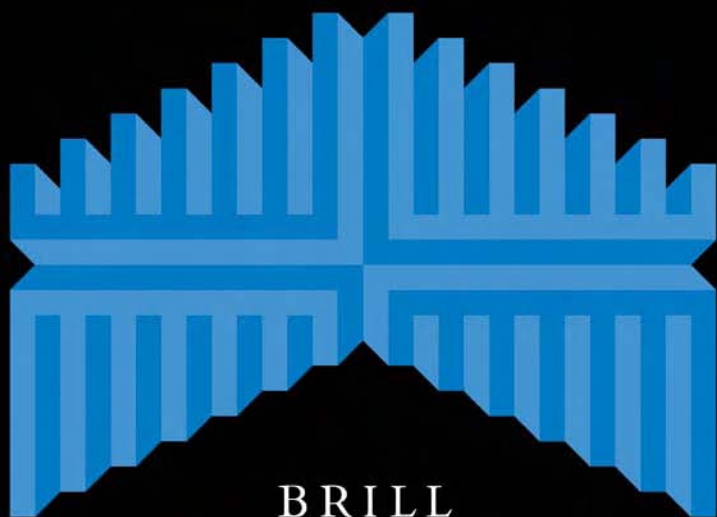


Otto Mulder

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Simon the High Priest in Sirach 50  
*An Exegetical Study of  
the Significance of Simon the High Priest  
as Climax to the Praise of the Fathers  
in Ben Sira's Concept of  
the History of Israel*



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SIMON THE HIGH PRIEST IN SIRACH 50

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VOLUME 78



# SIMON THE HIGH PRIEST IN SIRACH 50

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BY

OTTO MULDER



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Three words of Simon the Righteous are preserved in the פֶּרֶק אֲבוֹה *Pirke Abot* 1.2 'Torah, service and acts of kindness'. Everything necessary for building a new world is founded on these three pillars: על התורה ועל העבודה ועל נמילות חסדים.

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Ben Sira structures Sirach 44–50 with the help of demarcation texts. In Sirach 50, at the end of his wisdom book, he provides an exceptional picture of Simon the High Priest as the climax to the ‘Praise of the Fathers of All Times’. He issues a call to remembrance of Israel’s men of name on the day of remembrance itself, Rosh Hashanah. This feast, and not Yom Kippur or Tamid, determines the context in which Simon functions as High Priest. His personal engagement in line with the priestly tradition of Phinehas provides him with authority among his brothers and tremendous recognition from his people. Ben Sira appeals to the value of Israel’s Torah and wisdom traditions to which he gives concrete form in his portrayal of his contemporary, Simon the High Priest, in the temple. Against the background of the burning question of his day concerning the legitimation of the sanctuary in Jerusalem or Shechem, he expresses his firm opposition to the foolish inhabitants of the latter, namely the Samaritans.

His purpose in writing was to preserve and reinforce unity rooted in a universalistic concept of the entire congregation of Israel.

The Greek translation of Sirach by Ben Sira’s grandson makes a distinction between the inhabitants of Shechem and Samaria yet generally tends to blur the picture of Simon the High Priest who is identified with Simon, the Righteous.

The question of actualising historical writing in Tanakh and the New Testament served to inspire the present study of the significance of Simon the High Priest in the Praise of the Fathers, in light of the importance of Ben Sira’s re-writing of Israel’s history for developments in the Second Temple period.

After completing my architectural studies, my interest in biblical wisdom literature gradually increased as I commenced my theological studies in 1967 at the Faculty of Theology of the Rijks Universiteit Groningen, which ultimately led to the defence of my doctoral dissertation on November 23rd, 2000 in Utrecht. Initial discussions with Prof. Dr. A.S. van der Woude led to some exploratory

research in 1993 at Eberhard-Karls-Universität in Tübingen. Prof. Dr. H. Lichtenberger, Prof. Dr. M. Hengel and Prof. Dr. W. Thiele encouraged me at this juncture to pursue the topic further. Thanks to a stipend from the Dutch Reformed Council for Church and Israel I was able to continue my research in Jerusalem in 1994. This allowed me to examine the city's ancient water supplies from an architectural perspective. Discussions with Prof. Dr. M. Beit-Arié and Prof. Dr. E. Tov helped establish the basis for textual research into the manuscripts.

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My thanks are due to Prof. Dr. S.C. Reif, director of the Taylor-Schechter Research Unit and the staff of the Photography Department of Cambridge University Library for their willingness to place three bromide prints of the manuscript at my disposal.

My first encounter with Ben Sira has its roots in the tradition of the Dutch Reformed Church within which I live and work as minister to the Grote Kerk in Almelo and as lecturer in Biblical Studies, Judaica and Hebrew at the Faculty of Theology of Windesheim, Zwolle, and more specifically in the song of praise and thanksgiving written by Martin Rinckart (1586–1649) that he based on the Greek version of Sirach 50:22–24.

I am much indebted to my wife and children, parishioners and students for their constant support and inspiration. The late Prof. Dr. Adam Simon van der Woude should not go unmentioned. He was not only my first teacher in the world of biblical studies but by coincidence his funeral took place on the same day as my doctoral defence. In memory of him the reader is referred to Ben Sira himself who bound the names Adam and Simon together (49:16 and 50:1) in the glory that is revealed in his life's work in the name of YHWH.

The present revised and translated volume was kindly accepted by Prof. Dr. F. García Martínez and Prof. Dr. J.J. Collins for inclusion in the Series "Supplements to the Journal for the Study of Judaism".

Dr. Otto Mulder  
Almelo, June 28th, 2002

## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 *Status Questionis: Sir. 50:1–28*

The interpretation of Sir. 50:1–28 at the end of the wisdom book known as Jesus Sirach or Ecclesiasticus has been the subject of scholarly dispute since the discovery of the Hebrew manuscripts in 1896. The historical value of the identity of Simon the High Priest is at issue here. Is he to be identified with Simon, the Righteous, referred to in the Talmudic tractate *Pirke Abot*? Besides Josephus' *Antiquitates Judaicae*, Sir. 50:1–28 constitutes the most important source of information on this enigmatic figure.<sup>1</sup>

The hymn of praise in honour of the fathers is a particular genre in the book of Ben Sira. From the form-critical perspective this hymn of praise constitutes a unity with the Praise of the Creator (42:15–43:33) and the three hymns of praise in Sirach 51. The genre itself is characterised by its summation of Israel's history and can be identified as a *lehrhafte Geschichtsdarstellung*.<sup>2</sup> Following the introduction (44:1–15), the text offers the reader a description of Israel's history from Enoch to Nehemiah (44:16–49:13) together with a retrospective glance at the period from Enoch to Adam (49:14–16) immediately followed by the information concerning Simon (50:1–21). The text concludes with a doxology in 50:22–24, a short speech against the three nations in 50:25–28 and a personal epilogue in 50:26–27.

The present study takes the literary unity of the Praise of the Fathers in 44:1–50:28 as its point of departure. Certain exegetes draw a line at Sir. 49:16 and consider Sir. 50:1–28 as well as Sirach

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<sup>1</sup> Contrary to G.F. Moore's positive evaluation of Sirach 50 in 'Simon the Righteous', in FS I. Abrahams, *Jewish Studies*, New York 1927, 348–364 we find a denial of the historical value thereof by J.C. VanderKam in 'Simon, the Just: Simon I or Simon II?', in FS J. Milgrom, *Pomegranates and Golden Bells. Studies in Biblical Jewish and Near East Ritual, Law and Literature*, Indiana 1995, 303–318.

<sup>2</sup> A. Jirku, *Die älteste Geschichte Israels im Rahmen lehrhafter Darstellungen*, Leipzig 1917. This genre is evident in Psalms 78, 105, 106; Joshua 24; Nehemiah 9 and Acts 7:2–47.

51 to be an appendix, while others set the boundary at 50:24 thus disrupting the unity between 44:1–50:24 and 50:25–28.

Smend points out that 50:1–24 stands alone on account of the exceptional position of Simon the High Priest.<sup>3</sup> He insists that the numerical aphorism in 50:25–26 is characterised by an abrupt transition in style and that Ben Sira's personal epilogue in 50:27–28 constitutes a unique feature in the history of biblical literature.

In terms of textual transmission, it would appear that the final verse—50:28—has most evidently been the subject of reworking. G (the Greek version) contains an expanded version of the epilogue running into 50:29, a verse which is lacking in H.<sup>4</sup> S has a different text: “The height of the fear of the Lord is exalted above everything; hold on to it my son and do not let it go”.

Based on the interpolation of G50:29, scholars generally tend to present the compilation of the text in 10 stichos in line with the text edition of Ziegler. While Lévi follows manuscript B, he relocates H50:28c after the title of Sirach 51. Smend equates H50:28c with G29b. Segal offers a retro-translation of G50:29a although he omits the segment from G50:29c,d. H50:28 constitutes the point of departure in the text edition of Ben Hayyim and Beentjes. Such explanations of the difference between H and G typify the history of exegesis of the entire book of Jesus Sirach.

A hermeneutically circular argumentation often tends to emerge in the compilation of the text on account of a number of insufficiently justified presuppositions with respect to the facsimile based sources<sup>5</sup> and the exclusion of essential segments of the text.<sup>6</sup>

The advice offered by Skehan to Di Lella in this regard remains worthy of consideration: first consult the Geniza MSS of Sirach inde-

<sup>3</sup> R. Smend, *Die Weisheit des Jesus Sirach erklärt*, Berlin 1906. Smend notes: “Das Lob des Hohenpriesters Simon c. 50:1–24 ist von dem Lobe der vorzeitlichen Väter scharf geschieden”.

<sup>4</sup> Hereafter we will employ H to refer to the Hebrew version, G for the Greek version, S for the Syriac translation and L for the Latin translation.

<sup>5</sup> T. Muraoka/J.F. Elwolde eds, *The Hebrew of the Dead Sea Scrolls and Ben Sira*. Proceedings of a Symposium held at Leiden University 11–14 Dec. 1995, STDJ 26, Leiden 1997.

<sup>6</sup> F.V. Reiterer, *Bibliographie zu Ben Sira*, BZAW 266, Berlin 1998. Reiterer discusses the problems surrounding the name of Ben Sira (50:27; 51:30) in his introduction, dates MS B in the 12th century and presumes the influence of S (p. 7). With respect to the *Textfunde*, he observes a shift after the Leiden Symposium in 1995 (p. 25) whereby Ben Sira is considered the most important representative of a later development in the Hebrew of the Bible and the Mishnah.

pendently before examining the commentaries and studies which appeared after 1900.<sup>7</sup>

## 1.2 *Research into Sirach 44–50*

The discovery of the Hebrew manuscripts in 1896 and 1964 serves to divide the history of research into the ‘Praise of the Fathers’ into three phases.

### 1.2.1 *The period prior to 1896*

As a consequence of the rejection of Sirach as a canonical book in the rabbinic tradition, H disappeared from the horizon in spite of rabbinic appreciation for its content.<sup>8</sup> In the churches, G became the most important source. While it is reasonable to assume that the Syriac and Old Latin translations are partly based on a Hebrew text form, G remained the primary basis for the various translations.

The Church Fathers treasured the book of Jesus Sirach as a source of appropriate sayings which they quoted individually or in loose collections.<sup>9</sup> The Reformation made little difference to this state of affairs although the book came to be ranked as apocryphal. At the beginning of the 19th century efforts were made to make a retro-translation on the basis of G and S in an attempt to recover the Hebrew text which had survived in part in the Talmud.<sup>10</sup> Bickell

<sup>7</sup> A.A. Di Lella, *The Hebrew Text of Sirach*, The Hague 1966 (p. 16).

<sup>8</sup> G.F. Moore, ‘The Definition of the Jewish Canon and the Repudiation of the Christian Scriptures’, (1911) in S.Z. Leiman ed., *The Canon and Masorah of the Jewish Bible*, New York 1974, 99–141 and the critique thereof in L. Ginzberg, ‘Some Observations on the Attitude of the Synagogue towards the Apocalyptic-Eschatological Writings’, *JBL* 41 (1922) 115–136. G.F. Moore, *Judaism in the First Century of the Christian Era. The Age of the Tannaim*, I, Cambridge 1970. Moore summarises the *status questionis*. The highly esteemed book of Ben Sira is not sacred Scripture: “the author was known to have lived in comparatively recent times, in an age when, with the death of the last prophets, the holy spirit had departed from Israel” (p. 243).

<sup>9</sup> M. Gilbert, ‘Jesus Sirach’, in E. Dassmann ed., *Reallexikon für Antike und Christentum*, XVII, Stuttgart 1997, 878–906. Gilbert provides a survey of quotations by the Church Fathers from the 1st to the 6th centuries CE.

<sup>10</sup> A.E. Cowley/A. Neubauer, *The Original Hebrew of a Portion of Ecclesiasticus (XXXIX.15 to XLIX.11)*, Oxford 1897. Cowley and Neubauer provide examples from Talmudic and Rabbinic literature collected by Bickell, Fränkel and Benzeeb together with 79 examples of quotations from Ben Sira (pp. XIX–XXX). They qualify Ben Sira’s style as ‘pure and classical’ (p. XIV).



was among those who applied this method which resulted in 1882 in the reconstruction of the alphabetic acrostic in Sirach 51.

De Lagarde published the critical edition of S in 1861. The first text-critical publication of G appeared in 1887 in the 7th edition of Nestle based on Tischendorf's Septuagint edition. An explosion of scholarly interest followed the publication of the Hebrew manuscripts of Ben Sira from the Cairo-Geniza in 1896.<sup>11</sup>

### 1.2.2 *The period from 1896 to 1964*

The authority which had been afforded the endeavour to recover the «Urtext» on the basis of a retro-translation of G and S led to a pointed conflict between scholars on the reliability of this 12th century Hebrew manuscript. As a consequence of the often heated discussions, the text-critical analysis of the text enjoyed its first serious expansion after 1896.<sup>12</sup> A variety of detail studies also appeared together with the major commentaries of Lévi, Ryssel, Peters, Smend and Box.

In 1914, Baumgartner published his *formgeschichtliche* research into the position and significance of the Praise of the Fathers.<sup>13</sup> Baumgartner considered Sir. 44:1–50:20 to be a profane hymn, comparing it to Psalms 78, 105 and 106 which belong to the genre of historical psalms. He recognised another hymn in 50:22–24 which was similar to the doxology in 45:26. On account of the typical 'call to bless' that introduces this segment, he was inclined to see it as a short cultic hymn. Baumgartner considered the blessing in 47:22 to be a *Gattung* that allowed Ben Sira to make allusion to and reformulate a variety of prophetic promises.

The *profetische Schelt- und Drohrede* with its characteristic introductory 'Woe' formula stands in sharp contrast to these words of blessing and can be likened to Sir. 2:12–14 and 41:8. Baumgartner's

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<sup>11</sup> S. Schechter & C. Taylor, *The Wisdom of Ben Sira*, Cambridge 1899 & 1896/Amsterdam 1979 (p. 76). Schechter presumes authenticity and qualifies the style as 'artificial or Paitanic' (p. 27). Taylor views Ben Sira as 'a sedulous imitator of the Hebrew Scriptures' (p. VII).

<sup>12</sup> F.V. Reiterer, *Bibliographie zu Ben Sira*, BZAW 266, Berlin 1997. The seriousness of the conflict is evident from the historical survey; Margoliouth, for example, refused to discuss the matter further with König.

<sup>13</sup> W. Baumgartner, 'Die literarischen Gattungen in der Weisheit Jesus Sirach', *ZAW* 34 (1914), 161–198.

study distinguishes a variety of literary forms and considers Ben Sira to be an independent author who employed an entirely peculiar mixture of wisdom and prophecy. He considers it unremarkable, therefore, that Ben Sira makes reference to ‘*seers of all things in their prophecy*’ (44:3b) in his introduction to the Praise of the Fathers and then to the prophets: Samuel, Nathan, Elijah, Elisha, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Job and the twelve minor prophets. He concludes that Ben Sira is indeed a wise man, but above all one familiar with Scriptures and laws, a writer of psalms and a disciple of the prophets.<sup>14</sup>

While other scholars have their doubts concerning Ben Sira’s qualities as a poet, in my opinion they go too far when they refer to him as an epigone. Against the background of a significant Hellenistic influence, the form of the Praise of the Fathers is often likened to a *eulogy* or compared with the *De viris illustribus* genre or the *Beispielreihe*.

Little attention has been devoted to Simon in his function as High Priest. Moore dedicated a study to Simon in 1920 in which he calls for the proper appreciation of Sirach 50 and insists on the identification of Simon with Simon, the Righteous. He thus rejects the position of Josephus (*Antiquitates* XII) who associates Simon with a High Priest from the time of Alexander the Great. Moore cannot historically reconcile the reference to Simon, the Just in *Pirke Abot* 1.2 with this presentation. Josephus allowed himself a great deal of freedom as a historian. VanderKam has recently expressed critique of Moore’s generally accepted position.<sup>15</sup>

Segal’s study of the mutual interconnection between the versions HI, HII, GI, GII and S appeared in 1934 and confirmed the value of the early medieval Hebrew manuscripts.<sup>16</sup> Di Lella’s text-critical research reached similar positive conclusions in 1963/1966.

Two small fragments of Ben Sira text were found among the

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<sup>14</sup> M. Smith, *Studies in the Cult of Yahweh*, RGRW 130/I, Leiden 1996. The term ‘prophets’ can signify more than biblical prophets alone. While Ben Sira is not a prophet in the latter sense, he does enjoy prophetic inspiration, a characteristic that typifies the teacher of righteousness and the writer of the *Hodayot* (p. 96). Smith warns against *terminological booby traps*, especially frequently employed terms such as *intertestamental* and *Hellenistic*.

<sup>15</sup> J.C. VanderKam, ‘Simon, the Just: Simon I or Simon II?’ in FS J. Milgrom, *Pomegranates and Golden Bells*, Indiana 1995, 303–318.

<sup>16</sup> M.H. Segal, ‘The Evolution of the Hebrew Text of Ben Sira’, *JQR* 25 (1934–35) 91–149.

literature of Qumran and were published in 1962 without creating much of a sensation.<sup>17</sup>

### 1.2.3 *The period following 1964*

The spectacular discovery of the Masada scroll in 1964 offers considerable support to the reliability of the H text of the Ben Sira manuscripts contained in the Cairo-Geniza.<sup>18</sup> Yadin published a text-critical edition of this manuscript (39:27–44:17) in 1965.<sup>19</sup> In the same year, Rüger completed his study of the Hebrew text of Ben Sira, further establishing the authenticity of the Geniza material.<sup>20</sup> Middendorp was first to offer a systematic comparison of M with MS B,<sup>21</sup> focusing attention on the content of the book and presuming, together with Hengel, a profound Hellenistic influence.<sup>22</sup> This perspective, however, has been the subject of severe criticism.<sup>23</sup> Haspecker<sup>24</sup> proposes a point of cohesion in the ‘fear of the Lord’, Hadot in the ‘tendency to evil’ and Prato in ‘theodicy’.<sup>25</sup> Based on

<sup>17</sup> M. Baillet, J.T. Milik et R. de Vaux, *Les ‘Petites Grottes’*, DJD III, Oxford 1962 (pp. 75–77).

<sup>18</sup> E. Tov, *The Text-Critical Use of the Septuagint in Biblical Research*, JBS 8, Jerusalem 1997. One copyist is more reliable than the other: “For example, the community which transmitted MT has left the biblical text virtually unchanged for some two thousand years, whereas the Qumran scribes had already modernized and changed the orthography, morphology, and content of the text in the Second Temple period within a relatively short period of textual activity. Thus 1QIsa<sup>a</sup>, dating from the first century BCE, is further removed from the *Urtext* of Isaiah, than a Masoretic manuscript written in the tenth century CE.” (p. 225).

<sup>19</sup> Y. Yadin, *The Ben Sira Scroll from Masada*, Jerusalem 1965.

<sup>20</sup> H.P. Rüger, *Text und Textform im hebräischen Sirach I*, BZAW 112, Berlin 1970.

<sup>21</sup> T. Middendorp, *Die Stellung Jesu Ben Siras zwischen Judentum und Hellenismus*, Leiden 1972 (pp. 92–112).

<sup>22</sup> M. Hengel, *Judentum und Hellenismus*, WUNT 10, Tübingen 1973.

<sup>23</sup> L.H. Feldman, ‘How much Hellenism in Jewish Palestine?’, *HUCA* LVII (1986) 83–111. Feldman sharply criticises Hengel’s position which maintains that Hellenism was firmly rooted from the middle of the 3rd century BCE onwards. The former argues that the culture and language of Hellenism were only evident in the diaspora. By way of example he refers to Josephus who, on account of his knowledge of Greek, accompanied a delegation to Rome in 64 CE. Titus invited Josephus to address the people of Jerusalem in their own language, namely Aramaic. The style of his *Antiquitates* differs from *De Bello Judaico* because the author was able to avail of secretarial assistance as is apparent from *Contra Apion* 1.50. Feldman adds that none of the 30 Greek cities was in Judea, that the translator of Ben Sira’s book lived in Egypt (p. 97) and that the Rabbinic literature does not employ a single Greek philosophical term (p. 106).

<sup>24</sup> J. Haspecker, *Gottesfurcht bei Jesus Sirach*, AnBib 30, Rome 1967.

<sup>25</sup> J. Hadot, *Penchant mauvais et volonté libre dans la Sagesse de Ben Sira*, Brussels 1970. L. Prato, *Il problema della teodicea in Ben Sira*, AnBib 65, Rome 1975.

a study of the wisdom character of the book which resulted in a survey of core concepts, Rickenbacher concludes that H is *the* primary source for Sirach research. He likewise concludes that G would appear to be more significant than S and that L has little to offer in terms of innovation.<sup>26</sup> In his study of the theology of Sirach 24, Marböck insists that “Die Weisheit des Jesus Sirach war lange Zeit ein Stiefkind der biblischen Forschung”. In an article published in 1974,<sup>27</sup> however, Marböck speaks of a renaissance in Sirach research, drawing attention to wisdom in general, freedom of the will, Ben Sira as scribe and the relationship between Torah and wisdom.<sup>28</sup>

The tone of the discussion tended to be set by an anti-Hellenistic perspective which, according to Hengel, was characteristic of Ben Sira.<sup>29</sup> Middendorp insists on the evidence of Greek ideas in Ben Sira’s wisdom and qualifies his book as a ‘school text’. The process of memorisation, however, lies behind the fact that the  $\pm 100$  quotations from Proverbs are not correctly rendered in this school text. In order to demonstrate the independence of G, Middendorp compares H in the Masada scroll (M) with MS B and concludes that the absence of eschatological expectations in Ben Sira casts doubt on two characteristic texts (35:18–20; 36:1–17). He likewise maintains that Enoch (44:16) and Elijah (48:10–11) are later interpolations and considers essential text fragments (49:14–16; 50:25–26 and 51:30) to be unoriginal and thus to be left aside. He only raises Sir. 50:27–29 on account of the presence of the author’s name. The conclusion of the book follows in 50:29 in light of his insistence that 51:1–12 is a prayer of thanksgiving introduced at a later date. I prefer to reject this methodological omission of essential fragments of the text. Kieweler was later to express some critique of Middendorp’s treatment of Greek quotations.<sup>30</sup>

<sup>26</sup> O. Rickenbacher, *Weisheitsperikopen bei Ben Sira*, OBO 1, Göttingen 1973 (p. 214).

<sup>27</sup> J. Marböck, *Weisheit im Wandel: Untersuchungen zur Weisheitstheologie bei Ben Sira*, BBB 37, Bonn 1971. Id. ‘Besprechung von T. Middendorp, *Die Stellung Jesu Ben Siras zwischen Judentum und Hellenismus*’, *VT* 24 (1974) 510–513.

<sup>28</sup> G. von Rad, *Weisheit in Israel*, Neukirchen 1970. E. Janssen, *Das Gottesvolk und seine Geschichte*, Neukirchen 1971. G. Maier, *Mensch und freier Wille*, WUNT 12, Tübingen 1971. H. Stadelmann, *Ben Sira als Schriftgelehrter*, WUNT 2/6, Tübingen 1980. E.J. Schnabel, *Law and Wisdom from Ben Sira to Paul*, WUNT 2/16, Tübingen 1985.

<sup>29</sup> Middendorp refers to a number of Greek quotations in Ben Sira on the basis Lévi and Smend.

<sup>30</sup> H.V. Kieweler, *Ben Sira zwischen Judentum und Hellenismus*, BEAT30, Frankfurt a.M. 1992.

Lee offers a study of the form of 44–49 in contrast with the words of praise in 42:15–43:33. He maintains that 50:1–24 is related to 44–49, both sharing the form of an *encomium* on Simon, whereby 50:1–21 constitutes the *πραξιεις* with the virtues and the value of the subject and 50:22–24 the epilogue. Limited by his rather one sided focus on the *encomium*,<sup>31</sup> Lee's analysis lacks significant reference to 50:25–28 and only mentions 50:26 in relation to Joseph.<sup>32</sup> By omitting essential segments of the text he places the content on a procrustean bed.

Mack is inclined to consider the *encomium* form as inadequate and likewise excludes 50:25–26 and 50:27–28 (29) from the discussion as inessential eschatological elements. He views the Praise of the Fathers as a form of *hymnic history* and the *mythic aetiology for the Second Temple*.<sup>33</sup>

Exegesis based for the most part on a compilation of H, G and S endeavours to establish the «*Urtext*». The connection between the versions, however, tends for the most part to be arbitrary. Given the primary assumptions upon which Barthélemy and Rickenbacher base their concordance, it would appear that the concept of a textual compilation is out of date.<sup>34</sup> Indeed, contemporary text-critical research tends to leave aside the notion of a textual compilation<sup>35</sup> and the establishment of an «*Urtext*»<sup>36</sup> in favour of a variety of versions that

<sup>31</sup> J.H. Neyrey, 'Josephus' Vita and the Encomium: A Native Model of Personality', *JSS* XXV 2 (1994) 177–206. Neyrey's definition of an *encomium* differs from that of Lee. Josephus' reference to birth, origin, education and deeds in his *Vita* had an apologetic purpose designed to protect him from censure. In terms of form, an *encomium* must be considered inadequate where Simon is concerned. T. Nüßlein ed., *Rhetorica ad Hevrenium*, Sammlung Tusculum, Zurich 1994 (p. VI.10).

<sup>32</sup> T.M. Lee, *Studies in the Form of Sirach 44–50*, SBLDS 75, Atlanta 1986 (pp. 208, 234).

<sup>33</sup> B.L. Mack, *Wisdom and the Hebrew Epic*, Chicago 1986 (p. 178).

<sup>34</sup> D. Barthélemy/O. Rickenbacher, *Konkordanz zum hebräischen Sirach*, Göttingen 1973. The authors note in the introduction to their concordance: "die Konkordanz leidet a priori unter dem Mangel, daß nicht durchwegs nach Photographien oder Faksimiles, sondern nur nach Textausgaben gearbeitet werden konnte" (p. II). They base themselves on Lévi, Smend and Segal.

<sup>35</sup> P.C. Beentjes, 'The Reliability of Text-Editions in Ben Sira 41,14–16', *BTFT* 49 (1988) 188–194. Beentjes is sharply critical of Vattioni on account of the latter's inaccurate text edition (p. 192).

<sup>36</sup> E. Tov, *The Text-Critical Use of the Septuagint in Biblical Research*, JBS 8, Jerusalem 1997. The «*Urtext*» theory is based on the notion that an original text once existed that was split into different versions. From the methodological perspective, supporters of this theory follow the path of reconstruction, which is in danger of becoming an end in itself, disconnected from matters of content (p. 6). Tov points out the need for extreme caution when attempting a retro-translation.

give expression to the meaning of the work. Meaning itself is thus partly and provisionally to be derived from the versions.

The study of the text adopts a variety of approaches which we can summarise as follows:

- *philology*: employed by Penar to explain Sir. 50:8a–b; 50:11a–b; 50:22a–b; 50:24 and 50:25–26 on the basis of other Semitic languages.<sup>37</sup> Van Peursen categorises the use of verbal forms in the H text.<sup>38</sup>
- the «*Urtex*»: established by Reiterer in comparing H, G and S verse by verse and limiting himself to 44:16–45:26.<sup>39</sup> Based on formal comparison of a few minor differences he maintains that a supplementary study of the content would be desirable. Reiterer's work is clear evidence of the fact that text-criticism as such cannot be separated from the critical evaluation of content.
- *text-criticism*: employed by Schrader in a study of the theme of 'suffering'. By comparing M and MS B in 39:27–44:17, he endeavours to show that the quality of MS B is not particularly outstanding. Indeed the opposite would appear to be the case.<sup>40</sup>
- the *Greek version*: considered by Wright<sup>41</sup> and Minissale<sup>42</sup> to be independent.
- the *Qumran texts*: compared by Di Lella for the first time in a systematic way with the text of Ben Sira.<sup>43</sup> There appears to be a relatively high degree of interest in Ben Sira among Qumran experts.<sup>44</sup> Recent increased interest among Hebrew

<sup>37</sup> T. Penar, *Northwest Semitic Philology and the Hebrew Fragments of Ben Sira*, BibOr 28, Rome 1975.

<sup>38</sup> W.Th. van Peursen, *The Verbal System in the Hebrew Text of Ben Sira*, Leiden 1999.

<sup>39</sup> F.V. Reiterer, «*Urtex*» und Übersetzungen, *Sprachstudie über Sir. 44,16–45,26 als Beitrag zur Sira-forschung*, ATSAT 12, St. Ottilien 1980.

<sup>40</sup> L. Schrader, *Leiden und Gerechtigkeit, Studien zur Theologie und Textgeschichte des Sira Buches*, BET 27, Frankfurt 1994 (p. 228).

<sup>41</sup> B.G. Wright, *No Small Difference*, SBLSCS 26, Atlanta 1989.

<sup>42</sup> A. Minissale, *La versione greca del Siracide*, AnBib 33, Rome 1995.

<sup>43</sup> A.A. Di Lella, 'Qumran and the Geniza Fragments of Sirach', *CBQ* 24 (1962) 245–267.

<sup>44</sup> A number of fragments from the book of Ben Sira were found in Qumran:

- Sir. 6:14–15 and 20–31 among the fragments in 2Q18, DJD III, Oxford 1962 (pp. 75–77).
- Sir. 51:13–20, 30b, in 11QPs<sup>a</sup>, DJD IV, Oxford 1965 (pp. 79–85).
- Sir. 50:25–26 has a parallel in 11Q14, DJD XXIII, Oxford 1998.

scholars<sup>45</sup> has likewise drawn attention to the development of his use of language in the Second Temple period.<sup>46</sup>

Segal was first to publish the H text in a vocalised version based on retro-translations from G and S.<sup>47</sup> In 1968, Vattioni published his

Articles that make direct reference to Jesus Sirach and to the Praise of the Fathers in particular:

- J. Trinquet, ‘Les liens “Sadocites” de l’Écrit de Damas, des Manuscrits de la Mer Morte et de l’Écclesiastique’, *VT* 1 (1951) 287–292.
- J. Carmignac, ‘Les rapports entre l’Écclesiastique et Qumrân’, *RQ* 9 (1961) 209–218.
- J. Priest, ‘Ben Sira 45,25 in the Light of the Qumran Literature’, *RQ* 17 (1964) 111–118.
- M. Delcor, ‘Le texte hébreu du cantique de Siracide LI,13 et ss. et les anciennes versions’, *Textus* VI (1968) 27–48.
- M.R. Lehmann, ‘Ben Sira and the Qumran Literature’, *RQ* 9 (1961) 103–116. Lehmann offers a close reading of Sir. 50:3,15. In ‘11QPs<sup>a</sup> and Ben Sira’, *RQ* 42 (1983) 239–252, he refers to the use of עֲלִיָּן in 50:14,16,17, פֶּאֶר *hithpa’el* in 50:20, יָדָר in 50:16d and בָּרַךְ in 50:22.
- E. Puech, ‘4Q525 et les péripopes des Béatitudes en Ben Sira et Matthieu’, *RB* XCVIII (1991) 80–106. Puech considers the significance of the beatitude to be important for Sir. 50:28a.

Articles indirectly related to Sirach 44–50:

- J.M. Allegro, *The Treasure of the Copper Scroll*, New York 1960. Betesda is referred to in Col. X,15 and XI,12–15, as is also the case in Sir. 50:3.
- M.O. Wise, ‘The Teacher of Righteousness and the High Priest of the Intersacerdotium: Two Approaches’, *RQ* 53 (1989) 578–613. Wise argues that the mention of Simon the High Priest (50:1) is the only building block which is upheld in the theory of the title of the High Priest maintained by H. Stegemann, *Die Entstehung der Qumrangemeinde*, Bonn 1971.
- D. Dimant/J. Strugnell, ‘The Merkabah Vision in Second Ezekiel’, (4Q385 4), *RQ* 55 (1990) 331–348. The significance of the Merkabah vision becomes clear in Sir. 49:8b.
- E. Schuller, ‘4Q372 1: A Text about Joseph’, *RQ* 55 (1990) 349–376. The significance of Joseph is relevant in Sir. 49:15 en 50:25–26.
- E. Puech, ‘Le livre de Ben Sira et les manuscrits de la Mer Morte’, in FS M. Gilbert, *Treasures of Wisdom*, Leuven 1999, 411–426. Puech underlines the value of H.

Articles dealing with the Masada Scroll:

- J. Zeitlin, ‘The Ben Sira Scroll of Masada’, *JQR* 56 (1965/66) 185–190. Zeitlin calls the value of M and Yadin’s dating thereof into question.
- J.M. Baumgarten, ‘Some Notes of the Ben Sira Scroll from Masada’, *JQR* 58 (1967/68) 323–327.
- C. Martone, ‘Ben Sira Manuscripts from Qumran and Masada’, in P.C. Beentjes ed., *The Book of Ben Sira in Modern Research*, Berlin 1997, 81–94. Martone focuses on the parallel between M and MS B in 44:2a with the interpolated לְהַרְבֵּה and between M and G in 44:12.

<sup>45</sup> T. Muraoka/J.F. Elwolde eds, *The Hebrew of the Dead Sea Scrolls and Ben Sira*. Proceedings of a Symposium held at Leiden University 11–14 Dec. 1995, STDJ 26, Leiden 1997. Id., *Sirach, Scrolls and Sages*. Proceedings of a Second International Symposium on the Hebrew of the Dead Sea Scrolls, Ben Sira, & the Mishnah, held at Leiden University 15–17 Dec. 1997, STDJ XXXIII, Leiden 1997.

<sup>46</sup> A. Sáenz-Badillos, *A History of the Hebrew Language*, Cambridge 1993.

<sup>47</sup> M.Z. Segal, *בְּיָסוּד הַשְּׁלֵם*, סִפּוּר בְּיָסוּד הַשְּׁלֵם, Jerusalem 1933/’58/’72.



text edition in which he compiled the H-text on the basis of a variety of manuscripts: Ziegler's edition of G, the Vulgate edition of L and the De Lagarde edition of S dating from 1861.<sup>48</sup> The H text edition of Ben-Hayyim (1973), with its concordance and analysis of vocabulary,<sup>49</sup> is of eminent importance together with the text edition and a synopsis of Beentjes.<sup>50</sup>

Reiterer's bibliography of Ben Sira summarises developments as follows:

Das Buch stellt sich keineswegs als Rückübersetzung dar; es wurden kaum widerlegbare Argumente für originales Hebräisch vorgebracht. Es scheint klar zu werden, daß Sira ein hervorragender Repräsentant einer späten Sprachstufe ist (see 4.1.2).<sup>51</sup>

Gilbert offers an analysis of the problems that the priority of H raised for the Roman Catholic Church, which has based canonical authority on the Vulgate since the Council of Trent (1546). He considers G and H to be two inspired versions which represent different stages and proposes that we base ourselves on GI as well as L. Where necessary, the Sirach text can be corrected on the basis of H.<sup>52</sup> Only a few chapters of the Old Latin translation have been published.<sup>53</sup>

Given that the value of the Geniza fragments would appear to be comparable with those of Qumran and the Masada scroll, the question of the recognition of H, two thirds of which is now available to us, is once more a factor in the debate surrounding the question of canonicity.

By way of illustration, reference can be made to the Roman Catholic Petrus Canisius translation of Ecclesiasticus (1939), which Alfrink based on H and wherever possible gave priority to H over G.<sup>54</sup> The Willibrord translation (1975/1995), by contrast, considers

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<sup>48</sup> F. Vattioni, *Ecclesiastico, Testo ebraico con apparato critico e versione greca, latina e sirica*, Naples 1968.

<sup>49</sup> Z. Ben-Hayyim ed., *The Book of Ben Sira: Text, Concordance and an Analysis of the Vocabulary*, Jerusalem 1973.

<sup>50</sup> P.C. Beentjes, *The Book of Ben Sira in Hebrew. A Text Edition of all Extant Hebrew Manuscripts & A Synopsis of all Parallel Hebrew Ben Sira Texts*, VTSup LXVIII, Leiden 1997.

<sup>51</sup> F.V. Reiterer ed., *Bibliographie zu Ben Sira*, BZAW 266, Berlin 1998 (p. 25).

<sup>52</sup> M. Gilbert, 'L'Ecclésiastique: Quel Texte? Quelle Autorité?', *RB* 94 (1987) 233–250.

<sup>53</sup> W. Thiele published the critical edition of the Vetus Latina in the *Berichte des Instituts* on the basis of several years of research at the Vetus-Latina Institute in Beuron.

<sup>54</sup> 'De boeken der Wijsheid', in *De Heilige Schrift, Oude Testament*, vol. III. The



G to be the primary point of departure.<sup>55</sup> Is it feasible to speak of a correction based on H when both versions differ from one another on such a fundamental issue? Alfrink's original vision deserves some reappraisal in any new translation of Ben Sira.

One can conclude that a paradigm shift took place in the study of Ben Sira's book after 1964, a shift which has its roots in a re-orientation towards the Hebrew text. A variety of text-critical detail studies of the Praise of the Fathers has appeared in the work of Marböck,<sup>56</sup> Beentjes<sup>57</sup> and Hayward<sup>58</sup> who take H as their point of departure.

Scholars have been inclined in more recent years to reappraise the position of Ben Sira as *sofer* in the relationship between the history and literature of the 2nd century BCE.<sup>59</sup> We offer a number of typical examples, therefore, by way of illustration: Ó Fearghail's revision of the conventional understanding of Yom Kippur as the background for a description of Simon has been adopted without question by Skehan/Di Lella.<sup>60</sup> Ben Sira's association with the temple and its priests is described by Rivkin and—from a pan-Aaronic perspective—by Olyan.<sup>61</sup> Wright focuses his attention on the social order

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introduction of this Dutch translation, based on the original text with notes commissioned by the Roman Catholic apologetic society "Petrus Canisius", mentions the intention to provide a translation of Jesus Sirach based on H, being supplemented where lacking by G.

<sup>55</sup> *De Bijbel uit de grondtekst vertaald. Willibrord-vertaling*, Boxtel 1975. According to the introduction to this Dutch translation of Jesus Sirach, church statements no doubt followed the Greek text, especially at a time when the Hebrew original had disappeared from view. In the meantime, 1100 of the 1650 verses of Ben Sira are now available in H, albeit in a small number of mostly very late manuscripts which are not always of the highest quality. The Greek and Old Latin texts are frequently better and S (which is influenced by G) is also of value. Where G does not make sense H is introduced.

<sup>56</sup> J. Marböck, *Gottes Weisheit unter uns. Zur Theologie des Buches Sirach*, Freiburg 1995. Id. 'Der Hohepriester Simon in Sir 50', in FS M. Gilbert, *Treasures of Wisdom*, Leuven 1999, 215–229. Marböck compares 45:6–26 with 50:1–24 and lists a number of themes: building works, Simon's glory, liturgy, history (50:9) and the relationship between cult and creation/covenant.

<sup>57</sup> P.C. Beentjes, *Jesus Sirach en Tenach*, Nieuwegein 1981. Beentjes argues in favour of the priority of H in a variety of text-critical articles.

<sup>58</sup> C.T.R. Hayward, *The Jewish Temple. A Non-Biblical Sourcebook*, London 1996.

<sup>59</sup> D. Mendels, *The Land of Israel as a Political Concept in Hasmonean Literature, Resource to History in Second Century BC. Claims to the Holy Land*, Tübingen 1987.

<sup>60</sup> F. Ó Fearghail, 'Sir 50,5–21: Yom Kippur or the Daily Whole-Offering?', *Bib* 59 (1978) 301–316.

<sup>61</sup> E. Rivkin, 'Ben Sira—The Bridge Between the Aaronide and Pharisaic Revolutions', *Eretz Israel* 12 (1975) 95–103. S.M. Olyan, 'Ben Sira's Relationship to the Priesthood', *HTR* 80 (1987) 261–286.

and internal polemics surrounding the High Priesthood.<sup>62</sup> The Samaritan question is discussed by Purvis, Bowman and Kippenberg<sup>63</sup> and the absence of the Ezra tradition by Höffken.<sup>64</sup> Eschatology is the primary theme in the work of Martin.<sup>65</sup> In contrast to the comparison with 1 Enoch,<sup>66</sup> it would appear that the study of Egyptian wisdom fails to offer new perspectives.<sup>67</sup> Instead of having to choose between Simon I or Simon II, Hjelm recently suggests that we might look to Simon the Maccabean (142–135 BCE) for a point of identification, basing herself on the only established temporal indication of 132 BCE in G.<sup>68</sup> The question remains: Who is Simon?

### 1.3 *The history of the text*

The textual history of the book of Jesus Sirach is complicated. An historical gap of roughly 1000 years exists between the Geniza fragments and the Masada scroll with fragment Sir. 39:27–44:17. Only G, which goes back to a translation dating from 132 BCE, has been the subject of lengthy and consistent use. The priority of H over G can be explained, nevertheless, on the basis of text-criticism and the history of the text.

It is probable that Ben Sira wrote his wisdom book in Hebrew around 195 BCE. While most commentators maintain that Simon the High Priest was no longer alive at that point, the present close study of H50:1–28 would appear to counter this claim.

In the introduction to the Greek translation dating from 132 BCE,

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<sup>62</sup> B.G. Wright, 'Fear the Lord and Honor the Priest, Ben Sira as Defender of the Jerusalem Priesthood', in P.C. Beentjes ed., *The Book of Ben Sira in Modern Research*, Berlin 1977, 189–222. Ben Sira provides a positive evaluation of Simon and the priests in a polemic against his critics.

<sup>63</sup> J.D. Purvis, 'Ben Sira and the Foolish People of Shechem', *JNES* 24 (1965) 88–94. J. Bowman, *Samaritanische Probleme*, Stuttgart 1967. H.G. Kippenberg, *Garizim und Synagoge*, Berlin 1971.

<sup>64</sup> P. Höffken, 'Warum schwieg Jesus Sirach über Esra?', *ZAW* 87 (1975) 184–202.

<sup>65</sup> J.D. Martin, 'Ben Sira's Hymn to the Fathers. A Messianic Perspective', in A.S. van der Woude ed., *Crises and Perspectives*, OTS XXIV, Leiden 1986, 107–123. Id., 'Ben Sira—A Child of his Time', in FS W. McKane, 'A Word in Season', *JSOTSup* 42, Sheffield 1986, 141–161.

<sup>66</sup> R. Argall, *1 Enoch and Sirach*, SBLEJL 8, Atlanta 1995.

<sup>67</sup> J.T. Sanders, *Ben Sira and Demotic Wisdom*, SBLMS 28, Chico 1983.

<sup>68</sup> I. Hjelm, *The Samaritans and Early Judaism. A Literary Analysis*, *JSOTSup* 303, Sheffield 2000 (pp. 135, 281).

Ben Sira's grandson admits that he cannot completely follow the masterful Hebrew of his grandfather.

The wisdom book of Ben Sira did not become a part of Tanakh in the course of the formation of the Jewish canon. Given the fact that references to the book were introduced in the rabbinic literature as quotations from the Scriptures—*‘as it is written in the book of Ben Sira’*—, however, it would appear that the author's wisdom had long enjoyed a high degree of respect.<sup>69</sup> Both Jerome, the translator of the Vulgate (347–420), and Sa'adiah Gaon, the Mishnah commentator (882–942), express their familiarity with the H text. The H text has been available to us in different forms since 1896, based on a number of manuscripts that lay undetected for centuries in the Geniza of a synagogue in Cairo belonging to the Karaites. The 1200 year transmission history of the book from its composition to its first written copies remains a mystery to us.

The transmission of the text was clearly not the work of rabbis, as copies thereof were preserved by sectarian Jewish Karaite groups who recognised the Torah alone and radically rejected the oral explanations of Mishnah and Talmud. Timothy I, a Nestorian patriarch from Seleucia (±800 CE), makes reference to the acquisition of a number of ancient book scrolls from the territory around Jericho. In his text-critical research, Di Lella proposes the following summary of events:

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1. Ben Sira wrote his book in Palestine between 200 and 175 BCE.
  2. Several copies were in circulation which were employed by Ben Sira's grandson and in Qumran.
  3. At Jamnia, the rabbis rejected the book as part of Tanakh.
  4. A copy of H constitutes the basis of the Syriac translation dating from the 4th century.
  5. The Hebrew text is known to Jerome who had a manuscript at his disposal.
  6. After the 5th century, collections of well-loved wisdom sayings continue to function.

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<sup>69</sup> R. Smend, *Die Weisheit des Jesus Sirach erklärt*, Berlin 1906. Smend provides a survey of 82 genuine cola which he compares with the Hebrew text. He concludes: "Der Text der Talmudzitate ist fast überall schlechter, meistens viel schlechter, als der Handschriften" (p. L). A.E. Cowley/A. Neubauer, *The Original Hebrew of a portion of Ecclesiasticus XXXIX,15 to XLIX,11*, Oxford 1897. The authors refer to 79 sayings of Ben Sira found in the Talmud (pp. XIX–XXX).

7. At the end of the 8th century, a Ben Sira manuscript (H) is discovered in a cave near Jericho.
  8. Karaites acquire the text, make several copies with a retro-translation based on S.
  9. The Karaites and Sa'adiah Gaon continue to read Ben Sira in H up to the 12th century.
  10. Up to the end of the 19th century, several copies remain preserved in the Cairo Geniza.
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Although such a reconstruction remains hypothetical, Di Lella takes all known facts into account in his summary. Stegemann compares the transmission history of the H text<sup>70</sup> with the course of events surrounding two copies of an unknown book which have their roots in the Geniza and were published as *Fragments of a Zadokite Work*, the Cairo document (CD-A and CD-B), by Schechter in 1910. Fragments of the same book were found in three caves at Qumran and were published as the *Damascus Document* (4Q265–273, 5Q12, 6Q15). The book's content consists of exhortations, legal procedures, rules governing the meetings of the community and ceremonial regulations for exclusion. He associates this proposition with the data available concerning the Sirach fragments in the Geniza, Qumran and Masada and concludes:

die mittelalterlichen Sirach-Kopien sind also fast so gut wie Qumran-Funde, was man ohne diese selbst freilich nie hätte wissen können.

