). It suggests that some socio-economic components of the ethnic groups in Palestine were capable of financial dealings with the Greek world. The second group of findings was of mid-third century BCE stamped jar handles from Judea.<sup>110</sup> One group of these stamped handles bears the paleo-Hebrew inscription *YHD* and are inscribed with official government symbols. Most of these were found in Jerusalem (from

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<sup>107</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>109</sup> *Ibid.*, 105.

<sup>110</sup> *Ibid.*

Ophel and from the Tyropoean Valley). The second group bears a circular seal with a five-pointed star (perhaps the symbol of the High Priest) and the letters *YRŠLM*. Forty-four examples of this type are known. The *YHD*-handles may represent government ownership of taxes and the *YRŠLM*-handles may indicate taxes for the High Priest. In any case they attest to the existence of very traditional Jewish linguistic patterns in mid-third century BCE Judea.

Archaeological evidence suggests that Palestine was the province with the highest density of hellenistic cities outside Greece,<sup>111</sup> implying an intense urbanization which was planned and premeditated. Cities were built on sites offering shelter and a commercial infrastructure,<sup>112</sup> or on important trade routes.<sup>113</sup> There is clear evidence of the use of Greek grid patterns in some cities,<sup>114</sup> in others the pattern is found for the Roman period,<sup>115</sup> while a number of cities show no evidence whatsoever of Greek grid patterns.<sup>116</sup> Other important archaeological finds include hellenistic city walls,<sup>117</sup> city gates,<sup>118</sup> round towers,<sup>119</sup> square towers,<sup>120</sup>

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<sup>111</sup> Palestine had one city per 1200 km<sup>2</sup>, surpassed only by southern Thrace which had one city per 1000 km<sup>2</sup>. Arav, *Hellenistic Palestine*, 119. For a detailed discussion on city planning and architecture in hellenistic Palestine, see *ibid.*, 142-168.

<sup>112</sup> Samaria, Scythopolis, Philoteria and Tell Anafa.

<sup>113</sup> Philadelphia, Gerasa and Gadara were located on the King's Highway, while Pella, Hippos and Gamla were located on the transverse routes connecting the King's Highway to the Via Maris.

<sup>114</sup> Samaria, Philoteria, Marisa, Dor, Shiqmona and Ashdod.

<sup>115</sup> Ptolemais, Ashkelon, Gaza, Jerusalem, Gerasa, Abila and Strato's Tower. The discovery of the Greek pattern dating from the Roman period may be due to limited knowledge about the hellenistic levels in these cities. It is possible that the grid features carry on from the hellenistic period.

<sup>116</sup> Shechem, Gezer, Beth-Zur, Iraq el Emir, Tell Hesi and Tell Jemmeh.

<sup>117</sup> Ptolemais and Strato's Tower.

and bastions.<sup>121</sup> Arav notes:

According to the most recent data, more than two hundred Hellenistic sites in Palestine have been surveyed to date. Even so, this does not represent the final number of the Hellenistic sites in this area of the Near East. The lack of complete information on such a pivotal era and region in the history of the Near East necessitates a comprehensive study of the settlement pattern in Palestine. We can, however, refer to the areas for which surveys have been completed and published, and consider these as models from which it is possible to draw conclusions.<sup>122</sup>

The relevant survey of Hellenistic sites in Judea and Samaria reveals that they represent less than 7% of the total Hellenistic sites discovered in Palestine and that consequently the finds do not reflect the full dimensions of Hellenization. The import of the numismatic and archaeological evidence to date is that there is little support for the theory that Judea was extensively Hellenized before the mid-second century BCE. Mid-third century Judea was surrounded on all sides by the first wave of Hellenistic settlements and its population was familiar with Hellenism in the areas of government and economics. These Judeans were Hellenists in the very limited sense of interacting with the Greeks in official and economic matters. While an entire century would have to pass before Judea would be culturally engulfed by Hellenism, there were astute observers of the new cultural wind that was blowing, as evidenced in the books of Qoheleth and of Ben Sira. In short, one can conclude that

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<sup>118</sup>(...continued)

<sup>118</sup> Dor, Samaria and Iraq el-Emir.

<sup>119</sup> Samaria.

<sup>120</sup> Dor and Philoteria.

<sup>121</sup> Marisa, Samaria and Gezer.

<sup>122</sup> Arav, *Hellenistic Palestine*, 117.

Hellenism's advance was not a uniform tidal wave that swept the whole of the Orient before it in a clearly-defined progression from west to east. Rather, Hellenistic influences swirled in pools and collected in eddies that flowed around much of the territory whose only substantial link with the real Greek world was the economic relationship between indigenous leaders, merchants, and peasants and their foreign overlords. The archaeological record depicts third century BCE Judea as relatively dry ground; its inundation lay almost a century in the future.<sup>123</sup>

This conclusion is consistent both with the economic and military profile of hellenization found in the Zenon and Rainer papyri and with the portrait of the High Priest's financial autonomy offered by Josephus.

#### **(b) The Early Seleucid Period**

Seleucid<sup>124</sup> concerns regarding the sovereignty of Palestine reasserted themselves in 219 BCE when Antiochus III Megas raised the issue of Ptolemaic control of Syria-Palestine. An attempt by Antiochus to invade Palestine in 221 BCE ended in defeat. In 219 BCE he began a second offensive and by 218 BCE had control of northern Galilee. In response to Antiochus' attack Ptolemy IV Philopator (221-204 BCE) also invaded Palestine. The ensuing battle at Raphia (217 BCE) ended with Antiochus' defeat. In the flush of victory Ptolemy IV travelled through Palestine with his wife Arsinoë, spending three weeks there, being greeted with warm enthusiasm from the local population. In 204 BCE Ptolemy IV died and was succeeded by the five-year-old Ptolemy V Epiphanes (204-180 BCE). However,

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<sup>123</sup> Harrison, "Hellenization in Syria-Palestine," 107.

<sup>124</sup> On Seleucid rule in Palestine for the period under discussion in this study see J. K. **Davies**, "Cultural, Social and Economic Features of the Hellenistic World: VII. The Polis Transformed and Revitalized," in *The Hellenistic World*, CAH Series 7, Part 1, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 304-315; D. **Musti**, "Syria and the East," in *The Hellenistic World*, 175-220; Grabbe, *Judaism*, 269-270; Tcherikover, *Hellenistic Civilization*, 73-89.



power passed to the king's guardians who, due to their ineptitude, caused popular resentment among the Egyptian people. Antiochus availed of these circumstances to invade and conquer the entire Coele-Syrian region in 201 BCE, only to lose Palestine in 201/200 BCE to the Ptolemaic general Scopas. However, following the battle of Panium (200 BCE), Antiochus gained definitive control of Coele-Syria. Antiochus III eventually overstepped himself and lost power by challenging the might of the Rome. The consequences of this were grave. Rome declared war (192 BCE), defeated Antiochus at Magnesia (190 BCE) and forced him to pay considerable indemnity.<sup>125</sup> Antiochus was assassinated in 187 BCE while trying to rob the temple of Elam in an effort to raise money to pay the Romans and was succeeded by his son Seleucus IV Philopator (187-175 BCE). Under Seleucus the empire declined. Starved of capital, Seleucus attempted to rob the private funds of the Temple in Jerusalem.<sup>126</sup> After a brief and quiet reign Seleucus was murdered by his minister Heliodorus. While Seleucus had heirs, the throne was seized by Antiochus IV Epiphanes (175-164 BCE) who presided over such an intense hellenization of Palestine that it provoked the greatest crisis for Judaism since 587 BCE.

The essential nature of Seleucid rule was established by Seleucus I Nicator (305-281 BCE) and continued essentially unchanged throughout the period of the empire (312-63 BCE). The βασιλεύς was the supreme ruler of a dynastic monarchy. He was assisted by other significant royal officials.<sup>127</sup> In general terms

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<sup>125</sup> Arav, *Hellenistic Palestine*, 137-138.

<sup>126</sup> 2 Macc 3,4-40. A consequence of Seleucus' efforts to pay tribute to the Romans was an upsurge of pro-Ptolemaic support in Judea.

<sup>127</sup> These were: φίλοι or king's friends who formed the royal council which was established  
(continued...)

the rule of the Seleucid monarch can be described thus:

Balancing, and sometimes contrasted with, all these features stands the policy of the sovereign, resting specifically on the ideology of a personal and multiracial monarchy, a privileged relationship for the cities (*poleis*), a much-trumpeted respect for freedom and democracy (*eleutheria kai demokratia*), and, all in all, a claim to principles inspired by the policies of Alexander the Great ...<sup>128</sup>

Due to the huge size of the empire it was subdivided into large territorial divisions by the creation of viceroyalties which were usually administered by members of the royal dynasty.<sup>129</sup> The essentially hellenistic distinction maintained between πόλεις, ἔθνη and δυνάσται obtained.<sup>130</sup> Smaller districts were administered by a corps of bureaucratic officials similar to those in the Ptolemaic empire.<sup>131</sup> The object of royal rule was the territories (χώραι) of the empire and their subject population. All land was in the possession of the king. Such royal land (βασιλική χώρα) was worked by royal peasants (βασιλικοὶ λαοί). Private estates (δωρεαί) existed

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<sup>127</sup>(...continued)

by the king with absolute autonomy and given absolute power; δύνάμεις or armed forces which characterized Seleucid rule as a typical hellenistic monarchy.

<sup>128</sup> Musti, "Syria," 180.

<sup>129</sup> *Ibid.*, 184-189 on Seleucid administration.

<sup>130</sup> Bickerman, *Jews in Greek Age*, 122-129; *idem*, *The God of the Maccabees: Studies on the Meaning and Origin of the Maccabean Revolt* (Leiden: Brill, 1979), 35. The Seleucids recognized different categories of self-governing communities in their empire. These were: the πόλις or Greek city-state, the ἔθνος which was a political sub-unit ruled by local leaders, and finally the δυνάστη or vassal principality.

<sup>131</sup> These consisted of: financial administrator (διοικητής), district administrator (οἰκονόμος), military general (στρατηγός), accountant (ἐκλογιστής), secretary (ἐπιστολογράφος) and the keeper of the register of debts (χρεωφύλαξ).

also, but these were created by the king who suspended his rights over such land in favour of his *protégés*. Temple lands were not confiscated; rather the Seleucid rulers in general

... increasingly appear as the great conservers of the ancient temple structures (and perhaps also of the tribal structures), granting space for more or less developed forms of city life (and, consequently, for urban forms of property) ... [and] pursued a policy of intervention in temple finances and an anti-temple policy in general, *only* with regard to some eastern sanctuaries and *only* from the reign of Antiochus III onwards.<sup>132</sup>

Royal land was also transferred to the πόλεις (πολίτικαι χώραι) and to areas in order to create colonies (κατοικίαι). The effect of this led to an intensification of the urbanization of the empire. The Seleucid economy<sup>133</sup> was essentially agricultural. Tribute from the βασιλική χώρα formed the basis of Seleucid finance. The major agricultural produce (particularly of Coele-Syria) was corn, grapes and vegetables. Crafts and trades, such as the production of glass objects, purple dye and textile manufacture, flourished in the cities.<sup>134</sup> The colonization policy of the Seleucids was very different to that of the Ptolemies. Syria was the heart of the Seleucid Empire and so it was colonized extensively with the foundation of new cities. Seleucus Nicator founded such cities as: Antioch, Apamea, Seleucia, Laodicea and Nicopolis. Each of these cities contained a nucleus of Greek settlers. During the reign of Antiochus III the satrapal system was introduced into Phoenicia, Coele-Syria, Idumea and Palestine. As with the Ptolemaic empire, the Seleucids operated a comprehensive and extensive system of taxation. The main taxes were: personal or poll tax, sale tax, slave tax, salt tax,

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<sup>132</sup> Musti, "Syria," 197.

<sup>133</sup> *Ibid.*, 193-204 for a detailed analysis. See also Arav, *Hellenistic Palestine*, 137-139.

<sup>134</sup> Jones, *Eastern Roman Provinces*, 241-247.

crown tax which was in the form of an offering to the king, as well as taxes on the use of harbours and on imports and exports. In Judea agricultural produce was subject to a tithe, but this seems to have been a substitute for poll tax.<sup>135</sup>

Under the Seleucids Judea was only a small part of Coele-Syria. The term *Jew* applied only to those living around the temple in Jerusalem,<sup>136</sup> which was the only Jewish city as such in Judea. The Seleucid government of Judea continued more or less along the lines established by the Ptolemies: "Since the government of both the Ptolemies and the Seleucids rested on the same political principles, we may view as an entity the period of Ptolemaic and Seleucid domination over Jerusalem ... that is ... between 301 and 175 B.C.E."<sup>137</sup> Judea formed a self-governing unit within the empire although royal troops were garrisoned in the city. One significant change under Seleucid rule had to do with personal taxation. Ptolemaic rule depended on a massive system of tax-collection. Under Antiochus III the upper classes, *γερουσία*, Temple officials and the priestly caste were exempted from personal taxation; the royal edict under which this exemption was granted will be considered below. The intermediary between the Seleucid central government and the Jews continued, as under Ptolemaic rule, in the person of the High Priest, who continued to have political and fiscal roles. The *γερουσία* continued as a council to the High Priest.<sup>138</sup>

With the defeat of Ptolemaic rule in Judea, most Jews probably welcomed the new ruler, although the attitude of the Jerusalem community towards Antiochus

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<sup>135</sup> Musti, "Syria," 201n.44.

<sup>136</sup> *Polybius*, XVI, 39,5.

<sup>137</sup> Bickerman, "Post-Biblical Judaism," 54-55.

<sup>138</sup> *Ibid.*, 57.

is very difficult to determine. A vague reference in Jerome's commentary on the Book of Daniel suggests that Jerusalem was divided in its loyalty to the Ptolemies and the Seleucids. However, its value as a reliable historical source is disputed.<sup>139</sup> Flavius Josephus recounts two letters and a decree issued by Antiochus in favour of Jews: while not permitting a complete picture of the relationship between Jerusalem and the new Seleucid power, they offer some insight into how Antiochus viewed that relationship. According to Josephus, the king rewarded the Jews by extending them certain privileges.<sup>140</sup> Scholars however, disagree as to the genuineness and accuracy of Josephus' text.<sup>141</sup> Marcus<sup>142</sup> has weighed carefully the arguments of these scholars and concludes concerning the *Letter of Antiochus III to Ptolemy*: "I believe that the weight of evidence supports those scholars who accept Antiochus' letter to Ptolemy as an actual decree issued by the king soon

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<sup>139</sup> Tcherikover, *Hellenistic Civilization*, 77-79 correctly rejects attempts to determine Jerusalem's loyalty based on Dan 11,14. He rejects the view that the insurgents referred to in Dan 11,14 could be either pro-Seleucid hellenizers or a messianic group endeavouring to cast off foreign oppression. He is correct in this as both theories are constructed on the interpretation of a single biblical verse in the absence of corroborating evidence. However Hengel, *Judaism and Hellenism*, I, 7.9 seems to accept the text at face value.

<sup>140</sup> The edicts of Antiochus are contained in *Ant.*, 12 §§138-153. The edicts are found in the *Letter of Antiochus III to Ptolemy* (§§138-144), the *Decree of Antiochus III Concerning the Temple* (§§145-146) and the *Letter of Antiochus III to Zeuxis* (§§147-153).

<sup>141</sup> The most influential scholars opposed to the authenticity of the texts are J. G. Willrich and Adolf Büchler. Those favouring the texts' accuracy are V. A. Tcherikover and Elias Bickerman. Very often Josephus cannot be taken at face value due to his biases, the poor quality of his authorities and the lack of corroborating evidence for his claims. These problems are particularly acute when dealing with *Antiquities* as the work is clearly apologetic and the very scant material dealing with the Ptolemaic and early Seleucid periods is often filled out with material that is both legendary and dubious. Consequently the authority of each citation of Josephus will have to be assessed in the light of critical scholarship.

<sup>142</sup> R. Marcus, "Appendix D: Antiochus III and the Jews (*Ant.* xii. 129-153)," in *Josephus*, vol. 7 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, London: Heinemann, 1986), 743-766.

after his conquest of Coele-Syria."<sup>143</sup> Following Tcherikover, Marcus further argues that the *Decree of Antiochus III Concerning the Temple* is authentic. Equally so, Marcus argues for the authenticity of the *Letter of Antiochus III to Zeuxis*: "It seems to me, then, that there is no convincing evidence against the genuineness of Antiochus III's letter to Zeuxis."<sup>144</sup>

The *Letter of Antiochus III to Ptolemy* is a very important text as it is the only document concerning Seleucid rule in Judea in the pre-Maccabean era. Josephus presents Antiochus III as the author of the letter, which is probably historically correct,<sup>145</sup> and can be taken as an authentic expression of Antiochus' policy whereby Jewish autonomy was to be protected by the military and administrative apparatus of the Seleucid state. Addressed to the king's governor of Syria-Palestine, Ptolemy (210-195 BCE), the letter outlines Antiochus' precise reasons for rewarding the Jews: their demonstration of freedom, their welcome offered to him, their procurement of provisions for his soldiers and elephants, and finally, their joining forces with him against the Ptolemaic garrison.<sup>146</sup> The uncommon provision of military aid and foodstuffs by the Jerusalem population for Antiochus' soldiers and elephants clearly suggests the presence of a pro-Seleucid party in the city. Since the Jewish encounter with Antiochus is led by the

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<sup>143</sup> *Ibid.*, 761.

<sup>144</sup> *Ibid.*, 766.

<sup>145</sup> Elias **Bickerman**, "La Charte Séleucide de Jérusalem," in *Studies in Jewish and Christian History*, part 2 (Leiden: Brill, 1980), 44-85 for a detailed analysis of the letter.

<sup>146</sup> *Ant.*, 12 §§138-139.

γερουσία,<sup>147</sup> it can be assumed that its leader, the High Priest Simon II (219-196 BCE) was pro-Seleucid; a fact apparently confirmed by Ben Sira.<sup>148</sup> The absence of any mention of the High Priest in the letter is interesting and has been put forward as evidence of the document's inauthenticity.<sup>149</sup> However,

The high priest is not mentioned in the Persian decrees or in the Seleucid documents quoted in 1 and 2 Maccabees before the time of Jonathan, whereas the *gerousia* continues to be mentioned beside the high priests in documents from the later Hasmonaean period ... in the time of Antiochus III the high priest shared authority over the temple with the *gerousia*.<sup>150</sup>

Antiochus' action was both to restore Jerusalem and offer assistance to its citizens.<sup>151</sup> According to Josephus, Antiochus was motivated because of Jewish piety (διὰ τὴν εὐσέβειαν - §140). What he actually offered was τὴν εἰς τὰς θυσίας σύνταξιν (§140). Σύνταξις was something given by sovereigns to subjects. Thus Antiochus did not furnish the actual material for sacrifice, but the money to obtain it. He ordered also that the Temple be repaired (καὶ τὸ περὶ τὸ

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<sup>147</sup> *Ant.*, 12 §138. This was probably the chief legislative and juridical body of the Jews, operating under the presidency of the High Priest. Marcus, "Appendix D," 71. However, see also Bickerman, "Charte Séleucide," 48-49 who notes: "Ajoutons que l'organisation et les attributions de la gérusie de Jérusalem nous restent totalment inconnues."

<sup>148</sup> Antiochus' letter makes reference to the king's desire to rebuild Jerusalem and the Temple (*Ant.*, 12 §§139-141) which according to Sir 50,1-3 occurred during the period of office of the High Priest Simon II. Simon must therefore have carried out or facilitated Antiochus' plans, suggesting that he was pro-Seleucid. J. Middendorp, *Die Stellung Jesus Ben Siras Zwischen Judentum und Hellenismus* (Leiden: Brill, 1973), 168 also agrees with linking Antiochus' letter with the building programme under Simon. Tcherikover, *Hellenistic Civilization*, 81 argues that Simon was inclined to the Seleucids prior to the arrival of Antiochus.

<sup>149</sup> Marcus, "Appendix D," 754-755.

<sup>150</sup> *Ibid.*, 761.

<sup>151</sup> *Ant.*, 12 §139.

ἱερὸν ἀπαρτισθῆναι ἔργον - §141). §142 is a key text, outlining the privileged group which was to be exempted from the poll, crown, and salt taxes. The group consisted of ἡ γερουσία καὶ οἱ ἱερεῖς καὶ οἱ γραμματεῖς τοῦ ἱεροῦ καὶ οἱ ἱεροψάλται. The ordering of the elements of this privileged group is important and at first glance, surprising:

La situation privilégiée de prêtres indigènes ne surprend pas dans un document séleucide. L'aristocratie laïque des indigènes ayant été dépossédée par les conquérants, le clergé apparut comme l'élite et le porte-parole des populations orientales. Ce qui est remarquable, c'est de voir à Jérusalem, une ville sainte, le clergé cédant le pas au Sénat de la nation.<sup>152</sup>

For Tcherikover<sup>153</sup> the most important element in §142 is the reference to the decision to allow the Jews to live κατὰ τοὺς πατρίους νόμους:

It is not to be supposed that Antiochus or any other Hellenistic king, knew what the Mosaic Law was, or what was written in it and what was not, and he was certainly not familiar with the difference between the written and oral codes. Not he, but the Jews themselves imbued the dry juridical formula "the ancestral laws" with a living practical content. And by "the Jews," we mean the authorized representatives of the Jewish people and, in the case under discussion, the heads of the theocracy of Jerusalem, and the class of scribes who were recognized as the official interpreters of the Torah ...<sup>154</sup>

The final part of the letter (§§143-144) deals with Antiochus' measures to repopulate the city by fiscal and tax exemptions and by granting freedom to slaves and their children with the restoration of their property.

Josephus wrote this text in 93/94 CE in the wake of the destruction of the second Temple. His purpose was both apologetic and tendentious in that he

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<sup>152</sup> Bickerman, "Charte Séleucide," 59.

<sup>153</sup> Tcherikover, *Hellenistic Civilization*, 82.

<sup>154</sup> *Ibid.*, 84.



wanted to establish the respect a previous pagan ruler of Judea had for the Jews, their Temple and cult. It is most strange that Antiochus III's letter was addressed to Ptolemy and not to the Jews. This is probably because Josephus was working from a copy of the letter sent to Ptolemy. There is nothing unique in the letter's contents in that it conformed to the standard Seleucid procedure of establishing the rights of newly conquered cities. This Antiochus did for the Jews living in the ἔθνος of Judea. In re-establishing the statutes of the city, the king placed the Jews under their ancestral laws: "La locution 'les lois des ancêtres' indiquait pour les Juifs et pour les autorités païennes, lorsqu'elles parlaient des choses juives, le code de Moïse."<sup>155</sup> The effect of Antiochus' decree was twofold. First, it guaranteed the inviolability of the precepts of Torah. Second, it placed the Temple and its cult under royal control. In short, "la teneur de l'ordonnance reflète la structure politique spéciale de Jérusalem, ville sainte autour du Temple, où le clergé est privilégié et où la Torah remplace l'acte constitutionnel."<sup>156</sup>

The second document offered by Josephus is *The Decree of Antiochus III Concerning the Temple*.<sup>157</sup> According to Josephus this decree was a πρόγραμμα or public notice.<sup>158</sup> The first article of the notice (§145) dealt with the prohibition of entering the Temple, except for those Jews entitled to enter, once purified κατὰ τὸν πατριὸν νόμον. While the restriction of foreigners' entry to a holy place

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<sup>155</sup> Bickerman, "Charte Séleucide," 71.

<sup>156</sup> *Ibid.*, 85.

<sup>157</sup> Elias Bickerman, "Une Proclamation Séleucide Relative au Temple de Jérusalem," in *Studies in Jewish and Christian History*, part 2 (Leiden: Brill, 1980), 86-104 offers a detailed analysis of the decree.

<sup>158</sup> *Ant.*, 12 §145.

would have been alien to the Greeks,<sup>159</sup> the rationale behind Antiochus' decree was Jewish ancestral law.<sup>160</sup> The second article (§146) listed animals whose flesh and skin could not have been brought εἰς τὴν πόλιν and which could not have been bred there. This article is in keeping with similar interdictions of other holy places in the hellenistic world. The third article (§146) ensured that animals for sacrificial purposes were ritually pure. The punishment for violation was fixed at 3000 drachmas of silver payable to the priests. Josephus understood the πρόγραμμα as an imperial edict valid for the entire empire, when in effect it was a mere entry notice.<sup>161</sup> The third document, the *Letter of Antiochus III to Zeuxis*, adds little to the present discussion and can safely be disregarded.

Clearly these orders of Antiochus made for a peaceful relationship between the Jews and their new rulers. The import of the documents is twofold. First, in recognizing Jewish ancestral law, Antiochus opted not to disturb the entire political and religious foundation of Jewish tradition. Second, in recognizing the authority of the γερουσία, Antiochus acknowledged it as the supreme administrative institution and, by implication, the High Priest as the supreme ruler of Judea which now formed an ἔθνος or sub-division of the satrapy of Seleucid Coele-Syria. In short, Judea constituted an autonomous political unit within the empire, with its own ancestral law validated as official law. This official recognition of Judea as an autonomous political entity is in keeping with the complete lack of internal

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<sup>159</sup> Bickerman, "Proclamation Séleucide," 91.

<sup>160</sup> However, it should be noted that Torah does not contain any such prohibition.

<sup>161</sup> Bickerman, "Proclamation Séleucide," 102 understands it as a notice at the entrance to Jerusalem, reading εἰς τὴν πόλιν (§146) literally. However Tcherikover, *Hellenistic Civilization*, 85-87 argues convincingly that the restrictions applied only to the Temple and its immediate neighbourhood.

organization within the Seleucid empire necessary for the maintenance of political discipline.

The change of political rule eased the lot of the Jews as Antiochus did not impose a foreign bureaucracy in the manner of the Ptolemies. However, under Antiochus' reign the hellenistic ideals of uniting East and West under Greek culture continued to be promoted, and Greek thought proceeded unrestrainedly to influence the Hebrew mind. Tcherikover's<sup>162</sup> description of Jerusalem on the eve of this hellenistic reform is useful for this study as it presents the important political, and socio-religious realities of the period under consideration. Jerusalem was not a Greek πόλις, for,

... if we wish to see Jerusalem as a polis, we must require the existence of a demos, a citizen body gathering at fixed times and places for fixed purposes (the election of officials, etc.), and of a council, changing frequently, and of officials elected by the people. We must also require the existence of a gymnasium and an ephebeion as municipal educational institutions to train young people to Greek citizen life. In the absence of all these institutions, no city may be considered a polis.<sup>163</sup>

It was, however, a large and populous city within which the most important grouping was the Aaronic, hereditary priestly class which presided over the Judean theocracy. This group not only controlled the spiritual welfare of the people, but

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<sup>162</sup> *Ibid.*, 117-151.

<sup>163</sup> Victor A. Tcherikover, "Was Jerusalem a 'Polis'?", *IEJ* 14 (1964): 61-78, at 66. Tcherikover's concern is to establish that Jerusalem was not a πόλις in the Roman period. His evidence cited for the period of Ben Sira is worth considering. The type of popular assembly (ἐκκλησία) of the Ptolemaic period mentioned by Josephus in the story of Joseph the Tobiad (*Ant.*, 12 §164), as in the period of Ezra and Nehemiah, was a large congregation of people assembled in an *ad hoc* manner, rarely to confirm government action and consequently did not resemble the δῆμος of the Greek πόλις. The γερουσία had nothing in common with the Greek βουλή and evidence for the γυμνάσιον must be dated to a later period. Thus Jerusalem was not a πόλις at the time of Ben Sira.

it was the strongest and wealthiest class in Judea. The priests were divided into kinship groups. Some of these priestly families controlled the Temple, city and country, while others were poor and powerless. The Oniads<sup>164</sup> were the wealthiest and noblest group and controlled the office of High Priest:

It is therefore with some justification that the scholars are in the habit of calling the social regime in Judaea a "theocracy," or a "hierocracy," for not merely was the spiritual leadership in the hands of the priests, but their class was the strongest and the wealthiest among the classes of Jerusalem from the political and social viewpoints.<sup>165</sup>

The next most powerful group was the secular aristocracy whose wealth derived from either agricultural holdings or high administrative office. A final grouping worthy of special note was that of the scribes who functioned as interpreters of Torah. At the beginning of the Second Temple period the priests provided official legal interpretations. Tcherikover's thesis is that as the priestly class evolved into an exclusive and powerful class, identifying with wealthy landowners, they neglected this task and consequently the urban population sought out scribes for Torah-interpretation. Furthermore, Tcherikover contends, the scribes offered an interpretation of Israel's oral and written traditions, while the priests restricted their interpretations to the written Torah only. The thesis is highly conjectural, a fact recognized by Tcherikover himself who cautiously states:

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<sup>164</sup> Bickerman, *Jews in Greek Age*, 140-147. The term *Oniad* applies to the priestly dynasty from Onias I (323-300 or 290 BCE) onwards. The official name of the family was *the sons of Zadok*; Tcherikover, *Hellenistic Civilization*, 454n.8.

<sup>165</sup> *Ibid.*, 120.

*Chapter One: Ben Sira and the Evolution of Jewish Scribalism*

At all events (we must eschew dogmatism, since lack of evidence permits only conjecture), in the early Hellenistic period the class of scribes held a respected place among the various classes of the capital, and the nation's entire brains-its intelligentsia, to use a modern term, was concentrated among the men of this class.<sup>166</sup>

Tcherikover also argues that within the scribes there existed a special sect called the *Hasidim*, who were first organized under Simon I the Just (dates uncertain), and who best embody the ideology of the scribes.<sup>167</sup> It can be stated with certainty that Antiochus' royal charter constituted the scribes as a special and privileged body. Antiochus' decrees required the help of Jewish jurists, and since all Jewish law was based on Torah, the scribal role naturally included knowledge and interpretation of Torah.

Two other writings are important sources of data for the development of the Jewish community in this period: Josephus' *Legend of the Tobiads*,<sup>168</sup> and the *Wisdom of Jesus Ben Sira*. While Josephus' account is legendary and untrustworthy in places, its basic historicity can be accepted, which can be summarized as follows. The story is about a certain Joseph, who had a very high reputation for justice and uprightness among the people of Jerusalem. The High Priest Onias II (died 219 BCE), Joseph's uncle, refused to pay tribute to the Ptolemaic king, which provoked the threat of an Egyptian invasion of Judea. Joseph, having called the people together, went to Egypt, calmed the king's anger and received from the king the right to farm taxes, a function he performed for twenty-two years. Hyrcanus was born of a sexual liaison between Joseph and his

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<sup>166</sup> *Ibid.*, 125.

<sup>167</sup> *Ibid.*, 456n.21. The thesis is interesting, but remains highly conjectural.

<sup>168</sup> For the story of Joseph son of Tobiah see *Ant.*, 12 §§154-185.224 and for the story of Hyrcanus see *Ant.*, 12 §§186-222.228-236.

niece. On an occasion when Hyrcanus had gone to Egypt to present a gift to the king, he overspent his father's wealth in providing the king with an excessively lavish gift. This led to a bitter family quarrel, forcing Hyrcanus to flee across the Jordan. There he built a fortress and fought the Arabs. With the advent of Antiochus IV, Hyrcanus, fearing the king's wrath for what he had done to the Arabs, committed suicide and his property passed to the king.

Josephus relates events which take place prior to Seleucid rule in Palestine. The Ptolemaic king is probably Ptolemy III Eurgetes (246-221 BCE) and the date of Onias II's clash with the king is 242 BCE.<sup>169</sup> Josephus' chronology is confused, forcing one to opt for approximate dates for the birth of Joseph (270-260 BCE), his appointment as tax-collector (230-220 BCE), Hyrcanus' visit to Egypt (205-200 BCE) and Hyrcanus' death (175-170 BCE).<sup>170</sup> That Josephus records with such narrative detail the life of Joseph, suggests that Joseph must have introduced some new principles into the Jewish society of his time. Joseph is presented to Ptolemy as προστάτης of the people.<sup>171</sup> At the beginning of the hellenistic period the function of the προστασία was in the hands of the High Priest and had to do with gathering taxes, an occupation which would have been very lucrative for the High Priest. Indeed Joseph accused Onias II of retaining the προστασία for purposes of personal gain.<sup>172</sup> This financial and administrative function passed to Joseph and "thus occurred the first breach in the edifice of the theocracy of

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<sup>169</sup> Tcherikover, *Hellenistic Civilization*, 129. In 242 BCE it seemed that Seleucus II Callinicus might overthrow Ptolemaic power in Syria-Palestine. His short-lived victory over Ptolemy III may have been the occasion for Onias II's refusal to pay tribute to the Egyptian king.

<sup>170</sup> *Ibid.*, 130.

<sup>171</sup> *Ant.*, 12 §167.

<sup>172</sup> *Ant.*, 12 §161.

Jerusalem: the responsibility for the levying of taxes and their transmission to the king was removed from the High Priest and handed to a professional financier."<sup>173</sup> Accordingly, Joseph had become the High Priest's διοικητής with all the political and financial power associated with that role. In fact, Joseph is the clear Jewish counterpart of the entrepreneurial spirit found in Zenon and Apollonius. It is unlikely that Onias II ceded such power easily. Nonetheless, "the fact was, at any rate, that there now arose, alongside the traditional theocratic authority, a new power based on the personal financial skill and experience of a private individual who was closely bound up with the broad international field."<sup>174</sup> Joseph then expanded his role and influence by persuading Ptolemy to grant him, first, the right to collect taxes throughout Coele-Syria, Phoenicia, Judea and Samaria,<sup>175</sup> and second, the permission to institute tax reform in Coele-Syria,<sup>176</sup> which he did under force of arms.<sup>177</sup> It is clear from Josephus' account that

A Jew of the type of Joseph the Tobiad had no alternative but to quit the narrow framework of Jewish tradition or even to encounter it in head-on collision, and although we hear nothing of such a clash, the fact that from Joseph's family originated the "sons of Tobiah," the politicians who under Antiochus Epiphanes headed the Hellenistic movement in Jerusalem, itself suffices to explain in which direction the sympathies of Joseph and the members of his family inclined.<sup>178</sup>

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<sup>173</sup> Tcherikover, *Hellenistic Civilization*, 132.

<sup>174</sup> *Ibid.*, 133.

<sup>175</sup> *Ant.*, 12 §175.

<sup>176</sup> *Ant.*, 12 §§176-177.

<sup>177</sup> *Ant.*, 12 §§180-184.

<sup>178</sup> Tcherikover, *Hellenistic Civilization*, 134.

In his analysis of Josephus' story of Hyrcanus, Tcherikover contends that Hyrcanus' motivation in all he did was to secure for himself his father's tax-farming rights. It was exactly this ploy that earned for him his father's and brothers' hatred.<sup>179</sup> This hatred soon ceased to be merely a family feud, and quickly involved Judean politics. Josephus' account is clear:

ἀποθανόντος δὲ Ἰωσήπου τὸν λαὸν συνέβη στασιάσαι διὰ τοὺς παῖδας αὐτοῦ. τῶν γὰρ πρεσβυτέρων πόλεμον ἐξενεγκάμενων πρὸς Ἰρκανόν, ὅς ἦν νεώτατος τῶν Ἰωσήπου τέκνων, διέστη τὸ πλῆθος. καὶ οἱ μὲν πλείους τοῖς πρεσβυτέροις συνεμάχουν καὶ ὁ ἀρχιερεὺς Σίμων διὰ τὴν συγγένειαν.<sup>180</sup>

The whole of the population divided over the matter, with the majority and Simon the High Priest siding with the brothers against Hyrcanus. The conflict may be dated to Antiochus III's conquest of Jerusalem.<sup>181</sup> In which case the quarrel is transformed into a conflict between those of pro-Seleucid tendencies (Simon and the brothers) against the pro-Ptolemaic Hyrcanus. Hyrcanus' wars against the Arabs and building programmes in Transjordan suggest that he ruled there as a local prince:

τοῦ δὲ ἀρχιερέως ὑποδείξαντος παρακαταθήκας εἶναι χηρῶν τε καὶ ὀρφανῶν τινὰ δὲ καὶ Ἰρκανοῦ τοῦ Τωβίου σφόδρα ἀνδρὸς ἐν ὑπεροχῇ κειμένου οὕτως ἦν διαβάλλων ὁ δυσσεβὴς Σίμων τὰ δὲ πάντα ἀργυρίου τετρακόσια τάλαντα χρυσίου δὲ διακόσια.<sup>182</sup>

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<sup>179</sup> *Ibid.*, 136.

<sup>180</sup> *Ant.*, 12 §§228-229.

<sup>181</sup> Tcherikover, *Hellenistic Civilization*, 137.

<sup>182</sup> 2 Macc 3,11.



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Hyrchanus obviously enjoyed the confidence of the Temple authorities and of Onias III himself, who was pro-Ptolemaic. However, Hyrchanus would never see the return of the Egyptians and died in despair.

Josephus' legend suggests that the Tobiad family, an important Judean group of the period, had become wealthy through accumulation of land and tax-collection. The family's influence was primarily social, though it also exercised political influence by means of its wealth. Like other Jews the Tobiads were divided in their political allegiances with most members supporting the Seleucids, while Hyrchanus alone was the pro-Ptolemaic exception. The Tobiads were close to the High Priest Simon II and to the Temple which dominated the economy. The Temple was a source of great wealth as the annual half-shekel levy and other private monies were deposited there. In short, the Temple functioned as state exchequer and accordingly became a source of private funds for wealthy Judean families like the Tobiads, who had very significant influence during Simon's term of office. The most important insight which can be gained from Josephus' account of the Tobiads is that

Hellenism from its first appearance in Judaea, was internally bound up with one particular social class - with the wealthy families of the Jerusalem aristocracy. The crafty and resourceful tax-collector, the powerful and unscrupulous businessman, was the spiritual father of the Jewish Hellenizing movement, and throughout the entire brief period of the flourishing of Hellenism in Jerusalem, lust for profit and pursuit of power were among the most pronounced marks of the new movement.<sup>183</sup>

A second source of information for the period under consideration is the *Wisdom of Ben Sira*. For Ben Sira, supreme intellectual achievement was only possible through attaining wisdom. Yet he was the enemy of any concept of wisdom divorced from the fear of YHWH and not expressed in Torah. Ben Sira's outlook

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<sup>183</sup> Tcherikover, *Hellenistic Civilization*, 142.

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... witnesses to the widening of the intellectual horizon of the people of Jerusalem ... [Ben Sira] cannot find satisfaction in the restricted conditions of life in the tiny land of Judaea, and he feels a need to leave its borders, to see other lands ... In this sense Ben Sira ... may be compared with Joseph the Tobiad and his son Hyrcanus.<sup>184</sup>

However, Ben Sira never adopted a totally hellenized life-style, remaining a conservative Jew. His theological views will be considered later. Of more immediate interest is the information we can glean from his text about his own world. He portrays the contrast between the rich and poor of his time<sup>185</sup> which is not born of class struggle, but of hatred.<sup>186</sup> Ben Sira displays deep respect for those in authority, but still recognizes the existence of corruption among those in power in Jerusalem.<sup>187</sup> For Ben Sira there were three sources of antagonism in the Jerusalem community: the social conflict between rich and poor; the moral antagonisms between sinners and righteous and finally, the religious strife between unbelievers and pious. In particular, Ben Sira's work points to the coming social conflict between a wealthy, free-thinking class and a poor class which espoused a more traditional form of Judaism.<sup>188</sup>

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<sup>184</sup> *Ibid.*, 143.

<sup>185</sup> Sir 13,21-23.

<sup>186</sup> Sir 13,15-20.

<sup>187</sup> Sir 7,6; 8,14; 9,13.

<sup>188</sup> Tcherikover, *Hellenistic Civilization*, 126-151.186-203. Tcherikover's analysis of Josephus's biography and of Sirach suggests that the hellenizing movement in Jerusalem was to be found exclusively among the wealthy aristocratic families and that resistance to the reform came from the anti-hellenistic poor and was spearheaded by the Hasidim. The weakness in Tcherikover's thesis is the reconstruction of the Hasidim on the model of the rabbinic sage and the assumption that hellenization was found exclusively among the upper classes. See also Hengel, *Judaism and Hellenism*, I, 187-203 whose thesis is that the hellenistic reform was caused by the  
(continued...)

This brief analysis of Judea in the Early Seleucid Period points clearly to its status as a small, highly theocratic ἔθνος within a giant and extremely bureaucratic hellenistic empire. The massive expansion of bureaucracy, begun under the Ptolemies and continued in large measure by the Seleucids, allowed the role of the scribe to evolve to a point of central importance in the political, economic, administrative and religious affairs of state. There is some evidence that the Jerusalem theocracy may have undergone significant, but subtle change. The removal of tax-farming rights from Onias II in favour of Joseph the Tobiad may point to a certain decentralization of ruling authority away from the High Priest. Antiochus III's decree giving Jewish ancestral law the status of imperial law signals a new stage in the hellenization of Judea, occurring in Jerusalem, whereby Jewish intellectual and religious thought encountered the Greek world directly. Certainly the decree gave renewed impetus to the religious role of the scribe as interpreter of Torah, thus strengthening the significance of the scribe's religious activity within the Jewish theocracy. The fact that the priests are mentioned in second place behind the γερουσία in the list of the groups exempt from some Seleucid taxes may point to a certain complexity in the priests' status within the Jewish theocracy. Finally, the intellectual background of hellenistic Judea, dominated as it was by the Jewish concept of חֻמְתֵּי הַתּוֹרָה, offered the possibilities of locating Israel's traditions in a much wider perspective. None of these factors is conclusive in itself, but their

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<sup>188</sup>(...continued)

Tobiads who wished to replace traditional Judaism with an enlightened YHWHistic faith which would no longer separate Jews from the rest of the world. A similar approach is adopted by J. A. Goldstein, *I Maccabees: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, AB Series 41 (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1976), 104-160 who argues that the hellenizers were those who attempted to introduce some form of heterodox Judaism. The most convincing counter-argument is offered by Tcherikover, *Hellenistic Civilization*, 183-185 who argues that the hellenizers were interested in power and not some form of syncretistic reformed Judaism.

coincidence may suggest possible conditions for further evolutionary development in the role and significance of the Jewish scribe. The accuracy of this assertion can only be more fully assessed in the light of what is known from non-biblical literary sources about scribal activity in the Ptolemaic and Seleucid empires in general and within Judea in particular.

### 1.3 The Role of the Scribe in Pre-Maccabean Hellenistic Judea

#### (a) The Scribe as Bureaucratic Official

Bagnall's thorough study<sup>189</sup> of Ptolemaic administration has noted the few references to the γραμματεὺς in all relevant papyri and inscriptions of the era. The Zenon papyri relate how Zenon referred to the different officials he encountered in Palestine, of which the γραμματεὺς was clearly an important one. However, it is impossible to derive any information other than the title from the papyri.<sup>190</sup> Another group of officials, the κωμομισθωταί, occupied in Syrian villages the place reserved for scribes in Egyptian villages. Their function was bureaucratic, acting as stewards for the king.<sup>191</sup> Under Ptolemaic rule the βασιλικὸς γραμματεὺς ('royal scribe') was the assistant to the στρατηγός and performed statistical and financial functions. Likewise the τοπογραμματεὺς ('district scribe') and the κωμογραμματεὺς ('village scribe') carried out official functions such as

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<sup>189</sup> Roger S. Bagnall, *The Administration of the Ptolemaic Possessions Outside Egypt* (Leiden: Brill, 1976).

<sup>190</sup> Tcherikover, "Zenon Papyri," 3. Unfortunately the sources only refer to γραμματεῖς outside Syria-Palestine: to one Demetrios who was a γραμματεὺς from Cyprus and to a γραμματεὺς in Crete.

<sup>191</sup> Bagnall, *Ptolemaic Possessions*, 16; Rostovtzeff, *Hellenistic World*, I, 344.

keeping records and drafting legal documents.<sup>192</sup> In this way different categories of government scribes performed the essentially bureaucratic functions required for the financial and juridical administration of Judea. Many of these bureaucratic scribal functions continued under Seleucid rule.<sup>193</sup>

The data for the rest of the Ptolemaic Empire is very scant. In the latter part of the third century BCE one of the city officials of the Cypriot city of Kourion is referred to as γραμματεύς.<sup>194</sup> The figure of the γραμματεύς along with those of ἄρχων, στρατηγός, and ἀγορανόμος constituted one of the political institutions of the city. There are a few references to γραμματεύς during the reign of Ptolemy VI Philometor (180-145 BCE), just after the period of composition of Sirach. Eirenaios was γραμματεύς in Crete according to an inscription on the central Aegean island of Thera.<sup>195</sup> His function as γραμματεύς seems to have been exercised in respect of an Egyptian garrison on Crete. He also functioned as the οἰκονόμος of Crete. In a similar manner the military bases at Itanos (Crete), and on Thera and at Methana were all served by a γραμματεύς. The γραμματεύς was one of the characteristic Greek civic institutions found at Salamis. An inscription (150/149 BCE) lists the officers of the city government among whom is the

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<sup>192</sup> John G. Gammie, "The Sage in Sirach," in *The Sage in Israel and the Ancient Near East*, 366-368.

<sup>193</sup> E. Bevan, *The House of Ptolemy* (Chicago: Argonaut, 1968), 143-144.

<sup>194</sup> T. B. Mitford, *The Inscriptions of Kourion* (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 1971), 46-48.

<sup>195</sup> Bagnall, *Ptolemaic Administration*, 122.136.

γραμματεὺς.<sup>196</sup> Finally, in 105 BCE the city of Paphos erected a statue to a famous citizen, Kalippos, whose career among other roles involved twice being γραμματεὺς of the βουλή and once as γραμματεὺς of the city.<sup>197</sup> While not directly relevant to Judea, these texts suggest that the γραμματεὺς had a significant bureaucratic and administrative role under Ptolemaic rule and also was an important civic institution.

For the Seleucid period two very important sources of information on Jewish scribes which require brief comment are: Josephus' *Jewish Antiquities*, which refers to scribes in Seleucid Jerusalem, and the *Letter of Aristeas to Philocrates*, which deals with scribal-type activity in the Diaspora. The text<sup>198</sup> of Josephus' *Jewish Antiquities* was considered above already in the context of Antiochus III's letter to his governor, Ptolemy. The relevant passage reads:

ἀπολυέσθω δ' ἡ γερουσία καὶ οἱ ἱερεῖς καὶ οἱ  
γραμματεῖς τοῦ ἱεροῦ καὶ οἱ ἱεροψάλται ὧν ὑπὲρ τῆς  
κεφαλῆς τελοῦσι καὶ τοῦ στεφαντικοῦ φόρου καὶ τοῦ περὶ  
τῶν ἀλῶν.

The group designated οἱ γραμματεῖς τοῦ ἱεροῦ is difficult to identify, as Josephus uses a similar expression (γραμματεῦσιν τοῦ ἱεροῦ) in a comparable context, where a king (Artaxerxes) revokes tax obligations from a list of

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<sup>196</sup> *Ibid.*, 59. The other officers were a college of χρεοφύλακες, a πρὸς τῆι διαλογῆι of the records in the office of the χρεοφύλακες.

<sup>197</sup> T. B. Mitford, "The Hellenistic Inscriptions of Old Paphos," *Annual of the British School of Athens* 56 (1961): 1-41. The other functions were: δῆμος, ἡρχευκότα τῆς πόλεως, and τεχνίτης.

<sup>198</sup> *Ant.*, 12 §142.

functionaries.<sup>199</sup> However, this text is dependent on Josephus' account of Antiochus' decree and adds little to our knowledge of temple-scribes. For Bickerman, "'les scribes du sanctuaire' formaient les cadres de l'administration des affaires du Temple,"<sup>200</sup> and point to the intensification of bureaucratic administration under the influence of hellenization. However, Josephus uses the term γραμματεὺς of secular government officials, and does not state that the scribes constituted a social group or had any particular role in regard to Torah-interpretation. Josephus' presentation of scribes is as mid-level government officials.<sup>201</sup> Certainly in describing the scribes as γραμματεῖς τοῦ ἱεροῦ, Josephus leaves their precise function unclear, but emphasizes that the scribes were dependent on Temple revenues and on the priests. Thus,

We may speculate that the scribes were concerned either with the financial and organizational functions of the Temple or with the recording and teaching of sacred traditions and laws, but we cannot know for certain. That the scribes are dependent on Temple revenues and subordinate to the priests who controlled the Temple is certain ...<sup>202</sup>

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<sup>199</sup> *Ant.*, 11 §128. It seems that Josephus has borrowed from 1 Esdras 8,22 which uses the term πραγματικοί τοῦ ἱεροῦ. 1 Esdras has in turn borrowed from canonical Ezra (7,24) where the term λειτουργοί οἴκου θεοῦ (פְּלִיטֵי בֵּית אֱלֹהִים) is found. The term πραγματικοί means "'hommes d'affaires' que ce soit au service de l'État, ou d'une communauté, ou à leur propre compte." Bickerman, "Charte Séleucide," 59. What Josephus has done is that, in writing *Ant.*, 11 §128, he has used the language of Antiochus' decree in relating Artaxerxes' decree. Hence the substitution of the term πραγματικοί with γραμματεῦσιν.

<sup>200</sup> *Ibid.*, 60.

<sup>201</sup> Saldarini, *Palestinian Society*, 262.

<sup>202</sup> *Ibid.*, 250. Saldarini's viewpoint is further supported by the inclusion of the ἱεροψάλται in Antiochus' decree. According to Bickerman, *Charte Séleucide*, 63, these temple-singers and musicians "forment un corps séparé à côté de l'ordre sacerdotal. Ils sont  
(continued...)

However, Josephus' usage of γραμματεὺς reflects an essentially Greco-Roman perspective which saw the scribe merely as a bureaucratic official.<sup>203</sup>

The pseudonymous Jewish-Greek *Letter of Aristeas to Philocrates*, dating from late second century BCE Alexandria does not use the word γραμματεὺς. However, the letter provides a description of the function of the translators of the Septuagint.<sup>204</sup> Many of the attributes assigned to the translators are associated with scribes.<sup>205</sup> The translators are of the finest character, the highest culture, the most noble parentage and are proficient in Jewish literature. They can carry out diplomatic functions, and embody the Aristotelian doctrine of the mean, while having a facility in discussing matters of law. In short, the translators are portrayed as embodying the wisdom ideal. The absence of the term γραμματεὺς may reflect the Diaspora reality where Jews were not citizens and consequently had no official role for scribes, in contrast to Jerusalem.<sup>206</sup>

### **(b) The Scribe as Educator**

The Jewish scribe must also be understood in the educational context of pre-Maccabean hellenistic Judea: "The Hellenistic epoch produced a new picture

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<sup>202</sup>(...continued)

soumis au même contrôle généalogique que les prêtres." The decree may therefore refer to the ruling class in the Judean theocracy, priests and two groups of temple-officials who, although not priests themselves, were subject to them.

<sup>203</sup> Saldarini, *Palestinian Society*, 265.

<sup>204</sup> *Aristeas*, §§120-127.

<sup>205</sup> Saldarini, *Palestinian Society*, 260.

<sup>206</sup> *Ibid.*



of man, and the key concept in it was *paideia*.<sup>207</sup> Isocrates (436-338 BCE) certainly linked this idea with the universal concept of culture and Eratosthenes of Alexandria (276-192 BCE) had upheld the possibility of the idea of making the barbarians into Greeks through παιδεία. Consequently the Greek educational system based on παιδεία and the gymnasium were established in all the conquered hellenistic territories.

While little direct information is available in the sources about Greek education in the Seleucid period, there is more about the Ptolemaic period, but it pertains only to *Ptolemaic Egypt* and *Alexandria*. The key institutions were the elementary school, a private institution, found in the major cities, and the gymnasium, located throughout Egypt's larger villages and cities. These two institutions formed the basis of Greek culture in Egypt in general, and in Alexandria in particular, with consequent profound influence on its Jewish population: "The remarkable and probably historically unique fusion of Jewish and Hellenistic culture in Alexandria from the third century BC is only understandable on the ground of the unhindered access of Egyptian Jews to the treasures of Greek education."<sup>208</sup>

This education occurred in three stages. The first stage or elementary school was for students from the age of seven to fifteen. There then followed the ephebate for youths up to the age of seventeen. This was the real time of training in the gymnasium with emphasis on physical exercise and military training. The origins of the ephebate are disputed.<sup>209</sup> The Athenian ephebate in the period 336-

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<sup>207</sup> Hengel, *Judaism and Hellenism*, I, 65. For a detailed discussion of Greek education and its influence on Palestinian Judaism see *ibid.*, I, 65-78.

<sup>208</sup> *Ibid.*, I, 66.

<sup>209</sup> Robert Doran, "Jason's Gymnasium," in *Of Scribes and Scrolls: Studies on the Hebrew*  
(continued...)

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322 BCE involved compulsory military service for all young men who would be citizens. It consisted of two years in military service. By the third century BCE the ephebate was no longer obligatory and lasted only one year. The relationship between the ephebate and citizenship also underwent development.<sup>210</sup> By 119/8 BCE it was no longer required for citizenship and from 119/8 BCE foreigners were admitted. "In the second century BCE, ephebic training was not necessarily a prerequisite for citizenship. All those who were ephebes at Jerusalem may have become citizens, but not all citizens had to undergo ephebic training. The requirement for citizenship remained birth as a Jew."<sup>211</sup> The third stage of Greek education consisted of gymnasium education for young men up to the age of twenty. This embraced physical exercise, military training, music and literature, with particular emphasis on Homer. The gymnasium was directed by the *gymnasiarch*, a local dignitary who funded the institution from his own means. The approach of the Greek educational system was conservative. In fact,

... it acquired an expressly aristocratic character: and after hesitation at some unusual manifestations, like the competition of naked youths in the palaestra, had been overcome, it could also exercise a stronger attraction over the youths of subject peoples than the educational ideal of the oriental scribe, which was predominantly directed towards religious attitudes and traditional "wisdom." Whereas Greek education was designed to produce gentlemen amateurs, Eastern education was designed to perpetuate a guild of professional scribes.<sup>212</sup>

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<sup>209</sup>(...continued)

*Bible, Intertestamental Judaism and Christian Origins*, ed. Harold W. Attridge, John J. Collins, Thomas H. Tobin (Lanham, MA: University Press of America, 1990), 99-109, at 100.

<sup>210</sup> O. W. Reinmuth, "The Ephebate and Citizenship in Attica," *TAPA* 79 (1948): 211-231.

<sup>211</sup> Doran "Gymnasium," 103.

<sup>212</sup> Hengel, *Judaism and Hellenism*, I, 67.

This gymnasium functioned in a way that often caused difficulties for the Jews of Alexandria in that it kept alive Greek mythology, and had its guardian deities and festivals and competitions which had an almost religious character. Since a very strong connection existed between the gymnasium and the city's πολιτεία, quite often the polytheistic dimension of gymnasium education was a source of temptation to apostasy for Alexandrian Jews who sought political advantage. Indeed upper-class Jews did compromise with the essentially polytheistic basis to gymnasium education, as evidenced by the Jewish names on the lists of ephebrates in Greek cities. Such lists usually ended in formulae of dedication to Hermes and Heracles.<sup>213</sup> Since Alexandria functioned as the educational and spiritual centre of the hellenistic world, it is not improbable that young Jewish aristocrats from Jerusalem also studied there.

Greek education began its penetration of Palestine in the third century BCE. In the earliest stages there is no evidence of a conflict between the preservation of national tradition and a positive attitude towards Greek education.<sup>214</sup> This suggests the existence of Greek elementary schools in Jerusalem prior to 175 BCE. These offered the basic Greek education required for the social, economic and administrative intercourse between the temple state leadership and its Greek rulers. They may also have equipped the opponents of hellenism with its language and concepts which could be used subsequently in an apologetic defence of traditional Judaism. The earliest gymnasium *in Jerusalem* can be dated to 175 BCE, and was probably modelled by Jason on gymnasia already established in

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<sup>213</sup> *Ibid.*, II, 48n.84.

<sup>214</sup> This is evident in the manner in which a conservative like Ben Sira could praise Simon II (Sir 50,1-24) who was very predisposed to Hellenism.

other Phoenician and Palestinian cities before this date<sup>215</sup> and on those gymnasia to which the Diaspora Jews had access. This is certainly consistent with the profile of the hellenization established above from the Zenon and Rainer papyri, numismatics and archaeology.

2 Macc 4,10-17, a text offering a devastating criticism of Jason, has been shown by Doran<sup>216</sup> to echo discussions by Herodotus, Diodorus Siculus, Xenophon, Lucian and Plutarch on Greek educational ideals, and is concerned with education not nudity or head-gear: "To tamper with the education system was to tamper with the *politeia* of a nation, its own feature and stamp, its *χαρακτήρ*. What the author of 2 Maccabees sees at stake, then, is not whether one exercised or not, but what kind of nation was being formed."<sup>217</sup> The author was quite perceptive since Jason's establishment of the gymnasium as part of his educational reform in Jerusalem led to a decisive change of course in the development of the temple state's *πολιτεία* and transformed the Judean *ἔθνος* into a Greek *πόλις*. The effect of this was to break the influence of those conservative Jews opposed to hellenization and to further cleave the social gulf between the aristocratic rulers and the popular masses.

Finally, it should be noted that in the pre-Maccabean hellenistic period scribal schools<sup>218</sup> may have developed along two distinct lines: a minority of schools were liberal, hellenistic and assimilationist, while the majority were conservative with a concern to preserve the old traditions, even at the cost of

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<sup>215</sup> Hengel, *Judaism and Hellenism*, I, 71-72.

<sup>216</sup> Doran, "Gymnasium," 104-106.

<sup>217</sup> *Ibid.*, 107.

<sup>218</sup> Hengel, *Judaism and Hellenism*, I, 78-83.

adopting new forms and concepts.

While the non-biblical sources surveyed above offer a sketchy outline of the bureaucratic, administrative and educational aspects of scribal activity, they shed little light on scribal interpretation of Israel's biblical and religious traditions. Josephus acknowledges the presence in Early Seleucid Jerusalem of Temple scribes, whom he regards as bureaucratic officials, yet he does not relate them to any specific religious activity. Similarly, the *Letter of Aristeas to Philocrates* describes scholars who engage in religious activity, but does not explicitly call them scribes. In conclusion, it can be stated that the non-biblical sources point to a dearth of information about scribal religious activity in the pre-Maccabean hellenistic period.

#### **1.4 Ben Sira and the Evolution of Jewish Scribalism: Conclusions**

Jewish scribes in the post-exilic period "were not so much a new class or new beginning in ancient Jewish history as the heirs of a long and multifaceted Israelite scribal tradition, whose own roots in turn were struck in the soil of the great ancient Near Eastern civilizations."<sup>219</sup> In this regard Jewish scribalism must be seen in evolutionary terms, incorporating the activities of ancient Near Eastern scribes, but at the same time developing its own particular forms of the scribal role, which in turn underwent further development. Certainly pre-exilic scribes engaged in a wide range of activities, administrative, bureaucratic, pedagogic, literary and sapiential which find parallels in ancient Near Eastern scribalism. The *novum* represented by pre-exilic Israelite scribalism is its religious activity which may have found expression in the maintenance of traditional values, wisdom ideals and the investiture of religious teaching with a particular scribal understanding.

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<sup>219</sup> Fishbane, *Biblical Interpretation*, 24.

The immediate post-exilic period is dominated by Ezra, who functioned both as priest and scribe. Yet it is in his capacity as *scribe* that he is depicted as skilled in the knowledge and interpretation of written Jewish religious tradition. The radical reorientation towards exegesis of a written text exemplified by Ezra, while an intensification and renewal of earlier pre-exilic scribal activity, marks a significant point in the evolution of Jewish scribalism in that it occurs in a

... movement from a culture based on direct divine revelations to one based on their study and reinterpretation. The principal custodians of the former were the sage scribes of ancient Israel; the purveyors of the latter, the sage scholars of early Judaism. For their part, the sage-scribes inscribed divine words and traditions as they came to hand. The sage scholars on the other hand, variously extended these divine words and sacred traditions through interpretation. To be sure these scholars inherited modes of study and interpretation from their forbears; at the same time, they also initiated a new centrality and significance for these modes that is nothing short of decisive - and marks the closure of "ancient Israel" and the onset of "ancient Judaism."<sup>220</sup>

The period of Ptolemaic rule in Judea witnessed a huge increase in the extent of government bureaucratic and administrative structures. Literary, numismatic and archaeological sources indicate that the process of hellenization in this period was limited to coastal and frontier cities and expressed itself in economic and administrative terms. Consequently in this period it is the scribe's administrative role which became central for the smooth running of government. References to γραμματεὺς in this period are all extra-biblical, sparse and denote essentially financial and juridical roles. No useful evidence exists to permit an understanding of the development of the religious role of the Jewish scribe in this period.

Seleucid rule in Judea required the same administrative and bureaucratic structures needed under Ptolemaic dominion. Evidence of Greek educational

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<sup>220</sup> Fishbane, "Scribalism to Rabbinism," 440.

ideals in Phoenician and Palestinian cities outside the highlands of Judea suggest that, in the early rule of the Seleucids, the process of hellenization already encompassed cultural and intellectual life. While the full impact of this wave of hellenization did not make itself felt in Jerusalem until 175 BCE, it had already begun to break over Judea with the arrival of Antiochus III. Thus, the Early Seleucid Period may mark another significant moment in the evolution of Jewish scribal activity. The *Letter of Antiochus III to Ptolemy* and the *Decree Concerning the Temple* indicate how Antiochus III, first, validated Jewish law as official law and, second, recognized the authority of the High Priest, the *γερουσία* and of other officials, including the *γραμματεὺς* in the administration of the theocratic *ἔθνος* of Judea. Already a significant figure in the administration of Judea, with Jewish religious law recognized as official law, it is possible that the role of the Jewish scribe, as interpreter and teacher of Jewish religious traditions, underwent further intensive renewal. However, very few texts are available to cast further light on this possibility. Josephus' references to *γραμματεῖς τοῦ ἱεροῦ* do not connect the scribe with the interpretation of Israel's traditions. The *Letter of Aristeas to Philocrates* deals with a Diaspora Jewish community. While it describes activity in relation to Israel's traditions which might be termed *scribal*, it avoids the use of the word *γραμματεὺς*.

However, one other text remains to be examined which offers the most famous portrait of the scribe to be found in Jewish literature, namely Ben Sira's poem on the ideal scribe (Sir 38,24-39,11). The importance of this text is underscored by the fact that it, almost uniquely, permits an understanding of further evolution in Jewish scribalism on the eve of the hellenistic reform. It may be that Ben Sira's "portrait of the *sōpēr* demonstrates how the position of the teacher is breaking away from its association with the temple ... [and how] the

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*sōpēr* seems to have relatively independent significance ...<sup>221</sup> Analysis of this text, to be taken up in the next chapter, is now crucial to identify the nature of this particular moment of evolution in Jewish scribalism.

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<sup>221</sup> Hengel, *Judaism and Hellenism*, I, 79.



## CHAPTER TWO

### 2.0 BEN SIRA AND THE IDEAL SCRIBE

#### 2.1 The Original Hebrew Text and Ancient Versions

The Hebrew text of Sirach was known to have existed for a long time prior to its discovery, as evidenced by the many rabbinic and Talmudic citations of the text.<sup>1</sup> However, all references to Sirach in Hebrew ceased about the tenth century CE. In the period 1896-1900 CE about two-thirds of the Hebrew text of Sirach was discovered in the Cairo Geniza. An initial leaf of Sirach was identified by S. Schechter of Cambridge University,<sup>2</sup> while the remaining fragments were identified by other scholars. These Geniza fragments are designated in this study as MsA, MsB, MsC, and MsD. A further fragment, designated MsE, was discovered in 1931 CE by J. Marcus.<sup>3</sup> The text of Sirach in these manuscripts can be summarized as follows:

**MsA:** Six leaves containing Sir 3,6b-16,26 and dating from the eleventh century CE.

**MsB<sup>4</sup>:** Nineteen leaves containing Sir 30,11-33,3; 35,11-38,27b; 39,15c-51,30 and dating from the twelfth century CE.

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<sup>1</sup> S. Schechter, "The Quotations from Ecclesiasticus in Rabbinic Literature," *JQR* 3 (1890-1891): 682-706.

<sup>2</sup> S. Schechter, "A Fragment of the Original Text of Ecclesiasticus," *Expositor* 4 (1896): 1-15; *idem*, "Genizah Specimens: *Ecclesiasticus* [original text of 49:12-50:22]," *JQR* 10 (1897-1898): 197-206; *idem*, "A Further Fragment of Ben Sira [MS C: parts of chaps. 4, 5, 25, and 26]," *JQR* 12 (1899-1900): 456-465; *idem*, and C. Taylor, *The Wisdom of Ben Sira: Portions of the Book of Ecclesiasticus from Hebrew Manuscripts in the Cairo Genizah Collection Presented to the University of Cambridge by the Editors* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1899).

<sup>3</sup> J. Marcus, *The Newly Discovered Original Hebrew of Ben Sira (Ecclesiasticus xxxii,16-xxxiv,1): The Fifth Manuscript and a Prosodic Version of Ben Sira (Ecclesiasticus xxii,22-xxiii,9)* (Philadelphia: Dropsie College, 1931).

<sup>4</sup> Where marginal corrections to MsB are extant, these are indicated by MsB<sup>mg</sup>, while the main text is indicated by MsB<sup>xt</sup>.

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**MsC:** Four leaves containing Sir 4,23b.30.31; 5,4-7c.9-13; 6,18b.19.28.35; 7,1.2.4.6.17.20.21.23-25; 18,31b-19,3b; 20,5-7; 37,19.22.24.26; 20,13; 25,8.13.17-24; 26,1-2a and dating from before the eleventh century CE.

**MsD:** One leaf containing Sir 36,29-38,1 and dating from the eleventh century CE.

**MsE:** One leaf containing Sir 32,16-34,1, undated.

J. Schirmann identified more leaves of MsB and MsC in 1958 and 1960 CE.<sup>5</sup> The text of Sirach covered by these manuscripts is:

**MsB:** Two leaves containing Sir 10,9-20.22-24; 7,21a; 10,25-31; 11,1-10; 15,1-16,7.

**MsC:** Two leaves containing Sir 3,14-18.21.22; 41,16; 4,21; 20,22-23; 26,2b-3.13.15-17; 36,27-31.

Scholars have disputed the authenticity of these Geniza manuscripts.<sup>6</sup> However, the general consensus today is that the Geniza manuscripts do indeed represent the original Hebrew text, but in a corrupted form which may be traceable back as far as the Qumran period. Indeed Qumran fragments of the Hebrew text of Sirach have been found in Caves 2 and 11 respectively. The Cave 2 fragments, designated 2Q18, were discovered in 1956 CE and contain Sir 6,14.15.20-31.<sup>7</sup> The

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<sup>5</sup> J. Schirmann, "דף חדש מתוך ספר בן-סירא העברי," *Tarbiz* 27 (1957-58): 440-443; *idem*, "דפים נוספים מתוך ספר בן-סירא," *Tarbiz* 29 (1959-60): 125-134.

<sup>6</sup> See P. W. Skehan, and Alexander A. DiLella, *The Wisdom of Ben Sira*, AB Series 39 (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1987), 54 for a summary of the scholarly dispute. See also G. Bickell, "Der hebräische Sirachtext eine Rückübersetzung," *WZKM* 13 (1899): 251-256; I. Lévi, *The Hebrew Text of the Book of Ecclesiasticus*, SSS 3 (Leiden: Brill, 1904); D. S. Margolioult, *The Origin of the "Original Hebrew" of Ecclesiasticus* (London: Parker, 1899).

<sup>7</sup> M. Baillet, T. Milik, and R. de Vaux, *Les "Petites Grottes" de Qumrân: Texte*, DJD 3 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1962).

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text dates to the second half of the first century BCE. In 1965 CE fragments from Cave 11 containing Sir 51,13-20.30b were published.<sup>8</sup> Designated as 11QPs<sup>a</sup>, the text dates to the first half of the first century CE. The final collection of Hebrew fragments are those discovered in 1964 CE at Masada by Yigael Yadin.<sup>9</sup> Designated MsM, the text contained is Sir 39,27-44,17 and dates to the early first century CE. A final leaf, which this study recognizes as MsF, was published in 1982 CE.<sup>10</sup> The text contained in this leaf is Sir 25,8.20-21; 31,24-32,7; 32,33-33,8. The extant Hebrew text of Sirach is presented below in Table 01.<sup>11</sup>

**Table 01**  
**Extant Hebrew Text of Sirach**

<b>TEXT OF SIRACH</b>	<b>MANUSCRIPTS</b>
1,19.20	2Q18
2,18a	A
3,6b-16,26a	A, B, C, 2Q18
18,31b-19,2a.3b	C
20,4.5.6.7.13.22.23	B, C
23,16b	A

<sup>8</sup> J. A. Sanders, *The Psalms Scroll of Qumrân Cave 11 (11QPs<sup>a</sup>)*, DJD 4 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1965).

<sup>9</sup> Yigael Yadin, *The Ben Sira Scroll from Masada* (Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 1965).

<sup>10</sup> A. Scheiber, "A New Leaf of the Fourth [*sic*] Manuscript of the Ben Sira from the Geniza," *Magyar Könyvszemle* 98 (1982): 179-185.

<sup>11</sup> This is a modification of the basic presentation offered by Milward Douglas Nelson, *The Syriac Version of the Wisdom of Ben Sira Compared to the Greek and Hebrew Materials* (Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1988), 4-5.

Table 01 - Continued

<b>TEXT OF SIRACH</b>	<b>MANUSCRIPTS</b>
25,8.13.17-24	C, F
26,1-3.13.15-17	C
27,5.6.16	A, B
30,11-34,1	B, E, F
35,9-38,27	B, C
36,29-38,1	D
39,15c-51,30	B, C, M, 11QPs <sup>a</sup>

Finally, it should be noted that the Hebrew text exists in two forms, unexpanded (HebI) and expanded (HebII). HebI is original to Ben Sira, but HebII represents a subsequent expansion of the text by others. Scholars disagree as to the identity of those who produced HebII.<sup>12</sup>

The Greek version of Sirach exists in two versions, unexpanded (GI) and

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<sup>12</sup> Conleth **Kearns**, "The Expanded Text of Ecclesiasticus: Its Teaching on the Future Life as a Clue to its Origin" (Doctoral diss., Pontifical Biblical Commission, Rome, 1951); *idem*, "Ecclesiasticus or the Wisdom of Jesus the Son of Sirach," in *The New Catholic Commentary on Holy Scripture*, ed. Reginald C. Fuller, Leonard Johnstone and Conleth Kearns (London: Nelson, 1969), 543-546. Kearns' thesis is that the community at Qumran was responsible for the expanded text of Sirach. See also Hans Peter **Rüger**, *Text und Textform im Hebräischen Sirach: Untersuchungen zur Textgeschichte und Textkritik der Hebräischen Sirachfragmente aus der Kairoer Geniza*, BZAW Series 112 (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1970) who argues that two forms of the Hebrew text developed along different lines due to language interference. The changes in the Hebrew of Ben Sira produced two forms of the text, the older (HebI) and the younger (HebII). Rüger's conclusion is that HebI relates to HebII in the same manner that the MT relates to the Targumim.

expanded (GII).<sup>13</sup> GI is the work of Ben Sira's grandson, while GII is a later version based on a different form of the Hebrew text.<sup>14</sup> GI is not an exact translation of Hebl, something indirectly indicated in the grandson's Prologue:

Παρακέκλησθε οὖν μετ' εὐνοίας καὶ προσοχῆς τὴν ἀνάγνωσιν ποιεῖσθαι καὶ συγγνώμην ἔξειν ἐφ' οἷς ἂν δοκῶμεν τῶν κατὰ τὴν ἑρμηνείαν πεφιλοπονημένων τισὶν λεξέων ἀδυναμεῖν· οὐ γὰρ ἰσοδυναμεῖ αὐτὰ ἐν ἑαυτοῖς Ἑβραϊστὶ λεγόμενα καὶ ὅταν μεταχθῆ εἰς ἑτέραν γλῶσσαν· οὐ μόνον δὲ ταῦτα, ἀλλὰ καὶ αὐτὸς ὁ νόμος καὶ αἱ προφητεῖαι καὶ τὰ λοιπὰ τῶν βιβλίων οὐ μικρὰν ἔξει τὴν διαφορὰν ἐν ἑαυτοῖς λεγόμενα.<sup>15</sup>

In places the grandson may have even misread and misinterpreted the Hebrew text, which probably was not an autograph of his grandfather.<sup>16</sup> All the Greek manuscripts invert the order of Sir 33-36, while the correct order is found in the Hebrew manuscripts.<sup>17</sup> The Syriac version is derived from a Hebrew original and not from the Greek, though it represents a later form of the Hebrew expanded

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<sup>13</sup> *Sapientia Iesu Filii Sirach*, ed. J. Ziegler, SVTG Series 12.2 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1965), for detailed information on manuscripts (pp. 7-13), translations (pp. 13-37), quotations (pp. 37-40) and printed editions (pp. 40-53) of the Greek version. GI is contained in the uncials A, B, C, S and their dependent cursives, especially Codex 248. GII is contained in O and L' (where both main groups - Codices 248, 493, 637 - and the subgroup - Codices 106, 130, 545, 705 - witness to the same reading), and has about 300 cola not found in GI. The peculiar readings of Codex 248 and the other GII readings derive from one of the recensions of HebII.

<sup>14</sup> For a detailed discussion of the confusing Greek witnesses to Sirach, see Skehan-DiLella, *Wisdom of Ben Sira*, 55-56; Nelson, *Syriac Version*, 5-6.

<sup>15</sup> Prologue 15-26.

<sup>16</sup> Kearns, *Ecclesiasticus*, 546-547.

<sup>17</sup> The correct order, used throughout this study can be restored in Greek by making Sir 33,13b-36,16a precede Sir 30,25-33,13a.

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somewhat.<sup>18</sup> Syr probably derives from a Hebrew text different to Hebl, but also guided by a version of Gll. Syr does not invert Sir 33-36 nor does it contain the grandson's Prologue.<sup>19</sup>

Modern scholarship offers three basic theories in an attempt to relate Heb, G and Syr. DiLella<sup>20</sup> argues that Heb (MsB, MsB<sup>mrg</sup>, MsM) are genuine, with some retroversion from Syr. Middendorp<sup>21</sup> argues that Heb (MsB, MsB<sup>mrg</sup>, MsM) and G are genuine, but with differences due to oral transmission. Rüger<sup>22</sup> holds that Heb is genuine, existing in two forms Hebl and HeblI, where the latter is an inner development of the former. The methodological consequences are thus clear. The expanded text of Sirach will be ignored on the grounds that it represents not only the work of Ben Sira but also of those who subsequently expanded the text. Where possible Hebl will be followed; where it is lacking G1 will be followed, with careful reference to Syr. All text-critical variations will be justified on a case by case basis.

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<sup>18</sup> Ziegler, ed., *Sapientia Iesu Filii Sirach*, 31: "Syr geht nicht auf G, sondern auf H zurück; deshalb wird Syr nur gelegentlich zitiert."

<sup>19</sup> For a detailed account of the origin, transmission and nature of Syr see Nelson, *Syriac Version*, 17-28.

<sup>20</sup> Alexander A. DiLella, *The Hebrew Text of Sirach: A Text-Critical and Historical Study*, SCL Series 1 (The Hague: Mouton, 1966).