Stegemann's vision ultimately confirms the ten phase process of the transmission of H.<sup>71</sup> At the time of publication, however, Di Lella did not have the Masada text at his disposal. Rüger disputes his position on retro-translations from S and offers plausible arguments in favour of multiple Hebrew text forms.<sup>72</sup>

Given its inclusion in the Septuagint and quotation by the Church Fathers, the Greek version was quick to acquire canonical authority.

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<sup>70</sup> H. Stegemann, *Die Essener, Qumran, Johannes der Täufer und Jesus*, Freiburg 1993 (p. 103).

<sup>71</sup> A.A. Di Lella, *The Hebrew Text of Ben Sira*, The Hague 1966. In his review of the textual history of Ben Sira, Di Lella integrates the perspectives of those who support the authenticity of the Geniza fragments and discusses the critical perspectives of authors such as Margoliouth, Bickell, Torrey and Ginsberg. Based on the interchange of two text fragments in G—30:25–33:13a and 33:13b–36:16a—he maintains that H consistently forms the basis of G and S (pp. 52–55).

<sup>72</sup> H.P. Rüger, *Text und Textform im hebräischen Sirach*, Berlin 1970 (p. 115).

The Syriac translation, which stems from a later date, omits 193.5 verses, adds 74 others and, with 1616 verses is shorter than G. Winter concludes that S cannot have been made prior to the 3rd century.<sup>73</sup>

The Old Latin translation disappeared from view after Jerome's (377–419) translation was included in the Vulgate under the title 'Ecclesiasticus'. The book was definitively recognised as inspired by the Council of Trent and defined thereafter as deuterocanonical. As a poetical text, it is included in the canon after Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Qoheleth, Song of Songs and the Wisdom of Solomon.

Although Jesus Sirach lapsed into obscurity together with the other apocryphal books among the churches of the Reformation, it is evident that individual proverbs survived nevertheless as favoured aphorisms in collections exhibiting a moralising tone and were afforded critical-theological attention by Dukes.<sup>74</sup> Scholars frequently endeavoured to establish a retro-translation in H based on G.

On May 13th, 1896 Schechter recognised a page of a codex, which had been purchased by Agnes Smith Lewis and Margaret Dunlop Gibson during one of their many visits to the Orient, to be an H text of Sir. 39:15–40:8. The manuscript in question appeared to have come from the Geniza of the Ben Ezra synagogue (Fustat, Old Cairo).<sup>75</sup> Schechter published an article on the unique manuscript in the *Expositor* in July 1896. The excitement surrounding Schechter's discovery is described by Mrs. Lewis<sup>76</sup> in her book *In the Shadow of Sinai*.<sup>77</sup>

<sup>73</sup> M.M. Winter, 'The Origins of Ben Sira in Syriac. Peshitta Institute Communication XII', *VT* 27 (1977) 237–253 and 494–507. Winter refers by way of example to 50:7. Of the 7 verses in MS B and G of 50:19–22 only 2 have been translated in S. He is inclined to blame this fact on the hostile attitude of the Ebionites towards the priesthood and the covenant with Phinehas.

<sup>74</sup> L. Dukes, *Rabbinische Blumenlese, enthaltend: Eine Sammlung, Übersetzung und Erläuterung der hebräischen und chaldäischen Sprüche des Sirach, talmudischer Sprichwörter, Sentenzen und Maximen, nebst einem Anhang Leichenreden und einem Glossar*, Leipzig 1844 (pp. 67–84). Dukes provides 64 quotations in a retro-translation of De Wette, exhibiting a specific purpose to which he refers in the conclusion to his foreword: "Vielleicht daß verständige Leser, deren geistiges Auge an ererbtem Judenhaß—bei vielen Christen leider das einzig Christliche!—noch nicht ganz erblindet ist, dadurch eine Ansicht über Talmud und Judentum erhielten, welche der geschichtlichen Wahrheit sowohl als der christlichen Liebe würdiger ist." (p. VI).

<sup>75</sup> P.E. Kahle, *The Cairo Geniza*, Oxford 1947.

<sup>76</sup> S.C. Reif, 'The Discovery of the Cambridge Ben Sira MSS', in P.C. Beentjes ed., *The Book of Ben Sira in Modern Research*, BZAW 255, Berlin 1997, 1–22. Schechter's letter to Agnes Lewis concerning the discovery is dated May 13th, 1896. Id., *A Jewish Archive from Old Cairo*, Richmond 2000 (pp. 75ff.).

<sup>77</sup> A. Lewis, *In the Shadow of Sinai* (1895–1897), Cambridge 1898 (pp. 168ff.).

Another aspect of the matter affords us intense amusement and gratification. Sira, the author of Ecclesiasticus, was a woman hater. The names of Deborah, Ruth and Judith do not occur in his list of national heroes; and one of his aphorisms runs: '*Better is the wickedness of a man than the goodness of a woman*' (xlii.14). It seems therefore a just judgement upon him that the Hebrew text of his book, the text which he actually wrote, should have practically disappeared for fifteen centuries, and should have been brought under the eyes of a European scholar of his own nation, by two women.

Almost immediately after the initial publication, Sayce identified a number of similar pages in the Bodleian Library. Published by Cowley and Neubauer in January 1897, the pages verso and recto of this codex belonged to the same manuscript (MS B) and contained Sir. 40:9–49:11 (B X–XVIII). Schechter departed at once for Cairo where new discoveries in the Cairo Geniza had come to light, among them the text of Sir. 49:12c–51:3 on 3 pages verso and recto (B XIX–XXI) which formed the conclusion of the book. Together with the remaining pages, Schechter and Taylor published the new discoveries in book form in 1899.<sup>78</sup>

A. Firkowitsch and E.N. Adler, among others, preceded Schechter in his search of manuscripts. The discoveries were acquired by libraries in Cambridge, Oxford, Leningrad, Budapest, Paris and Frankfurt am Main. According to Kahle,<sup>79</sup> the total number of manuscripts originating from the Cairo Geniza is easily double the figure of 100,000 proposed by Schechter.<sup>80</sup>

The text editions and associated commentaries which appeared around 1900 still constitute an important source for exegesis.<sup>81</sup> A

<sup>78</sup> S. Schechter & C. Taylor, *The Wisdom of Ben Sira*, Cambridge/Amsterdam 1979.

<sup>79</sup> P.E. Kahle, *The Cairo Geniza*, Oxford 1959.

<sup>80</sup> S. Schechter, *Studies in Judaism*, II, Philadelphia 1908.

<sup>81</sup> The commentaries and text editions employed herein and referred to by author are:

- I. Lévi, *L'Écclesiastique ou la Sagesse de Jésus, fils de Sira*, Paris I 1898, II 1901.
- Id., *The Hebrew Text of the Book of Ecclesiasticus*, Leiden 1904.
- V. Ryssel, 'Die Sprüche Jesus', des Sohnes Sirachs', in E. Kautzsch ed., *Die Apokryphen und Pseudepigraphen des Alten Testaments*, I, Tübingen 1900/Darmstadt 1962, 230–475.
- N. Peters, *Der jüngst wiederaufgefundene hebräische Text des Buches Ecclesiasticus*, Freiburg i.B. 1902.
- Id., *Das Buch Jesus Sirach oder Ecclesiasticus*, EHAT 25, Münster 1913.
- H.L. Strack, *Die Sprüche Jesus', des Sohnes Sirachs*, Leipzig 1903.

comprehensive synopsis of all Hebrew manuscripts can be found in the text edition of Beentjes published in 1997.

#### 1.4 *The question of authenticity*

Prior to the discovery of the Hebrew Ben Sira fragments in 1896, a variety of Hebrew retro-translations—produced by reputable scholars—were in circulation. Given the significant variations found in the Geniza manuscripts, many experts have been inclined to consider them unreliable. According to Smend they contain a large number of errors (p. LXI).

Margoliouth writes disparagingly about Schechters's discovery in Cambridge<sup>82</sup> and is of the opinion that the manuscripts contain an inferior Hebrew retro-translation made by a Persian Jew no earlier than 1000.<sup>83</sup> His scepticism is grounded in a protracted discussion with Schechter on the original Hebrew version of Ecclesiasticus occasioned by the former's publication of a collection of quotations of Sirach in the rabbinic literature<sup>84</sup> shortly after his inaugural lecture in Oxford (1890) on the place of Ecclesiasticus in Semitic literature. Following Margoliouth's rather negative evaluation a variety of publications appeared in quick succession. König joined Schechter's counterattack<sup>85</sup> and Nöldeke and others waded into the fray.<sup>86</sup> Smend, Peters, Box and, a short time later, Lévi defended the value of the discoveries and published their textual studies with accompanying commentary.

The authenticity of the H text was confirmed by Di Lella who had already completed his research into the Geniza manuscripts in

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– R. Smend, *Die Weisheit des Jesus Sirach erklärt*, Berlin 1906.

– G.H. Box/W.O.E. Oesterley, 'The Book of Sirach', in R.H. Charles ed., *The Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament*, Oxford 1913, I, 268–517.

<sup>82</sup> D.S. Margoliouth, *The Origin of the "Original Hebrew" of Ecclesiasticus*, London 1899. Id., 'The Original Hebrew of Eccl. XXX.1.12–31 and XXXVI.22–XXXVII.26', *JQR* 12 (1899) 1–33.

<sup>83</sup> The margin adjacent to Sir. 45:8 contains the Persian gloss 'this manuscript ends here' intended to indicate that the reworking of the B-margin text based on an alternative copy of H concludes at this point.

<sup>84</sup> S. Schechter, 'The Quotations from Ecclesiasticus in Rabbinic Literature', *JQR* 3 (1891) 682–706.

<sup>85</sup> E. König, *Die Originalität des neulich entdeckten hebräischen Sirachbuches*, Freiburg i.B. 1899.

<sup>86</sup> T. Nöldeke, 'Bemerkungen zum hebräischen Ben Sira', *ZAW* 20 (1900) 81–94.

1962–63, the results of which were published in book form in 1966.<sup>87</sup> In the meantime, two small text fragments of Ben Sira from Qumran were published in 1962.<sup>88</sup>

The entire discussion took a definitive turn on April 8th, 1964, when Yadin and his associates made the sensational discovery of a parchment scroll containing fragments of Ben Sira from the 1st century BCE in a bunker on the east side of Masada.<sup>89</sup> This convincing proof of authenticity was quite unexpected. Although the book scroll is damaged and the text fragmentary, most of the columns contain coherent segments of the H text of 39:27–44:17. It would appear from Yadin's comparative study of M (Masada text) and MS B that, differences aside, the much younger manuscripts from the Cairo Geniza can be considered a reliable source for the study of the Hebrew version of the book of Ben Sira.

Puech insists on the importance of a careful comparison between parallel texts in M and MS B, especially with respect to the variant readings in the margin of B. It is possible, he argues, that MS B can be related to a manuscript from the 2nd century BCE on the basis of its use of the divine name יְהוָה instead of יהוה which is found in M (42:15,17). The variants in the margin of B suggest the influence of a copy which can be ascribed a later date. Puech proposes that M was reworked under the influence of Qumran copyists. It is not certain, therefore, that the scroll is original to Qumran. The Greek translation made by Ben Sira's grandson goes back to an even older Hebrew text form. This offers a possible explanation for the parallel reference to Enoch in MS B and G (44:16) in contrast to M in which the reference is lacking. Puech thus maintains the priority of MS B and M with respect to the translations GI, GII, S and L.<sup>90</sup>

Comparison with the Qumran texts is made difficult by the fact that only two small fragments were found 2Q*Ben Sira* (2Q18). Fragment

<sup>87</sup> A.A. Di Lella, *The Hebrew Text of Sirach. A Text-Critical and Historical Study*, The Hague 1966. Di Lella refers to examples from a retro-translation from S into H which Rieger would later criticise.

<sup>88</sup> M. Baillet, J.T. Milik et R. de Vaux, *Les 'Petites Grottes'*, DJD III, Oxford 1962 (pp. 75–77).

<sup>89</sup> Y. Yadin, *The Ben Sira Scroll from Masada*, Jerusalem 1965.

<sup>90</sup> E. Puech, 'Le livre de Ben Sira et les manuscrits de la Mer Morte', in FS M. Gilbert, *Treasures of Wisdom*, Leuven 1999, 411–426. Puech's reevaluation of the medieval manuscripts supports the present explanation of the H text based on MS B (p. 416).



1 exhibits greater agreements with 1:19–20 than 6:14–15. Fragment 2 agrees with 6:20–31.

Rüger rounded off his preliminary study of the Hebrew text edition of Ben Sira in 1965 and took it to the press in 1970.<sup>91</sup> He limits himself to 1:1–37:20. His preparatory material on parallel texts with M disappeared after his death and his resulting conclusions were never published. On the question of the authenticity of H, however, Rüger responds with an unreserved Yes! Based on his comparison of manuscript A with C and A with B he concludes that two Hebrew text forms must have existed. The oldest forms the basis of GI, a translation made by Ben Sira's grandson dating from 132 BCE and exhibits close agreement with the original of Ben Sira dating from  $\pm 190$  BCE. The younger text form constitutes the basis of GII and S. Rüger rejects Di Lella's retro-translation from a number of S texts. His explanation of textual variants in H and G is similar to that of Kearns, to whom both Skehan and Di Lella would later appeal.<sup>92</sup> Middendorp is of the opinion that the presence of synonyms in the comparative study of M and MS B suggests a variety of Hebrew text forms. This argument runs counter to his textbook hypothesis which is based entirely on the oral transmission.<sup>93</sup>

The striking frequency of agreement between G and M and Bmargin, however, suggests the use of a different Hebrew *Vorlage*. The translation of Ben Sira's grandson exhibits a high degree of freedom

<sup>91</sup> H.P. Rüger, *Text und Textform im hebräischen Sirach*, Berlin 1970. Rüger's preface is dated 'December 1969'.

<sup>92</sup> P.W. Skehan/A.A. Di Lella, *The Wisdom of Ben Sira*, AB 39, New York 1987. Di Lella counters Rüger's critique of the retro-translation (p. 58), referring to texts that he had already elaborated in 1966. Besides 5:4–6; 15:14,15,20; 16:3; 32:16, he includes 10:31c,d which he maintains is a retro-translation from S. These two cola, however, are lacking in G and S while they are present in MS A and B. Di Lella bases himself on Kearns (1969), who places two Hebrew (HI and HII) and two Greek text forms (GI and GII) alongside a Syriac and an Old Latin text form. Rüger likewise bases himself on two Hebrew text forms, explaining the textual variants without knowledge of Kearns. It is striking that Di Lella leaves Sir. 5:4a; 15:14b; 32:6b and 51:16,27,28 to one side while Skehan employs the same texts by way of example in his review of Rüger's book in *Bib* 52 (1971) 273–275.

<sup>93</sup> Based on 43:2a, Middendorp suggests that the sun as the origin of a new day is in line with Greek thought (p. 97). He leaves 43:7a to one side, however, in spite of the importance of the MS B reading with  $\square\square$ . In Sirach sun and moon determine the feasts and the seasons just as in Qumran. In a comparison of M and G43:7a, Middendorp avoids the calendar by considering  $\square\square$  as a *Hörfehler* of  $\square\square$  'feast' (p. 105).

and independence. A comparative study of M, MS B, G and S reveals the complexity of text-critical and hermeneutical questions.

In his comparative study dating from 1980, Reiterer aims at the discovery of coherence in H, S, G and L and ultimately at the establishment of the «*Urtex*».<sup>94</sup> In an ideal world, the compilation of text forms should make the achievement of such a goal possible. Reality, however, is different. Reiterer limits himself to Sir. 44:16–45:26 and begins with Noah (44:17). The influence of M (39:27–44:17) is thus virtually absent from his study. Undoubtedly the absence of Enoch in M may be striking, the white line between the introduction and the description of Noah leaving the precise reason why this verse in particular (44:16) has been omitted unresolved. Reiterer fails to deal with these questions and likewise appears to ignore Yadin's suggestion that Enoch in 44:16 of MS B should be moved to 49:14. It is evident from the latter's research that כְּהֵנִיךְ in MS B is altered to read כְּהֵנוֹךְ on the basis of G without further argumentation.

While Reiterer borrows the proposed priority of S with respect to G from Peters, the results of his own research do not appear to confirm such a point of departure.<sup>95</sup> He repeatedly insists in his minutely detailed verse by verse study that H offers a good and insightful text with which GI virtually always agrees. Wagner's recent study of hapax legomena in 39:27–44:17 has revealed, however, that GI is an independent text form and not a literal translation of H.<sup>96</sup>

Almost all scholars in search of a coherent vision of the various text forms and translations are inclined to turn to the theoretical model proposed by Segal (1935), whereby the latter was able to acquire insight into the coherence of H and the translations G and S by dividing the Greek text into GI and GII.<sup>97</sup>

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<sup>94</sup> F.W. Reiterer, «*Urtex*» und Übersetzungen, *Sprachstudie über Sir 44,16–45,26 als Beitrag zur Sira*forschung, St. Ottilien 1980. Reiterer concludes in his detailed study that H, on occasion, is relatively speaking the most original text and that it might be reasonable to consider it in some verses as the «*Urtex*» (p. 236). G is based on a Hebrew text form which is potentially more original than B.

<sup>95</sup> F.W. Reiterer, 'Review of Recent Research on the Book of Ben Sira', in P.C. Beentjes ed., *The Book of Ben Sira in Modern Research*, Berlin 1997, 23–60. Reiterer concludes here that the Masada text proves that MS B is an ancient text form of H and that G is not only a valuable translation but also independent in itself, an affirmation which cannot be applied to S (p. 30).

<sup>96</sup> C. Wagner, *Die Septuaginta-Hapaxlegomena im Buch Jesus Sirach*, Berlin 1999.

<sup>97</sup> M.H. Segal, 'The Evolution of the Hebrew Text of Ben Sira', *JQR* 25 (1934/35)

Ziegler considers this division of G into GI and GII to be irrelevant, insisting that GI, as the translation of Ben Sira's grandson, is an independent text form. Given the fact that there is no evidence that GII was transmitted as an independent text form, with the exception of fragments found in L248, he maintains that GII is more of a supplement to GI rather than a new translation and concludes:

in Sirach steht die Zahl der Emendationen und Konjekturen unter allen Büchern der Septuaginta an der Spitze.<sup>98</sup>

The Syriac translation frequently abbreviates the text and occasionally adds verses. The translation is strikingly tendentious with respect to the priests and the latter prophets.<sup>99</sup> Winter confirms Rüger's vision that S is dependent on G and cannot have existed prior to 300 CE. The fact that Nelson arrives at a similar date in this regard provides us with sufficient reason to consider S a translation with only indirect significance.<sup>100</sup>

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91–149. Segal suggests we consider GII as *pre-Christian* and GI as based on a *new recension* (p. 110). S is based on H with “popular paraphrases of certain verses originally current orally in Jewish circles of the talmudic period” (p. 123). Segal constructs his own version of H supplemented where necessary by retro-translations. In spite of the many differences, Segal maintains that H should be considered “an authentic and independent text” (p. 140). He agrees with Lévi that “the body of the book is really the original, the very work of Ben Sira” (p. 145).

<sup>98</sup> J. Ziegler, *Sapientia Iesu Filii Sirach*, Septuaginta Vetus Testamentum Graecum, XII/2, Göttingen 1980/2 (pp. 74–75). Ziegler takes an example from 48:17 which describes Hezekiah's water conduit. His text edition only includes the reading ὕδωρ ‘water’ which is clearly identifiable in various manuscripts of G and S as well as H, in spite of the evidence provided by other important manuscripts which offer the variant reading Γῶν ‘Gion’ or ἀργῶδες ‘water conduit’ (pp. 78–80).

<sup>99</sup> M.M. Winter, ‘The origins of Ben Sira in Syriac’, *VT* 27 (1977) I. 237–253, II. 494–507. In his discussion of the possibility that S was based on an alternative H text it would appear that a certain hostility towards the priests is evident in the translation of Sirach 50. The text of 50:7 is totally changed. The 7 line H text of 50:19–22 is reduced to 2 lines whereby the sacrificial offering is omitted. 45:8–15 is likewise omitted. H is followed in contrast to G in the abbreviated translation of 50:24, which results in the mentioning of Simon and the omission of Phinehas. Winter concludes that S is coloured by its Ebionite origin and that the translation dates from the 3rd century or later.

<sup>100</sup> M.D. Nelson, *The Syriac Version of the Wisdom of Ben Sira compared to The Greek and Hebrew Materials*, SBLDS 107, Atlanta 1988. Based on a comparison of S with GI and two H text forms, Nelson observes a degree of affinity with M. Fragments of S may stem from Jewish circles in Edessa which dates them at the very earliest around 40 CE. The earliest traces of a Syriac translation date from the 2nd cen-

Unfortunately, Thiele's text edition of the *Vetus Latina*<sup>101</sup> cannot be incorporated in the present study because only the first chapters have been published to date.

### 1.5 *Research into two distinct versions*

Research into the book of Ben Sira has been determined by the compilation of texts for a lengthy period of time. Reiterer is perhaps the most striking example of this approach, which focuses almost exclusively on the comparison of versions H and G and translations S and L and rarely ventures into the arena of interpretation. In spite of the fact that both Hebrew text forms (M and MS B) are of vital importance for the compilation of his «Urtext», he nevertheless leaves Sir. 44:1–15 untouched.<sup>102</sup> Questions related to content are only touched upon at the end of his work (see 4.1.2).

It is for this reason that we opt for a methodology which aims at an independent exegesis of the versions H and G prior to the matter of comparison and the endeavour to draw conclusions with respect to content:

- The Hebrew version is text-critically determined on the basis of facsimiles<sup>103</sup> and new photos of manuscript B.<sup>104</sup> Only the most

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tury. A complete Syriac translation of the Bible came into existence much later, probably in the 3rd or 4th century. At the end of the 5th century this translation underwent a Christian reworking by the Ebionites who were hostile to the references to the great ones among the fathers who are so highly honoured in Sirach 44–50.

<sup>101</sup> W. Thiele, *Vetus Latina, Sirach*, Band 11/2, Beuron 1987. In his *Arbeitsbericht* 23 (1990) Thiele insists on the importance of the *Vetus Latina* on account of its frequent Hebrew readings. Given the fact that a significant amount of material was already lost by the 2nd and 3rd centuries and in light of the destructive consequences of the persecution of Diocletian we have sufficient grounds to determine the deviations found in Jerome's Vulgate.

<sup>102</sup> D. Lührman, 'Henoch und die Metanoia', *ZNW* 66 (1975) 103–116. Lührman is critical of Yadin's reading of Sir. 44:16. P.C. Beentjes offers similar critique in 'The "Praise of the Famous" and its Prologue', *BTFI* 45 (1984) 374–383.

<sup>103</sup> *Facsimiles of the Fragments hitherto recovered of the Book of Ecclesiasticus in Hebrew*, London 1901.

<sup>104</sup> The photos of pages T-S 16.314 recto and verso and T-S 16.315 recto are new images, published with the permission of the Syndics of Cambridge University Library (dd. 4.9.98).

extensive text form—MS B<sup>105</sup>—is available for use with respect to Sirach 50.<sup>106</sup>

- The Greek translation of Ben Sira’s grandson is then treated as an independent version and explained on the basis of the text of Ziegler.

Given that the Syriac and Latin translations cannot be considered independent versions, they are not included in the present study beyond occasional and incidental reference.

Central to our study is the vision of Simon offered by Ben Sira in his book and the place of Sirach 50 in the context of the Praise of the Fathers.

- Part 2 deals with the relationship between 50:1–28 and 44:1–49:16 in an endeavour to establish the structure of the book of Ben Sira as a whole and the Praise of the Fathers in particular. The text editions of Ben-Hayyim and Beentjes are taken as standard.<sup>107</sup> Detailed research reveals the constant need to closely examine the facsimiles (c.q. photos) which can be decisive in matters of dispute.<sup>108</sup>
- Part 3 offers an exegetical analysis of H according to the structure of Sir. 50:1–28.
- Part 4 follows the same procedure with respect to G and the structure of Sir. 50:1–29.
- Part 5 presents the results of our research in summary form.

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<sup>105</sup> A. Yardeni, *The Book of Hebrew Script*, Jerusalem 1997. MS B represents calligraphic or ‘Eastern’ Hebrew script intended for use in sacred and official documents (p. 88).

<sup>106</sup> P.C. Beentjes, ‘The Reliability of Text-Editions in Ben Sira 41,14–16’, *BTFT* 49 (1988) 188–194. Beentjes considers it essential that publishers of text editions provide the reader with the most accurate information possible on the basis of the original manuscript.

<sup>107</sup> A.R. Müller-Wefling, ‘Eine neue Textausgabe von Jesus Sirach’, *BN* 89 (1997) 19–21. Müller-Wefling points out a number of mistakes in Beentjes’ reproduction of MS A in his text edition.

<sup>108</sup> P.C. Beentjes, *The Book of Ben Sira in Hebrew*, VTSup LXVIII, Leiden 1997. This new text-critical edition of MS B (50:1–28) provides כַּעֲרָבִי instead of כַּעֲרָבִי in 50:12e and הַצְּצֵרוֹת instead of הַצְּצֵרוֹת in 50:16b.

## CHAPTER TWO

### SIMON, THE CLIMAX OF THE PRAISE OF THE FATHERS

The present chapter focuses on the points of departure chosen by Ben Sira as author in drafting his book and the significance he ascribes to Simon, the High Priest in Sirach 50 as conclusion to the Praise of the Fathers. To this end we will begin with a study of the structure of the book as a whole in 2.1 and the Praise of the Fathers in particular in 2.2. The structural analysis is based on discourse development, numerical characteristics and the delimitation of the text.

#### 2.1 *The structure of the book*

Anyone intent on establishing a coherent vision of the structure of the wisdom book Ben Sira as a whole will quickly discover that important scholars such as Smend (23 text blocks) and Peters (10 parts) arrive at completely different delimitations of the text.<sup>1</sup> Ryssel's subdivision of the book, however, is intended to show that Ben Sira does indeed exhibit such a coherent structure, countering those who maintain that the author was merely a collector of existing proverbs or a copyist. Schürer, on the other hand, sees Ben Sira as a strong personality who wrote his book on the basis of a specific world-view and philosophy of life which provided it with cohesion and a distinct framework.<sup>2</sup> Ryssel delimits the text in seven parts:<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> P.C. Beentjes, 'De omstreden architectuur van het geschrift', *Schrift* 82 (1982) 134–135.

<sup>2</sup> E. Schürer, *Geschichte des Jüdischen Volkes im Zeitalter Jesu Christi*, III, Leipzig 1889 (p. 158). In *A New English Version* (1985), Geza Vermes notes "he is in any case no mere compiler", III.1 (p. 199).

<sup>3</sup> V. Ryssel, 'Die Sprüche Jesus', des Sohnes Sirachs', in E. Kautzsch ed., *Die Apokryphen und Pseudepigraphen des Alten Testaments*, Tübingen 1900/Darmstadt 1962, 230–475.

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|----------------|---|
| 1. 1:1–16:23   | The essence of wisdom, encouragement and the provision of counsel.                                |
| 2. 16:24–23:27 | God in creation and the human person in relation to God.  |
| 3. 24:1–30:27  | Wisdom and Torah, social precepts.  |
| 4. 30:28–36:22 | The Lord and his people, on courage and virtue.   |
| 5. 36:23–39:11 | Teaching and precepts governing social existence.   |
| 6. 39:12–42:14 | Creation and the position of human persons revisited.   |
| 7. 42:15–50:26 | Praise of God in nature and history with a conclusion in 50:27–29(28) and an appendix in 51:1–30. |
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Although subdivisions of the book published subsequent to Ryssel are based on presuppositions which do not take account of structural research into MS B, M and G, a number of constants are evident nevertheless. Reiterer notes how the various proposed points of departure make research complex.<sup>4</sup> Schrader, for example, maintains that the compilation of the book was the work of Ben Sira's disciples.<sup>5</sup> Decisive arguments against the authorship of Ben Sira, however, are not readily available. Marböck provides a historical survey of the various subdivisions of the book<sup>6</sup> in an effort to find *text markers*.<sup>7</sup>

It is generally accepted that Sirach 24 constitutes the central point of the book. The two hymns—the Praise of the Creator and his creation in 42:15–43:33 and the Praise of the Fathers in 44–50—form the conclusion of the book and exhibit a coherent structure. This provides the basic pattern for the generally known threefold division of the book proposed as early as 1643 by Cornelius a Lapide:<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> F.V. Reiterer, 'Review of Recent Research on the Book of Ben Sira', in P.C. Beentjes ed., *The Book of Ben Sira in Modern Research*, Berlin 1997, 23–60.

<sup>5</sup> L. Schrader, *Leiden und Gerechtigkeit*, BET 27, Frankfurt 1994 (pp. 58ff.). Id. 'Unverlässige Freundschaft und verlässliche Feindschaft', in F.V. Reiterer ed., *Freundschaft bei Ben Sira*, Berlin 1996. Schrader bases himself on his suspicion that the book of Ben Sira is not a self-made composition but a collection of independent units written by Ben Sira and assembled by his disciples who respected their content (p. 20).

<sup>6</sup> J. Marböck, 'Structure and Redaction History of the Book of Ben Sira. Review and Prospects', in P.C. Beentjes ed., *The Book of Ben Sira in Modern Research*, Berlin 1997, 61–79.

<sup>7</sup> Marböck refers to the following examples: the wisdom texts (1:1–10; 4:11–19; 6:18–37; 14:20–15:10; 24:1–29; 32:14–33:6; 38:24–39:11 and 51:13–30) and the autobiographical segments from Sirach 24 onwards (24:30–34; 33:16–19; 39:12,32; 50:27 and 51:13–30).

<sup>8</sup> This structure is problematic on account of the fact that it passes over 42:9–14—the treatise on the shameless and headstrong daughter and on the hatred of women—and the double epilogue in 50 and 51.

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|-------------|--|
| 1:1–23:27   | a characteristic opening concerning the origin and purpose of wisdom with a prayer as a conclusion in 22:27–23:6 and respect for YHWH in 23:27 (G 28). |
| 24:1–42:14  | a characteristic opening in the form of the praise of wisdom with instruction as a conclusion on false/sincere shame in 41:14–42:8.                    |
| 42:15–51:30 | the praise of God's glory in creation/history with a prayer of thanksgiving, an acrostic and a second conclusion in 51:1–30.                           |
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Smend insists that as *sofer* rooted in the oral tradition and its transmission in practice, Ben Sira has put together the various parts of his book without any particular plan. On this basis he is able to explain repetitions whereby themes such as one's choice of friends or moderation in one's eating habits are treated in more than one place. It is possible, he maintains, that Sir. 42:15–50:24 may be purely literary in origin (p. xxxvi). He is of the opinion that a higher level can be detected in the cohesiveness which is the result of the treated material. This is also the case with respect to the song in praise of wisdom in Sirach 24 which is constructed on the basis of 6 strophes each with 6 bicola.<sup>9</sup> Sir. 50:1–24 and 51:1–12 are likewise made up of 36 bicola. According to Smend, the Praise of the Creator is made up of 53 bicola, the Praise of the Fathers 211 and the praise of Simon 36. While this brings him to a total of 300 bicola, he concludes: "Ich kann aber kein Gewicht darauf legen" (p. xli). Smend maintains his own text edition throughout, however, supplemented by G.

A line count based on MS B and beginning with page B XII recto line 6 reveals the following: Praise of the Creator 48 + 1 white line; Praise of the Fathers 244 (+ 1 extra line); Sirach 51 including three psalms of praise 59 + 4 white lines. This provides a total of 351 lines of written text. Together with the remaining 5 lines on page B XII recto and the 5 white lines we thus arrive at a total of 361 lines.

In codicological terms, line counting on the basis of H is evident although the same cannot be said for G which has a colometric layout. The copyist of manuscript MS B probably worked on the basis

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<sup>9</sup> In his '*Die Weisheit des Jesus Sirach erklärt*', Smend does not deal further with the fact that Sirach 24 is only documented in G and not in H (p. xxxix).



of 360 instead of 361 lines on 10 pages (recto and verso). A possible explanation for the extra line can be found in 46:19<sup>10</sup> which together with 47:23 forms an exception with 4 cola per line. A more detailed explanation seems appropriate here:

- The 4 cola in H46:19 are written on a single line. G46:19, on the other hand contains 5 cola. This confirms our presupposition that the verse in question was written on two lines at an earlier stage of H. The line count in H thus appears to exhibit a balanced structure. The presentation of H46:19 is thus the result of a counting error on the part of the copyist of MS B.

An initial argument in support of this conclusion lies in the fact that the name of a person or of God served as a point of demarcation on the final line of a page (Enoch in 44:17a, Phinehas in 45:23a, YHWH in 46:6d, Philistines in 46:18b, Solomon in 47:23a, Joshua in 49:12a, YHWH the God of Israel in 50:22a).

A second supporting argument lies in the fact that Solomon is referred to in the concluding line (line 18 on page B XVII recto). According to MS B this is the 144th line of the Praise of the Fathers. Taking this point of demarcation as his point of departure, the copyist was then able to lay out the same 144 lines on 8 pages of 18 lines each. The key position of Solomon can also be derived from the layout of M. The Masada scroll is written in columns of 25 lines and ends in 44:17. If we presume an equal number of verses, it would appear that Solomon also serves here as a point of demarcation on the 6th page, i.e. on the 145th line of the Praise of the Fathers, given that 44:1 in column VII of M begins on line 6 and 46:19 has an extra line.

- The 4 cola in Sir. 47:23 can be explained differently. In the first place, 47:23e ער אִשֶׁר קם *‘until someone stood up’* is probably a scribal error on the part of the copyist given that Sir. 48:1 begins with the same words. In the second place, it is possible that Ben Sira did not initially want to refer to the name Jeroboam in 47:23g. Enoch in 49:14 is likewise absent, although for a completely different

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<sup>10</sup> With respect to the numbering of lines, Smend does not account for the fact that Sir. 44:16, 45:26, 46:17–18, 46:20, and in all probability 47:23 and 50:28, have 3 cola per line. Sir. 48:7c,d is written in one line but consists nevertheless of 2 cola. The same is true for the variants in the margin of B. Any comparison with G in terms of magnitude is thus made problematic.

reason. In the anticipative literary style of Ben Sira, Moses, Samuel, Elijah and Simon are each initially referred to in the second instance. The fact that 47:23e,f is lacking in G supports the argument that H originally had 3 cola (47:23f,g,h) written on a single line and that there is thus evidence of a copyist's error in H47:23e.

The copyist of MS B opted for a manuscript with 18 lines per page. M is written with 25 lines per page. Some degree of insight into the copyist's *modus operandi* can be acquired from the remarks in the margin of B. The Persian gloss in the left margin of page B XIV verso together with the indication of closure with respect to the text-critical revision in the margin of B adjacent to 45:8c,d are both worthy of note. The reason why this revision was not continued remains unknown.

In his second commentary (1913), Peters criticises Smend for his accentuation of wisdom passages in Ben Sira. He proposes an alternative division into two main parts each with five subdivisions and Sirach 51 as conclusion. He refers in support of his proposition to the subdivision of the Torah:

A:		B:		Appendix:	
I.	1:1 – 4:10	VI.	24:1 – 32:13		
II.	4:11 – 6:17	VII.	32:14 – 38:23		
III.	6:18 – 14:19	VIII.	38:24 – 41:12		51:1–30
IV.	14:20 – 20:26	X.	41:13 – 42:14		
V.	20:27 – 23:23	X.	42:15 – 50:29		

It is evident that every endeavour to establish the structure of Ben Sira leads to a different subdivision of the text. Pfeiffer observes in this regard: "Sirach's book was not composed according to a definite plan, but is a collection of separate essays or collection of maxims, like Proverbs, the author's model".<sup>11</sup>

Sauer concludes: "Eine durchgängige Ordnung, die den gesamten Aufbau der 51 Kapitel umfassen würde, ist nicht feststellbar".<sup>12</sup>

Gilbert refuses to recognise any systematic structure in Ben Sira,

<sup>11</sup> R.H. Pfeiffer, *History of New Testament Times*, New York 1949 (pp. 352–408). Pfeiffer envisages two primary parts (1–23 and 24–50) which begin as in Proverbs with a song of praise and end with an acrostic (Prov. 31:10–31 and Sir. 51:13–30).

<sup>12</sup> G. Sauer, *Jesus Sirach*, Gütersloh 1981 (p. 494). Id., "Gedanken über den thematischen Aufbau des Buches Ben Sira", in FS M. Gilbert, *Treasures of Wisdom*, Leuven 1999, 51–61. Sauer considers 42:15–50:29 to be a literary unit and observes thematic correspondence in Sirach 3–23 and 42:15–50:29.

limiting himself to a concise indication in Sirach 24 in which wisdom speaks in the 'I' form and Ben Sira personally occupies the forefront of the discourse (24:30–34). He subdivides the text into part I (1–24) and part II (25:1–33:18; 33:19–42:14 and 42:15–49:16) and considers 50 and 51 to be later additions.<sup>13</sup>

I have employed Gilbert's hypothesis by way of example in order to show that the structural disconnection of Sirach 50 from 44–49 has far-reaching consequences for further research, especially when there is evidence of a link between the two segments.

Roth has developed a model illustrating the gradual growth of the entire book beginning with chapters 1–23 and 51 and proposing the interpolation of three segments (24:1–32:13; 32:14–38:23 and 38:24–50:29) each with an introductory prologue (24:1–29; 32:14–33:15 and 38:24–39:11). The model itself takes the wisdom passages as its guide.<sup>14</sup>

Di Lella proposes a content-based subdivision into three main parts which he further subdivides into nine smaller units. His commentary follows this structure:<sup>15</sup>

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- I : Sir. 1:1–23:28 (1:1–4:10; 4:11–6:17; 6:18–14:19; 14:20–23:28)  
 II : Sir. 24:1–43:33 (24:1–33:18; 33:19–38:23; 38:24–43:33)  
 III : Sir. 44:1–50:24 together with the appendix 50:25–51:30.
- 

Harvey offers an alternative division by taking content as normative.<sup>16</sup> He notes a characteristic introduction with  $4 \times \text{ל}$  in 36:18–37:26. The cohortative at the beginning of 42:15; 44:1 and 51:1,11 likewise suggests a specific delimitation of the text, as does the literary form of a song of praise in honour of the *sofer* in 38:24–39:11. He ultimately arrives at a two part structure, each with four subdivisions:

Following the prologue:

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- part I : Sir. 1:1–4:10; 4:11–6:17; 6:18–14:19; 14:20–23:27,  
 part II : Sir. 24:1–32:13; 32:14–38:23; 38:24–43:33 and 44:1–50:29(28),  
 epilogue : Sir. 51:1–30.
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<sup>13</sup> M. Gilbert, 'Wisdom Literature', in M.E. Stone ed., *Jewish Writings of the Second Temple Period*, CRINT II.2, Assen 1984, 283–324.

<sup>14</sup> W. Roth, 'On the Gnostic-Discurive Wisdom of Jesus Sirach', *Semeia* 17 (1980) 59–79.

<sup>15</sup> P.W. Skehan/A.A. Di Lella, *The Wisdom of Ben Sira*, New York 1987.

<sup>16</sup> J.D. Harvey, 'Toward a Degree of Order in Ben Sira's Book', *ZAW* 105 (1993) 52–61.

Our primary disagreement with Harvey relates to the fact that he presumes Sirach 24, with its song of praise in honour of wisdom, to be the centre of the book between prologue and epilogue. The prologue is only to be found in G and is hence the composition not of Ben Sira but of his grandson. In this event, is it really correct to style Sirach 51 in H as an epilogue?

In the second place, a caesura between H38:23 and 38:24 at the beginning of the passage dealing with the wisdom of the scribe appears to me, in spite of the white line, to be less evident than after the conclusion in 39:11, which is followed by a cohortative *'once again let me express my thoughts'* (G39:12), introducing Ben Sira as speaker. The imperative *'listen to me'* in G39:13 thus indicates a new start with a song of praise in honour of the Creator (39:14–35), in similar fashion to 42:15; 44:1 and 51:1,11. Ben Sira underlines this song of praise (39:32–35) by the repetition of a personal word followed by the imperativi *'rejoice'* and *'praise'*. He is justifying himself as *sofer* and is determined to commit his well-considered insights to writing.<sup>17</sup>

Only G is available for the exegesis of 39:12f. Harvey concludes: "It is clear that Ben Sira does not follow a neat, formal outline such as our western minds might prefer, but this does not mean that there is no order to this book" (p. 60). Our criticism of this subdivision lies in the fact that it disrupts the unity of both hymns (42:15–43:33 and 44:1–50:24) and makes the relationship with the conclusion in 50:25–28 and 51 unclear. Moreover, the fact that this conclusion exhibits a great variety of literary units is not taken into account.

Jüngling focuses attention on the *"Ich"-Passagen des "Autors"* in 16:24–25; 24:30–34; 33:16–19; 39:12; 42:15 and 44:1. Although I support his insistence on the unity of 39:12–50:22(26) I cannot agree with his disengagement of 50:27–29 (51:1–30) as epilogue.<sup>18</sup>

Marböck leaves the question of multiple redactions and editions open together with the question of Ben Sira's own involvement in the compilation of his work in various stages from 32:14 onwards.

<sup>17</sup> J. Haspecker, *Gottesfurcht bei Jesus Sirach*, Rome 1967, p. 183. Haspecker accentuates unity in the introduction 39:12–13 and the conclusion of the song of praise in 39:33–34. The present author is inclined to consider Ben Sira's motivation for writing his book (39:32) a stronger argument in favour of unity.

<sup>18</sup> H.W. Jüngling, 'Der Bauplan des Buches Jesus Sirach', in FS F. Kamphaus, *Den Armen eine frohe Botschaft*, Frankfurt 1997, 89–105.

As such he introduces the possibility of later interpolations and an eschatological revision of Ben Sira's book during the Maccabean period. He concludes with a reference to Schrader who is inclined to see the book as the work of a disciple who posthumously compiled available fragments and added the conclusion in 50:27–29. Marböck is correct, however, in wondering why this arrangement could not have been the work of Ben Sira himself.<sup>19</sup>

One can conclude, therefore, that it is impossible to derive a convincing delimitation of the text on the basis of thematic wisdom and autobiographical passages with respect to their content alone. The question thus remains: are there alternative organisational principles available besides content?

## 2.2 *In search of alternatives*

In our endeavour to uncover the arrangement of the book of Ben Sira, our attention now turns to the function of the following structural elements:

- the superscriptions
- the autobiographical elements
- the numerical organisation of the different versions.

### 2.2.1 *The superscriptions and the size of the book*

While the superscriptions found in both H and G may be arbitrary interpolations, they might also represent a reliable principle of delimitation. Both H and G have a comparable superscription in 44:1. The same superscription is most probably missing in M if one considers the delimitation of column VII, the top of which lacks 5 lines including a white line distinguishing 43:33 and 44:1 where the Praise of the Fathers begins.

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<sup>19</sup> J. Marböck, *Weisheit in Wandel*, BBB 37, Bonn 1971. Based on the evidence of the superscriptions in G (7x) and MS B (3x) and their absence in M, Marböck is of the opinion that Ben Sira was influenced by Hellenism. Additional evidence in support of his argument is gleaned from the mention of the personal name Ben Sira and the biographical Gattung 'de viris illustribus' (p. 168). He is convinced that Ben Sira should be considered an independent author. Id. 'Structure and Redaction History of the Book of Ben Sira. Review and Prospects', in P.C. Beentjes ed., *The Book of Ben Sira in Modern Research*, Berlin 1997, 61–79.

Superscriptions in G are evident in a variety of places following the prologue:

1:1	ΣΟΦΙΑ ΙΗΣΟΥ ΥΙΟΥ ΣΙΡΑΧ	Wisdom of Jesus, son of Sirach
20:27	Λόγοι παραβολῶν	Sayings
23:7	Παιδεία στόματος	Command of the language
24:1	Σοφίας αἴνεσις	Praise of wisdom
30:1	Περὶ τέκνων	Concerning children
30:16	Περὶ βρωμάτων	Concerning food
44:1	Πατέρων ὕμνος	Praise of the Fathers
51:1	Προσευχὴ Ἰησοῦ Υἱοῦ Σιραχ	Prayer of Jesus, son of Sirach

These superscriptions are considered for the most part to be later interpolations. There is no question of arbitrariness, however, with respect to the repetition of the name of Jesus Sirach in 1:1 and 51:1, as the result of which G1–50 is seen as a unity and G51 as the conclusion of the Greek version.

The superscriptions in MS B, which is available to us on the whole from 30:11 onwards, are found in 31:12 and 44:14 at the beginning of a new page.

In H31:12 (B IV recto, line 1) the title מוסר לחם ויין יחדו *‘Teaching concerning eating and drinking wine together’* only has significance in terms of content for the passage dealing with behaviour at table (31:13–32:13).

The carelessly repeated title מוסר בשת *‘Teaching concerning shame’* in H41:15 (page B XI recto, line 8) clearly stands out in this otherwise carefully written manuscript.

The superscription in H44:1 שבת אבות עולם is always translated on the basis of G. In this regard, however, Hayward makes an exception with his translation ‘The Praise of the Fathers of the World’.<sup>20</sup> I prefer, on the contrary, to interpret עולם as a temporal indicator ‘of all times’, which clearly marks the transition from 42:15–43:33 to 44:1–50:28.<sup>21</sup> It does not provide us with sufficient evidence to suggest that it was employed as an organisational principle.

With the volume occupied by G as a whole, it is possible to estimate the number of pages which would have been employed in the version of MS B, given that each page consisted of 18 lines of text. Counting from 30:11a, the book would run from page B III recto

<sup>20</sup> C.T.R. Hayward, *The Jewish Temple. A Non-Biblical Sourcebook*, London 1996 (p. 41).

<sup>21</sup> עולם frequently serves as a temporal indicator.

to page XXI verso plus 3 missing pages verso and recto; 44 pages in total.<sup>22</sup>

With the exception of the pages B I verso and recto [10:19a–11:10d] and B II verso and recto [15:1a:16:7b] virtually nothing remains of the initial chapters of the book (1:1–31:11). A global calculation of the size of the book is possible nevertheless based on an equivalent number of verses in G and H:

Sirach	cola G	Lines in H and pages based on MS B	
1:1a–10:18b	563	$2 \times 8 \times 18 = 288$ l. equivalent to	16 pages
10:19a–11:10d	52	page B I recto/verso 34 l. + 2 w.l.	2 pages
11:11a–14:27b	221	$2 \times 3 \times 18 = 108$ l. equivalent to	6 pages
15:1a–16:7b	57	page B II recto/verso 35 l. + 1 w.l.	2 pages
16:8a–30:10b	974	$2 \times 14 \times 18 = 504$ l. equivalent to	28 pages
30:11a–51:30	1507	page B III–XXI + 3 missing pages	
	3374	(784 l. + 8 w.l.)	44 pages
	total	in total 1753 l. + 11 w.l.	98 pages

This calculation provides us with nothing more than a hypothesis, which suggests that MS B as a whole consisted of 49 pages. Excluding the margin, the maximum number of lines in MS B is 1753 as opposed to the 3374 cola of G. If one assumes an equivalence of 2 cola per line it would appear that G has been abbreviated. The difference is minimal with respect to Sirach 44–50. Sirach 51 in H, on the other hand, numbers 59 lines and in G only 83 cola.

### 2.2.2 *The autobiographical passages*

Personal statements introduced by ‘I...’ are to be found at important locations throughout the book. Can we assume in line with Jüngling that Ben Sira employed these autobiographical passages as points of demarcation?

We present the passages thematically under 4 headings:

#### 1. Identification with wisdom:

In H4:15–19 (MS A) the author begins to identify himself with wisdom *לִי שׂוֹמֵעַ* ‘*whoever obeys me*’ in 4:15a. The context is formed by the ‘love of wisdom’ as a service to the sanctuary in 4:14 on the

<sup>22</sup> In the introduction to his commentary (p. 12) Peters counts 22 pages in MS B from 30:11 onwards.

one hand, and the repeated ‘threat of rejection’ in 4:19a,c introduced by אִם יִסּוּר בְּאַחֲרָי ‘if he forsakes me’ on the other. Together with wisdom the author insists: לִי וּבְאַזְנוֹן לִי ‘all who listen to me’ (4:15b) shall live in my inner chambers and I shall reveal my secrets to him. This wisdom determines the author’s profound knowledge referred to in his personal conclusion (50:27–28).

## 2. Exhortation and personal experience:

In G6:23 the author makes a personal appeal: Ἄκουσον, τέκνον, καὶ ἔκδεξαι γνώμην μου ‘listen my son, accept my teaching’, employing the traditional form of exhortation. In H16:5 (MS A) he refers to his own experience as a teacher of wisdom, addressing his audience personally in 1p.s. After some rhetorical questions the author entreats his audience in 16:24 שְׁמַעוּ אֵלַי ‘listen to me’ which is followed by a cohortative (*hiph’l* גִּבְעוּ, see 50:27d) in 16:25 אֲבִיעָה ‘let me bring to the surface’ and אֶחְוֶה דַעַי ‘let me share my knowledge’.

The author’s personal sentiments are exposed in G25:1–7 in his favour towards harmony and friendship and his hatred of misbehaviour which he expresses in the traditional form of a numerical saying and a beatitude (25:8,9 and 26:1).

In G34:12–13 he relates his personal experience in the context of a journey narrative, referring to his gift of insight and his escape from the danger of death.

## 3. Prayer:

In G22:25–27 the author describes friendship in the form of an aphorism which he follows up with an individual prayer of entreaty, κύριε πάτερ καὶ δέσποτα ζωῆς μου ‘Lord, Father and Master of my life’ (23:1–6). In terms of content, the substantial prayer of entreaty in H36:1–27 interrupts his teaching on wisdom and may have been written by Ben Sira himself.

## 4. Expressions of self-awareness as teacher of wisdom and prophet:

In G24:1–22 the author exhibits his self-awareness in transmitting wisdom and identifies himself therewith. In G24:30–32 he uses the image of a minor irrigation channel which swells up into a great river and ultimately into a sea. A further image, introduced by ἔτι, refers to the rising sun at dawn. In G24:33–34 the author compares wisdom to the words of the covenant which are binding for all future generations. Here also he introduces his comparison with ἔτι.

In G33:16–19 the author opens twice with ἐγώ (33:16a, 17a). He presents himself as a *gleaner*, the last in line among the prophets. In



33:19 he appeals to the princes with an imperative: ἀκούσατέ μου *'listen to me!'*.

In G39:12 he envisages himself as the full moon, concluding his description of the *sofer* with a cohortative Ἔτι διανοηθεῖς ἐκδιηγῆσομαι *'once again let me express my thoughts'*. In 39:13 he appeals to the priestly circles, in the imperative form εἰσακούσατέ μου *'listen to me!'*, to assent to the praise of the good works of God's creation in 39:13–15.

In H39:32 (MS B) the author concludes by repeating his goal: *'Therefore from the beginning I have maintained this perspective, I have thought it through carefully and set it to writing'*. H breaks off at this point where the theme of good works in God's creation forms an inclusion in G39:16 and 39:33.

Given the repeated cohortatives נִשְׁחַלְלֵהּ *'let me praise'* in 44:1 and נִשְׁחַלְלֵךְ *'let me praise you'* in 51:1, 11, the cohortative נִזְכֹּר *'let me call to mind'* in H42:15 (MS B) would appear to be determinative of the characteristic structure of the text, introducing and demarcating new literary units.

In H50:25–28 Ben Sira focuses the full force of his reproach on three nations in the form of a numerical saying and thereafter reveals his name in the personal conclusion: שִׁמְעוֹן בֶּן יֵשׁוּעַ בֶּן אֵלְעָזָר בֶּן סִירָא *'Simon, Son of Jesus, son of Eleazar, son of Sirach'*.

In Sirach 51 the author rounds off his work with a psalm of praise (1–12), a psalm of thanksgiving (only in H) and an autobiographical acrostic on Lady Wisdom, concluding with: הַשְׂמֵחָה נַפְשִׁי בִישִׁיבְתִּי *'I find joy in my house of instruction'* (51:29). A second reference to the author's name *'Simon, son of Jesus'*, שִׁנְקֵרָא בֶּן סִירָא *'called Ben Sira'* appears in H51:30 which is followed by the concluding sentence: יְהִי שֵׁם יְיָ מְבֹרָךְ מֵעַתָּה וְעַד עוֹלָם: *'the name of the Lord be praised now and forever more'*.

On the basis of these four autobiographical perspectives it would appear that Sirach 24 offers the most significant indication in terms of subdividing the text on account of its identification of wisdom with the Torah. The imperative *'listen to me!'* in G33:19 suggests a new beginning with its typical appeal on the part of the author following the autobiographical closure of the preceding segment. A similar opening phrase is to be found in G39:13.<sup>23</sup>

<sup>23</sup> J. Liesen, 'Strategical Self-References in Ben Sira', in FS M. Gilbert, *Treasures*

The characteristic opening cohortative at the beginning of H42:15–43:33; 44:1–50:28 and 51:1–30 supports the unity of the hymns of praise. It is for this reason that it is incorrect to disassociate the Praise of the Creator from the Praise of the Fathers.

Based on this analysis of the autobiographical passages we propose a subdivision of the text with 3 main parts dealing with wisdom, the praise of God and the praise of human persons:

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|------------------|--|
| I. 1:1–23:27     | the pursuit of wisdom, the source of which is respect for God; the acquisition of wisdom in creation and life according to the Torah.  |
| II. 24:1–33:18   | the praise of wisdom, friendship, woman, neighbour, children, riches, health, teaching on bread and wine, life according to the Torah and 'P' as gleaner.  |
| 33:19–39:12      | experience as scribe, the journey, prayer, good and evil, the doctor, the work of the scribe.  |
| 39:13–42:14      | the praise of God's good works, the threat to life, death, shame, home, father and daughter, woman.  |
| III. 42:15–51:30 | the praise of God the creator and his works, the praise of the fathers, men who perform good deeds, diatribe against the nations and a personal conclusion, three psalms and a statement of closure. |
- 

Given its size, part I can be divided into two segments, the literary form of the imperative ἄκουσόν μου—which is comparable with 33:19 and 39:13—supporting the caesura, which Jüngling locates in 16:24–25. A counter argument is to be found in the reversed sequence of the imperative and the cohortative which fits within the literary unity of 16:17–25. On the contrary, there is some suggestion of disorder on account of the interruption in the theme of creation in 16:14d,e and 16:24f.

With respect to the subdivision of the first part of the book we prefer to attach greater importance to the two beatitudes אֲשֶׁרֵי אֲנוֹשׁ (14:1,2), which are rounded off in 14:20 with a third beatitude addressed to the man who pursues wisdom and insight, characterised in 14:21–27 from seven distinct perspectives which manifest his wisdom. In H31:8–11 Ben Sira formulates a similar characterisation of

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*of Wisdom*, Leuven 1999, 63–74. Liesen points to the importance of these texts for their *framing function*. His schematic survey based on G and supplemented by H does not allow us to establish a literary structure (p. 67).

a happy man employing four rhetorical questions. The positive tone is striking when compared to the chain of negations in part I.1 (1:1–13:25). On account of its form and well-considered composition, 14:1–27 is to be understood as a new beginning introducing part I.2 (14:1–23:27).<sup>24</sup>

Part II opens in 24:1 with the praise of wisdom and can be further subdivided into a number of distinct segments, beginning with the appeal: ‘*listen to me*’ (33:19 and 39:13) and following upon an autobiographical passage which serves to close off the preceding segment. The treatise on the doctor and the universal task of the wise are thus brought into line with one another.

Part III is characterised by the cohortative which introduces 42:15; 44:1 and 51:1,11. Given the content and literary form there is some suggestion here of significant cohesion between the hymn to God and his creation, the Praise of the Fathers and the closing psalms.

### 2.2.3 *A numerical structure in Sir. 39:13–51:30*

The hypothetical subdivision proposed in 2.2.2. can be tested against a study of the numerical and literary structure of 39:13–51:30, a virtually complete H text of which is available in MS B which is parallel in part to M.

The method of research we employ here was made known by the publications of, among others, Labuschagne, Langlamet and Menken,<sup>25</sup> who have shown that the counting of lines, cola and words often reveals structural associations which otherwise remain undisclosed. Their vision as such presupposes that form and content are inseparable. We intend, therefore, to go a step beyond Smend who was first to insist on the importance of the magnitude of a text for certain themes and figures dealt with therein. Smend limited himself to

<sup>24</sup> E. Puech, ‘4Q525 et les péripécopes des béatitudes en Ben Sira et Matthieu’, *RB* XCVIII (1991) 80–106. Puech argues a similar literary structure in the eight beatitudes in 4Q525 and Mat. 5:3–10 and in the composition of Sir. 14:20–27, ‘un ensemble à structure propre, fruit d’une histoire compliquée de la rédaction’ (p. 101).

<sup>25</sup> C.J. Labuschagne, *Vertellen met getallen*, ’s-Gravenhage 1992. Id. *Numerical Secrets of the Bible. Rediscovering the Bible Codes*, N. Richland Hills 2000. F. Langlamet, ‘Analyse Formelle et Numérique de 2 Samuel 7:1–7’, in FS Labuschagne, *Studies in Deuteronomy*, VTSup 53, Leiden 1994, 101–122. Id. ‘Les divisions Massorétiques du Livre de Samuel’, *RB* 4 (1984) 481–519. M.J.J. Menken, *Numerical Literary Techniques in John*, NTSup LV, Leiden 1985.

the conclusion that a degree of cohesion could be established in the final segment of Ben Sira's book.

The numerical method demands a more or less unproblematic text as its point of departure. The problem of the three intervening pages lacking in MS B can be solved on the basis of codicology, which focuses attention on the design specifications of manuscripts. A solution remains possible, therefore, for the determination of the size of the text in spite of the missing page in MS B which includes Sir. 39:13a–15b. G offers a fairly secure basis upon which we can assume the presence of 4 bicola on the verso page containing 38:27c–39:15b which remains unnumbered in the text edition of Beentjes.<sup>26</sup> In order to further determine the numerical division of 39:13–51:30 in MS B, and thereby make comparisons with other manuscripts, we have presumed the thematic subdivision of a number of literary units which may suggest a degree of potential cohesion on the basis of content. The interrelationship between the various subdivisions can be determined schematically as follows:

Theme:		in H	in G
39:13–40:27	good works	60 l.	119 c.
40:28–42:14	death and shame	55 l. (2 w.l.)	108 c.
42:15–43:33	Praise of the Creator	48 l. (1 w.l.)	106 c.
44:1–50:28	Praise of the Fathers	244 l.	502 c.
51:1–30	three psalms	59 l. (4 w.l.)	92 c.

There would appear to be no evidence of numerical structure.<sup>27</sup> A degree of literary unity can be established between the three hymns of praise in 42:15–51:30, each of which begins with a cohortative. Additional arguments in support of a potential subdivision of the text can be derived from an analysis of the altered subdivision of G and H and from the lay-out of manuscripts M and MS B.

<sup>26</sup> P.C. Beentjes, *The Book of Jesus Sirach*, Leiden 1997. The enumeration of the three missing pages verso and recto is not provided. One is thus left with the impression that the text is continuous. Page B IX recto begins with Sir. 39:15c (see: survey of pages iv–xiii, 2.2.5).

<sup>27</sup> F.V. Reiterer ed., *Bibliographie zu Jesus Sirach*, BZAW 266, Berlin 1998. Reiterer refers to the problems surrounding the verse counts in the text editions of H and G (Ziegler and Rahlfs) and the various translations which he represents graphically in a synopsis (p. 42).

### 2.2.4 *The interchange of chapters in G*

Evidence of an interchange of two text segments in G30:25–33:13a and 33:13b–36:16 first came to light on the basis of comparisons with L248 and is confirmed by the Hebrew version. The reasons that lay behind this substantial interchange remain intriguing.<sup>28</sup> Minor interchanges are more frequent.<sup>29</sup> Given the fact that the dividing line is located in the middle of the missing page following page V verso of MS B, any explanation of the interchange on the basis of the subdivision of this manuscript must be excluded. The same cannot be said for 30:25, however, which begins at the top of page I verso. The subdivision of M with 25 lines per page is clearly a different matter altogether. The text segment 30:25–33:13a in MS B consists of 100 lines and 33:13b–36:16 of 88 lines; thus 188 lines in total, accounting for the fact that three pages are missing. The Greek text by contrast consists of a total of 160 lines. The significant difference between both versions cannot be explained. The text segments interchanged in G each consist of 80 cola. The interchange must have taken place, therefore, at a later stage in the transmission of G. The interchange of segments 30:25–33:13a and 33:13b–36:16a in G is thus to be explained on the basis of a transposition of  $2 \times 2$  pages each with 20 lines (160 cola). This observation implies that a variant of H existed with 20 lines next to MS B with 18 lines and M with 25 lines.

For many years, the interchange of text segments was based exclusively on the evidence of the Lucianic Greek minuscule L248 and an Aramaic and Slavonic translation which ran counter to every available Greek manuscript. As an exception to the rule and against every expectation, the original subdivision of the text was confirmed by the discovery of the Ben Sira manuscripts in the Cairo Geniza. Setting aside evident differences in terms of content, the chapter and verse divisions found in G are extremely confusing when compared

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<sup>28</sup> A.A. Di Lella, *The Hebrew Text of Sirach. A Text-Critical and Historical Study*, Den Haag 1966. Di Lella quotes Swete who explains the displacement of two text fragments in G30:25–33:13a and 33:13b–36:16a, with almost the same dimensions, on the basis of an exchange of pages. H and L248 provide the original sequence (p. 50).

<sup>29</sup> V. Ryssel notes in his commentary that accident must be excluded (p. 245). The error is also found in other editions. He refers by way of example to the books of Plautus and Lysias (p. 384). The rupture is smoothed out in 36:16b by a small textual emendation.

with H. The self-evident character of the much maintained Greek subdivision of the text stems no doubt from the authority this version draws from virtually every edition of the bible. The sequence in G runs as follows:

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Sir. 1:1–30:24b    33:13b–36:16a    30:25–33:13a    36:16b–51:30

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Did aspects of content have a role to play in the interchange in G and if so can we determine what they were?

First of all, the transition from 33:13a to 13b between the interchanged segments is only documented in G. In terms of content, this transition is determined by the *geprägte Form* of the potter who moulds clay according to his pleasure just as the human person is moulded in the hand of God. From the literary perspective, this imagery belongs to a highly structured teaching on the human person who seeks God and fears him, a wise man who has seen the antitheses of life and is aware of his vulnerability (32:14–33:15). The teaching is thus interrupted by the textual displacement (32:14–33:13a/33:13b–15). The content of the conclusion (33:13b–15) is determined by the distinction between evil and good, death and life, light and darkness, and is followed by an appeal to carefully observe all God's works because all things come in pairs. Ben Sira then presents himself as a gleaner who is dedicated to those who seek wisdom.

- The content of segment 33:13b–36:16a is determined by the powerful contrast presented at the end of the teaching discourse (33:14) and the organisation of all things in pairs (33:15), followed by the autobiographical passage (33:16–18) and the characteristic appeal to the leader of the people to maintain their freedom (33:19, parallel 39:13). In the middle of the following passages with their various themes we find the journey report (34:12–13) and, as conclusion, the prayer (36:1–16).
- Segment 30:25a–33:13a, which is located after segment 33:13b–36:16a in G, deals with a variety of subjects including the rich and the poor. The beatitude and the questions it entails (31:8–11), the teaching on bread and wine (31:12–32:13) and the first part of the teaching discourse on the wise man (32:14–33:13a) constitute literary unities.

It is clear that the displacement of 33:13b–36:16a to before 30:25–33:13a in G is not the result of an effort to harmonise with the

content of what precedes in 24:1–30:24b. The diversity of prudent sayings on wisdom, women, riches, table manners, legal ordinances and the nurture of children is far too significant for this. Most important, however, is the fact that the displacement in G suspends the tension raised by the teaching discourse (32:14–23). The words of wisdom are thus focused more directly on everyday life and less on the elevated appeal to the political leaders (33:19) to free themselves from external domination. Whoever maintains his freedom when placed in a position of responsibility and wishes to live up to the repeated call to sanctification (ὁσιὸς ὄσιος 39:13a) derives much wisdom from the knowledge of the doctor and the *sofer*, all of which Ben Sira intends to write in a book (39:22).

### 2.2.5 *The missing pages in MS B*

The problem of the subdivision of the book can be explained on the basis of a comparison of the book-making and scribal tradition in H with G.<sup>30</sup> The teaching discourse in 32:14–33:15 is interrupted in G at 33:13a by the displacement discussed above. A concluding autobiographical segment (33:16–18) and a characteristic appeal to the leaders of Israel (33:19) thus acquire a degree of independence. With this in mind we propose the following hypothesis:

If Sir. 33:4–18, in agreement with the proportions of G, was written in 18 lines then H33:19 stands on the first line of the verso side of page AA.

The absence of the missing pages in MS B raises problems for the teaching discourse in 32:14–33:15, which is thus interrupted, and for 39:1–11. From 32:14 onwards, the interrupted teaching discourse is characterised by striking composition. This composition is particularly evident in the facsimile of page V verso of MS B (32:14–33:3) with דורש (3x 32:14f.), ירא יי (2x 32:16f.), אִישׁ חָכֵם (3x 32:17f.), the negations לֹא and אֵל (10x 32:18–22b) and the cohesion between respect for God and wise behaviour (32:22c–33:3). We have already seen that codicology attaches importance to the subdivision of the text per page. The fact that the following pages are missing, however, is not given sufficient attention in the text editions. In Beentjes' edition (p. 14) the page count lacks any indication of the missing two pages verso and recto (AA and BB) in MS B between B V and

<sup>30</sup> A. Yardeni, *The Book of Hebrew Script*, Jerusalem 1997 (pp. 88ff.).

B VI (Sir. 33:4–35:10) and the single page verso and recto (CC) missing between B VIII and B IX (Sir. 38:27c–39:15b).

A survey of pages IV–XIII verso and recto with the text of Sir. 31:12–44:16:

v + r	text	characteristics on line	
IV	31:12–31:31	B IV recto,	1.1 superscr. ויין יחדו מוסר לחם
V	32:1b–33:3	B V verso,	1.1 teaching 32:14–33:15 with 3x דורש
<b>AA</b>	33:4–	<b>AA</b> verso,	1.1 appeal 33:19 ‘ <i>listen to me!</i> ’
<b>BB</b>	35:10		
VI	35:11–36:21	B VI verso,	1.1 prayer 36:1–17
VII	36:22–37:26		
VIII	37:27–38:27b	B VIII recto,	1.7—verso 1.12 (+2w.l.) the doctor
<b>CC</b>	38:27c–39:15b	<b>CC</b> verso,	1.1 <i>sofer</i> ; 39:13 appeal: ‘ <i>listen to me!</i> ’
IX	39:15c–40:8	B IX verso,	1.5 autobiography, written record 39:32
X	40:9–41:9a	B X verso,	1.1 יראה אלהים 1.2. יראה אלהים, as Eden
XI	41:9b–42:11d	B XI recto,	1.8 superscr.: shame, verso, w.l.12
XII	42:11e–43:17b	B XII recto,	w.l.5, 1.6 Praise/Creator, coh. אומר נא
XIII	43:17c–44:16	B XIII verso,	1.1 superscr. שבת אבות עולם

The teaching discourse in 32:14–33:15 is followed by the autobiography in 33:16–18 and the appeal to the leaders of Israel in 33:19. The same literary structure can be found in the teaching discourse on the *sofer* in 39:1–11 and its autobiographical comparison with the full moon (cohortative) in 39:12 and the characteristic appeal to the faithful children (imperative) in 39:13. Both decisive passages are located on a missing page and as such can only be based on G. In our opinion, the transition to a new segment is to be found in 33:19 and 39:13.

The literary argument is perhaps the most conclusive. The subdivision of MS B exhibits three characteristics:

- A new passage regularly begins on line 1 of a new page and a white line or a superscription is used to delimit a literary unit.
- Beentjes notes the use of the letter א which serves to delimit the prayer (36:1 and 36:17)<sup>31</sup> and is present in the margin at the

<sup>31</sup> P.C. Beentjes, ‘Jesus Sirach 38:1–15\* Problemen rond een symbool’, *BTFT* 41 (1980) 260–265. From the codicological perspective, the accentuation here is of



transition from 51:12a to the second psalm of praise which is written in  $2 \times 7$  lines on page B XX verso and B XXI recto. In the doctor pericope (38:1–23)  $\text{ב}$  is found in the middle at the top of B VIII verso. On this basis Beentjes assumes an original segment in 38:1–12 which was later supplemented by 38:13–23. The refined workmanship evident in MS B, however, inclines one to imagine a later reworking of the doctor pericope. The copyist of MS B clearly had an explicit vision of the subdivision of the book, which exhibits a characteristic structure.

- Ben Sira's discourse is determined at the literary level by the introductory imperative *'listen to me!'* (33:19), which follows upon the autobiographical passage in 33:16–18. The repetition of the imperative *'listen to me!'* constitutes an inclusio in 33:19 and 39:13. The preceding autobiographical passage is introduced by *'once again'*. The conjunction  $\text{עַתָּה}$  serves to mark the repetition and the gradation thereof (24:32a, 33a) rather than to indicate temporality.

The absence of three pages in MS B prevents a comprehensive explanation of the subdivision. The characteristic appeals (33:19 and 39:13), however, provide reasonable support for a subdivision of 24:1–42:14 in three parts (24:1–33:18; 33:19–39:12 and 39:13–42:14). This can be checked against the H version of M.

### 2.2.6 *The Masada text as parallel*

The discovery of the Ben Sira Scroll at Masada offers some insight into the text segment 39:27–44:17 which is written on 7 pages in two columns each with 25 lines. The twenty six badly damaged leather fragments have been published in the text edition of Yadin.<sup>32</sup> The page format of M is regular. The scroll is incomplete, the text being recognisable from 39:27 onwards beginning with line 2 and ends in 44:17c.

The first page is seriously damaged. Page 2 ends with the theme of 'death' (40:11–41:1) while page 3 consists of a literary unit dealing with the themes 'death' and 'shame' (41:2–41:21b). Page 4 consists of a single unit dealing with the themes 'the strange woman'

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some importance. In his *The Wisdom of Ben Sira*, Schechter notes this referential signal but can find no parallel. He is inclined to consider it an abbreviation of the *pethucha* (p. 10). Middendorp notes this sign in 36:1–17 and 51:12 as a reference relating to segments introduced at a later date (p. 126).

<sup>32</sup> Y. Yadin, *The Ben Sira Scroll from Masada*, Jerusalem 1965 (p. 12).

and 'the disgraced daughter' (41:21c–42:14). Page 5 begins with 42:15 on line 1 thus clearly indicating that the Praise of the Creator and his creation constitutes a new literary unit into which the Praise of the Fathers (44:1–17c) harmoniously dovetails on page 7 line 6.

In contrast to M, MS B clearly has a caesura at the superscription of the Praise of the Fathers (44:1) with which page B XIII verso begins. In terms of content and size, both manuscripts differ only minimally. The text of 39:27–42:14 in M numbers 99 lines ( $24 + 3 \times 25$ ) and in MS B 94 lines. The supplementary lines which are written in the margin of B agree for the most part with M and sometimes with G. The same picture emerges with respect to 42:15–43:33. The last 4 lines are missing on page VII of M. We must presume a white line at the transition to 44:1. The text of M then numbers 54 lines ( $2 \times 25 + 4$ ) at this point while MS B only has 48 lines. The variants in the margin of B offer some explanation of the difference in size.

In 44:1–17, M numbers 18 lines while its MS B equivalent has 19 lines (including the superscription). The entire parallel text (39:27–44:17) numbers 171 text lines in M and 161 in MS B (discounting the margin). Although a comparison of 44:1–15 in MS B with M reveals a number of small variations in content, the number of words in both manuscripts appear to be the same after reconstruction, namely 108. Such quantitative comparison is a sign that the text did not undergo arbitrary change at the hands of its copyists.

As is evident with respect to the vision of Enoch, the transmission of the text is extremely complex. The limits of the present study prevent us from offering more details in this regard. The arrangement of the text and its formal characteristics provide insight into the work of the copyists which demands further explanation.<sup>33</sup>

#### Conclusions:

- The literary character of Sir. 39:13–42:14 deviates from the three songs of praise in 42:15–51:30, which constitute a strong literary unity. The copyist of M, however, tends to join thematic units on each page.
- Sir. 42:15 begins on a new page in M, thus ensuring a new beginning and a new chapter in relation to the Praise of the Creator and his creation. The same is true of 44:1 in MS B on line 1 of page B XIII verso.

<sup>33</sup> E. Tov, *Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible*, Assen 1992.

- The unity of the two hymns—the Praise of the Creator and the Praise of the Fathers—should not be disrupted in view of the subdivision of M and MS B and their content related cohesion.

### 2.2.7 *A new subdivision of the book*

Our explorations so far reveal that both the literary aspects of the text and the analysis of the numerical structure of H in manuscripts M and MS B do not provide an unambiguous picture. The reason for this would appear to be rooted in the fact the Hebrew manuscripts have not been preserved in perfect condition and that MS B lacks a number of pages.

While both manuscripts exhibit significant agreement at the level of content, there are also a number of striking difference. From the codicological perspective, the comparison of M and MS B makes it clear that the copyists work was conceptually well-thought through, taking account of the content, the arrangement and dimensions of the book.

With regard to the principles governing the subdivision of the book, definitive statements need to be treated with the necessary reserve. The most convincing arguments in support of a subdivision of the text can be derived, nevertheless, from the autobiographical aspects thereof in combination with the characteristic literary forms found in the various versions M, MS B and G.

Our comparison of MS B with G and the two H versions M and MS B reveals a clear caesura between 42:14 and 15.

The concluding segment—42:15–51:30—is thus characterised by its strong literary unity based on the hymnic character of its three subsections which consist of the Praise of the Creator and his creation, the Praise of the Fathers and the three concluding psalms.

On the basis of the literary characteristics which begin a new primary segment with the recognisable form of the beatitude (14:1) and the imperative '*listen to me!*' (33:19 and 39:13) we can propose a subdivision of the text made up of five collections of wisdom sayings and a sixth segment with three substantial hymns of praise, each of which is introduced with a cohortative '*let me remember*' and '*let me praise*'. Bearing in mind the hypothetical lay-out proposed in 2.2.2 we can now propose the following subdivision of the book:

Part	content	theme
1	1:1–13:25	The search for wisdom.
2	14:1–23:27	The discovery of wisdom.
3	24:1–33:18	Wisdom: meaning in personal existence.
4	33:19–39:12	Wisdom: its function in society.
5	39:13–42:14	Wisdom: between good/evil, life/death.
6	42:15–51:30	Praise of the Creator and his creation. Praise of the Fathers Hymns of praise: three concluding psalms.

According to this subdivision of the text, it is possible to consider Sirach 44–50 as an independent literary unit in part 6.

Sirach 50 constitutes an essential element in the conclusion of the Praise of the Fathers. The exuberant description of Simon as the author's contemporary fits well with the autobiographical segments which have such an important role to play in our understanding of the structure of the book. In 39:32, Ben Sira expresses his personal involvement by carefully considering everything and ultimately committing his considerations to writing.

In Sirach 50 he makes his personal option clear in the somewhat unexpected and emotionally laden tirade against the three nations (50:25–26), making reference to his own name in a personal epilogue (50:27–28) with which he concludes the Praise of the Fathers of all times.

### 2.3 *The structure of Sirach 50*

Ben Sira's role as independent author and *traditor* comes to the fore in his self-qualification as *gleaner* in 33:16b. This perspective is determinative for our analysis of the structure of the Praise of the Fathers.

Following the Praise of the Creator and his creation, this representation of Israel's history can easily be considered the most evidently self-written composition in the sixth part of the book (42:15–51:30).

Following the superscription שְׁבַח אֲבוֹת עוֹלָם 'Praise of the Fathers of All Times' in 44:1–15 we find a general introduction to the Praise of the Fathers. In contrast to what is often claimed, this does not present a history of Israel structured paradigmatically according to the twelve functions expressed in the form of a *Beispielreihe* (44:16–49:16). On the contrary, the twelve functions constitute an all embracing

framework for a specific description of the history of Israel which Ben Sira develops into a statement in praise of Simon and his continued living memory (44:13). Wisdom is concretised in governance and the administration of justice, in interaction with the Scriptures, in knowledge of the prescriptions and in living according to the 'Torah of life'. Humanity is crowned to this end with honour and glory, which is expressed in the political, cultural and cultic tasks that provided continuity and stability to Jewish social existence in Ben Sira's day.

These fundamentals form a *Leitmotiv* whereby the wisdom tradition echoes throughout history, beginning with Enoch (44:16), followed by a retrospective glance at Adam (49:16) and culminating in the activities of Simon, the righteous High Priest in Sirach 50.

Ben Sira's purpose in ordering history in this way is to remind men and women of God's involvement with humanity and the importance of guaranteeing the continuity of Israel's traditions.

### 2.3.1 *A subdivision of the Praise of the Fathers*

Just as the subdivision of the book as a whole can be derived from its autobiographical elements, it would seem that the structural design of the Praise of the Fathers can also be determined on the basis of the personal remarks made by Ben Sira. The presence of small literary segments can be demonstrated in the structure of his argument in which both style and the setting change. I will refer to these segments as *demarcation texts*, an expression borrowed from the science of semiotics in which discourse is subdivided into segments<sup>34</sup> by what are commonly referred to as *delimiters*.<sup>35</sup> Ben Sira marks off the beginning and end of his description of each of the personalities in his text. While Beentjes pointed this out with respect to 45:25e–26c,<sup>36</sup> the presence of such *delimiters* can also be demonstrated elsewhere.

<sup>34</sup> R. Barthes, 'Introduction à l'analyse structurale des récits', in *L'analyse structurale du récit*, Communications 8 (1966) 7–33. Segmentation gives rise to unity of form (p. 29). A.J. Greimas writes in this regard (p. 43) of 'le découpage en séquences' and in *Sémantique structurale*, Paris 1986 (2e ed.) of 'marque' in 'le couplage des fonctions' (p. 194).

<sup>35</sup> A.J. Greimas/J. Courtés, *Analytisch woordenboek van de semiotiek*, Tilburg 1987 (pp. 363ff.).

<sup>36</sup> P.C. Beentjes, 'The "Praise of the Fathers" and its Prologue', *BTFT* 45 (1984) 374–383. Beentjes provides a subdivision of the Praise of the Fathers: The prologue Sir. 44:1–15, part I Sir. 44:16–45:26, part II Sir. 46:1–50:24. With respect

On account of Ben Sira's personal involvement in the re-presentation of Israel's history the expression *demarcation texts* is considered preferable.

### 2.3.1.1 *Demarcation texts*

The demarcation texts serve to interrupt the enumeration of the various figures and can be recognised by a change in literary form which establishes closure and provides a breathing space before moving on to the next figure.

- In part I Ben Sira offers an historical summary running from Enoch to Phinehas and including the Torah. In terms of form, the closure of this segment in 45:25e–26c can be qualified as an exhortatory blessing. He introduces the blessing with the appeal **נַא** **וְעַתָּה בְּרַכּוּ נַא** 'Now then bless YHWH who is good!' which is confirmed in God's name by the promise 'he gives you the wisdom of his heart'. This is followed by an exhortation introduced by **לִמְעַן** 'so that no one shall forget the good which was entrusted to you'.
- In part II an expression of contrast precedes the second reference to the name of Solomon in 47:23a, introducing a distinction between the latter's infidelity and the **הַסֵּד** 'fidelity' of **אֱלֹהִים** 'God' (47:13b, 22a) via the fourfold negation **לֹא** in 47:22a,b,c,d. The contrast is given greater relief in the expression **אֱנָשִׁי הַסֵּד** (44:1a). From the form-critical perspective, this demarcation can be qualified as a confirmation of God's promise of salvation that serves to round off part II and its historical review from Joshua to Solomon (46:1–47:22).
- The characteristic historical retrospective from Enoch to Adam in 49:14–16 serves to round off part III (47:23–49:16). This segment begins with the death of Solomon and the division of the kingdom and follows the course of Israel's history up to and including the post-exilic period of reconstruction under Zerubbabel, Joshua and Nehemiah. The evocative nature of the retrospective characterises the transition to Sirach 50.

Two further fragments can be distinguished as demarcation texts in part III:

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to Enoch in 44:16 he follows the displacement to 49:14 suggested by Yadin. Smend, Peters, Hengel and Marböck, by contrast, consider the double reference to Enoch as an inclusion which establishes the boundaries of the Praise of the Fathers from 44:16 to 49:16.

- Following the negation in 48:15a,b we find a division being made between the figures in 48:16a,b with שׁוֹרֵי . . . שׁוֹרֵי ‘some . . . but others’, which is typical of announcements of judgement. This form is also to be found in the introduction (44:8a and 9a) and is designed to encourage the listener to make a choice.
- In Sir. 49:4a–6b Ben Sira makes an exception with respect to David, Hezekiah and Josiah, blaming the other kings of Judah for the fall of Jerusalem and the loss of the monarchy. In terms of form this would appear to be a concluding retrospective.
- Sirach 50 as a whole can be considered a demarcation text in part IV since Ben Sira clearly wrote it with Simon, the High Priest in mind (50:1–21). Four specific demarcation texts can be distinguished at the conclusion of Sirach 50:
  - 50:22–24 closes the description of Simon with a doxology.
  - 50:25–26 unexpectedly shifts to a *Scheltrede* against the nations.
  - 50:27–28 follows with a personal conclusion in which the author recapitulates his aims and Ben Sira ends with a benediction in the form of a beatitude.

Discourse demarcation established by these text fragments can be discerned with the help of semiotic analysis which aims at the delimitation of texts and determination of points of disjunction. The discursive syntax is structured by the alternation of time, place and person. The various personalities in the text can function as actants or as objects of consideration. The subdivision of the Praise of the Fathers is based on the demarcation texts and can be confirmed by numerical analysis.

### 2.3.1.2 *Literary units in the Praise of the Fathers*

As far as Peters, Smend and Lévi are concerned, content is normative with respect to the mutual cohesion of the individual literary units in Sirach 44–50. Smend also refers to the form-critical characteristics of the text, however, pointing to the importance of the attention given to each of the figures therein. Based on the length of the portrayals it would appear that Moses and Aaron are ascribed unequal significance. Smend notes in his commentary (p. xl) that he has endeavoured to find an organisational principle and suggests we base ourselves on the number of bicola in passages from the Praise of the Fathers which exhibit an evident pattern. By way of example, he counts 36 bicola in the Praise of Wisdom (24) and the Praise

of Simon, the High Priest (50:1–24). He bases himself on his self-constructed text taken from MS B and G. He would appear to be correct with respect to the Praise of Simon rooted in G with its interpolated verse 50:15. H, however, only has 35 bicola. One is left wondering whether the quest for similarity between certain segments of the text is not in danger of becoming the *Leitmotiv*. Smend counts a total of 211 lines in 44:1–49:16.

In spite of this criticism of Smend's methodology, he makes us aware, nevertheless, of the importance of these points of departure for text criticism and the final text, upon which semiotic analysis bases its endeavour to discern the structure of the discourse and the further determination of content with its ultimate significance for interpretation. Our primary difficulty, however, lies with his numerical analysis which is based on a compilation of H and G, supplemented with S. While he counts 18 lines in the introduction in 44:1–15, MS B has a superscription and 44:15 is in the margin of B. G, on the other hand, lacks 44:12. The resulting count is thus 17 lines and not 18.

MS B forms the point of departure for the present study in terms of textual criticism, the delimitation of textual units and the demarcation texts. The length of the portrayals of the various personalities in the text brings a number of characteristic numerical phenomena to light: Aaron is presented in 32 lines which is equal to the presentation of Joshua-Samuel and Enoch-Simon. Noah-Moses are presented in 21 lines which is equal to the presentation of Elijah-Elisha and Hezekiah-Josiah. The history of Enoch-Phinehas in part I consists of 61 lines which is equal to the history of Rehoboam-Adam in part III. The history of Joshua-Solomon in part II is consists of 60 lines. By counting 46:19 twice, however, we arrive once again at 61 lines. The introduction, the demarcation texts following Phinehas and Solomon and Sirach 50 likewise amount to 61 lines. Such subdivision offers clear evidence of a well-planned composition.

### 2.3.2 *The structure of the Praise of the Fathers*

Taking MS B as our point of departure, the structure of the Praise of the Fathers can be established on the basis of the demarcation texts and the evidence of numerical cohesion ( $4 \times 61 = 244$  lines).

In schema:



<i>Introduction (including superscription)</i>		17 l.
Part I.	Enoch-Jacob (13), Moses (9), Aaron (32), Phinehas (7)	= 61 l.
<i>exhortatory blessing</i>		2 l.
Part II.	Joshua-Caleb (18), Judges (2), Samuel (11), 1 extra l. (46:19cd), Nathan-David (18), Solomon (11)	= 61 l.
<i>confirmation of the promise</i>		3 l.
Part III.	Solomon-Jeroboam (5), Elijah (12), Elisha (5)	
<i>announcement of judgement</i>		4 l.
Hezekiah (9), Isaiah (4), Josiah (4)		
<i>concluding retrospective</i>		4 l.
Jeremiah (2), Ezekiel-Job (2), the twelve (2), Zerubbabel-Nehemiah (5)		
<i>evocation Enoch-Adam</i>		3 l. = 61 lines.
Part IV.	<i>Simon</i> 29 l.	
	<i>doxology</i> 5 l.	
	<i>Scheltrede</i> 2 l.	
	<i>conclusion</i> 2 l.	
	<i>benediction</i> 1 l. + introduction + 2 demarcation texts = 61 lines.	

In light of the evidently well-planned and harmonious lay-out of the Praise of the Fathers it seems reasonable to assume that Ben Sira was an independent author who portrayed the history of Israel in his own manner. His purpose is evident in the demarcation texts which serve as a guide for his representation of a history which must be assumed to have been familiar. He renders his vision of things in a reworking of the traditions surrounding the personalities he portrays, particularly with respect to Simon. For this reason one is at liberty to consider 50:1–28 as his most personal contribution.

The variants in G with respect to MS B can be ascribed to Ben Sira's grandson.

In his *prolegomena for a commentary*, Beentjes insists that the text is an autonomous, literary masterpiece with the fundamental structure of a *textum*. An analysis of Ben Sira's book should thus endeavour

to establish the unique place of each text within the book as a whole, to further determine the communicative aspects and function thereof, and finally to discern its literary characteristics and semantic aspects.<sup>37</sup> Besides a description of the discourse in each unit of Sirach 50, the present study offers a schematic representation of the text aimed at gaining insight into its development by considering H and G as independent versions.

### 2.3.3 *The structure of Sirach 50*

It would appear that Ben Sira's original train of thought can be discerned in the demarcation texts in H50:1–28. He sets the existing tradition surrounding the personalities he describes in his own framework, providing it on occasion with unexpected accents. H50:22–24 exhibits signs of an independent reworking of the tradition which is not unusual where poetical texts and prayers are concerned.<sup>38</sup> On the basis of 38:24–39:11, Marböck maintains that the rewriting of existing texts was among the specific tasks of the *sofer*:

Ben Sira erforscht wie Ezra die Tora, er verbindet wie die Torapsalmen Gesetz und Frömmigkeit: er begreift aber darüber hinaus die gesamte Überlieferung, Geschichte, Prophetie und vor allem den breiten Strom der Weisheit und in der Muße auch etwas vom Geist der griechischen Bildung ein.<sup>39</sup>

#### 2.3.3.1 *Syntactic analysis of Sirach 50*

Ben Sira marks off the history of Israel from Enoch to Nehemiah in three parts, arriving thereafter at an *élévation*<sup>40</sup> or *Steigerung* in

<sup>37</sup> P.C. Beentjes, "Ein Mensch ohne Freund ist wie eine linke Hand ohne die Rechte". Prolegomena zur Kommentierung der Freundschaftsperikope Sir 6,5–17', in F.V. Reiterer ed., *Freundschaft bei Ben Sira*, Berlin 1996, 1–18. Beentjes makes a distinction in literary aspects: *Abgrenzung, Struktur, Gattung, Stil, Wortwahl, Thema, Motive*. Among the linguistic aspects he includes: *Syntax, Morphologie, Phonologie* (p. 2).

<sup>38</sup> H. Stadelmann, *Ben Sira als Schriftgelehrter*, WUNT 2.6, Tübingen 1980. Stadelmann's insistence on the priestly background of Ben Sira (p. 274) is not convincing, despite the emphasis on Aaron's task as interpreter of the Torah (45:17). He surprisingly makes no reference to Phinehas who, in contrast to the king, is set up as the norm upon which to base one's appreciation of Simon, the High Priest (p. 151).

<sup>39</sup> J. Marböck, 'Sir., 38,24–39,11: Der schriftgelehrte Weise, Ein Beitrag zu Gestalt und Werk Ben Siras', in M. Gilbert ed., *La Sagesse de l'Ancien Testament*, Leuven 1979, 293–316. His ideal image of the *sofer* is not reflected in Tanakh (pp. 314f.).

<sup>40</sup> A.J. Greimas, *Sémantique structurale*, Paris 1986 (p. 233).

49:14–16 at the highest level with Adam, which he carries through into his presentation of Simon.

The connection between 49:16 and 50:1 is realised on the basis of the key concept **הַפְּאָרָה**. The glory of Adam is echoed in 50:1 with respect to Simon. In 50:11b, the latter's High Priestly vestments are described in all their glory in what amounts to a condensed form of the description of Aaron's clothing in 45:7–12. Simon reveals his glory in 50:20d with **פֶּאֶר** *hithpa'el*, when he blesses in the name of YHWH. The key concept 'glory' thus establishes a direct thematic association between 49:14–16 and 50:1–28.

Sirach 50 can be divided into two primary parts: 50:1–24 which deals with Simon and 50:25–28 which deals with Ben Sira himself.

In 50:1–24 Simon enjoys a central position as acting subject either in direct action or in reflexive sense. His actions determine the syntactic unity of the segment in the form of a laudation. His exceptional qualities are described in every possible way in 29 lines each with 2 cola. The doxology confirms Simon's glory in 5 lines in the form of an appeal to bless YHWH (50:22–24). The location of Simon's actions is the temple in Jerusalem.

While specific temporal indicators are lacking, time is established nevertheless in a general fashion: **בְּדוֹרוֹ** (1c, 3a) and **בְּיָמָיו** (1d, 2a).

The interchange of 50:2 and 3 in G can be explained on the basis of these temporal references. Commentators frequently assume that there is some suggestion here of past time, thus making Simon an historical figure in the mind of the author. Such an assumption, however, cannot be defended on the basis of the verbal forms. Indeed, the fact that Simon is an active participant would appear to suggest the contrary. The perfect form is used sparingly in 50:1d and three times in 20a–d following the temporal reference **אִשׁ**. The verbal forms, the frequent use of the *niph'al* and the participle, make it more reasonable to assume that Ben Sira is writing as Simon's contemporary. He offers a review of the realisation of Simon's building projects (50:1–4) during the final years of his ministry. In 50:1–21 he offers some indication of close familiarity with Simon and respect for the way he carried out his task. He concludes in 50:24 with **כִּי־מֵי שָׁמַיִם** 'as long as the days of the heavens endure'. There is evidently a unique word combination at this juncture.<sup>41</sup> The thematic force of Ben Sira's

<sup>41</sup> P.C. Beentjes, *Jesus Sirach en Tenach*, Nieuwegein 1981. The parallel between

terminology buttresses the content of 50:22–24 and there is a clear interchange of actants. Everyone is called upon to sing the praises of YHWH, the God of Israel, on account of Simon and the covenant with Phinehas which shall not be broken. It is presumed that the covenant will not be broken by God, although the possibility exists that the people and Simon's successors might be guilty thereof.

The thematic role of Simon is determined in positive fashion by his greatness which even takes on cosmic dimensions and find its ultimate end in God's confirmation of him and his descendants in the covenant with Phinehas. There is no suggestion of any shortcomings. The appeal in the doxology brings the recognition of YHWH to the fore, in sharp contrast to the *Scheltrede* with the denial thereof by two nations and a non-nation, the foolish people of Shechem.