<sup>21</sup> Middendorp, *Stellung*.

<sup>22</sup> Rüger, *Text und Textform*.

## 2.2 The Poem on the Ideal Scribe (Sir 38,24-39,11)

The word γραμματεύς occurs twice in G and the root ספר occurs nine times in Heb.<sup>23</sup> The only occurrence of γραμματεύς / ספר (substantive) is that found in Sir 38,24a in the poem about skilled workers and the scribe (Sir 38,24-39,11). In establishing the critical text of this poem the text-critical opinions of a selected number of scholars have been analysed and contrasted.<sup>24</sup> Accordingly, the text of

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<sup>23</sup> Γραμματεύς occurs in G at Sir 10,5b and 38,24a. ספר occurs in Heb at: Sir 31,11b.24a; 42,7a.15b.17b; 43,24a; 44,4c.15b and 51,1c. However, the only Hebrew text in which the root occurs as a substantive is Sir 38,24a. The first occurrence of γραμματεύς (Sir 10,5b) is to be ignored as not original to Ben Sira, but rather a textual corruption arising from a misunderstanding and bad translation of the Hebrew text. G reads: ἐν χειρὶ κυρίου εὐοδία ἀνδρός, καὶ προσώπῳ γραμματέως ἐπλήθησεν δόξαν αὐτοῦ while H (MsA) reads: ביד אלהים ממשלת כל גבר לפני מחוקק ישית הודו. The direct equivalence γραμματεύς / מחוקק is not attested to anywhere in the LXX. The verb חקק has a number of meanings: *to cut*, *to inscribe*, and *to prescribe laws* with the derived meaning *to rule* or *to command*. The translator of Heb has confused the idea of *inscribing* with that of *prescribing* and translated מחוקק with γραμματεύς. This view is supported by arguments internal to the text. Sir 10,5b as part of a unit (Sir 9,17-10,18) dealing with rulers (Sir 9,17-10,5), their arrogance (Sir 10,6-11) and their pride (Sir 10,12-18), is clearly a text about government and rulers. See also Gian Luigi Prato, *Il Problema della Teodicea in Ben Sira: Comparazione dei Contrari e Richiamo alle Origini*, AnBib Series 65 (Rome: Biblical Institute, 1975), 369-372. Sir 10,5 may even be a veiled rejection of the hellenistic concept of the divinity of earthly rulers by stressing that a ruler's glory comes from God. Skehan-DiLella, *Ben Sira*, 224 argue for a reference to the Ptolemaic or Seleucid kings. Clearly Sir 10,5 is *not* about scribes.

<sup>24</sup> The representative scholars thus chosen are: Joseph Haspecker, *Gottesfurcht bei Jesus Sirach*, AnBib Series 30 (Rome: Biblical Press, 1967), 71-72; Johannes Marböck, "Das Bild des Weisen in Sir 38,24-39,11," in *Weisheit in Wandel* (Bonn: Hastein, 1971), 118-120; Gian Luigi Prato, "Classi Lavorative e 'Otium' Sapienziale - Il Significato Teologico di una Dicotomia Sociale Secondo Ben Sira (32,24-39,11)," in *Lavoro e Riposo nella Bibbia*, ed. Giuseppe De Gennaro (Napoli: Dehoniane, 1987), 149-175; Otto Rickenbacher, *Weisheitsperikopen bei Ben Sira*, OBO Series 1 (Freiburg/Göttingen: Universitätsverlag/Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1973), 179-186; H. Stadelmann, *Ben Sira als Schriftgelehrter: Eine Untersuchung zum Berufsbild des Vormakkabischen Sofer unter Berücksichtigung seines Verhältnisses zu Priester- Propheten- und* (continued...)

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Sir 38,24-39,11 used by this study is as follows<sup>25</sup>:

38,24a		חכמת סופר תרבה חכמה
V.24b		וחסר עסק הוא יתחכם
V.25a		מה יתחכם תומך מלמד לשדד
V.25b		ומתפאר בחנית מהעיר
V.25c		באלוף ינהג ישובב בשוד
V.25d		ושעיותיו עם בני בקר
V.26a		לב ישית לשדד בתלמים
V.26b		ושקידתו לכלות מרבק
V.27a	οὕτως πᾶς τέκτων καὶ ἀρχιτέκτων,	
V.27b	ὅστις νύκτωρ ὡς ἡμέρας διάγει.	
V.27c	ὁ γλύφων γλύμματα σφραγίδων,	
V.27d	καὶ ἡ ἐπιμονὴ αὐτοῦ ἀλλοιωῶσαι ποικιλίαν.	
V.27e	καρδίαν αὐτοῦ δώσει εἰς ὁμοιωῶσαι ζωγραφίαν,	
V.27f	καὶ ἡ ἀγρυπνία αὐτοῦ τελέσαι ἔργον.	
V.28a	οὕτως χαλκεὺς καθήμενος ἐγγὺς (Syr) <i>kwr'</i>	
V.28b	καὶ καταμανθάνων ἔργα σιδήρου.	
V.28c	ἀτμὶς πυρὸς τήξει σάρκας αὐτοῦ,	
V.28d	καὶ ἐν θέρμη καμίνου διαμαχήσεται.	
V.28e	φωνῇ σφύρης (Eth →) <i>exsurdabit</i> τὸ οὖς αὐτοῦ,	
V.28f	καὶ κατέναντι ὁμοιώματος σκεύους οἱ ὀφθαλμοὶ αὐτοῦ.	
V.28g	καρδίαν αὐτοῦ δώσει εἰς συντέλειαν ἔργων,	
V.28h	καὶ ἡ ἀγρυπνία αὐτοῦ κοσμήσαι ἐπὶ συντελείας.	
V.29a	οὕτως κεραμεὺς καθήμενος (Syr) <i>'l ggl'</i>	
V.29b	καὶ συστρέφων ἐν ποσὶν αὐτοῦ τροχόν.	
V.30a	ἐν βραχίονι αὐτοῦ τυπώσει πηλόν	

<sup>24</sup>(...continued)

*Weisheitslehrertum*, WUNT Series 2 (Tübingen: Mohr, 1980), 218-219.284-293. See also Box-Oesterley, "Sirach," 452-456 and Smend, *Weisheit*, 347-356.

<sup>25</sup> For the detailed textual criticism of the poem, see Appendix One, pp. 326-333 below.



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- V.30b (Syr) *w'd wmt kypw wghyn.*  
V.30c καρδίαν ἐπιδώσει συντελέσαι τὸ χρῖσμα,  
V.30d καὶ ἡ ἀγρυπνία αὐτοῦ (emendation →) **רבעל** κάμινον.  
V.31a πάντες οὗτοι εἰς χεῖρας αὐτῶν (emendation →) **נמנו**,  
V.31b καὶ ἕκαστος ἐν τῷ ἔργῳ αὐτοῦ σοφίζεται.  
V.32a ἄνευ αὐτῶν οὐκ οἰκισθήσεται πόλις,  
V.32b (Syr →) **ובאו יגרו לא יעבו**.  
V.33a (Syr →) ἐν βουλῇ λαοῦ οὐ ζητηθήσεται,  
V.33b (Syr) *wbknwšt' l' ntrymwn.*  
V.33c *w'l kwrs' ddyn' l' ntbwn,*  
V.33d *wqym' wdyn' l' nstklwn.*  
V.33e *l' ntbynwn ywlpn' dhkmt'.*  
V.33f καὶ οὐχ εὐρεθήσονται (emendation →) **במשלים**.  
V.34a ἀλλὰ κτίσμα αἰῶνος (Syr) *nhryn*  
V.34b καὶ (Syr) *rnyhwn* αὐτῶν ἐν ἐργασίᾳ τέχνης.  
V.34c πλὴν τοῦ ἐπιδιδόντος τὴν ψυχὴν αὐτοῦ (Syr→) φόβῳ  
θεοῦ  
V.34d καὶ διανοουμένου ἐν νόμῳ (Syr→) ζωῆς.
- 39,1a** σοφίαν πάντων ἀρχαίων ἐκζητήσει,  
V.1b καὶ ἐν (Syr) *qdm'y'* προφητείαις ἀσχοληθήσεται,  
V.2a διήγησιν ἀνδρῶν ὀνομαστῶν συντηρήσει  
V.2b καὶ ἐν (Syr) *m'mqym* παραβολῶν συνεισελεύσεται,  
V.3a ἀπόκρυφα παροιμιῶν ἐκζητήσει,  
V.3b καὶ ἐν αἰνίγμασιν παραβολῶν ἀναστραφήσεται.  
V.4a ἀνὰ μέσον μεγιστάνων ὑπηρετήσει  
V.4b καὶ ἔναντι ἡγουμένων ὀφθήσεται.  
V.4c ἐν γῆ ἀλλοτριῶν ἐθνῶν διελεύσεται.  
V.4d ἀγαθὰ γὰρ καὶ κακὰ ἐν ἀνθρώποις ἐπέειρασεν.  
V.5a τὴν καρδίαν αὐτοῦ ἐπιδώσει ὀρθρῖσαι τὸν ποιήσαντα  
αὐτὸν  
V.5b καὶ ἔναντι ὑψίστου δεηθήσεται.  
V.5c καὶ ἀνοίξει στόμα αὐτοῦ ἐν προσευχῇ  
V.5d καὶ περὶ τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν αὐτοῦ δεηθήσεται.

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- V.6a (Syr →) אֵם טוֹב בְּעִינֵי אֵל עֲלִיִן
- V.6b πνεύματι συνέσεως ἐμπλησθήσεται.
- V.6c αὐτὸς ἀνομβρήσει ῥήματα σοφίας αὐτοῦ
- V.6d καὶ ἐν προσευχῇ ἐξομολογήσεται κυρίῳ.
- V.7a αὐτὸς (emendation →) יְבִין βουλήν αὐτοῦ καὶ ἐπιστήμην
- V.7b καὶ ἐν τοῖς ἀποκρύφοις αὐτοῦ διανοηθήσεται.
- V.8a αὐτὸς ἐκφανεῖ παιδείαν διδασκαλίας αὐτοῦ
- V.8b καὶ ἐν νόμῳ (Syr) *dhy'* καυχήσεται.
- V.9a αἰνέσουσιν τὴν σύνεσιν αὐτοῦ πολλοί,
- V.9b καὶ ἕως τοῦ αἰῶνος οὐκ ἐξαλειφθήσεται.
- V.9c οὐκ ἀποστήσεται τὸ μνημόσυνον αὐτοῦ,
- V.9d καὶ τὸ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ ζήσεται εἰς γενεὰς γενεῶν.
- V.10a τὴν σοφίαν αὐτοῦ διηγήσονται (Syr) *knwšt'*,
- V.10b καὶ τὸν ἔπαινον αὐτοῦ ἐξαγγελεῖ ἐκκλησία.
- V.11a (Corrupt verse: *Should he live long so will he be praised by thousands,*
- V.11b *and should he rest, so is his name enough*).

There is no great scholarly dispute about the structure of the poem, rather a general agreement that it is a diptych, divisible into two parts (Sir 38,24-34ab and Sir 38,34cd-39,11) with each containing its own contrasting image. The further subdivision into strophes followed by Alonso-Schökel<sup>26</sup> is followed unquestioningly by Marböck, Rickenbacher, Stadelmann and Prato. This structure of the poem is presented below in Table 02.

<sup>26</sup> L. Alonso-Schökel, *Proverbios y Eclesiástico*, Los Libros Sagrados (Madrid: Ediciones Cristiandad, 1968), 284-285 divides Part One into five strophes [Sir 38,24-26 (four bi-cola); 38,27 (three bi-cola); 38,28 (four bi-cola); 38,29-30 (four bi-cola - v.29cd is retained) and 38,31-34b (six bi-cola)]. Part Two is divided into four strophes [Sir 38,34cd-39,3 (four bi-cola); 39,4-5 (four bi-cola); 39,6-8 (four bi-cola); 39,9-11 (four bi-cola)]. The criterion for the division is essentially thematic. See Appendix One, 328n.10 below where Rickenbacher correctly opts for a shorter text through the elimination of Sir 38,29cd.

**Table 02**  
**Structure of the Poem on the Ideal Scribe (Sir 38,24-39,11)**

<b>PART ONE (SIR 38,24-34ab)</b>			
<b>STROPHE</b>	<b>TEXT</b>	<b>BICOLA</b>	<b>THEME</b>
01	38,24-26	04	Farmer
02	38,27	03	Engraver
03	38,28	04	Smith
04	38,29-30	03	Potter
05	38,31-34b	06	Positive and Negative Aspects of Manual Work

<b>PART TWO (SIR 38,34c-39,11)</b>			
<b>STROPHE</b>	<b>TEXT</b>	<b>BICOLA</b>	<b>THEME</b>
01	38,34c-39,3	04	The Ideal Scribe's Interpretation of Tradition
02	39,4-5	04	Social, Cultural and Religious Dimensions of the Ideal Scribe
03	39,6-8	04	Divine Inspiration
04	39,9-11	04	The Ideal Scribe's Universal Recognition and Eternal Fame

For Marböck,<sup>27</sup> Sir 38,24-39,11 functions within the book as the introduction to a

<sup>27</sup> Johannes Marböck, "Sir 38,24-39,11: Der Schriftgelehrte Weise: Ein Beitrag zu Gesalt und Werk Ben Siras," in *La Sagesse de l'Ancien Testament*, ed. M. Gilbert, BETL Series 51 (Gembloux/Louvain: Duculot/University, 1979), 293-316, at 294. Marböck does not identify this greater unit, but it is presumably Sir 39,12-42,14. In this regard the poem can be compared to the wisdom pericope Sir 14,20-15,10 which introduces Sir 15,11-18,14. Another close parallel to Sir 38,24-39,11, content-wise, is the introduction to the *Laus Patrum* (Sir 44-50) by Sir 44,1-15.

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new and greater teaching unit. For Prato,<sup>28</sup> the poem is to be located both in its immediate context and within the general context of Ben Sira's overall work and perception of creation as something essentially manifest in its contrasting aspects, all of which come from one creator.

### 2.3 Recent Scholarship and Sir 38,24-39,11

#### (a) Josef Haspecker

Haspecker's *Gottesfurcht bei Jesus Sirach* falls easily into two parts. The first part simply lists the occurrences of the principal and cognate expressions of *Gottesfurcht* and form-critically analyses the whole book. For Haspecker, *Gottesfurcht* is the determinative theme of Ben Sira's entire book. In fact, it is argued that the term is the *Stichwort* of Ben Sira's piety, not just because of the number of times it occurs in his work, but also by the very structure of his book. In the second part, Haspecker attempts to build a comprehensive thesis of Ben Sira's piety around the key texts studied in the first part. Haspecker concludes that for Ben Sira *Gottesfurcht* stands for a loving personal relationship with God<sup>29</sup> which is characterized by humility<sup>30</sup> and trust.<sup>31</sup> The main contribution made by Haspecker's work is the phenomenological and theological description of *Gottesfurcht*. The principal deficiencies are weak textual-criticism and a failure to

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<sup>28</sup> Prato, "Classi Lavorative," 157-164. Sir 36,18-39,11 is a body of text in which choices are offered and the preferential choice indicated. The basic choice principle is outlined in Sir 36,23-25, followed by a series of texts where such choices are indicated: women (Sir 36,26-31), friends (Sir 37,1-6), counsellors (Sir 36,7-15), true and false sages (Sir 37,16-26), health (Sir 37,27-31), doctors (Sir 38,1-15), death (Sir 38,16-23), and different professions (Sir 38,24-39,11).

<sup>29</sup> Sir 1,28-2,6: 32,14-16.

<sup>30</sup> Sir 3,7-20.

<sup>31</sup> Sir 2,6-14; 34,13-17.

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establish *Gottesfurcht* as a concept *structurally central* to Ben Sira's work. While *Gottesfurcht* is indeed a central theme, Haspecker has not established it as the principle of literary and thematic unity.

For Haspecker,<sup>32</sup> the opening statement of the *Poem on the Ideal Scribe* in Sir 38,24ab establishes Ben Sira's thesis: manual professions do not acquire the kind of wisdom available to the scribe through fear of God and practice of the Law. Haspecker describes the first part of the poem (Sir 38,24-34ab) as negative and the second (Sir 38,34cd-39,11) as positive. Part One of the poem is built strophically, offering a number of vignettes of a single profession, the manual worker, where each vignette has a typical three element structure. Each profession is described in a short sentence (Sir 38,25ab.27a. 28a.29a). There then follows a description of each activity which outlines its essential characteristics (Sir 38,25cd.27bd.28bf. 29b-30b). A concluding stereotypical formula establishes how the manual workers have been sequestered (*Beschlagnahme*) by their trades (Sir 38,26ab.27ef.28gf.30cd), leaving no more room for higher interests (*höhere Interessen*). Part Two of the poem begins with Sir 38,34cd by which the poem moves from the negative to the positive with the key concept, *fear of God*, at its turning point. For Haspecker this is the central verse of the poem which establishes the connection between fear of God and devotion to the Law, which is necessary for the scribe's cultivation of wisdom. Devotion to fear of God and the Law is not to be understood as a single activity but that which embraces the entirety of the scribe's life and activity. Sir 39,1-4 outlines the concrete activity of the scribe. Sir 39,5 is to be compared with the stereotypical formula used of the manual workers in Part One, and emphasizes the centrality of that which has sequestered the scribe, namely fear of God and zeal for the Law.

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<sup>32</sup> See Haspecker, *Gottesfurcht*, 179-181 for his analysis of Sir 38,24-39,11.

**(b) Johannes Marböck**

One of the most significant contributions to the study of this poem has been that of Marböck, whose principal work on the text<sup>33</sup> must be located against his wider thesis put forward in *Weisheit im Wandel*. In this latter work Marböck attempts to define the problem which dominated Ben Sira's time as a conflict between Judaism (a revealed religion based on election and remembered redemptive history) and Hellenism (with its emphasis on human reason and divine impartiality). Ben Sira's solution to the problem, according to Marböck, was to transform the concept of Torah, present it as Israel's wisdom and to move from an older revelatory view of reality to the more rational-secular hellenistic view with Torah at its centre. Marböck's thesis is presented in a number of steps. First, he deals with the spiritual and historical background to Ben Sira's activity. Then he examines Sir 1,1-10 and Sir 24, two texts (among others) in which the theme of wisdom predominates. Finally, he considers Ben Sira's creative theology and relationship with the pre-Maccabean hellenistic world. Certainly Marböck argues well that *Weisheit* gives the conceptual, structural and thematic priority to Ben Sira's book. In this he correctly rejects Haspecker's emphasis on the centrality of *Gottesfurcht*. According to Marböck wisdom for Ben Sira comes from God, and is given to the Jewish people to create unity between Creator and Creation. Human beings are invited to find wisdom, which is essentially an invitation to find God. However, Marböck fails to locate Ben Sira precisely within the wisdom tradition. In particular he has failed to grasp and make fuller use of the socio-economic situation of Ben Sira. Finally, he works mainly from G, exhibiting a certain discomfort in the use of Heb, as in the case of Sir 38,24-27, the existence of which he notes, but does not use.

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<sup>33</sup> Marböck, "Der Schriftgelehrte Weise," 293-316.

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For Marböck the first part of the poem (Sir 38,24-34b) has a certain parallel with the Egyptian work entitled *The Satire of the Trades* wherein the skilled worker does not have leisure to gather wisdom.<sup>34</sup> The second part (Sir 38,34c-39,11) on the other hand deals with the ideal wise scribe. Both parts are tightly connected both philologically and with contrasting thematic links which facilitate an emphasis on the unique role of the learned scribe in terms of activity, piety and renown.<sup>35</sup> The main philological link is (ἐπι)δίδοναι καρδίαν (Sir 38,26.27.28.30; 39,1.5) which denotes *attentiveness of heart*. There are three contrasting thematic links: first, ἀγρυπνία which characterizes manual labour (Sir 38,21b.27f.28h.30d) but not the activity of the learned scribe; second, the significant distinction between the role of the manual worker and of the learned scribe in the public domain is very striking. The latter's role is characterized by giving counsel (Sir 38,33a; 39,4.7), having reputation in the assembly (Sir 38,33b; 39,10), teaching discipline and knowledge (Sir 38,34a; 39,8a), exercising a judicial role (Sir 38,33cd) and occupying the leading position (Sir 38,34b; 39,4). All are characteristics notably absent in the manual labourer. Finally, the description of the manual worker follows a stereotypical pattern. The work procedure is described in detail (Sir 38,25cd.27cd.28c-f.29c-f) and closes with the refrain καρδίαν αὐτοῦ (ἐπι)δώσει ... ἀγρυπνία. On the other hand the word πλήν (Sir 38,34c) breaks away from this pattern and facilitates the articulation of the activity of the learned scribe (Sir 39,1-4), his personal relationship with God (Sir 39,5-8) and the glory and renown of the scribe in the assembly (Sir 39,9-11).

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<sup>34</sup> James Pritchard, ed., "The Satire on the Trades," in *ANET* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1955), 432-434. The satire was written about 1991 BCE and many copies were made of it subsequently in the period 1552-1100 BCE and especially in 1350-1200 BCE.

<sup>35</sup> Marböck, "Das Bild des Weisen," 119-120.

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In a subsequent and fuller article Marböck deals with the same matters,<sup>36</sup> but goes on to examine more fully the profile of the scribe evidenced in the poem. For Marböck the sage is essentially a ספר, a term which is polyvalent in the context of Israel's history.<sup>37</sup> However, the occurrence of the term ספר in Sir 38 is influenced strongly by its usage in Ezra-Nehemiah.<sup>38</sup> Marböck recognizes that this innovative image of the scribe as learned in the law certainly preceded Ben Sira, who has subsequently developed the concept further in Sir 38,24-39,11 by characterizing it in terms of leisure, study of Torah, fear of God, prayer, inspiration, wisdom and relationship to tradition. The presupposition for the scribe's wisdom is the condition of leisure or freedom from wearisome work or bother. The term used by Ben Sira is σχολή (Sir 38,24bβ) which does not have any biblical Hebrew equivalent with quite the same positive nuance as intended here. Ben Sira is in keeping with traditional values in advocating the importance of work.<sup>39</sup> Even in the first part of the poem Ben Sira emphasizes the importance of the work of craftsmen for society (Sir 38,32). At the same time he relates the significance of such labour (Sir 38,31.34). His concept of σχολή which denotes the ideal of freedom from all kinds of manual work in the interest of wisdom is not only unique to Sirach but to the Hebrew Bible also. In this context Marböck raises a fundamental issue of the social class Ben Sira belonged to and influenced his world-view, an issue which

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<sup>36</sup> Marböck, "Der Schriftgelehrte Weise," 293-296.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 296-299.

<sup>38</sup> In Ezra 7,6.10-11.21 the term is linked to searching, doing and teaching Torah, while in Neh 8 it denotes reading Torah.

<sup>39</sup> Sir 10,26-27, 11,20.



is of central interest to this study.<sup>40</sup> For Ben Sira σχολή is to be filled out by the total commitment of the scribe. Two Greek expressions are used here. The phrase (ἐπι)δίδοναι ψυχὴν, the Greek equivalent of יִשְׁבַּגַּ יָתֵג, expresses a total engagement in terms of strength, energy of possessions and indeed of oneself. On the other hand, (ἐπι)δίδοναι καρδίαν, with its biblical Hebrew equivalent אִשׁ בָּל, emphasizes the intellectual and mental dimensions of this commitment. Sir 38,26 contains the equivalent לֵב טִיִּשׁ / (ἐπι)δίδοναι καρδίαν which is to be assumed also in Sir 38,27.28.30. Finally, the term ἀγρυπνία emphasizes vigilance and care. The terms (ἐπι)δίδοναι καρδίαν and ἀγρυπνία which by way of refrain conclude the descriptions of the professions in Sir 38,24-34ab, emphasize the temporal and physical dimensions of the work involved. Thus, essential dimensions of wisdom activity are missing because the exhausting resistance of material, and above all, objects absorb and determine the person and his activity. The caesura marked with πλήν introduces the reuse and the new content given to (ἐπι)δίδοναι ψυχὴν (Sir 38,34c) and δίδοναι καρδίαν (Sir 39,5a), which emphasize the essentially religious dimension of the סֵפֶר. The phrase (ἐπι)δίδοναι ψυχὴν (Sir 38,34c) occurs in context with *fear of God* and Torah. Following Haspecker, Marböck understands *fear of God* as the full devotion of the human heart to God.<sup>41</sup> For Ben Sira it always precedes Torah and is basic to the

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<sup>40</sup> See Marböck, "Der Schriftgelehrte Weise," 300, who observes: "Man kann fragen, ob dies bloß als Zeichen der Herkunft Ben Siras aus der gutsituierten Jerusalemer Oberschicht zu verstehen ist oder ob hier nicht doch angeregt vom griechischen Denken σχολή zum notwendigen einer Weisheit geworden ist, die mit einem anderen Beruf nicht mehr vereinbar scheint."

<sup>41</sup> Haspecker, *Gottesfurcht*, 209-218.

fulfilment of Torah. Thus for Ben Sira the characteristic of the scribe evidenced in Sir 38,34cd is his total alignment and devotion to God.

The phrase (ἐπι)δίδοναι καρδίαν in Sir 39,5a is part of Ben Sira's core statement about the scribe whose energies are not absorbed by impersonal objects and who is free for full spiritual engagement with God (ὀρθρίσαι τὸν ποιήσαντα αὐτόν). This seeking of an encounter with God is then immediately concretized in the verses which follow. The phrase καὶ ἔναντι ὑψίστου δεηθήσεται (Sir 39,5b) expresses the scribe's basic attitude of petition before God which is further underlined by καὶ ἀνοίξει στόμα αὐτοῦ ἐν προσευχῇ (Sir 39,5c). Only after this petition does the scribe mention his concern - καὶ περὶ τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν αὐτοῦ δεηθήσεται (Sir 39,5d). Thus Sir 39,5 expresses most clearly the movement in which the scribe is caught up: namely from the external freedom from the commitment to laborious work to the inner freedom from sin. It is this absolute free dedication of heart and spirit to God which the scribe petitions God for as gift. The ספּר is not only characterized by a turning to God, but also by God's turning to him. This is clearly evident in Sir 39,6 where Ben Sira uniquely uses πνεῦμα of God. Inspiration by God's spirit constitutes the inner reality of the scribe which leads him to penetrate into God's mysteries (ἀποκρύφα - Sir 39,7b) and to glory in the law of YHWH (Sir 39,8b). Marböck argues that Ben Sira clearly understands the scribe's role as prophetic whereby prophecy and wisdom merge together in one activity.<sup>42</sup>

Another key element in Ben Sira's profile of the scribe is his wisdom activity in the traditional sense of having to do with experience, the mastering of life,

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<sup>42</sup> Marböck, "Der Schriftgelehrte Weise," 308-311.

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advice and education. This is most clearly reflected in Sir 39,4-7a.8a.9-11. However, this wisdom activity is closed to the person who is absorbed by manual labour and is possible only through leisure. The final element in the profile of the scribe is his relationship to Israel's traditions. The key verses here are Sir 39,1-3. Marböck argues that a precise translation and definition of the individual terms that are mentioned in these verses is not possible. The phrase σοφίαν πάντων ἀρχαίων (Sir 39,1a) refers to the wisdom books in general and does not characterize them anymore closely. The term προφητείας (Sir 39,1b) applies both to the earlier and later prophetic writings. Sir 39,2-3 probably refers to extra-biblical wisdom or to the study of oral traditions. Certainly Sir 39,1-3 suggests strongly that the scribe is concerned with a very rich tradition available to him. In conclusion Marböck's analysis of Sir 38,24-39,11 suggests that the poem offers a profile of the scribe unique in Jewish literature. The ideal scribe of Ben Sira searches the Torah, links law and piety, includes the entire tradition, history and prophecy, and above all the broad stream of wisdom, and in the pursuit of leisure has something of the spirit of Greek education.

### (c) Otto Rickenbacher

Rickenbacher's *Weisheitsperikopen bei Ben Sira* attempts to determine whether Ben Sira consistently holds to the theme that all wisdom comes from God and also to analyse the book's wisdom pericopes thematically, text- and form-critically. The result is essentially a detailed examination of the passages in Ben Sira in which the theme of wisdom dominates (including Sir 38,24-39,11). Rickenbacher ends up providing a word study, with a new German translation and a superabundance of text-critical notes. He argues strongly for the supremacy of Heb over the versions and in general of G over Syr. His major conclusion is that

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the theme of *God as Creator* runs through Ben Sira's book. Given the detailed work involved in his study, this is not a hugely innovative insight.<sup>43</sup> Given the nature of Rickenbacher's study in general, there is very little of comment or interpretation specifically on Sir 38,24-39,11.<sup>44</sup> However, a number of points are well made. First, Rickenbacher offers a very thorough comparison of Ben Sira's poem and the Egyptian *Satire of the Trades*. His conclusion is undeniable: while the Egyptian work is clearly a satire, there is nothing satirical in Ben Sira's treatment of manual work. Sir 39,5 is a key verse in that it relates prayer and the scribe's activity. In Part One of the poem, the manual workers are characterized by a total engagement with their activity and a purpose for its completion. For the scribe it is prayer which constitutes the scribe's *Grundhaltung*. The reference to πνεύματι συνέσεως in Sir 39,6b is also very important. The word πνεῦμα in Ben Sira is usually used in reference to a person, and never to the spirit of God. In the context of the ideal scribe it does indeed refer to a divine spirit of insight and once again emphasizes Ben Sira's basic tenet that all wisdom comes from God.

### **(d) Helge Stadelmann**

In his *Ben Sira als Schriftgelehrter* Stadelmann wishes to examine the role of the scribe in pre-Maccabean Jerusalem. He argues that Ben Sira was a member of the priestly class, as evidenced by his obvious interest in Torah and the attention he gives to cult and priesthood. These interests are consonant with post-Maccabean and pharisaic periods when Torah-interpretation was essentially a

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<sup>43</sup> However, the best fruit of his work may indeed be the concordance published subsequently: D. **Barthélemy**, and O. **Rickenbacher**, *Konkordanz zum Hebräischen Sirach: Mit Syrisch-Hebräischem Index* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1973).

<sup>44</sup> Rickenbacher, *Weisheitsperikopen*, 186-195.

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priestly function. Stadelmann argues that in linking Torah and wisdom Ben Sira becomes a new kind of scribe, namely a priestly scribe at the service of the pre-Maccabean Jerusalem bureaucracy. Stadelmann establishes the link between Ben Sira and the priesthood through a detailed study of Sir 31(34),21-32(35),20. On the basis of his analysis of the *Laus Patrum* (Sir 44-50), he argues that Ben Sira's scribal role was also prophetic. His conclusion is that in Ben Sira's day there were two types of scribe. First, the *normal* scribe, who was concerned with traditional wisdom in a spirit of piety. Second, the *inspired* scribe who was filled with the spirit of intelligence and who could produce such hymns as Sir 39,12-35.

Stadelmann<sup>45</sup> regards Part One of the poem as a highly significant preparation for what follows in Part Two. For him Ben Sira's account of manual labour is somewhat negative, characteristic of Ben Sira's typical bourgeois attitude and betrays hellenistic anti-manual labour opprobrium. While he draws on Rickenbacher's comparison of Sir 38,24-34b and the Egyptian *Satire of the Trades*, and indeed offers his own contrast, he argues that Ben Sira is not about denigrating the manual professions *per se*. Rather is he concerned to show that these professions, good and useful as they are in themselves, remain closed to the higher level of wisdom which remains available only to the *Schriftgelehrter* and is the subject of Part Two of the poem. Since Stadelmann's thesis is that Ben Sira was a priestly scribe, he regards the professions outlined in Part One as lay occupations. He suggests that Ben Sira was in fact a very conservative priestly scribe, who did not wish to jolt the *status quo*, but yet was concerned to preserve and defend priestly privilege.

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<sup>45</sup> See Stadelmann, *Schriftgelehrter*, 287-293 for his treatment of Sir 38,24-34b.

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In Part Two of the poem Stadelmann deals only with Sir 38,34c-39,8.<sup>46</sup> While following Rickenbacher's structuring of the text, he confines his study to the first three strophes (Sir 38,34c-39,3; 39,4-5; 39,6-8). His particular interest is in the last of these strophes dealing with the *Schriftgelehrter* who has been divinely inspired in a free act of grace. For Stadelmann the first two strophes (Sir 38,34c-39,5) deal with the regular or traditional *Schriftgelehrter* whose role is doubly characterized by the exploration of Torah and the devotional fear of YHWH. A connection exists between both these dimensions,<sup>47</sup> by which Torah-observance is not so much founded on the fear of YHWH, but that the fear of YHWH is experienced through Torah-observance. Accordingly, it is not just leisure for study (Sir 38,24) which constitutes the ideal ספר, but also the devotion of oneself to God, which in turn facilitates insightful penetration through the *law of life*. The double role announced in Sir 38,34c is now further elucidated in 39,1-5. Three sources of insight are offered: exploration of the biblical books (v.1),<sup>48</sup> the penetration of the general wisdom tradition (vv.2-3) and the travel experience of the ספר (vv.4cd). The occasion for travel is probably facilitated by the requirements of political service (vv.4ab). The final component in the profile of the traditional ספר is that of prayer as a petition for forgiveness of sin (v.5) which both locates the *Schriftgelehrter* in

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<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, 217-246.

<sup>47</sup> Sir 15,13-15; 17,6-12; 21,11; 35,24-36,1.

<sup>48</sup> Stadelmann, *Schriftgelehrter*, 228-229. Torah-interpretation by scribes began in earnest with the destruction of the First Temple. In the pre-Maccabean hellenistic period this role was further expanded as the scribes took up traditional wisdom-questions and wisdom-traditions into their area of research. Accordingly the traditional scribe is essentially concerned with *wisdom from below* namely the appropriately right behaviour for a successful life. Ben Sira may have indeed understood Torah in terms of universal creation-wisdom. The step of the ספר from actual Scripture-teaching to wisdom-teaching in response to the challenge posed by hellenism, has its theological beginnings here.

humble dependence before God and which also highlights that: "Der jüdische Schriftgelehrter ist kein autonomer Intellektueller und auch kein theoretischer Ethiker: Sein weisheitliches Forschen macht ihn sensibel für Sünde - auch für die eigene! - und so fleht er um Vergebung ..." <sup>49</sup> For Stadelmann, Ben Sira's profile of the traditional *Schriftgelehrter* can now be summarized as a person of piety and research, who investigates Torah and the other Scriptures and who has an interest in general wisdom-traditions. Above all the *Schriftgelehrter* practices fear of God, which finds its most personal expression in prayer.

The unique contribution Stadelmann makes to the study of this poem is his thesis that at v.6 a particular type of *Schriftgelehrter* is now introduced, that of the inspired ספר. This category is created by God's free act of grace by which πνεῦμα συγέσεως is granted the scribe (v.6b). <sup>50</sup> This profile of the inspired *Schriftgelehrter* is located against Ben Sira's general concepts of wisdom and creation. From creation each human person is endowed, by virtue of the ability to think and reason, with the capacity to recognize the wisdom which God has made universally available. In this respect the human person exercises choice either by opting for godlessness, the antithesis of wisdom or by achieving wisdom through fear of God and Torah-observance. However, the inspired *Schriftgelehrter* of Sir 39,6ab is located on a very different level. Along with the means of achieving

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<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, 231.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, 233. Stadelmann argues that this category of scribe is conditional on God's freely graced activity. He rejects any causal link between v.5 (a request for wisdom on the part of the scribe) and v.6 (a presumed divine answer to that request) on content and textual grounds. Content-wise v.5 is not a request for wisdom, but merely a prayer for forgiveness. Textually v.6 is introduced by the use of εἰς which indicates that divine inspiration is a conditionally free act of divine favour and not a general characteristic of the profession of the *Schriftgelehrter*.

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wisdom available to humanity, divine inspiration is an additional gift of God.<sup>51</sup>

The remaining section considered by Stadelmann (Sir 39,6c-8) deals with the activity of the inspired *Schriftgelehrter*. Themes similar to those found in Sir 39,1-5 have their parallel in Sir 39,6c-8: wisdom-sayings, prayer, knowledge and law. Accordingly, the inspired *Schriftgelehrter* stands much closer to the type of wisdom-teacher found in earlier Israelite wisdom-tradition. In v.7b interest in knowledge is specified, by which it is made clear that the activity of the inspired *Schriftgelehrter* penetrates more deeply than that of his traditional counterpart. If the traditional *Schriftgelehrter* was concerned merely with *wisdom from below*, then the inspired counterpart is concerned with *wisdom from above*, namely speculative, theological, revealed wisdom. This knowledge is not merely for the needs of the *Schriftgelehrter*, but forms part of his teaching role (v.8a) and his own opening up of the Scriptures. Accordingly, Stadelmann sums up the profile of the inspired *Schriftgelehrter* as:

Der inspirierte Sofer braucht mit dem ihm zur Verfügung stehenden Schatz an Heiligen Schriften, Weisheitstraditionen und seiner Geist-Erleuchtung (Inspiration) auch in einer bildungsorientierten hellenistischen Umwelt sein Licht nicht unter den Scheffel zu stellen, sondern kann im Blick auf das ihm Geschenkte mit freimütigem Rühmen in die Öffentlichkeit treten.<sup>52</sup>

**(e) Gian Luigi Prato**

The final scholar whose study of Sir 38,24-39,11 is worth recording here is Prato, whose concern is to examine Ben Sira's affirmation about work. Since the poem is a wisdom text, its affirmations are sparse, occasional and offered in

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<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, 235-238 for the detailed argument locating God's free gift of inspiration against a wider biblical background.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, 246.



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mosaic form. In studying Part One Prato, following Rickenbacher, argues for great caution in relating the poem to the teaching of Cheti. Rather he sees Ben Sira's perception of reality as something composed of apparent distinctions as the key to understanding the text.<sup>53</sup> The term γραμματέυς / ספר used in Sir 38,24a is a generic term denoting a social class. On the basis of the evidence in Sirach he argues that it is not possible to allocate the terms to a particular religious environment, cultic or priestly. He concludes that Ben Sira does not reject the manual professions. Rather they are appreciated for their technical ability and contribution to society (vv.31b-32ab). Yet they are not the professions appropriate for public office (vv.32c-33).

Sir 38,34c-39,3 describes the scribe who examines ancient traditions. The description of these traditions is largely generic. Sir 39,34d-39,1b certainly refer to Law and Prophets, while Sir 39,2-3 could refer to a primitive third section of the Hebrew Bible or to oral wisdom traditions. Where sacred texts are concerned the scribe's role is to comment (διήγησις - v.2a) and to bring obscurities (ἀπόκρυφα - v.3a) to light.<sup>54</sup> Sir 39,4-5 offers a profile of the social and religio-cultural profile of the scribe. Scribal activity thus described has two consequences. First, there is the divine response in the form of inspiration. This allows the scribe to spread doctrine further, to praise God (v.6), to exercise genuine didactic activity through the penetration of that which is hidden and through glorying in the Law (vv.7-8).

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<sup>53</sup> The key text here is Sir 33(36),7-15. Sir 38,24-39,11 must be viewed against this background of differentiated reality. Furthermore Ben Sira operates the preferential principle by which one part of reality is more excellent than the other and attempts to explain it. The non-excellent part is not negative but "esso costituisce solo il grado inferiore di una scala dove funziona in relazione a ciò che è superiore e che anzi contribuisce a valorizzarlo." Prato, "Classi Lavorative," 164.

<sup>54</sup> It should be noted however, that διήγησις (v.2a) does not describe scribal activity, but the object of that activity.

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Second, the scribe gains human official and universal recognition (Sir 39,10-11) which is concretized in a fame which endures beyond the grave. Finally, for Prato, the profession of the scribe is about the exegesis of scripture in a wisdom context. The contrast with the manual professions is not a comparison of what is actually done, but of their significance in a wisdom context. This contrast, based on the fundamental concept of *σχολή* (G Sir 38,24a), is in keeping with Ben Sira's concept of reality as highly differentiated.

This brief survey of recent scholarship suggests that scholars have tended to regard Sir 38,24-39,11 as a poem about the acquisition of wisdom. In this Haspecker is correct in saying that the first part of the poem (Sir 38,24-34ab) is negative and the second part (Sir 38,34cd-39,11) positive. However, in stating that the section on the manual professions is negative is not to suggest that Ben Sira's treatment of manual work is satirical or derogatory. Indeed as Rickenbacher has shown, Ben Sira's approach lacks the ridicule of the Egyptian *Satire of the Trades*. Stadelmann's view that Ben Sira betrays a typically negative bourgeois and hellenistic attitude against manual work is to be rejected as speculative and unsubstantiated. Indeed not only does Ben Sira not reject these professions, but appreciates them for their skill and contribution to society. However, Stadelmann's more nuanced view that the manual professions are not denigrated in themselves, but are presented as closed to the higher wisdom available only to the scribe represents an accurate reading of the text.

The most radical theory about the *ספר* put forward by any scholar is Stadelmann's, who claims that Sir 38,34c-39,5 deals with the regular or traditional *Schriftgelehrter* and Sir 39,6-11 deals with the inspired scribe. The former is characterized by piety, research of Scripture and the wisdom traditions and the practice of prayer and the devotional fear of YHWH. The inspired *Schriftgelehrter*

on the other hand is the recipient of God's freely given gift of inspiration. Sir 39,5-6 are key verses in determining this thesis which, however, cannot be maintained since Stadelmann is wrong in seeing in Sir 39,5 merely a request for forgiveness of sin. The request is rather for the gift of total personal dedication to God.<sup>55</sup> Stadelmann argues that since v.6 is introduced by *ἐάν*, it deals with divine inspiration as a conditionally free act of divine favour and not a general characteristic of the profession of the *Schriftgelehrter*. Ben Sira's use of *πνεύματι συνέσεως* is uniquely in reference to God, who turns to the scribe and freely offers the gift of divine inspiration. While Sir 39,6 certainly affirms God's freedom to act in this way, it does not profess the existence of a new category of scribe. Rather Sir 39,6 deals with one of the fundamental elements of scribal activity, divine inspiration, which in turn advances the scribe's teaching role (vv.7-8). In short, Ben Sira's profile of the scribe mentions certain scribal elements (life-experience, advice and education), while at the same time places significant emphasis on other ones (scriptural exegesis in a wisdom context, the linkage of Torah with piety, prayer, and the role of divine inspiration).

Stadelmann's thesis that the ideal scribe (namely Ben Sira) is priestly, conservative and protective of the *status quo*, while the manual professions are essentially lay is not established. First, the identification of the ideal scribe with an allegedly priestly Ben Sira has not been established. Second, Stadelmann's conclusion that the manual professions are primarily lay is based on an interpretation of *πράξει* (G Sir 38,24b) as essentially secular work. However, this

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<sup>55</sup> The phrase *(ἐπι)δίδοναι καρδίαν* used to indicate the total dedication of the manual labourers to their trade (Sir 38,26a.27e.28g.30c) is used also to indicate the scribe's total dedication to God. Freedom from sin (v.5d) thus constitutes part and not the totality of the scribe's request. Stadelmann's opinion that v.5 functions as a mere prayer for forgiveness is not upheld.

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is not the sense of עִסָּה (Heb Sir 38,24b) which means *heavy work*. Finally, there is nothing in the poem itself to suggest that the portrait of the ideal scribe is that of a priestly scribe. In fact, the absence of cultic concerns might suggest that the scribe envisaged by Ben Sira may be from among *non-cultic circles*, suggesting that the profile of the ideal scribe offered by Ben Sira points to a further development and re-orientation of the scribal activity typified by Ezra.<sup>56</sup>

While the scholarship surveyed above offers a variety of views on Ben Sira's profile of the ideal scribe, it has largely ignored a number of important issues: it has failed to analyse the process and result of the scribe's interpretation of Israel's traditions, leaving undefined the terminology used to characterize that interpretation; it has been merely content to focus on the canonical issue as to what constituted Ben Sira's bible; and finally it has assumed, but has not established, that the poem on the ideal scribe is autobiographical. However, the potential usefulness of the *Poem on the Ideal Scribe* lies elsewhere. It offers both a description of the ideal scribe's interaction with Israel's traditions, and a window onto the social world of the Jewish scribe. Any understanding of how Jewish scribalism functioned in Late Ptolemaic and Early Seleucid Judea will require a thorough investigation of these two issues. If the poem can indeed be shown to be clearly autobiographical, then it becomes possible to examine how Ben Sira *the scribe* interpreted Israel's traditions and functioned in the social world of pre-Maccabean hellenistic Judea. Consequently, the study must now proceed to examine whether the poem is actually autobiographical.

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<sup>56</sup> This question will be returned to in Chapter Four, "Ben Sira and the Social World of Pre-Maccabean Hellenistic Judea," pp. 275-282 below.

#### 2.4 Sir 38,24-39,11 in Comparison with Autobiographical Texts in Sirach

Seven texts in Sirach<sup>57</sup> have been identified by scholars as clearly autobiographical and can now be compared fruitfully with Sir 38,24-39,11. The first autobiographical text (Sir 24,30-33) forms the last stanza of a seven stanza poem which in most Greek manuscripts is entitled ΣΟΦΙΑΣ ΑΙΝΕΣΙΣ.<sup>58</sup> In the stanza (Sir 24,23-29) immediately preceding the autobiographical text, σοφία is identified with Torah using a cleverly developed water imagery. In vv.25-26 Torah is brimful with wisdom (ὁ πημπλῶν ὡς Φισων σοφίαν - v.25a) and runs over with understanding (ὁ ἀναπληρῶν ὡς Ἐυφράτης σύνεσιν - v.26a). In fact, wisdom is so much deeper than the sea (v.29) that no human can fathom it (v.28). Vv.30-33 can be understood against this background. Ben Sira's activity is derived from wisdom in the way a rivulet originates from a river (κάγῳ ὡς διῶρυξ ἀπὸ ποταμοῦ - v.30a). The first beneficiary of this activity is Ben Sira himself (v.31ab). Only after some radical and very unanticipated (καὶ ἰδοὺ ἐγένετό μοι - v.31c) expansion of his role as mediator of wisdom can Ben Sira then communicate this wisdom to his contemporaries (vv.32a-33a) and to future generations (V.33b). The manner in which this will occur (ὡς προφητεῖαν ἐκχεῶ - v.33a) implies some form of divine inspiration.

Thematically similar ideas are found in Sir 39,1-11. The ideal scribe's study of the scripture and traditions of Israel is essentially derivative and an engagement

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<sup>57</sup> These are: *Ben Sira the Wisdom Teacher* (Sir 24,30-33); *The Last to Keep Vigil* (Sir 33,16-18); *Ben Sira's Frequent Travels* (Sir 34,12-13); *Shining Like the Moon* (Sir 39,12); *Ben Sira's Postscript* (Sir 50,27); *An Autobiographical Wisdom Poem* (51,13-30); and *A Basic Prayer Pattern* (Sir 51,10-12).

<sup>58</sup> Skehan-DiLella, *Ben Sira*, 330. V.34 is to be read as a harmonizing expansion of the copyist and must be ignored here as the proper place for the verse is Sir 33,18.

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with wisdom (vv.1-3). The immediate consequences are for the scribe proper: his role in respect of rulers (v.4ab), foreign travel (v.4cd) and his relationship with YHWH (v.5). Only on reception of the divine free gift of inspiration (πνεύματι συνέσεως ἐμπλησθήσεται - v.6b) is it possible to mediate his wisdom to others (αὐτὸς ἀνομβρήσει ῥήματα σοφίας αὐτοῦ - v.6c; βουλήν αὐτοῦ καὶ ἐπιστήμην - v.7a; αὐτὸς ἐκφανεῖ παιδείαν διδασκαλίας αὐτοῦ - v.8a), both to contemporaries (αἰνέσουσιν τὴν σύνεσιν αὐτοῦ πολλοί - v.9a) and to future generations (καὶ ἕως τοῦ αἰῶνος οὐκ ἐξαλειφθήσεται. οὐκ ἀποστήσεται τὸ μνημόσυνον αὐτοῦ - v.9bc). Accordingly, the two texts share a common structure, presented below in Table 03.

**Table 03**  
**Common Structure of Sir 24,30-33 and 39,1-11**

	<b>SIR 24</b>	<b>SIR 39</b>
Activity Derived from Wisdom	vv.30ab	vv.1a-3b
Benefits to Ben Sira / Ideal Scribe	vv.31ab	vv.4a-5d
Sudden Transformation	vv.31cd	vv.6ab
Benefits to Contemporaries	vv.32a-33a	vv.7a-8b
Benefits to Future Generations	vv.33b	vv.9cd

Significant philological links exist between Sir 24,32-33 and Sir 39,6.8-9 emphasizing the manner in which both Ben Sira and the ideal scribe mediate wisdom to their contemporaries, and underscoring the thematic and structural links. The phrase παιδείαν ὡς ὄρθρον φωτιῶ (Sir 24,32a - with its synonym ἐκφανῶ) corresponds almost exactly with αὐτὸς ἐκφανεῖ παιδείαν (Sir 39,8a). The noun διδασκαλία occurs in Sir 24,33a and 39,8a. These philological

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correspondences emphasize the benefit of Ben Sira's and the ideal scribe's activity for others. The verbs ἐκχεῶ (Sir 24,33a) and ἀνομβρήσει (Sir 39,6c), while not exact synonyms, do correspond very closely in meaning. Finally, the phrase εἰς γενεάς occurs in both Sir 24,33b and 39,9d, highlighting the benefit of Ben Sira's and the ideal scribe's activity for future generations. The import of these philological links is that the sudden transformation within Ben Sira's own engagement with wisdom, by which it is not just for himself but is mediated both to his contemporaries and to future generations, corresponds exactly to the activity of the ideal scribe in the wake of divine inspiration.

The second autobiographical text (Sir 33,16-18)<sup>59</sup> is a short note in which Ben Sira attempts to legitimate his right to teach. He presents himself as standing in a long line of wisdom teachers (אחריו שקדתי - v.16a) who have gleaned much from Israel's traditions (וכמו עולל אחר הבוצרם) (v.16b). Ben Sira's progress in this role surpasses that of all other wisdom teachers (אני קדמתי) (v.17a) which is due to God's blessing (בברכת אל) (v.17a). Accordingly, Ben Sira was able to fill his wine-press (מלאתי יקבי) (v.17b). His study of Israel's traditions coupled with God's blessing led him to an increase of wisdom which was not for himself alone (כי לא) (v.18a) but for others (לכל מבקשי חכמה) (v.18b). Similar ideas are found in the poem on the ideal scribe (Sir 38,34-39,11) who derives wisdom from Israel's heritage (ἐν νόμῳ - v.34d, σοφίαν πάντων ἀρχαίων - v.1a, προφητείας - v.1b, διήγησιν ἀνδρῶν ὀνομαστῶν - v.2a, στροφαῖς παραβολῶν - v.2b, ἀποκρυφα παροιμιῶν - v.3a, αἰνίγμασιν παραβολῶν - v.3b). The significant moment of transformation in the life of the ideal scribe is when he is filled with the

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<sup>59</sup> In G this text along with other material is transposed to chapter 30. See *ibid.*, 380.396 on such transposed materials in G.

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spirit of God's inspiration (πνεύματι συνέσεως ἐμπλησθήσεται - v.6b) which allows him to pour forth wisdom (ἀνομβρήσει ῥήματα σοφίας - v.6c) and display teaching (ἐκφανεῖ παιδείαν διδασκαλίας - v.8a) for others. A similar structural pattern is detectable in both texts, presented below in Table 04.

**Table 04**  
**Common Structure of Sir 33,16-18 and 39,1-11**

	<b>SIR 33</b>	<b>SIR 39</b>
Gleaning Israel's Heritage	v.16ab	vv.1a-3b
Divine Intervention	v.17a	v.6a
Sapiential Fullness	v.17b	v.6b
Mediation of Wisdom to Others	vv.18ab	vv.7-9

Philologically there are a number of minor links between Sir 33,17-18 and Sir 39,1-11. The form ἐμπλήρωσα (תקבל - Sir 33,17b) corresponds to ἐμπλησθήσεται (Sir 39,6b), highlighting the sapiential fullness enjoyed both by Ben Sira and the ideal scribe. Those who pursue wisdom are described in Sir 33,18a as ζητοῦσιν παιδείαν, an activity in which the ideal scribe is intimately involved as expressed in such terms as σοφίαν πάντων ἀρχαίων ἐκζητήσῃ (Sir 39,1a), ἀπόκρυφα παροιμιῶν ἐκζητήσῃ (v.3a). Other key words held in common between both texts are: παιδεία (Sir 33,18b/39,8a), and κύριος (Sir 33,18b/Sir 39,8a), linking Ben Sira's mediation of wisdom with that of the ideal scribe. The implication of these thematic, structural and philological links is that Ben Sira's self-portrait in Sir 33,17-18 as the last in a line of wisdom teachers, who engages with Israel's traditions and due to God's blessing can make wisdom available to others, is a mirror image of the vignette of the ideal scribe offered in Sir 39,1-11.



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The third autobiographical text (Sir 34,11-13) occurs within a poem (vv.9-20) dealing with the implications and benefits of true wisdom and fidelity to Torah. Vv.10-11 deals with the issue of travel and how it tests people and enables them to put knowledge into practice. Vv.12-13 is a clear autobiographical note on the part of Ben Sira, which offers little detailed information. There are no obvious philological links between this text and the *Poem on the Ideal Scribe*. Nonetheless there are significant ideas in common between the two texts. Ben Sira is clearly one who has travelled much (ἐν τῇ ἀποπλανήσει μου - v.12aβ) as does the ideal scribe (ἐν γῆ ἀλλοτρίων ἔθνων διελεύσεται - Sir 39,4c). On his travels Ben Sira has witnessed much (πολλὰ ἑώρακα - v.12aα) while the ideal scribe has used the insights gained on his travels to test good and evil (ἀγαθὰ γὰρ καὶ κακὰ ἐν ἀνθρώποις ἐπείρασεν - Sir 39,4d).<sup>60</sup> Furthermore, Ben Sira suggests an inner fullness of understanding which has not been adequately articulated in his words (καὶ πλείονα τῶν λόγων μου σύνεσις μου - v.12b). This idea is replicated in the description of the ideal scribe (πνεύματι συνέσεως ἐμπλησθήσεται - Sir 39,6b). Thus in Sir 34,11-13 Ben Sira describes himself as one who is widely travelled, has seen much and has a level of understanding which has not yet been fully articulated. This self-description is almost identical with the profile of the ideal scribe as one who has travelled in foreign lands, has tested good and evil in people and who has been filled with the spirit of understanding.

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<sup>60</sup> Stadelmann, *Schriftgelehrter*, 230-231 argues that the form ἐπείρασεν (v.4d) reflects an autobiographical reminiscence, indicated by the surprising relapse into the past form. However, a more meaningful line of inquiry is a comparison with Sir 34,12-13. Ben Sira has understood himself completely as one of these wide travelled ספרים and wanted to depict himself as such.

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The fourth autobiographical text (Sir 39,12) forms the opening line of the first stanza (vv.12-15) of a long poem (vv.12-35) in praise of God the creator:

- V.12a ἔτι διανοηθεὶς ἐκδιηγῆσομαι  
V.12b καὶ ὡς διχομηνία ἐπληρώθην.<sup>61</sup>

Thematically Sir 39,12 and the *Poem on the Ideal Scribe* are closely linked. Ben Sira describes himself as full (ἐπληρώθην - v.12b), a term used also to describe the ideal scribe (ἐμπλησθήσεται - Sir 39,6b). In both cases there is a strong suggestion that both Ben Sira and the ideal scribe allow a flow of words to proceed from this fullness. Ben Sira has more to express (ἔτι διανοηθεὶς ἐκδιηγῆσομαι - v.12a) as does the ideal scribe (αὐτὸς ἀνομβρήσει ῥήματα σοφίας αὐτοῦ - Sir 39,6c). Thus an autobiographical text of Ben Sira is closely linked to part of the description of the profile of the ideal scribe.

The fifth autobiographical text (Sir 50,27) introduces the postscript to the work (vv.27-29). The key verse is v.27, which is to be regarded as autobiographical.<sup>62</sup> Philologically the text has links with the poem on the ideal scribe, especially in such key words as παιδεία (Sir 39,8a/50,27a), σύνεσις (Sir 39,6b.9a/50,27a), ἐπιστήμης (Sir 39,7a/50,27a) and σοφία (Sir 39,1a.10a/50,27d).<sup>63</sup> Close thematic links exist between Sir 39,6c and 50,27d:

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<sup>61</sup> This introductory verse is best translated as follows: "I have more on my mind to express; I am full like the full moon," which is a superior translation and more in keeping with G than the paraphrase given in Skehan-DiLella, *Ben Sira*, 454.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, 559.

<sup>63</sup> Stadelmann, *Schriftgelehrter*, 245-246. The autobiographical note in Sir 50,27a, which defines the content of the whole book of Sirach as παιδείαν συνέσεως καὶ ἐπιστήμης shows that Ben Sira links that which is used of the 730 in Sir 39,7-8a with the description of his own work.

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50,27d	ὁς	ἀνώμβρησεν	σοφίαν
39,6c	αὐτός	ἀνομβρήσει	ρήματα σοφίας αὐτοῦ

The ὁς of Sir 50,27d clearly refers back to v.27c and Ben Sira himself. The αὐτός of Sir 39,6c clearly refers to the ideal scribe. The activity of both Ben Sira and the ideal scribe is summed up by the same verb (ἀνομβρεῖν) in respect of the same object (σοφία). Once again Ben Sira's self-description in Sir 50,27d as one who pours forth wisdom is identical with the profile of the ideal scribe offered in Sir 39,6c.

The sixth autobiographical text (Sir 51,13-20) is Ben Sira's *Autobiographical Poem on Wisdom*.<sup>64</sup> The first unit (vv.13-17) focuses on Ben Sira's initial pursuit of wisdom. The language of vv.13-15 in particular underscores the manner in

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<sup>64</sup> Sanders, *Psalms Scroll*, 70-85; Skehan-DiLella, *Ben Sira*, 576. The two Hebrew recensions of the poem are found in MsB and 11QPs<sup>a</sup>. The Qumran text of Sir 51,13-20.30b, an authentic first century CE copy of the original composition and not a reconstruction from the versions, is of greater textual value. The poem attested to in 11QPs<sup>a</sup> is a twenty-three line alphabetic acrostic. MsB does not recognize the acrostic structure, first identified by Bickell in 1882 CE. Normally acrostics have only twenty-two lines. A twenty-three line acrostic begins with an א-line, has a ל-line in the middle and ends on a מ-line, thus forming the word מלא, the first letter of the Hebrew alphabet and which as a Piel verb means *to teach*. The extant Hebrew poem is not a full acrostic as it has been retroverted into Hebrew from the Syriac. The relationship between Heb and G is a major text-critical issue as the former text is longer by two hemistichs and there is no clear manner of relating the Hebrew hemistichs to their Greek counterparts. Sanders does not regard the poem as original to Ben Sira, a conclusion drawn from the fact that the poem was found in a Psalms scroll. Others (DiLella, Muraoka and Skehan) correctly reject Sander's conclusion as based on very flimsy grounds and consequently not established. The poem is divided into ten short stanzas which are grouped into the three main divisions of the poem: vv.13-17 (3 stanzas), vv.18-22 (3 stanzas) and vv.23-30 (4 stanzas). See also T. Muraoka, "Sir 51:13-20: An Erotic Hymn to Wisdom?," *JSJ* 10 (1979): 166-178; I. Rabinowitz, "The Qumran Hebrew Original of Ben Sira's Concluding Acrostic on Wisdom," *HUCA* 42 (1971): 173-184; P. W. Skehan, "The Acrostic Poem in Sirach 51:13-30," *HTR* 64 (1971): 387-400; Stadelmann, *Schriftgelehrter*, 30-33.

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which Ben Sira followed after wisdom.<sup>65</sup> Vv.16b-17a highlight the personal gain to Ben Sira from this initial interaction with wisdom (πολλὴν εὐρον ἑμαυτῶ παλδείαν - v.16b; ועלה היתה לי - v.17a).<sup>66</sup> V.17b indicates how Ben Sira's engagement with wisdom leads him to piety and praise of YHWH (למלמדי אתן) (הודו).<sup>67</sup> Similar ideas are found in the poem on the ideal scribe (Sir 39,1-11). The scribe is engaged with wisdom (Sir 39,1-3) which leads him to pious interaction with YHWH (v.5) The second larger unit of the autobiographical poem (Sir 51,18-22) suggests a subsequent and far more intensive engagement with, and pursuit of wisdom. This is particularly underscored by very emphatic language.<sup>68</sup> Some

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<sup>65</sup> This is reflected in such key expressions as: *to look for [wisdom]* (ובקשתיה - v.13a); *to seek [wisdom] out* (אדורשנה) - v.14b) and *to be familiar with [wisdom]* (ידעתיה) - v.15b). In all instances the imperfect form of the verb and the suffix in -ה clearly denoting חכמה, suggests that Ben Sira sought wisdom continually in his early life.

<sup>66</sup> For the expression ועלה this study reads *advantage, profit* with Skehan-DiLella, *Ben Sira*, 574-575 who vocalize the word as וְעֵלָה on the basis of Aramaic influences on late Hebrew. This is also supported by G (προκοπή). J. A. Sanders, *The Dead Sea Psalms Scroll* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University, 1967), 114 reads the word as וְעֵלָה which does not agree with G, nor fit the context adequately.

<sup>67</sup> For this verse MsB reads הודאה and 11QPs<sup>a</sup> הודי. G is of no help in resolving the issue directly. Both MsB and G understand the text to refer to YHWH. The context suggests that the praise offered must therefore be of YHWH and not to anyone else. The unusual form of the suffix in MsB, while not attested to in Biblical Hebrew, does have many close parallels. See Gesenius' *Hebrew Grammar*, ed. E. Kautzsch, 2nd ed., trans. A. E. Cowley (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1910), 542. While it is not possible to decide between *his praise* or *my praise*, the recipient of the praise is YHWH.

<sup>68</sup> Note such very strong expressions as: *to resolve and to wear [wisdom] down [by treading]* (זמותי ואשחקה) - v.18a); *to not turn back* (ולוא אשוב) - v.18b); *to burn with desire* (חריתי) - v.19a); *to refuse to relent* (ופני לוא השיבותי) - v.19b); *to pursue [wisdom]* (טרתי) - v.19c); *to open [wisdom's gate]* (פתחתי) - v.19e); see Alexander A. DiLella, review of *The Psalms Scroll of* (continued...)

scholars like DiLella read this unit's language in an innocuous, almost puritan manner, refusing to see anything distasteful or obscene in the text, suggesting that the key elements for Ben Sira in the pursuit of wisdom are prayer, pure hands and cleanliness! A far more suggestive and erotic reading of the poem is offered by others such as Sanders and Muraoka.<sup>69</sup> While this debate remains in stalemate, it underscores the highly emphatic language of this unit by which Ben Sira's all consuming intensity in the quest of wisdom is emphasized. The particular intensity of the language mirrors well the transformation of the ideal scribe's engagement with wisdom in the wake of divine inspiration (Sir 39,6).

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<sup>68</sup>(...continued)

*Qumrân Cave 11 (11QPs<sup>a</sup>)*, by J. A. Sanders, in *CBQ* 28 (1966): 92-95 and Skehan-DiLella, *Ben Sira*, 575 for a different reading based on G = τὰς χεῖράς μου ἐξεπέτασα πρὸς ὕψος); *to be attentive to [wisdom's] unseen parts* (ומערמיה אתבונן - v.19f); *to purify hands* (הברותי - v.20a); *to never forsake [wisdom]* (οὐ μὴ ἐγκαταλειφθῶ - v.20d), which is based on G as Heb is retroverted from Syr; *to seek [wisdom]* (τοῦ ἐκζητήσαι αὐτήν - v.21a) and *to possess [wisdom]* (קניתייה = ἐκτησάμην - v.21b).

<sup>69</sup> For an erotic reading of the hymn see Sanders, *Psalms Scroll*, 79-85; *idem*, *Dead Sea Psalms* 112-117. Sanders' thesis is that the poem is deliberately full of *mots à double entente* where the sage's pursuit of wisdom is related in highly erotic tones. See DiLella, "Review of *Psalms Scroll*," 94, who rejects the sexual interpretation which Sanders has given phrases such as רגלי (v.15c) and ידי (v.19e): "The context, however, in both places seems to demand that the parts of the body referred to are located at the end of the arms and leg, respectively, and not elsewhere." However, he does not deal with the other expressions (לקח - v.16b; עלה - v.17a; חורי - v.17b; חרה - v.19a; מערמיה - v.19f) used by Sanders in establishing his thesis. DiLella's conclusion is nothing more than an assertion that the context is not erotic because it's not! See also T. Muraoka, "Erotic Hymn," 166-178. Muraoka's criticism of Sanders is more closely argued. He rejects the ease with which Sanders finds sexual meaning in such phrases as: רגלי (v.15c), עלה (v.17a), חורי (v.17b) and מערמיה (v.19f). However Muraoka sees sexual imagery where Sanders has not. He reads v.19d as "in the moment of her ... orgasm, I will not let up, put the break" and v.20c as "I have found her a virgin." Muraoka concludes that the sexual imagery used in the poem is not foreign to Jewish Wisdom Literature and accordingly it is possible to read Ben Sira's desire for wisdom in such erotic terms. DiLella obviously regards Muraoka's thesis as unbalanced, but offers no reasons for this view. See also Skehan-DiLella, *Ben Sira*, 579.

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The final unit (Sir 51,23-30) of the autobiographical poem takes up the idea of Ben Sira's mediation of wisdom to others, especially the unlearned. Ben Sira's role is emphasized by the appeal to approach him (ἐγγίσατε πρός με - v.23a) who, by the synonymous parallelism of the verse, is likened to a school of learning (ἐν οἴκῳ παιδείας - v.23b). Ben Sira's role is further highlighted by the description of his action in mediating wisdom (ἤνοιξα τὸ στόμα μου καὶ ἐλάλησα - v.25a). It is clear also that the recipients of Ben Sira's mediation of wisdom are contemporaries (ἀπαίδευτοι - v.23a). Ben Sira's sense of possessing a fullness of wisdom which exceeds his own engagement with it (ὀλίγον ἐκοπίασα καὶ εὗρον ἑμαυτῷ πολλὴν ἀνάπαυσιν - v.27aβ-27b) is also a significant idea in this unit. As already seen in the poem on the ideal scribe, one of the consequences of the divine inspiration of the scribe is mediation of wisdom to contemporaries (Sir 39,7a-8b). It can now be stated that both Sir 39,1-11 and Sir 51,13-30 have structural and thematic elements in common, presented below in Table 05.

**Table 05**  
**Common Structure of Sir 51,13-20 and 39,1-11**

	<b>SIR 51</b>	<b>SIR 39</b>
First Engagement with Wisdom	vv.13-15	vv.1a-3b
Benefits to Ben Sira / Ideal Scribe	vv.16b-17a	vv.4a-5e
Devotional Response to YHWH	v.17b	vv.5de
Transformed Engagement with Wisdom	vv.18-22	vv.6ab
Benefits to Contemporaries	vv.23-30	vv.7a-8b

The structural and thematic links between the texts are further strengthened by some significant philological links. The link between both Ben Sira's and the ideal scribe's first engagement with wisdom is highlighted by the use of words such as: σοφία (Sir 38,24a; 39,1a.10a/51,13b.17b), ἐκζητεῖν (Sir 39,1a.3a/51,14b.21a). The transformation of Ben Sira and the ideal scribe are linked by κύριος (Sir 39,5b.6a.8b/51,22a). Benefits to contemporaries of both Ben Sira's and the ideal scribe's mediation of wisdom is linked by the common use of παιδεία (Sir 38,33d; 39,8a/51,16b.23b.26b). Other philological links are: καρδία (Sir 38,26a. 27e.28g.30c; 39,5a/51,15b.20c), ψυχὴ (Sir 38,34c/51,19a.20a.24b.26b.29a), ποιεῖν (Sir 39,5b/51,18a), αἰνεῖν (Sir 39,9a/51,22b), ἀνοίγω (Sir 39,5d/51,25a). The implication of this analysis is that there is an almost identical correspondence between Ben Sira and the ideal scribe in their respective engagements with wisdom. Both were involved in an initial engagement with wisdom, which because of some transformational experience, becomes an all consuming engagement, which ultimately leads to mediation of wisdom to others.

Rickenbacher and also Prato<sup>70</sup> have identified a basic prayer pattern in Sir 39,5-6 composed of three basic elements: petition, divine intervention, transformation of petition into prayer of praise. Sir 39,5b-e clearly is a prayer of petition with its emphasis on seeking YHWH, petitioning the Most High, opening lips in prayer and seeking pardon of sin. Sir 39,6a with its conditional clause introduced by ἐάν presents divine intervention as YHWH's free initiative, which consists in inspiration (v.6b). The consequence of this is to lead the ספר to praise YHWH (v.6d). A similar pattern is to be found in Sir 51,10-12, the final

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<sup>70</sup> See Rickenbacher, *Weisheitsperikopen*, 195; Prato, "Classi Lavorative," 173-175.

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autobiographical text to be considered and which forms the final verses of *Ben Sira's Prayer* (Sir 51,1-12). The poem has been regarded as unauthentic since it follows the postscript of Sir 50,25-29. However, the argument does not convince since the poem's language, form and content suggest authenticity.<sup>71</sup> Furthermore, the poem is also attested to in the Greek, Syriac and Latin versions,<sup>72</sup> while both the Greek title to the poem, ΠΡΟΣΕΥΧΗ ΙΗΣΟΥ ΥΙΟΥ ΣΙΡΑΧ, and the Latin, *ORATIO HIESU FILII SIRACH*, ascribe the poem to Ben Sira. The prayer of petition is clearly identifiable in the use of אל introducing a negative command (v.10c). The intervention of YHWH is underscored by expressions such as: שמע קולי (v.11c), ויאזין (v.11d), ויפרני (v.12a), וימלטני (v.12b) where each action described is YHWH's in respect of Ben Sira. Finally, the element of praise is found in v.12cd and indicated by the phrase הודיתי ואהללה ואברכה which describes Ben Sira's response to YHWH's action.

This same pattern can be found in each of the units which comprise the *Autobiographical Poem on Wisdom* (Sir 51,13-30). In unit one (vv.13-17) the pattern is identifiable as follows: petition or seeking after wisdom (v.13), intervention of wisdom (vv.14-16) and praise of YHWH (v.17). In unit two (vv.18-22) the same pattern is found: seeking after wisdom (vv.18-20b), intervention of wisdom (vv.20c-21) and praise of YHWH (v.22). The pattern is less detectable in unit three (vv.23-30) but may perhaps be identified as follows: seeking after wisdom (vv.23-26b), intervention of wisdom (vv.26c-28), praise of YHWH (v.29). While wisdom is the goal of the seeking in Sir 51,13-30, the assertion that the

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<sup>71</sup> R. Smend, *Die Weisheit des Jesus Sirach erklärt* (Berlin: Reimer, 1949), 495; Skehan-DiLella, *Ben Sira*, 563.

<sup>72</sup> See Alexander A. DiLella, "Sir 51:1-12: Poetic Structure and Analysis of Ben Sira's Psalm," *CBQ* 48 (1986): 395-407, at 396.



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basic prayer pattern is to be found here can be sustained because of Ben Sira's clear statement of the divine origins of wisdom and his identification of wisdom as an attribute of YHWH.<sup>73</sup> This brief analysis of the basic prayer pattern is sufficient to show that a fundamental link exists between the prayer of the ideal scribe and that which Ben Sira himself engages in as evidenced by Sir 51,10-12 and perhaps by Sir 51,13-30.

Sirach contains a number of clearly autobiographical texts in which Ben Sira describes certain aspects of his own search for and engagement with wisdom, along with a depiction of the transformative effects of his efforts. A comparison of these texts with the *Poem on the Ideal Scribe* in Sir 39,1-11 reveals that all the autobiographical texts share common thematic links with Sir 39,1-11, while three of them (Sir 24,30-33; 33,16-18; 51,13-30) share a common structure with that text, and three others (Sir 24,32-33; 50,27; 51,13-30) exhibit significant philological links. Finally, a basic prayer pattern detectable in Sir 39,5-6 is also clearly identifiable in Sir 51,10-12 where Ben Sira reveals his own pattern of prayer. A similar prayer pattern may be also present in one other autobiographical text (Sir 51,13-30). This analysis leads to the conclusion that the profile of the ideal scribe offered in Sir 39,1-11 corresponds to Ben Sira's own autobiographical self-description and that the profile of the ideal scribe must be deemed to be an autobiographical self-portrait by Ben Sira.

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<sup>73</sup> The entire book is introduced with a poetic unit dealing with the *Origin of Wisdom* (Sir 1,1-10). See Box-Oesterley, "Sirach," 317-318; Skehan-DiLella, *Ben Sira*, 136-139. All wisdom originates in God who is the seat of wisdom eternally (Sir 1,1), an idea which both encapsulates the theme of the whole book and is treated subsequently in the book (Sir 24,3-5.9b). However wisdom remains a mere creature (ἐκτισταί - Sir 1,4a), pre-existing all others, but whose source remains an unfathomable mystery to all but YHWH (Sir 1,6.8). Ben Sira never identifies wisdom with YHWH and this fact weakens somewhat the claim for the assertion of the basic prayer pattern in Sir 51,13-30.

## 2.5 Ben Sira the Scribe and the Interpretation of Israel's Traditions

Given that the *Poem on the Ideal Scribe* may be confidently regarded as autobiographical, it is now possible to study the key expressions used in the poem in respect of Ben Sira's relationship to Israel's traditions.<sup>74</sup> In the first of these expressions, καὶ διανοουμένου ἐν νόμῳ (Syr →) ζωῆς (Sir 38,34d), the verb used occurs in G fifteen times.<sup>75</sup> Of the cases where the context is clearly Scripture-focused, the Hebrew equivalent of the Greek term is based on the root בִּין in four such cases.<sup>76</sup> On the basis of an analysis of the Greek-Hebrew equivalents, this study proposes the Hebrew phrase הַשִּׁים לְבוֹ for διανοουμένου in Sir 38,34d and יִבִּין for διανοηθήσεται in Sir 39,7b.<sup>77</sup> הַשִּׁים לְבוֹ is probably a synonym

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<sup>74</sup> These are: διανοουμένου ἐν νόμῳ (Syr→) ζωῆς (Sir 38,34d), σοφίαν πάντων ἀρχαίων ἐκζητήσει (Sir 39,1a), ἐν (Syr) *qdm*y' προφητείαις ἀσχοληθήσεται (Sir 39,1b), διήγησιν ἀνδρῶν ὀνομαστῶν συντηρήσει (Sir 39,2a), καὶ ἐν (Syr) *m'mqym* παραβολῶν συνεισελεύσεται (Sir 39,2b), ἀπόκρυφα παροιμιῶν ἐκζητήσει (Sir 39,3a), ἐν αἰνίγμασιν παραβολῶν ἀναστραφήσεται (Sir 39,3b).

<sup>75</sup> Sir 3,22a.29a; 6,37a; 14,21a; 16,20a.23a.23b; 17,6b; 21,17b; 27,12b; 31,15b; 38,33c.34d; 39,7b.12a.