The concluding clause and the benediction in Ben Sira's personal epilogue *יראה יהוה היים* 'for the fear of YHWH is life' is determinative for the syntactic structure of Sirach 50. Qualified with the term *הפארה*, Simon is placed on a line with Adam whose glory is exalted in 49:16 *ועל כל חי* 'above all that lives'. Simon's glory is imaginatively reinforced in the terminology used to describe his fulfilment of the duties of the High Priest. The *transformation* Ben Sira wants to achieve lies in the recognition of the glory of Simon in his deeds as High Priest in the presence of God. He fashions his *manipulation* in the form of a number of rhetorical questions and exclamations designed to establish commotion among his addressees—'all people' (50:17a), 'all the people of the land' (19a) and 'the entire congregation of Israel' (20b)—based on Simon's competent authority.

The *performance* lies in a change of behaviour as everyone endorses the appeal to praise Simon. Everything God does for his people Israel through Simon serves to confirm now what He once did and promised forever to do in the covenant with Phinehas. Semiotic analysis focuses further on what is referred to as the *sanction*: 'then He shall be in peace in your midst!' (50:23b–24). God's presence in his covenant fidelity (*הסדר*) is made manifest in Simon's fulfilment of

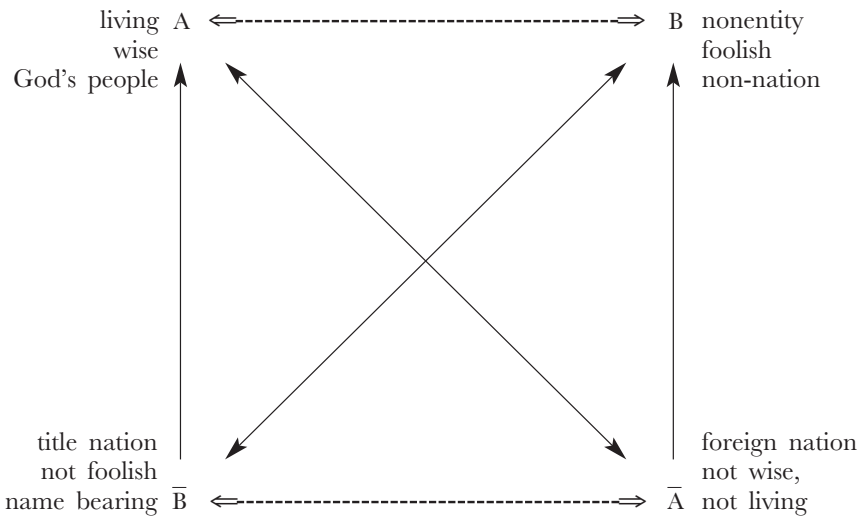
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45:15 and 50:24 is based on Psalm 89 (p. 185). According to Beentjes this psalm refers in 45:25 to Ben Sira's intention to associate the royal covenant with the covenant with Phinehas in 50:24. Nevertheless, the continuation of Israel's history does not depend on the succession of High Priestly generations. Continuity is only guaranteed, therefore, in so far as Simon and his sons give form to this covenant (pp. 191–197).

the task of High Priest. Next to the assurance of salvation, the positive end result includes a conditional aspect in Ben Sira's *Scheltrede* whereby he draws a sharp contrast between the priestly service in the temple in Jerusalem (50:1–24) and in the Samaritan sanctuary in Shechem (50:25–26). This gives rise to a suggestion of provisionality in human existence to allow for reflection on wisdom, the acceptance of the Torah and the fear of YHWH.

The ultimate goal is real life! In association with  $\text{כל חי}$  (49:16),  $\text{חיים}$  'life' in 50:28c render the ultimate change which Ben Sira wishes to achieve. The contrast drawn between  $\text{חיים}$  'life' (50:28c) and the preceding  $\text{עמ אִינוֹנוֹ}$  'non-nation' (50:25b) is so absolute that the outer extremes of wisdom and folly are presented side by side in this literary unit.

We offer a summary in the form of a semiotic square:



Key to various operations:

- opposite  $\longleftrightarrow$
- conflicting  $\longleftrightarrow$
- implying  $\longrightarrow$

### 2.3.3.2 Discursive analysis of *Sir.* 50:1–28

The association established between  $\text{כל חי}$  and  $\text{חיים}$  points to a continuing discourse in 44–49 and 50. The characteristic repetition of the key word  $\text{הַפְּאִרְהָה}$  suggests the demarcation of the transition from the evocation in 49:14–16 to 50:1–28. Demarcation is mostly indicated

by the use of a conjunction, by a change of location or time or actant, by a change in literary form or, as we have here, by special semantic characteristics which lead to the segmentation of the text.

- This segmentation is clearly visible in Sir. 50:1 in the reference to Simon and the semantic significance of נְרוּל in relation to the concluding word הַכֹּהֵן with which Ben Sira rounds off the opening clause 50:1a,b. It is thus all the more striking how the following three subordinate clauses all begin with אֲשֶׁר and how the first description ends in 4a with a defined participle which serves to provide Simon's activities with an extra accent. Simon's thematic role at this juncture is that of a builder, placing him in the context of temple construction side by side with Solomon (47:13), Zerubbabel and Joshua (49:11–12) and the rebuilding and fortification of the city of Jerusalem by Hezekiah (47:17) and Nehemiah (49:13). Ben Sira's description of Simon relates to the job description of the High Priest as political and religious leader bound to the temple and to the city of Jerusalem.
- The rhetorical question in Sir. 50:5 is introduced by the adverb מִה. In 50:5–10 Simon is represented in his thematic role as High Priest on the basis of eleven exceptional comparisons with the cosmos, the glory of nature and with the temple. Each comparison is marked off by an introductory comparative particle כִּי. The evident wealth of botanical information is overwhelming and testifies to an extraordinary preoccupation with the land, the environment and the natural world. The description of the trees reveals a clear association with a similar description of wisdom in Sirach 24.<sup>42</sup> The literary unit which runs from 50:5–10 and consists of 7 lines is part of a larger segment running from 5–21, which can be divided into 3 parts each representing a different perspective on Simon and each consisting of 7 lines (5–19) and a blessing (20–21).
- The repetition of the key word הַפֹּאֲרֵה in Sir. 50:11 is worthy of note. The preposition כִּי at the beginning of 3 lines in 50:11–12 serves to mark off Simon's role in the liturgy of sacrifice. Simon exercises his thematic role as glorious High Priest at this juncture, taking his place in the midst of the sons of Aaron. One can

<sup>42</sup> J. Marböck, *Weisheit in Wandel*, BBB 37, Bonn 1971. The series of comparisons in 24:13–22 is related exclusively to nature while the temple liturgy is involved in 50:9.

determine that G50:15 is a later interpolation on the basis of the fact that the harmonious construction of  $3 \times 7$  verse lines in H50:5–19 is thereby interrupted.<sup>43</sup>

- The determination of time in Sir. 50:16a is altered by the demonstrative adverb אִשׁ understood in the temporal sense as *‘thereafter’* or *‘then’*, as is also the case in 50:20a. From 50:13 onwards, the subject of the action shifts from Simon to the all the sons of Aaron and the entire congregation of Israel. In 50:16, 17 and 19 the text includes the qualifications *‘those who are priests’*, *‘all people’* and *‘all the people of the land’*. The description of the sacrificial liturgy is rounded off with the temporal indicator עַד.

To sum up, Simon is presented in 50:1–19 from four different perspectives in the form of a discourse which serves as a framework for his building activities (1–4), his glory as High Priest (5–10), his role in the sacrificial liturgy (11–14) and his central place among the priests and the people at the feast (16–19).

- Simon’s blessing as acting subject follows in Sir. 50:20–21. This literary unit is introduced by the adverb אִשׁ in similar fashion to 50:16. The repetition of the key word אִשׁ, here in the *hithpa’el*, is worthy of note.

The double reference to the divine name אֱלֹהִים in 20c,d is exceptional, since the discourse thus establishes a direct association between the repetition of the divine name in 22a and the doxology which follows. The blessing in 50:20–21 would appear to be so close to the representation of Simon as High Priest in 50:1–19 at the level of content and theme that it serves as a concluding description. Structural association is established by אִשׁ and עַד in the transition from 50:11a–14b to 50:16 and from 50:16a–19d to 50:20.

- The appeal אֱלֹהִים in Sir. 50:22–24 determines the moment of transition to the recitation of the doxology. Ben Sira opts here for a different literary form in which the thematic reference to אֱלֹהִים establishes an inclusion with 49:16 and 50:22 and corresponds at the level of content with 50:1–21. YHWH is the acting subject. In 50:24 Simon is placed in an historical context via the covenant

<sup>43</sup> The additional verse 15 in the Greek text makes reference to the libation of wine.

with Phinehas in which he acquires an entirely unique position. He thus constitutes the climax of the Praise of the Fathers.

- Ben Sira himself becomes an actant in Sir. 50:25–28 on account of the change of subject (1p.s.) in the *Scheltrede* to express his antagonism towards the three nations (25–26). In 10:6–19 he wrote with great contempt concerning the enemy as a group. In H36:10a he referred to Moab by name. Here, in the form of an invective, he names the inhabitants of Seir and Philistea while placing the emphasis on the foolish people of Shechem which he refers to as a non-nation in line with traditional prophetic preaching of judgement.<sup>44</sup>

He refers to his own name in a personal epilogue and ends with a benediction in the form of a beatitude (50:27–28).

Given the historical context, the disclosure of his person in 50:27 is unique.

The structure of Sirach 50 can be summarised in eight literary units:

part/verses	thematic role	num. analysis
1. 50: 1– 4	Simon as builder	5 l., 36 wrd.
2. 50: 5–10	Simon as High Priest	7 l., 56 wrd.
3. 50:11–14	Simon in function of the sacrifice	7 l., 49 wrd.
4. 50:16–19	Simon at the feast	7 l., 49 wrd.
5. 50:20–21	Simon and the High Priestly blessing	3 l., 20 wrd.
6. 50:22–24	Doxology	5 l., 36 wrd.
7. 50:25–26	Ben Sira's <i>Scheltrede</i>	2 l., 14 wrd.
8. 50:27–28	Ben Sira's epilogue and benediction	3.5 l., 30 wrd.

From the numerical perspective H50:1–28 is written on 39.5 lines numbering 79 cola and a total of 292 words. Based on this structure we will now proceed to an analysis of and commentary on the Hebrew text of the demarcation texts and of Sirach 50.

<sup>44</sup> H.J. Boecker, 'Anklagereden und Verteidigungsreden im Alten Testament', *EvT* 20 NF 15 (1960) 398–412. The *Gerichtsrrede* has its place in the administration of justice, in the city gate or in the temple. Prophetic judgement preaching, on the other hand, is characterised by its 'appeal' which is intended to exhort its listeners to behave as a holy people.



## CHAPTER THREE

### SIMON IN THE HEBREW VERSION OF BEN SIRA

#### 3.1 *The Hebrew text*

The discovery of the scroll in cave 1109 of the eastern wall of Masada has been of inestimable value for the study of the Hebrew text of Ben Sira. During excavations on April 8th, 1964, Yadin and his co-workers discovered the creased and crumpled remnants of what turned out to be 26 fragments of Sir. 39:27–44:17c, written on seven pages in 2 columns on parchment. In terms of format, the largest pages measure 16 × 23 cm. Each page originally consisted of 25 lines written in bicola with a separation between the lines of 6 mm and a letter size of 3 mm in middle or late Hasmonean script.<sup>1</sup>

MS B is written on oriental paper with pages verso and recto measuring 17 × 19 cm. Each page contains 18 lines of clearly visible text, especially on page B XIX verso.<sup>2</sup> The right hand margin is 1,9 cm broad, the top margin 1,7 cm and the lower margin 1,8 cm. The space between the lines measures 0,88 cm, the ledger lines being neat and regular. The lines occasionally run on into the left hand margin. Concise observations are written in the margins adjacent to the lines and a few variant readings are written vertically.

MS B takes the form of a codex and is written in colometric fashion<sup>3</sup> in regular characters which, from the palaeographic perspective, are evidently Aramaic or square script.<sup>4</sup> The copyist clearly worked with precision and it is evident that he was familiar with the rules governing the *Massekhet Soferim*.<sup>5</sup> The Hebrew text was written on pages of 18 lines and received a specific form which, given the cod-

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<sup>1</sup> Y. Yadin, *The Ben Sira Scroll from Masada*, Jerusalem 1965 (p. 2).

<sup>2</sup> The lines are particularly clear in MS fol. 1 recto in A.E. Cowley/A. Neubauer, *The Original Hebrew of a Portion of Ecclesiasticus* (XXXIX.15 to XLIX.11) Oxford 1897.

<sup>3</sup> E. Tov, *Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible*, Assen 1992 (pp. 201–220).

<sup>4</sup> A. Yardeni, *The Book of the Hebrew Script, History, Palaeography, Scriptstyles, Calligraphy & Design*, Jerusalem 1997. She refers to this type of script as 'Eastern' (p. 85).

<sup>5</sup> A. Cohen, *The Minor Tractates of the Talmud*, I/II, London 1965. Text-critical research reveals that the work of the copyist of MS B would appear to exhibit associations with the Talmudic prescriptions found in the *Massekhet Soferim*, which are intended for the writing of Torah scrolls and include halakhot concerning writing material,

icological studies of Beit-Arié, is clearly of significance in establishing origin, date and content.<sup>6</sup> The condition of some of the original pages has deteriorated because of efforts to make the text more readable. Di Lella places the blame for this situation on Smend who apparently treated the pages with vaseline.<sup>7</sup> The facsimiles as well as the three new photos exhibit no trace of such a treatment.<sup>8</sup>

A problem arises with respect to Sirach 50 on account of the fact that the three cola of 50:28c are not written on a single line (line 9 page B XX recto) but continue rather onto line 10 together with 51:1a,b. From the codicological perspective and in terms of content it is evident that 50:28c is a *catch-line*, intended to stand on the same line as 50:28a,b on account of the style of the copyist who also wrote 44:16a,b; 45:26a,b,c; 46:17b,18a; 46:20c,d,e; 47:23(e),f,g,h and 50:22a,b on a single line for the purposes of demarcation.<sup>9</sup> While there is little dispute concerning the origin and date of MS B, scholarly

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principles, scribes, the dimensions of pages, columns and margins, the correction of errors, the writing of the divine name and the preservation and reading of books.

<sup>6</sup> M. Beit-Arié, *The Making of the Medieval Hebrew Book. Studies in Palaeography and Codicology*, Jerusalem 1993. In a discussion with Prof. Dr. Beit-Arié (1994) he assured me that texts written on *paper* can date back to no earlier than the 4th century. In his comparative study of manuscript EBP.-AP.I 2889 from Tyrus 1091 and T-S.F3.29 from 1090 Beit-Arié was able to identify Abraham Shabbatai as the writer of MS A. Shabbatai, who is known among the circles of the Karaites, did not arrive in Egypt until a later date. The Persian gloss in the margin of B adjacent to 45:9 can also be explained on the basis of Shabbatai's well-travelled existence. I am grateful to Beit-Arié for permission to include this reference here. Nothing is known of the writer of MS B.

<sup>7</sup> P.W. Skehan/A.A. Di Lella, *The Wisdom of Ben Sira*, New York 1987. In a footnote on p. 60 Di Lella makes reference to the damage which took place after the publication of the facsimile edition dating from 1901. Smend apparently treated the Oxford pages (B X-XVIII), which were published by Sayce, with vaseline to obtain a sharper view of the text. On p. VII of his introduction to the text edition and word list Smend refers to the poor quality of the facsimiles dating from 1901 which represent the current state of affairs. He points out that he himself was able to make use of better copies which were prepared in the first instance by Clarendon Press. In order to make them more legible, the Oxford pages were thereafter "gereinigt und sodann mit durchsichtigem Stoff überklebt, um das brüchige Papier zusammenzufügen". It is somewhat amazing that the said photos are mentioned nowhere else in the literature. I am grateful to Prof. Dr. B. Richter of the Institute for Microfilms of Hebrew Manuscripts of the National Library in Jerusalem who afforded me the opportunity to study the 1901 facsimiles.

<sup>8</sup> For the present study, new copies from the T-S collection 16.314 recto and verso ad T-S 16.315 recto as *bromide prints* from Cambridge University Library were placed at our disposal.

<sup>9</sup> M. Haran, 'Book-Size and the Device of Catch-Lines in the Biblical Canon', *JJS* XXXVI.1 (1985) 1-11. The use of *catch-lines* in scrolls is intended to assist in the recognition of what follows (p. 9). Haran refers to the use of *catch-words* in codices (p. 11).

evaluation of the originality and content of the text is a frequent bone of contention.

Variant readings in 50:1–28 will be discussed in our text-critical observations in 3.1.3 on the basis of a comparison with the text editions of Ben-Hayyim and Beentjes. The exegesis of the demarcation texts follows in 3.2, the interpretation of Sirach 50 in 3.3 and the translation of the Hebrew text in 3.4.

### 3.1.1 *Text and textual criticism of Sirach 44–49*

The text editions of Ben-Hayyim<sup>10</sup> and Beentjes<sup>11</sup> constitute our point of departure for the textual criticism of Sirach 44–49 both of which have been checked against the facsimile edition published in 1901.<sup>12</sup> For comparison of the parallel text of M in the text edition of Yadin<sup>13</sup> with MS B in Sir. 44:1–15 both texts have been telescoped together and the differences and agreements made visible with the help of the typographical reproduction.

Textual criticism of the demarcation texts:

- 44:1–15 exhibits numerous small variations which are summed up in 3.2.1. A striking difference can be found in 44:10b where M, with its opening . . . צדק suggests ‘justice’ while MS B speaks of ותקוותם ‘and their hope’. 44:12 is lacking in MS B and 44:15 is found in the margin.
- In 45:26c the facsimile clearly provides the reading אמרתכם ‘that which has been said to you’. Though the concept is not found in Tanakh, this does not offer sufficient reason to emend the text to read נבחרתכם ‘their might’ (Lévi, Vattioni and Segal), or והפארתם ‘their glory’ (Peters on the basis of S).
- The Hebrew text of 47:22a–f is badly damaged, making G the only possible source of supplementation.

<sup>10</sup> Z. Ben-Hayyim ed., *The Book of Ben Sira: Text, Concordance and an Analysis of the Vocabulary*, Jerusalem 1973.

<sup>11</sup> P.C. Beentjes, *The Book of Ben Sira in Hebrew. A Text Edition of all Extant Hebrew Manuscripts & A Synopsis of all Parallel Hebrew Ben Sira Texts*, VTSup LXVIII, Leiden 1997. I follow Beentjes with respect to the enumeration (p. 16). Although MS B is more extensive, his enumeration continues after B I (10:19–11:10) and B II (15:1–16:7) with B III–XXI (30:11–51:30), in spite of the fact that a page containing 33:4–35:10 is missing between B V–VI and 2 pages containing 38:27c–39:15b are missing between B VIII–IX 2 (see 2.2.5).

<sup>12</sup> *Facsimiles of the Fragments Hitherto Recovered of the Book Ecclesiasticus in Hebrew*, Oxford-Cambridge 1901.

<sup>13</sup> Y. Yadin, *The Ben Sira Scroll from Masada*, Jerusalem 1965. The text of the introduction 44:1–15 is written in column VII and the photo of the manuscript can be seen in illustration 8.

- Apparently 47:22a–f; 48:15a–16b and 49:4a–6b do not exhibit any text-critical problems.
- In the facsimile of 49:14a נוצר lacks a ן- in [ן]נוצר. A serious problem emerges with respect to כהניך. In spite of the fact that the reading in MS B is indisputable, many commentators emend it nonetheless without text-critical evaluation or reference. G is generally used as the basis of the emendation: כהנוך ‘as *Enoch*’.

### 3.1.2 *A new text edition of Sirach 50*

The text of 50:1–28 in its Hebrew version is only available in MS B. Sir. 50:1–28 is written on pages B XIX recto, B XIX verso and B XX recto. The text is text-critically established on the basis of the facsimiles and the photos.

### 3.1.3 *Textual criticism of Sirach 50*

A number of verses have been damaged by the effects of moisture on the fold of page B XIX verso and B XIX recto. Damage to pages B XX and B XXI is significantly greater.

The effects of moisture and the fact that both sides of the page have been used for writing have led to the appearance of a small number of holes on part of B XIX line 17 (50:9b). Page B XIX lines 3 and 4 is soiled on both sides at 50:12b,d. The most recent edition of Beentjes carefully indicates the aforementioned damage. Given past negative results, Beentjes is extremely reserved at this juncture, providing only the letters that can be clearly documented.<sup>14</sup> Segal, on the other hand, is far less reserved.<sup>15</sup> He supplements the text with a retro-translation based on G<sup>16</sup> in order to provide as complete a Hebrew version as possible for publication.

In his first edition, Peters<sup>17</sup> tends to provide regular supplements or textual emendations based on G. Smend does the same on the basis of his own research into the original text, providing often valuable

<sup>14</sup> We share Beentjes critique of Vattioni, *Ecclesiastico*, Napoli 1968, together with his comments in relation to Segal and Ben-Hayyim in ‘The Reliability of Text-Editions in Ben Sira 41,14–16’, *BFTF* 49 (1988) 188–194.

<sup>15</sup> M.H. Segal, ספר בן־סירא השלם, Jerusalem 1958.

<sup>16</sup> E. Tov is of the opinion that retro-translation from the Septuagint text would appear to be productive, a procedure which he supports as a means to solve detail questions. See *Textual Criticism* (p. 117) and *Text-Critical Use of the Septuagint* (pp. 57–89).

<sup>17</sup> N. Peters, *Der jüngst wiederaufgefundene hebräische Text des Buches Ecclesiasticus*, Freiburg i.B. 1902.

supplements which sometimes differ from the facsimile.<sup>18</sup> It is apparent that commentators from around 1900 focus primarily on an exhaustive comparison of H with G and S, whereby priority is mostly given to G.

The exegesis which follows in the remainder of the present volume is based on M and MS B, which constitute the foundations of the Jerusalem edition, henceforth referred to as Ben-Hayyim,<sup>19</sup> and the most recent edition of Beentjes (1997). A detailed analysis of the facsimiles and the most recent photos, however, suggest that alternative perspectives remain possible with respect to the textual criticism of Sirach 50. Our goal is to establish the exegesis on a text edition which is as complete as possible, based on the manuscripts and complemented here and there on matters of detail. The following cola in 50:1–28 are subject to text-critical discussion:

### Sir. 50:8a

Smend and Ben-Hayyim suggest כִּנְצַפְעֹנִי, Schechter, Lévi, Peters and Segal read כִּנְיָ בְעֹנִי, which is likewise proposed by Beentjes. Neither the facsimile nor the photo, however, offer any support for the final יָ. While Smend proposes in his commentary that we read כִּנְצַנִי עֹנִים, this requires the emendation of the word עֹנִי which is perfectly legible.<sup>20</sup>

The reading with פ as fourth consonant would appear to be possible at first sight. Commentators mostly read a כ in בְעֹנִי at this juncture in line with the suggestion of Schechter, Peters, Segal and Beentjes. On the basis of the facsimile and the photo, however, I suggest that כִּנְיָ, instead of כִּנְפ- or כִּנְב-, is the most probable reading for 50:8a: כִּנְצַנִי עֹנִי בִימֵי מוֹעֵד.

It is possible that a genitive of the pluralis diversitatis נְצַנִים (only in Song 2:12, Gesenius §118 s.) follows כ to be read as כִּנְצַנִי. Given that this genitive followed by עֹנִי in status c. (Joüon/Muraoka §129r) stands in apposition (§131b), it is possible to understand these words

<sup>18</sup> R. Smend, *Die Weisheit des Jesus Sirach erklärt*, Berlin 1906.

<sup>19</sup> *The Book of Ben Sira, Text, Concordance and an Analysis of the Vocabulary*, Jerusalem 1973. This edition constitutes a milestone in text-critical research. The book was prepared by a team of researchers from the 'Academy of the Hebrew Language and the Shrine of the Book' and is signed by Z. Ben-Hayyim in their name.

<sup>20</sup> R. Smend, *Die Weisheit des Buches Sirach. Hebräisch und Deutsch*, Berlin 1906. Smend includes כִּנְצַפְעֹנִי בִימֵי מוֹעֵד in his text edition and suggests in a footnote that we read כִּנְצַנִי עֹנִים (p. 58). Given the fact that neither G nor S offer an alternative at this juncture, he is obliged to make a textual emendation in his commentary: *Die Weisheit des Jesus Sirach erklärt*, Berlin 1906 (p. 482).

as a genitivus objectivus (§129f) to be translated ‘*as flowering sprigs in the springtime*’.

### Sir. 50:9b

Damage to the text makes reading difficult at this juncture. Ben-Hayyim suggests **הבניה אציל**, although he has his doubts about the reading. Our analysis of the facsimile, however, would tend to support his proposal as the most probable reading. It is clear, nevertheless, that a number of letters are missing from both pages of B XIX. Segal suggests that we read **יל [צ]א [בבית]** while Beentjes proposes an alternative reading **יל [ב.] ה [א.] יל**.

Upon closer inspection of 50:21b the most likely reading is a **צ** which is recognisable on the upper side and the lower left side. In the missing segment of the line on the reverse side of B XIX-verso one can distinguish the form of a **ג**, a **כ**, or a **ר**. The most probable reading is therefore **הבניה אציל**. The noun **הבניה** is well documented in Ex. 25:9 signifying ‘*a pattern*’, which is proposed as **אציל** ‘*exceptional, exquisite*’, just as the ‘exceptional ones’ among the Israelites (Moses together with Aaron, Nadab and Abihu and the 70 elders) beheld God on the mountain in Ex. 24:11.

### Sir. 50:12b

All the consulted editions accept the reading **נצב**. While the text is damaged, the reading is well documented on account of the photos.

### Sir. 50:16b

Beentjes’ edition lacks the **כ** prior to **הצצרות**, in spite of the fact that it is unmistakably present in the facsimile **בהצצרות** and is provided in the text of the other editions without discussion.

### Sir. 50:20a

Ben-Hayyim is alone in noting the **יד(י) [י]** with an additional **ו**. The facsimile and the photo suggest, however, that we are almost certainly dealing with a slip of the pen at this juncture. The accepted reading **ידיו** remains unproblematic.

### Sir. 50:20d

In contrast to the other editions, Segal is the only one to have **הפאר** instead of **התפאר**. Based on the photos, however, Segal’s reading is evidently to be preferred.

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המבונן לטוב עליו:	וירימו היכל קושי
המקום את הדיכונות:	עומה יאמר זכרו
וינבד לזכר זכרו:	ועמא את הדיכונות
ונם הוא טלח פנים:	במבונן ירש השדך כותנך
ונם נישנו נקדה:	כוסף אם טלד נער
ועל כלותי תפארתא:	ושם ושת נאטש נקדו
שמען בן יוחנן הכהן:	עזל אחיו ותפארת עמו
ובימיו חזק היכל:	אשר בחרו נקד הבת
אשר חכם כהמנו:	אשר בחרו נטרה מקוה
פנת מעון ביהכל מלך:	אשר בימיו נבט קיו
ובחוק עזרו בניו:	הדואג לעמו מחתך
ובצאת מבית הפלפי:	מה נדדר בדישנחו מאהל
וכיחמלא מבין בנימין:	כסוכב אור מבין עמים
וכקשת ער אסמנך:	וכשמש מארקו אל היכל המלך
וכשושן על יכלים:	בביתו עבד מועד
וכאש לבונה על המטה:	כפרח לו ענף קיץ
הנאחו על אבני הפין:	בבליהם איל
וכעץ שמן מרוה ענף:	קיתו עץ מלא ענף

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Page B XIX recto

Sir. 50:12c–50:10b

12c,d	: המכוונן לכבוד עולם	וירימו היכל קדש
13a,b	: המקים את הרבתינו	נחמיה יאדר זכרו
13c,d	: ויצב דלתים נבריה	וירפא את הריסתינו
14a,b	: וגם הוא נלקח פנים	מעט נוצר על הארץ כהניך
15a,b	: וגם נותו נפקדה	כיוסף אם גולד נבר
16a,b	: ועל כל חי תפארת אדם	ושם ושח ואנוש נפקדו
1a,b	: שמעון בן יוחנן הכהן	גדול אחיו ותפארת עמו
1c,d	: ובימיו חזק היכל	אשר בדורו נפקד הבית
2a,b	: אשיח בם בהמונו	אשר בדורו נכרה מקוה
3a,b	: פנות מעון בהיכל מלך	אשר בימיו נבנה קיר
4a,b	: ומחזק עירו מצר	הדואג לעמו מחתף
5a,b	: ובצאתו מבית הפרכת	מה נהדר בהשניחו מאהל
6a,b	: וכירח מלא מבין בימי מועד	ככוכב אור מבין עבים
7a,b	: וכקשת נראתה בענן	וכשמש משרקת אל היכל המלך
8a,b	: וכשושן על יבלי מים	כנצני ענפי בימי מועד
8c,9a	: וכאש לבונה על המנחה	כפרח לבנון בימי קיץ
9b,c	: הנאחו על אבני הפץ	ככלי זהב [ת]בנ[י]ת א[צ]יל
10a,b	: וכעץ שמן מרוה ענף	כזית רענן מלא נרנר



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והתלכין בדרך תפארתו	במנוחתו בדרך סוד
ויהדר ערבת מקדשו	בשלותו על מוסד הוד
והוא נטב על מערכתו	למקבלו טעום מיד אחו
כישתליו ירוש לבטן	סוככו ל שורת בעם
כלב אחרון סכודים	זיקימותו כשרב עמל
בדרך כל קהל ישראל	ואשני יי בודם
ולסדר מערכת עליון	שר בלותו לשונמוטו
בזכרון תפארתו	אזריש בע אחרון חכהעם
להוכיח לפי עליון	ירישו וישמש קול אדיר
ויפלו על פניהם ארבעה	כל בשעו יחדו נמחרו
לפע קדושי ישראל	להשתחוות לפי עליון
ועל המצן השירי ערני	ועם השיר קולו
בשגלה לפע רחום	נידכו כל עם הארץ
ומשפטיו חזקו אליו	שר בלותו לשורת מוכח
על כל קהל ישראל	אזירד ומא אידון
ובש יי תפארתו	בכבודו בשפטו
ועל המצן השירי ערני	וישם לנפול שנת
ועתה ידעו את יי אלהי ישראל	ועתה ידעו את יי אלהי ישראל

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Page B XIX verso

Sir. 50:11a-22b

11a,b	: והתלבשו בנדי תפארת	בעטותו בנדי כבוד
11c,d	: ויהדר עזרת מקדש	בעלותו על מזבח הוד
12a,b	: והוא נצב על מערכות	בקבלו נתחים מיד אחיו
12c,d	: כשתילי ארזים בלבנון	סביב לו עטרת בנים
12e,13a	: כל בני אהרן בכבודם	ויקיפוהו כערבי נהל
13b,c	: נגד כל קהל ישראל	ואשי ייי בידם
14a,b	: ולסדר מערכות עליון	עד כלותו לשרת מזבח
16a,b	: בחצצרות מקשה	או יריעו בני אהרן הכהנים
16c,d	: להזכיר לפני עליון	ויריעו וישמיעו קול אדיר
17a,b	: ויפלו על פניהם ארצה	כל בשר יחדו נמהרו
17c,d	: לפני קדוש ישראל	להשתחות לפני עליון
18a,b	: ועל המון העריכו גרו	ויתן השיר קולו
19a,b	: בתפלה לפני רחום	וירנו כל עם הארץ
19c,d	: ומשפטיו הניע אליו	עד כלותו לשרת מזבח
20a,b	: על כל קהל ישראל	או ירד ונשא ידיו
20c,d	: ובשם יי תפאר	וברכת יי בשפתיו
21a,b	: [מכ]ר[כין] אל מפניו	וישנו לנפל שנית
22a,b	: עתה ברכו נא את יי אלהי ישראל המפליא לעשות בארץ	

וַיִּצְטַהֵר כִּרְצוֹנוֹ:	הַמַּגִּד לְאֵדִים מִדְּרָחִים
וַיְהִי כִשְׁלֹשֶׁת בַּיָּמִים:	לְכֶם חֲכָמַת לִבְבִי
וַיִּקְסֵם לוֹ בְּרִית פִּעֻמָּה:	יֵאמְרוּ הִיא שֶׁמֶעַן חֶסֶדָּו
כִּי מִי שֶׁמִּים:	אֲשֶׁר לֹא יִתְּלוּ וְלֹא יִרְשֶׁוּ
וְהַשְׁלוּשִׁית אֵינֶנּוּ עַם:	בְּשֶׁנֶּה גִוִּים קִינְהוּ נְשִׂאֵי
וַיְהִי נֶבֶל הַדִּיר כִּשְׂכָם:	יִנְשְׁבוּ שֶׁעִיר וּפְלִשְׁתִּי
לִשְׁמַעְעָן בֶּן יִשְׁעָן לְעֶרְבָן קָדָה:	מִדֶּסֶס שְׂכָל וּמוֹשֵׁל אוֹפֵנֶס
וְהַיָּד הַבְּעִי עַתְבֹּנוֹת:	אֲשֶׁר עֵבֵעַ בְּתוֹר לִבִּי
וַעֲתָן עַל לִבִּי יַחֲכֵם:	אֲשֶׁר אֵשׁ בְּאֵלֵה יְהוָה
כִּי פִדִית מִבְּנוֹת נֶפֶשׁ:	כִּי יִרְאוּתֵי חַיִּים אֶחְלֹלְךָ
וּמִיֵּד שְׂאוּל הַיְצִלְתֶּנּוּ:	אֶסְפְּרָה יִשְׁמַךְ מִעֲשׂוֹ חַיִּי
מִשׁוֹט דִּבְתִּלְשׁוֹן וּמִשְׁפַּת שִׁטְיָב:	חִישְׁתָּ בְּשֶׁרִי מִשְׁחַת
שְׂרִתֶּנּוּ כִּי וּבַחֲקֵדָךְ:	נִפְתַּחַת מִדִּבְתֵּי עַם
וּמִיֵּד מִבְּזִי שֵׁי נֶפֶשׁ:	בְּעֵד קִמִּי הַיְצִיטָה לִּי
וּמִמִּשְׁקוֹת שֶׁלֹּהֶב:	בְּמִיֵּקִישׁ עַל פִּילֵעַ
מִדְּרָחִים וּפְלִיֵּאֵם:	מִבְּנוֹת עֵרֹת דְּוִישְׁתֶּנּוּ
וְהַיָּד לְשׁוֹן מִדְּמָה:	מִקְבֹּת אֲשֶׁר לֹא יִנְכַחַה
	יִנְאֻפְתִּי זִמְהָ וּפְלִיֵּאֵם

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Page B XX recto

Sir. 50:22c–51:5b

22c,d	: ויעשהו כרצונו	המנדל אדם מרחם
23a,b	: ויהי בשלום ביניכם	יתן לכם חכמת לבב
24a,b	: ויקם לו ברית פינחס	יאמן עם שמעון חסדו
24c,d	: כימי שמים	אשר לא יכרת לו ולזרעו
25a,b	: והשלישית איננו עם	בשני נרים קצה נפשי
26a,b	: ונוי נבל הדר בשכם	יושבי שעיר ופלשת
27a,b	: מוסר שכל ומושל אופנים לשמעון בן ישוע בן אלעזר בן סירא:	
27c,d	: ואשר הביע בתבונות	אשר ניבע בפתור לבן
28a,b	: ונותן על לבו יחכם	אשרי איש באלה יחנה
28c,1	: אהללך אלהי ישעי א[.]. יך אלהי אבי:	כי יראת ייי היים
1c,d	: כי פדית ממות נפשי	אספרה שמך מעוז חיי
2a,b	: ומיד שאול הצלת רנלי	חשכת בשרי משהת
2c,d	: משוט דבת לשון ומשפת שטי כזב	פציהני מדבת עם
3a,b	: עזרתני כרוב חסדך	נגד קמי הייתה לי
3c,d	: ומיד מבקשי נפשי	ממוקש צופי סלע
4a,b	: וממצוקות שלהבת [. . . .]	מרבות צרות הושעתני
4c,d	: מרחם [.]. ום לאמ[.].	מכבות אש לאין פחה
5a,b	: וחצי לשון מרמה	משפתי זמה וטפלי שקר

**Sir. 50:21b**

The first word of this colon is illegible. Schechter's proposed reading *העם כלו* 'the people all of them' cannot be discerned in the facsimile or the photo.<sup>21</sup> In all probability, Ben-Hayyim discerns an א in the facsimile of the second word of this colon leading him to read אֵל, which occurs as the divine name 61 times in the book of Ben Sira. Upon closer inspection, the vague contours of אֵל מַפְנִי [ . . . ] ר [ . . . ] would appear to be present. For this reason we propose the reading מְבָרְכִי, a *pu'al* participle 3 p.pl. in status c. of בָּרַךְ.<sup>22</sup> This rare verbal form can be found in relation to אֵל in Num. 22:6; Ps. 37:22 and in its cognate form in Deut. 33:13 and 1 Chron. 17:27.

**Sir. 50:24c**

The word י' [ . . . ] רַה is uncertain in the text edition of Beentjes. A small portion of page B XX is missing. All other text editions give preference to a כ, which is evidently legible on the photo. This makes the reading יְכַרְתֶּם certain and establishes a strong word combination.

**Sir. 50:27c**

Based albeit on the facsimile, Schechter notes the reading לְבָן but considers לְבו to be less problematic. Peters omits both cola of 50:27c,d completely. Lévi and Smend follow Schechter's reading, which has its roots in the prioritisation of G. Schechter's textual emendation also involves the preceding word בְּפִתּוֹר in an effort to obtain a meaningful reading.

Based on the facsimile, however, בְּפִתּוֹר לְבָן should be given preference. This reading fits well in terms of content with the characteristic usage of the wisdom tradition in which the pure lifestyle of Joseph and Daniel is the subject of praise. Besides 'white' the term לְבָן can also mean 'clean, pure'. This interpretation is clearly recognisable in the protest against undignified behaviour in Mt. 23:27 and Acts 23:3. Ben Sira refers in 50:27c to the purity of the explanation or interpretation of his insights.

<sup>21</sup> S. Schechter & C. Taylor, *The Wisdom of Ben Sira, Portions of the Book of Ecclesiasticus*, Cambridge 1899 & 1896/Amsterdam 1979. Schechter and Taylor suggest the reading *העם כלו* as a supplement to the damaged text in 50:21. They propose a divergent reading in 50:9b with *בכלי* instead of *ככלי*. In 50:12e they correctly read *כערבי* instead of Beentjes' *כערבו*, and in 50:16c they read *להזכיר* as *להזכיר*.

<sup>22</sup> G corresponds with this reading.

### 3.2 *Demarcation texts in Sirach 44–49*

In his personal version of Israel's history, Ben Sira draws his audience's attention to Simon the High Priest, the climax of the Praise of the Fathers of all times. There can be little doubt that he knew Simon personally and that the latter was still alive at the time of writing.

Ben Sira structures his concept of history in three parts by way of *demarcation texts* within which framework he provides his audience with a reformulation of the tradition surrounding a number of important historical figures. Via accentuation and the imaginative use of language he prepares his audience for a climax in which the remarkable personality of Simon functions as High Priest par excellence.

One would be mistaken if one were to imagine that Ben Sira's purpose was to glorify the person of Simon. This vision of the text, of which Lee is a representative, presumes that Ben Sira was endeavouring to imitate a literary form employed in rhetoric: *panegyric*, *eulogy* or *encomium*.<sup>23</sup> Neyrey maintains that the primary purpose of this literary form is the praise of a particular individual.<sup>24</sup> Ben Sira's aim in rewriting Israel's history, however, is clearly the commemoration of the men of repute whose worthy deeds together with the activities of Simon offer a guide for the future. In the Torah of life, which he identifies with wisdom, he points out a way of approaching the problems surrounding the legitimisation of temple worship rooted in the concept *יראת יהוה היים* 'the fear of YHWH is life'.

#### 3.2.1 *Sir. 44:1–15 Introduction*

The introduction to the 'Praise of the Fathers of All Times' is written in bicolae.

<sup>23</sup> T.R. Lee, *Studies in the Form of Sirach 44–50*, SBLDS 75, Atlanta 1979. Lee's study focuses on literary genres from the Hellenistic rhetorical tradition (p. 23) and endeavours to establish a parallel for the form of the Praise of the Fathers which differs from Psalm 78, 105, 106, 135, 136; Nehemiah 9 and Ezekiel 20 and from Judith 5:5–21, 16:1–17 and Acts 7:2–53. As alternative for the *Beispielreihe* from the deuteronomistic tradition (p. 32) Lee opts for an *encomium* (p. 82). His method of research takes an existing form as its point of departure which was adopted by Ben Sira in his presentation of the content of the Praise of the Fathers.

<sup>24</sup> J.H. Neyrey, 'Josephus' *Vita* and the Encomium: A Native Model of Personality', *JStJ* XXV (1994) 177–206. Neyrey elaborates on the *encomium*, a list including literary forms used for the training of students in association with the *progymnasmata*. He defines an encomium as "a speech of praise, either of some person or place" (p. 179). Given its limitation to the life of a single individual, the encomium is not the most appropriate formal designation of the Praise of the Fathers.

In the following representation of the text of M and MS B, both versions are telescoped together in an accumulative model designed to make differences and similarities more evident by way of typographical variation:

### Sir. 44:1–15 in M and MS B

שבת אבות עולם :

אה	אהללה נא אנשי חסד	אבותינו בדורותם:	1
	רב כבוד חלק עליין	וגדלו מימות עולם:	2
בנבורם	דורי ארץ במלכותם	ואנשי שם בנבורם:	3
	ה'עצים בחנותם	וחזוי כל בנבואתם:	3
	שרי גוים במזמתם	ורוזנים במתקרותם:	4
	חכמי שיח בספרתם	ומשלים במשמרותם:	4
	חוקרי מזמור על חוק	נושאי משל בכתב:	5
	אנשי חיל וסומכי כח	ושיקטים על מכונתם:	6
	כל אלה בדורם	ומימי תפארתם :	7
	יש מהם הניחו שם	להשתנות בנחלתם:	8
	ויש מהם אשר אין לו זכר	וישבתו כאשר שבתו:	9
	כאשר לא היו היו	ובניהם מאהריהם:	9
	ואולם אלה אנשי חסד	ותקותם ל[א השב]ת:	10
	עם זרעם נאמן טובם	ונחלתם ל[בני בניהם]:	11
	בבריהם עמד זרעם	וצאצאיהם [בעבור] :	12M)
	עד עולם יעמד זכרם	וצדקתם (וכבודם) לא ימת[ח]:	13
	ות[יה]ם בשלום נאספה	ושמם חי לדור ודור:	14

Enlarged bold	<b>חסד</b>	: MS B agrees with M
Bracketed [ ] reduced	[ בניהם ]	: not in MS B and M (reconstructed from G)
Normal	שבת	: only transmitted in MS B
Normal bold	<b>ושמם</b>	: only transmitted in M

In M, 44:15 is followed by a white line (l. 23) and by Noah (44:17) on l. 24.  
In MS B, 44:14 on p. XIII verso (l. 17) is followed by Enoch (44:16) on l. 18.

**Praise of the Fathers of All Times**

- 1a,b I will now praise the men **who performed good deeds**,  
our **fathers** in their generations.
- 2a,b **Much honour has the Most High apportioned** (them)  
**and his greatness since** the days of old,  
3a,b dwellers of the earth in their kingdoms,  
men of name in their vigour,  
3c,d the counsellors **with their insight**  
**and seers of all things in their prophecy**,  
4a,b **leaders of peoples in their deliberations**  
**and jurists in their judgements**,  
4c,d **teachers of wisdom with their writings**  
**and masters of the rules of service**,  
5a,b **scholars of the meter of the psalmody**  
**and reciters of the proverbs** of the Scriptures  
6a,b **mighty men who exercise power**  
**and who enjoy silence** in their homes.
- 7a,b **All these** \*were honoured\* **among their contemporaries**  
and in their days (was) their glory.
- 8a,b **Some of them have left behind a name**  
**and in turn** their inheritors answer.
- 9a,b **But others among them, for those** there is **no remem-**  
**brance**,  
they will remain as they have remained,  
9c,d **as if they had never existed**  
nor their children after them.
- 10a,b **Whereas they are first, the men who perform good**  
**deeds**  
and their hope (righteousness, M) shall not falter,  
11a,b among **their descendants their worth turned out to**  
**be reliable**  
**and their heritage** for their children's children.
- (12a,b in M: In their covenant their descendants remain  
and their children on account of them.)
- 13a,b **To eternity** their remembrance shall **remain**  
and their righteousness (honour, M) shall not be wiped  
out.
- 14a,b [Their body is in p]ea[ce united  
and their name lives] **from** [generation] **to generation**.
- 15a,b \*[Their wisdom] **the assembly** [shall hand down]  
**and their praise the community shall proclaim**.\*

The preferred reading in M is marked \* . . . \* in 44:7a, 15 (Bmargin and M).

A supplementary reading based on M is marked (. . .) in 44:12.

Text supplemented on the basis of G is marked [. . . . .] in 44:14a–15a.



*Textual Criticism*

The text of MS B has been transmitted with a small number of marginal notes and an additional line 15. With the exception of a few minor alterations the text agrees more or less with M. M50:12a,b constitutes an exception in this regard.

Variant readings in M, MS B and Bmargin:

- 1b M has אַתְּ nota accusativi, matching Bmargin.  
 2a Bmargin's לָהֶם 'to them' supports הִלַּק as verb.  
 2b M has וַנְדַלָּהּ, MS B וַנְדַלּוּ.  
 3a,b In MS B (also in G). These cola are missing in M.  
 3a In Bmargin רֹדְדֵי 'masters'.  
 3b Bmargin בַּנְבוֹרָהּ is a variant of MS B בַּנְבוֹרָם.  
 3c M has וַיַּעֲצִים instead of הַיּוֹעֲצִים in MS B.  
 4a M has נָוִי (also in G) instead of נְוִים in MS B.  
 4b M has בְּמַחְקָקָם instead of בְּמַחְקְרוֹתָם in MS B.  
 4c Bmargin has בְּמַס as a variant of בְּסַפְרָתָם in MS B  
 5a M has עַל קוֹ 'according to the rule'  
 MS B עַל הַוִּקֵּץ 'according to the meter' and Bmargin has הַקּוֹ.  
 7a M adds נִכְבְּרוּ 'were honoured', in line with Bmargin.  
 8b In Bmargin לְהַשְׁתַּעֲפוֹת *hithpa'el*,  
 לְהַשְׁתַּעֲפוֹת *hiph'il* שְׁעָה 'to look around' are secondary when compared  
 with MS B לְהַשְׁתַּעֲפוֹת 'to answer in turn' *hishpa'al* עֲנָה.  
 9a M has the abbreviated form שְׂאִין instead of אִישׁר אִין in MS B.  
 10a M has אִוְלָם instead of וְאִוְלָם in MS B.  
 10b According to Yadin M begins with ..וַצִּי 'and their righteousness'  
 MS B has וְהַקְוָהּ 'and their hope'.  
 11a M has אִם instead of עַם in MS B.  
 12a M weakens the meaning of זֵרַעַם 'their descendents'.  
 MS B lacks 50:12 in contrast to M (also in G).  
 13a M has זֵרַעַם as in 12a.  
 MS B has זְכָרָם 'their memory'.  
 13b M has לֹא יִמְחַדּוּ instead of [..] וַצִּדְקָתָם in MS B.  
 14a M has נֹאסְפָה instead of נֹאסְפָם in MS B.  
 15 In M and written vertically in Bmargin, missing in MS B.  
 קָדַלְ עֲדָה וְתַהֲלָהֶם יִסְפֵּר קָדַל 'their wisdom the assembly  
 shall hand down and their praise the community shall proclaim'.

On seven occasions we find a word written *plene* in MS B in contrast to M: וְהוֹזִי in 44:3d, וְרוֹזְנִים in 4b, הַוִּקְרִי in 5a, נִוְשָׂאִי in 5b, וְסוֹמְכִי in 6a, וְשׁוֹקֵטִים in 6b and בְּדוֹרָם in 7a. The textual emendation in 44:13a with זֵרַעַם can be explained on the basis of the addition of 44:12 in M. MS B enjoys priority with זְכָרָם. Based on a reconstruction, both MS B and M have 108 words.

In his text edition of M, Yadin presumes *an archetypal text con-*

sisting of Bmargin and M, which he dates much earlier than MS B. In this early stage of transmission it is possible that errors or deliberate revision on the part of the copyists have found their way into the text.

We conclude that each verse of the H text must be established on the basis of a text-critical comparison of the variants in M, MS B or the margin of B.

### *Interpretation*

The superscription remains for the most part undiscussed.<sup>25</sup> While it is possible to read שְׁבַח as a perfect *pi'el* 3p.s., the substantive meaning deserves priority in a superscription. Praise is expressed in hope (10b), inheritance (11a), covenant (12a in M), remembrance (13a) and righteousness (13b), which are made concrete in the men of name (44:3b,8a), who perform good deeds and live in fidelity to the covenant (הסדר). The word combination אֲבוֹתָנוּ עוֹלָם is not found in Tanakh. The lack of preposition suggests we are dealing with a general temporal reference intended as a criterion of quality. The context is determined by the reference to אֲבוֹתֵינוּ 'our fathers' (44:1b), who are situated בְּדוֹרוֹתָם 'in their own generations', just as Simon will later be situated 'in his days' (50:1–24).

Twelve groups enjoy centrality in 44:3a–6b, each of which gives form to the אֲנָשֵׁי הַסֵּד in the midst of the peoples.<sup>26</sup> Their good deeds provide a genuine concretisation of wisdom in culture, cult and society. The מוֹשְׁלִים בְּמִשְׁמְרֵיהֶם 'the masters of the rules of service' (4d) constitute an exceptional category on account of the verb מָשַׁל (50:27).

The twelve groups are accentuated by reading the Most High as subject who 'apportions' הִלָּק much honour and glory (44:1–2). The

<sup>25</sup> A. Minissale, *La versione greca del Siracide*, AnBib 133, Rome 1995. Minissale also ignores the superscription (pp. 128f.). He remains inconsistent, however, in his preference for the texts of B, Bmargin and M. He follows Bmargin with respect to רוּדִי (44:3a), יוֹעֲצִים (44:3c), נִכְבְּרוּ (44:7a, also in M). He prefers M with respect to גִּי (44:4a), שְׁאִין (44:9a) and וְנִכְבְּרוּם (44:13b) and adopts Yadin's reconstruction in 44:10b וַצִּדְקָתָם לֹא הִכְרַתָּ (p. 37). C.T.R. Hayward, *The Jewish Temple. A Non-Biblical Sourcebook*, London 1996. Hayward explains the superscription and translates with 'The Praise of the Fathers of the World' (p. 41).

<sup>26</sup> P.C. Beentjes, 'The "Praise of the Famous" and its Prologue', *BTFT* 45 (1984) 374–383. Beentjes prefers 'people' (singularis) in 44:4a M and G above MS B, insisting that unity is lacking in Israel. The pluralis suggests a universal application in 44:1–15 and links up with Adam in 49:16.

parallel text in Deut. 32:3–9 (the song of Moses) sees the Most High apportion the הֵלֶק *'the inheritance'* to his people. This parallel clarifies the difference between the reading of הֵלֶק as a verb and as a noun.<sup>27</sup> In supporting the latter, Skehan/Di Lella ignore the dynamics of human behaviour by treating the inheritance of the Almighty as an ever-present given, apportioned by God to his people in perpetuity. The fact that Ben Sira makes a distinction with יֵשׁ . . . וְיֵשׁ (44:8–14) and thereby introduces a choice in one's behaviour as a condition for inheriting God's promise in line with prophetic preaching makes such an interpretation problematic. Some are indeed remembered while others disappear into nameless obscurity.

It follows that Ben Sira does not offer a paradigm which can be filled out in the course of his presentation of history with the men of name from Enoch to Nehemiah. On the contrary, the names to which he refers are placed in a context of הַסֹּד and כְּבוֹד, which give expression to the greatness apportioned to human beings by God as הַפְּאֻדָּה *'glory'*, and are characteristic of Adam and Simon. It is within the framework of the aforementioned glory that the hope, goodness, righteousness and peace mentioned in 44:10–14 are given concrete form in human behaviour. Human persons continue to be remembered by name<sup>28</sup> on this basis alone. 44:12 is documented in M and G. Yadin, followed by Martone,<sup>29</sup> considers 44:12 to be the original version, both authors tending to ignore the difficulties surrounding the content of 44:13a with the reading זֶרַעַם instead of זְכָרָם *'their remembrance'* in MS B. The repetition of זֶרַעַם in 44:12 and 13 is awk-

<sup>27</sup> P.W. Skehan/A.A. Di Lella, *The Wisdom of Ben Sira*, New York 1987. P.W. Skehan, 'Staves, and Nails, and Scribal Slips (Ben Sira 44:2–5)', *BASOR* 200 (1970) 66–71. As a consequence of Skehan's explanation, Israel's status as inheritance of God can be considered an established fact. Nevertheless, prophetic criticism is not directed against this conviction, which has its basis in God's promise, but rather against the covenant partner who fails to maintain the Torah of life.

<sup>28</sup> N. Peters, *Der jüngst wieder aufgefundenene hebräische Text des Buches Ecclesiasticus*, Freiburg i.B. 1902. Peters argues for זָנָה, although this verbal form is not found in Tanakh (p. 227).

<sup>29</sup> C. Martone, 'The Ben Sira MSS from Qumran and Masada', in P.C. Beentjes ed., *The Book of Ben Sira in Modern Research*, Berlin 1997, 81–94. Martone notes the absence of 44:12 in MS B. זֶרַעַם in M (44:11a; 12a and 13a) agrees with G. In my opinion 44:12 is omitted for a different reason: MS B 44:13 has זְכָרָם *'their remembrance'* instead of זֶרַעַם *'their descendents'* in M and G which forms a continuation of 44:10a,b together with עַד עוֹלָם יֵעֲמָד *'to remain in eternity'*. The parallel established by *'remembrance'* between 44:1–15 and 50:16d points to the centrality of the notion in the Praise of the Fathers.

ward. Yadin therefore translates 44:13a *'and for ever their seeds abideth'*, but it remains difficult to reconcile this translation with 44:11 in which the notion of eternity may be applicable to 'remembrance' but not to 'descendants'. The contrast established by יש...ויש is thus made significant in a group who do not enjoy 'remembrance' (44:9a-d) and a positively esteemed group, i.e. the men of name (44:10-11,13-15). This contrast continues to function in the announcement of judgement (48:15a-16b) and in the concluding retrospective which results in the destruction of Jerusalem (49:4a-6b). In an evocative manner, Ben Sira calls upon his audience to look back in history to Enoch, Joseph, Shem, Seth and Adam. With respect to Joseph, a parallel is established between נזירו *'his mortal remains'* and 44:14a, in which we read the reconstruction ונויהם בשלום נאספה *'their body is united in peace'*. Ben Sira concludes his introduction (44:15b) with the theme of the praise of the assembly (קהל) to which he returns in the glorious description of Simon in 50:1-24.

Ben Sira's representation of history does not reflect a Hellenistic environment in which one might expect to find an *encomium* praising one of the great men of a bygone era. By establishing a contrast between two groups, he places his introduction 44:1-15 firmly within a wisdom context.

### 3.2.2 *Sir. 45:25e-26c Exhortatory blessing*

25e,f : המעטר אתכם כבוד ועתה ברכו נא את יי השוב  
 26 : ויתן לכם חכמת לבו למען לא ישכח טובכם אמורתכם לדורות עולם

25e,f Now then bless YHWH who is good,  
 who crowns you with honour.  
 26a,b,c He gives you the wisdom of his heart,  
 so that no one shall forget the good which was entrusted  
 to you  
 and what was said to you in the generations to come.

#### *Interpretation*

Ben Sira addresses himself in Sir. 45:25e to his intended audience with the appeal ועתה *'now then'*. He refers to them indirectly on three occasions with the suffix 2p.pl. and exhorts them to join him in blessing יי *'YHWH'*. After this YHWH is the acting subject who gives the חכמת לבו *'wisdom of his heart'* (genitivus epexegeticus determining the quality of the given wisdom).

In the literary form of an exhortatory blessing, Ben Sira provides

the description of eight figures from the Torah, from Noah to Phinehas, summarised in 45:25e–26c. He places a particularly positive accent on *הַטוֹב יְיָ הַטוֹב* 'YHWH, who is good' and *הַמַּעֲטָר כְּבוֹד* 'He who crowns with honour'. A direct parallel can be found in 50:24a, in which the community of Israel is called upon to *בְּרַכּוּ נָא אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל* 'Now bless YHWH, the God of Israel'.

The same positive accent in the preceding description of Aaron not only highlights the division between the 'lawless' group surrounding Korah and Aaron (45:18–19) but also the significance of the priestly covenant with Phinehas (45:23–24). The sharp contrast between Aaron and his adversaries is completely absent in the case of Simon. It is only in 50:25–26 that we find a contrast between Ben Sira and the Samaritans, *אֵינָנוּ עַם* 'a non-nation'. Phinehas is the third High Priest in succession. He determines the cohesion between the detailed descriptions of Aaron (45:6–22) and Simon (50:1–24).<sup>30</sup>

The intention of Ben Sira's positive conclusion to part I (44:16–45:25d) is clear from the discourse running from Aaron to Phinehas. From 44:21 onwards YHWH is acting subject, 'the Holy One' (45:6a) who exalted *אֶהְרֵן לְמִטָּה לְוִי* 'Aaron from the tribe of Levi'. This translation seems so evident that it makes questions concerning a second interpretation of *לְמִטָּה לְוִי* 'by the staff of Levi' seem meaningless.<sup>31</sup> On closer inspection, however, this second interpretation does not appear so strange after all.<sup>32</sup> Levi's blossoming staff points to Ben Sira's

<sup>30</sup> P.C. Beentjes, *Jesus Sirach en Tenach*, Nieuwegein 1981. While Beentjes establishes a connection between Sir. 45:24–26 and 50:22–24, he telescopes the priestly and royal covenants into one. Phinehas, however, gives precise occasion for the distinction of the royal and the High Priestly functions, both of which coincide for the first time in Simon the Maccabean as established by charter in 1 Macc. 14:27–47. Beentjes' perspective on Sir. 45:25e,f–26 as a *crux interpretum* constitutes an important element in the motivation of my analysis of the demarcation texts and Sirach 50 (pp. 175ff.).

<sup>31</sup> F.V. Reiterer, *>Urtext< und Übersetzungen*, St. Ottilien 1980. Reiterer notes that it is possible to translate *מִטָּה* as 'staff'. He fails to do so, however, in spite of his observation that Tanakh contains no reference to Aaron belonging to the 'tribe' of Levi (p. 144).

<sup>32</sup> P.C. Beentjes, 'The Concept of "Brother" in the Book of Ben Sira. A Semantical and Exegetical Investigation', in F.S.M. Gilbert, *Treasures of Wisdom*, Leuven 1999, 75–90. Counter to Beentjes' translation of *מִטָּה* as 'tribe' our interpretation of 45:6a 'staff' does more justice to the relationship between Aaron and Moses in 45:1a–5f and in the second instance in 45:15a–17d, after YHWH himself had elevated Aaron to the High Priesthood (p. 86). This divine legitimisation is of such importance that Ben Sira mentions it at the outset.

intention to motivate the exaltation of Aaron after the revolt of Korah and his followers. We therefore opt for the translation: *'the Holy One exalted Aaron by the staff of Levi'* (45:6a). From the very beginning (45:6), Ben Sira makes reference to Num. 17:6–9 and in the second instance (45:20a), after the conflict with Korah, to Num. 17:10, in which the staff becomes a sign for the preservation of the priestly inheritance.

The *'staff'* provides the key for the literary cohesion of the description of Aaron in 45:6–22. Following his detailed description of the High Priestly garments (45:7–12), Ben Sira refers to the ordinance which maintains that these garments are intended for the exclusive use of Aaron and his descendents. Such an exclusive approach establishes a sharp contrast with the outsider who has no right to wear them (45:13).

Following the passage referring to Aaron's garments (45:7–12) and his exclusive right to wear them (45:13–14), Moses becomes subject and he anoints his brother who then participates as High Priest in the ברית עולם *'eternal covenant'* by offering sacrifice and instructing in the Torah (45:15–17). In contrast to this, attention is focused on the conflict with Korah and his followers, the זרים *'outsiders'*, who are no longer authorised to perform the priestly duties (45:18–19). God's confirmation of the glory and heritage of Aaron follows in a second instance (45:20–22). Continuity is apparent in the authoritative functioning of Phinehas (45:23–24). According to this priestly constitution, Phinehas' fervour is oriented towards the ברית שלום *'covenant of peace'*, in eternal service of the God of All and of the sanctuary with its High Priestly ministry. The discourse is interrupted by the proleptic comparison with David in 45:25a,b.

There would appear to be more at stake in H45:6–25d than Aaron's undisputed roots in the tribe of Levi. Ben Sira employs the demarcation text 45:25e–26c to establish the foundational pattern for his interpretation of history, which reaches its climax in Simon, and the confirmation of the covenant with Phinehas (50:24b).

The version of Ben Sira's grandson is significantly different at this point. In G45:6a he places Aaron, ὑψωσεν ἄγιον *'exalted to sainthood'*, on the same level as Moses while in G50:24 Simon and Phinehas remain unmentioned.

What are the operational arguments maintained by Ben Sira in this exhortatory blessing with a view to Sirach 50?

- Sir. 45:25c: *‘YHWH, who is good’*. The divine name **יְהוָה הטוב** is determinative for the theological thought of Ben Sirā and for his vision of humanity which He crowns with honour. In 45:23c he refers in a unique manner to the **אלוהי כל** *‘the God of all’*.<sup>33</sup> The inclusion between 39:16a and 39:33a with a detailed reflection on the ‘the works of YHWH, they are all of them good!’ makes it apparent that the concepts ‘all’ and ‘good’ are determinative for the description of the work of the scribe. Marböck notes the significance of Ben Sirā’s vision at this juncture.<sup>34</sup> He places the key word **טובכם** *‘the good entrusted to you’* preceded by **למען** in the context of an exhortation. The remembrance of this ‘good’ establishes continuity from the beginning unto eternity (44:11,13), made concrete in the **אזכרה** *‘memorial portion’* (45:16c).
- Sir. 45:25f.: *‘YHWH, who crowns you with honour’*. The crown is related to the covenant of peace with Phinehas and the covenant with David, the son of Jesse of the tribe of Judah referred to proleptically in (45:25a). Ben Sirā mentions both covenants side by side in order to distinguish the priestly and the royal commission from one another and to place both within an historical perspective. After the fall of Jerusalem and the exile, the break with the Davidic monarchy becomes definitive. The royal commission as such, however, is preserved in the political arena and its associated Messianic expectation as a crown in the temple until times change (Zech. 6:14). In spite of the destruction of the temple, the priestly covenant with Phinehas enjoys a degree of continuity<sup>35</sup> given the

<sup>33</sup> M.S. Smith, ‘How To Write a Poem: The Case of Psalm 151A (11QPs<sup>a</sup> 28.3–12)’, in T. Muraoka/J.F. Elwolde eds, *The Hebrew of the Dead Sea Scrolls and Ben Sirā*, Leiden 1997, 182–208. In this Psalm (1.7) **אֲרִיִן הַכּוֹל** forms a parallel with 45:23c.

<sup>34</sup> J. Marböck, ‘Sir. 38,24–39,11: Der schriftgelehrte Weise. Ein Beitrag zu Gestalt und Lehre Ben Siras’, in M. Gilbert ed., *La Sagesse de l’Ancien Testament*, Leuven 1979, 293–316.

<sup>35</sup> P.C. Beentjes, *Jesus Sirach en Tenach*, Nieuwegein 1981. Beentjes points out that the formulation **בְּרִית פִּינְחָס** does not occur as a word combination in Tanakh and as such is a creation of Ben Sirā himself (p. 196). He rightly considers an emendation of the text to be the wrong solution to the text-critical problem in 45:25c (p. 188). I do not share his conviction that H45:25a does not constitute a new opening line, however. The use of **נָם** in 45:23a and 25a does not only imply association between the covenant with Phinehas and the covenant with David, it also establishes a moment of contrast as is apparent from the closing **נָם לְכֵן** in 45:24a. A breathing space would appear to have been introduced at this juncture in which the quality of the covenant with Phinehas is positively compared with the later

splendid restoration of the priestly service in the Second Temple (50:24b) with Simon, surrounded by priests as with a *עטרה* 'crown' (50:12c), as its climax. While the *ברית שלום* 'covenant of peace' with Phinehas (45:24b) is orientated in terms of function to the maintenance of the sanctuary, it likewise establishes the quality of the peace to which it refers, a peace which is all inclusive and determinative for the service of *אלוהי כל* 'the God of all' (45:23c).

- Sir. 45:25f: *אתכם* and 45:26a *לכם* 'you'. Given the fact that Ben Sira does not mention a specific group of addressees, the question of the identity of the 'you' figure(s) remains unclear. While it is possible, in the first instance, that he is addressing Phinehas and the sons of Aaron, it seems more likely that he is addressing a larger audience, perhaps even the entire people to which he makes appeal in 50:22.<sup>36</sup> The exhortation stems from Ben Sira himself, who makes personal appeal as *sofer* (39:13), as one highly respected in Israel (39:9–10) and as one who functions as a *counsellor* in international matters.<sup>37</sup> In 44:3c he praises the counsellors on account of their insight.
- Sir. 45:26c: *אמורתכם* 'what was said to you'. In contrast to *אמונה* 'fidelity', this term is unknown in Tanakh. There is evidence, however, of a נ instead of a ר. Lévi, Vattioni and Segal suggest *נבורתכם* 'your strength', while Peters proposes *ופארתם* 'their glory' on the basis of S. This example reveals the extent to which the text editions differ from one another in terms of proposed readings. The

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covenant with David. The difference between the two is apparent, moreover, in the use of the concept *הק* with respect to Phinehas and *ברית* with respect to David. The fact that Ben Sira refers to the *ברית פינהס* in H50:24b is a clear indication that he ultimately attaches the same value to the priestly covenant. The contrast between priest and king remains nevertheless. After the exile, the High Priests formally do not bear royal responsibility. In the case of Simon, the royal task is expressed in the actual exercise of his High Priestly ministry. Reference to the unification of both responsibilities by popular decree is made for the first time in the Maccabean period, the period in which Ben Sira's grandson completed his translation. The textual variants in G and S can thus be explained against this background (p. 189).

<sup>36</sup> P.C. Beentjes, *Jesus Sirach en Tenach*, Nieuwegein 1981. The 2p.pl. leads Beentjes to interpret 45:25e–26c as veiled criticism of the sons of Aaron in his day. He provides thematic evidence of the link between 44:1–15 and 50:22–24 in schematic form (p. 193f).

Van Peursen elaborates this connection further in 12.13 *Excursus: Sir. 45:25–26 and 50:22–24*.

<sup>37</sup> P.A.H. de Boer, 'The Counsellor', in FS H.H. Rowley, *Wisdom in Israel and in the Ancient Near East*, VTSup III, Leiden 1955, 42–71.



expression אָמַרְתֶּם can be justifiably explained as a passive participle f. of אָמַר (with suffix 2p.pl.; see Mi. 2:7).

- Sir. 45:26a: חִכְמַת לְבוֹ הַכְּמָה ‘the wisdom of his heart’. The exhortation is based on the positive principle that YHWH imparts the wisdom of his heart to human beings, which stands in contrast to the more general expression חִכְמַת לְבָב ‘wisdom of heart’ in 50:23a. Ben Sira sees wisdom as the ability to discern the relationship between the giving of commandments and the task of maintaining them. He identifies wisdom with the תּוֹרַת הַיּוֹם ‘Torah of life’, which provides men and women with required insight (45:5d) and forms the basis of יִרְאַת יְיָ ‘the fear of YHWH is life’ (50:28).<sup>38</sup> The giving of חִכְמַת constitutes a reference to future generations both here in the exhortatory blessing and in the doxology (45:26a, 50:23a). The Torah of life determines the path one’s life should take, a path which leads to the good entrusted to human beings. Enoch is considered תְּמִימִים ‘perfect’ (44:16a) and Noah (44:17a) and Abraham נֶאֱמָן ‘without shortcoming’ (44:19b) in their fulfilment thereof. The conspiracies of the זָרִים ‘foreigners’ (45:13b, 18a) and the foolishness of the people in Shechem (50:26) constitute a sharp contrast in this regard.

The theocentric character of the exhortatory blessing is clearly rooted in its subject YHWH. He is good, He crowns, He gives, He entrusts and He speaks. Ben Sira calls upon his audience to join him in blessing YHWH with conviction, so that his fidelity and his word will not be forgotten.

Based on YHWH’s positive commitment, the exhortation rounds off part I in which a rupture between two groups of priests from the tribe of Levi is portrayed stemming from the time of Aaron, a rupture which Phinehas closes by his voluntary engagement. Phinehas is given an honourable mention in Ben Sira’s presentation of history (45:23c, 50:24b) because he acted voluntarily בְּקִנְאוֹ לְאֱלֹהֵי כָל ‘out of his zeal for the God of all’. The verb נָדַב in 45:23e means ‘to act voluntarily, spontaneously’ as an expression of personal choice.<sup>39</sup>

<sup>38</sup> We base our translation יִרְאַת יְיָ as ‘fear of YHWH’ on the content of the notion *Ehrfurcht* (awe) in order to avoid any potential misunderstanding of the concept ‘fear’.

<sup>39</sup> M. Hengel, *Judentum und Hellenismus*, Tübingen 1973. In addition to the ‘double path’ (Sir. 2:12), Hengel considers ‘heart’ to be an example of the terminology

3.2.3 *Sir. 47:22a-f Conformation of the promise*

22a,b	: ולא יפיל מדבריו ארצה:	[ואולם א] ל לא יוש חסד
22c,d	: [ואוה] ביו לא ישמיד:	לא [יכרית לבחוריו] נין ונכד
22e,f	: ולא [יה דוד שר]ש:	ויתן ל[יעקב שארית]

- 22a,b [Whereas] God does not abandon his faithfulness,  
he does not let his words fall to the earth.
- 22c,d [he does] not [destroy of his chosen] shoot and sprig  
[but those who love] him he shall not root out.
- 22e,f And he shall give to [Jacob a remnant]  
and to the [house of David] a root.

*Interpretation*

The damaged text can be supplemented here on the basis of G. The content of 47:22f is borrowed from 2 Sam. 7:15. The present composition should be ascribed to Ben Sira himself who appears to have made a number of allusions to familiar topoi. By way of a fourfold negation (4× לא) he contrasts God's (אל) positive engagement with the negative attitude adopted by Solomon. In this way, the author is able to demarcate the dissipation of the authentic purpose of kingship in Israel with the division of Solomon's kingdom and the onset of a violent kingdom in Ephraim. The kingship of David and Solomon is initially presented in a positive light in 47:1–18: God is subject in 47:13c,d. He builds a *בית לשמו* 'house for his Name'.<sup>40</sup> The change of subject in 47:18c (2p.s.m.), however, transforms this perspective on Solomon in a negative way.

Ben Sira provides a summary of the history of the Northern Kingdom from the time of Jeroboam in 47:21. After 47:22a–f he returns to his historical perspective in 47:23. He establishes a double contrast between *רחב* 'large' and *חסר* 'lack' in relation to *אולה* 'foolishness' and *בינה* 'insight'. With these terms from the wisdom tradition he sarcastically disqualifies Rehoboam as successor to Solomon.<sup>41</sup>

In terms of form, 47:22a–f can be qualified as a confirmation of

employed by Ben Sira in his wisdom teaching as *Grundbegriffe einer theologischen Anthropologie* (p. 256).

<sup>40</sup> T. Nöldeke, 'Bemerkungen zum hebräischen Ben Sira', *ZAW* 20 (1900) 81–94. Nöldeke confirms the reading of MS B with reference to 2 Sam. 7:11 (p. 90). In contrast to G, God (אל) in 47:13b–d) functions as subject of *הבין* (*hiph'il* בון) and *רצב* (*hiph'il* נצב) and not Solomon (Lévi, Peters, Skehan/Di Lella).

<sup>41</sup> T. Penar, *Northwest Semitic Philology and the Hebrew Fragments of Ben Sira*, BibOr 28, Rome 1975 (p. 82).

God's promise, reminiscent of Ps. 89:4,29 and 103:17–19. God is acting subject of each verb at this juncture. The character of God's promise is apparent from the imperfect 3p.s.m. Smend rightly emphasises the future significance of ויהן (47:22e), in contrast to G. Van Peursen limits himself to 47:22a–d and insists on reading the text in the present tense.<sup>42</sup>

The *hiph'il* of נפל in combination with ארצה in 47:22b introduces the semantic significance of the unfulfilled character of God's promise. The word combination נין ונכר 'shoot and sprig' (47:22c) can also be found in Isa. 14:22; Gen. 21:23 and Job 18:19.<sup>43</sup> Ben Sira associates himself with the deuteronomic tradition at this juncture by contrasting God's חסד with the infidelity (חסר בינה) of Rehoboam. God's promise ensures continuity which, although no longer at work in the monarchy, survives in the priestly tradition. Based on this demarcation of history prior to and after Solomon it follows that חסדו 'his faithfulness' ultimately abides in Simon (50:24a).

### 3.2.4 Sir. 48:15a–16b Announcement of judgement

15a,b	: ולא חדלו מחטאתם:	בכל זאת לא שב העם
15c,d	: ויפצו בכל האר:	עד אשר נסחו מארצם
15e,f	: ועוד לבית דוד קצין:	וישאר ליהודה מזער
16a,b	: ויש מהם הפליאו מעל:	יש מהם עשו ישר

- 15a,b Despite all this the people did not repent  
and they did not renounce their sin,  
15c,d until they were torn away from their land  
and they scattered themselves over the earth.  
15e,f But for Judah a small group remained  
yet still for the house of David a prince.  
16a,b Some of them did what was right  
but others among them were unfaithful beyond belief.

#### Interpretation

Following the history of Elijah and Elisha (48:1–14), the demarcation text 48:15a–16b serves as a transition to the presentation of the

<sup>42</sup> W.Th. van Peursen, *The Verbal System of the Hebrew Text of Ben Sira*, Leiden 1999. Van Peursen limits his analysis to 47:22a–d, thus ignoring 47:22e–f with ויהן (p. 98).

<sup>43</sup> G. Sauer, *Jesus Sirach (Ben Sira)*, Gütersloh 1981. With reference to 'the remains of Jacob' (22e) Sauer quotes Amos 5:15 in which Joseph is mentioned. Given the accusation in 50:26, this seems improbable.

history of Hezekiah and Josiah in 48:17–49:3. Ben Sira addresses himself to the people in 48:15a in the form of a complaint introduced by **לֹא זָכַרְתִּי לֹא**. He employs an established form at this juncture, taken from the prophetic judgement tradition, which is recognisable in the use of perfect verbal forms intended to accent the actuality of the transgression to which he is referring (48:15a–f). The complaint is reinforced by the double negation in the parallelism between **לֹא** and **וְלֹא** (48:15a,b). He similarly makes reference to the consequences of the people's actions by way of the temporal indicator **עַד אֲשֶׁר** (48:15c). The use of *niph'al* **נִסַּח** and imperfect c. *gal* **פָּרַץ** actively involves his addressees, further intensifying the punishment of dispersion. He describes the condemnation of the people into exile in Assyria as a world-wide diaspora, an event made all the more striking by the fact that 49:6 only speaks of the destruction of the holy city by fire and contains no reference to Judah's exile in Babylon.

The negative character of the dispersion is immediately transformed by the promise of salvation introduced by an imperfect c. *niph'al* **שָׁמַר** in 48:15e,f.

A **קַצִּין** 'prince' remains for the house of David (48:16f). This term (hapax) in combination with **מוֹשֵׁל** 'ruling' constitutes a topos in the wisdom tradition which takes its point of departure from the animal world. See Prov. 6:6–7 which speaks of the ant, which has no need of a ruler to organise its food supply.

Ben Sira further accentuates the point of contrast in 48:16a,b with **יֵשׁ . . . וְיֵשׁ**, as he did in 44:8a,9a.<sup>44</sup> In so doing, he underlines the alternative option of those who followed the right path in contrast to those whose **מַעַל** 'unfaithfulness' proved beyond belief (*hiph'il* **פָּלַא**). He thus echoes the voice of the prophets (Isa. 29:14), who base themselves on the deuteronomistic tradition, and establishes a link with 47:22a–f. When the people respond to God's promise with infidelity, judgement is the inevitable consequence. Nevertheless, a remnant remains.

<sup>44</sup> S.E. Fassberg, 'On the Syntax of Dependent Clauses in Ben Sira', in T. Muraoka/J.F. Elwolde eds, *The Hebrew of the Dead Sea Scrolls and Ben Sira*, Leiden 1997, 56–71. Fassberg considers the syntactic association between 44:8 and 48:16 typical: a main clause introduced by **וְ** followed by an asyndetic relative clause (p. 62).

3.2.5 *Sir. 49:4a–6b Concluding retrospective*

4a,b	ויאשיהו כלם השחיתו:	לבד מדויד יחזקיהו
4c,d	מלכי יהודה עד חמם:	ויעזבו תורת עליון
5a,b	וכבודם לנוי נבל נכרי:	ויתן קרנם לאחור
6a,b	וישמו ארחתיה:	ויציתו קרית קדש

- 4a,b With the exception of David and Hezekiah and Josiah, all behaved wickedly,  
 4c,d because the Torah of the Most High they abandoned, the kings of Judah, to the last one.  
 5a,b Therefore he shall give them a horn in the future and their glory to a foolish and foreign nation.  
 6a,b And they set the holy city on fire and they left her streets desolate.

*Interpretation*

Ben Sira makes an exception of the three kings David, Hezekiah and Josiah, setting them in contrast to all the rest. Via word-play he speaks positively of Hezekiah, who fortified his city (חזק) and remained faithful by doing good in line with David (48:22a), and of Josiah, who dedicated his whole heart to God (אל אל לבו) (49:3a). Given the unique position of these three kings, reference to their good works in the present retrospective is superfluous. The good entrusted to them remained in good hands (44:11a; 45:26b). Ben Sira provides a detailed sketch of Hezekiah's building projects (48:17–22) and describes David (47:8–10) and Josiah (49:1a–b) in terms borrowed from the cult.

The expression תורת עליון *'Torah of the Most High'* (49:4c) is also to be found in the teaching passages concerning death (41:4,8) and shame (42:2) and runs parallel to the *'Torah of life'* in 15:1b; 17:11; 45:5d.

A difference of opinion exists as to the meaning of לאחור (49:5a). Segal et al. read לאחור *'following, other'* instead of לאחור as it is found in Ps. 114:3,5 with reference to the Jordan 'turning back' on its course. In Isa. 41:23 and 42:23 the meaning of the expression shifts to the future, given that לאחור *'in the future'* is clearly at home in the prophetic preaching of judgement (Isa. 41:21f.) or in a speech of entreaty (Isa. 42:18f.). There is no question in Ben Sira of an apocalyptic vision of two aeons. The glory of the kings of Judah is handed over to the Babylonians, a נוי נבל נכרי *'foolish and foreign nation'* (49:5b). Ben Sira qualifies the Samaritans in a similarly invidious manner in the *Scheltrede* in 50:25–26.

The description of Jeremiah in H49:7 follows immediately after this concluding retrospective. G, in contrast, establishes a link between Jeremiah and 49:6. In my opinion this is incorrect. Penar understands בִּיד in H49:7a to have a causal significance,<sup>45</sup> in spite of the fact that this would lay the blame for all the misery referred to in the preceding verses at Jeremiah's door. Even the translation 'on account of Jeremiah' tends to misrepresent the relationship with 49:4–6. Di Lella freely translates 'as Jeremiah had foretold'. We prefer a different approach to the text, one which follows H and presumes a new beginning with Jeremiah in 49:7a–d following the concluding retrospective of 49:4–6. The relationship between Jeremiah and the people is a complicated one. In 49:7a Jeremiah is the subject of the nominal clause בִּיד יִרְמִיָהוּ which is followed by a change of subject in an asyndetic, relative subordinate clause (3p.pl.): כִּי עֲוִירוּ *for they disheartened him*'. This establishes a contrast between Jeremiah and the people which did not understand him. The prophet is also the object (suffix 3p.s.m.) of their disheartening behaviour. From the perspective of syntax there is a contrastive causal relationship in 7a which serves to explain the severe resistance encountered by the prophet.<sup>46</sup> The exclamation in 7b introduced by וַהֲוֹ underlines this contrast. The significance of בִּיד יִרְמִיָהוּ is related thereafter to 7 infinitivi (Jer. 1:10). In our translation of 49:7a–d Jeremiah holds his ground and acts resolutely as a prophet called from childhood:

*It was within Jeremiah's reach, in spite of the fact that they had disheartened him,  
the one who was created a prophet from the womb,  
to root up and to tear down, to eradicate and to destroy,  
but also to build and to plant and to restore.*

<sup>45</sup> T. Penar, *Northwest Semitic Philology and the Hebrew Fragments of Ben Sira*, BibOr 10, Rome 1975. Penar approaches 49:6–7a as a literary unit which he translates 'And they set fire to the Holy City, and made its streets desolate. On account of Jeremiah when they afflicted him.'. The expression בִּיד 'on account of' (cf. 46:4) thus makes Jeremiah partly responsible for the situation. This suggestion is even more apparent in translations such as 'by the hand of Jeremiah' (Cowley) or 'through' (Box and Van Peursen). G links ἐν χειρὶ Ἰερεμίου (49:7a) to 49:6.

<sup>46</sup> D.J.A. Clines ed., *The Dictionary of Classical Hebrew*, IV, Sheffield 1998. According to Clines' lexicon, כִּי can be understood as a preposition 'despite' (p. 389.13). In T. Muraoka/J.F. Elwolde eds, *The Hebrew of the Dead Sea Scrolls*, Leiden 1997, S.E. Fassberg, 'On the Syntax of Dependent Clauses in Ben Sira' (pp. 56–71) understands כִּי to be the introduction of a relative clause. M.Z. Kaddari in 'The Syntax of כִּי in the Language of Ben Sira' (pp. 87–91) translates 'as Jeremiah prophesied [literally, "through Jeremiah"] when they mistreated him'.

In association with the announcement of judgement in 48:15a–16b, the concluding retrospective ends negatively with reference to the destruction of Jerusalem and her abandoned streets. The temple and the Babylonian exile remain unmentioned.

In 49:7–10 Ben Sira makes reference to restoration and hope in the prophecy of Jeremiah, Ezekiel and Job, the latter being considered a prophet in the wisdom tradition. He concludes with an eschatological perspective on the twelve minor prophets whose bones send forth new life from the grave, completing Jacob's restoration and bringing hope.

From 49:11a onwards, he turns his attention to the period after the exile, opening with a rhetorical question. Restoration and hope are given concrete form in a positive setting with the reconstruction led by Zerubbabel, Joshua and Nehemiah who are to be considered **הַסֹּד אֲנֹשֵׁי הַסֹּד** (44:1a,10a) and are to be remembered on the same level as the three kings David, Hezekiah and Josiah.

In summary:

In his discourse, Ben Sira establishes an inclusion, based on the contrast **וְיֵשׁ . . . וְיֵשׁ**, between the introduction (44:8a,9a) and the announcement of judgement (48:16a,b). He establishes a similar contrast between the positive exhortatory blessing (45:25e–26c) and the four negations in the reassuring confirmation of God's promise (47:22a–f). The announcement of judgement (48:15a–16b) and the concluding retrospective introduce a negative note, however, in spite of David, Hezekiah and Josiah (49:4a–6b).

### 3.2.6 *Sir. 49:14a–16b Evocation*

14a,b	וְגַם הוּא נִלְקַח פְּנִים:	מֵעַשׂ נּוֹצֵר עַל הָאָרֶץ כְּהַנִּיד
15a,b	וְגַם נִוְיָחוּ נִפְקְדָה:	כִּי־וְסָפָ אִם נּוֹלַד נֹבֵר
16a,b	וְעַל כָּל חַי תִּפְאָרַת אָדָם:	וְשֵׁם וְשֵׁת וְאַנּוּשׁ נִפְקְדוּ

- 14a,b Virtually no one on earth has been formed to your priestly service,  
with the exception of him [Enoch], who was taken up in person.
- 15a,b Joseph then! When was such a one born,  
that even his mortal remains were treated with such respect?
- 16a,b And Shem and Seth, they were highly respected as human (beings)  
but above all that lives is the glory of Adam!

*Interpretation*

Ben Sira reaches the climax of his presentation in 49:14–16 following his description of Zerubbabel, Jeshua and Nehemiah (49:11–13). He invites his audience in a stirring appeal to join him in looking back to Adam before moving on to his similarly high-minded praise of Simon in 50:1–24. His elevated tone remains constant until the doxology in 50:22–24 when it unexpectedly changes into biting criticism of the Samaritans in 50:25–26. Insight into the value of his own tradition, which he underlines in his personal epilogue, clearly motivates this change of perspective. He challenges his audience to take up their own responsibility and, as an experienced teacher of wisdom, he endeavours thereby to increase the effectiveness of his argument.

Ben Sira's evocation is characterised by a *Steigerung* from "Enoch", Joseph, Shem and Seth to Adam. While the personal name Enosh is out of place in this historical sequence, the Hebrew term אָנוֹשׁ can be employed in the general sense to signify 'the human person'. The verbs serve to determine the discourse. The author employs a series of expressions formulated in each case in the *niph'al*: יָצַר 'to be formed' (14a), לָקַח 'to be taken up' (14b), יָלַד 'to be born' (15a), פָּקַד 'to be treated with respect' (15b, 16a). Even the more favoured reading כְּהֵנוֹךְ 'like Enoch' (49:14a) creates problems with respect to the significance of this evocation.

Although the Hebrew text is not perfectly legible at this juncture, the reading כְּהֵנוֹךְ is clear beyond all possible doubt. The name Enoch is thus lacking in 49:14a. The text is often emended to *error pro* הֵנוֹךְ without further explanation. The text editions of Ben-Hayyim and Beentjes form an exception in this regard. Yadin suggests that we relocate 44:16 to 49:14.<sup>47</sup> Although this evidently solves the problems surrounding the double reference to Enoch it is of little help in solving the problem of interpretation. At an early stage in his research, Lührmann criticised Yadin's interpretation of Enoch and the minor fragment M44:17 (line 24) with נוֹחַ צַדִּיק, which he adjoins hereto.<sup>48</sup> MS B would appear, however, to offer an alternative. In spite of the fact that Ryssel and Peters point out the possibility of

<sup>47</sup> Y. Yadin, *The Ben Sira Scroll from Masada*, Jerusalem 1965 (p. 38).

<sup>48</sup> D. Lührmann, 'Henoch und die Metanoia', *ZNW* 66 (1975) 103–116. Lührmann presumes that M44:16 also begins with Enoch.



vocalising the disputed term as כְּהֹנִיךְ ‘like your priests’ they disqualify this reading on account of what follows in 49:14b.<sup>49</sup> Tanakh only provides support for this reading in Ps. 132:9 and in the prayer to YHWH in 2 Chron. 6:41 and in Neh. 13:29.

The plural form כְּהֹנִיךְ can be explained grammatically as a plural of abstraction intended to encompass an action in its entirety (Joüon/Muraoka §136i), enabling us to translate ‘your priestly service’. In spite of the examples provided by Cowley (§124e)<sup>50</sup> of a ‘plural of amplification’, Tanakh offers no support for such an explanation and his hypothesis is generally ignored since the context unmistakably refers to Enoch. This notion probably achieved common acceptance at an early stage, enjoying further support from G. The version found in MS B, however, has been maintained for centuries and deserves priority<sup>51</sup> as *lectio difficilior*.<sup>52</sup> Rejection of the familiar reading found in G (with Enoch) can only be justified against the background of the train of thought evident in the demarcation texts. Further textual support cannot be provided.

### 3.2.6.1 *Enoch, your priests or Elijah?*

Ben Sira’s evocation begins in 49:14a with the particle מַעַט ‘few’. This term is mostly preceded by an interrogative הַ with the meaning: ‘is it not enough, that’, a form of questioning characteristic of the accusations found in prophetic speech. In the context of a negatively charged discourse, such accusations generally imply a positive response to the rhetorical question being posed. Ben Sira uniquely turns matters around with the form וְהַמִּי . . . מַעַט in order to show that one single exception is enough. An appropriate translation ‘virtually no one . . . with the exception of him’ is consistent with the so-called *Appellations-rede* thus consciously suggesting Enoch as the only possible referent. In 44:16 Ben Sira characterises Enoch as הַמִּיִּם ‘perfect’, הַלֵּךְ ‘walking’,

<sup>49</sup> S. Schechter & C. Taylor, *The Wisdom of Ben Sira*, Amsterdam 1979. Their list of quotations from the O.T. lacks Sir. 49:14 (p. 24).

<sup>50</sup> A.E. Cowley, *Gesenius’ Hebrew Grammar*, Oxford 1910 (p. 397).

<sup>51</sup> E. Puech, ‘Le livre de Ben Sira et les manuscrits de la Mer Morte’, in FS M. Gilbert, *Treasures of Wisdom*, Leuven 1999, 411–426. Puech insists that MS B should be highly rated, arguing that it goes back to an original that may represent the oldest version.

<sup>52</sup> E. Tov, *The Text-Critical Use of the Septuagint in Biblical Research*, JBS 8, Jerusalem 1997. A scribal error creates a *lectio difficilior* that need not necessarily enjoy priority (p. 226).

אוֹת דַּעַת ‘*sign of knowledge*’ and נִלְקָח ‘*taken up*’. Schmitt relates אוֹת דַּעַת to the secret knowledge which Enoch received in the journey report in 17–36 and the cosmological section 72–82 of the book 1 Enoch and in Jub. 4:17f. Enoch is well known in the pseudepigraphal tradition on account of his ‘walking’ with God whom he beheld face to face.<sup>53</sup> This experience may be referred to in 49:14b with the term פְּנִים ‘*in person*’. In 1 Enoch, which stems from the time of Ben Sira, Enoch receives several visions during his travels and encounters with angels. These images are later underscored in the book 3 Enoch in which he acquires insight into the heavenly forms together with knowledge of calendars, astronomy and cosmology. Jub. 4:16–26 locates Enoch in the temple and in *Num. R. XII.12* he is regarded as the priestly prototype. *Memar Marqah III. §2* and the Samaritan genealogy of High Priests honour him in a series running from Adam to Phinehas.

The fact remains, however, that Enoch is not mentioned in 49:14a.<sup>54</sup> In contrast to G and the various translation, MS B clearly has כַּהֲנָיִךְ, a term which can be read as ‘*your priests*’ or as a plural of abstraction ‘*your priestly service*’. A scribal error at such a crucial point in the text would appear to be out of the question. In the meantime, therefore, we prefer to maintain the translation ‘*your priestly service*’, which can be defended grammatically against the background of the various images of the High Priest current in Jerusalem. It is highly probable that the polemic in which Ben Sira and the circles surrounding Simon are engaged is directed against the Samaritan claim to a more authentic High Priesthood based in the *Tolidah* on natural descent from Adam onwards.

Word-play based on the expression ‘*your priestly service*’ and a rather obvious allusion to the name Enoch need not be excluded at this juncture given the time and the anticipative style figure with which the author prefers to introduce Moses, Joshua, Samuel, David, Solomon, Rehoboam, Jeroboam and Elijah in the second instance. In addition, the increased pace of historical developments following

<sup>53</sup> A. Schmitt, *Entrückung—Aufnahme—Himmelfahrt, Untersuchungen zu einem Vorstellungsbereich in A.T.*, FzB 10, Stuttgart 1973, 139–144/176–181 (p. 179).

<sup>54</sup> R.A. Argall, *I Henoch and Sirach*, Atlanta 1995. Argall rejects Yadin’s vision of 44:16 and 49:14. He interprets the sign of knowledge in 44:16 as a divine revelation to Enoch. He also insists on reading the name Enoch in 49:14, rejecting all further speculation (p. 250).

Onias III and the revolt under the leadership of the Maccabeans may have influenced the interpretation of the text. A word-play can only function in a recognisable context.<sup>55</sup> It is beyond doubt, therefore, that this context had changed to such an extent that an adaptation of the text with the explicit mention of the name Enoch was justified (see G and the later translations). As a consequence, the significance of the evocation in 49:14–16 as the bridge between Sirach 44–49 and Sirach 50 is devalued. The priests, *casu quo* Enoch, are given unique prominence by the association of their birth (49:14a) with that of Joseph (49:15a). The coordinative parallelism ascribes a qualitative value to their birth, which either places their entire life in a positive light or refers to their origin. The contrast between the deaths of Joseph and Enoch is of essential importance.