<sup>76</sup> These cases are: Sir 3,22a (διανοοῦ / הַתְּבוּןָ), 3,29a (διανοηθήσεται / יִבִּין), 6,37a (διανοοῦ / הַתְּבוּנָה), 14,21a (διανοοῦμενος / הַשִּׁים לְבוֹ) .

<sup>77</sup> This conclusion is arrived at on the basis that where Greek-Hebrew equivalents are available the pattern is as follows. Present tense forms of διανοεῖσθαι are used to translate Hitpolel forms of בִּין, while future tense forms of the Greek verb are used to translate Hiphil forms of the Hebrew verb. The parallel between the forms of the Greek verb in Sir 14,21a and 38,34d suggest that הַשִּׁים לְבוֹ may have been the Hebrew original, suiting very well the synonymous parallelism of v.34cd. The parallel between the forms of διανοεῖσθαι in Sir 3,29a and 39,7a suggest that the Hebrew original may have been יִבִּין .

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for a Hitpolel form of בִּין.<sup>78</sup> In the MT the Hitpolel form of בִּין can often denote a diligent consideration of something or a close careful examination.<sup>79</sup> In Sir 38,34d the object of this action is clearly *the law of life*. The equivalence of νόμος with תורה is sufficiently attested to in Sirach to suggest that it stands for the books of Moses.<sup>80</sup> Accordingly, Sir 38,34cd must be seen as a crucial verse which establishes a link between the fear of God and Ben Sira's close, careful, considered examination of Torah. In short, it is this Torah-interpretation, linked to the fear of God, which is the central and dynamically-motivating force behind all Ben Sira does.

The next important expression is σοφίαν πάντων ἀρχαίων ἐκζητήσει (Sir 39,1a). The verb ἐκζητεῖν occurs seven times in Sirach, for which there are five Hebrew equivalents.<sup>81</sup> However, the equivalents in Sir 47,25a, 44,5a, 51,14b

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<sup>78</sup> Sir 14,21b.

<sup>79</sup> Helmer Ringgren, "בִּין," in *TDOT*, vol. 2, ed. G. Johannes Botterweck and Helmer Ringgren, trans. John T. Willis (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975), 102-103. While the precise Greek-Hebrew equivalent of the terms in Sir 38,34d is not found in the Hebrew Bible, some Hitpolel forms of בִּין are translated by a form of וֹעִיב (Jer 9,17; 23,20; Job 37,14; 38,18) or by the cognate κατανοεῖν (1 Kgs 3,21; Job 30,20).

<sup>80</sup> The equivalence of νόμος with תורה is found in Sir 15,1b; 32,15a; 32,24a; 33,2a; 41,8b; 42,2a; 45,5d; 49,4c. In all cases except Sir 45,5d, the terms are used to indicate the books of Moses. In Sir 45,5d the terms are used to qualify the Decalogue.

<sup>81</sup> These are: 24,43a (ἐκζητοῦσιν / מבקשי); 39,1a.3a; 44,5a (ἐκζητοῦντες / חוקרי); 47,25a (ἐξεζητήσαν / התמכר); 51,14b (ἐκζητήσω αὐτήν / אדורשנה [11QPs<sup>a</sup>] בקשתיה [MsB]); 51,21b (ἐκζητήσαμ / להביט). G Sir 24,34a has its proper place as 33,18a. Skehan-DiLella, *Ben Sira*, 330.

and Sir 51,21a can safely be ignored.<sup>82</sup> The only remaining reliable equivalent is in Sir 33,18a.<sup>83</sup> Analysis of the occurrence of the root  $\text{בִּקַּשׁ}$  in Heb reveals that it is not used with any specific interpretative implication, but is simply a common term which may be used in respect of many matters, reflecting its usage in Biblical Hebrew.<sup>84</sup> The adjective  $\alpha\rho\chi\alpha\iota\omicron\varsigma$  is used in G four times, with two Hebrew

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<sup>82</sup> Sir 47,25a contains the form  $\acute{\epsilon}\xi\epsilon\zeta\eta\tau\eta\sigma\alpha\nu$  which is a supposed translation of  $\text{הִתְמַכֵּר}$ . However, since G has completely botched the translation of Heb, this particular case is of little value; see *ibid.*, 531. Sir 44,5a reads  $\acute{\epsilon}\kappa\zeta\eta\tau\omicron\upsilon\nu\tau\epsilon\varsigma \mu\acute{\epsilon}\lambda\eta \mu\omicron\upsilon\sigma\iota\kappa\acute{\omega}\nu$  which is a translation of the Hebrew  $\text{עַל קוֹ מִזְמוֹר מִקְרִי חוֹקֵי}$ . Yadin and Skehan differ on the solutions to the text-critical problems of Sir 44,5. Specifically in v.5a Yadin reads  $\text{עַל קוֹ}$  while Skehan reads  $\text{עַל חוֹק}$ , arguing that it better denotes a sense of rhythm and measured lyric while preserving assonance with elements in v.5a and v.6a. On  $\text{עַל קוֹ}$  see Yadin, *Masada*, 36. Yadin reads with MsB<sup>msb</sup> and MsM and translates the phrase as *according to rule*. On  $\text{עַל חוֹק}$  see P. W. Skehan, "Staves, and Nails, and Scribal Slips (Ben Sira 44:2-5)," *BASOR* 200 (1970): 66-71, at 69, who reads with MsB<sup>mt</sup>, and argues for assonance with  $\text{חֹרִי}$  in v.5a and  $\text{כַּח}$  in v.6a. For the translation of this phrase as *melodious* see Skehan-DiLella, *Ben Sira*, 499. However, neither phrase occurs in Biblical Hebrew. The phrases  $\text{עַל קוֹ}$  and  $\text{עַל חוֹק}$  are both a *hapax legomenon* in Heb. Since, in the Hebrew Bible the word  $\text{קוֹ}$  has a musical connotation not easily associated with  $\text{חוֹק}$ , this study follows MsM and MsB<sup>msb</sup> as the superior reading best suited to the context. In any case the context is that of composition of music and not a seeking after wisdom or biblical interpretation. The equivalence in Sir 51,14b is unreliable as it is impossible to know whether the text of MsB or 11QPs<sup>a</sup> is the basis for G. For Sir 51,21a MsB and Syr agree against G. The Hebrew phrase  $\text{לְהַבִּיט ב}$  *to look upon* is more appropriate to the erotic context of the poem (cf. Sir 9,8b) than the Greek  $\acute{\epsilon}\kappa\zeta\eta\tau\eta\sigma\alpha\iota$  *to seek*. Nowhere else in Sirach is the root  $\text{נִבַּט}$  translated by use of the verb  $\acute{\epsilon}\kappa\zeta\eta\tau\epsilon\iota\nu$ . In fact, in all cases in Sirach the Hebrew root means *to look, to seek, to be manifest* and never *to seek*.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*, 330. G Sir 24,34a ( $\acute{\epsilon}\kappa\zeta\eta\tau\omicron\upsilon\sigma\iota\nu$ ) = Heb Sir 33,18a ( $\text{מִבְּקִשִׁי}$ ).

<sup>84</sup> In Heb  $\text{בִּקַּשׁ}$  is used of wisdom (Sir 4,12b; 6,27a; 51,13b.26c) and of God (Sir 7,4a; 40,26d). It is also used however, of God's authority (Sir 7,4a), ambition (Sir 7,6a), wealth (Sir 11,10f), enemies (Sir 12,12d), joy (Sir 14,16b) and Ben Sira's life (Sir 51,3c). In the Hebrew Bible the activity of  $\text{בִּקַּשׁ}$  "has in view the finding of an object which really exists or which is thought to exist, which is not close at hand to the subject at the time of seeking, but is desired most (continued...)"

equivalents,  $\text{ישׁ}$  and  $\text{עָרַב}$ .<sup>85</sup> These occurrences suggest that  $\text{ישׁ}$  denotes *old*, synonym of *aged* and the opposite of *new*, while  $\text{עָרַב}$  denotes *of old*.<sup>86</sup> The context of Sir 39,1a suggests that σοφίαν πάντων ἀρχαίων refers to a wisdom which is of all those who lived in former times and accordingly are considered *ancient*. Thus Sir 39,1a is used generically to indicate the goal of seeking after the wisdom of those of old, and the effort which accompanies that goal, but without any specific interpretative import. The significant expression in Sir 39,1b is καὶ ἐν (Syr) *qdm*y' προφητείαις ἀσχοληθήσεται. The form ἀσχοληθήσεται (Sir 39,1b) is a *hapax legomenon* in both G and LXX.<sup>87</sup> Unfortunately the translation and significance of ἀσχοληθήσεται must remain unclear. Perhaps Ben Sira is suggesting that scribal wisdom is not achieved by heavy toil (Sir 38,24b), but only

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<sup>84</sup>(...continued)

earnestly and initiates the seeking." Siegfried Wagner, "שָׁרַב," in *TDOT*, II, 229-241 at 229. The function and meaning of the root is determined by its object and context. Of the more than 220 occurrences of the root only a few are used in the figurative or religious sense of seeking wisdom or the word of YHWH (Prov 2,4; 14,6; 15,14; 18,15, Amos 8,12, Mal 2,7).

<sup>85</sup> These are: Sir 2,10a; 9,10a (ἀρχαίον /  $\text{ישׁ}$ ); 16,7a (ἀρχαίων /  $\text{עָרַב}$ ); 39,1a.

<sup>86</sup> This can only be inferred from the context, unfortunately. Sir 9,10 is a maxim on friendship with a chiastic pattern a:b:b:a. Thus ἀρχαίον /  $\text{ישׁ}$  is in parallel with παλαιωθῆ /  $\text{ישׁ}$ . However, ἀρχαίον /  $\text{ישׁ}$  is the opposite to πρόσφατος /  $\text{שׁתׁ}$  and νέος /  $\text{שׁתׁ}$ . Clearly *old* is implied. In Sir 16,7 "Ben Sira alludes not only to the giants of Gen 6,1-4 ... but also to such 'princes of old' as the king of Babylon ... and Nebuchadnezzar." Skehan-DiLella, *Ben Sira*, 273-274. Sir 16,6-14 is a clear reference to notorious sinners in biblical history, who were *of old*. This equivalence of ἀρχαίος with  $\text{עָרַב}$  is also well attested to in the LXX (Isa 37,26; Pss 143,5; Lam 1,7; 2,17).

<sup>87</sup> The closest semantic equivalent to ἀσχοληθήσεται is ἀσכולία which translates the Hebrew root  $\text{שׁוׁע}$ , which is not attested to in the Hebrew Bible. However, in Sirach it can denote concern or anxiety (3,22b; 7,25a; 40,1) or heavy physical labour (38,24b).

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by being busily occupied ἐν προφητείαις, a phrase which remains enigmatic. The word προφητεῖαι occurs seven times in G, of which three have a Hebrew equivalent.<sup>88</sup> The term occurring in the Prologue is that used by Ben Sira's grandson and clearly refers to the second part of the Hebrew Canon. However, the term used by Ben Sira himself refers to prophecy in general and cannot be clearly identified with the prophetic corpus within the Hebrew Bible.<sup>89</sup>

Sir 39,2a reads διήγησιν ἀνδρῶν ὀνομαστῶν συντηρήσει. The verb συντηρεῖν occurs in G twelve times for which there are five Hebrew equivalents.<sup>90</sup> Analysis of the occurrence of שמר in Heb reveals an interesting pattern. The root occurs eighteen times and has a wide range of meanings.<sup>91</sup> However, the root is translated by συντηρεῖν or a synonym (τήρησις) where the direct object of the

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<sup>88</sup> These are: Prologue 24, Sir 24,33a; 36,20b; 39,1b; 44,3b (ἐν προφητείαις / בנבואה), 46,1b (ἐν προφητείαις / בנבואה), 46,20d (ἐν προφητεία / בנבואה) .

<sup>89</sup> The use of the word in Sir 24,33a and 36,20b merely suggests prophetic activity without any identification with the biblical prophets. This is supported by the use of the word to describe the activity of biblical heroes who are not to be identified with classical prophecy: Moses and Joshua (Sir 46,1b), and Samuel (Sir 46,20d). The occurrences of προφητεία / נבואה in the Hebrew Bible (Neh 6,12; 2 Chron 15,8) suggest that the term merely indicates prophetic action in a highly general fashion.

<sup>90</sup> These are: Sir 2,15b; 4,20a (συντηρήσων / שמר), 6,25b; 13,13a (συντηρήσων / השמר), Sir 15,15a (συντηρήσει / תשמר), 17,22b; 27,12a; 28,3a; 35,1a; 37,12b (συντηροῦντα / שומר); 39,2a; 41,14a (συντηρήσατε / שמעו). Sir 13,12a is to be ignored as it is expanded text. Skehan-DiLella, *Ben Sira*, 250.

<sup>91</sup> These are: *to watch time* (Sir 4,20a), *to be alert* (Sir 6,13b; 13,8a.13a; 32,22a.22c; 37,8a), *to keep law-commandments* (Sir 15,15a; 32,22b.22d.23a; 37,12b; 44,20a), *to ignore time* (Sir 20,7b), *to be deterred* (Sir 35,18b), *wages* (Sir 37,11h), *to prolong life* (Sir 37,31b), *to be preserved* (Sir 42,23b).

verb is a word denoting religious traditions (commandment or law).<sup>92</sup> In the Hebrew Bible the only instance where the root שמר is translated by a form of συντηρεῖν is in Ezek 19,19 where the object of the verb is also a religious tradition (YHWH's statutes). The likelihood is then that the root שמר underlies συντηρήσει in Sir 39,2a. The import of this is that Sir 39,2a refers to the retention of some religious tradition referred to as διήγησιν ἀνδρῶν ὀνομαστῶν. The word διήγησις occurs seven times in G,<sup>93</sup> all of which mean some kind of conversation or discourse. The adjective ὀνομαστός occurs twice with one Hebrew equivalent and means *famous*.<sup>94</sup> Thus Ben Sira's role is to retain the spoken discourses of the famous which form part of Israel's religious heritage. The retention of this tradition is to be seen more in terms of preservation than observation. Again the language used here is neither technical nor exegetical and can only refer to Ben Sira's work with these traditions in a very broad manner. Sir 39,2b contains the phrase ἐν στροφαῖς παραβολῶν συνεισελεύσεται. The form συνεισελεύσεται (Sir 39,2b) is a *hapax legomenon* in G.<sup>95</sup> The information thus available, while facilitating the translation *to penetrate* or *to enter into*, is nonetheless so scanty that it is

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<sup>92</sup> The exception to this is Sir 4,20a which may be idiomatic.

<sup>93</sup> These are: Sir 6,35a; 9,15b; 22,6a; 27,11a.13a; 38,25d; 39,2a.

<sup>94</sup> Sir 39,2a; 44,3b (ἄνδρες ὀνομαστοί / אנשי שמ). The identical Greek-Hebrew equivalence is found in Num 16,2 while a variant (אנשי שמוח) is found in 1 Chron 5,24, both of which can be translated as *famous men*.

<sup>95</sup> The only other forms of συνεισερχομαι occurring in the LXX are: συνεισέλθη μετ' (Exod 21,3), συνεισελεύσεται ... εἰς (Job 22,4), συνεισέρχου ... ἀπό (Est 2,13) and συνεισελθόντας μετ' (1Macc 12,48). The Greek verb translates the Hebrew roots בוא (Job 22,4; Est 2,13) or א"י (Exod 21,3).

impossible to identify clearly what the penetration of *στροφαῖς παραβολῶν* might actually mean. The word *παραβολή* occurs in G six times with an attested Hebrew equivalent occurring twice.<sup>96</sup> The word denotes a pithy saying which contains a deeper level of meaning hidden within it. This can only be arrived at by *entering into* the proverb.

Sir 39,3a is also concerned with sayings of hidden meaning (*ἀπόκρυφα παροιμιῶν ἐκζητήσει*). As seen above in the case of Sir 39,1a, the form *ἐκζητήσει* simply denotes a *seeking after* something in a general way without indication of any particular interpretative procedure. The adjective *ἀποκρυφός* occurs nine times in Sir, although three instances can be safely ignored. Hebrew equivalents are attested to in two cases.<sup>97</sup> The term denotes a hidden dimension to reality: human activity (Sir 23,19e), God (Sir 39,7b; 42,19b; 43,32a) and prophecy (Sir 48,25b). The noun *παροιμία* occurs only five times and with two possible Hebrew equivalents.<sup>98</sup> The meaning of the Greek and Hebrew is best

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<sup>96</sup> These are: Sir 1,25a; 3,29a (*παραβολήν* / *לְשׁוֹן*) ; 20,20a; 39,3b; 47,15b; 47,17a (*παραβολαῖς* / *לְשׁוֹן*). For Sir 13,26b, Heb is to be preferred over G on the basis of context and parallelism. Likewise in Sir 47,15b G is to be preferred over the highly damaged MsB. The reading of G in Sir 38,33e must be regarded as an error. P. W. Skehan, "They Shall Not Be Found in Parables (Sir 38,33)," *CBQ* 23 (1961): 40.

<sup>97</sup> These are: Sir 14,21b; 16,21b; 23,19e; 39,3a.7b; 42,9a.19b; 43,32a; 48,25b. For Sir 14,21b MsA is to be preferred to G on the grounds of parallelism. The text of Sir 16,21b in G is meaningless and does not fit the context, hence MsA is to be retained. The best attested text for Sir 42,9a is that of MsM restored from G, which does not include the term under investigation. Hebrew equivalents are to be found in Sir 42,19b (*ἀποκρύφω* / *נִסְתָּר*) and Sir 48,25b (*ἀπόκρυφα* / *נִסְתָּר*). The Hebrew root *נסת* is translated variously in G, but always denotes that which is hidden (Sir 3,22b; 16,17a; 39,19b; 42,19b; 48,12a.25b).

<sup>98</sup> These are: Sir 6,35b (*παροιμίας* / *לְשׁוֹן*); 8,8b (*καὶ ἐν ταῖς παροιμίας αὐτῶν* / *וּנְסִיחֵיהֶן*); 18,29b, 39,3a; 47,17a (*παροιμίας* / *לְשׁוֹן*).



summed up in the word *maxim*. These maxims are clearly oral (Sir 6,35b; 8,8b), convey wisdom (Sir 18,29b) and are to be associated with Solomon, Israel's paradigmatic sage (Sir 47,17a). Sir 39,3a thus identifies one of Ben Sira's activities as seeking after the hidden dimensions of such maxims. The text does not suggest how this is to be achieved, nor does it relate such maxims to Israel's heritage, except in a most vague and generalized way. Finally, Sir 39,3b reads ἐν αἰνίγμασιν παραβολῶν ἀναστραφήσεται. The term παραβολή has already been studied above and seen to mean a pithy saying containing deep meaning. In Sir 39,3b such sayings are characterized further by the use of the noun αἰνίγμα which occurs only twice in G.<sup>99</sup> The term means *hidden meaning*. The verb form used to relate the sayings of hidden meaning to Ben Sira is ἀναστραφήσεται. The verb ἀναστρεφεῖν occurs eight times in G.<sup>100</sup> However, of these only two occurrences (Sir 8,8b; 50,28a) share a similar context with Sir 39,3a. In Sir 8,8b the form ἀναστρέφου means *to be busy* and has for its object, wisdom sayings (παροιμίας). Similarly the form ἀναστρεφήσεται in Sir 50,28a has for its object, wisdom sayings (παιδείαν). Sir 39,3a also uses the form ἀναστραφήσεται and has for its object, wisdom sayings (ἐν αἰνίγμασιν παραβολῶν). Accordingly, there is a very close correspondence between Sir 39,3b and Sir 50,28a. The Hebrew root (הגה) behind the Greek expression means *to*

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<sup>99</sup> These are Sir 39,3b and Sir 47,15b. No Hebrew equivalent is available for Sir 39,3b and MsB is severely damaged at Sir 47,15b.

<sup>100</sup> These are: Sir 8,8b (ἀναστρέφου / שׁוּבָה); 12,12b (ἀναστρέψας / יְהַדְּבֵן); Sir 16,16b (ἀνατρέψαι / מְהַמְרֵן); 33,12d (καὶ ἀνέστρεψεν αὐτούς / וְהִפֵּם); 38,25c (ἀναστρεφόμενος / יְשׁוּבָה); 39,3b; 40,11a (ἀναστρέφει / יְשׁוּבָה); 50,28a (ἀναστραφήσεται / הִגָּה).

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*reflect on*. This is probably what is also meant in Sir 39,3b. Again this is merely a generic description of Ben Sira's activity in respect of the hidden meaning of pithy sayings.

DiLella overstates the case in concluding that "Ben Sira alludes to the threefold division of the OT in a manner similar to that of his grandson's Prologue: 'the Law of the Most High' (38:34d), 'the wisdom of the ancients' (39:1a), and 'the prophecies' (39:1b)."<sup>101</sup> There is no evidence whatsoever to support what must be considered an over-enthusiastic assertion. In arriving at such an incautious conclusion, DiLella greatly exceeds the position of previous scholars. Haspecker does not deal with the issue as such, but is content however, only to state that Torah is the object of Ben Sira's study.<sup>102</sup> Marböck argues that a precise definition of the terms used in Sir 39,1-3 is not possible, and then attempts to do so by assertion arguing that v.1a refers to general wisdom traditions, v.1b to prophetic writings and vv.2-3 to extra-biblical or oral sources.<sup>103</sup> Stadelmann is content to see in Sir 39,1 an allusion to biblical books and in vv.2-3 general wisdom traditions.<sup>104</sup> Prato arrives at the most sensible conclusion, it seems to this study. Sir 38,34d clearly refers to Torah. Sir 39,1 may refer to prophecies and vv.2-3 to oral traditions.<sup>105</sup> In short, Sir 38,34d-39,3 offers a highly generalized description of the ancient traditions and Ben Sira's interaction with them. However, since the *Poem on the Ideal Scribe* is autobiographical, it is now possible to correlate the

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<sup>101</sup> Skehan-DiLella, *Ben Sira*, 452.

<sup>102</sup> Haspecker, *Gottesfurcht*, 180.

<sup>103</sup> Marböck, "Der Schriftgelehrte Weise," 312.

<sup>104</sup> Stadelmann, *Schriftgelehrter*, 223.

<sup>105</sup> Prato, "Classi Lavorative," 172.

generalized description of Ben Sira's interaction with Israel's traditions with his reworking of these traditions as evidenced elsewhere in his work.

## **2.6 Ben Sira and the Ideal Scribe: Conclusions**

Ben Sira's autobiographical *Poem on the Ideal Scribe* points to something radically new in the evolution of Jewish scribalism. First, it firmly locates Ben Sira within the context of the concept of חֲכָמָה. While skilled workers are associated with lower wisdom, Ben Sira, the Jewish scribe, is associated with wisdom in its highest forms. Second, his fundamental role as scribe is established in terms of engaging with the traditions of Israel in a sapiential context and bringing forth from them new teaching, both for his contemporaries and for future generations. However, the content of these traditions and the manner of scribal engagement with them remain unclear. Third, Ben Sira's relationship with YHWH is crucial. Accordingly, piety, prayer, fear of God and divine inspiration are determining elements in his functioning as scribe. Finally, while any argument *ex silentio* requires a somewhat guarded consideration, it is accurate to state that there is no evidence of cultic concerns in the poem. The group of temple scribes mentioned in Antiochus III's decree, *after* the priests but alongside the temple-singers and musicians, may suggest that in early Seleucid Judea there had emerged a group of exegetes, identified with the Temple and subordinate to the priests, but not engaged in their cultic activities. Ben Sira's scribal self-portrait is not inconsistent with this hypothesis.

Ben Sira's silence on Ezra may now, perhaps, be understood. Scribal interpretation had so evolved from the Persian period, with its new-found emphasis on חֲכָמָה, prophet-like pneumatic inspiration, the interior disposition of the scribal exegete, and the possible separation of the interpretative role from the priestly

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class, that it could no longer be identified with the earlier model associated with Ezra. However, fundamental questions remain. What were the traditions of Israel which so interested Ben Sira? How did he interpret and actualize them for his contemporaries? Above all, why was it necessary for Ben Sira to engage in such interpretation? These are questions which must now be further investigated, beginning with his interpretation by which he may have actualized Israel's biblical traditions.

Several methodological considerations are suggested by the preceding analysis including Ben Sira's reliance on the Septuagint. First, as there is wide divergence between the biblical accounts of events, it is probable that where the Hebrew text is unquoted, Ben Sira drew on the Septuagint for the story's original quotations from the phrases of rulers and officials. These phrases can be identified where Ben Sira explicitly indicates he is quoting from words. Third, there is a need to distinguish deliberate allusion to scriptural phrases from phrases of common Hebrew and popular usage. This aspect is further complicated by the fact that Ben Sira may have alluded to Hebrew phrases which are not extant today, and the degree to which he has done so cannot be ascertained accurately. Fourth, Ben Sira may have quoted from material that has not made its way into the Jewish Canon, a matter which also cannot be resolved with any degree of accuracy. A final methodological consideration may be added in Ben Sira's text which addresses the nature of the biblical textual traditions available to Ben Sira and the

J. L. Neale, "The Bible and Ben Sira," *OJS* 14 (1911), 110-11; J. L. Neale, "Biblical Quotations in the Prologue of Ecclesiasticus," *JTS* 14 (1913), 141; Adelman, *Talbot, Founder of the New Testament*, for a more contemporary study on Ben Sira's use of the Canon of the Bible. See also *History of Literatures in Latin America*, Talbot J. Neale, *Quotations*, 1903; Neale's study focuses on the Septuagint and the New Testament in the light of the Canon of the Bible to show that not all parts of both and especially Ben Sira's Septuagint are a subject of general discussion and interest.

Neale, "Biblical Quotations," 143.

## CHAPTER THREE

### 3.0 BEN SIRA AND BIBLICAL INTERPRETATION

#### 3.1 Introduction

Ben Sira not only alluded to Israel's biblical traditions but interpreted them as well.<sup>1</sup> While recognizing this fact, scholarship has refrained both from systematically testing Ben Sira's biblical allusions in Heb and from analysing and classifying his interpretative techniques, due probably to the methodological difficulties involved in such a study. Snaith<sup>2</sup> has identified four major difficulties when evaluating Ben Sira's allusions to the Hebrew Bible. First, as there is wide divergence between the textual witnesses to Sirach, it is imperative to work where the Hebrew text is undisputed. Second, there is a need to distinguish the author's original quotations from the glosses of editors and copyists. These glosses can be expected where there are no equivalents in Greek for certain Hebrew words. Third, there is a need to distinguish deliberate allusion to biblical traditions from phrases of common literary and popular usage. This aspect is further complicated by the fact that Ben Sira may have alluded to Hebrew literature which is not extant today, and the degree to which he has done so cannot be estimated accurately. Fourth, Ben Sira may have quoted from material that has not made its way into the Hebrew Canon, a matter which also cannot be estimated with any degree of accuracy. A final methodological consideration may be added to Snaith's list, which arises from the nature of the biblical textual traditions available to Ben Sira and the

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<sup>1</sup> J. L. Koole, "Die Bible des Ben Sira," *OTS* 14 (1965): 374-396; J. G. Snaith, "Biblical Quotations in the Hebrew of Ecclesiasticus," *JTS* 18 (1967): 1-12; Schechter-Taylor, *Wisdom of Ben Sira*, 13-25. For a more contemporary study see Renzo Petraglio, *Il Libro che Contamina le Mani: Ben Sirac Rilegge il Libro e la Storia d'Israele*, Teologia 4 (Palermo: Augustinus, 1993). Petraglio's study focuses on the *Laus Patrum* and Ben Sira's rereading the history of the heroes of Israel in order to make them out as giants of faith and concludes that Israel's Scripture was a subject of profound deliberation and rewriting.

<sup>2</sup> Snaith, "Biblical Quotations," 1-12

access of modern readers to them. In the history of the development of the biblical text, Ben Sira's period corresponds to the third stage of a four-stage evolutionary process of textual transmission.<sup>3</sup> This third stage is characterized by the complete replacement of oral tradition by the written transmission of the text. The discovery of the Qumran scrolls<sup>4</sup> has facilitated a greater understanding of this stage of development of the text. In short, the situation which obtained in Ben Sira's day was one of considerable diversity in textual tradition.<sup>5</sup> It is of methodological importance that the available material

... witnesses to a wide variety of textual traditions which seemingly mirror fairly exactly the state of affairs which obtained in the pre-manuscript state of transmission. In other words, the extant evidence imposes on us the conclusion that from the very first stage of its manuscript tradition, the Old Testament text was known in a variety of traditions which differed from each other to a greater or lesser degree.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Shemaryahu **Talmon**, "The Old Testament Text," in *Qumran and the History of the Biblical Text*, ed. Frank Moore Cross and Shemaryahu Talmon (Cambridge, MA/London: Harvard University Press, 1975), 1-41. The first stage of this process was *oral* and is difficult to document as it precedes written texts. The second phase (sixth - fifth centuries BCE) corresponds to a shift *from oral to written traditions*. The third stage (early third century BCE) corresponds to *complete written transmission*, while the fourth stage (100 BCE - 200 CE) represents the period of the *standardization* of the text and the emergence of a *textus receptus*. *Ibid.*, 6-12.

<sup>4</sup> Frank M. **Cross**, "The Oldest Manuscripts from Qumran," *JBL* 74 (1955): 147-172; *idem*, "The History of the Biblical Text in the Light of Discoveries in the Judean Desert," *HTR* 57 (1964): 281-299; *idem*, "The Contribution of the Qumran Discoveries to the Study of the Biblical Text," *IEJ* 16 (1966): 81-95; Patrick W. **Skehan**, "The Qumran Manuscripts and Textual Criticism," *VTS* 4 (1957): 148-160; *idem*, "The Biblical Scrolls from Qumran and the Text of the Old Testament," *BA* 28 (1965): 87-100; Shemaryahu **Talmon**, "Aspects of the Textual Transmission of the Bible in the Light of Qumran Manuscripts," *Textus* 4 (1964): 95-132.

<sup>5</sup> Talmon, "Old Testament Text," 33: "The marked diversity of textual traditions which can be observed in these scrolls presumably derives from the temporal and/or geographical heterogeneity of the *Vorlagen* from which the Qumrân manuscripts, or some of them, were copied."

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 40.

The study of Ben Sira's biblical allusions is of its nature limited to those biblical traditions accessible by means of a text-critical study of the MT. Consequently, any conclusions must be tentative, because of both Sirach's textual history and the diversity of biblical textual traditions in Ben Sira's day. Nonetheless, a significant study is possible and will proceed in this chapter, beginning with the careful selection of a suitable text in Heb, followed by the identification within that text of a representative sampling of Ben Sira's biblical allusions, and concluding with an analysis of Ben Sira's interpretative techniques.

### **3.2 Choosing a Suitable Text**

The first stage in the study of Ben Sira's biblical allusions is to choose a *suitable text* in Sirach, which meets the methodological requirements outlined above. Such a text must be determined by a number of criteria. First, the text must be chosen from Heb1 as Ben Sira wrote originally in Hebrew. While G1 is the most reliable form of the entire book of Sirach, and of great value text-critically, it is not suitable as a text within which biblical allusions can be identified. This is due essentially to the grandson's mistranslation of, and failure to understand, the underlying Hebrew and the lack of any evidence to suggest that he was conscious of his grandfather's biblical allusions. Second, recalling the need to work where Heb is undisputed, the chosen text should have the maximum number possible of Hebrew witnesses, and third, since MsM is the oldest and most reliable Hebrew witness to the text of Ben Sira, it should also be attested to by the Masada Scroll. Accordingly, the suitable text can be narrowed to Sir 42,15-44,16 which is attested to by both MsB and MsM. Fourth, the text should not be fragmentary but constitute a literary unit within which context Ben Sira's biblical interpretation may be examined. Sir 42,15-44,15 contains two such units: the poem on the *Works of God in Creation* (Sir 42,15-43,33) and the poem in *Praise of Israel's Ancestors* (Sir

44,1-15).<sup>7</sup> Finally, the chosen text should contain as many putative allusions as possible from which a representative sampling may be determined for subsequent study. On the basis of previous scholarship,<sup>8</sup> the putative allusions for Sir 42,15-43,33 and Sir 44,1-15 are presented below in Table 06 and Table 07 respectively.

**Table 06**  
**Putative Allusions in Sir 42,15-43,33**

<b>THE WORKS OF GOD IN CREATION (SIR 42,15-43,33)</b>					
<b>SIR</b>	<b>PUTATIVE ALLUSION</b>	<b>SIR</b>	<b>PUTATIVE ALLUSION</b>	<b>SIR</b>	<b>PUTATIVE ALLUSION</b>
42,15	Ps 77,12	42,21	Deut 6,4	43,6	Gen 1,14
42,15	Job 15,17	42,21	Isa 40,14	43,6	Gen 1,16
42,16	Ps 104,31	43,1	Exod 24,10	43,6	Isa 55,13
42,16	Ps 145,9	43,2	Exod 34,10	43,8	Num 28,14
42,17	Ps 40,6	43,2	Ps 19,7	43,8	Isa 66,23
42,17	Job 15,15	43,2	Ps 66,3	43,8	Job 38,37
42,18	Job 38,16	43,5	Ps 95,3	43,10	Ps 33,6
42,20	Isa 40,26	43,5	Ps 95,5	43,11	Ezek 1,28

<sup>7</sup> Sir 44,16 should not be considered part of the poem, because of serious doubts concerning the originality of the verse. On Sir 44,16 Yadin, *Masada*, 38 states: "We may now assume that at an early period an attempt had been made to artificially expunge a portion of Ben Sira's observations on Enoch in the concluding verses, and to insert them in their chronological order, i.e. before Noah. Thus we may assume that a part of verse 16 was originally in chapter 49." Yadin's view is that Sir 44,16a is not original and that v.16bc belongs with Sir 49,14. Middendorp, *Stellung*, 53-54.109.112.134 also argues against the originality of v.16.

<sup>8</sup> The more important scholars who have tabulated putative allusions are: G. H. Box and W. O. E. Oesterley, I. Lévi, T. Middendorp, J. A. Sanders, S. Schechter and C. Taylor, Patrick W. Skehan and Alexander A. DiLella, and finally, Yigael Yadin.



Table 06 - Continued

<b>SIR</b>	<b>PUTATIVE ALLUSION</b>	<b>SIR</b>	<b>PUTATIVE ALLUSION</b>	<b>SIR</b>	<b>PUTATIVE ALLUSION</b>
43,14	Prov 16,4	43,20	Isa 59,17	43,25	Gen 7,14
43,17	Isa 29,6b	43,20	Ps 147,16	43,25	Ps 104,25
43,17	Isa 29,6c	43,20	Ps 147,17	43,25	Ps 107,24
43,17	Ps 29,3	43,21	Job 40,20	43,27	Qoh 12,13
43,17	Ps 29,8	43,24	Ps 18,45	43,28	Ps 145,3
43,17	Ps 29,9	43,24	Ps 107,23	43,28	Job 5,9
43,17	Job 37,5	43,24	Job 42,5	43,30	Isa 40,31
43,19	Num 17,23	43,25	Gen 1,21		
43,19	Ps 147,16	43,25	Gen 1,24		

Table 07  
Putative Allusions in Sir 44,1-15

<b>THE PRAISE OF ISRAEL'S ANCESTORS (SIR 44,1-15)</b>					
<b>SIR</b>	<b>PUTATIVE ALLUSION</b>	<b>SIR</b>	<b>PUTATIVE ALLUSION</b>	<b>SIR</b>	<b>PUTATIVE ALLUSION</b>
44,1	Isa 57,1	44,5	Isa 38,9	44,11	Deut 28,1-14
44,2	Deut 32,7-9	44,5	Ps 119,54	44,11	Ps 103,17
44,2	Ps 125,3	44,5	2 Chron 7,6	44,11	Prov 13,22a
44,3	Gen 6,4	44,6	Gen 47,6	44,13	Ps 112,6
44,3	Num 21,18	44,9	Obad 1,16	44,13	Ps 112,9
44,3	Prov 8,15	44,9	Job 10,19		
44,3	Qoh 12,11	44,11	Lev 23,3-13		

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Sir 42,15-43,33 contains forty-nine putative biblical allusions, of which ten are to the Torah, nine to the Prophetic books and thirty to "other ancestral books."<sup>9</sup> Sir 44,1-15 contains nineteen putative allusions of which six are to the Torah, three to the prophetic books and ten to "other ancestral books." While these lists of putative biblical allusions may not be exhaustive, it is clear that the poem with the greatest number and distribution of putative allusions is Sir 42,15-43,33, and it accordingly is chosen as the text from which a representative sampling of Ben Sira's biblical allusions will be identified for analysis. The text<sup>10</sup> of Sir 42,15-43,33 used by this study is as follows:

42,15ab	אזכרה נא מעשי אל וזה חזיתי ואספרה
V.15cd	באמר אדני מעשיו ופעל רצנו לחקו
V.16ab	שמש זורחת על כל נגלתה וכבוד אדני מלא מעשיו
V.17ab	לא השפיקו קדשי אל לספר כל נפלאותיו
V.17cd	אימץ אדני צבאיו להתחזק לפני כבודו
V.18ab	תהום ולב חקר ובמערמיהם יתבונן
V.18cd	כי ידע עליון כל דעת ויביט אתיות עולם
V.19ab	מחזה חליפות ונהיות ומגלה חקר נסתרות
V.20ab	לא נעדר ממנו כל שכל ולא חלפו כל דבר
V.21ab	גבורות חכמתו תכן אחד הוא מעולם
V.21cd	לא נוסף ולא נאצל ולא צריך לכל מבין
V.22ab	הלוא כל מעשיו נחמדים עד ניצוץ וחזות מראה
V.23ab	הכל חי ועומד לעד לכל צרך הכל נשמר
V.24ab	כלם שנים זה לעמת זה ולא עשה מהם שוא
V.25ab	זה על זה חלף טובו מי ישבע להביט הודם

<sup>9</sup> See Prologue 10, for this designation of books outside the Law and the Prophets.

<sup>10</sup> For the detailed textual criticism of this poem, see Appendix Two, pp. 334-352 below.

43,1ab	תאר מרום רקיע לטהר עצם שמים מביט הדרו
V.2ab	שמש מופיע בצאתו חמה כלי נורא מעשה אליון
V.3ab	בהצהירו ירתיה תבל לפני חרבו מי יתכלכל
V.4ab	כור נפוח מעשי מוצק שלוח שמש ידליק הרים
V.4cd	לשון מאור תגמר נושבת ומנורה תכוה עין
V.5ab	כי גדול אדני עשהו ודברו ינצח אבירו
V.6ab	וגם ירח יאריח עתות ממשלת קץ ואות עולם
V.7ab	בו מועד וממנו חג וחפץ ען]ה בתקופתו
V.8ab	חדש כשמו הוא מתחדש מה נורא בהשתנותו
V.8cd	כלי צבא נבלי מרום מרצף רקיע מזהירתו
V.9ab	תואר שמים והדר כוכב ועדי משריק במרומי אל
V.10ab	בדבר אדני יעמד חק ולא ישח באשמרותם
V.11ab	ראה קשת וברך עשיה כי מאד נהדרה בכבוד
V.12ab	חוג הקיפה בכבודה ויד אל נשתה בגבורה
V.13ab	נערתו תתוה ברק ותנצח זיקות משפט
V.14ab	למענו פרע אוצר ויעף עבים כעיט
V.15ab	גבורתו תחזק ענן ותגדע אבני ברד
V.17a.16a	קול רעמו יחיל ארץ ובכחו יניף הרים
V.16b.17b	אמרתו תחרוף תימן עלעול צפון סופה וסערה
V.17cd	כרשף יניף שלגו וכארבה ישכון רדתו
V.18ab	תואר לבנו יגהה עינים וממטרו יתמיה לבב
V.19ab	וגם כפור כמלח ישפך ויצמח כסנה צצים
V.20ab	צינת רוח צפון ישיב וכרגב יקפיא מקור
V.20cd	על כל מעמד מים יקרים וכשרין ילבש מקוה
V.21ab	יבול הרים כחרב ישיק ונוה צמחים כלהבה
V.22ab	מרפא כל מערף ענן טל פורע לדשן שרב
V.23ab	מחשבתו תעשיק רבה ויט בתהום איים
V.24ab	יורדי הים יספרו קצהו לשמע אזננו נשתומם

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V.25ab	שם פלאות תמהי מעשהו מין כל חי וגבורות רהב
V.26ab	למענו יצלה מלאך ובדבריו יפעל רצון
V.27ab	עוד כאלה לא נוסף וקץ דבר הוא הכל
V.28ab	נגדלה עוד כי לא נחקור והוא גדול מכל מעשיו
V.29ab	נורא אדני מאד מאד גבורתו דבריו
V.30ab	מגדלי אדני הרימו קול בכל תוכלו כי יש עוד
V.30cd	מרוממיו החליפו כח ואל תלאו כי לא תחקרו
V.31ab	מי חזה אותו ויספר ומי יגדלנו כאשר הוא
V.32ab	רוב נסתרות מאלה מעט ראיתי ממעשיו
V.33ab	את הכל עשה אדני ולאנשי חסד נתן חכמה

The poem's genre is similar to the Egyptian *onomasticon*.<sup>11</sup> There is no scholarly dispute about the structure of the poem, the most accurate and comprehensive outline of which is offered by Prato,<sup>12</sup> presented below in Table 08.

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<sup>11</sup> The *onomasticon* was "a type of literature devised as an aid to the scribes. It contained a list of names of places, occupations, titles, flora and fauna, natural phenomena, and the like." Skehan-DiLella, *Ben Sira*, 491. See also J. L. **Crenshaw**, "Wisdom in the Ancient Near East," in *IDBSup* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1976), 950.

<sup>12</sup> Prato, *Teodicea*, 141-145. A more simplified version of Prato's division is found in Skehan-DiLella, *Ben Sira*, 491.

**Table 08**  
**Structure of the Works of God in Creation (Sir 42,15-43,33)**

<b>PART ONE: INTRODUCTION (SIR 42,15-25)</b>			
<b>STANZA</b>	<b>TEXT</b>	<b>BICOLO</b>	<b>THEME</b>
01	42,15-16	03	The Works of God
	42,17-20	06	Inability to Recount Creation's Wonders
	42,21-25	06	The Positive Relationship Between Creator and Creation

<b>PART TWO: PRINCIPAL SECTION (SIR 43,1-26)</b>			
<b>STANZA</b>	<b>TEXT</b>	<b>BICOLO</b>	<b>THEME</b>
02	43,1-5	06	The Firmament and Sun
	43,6-8	04	The Moon
	43,9-12	04	The Stars and Rainbow
03	43,13-15.17a.16a	04	Lightning, Clouds, Hail and Thunder
	43,16b.17b-19	04	Wind, Storm, Snow and Frost
	43,20-22	04	Wind, Frost, Heat and Dew
	43,23-26	04	Sea and Messenger

Table 08 - Continued

<b>PART THREE: CONCLUSION (SIR 43,27-33)</b>			
<b>STANZA</b>	<b>TEXT</b>	<b>BICOLA</b>	<b>THEME</b>
04	43,27	01	Significance of Creation
	43,28-29	02	Exhortation (1st plural) to Praise
	43,30	02	Exhortation (2nd plural) to Praise
	43,31	01	Rhetorical Question
	43,32	01	Hidden Things of God
	43,33	01	Wisdom

### 3.3 Identifying a Representative Sampling of Ben Sira's Biblical Allusions

The first stage of this study's investigation of Ben Sira's biblical interpretation has been completed with the choice of a suitable text. The second stage consists in the identification within that text of a representative sampling of Ben Sira's biblical allusions. The approach to be adopted here will be decidedly intertextual as *intertextuality*<sup>13</sup> is a usefully important, contemporary, literary theory about the manner in which texts are dependent on pre-texts. An intertextual approach means that "the study of texts thus becomes no longer a search for the sources and influences as traditionally perceived, but rather it seeks to recognize

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<sup>13</sup> Philip Alexander, "Retelling the Old Testament," in *Intertextuality in Biblical Writings* (Kampen: Uitgeversmaatschappij J. H. Kok, 1989), 99-121; Ellen Van Woelde, "Trendy Intertextuality," in *Intertextuality in Biblical Writings: Essays in Honour of Bas van Iersel* (Kampen: Uitgeversmaatschappij J. H. Kok, 1989), 43-49; James W. Voelz, "Multiple Signs and Double Texts: Elements of Intertextuality," in *Intertextuality in Biblical Writings*, 27-34; Willem S. Vorster, "Intertextuality and Redaktionsgeschichte," in *Intertextuality in Biblical Writings*, 15-26.

all the lost discursive practices that make it possible for later texts to have meaning."<sup>14</sup> Freyne, following Jonathan Culler, argues that the notion of intertextuality needs to be focused by means of two presuppositions: the logical and the pragmatic. By focusing on logical presuppositions, literary theory can attempt to identify the participation of texts in previous discursive practices while by means of pragmatic presuppositions it examines how texts are used in a specific instance to achieve particular effects. Hays' study of intertextual echoes in the Pauline writings,<sup>15</sup> in terms of Culler's logical and pragmatic presuppositions, offers a useful approach to identifying biblical allusions in Ben Sira's *Works of God in Creation*. Hays observes that

The phenomenon of intertextuality - the imbedding of fragments of an earlier text within a later one - has always played a major role in the cultural traditions that are heir to Israel's Scriptures: the voice of Scripture, regarded as authoritative in one way or another, continues to speak in and through later texts that both depend on and transform the earlier.<sup>16</sup>

Hays' approach, based in turn on the work of Hollander,<sup>17</sup> is not concerned with the problem of Paul's actual or putative audience or his degree of self-awareness in echoing earlier texts, but the effect on those who have the ears to hear the Pauline echoing of Israel's Scriptures which constituted Paul's "cave of resonant

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<sup>14</sup> Seán Freyne "Reading Hebrews and Revelation Intertextually," in *Intertextuality in Biblical Writings*, 83-93, at 83; Jonathan Culler, "Presuppositions and Intertextuality," in *The Pursuit of Signs: Semiotics, Literature, Deconstruction* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1981), 100-118.

<sup>15</sup> Richard B. Hays, "Puzzle of Pauline Hermeneutics," in *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Saint Paul* (New Haven/London: Yale University Press, 1989), 1-33.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 14.

<sup>17</sup> John Hollander, *The Figure of Echo: A Mode of Allusion in Milton and After* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981).

signification."<sup>18</sup> A number of methodological issues need to be faced in studying biblical allusions and their interpretation. First, what constitutes a genuine intertextual echo? This question is most important, since

The volume of intertextual echo varies in accordance with the semantic distance between the source and the reflecting surface. Quotation, allusion, and echo may be seen as points along a spectrum of intertextual reference, moving from the explicit to the subliminal. As we move farther away from overt citation, the source recedes into the discursive distance, the intertextual relations become less determinate, and the demand placed on the reader's listening powers grows great. As we near the vanishing point of the echo, it inevitably becomes difficult to decide whether we are really hearing an echo at all, or whether we are only conjuring things out of the murmurings of our own investigations.<sup>19</sup>

Second, where is the locus of new intertextual meaning? For Hays there are five possibilities: in the author's mind; in the minds of the original readers of the work; in the text itself; in the modern reader's act of reading and finally, in the community of interpretation. The first two options situate new intertextual meaning in the historical act of communication between the author and readers in the past. The third option is, for Hays, a heuristic fiction which factors out the complicated issues of the history behind the text and the experience of modern readers encountering the text. The final two options locate intertextual meaning in the encounter of modern readers with a text not originally addressed to them. Rather than choose between the loci of new intertextual meaning, Hays argues that they must all be held together in a creative tension. Most usefully, Hays offers seven tests or criteria for hearing intertextual echoes, presented below in Table 09.

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<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 65.

<sup>19</sup> Hays, "Puzzle of Pauline Hermeneutics," 23.



Table 09  
Criteria for Hearing Intertextual Echoes

<b>CRITERION</b>	<b>CHARACTERISTIC</b>
<b>AVAILABILITY</b>	The degree to which a proposed precursor text was available to the author
<b>VOLUME</b>	The degree to which any explicit repetition of the words, phrases or syntactical patterns of the proposed precursor text is replicated in the putative allusion; the degree of rhetorical stress given by the author to an allusion or echo
<b>RECURRENCE</b>	The frequency with which an author alludes to or echoes elsewhere the same biblical passage
<b>THEMATIC COHERENCE</b>	The degree to which a putative allusion or echo fits in with the author's line of argument
<b>HISTORICAL PLAUSIBILITY</b>	The degree to which the author could have intended the alleged meaning effect
<b>HISTORY OF INTER- PRETATION</b>	The degree to which other readers have heard the same echo
<b>SATISFACTION</b>	The degree to which a proposed reading makes sense and illuminates the surrounding discourse

While Hays understands these criteria as "serviceable rules of thumb"<sup>20</sup> in guiding the identification and interpretation of intertextual allusion and echo, he quite correctly recognizes that they fail to account for all possibilities of intertextual conjunction:

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<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 32.

### Chapter Three: Ben Sira and Biblical Interpretation

Despite all the careful hedges that we plant around texts, meaning has a way of leaping over, like sparks. Texts are not inert; they burn and throw fragments of flame on their rising heat. Often we succeed in containing the energy, but sometimes the sparks escape and kindle new blazes, reprises of the original fire.<sup>21</sup>

Finally, Hays' study is not limited merely to what Paul intended in his interpretation of scriptural echoes, which Hays regards as historically speculative, but is concerned also with intertextual acts of figuration veiled from Paul himself, since Israel's Scriptures generated such new figurations through Paul. Hays' intertextual model, with appropriate modifications, is applicable to the study of Ben Sira's biblical allusions. The autobiographical texts in Sirach and the *Poem on the Ideal Scribe* present Israel's scriptural traditions as Ben Sira's principal precursor text and his "cave of resonant signification."<sup>22</sup> Furthermore, Ben Sira was a conscious reader of Israel's Scriptures<sup>23</sup> with a view to offering new signification of those Scriptures both to his contemporaries<sup>24</sup> and to future generations.<sup>25</sup> Any study of Ben Sira's biblical allusions is, by definition, an intertextual exercise by the modern reader who reads Sirach in the light of Israel's Scriptures and of what is known of Hellenism and Judaism in second century BCE Judea. Nonetheless, such an approach can indeed contribute to a better understanding of how Ben Sira functioned as an intertextual reader in his own day.

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<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 33.

<sup>22</sup> Sir 24,30; 33,16; 38,34c-39,3.

<sup>23</sup> Sir 24,31; 39,1-3.

<sup>24</sup> Sir 24,32-33a; 33,18; 39,7-8b; 51,23-30.

<sup>25</sup> Sir 24,33b; 39,9cd.

However, Hays' criteria, which are applicable to Pauline studies, require some modifications when applied to the *Works of God in Creation*. Two criteria, *availability* and *history of interpretation*, are fulfilled by definition. The prologue to G refers to τοῦ νόμου καὶ τῶν προφητῶν καὶ τῶν ἄλλων τῶν κατ' αὐτοὺς ἠκολουθηκότων δεδομένων,<sup>26</sup> suggesting that by 117 BCE two sections of the biblical tripartite canon had been formed. The third section, which would eventually become the כתובים, had not yet been clearly demarcated. This study accepts the current state of scholarship regarding the history of the canon,<sup>27</sup> according to which the *πῆξ* was closed by *circa* 400 BCE and the *נביאים* by *circa* 200 BCE.<sup>28</sup> The closure of the כתובים is dated by the end of the Second Century CE.<sup>29</sup> This study also accepts the current opinion that there never existed

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<sup>26</sup> Prologue 1-2; Harry M. **Ordinsky**, "Some Terms in the Prologue to Ben Sira and the Hebrew Canon," *JBL* 110 (1991): 483-490, at 483: "The terms discussed here are καὶ τῶν ἄλλων τῶν κατ' αὐτοὺς ἠκολουθηκότων in the first part of the Prologue, and ὁ νόμος and οἱ προφῆται throughout the Prologue. It will be argued that they should be rendered, respectively, 'the other books' (not simply 'the others,' 'the later authors,' or 'the writers who followed in their steps,' or the like) and 'the Law and the Prophets' (capitalized - not 'the law and the prophets')."

<sup>27</sup> Raymond E. **Brown** and Raymond F. Collins, "Canonicity," in the *NJBC*, ed. Raymond E. Brown, Joseph A. Fitzmeyer and Roland E. Murphy (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1990), 1034-1054.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 1037-1039; James A. **Sanders**, *From Sacred Story to Sacred Text* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987), 11-13, who dates the closure of the second section of the Canon at 190 BCE; Solomon **Zeitlin**, "A Historical Study of the Canonization of the Hebrew Scriptures," in *The Canon and Massorah of the Hebrew Bible: An Introductory Reader*, ed. Sid Leiman (New York: Ktav, 1974), 164-199.

<sup>29</sup> Brown and Collins, "Canonicity," 1039-1040. But see also R. T. **Beckwith**, *The Old Testament Canon of the New Testament Church and its Background in Early Judaism* (London: SPCK, 1985), 154-166 for a radically different view. Beckwith argues that the tripartite canon was closed by Judas Maccabeus in 162 BCE.

any *Alexandrian Canon* as distinct from a *Palestinian Canon*.<sup>30</sup> It thus follows that the criterion of availability is fulfilled for all putative allusions to the biblical books in the first two sections of the Hebrew Canon. Where the כתובים are concerned, the criterion is also fulfilled for all the books that eventually made their way into the third section of the Hebrew Canon, with the exception of the Book of Daniel. This is so because, while not yet formally canonized, all these books existed at the time of Ben Sira with the notable exception of the Book of Daniel, written *circa* 165 BCE. On this basis all the putative precursor texts in the *Works of God in Creation* fulfil the first criterion of availability. Since the list of putative allusions being examined has resulted from previous scholarship, the criterion of *history of interpretation* has also been fulfilled. The criterion of *recurrence* refers to the frequency with which Ben Sira alludes elsewhere to the same biblical passage. However, since multiple putative allusions to the same biblical text are extremely rare in Heb, this criterion has no great relevance and will not be used. In response to the methodological concern to distinguish biblical allusion from phrases of common literary and popular usage, the criterion of *popular usage* will be added. To fulfil this criterion the putative allusion must be shown *not* to be a mere example of common phraseology. Given the likely date for MsM, a comparison with QL<sup>31</sup> may prove useful in determining whether some of Sirach's putative

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<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 385-386; Albert Sundberg, "The Protestant Old Testament Canon: Should It Be Re-examined?" *CBQ* 28 (1966): 194-203 and *idem*, "The 'Old Testament': A Christian Canon," *CBQ* 30 (1968): 143-155.

<sup>31</sup> This is particularly appropriate in the light of the definite relationship between Sirach and the QL. J. Carmignac, "Les Rapports entre l'Écclésiastique et Qumrân," *RevQ* 3 (1961-1962): 209-218 and Manfred R. Lehmann, "Ben Sira and the Qumran Literature," *RevQ* 3 (1961): 103-116. Two concordances of the QL have been used: Karl Georg Kuhn, *Konkordanz zu den Qumrantexten* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1960) and *idem*, "Nachträge zur 'Konkordanz zu den Qumrantexten'." *RevQ* 4 (1963): 163-234. The former covers the following  
(continued...)

allusions are merely examples of common phrases or popular usage. The five criteria to be used in the identification of biblical allusions in the *Works of God in Creation* are presented below in Table 10.

Table 10  
Criteria for Identification of Biblical Allusions in the *Works of God in Creation*

<b>CRITERION</b>	<b>CHARACTERISTIC</b>
<b>VOLUME</b>	The degree to which any explicit repetition of the words, phrases or syntactical patterns of the proposed precursor text is replicated in the putative allusion
<b>THEMATIC COHERENCE</b>	The degree to which a putative allusion or echo fits in with the author's line of argument
<b>POPULAR USAGE</b>	The degree to which putative allusion does not exhibit evidence of common phraseology or usage
<b>HISTORICAL PLAUSIBILITY</b>	The degree to which the author could have intended the alleged meaning effect
<b>SATISFACTION</b>	The degree to which a proposed reading makes sense and illuminates the surrounding discourse

<sup>31</sup>(...continued)

QL: 1QpHab, 1QS, 1QM, 1QH, 4QpIsa<sup>a</sup>, 4QpIsa<sup>b</sup>, 4QpIsa<sup>c</sup>, 4QpIsa<sup>d</sup>, 4QpHos<sup>a</sup>, 4QpHos<sup>b</sup>, 4QpNah, 4QpPs37, 4QPB, 4QF1, 4QT, 4QM<sup>a</sup>, 6QD, CD. The following fragments in D. **Barthélemy** and J. T. **Milik**, *Qumran Cave 1*, DJD 1 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1955) are also covered: the Micah Commentary (14), the Zephaniah Commentary (15), the Psalms Commentary (16), the Book of Jubilees (17 and 18), the Book of Noah (19), the Sayings of Moses (22), an Apocryphal Prophecy (25), an Apocryphal fragment (26), the Book of the Mysteries (27), the Liturgy of the Three Tongues of Fire (29), Liturgical Texts (30 and 31), the War of the Sons of Light Against the Sons of Darkness (33), the Collection of Liturgical Prayers (34), the Collections of Thanksgiving Canticles (35), the Collection of Hymns (36), the Hymnic Compositions (37-40) and the some unclassified fragments (41-62, 69). The latter concordance covers the following QL: 4QpNah, 4QpPs 37, 4QF1, 4QSI40, 4QDibHam, 4QOrd. While the list of QL is not exhaustive, it does cover sufficient material to test whether a particular phrase in Heb represents popular or common usage rather than an allusion.

Since Hays' application of similar criteria to the Pauline letters can only offer "shades of certainty,"<sup>32</sup> how more tentative are the conclusions regarding a work from second century BCE Judea. To minimize uncertainty, it is necessary to work in that part of the spectrum of intertextual reference closer to explicit allusion than to subliminal echo. Accordingly, these criteria will be applied very conservatively to the putative biblical allusions in order to guarantee that the sample finally chosen is truly representative of Ben Sira's biblical alluding. Methodologically this means that *only those allusions which satisfy all five criteria will be chosen*. The putative allusions which do not satisfy these criteria may well function as allusions or intertextual echoes for Ben Sira, but given available data, their intertextual relations remain too indeterminate.

#### **(a) Volume**

The first criterion to be applied to the putative biblical allusions is *volume*, or the degree to which any explicit repetition of the words, phrases or syntactical patterns of the proposed precursor text is replicated in the putative allusion. The method used is to juxtapose the Hebrew text of the *Works of God in Creation* alongside the MT, to identify the relevant philological links and to determine the proximity of such links.

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<sup>32</sup> Hays, "Puzzle of Pauline Hermeneutics," 32.

Sir 42,15ab	אזכרה נא מעשי אל וזה חזיתי ואספרה
Ps 77,12ab	אֶזְכִּיר אֶזְכּוֹר מֵעַלְיָיָהּ כִּי־אֶזְכְּרָה מִקֶּדֶם פְּלֹאֵךְ
Sir 42,15ab	אזכרה נא מעשי אל וזה חזיתי ואספרה
Job 15,17ab	אֶחָדָךְ שָׁמַע־לִי וְזֶה־חִזִּיתִי וְאֶסְפְּרָה

The root זכר forms, with the divine name, the philological links between Sir 42,15a (אזכרה ... אל) and Ps 77,12 (אֶזְכִּיר אֶזְכּוֹר ... יָהּ ... אֶזְכְּרָה). However, since this note is also heard in five other texts,<sup>33</sup> volume is considered fair. On the other hand, Job 15,17b is the only text in the Hebrew Bible in which the roots ספר and חזה occur together. The expression וְזֶה־חִזִּיתִי וְאֶסְפְּרָה, occurring uniquely in Job 15,17b, is replicated exactly in Sir 42,15b; thus volume is at maximum.

Sir 42,16ab	שמש זורחת על כל נגלתה וכבוד אדני מלא מעשיו
Ps 104,31ab	יְהִי כְבוֹד יְהוָה לְעוֹלָם יִשְׂמַח יְהוָה בְּמַעֲשָׁיו
Sir 42,16ab	שמש זורחת על כל נגלתה וכבוד אדני מלא מעשיו
Ps 145,9	טוֹב־יְהוָה לְכֹל וְרַחֲמָיו עַל־כָּל־מַעֲשָׁיו

As the philological link between כבוד אדני ... מעשיו in Sir 42,16b and כבוד יְהוָה ... which occurs uniquely in the Hebrew Bible in Ps 104,31, volume for this allusion is very good. While the forms מעשיו and אדני link Sir 42,16b and Ps 145,9b,

<sup>33</sup> אזכרה - Ps 42,5; 77,4; אֶזְכִּיר - Isa 63,7; Ps 71,16; 87,4.

the same combination is also heard in two other texts.<sup>34</sup> Volume can be considered good.

Sir 42,17ab	לא השפיקו קדשי אל לספר כל נפלאותיו
Ps 40,6ab	רבות עשית אתה יהוה אלהי נפלאותיך
Ps 40,6cd	ומחשבתך אלינו אין ערך אליך
Ps 40,6cd	אגידה ואדברה עצמו מספר
Sir 42,17ab	לא השפיקו קדשי אל לספר כל נפלאותיו
Job 15,15ab	הן בקדשו בקדשיו לא יאמין ושמים לא יזכו בעיניו

The suffixed word נפלאות and the root ספר link Sir 42,17b (לספר ... נפלאותיו) and Ps 40,6 (נפלאותיך ... מספר). As this note is also heard in two other texts,<sup>35</sup> volume is good. The only link between Sir 42,17a and Job 15,15a is based on קדשי / בקדשיו. However, as these philological links are shared with 162 other texts, the note is so faint and lost in the clutter of other putative intertextual echoes that it is highly improbable that any allusion to Job 15,15a is intended in Sir 42,17a.

<sup>34</sup> Ps 103,22; 145,17.

<sup>35</sup> Judg 6,13; 1 Chron 16,24.



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Sir 42,18ab	תְּהוֹם וּלֵב חֶקֶר וּבְמַעֲרָמֵיהֶם יִתְבוֹנֵן
Job 38,16ab	הִבָּאתָ עַד-נִבְכִיּוֹתַי וּבַחֶקֶר תְּהוֹם הִתְהַלַּכְתָּ

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Since Job 38,16 is the only text in the entire Hebrew Bible in which the word תְּהוֹם and the root חֶקֶר occur together, volume is very good.

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Sir 42,20ab	לֹא נֶעְדָר מִמֶּנּוּ כָל שִׁכְל וְלֹא חִלְפוּ כָל דְּבַר
Isa 40,26ab	שְׂאוּ-מַרוֹם עֵינֵיכֶם וּרְאוּ מִיִּבְרָא אֱלֹהִים
Isa 40,26cd	הַמוֹצִיא בַּמִּסְפָּר צְבָאִים לְכֹלֶם בְּשֵׁם יְקָרָא
Isa 40,26ef	יָרַב אוֹנִים וְאִמִּיץ כַּח אִישׁ לֹא נֶעְדָר

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While the phrase לֹא נֶעְדָר of Isa 40,26f is replicated exactly in Sir 42,20a, the same note is also sounded exactly in two other texts.<sup>36</sup> Volume is thus considered good.

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<sup>36</sup> 2 Sam 17,22 and Zeph 3,5.

Sir 42,21ab	גבורות חכמתו תכן אחד הוא מעולם
Sir 42,21cd	לא נוסף ולא נאצל ולא צריך לכל מבין
Deut 6,4	שִׁמְעֵ יִשְׂרָאֵל יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ יְהוָה אֶחָד
Sir 42,21ab	גבורות חכמתו תכן אחד הוא מעולם
Sir 42,21cd	לא נוסף ולא נאצל ולא צריך לכל מבין
Isa 40,14ab	אֶת־מִי נֹעֵץ וַיִּבְיֵנְהוּ וַיִּלְמְדֵהוּ בְּאֵרַח מְשָׁפֵט
Isa 40,14cd	וַיִּלְמְדֵהוּ דַעַת וְדַרְךְ תְּבוּנוֹת יוֹדִיעֵנוּ

Sir 42,21b and Deut 6,4b are linked by the use of אחד to denote the oneness of God. As this note is also sounded in one other text,<sup>37</sup> volume is very good. Sir 42,21d and Isa 40,4a are linked by the root בין. While the root occurs extremely frequently in the Hebrew Bible, the form in Isa 40,14a (וַיִּבְיֵנְהוּ) is the only instance where God is the object of the verb. The form in Sir 42,21d (מבין) has God as its implied object; thus volume is very good.

Sir 43,1ab	תאר מרום רקיע לטהר עצם שמים מביט הדרו
Exod 24,10	וַיֵּרְאוּ אֶת אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וַתַּחַת רַגְלָיו כַּמַּעֲשָׂה לְבַנַּת הַסְּפִיר וּכְעֵצִים הַשָּׁמַיִם לְטָהַר

As Exod 24,10 is the only text in the Hebrew Bible in which the particular phrase לטהר עצם השמים occurs and which is reproduced almost exactly in Sir 43,1b, volume is very good.

<sup>37</sup> Zech 14,9.

Sir 43,2ab	שמש מופיע בצאתו חמה כלי נורא מעשה אליון
Exod 34,10	וַיֹּאמֶר הַנְּה אֲנֹכִי כִרְת בְּרִית נֶגֶד כָּל-עַמֶּךָ אֲעֲשֶׂה נִפְלְאוֹת אֲשֶׁר לֹא-נִבְרְאוּ בְּכָל-הָאָרֶץ וּבְכָל-הַגּוֹיִם וְרָאָה כָּל-הָעַם אֲשֶׁר-אַתָּה בְּקִרְבּוֹ אֶת-מַעֲשֵׂה יְהוָה כִּי-נִזְרָא הוּא אֲשֶׁר אֲנִי עֹשֶׂה עִמָּךְ
Sir 43,2ab	שמש מופיע בצאתו חמה כלי נורא מעשה אליון
Ps 19,7ab	מִקְצֵה הַשָּׁמַיִם מוֹצֵאוֹ וּתְקוּפָתוֹ עַל-קְצוֹתָם
Ps 19,7c	וְאִין נִסְתָּר מִחִמָּתוֹ
Sir 43,2ab	שמש מופיע בצאתו חמה כלי נורא מעשה אליון
Ps 66,3a	אָמְרוּ לֵאלֹהִים מַה-נִּזְרָא מַעֲשֵׂיךָ
Ps 66,3b	בְּרַב עֲזָךְ יִכְחָשׁוּ לְךָ אִיבֹדִים

Sir 43,2b contains a divine name, and the phrase נורא מעשה. Only two texts in the Hebrew Bible similarly contain this combination of words and an alternative divine name: Exod 34,10 (יְהוָה) and Ps 66,3a (אֱלֹהִים); consequently volume is good for these two putative allusions. Sir 43,2a is linked to Ps 19,7 by the root יצא and the noun תְּמָה. Since this is the only biblical text with such philological links, volume is very good.

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Sir 43,5ab	כי גדול אדני עשהו ודברו ינצח אבירו
Ps 95,3ab	כי אל גדול יהוה ומלך גדול על כל אלהים
Ps 95,5ab	אשר לו הים והוא עשהו ויבשת ידיו יצרו:

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The only text in the Hebrew Bible in which the phrase גדול יהוה occurs with the expression עשהו is Ps 95,3-5. Accordingly, volume is very good.

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Sir 43,6ab	וגם ירח יאריח עתות ממשלת קץ ואות עולם
Gen 1,14	ויאמר אלהים יהי מארת ברקיע השמים להבדיל בין היום ובין הלילה והיו לאתת ולמועדים ולימים ושנים

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Sir 43,6ab	וגם ירח יאריח עתות ממשלת קץ ואות עולם
Gen 1,16	ויעש אלהים את שני המארת הגדלים את המאור הגדל לממשלת היום ואת המאור הקטן לממשלת הלילה ואת הכוכבים

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Sir 43,6ab	וגם ירח יאריח עתות ממשלת קץ ואות עולם
Isa 55,13	תחת הנעצוץ יעלה ברוש תחת ותחת הסרפד יעלה הדס והיה ליהוה לשם לאות עולם לא יכרת

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The only text in the Hebrew Bible in which the form ממשלת occurs with the word אות is Gen 1,14-16; thus volume is very good. Isa 55,13d is the only text in the Hebrew Bible in which the phrase לאות עולם occurs, and which is almost exactly replicated in Sir 43,6b. Accordingly, volume is also very good.

Sir 43,8ab	חדש כשמו הוא מתחדש מה נורא בהשתנוותו
Sir 43,8cd	כלי צבא נבלי מרום מרצף רקיע מזהירתו
Num 28,14	וְנִסְפִיָּהֶם חָצִי הַהֵינן יִהְיֶה לְפָר וְשְׁלִישַׁת הַהֵינן לְאֵיל וְרִבִיעֵת הַהֵינן לְכַבֵּשׁ יֵינן זֹאת עֵלַת חֹדֶשׁ בְּחֹדֶשׁוֹ לְחֹדְשֵׁי הַשָּׁנָה
Sir 43,8ab	חדש כשמו הוא מתחדש מה נורא בהשתנותו
Sir 43,8cd	כלי צבא נבלי מרום מרצף רקיע מזהירתו
Isa 66,23a	וְהָיָה מִדֵּי-חֹדֶשׁ בְּחֹדֶשׁוֹ וּמִדֵּי שַׁבַּת בְּשַׁבְּתוֹ
Isa 66,23b	יָבוֹא כָּל-בָּשָׂר לְהִשְׁתַּחֲוֹת לִפְנֵי אֲמֹר יְהוָה
Sir 43,8ab	חדש כשמו הוא מתחדש מה נורא בהשתנותו
Sir 43,8cd	כלי צבא נבלי מרום מרצף רקיע מזהירתו
Job 38,37ab	מִי־יִסְפֹּר שְׁחָקִים בְּחֻכְמָה וְנִבְלֵי שָׁמַיִם מִי יִשְׁכִּיב

Since the form חֹדֶשׁ occurs forty-two times in the Hebrew Bible, the note sounded in Num 28,14 and Isa 66,23 is too faint to support an explicit allusion. The phrase נִבְלֵי שָׁמַיִם, found uniquely in the Hebrew Bible in Job 38,37b, is philologically almost identical with נבלי מרום of Sir 43,8c.<sup>38</sup> Accordingly, volume is very good.

Sir 43,10ab	בְּדַבַּר אֲדֹנָי יַעֲמֵד חֵק וְלֹא יִשַׁח בְּאֲשֵׁמְרוֹתָם
Ps 33,6ab	בְּדַבַּר יְהוָה שָׁמַיִם נַעֲשׂוּ וּבְרוּחַ פִּיּוֹ כָּל-צְבָאָם

<sup>38</sup> The words שָׁמַיִם and מְרוֹם are synonyms.

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The expression בדבר אדני found in Sir 43,10a corresponds almost identically with בדבר יהוה of Ps 33,6a. However, as the same philological link is possible with eleven other texts,<sup>39</sup> volume is poor.

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Sir 43,11ab	ראה קשת וברך עשיה כי מאד נהדרה בכבוד
Ezek 1,28	כַּמְרֵאָה הַקִּשֶׁת אֲשֶׁר יְהִיָּה בְּעֵינֵי בְּיוֹם הַגִּשְׁשׁ כִּן מְרֵאָה הַנִּנְהָ סָבִיב הוּא מְרֵאָה דְּמוֹת כְּבוֹד־יְהוָה וְאַרְאָה וְאַפֵּל עַל־פְּנֵי וְאַשְׁמַע קוֹל מְדַבֵּר

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As the only texts in the Hebrew Bible in which the combination of the roots ראה, קשת, and כבוד occur are Isa 66,19 and Ezek 1,28, volume is good.

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Sir 43,14ab	למענו <sup>40</sup> פרע אוצר ויעף עבים כעיט
Prov 16,4ab	כֹּל פֶּעַל יְהוָה לְמַעְנֵהוּ <sup>41</sup> וְגַם־רָשָׁע לְיוֹם רָעָה

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In the absence of any philological links between Sir 43,14a and Prov 16,4a, volume is zero and there is no evidence of an explicit allusion here.

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<sup>39</sup> 1 Sam 3,21; 1 Kgs 13,1.2.5.9.17.18.32; 20,35; Jer 8,9; 2 Chron 30,12.

<sup>40</sup> This form is vocalized לְמַעְנוֹ and the suffix refers to אל in v.12b.

<sup>41</sup> McKane, *Proverbs*, 497. The MT reads לְמַעְנֵהוּ. However, the Vg reads "*propter semet ipsum*" which suggests a Hebrew reading of לְמַעְנֵהוּ. The suffix refers to כל and not to יהוה.

Sir 43,17a.16a	קול רעמו יחיל ארץ ובכחו יניף הרים
Sir 43,16b.17b	אמרתו תחריף תימן עלעול צפון סופה וסערה
Isa 29,6ab	מעם יהוה צבאות תפקד ברעם וברעש וקול גדול
Isa 29,6c	סופה וסערה ולהב אש אוכלה
Sir 43,17a.16a	קול רעמו יחיל ארץ ובכחו יניף הרים
Sir 43,16b.17b	אמרתו תחריף תימן עלעול צפון סופה וסערה
Ps 29,3ab	קול יהוה על-המים אל-הכבוד הרעים יהוה על-מים רבים
Ps 29,8ab	קול יהוה יחיל מדבר יחיל יהוה מדבר קדש
Ps 29,9ab	קול יהוה יחולל אילות ויחשף יערות
Ps 29,9c	ובהיכלו פלו אמר כבוד
Sir 43,17a.16a	קול רעמו יחיל ארץ ובכחו יניף הרים
Sir 43,16b.17b	אמרתו תחריף תימן עלעול צפון סופה וסערה
Job 37,5ab	ירעם אל בקולו נפלאות עשה גדלות ולא נדע

The word קול and root רעם link Sir 43,17a with Isa 29,6b, and Sir 43,17a with Ps 29,3, as well as Sir 43,17a with Job 37,5a. As these philological links are also shared with seven other texts,<sup>42</sup> volume is considered moderate. The only text in the Hebrew Bible in which the phrase סופה וסערה occurs is Isa 29,6c. As the phrase is replicated exactly in Sir 43,17b volume is at maximum for this putative allusion. Since Ps 29,8a is the only text in the Hebrew Bible in which the phrase קול יהוה יחיל occurs, and which is replicated exactly in Sir 43,17a, volume is also

<sup>42</sup> 1 Sam 7,10; 2 Sam 22,14; Ps 18,14; 77,19; 104,7; Job 37,4; 40,9.

at maximum. As the philological link with Ps 29,9a based on קול יהוה is shared with ten other texts,<sup>43</sup> volume is considered moderate.

Sir 43,19ab	וגם כפור כמלח ישפך ויצמח כסנה צצים
Num 17,23	וַיְהִי מִמַּחֲרַת וַיָּבֵא מֹשֶׁה אֶל-אֶהֱל הָעֵדוּת וְהִנֵּה פָּרַח מִשָּׂה-אֶהֱרֹן לְבֵית לִוִי וַיֵּצֵא פָּרַח וַיֵּצֵץ צִיץ וַיִּגְמַל שְׂקָדִים
Sir 43,19ab	וגם כפור כמלח ישפך ויצמח כסנה צצים
Ps 147,16ab	הַנֹּתֵן שֶׁלֶג כְּצֶמֶר כְּפֹר כְּאֶפֶר יַפְזֹר

Sir 43,19b and Num 17,23 are linked by the occurrence of the word ציץ. As this note is sounded also in fourteen other texts,<sup>44</sup> volume is considered too poor to support an explicit allusion. The word כפור, a *hapax legomenon* in the Hebrew Bible occurring in Ps 147,16b, occurs in Sir 43,19a; thus volume is maximized.

<sup>43</sup> Gen 3,8; Deut 5,25; 18,16; Isa 66,6; Mic 6,9; Ps 29,3.4.5.7.8.

<sup>44</sup> Exod 28,36; 39,30; Lev 8,9; Num 17,23; 1 Kgs 6,18.29.32.35; Isa 28,1; 40,7.8; Jer 48,9; Ps 103,15; Job 14,2.



Sir 43,20ab	צינת רוח צפון ישיב וכרגב יקפיא מקור
Sir 43,20cd	על כל מעמד מים יקרים וכשרין ילבש מקוה
Isa 59,17ab	וַיִּלְבַּשׁ צְדָקָה כְּשֵׁרִין וְכוּבַע יְשׁוּעָה בְּרֵאשׁוֹ
Isa 59,17cd	וַיִּלְבַּשׁ בְּגָדֵי נָקָם תְּלַבֶּשֶׁת וַיַּעַט כַּמְעִיל קִנְאָה
Sir 43,20ab	צינת רוח צפון ישיב וכרגב יקפיא מקור
Sir 43,20cd	על כל מעמד מים יקרים וכשרין ילבש מקוה
Ps 147,16ab	הַנֹּתֵן שֶׁלֶג כַּצֶּמֶר כְּפוֹר כְּאֶפֶר יִפְזֹר
Ps 147,17ab	מִשְׁלֵיךְ קָרְחוֹ כְּפִתִּים לִפְנֵי קָרְחוֹ מִי יַעֲמֹד

The word כְּשֵׁרִין is a *hapax legomenon* in the Hebrew Bible occurring at Isa 59,17a, as one of the objects of וַיִּלְבַּשׁ. Both these forms are replicated in Sir 43,20d, thus volume is maximized. In the absence of any significant philological links between Sir 43,20 and Ps 147,16-17, volume is zero and it must be concluded that no explicit allusion is intended.<sup>45</sup>

Sir 43,21ab	יבול הרים כחרב ישיק ונוה צמחים כלהבה
Job 40,20ab	יבול הָרִים יִשְׂאוּלוּ וְכָל־תַּיִת הַשָּׂדֶה יִשְׁחַקוּ־שָׁם

<sup>45</sup> Middendorp, *Stellung*, 75, states: "Ps 147,16 und 17 gibt eine Beschreibung von Schnee, Eis und Frost. Ähnlich ist die Schilderung in Sir 43,20." While the portrayal may be somewhat similar in both texts, there can be no question of any direct allusion in Sir 43,20 to Ps 147,16-17.

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Since the expression **בול הרים** occurs uniquely in Job 40,20a<sup>46</sup> and is replicated in Sir 43,21a, volume is considered very good.

Sir 43,24ab	יורדי הים יספרו קצהו לשמע אזננו נשתומם
Ps 18,45ab	לשמע אֶזֶן יִשְׁמְעוּ לִי בְּגִי-נֶכֶר וּבְחֶשׁוֹלֵי
Sir 43,24ab	יורדי הים יספרו קצהו לשמע אזננו נשתומם
Ps 107,23ab	יורדי הים באַגִּיזוֹת עָשִׂי מְלֶאכֶה בְּמִים רַבִּים
Sir 43,24ab	יורדי הים יספרו קצהו לשמע אזננו נשתומם
Job 42,5ab	לְשִׁמְע־אֶזֶן שְׁמַע־תִּיד וְעַתָּה עֵינֵי רָאִתְךָ

<sup>46</sup> The MT reads **כִּי-בּוֹל**. The root **בול** occurs in Isa 44,19 (**לְבוֹל**) and Job 40,20 (**בוֹל**), but is not attested to in Biblical Hebrew as a common noun. Accordingly, in Isa 44,19 it is regarded as either an abbreviation or scribal error for the noun **יבול**, meaning *produce* or *tribute*. A similar solution has also been adopted for Job 40,20. See Norman **Habel**, *The Book of Job*, OTL Series (London: SCM, 1985), 550.553 who has translated the text as "The mountains bring him their tribute; all the beasts of the field revel there." However, Marvin H. **Pope**, *Job: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, AB Series 15, 3rd ed. (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1973), 325-326 rejects this standard resolution. Pope's solution is to read **בול הרים** (v.20a) in parallel with **וְכָל-חַיַּת הַשָּׂדֶה** (v.20b). His translation reads: "The beasts of the steppe relax; all the creatures of the wild play there," on the basis of the Akkadian expression *būl sêri*. However, this solution requires the tendentious emendation of v.20a by which **יִשְׁלִיֹו** is read for **יִשְׁאוּ-לוֹ**. Habel's solution is the one adopted by this study as it is simple, does not rely on comparative linguistics and requires no elaborate emendations.

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As the expression יְרַדֵּי הַיָּם occurs uniquely in the Hebrew Bible in Ps 107,23a,<sup>47</sup> volume is very good. The expression לְשִׁמְע־אֶזְנוֹן occurs only twice in the Hebrew Bible: in Ps 18,45a and Job 42,5a. Thus volume is also good for these putative allusions.

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Sir 43,25ab	שֵׁם פְּלֹאוֹת תִּמְהִי מַעֲשָׂהוּ מִיַּן כָּל חַי וְגַבּוּרוֹת רַהֵב
Gen 1,21	וַיְבָרֵא אֱלֹהִים אֶת־הַתַּיִם וְאֶת־הַגְּדֹלִים וְאֶת־כָּל־נֶפֶשׁ הַחַיָּה הָרֹמֶשֶׁת אֲשֶׁר שָׂרְצוּ הַמַּיִם לְמִינֵיהֶם וְאֶת־כָּל־עוֹף הַכָּנָף לְמִינֵיהֶם וַיַּבְרֵא אֱלֹהִים פִּי־טוֹב

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Sir 43,25ab	שֵׁם פְּלֹאוֹת תִּמְהִי מַעֲשָׂהוּ מִיַּן כָּל חַי וְגַבּוּרוֹת רַהֵב
Gen 1,24	וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים תּוֹצֵא הָאָרֶץ נֶפֶשׁ חַיָּה לְמִינָהּ בְּהֵמָה וְרֶמֶשׁ וְחַיֵּיתוֹ־אָרֶץ לְמִינָהּ וַיְהִי־כֵן

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<sup>47</sup> The phrase is also found in Isa 42,10b, but this is a corruption probably due to haplography. John McKenzie, *Second Isaiah: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, AB Series 20 (Garden City, NY: Doubleday), 42. Parallels with Ps 96,11b; 98,7a suggest יְרַעֵם הַיָּם.

Sir 43,25ab	שֵׁנוּ פְּלֹאוֹת תְּמַהִי מַעֲשֵׂהוּ מִיֵּן כָּל חַי וּגְבוּרוֹת רַהֲבִי
Gen 7,14	הַמָּה וְכָל-הַחַיָּה לְמִינָהּ וְכָל-הַבְּהֵמָה לְמִינָהּ וְכָל-הַרֶמֶשׂ הַרֶמֶשׂ עַל-הָאָרֶץ לְמִינֵהוּ וְכָל- הָעוֹף לְמִינֵהוּ כָּל צֶפֶר כָּל-כָּנָף
Sir 43,25ab	שֵׁם פְּלֹאוֹת תְּמַהִי מַעֲשֵׂהוּ מִיֵּן כָּל חַי וּגְבוּרוֹת רַהֲבִי
Ps 104,25a	זֶה הַיָּם גָּדוֹל וְרַחֵב יָדָיִם
Ps 104,25b	שֵׁם-רֶמֶשׂ וְאֵין מִסְפָּר
Ps 104,25c	חַיּוֹת קִטְנּוֹת עִם-גְּדֹלוֹת
Sir 43,25ab	שֵׁם פְּלֹאוֹת תְּמַהִי מַעֲשֵׂהוּ מִיֵּן כָּל חַי וּגְבוּרוֹת רַהֲבִי
Ps 107,24ab	הַמָּה רָאוּ מַעֲשֵׂי יְהוָה וְנִפְלְאוֹתָיו בְּמִצּוֹלָה

Sir 43,25 is linked to both Gen 1,21 and 7,14 by כל, חי and מין. As the same links are found in two other texts,<sup>48</sup> volume is considered good. Sir 43,25 is linked to Gen 1,24 by חי and מין. However, as the same philological links are shared with fifteen other texts,<sup>49</sup> volume is too poor to sustain an explicit allusion. Sir 43,25 and Ps 104,25 are linked by שם and חי. However, as these philological links are shared with eighty-eight other texts, volume is too faint to support any explicit allusion to

<sup>48</sup> Gen 1,25; 6,20. A similar link is found in Dan 12,7 a text which does not fulfil the criterion of availability.

<sup>49</sup> Gen 1,24.25; 6,20; 7,14; 1 Sam 9,1; 1 Kgs 7,49; 2 Kgs 23,13; Jer 22,24; Ps 16,11; 74,11; 118,15.16; 138,7; Dan 12,7; 1 Chron 27,11. Note that Dan 12,7 is a text which does not fulfil the criterion of availability

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Ps 104,25. Finally, Sir 43,25a and Ps 107,24 are linked by the noun מעשה and the root פלא. As similar links are found in four other texts,<sup>50</sup> volume is considered fair.

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Sir 43,27ab	עוד כאלה לא נוסף וקץ דבר הוא הכל
Qoh 12,13	סוף דְּבַר הַכֹּל נִשְׁמַע אֶת־הָאֱלֹהִים יִרְא וְאֶת־מִצּוֹתָיו שָׁמֹר כִּי־זֶה כָּל־הָאָדָם

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The only text in the Hebrew Bible in which the expression סוף דְּבַר occurs is Qoh 12,13. This expression is reproduced almost exactly in Sir 43,27b,<sup>51</sup> thus volume is considered very good.

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Sir 43,28ab	נגדלה עוד כי לא נחקור והוא גדול מכל מעשיו
Ps 145,3ab	גְּדוֹל יְהוָה וּמְהֻלָּל מְאֹד וְלֹגְדָלְתוֹ אֵין חֶקֶר
Sir 43,28ab	נגדלה עוד כי לא נחקור והוא גדול מכל מעשיו
Job 5,9ab	עֲשֵׂה גְדֻלּוֹת וְאֵין חֶקֶר נִפְלְאוֹת עַד־אֵין מִסְפָּר

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<sup>50</sup> Exod 34,10; 2 Kgs 16,10; Neh 8,7; Ps 139,14.

<sup>51</sup> The words קץ and סוף are synonyms. Francis **Brown**, S. R. **Driver**, and Charles A. **Briggs**, *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament: With an Appendix Containing the Biblical Aramaic* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1951), 693.

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Sir 43,28 is linked to Ps 145,3 by the occurrence of the roots גדל and חקר. As similar philological links are found in two other texts,<sup>52</sup> volume is considered good. The only text in the Hebrew Bible in which the roots עשה, גדל and חקר occur together is Job 5,9a (= 9,10a), thus volume is considered very good for this putative allusion.

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Sir 43,30ab	מגדלי אדני הרימו קול בכל תוכלו כי יש עוד
Sir 43,30cd	מרוממיו החליפו כח ואל תלאו כי לא תחקרו
Isa 40,31ab	וקוֹי יִהְיֶה יַחְלִיפוּ כַח יַעֲלוּ אַבְר פְּנֹשְׁרִים
Isa 40,31cd	יְרוֹצוּ וְלֹא יִיָּנְעוּ יִלְכוּ וְלֹא יִיָּעֲפוּ

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Isa 40,31 is the only text in the Hebrew Bible in which the root חלף occurs with the nouns כח and יְהָיָה, thus volume is very good.

Putative allusions where volume is at zero, faint or too poor to support an explicit allusion will be excluded from the representative sampling of Ben Sira's biblical allusions. While they may well contain intertextual echoes, their evidence is too weak to support any significant conclusions about Ben Sira's activity as interpreter of Israel's Scriptures. The ten putative allusions thus excluded are presented below in Table 11.

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<sup>52</sup> Judg 5,16; Job 5,9 (= 9,10).

**Table 11**  
**Excluded Putative Allusions in Sir 42,15-43,33**

<i>SIR</i>	<i>PUTATIVE ALLUSION</i>	<i>VOLUME LEVEL</i>	<i>SIR</i>	<i>PUTATIVE ALLUSION</i>	<i>VOLUME LEVEL</i>
42,17	Job 15,15	Faint	43,19	Num 17,23	Poor
43,8	Num 28,14	Faint	43,20	Ps 147,16	Zero
	Isa 66,23	Faint		Ps 147,17	Zero
43,10	Ps 33,6	Poor	43,25	Gen 1,24	Poor
43,14	Prov 16,4	Zero		Ps 104,25	Faint

**(b) Thematic Coherence**

The second criterion of *thematic coherence* or the degree to which the remaining thirty-nine putative allusions fit in with Ben Sira's argument, will now be considered. The criterion will be deemed fulfilled where the text of the *Works of God in Creation* and the putative allusions share common themes. This comparison is presented below in Table 12, where the column indicated by the abbreviation "Coh" shows whether thematic coherence is achieved or not.

**Table 12**  
Application of Criterion of Thematic Coherence

<b>SIRACH</b>	<b>PUTATIVE ALLUSION</b>	<b>THEME</b>	<b>COH?</b>
42,15a		Recalling God's primordial works	
	Ps 77,12	Recalling God's primordial works	Yes <sup>53</sup>
42,15b		Sapiential role of personal experience	
	Job 15,17b	Sapiential role of personal experience	Yes
42,16b		Divine glory manifest in Creation	
	Ps 104,31	Divine glory manifest in Creation	Yes
	Ps 145,9b	YHWH's compassion over Creation	No
42,17b		Incapacity to number God's wonders	
	Ps 40,6	Incapacity to number God's wonders	Yes <sup>54</sup>
42,18a		Divine omnipotence	
	Job 38,16b	Divine omnipotence	Yes
42,20a		God's limitless understanding	
	Isa 40,26f	Stars do not fail because of God	No <sup>55</sup>

<sup>53</sup> The five other texts which share similar philological links (Ps 42,5; 77,4; Isa 63,7; Ps 71,16; 87,4) do not have any theme in common with Sir 42,15a and consequently do not fulfil the criterion of thematic coherence.

<sup>54</sup> The two other texts which share similar philological links (Judg 6,13; 1 Chron 16,24) do not fulfil the criterion of thematic coherence as they do not have any theme in common with Sir 42,17b.

<sup>55</sup> The two other texts which share similar philological links (2 Sam 17,22; Zeph 3,5) do not fulfil the criterion of thematic coherence as they do not have any theme in common with Sir 42,20a.



Table 12 - Continued

SIRACH	PUTATIVE ALLUSION	THEME	COH?
42,21b	Deut 6,4b	Divine oneness and immutability	
		Divine oneness and immutability	Yes <sup>56</sup>
42,21d	Isa 40,14a	Divine incomparability	
		Divine incomparability	Yes
43,1b	Exod 24,10	Heaven's reflection of its own glory	
		Vision of YHWH and sapphire pedestal	No
43,2a	Ps 19,7	The sun	
		The sun	Yes
43,2b	Exod 34,10 Ps 66,3a	God's awesome work is the sun	
		God's awesome work is the covenant	No
		YHWH's awesomeness in creation	No
43,5a	Ps 95,3a Ps 95,5a	Greatness of God manifest in the sun	
		Greatness of God manifest in created works	Yes
		Greatness of God manifest in created works	Yes

<sup>56</sup> The other text which shares similar philological links (Zech 14,9) also fulfils the criterion of thematic coherence as it shares the theme of divine oneness and immutability with Sir 42,21b. However, as this text itself alludes to Deut 6,4 it can be disregarded at this point.

Table 12 - Continued

SIRACH	PUTATIVE ALLUSION	THEME	COH?
43,6b		Moon regulates time and is an everlasting sign	
	Gen 1,14	Stars regulate time and are signs	No
	Gen 1,16	Moon regulates time	Yes
	Isa 55,13	Created order functions as everlasting sign	No
43,8c		Moon's activity on the clouds	
	Job 38,37b	YHWH's activity on the clouds	No
43,11		The rainbow	
	Ezek 1,28	The rainbow	Yes <sup>57</sup>
43,17a		Theophany: earthquake, noise, storms	
	Isa 29,6b	Theophany: earthquake	Yes <sup>58</sup>
	Ps 29,3	YHWH's thundering on water	No
	Ps 29,8a	Theophany: earthquake, noise	Yes
	Ps 29,9a	Effects of YHWH's voice on animals and forests	No
	Job 37,5a	YHWH's thundering	No

<sup>57</sup> The other text which shares similar philological links (Isa 66,19) does not fulfil the criterion of thematic coherence as it does not have any theme in common with Sir 43,11.

<sup>58</sup> Of the seven other texts which share similar philological links, six (1 Sam 7,10; 2 Sam 22,14; Ps 18,14; 104,7; Job 37,4; 40,9) do not fulfil the criterion of coherence, lacking as they do any thematic link to Sir 43,17a; however, one text (Ps 77,19) does so.

Table 12 - Continued

<b>SIRACH</b>	<b>PUTATIVE ALLUSION</b>	<b>THEME</b>	<b>COH?</b>
43,17b		Theophany: storms and tempest	
	Isa 29,6c	Theophany: storms and tempest	Yes
43,19a		Divine strewing of hoar-frost	
	Ps 147,16b	Divine strewing of hoar-frost	Yes
43,20d		Frozen pond likened to armour	
	Isa 59,17a	YHWH as armoured warrior	No
43,21d		Divine scorching of mountain growth	
	Job 40,20a	Mountain growth offered to Behemoth	No
43,24a		Sea-voyagers and the vast ocean	
	Ps 107,23a	Sea-voyagers' trade	No
43,24b		Marvelling at the vast ocean	
	Ps 18,45a	Listening to YHWH	No
	Job 42,5a	Listening to YHWH	No

Table 12 - Continued

SIRACH	PUTATIVE ALLUSION	THEME	COH?
43,25		God's sea-creatures	
	Gen 1,21	God's sea-creatures	Yes <sup>59</sup>
	Gen 7,14	God's land- and air-creatures	No
	Ps 107,24	God's sea-creatures	Yes <sup>60</sup>
43,27b		Nothing more to be said	
	Qoh 12,13a	Nothing more to be said	Yes
43,28		Divine incomparability	
	Ps 145,3	Divine incomparability	Yes <sup>61</sup>
	Job 5,9a	Divine incomparability	Yes
43,30ac		Renewal of strength and praise of YHWH	
	Isa 40,31a	Renewal of strength and praise of YHWH	Yes

<sup>59</sup> The two other texts which share similar philological links (Gen 1,25; 6,20) do not fulfil the criterion of thematic coherence, lacking any theme in common with Sir 43,25.

<sup>60</sup> The four other texts which share similar philological links (Exod 34,10; 2 Kgs 16,10; Neh 8,7; Ps 139,14) do not fulfil the criterion of coherence, lacking any theme in common with Sir 43,25.

<sup>61</sup> Of the two other texts which share similar philological links, one (Judg 5,16) does not fulfil the criterion of thematic coherence, while the other (Job 5,9 = 9,10) does.

Putative allusions which do not fulfil the criterion of thematic coherence are excluded at this point from the representative sampling of Ben Sira's biblical allusions, as it is most unlikely that they contain intertextual echoes. The seventeen putative allusions thus excluded are presented below in Table 13.

**Table 13**  
**More Excluded Putative Allusions in Sir 42,15-43,33**

<i>SIRACH</i>	<i>PUTATIVE ALLUSION</i>	<i>SIRACH</i>	<i>PUTATIVE ALLUSION</i>
42,16b	Ps 145,9b	43,17a	Ps 29,9a
42,20a	Isa 40,26f		Job 37,5a
43,1b	Exod 24,10	43,20d	Isa 59,17a
43,2b	Exod 34,10	43,21d	Job 40,20a
	Ps 66,3a	43,24a	Ps 107,23a
43,6b	Gen 1,14	43,24b	Ps 18,45a
	Isa 55,13		Job 42,5a
43,8c	Job 38,37b	43,25	Gen 7,14
43,17a	Ps 29,3		

The criteria of *popular usage*, *historical plausibility* and *satisfaction* will be applied to the remaining twenty-two putative allusions in order to finalize the representative sampling of Ben Sira's biblical allusions in the *Works of God in Creation*.

**(c) Popular Usage, Historical Plausibility and Satisfaction**

The criterion of *popular usage*, or the degree to which putative allusion does not exhibit evidence of common phraseology or usage, was applied to the

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remaining putative allusions by examining QL<sup>62</sup> for the occurrence of similar words and roots shared by Heb and the twenty-two putative allusions; none were found. While this is really only a rule of thumb, it is sufficient to indicate the high probability that the putative biblical allusions in the *Works of God in Creation* are not examples of common or popular phraseology and usage. The criterion of *historical satisfaction*, or the degree to which Ben Sira could have intended the alleged meaning effect, can only really be applied in the context of the analysis of his interpretation of biblical allusions. There is, however, no *prima facie* evidence of ideas in the poem which would be historically implausible in second century BCE Judea. Similarly, the final criterion, *satisfaction*, or the degree to which a proposed reading makes sense and illuminates the surrounding discourse, can only be fully determined in the context of the analysis of Ben Sira's interpretation of the biblical allusions. However, there is *prima facie* evidence that five putative biblical allusions do not satisfy this criterion. The putative allusions in Sir 43,5a are to Ps 95,3a.5a. Ps 95 is an enthronement hymn which praises YHWH's supremacy over all other gods. V.3a likens YHWH to the Great El, while v.5a relates how YHWH created the sea. However, since Sir 43,5 is concerned with YHWH as creator of the great sun, its argument is not advanced by any allusion to Ps 95. Consequently the criterion of satisfaction is not fulfilled.

The putative allusions in Sir 43,25 are to Gen 1,21 and Ps 107,24. Gen 1,1-

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<sup>62</sup> In examining QL the following works were found to be useful: J. M. **Allegro**, "An Unpublished Fragment of Essene Halakhah (4Q Ordinances)," *JSS* 6 (1961): 71-73; M. **Baillet**, "Un Recueil Liturgique de Qumrân, Grotte 4: 'Les Paroles des Luminaires'," *RB* 68 (1961): 195-250; Millar **Burrows**, *The Dead Sea Scrolls of St. Mark's Monastery* (New Haven: The American School of Oriental Research, 1950); Menahem **Mansoor**, *The Thanksgiving Psalms: Translated and Annotated with an Introduction*, STDJ Series 3 (Leiden: Brill, 1961); J. **Stugnell**, "The Angelic Liturgy at Qumrân, 4Q Serek Šîrôt 'Ôlar Haššabât," in *VTS*, vol. 7 (Leiden: Brill, 1960), 318-345; J. **Van der Ploeg**, *Le Rouleau de la Guerre: Traduit et Annoté Avec une Introduction*, STDJ Series 2 (Leiden: Brill, 1959).

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2,4a deals with the creation of the world. Specifically v.21 refers to the creation of sea monsters, water creatures and winged birds. Ps 107 is a communal thanksgiving hymn in which the experiences of storm-tossed, yet divinely saved, sea-voyagers are related. In Ps 107,24 the voyagers witness YHWH's wonders in the sea. The majesty and splendour of the sea is the subject of Sir 43,23-26.<sup>63</sup> Ben Sira's listing of the elements of nature which do God's will follows a logical sequence: sky → atmosphere → land → sea. Thus the sky and sea form an *inclusio* denoting the entirety of creation. Sir 43,23 with its theme of divine domination of the seas is replete with ancient cosmological nuances.<sup>64</sup> Sir 43,24 and Ps 107,23-27 both emphasize the physical power of the sea. Ben Sira's viewpoint in Sir 43,25 is that the variety of sea creatures is a characteristic of God's creative work. What Ben Sira has achieved is the integration of the creation theme of Ps 107,24 into the sapiential framework of Sir 43,23-26. However, Sir 43,26 is crucial to this process. The balance between מלאך (v.26a) and וברבריו (v.26b), in a context which is clearly that of the Creator God (למענו - v.26a), affirms the traditional doctrine of the efficacy of the creative divine word. Furthermore, the phrase יפעל רצון (v.26b), whereby created works are stated to fulfil the divine word, recalls the phrase ופעל רצונו (Sir 42,15d) whereby divine wisdom is expressed in created works. Accordingly, for Ben Sira created works are not just the result of the divine word, but are divine word in that they fulfil divinely attributed roles. Thus, Sir 43,26 underpins the sapiential direction of the entire poem. While the material in Gen 1,21 is similar to that of Ps 107,24, the putative allusion in Gen 1,21 shows no

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<sup>63</sup> Prato, *Teodicea*, 193-197.

<sup>64</sup> In particular the story of Tiamat in *Enuma Eliš* and the Ugaritic legend of Ba'al's victory over Yam.

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evidence of being as integrated into the text of Sir 43,23-26 as Ps 107,24 does. In short, the putative allusion to Gen 1,21 does not advance the argument of Sir 43,25 in any way equal to that of Ps 107 and consequently the criterion of satisfaction must be considered not fulfilled for Gen 1,21.

The putative allusion in Sir 43,27b is to Qoh 12,13a.<sup>65</sup> Prato argues that it is not possible to establish any conclusive links between Sir 43,27 and Qoh 12,13 for three basic reasons. First, Qoh 12,13a can be translated "as a conclusion of the entire discourse which has been heard,"<sup>66</sup> which is not exactly the same as Sir 43,27b. Second, Qoh 12,12-14 has been identified as an epilogue created by the redactor of the book. Attempts to establish links between Sir 43,27 and Qoh 12,13 have tended to argue on the basis of a shared conservative, moralistic, pious outlook shared by Ben Sira and the redactor of Qohelet. However, the material found in the epilogue has some contact with the rest of the book of Qohelet<sup>67</sup> and must not be considered a conservative attempt to modify less orthodox views in the rest of the book. Third, the sapiential themes enunciated in Sir 42,15-43,33 are not easily reconcilable with the supposed conservative theology of Ben Sira. Prato concludes: "Tutt'al più il parallelo, nel caso che si potesse sostenere, avrebbe un valore lessicale."<sup>68</sup> Accordingly, the criterion of satisfaction is not fulfilled.

The putative allusion in Sir 43,30ac is to Isa 40,31a. Isa 40,12-31 is a text in which the majesty of the divine Creator is proclaimed. Isa 40,29-31 relates how

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<sup>65</sup> Prato, *Teodicea*, 199-200 for a detailed study of the relationship between Sir 43,27 and Qoh 12,13.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, 199. Prato translates Qoh 12,13a as "come conclusione di tutto il discorso ascolta."

<sup>67</sup> Qoh 3,14; 5,6; 8,12; 10,20; 11,9.

<sup>68</sup> Prato, *Teodicea*, 200; F. J. **Backhaus**, "Qohelet und Sirach," *BN* 69 (1993): 32-55 who argues against any literary dependence by Sirach on the book of Qohelet.



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the humble will be exalted and v.31 equates the faint with those who wait on YHWH. Sir 43,30, on the other hand, is a call to those who praise YHWH not to grow weary. There is no evidence that Isa 40,31a has been used to advance the argument of Sir 43,30 and consequently the criterion of satisfaction is not fulfilled. On the basis of the five criteria used above, the representative sampling of Ben Sira's biblical allusions consists of seventeen allusions, presented below in Table 14.

**Table 14**  
**Representative Sampling of Biblical Allusions in Sir 42,15-43,33**

<b>NO.</b>	<b>SIRACH</b>	<b>ALLUSION</b>	<b>NO.</b>	<b>SIRACH</b>	<b>ALLUSION</b>
01	42,15a	Ps 77,12	10	43,11	Ezek 1,28
02	42,15b	Job 15,17b	11	43,17a	Isa 29,6b
03	42,16b	Ps 104,31	12	43,17a	Ps 29,8a
04	42,17b	Ps 40,6	13	43,17b	Isa 29,6c
05	42,18a	Job 38,16b	14	43,19a	Ps 147,16b
06	42,21b	Deut 6,4b	15	43,25	Ps 107,24
07	42,21d	Isa 40,14a	16	43,28	Ps 145,3
08	43,2a	Ps 19,7	17	43,28	Job 5,9a
09	43,6b	Gen 1,16			

### 3.4 Ben Sira's Biblical Interpretation in the *Works of God in Creation*

The second stage of the study of Ben Sira's biblical interpretation has been completed with the identification of a representative sampling of his biblical allusions. The third and final stage of this chapter's investigation will focus on the manner by which Ben Sira generated new intertextual acts of figuration from these biblical allusions in his *Works of God in Creation*. A very useful approach for this third stage is the concept of *inner-biblical exegesis* proposed by Fishbane<sup>69</sup> who distinguishes the *traditum* (content of tradition) from the *traditio* (process of transmitting the tradition). *Inner-biblical exegesis* is that which begins with the received scripture and then moves forward to interpretations based on it, thus establishing the relationship between *traditum* and *traditio* as that between authoritative teaching and the concern to depict it as contemporary or relevant for a new time or set of circumstances. Inner-biblical exegesis is certainly the approach to adopt in cases where there are explicit scripture quotations. While it is also feasible in the absence of explicit quotations, it is necessary to establish the link between the *traditum* and the *traditio* on a case-by-case basis: "When a nexus between a given *traditum* and its exegetical *traditio* can be analytically recovered and demonstrated, then and only then are we confidently in the presence of examples of inner-biblical exegesis."<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>69</sup> Michael Fishbane, "Revelation and Tradition: Aspects of Inner-Biblical Exegesis," *JBL* 99 (1980): 343-61; *idem*, *Biblical Interpretation*. See also M. V. Fox, "The Identification of Quotations in Biblical Literature," *ZAW* 93 (1981): 46-31; M. Gertner, "Terms of Scriptural Interpretation: A Study in Hebrew Semantics," *BSOAS* 25 (1962): 1-27; J. A. Sanders, "Text and Canon: Concepts and Method," *JBL* 98 (1979): 5-29.

<sup>70</sup> Fishbane, *Biblical Interpretation*, 12.

Inner-biblical exegesis exhibits a wide variety of forms: scribal,<sup>71</sup> legal,<sup>72</sup> and mantological.<sup>73</sup> A preliminary reading of the *Works of God in Creation* shows no evidence of any of these exegetical forms. Another exegetical technique outlined

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<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, 23-43. *Scribal exegesis* arises from the pivotal role of the scribe in the process of transmitting the *traditum*. Scribes received texts, studied, copied and passed them on to subsequent generations. However, they were not neutral before their texts, believing in and interpolating the texts as they transmitted them. Scribal interpolation took the form of correcting errors and clarifying words. Since many of the scribal marginalia have been incorporated into the text, a careful study using internal textual criteria must be undertaken to identify and study the scribal interpolations.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, 91-106. *Legal exegesis* arises from the fact that biblical law is a prototype of legal and ethical norms. Here the *traditio* developed as a solution to gaps and obscurities in the legal *traditum*, and was a response to difficulties which were discovered in the text ("*in claris non fit interpretatio*").

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, 443-446. 506-524. *Mantological exegesis* is the interpretation of material which is ominous or oracular in range and content. Mantological material falls into two basic categories: visual phenomena (dreams, visions and omens) and auditory phenomena (oracles). Visual phenomena are of the covert mantological type, in that what was seen had to be clarified and interpreted. Clearly, in such cases the hermeneutical role of the interpreter was crucial. In this form of exegesis there was no *traditio* as such, only the careful transmission of the phenomena and their interpretation. Covert mantological exegesis arose out of a *cognitive crisis*, where the crisis was on the level of content and plain sense of the visual manifestation. As the material was given a coherent rational explanation by the interpreter, cognitive dissonance was eliminated. Auditory phenomena are of the overt mantological type. As such they are presented by a divinely inspired person. The issue here was not one of a *traditum* being interpreted, but of a *traditum* that failed and was in need of revision. The cognitive crisis which gave rise to overt mantological exegesis occurred when valued oracles failed to be realized, when their manifest meaning was cast in doubt or when events seemed to refute them. Since this crisis was theological in nature, the role of the interpreter was either to re-open and prolong confidence in the oracle's content or to establish its closure and realization. With this form of exegesis, the problem of meaning or of the legitimacy of the interpretation did not arise initially. At the start, the phenomena was assumed to be clear and intelligible in all cases and there was no initial cognitive dissonance. However, with the passage of time, cognitive dissonance increased with the failure of the oracle to be fulfilled. This allowed three possible hermeneutical strategies for the interpreter who argued that the fulfilment had been temporarily delayed; or announced the failure of the oracle and offered a revised prediction; or lastly argued that the oracle was destined for the contemporary period.

by Fishbane is *aggadic exegesis*<sup>74</sup> which is concerned with the whole spectrum of ancient Israelite ideas, genres and texts, and attempts to use the received *traditum* in order to arrive at new theological insights, attitudes and theories. Aggadic exegesis proceeds from a fullness in the *traditum*, not attempting to fill out gaps, but drawing forth hidden meaning, emphasizing the *sensus plenior* of the text. Inner-biblical aggadic exegesis does not usually employ explicit initial formulae, but in most cases uses implicit or virtual citations. Where the putative *tradio* is dominated by key words and phrases also found in the putative *traditum*, but used in new and transformed ways, the possibility of identifying aggadic exegesis is heightened:

In other words, the identification of aggadic exegesis where external objective criteria are lacking is proportionally increased to the extent that multiple and sustained lexical linkages between two texts can be recognized, and where the second text (the putative *tradio*) uses a segment of the first (the putative *traditum*) in a lexically reorganized and topically rethematized way.<sup>75</sup>

However, great care must be taken to ensure that a putative case of aggadic exegesis is not confused with a shared phraseology arising from a common linguistic tradition. This brief overview of the inner-biblical exegetical approach is sufficient to indicate its suitability for the purposes of this study because of its capacity to identify the manner in which Ben Sira reworked the *traditum* of his day into a *tradio* and legitimated that *tradio*. Accordingly, some elements of Fishbane's model of aggadic exegesis will be applied to the biblical allusions in the *Works of God in Creation*, a poem concerned with the Jewish sapiential view of cosmogony and the relationship of the cosmos to YHWH, the Creator God.

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<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, 281-440.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, 285.

**(a) Sir 42,15a/Ps 77,12**

The first of the representative sampling of biblical allusions is in Sir 42,15a to Ps. 77,12. Ps 77 is a mixed type consisting of an individual lament (Ps 77,1-11) and a hymn (Ps 77,12-21) recalling God's primordial deeds. Specifically Ps 77,12 (אֲזַכֵּיר אֶזְכֹּר מֵעַלְלֵי־יְהוָה כִּי־אֶזְכְּרָה מִקֶּדֶם פְּלֹאֵד) is a statement of the memory of YHWH's primordial deeds in favour of Israel, activity in keeping with Ben Sira's portrait of the divinely inspired scribe.<sup>76</sup> Sir 42,15-43,33 is a clear example of the *Schöpfungshymne*,<sup>77</sup> in which the opening colon (אֶזְכְּרָה נָא מַעֲשֵׂי) functions as scribal self-exhortation to praise God. "Già l'autoesortazione alla lode indica quindi che si vuol narrare enumerando, ma il senso o lo scopo di questa narrazione di lode risulta da 15b ..." <sup>78</sup> The *traditum* (Ps 77,12) and the *tradio* (Sir 42,15a) are linked by the root זָכַר. In the *traditum* the root occurs in a statement of intention to recall YHWH's actions made emphatic by the use of the infinitive absolute (אֶזְכֹּר אֶזְכֹּר), where the object of the verb is מֵעַלְלֵי־יְהוָה which stands for YHWH's deeds of salvation in relation to Israel. In the *tradio* the root occurs in a first person, singular, cohortative (אֶזְכְּרָה) denoting the dedication of the will to the action of recalling by means of self-encouragement or self-exhortation on the part of Ben Sira. The object of this recollection is מַעֲשֵׂי אֱלֹהִים, a phrase denoting God's action in creation. The *tradio* represents a text which has transcended its original meaning and become the basis of new meaning, indicating the presence of aggadic exegesis.

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<sup>76</sup> Sir 39,6d: ἐν προσευχῇ ἑξομολογήσεται κυρίῳ.

<sup>77</sup> Stadelmann, *Schriftgelehrter*, 242.

<sup>78</sup> Prato, *Teodicea*, 158.

In general, Ben Sira's teaching arises out of the encounter of Judaism with hellenistic liberalism.<sup>79</sup> Hengel<sup>80</sup> has noted the particularly close contact between *Stoic philosophy* and *Ben Sira's thought on creation*, which is the central theme of Sir 42,15-43,33. Accordingly, this study will examine the degree to which Stoic philosophical ideas form a significant point of departure<sup>81</sup> for the aggadic exegesis of the allusions identified in the *Works of God in Creation* and if Ben Sira, in presenting Jewish thought, offers a critique of such Stoic concepts.

The Stoic theory of cosmogony<sup>82</sup> did not allow for creation *ex nihilo*. Rather Stoicism posited an eternally existing substance or οὐσία out of which entire universes were born by διακοσμήσις and into which they dissolved by means of ἐκπύρωσις. The generation of the universe occurred in the interaction of two opposite, inseparable, corporeal principles (ἀρχαί),<sup>83</sup> one active (ποιοῦν) and one passive (πάσχον), on the primal substance. The active principle, called θεός, was described as a mighty and continuous fire,<sup>84</sup> or πῦρ τεχνικόν.<sup>85</sup> The passive

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<sup>79</sup> Hengel, *Judaism and Hellenism*, I, 131-153.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*, 147-149. However, points of contact between hellenistic philosophy and Ben Sira's teaching *in general* are not limited merely to Stoicism.

<sup>81</sup> Fishbane, *Biblical Interpretation*, 408-409. The point of departure for aggadic exegesis is typically some form of discontinuity in the perception of the inherited *traditum*.

<sup>82</sup> Michael **Lapidge**, "Stoic Cosmology," in *The Stoics*, ed. John M. Rist (Berkeley/London: University of California Press, 1978), 161-185; Shmuel **Sambursky**, *Physics of the Stoics* (London: Hutchinson, 1971); F. H. **Sandbach**, *The Stoics*, 2nd ed. (Bristol: Bristol Press, 1975); Robert B. **Todd**, "Monism and Immanence," in *The Stoics*, 137-160.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*, 139-140. Todd argues, on the basis of Hans **von Arnim**, *Stoicorum Veterum Fragmenta*, vol. 1 (Leipzig: Teubner, 1921), §98 and *idem*, *Stoicorum Veterum Fragmenta*, vol. 2 (Leipzig: Teubner, 1921) §§310.999, for the *incorporeality* of the ἀρχαί.

<sup>84</sup> *SVF* 2 §1045.

principle consisted of ἄπολος ὕλη, or inert matter which was qualified by θεός.<sup>86</sup> Following Hesiod,<sup>87</sup> Zeno (320-250 BCE) may have thought of ὕλη as consisting of water. By analogy with his understanding of the biological process of human and animal reproduction,<sup>88</sup> Zeno understood that the first stage in the generation of the universe occurred when the hot fiery θεός-principle acted on the moist ὕλη-principle.<sup>89</sup> The Stoic theory of ἀρχαί functioned in two ways. First, it provided the groundwork for a cosmological account of change in which the activity of the active principle on itself is the creativity of the primary element in establishing the cosmos. Second, it showed that the object of analysis was composed of two separate aspects, active and passive, divine and material. The second stage in the generation of the cosmos saw the creation of four basic mutable elements (earth, air, fire and water) from which the universe was constituted. The process occurred for Zeno by condensation and rarefaction,<sup>90</sup> for Cleanthes (301-232 BCE) by a kind of chain-reaction,<sup>91</sup> and for Chrysippos (280-206 BCE) by a model which is essentially a reworking of that proposed by Zeno.<sup>92</sup> The elemental fire (πῦρ ἄτεχνον) thus created was distinguished from the active πῦρ τεχνικόν which is

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<sup>85</sup>(...continued)

<sup>85</sup> SVF 1 §171; 2 §§1133-1134.

<sup>86</sup> SVF 2 §§300-301.

<sup>87</sup> SVF 1 §103.

<sup>88</sup> SVF 1 §§126-129.

<sup>89</sup> SVF 1 §102.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>91</sup> SVF 1 §497.

<sup>92</sup> SVF 2 §579.

θεός. The sublunar world consisted of various combinations of the four elements, while the heavens consisted of pure creative fire or αἰθήρ.

The Stoic concept of πνεῦμα originated in biological thought. Zeno equated Aristotle's concept of an inborn πνεῦμα with that of ψυχή.<sup>93</sup> This πνεῦμα was corporeal, extended throughout the entire body and vitalized it. Bodily sensation (αἴσθησις) occurred with the movement of the πνεῦμα from the soul's command centre (ἡγεμονικόν) to other bodily regions.<sup>94</sup> The Stoic concept of the cosmic πνεῦμα was simply an application of the notion of bodily πνεῦμα to the universe. For Zeno, the principal cosmic agent was the πῦρ τεχνικόν. For Cleanthes, it was creative fire located in the sun.<sup>95</sup> Chrysippos, however, is probably the originator of the idea of cosmic πνεῦμα.<sup>96</sup> The totally penetrating and pervasive motion of the corporeal, cosmic πνεῦμα was by a process termed κράσις δι' ὅλον,<sup>97</sup> and was responsible for the shapes and variety of created things.<sup>98</sup> The manner in which the cosmic πνεῦμα imparted coherence to the universe was derived from Stoic biology. Cosmic coherence, in Chrysippos' view, was due to

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<sup>93</sup> *SVF* 1 §§135-138.

<sup>94</sup> *SVF* 1 §151. For Chrysippos' theory of the extensive application of πνεῦμα to account for all bodily phenomena see *SVF* 2 §911.

<sup>95</sup> *SVF* 1 §§499-530.

<sup>96</sup> *SVF* 2 §§439-462.

<sup>97</sup> *SVF* 2 §§463-481.

<sup>98</sup> *SVF* 2 §310.



τόνος or internal tension created by the cosmic πνεῦμα.<sup>99</sup> For Chrysippos, bodily sensation occurred as a result of the transmission of impulses from the peripheral sense organs by the πνεῦμα to the command centre.<sup>100</sup> The transmission was maximized when the πνεῦμα was taut throughout the body. The implications of this biological theory for cosmic coherence were worked out by Chrysippos.<sup>101</sup> The cohesive force of tension in the cosmos arose out of two, equal, but opposed motions. When the πνεῦμα interpenetrated a physical object there was a motion outward towards the surface and a motion inward towards the centre of the object. Outward motion gave the object its size and shape, while inward motion gave it integration. This theory of cosmic tension had three important consequences. First, the tensional connection between all parts of the universe implied a tensional connection between heavenly and terrestrial phenomena. Second, there could be no void in the universe or cosmic tension would be broken.<sup>102</sup> Finally, the cosmic πνεῦμα had both spatial and temporal extension. This meant that all events were linked together in the Stoic concept of a chain of fate.

The Stoic universe was considered spherical,<sup>103</sup> corporeal,<sup>104</sup> and finite in

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<sup>99</sup> SVF 2 §§447.546.

<sup>100</sup> SVF 2 §826.

<sup>101</sup> Zeno had no comparable theory and while Cleanthes did have a basic concept of cosmic tension, it was not derived from the cosmic πνεῦμα (SVF 1 §563).

<sup>102</sup> SVF 2 §543.

<sup>103</sup> SVF 2 §547.

<sup>104</sup> The only incorporeals within Stoic cosmology were regarded as λέκτα. SVF 1 §95; 2 §331.

extent. Within the universe the four elements were arranged in spherical tiers.<sup>105</sup> For Zeno, the universe was held together as all the elements had a rectilinear motion towards the centre of the universe. The fire of the sun, moon and stars was τεχνικόν,<sup>106</sup> equivalent to θεός, and which moved peripherally. Πῦρ ἄτεχνον, on the other hand, moved rectilinearly. This theory was ultimately superseded by Chrysippos' theory of an all-pervading cosmic πνεῦμα. For the Stoics the cosmic process was an infinite series of finite phases of alternate stages of διακοσμήσις and ἐκπύρωσις in which the newly generated universes were identical in every detail to preceding ones:

It would seem consistent with Stoic theory that *ekpyrōsis* would imply not merely the dissolution of the created universe, but also the dissolution of the four created elements back into primal substance (*ousia*) that, as we saw, had two aspects: active/fiery and passive/watery. Thus, although no Stoic source says as much, both fiery *theos* and watery *hylē* would have been extant at *ekpyrōsis*.<sup>107</sup>

One possible explanation for ἐκπύρωσις is ἀναθυμίασις<sup>108</sup> or the process of evaporation of water from the seas to fuel the sun, moon and stars. When the seas would be exhausted, the solar, lunar and stellar fire would consume the cosmos. However, this notion created difficulty as it remained unclear how the fire of the sun, moon and stars, which was τεχνικόν, could lead to the destruction of the cosmos. Since God had determined the cosmos, God could be identified with Nature, Fate and Providence. Φύσις or Nature, was synonymous with πῦρ

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<sup>105</sup> SVF 2 §555.

<sup>106</sup> SVF 1 §120.

<sup>107</sup> Lapidge, "Stoic Cosmology," 183.

<sup>108</sup> SVF 2 §650.

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τεχνικόν and θεός which methodically executed the plan according to which the cosmos grew and changed. Fate was the certainty of the process, while Providence was God's rationality. There was no attempt in Stoicism to suggest that God's purposes were unfathomable to humans, since God and human beings had the same reason. Thus the fully intelligent human would approve of God's ways.

For the Stoics, "Natural beauty or finality in Nature pointed to the existence of a principle of thought in the universe, God, Who, in His Providence, had arranged everything for the good of man."<sup>109</sup> Since φύσις, πῦρ τεχνικόν and θεός were synonymous for the divine rational principle which methodically executed the plan according to which the cosmos grew and changed, contemplation of φύσις led to the exaltation of θεός. Ben Sira too was convinced of the purposefulness of creation,<sup>110</sup> a concept central to his rational theodicy: God's creation is perfect and harmonious in all respects and is that which sustains, rewards and punishes humans.<sup>111</sup> Thus God is to be extolled. The particular point of contact between Sir 42,15a and Stoic cosmogony is the relationship between

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<sup>109</sup> Frederick Copleston, *A History of Philosophy: Volume 1 - Greece and Rome - Part 2* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1962), 132.

<sup>110</sup> Sir 39,16: מעשי אל כלם טובים וכל צורך בעתו יספיק, where the word צורך, a *hapax legomenon*, denotes *purpose*.

<sup>111</sup> The ultimate expression of the relationship between God and creation is: הוא הכל (Sir 43,27b). Stoic influence on Ben Sira can be seen in his openness to the possibility of a rational understanding of the world, suggesting close contact with the Stoic conception of the purposefulness of individual natural phenomena. In fact, prior to the discovery of Heb, Sir 43,27 was regarded as a Stoicizing gloss. Hengel, *Judaism and Hellenism*, I, 147-148: "It is also significant that Ben Sira has a predilection for the abstract concept of the 'all' (*hakkōl*), which embraces all creation; but appears all the more frequently in literature which is approximately contemporaneous with Ben Sira. Whereas God is at best called the Creator of all, Ben Sira goes a step further and ventures to say: 'He is the all'. Cleanthes' Hymn to Zeus could also have come from the hand of Ben Sira, with some minor alterations."

the deity and the cosmos. For Ben Sira, as with Stoic thought, the cosmos is to be considered as a work of the deity (מעשי אל). However, Ben Sira goes further in that Sir 42,15a aggadically reinterprets YHWH's *salvific deeds* (מעלליה - Ps 77,12) as *divine creational acts* (מעשי אל). Thus, Ben Sira's Creator God was the God who had historically entered into relationship with a particular nation, Israel and not merely θεός, or the Stoic active rational principle of the cosmos. In this manner, a significant point of departure for the aggadic exegesis arises from, and critiques, the Stoic theory of cosmogony. Both the criteria of *historical plausibility* and *satisfaction* are fulfilled accordingly.

The logical technique<sup>112</sup> used is supplementation, or the placing of the new *traditio* in conjunction with a revised version of the entire *traditum*. The form of verb (אָזְכִּיר) in the *traditum* and its object, YHWH's salvific deeds in favour of Israel, are completely revised and presented as the new *traditio* wherein Ben Sira exhorts himself (אֶזְכְּרָה) to recite God's actions in creation. Of particular interest is the textual-narrative context,<sup>113</sup> or the manner in which a specific segment of exegesis functions within the specific argument of the aggadic *traditio*. As the opening line of the poem, Sir 42,15a functions as Ben Sira's conscious self-

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<sup>112</sup> Fishbane, *Biblical Interpretation*, 419-425. One of the formal procedures of aggadic exegesis is *logical technique* of which there are four main sub-categories: *lemmatic deduction or inference* by which a conclusion is deduced or inferred from a topos as a whole or from specific terms contained therein; *exegetical correlation* by which exegetical meaning is established through the correlation of similar things; *interpolation and supplementation*. By interpolation is meant the insertion of the *traditio* into the *traditum*, while supplementation involves placing the new *traditio* after the *traditum* or in conjunction with a revised version of the entire *traditum*; and finally, סְמוּכִין which is a technique involving the juxtaposition of texts which are not meaningfully related in the historical tradition and drawing new conclusions from them.

<sup>113</sup> *Ibid.*, 434. This term refers to the literary setting of the aggadic exegesis in its new context and is concerned to determine how a specific segment of exegesis functions within a specific argument.

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exhortation to direct himself totally to praise God the Creator by enumerating the divine acts of creation. It is no mere emphatic statement of intention, as with the *traditum*, but a call for the total alignment of his entire being to the praise of God, consistent with the religious commitment of the ideal scribe.<sup>114</sup> In terms of mental matrix,<sup>115</sup> or the manner in which the Ben Sira as aggadic exegete perceived the historical *traditum*, his perception of Ps 77,12 is radical in that the *traditum* is extensively revised and extended beyond the particularity of the psalmist's praise of YHWH's salvific deeds in favour of Israel to the universality of the scribal exaltation of the Creator God. The exegetical form<sup>116</sup> used in this aggadic interpretation is embedded, as the allusion to Ps 77,12 is a covert presentation of the *traditum* in connection with its new application in Sir 42,15a. The aggadic *tradio* exhibits no shift of voice.<sup>117</sup> Both Ps 77,12 and Sir 42,15a express authority

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<sup>114</sup> Sir 39,5a: τὴν καρδίαν αὐτοῦ ἐπιδώσει ὀρθρῖσαι τὸν ποιήσαντα αὐτόν.

<sup>115</sup> Fishbane, *Biblical Interpretation*, 434-435. The term *mental matrix* refers to the manner in which the aggadic exegete perceives the historical *traditum*. This perception can be *revisionistic*, *visionary* or *radical*.

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid.*, 429-433. The more important exegetical forms are of three types: the *lemmatic form* is an overt presentation of a tradition followed by its application; the *embedded form* which involves a covert presentation of a *traditum* in connection with its new application (*tradio*); the *taxemic form* involves the creative (re)combination of elements from the tradition.

<sup>117</sup> *Ibid.*, 435-440. The authority of aggadic exegesis is evidenced in the continuities and discontinuities which exist between the voice of the original *traditum* and the ongoing voice of the *tradio*. The most important voice is the *divine voice* which initiates a *tradio* and reuses it in an aggadic manner. Aggadic exegesis, given authority by means of the *divine voice*, underscores the ongoing divine involvement of God in the life of Israel as new levels of meaning are given to old revelation. A second important voice is the *Mosaic voice*, by which the aggadic *tradio* is stamped with Moses' authority as guardian of tradition. A third important voice is the *uninspired prophetic voice*, where there is human reportage of divine speech with aggadic transformation. In using this voice, dimensions of YHWH's old words and actions are newly  
(continued...)

by means of the narrative voice. In this way Ben Sira's teaching in Sir 42,15a is presented in continuity with that of the psalmist contained in Ps 77,12. However, exegetical legitimation,<sup>118</sup> or the manner in which the *traditio* seeks to authorize its innovative exegesis, does not occur in a manner typical of Fishbane's model. Rather, Ben Sira appeals to himself (אזכרה נא) as an authoritative interpreter, whose prophetic-like authority arises from his status as a divinely inspired scribe.<sup>119</sup>

**(b) Sir 42,15b/Job 15,17b**

The second biblical allusion under consideration is in Sir 42,15b (וזה חזיתי) to Job 15,17b (וזה-חזיתי ואספרה). Job 15,1-35 contains Eliphaz's second speech which is made up of two units. The first (Job 15,1-16) is an indignant personal rebuke on Job while the second (Job 15,17-35) is a portrayal of the wicked. This begins with an introductory apology for Eliphaz's claim to speak wisdom (Job 15,17-19). Eliphaz emphasizes both personal experience and some

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<sup>117</sup>(...continued)

revealed. The final voice is the *narrative voice*. With the use of this voice the authority of the *traditio* is indistinguishable from that of the *tradicum*.

<sup>118</sup> *Ibid.*, 528-535. By *exegetical legitimation* is meant the manner in which the *traditio* seeks to authorize its innovative exegesis. This legitimation falls into four broad categories: *innovative and continuous revelation* occurs where formulae of revelation are used to introduce the new exegetical material of the *traditio*; *pseudonymous exegesis* is that legitimated under the auspices of an important personality from the past (divine, human) while *pseudepigraphic exegesis* is legitimated by appeal to the anonymous voice of the omniscient narrator; *attributive, pseudo-attributive* and *non-attributive exegesis* occurs when a new interpretation is attributed to an authoritative historical source in a tendentious or spurious manner.

<sup>119</sup> Sir 39,6bcd.

kind of mysterious personal revelation (תְּהִלָּתוֹ).<sup>120</sup> In short, Eliphaz claims both personal experience and direct communication with mysterious forces as the basis for his teaching which is confirmed by ancestral wisdom (Job 15,18). Ben Sira also claims personal experience and mysterious revelation.<sup>121</sup> However, Ben Sira does not seek confirmation of his claim to teach wisdom from ancestral wisdom, but from a sapiential consideration of the created order. This is highlighted in Sir 42,15cd by relating God's creative wisdom and the created order,<sup>122</sup> as presented below in Table 15.

Table 15  
Divine Wisdom and the Created Order

SIRACH	DIVINE WISDOM	CREATED ORDER
42,15c	באמר אדני	מעשיו
42,15d	לחקו	פעל רצנו

<sup>120</sup> Eliphaz's first speech (Job 4,1-5,27) emphasizes both personal experience (Job 4,7.8; 5,1.3.8.17.27) and mysterious revelation (Job 4,12-16). The latter is denoted by תְּהִלָּתוֹ (Job 4,13) which is a cognate noun of תִּפְּלוֹ.

<sup>121</sup> The root תִּפְּלוֹ occurs four times in Heb (apart from Sir 42,15b). In God it denotes omniscience (Sir 15,18b) and in people some kind of visionary experience (Sir 44,3d; 46,15a; 48,24a). Personal experience and divine inspiration are central to the activity of the scribe (Sir 39,4.6).

<sup>122</sup> A similar link between God's creative wisdom and the created order is found in Wis 9,1-2: θεὸς πατέρων καὶ κύριος τοῦ ἐλέους ὁ ποιήσας τὰ πάντα ἐν λόγῳ σου καὶ τῇ σοφίᾳ σου κατασκευάσας ἄνθρωπον ἵνα δεσπόζη τῶν ὑπὸ σοῦ γενομένων κτισμάτων.

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Since created works proceed from divine wisdom, the one who can recount (סִפֵּר) them is a sage (סֹפֵר). Both Eliphaz and Ben Sira emphasize personal and revelatory experience, but Ben Sira expands the visual to include the entirety of the created order.<sup>123</sup> The *traditum* (Job 15,17b) and the *tradio* (Sir 42,15b) are linked by the common phrase וַיִּזְכֹּר חַיֵּי וְאִסְפָּרָה. In the *traditum* the expression וַיִּזְכֹּר חַיֵּי וְאִסְפָּרָה refers to Eliphaz's personal experience regarding the fate of the wicked, while the expression וַיִּזְכֹּר חַיֵּי וְאִסְפָּרָה in the *tradio* refers to Ben Sira's experience of observing creation. While the phrase is identical in both texts, the reuse of the phrase in the changed context of the *tradio* suggests aggadic exegesis.

The point of contact between Sir 42,15b and Stoic thought is the manner by which an observer of creation can proceed to contemplate the deity. An important aspect of Stoic cosmogony was its philosophical confidence in achieving a *rational* understanding of the θεός-principle active in creation. However, for Ben Sira, personal observation of the created order was not sufficient to lead to the contemplation of God. By aggadically reworking Job 15,17b, with its emphasis on mysterious personal revelation from God, Ben Sira argues that a merely rational understanding of God is not possible. Rather, God has to complement human observation by means of divine revelation. That which Ben Sira perceives and recounts as a sage, is not simply what he has observed personally, but also what has been revealed to him by God. As with Sir 42,15a aggadic exegesis proceeds from Stoic cosmogony, but critiques it as inadequate. Accordingly, Ben Sira's argument fulfils both the criteria of *historical plausibility* and *satisfaction*.

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<sup>123</sup> Prato, *Teodicea*, 158-159.



The logical technique used is one of supplementation, as the new *tradio* (Ben Sira's own experience of creation and nature) occurs as a revised version of the entire *tradio* (Eliphaz's personal experience of the fate of the wicked). While an identical phrase is used in both texts, the meaning of the phrase in the *tradio* has been completely revised in the *tradio*. The textual-narrative context of the aggadic *tradio* is closely related to that of Sir 42,15a. Ben Sira has already exhorted himself to dedicate his entire being to the praise of God the Creator. The basis for this is presented in Sir 42,15b; namely what Ben Sira has personally observed in creation (חיותי) he can recount (ואספרה) to his readers, functioning as a wise divinely-inspired scribe.<sup>124</sup> Ben Sira's perception of Job 15,17b is radical. While the *tradio* is not revised *per se*, its meaning has been extended far beyond Eliphaz's personal experience to encompass that of Ben Sira. The exegetical form used in this aggadic interpretation is embedded, as the allusion to Job 15,17b is a covert presentation of the *tradio* in connection with its new application in Sir 42,15b. The aggadic *tradio* exhibits no shift of voice; both Job 15,17b and Sir 42,15b express authority by means of the narrative voice. In this way Ben Sira's teaching in Sir 42,15b is presented in continuity with that of Eliphaz in Job 15,17b. This particular appeal to Eliphaz is centrally important in terms of exegetical legitimation. In the book of Job, Eliphaz presents himself as a teacher of traditional wisdom who grounds his teaching authority in both personal experience of the created order and in divinely inspired revelatory experience. Thus, as with Sir 42,15a, the *tradio* is legitimated by appeal to Ben Sira's own divinely-appointed prophetic scribal authority to interpret that which has been given

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<sup>124</sup> Cf Sir 39,6bc: πνεύματι συνέσεως ἐμπλησθήσεται, αὐτὸς ἀνομβρήσει ῥήματα σοφίας αὐτοῦ and Sir 39,8a: αὐτὸς ἐκφανεῖ παιδείαν διδασκαλίας αὐτοῦ.

him through personal and revelatory experience. In this way Sir 42,15, the opening line of the poem, functions as a general statement of the prophetically-inspired legitimation of all the biblical allusions which follow in the poem.

**(c) Sir 42,16b/Ps 104,31**

The third allusion in Sir 42,16b (וכבוד אדני מלא מעשיו) is to Ps 104,31 (יהי כבוד יהוה לעולם ישמח יהוה במעשיו) occurring in a hymn to the Creator God which has many resemblances to the Egyptian *Hymn to the Aton*. Specifically Ps 104,31 states that YHWH's glory is manifest in the magnificence of the created world. Sir 42,16 also takes up the traditional biblical idea<sup>125</sup> that God's glory is spread throughout the world. However, in Sir 42,16 this is presented in the very specific image of the sun's splendour. Like the shining sun, "la gloria di Dio è diffusa e percepibile quasi sensibilmente, perciò lo studio o anche la semplice constatazione di quanto è percepibile rende coscienti e partecipi di essa."<sup>126</sup> Two key concepts found in the *traditum* (Ps 104,31a), divine glory (כבוד יהוה) and created works (במעשיו), occur also in the *traditio* (Sir 42,16b) as וכבוד אדני מלא מעשיו. The form of the verbs used in the *traditum* is jussive

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<sup>125</sup> Isa 6,3; Ps 104,31. However, it is most unlikely that Isa 6,3 is the *traditum* alluded to here for a number of reasons. The philological links between Isa 6,3 and Sir 42,16b are based on the occurrence of the Tetragrammaton (יהוה) along with the roots מלא and כבוד. However, Sir 42,16b shares these philological links with eleven other texts (Exod 40,34.35; Num 14,21; 1 Kgs 8,11; 2 Chron 5,14; 7,1.2; Ezek 10,4; 43,5; 44,4; Hab 2,14). Thus, volume is far too poor to support a specific allusion to Isa 6,3. Furthermore, the context of Isa 6,3 is the liturgy of the Jerusalem Temple in which YHWH's כבוד or *power over the nations* was proclaimed. Ps 104,31 for which volume is very good, occurs in the context of a creation hymn celebrating YHWH's כבוד or *divine magnificence manifest in creation*. Finally, it should be noted that none of the scholars and commentaries surveyed in this study suggest any allusion to Isa 6 in the *Works of God in Creation*.

<sup>126</sup> Prato, *Teodicea*, 159.

(יהי ... חמא), thus making Ps 104,31a into a wish that YHWH's glory be eternal and that YHWH rejoice in the works of his creation. In the *traditio* the meaning has been subtly changed. The verb מלא, a Piel perfect, relates YHWH's glory and his created works. In short, the *traditio* is an affirmation that YHWH's glory fills the creation and the transformation of the *traditum* is clearly aggadic.

As seen above, the Stoic perception of the manner in which the cosmos is permeated by the deity was derived from Zeno's biological speculation about the extension of πνεῦμα throughout the human body, whereby bodily sensation (αἴσθησις) occurred with the movement of the πνεῦμα from the soul's command centre (ἡγεμονικόν) to other bodily regions. This model of bodily πνεῦμα was then applied to the cosmos. The Stoics differed on what constituted the cosmic agent which interacted with the cosmos. For Zeno, it was πῦρ τεχνικόν; for Cleanthes it was creative fire located in the sun,<sup>127</sup> which itself functioned as the cosmic ἡγεμονικόν, while for Chrysippos it was the cosmic πνεῦμα, whose totally corporeal, penetrating and pervasive motion was responsible for the shapes and variety of created things. The manner in which YHWH's glory permeates creation (Sir 42,16b) forms the point of contact with Stoic thought. The aggadic reworking of Ps 104,31 suggests that Ben Sira, as with Stoic thought, understood that the deity permeated the cosmos. However, for Ben Sira it is YHWH's *fiery*<sup>128</sup>

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<sup>127</sup> SVF 1 §500: Κλεάθης ὁ Στωικὸς ἐν ἡλίῳ ἔφησεν εἶναι τὸ ἡγεμονικὸν τοῦ κοσμοῦ; "Cleanthes, qui quasi maiorum est gentium Stoicus, Zenonis auditor, solem dominari et rerum potiri putat."

<sup>128</sup> Divine glory is only mentioned by Ben Sira four times in his work. In Sir 47,8b he refers to the manner in which David proclaimed YHWH's glory. In Sir 42,16b.17d divine glory and creation are related. Sir 17,13 alludes to the manifestation of YHWH's glory at Sinai which in the MT is depicted as *fiery* (Exod 19,18; 24,17). M. Weinfeld, "קָבוֹד," in *TDOT*, vol. 7, ed. G. (continued...)

glory which permeates creation. This glory cannot be equated with the sun, which is only a simile of the manner in which YHWH's glory fills creation (Sir 42,16a). While the aggadic exegesis proceeds from the Stoic perception of the manner in which the cosmos is permeated by the deity, Ben Sira's thought is a complete rejection of Zeno's concept of cosmic permeation by πῦρ τεχνικόν and of Cleanthes' solar ἡγεμονικόν. Accordingly, both *historical plausibility* and *satisfaction* are fulfilled.

The logical technique followed is supplementation as the *traditum* has been completely revised in two movements. The concepts of YHWH's glory and creation, unrelated in the *traditum*, have been brought together in the *tradio* while all the nuances of the jussive mood have been removed. Thus, Ben Sira has taken the psalmist's aspiration and transformed it into an affirmation coherent with Jewish tradition. In terms of the textual-narrative context Ben Sira's assertion is well argued. The manner in which YHWH's glory fills the creation is as obvious as the brilliant sun (שמש זורחת על כל נגלתה - Sir 42,16a). In short, "One would have to be physically and spiritually blind not to see God's glory in creation."<sup>129</sup> Ben Sira's mental matrix in relation to Ps 104,31a is radical in that the *traditum* is extensively revised and extended beyond the psalmist's aspiration concerning YHWH's glory and rejoicing, in favour of an affirmation of the ubiquity of YHWH's glory in creation. The exegetical form is embedded, as the allusion to Ps 104,31a is a covert presentation of the *traditum* in connection with its new application in Sir 42,16b. The aggadic *tradio* exhibits no shift of voice as both Ps 104,31a and Sir

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<sup>128</sup>(...continued)

Johannes Botterwick, Helmer Ringgren and Heinz-Josef Fabry, trans. David E. Green (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 22-38.

<sup>129</sup> Skehan-DiLella, *Ben Sira*, 491.

42,16b express authority by means of the narrative voice, thus presenting Ben Sira's teaching in Sir 42,16b in continuity with the psalmist's in Ps 104,31a.

**(d) Sir 42,17b/Ps 40,6**

The fourth putative allusion in Sir 42,17b (לספר כל נפלאותיו) is to Ps 40,6,

רבות עשית אתה יהוה אלהי נפלאותיך  
ומחשבתך אלינו אין ערך אליך  
אגידה ואדברה עצמו מספר

which occurs in a thanksgiving hymn (Ps 40,2-11). Specifically Ps 40,6 states that God has created so many wonders that the psalmist cannot number them. Sir 42,17 states that God's holy ones cannot recount all his wonders and that he has strengthened his hosts to withstand his glory. In traditional wisdom it was considered that such beings could not be in the presence of God nor adequately perform their duties.<sup>130</sup> Sir 42,17 deals with the universal presence of the creator God. This is first expressed negatively (v.17ab) and then positively (v.17cd).<sup>131</sup> In short, Sir 42,17 states that God's universal presence is manifested through heavenly beings, even though they cannot number all God's wonders.

The key concept linking the *traditum* (Ps 40,6) and the *traditio* is the recounting of YHWH's wonders. In the *traditum* the psalmist expresses an incapacity to recount YHWH's wonders (נפלאותיך) because they are too numerous (מספר). However, the *traditio* asserts that the heavenly hosts are incapable of recounting (לספר) God's wonders (נפלאותיו), despite their ability to stand before the divine glory (Sir 46,17bc). In the *traditum* the participle (נפלאות) has

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<sup>130</sup> Job 4,18; 15,15. The duties consisted in praising God (Ps 103,21; 148,2). Similar ideas are found at Qumran (1QM 12,1-8; 1QH 11,10-13).

<sup>131</sup> A similar pattern is found in Sir 17,32-18,3.

a second person singular suffix (ךי) affixed, while in the *traditio* it is a third person singular suffix (י). A direct prayer by the psalmist addressed to God has been transformed into a statement of Ben Sira about God's creation. The verb form in the *traditum* (מספר) is a Piel infinitive construct with the preposition -ב suggesting that the splendours of creation are too numerous, to achieve the aim of recounting it. In the *traditio* the verb form is a Piel infinitive construct with the preposition ל indicating a purpose or aim which God's holy ones are incapable of achieving. The idea expressed by the psalmist who fails to recount the splendours of creation because they are too numerous has been transformed into a statement about the inability of the heavenly host to recount creation because it is so resplendent. Ben Sira's argument is that while YHWH's glory permeates the creation, creatures are limited when recounting it. If this is so even for angelic beings who can stand before YHWH's glory, how more so for human creatures.

The aggadic exegesis here, as with Sir 42,15b, responds to the Stoic idea of the comprehension of the deity by observing the cosmos. For Ben Sira, the contemplation of God's presence in the wonders of creation (Sir 42,17b) lies even beyond the capacity of the heavenly beings (Sir 42,17a). From this point of view, the Stoic concept of a rational understanding of θεός is once again presented as deficient. Accordingly, both *historical plausibility* and *satisfaction* are fulfilled. The logical technique used is supplementation, since as seen above, the *traditum* has been completely revised. This extensive revision of the language of the *traditum* and its transformation from a prayer directed to God into a theological statement suggests once again that Ben Sira's mental matrix is radical. The exegetical form is embedded, while the aggadic *traditio*, exhibiting no shift of voice, is presented in the narrative voice as teaching in continuity with the psalmist.

**(e) Sir 42,18a/Job 38,16b**

The fifth allusion is in Sir 42,18a (תהום ולב חקר) to Job 38,16b (וּבְחַקֵּר תְהוֹם הַתְּהַלְכֶתָּ) YHWH's first speech in the book of Job is in Job 38,4-39,30, in which Job 38,16-18 deals specifically with the Netherworld. The phrase תְהוֹם בְּחַקֵּר in Job 38,16b refers to the primordial abyss which God brought under control by means of creation and stands for God's omnipotence and omnipresence.<sup>132</sup> The speech then is a challenge by the omnipotent God to Job's limited assertions which are based on human speculation. Sir 42,18-21 deals with divine omniscience. In particular, as with Job 38,16b, Sir 42,18 deals with God's omnipotence in spatial terms, but also in human terms by the introduction of לב. Sir 42,19 (מחזה חליפות ונהיות ומגלה חקר נסתרות) presents divine omnipotence in temporal terms while Sir 42,20 (לא נעדר ממנו כל שכל ולא חלפו כל דבר) expresses a similar idea to that in v.18, only expressed negatively. Human words and thoughts "restano controllate da Dio non perché esse siano la manifestazione di un pensiero o di una parola divina, ma perché fanno parte del mondo creato, che nella sua struttura rivela la presenza universale del creatore."<sup>133</sup>

The concept of searching the abyss (וּבְחַקֵּר תְהוֹם) found in the *traditum* (Job 38,16b) occurs also in the *traditio* (חקר - תהום ולב חקר - Sir 42,18a), but in a significantly modified manner. In the *traditum* the root חקר occurs as a noun (חִקָר) in a construct relationship with תְהוֹם denoting the recesses of the abyss. In the *traditio* the root חקר occurs as a verb, the object of which is both the abyss and the human heart (תהום ולב). YHWH's question about walking in the recesses of the abyss has

<sup>132</sup> Isa 51,9-10; Ps 33,7; 36,7; 89,10-11; Job 9,13; 26,12-13; 38,16.

<sup>133</sup> Prato, *Teodicea*, 166.

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been transformed by Ben Sira into a statement about divine capacity to search both the abyss and the human heart. Thus the exegetical reworking of Job 38,16b in Sir 42,18a is aggadic.

The point of contact between Sir 42,18a and Stoic thought is the comprehensibility of the human heart. For the Stoics, αἴσθησις or bodily sensation occurs with the movement of the corporeal πνεῦμα from the ἡγεμονικόν, or body's command centre or heart, to other bodily regions. Ben Sira, however, maintains the essentially inscrutable nature of the human heart which is known only to God (Sir 42,18ab). Thus, he establishes a relationship between the personal Creator God and the human heart, which is in keeping with Jewish biblical tradition<sup>134</sup> and allows for no merely rationalistic explanations. For Ben Sira the heart is the source of a person's interiority<sup>135</sup> and that dimension open to wisdom.<sup>136</sup> It is only by divine interaction with the human heart that one can attain wisdom.<sup>137</sup> Thus one of the goals of the ideal scribe is to direct the heart to seek out the Creator.<sup>138</sup> Ben Sira's argument that the human heart, like creation, is only

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<sup>134</sup> On this tradition see Heinz-Josef Fabry, "לֵב, לִבָּב," in *TDOT*, VII, 399-437 on the biblical understanding of the human heart. The heart denotes all aspects of personal identity: vital, affective, noetic and voluntative. In the religious realm the heart is the locus of God's influence. YHWH both governs the heart and knows the heart of all. The phrase וּבְחֵן לְבוֹת וּכְלִיּוֹת (Ps 7,10) is an epithet of YHWH in terms of divine capacity to know mortals. In Heb the noun לֵב occurs fifty-eight times, while לִבָּב occurs ten times; in G the noun καρδία occurs forty-six times.

<sup>135</sup> Sir 13,25a.26a; 14,3a; 22,19b; 36,25a; 37,14a.

<sup>136</sup> Sir 4,17e; 6,20b.32b; 22,16c.

<sup>137</sup> Sir 6,37c.

<sup>138</sup> Sir 39,6c.



comprehensible to the omniscient God, fulfils *historical plausibility* and *satisfaction* and quite likely proceeds from the Stoic rationalistic explanation of *αἴσθησις*.

The logical technique is one of supplementation by which the *traditum* has been completely revised by establishing a new relationship between its basic concepts (תחום, חקר) and by the introduction of the notion of the human heart (לב). In terms of textual-narrative context Sir 42,18-21 deals with divine omniscience. Ben Sira argues that the beauty and harmony of creation has its origins in God's wisdom. Accordingly, the Creator God is omniscient. Sir 42,18a introduces the idea of divine omniscience by portraying God as one who has both knowledge and control not only of the interiority of creation (the abyss) but also of the interiority of the human person (the heart). Ben Sira's mental matrix is once again radical as a divine rhetorical question about Job's inability to walk in the range of the deep in the *traditum* has been transformed in the *tradio* into a theological statement about the extent of divine omniscience. The exegetical form used in this aggadic interpretation is embedded, as the allusion to Job 38,16b is a covert presentation of the *traditum* in connection with its new application in Sir 42,18a. The aggadic *tradio* exhibits a major shift of voice: from the divine voice of the *traditum* to Ben Sira's voice in the poem, presenting the new teaching as his own, but in continuity with YHWH's own revelation.

**(f) Sir 42,21b/ Deut 6,4 and Sir 42,21d/Isa 40,14a**

The sixth allusion, found in Sir 42,21b (אחד הוא מעולם), is to Deut 6,4 (שמע יִשְׂרָאֵל יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ יְהוָה אֶחָד), while the seventh allusion in Sir 42,21d (את־מי נועץ נִיבִינְהוּ) is to Isa 40,14a (ולא צריך לכל מבין). Deut 6,4-9 is a basic, but ambiguous, exhortation made up from many imperatives and may have even

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been used as a traditional summons of the assembly to worship.<sup>139</sup> Its ambiguity lies in that it may be an affirmation of exclusive devotion to YHWH or of Jewish monotheism. While both meanings can be understood from the Hebrew text, it is probably more an affirmation of exclusive devotion to YHWH than a statement of monotheism. The study of Ben Sira's allusion to Deut 6,4 must address the issue of whether Ben Sira was monotheistic in outlook. Certainly "... at the beginning of its history Israel's religious practice was pluralistic, including the acknowledgement of a number of gods ... in the post-exilic period her religious practice was monolatrous and her theology monotheistic."<sup>140</sup> Sir 36,1-5 is an important text which allows some insight into Ben Sira's attitude to theological monotheism. For him, Israel's God is the Universal God (אלהי הכל - v.1a) and the Only God (כי אין אֵל אֲחֵר - v.5b). While Deut 6,4 states that YHWH alone is Israel's God (אֵלֵינוּ), Ben Sira affirms that Israel's God (אלהים) is the God of all peoples and the only God apart from whom there is no other. In this Ben Sira is a firm theological monotheist and, therefore, it is not improbable that he could re-interpret Deut 6,4 in monotheistic terms.