The *lectio difficilior* כְּבִדְיָךְ, however, does not solve the problem of the suffix 2p.s. In other demarcation texts (45:25f, 26a and 50:23), Ben Sira opts for the 2p.pl. in order to establish direct contact with his audience. It is highly likely, therefore, that he addressed himself directly to his audience at this juncture in order to shed special light on the priesthood devoted to YHWH against the background of his own time. The following possibilities should be taken into consideration:

### 1. Internal differences concerning the High Priesthood

In the polemic surrounding the High Priesthood, Ben Sira addresses the people directly with the expression ‘your priestly service’. In the biblical context, only a small number of texts, namely Neh. 13:14, 22, 29, 31, exhibit any degree of relationship with his position at this juncture. In each of these four instances, however, Nehemiah addresses himself to God in a prayer of entreaty: זְכַרְהֲלִי אֱלֹהֵי לְשׁוּבָה ‘remember me, my God, in favour’ (13:31). His prayer sums up the conflicts surrounding the portion of the Levites, violation of the Sabbath commandment, marriage with foreign women and the exclusion of the son of the High Priest Eliashib who was married to the daughter of Sanballat the Horonite. In Neh. 13:29, Nehemiah complains about this defilement of the *הַכֹּהֲנִים וְכִרְתֵּי הַכֹּהֲנִים* (as variant *הַכֹּהֲנִים*) ‘the priesthood and the covenant of the priesthood and the Levites’.

<sup>55</sup> J. Marböck, ‘Henoch—Adam—der Thronwagen; Zu frühjüdischen pseudepigraphischen Traditionen bei Ben Sira’, *BZ NF* 25 (1981) 103–111. Marböck supports the possible existence of a speculative intellectual tradition as a developmental phase in the apocalyptic of the 3rd century BCE with respect to Enoch, the glory of Adam and Ezekiel’s vision (49:8) of the merkabah (p. 108).

The elevated tone with which Ben Sirá praises Adam and Simon prevents such internal tensions from rising to the surface in contrast to the external tensions evident in the *Scheltrede* in 50:25–26. The evocation in 49:14–16 stands on its own and serves as a bridge between 44–49 and 50.

Ben Sirá's summary of history is not intended as a paradigm for the 'great of name' but forms, rather, a universal framework within which the twelve functions point to the תפארתה 'glory', which was given expression in Adam (49:16) and in the activities of Simon (50:1).<sup>56</sup> While Stadelmann insists that 44:3–6 makes reference to the prophets but not the priests, his argument is invalidated by the fact that the priestly ordinances are mentioned in 44:4d.<sup>57</sup> From his introduction onwards, Ben Sirá presumes a universal framework, which stands in direct contrast with Ezra's particularistic concept of a holy people. It is evident, therefore, that he had sufficient reason to leave Ezra out of his presentation of history.<sup>58</sup>

## 2. Conflict concerning the High Priestly genealogy in Samaria and in Jerusalem

Based on the genealogy of their High Priests found in the *Samaritan Chronicle, Tolidah*,<sup>59</sup> which begins with Adam and continues unbroken up to the time in question, the Samaritans lay claim to the authentic service of YHWH in Shechem.<sup>60</sup> Enoch clearly enjoys a prominent place in their tradition. In *Memar Marqah* II §10,<sup>61</sup> for example, Enoch stands side by side with Adam, the former having knowledge of the place in which God desires to be worshipped (Deut. 12:5) and the latter having addressed his prayer in the direction of Shechem. Enoch

<sup>56</sup> P.C. Beentjes, 'The "Praise of the Famous" and its Prologue. Some Observations on Ben Sirá 44:1–15 and the Question on Enoch in 44:16', *BTFT* 45 (1984) 374–383. Beentjes bases himself on the literary form '*De viris illustribus*'. The interpolated ליה (44:2a) in the margin of B thus gives occasion to consider 'our fathers' (44:1b) as paradigmatic for the famous men of Israel. His preference for ׀ in M (44:4a) instead of ׀׀ in MS B fits within this framework, the latter underlining the universal aspect of Ben Sirá's theological perspective.

<sup>57</sup> H. Stadelmann, *Ben Sirá als Schriftgelehrter*, WUNT 2/6, Tübingen 1980 (p. 188).

<sup>58</sup> P. Höffken, 'Warum schwieg Jesus Sirach über Ezra?', *ZAW* 87 (1975) 184–202. C. Begg, 'Ben Sirá's Non-mention of Ezra', *BN* 42 (1988) 14–18.

<sup>59</sup> The use of arguments from Samaritan and speculative apocalyptic literature requires due observation of the hermeneutical rules governing historical criticism.

<sup>60</sup> J. Bowman, *Samaritan Documents*, Pittsburgh 1977 (p. 39).

<sup>61</sup> J. Macdonald, *Memar Marqah. The Teaching of Marqah, II*, Berlin 1963 (p. 74).

proclaimed the name of YHWH in this place while Noah and Abraham built an altar there which was used by Isaac and Jacob and later became the property of Joseph. A current tradition had been established surrounding Enoch which one can presume to have been common knowledge at the time of Ben Sira.<sup>62</sup>

The fact that Joseph<sup>63</sup> was buried at Shechem is of even greater importance for the Samaritan tradition. Based on the Torah and the traditions stemming from the period prior to Moses,<sup>64</sup> his grave increased the value of the sanctuary.<sup>65</sup> In contrast to Shechem, Jerusalem as the place chosen by God cannot boast such a centuries old patriarchal tradition.<sup>66</sup> The Samaritan claim to having the oldest and therefore the holiest place in Shechem must have been extremely offensive to Ben Sira and the circles surrounding Simon. The anti-Samaritan polemic is further fuelled in the vision of the High Priesthood found in the *Memar Marqah III. §2 'the Status of a Holy People'* which contains elements whereby the High Priest distinguishes himself from his brothers: by praying as Adam did when he was afraid, as Enoch in his obedience, as Enosh when he proclaims, as Noah when he submits, as Abraham when he is tested, as Isaac when he is bound, as Jacob when he is sad, as Joseph when he flees, as Moses when he hides his face, as Aaron when he is silent, as Eleazar when he trusts and as Phinehas in his zeal for God.<sup>67</sup> The same men are mentioned in VI §2 as the bearers of wisdom.

An additional argument underlining this contrast can be found in G50:25–26 in which two groups of Samaritans are distinguished: those who dwell on the mountain of Samaria and the foolish folk that lives in Shechem.

<sup>62</sup> R.A. Argall, *1 Enoch and Sirach*, SBLEJL 8, Atlanta 1995.

<sup>63</sup> E. Schuller, '4Q372 1: A Text about Joseph', *RQ* 55 (1990) 349–376. Given the fact that the Samaritans consider themselves to be the true descendents of Joseph, it is not surprising that an anti-Samaritan text was found among the discoveries at Qumran (p. 375). 'Theological geography' is central to the discussion (p. 372).

<sup>64</sup> J.A. Montgomery, *The Samaritans. The earliest Jewish Sect, Their History, Theology and Literature*, New York 1907 (pp. 225f.).

<sup>65</sup> J. Zsengeller, *Gerizim as Israel*, UTR 38, Utrecht 1998 (p. 92).

<sup>66</sup> J. Bowman, *Samaritanische Probleme, Studien zur Verhältnis von Samaritanertum, Judentum und Urchristentum*, Stuttgart 1967. The Zadokite line ends with Onias III and Jason. The Samaritan's scriptural argument is directed against the quality and the continuity of the High Priesthood in Jerusalem (p. 33).

<sup>67</sup> J. Macdonald, *Memar Marqah. The Teaching of Marqah, II*, Berlin 1963 (p. 93).

### 3. The identification of Enoch with Elijah

Sir. 48:9a and 49:14b state that both Enoch and Elijah were ‘*taken up*’ (גלקקד). Beentjes observes an *apostrophe* (48:4–10), in which Ben Sira addresses himself directly to Elijah in the 2p.s. This literary form is well known in classical rhetoric and is applied earlier in 47:14–21 in relation to Solomon. Comparison with Tanakh offers no new perspectives on the matter. Beentjes offers a further study of the non-canonical literature from later periods and speaks of an Elijah tradition in the portion of *Targum Jonathan* relating to Ex. 6:18, in which the prophet is said to have lived long enough to have seen Phinehas before departing for Israel’s exiles.<sup>68</sup> This identification of Elijah with Phinehas is also to be found in Pseudo-Philo (46:4–48). Reference can similarly be found to an identification of Elijah with Enoch in the Apocalypse of Elijah 4:7 and in 1 Enoch 90:31.

Our conclusion remains, for the time being at least, that the first reading *‘your priestly service’*, is the most evident and that it can be combined with the Samaritan context. We shall return to this hypothesis in our exegesis of 50:25–26.

#### 3.2.6.2 *Joseph, Shem, Seth and Adam?*

Joseph is described in 49:15 with the help of an unfamiliar conjunction  $\text{אם} \dots \text{ב}$ <sup>69</sup> as an exception in the series of tradition bearers.<sup>70</sup> Joseph is characterised by his exemplary way of life and his wisdom. He functions as an ethical model, representing the ideal image of the good person.<sup>71</sup> It is well known in the biblical tradition that Joseph was buried at Shechem (Josh. 24:32; Acts 7:16), a detail that has been preserved in the Samaritan tradition. The Samaritans consider themselves to be sons of Joseph and claim that they received his grave as an inheritance.

A similarly worded exclamation can also be found in the Talmudic tractate *Sotah* 1.9d  $\text{מי לנו נדול מיוסף שלא נתעסק בו אלא משה}$  ‘*We have*

<sup>68</sup> P.C. Beentjes, ‘De stammen van Israël herstellen. Het portret van Elia bij Jesus Sirach’, in ACBET 5, Kampen 1984 (147–155). Arguments based on the pseudepigrapha are of a different order to those based on the discourse of Ben Sira in the Praise of the Fathers.

<sup>69</sup> C. van Leeuwen, ‘Die Partikel אם’, in *Syntax and Meaning, Studies in Hebrew Syntax and Biblical Exegesis*, OTS XVIII, Leiden 1973, 15–48.

<sup>70</sup> H.G. Kippenberg, *Garizim und Synagoge*, Berlin 1971 (p. 272, n. 95).

<sup>71</sup> H.W. Hollander, *Joseph as an Ethical Model in the Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs*, Leiden 1981.

none so great as Joseph, for only Moses took care of his [bones].<sup>72</sup> The imagery evoked in 49:15b is accentuated by **נחם** as is likewise the case in 14b.

The interpretation of the term Enosh as a personal name<sup>73</sup> in 49:16a is problematic, as is the fact that it interrupts the genealogy running from Shem to Seth. The threefold repetition of the conjunction **ו** in 49:16a is distinctive. Shem and Seth thus belong together and **וְאִנּוֹשׁ** 'human being' forms a word combination with **נִפְקְדוּ**.

The *niph'al* form of the verb **פָּקַד** is repeated in 49:16a, after having been used to draw particular attention to the respect shown to Joseph's **נְיִיָּה** 'corpse, mortal remains' in 49:15b. It is with this verb that Joseph made his brothers, the **בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל**, swear the oath: 'God shall surely take care of you (**פָּקַד יִפְקְדֵנִי**), take then my bones with you from here' (Gen. 50:25). Thus Joseph is not buried in Hebron but in Shechem. Mention is made in Josh. 24:32 to a group of people who refer to themselves as the **בְּנֵי יוֹסֵף** 'the sons of Joseph' and as having acquired the rights to inherit Joseph's burial place as their property. This claim is disputed in the pseudepigraphal literature.<sup>74</sup>

From the literary perspective, Ben Sira not only establishes coordinative parallelism based on **נחם** between 14b and 15b but also a parallelism between 15b and 16a based on **נִפְקְדוּ** *niph'al* of **פָּקַד** 'to look after', which suggests a specific way of thinking<sup>75</sup> and is mostly translated in the negative sense 'to miss'. In theological contexts, however, YHWH turns towards human persons in the positive sense 'to take heed of' and 'to respect'.

The *Steigerung* in 49:16 rises via Shem and Seth to Adam. Shem and Seth are seen as 'mortal men'. Shem is known as the forefather of all Semitic peoples and Seth on account of his secret knowledge.<sup>76</sup>

<sup>72</sup> J. Neusner, *The Mishnah: A New Translation*, New Haven 1988.

<sup>73</sup> In the translation proposed by Ryssel, Peters, Box, Eberharter, Sauer and Di Lella, Enosh is maintained as a personal name. The placing of Seth before Shem in S and L points to a problem of interpretation. Smend favours a textual emendation: **וְאִנּוֹשׁ** instead of **וְאִנּוֹשׁ**.

<sup>74</sup> According to Jubilees 46:9 Joseph's bones remained in Egypt. Thus he was not reburied in Hebron.

<sup>75</sup> M. Kister, 'Some Notes on Biblical Expressions and Allusions and the Lexicography of Ben Sira', in T. Muraoka & J.F. Elwolde eds, *Sirach, Scrolls, and Sages*, Leiden 1999, 160–187. Kister does not associate **פָּקַד** with Joseph's body but does associate **נִלְקַח פְּנֵים** (49:14) with the death of Enoch.

<sup>76</sup> A.F.J. Klijn, *Seth in Jewish, Christian and Gnostic Literature*, NTSup XLVI, Leiden 1977.

They are brought together by the respect they received as human beings and are placed on the same level as the priests (Enoch) and Joseph. The glory of Adam surpasses ‘all that lives’. In a somewhat complicated sentence construction, Ben Sira first turns his thoughts towards ‘being formed’ and ‘being born’ in 49:14 and 15 then towards the end of life with נלקה *‘being taken up’* in 49:14b and נפקדה *‘being looked after, being respected’* in 15b.<sup>77</sup>

The accentuation of the personal dimension is of importance in 49:14–16:

- In 14b פנים . . . הוא ונם *‘and with the exception of him . . . in person’*,<sup>78</sup>
- in 15b . . . נותרו *‘even his mortal remains . . .’*
- in 16a ואנוש *‘as human (beings)’*
- in 16b ועל כל חי *‘above all that lives’*.

Synonymous parallelism is evident in this survey between verses 14 and 15 together with a progressive *Steigerung* in verse 16 towards Adam who stands out above all that lives. Ben Sira does not only consider Adam in 49:16b from a retrospective point of view, he also offers an eschatological perspective.

With reference to Smend<sup>79</sup> and Jacob,<sup>80</sup> Caquot considers this possible on account of the ‘son of man’ in Daniel 7 and the conceptualisation of wisdom as divine hypostasis<sup>81</sup> although he rejects

<sup>77</sup> J. Yahalom, ‘Angels do not understand Aramaic’, *JJS* 47 (1996) 33–44. Yahalom argues for a distinction in the meaning of נפקדה in 49:15, 49:16 and 50:1c.

<sup>78</sup> P. Joüon/T. Muraoka, *A Grammar of Biblical Hebrew*, Rome 1991. §146a maintains that a personal pronoun can be introduced to create an antithetical contrast by means of which one person is set in greater relief with respect to others (p. 538).

<sup>79</sup> R. Smend, *Die Weisheit des Jesus Sirach erklärt*, Berlin 1906. Smend notes in his commentary: “Zum ersten Mal taucht Adam in der jüdischen Literatur hier als der unvergleichlich Herrliche auf. Diese Schätzung des ersten Menschen, bei der man der Poesie von Genesis 2 einen neuen, und den Worten von Gen. 1:26 einen persönlichen Sinn gab, hatte ihre Wurzel in der messianischen Hoffnung, die ihr Ideal in der Vergangenheit suchte und es bis auf den Anfang der Welt zurücktrug” (p. 476).

<sup>80</sup> E. Jacob, ‘L’histoire d’Israël vue par Ben Sira’, in FS A. Robert, *Mélanges bibliques*, Paris 1957, 288–294. Jacob follows Smend in considering Adam in the eschatological sense.

<sup>81</sup> A. Caquot, ‘Ben Sira et le messianisme’, *Semitica* 16 (1966) 43–68. Caquot connects Adam with pre-existent wisdom in Sirach 24. He responds to the question “cette croyance ‘protologique’ se transpose-t-elle en croyance eschatologique?” in the negative (p. 67).



the messianic significance of Adam which Martin endeavours to defend.<sup>82</sup>

The evocation is thus not limited to retrospective. The memory of Adam and his significance as one who stands above ‘all that lives’ establishes the framework for a glance into the future. Our sketch of the grammatical structure of the text provides a degree of insight into the discourse, which reaches its climax in Adam’s glory, only to be continued in the portrayal of Simon as climax of the Praise of the Fathers.<sup>83</sup>

In summary:

Ben Sira considers the pre- and post-exilic periods as a literary unity in 49:7–16. He enters the post-exilic period in 49:11–13 with the exclamation ׀ׁ. Following the reconstruction of the temple by Zerubbabel and Jeshua, Nehemiah enters the scene as one whose memory is worthy of exaltation. The evocation reaches its climax in Adam. All the aforementioned themes return in the doxology (50:22–24), only to be further accentuated by the contrast established by the *Scheltrede* (50:25–26). The audience is forced to go along with this reasoning process up to the concluding key word ׀ׁׁׁׁ ‘life’, which has its roots in ׀ׁׁׁׁׁׁ ‘the fear of YHWH’ (50:28c).

The present evocation is clearly more than a mere concatenation of independent impressions relating to the three individuals referred to therein. Verses 14 and 15 are characterised by a twofold parallelism founded in the first instance on the birth of the priests (Enoch) and of Joseph, and in the second instance on the death of both men and the respect shown for their mortal remains. Where Shem, Seth and Adam are concerned, the pattern is disrupted by the absence of contrast between life and death. Sir. 49:16 thus exhibits a different kind of parallelism: Shem and Seth enjoy great respect during their lifetime as human beings and Adam stands out above all that lives.

In schema:

<sup>82</sup> J.D. Martin, ‘Ben Sira’s Hymn to the Fathers. A Messianic Perspective’, in *Crisis and Perspectives*, OTS XXIV, Leiden 1986, 107–123. Martin considers Caquot’s perspective too limiting. He points to the Adamite messianism in 1 Enoch 85.3 in which Adam appears as a white bull (p. 118) and establishes a relationship with apocalyptic circles (p. 119). We consider these steps to be somewhat exaggerated.

<sup>83</sup> J.R. Levison, *Portraits of Adam in Early Judaism, From Sirach to 2 Baruch*, JSPESup 1, Sheffield 1988. Levison observes 49:16 as a unique passage in Sirach: “Not speculation about Adam but the glory of Israel leads Ben Sira to glorify Adam” (pp. 45f.).

49:14a	49:14b	49:15a	49:15b	49:16a	49:16b
					above all that lives <b>Adam</b>
formed priestly service (Enoch)	- life -	being born <b>Joseph</b>	- life -	respected as human beings <b>Shem and Seth</b>	
	being taken up <b>Enoch</b>	- death -	respect for mortal remains (Joseph)		

Closer inspection reveals that the themes surrounding Enoch (נלקח 'taken up') as well as Joseph (נפקדה 'respected') are determined by the events surrounding the end of their lives. The significance of the *niph'al* form of the verb פקד with respect to Shem and Seth, however, points in the opposite direction. The exceptional word combination ואנוש נפקדו 'they were highly respected as human beings' is thus given a positive charge, which achieves its high point in Adam with the argument על כל חי 'above all that lives'. Ben Sira is not only referring to Adam as such but to the תפארת אדם 'the glory of Adam'.<sup>84</sup> This word combination serves as a hinge between 44–49 and 50.<sup>85</sup> The key word תפארת is determinative of the content of 49:16; 50:1,11b and 20d. In its most original form, this glory is visible in Simon; not as an unachievable ideal stemming from the time of creation (ἀρχή),<sup>86</sup> but as a goal in life: the human person is elevated (50:22c), is given wisdom of heart and lives in the fear of YHWH (50:28c).

It is striking that all reference to the human person as one made

<sup>84</sup> A questionable reference remains to the members of the everlasting covenant in Qumran אדם להם כבוד and the glory of Adam is for them', CD-A II, 20 and IQS IV, 23.

<sup>85</sup> C.T.R. Hayward, *The Jewish Temple. A Non-Biblical Sourcebook*, London 1996. Ben Sira takes the creation of Adam as first human being (17:1–8), compared in his glory (תפארת) in 49:16 with wisdom (6:31) and with Simon (50:1), as his point of departure. The glory of Adam is associated with the High Priestly garments in various rabbinic sources and in Qumran (pp. 44–46). Adam offers sacrifice as first priest (Jubilees 3:27). Hayward's interpretation of Sir. 17:1 is based entirely on G. In contrast to Gen. 2:7–22, ἄνθρωπον lacks the definite article. The reference is thus to human beings in general and not to the person of Adam.

<sup>86</sup> B.A. van Groningen, *In the Grip of the Past. Essay on an Aspect of Greek Thought*, Phil. Ant. VI, Leiden 1953 (pp. 15–17).

in the image and likeness of God is lacking in Ben Sira's book of wisdom. It is for this reason that Stone dates the extensively developed literary tradition surrounding Adam as the first human being later than Ben Sira.<sup>87</sup> There is no question, however, of a well-established Adam tradition at this juncture, only an exceptional reference to a theme, which was in the earliest stages of its development in the days of Ben Sira and Simon.

### 3.3 Interpretation of Sirach 50

We opt for a literary structure of eight independent textual units as the basis of our exegesis of Sirach 50 (2.3.3.2).

#### 3.3.1 *Sir. 50:1–4 Simon as builder*

1a,b	: שמעון בן יוחנן הכהן :	גדול אחיו ותפארת עמו
1c,d	: ובימיו חזק היכל :	אשר בדורו נפקד הבית
2a,b	: אשיח בם בהמונו :	אשר בדורו נכרה מקוה
3a,b	: פנות מעון בהיכל מלך :	אשר בימיו נבנה קיר
4a,b	: ומחזק עירו מצר :	הרואנ לעמו מחתף

- 1a Highly esteemed among his brothers and the glory of his people  
 1b is Simon, the Son of Jochanan, the priest,  
 1c since during his ministry the house [of God] was inspected  
 1d and he, in his days, restored the temple.  
 2a Since, in his time, a reservoir was dug out,  
 2b with a dividing wall therein on account of the waterflow.  
 3a Moreover, in his days, a wall was built  
 3b [with] fortress towers for a royal palace.  
 4a It is he who takes care of his people against robbery  
 4b and he makes his city stronger than the enemy.

Verses 2 and 3 have been interchanged in G. Commentators mostly follow the enumeration found in the text edition of Ziegler.<sup>88</sup> In his own edition of the H text, Beentjes has adapted the enumeration in line with MS B, although he is inconsistent in his inclusion of G50:15.

<sup>87</sup> M.E. Stone, *A History of the Literature of Adam and Eve*, SBLEJL 3 Atlanta 1992 (p. 56).

<sup>88</sup> G. Sauer, *Jesus Sirach*, Gütersloh 1981 and P.W. Skehan/A.A. Di Lella, *The Wisdom of Ben Sira*, New York 1987 incorporate the transposition of H50:2,3 found in G50:2,3 without further ado. Skehan's remark "MS B transposes these two verses", however, speaks volumes (p. 548).

In order to avoid misunderstandings, however, we will follow the enumeration proposed by Beentjes in H.<sup>89</sup>

In the description of Simon as a builder, the author presents his works in three bicola that are stylistically determined by the relative אשר. In 50:1 Simon comes into view as the subject of consideration while in 50:4 he is actant. Structural analysis refers to this literary phenomenon as a *ring pattern*.<sup>90</sup> Simon is the central figure of the discourse just as he is the focal point of the temporal indicators בדורו 'in his time, during his ministry' (50:1c, 2a) and בימיו 'in his days' (50:1d, 3a).

It remains a question whether Simon was still alive at this juncture. Although Peters, for example, is convinced that "Der Abschnitt ist nach dem Tode Simeons geschrieben", closer inspection reveals that his argumentation is flawed and that Simon was probably alive at the time of writing. The fact that centuries of exegesis have been based on G, however, has made it almost blasphemous to support such an affirmation.<sup>91</sup>

Basing himself on 50:24b in G and presuming Yom Kippur to be the background, Smend was initially of the opinion that Ben Sira wrote the Praise of the Fathers while Simon was still alive. He later changed his mind, however, arguing that "von Simon wird überall im Perfektum geredet". This observation is not only too general it is also incorrect.

The H version presents a different picture. In 50:1–24 Simon is acting subject in the context of a variety of verbal forms:

- a participial form הדואנ (4a), ומחזק (4b), הנאדו (9c),
- an infinitive construct with suffix 3p.s.m. בהשנידו (5a), ובצאתו (5b), בעמותו (11a), והתלבשו (11b), בעלותו (11c), בקבלו (12a), כלותו and לשרת (14a), ולסדר (14b), כלותו and לשרת (19c),
- an imperfect consecutive ויהדר (11d), יתפאר (20d).

<sup>89</sup> P.C. Beentjes, *The Book of Ben Sira in Hebrew*, VTSup LXVIII, Leiden 1997.

<sup>90</sup> S. Bar-Efrat, 'Some Observations on the Analysis of Structure in Biblical Narrative', *VT* 30 (1980) 154–173. Bar-Efrat presumes the basic pattern A-B-A, extended here to A-B-B-A.

<sup>91</sup> F.V. Reiterer, 'Review of Recent Research on the Book of Ben Sira', in P.C. Beentjes ed., *The Book of Ben Sira in Modern Research*, Berlin 1997, 23–60. By dating the book around 190, Reiterer accentuates the apparently obvious fact that Simon was dead (50:1–2). The problem is not discussed in his *review*, however. The date of Simon's death remains to be established.

Simon is presented as subject of a perfect form at three characteristic moments:

- In 50:1d we read perfect *piʿel* הוֹק *‘he restored’* in contrast to Segal, who suggests הִתְק perfect *puʿal* on account of the passive form of the perfect *niphʿal* of פָּקַד, כָּרַה and בָּנָה, with which Ben Sira describes the building works in 50:1c, 2a, 3a and whereby Simon is subject of consideration.
- In 50:12b, נָצַב *‘he is the one who presides’* can be justified text-critically (3.1.3) as a perfect *niphʿal* of נָצַב. With the accent on הוּא, Simon is acting subject and thus *primus inter pares* among the priests (50:12c–13c).
- In 50:19d–20a at the conclusion of the sacrifices and at the beginning of the blessing in a unique syntactic context corresponding to 50:14a–16a with עָד and אֵן. In 50:19d, the effect of Simon’s action is presented in a single moment with הִנִּיעַ *‘his prescriptions he brings to his goal’* (perfect *hiphʿil* נָנַע with אֵל + suffix 3p.s.m.) In 50:19c, this moment is temporally determined by the adverb עָד. In relation to the adverb אֵן in 50:20a, Simon continues his actions in two perfect forms: יָרַד *‘he descends’* and הִנְשִׂא *‘he raises his hands’*. Simon then gives the blessing and in 50:20d reveals God’s glory (יְהוֹפֵאֵר).

Simon is the focus of attention from the beginning (50:1) and as actant his presence is a living reality. He stands with the same glory ascribed to Adam in the midst of his brothers, both priests and Levites, as *primus inter pares*.<sup>92</sup>

After Adam (49:14–16) Simon is positioned in 50:1–4 at the same glorious level in the midst of his brothers (P) and his people (V) as High Priest in the active sense (Sa) and as subject of consideration in his passive involvement (Sb). Full emphasis is placed on Simon as acting subject in 50:4a,b with a participle of הָאֵן + definite article. The repetition of אֵשֶׁר reinforces this image of Simon as a builder. A personal accent is evident in the use of suffixes in אֶחָיו (1a), עָמוֹ (1a and 4a) and עִירוֹ (4b).

In schema:

<sup>92</sup> P.C. Beentjes, ‘The Concept of “Brother” in the Book of Ben Sira’, in FS M. Gilbert, *Treasures of Wisdom*, Leuven 1999, 75–90. Beentjes locates Simon among priestly circles and among the people. Via word-play, however, Ben Sira refers to Simon as הַכֹּהֵן *‘the priest’* par excellence.

Verse	Person	Theme
1a	P1 V1	Esteemed by his brothers, glory of his people / nom.
1b	Sb1	Simon, the High Priest / nom.
1c	Sb2	אשר during his ministry, temple inspected פקד
1d	Sa1	in his days, Simon restored the temple חוק
2a	Sb3	אשר in his days, reservoirs dug out כרה
2b		with a dividing wall / nom.
3a	Sb4	אשר in his days, building of a wall בנה
3b		with fortress towers / nom.
4a	Sa2 V2	Simon taking care of his people דאנ
4b	Sa3	making his city stronger than the enemy. חוק

## Abbreviations:

P ⇒ priests, Sa ⇒ Simon as actant, Sb ⇒ Simon as subject of consideration,  
V ⇒ preposition, nom. nominal clause.

*Interpretation:* Sir. 50:1a

The emphasis falls on גדול 'great', a qualification whereby the men of name (44:2a), Joshua (46:1d) as well as Zerubbabel (49:11)<sup>93</sup> are afforded eminence and might in the same fashion as the כהונה גדולה 'the High Priest's ministry' (45:24) in caring for the sanctuary on the basis of the covenant with Phinehas that stands עד עולם 'forever'. By way of a word-play, whereby גדול and הגבהן<sup>94</sup> come to stand respectively at the beginning and end of the clause, Ben Sira focuses attention on the unique position of Simon. In order to preserve the word-play we translate 'highly esteemed . . . , the priest' in contrast to 'le pontife' (Lévi), 'der Größte . . . , der Hohepriester' (Peters, Ryssel) which fail to preserve the element of surprise. Simon's greatness does not stand on its own but is related at the literary level with אחיו 'his brothers'. This segment is lacking in G and S. From the perspective of syntax, there is evidence of an objective genitive in גדול אחיו and as a consequence also in הפארתו עמו. In this instance, Simon's brothers are the subject of 'to make great' and his people of 'to highly esteem', while Simon can be considered the object of the action—in which he himself is fully involved—via a suffix 3p.s.m. A nominal translation

<sup>93</sup> Sir. 49:11 is seriously damaged. Ben-Hayyim reads גה [גג]ל. Beentjes considers [...]ל[...] to be beyond dispute.

<sup>94</sup> H. Englander, 'The Men of the Great Synagogue', *HUC Jub. Vol.* (1925) 145–169. Englander notes the common occurrence of the definite article with the adjective גדול.

of this observation concerning Simon thus seems appropriate: *'highly esteemed among his brothers and the glory of his people'* (50:1a).<sup>95</sup> The exalted tenor of the evocation in 49:14–16 is maintained in 50:1. The author employs the term תפארתה *'glory'* to describe the uniqueness of Adam and Simon.

The semantic significance of תפארתה is complex,<sup>96</sup> serving to infer the presence of the glory of YHWH in the lives of men and women. In the introduction, Ben Sira qualifies the importance of תפארתם *'their glory'* (44:7) for *'all those, among their contemporaries'*, i.e. all those who give form to this glory in their own manner. The latter are praised in 44:3–6 in twelve groups with the Most High apportioning them רב כבוד *'much honour'* and גדלו *'his greatness'*.<sup>97</sup> For some of them *'remembrance'* does not prevail, but for others it does *'remain'* in the covenant (44:12).<sup>98</sup> In Sirach 44–50, the glory of God manifests itself gradually in history and reaches its climax in the activities of Simon as High Priest. Ben Sira is able to maintain continuity between 44:1–15 and 50:1 and is clearly familiar with the traditions

<sup>95</sup> M.O. Wise, 'The Teacher of Righteousness and the High Priest of the Intersacerdotium: Two Approaches', *RQ* 53 (1989) 587–613. Counter to the theory proposed by H. Stegemann, *Die Entstehung der Qumrangemeinde*, Bonn 1971, Wise insists that the argument that G50:1, with the common expression ὁ ἱερεὺς ὁ μέγας, reflects an older version with הגדול הכהן *'the High Priest'*, is incorrect (pp. 592f.). H50:1 speaks of הכהן.

Stegemann accentuates the absolute value of the title "ha-kohen" with respect to Simon. In our analysis of the word-play, the quality גדול should be considered conditional in relation to the High Priest, in the same manner as צדקה in relation to the Teacher of Righteousness. The value of the ministry is not an absolute datum. The ordinance of YHWH expressed by the term תקן (45:24a) calls for mutual recognition in the בריה שלום (45:24b) and thus demands Simon's personal engagement in the בריה פניהם (50:24).

<sup>96</sup> J.K. Aitken, 'The Semantics of 'Glory' in Ben Sira—Traces of a Development in Post-Biblical Hebrew?', in T. Muraoka & J.F. Elwolde eds., *Sirach, Scrolls, & Sages*, Leiden 1999, 1–24. Aitken studies the use of תפארתה in 50:1 in relation to 49:16, focusing on Simon's clothing (50:5–11) and the garments of wisdom (6:29–31). Adam is envisaged from the perspective of 49:16 only (pp. 6, 9) and not against the background of the evocation in 49:14–16. The historical context of Simon as builder (50:1–4) stands outside the range of his analysis.

<sup>97</sup> T.H. Lim, "'Nevertheless these were men of piety" (Ben Sira XLIV 10)', *VT* XXXVIII, 3 (1988) 338–340. Lim understands the praise of Simon to be directly related to the good name and ongoing remembrance underlined in the introduction Sir. 44:1–15.

<sup>98</sup> Although lacking in MS B, this interpolation is to be found in the Masada text in 44:12.

surrounding Enoch, Joseph, Shem, Seth and Adam.<sup>99</sup> As such, he is able to transcend the boundary between Torah and the Prophets.<sup>100</sup>

The semantic significance of תפארתה (49:16; 50:1) does not exhibit an eschatological dimension. Ben Sira employs the noun 10 times in the general sense in line with its usage in Tanakh as a whole (47 times). In 50:20d he associates Simon's activities in the name of YHWH (פאר imperfect *hithpa'el* 3p.s.m.) with this glory. He describes the glorious garments of Aaron and Simon (45:8 and 50:11a) with functionality in mind. Just as the glory of Adam is associated with his ἀρχή,<sup>101</sup> so the glory of Simon emerges from his personal engagement in the temple. He is clothed in the vestments of glory (50:11b) in order to serve as High Priest and in so doing he reveals his glory (50:20d).

In the word combination תפארתה עמו, the legitimisation and recognition of God's glory is given expression in the activities of Simon, the High Priest.

### Sir. 50:1b

The name Simon is mentioned for the second time in line with Ben Sira's anticipative literary style. The author also employs this syntactic style figure with respect to Moses, Samuel, Korah, Joshua, Solomon, Rehoboam and Elijah. The reader's interest is first aroused and only then does the figure come into view. In the case of Simon נדול and הכהן constitute an inclusion and determine the conditional aspect of his function.<sup>102</sup>

Most exegetes take it more or less for granted that we are dealing here with Simon II, who served as High Priest from circa 220–190 BCE.<sup>103</sup> Simon is most often identified with Simon, the Righteous,<sup>104</sup>

<sup>99</sup> J.R. Levison, *Portraits of Adam in Early Judaism from Sirach to 2 Baruch*, JSPESup 1, Sheffield 1988. Levinson's contextual explanation of 49:16 does not establish any relationship with Simon (50:1ff.).

<sup>100</sup> J. Marböck, 'Henoch—Adam—der Thronwagen', *BZ NF* 25 (1981) 103–111. Marböck considers it necessary to examine Ben Sira more closely in relation to early Jewish literature and Qumran.

<sup>101</sup> C.T.R. Hayward, *The Jewish Temple. A Non-Biblical Research*, London 1996 (pp. 38–72). Simon's attire is analogous to the תפארתה of Adam who was the first, according to the rabbinic tradition, to wear the garments of the High Priest (p. 45). Ben Sira is focused on the divine institution of the High Priesthood of Aaron and the practical implementation thereof by Phinehas and Simon.

<sup>102</sup> R. Meyer, *Hebräische Grammatik*, III: Satzlehre, Berlin 1972 (§122).

<sup>103</sup> A.S. van der Woude ed., *Bijbels Handboek*, IIB, Kampen 1983 (p. 89).

<sup>104</sup> G.F. Moore, 'Simeon the Righteous', in FS I. Abrahams, *Jewish Studies*, New



although a variety of significant differences of opinion exist on the matter.<sup>105</sup> The year of his death remains undetermined.<sup>106</sup> He was the father of Onias III. He is mentioned in the *Pirke Abot*<sup>107</sup> and in other rabbinic literature.<sup>108</sup> A prayer is known to us from 3 Maccabees 2:1–20.<sup>109</sup> The works of Flavius Josephus make reference to the decree of Antiochus III (*Ant.* XII, 138–144) in which privileges were granted to restore the temple and the city after the destruction that resulted from the siege of the city by Scopas, the military leader of the Ptolemeans. In spite of the fact that Smend denies the authenticity of the letter in question,<sup>110</sup> the intention of Antiochus III remains insightful.<sup>111</sup> By agreeing to the rededication of the temple and by granting attractive tax incentives to potential new city dwellers he was able to influence High Priestly circles in Jerusalem who supported him in his struggle. Following the humiliating peace of Apamea in 188, the political and economic climate changed completely and the Seleucid kingdom found itself in recession. Thus while both Simon and Ben Sira lived during a period of relative harmony.

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York 1927, 348–364. Moore clearly presumes that Simon II, is Simon, the Righteous.

<sup>105</sup> J.C. VanderKam, 'Simon the Just: Simon I or Simon II?', in FS J. Milgrom, *Pomegranates and Golden Bells*, Indiana 1995, 303–318. VanderKam rejects the evidence of Sirach 50 for Simon II.

<sup>106</sup> R. Michaud, *Ben Sira et le Judaïsme*, Paris 1988. Michaud maintains 196 BCE as the year of Simon's death. Commentators general vary in their estimations between 200–190 BCE (p. 192).

<sup>107</sup> Simon is referred to as the last of the 'men of the Great Assembly' (*Pirke Abot* 1.2).

<sup>108</sup> D. Dimant, 'Qumran Sectarian Literature' in *Jewish Writings of the Second Temple Period*, CRINT 2.II 1984, 483–550. According to the chronology of the animal apocalypse (1 Enoch 85–90), 199 BCE constitutes a turning point in a process of momentous political change. 200 is maintained as the year of Simon II's death although most commentators tend to opt for around 190 BCE (p. 545).

<sup>109</sup> H. Anderson, '3 Maccabees', in J.H. Charlesworth ed., *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, II, London 1985, 509–529. According to Anderson, the document portrays the life of the Jews in Egypt. He ascribes the prayers of Simon and Eleazar to the *sacred history*, comparable with the historical Psalms. He views Simon's prayer as a reaction to Ptolemy IV Philopator (221–204 BCE), who desired to enter the sanctuary. Simon appeals to the sanctification of the temple for the name of God (3 Macc. 2:9).

<sup>110</sup> E.J. Bickermann, 'Der seleukidische Freibrief für Jerusalem' in A. Schalit, *Zur Josephus-Forschung*, Darmstadt 1973. In contrast to Smend, Bickermann endeavours to defend the authenticity of the letter of Antiochus on the basis of comparable ordinances imposed by Hellenistic rulers (p. 240).

<sup>111</sup> V. Tcherikover, *Hellenistic Civilization and the Jews*, New York 1979. While Antiochus is against the process of Hellenisation, he supports the continuation of the traditional life (p. 80).

Simon's son Onias III was to face the wind of opposition that was later to develop into a storm under the Hellenising activities of Jason and Menelaos and later still into the Maccabean revolt against Antiochus IV.

Against this historical background, Ben Sira describes the building activities of Simon that he realised in a short period of time after 200. He demarcates the work of Simon in 50:1c,2a,3a in an attributive subordinate clause beginning with אָשַׁר. Van Peursen notes the exceptional stylistic characteristic that an אָשַׁר clause, when repeated, is replaced by a participial clause.<sup>112</sup> From the semantic perspective, the various potential meanings of נִפְקֵד<sup>113</sup> remain problematic:

In Sir. 49:15b, in relation to Joseph, 'to take care of' (Gen. 50:25; Ex. 13:19 and Josh. 24:32).

In Sir. 49:16a, in the description of Shem and Seth, 'to highly respect'.

In Sir. 50:1c, the *niph'al*, besides its usual meaning 'to call as a witness' can also signify 'to inspect, to count, to visit'.<sup>114</sup> Where buildings are concerned, however, this understanding of the term is lacking in Tanakh.<sup>115</sup> Nevertheless, given its Akkadian etymology and the use of the term in two of the Mari letters<sup>116</sup> concerning the 'inspection' of military preparations, the building context would seem to support the interpretation of נִפְקֵד as 'to be inspected'.<sup>117</sup> Moreover, the *pu'al* participle הַמְּפַקְדִים is used in 2 Chron. 34:10 to signify 'inspectors' who were appointed during the reign of Josiah to supervise restoration work in the temple.

<sup>112</sup> W.Th. van Peursen, *The Verbal System in the Hebrew Text of Ben Sira*, Leiden 1999 (p. 279).

<sup>113</sup> Schechter suggests a textual emendation based on the *niph'al* of בָּרַק 'to repair' (2 Chron. 34:10)

<sup>114</sup> R. Hayward, 'The New Jerusalem in the Wisdom of Ben Sira', *SJOT* 6 (1992) 123–138. Instead of נִפְקֵד in B50:1c Hayward reads נִפְקְדָה 'visited' and 'remembered' (p. 132, n. 20).

<sup>115</sup> H. Wildberger, *Jesaja*, BK X.2, Neukirchen 1978. According to Wildberger, פִּקֵּד in Isa. 24:21 means 'to call to account'. The verb enjoys significant diversity of meaning.

<sup>116</sup> J.R. Spencer, 'PQD, the Levites, and Numbers 1–4', *ZAW* 110 (1998) 535–546. Besides the 'Akkadisches Handwörterbuch' of W. von Soden and the detail studies of Van Hooser, Hollert and Scharbert on the meaning of פִּקֵּד, Spencer also discusses the letters of Samsi-Addu (ARM 1,42) and Kibri-Dagan (ARM III,19), in which explicit reference is made to the 'inspector'.

<sup>117</sup> J. Yahalom, 'Angels do not understand Aramaic', *JJS* 47 (1996) 33–44. Yahalom translates: 'in whose generation the Temple was examined' (p. 39).

Ben Sira employs two synonymous temporal indicators that would appear to have occasioned the interchange of verses 2 and 3 in G. The repetition of בְּדוֹרוֹ points to a style figure in 50:2a. For the most part בְּדוֹרוֹ refers to a limited period of time, in this instance to a specific period of service in the temple, while בְּיָמָיו tends to refer to a period of days such as a month or a year. The author similarly employs two synonyms in his description of the temple. Besides הַבַּיִת 'the house' (Ezekiel 40–48; *Damascus Document*<sup>a</sup> (CD-A) III.19 and 11Q*Temple Scroll*<sup>a</sup> (11Q19) XXIX.3) he also speaks of הַיְכָל 'temple'. In 2 Chron. 4:22, the word combination הַבַּיִת לַהַיְכָל serves to round off the description of the building of the temple.<sup>118</sup>

Following אֲשֶׁר, the perfect *pi'el* הוֹק stands out against the three *niph'al* forms. There is no need to resort to textual emendation at this juncture. It is possible that Simon completed his restoration work shortly after 200. Ben Sira thus envisages Simon, the High Priest, as the living personification of הוֹקִיָּה 'Hezekiah', the king as builder of the city and its water works.<sup>119</sup>

### Sir. 50:2

Ben Sira's style is characterised by the use of key concepts, unique word combinations, inversions and word-play. The unidentified water reservoir serves as an example. Lévi, Peters and Smend consider בַּם to be a scribal error for בַּיִם. Ryssel reads בַּיִם. Van den Born suggests that the term refers to the molten sea spoken of in 1 Kgs 7:23–25. Given the continued lack of a definitive explanation, however, it seems appropriate to re-open the question and endeavour to determine, with the help of archaeological data, whether Ben Sira's references to the temple's water supply are reliable.

### Excursus I *Stroution or Bethesda*

As our point of departure we assume that Ben Sira's description of the High Priestly vestments was based on first hand knowledge and

<sup>118</sup> A.S. van der Woude, *Zacharia*, Nijkerk 1984. Zech. 4:9 refers to הַבַּיִת הַזֶּה 'this house', that arose under the leadership of Zerubbabel. This temple house belonged to 'the day of small things' (4:10). In Zech. 6:12 the messianic ruler shall extend הַיְכָל יְהוָה 'the sanctuary of YHWH' in its fullest glory as a palace. This terminology takes on an eschatological dimension in Zechariah on account of the messianic ruler and the High Priest (p. 116).

<sup>119</sup> J. Priest, 'Ben Sira 45,25 in the Light of the Qumran Literature', *RQ* 17 (1964) 111–118.

that the water works and defences which date from the period of Hezekiah, Zerubbabel and Nehemiah are not the products of his imagination.<sup>120</sup> By way of example we will examine the author's description of Hezekiah's construction of the tunnel of Siloam (48:17) that was designed to direct the waters of Gihon<sup>121</sup> inside the city walls where they would collect in a מִקְוֵה 'new reservoir' at the Tyropeon valley next to the opening of the tunnel.<sup>122</sup> This water basin was at least 10m. higher than the old reservoir that was supplied by water channels located outside the city walls (Isa. 22:9,11 and 2 Chron. 32:30).<sup>123</sup> Nehemiah arranged the repair of the wall of the old reservoir to facilitate the irrigation of the royal gardens in the valley (Neh. 3:15).<sup>124</sup>

As in 48:17, Ben Sira also makes reference to a water reservoir מִקְוֵה in 50:2,<sup>125</sup> but the location thereof and the circumstances surrounding its construction differ from that of Hezekiah.<sup>126</sup> The textual emendation of כַּם to read כִּים at this juncture does not provide an adequate solution to the problem.

While כִּים would appear to be a unique word combination that, in line with Jer. 50:15, may refer to a tower, wall or pillar, its meaning remains uncertain.

<sup>120</sup> J.L. Duhaime, 'El elogio de los Padres de Ben Sira y el Cántico de Moisés' (Sir 44–50 y Dt 32), *EstBib* 35 (1976) 223–228. Deut. 32:43 acquires concrete form in 48:10–13; 50:1–4.