Isa 40,12-31, a text in which the majesty of the divine Creator is proclaimed, highlights the efficacy of divine wisdom in creation and argues that creation attests to the superiority of Israel's God. Since YHWH is incomprehensible and immeasurable (Isa 40,12-13), no one can advise or suggest how YHWH should act. Sir 42,21 affirms divine sapiential power by linking it to creation.<sup>141</sup> This is

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<sup>139</sup> Gerhard von Rad, *Deuteronomy*, OTL Series (London: SCM, 1966), 63.

<sup>140</sup> Andrew D. H. Mayes, "Kuntillet 'Ajrud," in *Archaeology and Biblical Interpretation*, ed. John R. Bartlett (London and New York: Routledge, 1997), 51-66, at 64.

<sup>141</sup> Prato, *Teodicea*, 167.

achieved by the parallelism between the two bicola in v.21. God regulates the mighty deeds of his wisdom in such a way that nothing is added or taken away. This is affirmed in the clear parallelism between v.21a (נְבוֹרוֹת חִכְמָתוֹ חֵן) and v.21c (לֹא נוֹסֵף וְלֹא נֹאצֵל). The corresponding parallelism between v.21b (אֶחָד הוּא מֵעוֹלָם) and v.21d (וְלֹא צָרִיךְ לְכָל מְבִיֵן) suggests that since God is from all eternity one, God is in no need of any counsellor.

The key phrase יְהוָה אֶחָד in the *traditum* (Deut 6,4b) reappears as אֶחָד הוּא in the *traditio* (Sir 42,21b), and is modified by the addition of the phrase מֵעוֹלָם. This eternal aspect of divine oneness underscores the immutability of Israel's God. Thus, Israel's exclusive devotion to YHWH in the *traditum* becomes, in the *traditio*, the basis for asserting the absolute quality of divine wisdom in monotheistic terms. This suggests an aggadic transformation of the *traditum*, which probably arises in response to the hellenistic attitude of *theocracy* (the tendency to regard different religions as the manifestations of a single deity) and the consequent attempt by Judaism to portray itself as the only authentic philosophical monotheism.<sup>142</sup> The hellenistic attitude towards foreign gods was to give them new names and incorporate them into the Greek pantheon,<sup>143</sup> and in some cases even to revere them in their older non-Greek forms:

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<sup>142</sup> Hengel, *Judaism and Hellenism*, I, 261-267.

<sup>143</sup> *Ibid.*, II 172-173n.27.

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But where they [the Greeks] raised themselves through philosophically-trained thought beyond the naive polytheistic native religion of the simple people and regarded the 'spiritual' Jewish worship of God, devoid of images, with goodwill, there was nevertheless no understanding of the way in which this religion was anchored in the law in a way which excluded all other forms of religious practice, and was inseparably bound up with the Jewish people and its history.<sup>144</sup>

This hellenistic universal religious attitude may be termed *theocracy*,<sup>145</sup> a tendency which dominated the doctrine of θεός articulated by Zeno: ἔν τε εἶναι θεὸν καὶ νοῦν καὶ εἰμαρμένην καὶ Δία πολλαῖς τε ἑτέραις ὀνομασίαις προσονομάζεσθαι. ...<sup>146</sup> Later commentators on Stoic theocracy would express similar opinions.<sup>147</sup> The tendency to theocracy in the Diaspora is attested to in Jewish witnesses. Two inscriptions<sup>148</sup> from the Ptolemaic period were found at Redesieh in Apollonopolis Magna, Upper Egypt: θεοῦ εὐλογία / θε(υ)όδοτος Δωρίωνος / Ἰουδαῖος σωθεὶς ἐκ πε / λ(άγ)ους, and Ἐυλογεῖ τὸν θεὸν / Πτολεμαῖος / Διονυσίου / Ἰουδαῖος. These were discovered in a temple dedicated to Pan, and clearly identify Pan and the Jewish God.<sup>149</sup>

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<sup>144</sup> *Ibid.*, I, 261.

<sup>145</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>146</sup> *SVF* 1 §102.

<sup>147</sup> Hengel, *Judaism and Hellenism*, I, 262; II, 174n.38. *De Deor. Nat.* 2 §§28.71 reads: "deus pertinens per naturam cuiusque rei, per terras Ceres, per maria Neptunus, alii per alia, poterunt intellegi qui qualesque sint"; *Ad A en.* 4 §638 reads: "et sciendum Stoicos dicere unum esse deum, cui nomina variantur pro actibus et officiis."

<sup>148</sup> Hengel, *Judaism and Hellenism*, I, 264.

<sup>149</sup> Ben Sira, following the spirit of the time, could say:  $\text{לכל הויה}$  (Sir 43,27b).

A similar thought is expressed by the author of the *Letter of Aristeas to Philocrates*, who outlines the Jewish universalist concept of God: τὸν γὰρ πάντων ἐπόπτην καὶ κτίστην θεὸν οὗτοι σέβονται, ὃν καὶ πάντες, ἡμεῖς δὲ, βασιλεῦ, προσονομάζοντες ἑτέρως Ζῆνα καὶ Δία.<sup>150</sup> Aristobulus and Josephus also portray the assimilation of the Jewish concept of God to Greek ideas as a presentation of the Jewish faith in terms of philosophical monotheism.<sup>151</sup> However, this assimilation did not represent the attitude of the majority of Diaspora Jews. Rather a negative, separatist tendency predominated and was articulated in the refusal to transfer non-Jewish divine names and concepts to the God of Israel by means of theocracy.

Inscriptions found at Ptolemais,<sup>152</sup> Mount Carmel,<sup>153</sup> and Dan<sup>154</sup> suggest strong evidence of theocracy in hellenistic Palestine. At Ptolemais (Acco) a mid-second century BCE inscription to the Syrian gods, Hadad and Atargatis, reads:

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<sup>150</sup> *Aristeas* §15.

<sup>151</sup> Hengel, *Judaism and Hellenism*, I, 265-266.

<sup>152</sup> M. **Avi-Yonah**, "Syrian Gods at Ptolemais - Acco," *IEJ* 9 (1959): 1-12; Hengel, *Judaism and Hellenism*, I, 261. II, 173n.28.

<sup>153</sup> M. **Avi-Yonah**, "Carmel and the God of Baalbek," *IEJ* 2 (1952): 118-124.

<sup>154</sup> Yoël **Arbeitman**, "Detecting the God Who Remained in Dan," *Hen* 16 (1994): 9-14; Avraham **Biran**, "To the God Who is in Dan," in *Temples and High Places in Biblical Times: Proceedings of the Colloquium in Honor of the Centennial of Hebrew Union College - Jewish Institute of Religion* (Jerusalem: Hebrew Union College - Jewish Institute of Religion: 1981), 142-151; Vassilos **Tzaferis**, "The 'God Who is in Dan' and the Cult of Pan at Baniyas in the Hellenistic and Roman Periods," in *Erlsr*, vol. 23 (Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society), 128-135.

[Α]ΔΑΔΩΙ ΚΑΙ ΑΤΑΡΓΑΤΕΙ	To Hadad and Atargatis
ΘΕΟΙΣ ΕΠΗΚΟΟΙΣ	The gods who listen to prayer
ΔΙΟΔΟΤΟΣ ΝΕΟΠΤΟΛΕΜΟΥ	Diodotus (the son) of Neoptolemos
ΥΠΕΡ ΑΥΤΟΥ ΚΑΙ ΦΙΛΙΣΤΑΣ	On behalf of himself and Philistia
ΤΗΣ ΓΥΝΑΙΚΟΣ ΚΑΙ ΤΩΝ	His wife and the
ΤΕΚΝΩΝ ΤΟΝ ΒΩΜΟΝ	Children (has dedicated) the altar
ΚΑΤΕΥΧΗΝ	In fulfilment of a vow. <sup>155</sup>

The names used imply that those who dedicated the altar were Greeks, while the mention of the children suggests colonists settled at Ptolemais. The gods addressed were clearly oriental, with no attempt made to disguise them. The use of the epithet ΕΠΗΚΟΟΙΣ suggests that the god in question was Hadad or Ba`al Šāmēm who was directly equated with Zeus.<sup>156</sup> The inscription sheds light on the nature of religious worship in Palestine in the early Hellenistic Period and "shows that the oriental gods still commanded the allegiance of the newly-settled Greeks and Macedonians, and *a fortiori* that of the Semitic natives of these cities."<sup>157</sup>

A plinth was discovered at Mount Carmel which formed part of a large statue and has the following inscription in front:

ΔΙΙ ΗΛΙΟΠΟΛΕΙΤΗ ΚΑΡΜΗΛΩ	To Heliopolitan Zeus (of) Carmel
Γ. ΙΟΥΛ-ΕΥΤΥΧΑΣ.	(by) Gaius Iulius Eutychas,

while on the side it is inscribed:

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<sup>155</sup> Avi-Yonah, "Syrian Gods," 3.

<sup>156</sup> *Ibid.*, 5-7. Avi-Yonah's conclusion is based on his analysis of the use of the epithet ΕΠΗΚΟΟΙΣ which denotes *healing* and *salvation* and was used in Greece of Asklepius, Telesphoros, Hygieia, Artes, Apollo, Aphrodite and Herakles. While the term was rarely used in Greece, it had more common usage in the Aegean islands where it was employed to describe oriental gods. In Syria it was used specifically of Zeus. See also Hengel, *Judaism and Hellenism*, I, 297-305 on the identification of Ba`al Šāmēm or Ba`al Šemīm (Aramaic) with Zeus.

<sup>157</sup> *Ibid.*, 12.

ΚΟΛ>ΚΑΙΣΑΡΕΥΣ

colonist (of) Caesarea.

While the plinth dates from the late second or early third century CE, Avi-Yonah argues that it implies, from hellenistic times onwards, the worship of the God of Baalbek under the guise of Iupiter Heliopolitanus who was equated with Hadad. The god was thus a semitic deity who combined the functions of the solar god of the "sun-city," Heliopolis and those of Ba`al, the god of rain and thunder. "We conclude therefore that the Ba`al of the Carmel was identical with Hadad, the 'Lord of Heaven', the great god of the Syrians and the Phoenicians ..." <sup>158</sup> The hellenization of Ba`al Šāmēm and his identification with Zeus suggests an *interpretatio graeca* of older semitic deities at Mount Carmel.

A bilingual inscription (Aramaic and Greek) discovered at Dan, and dated to third or second century BCE, reads:

ΘΕ ΩΙ  
[Τ]ΩΙ ΕΝ ΔΑΝΟΙΣ  
[Ζ]ΟΙΛΟΣ ΕΥΧΗΝ.  
נדר זילס לא

The Aramaic can be reconstructed from the Greek to read *בדן נדר זילס לאלהא* and may be translated as "In Dan, Zilas made a vow to the god." The name of the deity is not given, contrary to usual Greek custom. The use of the Greek plural ΔΑΝΟΙΣ may suggest a reference to the locality. However,

... it is possible that the plural form refers to the people or tribe whose god was so well known to them that it was unnecessary to name him. If so, the term "Danois" would not refer to the locality but rather to the name of the people who lived in the area. In our case, these would be the descendants of the tribe of Dan whose name persisted in later generations. <sup>159</sup>

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<sup>158</sup> Avi-Yonah, *God of Baalbek*, 12.

<sup>159</sup> Biran, "God Who is in Dan," 147.

Furthermore, it is possible

... to support the assumption that the traditional deity worshipped at Dan was not subjected to any sort of equation or fusion with some other god of Greek or Oriental essence. The god was accepted with its traditional identity, or at least under its local name and most probably with many of its original qualities. Only the form of the worship was readjusted, either to respond to the demands of the new devotees or to follow the fashion of the time.<sup>160</sup>

The god of Dan was not a Greek deity, but a well-known god recognized by the Danites, the mention of whom, and the fact that the inscription is bilingual, suggests a remembrance of YHWHistic worship. The evidence from Ptolemais, Carmel and Dan suggests that in hellenistic Palestine, theocracy took a form whereby older semitic deities were positively assimilated to Greek counterparts.

The point of contact between Sir 42,21b and hellenistic thought is the oneness of the deity. However, Ben Sira in the aggadic reworking of Deut 6,4 proclaims that the unique and immutable character of Israel's God has been so from eternity (מעולם) and is thus beyond assimilation to Greek universalist divine concepts. This view is underscored by the fact that Ben Sira was not an advocate of theocracy. Rather, he hoped that foreign nations would come to comprehend Israel's God as the only God, *in the same manner by which Israel understood God*.<sup>161</sup> His refusal to allow a transference of Greek conceptions of God to Israel's God puts him at odds with the writer of the *Letter of Aristeas to Philocrates*. In his affirmation of the oneness of Israel's God by allusion to Deut 6,4 *historical plausibility and satisfaction* are fulfilled.

The logical technique is by supplementation as the concept of exclusivity in the *traditum* has been completely revised by asserting in the *traditio* that divine

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<sup>160</sup> Tzaferis, "Dan," 130.

<sup>161</sup> Sir 36,5.



oneness is an eternal attribute of God (מעולם). This complete revision is further underscored by removing the *tradiium* from its legal and cultic context and by locating it as an aggadically reworked *tradio* in a sapiential context (Sir 42,21a). In terms of the textual-narrative context the aggadic *tradio* provides a powerful advocacy of Jewish monotheism. The active principle in creation is the limitless wisdom of Israel's God, the Creator God, who is eternally one and immutable. Ben Sira's mental matrix is radical as the *tradiium* is revised and extended beyond the particularity of Israel's exclusive devotion to its God, to a monotheistic presentation of that God in creational and sapiential concepts devoid of nationalistic and historically conditioned limitations. The exegetical form is embedded. The shift in voice is from the authoritative Mosaic voice presented in the *tradiium*, to Ben Sira's narrative voice in the *tradio*, thus presenting the teaching in Sir 42,21b in continuity with the tradition articulated by Moses (Deut 6,4b). However, while Ben Sira is indebted to the earlier Mosaic voice, it is his voice which is the stronger.

Ben Sira's allusion to, and reworking of, Deut 6,4 is made more emphatic by a further allusion to a prophetic text from Isaiah. Here, the key root linking the *tradiium* (Isa 40,14a) and the *tradio* (Sir 42,21d) is בין. In the *tradiium* it occurs in a question as a verb, the object of which is God (אֵתֵּמֵי נוֹעֵץ וַיְבַיֵּנֶהוּ). In the *tradio* it occurs in a statement as a participle, the implied object of which is God (וְלֹא צִדִּיק לְכֹל מִבֵּין). The question in the *tradiium* is rhetorical, voiced by the prophet and has the implied answer that nobody has instructed YHWH who is incomparable and immeasurable. Thus,

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... divine incomparability and immeasurability consist in the fact that nobody possesses the measures for pronouncing judgement on the divine planning and acting; as a result, nobody can give him advice, or say to him that in this or in that he ought to have acted rather differently.<sup>162</sup>

The *traditio* also affirms divine incomprehensibility, but grounds it in the immutable oneness of God (Sir 42,21a). Thus, the *traditum* is aggadically transformed and as seen with Sir 42,21a above, responds to the challenge to Judaism presented by hellenistic theocracy. For the Stoics, the θεός-principle could be comprehended rationally and venerated under the name of any divinity. Ben Sira refuses to apply such concepts to YHWH who, remaining fundamentally incomprehensible and absolutely self-sufficient in his oneness, does not require a counsellor. *Historical plausibility* and *satisfaction* can thus be regarded as fulfilled.

The logical technique is by supplementation as the *traditum* is completely revised by a transformation of the *traditum* from rhetorical question to theological statement, by changing the verb בִּין to the participle מִבִּין and by locating the aggadically reworked *traditum* in the context of divine immutability. In terms of textual-narrative context, Ben Sira argues that the Creator God, Israel's God, is incomparable and incomprehensible because of eternal oneness and immutability. Thus divine beauty and wisdom can only be glimpsed in and through the creation. The exegetical form used in this aggadic interpretation is embedded, as the allusion to Isa 40,14a is a covert presentation of the *traditum* in connection with its new application in Sir 42,21d. Ben Sira's mental matrix is radical as the meaning of the *traditum* is extended by its association with Jewish monotheism. There is a shift of voice from the prophetic voice in Isa 40,14a to the Ben Sira's voice in Sir 42,21d. In this way Ben Sira's teaching is presented in continuity with that of Isaiah, thus presenting his own role as truly prophetic.

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<sup>162</sup> Claus Westermann, *Isaiah 40-66: A Commentary*, OTL Series (London: SCM, 1969), 51.

The combination of these two allusions, from both Law and Prophets, allows Ben Sira to bring the entire weight of the Jewish biblical tradition to bear on hellenistic theocracy and to reject it. Its syncretistic tendency is rejected by a strong appeal to the Jewish monotheistic ideal, while any possible assimilation of YHWH to a divine Greek counterpart is repudiated by an emphatic assertion of the incomparability and incomprehensibility of the Creator God, namely YHWH, Israel's One God.

**(g) Sir 43,2a/Ps 19,7**

The eighth allusion, found in Sir 43,2a (שמש מופיע בצאתו חמה), is to Ps 19,7 (מקצה השמים מוצאו ותקופתו על-קצותם ואין נסתר מחמתו). Ps 19 contains two hymns: a creation hymn (Ps 19,1-7) and a wisdom hymn (Ps 19,8-15) thus underlining the connection between creation and wisdom theology. Sir 43,2-5, a text which has a very complex cultural, historical and biblical background,<sup>163</sup> focuses primarily on the sun's function to illuminate and heat the earth.<sup>164</sup> There are three important links between Sir 43,2-5 and Ps 19. First, there is an emphasis placed on God's word (ודברו - Sir 43,5b; תורת יהוה - Ps 19,8). Second, both texts offer a description of the sun on its course (Sir 43,2; Ps 19,7). Finally, the sun is regarded as a hero in both texts (אביר - Sir 43,5b; גבור - Ps 19,6b). By means of the allusion to Ps 19 Ben Sira links the powerful hero-like sun with God's grandeur. As one of God's created works the sun manifests the awesome power of God's word. Two terms from the *traditum* (Ps 19,7) מוצאו and מחמתו have

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<sup>163</sup> Prato, *Teodicea*, 172-177.

<sup>164</sup> Similar ideas are found in other Ancient Near Eastern texts; see James Pritchard, ed., "The Hymn to the Sun God," in *ANET*, 387-389.

been combined in the *tradio* (Sir 43,2a) as *בנאתו חמה*. In the *tradio* the sun is presented as one of God's works which reflects divine glory,<sup>165</sup> and is specifically referred to in terms of the sun's rising and its heat. In the *tradio* these two solar aspects are also mentioned of the sun which is presented as a divine creation (*כלי נורא מעשה אליון* - Sir 43,2b). There is no evidence that the *tradio* represents a text which has transcended its original meaning and become the basis for a new meaning. There is no exegetical reworking of the *tradio*; its language and imagery are borrowed by allusion simply for use in Sir 43,2a.

The point of contact between Sir 43,2a and Stoic thought is the significance of the sun. In the hellenistic world *solar theology*, derived from a fascination with astrology, was common-place, and was most evident in Stoic concepts of cosmogony, particularly Cleanthes' identification of the sun as τὸ ἡγεμονικὸν τοῦ κοσμοῦ, and in the doctrine of ἐκπύρωσις whereby the stars melted into the sun.<sup>166</sup> Posidonius (135-51 BCE) associated the sun with Zeus,<sup>167</sup> whose veneration under the title ὕψιστος was widespread throughout the hellenistic world, particularly in Palestine.<sup>168</sup> From the Jewish perspective advocated by Ben Sira, the sun is not of the *creative* order and identifiable with Zeus or Ba'al Šāmēm. On the contrary, the sun is of the *created* order and its shining merely reflects the even greater glory of its Creator, YHWH, Israel's God of whom the epithet *אליון* (Sir 43,2b) can be exclusively applied. Thus by means of the allusion

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<sup>165</sup> Ps 19,2: *הַשָּׁמַיִם מִסְפָּרִים כְּבוֹד־אֵל וּמַעֲשֵׂה יָדָיו מִגִּיד הַרְקִיעַ*.

<sup>166</sup> *SVF* 1 §§499.510.

<sup>167</sup> Hengel, *Judaism and Hellenism*, II, 159n.820.

<sup>168</sup> Avi-Yonah, "Syrian Gods," 6; Hengel, *Judaism and Hellenism*, I, 298.

in Sir 43,2a Ben Sira rejects Stoic concepts of cosmic permeation by  $\pi\upsilon\rho$   $\tau\epsilon\chi\nu\epsilon\iota\kappa\acute{o}\nu$  and of solar  $\eta\gamma\epsilon\mu\omicron\nu\epsilon\iota\kappa\acute{o}\nu$ . While there is no strong evidence of any aggadic reworking of the *tradtum*, the allusion to Ps 19,7 advances Ben Sira's assertion of the superiority of Jewish cosmology over its hellenistic counterpart.

**(h) Sir 43,6b/Gen 1,16**

The ninth allusion, found in Sir 43,6b (ממשלת קץ ואות עולם), is to Gen 1,16 (וַיַּעַשׂ אֱלֹהִים אֶת־שְׁנֵי הַמָּאֲרוֹת הַגְּדֹלִים אֶת־הַמָּאוֹר הַגָּדֹל לְמַשְׁלַח הַיּוֹם וְאֶת־הַמָּאוֹר הַקָּטָן לְמַשְׁלַח הַלַּיְלָה וְאֵת הַכּוֹכָבִים). Sir 43,6-8 contains four bicola on the subject of the moon, the role of which is linked to its calendrical function,<sup>169</sup> while Gen 1,1-2,4a deals with the creation of the world. Specifically Gen 1,14-19 deal with the fourth day and the creation of various astral bodies. Their function is to separate day and night, to rule, to be signs and to illuminate the earth. In Gen 1,16 the moon's function is to rule the night. For Ben Sira the moon's function is to be *אות עולם* (Sir 43,6b $\beta$ ) and thus perpetually regulate the calendar. This is a greater function than the measurement of time (ממשלת קץ) - Sir 42,6b $\alpha$ ).<sup>170</sup> Prato correlates Sir 43,6 and Gen 1,16 well together:

Abbiamo quindi un dominio stabile esercitato sull'alternarsi di tempi definiti: l'equivalenza con giorno e notte di Gen 1,16 non dice infatti che qui si debba intendere che la luna divide e distingue solo questi periodi di tempo, ma indica che alla luna va attribuito l'alternarsi di ogni tempo stabilito ... secondo un processo regolare e durevole.<sup>171</sup>

<sup>169</sup> Prato, *Teodicea*, 177-184.

<sup>170</sup> *Ibid.*, 178. The word קץ denotes a limited period of time.

<sup>171</sup> *Ibid.*, 179.

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For Ben Sira, the divinely appointed function of the moon is to regulate time, a viewpoint which is consonant with Gen 1,16. The key word linking Gen 1,16 (*tradtum*) and Sir 43,6b (*tradtio*) is ממשלה. In both the *tradtum* and *tradtio* the word determines the function of the moon. The *tradtum* portrays the moon's function as simply chronological (לממשלה הלילה), while in the *tradtio* the role is both chronological (ממשלה קץ) and calendarial (ואות עולם), a function further elucidated in Sir 43,7a in terms of liturgical seasons and feasts. Certainly the *tradtio* represents a text which has transcended its original meaning and become the basis of new meaning, indicating the presence of aggadic exegesis.

The aggadic exegesis in Sir 43,6b is probably related to the specific issue of the Jewish sectarian, or hellenistic, manner of calculating time. Little information is available about the calendar used by mainstream Judaism of the period, other than it was lunisolar. However, by Ben Sira's time a solar calendar had been adopted by the sectarian Essenes.<sup>172</sup> The solar calendar which was probably introduced from Ptolemaic Egypt and followed earlier hellenistic Egyptian models. While the Essenes did not worship the sun,<sup>173</sup> it did have a huge degree of symbolism for them. In this context the Essene calendar would have been easily understood outside mainstream Judaism.<sup>174</sup> Most importantly, the manner of

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<sup>172</sup> Hengel, *Judaism and Hellenism*, I, 235. This calendar allowed for a year of 364 days, divisible into four quarters of thirteen weeks. Each quarter consisted of thirty or thirty-one days. The year always began on a Wednesday and religious feasts never fell on a Saturday.

<sup>173</sup> This is alleged by Josephus in *Bell.* 2 §128.

<sup>174</sup> Hengel, *Judaism and Hellenism*, II, 157-158n.813. The Essene solar calendar required additional scriptural substantiation by means of *revelatio specialissima*. This led to the enlargement of the collection of 'revelation books' at Qumran, which in turn protected Essene view of creation and salvation history from hellenistic ideas; *idem*, "Scriptures and their Interpretation," 171-172.

calculating time was in itself an indicator of traditional Judaism, since in hellenistic Judea: "A life according to the Torah, corresponding to the laws of creation and the course of history was possible only with the correct calculation of time revealed by God."<sup>175</sup> A crucial question in pre-Maccabean hellenistic Judea must certainly have been around the issue of the divinely intended manner of calculating time. Ben Sira's aggadic reworking of Gen 1,16 by means of the shared key-word ממשלה emphasizes the continuity between the older *traditum* and the contemporary *tradio*, and by which the authority of the traditional mainstream Jewish lunisolar calendar is grounded in God's intention at the dawn of creation. Thus both *historical plausibility* and *satisfaction* are fulfilled.

The logical technique used is supplementation. The *traditum* of Gen 1,16 is alluded to by means of reference to the moon and its function in terms of the verb ממשלה, which has for its object הלילה, indicating a chronological function. In the *tradio* this chronological function is maintained by retaining the exact verb form with the object קץ. However, in the *tradio* Ben Sira extends the chronological function to a wider calendrical function by means of the phrase ואות עולם. In terms of textual-narrative context, Stanza Two (Sir 43,1-12) of the *Works of God in Creation* is concerned with specific creatures of God and their usefulness. While the subject of the moon receives less text space in the poem (four bicola) than the sun (five bicola), the former is of greater usefulness because of its function to regulate times and seasons. This enlarged function is then explained in Sir 43,7a. This aggadically inferred function is presented in the language of Gen 1,16 suggesting that the moon's calendrical function was part of the divinely intended order of creation. In short, Ben Sira indicates clearly that the divinely intended

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<sup>175</sup> Hengel, *Judaism and Hellenism*, I, 235.

calendar was lunar, and so from the beginning.<sup>176</sup> In terms of mental matrix Ben Sira's perception of Gen 1,16 is radical in that the *traditum* is revised and extended by the introduction of the moon's crucial calendrical function. The exegetical form used in this aggadic interpretation is embedded. There is no shift of voice. Both Gen 1,16 and Sir 43,6b, using the narrative voice, present the *traditio* as teaching in continuity with Gen 1,16.

**(i) Sir 43,11/Ezek 1,28**

The tenth allusion is in Sir 43,11 (ראה קשת וברך עשיה כי מאד נהדרה בכבוד) to Ezek 1,28:

כַּמְרָאָה הַקֶּשֶׁת אֲשֶׁר יְהִיָּה בְּעֵינַי בְּיוֹם הַנִּשְׁמָה  
כִּן מְרָאָה הַנְּנָה סְבִיב הוּא מְרָאָה דְּמוּת כְּבוֹד־יְהוָה  
וְאֲרָאָה וְאֶפְלַע עַל-פְּנֵי וְאִשְׁמַע קוֹל מְדַבֵּר.

Ezek 1,1-28 deals with Ezekiel's vision of God. Specifically v.28 portrays the theophany in which YHWH calls Ezekiel to his mission as culminating in a glorious rainbow, which functions as a symbolic circumlocution for YHWH.<sup>177</sup> Sir 43,9-12 contains four bicola on the stars (vv.9-10) and the rainbow (vv.11-12).<sup>178</sup> As with the stars, the portrait of the rainbow emphasizes glory and beauty (כבוד - vv.11b.12a; נהדרה - v.11b; בנבורה - v.12b). However, the focus is not exclusively on luminosity and splendour, but on theophany. This is introduced by the allusion to

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<sup>176</sup> Appendix Two, page 342n.54 below. For MsM, MsB<sup>msg</sup>, G and Syr the moon is the subject of the verse. For MsB<sup>bt</sup> it is both sun and moon. Yadin, *Masada*, 30: "We may assume that *Btext* here is perhaps influenced by the *Ben Sira* recension originating with the Dead Sea Sect, where a deliberate attempt was made to introduce the sun as a factor in determining the seasons ..."

<sup>177</sup> The only other biblical example in which YHWH's majesty is so manifested is found in Exod 33,18-23.

<sup>178</sup> Prato, *Teodicea*, 186-187.



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Ezek 1,28. In the *Works of God in Creation* Ben Sira uses various elements of creation to portray divine theophany: firmament, sun, moon, stars, rainbow, hail, lightning, clouds, thunder, wind, storm, snow, frost, heat, dew, sea and messenger. The mention of the rainbow, and the allusion to theophany from Ezek 1,28, marks the transition point from celestial elements (dealing with the origins of creation) to atmospheric elements linked to the human world). The two important concepts in the *traditum* (Ezek 1,28) are the appearance of the rainbow (בְּמֵרָאָה הַקֶּשֶׁת) and divine glory (כְּבוֹד־יְהוָה). YHWH's glory is what is observed by Ezekiel who likens it to a splendid rainbow. These basic concepts are found in the *traditio* (Sir 43,11) where Ben Sira urges a contemplation of the rainbow (רֵאֵה קֶשֶׁת) because of its glory (כִּי מֵאֵד נִהְדַּרְהָ בְּכִבוֹד), which leads to the blessing of its Maker. The noun used in the *traditum* (מֵרָאָה) has been changed to an imperative (רֵאֵה) in the *traditio*. In the *traditum* the noun (כְּבוֹד) is used of YHWH, but in the *traditio* it refers to the rainbow, suggesting the presence of aggadic exegesis.

Once again, the aggadic exegesis provides a response to Stoic cosmogony. For Ben Sira, who as seen in Sir 42,16 above, rejects both Zeno's concept of cosmic permeation by πῦρ τεχνεαόν and Cleanthes' solar ἡγεμονεαόν, the observation of the glory of the rainbow leads directly to the contemplation of YHWH's fiery glory. Thus, *historical plausibility* and *satisfaction* are fulfilled. Logical technique is by supplementation as the *traditum* is extensively revised. The appearance of the rainbow in the *traditum* (בְּמֵרָאָה הַקֶּשֶׁת) has been transformed in the *traditio* into a command to contemplate the rainbow (רֵאֵה קֶשֶׁת). In the *traditum* the rainbow is presented as a simile of YHWH's glory. In the *traditio* the rainbow's glory is that which leads to contemplation of the implied glory of the Creator God. In terms of textual-narrative context, Ben Sira argues that the

contemplation of such a glorious object as the rainbow leads to a deeper contemplation or blessing of its Maker. This movement from the contemplation of a created object to that of its Maker runs through the entire poem.<sup>179</sup> Ben Sira's mental matrix is once again radical as the *traditum* has undergone extensive revision. No longer is the rainbow a simile for divine glory, but its own glory leads the observer to contemplate the even greater glory of its Maker; the glory of the rainbow leads directly to YHWH's glory and not merely by analogy. The exegetical form used in this aggadic interpretation is embedded, as the allusion to Ezek 1,28 is a covert presentation of the *traditum* in connection with its new application in Sir 43,11. There is no shift in voice, as both the *traditum* and the *traditio* use the narrative voice, thus presenting Ben Sira's teaching in Sir 43,11 in continuity with that of Ezekiel.

**(j) Sir 43,17a/Isa 29,6b and Ps 29,8a**

The eleventh and twelfth allusions, in Sir 43,17a (קול רעמו יחיל ארץ), are to Isa 29,6b (בְּרַעַם וּבְרַעַשׁ וְקוֹל גְּדוֹל) and Ps 29,8a (קוֹל יְהוָה יַחִיל מִדְבָּר). Isa 29,1-8 is a woe oracle announcing a siege against Jerusalem. Vv.5-8 portray YHWH's salvation using the image of a rainstorm, in which the thunder and earthquake are part of a "teofania di punizione"<sup>180</sup> which obediently manifests YHWH's presence. Ben Sira presents the same phenomena in Sir 43,17a as something resulting from, and obedient to, YHWH's voice (קול רעמו). Ps 29 is a YHWHistic adaptation of a Canaanite hymn to Ba`al in which YHWH's supremacy and universal rule are proclaimed. In particular, Ps 29,3-9a describes YHWH's

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<sup>179</sup> Sir 42,16; 43,2.5a.27b.28-29.

<sup>180</sup> Prato, *Teodicea*, 190.

glory as that of a divine warrior whose power nothing can resist. The reference in Sir 43,17a to the seismological effect of YHWH's thunder is typical language of theophany. What is important is that the thunder, as with all the other elements of nature mentioned in the stanza, carry out God's will. Key concepts in the *tradita* (Isa 29,6b and Ps 29,8a) such as the nouns קול (Isa 29,6b and Ps 29,8a), רעם (Isa 29,6b) and the verb form יחיל (Ps 29,8a) occur in Sir 43,17a (קול רעמו יחיל). In the Isaiah *traditum* קול and רעם function as traditional theophanic elements indicating the presence of YHWH. In the Psalm *traditum* רעם and יחיל function together to present a storm as a divine manifestation of power. In the *traditio* these elements are combined together and given a new meaning in that the writhing of the earth at the sound of YHWH's thunderous voice is not presented as theophany *per se*, but as another example of the creation doing the will of the Creator.

Once again the aggadic exegesis addresses the Stoic concept of divine permeation by the deity. For the Stoics, θεός is rational cosmic force, which in its inter-penetration of ύλη constitutes the material cosmos. For Ben Sira, this is a deficient viewpoint. Θεός, for him, is Israel's God, the Creator God, who creates the material cosmos, but is *distinct* from it. This distinction is clearly manifest in the dramatic way creation responds to divine theophany, particularly by thunder and earthquake. In arguing thus, *historical plausibility* and *satisfaction* are fulfilled.

Two texts, one dealing with the theophanic aspect of YHWH's noise and the other with its seismic aspect, have been combined to portray creation responding to its Maker. Since two texts not meaningfully related in the Hebrew Bible have been combined and a new conclusion drawn from them, the logical technique used here is סמוכין.<sup>181</sup> In terms of textual-narrative context Stanza Three (Sir 43,13-26)

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<sup>181</sup> Fishbane, *Biblical Interpretation*, 424-425.

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of the *Works of God in Creation* deals with various natural elements doing the will of their Creator; Sir 43,17a specifically mentions thunder in this capacity. Ben Sira's mental matrix is radical. While the terminology of the original *tradita* is preserved in the *traditio*, the meaning derived from them is radically new. For Ben Sira the convulsing of the earth in the presence of divine thunder is not about recognizing the sacred presence of God, but another example of the creation acting in obedience to its Creator. The exegetical form used in the aggadic *traditio* is embedded as the allusion to Isa 29,6b and Ps 29,8a is a covert presentation of the *tradita* in connection with the new application in Sir 43,17a. In the Isaiah *traditum* the voice is YHWH's, which in the *traditio* becomes the voice of Ben Sira. In the Psalm *traditum* the voice is that of the psalmist, which becomes the voice of Ben Sira in the *traditio*. In this way, Ben Sira's own teaching is presented in continuity with the revelation and wisdom of Israel's biblical traditions.

#### (k) Sir 43,17b/Isa 29,6c

The thirteenth allusion, found in Sir 43,17b (צפון סופה וסערה), is to Isa 29,6c (סופה וסערה וְלֵב אִשׁ אוֹכֵלָה). All that has been said above in relation to thunder and earthquake (Sir 43,17a/Isa 29,6b) is applicable here also. The *traditum* (Isa 29,6c) uses the phrase סופה וסערה which is identical to that found in the *traditio* (Sir 43,17b). In the *traditum* סופה וסערה are traditional elements of theophany in the context of wrath and judgement.<sup>182</sup> In the *traditio* they have been divested of their traditional meaning and are presented as yet another example of the creation responding obediently to its Maker. Most of what has been considered regarding the aggadic exegesis of Sir 43,17a can be reiterated here

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<sup>182</sup> Skehan-DiLella, *Ben Sira*, 494.

in terms of textual-narrative context, mental matrix, exegetical form and legitimation. The logical technique used is supplementation. While the phrase *סופה וסערה* is not modified in itself, the change of context, from theophanic wrath and judgement to a creational setting, leads to a complete revision of the *traditum*. The shift in voice is from the divine voice of the *traditum* to Ben Sira's voice in the *traditio*. Thus, not only is Ben Sira's teaching presented in continuity with divine revelation manifest in Israel's biblical traditions, but in a prophet-like manner he annunciates a divine message for his contemporaries. In short, the words are those of Ben Sira, but the voice is that of YHWH.

**(I) Sir 43,19a/Ps 147,16b and Sir 43,25a/Ps 107,24**

The fourteenth and fifteenth allusions are in Sir 43,19a (וגם כפור כמלח ישבך) to Ps 147,16b (כפור כַּאֲפֹר יִפּוֹר) and in Sir 43,25a (שם פלאות תמהי מעשהו) to Ps 107,24 (הַמָּה רָאוּ מַעֲשֵׂי יְהוָה וּנְפִלְאוֹתָיו בַּמַּבּוּלָה). Ps 147 is a post-exilic communal hymn. Specifically Ps 147,12-20 is an invitation to praise YHWH whose creative word is visible in the natural world. Sir 43,19a takes up the meteorological phenomenon of frost which is highlighted in terms of its brilliance, thus diluting the somewhat negative tone of Ps 147,16b where frost is compared to ashes, and is portrayed as complying with God's will. Ps 107 is a communal thanksgiving hymn in which the experiences of storm-tossed, yet divinely saved, sea-voyagers are related. In Ps 107,24 the voyagers witness YHWH's wonders in the sea. The majesty and splendour of the sea is the subject of Sir 43,23-26. Ps 147,16b is alluded to in Sir 43,19a. The noun *כפור* occurs in both the *traditum* (Ps 147,16b) and *traditio* (Sir 43,19a). In the *traditum* *כפור* is the object of YHWH's scattering (*יפּוֹר*) and is just one example of YHWH's creative word active in

creation. In the *tradio* the noun כפור is the object of YHWH's pouring (ישפך) and is presented as an element of creation doing the will of the Creator. There is no aggadic transformation of meaning in the movement from *tradio* to *tradio*; Ben Sira has simply borrowed an image from Ps 147,16b and used it in his poem. Similarly Ps 107,24 is alluded to in Sir 43,25. In the *tradio* (Ps 107,24) divine wonders (נפלאותיו) and deeds (מעשי יהוה) in the seas are mentioned. These also occur in the *tradio* (Sir 43,25) as פלאות ... מעשהו. Once again there is no aggadic transformation of meaning in the movement from *tradio* to *tradio*. Ben Sira has simply borrowed imagery from the Hebrew Bible for reuse in the poem. The allusions already serve his purpose to present the entire cosmos in obedience to the will of Israel's God.

**(m) Sir 43,28/Ps 145,3 and Job 5,9a**

The final two examples of the representative sampling of Ben Sira's biblical allusions are in Sir 43,28 (נגדלה עוד כי לא נחקר והוא גדול מכל מעשיו) to both Ps 145,3 (גדול יהוה ומקלל מאד ולגדלתו אין חקר) and to Job 5,9a (עשה גדלות ואין חקר). Ps 145 is an acrostic hymn in which vv.1-10 praise the greatness and might of YHWH. Ps 145,3 advocates praise of YHWH since his greatness is without limit. Job 5,9a occurs in Eliphaz's message of assurance to Job (Job 5,3-16). Job 5,9-16 is a doxology praising the creator God of the wisdom tradition, in which Job 5,9a focuses on God as a maker of marvels. In short, the entire doxology presents God as "the wonder worker, champion of social justice, rainmaker, and master mind controlling all wisdom and strategies on earth."<sup>183</sup> Sir 43,28-30 contains typical elements found in many creation hymns: an invitation to

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<sup>183</sup> Habel, *Job*, 134.

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praise (Sir 42,28α); the motives for praise which usually consist of divine attributes (Sir 43,28αβ-29); a conclusion ending on a note of praise (Sir 43,30). Sir 43,28 argues that since God, who is beyond human comprehension and greater than his created works, is so awesome he is to be praised.

The key concepts found in the psalm *traditum* are that YHWH *himself* is great (גדול) with a greatness which is unsearchable (ולגדלתו אין חקר). The important concepts found in the Job *traditum* are that YHWH's *deeds* are great and unsearchable (עשה גדלות ואין חקר). The *traditio* (Sir 43,28) asserts that God is to be praised since he is unsearchable (כי לא נחקור) and greater than his creation (והוא גדול מכל מעשיו). The transformation of the two *tradita*, by establishing a necessary connection between them in the *traditio*, is aggadic and probably is offered in response to the Stoic concepts of cosmogony and of the relationship between the θεός-principle and the cosmos. The link between the greatness of the θεός-principle and the cosmos is emphasized in Cleanthes' *Hymn to Zeus*:

ὄφρ' ἄν τιμηθέντες ἀμειβώμεσθ' ἀ σε τιμῆ,  
ὑμνοῦντες τὰ σὰ ἔργα διηνεκές,  
ὡς ἐπέοικε θνητὸν ἔόντ',  
ἐπεὶ οὔτε βροτοῖς γέρας ἄλλο τι μείζον,  
οὔτε θεοῖς, ἢ κοινὸν ἀεὶ νόμον ἐν δίκῃ ὑμνεῖν.<sup>184</sup>

Thus for a Stoic like Cleanthes, observation of the cosmos and the rationalistic comprehension of the θεός-principle underlying it, leads mortals to the hymnic praise of the creator and thus κοινὸν ἀεὶ νόμον ἐν δίκῃ ὑμνεῖν. In place of the Stoic rationalist model of comprehending God, Ben Sira asserts God's

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<sup>184</sup> SVF 1§537.

fundamentally unfathomable dimension (כי לא נחקור - v.28aβ). Furthermore, his emphatic statement that Israel's God is far greater than the entire created cosmos (והוא גדול מכל מעשיו - v.28b) is a resounding condemnation of the deficiency of the Stoic understanding of θεός as a cosmic principle of created matter. In this way Ben Sira presents his concept of the Creator God as superior to the Stoic view. Accordingly, both *historical plausibility* and *satisfaction* are considered fulfilled.

Logical technique is by סמוכין as two texts not related in the biblical tradition have been juxtaposed and a new conclusion drawn from them. In terms of textual-narrative technique Stanza Four (Sir 43,27-33) of the *Works of God in Creation* deals with the greatness of God who is the Maker of the wondrous creation. In Sir 43,27 (הוא הכל) Ben Sira states that God is revealed in the splendours of creation. However, since the capacity of human beings to comprehend the creation is limited (עוד כאלה לא נוסף), how much more is God beyond human comprehension and so to be extolled. Ben Sira's mental matrix is again radical as the *tradita* are extensively revised by their juxtaposition. The necessary connection between the unsearchable quality of YHWH and of his deeds, allows Ben Sira, in the face of divine incomprehensibility, to bring to an end on a note of praise a poem, which has enumerated the great creational acts of God. The exegetical form is embedded as with all Ben Sira's allusions. In the case of the psalm *traditum* there is no shift of voice, as the voice of the psalmist in the *traditum* becomes Ben Sira's voice in the *traditio*. In the case of the Job *traditum* there is no shift of voice from Eliphaz's narrative voice to Ben Sira's voice in Sir 43,28. Ben Sira's teaching is thus presented in continuity with Israel's sapiential traditions.



### 3.5 Ben Sira's Biblical Interpretation: Conclusions

A number of important conclusions can be drawn on the basis of this study. In the first place, the issue of identifying Ben Sira's biblical allusions in Heb is methodologically difficult. This is due to the fluidity of the Hebrew biblical textual tradition in the second century BCE, the specific difficulties involved in studying Heb, namely its divergence from G and Syr, its glosses and retroversions, and the fact that there may well be other Israelite traditions alluded to in the text which can no longer be identified. An intertextual approach operating within these methodological constraints, while not permitting the identification of all Ben Sira's allusions and intertextual echoes, does allow for the possibility of identifying a controlled, representative sampling of allusions, through the rigorous application of intertextual criteria. The approach of previous scholarship, content to claim biblical allusions on the basis of the criteria of *availability* and *volume* alone, has at times made for an over-exuberant and somewhat hasty identification of Ben Sira's biblical allusions. The claim by Schechter and Taylor, for instance, to offer a complete list "containing the phrases, idioms, typical expressions, and even whole verses about which there can be no reasonable doubt that they were either suggested to him [Ben Sira] by or directly copied from the Scriptures" is typical of this over-enthusiastic approach.<sup>185</sup> The intertextual criteria applied to Ben Sira's putative biblical allusions are analogous to a photochromatic filter. When a landscape is viewed through a filter of a particular colour, certain features are prominent while other aspects remain faint or even invisible. Consequently precise filters are chosen to view particular aspects of a landscape under investigation. The application of the intertextual criteria chosen by this study reveals only Ben Sira's more obvious biblical allusions and cannot detect weaker allusions and

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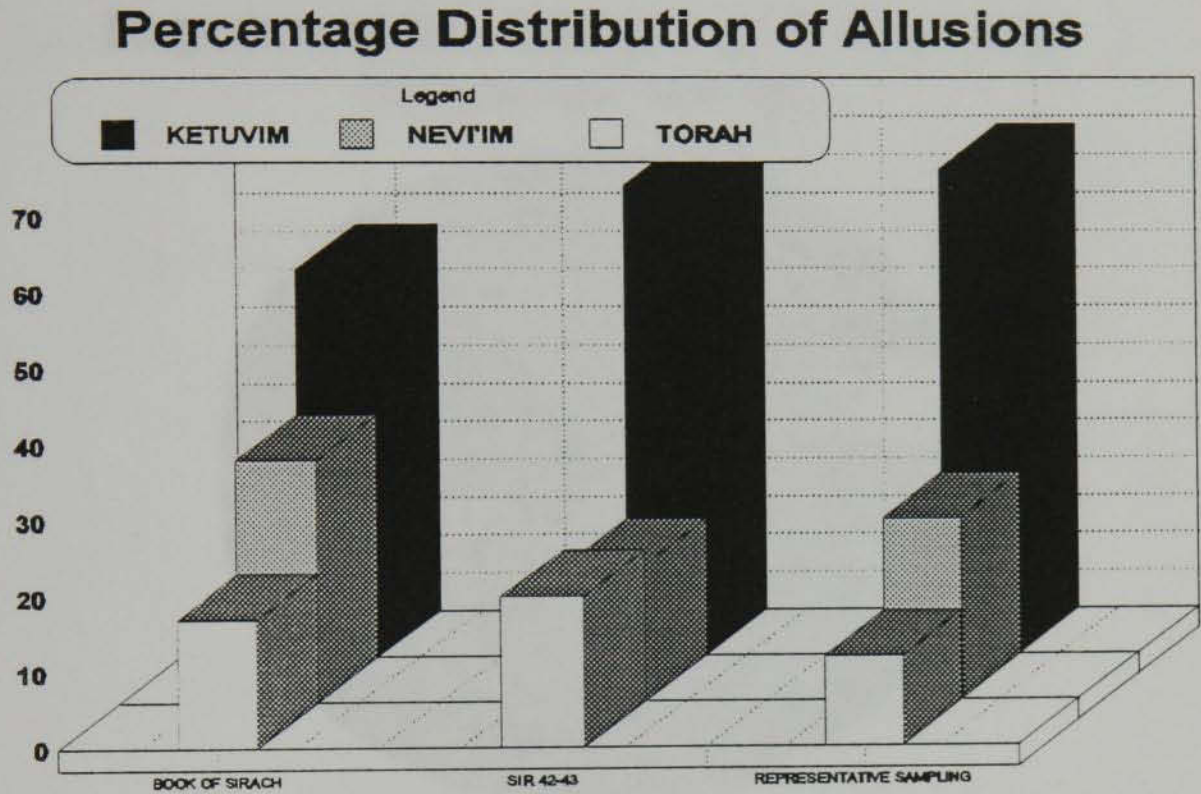
<sup>185</sup> Schechter-Taylor, *Wisdom of Ben Sira*, 13.

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fainter intertextual echoes. While this is a limitation, it does offer one significant advantage: the obvious biblical allusions thus identified, are in all probability directly intended by Ben Sira and permit the study of his re-interpretation of biblical texts.

The distribution of the representative sampling of allusions among the three divisions of the Hebrew Bible, when compared with similar distributions for putative allusions in the entire book of Sirach and in the *Works of God in Creation*, reveals an interesting pattern, illustrated below in Figure 01.

Figure 01

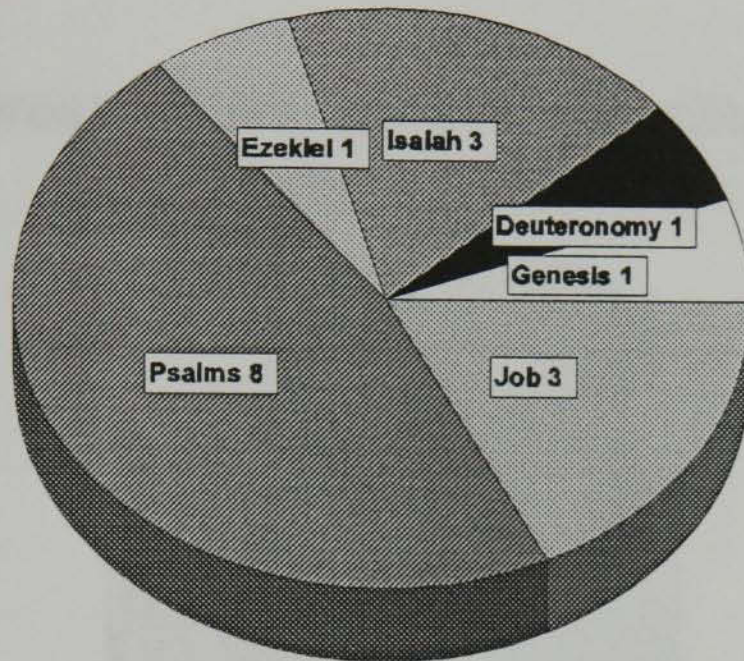


The distribution of allusions in the representative sampling is broadly similar to that for the distribution of putative allusions in the entire book. In both patterns, allusions to the "other ancestral books," denoted *Ketuvim* in Figure 01, predominate with a higher proportion in the representative sampling. This is to be expected in a sapiential work such as Sirach in general, and in a creation poem in particular. The pattern becomes more obvious when the distribution of allusions in the representative sampling among specific biblical books is taken into account. This is illustrated graphically in Figure 02, below.

Figure 02

## Representative Sampling of Allusions

Distribution In the Hebrew Bible



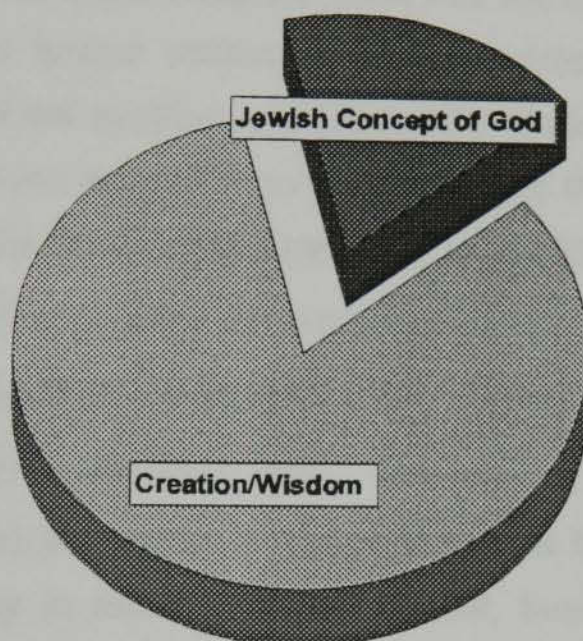
Nearly 75% of the allusions are drawn from two of the "other ancestral books," Psalms and Job. Since the bulk of the allusions used by Ben Sira in the *Works of God in Creation* has been drawn from the books outside what was probably the canon of Ben Sira's day, a pattern suggested by the distribution of putative allusions throughout the entire book of Sirach, it is highly probable then that Ben Sira's scribal activity may well have played a significant role in the eventual canonization of these books in Judaism. However, a study of Ben Sira's aggadic reinterpretation of the biblical tradition suggests that his choice of allusions may have been determined more by the manner in which these lent themselves to the development of his teachings, than by any consideration of which actual books of

the biblical tradition they derived from. Accordingly, it is worth examining the thematic distribution of allusions in the representative sampling, which is illustrated graphically in Figure 03, below.

Figure 03

## Representative Sampling of Allusions

Thematic Distribution



Creation or sapiential themes are found in over 80% of the allusions. Three allusions are concerned with specifically Jewish concepts of God derived from Israel's unique experience of YHWH: exclusive worship,<sup>186</sup> YHWH's divine כבוד,<sup>187</sup>

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<sup>186</sup> Deut 6,4.

<sup>187</sup> Ezek 1,28.

and unsearchability.<sup>188</sup> In choosing these particular allusions, Ben Sira may have opted for texts which allowed him to dialogue with Hellenism about the relationship between the Deity and the cosmos, while at the same time adhering to essential Jewish belief.

These patterns of distribution suggest that Ben Sira was extremely familiar with the biblical traditions of Israel and specifically identified and chose quite calculatingly the texts he required for the development of his teaching because of the ease with which he could integrate them into his contemporary intellectual framework.<sup>189</sup> This is further confirmed by the precise manner in which he reworked the texts of the *tradtum* into his *tradtio*. This thorough knowledge of Israel's biblical traditions derived from close study of these traditions. Generic terminology used in the *Poem on the Ideal Scribe* (Sir 38,24-39,11) may now be better understood. Phrases such as διανοουμένου ἐν νόμῳ (Sir 38,34d), and σοφίαν πάντων ἀρχαίων ἐκζητήσει (Sir 39,1a), ἐν ... προφητείαις ἀσχοληθήσεται (Sir 39,1b), and διήγησιν ἀνδρῶν ὀνομαστῶν συντηρήσει (Sir 39,2a) are not the language of precise biblical interpretation but denote scribal activity in terms of close, careful, busily occupied study and retention of the biblical traditions whether Torah, famous discourses, prophecies, or wisdom. Clearly what Ben Sira claims the ideal scribe *ought to do* in respect of the study of the biblical traditions, *he actually does* and very effectively. The autobiographical texts in which Ben Sira deals specifically with his role as scribe must also be seen in this light. His interpretative work is but a rivulet derived from

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<sup>188</sup> Ps 145,3.

<sup>189</sup> Gerald T. Sheppard, *Wisdom as a Hermeneutical Construct: A Study in the Sapientializing of the Old Testament*, BZAW Series 151 (Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1980), 12-18.

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the vast river of Israel's biblical traditions (καὶ γὰρ ὡς δλωρὺξ ἀπὸ ποταμοῦ - Sir 24,30a). By implication, this rivulet can only have been produced because Ben Sira was able to fathom the depths of the river itself. Like previous teachers in Israel he worked hard at gleaning from the biblical traditions (וְגַם אֲנִי אַחֲרָיו שִׁקְדָתִי) (Sir 33,16) without which he could not have filled his winepress with the wine of his teaching (Sir 33,17). In fact, his study of Israel's biblical traditions began in his early life and was the passion of his youth (Sir 51,13-15):

(v.13) אֲנִי נֶעַר בְּטָרֵם תְּעִיתִי וּבִקְשָׁתִי

(v.14) בָּאָה לִי בַתְרָה וְעַד סוּפָה אֲדוֹרְשָׁנָה

(v.15a) גַּם גָּרַע נֶגֶץ בְּבִשּׁוּל עֲנָבִים יִשְׁמַחַר לִבִּי

(v.15b) דְּרַכָּה רִגְלִי בְּמִישׁוֹר כִּי מִנְעוּרֵי יַדְעָתִי.<sup>190</sup>

The portrayal of the life of ideal scribe as one given over to the earnest study of Israel's biblical traditions, and which Ben Sira autobiographically ascribes to himself, is clearly evidenced by his erudite, and carefully precise choice of biblical allusions.

Not all Ben Sira's biblical allusions are exegetically reworked.<sup>191</sup> In such allusions imagery is borrowed without any change of language or context to convey similar meaning in the *traditio*. All the other allusions studied exhibit aggadic exegesis. This may allow one to understand better the generic terminology used in the *Poem on the Ideal Scribe*. The scribe's task is one of arriving at a deeper meaning which is to be derived from the text (καὶ ἐν ... παραβολῶν συνεισελεύσεται - Sir 39,2b). This deeper meaning is hidden in the text and requires to be drawn out (ἀπόκρυφα παροιμιῶν ἐκζητήσει - Sir 39,3a; ἐν

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<sup>190</sup> Sanders, *Dead Sea Psalms Scroll*, 114.

<sup>191</sup> Ps 19,7 in Sir 43,2a; Ps 147,16b in Sir 43,19a and Ps 107,24 in Sir 43,25.

αἰνίγμασιν παραβολῶν ἀναστραφήσεται - Sir 39,3b). This type of aggadic exegesis engaged in by Ben Sira is sufficient to locate him firmly on a trajectory from scribalism *en route* to rabbinism, but insufficient to determine whether he marks a new departure in biblical interpretation. Some support for the thesis that Ben Sira can be located at a key point *en route* from scribalism to rabbinism is suggested by the strong influence Ben Sira's work has exercised over Rabbinic Literature, as evidenced in the frequency with which it is quoted therein<sup>192</sup> and by its attested use in the synagogue service.<sup>193</sup> It is not impossible that rabbinic exegetical techniques were in continuity with Ben Sira's own aggadic-type scriptural interpretation. His view of himself, וגם אני אחריו שקדתי וכמו עולל אחר הבוצרם (Sir 33,16), suggests that Ben Sira may not necessarily have been the innovator of a new form of biblical interpretation, but one who typified it.

Ben Sira's reinterpretation of biblical allusions portrays him as one who was well aware of hellenistic culture and whose thought had much in common with Stoic ideas, particularly those of Zeno and Cleanthes. However, the concepts of Stoicism were not adequate in themselves for Ben Sira's theology, which remained firmly grounded in Jewish biblical tradition. Thus, a significant point of departure for Ben Sira's aggadic reworking of biblical allusions was produced by Palestinian

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<sup>192</sup> S. Schechter, "The Quotations from Ecclesiasticus in Rabbinic Literature," *JQR* 3 (1890-91): 682-706. For an extensive, but not exhaustive, list of quotations see *ibid.*, 689-697; Box-Oesterley, "Sirach," 297-298. It should be noted that the quotations do not always correspond with the references given in Sirach; at times only one sentence of that which is quoted is actually found in Sirach; while in other cases some of the sentences quoted are not actually found in Sirach. Certainly the work exercised significant influence on *Pirque Abot* and *Derek Eres Rabba*. There are also interesting parallels with the *Shemoneh 'Esreh* which occupied an important position in the synagogue services. Finally, the description of the High Priest which occurs in the synagogue liturgy of the Day of Atonement has been influenced by Sir 50.

<sup>193</sup> Cecil Roth, "Ecclesiasticus in the Synagogue Service," *JBL* 71 (1952): 171-178.



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Judaism encountering and engaging with hellenistic philosophy, particularly Stoic concepts of creation and theocracy.

For Ben Sira, wisdom and creation are inextricably linked.<sup>194</sup> In the wisdom tradition in general YHWH is the divine creator of all and

... the world is a showcase for divine activity. It is not contemplated in and for itself, but in relation to the creator and to living things that occupy it. It is not a cosmos that works mechanically, but a happening that occurs over and over for all its inhabitants ... Hence the human *experience* of the world is so important.<sup>195</sup>

The consequence of this is a fundamental link between wisdom and the praise of the Creator God which is reflected in a reverential attitude to creation. It is also through the sapiential understanding of creation that Israel can encounter YHWH, its only God, experienced through historically mediated revelation:

The dialogue between the Israelite and the environment was also a dialogue with the God who was worshipped in Israel as creator and redeemer. ... The world of the sage was hedged about, but not directed, by the sacred traditions rehearsed in the cult (the liturgical experience). It was from the experience of the world ... that the sages derived their lessons.<sup>196</sup>

The hellenistic (Stoic) doctrine of creation, with its emphasis on monism and rationalism, understood God as the active principle in a well-ordered purposeful cosmos which permeated the creation and could be contemplated through reflection on the beauty of nature. Ben Sira was quite prepared to accept elements of the Stoic idea of creation, particularly those regarding creation's purposefulness and the ubiquity of God as the principle of the cosmos (Sir 43,27). However, he never allowed his teaching evolve to monism, nor abandon its adherence to a

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<sup>194</sup> This applies to all biblical sapiential literature. Roland E. Murphy, *The Tree of Life: An Exploration of Biblical Wisdom Literature*, ABRL Series (New York: Doubleday, 1990), 118-121.

<sup>195</sup> *Ibid.*, 119.

<sup>196</sup> *Ibid.*, 124.

theological understanding of Israel's fundamental, historically conditioned experience of YHWH.

Since the *Works of God in Creation* functions as a hymn in which Ben Sira articulates Palestinian Judaism's sapiential understanding of creation, it opens quite naturally with its author's reverential total self-alignment to the praise of the Creator God (Sir 42,15a), derived from his own human experience of the world (Sir 42,15b) which leads to a deeper contemplation or blessing of the Creator (Sir 42,16; 43,2.5a.11.27b.28-29). Ben Sira argues that since God is revealed in the splendours of creation (Sir 43,27b) and the human capacity to comprehend that creation is limited, how much more is God beyond human comprehension and deserving of praise. While Stoic concepts are to be found in the poem (Sir 42,16a; 43,17a.17b), Ben Sira is clear that the Creator God is *Israel's God*. In keeping with Israelite wisdom tradition, Ben Sira understands that the beauty of nature derives from divine wisdom. Accordingly, God is omniscient having knowledge of the interiority of both creation and the human person (Sir 42,18a). The relationship between Israel's sapiential and historical experience of God is also illustrated in the advocacy of the solilunar calendar as intended by divine wisdom from the beginning of creation (Sir 43,6b), to regulate Israel's liturgical worship of its historically revealed God.

In contradistinction to the Stoic philosophical monotheistic tendency to theocracy, Ben Sira powerfully advocates Jewish monotheism (Sir 42,21a) by identifying the active principle of the cosmos, not with the Stoic rationalistic θεός-principle, but with the Creator God, the Only God, who is Israel's God, nationally and historically experienced and whose limitless wisdom<sup>197</sup> is revealed in creation.

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<sup>197</sup> There is a close analogy between Ben Sira's concept of wisdom and the Stoic λόγος or  
(continued...)

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Ben Sira further argues (Sir 42,21d) that this Creator God, Israel's God, is incomparable and incomprehensible, unlike the rationalistically comprehensible Stoic θεός, because of the eternal oneness and immutability of the Deity.

In its attitude to the hellenistic philosophy of his time, Ben Sira's exegetical strategy was fundamentally conservative. While he used hellenistic language and concepts to present his views, he chose an essentially sapiential reading of Israel's biblical traditions to consolidate and advance the tenets of Palestinian Judaism. In general, it can be stated that hellenistic philosophical influences on Ben Sira probably indicate his need to adapt to the learned arguments of the time so as to be understood by pupils and opponents alike. However, Ben Sira never abandoned his adherence to fundamental Jewish views. Ben Sira's aggadic reworking of biblical allusions suggests that his school was far from liberal and assimilationist, but traditional, yet open to using new forms and concepts. In short, Ben Sira in his role as biblical exegete demonstrates evidence of being a *hellenized Jew*, a concept which needs to be broken down further.

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<sup>197</sup>(...continued)

universal law which pervades creation. Once again Ben Sira is aware of Stoic doctrine which in itself is inadequate for his purposes and which must be modified accordingly. In a way similar to the Stoics, but decisively developed "... Ben Sira identified wisdom as the 'primal image' and 'the principle of order' of the world created by God, which was 'poured out on all God's works' (Sir. 1.9), with the firmly delineated moral norm of pious Jews, the Torah communicated exclusively to Israel on Sinai." Hengel, *Judaism and Hellenism*, I, 159. The particular contribution made by Ben Sira in relating the sapiential and historically conditioned experiences of God, is his emphatic affirmation that Israel's Torah is to be identified with Wisdom. Skehan-DiLella, *Ben Sira*, 77.336. This affirmation is best expressed by Ben Sira in Sir 24,23: ταῦτα πάντα βίβλος διαθήκης θεοῦ ὑψίστου νόμον ὃν ἐνετείλατο ἡμῖν Μωυσῆς κληρονομίαν συναγωγᾶς Ἰακωβ. A related idea is found in Deut 4,6 where observance of the deuteronomic law is Israel's wisdom and discernment (חָכְמָה וְדַעַתָּה). In this, Deut 4,6 marks an important step on the way to Ben Sira's identification of Israel's Torah with Wisdom. However, the Torah-Wisdom-λόγος relationship is not explicitly present in the representative sampling of allusions studied here.

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One helpful approach is that of Barclay<sup>198</sup> who suggests that the process of hellenization may be broadly distinguished under three categories: assimilation, acculturation and accommodation. By *assimilation* is meant the degree to which individuals are "wholly integrated into the majority society ... [and] have abandoned the peculiar customs and practices of their own minority community."<sup>199</sup> In Ben Sira's context the majority society was the hellenized Ptolemaic or Seleucid empires and the minority community that of the Judean theocracy. Thus, assimilation can be measured in terms of the frequency and quality of social contacts between Jews and Greeks on the scale<sup>200</sup> illustrated below in Figure 04.

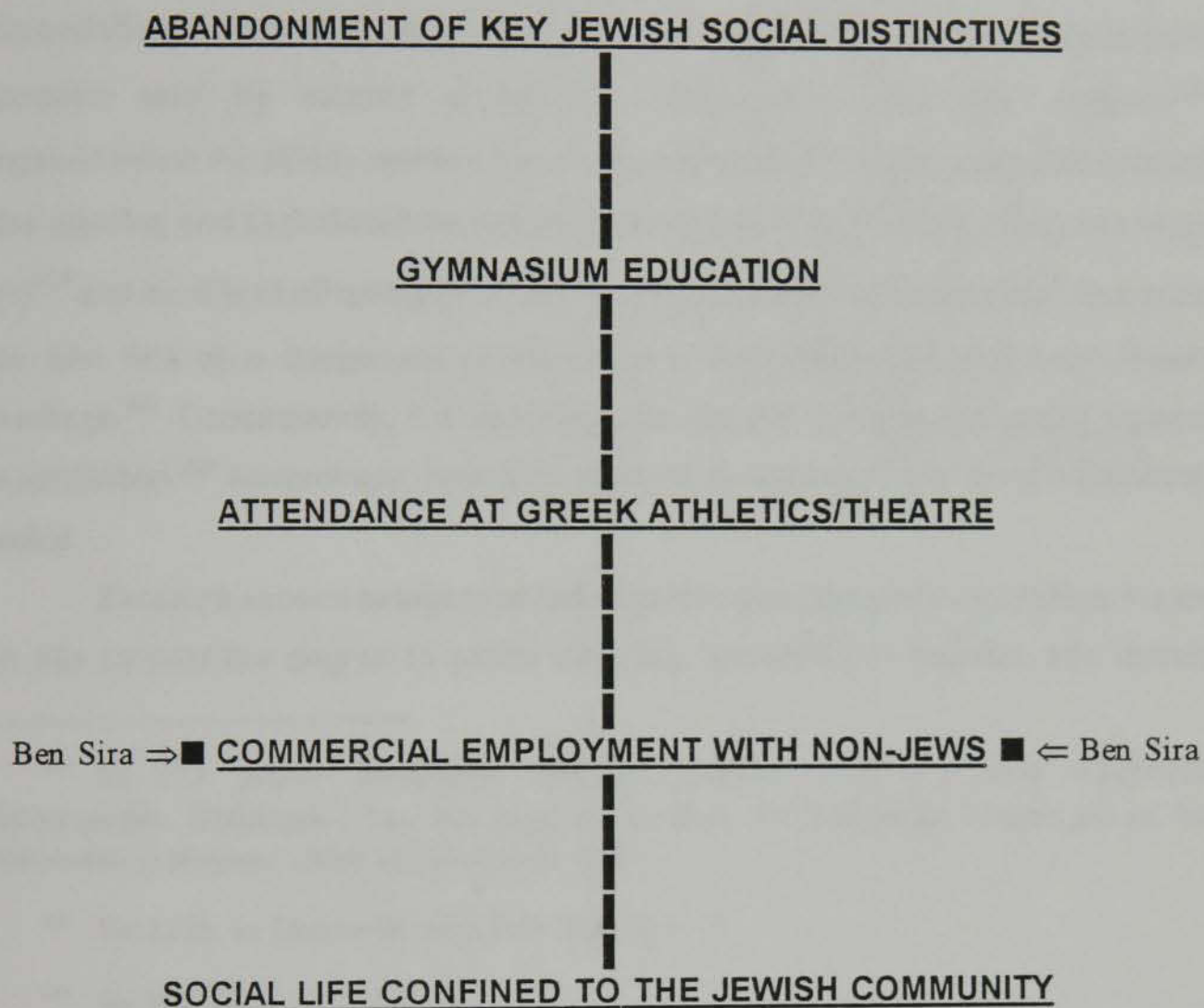
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<sup>198</sup> John M. G. Barclay, "Paul Among Diaspora Jews: Anomaly or Apostate?," *JSNT* 60 (1995): 89-120, at 93.

<sup>199</sup> *Ibid.*, 93.

<sup>200</sup> *Ibid.*, 95.

Figure 04  
Ben Sira and Assimilation



Ben Sira's self-description in the *Poem on the Ideal Scribe* as one who engaged in foreign travel<sup>201</sup> suggests that he had assimilated only to the level of secondary

<sup>201</sup> Sir 39,4c; also Sir 9,13 where Ben Sira's familiarity with court intrigues may be due to some level of contact with non-Jews: רחק מאיש [שלי]ט להרו[ג]ן ואל תפחד פחדו מות.

relationship based on commercial contacts with Hellenism.<sup>202</sup> Certainly in the remainder of the book his outlook is anti-assimilationist. Ben Sira understood the way of assimilation as a double path trodden only by sinners (ἀμαρτωλῶ ἐπιβαίνοντι ἐπὶ δύο τρίβους)<sup>203</sup> against which he strictly warned his young students.<sup>204</sup> Those Jews who ignored the warning and assimilated he regarded as foolish (נבל),<sup>205</sup> of reprobate line (סמא גני)<sup>206</sup> and as witless offspring (נכד אייל).<sup>207</sup> In religious terms, assimilation was seen by Ben Sira as a dangerous compromise which risked alienation from Jewish heritage.<sup>208</sup> Consequently, his teaching was meant to equip the young against assimilation.<sup>209</sup> Accordingly, Ben Sira must be scored quite low on this particular scale.

Barclay's second category of hellenization is *acculturation* by which is meant in this context the degree to which Ben Sira acquired the linguistic and literary

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<sup>202</sup> Sir 27,1: χάριν διαφόρου πολλοὶ ἥμαρτον καὶ ὁ ζητῶν πληθῦναι ἀποστρέψει ὀφθαλμόν. Ben Sira does not condemn the commercial contacts *per se*, but the unethical practices which can arise from them.

<sup>203</sup> Sir 2,12b; so Skehan-DiLella, *Ben Sira*, 151-152.

<sup>204</sup> Sir 4,20-24; so *ibid.*, 175-176.

<sup>205</sup> Sir 4,27a; so *ibid.*, 177.

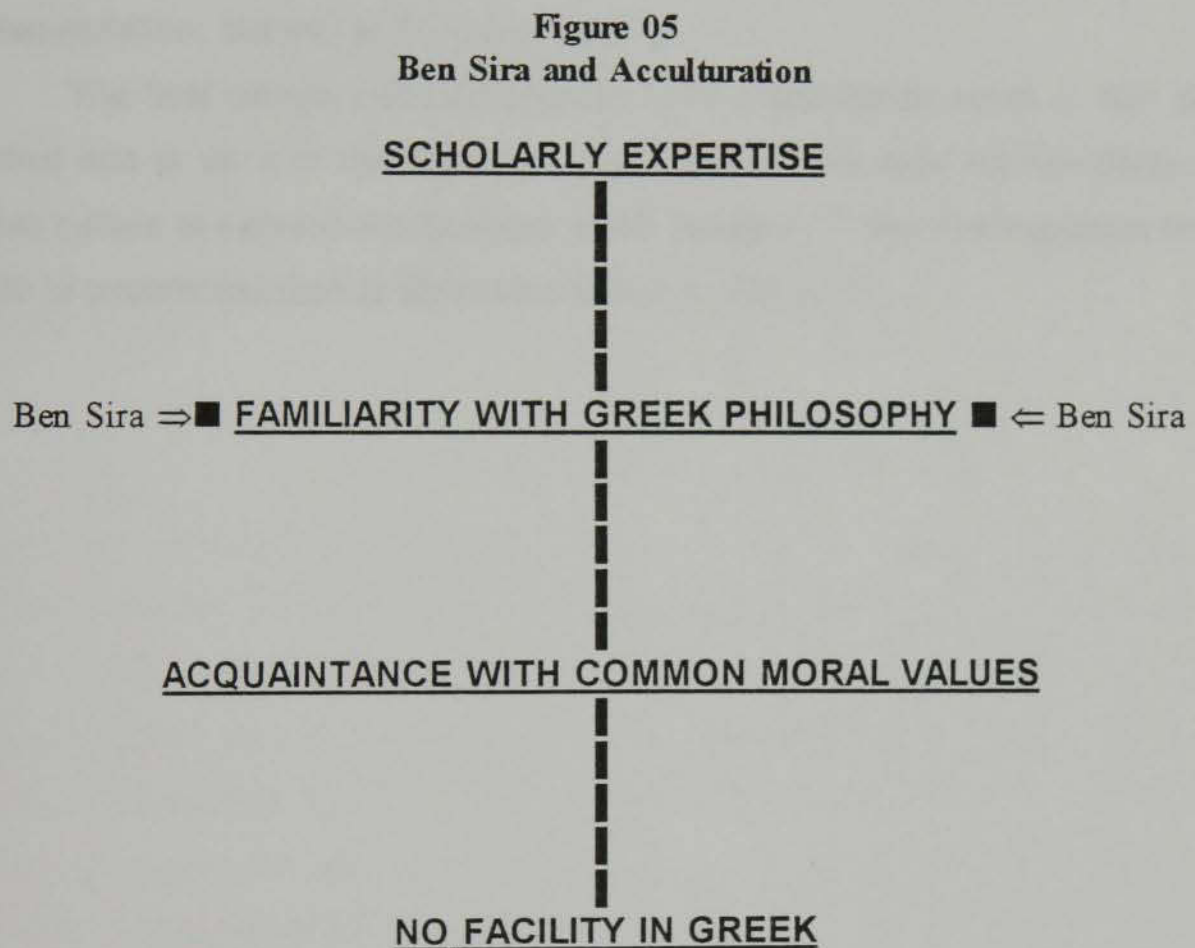
<sup>206</sup> Sir 41,5a; so *ibid.*, 474.

<sup>207</sup> Sir 41,5b; so *ibid.*, 468.

<sup>208</sup> Sir 11,34: ἐνοίκισον ἀλλότριον καὶ διαστρέψει σε ἐν ταραχαῖς καὶ ἀπαλλοτριώσει σε τῶν ἰδίων σου; so *ibid.*, 246.

<sup>209</sup> Sir 50,28-29; so *ibid.*, 559.

heritage of the hellenistic culture.<sup>210</sup> Superficially this could be measured in terms of his ability to speak Greek. More significant acculturation would be evident in the extent of his knowledge of hellenistic philosophical traditions. The ultimate degree of acculturation would be evident in any expertise Ben Sira might have had in the critical tradition of hellenistic scholarship. Ben Sira's location on the scale of acculturation<sup>211</sup> is illustrated below in Figure 05.



The analysis of the poem on the *Works of God in Creation* has shown the extent of Ben Sira's knowledge and familiarity with Stoic ideas of cosmogony and

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<sup>210</sup> Barclay, "Diaspora Jews," 95-96.

<sup>211</sup> *Ibid.*, 96.

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theocracy, particularly expressed in the ideas of Zeno and Cleanthes. His familiarity with non-Jewish literature in general has been well documented.<sup>212</sup> However, knowledge of philosophical ideas does not imply scholarly expertise in hellenistic literature. In fact, Ben Sira discouraged his students from acquiring such expertise, deriding the futility of Greek learning,<sup>213</sup> and encouraged them to acquire Jewish wisdom.<sup>214</sup> Ben Sira must therefore be scored reasonably high on the scale of acculturation, but not at its maximum.

The final category of hellenization is *accommodation* which in Ben Sira's context has to do with the manner by which Ben Sira used his familiarity with Greek culture to express the essence of his Judaism.<sup>215</sup> Ben Sira's position on the scale of accommodation is illustrated below in Figure 06.

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<sup>212</sup> Skehan-DiLella, *Ben Sira*, 46-50.

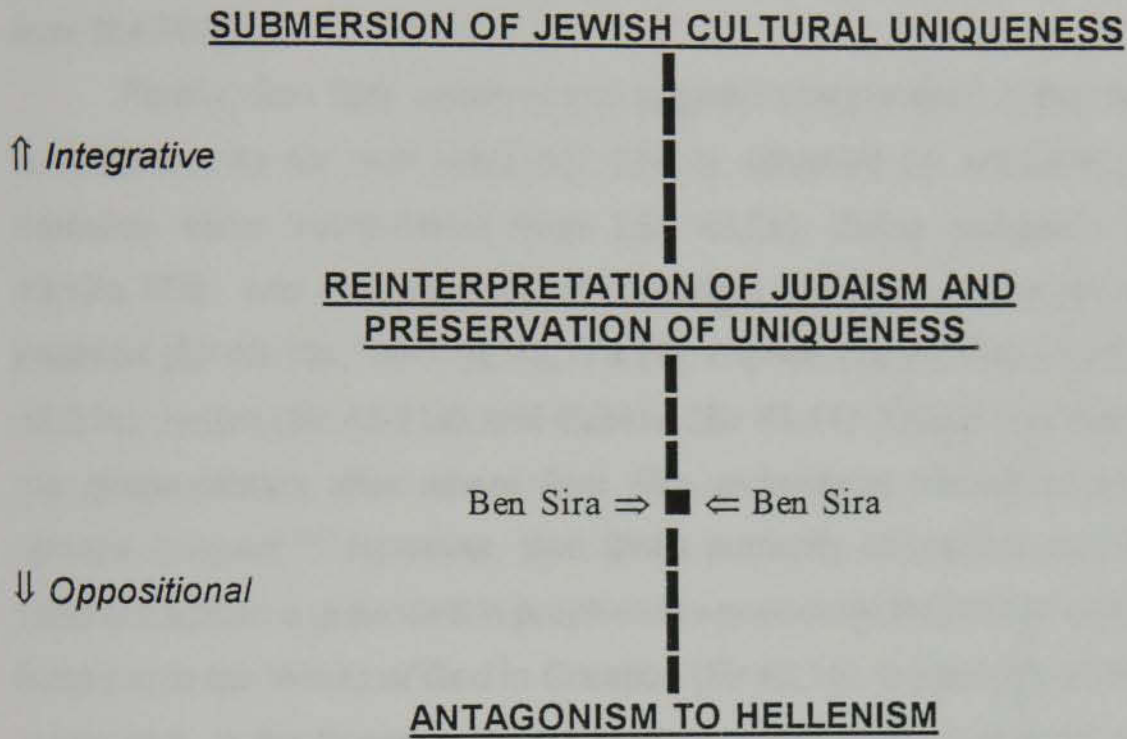
<sup>213</sup> Sir 3,21-24.

<sup>214</sup> Sir 6,18-37.

<sup>215</sup> Barclay, "Diaspora Jews," 97-98.



Figure 06  
Ben Sira and Accommodation



There is no doubt that Ben Sira's accommodation of Judaism to Hellenism is oppositional. The reinterpretation of biblical allusions in the *Works of God in Creation* testifies to a desire on his part to uphold both the uniqueness of Israel's biblical tradition and its superiority over hellenistic thought. Yet his rejection of hellenistic thought is free from overt polemic. This pattern of accommodation is found elsewhere in the book of Sirach.<sup>216</sup> Accordingly, Ben Sira can be located on the oppositional end of the accommodation scale, maintaining the uniqueness of the Jewish tradition but devoid of radical antagonism towards Hellenism. As a hellenized scribe Ben Sira was very definitely anti-assimilationist and combined his thorough knowledge of Israel's biblical tradition along with his considerable

<sup>216</sup> On his opposition to Hellenism see Sir 33,7-15; 36,1-22. On the superiority of Israel's traditions see Sir 19,20; 24,8-12.

familiarity with Greek thought to achieve an oppositional accommodation of Judaism to Hellenism, demonstrating the uniqueness and superiority of the former over the latter.

Finally, Ben Sira presents the aggadic interpretation in the *Works of God in Creation*, as his own teaching. This is achieved by articulating in his own narrative voice authoritative texts (Sir 43,2a), divine revelation (Sir 42,18a; 43,17a.17b), and the teaching of important biblical personages such as the psalmist (Sir 42,15a.16b.17b; 43,17a.28), Eliphaz (Sir 42,15b; 43,28), Moses (Sir 42,21b), Isaiah (Sir 42,21d) and Ezekiel (Sir 43,11). These may well be some of the grape-pickers after whom Ben Sira understood himself to be gleaning in Israel's vineyard.<sup>217</sup> However, Ben Sira's authority as teacher and interpreter of biblical tradition is grounded in prophet-like pneumatic inspiration which, while only hinted at in the *Works of God in Creation* (Sir 42,15), is explicitly stated elsewhere in his work. In the *Poem on the Ideal Scribe* the scribe is portrayed as an inspired teacher<sup>218</sup> who brings forth instruction and sets him apart from the manual workers (Sir 38,33e). In the autobiographical texts Ben Sira understands his teaching role as an inspired teacher<sup>219</sup> of instruction as central. Similar ideas are to be found later at Qumran and in Pharisaic circles.<sup>220</sup> As stated in the *Poem on the Ideal Scribe*, his whole work is his contribution to both contemporaries and to future generations,<sup>221</sup> which functioned to guarantee that his name would be honoured

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<sup>217</sup> Sir 33,16.

<sup>218</sup> Sir 39,6.

<sup>219</sup> Sir 24,31cd; 39,12a; 50,27d.

<sup>220</sup> Hengel, "Scriptures and their Interpretation," 169-174.

<sup>221</sup> On Ben Sira's contribution to his contemporaries see Sir 39,7a-8b; also Sir 24,32a-33a; 33,18ab; 51,23-30. On the contribution to future generations see Sir 39,9cd; also Sir 24,33b.

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after his death (Sir 39,9a-11b). In a society which had no concept of life after death, the honouring of his good name,<sup>222</sup> through his teaching, would attain for Ben Sira vicarious immortality.

The fundamental questions raised at the end of Chapter Two have been addressed and answered. The biblical traditions which Ben Sira used have been identified and his manner of reinterpreting them classified. The interaction of hellenistic thought with Palestinian Judaism has been recognized as the point of departure for his aggadic reinterpretation of biblical tradition. The portrait of Ben Sira that emerges, at this point, is one of inspired biblical interpreter who is both knowledgeable of Israel's traditions and of contemporary Greek philosophical thought, and who attempts to uphold and defend the superiority of Judaism in the face of the rising tide of Hellenism, through the use of language and concepts current in the hellenistic world, while at the same time earning for himself an immortal name. However, the results from this study, based on the analysis of one poem only, are by their nature limited and tentative. The further investigation of all biblical allusions in Heb which needs to be undertaken lies beyond the scope of this work. Nonetheless, within the context of this study, it is possible to bring into greater relief, other dimensions of Ben Sira's profile as biblical interpreter. Since intertextuality can be described as the participation of texts in the discursive practices of a culture,<sup>223</sup> Ben Sira's intertextual reading of Israel's biblical traditions alongside hellenistic philosophical thought must be investigated in the context of the social world of pre-Maccabean Judea, in order to achieve the fullest profile of Ben Sira as inspired exegete. It is to this task that the final chapter now turns.

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<sup>222</sup> Sir 37,26; 40,19; 41,11-13; 44,10-15.

<sup>223</sup> Freyne, "Reading Intertextually," 83.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### 4.0 BEN SIRA AND THE SOCIAL WORLD OF PRE-MACCABEAN HELLENISTIC JUDEA

#### 4.1 Introduction

Some previous attempts to locate Ben Sira within the social world of second century BCE Judea, and to analyse the manner in which he functioned in that society, have used significantly different perspectives. R. Gordis<sup>1</sup> has argued that the world of biblical wisdom literature in general is aristocratic Jerusalemite of the fifth to second centuries BCE, and that Ben Sira as a wisdom writer must therefore be located within that particular social stratum. Helge Stadelmann<sup>2</sup> has attempted to identify the world of Ben Sira and of his audience implied in the text of Sirach, arguing that both Ben Sira, the prosperous priest-scribe, and the Judean youth he educated, were members of what Stadelmann terms the upper-middle class [*sic*]. Harold Van Broekhoven<sup>3</sup> has used a social-scientific methodology based on Mary Douglas' cultural anthropological variables of *group* and *grid*,<sup>4</sup> in an effort attempt to determine Ben Sira's social world. While his various conclusions have been

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<sup>1</sup> R. Gordis, "The Social Background of Wisdom Literature," *HUCA* 18 (1943-1944): 77-118.

<sup>2</sup> Stadelmann, *Schriftgelehrter*, 1-39.

<sup>3</sup> Harold Van Broekhoven, "Wisdom and the World: The Function of Wisdom Imagery in Sirach, Pseudo-Solomon and Colossians" (Ph. D. diss., University of Boston, 1988); *idem*, "A New Model for Discerning Wisdom: The Case of Sirach and Pseudo-Solomon," in *New Perspectives on Ancient Judaism: Society and Literature in Analysis*, vol. 5, ed. Paul V. M. Flesher (Lanham, MD: UPA, 1990), 3-46.

<sup>4</sup> Mary Douglas, *Natural Symbols: Explorations in Cosmology* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1982), 54-64. For an excellent summary of Douglas' model see Jerome H. Neyrey, *An Ideology of Revolt: John's Christology in Social-Science Perspective* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1988), 117-121.

somewhat discrepant,<sup>5</sup> Van Broekhoven has revealed the possibility of new insights which can be derived from a socially contextualized reading of Sirach.

The theory of reading which underpins this particular study derives from Bruce Malina<sup>6</sup> who understands the socio-linguistic purpose of language as conveying meaning which "resides in the social system of individuals that is held together by a shared culture, shared values, and shared meanings along with social institutions and social roles to realize those values and meanings."<sup>7</sup> In short, what Ben Sira has written about himself as Jewish scribe conveyed and imparted a meaning which is rooted in the social system of second century BCE Judea and can only be fully interpreted when located and understood within that specific social context. Accordingly, the appropriate model of reading comprehension is what Malina terms the *scenario model*,<sup>8</sup> whereby "the reader uses the text to identify an appropriate domain or frame of reference and then rearranges that

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<sup>5</sup> Initially Van Broekhoven, using Mary Douglas' model, agreed with Gordis and classified Ben Sira as exhibiting a *weak group - high grid* profile; Van Broekhoven, "Wisdom and the World," 62: "Sirach's description of his own role confirms the analysis of Gordis or, in the model from Mary Douglas, a high-grid, low group profile." However in his subsequent study, Van Broekhoven altered his view, arguing for a *strong group - high grid* profile in Ben Sira's case; Van Broekhoven, "New Model," 3-46. See also page 292n.205 below.

<sup>6</sup> Bruce Malina, "Reading Theory Perspective: Reading Luke-Acts," in *The Social World of Luke-Acts: Models for Interpretation*, ed. Jerome H. Neyrey (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1991), 3-23.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 13-17. The *scenario* model focuses on meaning and regards the text as a succession of explicit and implicit mental representations (scenes, schemes or models) which in turn evoke corresponding ones in the mind of the readers. The task of reading is first, to call to mind the appropriate scene, scheme or model and second, to use it as the wider framework within which to locate the meanings proposed in the text. Opposed to the scenario model, the *propositional* model regards the text as a sequence of propositions, made up of sentences and words. The task of reading is to identify and connect propositions. The propositional reading of the text fails to elucidate meaning which is mediated by the social system in which the text was produced.

domain according to the arrangements suggested in the text."<sup>9</sup> Biblical authors, Ben Sira included, coming from decidedly high context societies,<sup>10</sup> do not facilitate the scenario model of reading by attempting to explain their ancient world in terms the contemporary reader can understand. It is necessary, therefore, to derive suitable models to facilitate the interpretation of the text: "All interpretation, it would seem, requires and ultimately rests on such models."<sup>11</sup>

Following Carney,<sup>12</sup> models offer an interpretative stage which allows for both cognitive filtering (seeing what is in a text) and cognitive mapping (perceiving what is meant by the text). In fact, "we do not have the choice of whether we will use models or not. Our choice, rather, lies in deciding whether to use them consciously or unconsciously. If we use them unconsciously they control us, we do not control them."<sup>13</sup> By *model* is meant an outline framework which

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<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 15.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 19-20. A *high context* society is one which produces sketchy impressionistic texts where much is left to the reader's imagination and few details are spelled out. This is so because people in such societies were socialized into shared ways of seeing and perceiving. In this regard, the Mediterranean biblical world was a typical high context society. A *low context* society is one in which everything is detailed as much as possible, leaving nothing to the reader's imagination.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 17.

<sup>12</sup> T. F. Carney, *The Shape of the Past: Models and Antiquity* (Laurence, KS: Coronado Press, 1975), 1-43.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

... sets out the major components involved and indicates their priority of importance. It provides guidelines on how these components relate to one another. It states the range within which each component or relationship may vary. A model is something less than a theory and something more than an analogy. Used in the sense being considered here, a model is not a mere replica of a specific thing or process. Its differences from analogies and replicas and suchlike are informative ...<sup>14</sup>

While models function as a link between theory and observation, they can only approximate to reality and do suffer from the limitation of presenting a generalized picture. Consequently their use requires much caution and self-criticism. Nonetheless, models cannot be true or false, only appropriate or inappropriate depending on the results they achieve: "Thus the 'best' model is not necessarily the most elegant one, or the one from the most fashionable designer. The best one is whichever gets the best results for a particular set of data for a particular problem. Models are only as good as their results."<sup>15</sup> Carney's *postulational model* is of particular interest as it is one which

... enables us to match reality against a master pattern and so to perform very complicated comparisons. We can use it to check a hunch - to verify an intuitive impression of an elaborately complicated nature - even when the data available are themselves very chaotic. The model can also be used to test a formally structured hypothesis. ... The postulational model thus provides us with a set of criteria which are eminently disprovable, so that, by using them, we can arrive at a body of proven facts.<sup>16</sup>

Both Gordis and Stadelmann have not used models explicitly in their attempts to understand the social world of Ben Sira. However, the implied model is postulational in both cases. Gordis' implicit master pattern, against which the world

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<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 7.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 37.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 23.

implied in the text of Sirach is compared, is the aristocratic Jerusalemite background to wisdom literature from the fifth to second centuries BCE, while Stadelmann's is the socio-economically polarized Jerusalem of the second century BCE. On the other hand, Van Broekhoven has opted explicitly for a master pattern based on the cultural anthropological variables of *group* and *grid*.

The results achieved by these scholars constitute a useful framework against which to test and evaluate the conclusions of this particular study. However, in an effort to achieve even greater precision, the appropriate postulational model to be used explicitly by this study must be firmly based on Ben Sira's actual social world. Since his social world may have been centred on second century BCE Jerusalem, the model which suggests itself for further investigation is that of the ancient city.

## **4.2 A Postulational Model: The Ancient City**

### **(a) Urbanization and Urban Terminology in Sirach**

Greek urbanization which penetrated the Near East and Palestine in the late third and early second centuries BCE, constituted a fundamental, dynamic and innovative force which had profound economic, political and cultural effects on Judaism. As already alluded to in Chapter One, both Ptolemaic and Seleucid concepts of colonization were wedded closely to the phenomenon of urbanization.<sup>17</sup> In fact,

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<sup>17</sup> See pp. 32-35, 40-42, 45-46 above.



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The city not only remained the one accepted method of spreading the Greek way of life and maintaining Greek supremacy in the newly formed [hellenistic] kingdoms which grew out of Alexander's empire, it also became an important means of propaganda. At the same time Greek cities were influenced by the traditions of native life which were encountered throughout the conquered territories.<sup>18</sup>

In the hellenistic period, including Ben Sira's, the city could be defined as a large, permanently settled, organized community of people bound together by religious, political and economic interests, complementary and interdependent through a division of labour and stratification of society and headed by a priest, governor, prince or king, with a temple compound as a religious centre and a palace or citadel as a political centre.<sup>19</sup>

Since the city so dominated society in the hellenistic period it is worth considering the very useful study of urban terminology in the Hebrew Bible undertaken by Frick, who has analysed the Hebrew word עִיר, its synonyms, homonyms and cognates.<sup>20</sup> The predominant sense of עִיר is that of a fortified structure for defence purposes. Other meanings include: a walled, permanent settlement; a quarter of such a settlement; and finally, the more comprehensive politico-economic sense of city. Additional urban terminology identified by Frick is outlined in Tables 16, 17 and 18 below.

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<sup>18</sup> E. J. Owens, "Town Planning in the Hellenistic World," in *The City in the Greek and Roman World* (London/New York: Routledge, 1992), 74-93, at 74.

<sup>19</sup> Paul Lampl, *Cities and Planning in the Ancient Near East* (London: Studio Vista, 1968), 6.

<sup>20</sup> Frank S. Frick, *The City in Ancient Israel*, SBLDS 36 (Missoula: Scholars Press, 1977), 25-75.

**Table 16**  
**Important Synonyms of עיר**

קריה	Designates a city in terms of its city walls
שער	Often used as a synecdoche for city and usually refers to the military aspect of the city defences
מקום	Designates a city as the place of human abode
הר	Can be the basis for mythological references to cities as well as the more pragmatic aspect of defence

**Table 17**  
**Terminology Specifically Relating to a City's Fortifications**

מגדל	Tower or bastion erected in the city walls
בירה	Castle or palace
צריח	Stronghold
ארמון	Citadel
יער	Figurative use of term for <i>forest</i>
עפל	Fortified installation on a hill
מלוא	Citadel-like structure

Table 18  
Terminology for Secondary Settlements

חֲצֵר	Village
בְּנוֹת	Villages of a city
חֲנִיָּה	Tent village
נֹוֹה	Nomadic abode
כְּפָר	Unwalled village

Frick has concluded that the word עִיר occurs over 1090 times, with the greatest occurrence of the word suggesting that

The city as a walled place of refuge is thus a very early and very predominant way of understanding the city in the OT. The walls of a city were not intended to be the demarcation of the city limits; they rather signified the cooperative attempt of a social unit to find complete security for the place of its abode.<sup>21</sup>

The results of a similar analysis on the text of Sirach, undertaken by this study, are summarized in Table 19 below.

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<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 32.

Table 19  
Urban Terminology in Sirach

HEB	G	SIRACH
עיר	πόλις	9,18a; 10,3a <sup>22</sup> ; 10,3b; 16,4a; 36,29b <sup>23</sup> ; 36,31b(x2); 40,19a; 41,5a <sup>24</sup> ; 42,11c; 46,2b; 48,17a; 50,4b; Sir 51,12(viia) <sup>25</sup>
קריה		36,18a; 49,6a
שער		7,7a; 31,24a; 42,11d <sup>26</sup> ; 51,9b <sup>27</sup> ; 51,19c

<sup>22</sup> Sir 10,3a may be ignored on text-critical grounds as the reading in G (τὸν λαὸν αὐτοῦ) is supported by Syr against MsA.

<sup>23</sup> Sir 36,29b may be ignored on text-critical grounds as MsB<sup>ext</sup> reads עזר ומבצר, while MsB<sup>msg</sup>, MsC and MsD read עיר מבצר. The original reading was probably עזר כעצמו; once עזר was corrupted into עיר, the development of מבצר from כעצמו was inevitable; Skehan-DiLella, *Ben Sira*, 427.

<sup>24</sup> Sir 41,5a may be ignored on text-critical grounds. While ערים is found in MsB<sup>msg</sup>, the reading of MsM (רעים) is supported by G (ἀμαρτωλῶν).

<sup>25</sup> This reading is to be ignored on the grounds that the entire poem 51,12(i-xvi) is not original to Ben Sira; Skehan-DiLella, *Ben Sira*, 569.

<sup>26</sup> For Sir 42,11d MsB<sup>ext</sup> reads שער בהושבתך בעדת שער, MsB<sup>msg</sup> reads שער הושבתך בעדת שער while G reads ἐν πλήθει πολλῶν. Box-Oesterley, "Sirach," 470 suggest the reading πύλων, while Ziegler, ed., *Sapientia Iesu Filii Sirach*, 323 notes a variant reading, πόλεως.

<sup>27</sup> שער does not have any urban connotation in Sir 51,9b where the reference is to Sheol.

Table 19 - Continued

HEB	G	SIRACH
	πόλις	9,13f <sup>28</sup> ; 23,21a; 26,5c; 24,11a; 28,14c; 38,32a
	πύλη	9,13d

None of the other urban terminology used in the Hebrew Bible for the city, its fortifications or secondary settlements is attested to in Sirach. This analysis suggests that, for Ben Sira, the most basic concept of the city was that of a unit protected by walls<sup>29</sup> and so typically fortified that it could only be taken by military conquest.<sup>30</sup> The fortification of Jerusalem was regarded as so important as to be mentioned among the deeds of some of the great heroes of Israel.<sup>31</sup> Ben Sira's more developed understanding of the city was that of a permanent settlement<sup>32</sup> which grew and expanded according to the intelligence and piety of its leaders,<sup>33</sup> but which was also dependent on the skill of the manual labourers who maintained it.<sup>34</sup> In fact, it was precisely this concept of the city's permanence which also

<sup>28</sup> This reading may be ignored. While Sir 9,13f (G) contains the phrase ἐπὶ ἐπάλλξεων πόλεως, MsB reads ׀לרררר ׀לרר. MsB is to be preferred since it upholds the parallelism between v.13e and v.13f. This is not the case with G.

<sup>29</sup> Sir 28,14c (πόλις ὀχυράς).

<sup>30</sup> Sir 46,2b.

<sup>31</sup> Sir 48,17a (Hezekiah); 49,13d (Nehemiah); Simeon II (50,4b).

<sup>32</sup> Sir 36,31b.

<sup>33</sup> Sir 10,3b (כל - σύνεσις); Sir 16,4a (רר רר).

<sup>34</sup> Sir 38,32a.

allowed it to convey vicarious immortality on its founder through the perpetuation of that founder's name.<sup>35</sup>

However, Ben Sira's most developed concept of the city was that of a legal or socio-religious centre. For Ben Sira the legal and administrative system was centred on the city.<sup>36</sup> At the social level, the city almost became for Ben Sira a metaphor for public opinion or the public legitimation or disapproval of behaviour. It is clear from the advice Ben Sira offers that he valued public approval very highly. Accordingly, attributes and actions which led to public disapproval were to be avoided.<sup>37</sup> At the religious level the most important of all cities was Jerusalem which was the πόλις ἡγαπμένη or city beloved of YHWH and the place of Wisdom's dwelling and from which she exercised her ἐξουσία.<sup>38</sup> Ben Sira also described Jerusalem as the holy city of God and the place of dwelling of God's throne.<sup>39</sup> Finally, it should be noted that Ben Sira's grandson described his grandfather as a Jerusalemite,<sup>40</sup> strongly identifying him with Jerusalem. In

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<sup>35</sup> Sir 40,19a.

<sup>36</sup> Sir 7,7a (עדת שערי אל); 10,2b (וכראש עיר כן יושביו); 10,3b (ועיר נושבת) (בשכל שריה).

<sup>37</sup> These are: the *railing speech* of the איש לשון (Sir 9,18a), *adultery* (Sir 23,21a), *false charges* (διαβολή πόλεως) in public (Sir 26,5c), *stinginess* with food (Sir 31,24a), and *recalcitrance* in a daughter (Sir 42,11cd).

<sup>38</sup> Sir 24,11.

<sup>39</sup> On the *holy city* see Sir 36,18a (קרית קדש); Sir 49,6a (קרית קדש); on the *place of dwelling of God's throne* see Sir 36,18.

<sup>40</sup> (G) Sir 50,27c: Ἰησοῦς υἱὸς Σιραχ Ἐλεαζαρ ὁ Ἱεροσολυμίτης. However, (Heb) Sir 50,27c reads: לשמעון בן ישוע בן אלעזר בן סירא. The difference can be explained in  
(continued...)

conclusion, the close links between hellenization and urbanization, Ben Sira's keen interest in the city, particularly Jerusalem, and the extent to which his thought is urban-focused, suggest the city as the place of his social location. Therefore, in an effort to clarify his role in Jewish society, it is necessary to use the model of urban reality in a pre-industrial society.

### (b) Lenski's Model of the Pre-Industrial Agrarian Society

The relevance of such a model emerges when it is located within the context of early European urban theory,<sup>41</sup> which developed in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries CE, and can be characterized by two basic features: first, it assumes that the characteristics of any unit of social life are determined by institutions and second, it assumes that human society is an evolutionary or historical product. One resulting approach has been an attempt to explain social events in the discovery of origins.<sup>42</sup> A second approach has been to emphasize the rural-urban dichotomy,<sup>43</sup> while a third approach has studied the pre-industrial city.

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<sup>40</sup>(...continued)

that "G weist hier zusätzlich zu Ben Siras Eigennamen die Bezeichnung ὁ Ἱεροσολυμίτης auf, was Zusatzinformation für ägyptische Leser sein dürfte"; Stadelmann, *Schriftgelehrter*, 4n.2. The title ὁ Ἱεροσολυμίτης, while unique in the LXX, does indicate that Ben Sira's grandson considered it important to associate his grandfather with the city of Jerusalem.

<sup>41</sup> Frick, *City in Ancient Israel*, 1-24.

<sup>42</sup> This institutional theory of the city attempted to explain the city in terms of its order and historical primacy. Don **Martindale**, "Preparatory Remarks: The Theory of the City," in *The City* by Max Weber trans. and ed. Don Martindale and Gertrude Neuwirth (New York: Free Press, 1966), 9-62, is typical of the approach.

<sup>43</sup> This approach has been developed into the modern sociological theory where the rural-urban divide has been expressed in categories such as sacred *versus* secular, *Gemeinschaft versus* *Gesellschaft*, folk *versus* urban, static *versus* dynamic, agricultural *versus* non-agricultural, pre-  
(continued...)

Various scholars have attempted to articulate the distinctive traits of the pre-industrial city based on demographic and economic criteria.<sup>44</sup> Such criteria are of little help when applied to the cities of the Hebrew Bible, since "the city in the Old Testament is not so much a place of residence as a fortified place of refuge. Thus the population of a city could fluctuate as a function of the presence or absence of threats to its populace."<sup>45</sup> The demographic and economic approach to understanding the city has been critiqued by scholars who stress social and cultural values as key criteria in the analysis of urban social structure.<sup>46</sup>

Since there is need for a model of the ancient city free from anachronistic and contemporary western ethnocentric limitations, whereby the patterns and

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<sup>43</sup>(...continued)

literate *versus* literate, primitive *versus* civilized. Such concepts however, are limited by the fact that they are ideal-type constructs produced by Western writers. For this particular approach see Emile **Durkheim**, *The Division of Labour in Society* (New York: Free Press, 1947).

<sup>44</sup> Louis **Wirth**, "Urbanism as a Way of Life," in *Reader in Urban Sociology*, ed. P. K. Hatt and A. J. Reiss (Glencoe: Free Press, 1951), 32-49 argues that these criteria are three-fold: number of people, density of settlement, and degree of heterogeneity of the urban population. V. Gordon **Childe**, "The Urban Revolution," *Town Planning Review* 21 (1950): 3-17 and *idem*, "Civilization, Cities and Towns," *Antiquity* 31 (1957): 36-38, has identified eleven social and cultural traits. These are: the presence of full-time specialists who exchange services for food, produced by farmers; larger, denser populations; art, produced by specialists; the presence of writing and numerical notation; the presence of exact sciences such as arithmetic, geometry and astronomy; taxes paid by farmers to the religious and secular administrations; society based on kinship rather than on residence; public holidays; foreign trade; a class-structured society due to unequal distribution of plentiful property; city walls and fortifications.

<sup>45</sup> Frick, *City in Ancient Israel*, 11.

<sup>46</sup> M. **Weber**, "Die Stadt," *Archiv für Sozialwissenschaft und Sozialpolitik* 47 (1921): 621-772. For Weber a full urban community had to display the following features: fortifications; a market; a court and at least a partially autonomous legal system; forms of association; partial autonomy and autocephaly. Other proponents of the socio-cultural approach are: Gerhard **Lenski**, *Power and Privilege: A Theory of Social Stratification* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1966); Gideon **Sjoberg**, *The Preindustrial City: Past and Present* (New York: Free Press, 1960).



dynamics of modern cities are projected back onto those of antiquity,<sup>47</sup> the sociological approach to the ancient city offers the best possibility of methodological accuracy. Central to this approach is the concept that cities were not commercial centres, loci of public agencies offering services to residents or market places for the surrounding countryside: "The cities of antiquity did not look, smell, or sound like cities of today. People were not in them for the same reason we are, nor did life in them match what urban life has come to be today."<sup>48</sup> Rather, the sociological method is concerned with the manner in which the ancient city functioned in the regional system around it; the distinction between urban elite and non-elite; the patterns of social interaction between the various groups that inhabited cities and the means by which that interaction was shaped.<sup>49</sup> In this regard, Gerhard Lenski's study typifies the sociological method.<sup>50</sup>

However, the sociological approach is not free *ipso facto* from methodological difficulties and limitations,<sup>51</sup> as its philosophical basis can often be both modern and western. A methodologically uncritical use of the social sciences

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<sup>47</sup> Richard L. Rohrbaugh, "The City in the Second Testament," *BTB* 21 (1991): 67-75, at 68: "In the same way that our understanding of what a city is can cause confusion, so also can projection of the patterns and dynamics of modern cities back onto those of antiquity"; *idem*, "The Pre-industrial City in Luke-Acts: Urban Social Relations," in *The Social World of Luke-Acts: Models for Interpretation*, 125-149, at 127-129.

<sup>48</sup> Rohrbaugh, "City," 73.

<sup>49</sup> Carney, *Models and Antiquity*, 83-136 attempts to set out the characteristics of preindustrial cities in terms of population structure; family/personality systems; social stratification; economics; technology; education and communications; politics; religion. Carney uses the ancient city of Rome as the basis for his model which he claims can be applied to other ancient capital cities. However, the model may not be totally applicable as it is based on one particular city.

<sup>50</sup> Lenski, *Power and Privilege*, 189-296.

<sup>51</sup> Saldarini, *Palestinian Society*, 12-34.

can lead to inappropriate questions being asked of an ancient society, based on inaccurate presuppositions, resulting in misleading conclusions. Lenski's social scientific and cross-cultural study is, when located within the context of social theory, highly functionalist in its approach.<sup>52</sup> which in turn is limited in a number of ways: it is biased in favour of the *status quo*; it does not explain the origins and purposes of a society; since it is concerned with societal coherence it fails to register a criticism of oppressive social relations and interactions; and finally, not being holistic it ignores subjective motives, intentions and truth claims. Consequently, the faith and beliefs of those who made up ancient society must also be taken into account as well as social structures and forces.

In applying Lenski's functionalist model to Sirach, it may be that the available data in Ben Sira's social world does not fit in every respect. However, its value is that it can produce a useful template of all the elements of a pre-industrial urban society against which to measure the degree to which Ben Sira's social world does or does not fit the model. The main elements in Lenski's model are concepts such as class, power, privilege, prestige, status and elite groups. Lenski defines *power* as the probability of persons carrying out their will even when opposed by others,<sup>53</sup> while *privilege* is the possession and control of a portion of the surplus of society produced by power.<sup>54</sup> *Prestige* can be defined as one's standing with others and is dependent on power and privilege. *Status groups* were based either on power or prestige, while the *elite* were the highest ranking

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<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, 17-20. *Functionalism* is the sociological theory which assumes that all human action contributes to human living and society and seeks to understand the function of each human action.

<sup>53</sup> Lenski, *Power and Privilege*, 44.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, 45.

segment of any social unit. The *class system* of antiquity was a hierarchy of classes ranked according to some single criterion wherein class was determined by the unequal distribution of the valued resources of wealth, power and prestige. The resultant formation and ranking of homogeneous sub-populations form the basis for Lenski's method.

The major elements in Lenski's model of a pre-industrial agrarian urban society may now be summarized with a view to examining the degree of fit between the model and the data available for Ben Sira's social world. For Lenski, such agrarian societies<sup>55</sup> were characterized by: monarchical and theocratic forms of government, militarism, warfare and conquest leading to the formation of multi-ethnic states, urbanization, technological production, economic development with the diversification of roles and vocations within the society. In such monarchical agrarian states, religion functioned at the service of the state, and religious leadership gained much from the alliance with the state: a share of the economic surplus and the defence of theological interests by state power. The net result was the strengthening of national faiths. Where religious conflict occurred, it was usually due to tension between ethnic groups or between rural and urban populations. The urban centre dominated the agrarian society politically, economically, religiously and culturally.<sup>56</sup> Those engaged in the same fields of social or economic activity - officials, priests, scholars, scribes, merchants, servants, soldiers, craftsmen, and labourers - were organized into guilds which were religious, fraternal, political and economic.

Since specialists had to exchange the products of their labours, there arose

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<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, 192-210; Saldarini, *Palestinian Society*, 35-49.

<sup>56</sup> Lenski, *Power and Privilege*, 199. Jerusalem functioned as such a centre in hellenistic Judea.

a need for a merchant class and monetary systems. Writing, developed as a response to increasing economic problems faced by the urban classes, became an instrument of social control, and also widened the traditional gulf between the ruling classes and the common people by introducing the cultural distinction between the literate minority and the illiterate majority:

On the one hand there was ... the sacred literature of the dominant faith, together with the great works of philosophy and literature, standards of honour and etiquette, and all other elements which were part of the literate minority. Contrasted this was ... [the] tradition of the common people, filled with practical matters of peasant technology, primitive superstition, and characterized by a highly parochial view of the world.<sup>57</sup>

Agrarian societies were marked by social inequality<sup>58</sup> especially in power, privilege and honour: "In these societies the institutions of government are the primary source of social inequality."<sup>59</sup> Since the state was the supreme prize for all who coveted power, privilege and prestige, the one who could control the state would fight to preserve that control. Wars between agrarian states were undertaken by their rulers and ruling classes for personal gain, glory or to protect established interests. Internal struggles for power were seldom over principles, but between factions of the privileged class seeking its own special advantage: "The capture of the machinery of government, either from without or from within, was a prize that brought fabulous wealth and immense power to the victor."<sup>60</sup> Agrarian society operated on the basis of the proprietary theory of the state, whereby the state was a piece of property which its owner, the ruler, could use for personal advantage

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<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, 208.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, 210-219.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, 210.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, 212.

and which could be transferred to one's heirs. This theory applied to state, lands and taxes. The exercise of proprietary rights was exercised through the collection of taxes, tribute money, rents, and services.<sup>61</sup>

The most significant classes of the agrarian society were the *upper classes* consisting of the ruler, the governing class, the retainer class, the merchant class, and the priestly class along with the *lower classes* consisting of the peasant farmer class, the artisan class, the unclean or degraded class and the expendable class. Pre-industrial cities were characterized by an anti-technological climate of thought.<sup>62</sup> The low productivity supported a relatively small ruling elite or *governing class*,<sup>63</sup> circa 2% of the population, which included advisers of the ruler, civic officials, military officials. The governing class possessed the right to share the economic surplus of the state. Thus, the rulers would grant the governing class landed estates and their income, along with political responsibilities. The other sources of income for the governing class were: sale of justice; the sale of office; exemption from payment of taxes.<sup>64</sup> Educational opportunities were restricted to the elite:

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<sup>61</sup> Sjoberg, *Preindustrial City*, 118-120.123-133; Carney, *Models and Antiquity*, 99-100.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, 106-111.

<sup>63</sup> Lenski, *Power and Privilege*, 219-230.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, 229. "In general, *landownership, when divorced from public office, was valued chiefly as a means to obtain prestige and economic security, while public office was used primarily for political and economic advancement.*"

*Chapter Four: Ben Sira and the Social World of Pre-Maccabean Hellenistic Judea*

The ruling class monopolized formal education and most skills. Only with a scatter of elites each possessing specialist expertise is pluralism - the maintenance of several sets of values within one community - feasible. Thus education too contributed to the hierarchical, authoritarian cast of society.<sup>65</sup>

Politics took place in the primate city, whose residents were probably more important and influential than others. Decision-making was the prerequisite of the elite and one's place in society was the crucial determinant. The political culture was authoritarian, paternalistic and hierarchical: "Examples from the past, respect for traditions in general and disdain of novelty were drummed into the young man of the elite or subelite in these societies."<sup>66</sup>

The ruler and governing class employed officials, soldiers, servants and personal retainers, who depended on the political elite.<sup>67</sup> The basic function of the *retainer class* was to serve the political elite. Their payment was separation from, and elevation above, the mass of common people along with a share in the economic surplus. Boundaries between different groups in the retainer class were fuzzy, as well as boundaries between the retainer class and the governing class. Collectively the retainer class was important as it provided numerical support for the ruler and the governing class, mediated relations between rulers, the governing class and the ordinary people and deflected hostility and resentment away from rulers: "In modern society the retainers' roles are fulfilled by the middle class, but in antiquity they were not a middle class because they lacked any independent power. They were a residual group dependent on the governing class and

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<sup>65</sup> Carney, *Models and Antiquity*, 111.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, 118.

<sup>67</sup> Lenski, *Power and Privilege*, 243-248.

participating in its life to some extent."<sup>68</sup> In particular, priests and scholars maintained public order to ensure the elite's control. This control "was usually legitimated by a religious and educational bureaucracy that became the keeper of the so-called great tradition. This is the 'official' version, usually written, of a culture's religion, values and social world. It articulates the values and mores of the elite manifest."<sup>69</sup> Collectively

... the members of this class were terribly important to their superiors, individually most of them were expendable. Except perhaps for clerks and others whose work required literacy, their skills were usually ones which could be mastered by others without too much difficulty.<sup>70</sup>

The *merchant class*<sup>71</sup> evolved from the ranks of the peasants and usually ranked above farmers and artisans. Merchants stood in a *market relationship* to the governing class, while the retainer class stood in an *authority relationship*. The governing class could always dictate terms in an authority relationship, but less so in regard to market relationships. While merchants shared in the economic surplus, the governing class shared in the wealth generated by merchants through taxes. In this way the merchants were given part of the responsibility of extracting economic surplus from the common people who in turn could not place all their blame on the political elite: "The ultimate objective of the merchant class was to maximize the area in which market relations prevailed and minimize the area of authority relations, while the aim of the political elite was the reverse."<sup>72</sup> The

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<sup>68</sup> Saldarini, *Palestinian Society*, 38.

<sup>69</sup> Rohrbaugh, "Pre-industrial City," 133-134.

<sup>70</sup> Lenski, *Power and Privilege*, 246.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, 248-250.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, 254.

merchant class was a privileged class and depended on the power of the governing elite, who were their best customers. In itself, the merchant class had low prestige and no direct power. The ultimate goal of the merchant class was to be like the members of the governing class, to be accepted by them as equals and to become one of them. The political elite needed the merchant class to defend the principle of social inequality and to extract wealth from the common people.

The *priestly class*<sup>73</sup> mediated relations between God and people by means of sacrificial rites. Their status in society was dependent on leadership roles in the religious system. Often the priestly class was the wealthiest in society, particularly due to religious tithes. The political elite needed the blessing of the priestly class, especially to legitimate the regime: "In societies where limited literacy was the rule, the clergy were often called upon to perform those administrative tasks which required a mastery of the art of writing."<sup>74</sup>

The *peasant farmers*<sup>75</sup> were the substantial majority of the people and were subject to government taxation. They had little but the bare necessities of life, and were viewed by the political elite as different and lacking in the personality which the elite prized and respected. Peasants, while recognizing the cultural chasm, were always motivated to maximize their rewards, leading to struggles between the peasants and political elite. These usually took on non-violent aspects such as the evasion of taxes, rents, services. Violence erupted when the peasants were pushed too far. The basic rule in an agrarian society was that the greater the military importance of the peasant farmer, the better the farmer's economic and political situation tended to be.

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<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, 256-266.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, 260.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, 266-278.



The *artisan class*<sup>76</sup> was never large (circa 3-7% of the population) and was usually made up of employees of the merchant class. It is highly anachronistic to view this class as a middle class as it had no independent power. Wages were directly dependent on skill: "Preindustrial society, however, tended overwhelmingly to produce a form of social organization in which each craftsman manufactured the product which he sold. The craftsman individually produced the entire item, from raw material to finished product - and sold it in competition with a streetful of others such as himself."<sup>77</sup>

A significantly less important group of classes were the *unclean or degraded classes*.<sup>78</sup> These were offensive occupational groups which occupied a position in society inferior to the masses of the common people. Typical of these were those who had only their bodies or physical energy to sell and who accepted occupations which destroyed them. The *expendables*,<sup>79</sup> circa 5-10% of the population, constituted the most irrelevant class of all and was formed from those for whom society had no use: criminals, outlaws, beggars and the unemployed. Agrarian societies gave the impression of gross injustice in the distributive system<sup>80</sup> in that a small number of individuals enjoyed immense luxury, while the majority of the population were denied the basic necessities of life. Yet when the demographic factor is introduced, the problem was not so simple: there was no alternative to the existence of a class of expendables. While the governing classes exploited the

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<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, 278-280.

<sup>77</sup> Carney, *Models and Antiquity*, 104.

<sup>78</sup> Lenski, *Power and Privilege*, 280-281.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*, 281-284.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*, 295-296.

common people, they did maintain law and order, on which the economy depended. In this context religion<sup>81</sup> attempted to bring a sense of sacredness, purpose and dignity to the lives of outgroups. In agrarian societies religious belief fundamentally influenced thought patterns. The religion of the governing class tended to be literary, philosophical and formal. For the lower orders, religion offered an escape from life's brutal realities. However, religion also acted to maintain the control of the elite over society.

The different classes were not superimposed upon one another, but had a tendency to overlap. Power and privilege were a continuum, not a series of distinct strata. Vertical mobility<sup>82</sup> occurred, but was very rare, while downward mobility was more frequent. The surplus of physical labour in agrarian societies was driven downward in the class system in the direction of the expendable class, which performed the unavoidable function of redressing the demographic balance. The influence of surplus population can be seen at every level in agrarian society. The peasants divided their land and patrimony equally among sons, thus reducing individual small holdings to the point where they were too small to support those who occupied them. This practice of primogeniture led to the decline of the non-inheriting sons: "The simple fact is that there is no way to avoid a net downward movement in societies in which all but the lowest classes produce more offspring than there are status vacancies."<sup>83</sup> Where upward mobility occurred it was due to expanding trade, the vacation of positions by those who left no heirs, and the vacation of positions by those who lacked skill to hold them. Most of the upward steps were movements of those within a class, though once in a lifetime steps

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<sup>81</sup> Carney, *Models and Antiquity*, 122-128.

<sup>82</sup> Lenski, *Power and Privilege*, 289-295.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*, 291.

between classes were possible. Dramatic advances were made by those with whom wealth and power were associated, while farming and crafts promised limited advance.

Finally, it should be noted that the internal social stratification of the agrarian city was mirrored in its physical configuration. The central area was dominated by the palace, temple, and the residences of the political and religious elite. Internal walls also divided sections of the population to serve the elite. There was usually a separation of ethnic or occupational groups. The non-elite usually fanned out towards the periphery, with the outcast groups at the very edges. Gates in the internal walls controlled the interaction between various groups and at night were closed, cutting off any possibility of inter-group communication. In fact,

A member of the urban elite took significant steps to avoid contact with other groups except to obtain needed goods and services. Such a person would have experienced a serious loss of status if found to be socializing with groups other than his own. Thus social and geographical distancing, enforced and communicated by interior walls, characterized both internal city relations and those between city and country.<sup>84</sup>

These elements of Lenski's generalized sociological model, summarized briefly above, form the template which can now be used in Ben Sira's case in an effort to arrive at a more precise understanding of his social role as scribe in second century BCE Judea. This will be done in two stages. First, the model will be applied to the generalized historical, political and socio-religious situation of pre-Maccabean Judea, surveyed in Chapter One above, to test whether that urban society was indeed pre-industrial agrarian. Second, the model will then be applied to Ben Sira himself, making use of the text of Sirach in general, and of the *Poem on the Ideal Scribe* and the autobiographical texts in particular, to test the hypothesis that he was a member of a scribal retainer class.

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<sup>84</sup> Rohrbaugh, "Pre-industrial City," 137.

### **4.3 Ben Sira: The Profile of a Scribe in an Agrarian Urban Society**

#### **(a) Pre-Maccabean Hellenistic Judea as an Agrarian Society**

In comparing the political and socio-religious situation of Pre-Maccabean Judea, considered in Chapter One above, with Lenski's model, some key characteristics of pre-industrial agrarian urban society are identifiable: namely, Judea belonged to a multi-ethnic, highly militaristic empire, ruled by foreign monarchical dynasties<sup>85</sup> in which the proprietary theory of the state operated.<sup>86</sup> Other aspects of pre-industrial agrarian society identifiable for Judea are: urbanization,<sup>87</sup> economic expansion with the inevitable development of merchant and artisan classes,<sup>88</sup> the fiscal and legal privileges enjoyed by the Jewish religious leadership<sup>89</sup> and finally, the rampant social inequality witnessed to by Ben Sira himself.<sup>90</sup> Since the leaders of the Judean theocracy, the High Priest and γερουσία,<sup>91</sup> were in receipt of both income<sup>92</sup> and political responsibility from the hellenistic rulers, they can be regarded, within Lenski's model, as a ruling elite.

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<sup>85</sup> See pp. 29.32-33.43-46 above.

<sup>86</sup> See pp. 34.45.57 above. The proprietary theory of the state operated and was evident in the concepts of οἶκος, βασιλική χώρα, βασιλικοὶ λαοί and δωρεαί, and in the exercise of royal proprietary rights through the προστασία.

<sup>87</sup> See pp. 32-33.35.40-43.45-46 above.

<sup>88</sup> See pp. 34.46-47 above.

<sup>89</sup> See pp. 47-53 above.

<sup>90</sup> Sir 3,30-31; 4,2-6.8-10; 7,10b; 29,8-13; 35,3-4. On Ben Sira and social justice see Skehan-DiLella, *Ben Sira*, 88-90.

<sup>91</sup> See pp. 33-34.47-51.53 above.

<sup>92</sup> See pp. 56-60 above.

In terms of Lenski's model, the consistent profile of the scribe in the Ancient Near East and in pre-exilic Israel-Judah and post-exilic Judea is one of retainer, whose multifaceted functions varied and developed in different historical contexts. In most Ancient Near Eastern societies the retainer role was expressed in bureaucratic, educational and sapiential terms.<sup>93</sup> Pre-exilic Israelite scribes performed similar retainer functions, as well as literary and exegetical roles.<sup>94</sup> In the post-exilic restoration under the Persians, the Jewish scribe's retainer role continued in the bureaucratic and administrative realm, but found particular expression in Ezra's exegesis of written religious texts.<sup>95</sup> The Ptolemaic style of government with its obsessive bureaucracy in general, and its control of Judea in particular, required an extensive retainer class of different kinds of officials,<sup>96</sup> among whom the γραμματεὺς was a significantly important member of the retainer class. Seleucid rule also required a similar retainer class.<sup>97</sup>

The application of Lenski's model to the generalized historical, political and socio-religious situation of Ben Sira's social world, indicates that Early Seleucid Judea was a pre-industrial agrarian urban society. Furthermore, it was effectively a theocracy which enjoyed a certain degree of independence from the Seleucid

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<sup>93</sup> See pp. 13-15 above.

<sup>94</sup> See pp. 16-20 above.

<sup>95</sup> See pp. 20-28 above.

<sup>96</sup> See pp. 30-32 above. These officials were the διοικητής, στρατηγός, οἰκονόμος, as well as the γραμματεὺς, whose role was further subdivided into those of βασιλικὸς γραμματεὺς, τοπογραμματεὺς and κωμογραμματεὺς.

<sup>97</sup> See page 45n.131 above. This class consisted of a wide range of officials: διοικητής, οἰκονόμος, στρατηγός, ἐκλογιστής, ἐπιστολογραφός, χρεωφύλαξ and γραμματεὺς.

king. The *γερουσία*, mentioned in Antiochus III's decree concerning exemption from state taxes, probably consisted of leading priests and citizens, and was presided over by the High Priest. The remaining groups mentioned in the decree may be regarded as retainers, with the priests performing cultic retainer functions and the Temple-singers other liturgical roles. In this context, the Temple-scribes may well have been non-cultic retainers, engaged in the scholarly study and interpretation of Israel's sacred traditions with a view to legitimating the Judean theocracy. However, to test this hypothesis further, it is necessary to apply Lenski's model specifically to Ben Sira, the Jewish scribe of the period, in order to determine with greater precision how he functioned as scribal retainer at the service of the Judean theocracy.

**(b) Ben Sira as Scribal Retainer**

Lenski's model identifies the first social class of a pre-industrial agrarian urban society as the ruler, which in the case of second century BCE Judea, was the hellenistic king. While Ben Sira does not mention the ruler or hellenistic king in the *Poem on the Ideal Scribe*, there are a number of references throughout the book of Sirach which are presented below in Table 20.

**Table 20**  
**Ruler (Hellenistic King) Terminology in Sirach**

<i>HEB</i>	<i>G</i>	<i>SIRACH</i>
מלך	βασιλεύς	7,4b.5b; 10,3a.10b; 38,2b
נדיב		8,2d

The hellenistic king was the one who sustained retainers, particularly the

physician.<sup>98</sup> However, Ben Sira advised would-be-retainers to exercise caution. While the king, functioning as an agrarian ruler, conferred political prestige, Ben Sira encouraged his audience to avoid such honours,<sup>99</sup> presumably because of royal corruption derived from excessive wealth.<sup>100</sup> Equally, flaunting one's wisdom was to be avoided due to the risks involved in such an enterprise.<sup>101</sup> A wanton king (מלך פרוע), in contrast to a wise governing class, was capable of the destruction of the people.<sup>102</sup> However, the power of the hellenistic king was not absolute in that it was ultimately limited by death.<sup>103</sup> The king's negative portrayal by Ben Sira is underscored both by his desire for Judea to be freed from the rule of the hellenistic kings, whom he saw as foreign enemies who oppressed and were hostile to the Jews,<sup>104</sup> and by the fact that for Ben Sira there was only One whom he could address as King,<sup>105</sup> namely the God of Israel whose temple was in Jerusalem.<sup>106</sup>

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<sup>98</sup> Sir 38,2b.

<sup>99</sup> Sir 7,4b.

<sup>100</sup> Sir 8,2d.

<sup>101</sup> Sir 7,5b.

<sup>102</sup> Sir 10,3a.

<sup>103</sup> Sir 10,10b. Skehan-DiLella, *Ben Sira*, 225: "Though the language is elusive to protect himself from the pagan overlords, Ben Sira's graphic description of human frailty, impermanence, and corruptibility in vv 9-11 was probably meant as a stinging and grim diatribe against the Ptolemaic and Seleucid kings who claimed to be 'gods on earth' and 'masters of the world'."

<sup>104</sup> Sir 36,2-12 describes the hellenistic kings as *foreigners* (עם נכר - v.3a), *enemies* (צר - v.7b), *foes* (אויב - v.7b), *oppressors* (οἱ κακοῦτες τὸν λαόν - v.11b), and *hostile rulers* (ἀρχόντων ἐχθρῶν - v.12a).

<sup>105</sup> Sir 51,1a.

<sup>106</sup> Sir 50,2b (היכל מלך) and Sir 50,7a (היכל המלך).

*Chapter Four: Ben Sira and the Social World of Pre-Maccabean Hellenistic Judea*

Ben Sira's implacable theological and political opposition to the hellenistic kings, along with his non-mention of them in the *Poem on the Ideal Scribe*, is clear evidence that he did not belong to the Judean governing class, which was the class in Judea who would have had to deal directly with such kings.

Ben Sira's relationship with this governing class or ruling elite must now be examined. While he mentions the ruling elite explicitly, he does not dwell on them (Sir 38,33f: 39,4):

They are not found among rulers (משלים). ... In the midst of the mighty (μεγιστάνες) he serves, and appears before leaders (ἡγούμενοι).

Unlike the other people mentioned in the poem, the scribe has direct dealings with the ruling class and is in a relationship of service to them. While the ruling class is not dwelt on here in much detail, there are many references to rulers throughout the book of Sirach which are presented below in Table 21.

**Table 21**  
**Ruling Class Terminology in Sirach**

<i>HEB</i>	<i>G</i>	<i>SIRACH</i>
גדול	δυναστης	8,1a
זקנים	γέρων	32,9a
מחוקק	γραμματεύς	10,5b <sup>107</sup>
משל	δυναστης	4,27b; 10,24a
	ἡγούμενος	9,17b
	κρίτης	7,6a

<sup>107</sup> G has mistranslated Heb. See page 82n.23 above.



Table 21 - Continued

HEB	G	SIRACH
נדיב	δυναστής	7,6c; 13,9a
	μεγιστάν	11,1b; 38,3b
נשא	ἡγούμενος	41,17b
ראש		10,2b.20a
שלטון	μεγιστάν	4,7b
שפט	κριτής	8,14a; 10,1a.2a.24a
שר	μεγιστάν	8,8d; 10,24a; 32,9b
	δυναστής	10,3b; 41,17b <sup>108</sup>
	πρεσβύτερος	7,14a
	ἡγούμενος	17,17a; 39,4b
	μεγιστάν	20,27b.28b; 23,14b; 39,4a

Ben Sira's attitude to the ruling class in these texts indicates that he considered that class superior to his own. Rulers were to be served,<sup>109</sup> deferred to,<sup>110</sup> and treated with respect.<sup>111</sup> Within the ruling class there were different roles.<sup>112</sup> Rulers

<sup>108</sup> Reading with MsM, MsB<sup>msg</sup> and G against MsB<sup>xt</sup>.

<sup>109</sup> Sir 8,8d.

<sup>110</sup> Sir 4,7b.27b; 7,14a; 8,1a; 20,27b.28b; 32,9.

<sup>111</sup> Sir 23,14; 41,17b.

<sup>112</sup> Sir 10,24a.

possessed power<sup>113</sup> and prestige,<sup>114</sup> but not all did so in equal fashion.<sup>115</sup> While Ben Sira regarded the ruling class more favourably than he did the king,<sup>116</sup> nonetheless he understood their authority as divinely appointed<sup>117</sup> and therefore ultimately subject to God's authority.

The third of Lenski's nine groups identifiable in the *Poem on the Ideal Scribe* is the scribal retainer class, to which Ben Sira autobiographically ascribes himself. At the outset, Ben Sira establishes the boundaries of this class: the upper boundary is established in terms of service to the ruling class,<sup>118</sup> while the lower boundary separating the scribal retainer class from inferior classes is established in terms of wisdom and the opportunity to pursue it.<sup>119</sup> As a scribal retainer Ben Sira had a number of functions: unlike the inferior classes<sup>120</sup> he possessed the

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<sup>113</sup> Sir 8,1b.14a; 38,3b.

<sup>114</sup> Sir 10,20a.24a; 11,1b.

<sup>115</sup> Sir 7,6c; 13,9a.

<sup>116</sup> Sir 9,17b; 10,1-3. Ben Sira's positive attitude to the ruling class finds its highest expression in his eulogy of Simeon II in Sir 50,1-24.

<sup>117</sup> Sir 10,5b; 17,17a.

<sup>118</sup> Sir 39,4ab.

<sup>119</sup> Sir 38,24.

<sup>120</sup> Sir 38,33. Skehan-DiLella, *Ben Sira*, 451: "But in counselling people they are not sought, and in the assembly they are not prominent. They do not sit on the judge's chair, and they do not think over regulations and right decisions. Also they do not understand the learning of wisdom. They are not found among rulers." These are functions in the public domain from which the inferior classes are excluded by virtue of their lesser wisdom. However, the text does not affirm these public functions as *scribal activity*, as the description of such activity only begins at Sir 38,34c. Against Marböck, "Der Schriftgelehrte Weise," 119-120 and also against Pamela A. Foulkes, "'To Expound Discipline or Judgement': The Portrait of the Scribe in Ben Sira," *Pacifica* (continued...)

wisdom to assist the governing class in the exercise of public office;<sup>121</sup> he exercised ambassadorial functions<sup>122</sup> and engaged in the all-important task of education.<sup>123</sup> However, his most significant function was that he legitimated the religious and political *status quo* in the face of hellenistic thought and culture by engaging with Israel's traditions, and particularly its biblical tradition. Thus Ben Sira defined the primary task of the scribe as keeper of Israel's tradition (Sir 39,1-3):

He seeks the wisdom of all the ancients, and is busy with the ancient prophecies. He preserves the story of famous men, and penetrates meaningful sayings. He seeks out the obscurities of proverbs, and is engaged with the riddles of parables.<sup>124</sup>

As with the Judean ruling class, Ben Sira's authority as scribe was grounded in his relationship with God (Sir 39,5-8):

He sets his heart to seek his Creator (early in the morning), and implores before the Most High. He opens his mouth in prayer, and implores because of his sins. If God Most High wants it, he will be filled with the spirit of understanding. He himself bubbles forth his words of wisdom, and praises the Lord in prayer. He understands his advice and knowledge, and thinks over His mysteries. He brings forth the instruction of his teaching, and boasts about the law of life.

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<sup>120</sup>(...continued)

7 (1994): 75-84, at 76 who unwisely uses Sir 38,33cd to substantiate her thesis that Ben Sira was not a teacher, but a member of the judiciary.

<sup>121</sup> Sir 39,4ab.

<sup>122</sup> Sir 39,4cd.

<sup>123</sup> Sir 39,8.

<sup>124</sup> See also the autobiographical description in Sir 33,16-17. Foulkes, "Portrait of the Scribe," 79-84 argues that Israelite and international wisdom tradition formed the basis of scribal activity in preparation for a career in the judiciary. The argument does not persuade. The *Poem on the Ideal Scribe* clearly portrays the scribe's engagement with God and Torah as life-long (Sir 38,34cd; 39,5a). See pp. 91-93 above.

As a status group, the scribal retainer class was not ultimately based on power but on the prestige and honour due it from society (Sir 39,1-11):

Many speak of his sagacity, and he is not blotted out forever. His memory does not cease, and his name will live from generation to generation. The community praises his wisdom, and the assembly announces his approval. Should he live long so will he be praised by thousands, and should he rest, so is his name enough.

The only other portrait of a member of the retainer class which Ben Sira offers in his book is that of the physician,<sup>125</sup> a role which has certain similarity with the scribe's. The scribe's role is based on חכמה, while the physician's is based on דעת.<sup>126</sup> Like the scribe's, the physician's profession is established by God,<sup>127</sup> is grounded in piety,<sup>128</sup> and functions at the service of the ruling class.<sup>129</sup>

Positing Ben Sira as a member of the scribal retainer class, it is possible to evaluate Gordis' theory that Ben Sira belonged to the aristocracy. Gordis' thesis is that all wisdom writers in Ancient Israel derived from a common social background, namely the Jerusalemite aristocracy of the eighth to fifth centuries BCE, which was associated with high-priestly and government circles and was very conservative in outlook and not open to change.<sup>130</sup> Gordis argues that Ben Sira was from this social background, since the book of Sirach portrays Ben Sira as teaching sexually mature young men, the sons of the wealthy aristocracy, who

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<sup>125</sup> Sir 38,1-15.

<sup>126</sup> Sir 38,3a.

<sup>127</sup> Sir 38,1b.

<sup>128</sup> Sir 38,14a. The verb διαθῆναι is also used in Sir 39,5b of the scribe.

<sup>129</sup> Sir 38,3b.

<sup>130</sup> Gordis, *Social Background*, 77-118.

alone could have afforded the time for leisurely pursuit of wisdom.<sup>131</sup> Other factors which, for Gordis, confirm his thesis are: Ben Sira's utilitarian morality,<sup>132</sup> his lack of belief in an after-life,<sup>133</sup> his attitude to evil,<sup>134</sup> his religious ideas, his concept of free-will,<sup>135</sup> his approach to the Temple,<sup>136</sup> and his attitude to women.<sup>137</sup> Ben Sira must be seen therefore to reflect the political, social and moral attitudes of the Judean aristocracy. Gordis concludes, given the absence of any mention of God's role in history, of passion for justice, of national loyalty, of freedom as a human right and of dissatisfaction with the world as it is, that Ben Sira was proto-Sadducean.<sup>138</sup>

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<sup>131</sup> *Ibid.*, 83. A similar viewpoint is expressed by H. Duesberg, *Les Scribes Inspirés* (Maredsous, Belgium: Éditions de Maredsous, 1966), 392: "Ben Sira en parle comme un patricien trop haut placé pour être dédaigneux; il est simplement protecteur et bienveillant." Ben Sira is further described as a "grand bourgeois de Jérusalem."

<sup>132</sup> Sir 13,2-20; 20,9-10. This utilitarian morality is further reflected in *condemnations of bribery* (Sir 7,6; 20,29); *opposition to theft* (Sir 5,8; 13,24; 20,25; 40,13); *condemnation of dishonesty in business* (Sir 3,31; 12,1; 18,18; 22,23); and emphasis on *physical enjoyment* (Sir 14,15; 40,20).

<sup>133</sup> Sir 7,17; 10,1; 17,27; 41,14.

<sup>134</sup> Sir 39,16. Ben Sira rejects any theory of evil based on *Satan* (Sir 21,27), which Gordis regards as an essentially plebeian concept.

<sup>135</sup> Sir 15,11.16.

<sup>136</sup> Sir 49,15-50,24.

<sup>137</sup> Sir 25,5-26; 26,1-18.

<sup>138</sup> Other scholars have argued that Ben Sira was proto-Pharisaic, in particular J. G. Snaith, "Ben Sira's Supposed Love of Liturgy," *VT* 25 (1975): 167-174. Such anachronistic arguments and terminology have been rejected by Saul M. Olyan, "Ben Sira's Relationship to the Priesthood," *HTR* 80 (1987): 261-286, at 262n.6.

However, Gordis' thesis may be criticized on a number of issues. First, he presents Israel's wisdom tradition in a highly monolithic fashion in that he draws on sapiential literature, but fails to allow the profile of the individual sapiential books and their writers to emerge and makes no distinction between pre-exilic court wisdom and that of pre-Maccabean hellenistic Judea. Second, the implied model for interpreting Ben Sira's social world (patrician *versus* plebeian) is not adequate to the complexity of that world, and is never consciously applied to the social dynamics of pre-Maccabean hellenistic Judea. Third, it is assumed, but never established, that the social context for literary wisdom is exclusively that of an aristocratic elite. Finally, it is also assumed that, since Ben Sira articulates views which are allegedly aristocratic in tone, he is *ipso facto* to be considered an aristocrat, without any significant analysis of the relationship between the Jewish scribe and the aristocratic elite in hellenistic Judea of the early second century BCE. In fact, there are indeed texts which clearly prevent Ben Sira from being assigned to the aristocratic elite, but rather to one of the upper social classes.<sup>139</sup> Ben Sira's decidedly non-aristocratic attitudes are revealed in his warnings against trusting in wealth,<sup>140</sup> against the powerful exploitation by the rich,<sup>141</sup> and in his statements about the morally corrosive effects of wealth.<sup>142</sup> He displayed a sensitivity to the plight of the poor,<sup>143</sup> particularly in statements which favoured the

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<sup>139</sup> Stadelmann, *Schriftgelehrter*, 5-12.

<sup>140</sup> Sir 5,1.8.

<sup>141</sup> Sir 9,13; 13,3-7.

<sup>142</sup> Sir 8,2; 34,1-9; 40,13-14.

<sup>143</sup> Sir 10,22-23.30; 13,18-23.

poor over the rich.<sup>144</sup> In this context it should be recognized:

Doch darf dieser Umstand nicht die bemerkenswerte Tatsache verdunkeln, daß sich eine so positive Einstellung den Armen gegenüber, wie wir sie bei Sirach gefunden haben, sonst in der gesamten Literatur der Apokryphen und Pseudepigraphen nirgends findet.<sup>145</sup>

While such sentiments are inconsistent with an aristocratic profile of Ben Sira, they are most compatible with the profile of a learned and influential person located between the poor peasantry and the aristocratic elite, namely among the retainer class.

Lenski's fourth social group is the merchant class. While Ben Sira does not give any sustained account of how this class functioned, in a way analagous to his description of his own class in the *Poem on the Ideal Scribe*, nevertheless there are a number of references to merchants in the book of Sirach presented below in Table 22.

Table 22  
Merchant Class Terminology in Sirach

HEB	G	SIRACH
סוחר		37,11c
תגר	ἔμπορος	42,5b
		26,29a
	κάπηλος	26,29b

Ben Sira's silence on the merchant class is probably due to his dislike and mistrust of merchants which seem to be based on their alleged lack of integrity. Certainly

<sup>144</sup> Sir 21,5; 35,16.

<sup>145</sup> Stadelmann, *Schriftgelehrter*, 9.

he regarded commerce as a morally dangerous activity (Sir 26,29-27,3):

A merchant (ἔμπορος) can hardly remain without fault, or a shopkeeper (κάπηλος) free from sin; for the sake of profit many sin, and the struggle for wealth blinds the eyes. Like a peg driven between fitted stones, between buying and selling sin is wedged in. Unless one holds fast to the fear of the Lord (ἐὰν μὴ ἐν φόβῳ κυρίου), with sudden swiftness one's house will be thrown down.<sup>146</sup>

However, the criterion which distinguishes the merchant class from the scribal retainer class is the former's implied unwillingness to hold fast to the fear of God, a concept which lies at the heart of the scribal role (Sir 38,34cd):

How different the one who gives his soul up to fear God (τοῦ ἐπιδιδόντος τὴν ψυχὴν αὐτοῦ φόβῳ θεοῦ) and to ponder the law of life!

Lenski's model may offer another possibility for understanding Ben Sira's attitude to merchants and his exclusion of them from the *Poem on the Ideal Scribe*. When the social groups of an agrarian society are compared in terms of privilege, it is clear that the only group which could have direct access to the governing class, without any mediation by the retainer class, is the merchant class. This is so because the merchant class enjoyed privilege on the basis of their market relationship with the ruling class, while the scribal retainer class enjoyed privilege on the basis of an authority relationship. It is quite possible that Ben Sira regarded the merchant class as one in competition with his own retainer class for privilege within the Judean theocracy, in which context his silence is understandable.

As with the merchant class, there is no sustained account in the *Poem on*

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<sup>146</sup> See Skehan-DiLella, *Ben Sira*, 353 for this translation. A similar moral warning is sounded in Sir 37,11c. The lack of integrity on the part of merchants allowed Ben Sira to advocate haggling with them without shame (Sir 42,5b). See also Hengel, *Judaism and Hellenism*, I, 137-138 who suggests that Ben Sira's negative stance towards merchants may have been because they were non-Jewish.



the *Ideal Scribe* of the priestly class, the fifth of Lenski's social classes. Nevertheless, Ben Sira's few references throughout his entire work to priests and priesthood are presented below in Table 23.

Table 23  
Priestly Class Terminology in Sirach

HEB	G	SIRACH
כהן	ἱερεύς	7,29b.31a; 50,1a
		50,16a
	ἱερεύς	50,12a
כהונה	ἱερωσύνη	45,24d
	ἱερατεία	45,7b

In short, Ben Sira had very little to say explicitly about priests and priesthood.<sup>147</sup> Certainly he had a very high regard for the levitical priesthood, founded in the covenant with Aaron<sup>148</sup> which he understood to have been legitimately passed to Aaron's grandson, Phinehas.<sup>149</sup> Accordingly, he encouraged his readers/students to revere the priests and give them their due portion.<sup>150</sup> As there is no mention of priests in any scribal context, nor in the autobiographical texts, there is nothing to

<sup>147</sup> For Ben Sira, the activity of priests was essentially cultic (Sir 45,15e; Heb 46,13d, 50,12a; Heb 50,16a) and in the case of Simon, architectural (Sir 50,1b). The only example of priestly teaching is in the description of Aaron (Sir 45,17cd), a text derived from Lev 10,10.

<sup>148</sup> Sir 50,16a. Ben Sira calls the priests of his own day בני אהרן.

<sup>149</sup> Sir 45,24. See John F. A. Sawyer, "Was Jeshua Ben Sira a Priest?," in *Proceedings of the Eighth World Congress of Jewish Studies* (Jerusalem: World Congress of Jewish Studies, 1982), 65-71, at 66 and also Skehan-DiLella, *Ben Sira*, 513 on Ben Sira's attitude to Phinehas.

<sup>150</sup> Sir 7,29-31.

imply that Ben Sira is to be located where both the scribal retainer and priestly classes overlapped. With this scarcity of comment from Ben Sira on priesthood in general, and his total silence on whether he himself was a priest, scholars have attempted to deduce from the text of Sirach and other texts whether Ben Sira was in fact a priest. The most comprehensive analysis to date has been that of Stadelmann,<sup>151</sup> who infers that Ben Sira was a priestly-scribe by reference to the text of Sirach,<sup>152</sup> the Hebrew Bible,<sup>153</sup> Jewish Pseudepigraphic sources,<sup>154</sup>

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<sup>151</sup> Stadelmann, *Schriftgelehrter* 12-26. Note that Stadelmann follows the Greek inverted order of Sir 33-36 while this study presents all his citations of Sirach according to the correct order of the Hebrew manuscripts.

<sup>152</sup> In Sir 38,24b (G) Ben Sira states that a condition for scribal activity is freedom from work (καὶ ὁ ἐλασσοῦμενος πράξει αὐτοῦ σοφισθήσεται). Stadelmann understands the Greek term *πρᾶξις* to mean *secular work*: *ibid.*, 13. Ben Sira also makes reference to contributions which must be made to priests (Sir 7,29-31; 45,20-22) and presents Aaron as the founder of a privileged order of priests which was learned in the law and had a privileged income (Sir 45,19-22). Josephus attests to contributions offered to maintain priestly groups in Jerusalem (*Ant.*, 20 §220; *Vita* §§1-7.422): *ibid.*, 13-14. Stadelmann's argument is that since the Ideal Scribe is free from secular work and Ben Sira's repeated concern with the contributions to be made to the priests, he must have been a priest. Other scholars who support the thesis that Ben Sira was a priest are Hengel, *Judaism and Hellenism*, I, 133; *idem*, "Scriptures and Their Interpretation," 166; Joseph **Blenkinsopp**, *Sage, Priest, Prophet: Religious and Intellectual Leadership in Ancient Israel* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1995), 15, who argues on the same basis that Ben Sira was an *inactive priest*.

<sup>153</sup> In the Hebrew Bible the interpretation and teaching of Torah is always presented as a priestly task (Lev 10,11; Deut 17,9-11) and the clearest example of a link between learnedness in the law and scribal activity is Ezra who was also a priest (Ezra 7,1-5.11-12; Neh 8,2.9).

<sup>154</sup> According to *Aristeas* §§130-170 Eleazar the High-Priest gave instruction in the Torah. In the *Book of Jubilees* 45,16 the priestly tribe of Levi is described as having been entrusted with the tradition of the holy writings. In the *Testament of Levi* it was Levi's seed which would produce scribes along with High-Priests and Judges (8,17). In fact, Stadelmann argues for a close parallel between Sir 39,1-11 and the *Testament of Levi* §13: Stadelmann, *Schriftgelehrter*, 23n.1. While he recognizes the fact that in the post-Maccabean period there arose a hasidic/pharisaic Torah-teaching non-priestly movement, scripture teaching remained the characteristic role of the priest.

Qumran<sup>155</sup> and other Jewish literature.<sup>156</sup> Stadelmann can thus summarize Ben Sira in his social world context: "Wir sehen ihn nicht als einen reichen, der aristokratischen 'leisure class' zugehörigen Patrizier ... sondern als einen in Jerusalem in einem gewissen Wohlstand lebenden Priester, der von Abgaben lebt und innerhalb der Hierokratie seinen Mann steht."<sup>157</sup>

However, his persuasive thesis that Ben Sira was a priest suffers from a certain imprecision. Stadelmann's thesis that Ben Sira was a priest-scribe cannot be maintained on the inferences from the text of Sirach. His argument that the scribe is involved in priestly, as opposed to lay, work does not persuade. As seen already,<sup>158</sup> the Greek term *πράξει*<sup>159</sup> is a translation of the Hebrew *פוע* which means *heavy* work and not secular as opposed to lay work. Stadelmann is correct in identifying Sir 7,29-31 as a text dealing with the economic privileges enjoyed by priests. However, it is in a context<sup>160</sup> dealing with personal responsibilities towards a series of people and towards livestock and does not exhibit evidence of any

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<sup>155</sup> With their separation from the Temple, the priests at Qumran emphasized their role as scripture interpreters and teachers. The *Temple Scroll* (11QTemple 56,2-11) presents the task of Torah instruction as that of the priests who retained authority in all questions of law (1QS 9,7; 1QSa 1,15-16.23; 11QTemple 56,9-10; 57,11-14; 61,7-9; 63,3-4). Stadelmann does recognize that at Qumran there existed a group of non-priests given to the investigation of the law (CD 6,2-7); however, priority was always priestly (1QS 6,8-9; CD 14,3-6). These non-priests also informed less skilled priests about the exact meaning of the law (CD 13,5-6).