<sup>121</sup> J. Ziegler, *Sapientia Jesu Filii Sirach*, Göttingen 1980. Ziegler suggests we replace ὕδωρ in 48:17 with the variant reading τὸν γῶγ. Given the fact that the proper name Γῶν is familiar to the Septuagint, any reference is clearly being made at this juncture to the Gihon. He calls this "ein lehrreiches Specimen eruditionis" illustrating the complicated textual history of G (pp. 78f.).

<sup>122</sup> R. Amiran, 'The Water Supply of Israelite Jerusalem', in Y. Yadin ed., *Jerusalem Revealed, Archaeology in the Holy City 1968–1974*, Jerusalem 1976, 75–78. Amiran wrongly designates the new pool on his map as 'the lower pool', while he increases the confusion by quoting 48:17 from G: 'and made wells for water'. The remark "Neither Ben Sira nor his grandson was an archaeologist" (commentary of Skehan/Di Lella, note 48:17c) is misplaced.

<sup>123</sup> L.H. Vincent/M.A. Steve, *Jérusalem de l'Ancien Testament, Recherches d'Archéologie et d'Histoire*, Paris 1954. Vincent offers a clear summary of information concerning four pools and observes: "La Piscine entre les deux murs est le vaste réservoir nouveau créé par Ézéchiass au débouché de son tunnel-aqueduc et devenu la Piscine de Siloé" (p. 295).

<sup>124</sup> The expressions 'the Fountain Gate' and 'the wall of the Pool of Shelah', found in Neh 3:15 suggests a description, dating almost certainly from the period of the early monarchy, of both water channels that run from the Gihon to the water supply reservoir.

<sup>125</sup> A. Jansen, 'Einige textkritische und exegetische Bemerkungen zum Buche Ekklesiastikus, Eccl. 33,3; 50,1–5; 50,24a', *BZ* 4 (1906) 20–24. Jansen distinguishes three building works: the temple, the city wall and the excavation of the major reservoir that he considers to be an improvement or expansion of the reservoir of Hezekiah referred to in 48:19.

<sup>126</sup> See the description of water reservoirs on the Temple Mountain in the Letter of Aristas (89–91).

The *Copper Scroll* (3Q15) makes use of this terminology in *Col.* XI.11–14 as a place reference בְּבֵית אֶשְׁדָּתַיִן בְּאֶשְׁיָה. Milik's text edition emphasises the importance of the latter for our understanding of 50:2. Allegro translates the name of the place as בְּבֵית אֶשְׁדָּתַיִן: 'in the house of the [two] pools.' Lehmann translates 'rectangular reservoir'. Jeremias draws attention to the dual form of Bethesda and emphasises the concept 'jemumit' as a diminutive form of יָם. García Martínez/Van der Woude and Vermes on the other hand, translate the text 'in Beth-Eshdatain (Bethesda), in the reservoir, where you enter the small pool'.<sup>127</sup>

During the excavations of Bethesda adjacent to the present church of St. Anna, archaeologists became aware of the immense size of two water basins, each measuring 50 × 50 m. in surface area with a depth of 8 m. and with a dividing wall in the middle measuring 6.5 m. in breadth upon which the colonnade referred to in *Jn.* 5:2 can be situated (Jeremias). Besides their research into the water provisions of the temple court, Vincent and Simons<sup>128</sup> draw particular attention to the Stroution, which supplied fortress Antonia with water. The name is borrowed from Josephus (*Bel.* V, 466–472),<sup>129</sup> who maintained the existence of a Roman siege wall in the middle of the water basin. At the present time, the underground water basin measuring 52 × 18 m. is accessible via the monastery of the Sisters of Zion and the tunnel runs along the western Herodian wall. The enormous basin is divided in two by a supporting wall with vaults and arches that provides foundation to the buildings above. It would appear from drawings of the reconstruction<sup>130</sup> that the Stroution lies in part under the Lithostratos to the north west side of fortress Antonia. Josephus was the first to mention the Stroution in his description of the siege of Jerusalem and of a memorial to the High Priest.<sup>131</sup> While Allegro endeavours to explain

<sup>127</sup> J.M. Allegro, *The Treasure of the Copper Scroll*, New York 1960 (p. 53). M.R. Lehmann, 'Ben Sira and the Qumranliterature', *RQ* 9 (1961) 103–116. J. Jeremias, 'Die Kupferrolle von Qumran und Betesda' in *Abba*, Göttingen 1964, 361ff. F. García Martínez/A.S. van der Woude, *De rollen van de Dode Zee*, Kampen 1995, II, (p. 511). G. Vermes, *The Complete Dead Sea Scrolls in English*, London 1998 (p. 588).

<sup>128</sup> J. Simons, *Jerusalem in the Old Testament*, Leiden 1952. Simons argues with respect to *Sir.* 50:2 for the large cistern under the southern part of the Temple square (p. 350).

<sup>129</sup> O. Michel/O. Bauernfeind, *Josephus De Bello Judaico. Der jüdische Krieg, Griechisch und Deutsch*, Munich 1963. We quote references to Josephus' *Bel.* found in this text edition.

<sup>130</sup> L.H. Vincent/M.A. Steve, *Jérusalem de l'Ancient Testament*, Paris 1954, Planche XLIV, XLVII. Vincent mentions *Sir.* 50:2 but considers the text to be obscure (p. 307). He observes that the Stroution already existed before fortress Antonia was extended during the Herodian period (p. 434).

<sup>131</sup> Josephus *Bel.* V, 469 mentions this memorial τὸ τοῦ ἀρχιερέως μνημεῖον that the tradition ascribed to Simon, the Just. His grave, located nearby, is still a place of pilgrimage for orthodox Jews (*EncJud* 14, p. 1568).

the siege wall by locating it adjacent to the sedimentation basins higher up along the route leading to the Damascus gate, his argumentation is based on a non-standard text and a doubtful translation. According to the research of the archaeologist Bahat we are dealing with a single reservoir that was later covered with a double barrel-vault. He locates the Stroution at the foot of the rocky outcrop upon which fortress Antonia is built.<sup>132</sup> Josephus offers a sketch of the fortress (*Bel. V*, 238–247), which dominates the temple court. He refers to the hill as Bezetha, the highest hill joined to a part of the new city by building development and overshadowing the temple from the north (*Bel. V*, 247).

It is the present author's conviction, however, that *Sir.* 50:2 does not refer to the Stroution but rather to the two divided water reservoirs of Bethesda. The first argument in support of this claim is a literary one. Josephus is alone in mentioning the Stroution. During the Roman siege, fortress Antonia had already been reduced to a ruin<sup>133</sup> after the defeat of the Zealots. Despite the fire that destroyed it, the remains of the fortress still functioned for defensive purposes. Josephus describes the defensive wall constructed by the Roman 5th Legion as *κατὰ μέσον της Στρουθίου* in *Bel. V*, 467. Such a location cannot mean 'in the middle of' on account of the accusative μέσον, but rather 'opposite the middle of the Stroution', thus indicating its orientation.<sup>134</sup> A second argument is the location of the Stroution with respect to the Lithostratos, which constituted the inner court of fortress Antonia. Furthermore, the construction of a siege wall in the middle of a water reservoir would be hardly likely to serve its evident purpose. A third argument relates to the fact that Josephus describes the defence of the north side of the city by the Zealots in *Bel. V*, 303–304 where Titus withdrew to beyond shooting distance of the so-called military camp of the Assyrians that was located higher up to the north of the city. The distance between the double water reservoir of Bethesda and the northern wall of the Herodian temple complex is roughly 200 m. The precise point at which the northern city wall runs from fortress Antonia towards the

<sup>132</sup> H. Geva ed., *Ancient Jerusalem Revealed*, Jerusalem 1994. Dan Bahat offers a highly detailed description of the tunnel running along the western wall, the water channel discovered in 1985 and known as 'the Hasmonean aqueduct' that flows into the Stroution. Fortress Antonia, referred to by Josephus as the Baris, was built in various stages. The Stroution was altered in the Herodian period on account of the massive extension of the temple square. Initially it was an open water reservoir excavated during the Second Temple period. It was first covered over with a double-barrel vault during the Roman period (2nd century BCE). He concludes: "what appears as twin pools is in effect one large pool" (p. 190).

<sup>133</sup> J. Simons argues that this cistern already existed prior to the extension of the fortress. An underground cistern, however, cannot serve as a point of orientation for the two Roman siege walls (p. 434).

<sup>134</sup> Michel/Bauernfeind translate 'mitten im sogenannten Struionteich'.

Kidron valley is unclear. A fourth argument has to do with the range of the Roman fire power that was greater than that of the catapults taken by the Zealots in their capture of fortress Antonia. *Bel. V*, 270 speaks of two or more stadia or roughly 350 m. and mentions the fact that the stone missiles were painted black in order to confuse the besiegers who would thus be unable to see them coming. Such a procedure only makes sense if the missiles were fired against the sun from the north side near Bethesda.

Based on Josephus' description it seems possible to offer an alternative interpretation of *Sir. 50:2* and the Stroution. Higher up on the north side of the temple court there is mention of the new city that Josephus refers to as Βεζαθα (*Bel. V*, 246). The development of the city to which he refers may have taken place during the time of Simon. The water reservoirs of Bethesda are situated in a natural valley.<sup>135</sup> It is probable, therefore, that a smaller water reservoir already existed at this location and that it was enlarged in Simon's days.

One can combine this with a further literary argument from *Sir. 50:2b* based on the rare word combination of  $\text{וַיִּשְׂרַח}$ , which can be understood as a wall or partition, and  $\text{בָּהֶן}$  'therein', supplemented with  $\text{וַיִּזְרַח}$  whereby the repetition of the preposition  $\text{ב}$  and the  $\text{ח}$  suffix 3p.s.m. are out of the ordinary. Lévi and Peters speak of the commotion or effervescence stemming from the movement of the water and the noise associated therewith. A recurrent stirring of the waters at Bethesda is known to us from *Jn. 5:4*. Bultmann,<sup>136</sup> who was unfamiliar with the excavation results, identifies this with the pool of Siloam. Schnackenburg, in contrast, presents a realistic picture of the construction of a magnificent gallery of five pillars during the government of Herod. There can be little doubt that Bethesda provided the Roman besiegers with pleasant quarters and a birds-eye view of the temple and fortress Antonia.

Bethesda was still being visited centuries later. Eusebius points out that pilgrims emerged from the waters thereof coloured red. This phenomenon can be related to the variant reading  $\text{τοῦ θεῖου}$  'the sulphur bath' instead of  $\text{τοῦ Στρουθίου}$  found in some of Josephus' manuscripts, although this would tend to say more about the smell than about the colour.<sup>137</sup> The red pigmentation can be explained, on the other hand, as a natural phenomenon resulting from the red rocks hidden deep

<sup>135</sup> W.H. Mare, *The Archeology of the Jerusalem Area*, Grand Rapids 1988. In spite of the fact that the colonnades exemplify Herodian style, Mare suggests that we date Beth Hasda at the time of Simon, the Just. His reference to "Ecclus. 40:1-3" is incorrect (p. 168).

<sup>136</sup> R. Bultmann, *Das Evangelium des Johannes*, KEK II.19, Göttingen 1968 (p. 180, n. 7). R. Schnackenburg, *Das Johannesevangelium*, HTKNT IV.2, Freiburg i.B. 1971 (p. 119).

<sup>137</sup> Josephus *Bel. V*, 467 (Michel/Bauernfeind, *De Bello Judaico* II. 1, p. 182, n. 261).

beneath the pool through which the water welled up from time to time.

Bethesda is located in a sheltered valley. The 30 meter difference in elevation provided ideal conditions for the creation of a water supply during the time of Simon. Improved control of the movement of the water was achieved by the construction of a dividing wall thus partitioning the pool into two segments.

We conclude from this excursus that Ben Sira offers a meticulous description,<sup>138</sup> one that agrees in detail with the double reservoir of Bethesda, the latter being known for its dividing wall and its occasionally agitated waters.

### Sir. 50:3a,b

The description of Simon's building activities is continued with an introductory אֶשֶׁר. The walls and fortified towers indicate the presence of existing fortifications that were regularly reinforced. Josephus points out that the Baris was significantly extended in the Herodean period and was given the name Antonia.<sup>139</sup> This fortress is detached from the Herodean wall and is located to the north west of a natural elevation that rises above the temple court.

In Simon's day, the city walls were more modest in scale. Verse 3a makes reference to the building of a city wall קִיר, while verse 3b employs the word combination פְּנוֹת מַעֲוֵן *'fortress towers'*. Ryssel interprets the latter as bunker dwellings although he follows Schechter in reading מַעֲוֵן as *'refuge'* and translates *'Festungszinnen am Tempel des Königs'*. Peters (1902), Sauer and Di Lella are inclined to think of the temple at this juncture while Lévi, Smend and Box presume the existence of a royal palace in the neighbourhood of the temple. Peters (1913) locates this royal palace with corner towers to the south. The identity of the king associated herewith remains a mystery.

A semantic question arises at this juncture as to whether one should interpret הַיְכָל מֶלֶךְ as the temple or as another building? Given the fact that a king had not reigned in Israel for centuries,

<sup>138</sup> G.J. Wightman, 'Ben Sira 50:2 and the Hellenistic Temple Enclosure in Jerusalem', in FS J.B. Hennesy, *Trade, Contact, and Movement of Peoples in the Eastern Mediterranean*, Sidney 1995, 275–283. Wightman confirms that lack of regard for the information provided by Ben Sira is a *false assumption* (p. 283) and that Josephus as an historical source for Simon II contributes virtually nothing.

<sup>139</sup> Josephus *Ant.* XV, 409. H. Geva ed., *Ancient Jerusalem Revealed*, Jerusalem 1994 (p. 185).



it is surprising that the building still bore the name 'palace of the king'.<sup>140</sup> The theological consequences drawn from both hypotheses are significantly divergent.

Di Lella points to the use of the expression in Deut. 26:15 and in Ps. 68:6 in which God is enthroned in his holy dwelling in the heavens. On this basis he translates *'the residence precinct with its temple of the King'*, appealing for support to 50:14–17 which speaks of אֵל עֲלִיִּין *'the Most High'*. The use of הַיְכָל as *'heavenly palace'* in which God reigns as King (Ps. 29:9–11) can be found in the bible as a variant for *'the temple'*. In combination with מֶלֶךְ, הַיְכָל can be translated: *'the palace of the king'* or *'palace of the King'*. Both translations of 50:3b are legitimate. In the first instance we are dealing with a building that bears this name on the basis of older traditions. In the second instance we are dealing with the temple of God as King.

The proverbs of blessing from Qumran employ the same expression of a 'palace' while adding an eschatological dimension. These texts are a valuable source for determining the expression's semantic significance. 1QRule of the Blessings (1Q28b [1QSb]) III.26 speaks of the eternal priestly covenant. The priests are blessed by YHWH for service in the temple: בַּמְעוֹן קֹדֶשׁ *'in the holy dwelling'*. YHWH, in turn, delivers his blessing from his מְעוֹן *'holy dwelling, the heavens'*. In this instance, the temple and God's heavenly dwelling are placed on one and the same line. In column IV, the priestly service is referred to as being exercised בַּהֵיכָל מַלְכוּת *'in the temple of the kingdom'*, thus implying a future undertaking and a perfection that had not yet been realised. The community of Qumran looked forward with longing to this moment and as such they no longer ascribed a value to the temple in Jerusalem.

Such an interpretation is certainly not supported by the text of Sirach 45 and 50. On the contrary! Simon is the personification par excellence of the High Priest. The interpretation *'royal palace'* seems most appropriate at this juncture. Reference to the temple, moreover, has already been made in 50:1d. In addition, 50:5a contains archaising references to the temple in אֹהֶל *'tent'* and בֵּית הַפְּרֹכֶת *'house of the veil'*. In correlation with the preceding text, reference is made once again in 50:7 to the הַיְכָל הַמֶּלֶךְ over which the rising sun sheds its early morning light.

<sup>140</sup> Josephus *Bel.* V, 241 speaks of a palace (βασιλείου).

Everything concerning Simon in 50:1–4 is written from the perspective of the temple and in particular the realisation of the service of YHWH ‘as long as the days of the heavens endure’ (50:24). This temporal indication should not be interpreted as transcendent-eschatological. While Ben Sira is fully aware of the value of the temple, he does not assign any premature fulfilment of salvation thereto.<sup>141</sup> It may be for this reason that his use of terminology is archaising and masked. Rooted in wisdom, he is able to subtly relativise emerging variance concerning the temple by employing imaginative language in order to provide new and insightful perspectives.

Based on the provisional character surrounding the expectation of a king such as David, the translation ‘a royal palace’ does not refer to a specific building but rather to all the buildings of the temple complex, including the walls thereof that were repaired in a short period of time in Simon’s days.<sup>142</sup>

### Sir. 50:4a,b

Ben Sira concludes his description of Simon’s building activities with an active participle 3p.s. of  $\text{בָּנֶה}$  and with  $\text{קוֹנֵן}$  in complementary parallelism. He refocuses the readers attention from the building activities to Simon, the builder, who is accented via the definite article  $\text{הַדָּרָשָׁן}$ , as in  $\text{הַמְּאֹדָהּ}$  ‘he who knows himself bound’ (50:9c) and  $\text{הוּא נֹצֵחַ}$  ‘he who presides’ (50:12b).

In 50:4a,  $\text{עָבַד}$  constitutes an inclusion with 50:1a, thereby delimiting the literary unit in question. In addition,  $\text{קוֹנֵן}$  (*piʿel*) in 50:1d reinforces the inclusion with  $\text{בְּרֹנֵן}$  (participle *piʿel*) in 50:4b. Established

<sup>141</sup> O. Plöger, *Theokratie und Eschatologie*, WMANT 2, Neukirchen 1968. Plöger distinguishes two contradictory perspectives. The first continues the prophetic tradition in an increasingly transcendent-eschatological expectation. In line with Ezra and the Chronicler’s view of history, the second takes a priestly ideal, realised in the priestly ministry and the Second Temple, as its point of departure. While it might appear that Ben Sira represents the second perspective, it would perhaps be more realistic to presume that the dividing line between the two perspectives was not so clear in his days. Ben Sira falls outside the range of Plöger’s study (p. 142) and cannot be subdivided along the lines of the two traditions he proposes.

<sup>142</sup> Josephus *Ant.* XV, 421 estimates 18 months for the construction of the temple under Herod and 8 years for the construction of the colonnade and the exterior walls. Such a tempo bears witness to a high degree of skill on the part of the architects and builders. In *Bel.* V, 504–510, Josephus describes the construction of a ring-wall consisting of 39 stadia and 13 military encampments in three days. This is surprisingly fast when compared with the uninterrupted construction of the siege wall that took 17 days (*Bel.* IV, 466).

by the parallelism in 4a,b the poetic vigour is further underlined by the use of rare terminology that is either infrequent or even unique in Tanakh.

- First, the verb נָסַח is rare and only occurs with לָ in the meaning ‘to care for’ in 1 Sam. 9:5; 10:2, in which Saul and later Samuel speak of the concern of Saul’s father with respect to his son. Ben Sira is able to apply this paternal concern to Simon and his sons Onias III and Jason. Josephus incorrectly includes Menelaos (*Ant.* XII, 238). Peters understands the text as a concrete reference to Simon, who protected his city against plundering after the victory of Antiochus III (*Ant.* XII, 152–153). Others opt for the style of *pathetic history*.<sup>143</sup> Whatever the truth may be, Simon remains a remarkable figure.
- Second, the term הִרְבֵּה ‘robbery’ is only found elsewhere in Prov. 23:28 in an appeal from a father to his son. Buber and Rosenzweig translate: ‘Ja, wie ein Strolch lauert die auf, Verräter mehrt sie unter den Menschen.’ Such proverbial wisdom would have been quite meaningful for the attentive listener of his day. It alludes to the language employed by a father in addressing his son, a language familiar in the wisdom tradition, in which this topos is frequently found. Whom then did Ben Sira have in mind in invoking the image of the אֹיֵב ‘enemy’ via his probable allusion to Prov. 23:28? Against which enemy did Simon fortify the city?

All of the commentators opt in this regard for a concrete threat confronting Jerusalem. A possible external enemy may have been Samaria, given Sir. 50:25–26. Alternatively, it may be possible to interpret the text as a reference to the threat of internal division within Jerusalem itself. The reinforcement of such self-awareness may have been part of Ben Sira’s purpose as a teacher of wisdom who warned against prostitutes via this unique verbal allusion (Prov. 23:28). In Ezekiel 16, the same topos is radically directed against Jerusalem in which shameless infidelity is brought to light, in similar fashion to the reference to Oholah and Oholibah in Ezekiel 23.

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<sup>143</sup> G.W.E. Nickelsburg, ‘Stories of Biblical and Early Post-Biblical Times’, in M.E. Stone ed., *Jewish Writings of the Second Temple Period*, CRINT, II.2, Assen 1984, 33–87. The prayer of Simon the High Priest (3 Macc. 2:1–20) follows, in the emotionally laden style of the *pathetic history* (p. 81), upon the description of Ptolemy and his endeavour to enter the holy of holies.

- Third, הוֹק is determinative for the interpretation of 50:4. The verb is found only three times in Tanakh in the *pi'el* participle form:
- a) הוֹק ‘to give strength, to repair’ (2 Kgs 12:8) and employed by the priest Jehoiada, who was the creative inspiration behind the restoration of the temple;
  - b) הוֹק ‘to harden’ with reference to the heart of pharaoh in Ex. 14:17;
  - c) הוֹק in combination with מִן is only found elsewhere in Ps. 35:10 ‘O Lord, who is like you? You deliver the weak from those too strong for them . . .’.

The verb הוֹק occurs in the *qal* perfect form in 50:1d with Simon as subject and refers to the fact that Simon completed the restoration of the temple as a unique building programme while he was still alive. In 50:4b, Ben Sira employs a word-play, evoking the name of Hezekiah and his engagement in the struggle against Senacherib referred to in 48:17a: יְהוֹקִיחוּ הוֹק עִירוּ ‘Hezekiah fortified his city’. In both instances, the connection with the city is expressed in a highly personal manner. Ben Sira’s description employs entirely unique terminology close to that of the *Baunotizen* in Chronicles that belong to the *topoi* of the post-exilic history in which הוֹק is characteristic.<sup>144</sup>

Via the comparative significance of מִן, Ben Sira establishes a contrast with the otherwise undefined צַר ‘enemy’.

The question of the identity of the צַר remains open. For the time being, having focused on Simon, the builder (50:1–4), we now turn our attention to Simon in the temple (50:5–10).

### 3.3.2 *Sir. 50:5–10 Simon as High Priest*

5a,b	: ובצאתו מבית הפרכת	מה נהדר בהשניחו מאהל
6a,b	: וכירה מלא מבין בימי מועד	ככוכב אור מכין עבים
7a,b	: וכקשת נראתה בענן	וכשמש משרקת אל היכל המלך
8a,b	: וכשושן על יבלי מים	כנצני ענפי בימי מועד
8c,9a	: וכאש לבונה על המנחה	כפרה לבנון בימי קיץ
9b,c	: הנאהו על אבני הפץ	ככלי זהב [.]בנ[.]ת א[.]ל
10a,b	: וכעץ שמן מרוה ענף	כזית רענן מלא נרנר

<sup>144</sup> P. Welten, *Geschichte und Geschichtsdarstellung in den Chronikbüchern*, WMANT 42, Neukirchen 1973. Welten treats the topos *Baunotiz* as a structuring literary factor in much the same way as we have analysed the demarcation texts in the present volume. He considers the use of a perfect after a temporal indication in 2 Chron. 33:14 as an Aramaic idiom in order to accentuate its unique character (p. 32).

- 5a How glorious is he when he looks out of the tent  
 5b and comes out of the house of the veil,  
 6a as a luminous star in the midst of the clouds,  
 6b as the full moon determining the festal days,  
 7a as the sun brightly rising over the royal palace,  
 7b as the rainbow, which manifests itself in the clouds,  
 8a as flowering sprigs in the springtime,  
 8b as a lily on the flowing streams of water,  
 8c as a shoot from Lebanon in the days of summer,  
 9a as ardour of incense on the food offering,  
 9b as golden vessels according to the proposed pattern  
 9c knowing himself bound by the stones of prosperity  
 10a as a luxuriant olive full of ripe fruit,  
 10b as an olive willow that refreshes its branches.

The structure of the present literary unit is determined by eleven comparisons, each introduced by כ. The exclamation מִה נִהַרֵר draws our immediate attention to the glory of Simon in the temple. The figurative trajectory of the text is given concrete form with the help of two infinitives construct serving as nominatives and introduced by כ at the moment he leaves the holy of holies and comes into sight of the priests and the entire community of Israel in the forecourt. Simon stands in full view and his glory is described in cosmic dimensions, extending over the heavens and the earth. The sequence of sun, moon and stars is deliberately reversed at this juncture in the symbolic imagery employed by the author. The four cola 50:6a–7b speak first of the luminous star and then of the moon and the sun. The light of the heavenly bodies becomes more and more intense while the rainbow, which emerges in the clouds, serves to unite heaven and earth. In 50:8a–c, three elements from the world of tree/plant imagery follow, rounded off with the olive and the olive willow in 50:10a,b. Such nature symbolism serves as an inclusion surrounding the three cola describing the priestly service in 50:9a–c. Where the reader expects to find the tenth comparison with Simon, 9c employs a *niph'al* participle of נִרַס with the definite article to form a striking and distinctive feature of the text. The structure, which is characterised by its *parallel pattern*, is employed by Ben Sira to sketch a complete image of Simon in the temple on the basis of eleven comparisons.

In schema:

Verse	Person	Theme	
5a	Sa4	Exclamation	מה נהדר: How glorious is Simon!
5a	Sa5	Looking out from the tent,	שנה
5b	Sa6	coming out of the sanctuary,	יצא
6a,b	Sb5,6	as star, as full moon,	
7a,b	Sb7,8	as sun, as rainbow,	4x cosmic symbolism
8a,b	Sb9,10	as sprig, as lily,	
8c	Sb11	as shoot from Lebanon,	3x tree/plant symbolism
9a	Sb12	as ardour of incense,	
9b	Sb13	as golden vessels,	2x sanctuary symbolism.
9c	Sa7	knowing himself bound	חזה
10a,b	Sb14,15	as olive, as olive willow	2x tree symbolism

## Abbreviations:

Sa ⇒ Simon as actant, Sb ⇒ Simon as subject of consideration.

Employing a considerable variety of images, Ben Sira presents the theme of the glory of Simon that has its parallel in the praise of wisdom in Sirach 24 and the Praise of the Creator in 43:1,11. Frequent points of intersection with Tanakh are evident in the form of characteristic word combinations that refer to a particular context. Such intersections would have been quite plausible to the connoisseurs of the school of Ben Sira.

*Interpretation:* Sir. 50:5a,b

Ben Sira expresses wonder at Simon as High Priest via the exclamatory pronoun מה. He employs the same style figure to inspire the praise of Zerubbabel in 49:11, thus preparing for the climax of the Praise of the Fathers in 50:1–24. The verb הדר (*niph'al*) gives expression to the magnificent appearance of Simon in the temple (50:5a). In 50:11d, the verb הדר in the *pi'el* forms a link between Simon in the temple (50:5–10) and the following segment dealing with the sacrifice at the altar (50:11–14). A relationship at the level of content exists in Ben Sira's extensive vocabulary between הדר and terms such as כבד (50:11a), הוד (50:11c) and הפארה (50:1a,11b). This indicates a significant degree of literary unity in the description of Simon as builder, Simon in the temple and Simon at the altar in the three sub-sections of 50:1–14.

Ben Sira's figurative use of language is reminiscent of the exuberant portrayal of the garments of Aaron (45:6–12). Aaron's conflict with Korah, Dathan and Abiram (45:18–19) has no parallel in

50:1–24. There can be no question of conflict at this juncture. On the contrary, the unity between Simon, his brothers and his people is clearly established. In his ornate use of the language of nature symbolism, Ben Sira follows his own unique path as a teacher of wisdom (50:6–8,10 and 12c–e).

Kraus refers to the characteristic description of nature as the genre of the *Listenwissenschaft der Naturweisheit*.<sup>145</sup> Von Rad alludes to the context as sapiential *Listenwissenschaft*<sup>146</sup> and compares Job 38 with the *Onomastikon of Amenope*.<sup>147</sup> He includes Sirach 43, Psalm 148, the hymn of the three young men (Dan. 3:52–90/G) and 4 Ezra 7:39–43 in his comparison and concludes:

Die Weisen, wohlbewandert in aller gelehrten Literatur, standen dann vor der nicht allzuschweren Aufgabe, bei der Herstellung ihrer Lehrdichtungen diesem von der damaliger Wissenschaft längst sanktionierten Schema entlang zu gehen und die nüchternen Reihen in Dichtungen umzusetzen. Der Vorgang in Sir. 43,1f. ist also grundsätzlich der Gleiche wie in dem *πατέρων ὕμνος* Sir. 44–49. In dem einen Fall handelt es sich um die Umdichtung einer gelehrten historischen Vorlage, im anderen um die einer gelehrten naturwissenschaftlichen.

Given Von Rad's position on the matter, we are left with a question concerning the manner in which Ben Sira has transformed his knowledge into *Dichtungen*. It is apparent, moreover, that the context of Tanakh together with his own book of wisdom evidently determine the significance of his characteristic use of terminology. The stacking up of exceptional expressions indicates that the author is elaborating a stylised text with the intention of keeping familiar biblical images fresh and alive and providing them with new meaning.

To begin with, we only find the pronoun *נִפְחָל* with *niph'al* *הִדָּר* in his description of Joshua son of Nun (46:2). In Tanakh as a whole, this *niph'al* is only to be found in Lam. 5:12. The nominal form in the sense of 'splendour, magnificence, distinction', by contrast, is relatively frequent especially in poetic texts. In the *pi'el* *הִדָּר* means 'to honour, to ascribe splendour' (7:1 and 50:11). Ben Sira is clearly referring here to Joshua.

<sup>145</sup> H.J. Kraus, *Psalmen*, BK XV, Neukirchen 4/1972. Kraus refers to this genre in relation to Psalm 148.

<sup>146</sup> G. von Rad, 'Hiob 38 und die Altägyptische Weisheit', in *Gesammelte Studien*, TB 8, Munich 1961, 262–271 (p. 265).

<sup>147</sup> J.T. Sanders, *Ben Sira and Demotic Wisdom*, SBLMS 28, Chico 1983. While Sanders does not refer to these forms explicitly, he does draw a direct association

Simon's action becomes the focus of attention with two identical forms, infinitive c. with suffix 3p.s.m., both preceded by the preposition ב. *Hiph'il* שנה in combination with מן only occurs here and means 'to look out' while the verb צא with מן means 'to go out'. Both infinitives are associated with the tent and the house of the veil in coordinative parallelism. The sanctuary is described with the help of archaic terminology הבית (50:1c), היכל (50:1d), אהל (50:5a), בית הפרכה (50:5b) and מקדש (50:11d; see also 45:24b). The tent is reminiscent of the tabernacle and establishes a connection with the time of Aaron and Phinehas and the wisdom tradition (Sir. 24:9–11). The house of the veil בית הפרכה in 50:5b refers to the holy of holies in the temple. This word combination is not found in Tanakh. The expression מביה לפרכה occurs only in Ex. 26:33; Lev. 16:2,12,15 and Num. 18:7. In the context of such rare usage, the presence of ה instead of ל is clearly significant although Smend tends to minimise the difference.<sup>148</sup> It is striking that הפרכה 'the veil' is employed on two occasions in relation to the ark that was to be carried לפרכה 'into the house of the veil' (Ex. 26:33). The preposition ל underscores the interpretation of מן as 'in the direction of'. Given the prescription that the High Priest alone was permitted to go behind the veil to offer incense and sprinkle the blood in order to bring about reconciliation, this points with respect to the construction of the tabernacle to the liturgical context of Yom Kippur. Compared with Tanakh, the expression 'the house of the veil' is a unique word combination on account of the definite article ה preceding פרכה together with ביה. As with 'the priest' in 50:1b, Ben Sira indicates the quality of the temple in 50:5b<sup>149</sup> and makes no allusion to Yom Kippur. He simply makes reference to the veil that served to set off the holy of holies (Ex. 26:33; 36:35; 40:3,26).<sup>150</sup> In Torah, the same quality is

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between Sir. 42:15–43:26 and Phibis in *Papyrus Insinger* XXX.17f. This association raises a number of additional questions to which his research offers no clear answer.

<sup>148</sup> R. Smend, *Die Weisheit des Jesus Sirach*, Berlin 1906. Smend thinks exclusively of Yom Kippur and concludes: "Auch מביה הפרכה soll wohl 'hinter dem Vorhang weg' bedeuten" (p. 481).

<sup>149</sup> C.T.R. Hayward, *The Jewish Temple. A Non-Biblical Sourcebook*, London 1996. It is partly for this reason that Hayward rejects the theory of Yom Kippur as background to the portrayal of Simon (p. 50). He refers in his argumentation to the fact that nothing in the text would appear to be related to the liturgical order associated with Yom Kippur while *Tamid*, by contrast, would seem to be more appropriate in this regard. He notes, in addition, that Simon's clothing is equally inappropriate.

<sup>150</sup> The veil is not only mentioned in relation to the temple but also the heavens.



ascribed to the veil as to the ark, the table and the chandelier. Special responsibility for transportation of the inventory of the holy of holies was ascribed to the Kohathites (Num. 4:1–20 and 4Q-Testament of Qahat (4Q215[4QTNaph]), *Col.* I.12–13).<sup>151</sup>

According to Schechter<sup>152</sup> and many after him, Yom Kippur is the feast that forms the background of Simon's activities in Sirach 50. Van den Born, on the other hand, points out that the High Priest would have been dressed in a linen garment on Yom Kippur and not his *pontificalia* (Lev. 16:23–25).<sup>153</sup> Other sources tend to be vague on this particular point. Flavius Josephus, for example, provides some information on the matter in *Bel.* V, 236, noting that the High Priest's special garments were not worn for ordinary, everyday activities but only for the one particular day when he entered the holy of holies. *Bel.* V, 231, by contrast, also mentions the Sabbath and the feasts of the new moon. Evidently Josephus does not provide a unambiguous image of the High Priestly garments on Yom Kippur.

A more detailed description is available to us in the Talmudic tractate *Yoma*.

In *Yoma* III.4a the High Priest is presented as taking a bath in the morning after which he clothes himself in a golden garment in order to offer the daily sacrifice and to offer incense in the sanctuary. He then puts on a white garment as he slaughters a young bull in sacrifice for his own sins and recites the confession of guilt (III.6a). Lots are drawn between the two goats and a second confession of guilt follows. The High Priest offers incense in the holy of holies, sprinkles the ark with blood and thereafter the golden altar (III.9–IV.2b).

In *Yoma* VI.2a the people throw themselves to the ground, con-

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According to 3 Enoch 45, all the generations of the world are represented on the curtain together with their deeds and thoughts. This theme is further elaborated in later Jewish mysticism in the Merkabah tradition and in the Hekhalot literature. See G. Scholem, *Die jüdische Mystik in ihren Hauptströmungen*, who considers this representation to be extremely old (p. 77).

<sup>151</sup> M. Haran, 'The Priestly Image of the Tabernacle', *HUCA* XXXVI (1965) 191–226. Given the distinct tasks ascribed to the Levites, the Kohathites, the Gershonites and the Merarites in Numbers 4 in the context of transporting the tabernacle, there was an evident qualitative difference between the furnishings and the sanctuary itself.

<sup>152</sup> S. Schechter & C. Taylor, *The Wisdom of Ben Sira*, Amsterdam 1979 (p. 63, n. 5).

<sup>153</sup> A. van den Born, *Wijshheid van Jesus Sirach*, BOT VIII/V, Roermond 1968 (p. 237).

fess their guilt and cry out: ברוך שם כבוד מלכותו לעולם ועד *'blessed are You, the holy Name of his kingdom for evermore'*, after which the goat of Azazel is driven into the wilderness (VI.3a). After the burnt offering of the young bull and the second goat, the reading concerning the Day of Reconciliation (Leviticus 16; 23:26–32) and the quotation from Num. 29:7–11 then follow. Thereafter, the High Priest takes a bath and clothes himself in the white garment on top of which he puts on the golden vestment, offers the evening sacrifice, purifies the lamps (VII.3a) and returns home in his own clothing (VII.4d). According to *Yoma*, therefore, one can conclude that on Yom Kippur the High Priest is only fully vested during the sacrifices offered in the early morning and at the evening sacrifice.

Sir. 50:5, 11 thus lacks a specific reference to Yom Kippur. Simon is located in general terms in the temple as he leaves the sanctuary. Ben Sira puts himself in the position of the people as they observe the High Priest emerge into view in all his glory. As with Aaron, Simon is ascribed majesty (הוד) and serves the Holy One in his splendour (בכבוד) in 45:7a,b. He shares in the הוד כבוד והזלת עז *'majestic splendour and magnificent eminence'* given expression in the grandeur of his clothing (45:12).<sup>154</sup> In Simon's case no reference is made to his entourage, only to the High Priest as such. Ben Sira changes the customary terminology in order to accentuate his unique position and to identify him with wisdom (Sir. 24:9–11).

### Sir. 50:6a

Ben Sira's description employs cosmic terminology: the stars, the moon, the sun and the rainbow in 50:6,7. The sequence is reversed in comparison with 42:15–43:33.

The repetition of מִבֵּין is neither dittography (Lévi, Di Lella and Wright)<sup>155</sup> nor a *clerical error* (Schechter) and need not be adapted to G and S (Peters). Ben-Hayyim employs an exclamation mark at this juncture.

The present author notes that מִבֵּין can be vocalised as מִבֵּיִן or as מִבֵּיִן, the semantic value of each being quite distinct. In 50:6a, the

<sup>154</sup> P.C. Beentjes, *Jesus Sirach en Tenach*, Nieuwegein 1981 (p. 202).

<sup>155</sup> B.G. Wright, 'Fear the Lord and Honor the Priest', in P.C. Beentjes ed., *The Book of Ben Sira in Modern Research*, Berlin 1997, 189–222. Wright offers a reconstruction of H based on G: מועד וכירה מלא בימי *'like the full moon in the festival season'*.

expression מִבֵּין עָבִים *'in the midst of the clouds'* employs a double preposition to determine the place of the luminous star. In 50:6b, on the other hand, a participial form מִבֵּין (*hiph'il* בֵּין) is employed followed by the preposition כּ *'as distinguished from'*, underlining the importance of the festival calendar in which the moon had a significant role to play. The עָבִים *'clouds'* form an inclusion with the synonymous עַנַּן *'bank of clouds'*, whereby the author further vivifies his exploitation of cosmic symbolism to represent Simon in 7b.

While it is worthy of note that the expression כּוֹכַב אֹרֶר *'the luminous star'* is mentioned prior to the sun and the moon, the reverse order as such is far from arbitrary. Stars had a function in determining good fortune or disaster. In Tanakh, the singular כּוֹכַב only occurs in Amos 5:26, where the prophet fulminates against the idolatrous worship of the Assyrian star gods Sakkuth and Kaiwan. In the prophecy of Bileam *'a star shall come out of Jacob'*, the star implies good fortune for the people (Num. 24:17).

It is highly probable that Ben Sira is alluding to Ps. 148:2–4 in 50:6a and that he employs the singular כּוֹכַב אֹרֶר *'luminous star'* with Simon in mind. When compared with *'praise Him sun and moon, praise Him shining star'* (Ps. 148:3) the reversed sequence in 50:6 is clearly intentional.<sup>156</sup> By placing the star in the first position in combination with אֹרֶר Simon acquires a uniquely elevated position in the context of cosmic symbolism.

That Ben Sira is following his own unique strategy at this juncture is evident from the fact that the comparison of human beings with cosmic, heavenly bodies is problematic in Tanakh, witness the dreams of Joseph and the worship of images.<sup>157</sup> The motivation behind his use of such symbolic language, therefore, must be sought in the wisdom tradition. Wisdom has its dwelling in the highest

<sup>156</sup> P.C. Beentjes, *Jesus Sirach en Tenach*, Nieuwegein 1981 (pp. 60f.).

<sup>157</sup> Such disruption of the divine order is taken very seriously in the context of prophetic judgement (Isa. 13:10; Jer. 8:2; Ez. 32:7–8 and Joel 2:10). It constitutes a topos in the prophecy of the day of the Lord in Amos 8:9, the original meaning of which (Joel 2:28–32) is reversed by the prophet. In the battle song of Josh. 10:12, we witness the sun and the moon standing still at Gibeon. Deutero-Isaiah excludes the natural function of light from the future order of things. In a visionary prophecy of salvation he sees YHWH as the eternal light, while the sun and the moon no longer function (Isa. 60:19). This symbolic language continued to maintain its significance (Rev. 22:5), even where comparison with heavenly bodies such as the sun and the moon was a risky matter on account of its potential idolatrous associations.

heights, is enthroned upon a pillar of cloud, has cosmic characteristics and is valid for all time (24:4–9). Ben Sira's intention is the identification of wisdom with the Torah that enjoys its continuation in the service of Simon in the temple who thus in turn becomes the personification of this wisdom. While the absence of Sirach 24 in H mitigates the possibility of certitude in this matter, there would appear to be every reason to follow this line of thought since the author refers to the full moon 'determining the festal days' in 50:6b prior to mentioning the sun in 50:7a.

### Sir. 50:6b

The exceptional word combination ירה מלא *'full moon'* is not documented in Tanakh. The full moon functions to determine the festal days ימי מועד. Ben Sira refers hereby to the burning question of the transition from the much older solar calendar to the lunar calendar that was introduced into daily life from the time of the Babylonian exile.<sup>158</sup> It is probable that this lunar calendar was first introduced into the temple liturgy after Onias III and Jason when it became normative for the determination of festivals.<sup>159</sup> Conflicts surrounding the use of different calendars will doubtless have extended over a significant period of time before they became known to us in the literature of Qumran.<sup>160</sup>

The comparison of Simon with the new moon, moreover, would

<sup>158</sup> J. Morgenstern, 'The Calendars of Ancient Israel', *HUCA* X (1935) 1–148. Morgenstern distinguishes three calendars, the last of which being a lunar calendar of Babylonian origin (p. 95), recognisable by the use of Babylonian names, instead of simple enumeration. The New Year feast was originally celebrated on the tenth of the seventh month (Ez. 40:1), later on the first day of the seventh month (Lev. 23:24 and Num. 29:1). The earth was created according to the Babylonian tradition on the first day of Tishri and in an alternative tradition on the first day of the first month, Nisan. Since Ezra and Nehemiah this new lunar calendar became a regular feature of daily life.

<sup>159</sup> In the Talmudic tractate *bRosh Hashanah* 25a, Psalm 104 is referred to as the psalm of the day for the day of the new moon in the seventh month Tishri upon which the world was created: 'He created the moon for the fixed times, the sun knows the time of its setting'. In the lunar calendar, the full moon does not constitute the primary problem but rather the establishment of the appearance of the new moon by two witnesses (*Rosh Hashanah* 1.4–3.1).

<sup>160</sup> F. García Martínez/A.S. van der Woude, *De rollen van de Dode Zee II*, Kampen 1995. Under 'calendars and priestly timetables' (pp. 463–494) the arrangement of the 24 priestly subdivisions in the *Mishmarot* is treated in the calendar of Qumran. This latter dates back to an older tradition based on a solar calendar. Each priestly subdivision serves 13 times in the course of a six-year cycle.

have been meaningless at that time since the moon was invisible. The qualification 'full moon' thus acquires a polemic undertone directed against the sub-division of the lunar calendar.

In Tanakh, sun and moon seldom function together in the description of persons. David and Pharaoh constitute the exceptions in this regard, the former being addressed by God with the words: '... his throne shall endure before me as the sun. It shall be established as the moon, an enduring witness in the skies' (Ps. 89:37–38), the latter in a song of lament: 'When I blot you out, I will cover the heavens and make their stars dark. All the shining lights of the heavens I will darken above you, and put darkness on your land, says the Lord God.' (Ez. 32:7).

Ben Sira adopts a different perspective when he refers to himself in the words 'I am full like the full moon' (G39:12 on account of the omission of page CC in MS B). With full poetic license, he reduces the cosmic powers to human dimensions in this declaration, which belongs to an autobiographical passage in the context of the work of the scribe (38:24–39:11). The full moon thus constitutes an essential point of interest in the conceptualisation of Simon.

The moon is represented in even greater detail in the Praise of the Creator in (42:15–43:33). After an introductory remark concerning the works of the Lord and the magnificence of the heavens (43:1) we are then given a description of the sun (43:2–5), the moon (6–8) and the stars (9). After the orders of the Holy One (10) an appeal follows to look at the rainbow, the clouds and other natural phenomena and to praise the Creator. The text of 43:6–8 is extremely complicated.<sup>161</sup> In 43:7, MS B begins with **בם** 'through them', while Bmargin changes this to read **בו** 'through him'.<sup>162</sup> The concept **בתקופתו**

<sup>161</sup> Y. Yadin, *The Ben Sira Scroll from Masada*, Jerusalem 1965. Yadin refers to 43:7 as a typical example of both versions, each indicating a different tradition (p. 8). The text upon which the author of MS B bases himself stems from Qumran, in which the sun is to be reckoned with as a factor in the establishment of the seasons. M has **לו** instead of **בו** in Bmargin, with which both G and S agree. Skehan/Di Lella opt, therefore, for **בו** (p. 489). Middendorp bases himself on 43:2 and locates Ben Sira in the context of Greek thought in which the sun served to mark the day (p. 97). Supplementary argumentation is necessary in order to make a decision at this juncture.

<sup>162</sup> L. Schrader, *Leiden und Gerechtigkeit*, BET 27, Frankfurt am Main 1994. Schrader closely examines the relationship between M, MS B, Bmargin, G and S in order to establish the older version of H. Instead of limiting himself to formal comparison, however, he also forms conclusions based on content. In Sir. 43:7 he

'at its turning point' (7b) is only applied to the sun in Tanakh.<sup>163</sup> The question remains as to whether Lehmann is correct in concluding with such conviction that Ben Sira based himself on a lunar calendar.<sup>164</sup> Based on the textual variations with respect to 43:7, it is clear that the poetic description of the moon (43:6–8) does not permit us to draw far-reaching conclusions on the matter of the calendar debate and Ben Sira's position therein. In his interpretation of 43:7a, Wright presumes the reading of Bmargin without further ado, in spite of the fact that MS B speaks of both sun and moon. His presupposition maintains that there is an evident contrast between Ben Sira, on the one hand, and 1 Enoch and the Testament of Levi (Aram.), on the other, with respect to their evaluation of the solar calendar.<sup>165</sup> Based on MS B, however, there is no particular difference of opinion to be observed since Ben Sira did not write in an ideological vacuum but in a characteristic social situation. Wright insists that Ben Sira's position in the internal polemic raging among the priests is determined by his unequivocal support for the priestly faction in the temple. For this reason he emends the text of 50:6b.