<sup>156</sup> Philo (*Quod Deterius* §§62-68) and Josephus (*Bell.*, 3 §352; *Vita* 8; *c.Ap.*, 1 §29) affirm that Torah learnedness was essentially priestly.

<sup>157</sup> Stadelmann, *Schriftgelehrter*, 26.

<sup>158</sup> See pp. 102-103 above.

<sup>159</sup> Sir 38,24b.

<sup>160</sup> Sir 7,18-36.

heightened interest in the contributions to be made to the priests. Nor does the reference to the contributions to be made to Aaron,<sup>161</sup> derived from Num 18,8 and Lev 24,9, betray any heightened interest in priestly income.

The whole issue of Ben Sira's approach to liturgy and cult has been investigated inconclusively by various scholars. Some argue that he was very concerned with matters cultic,<sup>162</sup> while others argue that, while Ben Sira certainly had an interest in ritual, it meant very little to him.<sup>163</sup> The position in favour of Ben Sira's interest in liturgy and cult has been recently argued again by Olyan<sup>164</sup> based on a somewhat uncritical acceptance of Stadelmann's thesis that Ben Sira was a priest. A very clear counter-argument had already been presented by Snaith<sup>165</sup> whose approach is to examine the passages in Sirach which deal with religious ceremonial and priesthood, showing convincingly that Ben Sira's description of Aaron's liturgical vestments is inaccurate,<sup>166</sup> and instead of demonstrating keen cultic interest, betrays a complete and uncritical dependence on biblical sources. In the description of Simon,<sup>167</sup> Ben Sira has combined two ceremonials: that of the

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<sup>161</sup> Sir 45,19-22.

<sup>162</sup> T. Maertens, *L'Éloge des Pères (Ecclésiastique XLIV-L)* (Bruges: Éditions de l'Abbaye de Saint André, 1956), 121.156; G. Maier, *Mensch und Freier Wille: Nach den Jüdischen Religionsparteien Zwischen Ben Sira und Paulus*, WUNT Series 12 (Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 1971), 52-54; L. Perdue, *Wisdom and Cult: A Critical Analysis of the Views of Cult in the Wisdom Literatures of Israel and the Ancient Near East*, SBLDS 30 (Missoula: Scholars Press, 1977), 188-211.

<sup>163</sup> Smend, *Weisheit erklärt*, 374-375.

<sup>164</sup> Olyan, "Priesthood," 261-286.

<sup>165</sup> Snaith, "Supposed Love of Liturgy," 167-174.

<sup>166</sup> Sir 45,6-22.

<sup>167</sup> Sir 50,1-21.

Day of Atonement and that of the Daily Whole-Offering.<sup>168</sup> Snaith's conclusion is that Ben Sira's marked *lack of interest* in liturgy and cult is reflected particularly in the way in which concerns for social justice and personal devotion predominate over public cult.<sup>169</sup> In fact, cultic references in Sirach do not necessarily mean that Ben Sira was a priest since "parlare con entusiasmo di una realtà non significa necessariamente farne parte, e quindi, nel caso concreto, l'eventuale esaltazione del culto non dice di per sé che Ben Sira appartenesse alla classe sacerdotale."<sup>170</sup>

Stadelmann's appeal to biblical texts in support of his thesis does not yield very clear results. Texts such as Lev 10,11 and Deut 17,11 do suggest that authoritative instruction concerning obligations based on the law of Moses was indeed entrusted to priests. It is, however, anachronistic to see such texts as the basis for any alleged priestly teaching of scripture in pre-Maccabean hellenistic Judea, since "tôrâ in various periods never meant what we might properly call

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<sup>168</sup> *Tam* 6,3-8,3.

<sup>169</sup> For a totally different reading of Sir 50,1-21 see Fearghas Ó Fearghail, "Sir 50,5-21: Yom Kippur and The Daily Whole-Offering?" *Bib* 59 (1978): 301-316, at 316: "Sir 50,5-21 has nothing to do with the Day of Atonement but portrays the High Priest Simon offering the Daily Whole-Offering. Had the writer 'Yom Kippur' in mind, he surely would have chosen some elements proper to the ceremonies of that day instead of the Daily Whole-Offering." A similar portrayal of a High Priest (Eleazar) is to be found in *Aristeas*, §§ 92-95 which contains a very elaborate description of the High Priest's attire similar to that found in Sir 50,1-21. In short, Ben Sira does not show evidence of keen liturgical interest, rather a desire to eulogize and idealize Simon poetically. See also R. Hayward, "Sacrifice and World Order: Some Attitudes on Ben Sira's Attitude to the Temple Service," in *Sacrifice and Redemption: Durham Essays in Theology*, ed. S. W. Sykes (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 22-34 who argues that Ben Sira draws a parallel between Wisdom's residence and the priestly service on Mount Zion.

<sup>170</sup> Gian Luigi Prato, review of *Ben Sira als Schriftgelehrter*, by Helge Stadelmann, *Greg* 63 (1982): 560-565 at 561. Prato flatly rejects Stadelmann's thesis that Ben Sira was a priestly scribe on the basis of priestly and cultic references. For a similar critique of Stadelmann, see also Pancratius C. Beentjes, "Recent Publications on the Wisdom of Jesus Ben Sira (Ecclesiasticus)." *BTFT* 43 (1982): 188-198, at 193.

instruction, and that a priest dealing with it could not properly be said to be teaching."<sup>171</sup> While the biblical texts about Ezra do indeed point to his particular combination of scribal, priestly and exegetical roles, the text of Sirach does not permit a similar claim in respect of Ben Sira.

The appeal to Jewish Pseudepigrapha yields very little. Stadelmann claims that *Aristeas* §§128-171 deals with Eleazar's instruction of the Mosaic law; it is rather an apologetic vindication of the purpose and function of Jewish law.<sup>172</sup> Stadelmann's use of the *Book of Jubilees* and the *Testament of Levi* overlooks the highly apologetic nature of these writings which express the messianic hope of Israel in terms of Levi's lineage, which is inappropriate in the light of Ben Sira's unbounded admiration for Aaron<sup>173</sup> and the Aaronic high-priesthood traced through Phinehas<sup>174</sup> and his obvious exclusion of Eleazar from the *Laus Patrum* (Sir 44-50). While Stadelmann emphasizes the significance of the *priestly* role of scripture-teaching evidenced at Qumran, he overlooks the significance of the equally evidenced *non-priestly* role attested to in the QL.<sup>175</sup> Finally, while the evidence from Philo and Josephus attests to priestly *learnedness* in legal matters, there is no clear evidence of an exclusive priestly *scripture-teaching* role.

It is now possible to summarize the argument. The text of Sirach cannot unambiguously answer the question as to whether Ben Sira was a *priestly* or *non-*

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<sup>171</sup> Concerning Lev 10,10-11 see John J. Castelot, and Aelred Cody, "Religious Institutions," in *NJBC*, 1253-1283, at 1255b.

<sup>172</sup> Herbert T. Andrews, "The Letter of Aristeas," in *The Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament*, ed. R. H. Charles, vol. 2 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1913), 83-122, at 84-85.

<sup>173</sup> Sir 45,6.20.25.

<sup>174</sup> Sir 45,23.

<sup>175</sup> CD 6,2-7; 13,5-6.

priestly scribe. The *Poem on the Ideal Scribe* and the autobiographical texts show no evidence of cultic concerns, while texts dealing with priests and the priesthood are exclusively concerned with cultic matters and are devoid of any reference to interpreting and teaching Israel's biblical traditions. Thus the book of Sirach fails to provide any evidence suggesting that the priestly and scribal retainer classes in pre-Maccabean Judea overlapped in the person of Ben Sira who was silent on Ezra,<sup>176</sup> the only priest-scribe referred to in the Hebrew Bible. Equally so, inferred argument from outside the book of Sirach does not persuade that Ben Sira was a priest. In short, it is not possible to answer unambiguously the question as to whether Ben Sira was a priestly or non-priestly scribe. Historically Ben Sira's period was one in which the social role of the scribe increased in significance under the bureaucratic requirements of Ptolemaic and Seleucid rulers and particularly with the proclamation by Antiochus III Megas of the Mosaic law as Seleucid law in Jerusalem, and who in his list of state officials exempt from taxes, had located the Temple-scribes separate from and subordinate to the priests. Furthermore, there is evidence of a hasidic/pharisaic Torah-teaching non-priestly movement, who in the post-Maccabean period constituted a group of teachers and interpreters of Israel's scripture. There is also evidence at Qumran of such teachers operating under priestly management. While absolute certainty cannot be attained, the most probable profile arising from the confluence of the available data is that Ben Sira was a scribe who, although not involved in cultic matters,<sup>177</sup> operated under the guidance of the Jerusalem priesthood.

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<sup>176</sup> See pp. 25-28 above.

<sup>177</sup> Marböck, "Der Schriftgelehrte Weise," 306 argues that Ben Sira was a layman. Unfortunately the evidence is far too tenuous to support this claim unambiguously.

Lenski's sixth social group, the peasant farmer<sup>178</sup> is explicitly mentioned in the *Poem on the Ideal Scribe* (Sir 38,25-26):

How can one become wise (מה יתחכם) who handles the plough and glories in the shaft of a goad? Who drives cattle and who turns the oxen about and his talk is about bull-calves? He directs his heart (לב) towards it, to harrow the furrows, and his care (שקידתו) is about fodder.

While Ben Sira understood the work of the peasant farmer to be assigned by God,<sup>179</sup> the answer to his question (מה יתחכם) was that the peasant farmer class was inferior to the scribal retainer class in terms of wisdom. Ben Sira portrays the Judean peasant farmer, even equipped with the technologically advanced plough,<sup>180</sup> as incapable of wisdom since his heart (לב) was devoted to tillage and his care (שקידתו) to animal husbandry.

Lenski's seventh social group, the artisan class, is referred to in Sirach only in the *Poem on the Ideal Scribe* (Sir 38,27):

So too is the carver (τέκτων) and the artisan (ἀρχιτέκτων) who passes night and day. The engraver (γλύφων) engraves the signet-rings, and his steadfastness is to change coloured patterns (ἀλλοιῶσαι ποικιλίαν). He directs his heart towards it, to imitate the life model (ὁμοιῶσαι ζωγραφίαν), and his care is to complete the work (τελέσαι ἔργον).

Skilled artisans individually produced their items from raw material to finished product and sold them in a competitive market. Ben Sira's portrait, which focuses

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<sup>178</sup> There are two references to hired peasant workers (שכיר - μίσθιος) in the rest of the book: Sir 7,20b (reading with MsC against MsA) and 37,11h (reading with MsB<sup>ms</sup> and MsD against MsB<sup>nt</sup>).

<sup>179</sup> Sir 7,15.

<sup>180</sup> See page 35n.93 above.



on the skill of the artisan by the use of key words which emphasize the intricate nature of the work: γλύφειν, ἀλλοιωῶσαι ποικιλίαν, ὁμοιωῶσαι ζωγραφίαν, and τελέσαι ἔργον, is confirmed by archaeological finds for the period.<sup>181</sup>

The eighth of Lenski's social classes, the unclean or degraded class, which occurs in the book of Sirach is presented below in Table 24.

Table 24  
Degraded Class Terminology in Sirach

HEB	G	SIRACH
גבע	οἰκέτης	4,30b; 7,20a.21a; 10,25a; 33,25b.28a.31a.31c; 42,5c <sup>182</sup>
		6,11b; 37,11i
	χαλκεύς	38,28a
	κεραμεύς	38,29a

The degraded class, identified in the *Poem on the Ideal Scribe* with the smith and the potter, seems to have occupied one of the lowest positions in the agrarian urban society as its members had only their physical energy to sell in debilitating occupations. The portrait of the smith is almost exclusively given over to a description of how his occupation is destructive of both his flesh and ears (Sir 38,28):

<sup>181</sup> Glassware discovered at Tel Anafa in Galilee attests to the intricacy of hellenistic artistic carving and the variety of colours used (green, brown, yellow, aquamarine, blue and purple) in producing luxury artifacts for the wealthy. On the finds at Tel Anafa see S. S. Weinberg, "Tel Anafa," *IEJ* 19 (1969): 250-252 and *idem*, "Tel Anafa: The Hellenistic Town," *IEJ* 21 (1971): 86-109.

<sup>182</sup> Reading with MsM and G against MsB.

*Chapter Four: Ben Sira and the Social World of Pre-Maccabean Hellenistic Judea*

So too is the smith who sits by the furnace and examines iron equipment closely. The breath of the fire melts his flesh, and in the heat of the oven he is baked. The noise of the hammer deafens his ear, and his eyes are on the pattern of vessels. He directs his heart towards it, to the completion of the works, and his care is to arrange (them) in completion.

The portrait of the potter, on the other hand, emphasizes the bodily energy required of arms and feet for his occupation, but which is ultimately destructive of bodily health (Sir 38,29-30):

So too is the potter who sits near the wheel, and rotates the wheel with his feet. With his arm he moulds the clay, and before he dies he is bent and curved. He directs his heart towards it, to complete the glaze, and his care is to reheat the oven.

Ben Sira's attitude to slaves, who are not mentioned in the *Poem on the Ideal Scribe*, was somewhat positive,<sup>183</sup> suggesting that they were of value and not to be located among the lowest social stratum, the expendable class. However, he was quite content to deal with servants in a harsh manner.<sup>184</sup> Sir 33,25.27-30b portrays the work of the slave as physically debilitating:

Fodder and whip and loads for an ass; food, discipline and work for a slave ... Yoke and harness will bow the neck, and for a wicked slave, punishment in the stocks. Put him to work, that he may not be idle, for idleness teaches much evil. Set him to work, as is fitting for him, and if he does not obey, make his fetters heavy.

While Lenski's final social group, the expendable class, is not referred to in the *Poem on the Ideal Scribe*, the reference to some members of this social stratum in the rest of the book is presented below in Table 25.

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<sup>183</sup> Sir 4,30b; 7,20-21; 10,25; 33,30c-33.

<sup>184</sup> Sir 23,10; 33,25.27-30b; 42,5c.

**Table 25**  
**Expendable Class Terminology in Sirach**

HEB	G	SIRACH
אִשָּׁה זָרָה	γυνή ἑταιριζομένη	9,3a
מַגְנִיחַ	ψαλλούση	9,4a
	πόρνη	19,2b
חַיֵּי מֵתִין		40,28a
שֹׁאֵל	ἐπαίτησις	40,30a
שֹׁאֵל	κλοπή	41,19a
	κλέπτης	20,25a
עֲשָׂפ	ἀνομία	41,18b
	ὀκνηρός	22,1a.2a

Ben Sira's strong opposition to social contact with the expendable class is evident in his terse advice to avoid contact with prostitutes,<sup>185</sup> a life of begging,<sup>186</sup> theft,<sup>187</sup> and criminal activity.<sup>188</sup> His intense dislike for this class is clear in his description of the consequences of contact with prostitutes, his graphic description of begging, his use of comparison with regard to those who refuse to work, and the ruin he associated with theft:

<sup>185</sup> Sir 9,3-4; 19,2b.

<sup>186</sup> Sir 40,28a.

<sup>187</sup> Sir 41,19a.

<sup>188</sup> Sir 41,18b.

*Chapter Four: Ben Sira and the Social World of Pre-Maccabean Hellenistic Judea*

Wine and women lead intelligent men astray, and the man who consorts with harlots is very reckless. Decay and worms will inherit him, and the reckless soul will be snatched away (Sir 19,2-3).

My son, do not lead the life of a beggar; it is better to die than to beg. When a man looks to the table of another, his existence cannot be considered as life. He pollutes himself with another man's food, but a man who is intelligent and well instructed guards against that. In the mouth of the shameless begging is sweet, but in his stomach a fire is kindled (Sir 40,28-30).

The indolent may be compared to a filthy stone, and every one hisses at his disgrace. The indolent may be compared to the filth of dunghills; any one that picks it up will shake it off his hand (Sir 22,1-2).

A thief is preferable to a habitual liar, but the lot of both is ruin (Sir 20,25).

Thus one would expect Ben Sira to be silent on the expendable class in the *Poem on the Ideal Scribe*, seeing in that class no possibility whatsoever of wisdom nor of any contribution to the Judean theocracy.

The above analysis has shown that five of Lenski's social classes are mentioned in the *Poem on the Ideal Scribe*: the ruling class, the retainer class and three lower classes ranked in an increasing order of inferior status. While the ruling class is merely alluded to, the classes inferior to the retainer class are described in detail. They are not portrayed with any sense of contempt, but as socially distinct from the scribal retainer class. The evident social distinction drawn between the scribal retainer class and the inferior classes is based primarily on the type of wisdom possessed by each class. The scribal class was regarded by Ben Sira as truly wise and possessing the prerequisite condition of freedom from heavy toil to achieve wisdom.<sup>189</sup> For Ben Sira it was impossible that the inferior classes

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<sup>189</sup> Sir 38,24.

could achieve this wisdom.<sup>190</sup> While this is asserted explicitly of the peasant farmer class,<sup>191</sup> it is implied of the artisan and degraded classes by the repetition of οὕτως.<sup>192</sup> Ultimately the inferior classes were incapable of wisdom as their hearts<sup>193</sup> and care<sup>194</sup> were directed to matters of worldly work and trade.<sup>195</sup> Thus Ben Sira articulated the distinction between the scribal retainer class and the rest of Judean society in sapiential terms. Inequality of status based on power and privilege also underlined the social distinction based on sapiential distinctions. The roles from which the inferior classes were excluded are precisely those which provided public status.<sup>196</sup> The scribe, on the other hand, achieved status both in his own life time and after his death.<sup>197</sup> Social distinction led to diversification of roles among the different social classes in Judean society. The classes inferior to the scribal class were concerned with the lower wisdom associated with manual labour, urban life, food and trade,<sup>198</sup> while the scribe engaged in public life.<sup>199</sup>

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<sup>190</sup> Sir 38,25a.

<sup>191</sup> Sir 38,25a.

<sup>192</sup> Sir 38,27a.28a.29a.

<sup>193</sup> Sir 38,26a.27e.28g.30c.

<sup>194</sup> Sir 38,26b.27f.28h.30d.

<sup>195</sup> Sir 38,34a.

<sup>196</sup> Sir 38,33.

<sup>197</sup> Sir 39,9-11.

<sup>198</sup> Sir 38,31-32.34ab.

<sup>199</sup> Sir 39,4.8-11.

The fundamental role of religion in the functioning of the agrarian urban society is underscored by Ben Sira's emphasis on the religious dimension of the Jewish scribe. This is highlighted in many ways: the dedication of the scribe to both the fear of God and the Law of Life,<sup>200</sup> the seeking after the Most High Creator God,<sup>201</sup> the importance of prayer in the scribe's life,<sup>202</sup> and the centrality of divine pneumatic inspiration for all that the scribe does.<sup>203</sup> In the essentially theocratic agrarian urban society, the retainer class utilized religion for the service of the state. For Ben Sira this is evident in the manner in which the religious dimension of the scribe is presented as a *sine qua non* without which the scribe could not function in the Judean theocracy.

For Lenski, the social classes of agrarian pre-industrial society are based on the variables of power and privilege. This means that within each class there were people of higher and lower status. Ben Sira was not just a mere bureaucrat, or roving ambassador or wisdom teacher. As a Jewish scribe he maximized his status by engaging with Israel's ancient traditions in a movement which flowed from his personal relationship with God. The study of Ben Sira's interpretation of biblical allusions in the *Works of God in Creation*, considered in Chapter Three above, allows for greater insight into the manner of how Ben Sira, the scribal retainer, functioned as a keeper of Israel's tradition. He was thoroughly familiar with that tradition and engaged in its close, careful study. His method of biblical

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<sup>200</sup> Sir 38,34cd.

<sup>201</sup> Sir 39,5ab.

<sup>202</sup> Sir 39,5cd.6d. See also Ben Sira's prayer in Sir 51,11ab.12cd. and his autobiographical comments on prayer in Sir 51,22b.29b.

<sup>203</sup> Sir 39,6abc. This concept of inspiration is found in the autobiographical texts also (Sir 24,33a; 39,12b).

interpretation was aggadic, as he understood the tradition to possess a hidden, deeper meaning, which only the inspired scribe could draw out.

As keeper of the tradition he could confidently engage it in dialogue with contemporary hellenistic ideas, which allowed for a number of important consequences: it legitimated the Judean theocracy, allowing it to find a balance between the new hellenistic outlook of the imperial government and its traditional Jewish roots; it allowed Ben Sira to actualize Israelite tradition, as he allowed it to speak with a new voice in the new language of hellenistic thought within a cultural and political context radically different to that of its origins; it also permitted him to articulate the religious ideas important in pre-Maccabean Judaism. Some of these religious ideas, the Jewish concept of monotheism, the permeation of the cosmos by YHWH's divine *קְבוֹד*, and the mysterious unknowable dimension of Israel's God, he asserted as fundamentally Jewish, and completely at odds with hellenistic thought, having no point of contact with it. The other Jewish religious ideas he presented were those which could dialogue with hellenistic concepts of creation and theocracy, but always from a position of religious superiority. Among these ideas were: the concept of the Creator God as YHWH, the only God, Israel's Deity encountered sapientially and historically as opposed to any monistic rationalistic principle in the cosmos; human limitations in the knowledge and contemplation of God, and divine omniscience.

Lenski's model has been useful in understanding Ben Sira as scribal retainer. Because of its inherent functionalism, it portrays him simply as a religious functionary serving an aristocratic ruling class and cannot register any subjective claims about his role. Thus, the model's perspective must be sharpened by Ben Sira's emphatic insistence on divine inspiration, by which he established his scribal authority as exegete and, which allowed him some independence from the ruling elite to engage in a prophet-like critique of the social conditions obtaining in Judea.

#### **4.4 Ben Sira and Social Relationships in Pre-Maccabean Hellenistic Judea**

The profile of Ben Sira which emerges from this analysis is that of an upper-class retainer scribe at the service of the ruling elite in the Judean theocracy, who although not a priest was probably under priestly management, and whose primary function, assigned him by God, was the pneumatically-inspired study, interpretation and actualization of Israel's biblical traditions. However, the concepts of *class*, *group*, *power*, and *wealth*, as used by Lenski, may not be sufficiently dynamic to allow for a more sensitive reading of the many and complex social relationships obtaining in the Judea of Ben Sira's time. Lenski's model is useful in examining the vertical dimension of relationships in an agrarian society. However, such societies also had a strong horizontal dimension based on relationships, within and across class boundaries. Therefore, Lenski's model needs to be nuanced by an examination of social relationships as a system of networks which gave rise to various groups in Judea and determined how they may have operated. Accordingly, any clearer understanding of Ben Sira as Jewish scribe, will require a discussion of how he functioned in the context of such social relationships. While a comprehensive analysis of the totality of Ben Sira's social relationships lies well beyond the scope of this study, an analysis of them in the context of his role as Jewish scribe is realistically achievable.

##### **(a) Van Broekhoven's Thesis**

One attempt to locate Ben Sira within the context of his social relationships has been that of Van Broekhoven, whose revised thesis<sup>204</sup> is that Ben Sira exhibits

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<sup>204</sup> Van Broekhoven, "New Model," 3-46.



a strong group-high grid profile.<sup>205</sup> Ben Sira's concepts of personal morality, which reflected his own individual egotism, were modified by his identity with the community.<sup>206</sup> He reaffirmed traditional language, symbols, rituals and history, particularly in the *Laus Patrum* whereby Israel's heroes were presented as examples of those who transcended individual mortality through identification with Israel's history. Van Broekhoven is correct in citing the *Laus Patrum*, which has been thoroughly studied form-critically by Mack<sup>207</sup> and subsequently by Lee.<sup>208</sup> The thrust of these studies is that while the *Laus Patrum*

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<sup>205</sup> The variables *group* and *grid* are those used by Mary Douglas for analysing social units; Douglas, *Natural Symbols*, 54-64. For an excellent summary of Douglas' model see Neyrey, *Ideology of Revolt*, 117-121; *ibid.*, 119: "Group refers to the degree of societal pressure at work in a given social unit to conform to the society's definitions, classifications, and evaluations. The degree of pressure may be strong (hence, strong group) or weak (weak group). ... Grid refers to the degree of socially constrained adherence normally given by members of a society to the prevailing symbol system, its classifications, patterns of perception and evaluations, and so on, through which the society enables its members to bring order and intelligibility to their experience. Like the group variable, grid may be high, where there is a close fit between an individual's experience and the myths and norms of his or her society, or low, where the match is tenuous or wobbly."

<sup>206</sup> Ben Sira's concepts of personal morality were indeed indicative of individualistic concerns (Sir 11,19-28; 14,11-19; 17,22; 37,23-26; 38,16; 40,1-11; 41,1), as one would expect of a wisdom teacher, but nonetheless upheld values which exhibited a concern for society (Sir 37,23-26).

<sup>207</sup> See Burton L. Mack, *Wisdom and the Hebrew Epic: Ben Sira's Hymn in Praise of the Fathers* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1985), 120-137 who argues that Sir 44-50 has many hellenistic precursor texts, which he identifies as historiography, biography and the encomium.

<sup>208</sup> See Thomas R. Lee, *Studies in the Form of Sirach 44-50* (Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1986) who identifies three approaches in previous studies of the form of Sir 44-50. The first approach sees Sir 44-50 as a recitation of Israel's history, similar to others found in the Hebrew Bible (pp. 23-48). The second approach identifies the *Laus Patrum* as an example of pre-rabbinic midrash (pp. 49-54); see also R. T. Siebencek, "May Their Bones Return to Life! - Sirach's Praise of the Fathers," *CBQ* 21 (1959): 411-428, at 416n.14. The third approach understands the hymn as an example of hellenistic peripatetic biographical writing; Lee, *Form of Sirach*, 54-79. Lee  
(continued...)

is concerned with individuals, it presents them as holders of public office who built up and sustained Israel throughout its history.

For Van Broekhoven, Ben Sira's *strong group - high grid* profile is also reflected in his strong concern with Israelite cult, the place of the Torah in the community and the rituals and symbols which facilitated the integration of the community. While the scholarly debate about Ben Sira's alleged high regard for cultic matters is inconclusive,<sup>209</sup> Van Broekhoven is correct in drawing attention to Ben Sira's frequent reference to Torah, which Ben Sira equated with wisdom and described as gifted by YHWH as a heritage to the community of Israel.

The *strong group - high grid* profile is also evident, according to Van Broekhoven, in Ben Sira's use of traditional vocabulary and his concern to preserve the identity and boundaries of the Jewish community. His use of traditional language and vocabulary has been studied and analysed.<sup>210</sup> His other very obvious cosmopolitan traits, which Van Broekhoven has overlooked, must also be taken into account. These include his foreign travels<sup>211</sup> and his use of

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<sup>208</sup>(...continued)

argues that none of these approaches are adequate for identifying the hymn's form accurately. His thesis is that Sir 44-50 is an example of the hellenistic encomium, whereby a great man is praised against the background of the great deeds of others.

<sup>209</sup> See pp. 279-280 above.

<sup>210</sup> Alexander A. DiLella, "Conservative and Progressive Theology: Sirach and Wisdom," *CBQ* 38 (1966): 139-154; *ibid.*, 139. DiLella's thesis is that Ben Sira's response to the "crisis of hellenism" is essentially conservative, and is "characterized by a tendency to preserve or keep unchanged the truths and answers of the past because only these are adequate as solutions for present problems." DiLella's thesis is argued on Ben Sira's reaction to hellenism, his anthropology and his attitudes to retribution. DiLella reads Sirach against the crisis provoked by Jason in 174-171 BCE and speculates that Ben Sira foresaw the crisis and wrote his book in some form of anticipated response.

<sup>211</sup> Sir 34,10-11; 39,4c.

hellenistic concepts, particularly those with which he equates wisdom: παιδεία / המוסר,<sup>212</sup> σύνεσις / תבונה,<sup>213</sup> διανόημα<sup>214</sup> and βουλή.<sup>215</sup> As seen in Chapter Three above, a most significant influence on him was hellenistic philosophical thought, particularly Stoicism.<sup>216</sup> Van Broekhoven is correct in asserting that Ben Sira

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<sup>212</sup> Georg **Bertram**, "Παιδεύω," in *TDNT*, vol. 5, ed. Gerhard Kittel and Gerhard Friedrich, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1967), 596-625. Παιδεία is an essentially Greek concept denoting family education through discipline. For Israel growth and discipline was regulated by הורח and accordingly, the Hebrew Bible has many words for teaching, direction, chastisement and correction. Yet only one Hebrew word, מוסר, adequately approximates παιδεία. מוסר denotes the whole range of meanings associated with παιδεία, yet also indicates a religious aspect to the concept, identifying discipline with practical morality and linking it with God's own demanding and educating power. In this way, παιδεία / מוסר forms a bridge between secular Greek culture and Hebrew revelation. Wisdom is equated with παιδεία in Sir 4,24.

<sup>213</sup> Hans **Conzelmann**, "Συνίημι," in *TDNT*, vol. 7, ed. Gerhard Kittel and Gerhard Friedrich, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1971), 888-896. This concept, common in the Wisdom Literature of the Hebrew Bible, denotes the Greek idea of formal perception or understanding. As with παιδεία / מוסר, the Greek idea has been adopted and adapted to Jewish religious thought. For the Greeks σύνεσις, a secular concept, denoted a faculty inherent to human beings. According to Jewish thought σύνεσις, or more commonly בינה, was regarded as a divine gift which had to be actively sought. Its absence in someone was regarded as a moral fault liable to punishment (Sir 14,20).

<sup>214</sup> Sir 25,5.

<sup>215</sup> Gottolab **Schrenk**, "Βούλομαι," in *TDNT*, vol. 1, ed. Gerhard Kittel, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1964), 629-637. Βουλή denotes deliberation or taking counsel. It can refer to inward deliberation or resolve or the very process of deliberation or counsel (Sir 25,5).

<sup>216</sup> Hengel, *Judaism and Hellenism*, I, 138-153. Greek philosophy has certainly been a significant influence on the development and articulation of Ben Sira's main theological and anthropological concepts: free will, retribution, YHWH's righteousness, the rationale behind (continued...)

attempted to preserve the identity and boundaries of the Judean community since, as a hellenized Jewish scribe, he was anti-assimilationist, combining his knowledge of Israel's biblical tradition with Greek thought to demonstrate the uniqueness and superiority of Judaism.<sup>217</sup> While Van Broekhoven's assertion that Ben Sira integrated his society by means of his particular interpretation of scripture is largely supported by this study's analysis in Chapter Three above, the fragmentation of Jewish society must not be seen in pro-Seleucid or pro-Ptolemaic terms, as Van Broekhoven maintains, but in the disintegration caused by the rising tide of hellenistic thought and culture.<sup>218</sup> Finally, in alluding to Ben Sira's condemnation of social evil<sup>219</sup> as something which threatened the life of the community and his grounding of his own personal identity in the community by courting and dwelling with Wisdom,<sup>220</sup> Van Broekhoven has established the thesis that Ben Sira was a strong group individual.

Dyadic or group-oriented personality is a characteristic of the strong group individual.<sup>221</sup> By this is meant that such an individual is a person in relation to at least one other social unit and needs others to define status, identity and social

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<sup>216</sup>(...continued)

creation, theodicy. Greek influences are also found in Ben Sira's dining customs and his positive attitude towards medics.

<sup>217</sup> See pp. 231-237 above.

<sup>218</sup> It is most unlikely that Ben Sira's portrayal of the pro-Seleucid Simeon II in Sir 50,1-20 as the culmination of his praise of Israel's heroes could have functioned to integrate a society divided into pro-Seleucid and pro-Ptolemaic groups.

<sup>219</sup> Sir 5,1; 8,14; 12,6; 13,2-22; 17,23; 35,10.

<sup>220</sup> Sir 51,13-30.

<sup>221</sup> Bruce J. Malina and Jerome H. Neyrey, "First-Century Personality: Dyadic, Not Individual," in *The Social World of Luke-Acts*, 67-96.

role. A dyadic person "perceives himself as always interrelated to other persons, while occupying a distinct social position both horizontally (with others sharing the same status, ranging from centre to periphery) and vertically (with others above and below in social rank)."<sup>222</sup> The dyadic personality usually tests this interrelatedness by focusing on the demands and expectations of others who can grant or withhold honour.

In the *Poem on the Ideal Scribe* and the autobiographical texts, Ben Sira exhibits a dyadic personality in both the horizontal and vertical dimensions of his social relationships. The horizontal dimension of his dyadic interrelatedness is made up of members of the scribal retainer class<sup>223</sup> and previous wisdom scholars.<sup>224</sup> The vertical dimension consists of those ranked below the scribe: the untutored,<sup>225</sup> the peasant farmer,<sup>226</sup> artisan<sup>227</sup> and degraded classes.<sup>228</sup> The ruling class clearly ranked above Ben Sira.<sup>229</sup> There were two other figures to whom Ben

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<sup>222</sup> *Ibid.*, 73.

<sup>223</sup> Sir 38,24; 39,1-11.

<sup>224</sup> Sir 33,16b.

<sup>225</sup> Sir 33,18; 51,23-30. The untutored are ranked lower than the scribe, but higher than the farmer, artisan and degraded classes who are incapable of learning wisdom (Sir 38,33e).

<sup>226</sup> Sir 38,25-26.

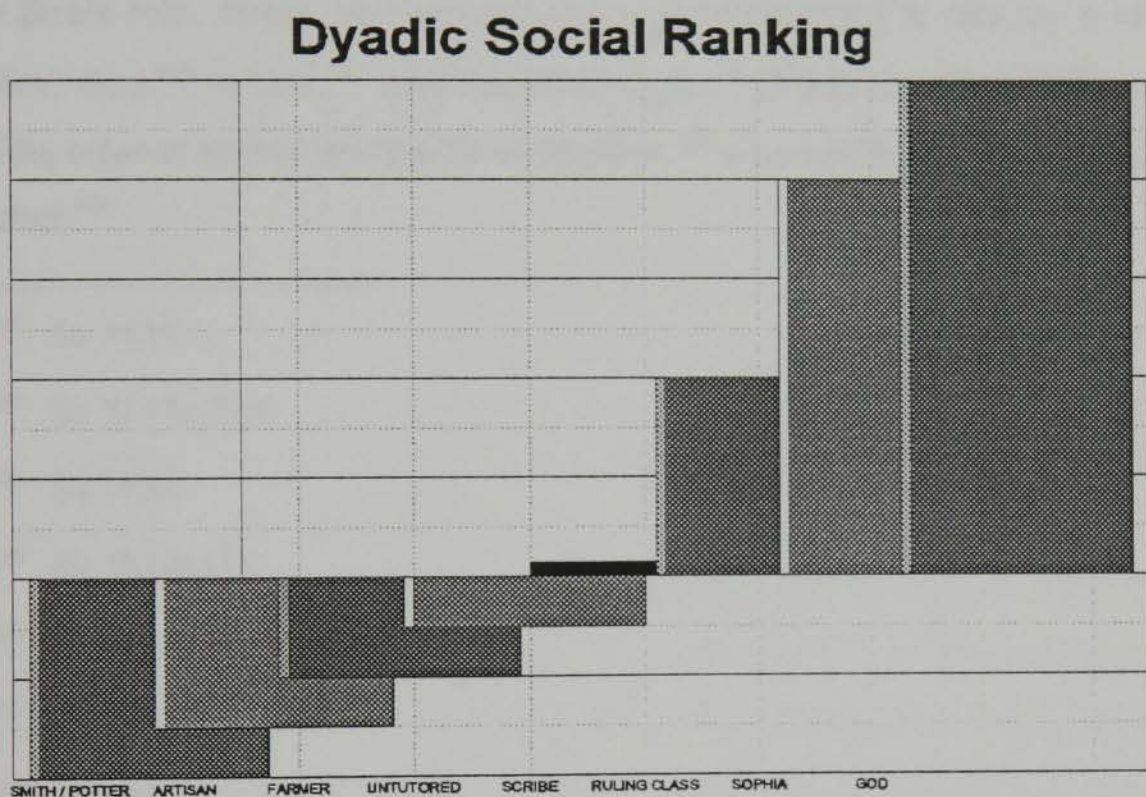
<sup>227</sup> Sir 38,27.

<sup>228</sup> Sir 38,28.

<sup>229</sup> Sir 38,33b.33c.33f; 39,4.

Sira related intimately, personified σοφία / תורה,<sup>230</sup> and God,<sup>231</sup> and who had even greater ranking than the ruling class. The social ranking of these of these dyadic relationships is illustrated below in Figure 07.

Figure 07



While σοφία / תורה and God are not historical personages of second century BCE Judea, they were important 'others' for Ben Sira who significantly influenced his own perception of himself. The social unit within which Ben Sira embedded himself was Judean society of the governing elite, which is described variously as *knwšt'*

<sup>230</sup> Sir 38,34d; 39,8b; 51,13-20.

<sup>231</sup> Sir 38,34a; 39,5-7; 51,10-12.

(Syr) and ἐκκλησία.<sup>232</sup> Within this society the roles Ben Sira considered important were those which involved dyadic interrelatedness (Sir 38,33; 39,4):

But in counselling people they are not sought, and in the assembly they are not prominent. They do not sit on the judge's chair, and they do not think over regulations and right decisions. Also they do not understand the learning of wisdom. They are not found among rulers. ... In the midst of the mighty he serves, and appears before leaders.

Ben Sira's role, status and identity were communicated to him by a range of 'others': God,<sup>233</sup> πολλοί,<sup>234</sup> and the community.<sup>235</sup> These socially conditioned him into the roles of scribal interpreter of tradition,<sup>236</sup> bureaucrat,<sup>237</sup> ambassador<sup>238</sup> and teacher.<sup>239</sup>

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<sup>232</sup> Sir 39,10.

<sup>233</sup> Sir 33,17a; 39,6.

<sup>234</sup> Sir 39,9a.

<sup>235</sup> Sir 39,10b.11a.

<sup>236</sup> Sir 39,1-3.

<sup>237</sup> Sir 39,4ab.

<sup>238</sup> Sir 39,4cd.

<sup>239</sup> Sir 24,32a.33a; 33,18; 39,8a; 50,27a.

**(b) Honour**

A second important indicator of Ben Sira's social relationships as scribal retainer is that of honour which "is based on relationships to others in the community and is the highest temporal ideal of a society."<sup>240</sup> Honour,<sup>241</sup> or the positive value of self in one's own eyes along with positive appreciation from one's social group, is an indicator of rightful place and standing in society. It can be ascribed and/or acquired. *Ascribed honour*, is that honour which is obtained passively through kinship or endowment, and not because of any effort or achievement. Ascribed honour is usually bestowed by a notable person of power (God, the king, the ruling aristocracy) who can claim honour for others and can force the acknowledgement of that honour because of their own power and rank. *Acquired honour* is the socially recognized claim to worth that is obtained by achievement. Honour, both ascribed and acquired, was regarded as a pivotal value in pre-industrial agrarian agonistic cultures, and as such was something people sought either to defend or to augment.

At its most basic, honour is the self-respect of a dyadic person who depends constantly on others (family, kin, social unit) to affirm self-worth. Thus honour is usually replicated by blood and name. Honour is always presumed to exist within the family, and to be absent outside it, until proven otherwise. Since honour is replicated by blood, the good name of a family indicates honour, as in the convention by which males are known by the name of their fathers and their kinship groups. Outside family and kinship groups, one's good name or reputation constitutes one's greatest prize. Thus in an agonistic honour-oriented society, such

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<sup>240</sup> Saldarini, *Palestinian Society*, 55.

<sup>241</sup> Bruce J. Malina, and Jerome H. Neyrey, "Honor and Shame in Luke-Acts: Pivotal Values of the Mediterranean World," in *The Social World of Luke-Acts*, 25-65.



as Ben Sira's, there is constant competition for honour and reputation. In such contests, "publicity and witnesses are crucial for the acquisition and bestowal of honour. Representatives of public opinion must be present, since honour is all about the court of public opinion and the reputation which that court bestows. Literally, public praise can give life and public ridicule can kill."<sup>242</sup>

Like individuals, social groups, natural and voluntary, possess a collective honour in which the members participate. Natural groupings occur in a fashion which lies beyond a person's control. Dishonour done within the natural group, if sufficiently serious, is considered sacrilegious, since the leaders of such groupings are regarded as sacred. Voluntary groupings, on the other hand, result from choice and the people involved have no sacred qualities. Thus the posts, offices or functions in such groupings bear the qualities otherwise embodied by persons in natural groups. When both the *Poem on the Ideal Scribe* and the autobiographical texts are examined from the perspective of honour, a dominant semantic field emerges, presented below in Table 26.

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<sup>242</sup> *Ibid.*, 36.

Table 26  
Semantic Field: Honour

HEB	G	SIR	G	SIR
אברכה	εὐλογήσω	51,12d	αἰνέσει	51,29b
אהודנו	αἰνέσω	51,22b	μὴ αἰσχυνθείητε	51,29b
אהללה		51,11a.12c	διηγῆσονται	39,10a
אזכרך	ὑμνήσω	51,11b	ἐξ- ομολογήσεται	39,6d
ארומם	ἐπεκαλεσάμην	51,10a	ἔπαινον	39,10b
אתן הודי	δώσω δόξαν	51,17b	καυχῆσεται	39,8b
יתחכם	σοφισθήσεται	38,24b.25a	ὄνομα καταλείψει	39,11a
קדמתי	ἔφθασα	33,17a	σοφίζεται	38,31b
שכר(כם)	μισθόν	51,22a.30b	<b>SYR</b>	<b>SIR</b>
			<i>ntrymw n</i>	38,33b

Clearly the concept of honour dominates these texts. The principal type of honour is acquired honour. The lower classes acquire honour by their manual labour (Sir 38,31-32.34ab):

All these are entrusted to their hands, and each in his work becomes wise. Without them no city is built, and where they live they are not hungry. ... But they understand worldly work, and their thinking is in the work of trade.

*Chapter Four: Ben Sira and the Social World of Pre-Maccabean Hellenistic Judea*

The honour thus acquired is inferior since the lower classes were incapable of the achievements which permitted the acquisition of greater honour (Sir 38,33):

But in counselling people they are not sought, and in the assembly they are not prominent. They do not sit on the judge's chair, and they do not think over regulations and right decisions. Also they do not understand the learning of wisdom. They are not found among rulers.

On the other hand, Ben Sira as Jewish scribe acquired much greater honour by engaging in activities which permitted its acquisition:

How different the one who gives his soul up to fear God, and to ponder the law of life! (Sir 38,34cd).

He seeks the wisdom of all the ancients, and is busy with the ancient prophecies. He preserves the story of famous men, and penetrates meaningful sayings. He seeks out the obscurities of proverbs, and is engaged with the riddles of parables. In the midst of the mighty he serves, and appears before leaders. He passes through the land of different peoples. For he has tested good and evil things in people (Sir 39,1-4)

He himself bubbles forth his words of wisdom, and praises the Lord in prayer. He directs his advice and knowledge, and thinks over His mysteries. He brings forth the instruction of his teaching, and boasts about the law of life (Sir 39,6-8).

I went forth like a canal from a river and like a water channel into a garden. I said, "I will water my orchard and drench my garden plot"; and lo, my canal became a river, and my river became a sea. I will again make instruction shine forth like the dawn, and I will make it shine afar; I will again pour out teaching like prophecy, and leave it to all future generations (Sir 24,30-33).

I was the last on watch; I was like one who gleans after the grape-gatherers; by the blessing of the Lord I excelled, and like a grape-gatherer I filled my wine press. Consider that I have not laboured for myself alone, but for all who seek instruction (Sir 33,16-18).

Instruction in understanding and knowledge I have written in this book ... who out of his heart poured forth wisdom (Sir 50,27).

Ben Sira's *Autobiographical Poem on Wisdom* also offers a powerfully vivid description of his engagement with wisdom on which his acquired honour is established.<sup>243</sup> The strong focus on honour acquired by achievement, suggests that the social grouping of greatest importance to Ben Sira was the scribal voluntary grouping. It is interesting that the only person Ben Sira portrays as being endowed with ascribed honour is himself. This ascribed honour is of the highest order since God is the One who bestows it:

If God Most High wants it, he will be filled with the spirit of understanding (Sir 39,6).

By the blessing of the Lord I excelled (Sir 33,17a).

To my Teacher I will give grateful praise (Sir 51,17b).

The Lord has granted me my tongue as a reward, and with my lips I will praise him (Sir 51,22).<sup>244</sup>

The inferior nature of the honour acquired by the lower classes and the superior nature of that acquired by Ben Sira for himself and ascribed him by God is evident in his use of place references: the lower classes are located at places which do not afford much honour: at the plough,<sup>245</sup> by the furnace,<sup>246</sup> and near the potter's wheel.<sup>247</sup> Moreover, they are not to be found in places which could afford superior

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<sup>243</sup> Sir 51,13-30. See pp. 110-112 above, regarding Ben Sira's use of highly erotic and emphatic language to express his relationship with personified wisdom.

<sup>244</sup> Reading with G and Syr against MsB which has altered the verse; Skehan-DiLella, *Ben Sira*, 575.

<sup>245</sup> Sir 38,25a.

<sup>246</sup> Sir 38,28a.

<sup>247</sup> Sir 38,29a.

honour: in the assembly,<sup>248</sup> on the judge's chair,<sup>249</sup> among rulers.<sup>250</sup> Ben Sira, however, is located at precisely those places which offer the highest honour: in the midst of the mighty, before leaders,<sup>251</sup> and before the Most High.<sup>252</sup> For Ben Sira, honour was replicated uniquely by name.<sup>253</sup> As with a dyadic personality in an agonistic cultural context, the public acclamation of his honour was, typically, of greatest importance to Ben Sira (Sir 39,9a-11b):

Many speak of his sagacity, and he is not blotted out forever. His memory does not cease, and his name will live from generation to generation. The community praises his wisdom, and the assembly announces his approval. Should he live long so will he be praised by thousands, and should he rest, so is his name enough.

### (c) Patronage

Social relations in ancient societies were linked to symbolic images that differ from those operating in contemporary Western society. Access to resources and position was mediated through special groups or individuals, in a system dominated by the elite and its values. Thus, ancient social relationships between individuals based on inequality and differences in power may be termed *patron-client relations*.<sup>254</sup> Therefore, patronage is a third important indicator of Ben

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<sup>248</sup> Sir 38,33b.

<sup>249</sup> Sir 38,33c.

<sup>250</sup> Sir 38,33f.

<sup>251</sup> Sir 39,4.

<sup>252</sup> Sir 39,5b.

<sup>253</sup> Sir 39,9b-11b; 50,27c.

<sup>254</sup> Halvor Moxnes, "Patron-Client Relations and the New Community in Luke-Acts," in *The Social World of Luke-Acts*, 241-268.

Sira's social relationships. In *patron-client relations* the patron monopolized resources which the client needed, while the client offered the patron expressions of loyalty and honour. Such patron-client relations had a number of basic characteristics.<sup>255</sup> The relationship was based on the simultaneous exchange of different types of resources: support and protection from the patron, with solidarity and loyalty from the client. The relations were voluntary, linked to personal honour and obligation, may have contained elements of spiritual attachment and were ideally of life-long endurance. This primary form of patronage is that whereby the patron gives to the client from personal resources.

A second form of patronage in antiquity was that of brokerage,<sup>256</sup> in which the broker-patron functioned as a mediator, giving the client access to the resources of a more powerful patron. The same person may have acted simultaneously as a broker between higher and lower ranking people, and as a patron to clients who were ranked inferior. A third and predominant form of patronage in ancient societies was that of benefactor-patronage usually expressed through the erection of public buildings, the payment for public festivals and sacrifices, or public distribution of food. Reward for these services was usually expressed in terms of public honour.<sup>257</sup> The model of patronage will now be applied to the *Poem on the Ideal Scribe* and the autobiographical texts, paying particular attention to the resources which were offered to Ben Sira, and which he then passed on to others. Analysis of the texts reveals a semantic field (Table 27

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<sup>255</sup> S. N. Eisenstadt, and L. Roniger, *Patrons, Clients and Friends: Interpersonal Relations and the Structure of Trust in Society* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 48-49.

<sup>256</sup> A. Blok, "Variations in Patronage," *Sociologische Gids* 16 (1969): 365-378.

<sup>257</sup> Sir 50,1-20. Ben Sira lavishes praise on his great hero, Simon II, who is presented as a typical benefactor-patron of Jerusalem (Sir 50,1-4).

below) which suggests that Ben Sira's uniquely powerful patron was God.

**Table 27**  
**Semantic Field: God as Patron - Divine Titles**

<i>HEB</i>	<i>G</i>	<i>SIRACH</i>
אבי	πατέρα	51,10a
אל	ἐν εὐλογία κυρίου	33,17a
אלהי אבי	κύριε βασιλεῦ	51,1b
אלהי ישעי	θεὸν τὸν σωτήρᾱ μου	51,1a
אל עליון <sup>258</sup>	κύριος ὁ μέγας	39,6a
נבור ישעי		51.10b
י״י	κύριε	51,8a
	κύριον	51,10a
	κυρίου	51,12d
	κύριος	51,22a
		51,11c

<sup>258</sup> See Appendix One, page 330n.25 below.

Table 27 - Continued

HEB	G	SIRACH
	κυρίω	39,6d
למלמדי	διδόντι μοι σοφίαν	51,17b
מעוז חיי		51,1c
	ὑψίστου	39,5b

Along with these divine titles Ben Sira portrayed God's actions as typically those of a patron (Table 28 below).

Table 28  
Semantic Field: God as Patron - Divine Action

HEB	G	SIRACH
יאזין		51,11c
בברכת אל	ἐν εὐλογίᾳ κυρίου	33,17a
יגאלם	σώζεις	51,8d
הייתה לי	ἐγένου	51,2f
הושעתני	ὦν ἔσχον	51,3d
חסדיו	τῆς εὐεργεσίας σου	51,8b
חשכת	ἐλυτρώσω	51,2a
המציל	ἐξαιρή	51,8c



Table 28 - Continued

HEB	G	SIRACH
הצלח		51,2c
ימלטני	ἐξείλου με	51,12b
נתן... שכר	ἔδωκεν ... μισθόν	51,22a
	δώσει ... μισθόν	51,30b
עזרתני	ἐλυτρώσω με	51,3a
פדית	ἐλυτρώσω	51,2a
יפדני	ἔσωσας	51,12a
פציתני		51,2d
רחמי יי	τοῦ ἐλέους σου	51,8a
	τῷ ἐλέει αὐτοῦ	51,29a
שמע	ἐισηκούσθη	51,11c
	τὸν ποιήσαντα αὐτόν	39,5a
	πνεύματι συνέσεως ἐμπλησθήσεται	39,6b

Ben Sira's most powerful patron was God who functioned in regard to him as Creator,<sup>259</sup> Inspirer,<sup>260</sup> Benefactor,<sup>261</sup> Saviour-Redeemer,<sup>262</sup> and Teacher.<sup>263</sup> The

<sup>259</sup> Sir 39,5a.

<sup>260</sup> Sir 39,6b.

<sup>261</sup> Sir 33,17a; 51,30b.

texts in which Ben Sira deals specifically with a resource being given to him by God are of particular interest:

If God Most High wants it, he will be filled (πνεύματι συνέσεως ἐμπλησθήσεται) with the spirit of understanding (Sir 39,6).

Since in this way I have profited, to my Teacher (למלמדִי / τῷ διδόντι μοι σοφίαν) I will give grateful praise (Sir 51,17).

The Lord granted me my tongue as a reward (γλῶσσάν μοι μισθόν μου), and with my lips I will praise him (Sir 51,22).

The ultimate resource granted Ben Sira by his Divine Patron is that which allowed him to function as an inspired wisdom teacher and in exchange for which he offered God praise,<sup>264</sup> typifying the patron-broker relationship.

The texts under consideration also contain references to those who were in a client-broker relationship with Ben Sira, indicated in the semantic field presented below in Table 29.

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<sup>262</sup>(...continued)

<sup>262</sup> Sir 51,1-3.8-12b.29a.

<sup>263</sup> Sir 51,17a.22a.

<sup>264</sup> Sir 39,6; 51,1.10ab.11ab.12cd.22b.29b.

**Table 29**  
**Semantic Field: Ben Sira's Clients**

<i>HEB</i>	<i>G</i>	<i>SIRACH</i>
לכל מבקשי חכמה	πᾶσιν τοῖς ζητοῦσιν παιδείαν	33,18b
סכלים	ἀπαιδεῦτοι	51,23a
	εἰς γενεὰς αἰώνων	24,33b

Ben Sira's clients were those who stood in need of the wisdom-instruction which he had received from God, engaged with thoroughly and which he then offered them, as underscored by the following texts:

I will again make instruction shine forth like the dawn, and I will make it shine afar; I will again pour out teaching like prophecy, and leave it to all future generations (Sir 24,32-33).

Consider that I have not laboured for myself alone, but for all who seek instruction (Sir 33,18).

I have more on my mind to express, I am full like the full moon (Sir 39,12).

Instruction in understanding and knowledge I have written in this book, Jesus the son of Sirach, son of Eleazar, who out of his heart poured forth wisdom (Sir 50,27).

Hear but a little instruction (Sir 51,28a).

The emerging profile is that of Ben Sira the inspired Jewish scribe, who received wisdom from his Divine Patron, engaged with it and then communicated it to his contemporaries and to future generations. But who exactly were Ben Sira's clients

whom he termed ἀπαίδευτοι? Stadelmann<sup>265</sup> has attempted to identify the social world of Ben Sira's contemporary audience, and takes for its point of departure a comparison between the Greek sophist and Jewish wisdom schools. Since the former concentrated on moral education, rhetoric and philosophy, while the latter was concerned chiefly with ethics and Torah-interpretation, it cannot be argued that the Greek sophist school was the force behind the development of the Jewish sapiential school nor that the system of fees demanded in the Greek school applied also in the Jewish one.<sup>266</sup> Certainly Ben Sira did not charge his students any fees,<sup>267</sup> thus invalidating any claim *a priori* that his pupils came from the aristocracy, since they alone could have afforded such an education. Stadelmann attempts to discover Ben Sira's audience as inferred in the text. The frequently recurring terms בני and בןך express the traditional forms of address used by teachers of their pupils. It also allows one to infer that the people so addressed were young.<sup>268</sup> Socially, Ben Sira's audience came from the upper-class,<sup>269</sup> while

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<sup>265</sup> Stadelmann, *Schriftgelehrter*, 27-39.

<sup>266</sup> Evidence for the rabbinic period indicates a refusal to establish fees (*Av* 1,13; *m.Bekh* 4,6; *b.Nid* 29a.62a). Rabbinic teachers earned their maintenance through professional work (*b.San* 41a; *b.Bes* 29a), and were also supported by the voluntary charity of the people (*b.Yom* 35b).

<sup>267</sup> On the question whether Ben Sira demanded fees from his pupils, Sir 51,25b (קנו לכם בלא כסף) which is not an allusion to Isa 55,1 but a statement on the condition of entering Ben Sira's academy, answers the question in the negative.

<sup>268</sup> Sir 33,20-24 may suggest the presence of older people who may have an inheritance. However, the text is ambiguous in this respect. It could be equally valid to see it as an admonition to young Jewish males about personal independence in the course of their future lives.

<sup>269</sup> They clearly have superiors (Sir 4,7) before whose power they are to be on their guard (Sir 8,1; 9,13) and by whom they could be exploited (Sir 8,12; 13,2-7). They have association with the powerful (Sir 23,14), possess slaves (Sir 4,30; 6,11; 33,25-33; 42,5). Finally, they are inculcated with fidelity to duty (Sir 11,20).

religiously, they were faithful Jews.<sup>270</sup> Accordingly, neither Ben Sira nor his young students came from within the Judean aristocratic elite, but from the more socially subordinate wealthy upper-class. In all likelihood, in brokering a relationship between God and his own students by mediating wisdom to them and encouraging them to make a living in a similar fashion,<sup>271</sup> Ben Sira presided over a scribal school concerned with maintaining traditional Jewish sapiential values.

This brief analysis of Ben Sira's social relationships is sufficient to indicate that he was a dyadic or group-oriented personality for whom God, σοφία / תורה, and the Jewish community of his day constituted the significant others who helped to define his scribal identity, primarily as exegete and wisdom teacher. As such honour, both acquired and ascribed, was a pivotal value for him. The former was achieved through the exercise of his scribal role, while the latter was granted him only by God. For Ben Sira, his honour was replicated in the recognition of his good name by both his contemporaries and by future Jewish communities. At the heart of his scribal activity was his role of brokering a relationship between the ἀπαίδευτοι of Judean society and their God through prophet-like instruction of the pneumatically-mediated wisdom which he received from God and equated with Israel's תורה. His clients, the ἀπαίδευτοι, were foremost the young, upper-class, male, pious Jews of his academy, which functioned to preserve Jewish tradition in the face of rising Hellenism and to perpetuate the scribal class as typified by Ben Sira himself.

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<sup>270</sup> They are υἱοὶ ὅσσοι (Sir 39,13) and it is to such God gives wisdom (Sir 43,33) which is equated with Torah (Sir 24,23-29).

<sup>271</sup> Sir 51,28.

Finally, there was within Ben Sira, the Jewish scribe, an obvious tension between one who was shaped by engagement with Israel's traditions, while at the same time possessing a self-awareness with definite prophetic features. The prophetic element is best summed up in the following texts:

I will again pour out teaching like prophecy, and leave it to all future generations (Sir 24,33).

If God Most High wants it, he will be filled with the spirit of understanding (Sir 39,6).

It is precisely this prophetic feature to Ben Sira's role as scribe which allowed him to be concerned as a scribe, not merely with bureaucratic matters, but with a central role in the relationship between the Jewish community and YHWH by means of an inspired interpretation of Israel's traditions. However, the tension in the scribal role between mere tradent of tradition and prophetic reinterpreter of it is most clearly evident in Ben Sira's attitude towards the poor.<sup>272</sup> In this regard Hengel's description of Ben Sira is most apt: "Ben Sira thus forms a spiritual-intellectual pivotal point. He is a wise man of synthesis who unites contrary aspects ..."<sup>273</sup> Such a synthesis was possible only because Ben Sira understood his scribal role to have been established and sustained by his Divine Patron to whom he owed ultimate loyalty.

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<sup>272</sup> On Ben Sira's social teaching see Hengel, *Judaism and Hellenism*, I,136-138; *idem*, "Scriptures and their Interpretation," 164-167; Skehan-DiLella, *Ben Sira*, 88-90. Ben Sira offers a vivid description of the opposition between rich and poor in his society (Sir 13,2-5.15-22.23) and of the rich aristocracy (Sir 8,2.12; 9,13; 13,9-13). However, he was not content merely to describe the *status quo*. Linking wealth and sin (Sir 11,10; 31,5), some of his statements have a prophetic ring to them (Sir 34,24-27). Nonetheless, unlike the biblical prophets, he did not call for divine action to end the Judean *status quo*, but based social conduct on divine retribution (Sir 4,1.9-10; 21,5).

<sup>273</sup> Hengel, "Scriptures and their Interpretation," 166.

#### 4.5 Ben Sira and the Social World of Pre-Maccabean Hellenistic Judea: Conclusions

A number of conclusions can be drawn from the application of social scientific concepts to pre-Maccabean hellenistic Judea, Ben Sira's *Poem on the Ideal Scribe* and his aggadic reinterpretation of biblical allusions in the *Works of God in Creation*. It is clear that second century BCE Judea exhibits the principal characteristics of an agrarian urban society particularly in terms of foreign dynastic monarchical rule, militarism, the proprietary theory of the state, urbanization, the protection of its religious ethos by the state and the class structure of society. This profile of pre-Maccabean hellenistic Judea is confirmed by the *Poem on the Ideal Scribe* and its identification of five major social classes: the ruling class, the retainer class and three lower classes ranked in an increasing order of inferior status. While not portrayed with any sense of contempt, the lower classes were regarded by Ben Sira as socially distinct from the scribal retainer class.

The profile of Ben Sira in this context is one of scribal retainer. As such he was at the service of the governing class, which in Judea was composed of the High Priest and the *γερονσία*. The boundary between his retainer class and the inferior classes was established and maintained in terms of *σοφία* / *חכמה* and freedom from the laborious toil of the lower classes in order to pursue retainer activities. The principal activity of Ben Sira as scribal retainer was engagement with and protection of Israel's traditions. The *Works of God in Creation* affirms Ben Sira's thorough knowledge of and familiarity with those traditions, as well as considerable erudition in Greek philosophical ideas, particularly Stoic concepts of cosmogony and theocracy. His aggadic reinterpretation of biblical tradition in so highly hellenized an environment legitimated the Judean theocracy, actualized the ancient Israelite traditions and permitted a trenchant defence and advocacy of Jewish beliefs. In this capacity Ben Sira was not merely a bureaucrat, but one

imbued with prophetic awareness and a strong religious piety which he considered integral to his function as biblical interpreter. Accordingly, he attached great significance to concepts such as fear of YHWH, Torah, prayer and divine inspiration. Another great task of the scribal retainer which Ben Sira articulated was that of educator of the young. It can reasonably be assumed that he was highly concerned to imbue his students with love for Israel's traditions, and to instruct them in his interpretative techniques. Ben Sira, exhibiting the principal traits of a dyadic personality, was also very concerned to maximize his honour and establish his good name through the exercise of his scribal role. As a scribal retainer, Ben Sira also functioned as broker, mediating σοφία / חכמה from his Divine Patron (God) to his clients (ἀπαίδευτοι).

The opinion of previous scholarship about Ben Sira's social world may be more fully evaluated. This study's classification of Ben Sira among the scribal retainer class suggests that Gordis' view of his social background among the Judean aristocratic elite must be questioned and that Stadelmann's thesis that he belonged neither to the peasant nor aristocratic classes but to an upper-middle class must be viewed as anachronistic. Furthermore, the weakness of Gordis' assumption is that Ben Sira was an aristocrat simply because he allegedly reflected the political, social and moral attitudes of the aristocratic elite. However, the extent to which this occurred is consistent with a perception of Ben Sira as a scribal retainer at the service of the governing class and articulating some of their values. Unfortunately the scribal retainer model does not allow for the unambiguous clarification of Stadelmann's thesis that Ben Sira was a priestly scribe, which in the view of this study, is an argument which does not stand on its own merits. However, the model does suggest the view that Ben Sira was not a priest, but a scribal retainer under priestly management.



The definition of the boundaries operative in Judean society in terms of σοφία / חכמה is consistent with Douglas' concept of strong group. Ben Sira's strong group tendencies are also evident in dyadic personality concerns in the *Poem on the Ideal Scribe* and the very high degree of divine involvement with the cosmos articulated in the *Works of God in Creation*. High grid interests are manifest in both poems in terms of Ben Sira's willingness to fulfil all the demands placed on him as scribal retainer. This study concurs with Van Broekhoven's final conclusion, that Ben Sira exhibits a *strong group - high grid* profile. However, Ben Sira appears not so much as one who integrated a fragmented Judean society, but one who both legitimated and prophetically criticized a Judean theocracy which was characterized by a high degree of social diversification.

The profile of Ben Sira which emerges from this analysis is that of an upper-class retainer scribe at the service of the ruling elite in the Judean theocracy. While not a priest, he probably functioned under priestly management. His primary scribal function, assigned him by God, was to broker a relationship between the ἀπαίδευτοι of Judean society and YHWH, through a prophet-like pneumatically-inspired study, interpretation and actualization of Israel's traditions.

## GENERAL CONCLUSIONS

The approach of this study has been to attempt to sketch the profile of Ben Sira as Jewish scribe and interpreter of biblical tradition in four stages: first, by locating him against the background of the scribalism of the Ancient Near East, pre-exilic Israel-Judah and post-exilic Persian Palestine in general, and of scribalism in pre-Maccabean hellenistic Judea in particular; second, by examining Ben Sira's own attitude to scribalism through an analysis of his *Poem on the Ideal Scribe* and a selection of autobiographical texts; third, by investigating his interpretation of a representative sampling of biblical allusions in the *Works of God in Creation*; and finally, by endeavouring to understand his social world and the role he played in it as scribe and biblical interpreter of Israel's biblical traditions.

The origins of Ben Sira's profession as Jewish scribe are to be found among the scribes of the Ancient Near East, with whom Ben Sira shared many characteristics. Ancient Near Eastern scribes functioned as educators. This is particularly so of Egyptian scribes of the Old Kingdom who taught aristocratic children and of the Sumerian *ummi*a whose *edubba* functioned as a locale for imbuing the young with ethical and practical values. These *edubba*-graduates were upper class young males who were destined to become temple functionaries within the Sumerian theocracy. Close parallels abound with Ben Sira whose בית המדרש in Jerusalem was for the education of young men,<sup>1</sup> and who regarded his scribal role in pedagogic terms.<sup>2</sup> His students were not aristocrats, but upper class faithful Jews who probably were in training to become scribes at the service of the Judean theocracy. The Akkadian concept of *wise* was applicable to the scribe and to a wide range of professions including those with expertise in specialist manual skills,

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<sup>1</sup> Sir 51,23-28.

<sup>2</sup> Sir 39,8.

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echoing very loudly Ben Sira's own attitude in the *Poem on the Ideal Scribe*.<sup>3</sup> Ancient Near Eastern scribes, particularly Egyptian and Akkadian, also performed the bureaucratic functions of adviser, diplomat and government official, all of which Ben Sira ascribed to himself.<sup>4</sup> Pre-exilic Israel also had scribes who functioned as royal officials at the bureaucratic and administrative service of the monarchy. Undoubtedly, the first element in the profile of Ben Sira as Jewish scribe is the essentially educational and bureaucratic function characteristic of ancient Near Eastern and pre-exilic Israelite scribes which was regarded by him as an important component of his own scribal profession.

Scribalism in post-exilic Persian Palestine was equally attentive to bureaucratic administration, while the task of the interpretation of religious tradition probably remained in priestly circles. The radical reorientation towards exegesis of a written text exemplified by Ezra, while an intensification and renewal of earlier pre-exilic scribal activity, marks a significant point in the evolution of Jewish scribalism in that a scribe, albeit a *priestly* scribe, was entrusted with a significant exegetical role in respect of religious tradition. The second element in the profile of Ben Sira as scribe is the vitally important role of interpreter of religious tradition.<sup>5</sup>

Literary, numismatic and archaeological evidence indicates that the process of hellenization in Ptolemaic Judea was largely limited to coastal and frontier cities and expressed itself in economic and administrative terms with the ensuing expansion of imperial government bureaucracy and the consequent development of the centrality of the scribe's administrative role for the smooth running of

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<sup>3</sup> Sir 38,31.

<sup>4</sup> Sir 38,33; 39,4.

<sup>5</sup> Sir 24,30; 33,16; 38,34c-39,3; 51,13-15.

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government. References to γραμματεὺς in this period are all extra-biblical, sparse and denote essentially financial and juridical roles. Seleucid Judea also required similar administrative and bureaucratic structures to those acquired under Ptolemaic dominion. Evidence for the process of hellenization under Seleucid rule suggests that it had already encompassed the cultural and intellectual life of Judea. Indeed, the Early Seleucid Period may mark another significant moment in the evolution of the Jewish scribe. Josephus' account of Antiochus III's decree concerning tax-exemptions does not specifically point to a separation of priestly, levitical and scribal roles in Pre-Maccabean Hellenistic Judea. However, it does suggest that the Temple-scribes were a distinct group, apart from, but subject to the priests. "In the 2d cent. BC priests were still characterized as men who offered sacrifice and incense, who performed rites of expiation, who blessed the people and made known to them *tôrâ* in the form of statutes and legal pronouncements..."<sup>6</sup> Thus, Josephus' testimony of Antiochus III's validation of Jewish law as official law and his recognition of the authority of the High Priest and γερουσία and of other officials, including the γραμματεὺς in the administration of the theocratic ἔθνος of Judea suggests a further movement in the evolution of Jewish scribalism wherein the scribe's bureaucratic and exegetical activities may have coincided, with the consequent effect that the role of interpreter of Israel's traditions may not have remained an exclusive function of the priesthood.<sup>7</sup> However, the evidence is ambiguous. Josephus' references to γραμματεῖς τοῦ ἱεροῦ fail to connect the scribe with the interpretation of Israel's traditions, while the *Letter of Aristeas to Philocrates*, dealing with a Diaspora Jewish community,

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<sup>6</sup> Castelot-Cody, *Religious Institutions*, 1258.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 1259.

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describes scribal-type activity in relation to Israel's traditions yet avoids the use of the word γραμματεύς. The third element in the profile of Ben Sira as Jewish scribe is that there is no clear direct convincing evidence to suggest that Ben Sira, who functioned explicitly as an interpreter of tradition, was a priest engaged in cult.

Ben Sira's autobiographical *Poem on the Ideal Scribe* confirms these elements of his profile as Jewish scribe and points to a new intensification in the evolution of Jewish scribalism. It locates Ben Sira within the sapiential context of the concept of חֲכָמָה by associating the Jewish scribe Ben Sira with wisdom in its highest forms. It portrays the fundamental role of scribe in terms of engaging with the traditions of Israel in a wisdom context and bringing forth from them new teaching, both for Ben Sira's contemporaries and for future generations. While any *argumentum ex silentio* is doubtful, there is no evidence whatsoever of cultic concerns in the poem. However, a new and fourth element in the profile of the Jewish scribe is introduced, namely Ben Sira's emphatic insistence on his personal relationship with YHWH and the role of piety, prayer, fear of YHWH and divine inspiration as determining elements in his functioning as scribe. The poem suggests that the interpretation of Israel's traditions by scribes had so evolved from the Persian period, with its emphasis on חֲכָמָה, the interior spiritual disposition of the scribal interpreter, and the possible separation of exegetical scribalism from the priestly class, that it could no longer be identified with Ezra, about whom Ben Sira is thunderously silent in the *Laus Patrum*. In fact, Ben Sira's scribal self-portrait is not inconsistent with the hypothesis that in early Seleucid Judea there had emerged a group of exegetes, not associated with cultic matters, but nonetheless identified with, and subordinate to, the Temple priests. Nevertheless, while the poem emphasizes the centrality of the scribal role of interpreter of tradition, it does not permit access to the manner by which Ben Sira reinterpreted

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biblical tradition in pre-Maccabean Judea.

The intertextual approach to this particular problem, operating within clear methodological constraints, allows for the possibility of identifying a controlled, representative sampling of biblical allusions, through the rigorous application of intertextual criteria to a carefully selected target text, which for this study was the poem entitled *Works of God in Creation*. Since the bulk of the allusions used by Ben Sira in the *Works of God in Creation* has been drawn from the books outside what was probably the canon of his day, a fifth element in the profile of Ben Sira as Jewish scribe is the suggestion that his scribal activity may well have played a significant role in the eventual canonization of these books in Judaism. Creation or sapiential themes are found in over 80% of the allusions investigated, suggesting that Ben Sira opted for texts which allowed him to dialogue with similar hellenistic concepts while adhering to essential Jewish belief and that Ben Sira specifically identified and chose quite calculatingly the texts he required for the development of his teaching. The sixth element in the profile of the Jewish scribe is his thorough knowledge of Israel's biblical traditions derived from close study of these biblical traditions.<sup>8</sup>

The seventh element in the profile of the Jewish scribe is evident in Ben Sira's aggadic reinterpretation of biblical allusions, but it cannot be clearly determined whether he marked a new departure in biblical interpretation, as his own view of himself suggests that he may not necessarily have been the innovator of a new form of biblical interpretation, but one who typified it.<sup>9</sup> The eighth element in the profile of the Jewish scribe has to do with vicarious immortality. Ben Sira presents his aggadic reinterpretation of biblical allusion in the *Works of God in*

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<sup>8</sup> Sir 24,30a; 33,16-17; 38,34d; 39,1b.2a; 51,13-15.

<sup>9</sup> Sir 33,16.

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*Creation*, as his own teaching, and as in the *Poem on the Ideal Scribe*, regarded his whole work as his contribution to both contemporaries and to future generations, guaranteeing that his name would be honoured after his death and that through his teaching, he would attain vicarious immortality.

The ninth element in the profile of the Jewish scribe has to do with his degree of hellenization. The study of his reinterpretation of biblical allusions in the *Works of God in Creation* suggests that Ben Sira was indeed thoroughly hellenized and familiar with Stoic ideas, particularly those of Zeno and Cleanthes. However, in its attitude to the hellenistic philosophy of his time, Ben Sira's exegetical strategy was conservatively innovative in that he used hellenistic language and concepts to present his views while maintaining an essentially sapiential reading of Israel's biblical traditions. However, the concept of Ben Sira as a hellenized scribe and sage can be further nuanced under the categories of assimilation, acculturation and accommodation. Ben Sira was most certainly anti-assimilationist, but highly acculturated, using his scribal role in an accommodation of Judaism to Hellenism which was oppositional.

The application of Lenski's model to pre-Maccabean hellenistic Judea, Ben Sira's *Poem on the Ideal Scribe* and his aggadic reinterpretation of biblical allusions in the *Works of God in Creation* yields important information about Ben Sira's social world and the manner by which he operated as a scribe in that world. Second century BCE Judea exhibits the principal characteristics of an agrarian urban society, a profile confirmed by the *Poem on the Ideal Scribe*. The final element in the portrait of Ben Sira is one of scribal retainer at the service of the governing class, which in Judea was composed of the High Priest and the *γερουσία*. He both established and maintained the boundary between himself and the inferior classes in terms of σοφία / חכמה and freedom from the laborious toil

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of the lower classes in order to pursue retainer activities. As scribal retainer, Ben Sira engaged with and protected Israel's traditions. By means of his aggadic reinterpretation of biblical tradition, he legitimated the Judean theocracy, actualized ancient Israelite traditions and staunchly advocated the superiority of Jewish beliefs. The final element in the profile of Ben Sira as scribe is one of a dyadic or group-oriented personality, keenly concerned for his honour, who functioned as a broker between YHWH and the Jerusalem community by means of his scriptural interpretation and teaching.

However, there is a dimension to Ben Sira's scribalism which Lenski's functionalist model does not adequately allow for. This is the implied conflict of interest between Ben Sira's role as retainer at the service of the priestly ruling class and his independent, prophetic claim to brokerage of divine wisdom. His silence on Ezra the priest-scribe, his emphatic insistence on divine inspiration as the basis for his own scribal activity, and his willingness to be moderately critical of the powerful and wealthy in Judean society, suggest that an old tension between prophet and priest continued to be played out in the more intellectual climate of the hellenistic period.

These elements can be combined to give a portrait of Ben Sira as Jewish scribe in pre-Maccabean Judea. Ben Sira was not only an educator of the young and a bureaucrat, but also a sage who, although not a priest, functioned under the management of the Temple priesthood and understood his principal scribal role as interpreter of Israel's religious heritage, including its biblical tradition. To this end he achieved an intimate and thorough knowledge of Israel's biblical traditions through an intensely close study of them. Central to the scribal role was his personal relationship with YHWH and the importance of personal piety, prayer, fear of YHWH and divine inspiration. In fact, he legitimated his teaching on the basis of his being inspired by the Spirit of YHWH. His aggadic reinterpretation of biblical



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allusion has located him firmly on a trajectory from scribalism *en route* to rabbinism, guaranteed him vicarious immortality in his own day, and probably played a significant role in the process of canonization of the Hebrew Bible. As a scribal retainer he served the governing class of the Judean theocracy, legitimating their authority while protecting Jewish tradition, actualizing it and advocating its superiority. More importantly, he helped to broker the relationship between YHWH and the Jerusalem community through the actualization of Israel's scripture. As a conservative Jew he was opposed to any assimilation of Judaism to Hellenism and used his considerable craft to defend and maintain his ancestral faith.

However, events in Seleucid Judea would eventually alter radically the political and religious background against which Ben Sira achieved his delicate balance between Judaism and hellenistic culture. The events of 175-164 BCE would see the Judean theocracy take a staunchly pro-assimilationist stance and accommodate Judaism to Hellenism in such a highly integrative way that the submersion of Jewish cultural and religious uniqueness would provoke an immense crisis for Judaism. The advent of Onias III (196-174 BCE) moved the high priesthood in the direction of the Ptolemies and away from the Seleucids and their Tobiad supporters. While Onias was absent from Jerusalem, forced by the Tobiads to go to the new Seleucid king Antiochus IV Epiphanes (175-164) to explain himself, Jason (174-171 BCE) was appointed High Priest. In short: "Jason may be considered quite correctly as the founder of the Greek city of Antioch-at-Jerusalem."<sup>10</sup>

The date of the establishment of the Greek πόλις at Jerusalem may have been 172 BCE (?) when Antiochus visited the city. Jason's reform contained many elements: the reform of the δῆμος; the establishment of a gymnasium and

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<sup>10</sup> Tcherikover, *Hellenistic Civilization*, 164.

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ephebeion; the loss of the Torah's civil status gained under Antiochus III. While Antiochus IV was a political hellenizer *par excellence*, there is no evidence that he wished to abolish local cultures in his empire or enforce an imperial policy of religious unification. Rather the religious and cultural crisis in Judea was the consequence of the reform, not the reason for it. When Jerusalem became a πόλις, a conflict arose between the assimilationist aristocratic ruling elite and the lower classes who were opponents of Jason's reform. With the establishment of the πόλις the affairs of Jerusalem were firmly in the hands of the rich and powerful. The despoliation of the Temple treasury by Jason's successor Menelaus (171-162 BCE) was the catalyst in the Jewish revolt.

Ben Sira's bold experiment may not be described as a failure. Rather, in his scribal activity as interpreter of biblical tradition he demonstrated that it was possible to achieve the confident articulation of religious belief in the language and concepts of an antagonistic and powerful culture. He stood at an important juncture in Judaism, in a line of interpreters of Israel's traditions who sought to bequeath Jewish heritage to future generations (Sir 33,16-18).

## APPENDIX ONE

### THE POEM ON THE IDEAL SCRIBE (SIR 38,24-39,11): A CRITICAL TEXT

38,24a	חכמת סופר תרבה חכמה <sup>1</sup>
V.24b	וחסר עסק הוא יתחכם
V.25a	מה יתחכם תומך מלמד לשרד
V.25b	ומתפאר בחנית מהעיר
V.25c	באלוף ינהג ישובב בשור <sup>2</sup>
V.25d	ושעיותיו עם בני בקר
V.26a	לב ישית לשרד בתלמים
V.26b	ושקידתו לכלות מרבק <sup>3</sup>
V.27a	οὕτως πᾶς τέκτων καὶ ἀρχιτέκτων,

<sup>1</sup> Rickenbacher, *Weisheitsperikopen*, 179 argues that Heb best transmits the verse, which is also supported by Syr. The second occurrence of the second substantive חכמה has been rendered σχολῆς in G, a translation which would have been more suitable for the first occurring substantive חכמה; Smend, *Weisheit*, 346. Marböck, "Das Bild," 118 avoids the issue by simply not using Heb. G is supported by Stadelmann, *Schriftgelehrter*, 285n.2 who translates v.24a as "Die Weisheit des Schriftgelehrten (gründet) in Gelegenheit zur Muße." He thus argues on the basis of the parallelism between σχολῆς (G - v.24aβ) and ἐλασσοῦμενος πράξει (G - v.24bα) and a highly speculative and unproven theory that Heb represents a text which had subsequently been changed to suit Rabbinic anti-leisure sensibilities (Av 2,2; 4,10). Prato opts for G, arguing that Heb is concerned to contrast the profession of the scribe with manual labour professions, while G wishes to highlight the scribe's *otium*. His decisive argument is "ciò induce a ritenere che il greco, almeno parzialmente, inquadri la pericope in una concezione propria, tratta forse dal suo ambiente culturale": Prato, "Classi Lavorative," 167. His argument, however, is to be rejected. Since the poem is indeed about the contrast between the manual and scribal professions, Heb Sir 38,24a functions coherently.

<sup>2</sup> Following Heb, which in terms of style and content seems more original; Rickenbacher, *Weisheitsperikopen*, 180 and Stadelmann, *Schriftgelehrter*, 285n.3.

<sup>3</sup> Following Heb and G. Heb has reversed v.26a with v.26b. The correct order is found in G and Syr; Rickenbacher, *Weisheitsperikopen*, 180.

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V.27b	ὅστις νύκτωρ ὡς ἡμέρας διάγει. <sup>4</sup>
V.27c <sup>5</sup>	ὁ γλύφων <sup>6</sup> γλύμματα σφραγίδων,
V.27d	καὶ ἡ ἐπιμονὴ αὐτοῦ ἀλλοιωῶσαι ποικιλίαν.
V.27e	καρδίαν αὐτοῦ δώσει εἰς ὁμοιωῶσαι ζωγραφίαν,
V.27f	καὶ ἡ ἀγρυπνία αὐτοῦ τελέσαι ἔργον.
V.28a	οὕτως χαλκεὺς καθήμενος ἐγγύς (Syr) <i>kwʾ</i> <sup>7</sup>
V.28b	καὶ καταμανθάνων ἔργα σιδήρου.
V.28c	ἄτμις πυρὸς τήξει σάρκας αὐτοῦ,
V.28d	καὶ ἐν θερμῇ καμίνου διαμαχήσεται.
V.28e	φωνῇ σφύρης (Eth →) <i>exsurdabit</i> <sup>8</sup> τὸ οὖς αὐτοῦ,
V.28f	καὶ κατέναντι ὁμοιώματος σκεύους οἱ ὀφθαλμοὶ αὐτοῦ.
V.28g	καρδίαν αὐτοῦ δώσει εἰς συντέλειαν ἔργων,
V.28h	καὶ ἡ ἀγρυπνία αὐτοῦ κοσμήσαι ἐπὶ συντελείας.

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<sup>4</sup> The final word in MsB<sup>kt</sup> is lost, while MsB<sup>ms</sup> contains 𐤒𐤍𐤏 which agrees with G (διάγει); Stadelmann, *Schriftgelehrter*, 286n.1. This is preferable to Syr, which is incomplete and does not convey the same order found in Heb and G; Rickenbacher, *Weisheitsperikopen*, 180

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 180-181. The text of Sir 38,27c-39,15c is missing in Heb, leading to a loss of exactly thirty-six bi-cola. The same text in Syr contains thirty-six bi-cola, while that of G contains thirty-seven.

<sup>6</sup> G contains a plural (γλύφοντες) which probably has arisen due to the double description of a single profession in v.27a; Stadelmann, *Schriftgelehrter*, 286n.2.

<sup>7</sup> G reads ἄκμονος (*anvil*) while Syr reads *kwʾ* (*oven*). Syr clearly agrees better with the sense of v.28cd; Rickenbacher, *Weisheitsperikopen*, 181 and Stadelmann, *Schriftgelehrter*, 286n.4.

<sup>8</sup> This study reads with the Ethiopic "exsurdabit," as G is obviously corrupt; Ziegler, ed., *Sapientia*, 304. Rickenbacher, *Weisheitsperikopen*, 181 and Stadelmann, *Schriftgelehrter*, 286n.4 argue that the original Greek may have read κωφεύσει and that G has rendered it καινεί; Smend, *Weisheit*, 350 argues that the original Greek read κλίνει, but offers no supporting evidence.

Appendix One: The Poem on the Ideal Scribe (Sir 38,24-39,11) - A Critical Text

V.29a	οὕτως κεραμεὺς καθήμενος (Syr) 'l ggl' <sup>9</sup>
V.29b	καὶ συστρέφων ἐν ποσὶν αὐτοῦ τροχόν. <sup>10</sup>
V.30a	ἐν βραχίονι αὐτοῦ τυπώσει πηλὸν
V.30b	(Syr) w'd wmt kypw wghyn. <sup>11</sup>
V.30c	καρδίαν ἐπιδώσει συντελέσαι τὸ χρῖσμα,
V.30d	καὶ ἡ ἀγρυπνία αὐτοῦ (emendation →) לבער <sup>12</sup> κάμινον.
V.31a	πάντες οὗτοι εἰς χεῖρας αὐτῶν (emendation →) יאמנו, <sup>13</sup>
V.31b	καὶ ἕκαστος ἐν τῷ ἔργῳ αὐτοῦ σοφίζεται.
V.32a	ἄνευ αὐτῶν οὐκ οἰκισθήσεται πόλις,
V.32b	(Syr →) ובאשר יגרו לא ירעבו. <sup>14</sup>

<sup>9</sup> Reading with Syr 'l ggl' as G ἐν ἔργῳ αὐτοῦ makes little sense in the context; Rickenbacher, *Weisheitsperikopen*, 182 and Stadelmann, *Schriftgelehrter*, 286.

<sup>10</sup> V.29cd falls out. For a persuasive and convincing argument see Rickenbacher, *Weisheitsperikopen*, 181-182. G has thirty-seven bi-cola in the section Sir 38,27c-39,15c, while Syr has thirty-six and the missing Heb would also consist of thirty-six bi-cola. Rickenbacher argues that the content of v.29cd is so meaningless that it must be the extra verse supplied by G and thus falls out here. This argument is rejected as weak by Prato, "Classi Lavorative," 165n.16, who offers no convincing counter-argument.

<sup>11</sup> Reading with Syr; Rickenbacher, *Weisheitsperikopen*, 183; Stadelmann, *Schriftgelehrter*, 286n.6: "G ergibt keinen rechten Sinn und ist auch stilistisch holprig, indem es schon zum zweiten Mal in dieser Strophe die 'Füße' des Töpfers erwähnt."

<sup>12</sup> Syr uses the verb *to build* which is meaningless in the context. G reads καθαρίσαι which does not fit the context as the great heat of the oven would burn off any slag; Smend, *Weisheit*, 351, whose argument is that G read the Hebrew בער (Sir 27,5) and misunderstood it to mean *to clean* rather than *to reheat*; also Rickenbacher, *Weisheitsperikopen*, 183.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.* G has read a Hiphil of the verb אמן in place of a Niphal.

<sup>14</sup> For v.32b Syr, from which Heb is reconstructed, is preferable over G. The Οὐ of G is a misunderstanding of Οὐ̇; Box-Oesterley, "Sirach," 454. Rickenbacher, *Weisheitsperikopen*, 183 argues further that the verb περιπατεῖν has been derived from πεινᾶν *to be hungry*; also Stadelmann, *Schriftgelehrter*, 287n.1. In short, v.32b in G makes no sense at all.

Appendix One: The Poem on the Ideal Scribe (Sir 38,24-39,11) - A Critical Text

V.33a <sup>15</sup>	(Syr →) ἐν βουλῇ λαοῦ οὐ ζητηθήσεται, <sup>16</sup>
V.33b	(Syr) <i>wbknwšt' l' ntrymwn.</i>
V.33c	<i>w'l kwrs' ddyn' l' ntbwn,</i>
V.33d	<i>wqym' wdyn' l' nstklwn.</i>
V.33e	<i>l' ntbynwn ywlpn' dhkmt'.</i>
V.33f	καὶ οὐχ εὐρεθήσονται (emendation →) במשלים. <sup>17</sup>
V.34a	ἀλλὰ κτίσμα αἰῶνος (Syr) <i>nhryn</i> <sup>18</sup>
V.34b	καὶ (Syr) <i>rnyhwn</i> <sup>19</sup> αὐτῶν ἐν ἐργασίᾳ τέχνης.
V.34c	πλὴν τοῦ ἐπιδιδόντος τὴν ψυχὴν αὐτοῦ (Syr→) φόβῳ θεοῦ <sup>20</sup>
V.34d	καὶ διανοουμένου ἐν νόμῳ (Syr→) ζωῆς. <sup>21</sup>

<sup>15</sup> For this entire verse Syr is preferred over G as the word choice of the former seems to be more typical of Sirach than that offered by G; Rickenbacher, *Weisheitsperikopen*, 183 and Stadelmann, *Schriftgelehrter*, 287n.3.

<sup>16</sup> G is reconstructed from Syr; Box-Oesterley, "Sirach," 454.

<sup>17</sup> Rickenbacher, *Weisheitsperikopen*, 177 translates v.33f as "und die Sprüche der Weisen verstehen sie nicht." However this study follows the convincing arguments put forward by Skehan, "Not Found in Parables," 40, namely that Ben Sira wrote במשלים which the grandson understood as במשלים "in parables" instead of במשלים "among rulers"; Stadelmann, *Schriftgelehrter*, 287: "und unter Herrschern werden sie nicht gefunden."

<sup>18</sup> Reading with Syr. G has misread יבינו in the *Vorlage* for כינו and translated it with στηρίσουσιν *to hold fast*; Box-Oesterley, "Sirach," 455 and Stadelmann, *Schriftgelehrter*, 287n.6.

<sup>19</sup> Reading with Syr *rnyhwn* (*thinking*) as opposed to Greek δέησις (*prayer*) which does not fit the context; Smend, *Weisheit*, 353.

<sup>20</sup> G is reconstructed from Syr; Box-Oesterley, *Sirach*, 455; Haspecker, *Gottesfurcht*, 71-72; Rickenbacher, *Weisheitsperikopen*, 183-184 and Stadelmann, *Schriftgelehrter*, 218n.1.

<sup>21</sup> G is reconstructed from Syr. The very complicated text-critical problems of this verse have been dealt with thoroughly by Haspecker, *Gottesfurcht*, 71-72. He follows the text of Syr for a number of well argued reasons. First, G is too short and empty content-wise. Second, since Sirach does not tend to have two names for God in the same bi-colon, the reading of G (νόμῳ  
(continued...))

*Appendix One: The Poem on the Ideal Scribe (Sir 38,24-39,11) - A Critical Text*

39,1a	σοφίαν πάντων ἀρχαίων ἐκζητήσει,
V.1b	καὶ ἐν (Syr) <i>qdm̄y</i> <sup>22</sup> προφητείας ἀσχοληθήσεται,
V.2a	διήγησιν ἀνδρῶν ὀνομαστῶν συντηρήσει
V.2b	καὶ ἐν (Syr) <i>m̄mqym</i> <sup>23</sup> παραβολῶν συνεισελεύσεται,
V.3a	ἀπόκρυφα παροιμιῶν ἐκζητήσει,
V.3b	καὶ ἐν αἰνίγμασιν παραβολῶν ἀναστραφήσεται.
V.4a	ἀνὰ μέσον μεγιστάνων ὑπηρετήσει
V.4b	καὶ ἔναντι ἡγουμένων ὀφθήσεται.
V.4c	ἐν γῆ ἀλλοτρίων ἔθνῶν διελεύσεται.
V.4d	ἀγαθὰ γὰρ καὶ κακὰ ἐν ἀνθρώποις ἐπείρασεν.
V.5a	τὴν καρδίαν αὐτοῦ ἐπιδώσει ὀρθρίσαι τὸν ποιήσαντα αὐτὸν <sup>24</sup>
V.5b	καὶ ἔναντι ὑψίστου δεηθήσεται.
V.5c	καὶ ἀνοίξει στόμα αὐτοῦ ἐν προσευχῇ
V.5d	καὶ περὶ τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν αὐτοῦ δεηθήσεται.
V.6a	(Syr →) <i>לילין לא בעני טוב סא</i> <sup>25</sup>
V.6b	πνεύματι συνέσεως ἐμπλησθήσεται.

<sup>21</sup>(...continued)

ὑψίστου) must be changed in favour of νόμῳ ζωῆς which is attested to elsewhere in Sirach (Sir 17,11 - G and Syr; 45,5 - Heb, G and Syr); also Rickenbacher, *Weisheitsperikopen*, 183-184 and Stadelmann, *Schriftgelehrter*, 218n.1.

<sup>22</sup> Rickenbacher, *Weisheitsperikopen*, 184: "Nicht so klar ist, ob man sich für den zweiten Stichos eher an G halten soll und dann also dem Substantivum abstractum 'Weissagungen' den Vorrang geben muss, oder ob man das persönlichere 'Profeten der alten Zeit' aus S vorziehen darf." Syr probably contains the best reading.

<sup>23</sup> Marböck, "Das Bild," 118 suggests reading "Tiefen der Sinnsprüche" (*deep things of parables*) with Syr; also Box-Oesterley, "Sirach," 455.

<sup>24</sup> The expression πρὸς κύριον (v.5ba) is a gloss which has made v.5ab into a tri-colon. However, in Syr it is a bi-colon. Furthermore, Ben Sira's own tendency not to have two names for God in a single verse supports the view that the phrase in v.5ba is superfluous; Rickenbacher, *Weisheitsperikopen*, 184-185 and Stadelmann, *Schriftgelehrter*, 218n.4.

<sup>25</sup> Heb is reconstructed from Syr; Box-Oesterley, "Sirach," 456.

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- V.6c αὐτὸς ἀνομβρήσει ῥήματα σοφίας αὐτοῦ  
V.6d καὶ ἐν προσευχῇ ἔξομολογήσεται κυρίῳ.  
V.7a αὐτὸς (emendation →) ܕܒܝ<sup>26</sup> βουλήν αὐτοῦ καὶ ἐπιστήμην  
V.7b καὶ ἐν τοῖς ἀποκρύφοις αὐτοῦ διανοηθήσεται.  
V.8a αὐτὸς ἐκφανεῖ παιδείαν διδασκαλίας αὐτοῦ  
V.8b καὶ ἐν νόμῳ (Syr) *dhy*<sup>27</sup> καυχήσεται.  
V.9a αἰνέσουσιν τὴν σύνεσιν αὐτοῦ πολλοί,  
V.9b καὶ ἕως τοῦ αἰῶνος οὐκ ἐξαλειφθήσεται.  
V.9c οὐκ ἀποστήσεται τὸ μνημόσυνον αὐτοῦ,  
V.9d καὶ τὸ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ ζήσεται εἰς γενεὰς γενεῶν.  
V.10a τὴν σοφίαν αὐτοῦ διηγῆσονται (Syr) *knwšt'*,<sup>28</sup>  
V.10b καὶ τὸν ἔπαινον αὐτοῦ ἐξαγγελεῖ ἐκκλησία.  
V.11a (Corrupt verse: *Should he live long so will he be praised by  
thousands,*  
V.11b *and should he rest, so is his name enough*).<sup>29</sup>

The translation of the text is as follows:

- 38,24a** The wisdom of the scribe increases wisdom,  
V.24b and the one free from heavy toil becomes wise.  
V.25a How can one become wise who handles the plough  
V.25b and glories in the shaft of a goad?  
V.25c Who drives cattle and who turns the oxen about  
V.25d and his talk is about bull-calves?  
V.26a He directs his heart towards it, to harrow the furrows,  
V.26b and his care is about fodder.

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<sup>26</sup> G has καθευθυνεῖ which represents a confusion of ܕܒܝ for ܕܒܝ; Marböck, "Das Bild," 118, Rickenbacher, *Weisheitsperikopen*, 185 and Stadelmann, *Schriftgelehrter*, 219n.3.

<sup>27</sup> Reading with Syr on the basis Sir 38,34d; Rickenbacher, *Weisheitsperikopen*, 185 and Stadelmann, *Schriftgelehrter*, 219n.5.

<sup>28</sup> G reads ἔθνη which gives to v.10ab a synthetic parallelism and a thought alien to Ben Sira. Syr reads *knwšt'* (*community*) which gives the verse its natural synonymous parallelism; Rickenbacher, *Weisheitsperikopen*, 185-186.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 178.186, for this translation as v.11 is totally corrupt in both G and Syr.



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- V.27a            So too is the carver and the artisan  
V.27b            who passes night and day.  
V.27c            The engraver engraves the signet-rings,  
V.27d            and his steadfastness is to change coloured patterns.  
V.27e            He directs his heart towards it, to imitate the life model,  
V.27f            and his care is to complete the work.  
V.28a            So too is the smith who sits by the furnace  
V.28b            and examines iron equipment closely.  
V.28c            The breath of the fire melts his flesh,  
V.28d            and in the heat of the oven he is baked.  
V.28e            The noise of the hammer deafens his ear,  
V.28f            and his eyes are on the pattern of vessels.  
V.28g            He directs his heart towards it, to the completion of the works,  
V.28h            and his care is to arrange (them) in completion.  
V.29a            So too is the potter who sits near the wheel,  
V.29b            and rotates the wheel with his feet.  
V.30a            With his arm he moulds the clay,  
V.30b            and before he dies he is bent and curved.  
V.30c            He directs his heart towards it, to complete the glaze,  
V.30d            and his care is to reheat the oven.  
V.31a            All these are entrusted to their hands,  
V.31b            and each in his work becomes wise.  
V.32a            Without them no city is built,  
V.32b            and where they live they are not hungry.  
V.33a            But in counselling people they are not sought,  
V.33b            and in the assembly they are not prominent.  
V.33c            They do not sit on the judge's chair,  
V.33d            and they do not think over regulations and right decisions.  
V.33e            Also they do not understand the learning of wisdom.  
V.33f            They are not found among rulers.  
V.34a            But they understand worldly work,  
V.34b            and their thinking is in the work of trade.  
V.34c            How different the one who gives his soul up to fear God,  
V.34d            and to ponder the law of life!
- 39,1a**            He seeks the wisdom of all the ancients,  
V.1b            and is busy with the ancient prophecies.  
V.2a            He preserves the story of famous men,  
V.2b            and penetrates meaningful sayings.  
V.3a            He seeks out the obscurities of proverbs,

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- V.3b and is engaged with the riddles of parables.  
V.4a In the midst of the mighty he serves,  
V.4b and appears before leaders.  
V.4c He passes through the land of different peoples.  
V.4d For he has tested good and evil things in people.  
V.5a He sets his heart to seek his Creator (early in the morning),  
V.5b and implores before the Most High.  
V.5c He opens his mouth in prayer,  
V.5d and implores because of his sins.  
V.6a If God Most High wants it,  
V.6b he will be filled with the spirit of understanding.  
V.6c He himself bubbles forth his words of wisdom,  
V.6d and praises the Lord in prayer.  
V.7a He directs his advice and knowledge,  
V.7b and thinks over His mysteries.  
V.8a He brings forth the instruction of his teaching,  
V.8b and boasts about the law of life.  
V.9a Many speak of his sagacity,  
V.9b and he is not blotted out forever.  
V.9c His memory does not cease,  
V.9d and his name will live from generation to generation.  
V.10a The community praises his wisdom,  
V.10b and the assembly announces his approval.  
V.11a Should he live long so will he be praised by thousands,  
V.11b and should he rest, so is his name enough.

## APPENDIX TWO

### THE WORKS OF GOD IN CREATION (SIR 42,15-43,33): A CRITICAL TEXT

42,15ab

אזכרה נא<sup>2</sup> מעשי אל וזה חזיתי ואספרה<sup>1</sup>

V.15cd

באמר אדני<sup>5</sup> מעשיו<sup>4</sup> ופעל רצונו לחקו<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The variant readings in the witnesses are: MsM and MsM<sup>ms</sup> (ואשננה), MsB (ואספרה), G (ἐκδιηγῆσομαι) and Syr ('n mtn). Yadin, *Masada*, 26 argues in favour of MsM on the basis of the occurrence of the root שׁנן in Deut 6,7 and that the Masada Scroll reflects the text "perhaps" used by G and Syr. Similarly Skehan-DiLella, *Ben Sira*, 487, who see a direct equivalence between MsM and Syr, while Prato, *Teodicea*, 122 claims that G and Syr are closer to MsB. The occurrence of the expression וְזֶה־חִזִּיתִי וְאִסְפְּרָה in Job 15,17b suggests that the reading of MsB is preferable.

<sup>2</sup> The variant readings are: MsM (אזכרה נא), MsB (אזכר נא), and G (μνησθήσομαι δὴ). Both variant readings in Heb correspond to G; Box-Oesterley, "Sirach, 471" and Yadin, *Masada*, 26. This poem flows naturally into the lengthy poem in praise of Israel's ancestors (Sir 44,1-50,24), which begins with the cohortative נא אהללה (Sir 44,1a - MsB). The parallel with the opening to the hymn in praise of God's works suggests a cohortative also at 42,15a. Finally, אזכרה balances neatly with ואספרה in v.15b.

<sup>3</sup> This is a notoriously complicated verse textually. According to Skehan-DiLella, *Ben Sira*, 487, MsM and MsB<sup>xt</sup> can be pointed: וְפֹעֵל רְצוֹנוֹ לְקָחוֹ ("he accepts the one who does his will") which is very close to Syr ("and all his creatures do his will"), while an alternative pointing according to MsB<sup>ms</sup> is: וְפֹעֵל רְצוֹנוֹ לְקַח ("and teaching is a work of his will"). Yadin, *Masada*, 45, follows MsB<sup>xt</sup>: "and his teaching is a work of his will". Prato, *Teodicea*, 122-123, who identifies לקחו as the subject of the clause in parallel with מעשי (v.15c), offers two possible translations: "e opera della sua benevolenza è il suo insegnamento" or "e dalla sua benevolenza il suo insegnamento." The second translation is not supported by the consonantal text. Taking ופעל in parallel with באמר and רצונו in parallel with אדני it is possible to point the colon: וְפֹעֵל רְצוֹנוֹ לְקָחוֹ ("and his teaching is the work of his will"). It is not clear how these various translations for v.15d relate to the remainder of the verse without forcing the text. Another possibility is suggested by the Greek witnesses. While the colon is missing in most Greek manuscripts, it is present with variants in S (in a secondary hand), Mss 339 and 679. The reconstructed Greek text reads: καὶ γέγονεν ἐν εὐδοκίᾳ αὐτοῦ κρίμα; so  
(continued...)

Appendix Two: The Works of God in Creation (Sir 42,15-43,33) - A Critical Text

V.16ab שמש זורחת<sup>8</sup> על כל נגלתה וכבוד אדני<sup>7</sup> מלא מעשיו<sup>6</sup>  
 V.17ab לא השפיקו<sup>9</sup> קדשי אל לספר כל נפלאותיו

<sup>3</sup>(...continued)

Ziegler, ed., *Sapientia*, 324. Accordingly לקחו should be emended to לחקו giving "and the work of his will is according to his decree" as the translation for v.15d which is broadly similar to that offered by Box-Oesterley, *Sirach*, 471: "and what was wrought by His good pleasure according to His decree." Since the nouns פעל and מעשה are often synonyms in late Hebrew poetry, the semantic parallelism between באמר אדני and לחקו and between מעשיו and פעל רצנו suggests the probable accuracy of the emended text and its translation offered here.

<sup>4</sup> The variant readings are: MsM, MsB<sup>msb</sup> (מעשיו) = Syr, MsB<sup>bx</sup> (רצונו), and G (τὰ ἔργα αὐτοῦ). The reading to be followed is MsM = MsB<sup>msb</sup> = G = Syr; Yadin, *Masada*, 26, and Skehan-DiLella, *Ben Sira*, 487.

<sup>5</sup> The variant readings are: MsM (אדני), MsB (אלהים), and G (κυρίου). The reading to be followed is MsM = G; Yadin, *Masada*, 26 and Skehan-DiLella, *Ben Sira*, 487.

<sup>6</sup> The variant readings are: MsM (וכבוד אדני מלא מעשיו), MsB (על כל מעשיו) = Syr and G (πλήρης τὸ ἔργον αὐτοῦ). Yadin, *Masada*, 26 and Skehan-DiLella, *Ben Sira*, 487 opt for MsM and G, while Prato, *Teodicea*, 123 opts for MsB and Syr. No convincing arguments are offered for either option. This study follows MsM = G, based on the general superiority of the former as a textual witness.

<sup>7</sup> The variant readings are: MsM (אדני), MsB (י) and G (κυρίου). On the basis of v.15c the reading of MsM is followed.

<sup>8</sup> The variant readings are: MsM (זוהרת), MsB (ת[זר]) = Syr, and G (φωτίζω). Yadin, *Masada*, 26 and Skehan-Dilella, *Ben Sira*, 487 choose MsM and G, while Prato, *Teodicea*, 123 opts for MsB and Syr. Given that in the Hebrew Bible the root זרח is used of שמש while זוהר is not, a pattern confirmed by Sir 26,16, this study is inclined to follow Prato's opinion.

<sup>9</sup> The variant readings are: MsM (לספר כל נפלאותיו), MsB<sup>bx</sup> (לספר נפלאות יי), MsB<sup>msb</sup> (לספר נפלאות נבורותיו), and G (ἐκδιηγῆσασθαι πάντα τὰ θαυμάσια αὐτοῦ). The reading to be followed is MsM = G; *ibid.*; Skehan-DiLella, *Ben Sira*, 487; and Yadin, *Masada*, 26.

V.17cd	אימץ <sup>13</sup> אדני צבאיו <sup>12</sup> להתחזק <sup>11</sup> לפני כבודו
V.18ab	תהום ולב חקר ובמערמיהם <sup>14</sup> יתבונן
V.18cd	כי ידע עליון כל דעת <sup>17</sup> ויביט <sup>16</sup> אתיוח <sup>15</sup> עולם

<sup>10</sup>(...continued)

<sup>10</sup> The variant readings are: MsM (השפיקו), MsB (הספיקו), and G (οὐκ ἐξέποίησεν). The meaning of MsM and G (*to be sufficient*) seems to fit the context better, while the meaning of MsB (*to smite, clap*) does not suit the context easily. The commentators mentioned above are content simply to list the alternatives and make a choice without justification. Prato opts for the reading of MsB, but offers a translation ("non bastano i santi di Dio") which is more in keeping with MsM and G; Prato, *Teodicea*, 119.

<sup>11</sup> The variant readings are: MsM = MsB<sup>xt</sup> (להתחזק) = G (στηριχθῆναι) and MsB<sup>mg</sup> (להחזיק). This study reads with MsM, MsB<sup>xt</sup>, G against MsB<sup>mg</sup>; *ibid.*, 123-124 and Yadin, *Masada*, 26.

<sup>12</sup> The variant readings are: MsM (אדני צבאיו), MsB (אלהים צבאיו), but G has probably misread צבאות אדני to create κύριος ὁ παντοκράτωρ; *ibid.* Prato, *Teodicea*, 123 argues that G has misread צבאות אלהי although he does not attempt to reconcile אלהי and κύριος. MsM in all probability contains the superior reading.

<sup>13</sup> The variant readings are: MsM (אמץ), MsB<sup>xt</sup> (אימץ), MsB<sup>mg</sup> (אומץ), and G (ἐστερέωσεν). Yadin, *Masada*, 26: "The *defectiva* spelling of the [Masada] Scroll precludes any decision between Btext ... and ... Bmargin." The reading to be followed is MsB<sup>xt</sup> = G = Syr; Prato, *Teodicea*, 123-124.

<sup>14</sup> The variant readings are: MsM (ובמערמיהם), MsB (ובכל מערומיהם) and G (καὶ ἐν πανουργέμασι αὐτῶν). Yadin, *Masada*, 27 opts for the reading of MsM = G while Prato, *Teodicea*, 124 opts for MsB = Syr, although he does recognize that Syr has been influenced by Sir 17,19a. In the absence of conclusive argument, the reading to be followed is MsM = G.

<sup>15</sup> The variant readings are: MsM (אתיוח), MsB (missing), and G (σημεῖον). G has misread אתיוח as אחוח; Alexander A. DiLella, review of *Sapientia Filii Sirach*, ed. Joseph Ziegler, *CBQ* 28 (1966): 538-540, at 540 and Skehan-DiLella, *Ben Sira*, 487.

<sup>16</sup> The variant readings are: MsM (ויביט [ ]), MsB (missing), G (καὶ ἐνέβλεψεν). Since MsM = G the reading of MsM is to be restored to ויביט; Yadin, *Masada*, 27 against Prato, *Teodicea*, 124.

V.19ab	מחזה חליפות ונהיות <sup>18</sup> ומגלה חקר נסתרות
V.20ab	לא נעדר ממנו כל שנל <sup>20</sup> ולא חלפו <sup>19</sup> כל דבר
V.21ab	נבורות <sup>22</sup> חכמתו תכן אחד הוא מעולם <sup>21</sup>
V.21cd	לא נוסף <sup>24</sup> ולא נאצל ולא צריך לכל מביין <sup>23</sup>

<sup>17</sup>(...continued)

<sup>17</sup> The variant readings are: MsM ([ דען ], MsB (missing) and G (ἔγγω γὰρ ὁ ὑψιστος πᾶσαν εἴδησιν). This study opts for the restoration of the text to כל דעת on the basis of G; *ibid.* against Yadin, *Masada*, 27.

<sup>18</sup> The variant readings are: MsM (missing), MsB<sup>txt</sup> (נהיות), MsB<sup>msg</sup> (ונהיות) = Syr, and G (τὰ ἐσόμμενα). The reading to be followed is that of MsB<sup>msg</sup> = G = Syr; *ibid.* and Prato, *Teodicea*, 124.

<sup>19</sup> The variant readings are: MsM ([ אב ] ו), MsB<sup>txt</sup> (חלפו), MsB<sup>msg</sup> (מנו חלף), and G (οὐκ ἐκρύβη); *ibid.*, 125 where Prato argues that MsB<sup>msg</sup> has been influenced by v.20a and that G has confused the verbs in Heb. Skehan-DiLella, *Ben Sira*, 487 argue for עברו on the basis of a parallelism in Isa 24,5, while Yadin, *Masada*, 27 defends the originality of the Masada Scroll, reading אברו. Ultimately the various arguments are inconclusive. Perhaps MsB<sup>txt</sup> is to be followed on the basis of context.

<sup>20</sup> The variant readings are: MsM (שכל), MsB (כל שכל), and G (πᾶν διανόημα). The reading to be followed is that of MsB = G = Syr; Prato, *Teodicea*, 125.

<sup>21</sup> MsM restored according to MsB.

<sup>22</sup> The variant readings are: MsM (נבורת), MsB<sup>txt</sup> ([ ג ]), MsB<sup>msg</sup> (נבורות), G (τὰ μεγαλεία). On MsM, Yadin, *Masada*, 27 correctly notes: "Since the spelling in the Scroll is *defectiva*, it is not decisive in the matter, and perhaps it should be pointed: נבורת." On the reading of G, Prato, *Teodicea*, 125 states: "è meglio intendere al singolare." However, no reasons are offered for this position. The best solution is that offered by Skehan-DiLella, *Ben Sira*, 487 in accepting the reading MsM = MsB<sup>msg</sup> = G.

<sup>23</sup> MsM restored according to MsB.

<sup>24</sup> The variant readings are: MsM (לא נאסף), MsB (ל [ף]), and G (προσετέθη). Yadin, *Masada*, 27 wishes to restore MsB according to MsM and not according to G which he claims (continued...)

V.22ab הלוא כל מעשיו נחמדים<sup>26</sup> עד ניצוץ וחזות מראה<sup>25</sup>  
 V.23ab<sup>27</sup> הכל חי ועומד לעד<sup>30</sup> לכל<sup>29</sup> צרך הכל נשמר<sup>28</sup>

<sup>24</sup>(...continued)

has confused the Hebrew verbs אסף and יסף. Prato, *Teodicea*, 125 correctly rejects this, pointing out that all other instances of the use of the Niphal of אסף in Heb have the nuance of *dying*, and so retains the traditional restoration of MsB based on G (לא נוסף).

<sup>25</sup> The variant readings are: MsM (עד ניצוץ וחזות מראה), MsB (missing), and G (καὶ ὡς ὁσπιθηρός ἐστὶ θεωρησάμενος). MsM is very close to G. The reading καὶ ὡς of G may be a corruption of ἔως; Yadin, *Masada*, 27. Skehan-DiLella, *Ben Sira*, 488 correct MsM to: עדני צוץ וחזות מראה. In this they follow J. Strugnell, "Notes and Queries on 'The Ben Sira Scroll from Masada,'" in *ErIsr*, vol. 9 (Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 1969), 116-117, who translates it as "delightful to gaze upon and a joy to behold." This, however, is correctly rejected by Prato, *Teodicea*, 126 because "tuttavia צוץ non ha questo significato e anche il passaggio חזות חזות resta inspiegato." The reading to be followed is MsM = G.

<sup>26</sup> The variant readings are: MsM ([ נחמדן ], MsB (missing), and G (ἐπιθυμητά). MsM is restored to נחמדים according to G; *ibid.*, 125; Skehan-DiLella, *Ben Sira*, 488 and Yadin, *Masada*, 27.

<sup>27</sup> In Sir 42,23-43,2 the order in MsB is confused (Sir 42,23a.25ab; 43,1ab; 42,23b.24ab; 43,2).

<sup>28</sup> The variant readings are: MsM (נשמר), MsB<sup>xt</sup> (ע[ ]), MsB<sup>ms</sup> (נשמע), and G (ὑπακούει). See Yadin, *Masada*, 28 who, arguing that G represents an error whereby נשמר was misheard as נשמע, concludes that "the reading of the scroll is unquestioningly preferable." Prato, *Teodicea*, 126 agrees.

<sup>29</sup> The variant readings are: MsM (כל[ ]), MsB<sup>xt</sup> (ולכל), MsB<sup>ms</sup> (לכל), and G (ἐν πάσας). The reading to be followed is MsM = MsB<sup>ms</sup> = G; Yadin, *Masada*, 28 against Prato, *Teodicea*, 126.

<sup>30</sup> The variant readings are: MsM (הכל חי ועון [ר לעד]), MsB<sup>xt</sup> ([ ר ל ]), MsB<sup>ms</sup> (הוא חי וקים לעד), G (πάντα ταῦτα ζῆναι καὶ μένει εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα) = Syr. MsM is restored to הכל חי ועומד לעד according to G; Skehan-DiLella, *Ben Sira*, 488, Prato, *Teodicea*, 126 and Yadin, *Masada*, 27.

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V.24ab	כלם שנים זה לעמת זה <sup>32</sup> ולא עשה מהם שוא <sup>31</sup>
V.25ab	זה על זה חלף טובו <sup>34</sup> מי ישבע להביט הודם <sup>33</sup>
43,1ab	תאר מרום רקיע לטהר <sup>36</sup> עצם שמים מביט הדרו <sup>35</sup>

<sup>31</sup> The variant readings are: MsM (missing), MsB (ש), G (οὐδὲν ἐλλείπον). MsM is restored to שוא according to Syr and MsB; Skehan-DiLella, *Ben Sira*, 488 and Yadin, *Masada*, 28.

<sup>32</sup> The variant readings are: MsM (לעמת זה [ כלם ]), MsB (כלם שונים זה מזה), G (πάντα δισσὰ ἐν κατέναντι τοῦ ἐνός), and Syr (*wkhlhwn tryn tryn hd lqwbl hd*). The best reading is probably MsM restored from G and Syr; Skehan-DiLella, *Ben Sira*, 488 and Yadin, *Masada*, 28 against Prato, *Teodicea*, 126-127.

<sup>33</sup> The variant readings are: MsM (מי ישבע להביט הודם [ ]), MsB<sup>txt</sup> ([ ] ל [ ] וימי ישב), MsB<sup>msg</sup> (ומי ישבע להחביט חואר), and G (καὶ τίς πλησθήσεται ὀρώων δόξαν αὐτοῦ). The best reading is MsM = G; *ibid.*, 127; Skehan-DiLella, *Ben Sira*, 488; and Yadin, *Masada*, 28.

<sup>34</sup> The variant readings are: MsM (טובם), MsB<sup>txt</sup> (טובו), MsB<sup>msg</sup> (טוב), and G (τὰ ἀγαθά). Skehan-DiLella, *Ben Sira*, 488 follow Yadin, *Masada*, 28 who opts for טובם in v.25a to balance with הודם in v.25b. Prato, *Teodicea*, 127 correctly rejects this as the subject of v.25a (זה) is singular and that of v.25b is plural (כלם in v.24a). The best reading is probably טובו of MsB<sup>txt</sup> which balances more grammatically with הודם in v.25b.

<sup>35</sup> The variant readings are: MsM (ועצם שמים מן [ ] רו), MsB<sup>txt</sup> (ועצם שמים מן [ ] רביט הדרו), MsB<sup>msg</sup> (ועצם שמים מביט נהרה), G (εἶδος οὐρανοῦ ἐν ὀράματι δόξης). Some form of restored MsM seems to offer the best reading, but scholarship disagrees on how this should be done. Yadin, *Masada*, 28 restores it: ועצם שמים מביע הדרו. Skehan-DiLella, *Ben Sira*, 488 opt for: ועצם שמים מראה הדרו. Prato, *Teodicea*, 128 chooses: ועצם שמים מביט הדרו. The participle מביט occurs elsewhere in Heb (Sir 15,18b; 37,4a; 42,11f) where it means *to see* or *to look*. מביע occurs in Sir 43,2a with the meaning *to shine*. G's reading ἐν ὀράματι occurs in the LXX always with the meaning of *vision* (Gen 15,1; 46,2; Num 12,6; Dan 1,17; 2,19; 7,7.13.15; 8,2.27; 10,1) and would seem to support Prato's restoration of MsM according to MsB<sup>msg</sup>.



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V.2ab	שמש מופיע בצאתו חמה <sup>38</sup> כלי נורא מעשה אליון <sup>37</sup>
V.3ab	בהצהירו ירתיה תבל <sup>40</sup> לפני חרבו מי יתכלכל <sup>39</sup>
V.4ab	כור נפוח מעשי <sup>44</sup> מוצק <sup>43</sup> שלוח <sup>42</sup> שמש ידליק <sup>41</sup> הרים

<sup>36</sup>(...continued)

<sup>36</sup> The variant readings are: MsM (תאר מרום ורקיע לטהר), MsB<sup>ext</sup> (missing), MsB<sup>msb</sup> (תואר (מרום רקע על טהר), G (γαυρίαμα ὑψους στερέωμα καθαριότητος), and Syr (missing). Yadin, *Masada*, 28 merely asserts the correctness of MsM without offering compelling reasons as do Skehan-DiLella, *Ben Sira*, 488. Prato, *Teodicea*, 127 opts correctly for MsM emended from G.

<sup>37</sup> The variant readings are: MsM (כלי נורא מעשי [ ] ליון), MsB (מה נורא מעשי יי), G (σκεῦος θαυμαστὸν ἔργον ὑψίστου). Yadin, *Masada*, 29 argues for the originality of the scroll since MsM = G = Syr. Skehan-DiLella, *Ben Sira*, 488 restore MsM to מעשה אליון. Prato, *Teodicea*, 129 corrects MsM to read מעשה יי. However G (ὑψίστου) and Syr (*dmrym'*) do not support his emendation.

<sup>38</sup> The variant readings are: MsM (שמש מופיע בצאתו נכסה), MsB<sup>ext</sup> (שמש מביע בצרתו חמה), MsB<sup>msb</sup> (שמש מופיע בצאתו חמה), and G (ἥλιος ἐν ὀπτασίᾳ διαγγέλλων ἐν ἐξόδῳ). Yadin, *Masada*, 28-29 defends his scroll arguing for the retention of נכסה on the basis of the root's occurrence in Ps 81,4 where it suggests a full moon. Skehan-DiLella, *Ben Sira*, 488 follow Yadin. However, while the link between Ps 81,4 and Sir 43,2a is interesting, it is quite tenuous. Prato, *Teodicea*, 128 corrects MsM from MsB to חמה. It is probably a better reading for the context. However, all attempts at a solution are inconclusive.

<sup>39</sup> The variant readings are: MsM (ולפני חרב מי יתכלל [ ] ל), MsB (לפני חרבו מי יתכלכל), and G (καὶ ἐναντίον καύματος αὐτοῦ τίς ὑποστήσεται). Yadin, *Masada*, 28 restores MsM to יתכלכל according to MsB. The similarity of MsM, MsB and G suggest the reading חרבו; Prato, *Teodicea*, 129 and Skehan-DiLella, *Ben Sira*, 488.

<sup>40</sup> MsM = MsB.

<sup>41</sup> The variant readings are: MsM (missing), MsB<sup>ext</sup> (ידליק), MsB<sup>msb</sup> (יסיק), and G (ἐκκαίω). The roots in Heb are both a *hapax legomenon*. The use of דלק in Isa 5,11 suggests that it might possibly be appropriate for this context.

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V.4cd	לשון מאור תגמר נושבת <sup>46</sup> ומנורה תכוה עין <sup>45</sup>
V.5ab	כי גדול <sup>50</sup> אדני <sup>49</sup> עשהו <sup>48</sup> ודברו ינצה אבירו <sup>47</sup>
V.6ab	וגם ירח יאריח עתות <sup>52</sup> ממשלת קץ ואות עולם <sup>51</sup>

<sup>42</sup>(...continued)

<sup>42</sup> The variant readings are: MsM ([ שלן]), MsB<sup>ext</sup> (שולח), and MsB<sup>msb</sup> (שלוח). MsM is restored to שלוח according to MsB<sup>msb</sup>; Skehan-DiLella, *Ben Sira*, 488 and Yadin, *Masada*, 29. Prato, *Teodicea*, 129 opts for MsB<sup>ext</sup> without any clear justification for the choice.

<sup>43</sup> The variant readings are: MsM (מוצק), MsB<sup>ext</sup> (מזוק), and MsB<sup>msb</sup> (מוצק). The preferred reading is MsM = MsB<sup>msb</sup>; Yadin, *Masada*, 29 against Prato, *Teodicea*, 129 who nonetheless opts for MsB<sup>ext</sup>.

<sup>44</sup> The variant readings are: MsM (מעשי), MsB (מהם), G (ἔργους) = Syr (k'bd'). מעשי is the better reading supported by MsM = G = Syr; Yadin, *Masada*, 29 against Prato, *Teodicea*, 129 who despite the agreement of the witnesses opts for MsB.

<sup>45</sup> MsM is missing and is restored according to MsB.

<sup>46</sup> MsM is restored according to MsB<sup>msb</sup>.

<sup>47</sup> MsM is missing except for ודברן. MsB<sup>ext</sup> reads: ודבריו ינצה אבירו, while MsB<sup>msb</sup> has the variant ינצה. MsM is restored according to MsB<sup>ext</sup>; Prato, *Teodicea*, 130 and Yadin, *Masada*, 29. But note Skehan-DiLella, *Ben Sira*, 488: "Commentators (and translators) are not in agreement on the meaning of the colon."

<sup>48</sup> The variant readings are: MsM (עשהו), MsB<sup>ext</sup> (עושהו), MsB<sup>msb</sup> (עושה), G (ὁ ποιησας αὐτόν), and Syr (d'bdh). The best reading is MsM = MsB<sup>ext</sup> = G = Syr; Yadin, *Masada*, 29.

<sup>49</sup> The variant readings are: MsM (אדני), MsB<sup>ext</sup> (י), MsB<sup>msb</sup> (עליון), and G (κύριος). As with Sir 42,15a.16b.17c the better reading is MsM (אדני) = G (κύριος).

<sup>50</sup> The variant readings are: MsM (גדול), MsB<sup>ext</sup> (גדיל), MsB<sup>msb</sup> (גדול), G (μέγας), and Syr (rb). גדול is probably the better reading since MsM = MsB<sup>msb</sup> = G = Syr. The confusion between גדיל and גדול suggests "that medieval scribes of the Cairo MSS frequently had trouble identifying with certitude a *waw* or a *yod* in their *Vorlagen*." See DiLella, *Hebrew Text of Sirach*, 101.

<sup>51</sup> MsM, which is virtually missing except for a single מ, is restored from MsB.

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V.7ab	בו מועד וממנו חג <sup>54</sup> וחפץ ען <sup>53</sup> ה[ בתקופתו
V.8ab	חדש כשמו הוא מתחדש <sup>56</sup> מה נורא בהשתנותו <sup>55</sup>
V.8cd	כלי צבא נבלי מרום <sup>58</sup> מרצף רקיע מזהירתו <sup>57</sup>
V.9ab	תואר <sup>62</sup> שמים והדר <sup>61</sup> כוכב ועדי משריק <sup>60</sup> במרומי אל <sup>59</sup>

<sup>52</sup>(...continued)

<sup>52</sup> The variant readings are: MsM (וגם ] ירח יאריח עחות), MsB (וגם ירח ירח עחות שבות), and G (καὶ ἡ σελήνη ἴσθησιν εἰς καιρὸν αὐτῆς). שבות in MsB is probably an "accretion influenced by ירח ירח, and should be omitted": Yadin, *Masada*, 29; also Prato, *Teodicea*, 130 and Skehan-DiLella, *Ben Sira*, 488.

<sup>53</sup> The only text of Heb extant for this verse is MsB. Commentators disagree on how ה[ ע] should be emended. Yadin, *Masada*, 30 opts for עתה, arguing that this best corresponds to G (μειλούμενος) and Syr (*gmr*); also Skehan-DiLella, *Ben Sira*, 489. However, Prato, *Teodicea*, 131 uses G and Syr to defend the emendation עופה. The original remains undetermined.

<sup>54</sup> The variant readings are: MsM (לו מון ] ד וממנו חג), MsB<sup>ext</sup> (בם מועד וזמני חוק), MsB<sup>msb</sup> (בו מועד וממנו חוק), G (ἀπὸ σελήνης σημείου ἑορτῆς). Since MsM and MsB<sup>msb</sup> are very close, the former should probably be corrected from the latter. For MsM, MsB<sup>msb</sup>, G and Syr the moon is the subject of the verse. For MsB<sup>ext</sup> it is both sun and moon.

<sup>55</sup> The variant readings are: MsM (missing), MsB<sup>ext</sup> (מה נורא בהשתנותו), MsB<sup>msb</sup> (מה נורא בתשובתו), G (αὐξανόμενος θαυμαστῶς ἐν ἀλλοιώσει). MsM is restored according to MsB<sup>ext</sup> which is similar to G.

<sup>56</sup> The variant readings are: MsM ([ חדש כשמו הוא מת] מת), MsB<sup>ext</sup> (חדש בחדשו הוא), MsB<sup>msb</sup> (מתחדש), G (μῆν κατὰ τὸ ὄνομα αὐτῆς ἐστίν), and Syr (*yrb' 'yk šmh 'ytwwhy*). MsB<sup>ext</sup> is corrupt. MsM is almost identical to MsB<sup>msb</sup>, and very close to G and Syr. Thus MsM is restored according to MsB<sup>msb</sup>.

<sup>57</sup> MsM (missing except for [מ] צף) restored from MsB<sup>ext</sup> (מרצף) rather than MsB<sup>msb</sup> (מערץ).

<sup>58</sup> MsM = MsB.

<sup>59</sup> MsM ([ במרומי אל]) is restored from MsB (במרומי אל).

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V.10ab	בדבר אדני יעמד חק ולא ישח באשמרותם <sup>63</sup>
V.11ab	ראה קשת וברך עשיה <sup>65</sup> כי מאד נהדרה בכבוד <sup>64</sup>
V.12ab	חוג <sup>69</sup> הקיפה <sup>68</sup> בכבודה <sup>67</sup> ויד אל נשתה בגבורה <sup>66</sup>

<sup>60</sup>(...continued)

<sup>60</sup> The variant readings are: MsM (ער ומשריק) according to Yadin, *Masada*, 30-31 but (עדי משריק) according to Skehan-DiLella, *Ben Sira*, 489; MsB<sup>xt</sup> (ואורו מזהיר), MsB<sup>msb</sup> (ועדי משריק), and G (κόσμος φωτίζω εν ύψίστοις κυρίου). Prato, *Teodicea*, 132 rejects MsM because "non sembra riprodotto da G κόσμος φωτίζω." This criticism could also be made of his own translation "e la sua luce risplende nelle altezze divine": *ibid.*, 120. Since MsM (Skehan-DiLella) = MsB<sup>msb</sup>, this is the text followed by this study.

<sup>61</sup> The variant readings are: MsM (והדר), and MsB (והדר). The conclusion of Yadin, *Masada*, 30 that "it would seem that the Scroll reading should be adopted." is tendentious. The combination הדר / δόξα occurs in Heb in another text (Sir 43,1b) suggesting that it might be appropriate for v.9a. Finally, Prato, *Teodicea*, 132 understands vv.9-10 to refer to the *stars*, while Skehan-DiLella, *Ben Sira*, 489 and Yadin, *Masada*, 30-31 understand them to refer to the *moon*. Prato is probably correct, as will be seen below in footnote 63, and accordingly understands כוכב as a collective noun.

<sup>62</sup> חור(MsM) is taken as a phonetic spelling of חואר(MsB).

<sup>63</sup> MsM = MsB<sup>xt</sup> with the exception of the divine name. The former has אדני and the latter אל. Prato, *Teodicea*, 132 notes: "באשמרותם: il plurale conferma che si parla di stelle."

<sup>64</sup> The variant readings are: MsM ([נהדר]), MsB<sup>xt</sup> (נהדר), and MsB<sup>msb</sup> (נהדרה). The preferred reading is MsM = MsB<sup>msb</sup>; Skehan-DiLella, *Ben Sira*, 489 and Yadin, *Masada*, 31 against Prato, *Teodicea*, 133 who simply asserts the superiority of MsB<sup>xt</sup>.

<sup>65</sup> MsM = MsB = G (ἴδε τόξον καὶ εὐλόγησον τὸν ποιήσαντα αὐτό).

<sup>66</sup> The variant readings are: MsM ([בנב]), MsB (missing), G (omitted). Yadin, *Masada*, 31 restores to בנבורה. So Prato, *Teodicea*, 133 and Skehan-DiLella, *Ben Sira*, 489.

<sup>67</sup> So MsM and MsB<sup>xt</sup> against MsB<sup>msb</sup> (בכבודו).

<sup>68</sup> MsM (missing) is restored from MsB.

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V.13ab	נערתו תתוה ברק <sup>71</sup> ותנצח זיקות משפט <sup>70</sup>
V.14ab	למענו <sup>75</sup> פרע <sup>74</sup> אוצר <sup>73</sup> ויעף עבים כעיט <sup>72</sup>
V.15ab	גבורתו תחזק <sup>76</sup> ענן ותגדע אבני ברד
V.17a.16a <sup>77</sup>	קול רעמו יחיל <sup>80</sup> ארץ <sup>79</sup> ובכחו יניף <sup>78</sup> הרים

<sup>69</sup>(...continued)

<sup>69</sup> The variant readings are: MsM (חונג), MsB<sup>ext</sup> (חוק), and MsB<sup>ms</sup> (הוד). MsB is clearly corrupt; Prato, *Teodicea*, 133; Skehan-DiLella, *Ben Sira*, 489; and Yadin, *Masada*, 31.

<sup>70</sup> The variant readings in Heb are: MsM (ותנצח זיקות משפט), MsB<sup>ext</sup> ([ ] זיקות), and MsB<sup>ms</sup> (ותנצח זיקים במשפט); but in a secondary hand: [ ] זיקות משפט. MsB<sup>ext</sup> is restored according to MsM, while the variants in MsB<sup>ms</sup> (primary and secondary hands) are corruptions; Prato, *Teodicea*, 133; Skehan-DiLella, *Ben Sira*, 489; Yadin, *Masada*, 31.

<sup>71</sup> The variant readings in Heb are: MsM (נערתו [ ] ה ברד), MsB<sup>ext</sup> (גבורתו תתוה ברק), MsB<sup>ms</sup> (נערתו תתוה בקר), and G (προστάγματι αὐτοῦ κατέσπευσεν χλόνα). MsM is restored according to MsB<sup>ext</sup> and MsM<sup>ms</sup>. Prato, *Teodicea*, 133 sums up well: "B è invece nel giusto con ברק (= "fulmine"), mentre Bm בקר è una svista e Mas ברד (= "grandine"; cfr. G χλόνα) non si addatta al contesto e proviene da 15b (Mas)"; also Yadin, *Masada*, 31.

<sup>72</sup> According to MsM. MsB is severely damaged.

<sup>73</sup> MsB ([ אוצר ]) is restored from MsM (אוצר).

<sup>74</sup> The variant readings are: MsM (פרע), MsB (ברא), and G (ἤνεώχθησαν). The preferred reading is MsM = G.

<sup>75</sup> The variant readings are: MsM (למענו), MsB<sup>ext</sup> (למען), MsB<sup>ms</sup> (למענו), and G (δὲ τὸ τοῦτο). The preferred reading is MsM = MsB<sup>ms</sup> = G; Yadin, *Masada*, 31. Prato, *Teodicea*, 133 opts for MsB<sup>ext</sup> despite the lack of support from the other witnesses.

<sup>76</sup> MsM reads חזק (v.15a), which should probably be corrected to תחזק to agree with תגדע (v.15b); *ibid.*, 134; Skehan-DiLella, *Ben Sira*, 489; Yadin, *Masada*, 31. MsB is damaged throughout.

<sup>77</sup> The order of the bicola for vv.16-17 is confused in MsB<sup>ext</sup>. The correct order (vv.17a.16a.16b.17b. 17c.17d) is found in MsM, MsB<sup>ms</sup>, and in some manuscripts of G and Sahidic.

V.16b.17b

אמרתו תחרף תימן<sup>82</sup> עלעול צפון<sup>81</sup> סופה וסערה

V.17cd

כרשף<sup>85</sup> יניף<sup>84</sup> שלגו וכארבה ישכון רדתו<sup>83</sup>

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<sup>78</sup>(...continued)

<sup>78</sup> The variant readings are: MsM (יניף), MsB<sup>xt</sup> (missing), MsB<sup>ms</sup> (יזעים), and G (σαλευθήσονται). The best reading is MsM = G, as נוף can be translated by σαλεύειν and not זעם.

<sup>79</sup> MsM, MsB<sup>xt</sup>, MsB<sup>ms</sup> all read ארצו, while G reads γῆν. Prato, *Teodicea*, 134 is right to correct Heb to ארץ as this agrees with G and preserves the parallelism between ארץ ... קול רעמו (v.17a) and אמרתו ... תימן (v.16b).

<sup>80</sup> The variant readings are: MsM (יחיל), MsB<sup>xt</sup> (יחול), MsB<sup>ms</sup> (יחיל), and G (ὠδίνησεν). The best reading is MsM = MsB<sup>ms</sup> = G; *ibid.* and Skehan-DiLella, *Ben Sira*, 490.

<sup>81</sup> The variant readings are: MsM (עלעול), MsB<sup>xt</sup> (זלעפון [פון]), MsB<sup>ms</sup> (עלעול). Prato, *Teodicea*, 135 is correct in retaining צפון in v.17b to balance with תימן in v.16b, a correction also accepted by Yadin, *Masada*, 32. Both עלעול and זלפון fit the context. This study follows MsM = MsB<sup>ms</sup>.

<sup>82</sup> The variant readings are: MsM (אמרתו תחרף תימן), MsB<sup>xt</sup> (missing), MsB<sup>ms</sup> (אימתו תחרף תימן), and G (ἐν θελήματι αὐτοῦ πνεύσεται νότος). See *ibid.* where Yadin has reconstructed the first word in MsM (אמרתו) since there is a lacuna in the manuscript and only the beginning of the word is found; also Prato, *Teodicea*, 134. The difference between the reading of MsM (תחרף) and MsB<sup>ms</sup> (תחרף) is only one of a *mater lectionis*.

<sup>83</sup> The variant readings are: MsM (רדתו), MsB (דרתו), MsB<sup>ms</sup> (רדתו), and G (ἡ κατάβασις αὐτῆς). MsM = MsB<sup>ms</sup> = G, while MsB<sup>xt</sup> is a corruption; *ibid.*, 135.

<sup>84</sup> The variant readings are: MsM (יפרח), MsB (יניף), and G (πάσσει). Other occurrences of the root פרח in Heb (Sir 11,22b, 40,18c, 49,10b) all have the meaning *to flourish*, while the occurrences of the root נוף (Sir 12,18a, 33,3a, 37,7a, 43,16b, 46,2b, 47,4c) have a range of meanings not dissimilar to that of πάσσει. Thus the preferred reading is MsB<sup>xt</sup> = G.

<sup>85</sup> MsB<sup>xt</sup> (כרשף [ ]) is restored from MsM = MsB<sup>ms</sup> (כרשף), and G (ὡς πετελυά).

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V.18ab	תואר <sup>89</sup> לבנו <sup>88</sup> יגה <sup>87</sup> עינים וממטרו יתמיה <sup>86</sup> לבב
V.19ab	וגם <sup>92</sup> כפור כמלח ישפך <sup>91</sup> ויצמח כסנה צצים <sup>90</sup>
V.20ab	צינת רוח צפון ישיב <sup>95</sup> וכרגב <sup>94</sup> יקפיא מקור <sup>93</sup>

<sup>86</sup> The variant readings are: MsM (יתמיה), MsB (יהמה), and G (ἐκστήσεται). Since G renders both MsM and MsB, it is impossible to be conclusive. Skehan-DiLella, *Ben Sira*, 490 follow Yadin, *Masada*, 32 and read with MsM, as does this study, while Prato, *Teodicea*, 118 opts for MsB.

<sup>87</sup> The variant readings are: MsM (יהג), MsB<sup>txt</sup> (יגהה), MsB<sup>msb</sup> (יהנה), and G (ἐκθαυμάσει). Since G renders both variants of MsB, it is impossible to be conclusive. It is probably best read with MsB<sup>txt</sup>; *ibid.*, 135.

<sup>88</sup> לבנו of MsM = G (λευκότητος αὐτῆς), and is the equivalent of לבנה of MsB.

<sup>89</sup> תור (MsM) is taken as a phonetic spelling of תואר (MsB). See Sir 43,9a above.

<sup>90</sup> The variant readings are: MsM (ויצמח כסנה צצים), MsB (ויציץ כספיר ציצים), and G (καὶ παγεῖσα γίνεται σκολόπων ἄκρα). Yadin, *Masada*, 32 argues for the originality of MsM, explaining MsB's variants as copyists' misreading; also Skehan-DiLella, *Ben Sira*, 490. Prato, *Teodicea*, 136 retains the reading of MsB while at the same time recognizes that "G ... suppose un testo più vicino a Mas che a B." It is not possible to be conclusive.

<sup>91</sup> The variant readings are: MsM (ישפך), MsB<sup>txt</sup> (ישכון), MsB<sup>msb</sup> (ישפך), and G (χέει). The best reading is MsM = MsB<sup>msb</sup> = G. The variant in MsB<sup>txt</sup> has probably been influenced by ישכן in Sir 43,17d above.

<sup>92</sup> MsM is restored according to MsB (וגם).

<sup>93</sup> The variant readings are: MsM (מקור), MsB<sup>txt</sup> (מקורו), MsB<sup>msb</sup> (מקוה). The reading of MsB<sup>msb</sup> has been influenced by מקוה in v.20d. The reading of MsM is preferable; Yadin, *Masada*, 33.

<sup>94</sup> The variant readings are: MsM (וכרגב), and MsB (וכרקב); *ibid.* "MS. B ... [is] a reading which has given rise to extreme difficulty (see the commentators). There is no doubt that we have here the correct reading ..."; also Prato, *Teodicea*, 136 and Skehan-DiLella, *Ben Sira*, 490.

<sup>95</sup> According to MsB. MsM is fragmentary.

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V.20cd	על כל מעמד מים יקרים וכשרין ילבש מקוה <sup>96</sup>
V.21ab	יבול הרים כחרב ישיק ונוה צמחים כלהבה <sup>97</sup>
V.22ab	מרפא כל מערף ענן טל פורע לרשן שרב <sup>98</sup>
V.23ab	מחשבתו <sup>101</sup> תעשיק <sup>100</sup> רבה ויש בתהום איים <sup>99</sup>
V.24ab	יורדי הים יספרו קצהו <sup>103</sup> לשמע אזננו נשתומם <sup>102</sup>
V.25ab	שם פלאות תמהי מעשהו <sup>105</sup> מין כל חי וגבורות רהב <sup>104</sup>

<sup>96</sup> According to MsB. MsM is completely damaged.

<sup>97</sup> According to MsB. Missing in MsM. MsB<sup>txt</sup> reads ונוה where MsB<sup>mss</sup> reads וצור. "Quest'ultimo è forse influenzato da הרים di 21a e perciò B non va mutato": Prato, *Teodicea*, 137.

<sup>98</sup> According to MsB. MsM is fragmentary. טל is placed at the beginning of v.22b and not at the end of v.22a; *ibid.*

<sup>99</sup> The variant readings are: MsM = MsB<sup>txt</sup> (איים), MsB<sup>mss</sup> (אוצר), and G (νήσους). The best reading is MsM = MsB<sup>txt</sup> = G; *ibid.*, 138; Skehan-DiLella, *Ben Sira*, 490; Yadin, *Masada*, 33. For the rest of the colon according to MsB. MsM is missing.

<sup>100</sup> The variant readings are: MsM (תעמיק), and MsB ([ ]נשיק). All attempts to solve the textual difficulty are tentative and inconclusive. The reconstruction by Prato, *Teodicea*, 137 is probably the best (תעשיק).

<sup>101</sup> The variant readings are: MsM ([ ]אמרן), MsB<sup>txt</sup> (מחשבתו), and MsB<sup>mss</sup> (משובחתו). On the reading of MsM Yadin, *Masada*, 33 admits "that the fragment is too small, and it is difficult to reach any definite conclusions on account of the copyist's errors." Prato, *Teodicea*, 137 states boldly that the reading of MsB<sup>txt</sup> "può essere conservato come soggetto, nonostante G λογισμῶ αὐτοῦ ..." The corrupt nature of the text makes any conclusive argument impossible.

<sup>102</sup> The variant readings are: MsM (נשמחם), and MsB (נשתומם). MsM is restored according to MsB as the former's reading is due to the copyist's erroneous transcription.

<sup>103</sup> According to MsB. MsM is fragmentary.

<sup>104</sup> The variant readings are: MsM (רהב), MsB (רבה), and G (κητῶν). The best reading is MsM = G; Prato, *Teodicea*, 138 and Yadin, *Masada*, 34. For the rest of the colon, MsM is restored according to MsB.



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V.26ab	למענו יצלה מלאך ובדבריו יפעל רצון <sup>106</sup>
V.27ab	עוד כאלה לא נוסף <sup>108</sup> וקץ דבר הוא הכל <sup>107</sup>
V.28ab	נגדלה <sup>110</sup> עוד כי לא נחקור והוא גדול מכל מעשיו <sup>109</sup>
V.29ab	נורא אדני מאד מאד <sup>112</sup> גבורתו <sup>111</sup> דבריו
V.30ab	מגדלי אדני הרימו קול <sup>114</sup> בכל תוכלו כי יש עוד <sup>113</sup>
V.30cd	מרוממיו <sup>116</sup> החליפו כח ואל תלאו כי לא תחקרו <sup>115</sup>

<sup>105</sup>(...continued)

<sup>105</sup> According to MsB. MsM is missing.

<sup>106</sup> According to MsB. MsM is missing.

<sup>107</sup> According to MsB. MsM is missing.

<sup>108</sup> G (καὶ οὐ μὴ ἀφαιώμεθα) has read Heb as לא נוסף, due probably to the influence of Qoh 12,13 (סוף דבר); Prato, *Teodicea*, 139.

<sup>109</sup> According to MsB. MsM is missing.

<sup>110</sup> The variant readings are: MsB<sup>txt</sup> (לה [ג], and MsB<sup>msg</sup> (נגלה). "Non ci si può basare su G ... che è traduzione mal riuscita ...": Prato, *Teodicea*, 139 who reconstructs the reading in MsB<sup>txt</sup> as נגדלה.

<sup>111</sup> The variant readings are: MsM (תו [ ]), MsB<sup>txt</sup> (ונפלאות), MsB<sup>msg</sup> (גבורתו), and G (ἡ δυναστεία αὐτοῦ). The best reading is MsB<sup>msg</sup> = G (= MsM); Skehan-DiLella, *Ben Sira*, 490. Prato, *Teodicea*, 139 allows for a choice between the variants in MsB, but opts for MsB<sup>txt</sup>.

<sup>112</sup> MsB (אד מאד [נו]) is restored from G (φοβερὸς κύριος καὶ σφόδρα μέγας). The reading אדני is used consistent with usage prior to this.

<sup>113</sup> According to MsB. MsM is fragmentary.

<sup>114</sup> MsB (הרימו קול [מ] [ל]) is restored from G (δοξάζοντες κύριον ὑψώσατε).

<sup>115</sup> MsB<sup>txt</sup> ([ת]) is restored according to MsB<sup>msg</sup> ([תחקן]) and G (ἀφίκηθε).

<sup>116</sup> The variant readings are: MsB<sup>txt</sup> (מרומים תחליפו), MsB<sup>msg</sup> (מרוממיו החליפו), and G  
(continued...)

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V.31ab	מי חזה אותו ויספר ומי יגדלנו כאשר הוא <sup>117</sup>
V.32ab	רוב נסתרות מאלה <sup>119</sup> מעט ראיתי <sup>118</sup> ממעשיו
V.33ab	את הכל עשה אדני ולאנשי חסד נתן חכמה <sup>120</sup>

The translation of the text is as follows:

<b>42,15a</b>	Let me recall the works of God,
V.15b	and recount what I have perceived.
V.15c	From the Lord's word come his works,
V.15d	and the work of his will is according to his decree.
V.16a	As the rising sun shows itself over all,
V.16b	so the glory of the Lord fills his works.
V.17a	Yet the holy ones of God are not sufficient
V.17b	to recount all his wonders;
V.17c	He has strengthened his hosts
V.17d	to withstand his glory.
V.18a	He searches the abyss and the heart,
V.18b	and understands their innermost secrets.

<sup>116</sup>(...continued)

(ὕψοῦντες αὐτόν). The Polel participle of רום is מרומם. Thus the reading of MsB<sup>msb</sup> = G is correct.

<sup>117</sup> Missing in Heb. The text is that of Segal, proposed by Prato, *Teodicea*, 140.

<sup>118</sup> G reads ἐοράκαμεν. However, since Sir 42,15 (אזכר נא) suggests that the poem is spoken in the first person, singular, ראיתי is retained.

<sup>119</sup> MsB (אלה[            ]נ) is restored from G (πολλὰ ἀπόκρυφα ἔστιν μείζονα τούτων).

<sup>120</sup> MsB ([            ]ול[            ]את הכל) is restored from G. The exact manner in which the phrase καὶ τοῖς εὐσεβέσις should be restored in Hebrew is problematic. See Prato, *Teodicea*, 140 who opts for ולחסידים. The second possibility (ולאנשי חסד) would link the conclusion of the poem with the start of the poem in praise of Israel's ancestors (Sir 44,1a); Skehan-DiLella, *Ben Sira*, 490. This option, while as inconclusive as Prato's, seems preferable.

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- V.18c For the Most High knows all knowledge,  
V.18d and sees the things that are to come for ever.  
V.19a He makes known the past and the future,  
V.19b and reveals the deepest secrets.  
V.20a No insight does he lack,  
V.20b and nothing passes him by.  
V.21a He regulates the mighty deeds of his wisdom;  
V.21b he is from all eternity one.  
V.21c Nothing is added, nothing taken away,  
V.21d and he is in no need of any counsellor.  
V.22a Are not all his works desirable,  
V.22b yet only a spark is offered to behold.  
V.23a Everything lives and remains forever,  
V.23b and all things are preserved to meet any need.  
V.24a All things come in pairs, one thing opposite the other;  
V.24b and he has not made any one of them in vain.  
V.25a One exceeds the other in its virtue;  
V.25b who could ever tire of beholding their glory?
- 43,1a The beauty of the celestial height is the clear vault of the sky;  
V.1b the sky itself manifests its glory.  
V.2a The sun at its rising shines forth heat;  
V.2b an awesome instrument, the work of the Most High.  
V.3a At noon it parches the world;  
V.3b who can endure before its heat?  
V.4a Like a glowing furnace of molten metal,  
V.4b the sun's rays set the mountains aflame.  
V.4c A tongue of fire consumes the world,  
V.4d and by its fire the eyes are burned.  
V.5a For great is the Lord who made it,  
V.5b and his word makes his mighty one eminent.  
V.6a And also the moon marks the seasons,  
V.6b governing the times and an everlasting sign.  
V.7a By it (is determined) sacred seasons and pilgrimage feasts,  
V.7b a light which wanes on its course.  
V.8a The new moon, as its name suggests, renews itself;  
V.8b how awesome in its phases.  
V.8c An instrument of the army of the clouds of the heavens,  
V.8d paving the firmament with brilliance.  
V.9a The stars are the beauty of the heavens and its splendour;

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- V.9b shining ornaments in the heights of God.  
V.10a By the Lord's word they stand in their appointed places,  
V.10b and they do not tire in their keeping watch.  
V.11a Behold the rainbow and bless its maker,  
V.11b for it is exceedingly beautiful in its majesty.  
V.12a It encircles the heavenly vault with its glory,  
V.12b and the hand of God has stretched it out with power.  
V.13a His rebuke marks out the path for the hail,  
V.13b and speeds the lightnings of his judgement.  
V.14a For his own purpose he opens the storehouse,  
V.14b and the clouds fly out like birds of prey.  
V.15a His power strengthens the clouds,  
V.15b and breaks the hailstones to pieces.  
V.17a The voice of his thunder makes the earth writhe,  
V.16a and by his power he shakes the mountains.  
V.16b His word incites the south wind,  
V.17b the northerly cyclone, the hurricane and the storm wind.  
V.17c Like flocks of birds he sheds his snow abroad,  
V.17d and like a locust-swarm alighting is its descent.  
V.18a The beauty of its whiteness dazzles the eyes,  
V.18b and the heart is amazed at its raining.  
V.19a And also he pours out hoar-frost like salt,  
V.19b and it forms like a thornbush of blossoms.  
V.20a He causes the icy blast of the north wind to blow,  
V.20b and he thickens the spring of water like an earthen clod.  
V.20c He spreads a crust over every basin of water,  
V.20d and he clothes the pond as with breast armour.  
V.21a He scorches the produce of the mountains with heat,  
V.21b and the flowing meadows with flame.  
V.22a The dripping cloud heals all;  
V.22b the dew, alighting to enrich the parched land.  
V.23a His purpose stills the deep,  
V.23b and plants the islands in the ocean.  
V.24a Those who go down to the sea relate its extent,  
V.24b and when our ears hear them we are awestruck.  
V.25a In it are wonders, his amazing creatures,  
V.25b all living things and the monsters of Rahab.  
V.26a On account of him (his) messenger prospers,  
V.26b and by his words, accomplishes his will.  
V.27a More like this we will not add,

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- V.27b and the end of the matter is: "He is all."  
V.28a Let us praise him more, for we cannot fathom him;  
V.28b for he is greater than all his works.  
V.29a Terrible is the Lord exceedingly;  
V.29b his deeds are his strength.  
V.30a Raise your voice, you who praise the Lord;  
V.30b as much as you can, for there is still more.  
V.30c You who exalt him, renew your strength;  
V.30d and do not grow weary, because you cannot fathom (him).  
V.31a Who has seen him and can thus relate?  
V.31b and who can extol him as he is?  
V.32a More numerous than these are the things which lie hidden;  
V.32b only few of his works have I seen.  
V.33a For the Lord has made all things,  
V.33b and to pious people he has given wisdom.

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