The present author's analysis of  $\text{בְּיָמָיו}$  is completely different, since

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compares the three different readings: MS B ( $\text{בַּיּוֹם}$ ), Bmargin ( $\text{בַּיּוֹם}$ ) and M ( $\text{בַּיּוֹם}$ ). He considers M to be original and presumes MS B to be a scribal error (p. 32) to be explained on the basis of  $\text{בַּיּוֹם}$  in the line above (43:6a). The fact that the manuscript has  $\text{בַּיּוֹם}$ , excludes the possibility of scribal error. Schrader unjustifiably rejects Yadin's reading of MS B as speculation (p. 32, n. 51). In my opinion, the reading of MS B should be considered original as the *lectio difficilior*. This reading is of decisive importance for the calendar question.

<sup>163</sup> J.J. Stamm ed., *Hebräisches und Aramäisches Lexicon zum Alten Testament*, Leiden 1967–1990 (pp. 1641–1642). The noun  $\text{יָמֵי הַשָּׁמֶשׁ}$  is used for the solar cycle and the turn of the year. Sir. 43:7 is mentioned as the only exception.

<sup>164</sup> M.R. Lehmann, 'Ben Sira and the Qumran Literature', *RQ* 9 (1961) 103–116. Based on the quotation of 43:6–8 (he regularly employs a different versification as here 43:7–9) and the textual emendation to read  $\text{שְׁבוֹרָה}$ , Lehmann maintains that there can be no doubt that Ben Sira took a lunar calendar as his point of departure. In the explanation that follows concerning the varying enumeration of the *mishmaroth* he refers to the problems associated with this matter for the normative Jewish tradition. In addition, *Hodayot* (1QH XII. 4–9) contains a parallel with Sir. 43:6–8, suggesting that the new moon constituted the point of commencement of each month (p. 113). One is obliged to conclude that the calendar question continues to raise significant questions and that dogmatic assertions concerning the calendar employed by Ben Sira deserve to be relativised.

<sup>165</sup> B.G. Wright, 'Fear the Lord and Honour the Priest', in P.C. Beentjes ed., *The Book of Ben Sira in Modern Research*, Berlin 1997. Wright insists: 'Nowhere does Ben Sira attribute to the sun any calendrical function'. According to Wright, the moon alone is determinative for the establishment of the seasons and the feasts (p. 207). MS B, however, reads  $\text{בַּיּוֹם}$ !

there is no evidence of a scribal error based on dittography. In 50:6, Ben Sira presents an outline vision, accentuated by the polemical situation, which deals with the determination of festival days by the full moon with which Simon is compared. This would appear to argue against a lunar calendar. There is absolutely no evidence in Sirach 50 of a closed front established by the temple priests against a marginalised group of priests and scribes belonging to the circle of Enoch.<sup>166</sup> On the contrary, Ben Sira portrays Simon as holding such a unique position in the priestly circles in Jerusalem that even his Zadokite origins are unimportant. Simon's exemplary character is the core of Ben Sira's concern and not his origins. He may indeed have consciously avoided reference to the latter on account of the polemical situation that tended to be determined by external opposition.

Our own hypothesis in this regard is that there is evidence of a conflict brought about by the Samaritan claim to the true priesthood and their criticism of the temple in Jerusalem. Ben Sira thus accentuated the unity among the priests in Jerusalem in order to avoid the impression that the polemic might have led to internal discord. The calendar question constitutes one example of internal conflict in Jerusalem, the fact that nothing is said concerning Ezra another. The calendar question is thus one possible explanation of the latter silence. The other possibility has its roots in the explanation of the Torah given to Aaron by Moses in 45:17. Ben Sira endeavours to bridge the differences in Jerusalem by establishing a connection between the Torah of life and wisdom. This hypothesis is based on the unemended text of MS B.

One can conclude, therefore, that Ben Sira employed the exceptional word combination 'the full moon' in order to qualify Simon as High Priest for the task of determining the times and the festival days according to the Torah. Such calculation was important on account of the fact that the two primary feasts of Passover and Tabernacles fell according to the festival calendar in Lev. 23:6,33 and in Num. 28:17; 29:12 on the fifteenth of the first and the sev-

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<sup>166</sup> R.A. Argall, *1 Enoch and Sirach*, SBLEJL 8, Atlanta 1995. Argall points to internal conflicts between rival groups of wisdom teachers and to stereotypical rhetoric: hardening of the hearts, scoffers, liars and fools (1 Enoch 98:9,11,15; 104:10 and Sir. 3:26–27,28; 34:1,4). It is worthy of note that 1 Enoch 104:10 warns against the sinners who, at the end time, will write their books in their own name. This judgement affects Ben Sira in 50:27 (pp. 95ff.).

enth month respectively, i.e. on the day of the full moon. Both festivals were determined on the basis of the Torah according to the calculations of the priestly code that can be presumed to have been familiar to both Simon and Ben Sira. The lunar calendar, on the other hand, was based upon the witness of two individuals concerning the arrival of the new moon. Echoes of a powerful and fundamental polemic clearly reverberate in the accent on the *full* moon!

### Sir. 50:7a

The sun acquires the attributive adjunct מִשְׁרֵקָה. The term is an unknown participial form bearing the semantic significance of the east, the colour red and the sunrise. The root שֵׁרַק *‘to smear, to apply make up’*<sup>167</sup> is found in the Mishnah. In the blessing of Judah in Gen. 49:11 the notion שֵׁרֵקָה refers to the colour of blood-red grapes. This topos<sup>168</sup> is also found in the song of the vineyard in Isa. 5:2 and in the same prophet’s preaching of judgement against Moab in 16:8. The city of Masrekah in Edom likewise alludes to the colour red (Gen. 36:36; 1 Chron. 1:47) while the hapax הַמִּוֶּץ is mostly interpreted as *‘red’* or *‘crimson’* on account of the vivid colour associated with Edom (Isa. 63:1).

The preposition לְ indicates direction. While the red glow of the morning sun can be explained as a familiar natural phenomenon, in combination with the temple it constitutes a characteristic brightness associated with the vision of the return of God’s glory thereto (Ez. 43:1–6). Zimmerli is determined to avoid any idea of *solar symbolism* at this juncture.<sup>169</sup> Morgenstern establishes a relationship with the legitimacy of the temple.<sup>170</sup> Josephus offers a completely different perspective in *Bel. V*, 222–224, in which he provides a detailed description of the fiery glow of the morning sun reflected by the

<sup>167</sup> J. Levy, *Wörterbuch über die Talmudim und Midraschim IV*, Darmstadt 1963 (p. 614).

<sup>168</sup> G. Fohrer, *Exegese des Alten Testaments*, Heidelberg 1976. Fohrer refers to the traditional themes that remain recognisable in history as *topoi* as ‘geprägte Bedeutungssyndrome’, to be determined on the basis of ‘die Erfassung des soziokulturellen Hintergrundes’ (pp. 110–115).

<sup>169</sup> W. Zimmerli, *Ezechiel*, BK XIII.2, Neukirchen 1969 (p. 1077).

<sup>170</sup> J. Morgenstern, ‘The Three Calendars of Ancient Israel’ *HUCA I* (1924) 13–78. Morgenstern interprets Ez. 43:1 as the descent of fire from heaven in support of the legality of the temple, just as the fire descended during the dedication of the temple of Solomon in 2 Chron. 5:13b–14; 7:1 and during David’s first sacrifice on the threshing floor of Ornan in 1 Chron. 21:26.



solid gold plates decorating the temple.<sup>171</sup> He compares this with a mountain peak covered with snow. The temple thus becomes a blinding white as it reflects the rays of the sun. In line with the significance of *היכל מלך* 'royal palace' in 50:3b, 7a can also be understood to refer to the entire temple complex, observable in all its radiance from the south and west and, in particular, from the Mount of Olives to the east. It is from this precise direction that the sun's rays shine directly into the sanctuary. The vision of the prophet Ezekiel thus portrays the entrance of YHWH into his sanctuary. When the High Priest, clothed in the golden ephod, emerges in the early morning having offered incense in the sanctuary, he thus presents his magnificence and constitutes the reflection of the *כבוד* described by Ben Sira in 50:5–10.

In the hymns of Qumran this glory is given expression as a splendour of light in 4Q*Songs of the Sabbath sacrifice* (4Q403 [4Q*ShirShabb*<sup>d</sup>], Col. I.45) [*. . . marvellous wonder . . . the glory*] in the most perfect light' while the hymn in 1Q*Hodayot*<sup>a</sup> (1QH<sup>a</sup>, Col. XII.6) describes the divine manifestation 'Like perfect dawn you have revealed yourself to me with your light' (cf. Ps. 50:2).

### Sir. 50:7b

The use of the *niph'al* 3p.f.s. of *ראה* is unusual because the rainbow itself becomes subject in the reflexive sense 'to reveal oneself, to manifest oneself' (Lévi and Di Lella).<sup>172</sup> Schechter and Smend refer to Ez. 1:28, while Ryssel, Box and Sauer translate in the passive with 'to be seen'. Ben Sira is quoting Gen. 9:14 at this juncture, albeit with a subtle difference. Via the preceding *והיה*,<sup>173</sup> the future event is announced in a perfect consecutive. The rainbow shall become visible (perfect c. *niph'al* *ויראהה*). Scholars mostly translate the *niph'al*

<sup>171</sup> J. Jeremias, *Jerusalem zur Zeit Jesu*, Göttingen 1962. Jeremias makes reference to a concave mirror of gold (*Yoma* III.10), a gift from queen Helena of Adiabene, in which the rays of the morning sun are reflected (*bYoma* 37b, p. 26).

<sup>172</sup> P.C. Beentjes, *Jesus Sirach en Tenach*, Nieuwegein 1981. Beentjes refers in this regard to the predicative clause in Sir. 43:1a, in which the heavens manifest their own majesty (p. 123).

<sup>173</sup> A.E. Cowley, *Gesenius' Hebrew Grammar*, Oxford 1910, §112y. C. Westermann, *Genesis*, BK I.1, Neukirchen 1974. Westermann's interpretation: "und der Regenbogen wird sichtbar in den Wolken" (p. 635) is conceived entirely from the perspective of the human person looking up to the heavens. While this passive translation is customary (Gen. 9:14), a reflexive translation would appear to be more appropriate.

passive in the context of the promise. By changing the verbal form into a *niph'al* perfect, Ben Sira insists in his description of Simon that this promise has already become a reality. Given the association with Gen. 9:16 in which the rainbow is subject, the reflexive meaning of the *niph'al* of אָרַב with the rainbow that 'reveals itself' would seem to be more appropriate than the passive meaning.<sup>174</sup>

The all-embracing sign of the rainbow serves as a remembrance of the covenant with Noah. In 50:7b, the reflexive meaning in comparison with the High Priest provides confirmation of the Noahic covenant with all living creatures on earth כָּל בְּשָׂר. This phrase gives expression to the universal aspect of the Noahic covenant that is likewise evident in the worship of 'all people' (50:17a). This universal aspect points to the main line of Ben Sira's thought and of his vision of the temple that, rooted in wisdom that identifies itself with Torah, is universal and cosmic by nature. One can conclude, therefore, that the reflexive meaning presents an open offer to which humanity can respond.

### Sir. 50:8a

In three cola, the magnificence of the natural world is called upon in the continuing description of Simon in 50:8. Three images taken from the world of plant and tree symbolism—flowering sprigs, the lily and the shoot from Lebanon—are bound together by temporal references to springtime and summer.

In 50:8a we read פְּרֻצֵי עֹנֵפִי 'as flowering sprigs' based on the results of textual criticism (3.1.3.). The word נֶץ is only found elsewhere in Tanakh in Gen. 40:10 and Isa. 18:5 in the form נֶצֶח 'blossom' and the plural הַנְּצִיִּים in Song 2:12. The term is seldom found in rabbinic Hebrew.<sup>175</sup> In status c. pl. עֹנֵפִי 'sprigs' stands in apposition to כְּנֻצֵי, which is likewise written in status c. according to a specific stylistic usage of the genitive and can be translated *flowering sprigs*.<sup>176</sup>

<sup>174</sup> A parallel is available in Ps. 19:1–7 in which the heavens are the acting subject in the telling of the glory of the Lord, even without language. The silence is expressed in the *niph'al* בְּלִי נִשְׁמָע קוֹלָם 'their voice is not heard' (19:4). The sun emerges from his tent as a bridegroom from his wedding canopy (19:6). The imagery of the moon renewing itself found in Sir. 43:8a is akin to this (participle *hitpa'el* הִתְפַּאֵל).

<sup>175</sup> J. Levy, *Wörterbuch über die Talmudim und Midraschim*, Darmstadt 1973 (III, p. 427).

<sup>176</sup> P. Joüon/T. Muraoka, *A Grammar of Biblical Hebrew*, SubBi 14, Rome 1991 (§129f, 131h). A noun having a genitival group in apposition is itself in the status

This construction is unusual. Schechter, Ryssel, Levi and Segal suggest the reading ענפים but the facsimile and the photo offer no justification for emendation. Penar suggests that we read ענף in the singular with a suffix 3p.s.m.<sup>177</sup> While such an explanation is acceptable from the linguistic perspective and relatively simple, it presumes the reading כנף בענפי 'like a flower on its branch in the days of the appointed feast'. In terms of content, however, objections can be raised against this explanation since it suggests that reference is being made to a specific sprig and a specific type of tree. The reading likewise suggests that reference is being made to a specific feast,<sup>178</sup> Succoth being the most evident given its association with the lulav and etrog and the branches of palm trees found in Lev. 23:40.

The present interpretation of כנצני ענפי 'as flowering sprigs' points to the sense of amazement experienced in observing the tender magnificence of the blossoms of early spring, a broadly familiar sign of new life without specific reference to a determined type of branch or tree. Sauer establishes a link between 50:8a and בימי מועד and thus implies a connection with festival days. Based on the free translation 'rose' found in G, Levi and Di Lella are inclined to think of the springtime. The general meaning of מועד 'determined time', however, fits well with the parallel בימי קיץ 'in the days of summer' in 8c. As such, therefore, מועד can be understood as a reference to the moment when the branches begin to flower. Ben Sira thus associates the 'determined time' appropriate to trees in the order of nature with springtime. By combining two temporal references, he points to spring and summer without indicating any specific feast as such. To do so would draw attention away from Simon who is ultimately the focus of this symbolic description (50:5–10).

### Sir. 50:8b

The comparison of Simon with the שושן 'lily' is imaginatively enlarged as an *endungslose singularische Kollektivform* in combination with the flow-

c. (§129r). The reading כנצני is thus grammatically correct. Peters appeals to the grammar of Gesenius (§130a1) and reads the preposition ב in 50:8 prior to ענפי.

<sup>177</sup> T. Penar, *Northwest Semitic Philology and the Hebrew Fragments of Ben Sira*, BibOr 28, Rome 1975 (p. 85).

<sup>178</sup> The new year for trees is mentioned in Talmud b*Rosh Hashanah* 1:14–15. Reference is made to the citrus tree and the wild olive, the blossoming of which is the criterion for specifying the time.

ing water upon which such flowers drift.<sup>179</sup> From the botanical perspective, one can identify the reference with the familiar (water)lily, the preposition על indicating its typical habitat drifting on water. The translation ‘as a lily on flowing streams of water’ is intended to draw attention to the perpetual motion of the water. The מים יבלי ‘streams of water’ are only documented in Tanakh in Isa. 30:25 and 44:4 in the context of salvation preaching. This unusual use of terminology tends to raise a number of associations. It is reminiscent, for example, of עלפלני מים (Ps. 1:3b) on account of the word combination פלנים יבלי מים ‘brooks running with water’ in Isa. 30:25 that have their source in the bare, lofty mountains, are a life giving force and cause shallows to spring up (Isa. 44:4). Ben Sira thus employs the flowering sprigs and the lily to underline both the vulnerability and the power of life.

### Sir. 50:8c

The author employs an association based on the symbolism of the cedars of Lebanon in order to present Simon as a ‘shoot’, a young cedar in full growth, as in 50:12d. The topos פרה לבנון ‘a shoot from Lebanon’ is borrowed from Nahum (1:4) and clearly alludes to the non-salvific context of Nah. 1:3b–8 in which God is described in a hymn as the jealous one and the avenger who controls nature and allows the ‘verdance of Lebanon’ to ‘wither and fade’. Ben Sira thus makes use of the reverse of a literal quotation as a conscious reference.<sup>180</sup> In his own idiom, 50:8c represents a positive image in which the geographical term Lebanon can be understood as a symbolic reference to the temple.<sup>181</sup> In the peshar of Nahum (4Q169 [4Qp.Nah])

<sup>179</sup> J.J. Stamm ed., *Hebräisches und Aramäisches Lexicon zum Alten Testament*, IV, Leiden 1967–1990. Given the word combination with ‘streams of water’, it would appear that the lily, *Lilium candidum*, which occurs in a variety of forms, is not intended here as such but rather the lotus, *Nymphaea lotus Lilium* (p. 1349).

<sup>180</sup> P.C. Beentjes, *Jesus Sirach en Tenach*, Nieuwegein 1981. On closer inspection, Beentjes does not associate this unique word combination with Nah. 1:3b–8 (pp. 168–169). He interprets the reversal only in the literal sense. In dealing with the Scriptures, a reversal of associative significance seems possible in the context of the oral tradition, prompted initially by quoting a specific passage.

<sup>181</sup> C.T.R. Hayward, ‘Sacrifice and World Order: Some Observations on Ben Sira’s Attitude to the Temple Service’, in S.W. Sykes ed., *Sacrifice and Redemption*, Cambridge 1991, 22–34. According to Hayward, a rich diversity of images is present in Sirach 24 in which the author presents the temple as the earthly Eden from which the ‘water streams’ of wisdom derive their source (pp. 26–27). The geographical term ‘Lebanon’ can function as a symbol for the temple in Jerusalem (Ps. 92:13–14).

*frags.* 1 + 2), the negative image of the Kittites (Romans) is applicable. Their leaders are like lofty Lebanon and the men of their council as ‘the green of Lebanon’. The ambiguity of this topos is considerable. Ben Sira offers a positive image with פֶּרֶה לְבָנוֹן, since the term פֶּרֶה, in the context of Torah, relates to the blossoming of the staff of Aaron for the house of Levi (Num. 17:3). This association thus calls to mind the exaltation of Aaron לְיַי לְמִטָּה *‘by the staff of Levi’* (45:6a). In the first instance, therefore, Simon is compared with the shoot visible in Lebanon as a young sprouting tree בְּיַמֵּי קִיץ *‘in the days of summer’* who guarantees continuity in the High Priestly tradition.<sup>182</sup> The reference to summer is significant in that it expresses stability in the face of heat and drought.

### Sir. 50:9a

The comparisons in 50:9 leave the world of nature behind and turn to that of the cult in a sequence of three symbols: burning incense, golden vessels and stones. Simon is compared with אֵשׁ לְבוֹנָה *‘ardour of incense’*. Ben Sira thus employs a word play based on the terms לְבָנוֹן *‘Lebanon’* (8c) and לְבוֹנָה *‘incense’* (9a) in order to turn our attention to the temple liturgy.<sup>183</sup>

In the context of the temple liturgy, מְנַחֵה *‘offering’* is a general designation<sup>184</sup> and incense is burnt on the altar of incense located in the sanctuary immediately in front of the holy of holies. At the present juncture, however, Ben Sira makes allusion to burning incense in combination with עַל הַמְנַחֵה *‘on the food offering’*. Such a word combination is only found elsewhere in Lev. 6:8,15 in relation to food offerings. The latter figured among the burnt offerings that were

<sup>182</sup> N. Wieder, ‘The Term קִיץ in the Dead Sea Scrolls and in Hebrew Liturgical Poetry’, *JJS* 5 (1954), 22–31. In Qumran, the term קִיץ *‘summer’* also has a more general significance as ‘period’ or ‘time’.

<sup>183</sup> The comparison with אֵשׁ has a parallel in relation to Elijah כֹּאֵשׁ לְבוֹנָה *‘a prophet like fire’* (48:1) which is supported by the exclamatory מֵהַּ introducing 48:4a and 50:5a.

<sup>184</sup> G refers specifically to the incense offering by mentioning the incense in combination with the fire pan. While Ryssel and Lévi do not consider this emendation necessary, they insist on emending אֵשׁ לְבוֹנָה to read אֵשׁ לְבוֹנָה *‘fire offerings’*. The latter is unknown, however, in combination with לְבוֹנָה *‘incense’*. Schechter suggests the interpolation of לְבוֹנָה and reads *‘fire of incense’* together with G. Peters, Smend, Box, Van den Born and Snaith accept an alternative emendation of מְנַחֵה הַמְנַחֵה *‘offering’* (MS B) to read מְנַחֵה הַמְנַחֵה *‘fire pan’* (in line with G and S). While Sauer and Di Lella follow MS B in 9a they do not do so in the following colon 9b. The commentaries as a whole tend to have difficulty explaining the problem.

intended in part for the priests. Moreover, the word combination in Lev. 24:7 is associated with the offerings of bread that were to be renewed every Sabbath and that likewise belonged among the burnt offerings. The image provides us with a new perspective: Simon is compared with the ardour of incense on top of the offering, thus further qualifying his elevated position. In addition, the food offering indicates his contribution to the livelihood of the priests.<sup>185</sup> The burning incense determines his primary position, alludes to his ongoing commitment and the everlasting statute on behalf of the priests (Lev. 6:18; Sir. 45:24–25; 50:13 and 50:24). This scent calls to mind (אֶזְרָרָה) the offering by fire of a pleasing odour to YHWH (Lev. 2:1–2; 6:8).<sup>186</sup>

The translation found in G reads ‘as fire and incense on a fire pan’, which refers to the incense offering (Ex. 30:1–10; 34–38 and Lev. 4:7; 10:1 and 16:12) that was decisive in the conflict with Korah and his associates (Num. 16:17).<sup>187</sup>

The expression ‘ardour of incense’ draws attention to Simon and his priests who form a unity recognisable in the fragrance of the incense and the glow of the fire as they serve to purify the relationship between the people and YHWH.

The present colon provides further evidence of the extent to which exegetes tend to approach H from the perspective of G and give priority to the latter when it suits them.<sup>188</sup> The emendations introduced

<sup>185</sup> N. Calduch-Benages, ‘Aromas, perfumes y fragancias en El Sirácide’, in FS M. Gilbert, *Treasures of Wisdom*, Leuven 1999, 15–30. Calduch-Benages associates ἐπὶ πυρείου with the fire pan (בִּזְרָרָה) based on the preposition ἐπὶ in G and על ‘on’ in H. She unjustifiably considers her translation of H ‘como fuego de incienso sobre la ofrenda’ as less appropriate when compared to that of G (p. 27). Simon’s task of providing the priests with their day-to-day needs hereby lacks full appreciation in G.

<sup>186</sup> J. Marböck, ‘Der Hohepriester Simon in Sir 50. Ein Beitrag zur Bedeutung von Priestertum und Kult im Sirachbuch’, in FS M. Gilbert, *Treasures of Wisdom*, Leuven 1999, 215–229. Marböck confirms the significance of זָכָר at this point and with respect to Aaron by way of the golden bells and pomegranates (45:9c), the precious stones (45:11c) and the memorial sacrifice (45:16).

<sup>187</sup> The incense offering is mentioned in these three places. It is striking that no deep-seated conflicts emerge in H50:1–24 with respect to the priestly tradition in contrast to Sirach 45.

<sup>188</sup> T. Middendorp, *Die Stellung Jesu Ben Sira zwischen Judentum und Hellenismus*, Leiden 1972 (p. 48). Middendorp first translates according to H after which he gives preference to G ‘Und wie Feuer und Weihrauch auf der Pfanne’, suggesting that a scribal error or an error in reasoning is to blame for this minor change. The consequence of his similar evaluation of 60 locations in Ben Sira in comparison with Tanakh is that its author comes across as lacking originality and even as an epigone. Middendorp incorrectly appeals in this regard (p. 35) to Lévi, Smend and Peters

by Ben Sira with respect to formulations found in Tanakh as a whole, however, are generated by a conscious option on his part to bring his readers with him in his arguments and thus to lead them into wisdom and insight in order to align their own day to day lives with the Torah.

### Sir. 50:9b

The line of thought is continued in the comparison with the כְּלֵי זָהָב *'golden vessels'*. In the vision of Moses on Mount Sinai in Ex. 25:29 we are given a survey of the plates, dishes, flagons and bowls intended for pouring libations to be made of pure gold according to the pattern revealed to him by YHWH (Ex. 25:9 and 11Q*Temple Scroll*<sup>a</sup> (11Q19 [11QT<sup>a</sup>], Col. XXXIII.13–14).

The word combination כְּלֵי זָהָב is only found elsewhere in Num. 31:50 where it is included in the reference to the booty captured from the Midianites. It is apparent from history that the golden vessels in the temple of Solomon only functioned for a short period of time. In the 5th year of the reign of Rehoboam, Pharaoh Shishak took away the golden treasures from the temple and the royal palace (1 Kgs 14:26; 2 Chron. 12:9). According to 2 Kgs 12:13, golden vessels were no longer fabricated during the restoration of the temple under King Jehoash. While we know that King Asa later introduced silver and gold utensils into the 'house of the Lord' (1 Kgs 15:15), it is equally evident that he quickly sent the same vessels to Ben-hadad king of Aram (1 Kgs 15:18). Pharaoh Neco was only able to demand one talent of gold as tribute (2 Kgs 23:33), while the Babylonians were left with little more than the temple brassware as booty. Mention of the removal of the golden fire pans and basins suggests that these were the last remaining golden vessels in the sanctuary.<sup>189</sup>

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and is ultimately obliged to withdraw this disqualification (p. 49). His research is paradigmatic of the methodological approach that would give priority to G and derive H therefrom.

<sup>189</sup> Solomon earns 666 talents of gold per year on account of his business activities (1 Kgs 10:14–25 and 2 Chron. 9:13). The figures vary considerably in the chronistic history. In 1 Chron. 22:14 David makes 100,000 talents of gold available to Solomon for the construction of the temple. In a speech to the people in 1 Chron. 29:4 David speaks of 3000 talents supplemented by 5000 talents of gold donated by the people. A significant amount of gold was evidently employed in the construction of the temple.

We can conclude that the subject of the golden vessels bore a significant degree of emotional charge.<sup>190</sup> Our reading of Tanakh clearly indicates that Ben Sira was well aware that the subject was a sensitive one for those who were familiar with the Scriptures. This is far from evident in G, however, which speaks of a *vase of embossed gold*, comparable with the description found in *Yoma*.

In spite of any diffidence concerning the reading of the text, the suggestion that the golden vessels would have been magnificent examples of enamelled, hammered, embossed and polished artistry enjoys some degree of support. It is for this reason that 50:9c is almost always translated *'decorated with precious stones'*.

Sauer suggests *בבית אציל* *'in the house of a dignitary'* on the basis of H. The damage on page B XIX l.17, however, is quite evident. While the significance of H is decisive, we suggest the reading *תבנית אציל* *'according to the proposed pattern'* in our text-critical analysis (3.1.3),<sup>191</sup> in association with the plan for the construction of the sanctuary revealed by God to Moses on Mount Sinai (Ex. 25:10–31:18). The divine model thus served as the guarantee of the quality of the temple and the design of its golden vessels. The word combination is clearly intended to compare Simon with the golden vessels employed in the sanctuary according to the rules set out in the Torah and fabricated according to the model proposed therein. As a righteous man, Simon is of inestimable value, beyond even the value of gold!

### Sir. 50:9c

Instead of providing a further elaboration on 9b, colon 9c functions as an independent comparison intended to portray Simon in all his

<sup>190</sup> R. Bergmeier, 'Zur Frühdatierung samaritanischer Theologoumena', *JSS* V.2 (1974) 121–153. Bergmeier refers to the report in Josephus *Ant.* XVIII, 85, in which mention is made of the hidden golden vessels from the tabernacle, which Moses is said to have buried on Mount Gerizim. The same tradition is also mentioned in 2 Macc. 2:4–8 (p. 134).

<sup>191</sup> R.G. Hamerton-Kelly, 'The Temple and the Origins of Jewish Apocalyptic', *VT* XX (1970) 1–15. References to the heavenly temple are not only to be found in the apocalyptic literature but also in the priestly tradition in Ex. 24–31 in which Moses is shown a model (תבנית). The Sumerian inscription of Gudea (Lagash) and the Enuma Elish VI 50 would appear to provide similar evidence. After the great eschatological struggle between Gog and Magog, the prophecy of Ezekiel concludes with the vision of the heavenly temple (40f.). Haggai 2 and Zechariah 2f. exhibit similar tensions between eschatology and theocracy (Plöger). Von Rad locates the origins thereof in wisdom circles (*Theologie des A.T.*, II, pp. 300f.).



glory. From the numerical perspective, a caesura is established in the discourse after the ninth comparison. The participle *niph'al* 3p.s.m. of אָהַר, preceded by the definite article introduces a new aspect.

The *niph'al* of אָהַר in its finite form is only found elsewhere in Tanakh in the narrative of the binding of Isaac where a ram is caught by its horns in the thicket (Gen. 22:13). It occurs elsewhere as a participle pl. in Qoh. 9:12, in which fish are caught in a treacherous net. Qoheleth concludes his discourse with this image, pointing out that the same fate will overcome all mortals when it suddenly falls upon them. The verb occurs four times in the book of Ben Sira: in 11:30a where the image of the captive (אָהַר) bird is compared with the heart of the proud, in 33:13 in the moulding (לְאָהַר) of clay in the hands of the potter, in the instruction (32:14–33:15) and here in 50:9c in the form of a participle *niph'al* אָהַר with the definite article followed by the preposition עַל. Lévi considers this latter form of אָהַר (50:9c) to be incorrect on account of the fact that it is not documented elsewhere. The word combination אֲבִנֵי הַפֶּזֶז, moreover, is also exceptional. Commentators usually translate with ‘the precious stones’, based on the stones referred to in the context of Zion in Isa. 54:12.<sup>192</sup> Tanakh, however, does not offer a parallel with the regalia associated with the High Priest (45:11b; 50:9c). Reference is made to precious stones on four occasions in the Qumran literature in 1Q*War Scroll* [1QM], as decoration of shield and sword (*Col.* V.6,9,14) and as a sign of riches (*Col.* XII.13).

Sir. 45:11d notes, in addition, that the stones were foreseen with an inscription containing the names of the tribes of Israel לְזִכְרוֹן ‘as a commemoration’, in line with the two אֲבִנֵי זִכְרוֹן ‘stones of remembrance’ in Ex. 28:12 set on the shoulder-pieces of the ephod and each engraved with six names of the tribes of Israel. Reference is also made to the twelve stones set in the breastplate indicating the way in which Aaron bore all Israel upon his shoulders and upon his heart as a continual memory (Ex. 28:30). The אֲבִנֵי are in the status c. and are determined by הַפֶּזֶז as *nomen rectum*.

While the nominal form is rare, it occurs with relative frequency in Qoheleth as *favour*’ and in this sense לְכָל־הַפֶּזֶז can be translated

<sup>192</sup> P.C. Beentjes, *Jesus Sirach en Tenach*, Nieuwegein 1981. Beentjes criticises the vision of Snaith who prematurely establishes a relationship with Isa. 54:12 and ignores the differences (p. 111).

'every thing' or 'alles Anliegen' (Buber/Rosenzweig). The verb הפיץ in the sense of 'to have pleasure in, to love, to desire' belongs to the idiom of prophetic judgement and refers to that which is not pleasing and is not consistent with Torah.

Ben Sira applies the word combination אבני הפיץ to the twelve precious stones that decorate Aaron's breastplate (45:11). This unusual word combination, however, does not simply refer to any such precious stones but rather to the stones of remembrance, the so-called 'stones of favour' mentioned in the blessing of Moses and Levi in Deut. 33:8: 'your Thummim and Urim belong to the one you favour' (הסידר). YHWH looks upon Levi and his sons with favour on account of the twelve tribes of Israel. In Sir. 45:11d, every stone on the breastplate of Aaron is precious in relation to the remembrance.<sup>193</sup>

One can conclude, therefore, that Ben Sira does not offer a more detailed comparison with respect to Simon in 50:9c. Instead of a tenth comparison, rather, he consciously interrupts the series of images presented in nominal clauses with a verbal form. Taking H as our point of departure, we are confronted with a different perspective on Simon to that based on interpretations of G, the latter having disregarded the numerical structure of Sirach 50.

Based on the interpretation of הנאווה, colon 9c can be read as an independent determination of Simon. He is acting subject of the participle *niph'al* with its definite article that can be interpreted as passive or reflexive. Simon's exercise of the function of High Priest is far from passive, however, caught as it were as the helpless ram in the thicket (Genesis 22), or as a fish or bird trapped in a net (Qoh. 9:12). The reflexive translation 'knowing himself bound', by contrast, gives expression to Simon's conscious adherence to the covenant made manifest in the wearing of the breastplate. Ben Sira offers a reflection at this culminative juncture on Simon's unique position,

<sup>193</sup> C. Houtman, 'The Urim and Thummim: A New Suggestion', *VT* XL.2 (1990) 229–232. The *urim and thummim* served originally as an oracular medium in the context of divine revelation. The High Priest's breastplate came to enjoy more of a decorative function and was less understood as a repository for the *urim and thummim*. Houtman, therefore, interprets Ex. 28:30 on the basis of the comparable text in Ex. 28:29 and insists that: "the high priest is destined to be Israel's representative in body and mind". The emphasis is placed all the more on 'the heart' (Ex. 28:29–30) and on 'the continual remembrance before the Lord' (Ex. 28:29). The High Priest is thus aware that he is bound in his heart as representative of the people before the face of YHWH.

aware that he is committed to his task as High Priest. He is the subject of an interactive relationship with YHWH. All Israel is presented as a unity in these twelve stones.

### Sir. 50:10a

Ben Sira concludes his discourse with an image from the world of tree symbolism similar to those found in 50:8a,b,c. For this reason, Segal is inclined to suggest that we allow 50:9 and 10 to change places. Numerical research together with the evident verse divisions of G and S, however, do not support such an emendation.

In 50:10a Ben Sira borrows the image of the olive in the sense employed by the prophet Zechariah who compares it in his vision with the High Priest (Zech. 4:3,11). Rooted in his evident botanical expertise, Ben Sira distinguishes between the  $\text{זית}$  'olive' (*Olea Europaea*) and the  $\text{עץ שמן}$  'olive-willow' (*Elaeagnus angustifolia*),<sup>194</sup> describing the characteristics of both with a surprising degree of accuracy. The olive has a special significance in the biblical context, indicating the relationship between Israel and God: 'the vine and the olive, which you did not plant'. This perspective forms a topos in relation to the gift of the promised land (Deut. 6:11; 28:40; Josh. 24:13). The magnificence ( $\text{הדר}$ ) of Israel is compared to the olive in Hos. 14:7, while pure olive oil plays a significant role in the cult in Lev. 24:2.

An entirely different aspect emerges in the fourth vision of Zechariah (4:3,11), in which two olive trees represent 'the two anointed ones who stand before the Lord of all the earth'. Both figures are ascribed messianic significance, familiar to us from *1QRule of the Community* (1QS), Col. IX.11 and *1QRule of the Congregation* [1QSa], Col. II.11–15) and the *Damascus Document* (CD-B), Col. XX.1 and (CD-A), Col. XIV.19) as Messiah of Aaron and Messiah of Israel. In *4QTestimonia* (4Q175), 9–20, reference is made to the star from Num. 24:15–17 and the blessing of Moses and Levi from Deut. 33:8–11.

Literary research into the significance of the particular type of tree tends to miss the target. The method followed here, by contrast, will endeavour to trace the employment of the unique word combination.

The combined use of the terms  $\text{זית}$  and  $\text{עץ שמן}$  is evidently borrowed from Ps. 52:8 'I am like a green olive tree in the house of God'.

<sup>194</sup> W. Walker, *All the Plants in the Bible*, London 1957. M. Zohary, *Plants of the Bible*, Tel Aviv 1982.

The additional word combination מלא נרנר *'full of ripe fruit'* clearly forms an appropriate complement.<sup>195</sup> The concept נרנר functions in the context of a mashal concerning the beating of the olive tree in Isa. 17:6 intended to draw attention to the two or three berries that remain after the gleaning.

The symbol of the ripening olive in Psalm 52, however, is unrelated to the harvest motif, being located rather in the temple. The psalmist stands in the house of God, in the midst of חסידריך *'your faithful'* (52:11b), and makes the transition from a lament of the individual to a song of thanksgiving in the temple. In the midst of the faithful he is able to trust in God's חסד. Ben Sira alludes to this Psalm and in so doing reminds his audience of the way in which Simon functioned as a luxuriant olive full of ripe fruit, as one of the חסדי אשׁי (44:1a), who held firm in praise and hope as King David did in spite of the threats confronting them both.

### Sir. 50:10b

Ben Sira employs a different tree sort in his comparison, the עץ שבן *'olive willow'*. Commentators mostly translate this expression as 'wild olive' but this is somewhat inaccurate since it gives the impression that we are dealing with an inferior sort of olive. The term 'oleaster'<sup>196</sup> refers to the type of wood involved, differing from the olivewood. The tree in question is a sort of willow, mentioned in the same breath as the olive, the myrtle, the palm and other unspecified broadleaf trees in the context of building Succoth or tabernacles in Neh. 8:15.

In the promise of salvation in Isa. 41:19, the oleaster is portrayed

<sup>195</sup> J.F. Elwolde, 'Developments in Hebrew Vocabulary Between Bible and Midrash', in T. Muraoka/J.F. Elwolde eds., *The Hebrew of the Dead Sea Scrolls and Ben Sira*, Leiden 1997, 17–55. Elwolde translates the hapax נרנר as 'olive' and refers hereby to common usage.

<sup>196</sup> C.W. Mönnich,  *Een tak van de wilde olijf, het Griekse erf en de weg van Israël*, Baarn 1984. Mönnich refers to the oleaster, nevertheless, as an olive willow and wrongly identifies this tree with the *olea sylvestris*, the wild olive, which gives bitter fruit and as a shrub has no further usefulness (p. 7). His conclusion with respect to the grafting of the wild olive to the stem of the noble olive lacks insight into the core of Paul's vision: '... you, a wild olive shoot, were grafted in their place to share the rich root of the olive tree' (Rom. 11:16–19; p. 171).

The same reference to the wild olive can be found in H. Schlier, *Der Römerbrief*, HTKNT VI, Freiburg 1977 (p. 333). The correct distinction between καλλιέλαιος = עץ and ἀγριέλαιος = עץ שבן can be found in O. Michel, *Der Brief an die Römer*, KEK IV, Göttingen 1966 (p. 275).

as flowering in a wilderness that has become fertile and abounding in water. It is clearly a tree type that grows quickly where water is available in significant quantities. The type of wood it produces is soft and easy to model.<sup>197</sup>

Besides the aforementioned references in Tanakh, the word combination עץ שִׁמְרֹן is to be found on four further occasions in 1 Kgs 6:23–33, in which so-called oleaster-wood, usually translated inaccurately as olive-wood, is employed to sculpt cherubs that are then overlaid with gold. Such symbolism introduces a new perspective given its unique associations with the inner realms of the temple in which everything is overlaid with gold, including the cherubs of oleaster and the richly carved doors. Simon is thus compared with this tree and its soft wood. As High Priest he is likewise clothed with a golden vestment, the ephod. Against this background, the second word combination in this colon offers another perspective. The verb רָוַה, in the *hiph'il* 'to refresh', is further specified by מְרַוֶּה עֵנֶף and is mostly employed in the context of promises of salvation to imply 'satisfaction' (Isa. 55:10; Jer. 31:25; Hos. 6:3). The participle *hiph'il* refers in addition to a hapax in Prov. 11:25, in which it is said that 'the one who blesses and refreshes will be refreshed'. The second term in this word combination, עֵנֶף 'branch', is borrowed from the imagery found in Ezekiel in which God is portrayed as planting a young cedar after the exile on the mountain height of Israel that produces branches (17:8,23). In Ezekiel, Assyria is a 'cedar of Lebanon with fair branches' (31:3) and the mountains of Israel produce fruit yielding branches (36:8). The same 'branches' are also referred to in Ps. 80:11, where they extend over the entire land from the sea to the river.

The tree symbolism employed at this juncture thus presents Simon as the core of the soft and easily sculpted wood of the olive willow overlaid with gold and as the branches that live and encompass life, refreshing and being refreshed.

In summary:

Ben Sira's exclamation 'How glorious is Simon!' can clearly be

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<sup>197</sup> J. Jeremias, *Jerusalem zur Zeit Jesu*, Göttingen 1962. Jeremias refers to the rabbinic tradition in which the wood of the olive and the vine are considered unacceptable for daily sacrifice (p. 56). The fig tree, the hazelnut tree and the olive willow are, by contrast, acceptable (*Tamid* II.3).

endorsed from every side. His use of comparisons effectively determines the unique position of Simon, simultaneously calling to mind a flood of associations with Tanakh in remembrance.

Given our interpretation of Sir. 50:5–10, Von Rad's inquiry into the *Dichtung* in the context of *sapientielle Listenwissenschaft* can be answered as follows: Ben Sira is not interested in compiling an approved list of trees and plants with their unique characteristics as these were constructed from the time of Aristotle up to and including Linnaeus. He stands, rather, in the tradition of the Psalms, in which trees have the capacity to rejoice (96:12), and provides a conscious and well-considered *Dichtung* to the unique concepts and word combinations he employs. In 50:5 and 9, Simon is portrayed in function of the temple, as can be seen in the fire and sensed in the fragrance of incense. The generosity of the sacrifices provides the priests with their day-to-day needs. Cosmic significance (50:6,7) is apparent from the reversal of the customary presentation of the heavenly bodies. The tree symbolism presents Simon as both vulnerable and powerful as the olive willow (50:10b).

With this all-embracing vision of Simon, Ben Sira thus provides content to the הפארתה, comparable with the wisdom described in Sirach 24 in equally magnificent terms.

### 3.3.3 Sir. 50:11–14 *Simon in function of the sacrifice*

11a,b	: והתלבשו בנדי הפארתה	בעשותו בנדי כבוד
11c,d	: ויהדר עזרת מקדש	בעלותו על מזבח הוד
12a,b	: והוא נצב על מערכות	בקבלו נתחים מיד אחיו
12c,d	: כשתילי ארזים בלבנון	סביב לו עטרת בנים
12e,13a	: כל בני אהרן בכבודם	ויקיפוהו כערבי נחל
13b,c	: נגד כל קהל ישראל	ואשי ייי בידם
14a,b	: ולסדר מערכות עליון	עד כלותו לשרת מזבח

- 11a When he robes himself in a garment of eminence  
 11b and clothes himself in a vestment of glory,  
 11c when he ascends towards the raised altar  
 11d and bestows splendour on the walled enclosure of the sanctuary,  
 12a when he takes the portions from the hands of his brothers  
 12b then he is the one who presides at the order of worship [of the sacrifice].  
 12c Around him a crown of sons,  
 12d as seedlings of the cedars in Lebanon  
 12e and they encircle him as willows from the riverbank  
 13a all the sons of Aaron in their splendour

- 13b with burnt offerings for YHWH in their hands
- 13c in front of the whole assembly of Israel.
- 14a Until he has finished serving at the altar
- 14b and arranging the order of worship of the Most High.

The structural profile of the discourse in these verses is determined by Simon and the priests as acting subjects. Simon carries out the preparations for the order of sacrifice, which are introduced in three instances by **ו** and described in 6 cola with an extra accent provided by **וְהָיָה** in 12b. Simon's splendour is of decisive significance for the temple (50:11) and for the circle of his brothers (12). He is the *primus inter pares*, who stands ready to fulfil the duties of High Priest and prepare the sacrifice according to the prescribed rules. His brothers (12a), all the sons of Aaron (13a), form a **עֲטֶרֶה** 'crown' around him. The priests are only referred to in 50:16a as a separate group, forming a concentric movement around the core in which Simon has pride of place and the entire community of Israel comes into view (13c). As was the case with respect to Simon in 50:11a–12b, the priests are likewise described in 50:12c–13c in 6 cola. The **מַעֲרֹכֹת** 'order (of worship)' in 12b and 14b constitute an inclusion surrounding the priests and the people. The entire segment is rounded off with 2 cola in which Simon is portrayed as arranging the prescribed order of worship before the Most High. The structure of the unit is based on 7 bicola, partly parallel (11a–12b) and partly chiasmic (12c–14b).

The altar of burnt offerings in the temple serves as the location in which the action takes place, while particular attention is focused on a number of essential elements of the liturgy:

- the garments that determine the glory and dignity of the High Priest (11a,b),
- the passage to the altar, its magnificence in the temple as a whole (11c,d),
- the presentation of offerings as prescribed by the order of worship (12a,b),
- the priests surrounding Simon as a crown of glory (12c,d,e and 13a),
- the burnt offerings that are characteristic of priestly dignity (13b,c),
- the arrangement of the order of worship before the Most High (14a,b).

The literary unit is concluded (14) in a fashion similar to that of 50:19c,d.

In schema:

Verse	Person		Theme	
11a	Sa8	ב	with עשה inf.c.+suffix 3p.s.m.	
11b	Sa9		לבש inf.c.+3p.s.m. <i>hithpa'el</i> ,	
11c	Sa10	ב	with עלה inf.c.+suffix 3p.s.m.	
11d	Sa11		הדר imperf.c.3p.s.m.	
12a	Sa12 P2	ב	with קבל inf.c.+suffix 3p.s.m.	
12b	Sa13		יצב <i>niph'al</i> perf.3p.s.m. + יהוה he	/ Simon!
12c	Sb16 P3	Around לו	him, the crown of sons/priests	/ nom.
12d	P4		seedlings of cedars of Lebanon	/ nom.
12e	Sb17 P5	they,	נקף imperf.c. <i>hiph'il</i> +suffix 3p.s.	[Simon]
13a	P6	they	כל בני אהרן	nom.
13b	Ab1		with ואשי in their hands for ""	/ nom.
13c	V3		before [the people] קהל ישראל	/ nom.
14a	Sa14	עד	he [Simon] כלה <i>pi'el</i> inf.c.+suffix 3p.s.m.,	
14b	Sa15		שרה and סדר inf.c + ל	
	Ab2		before עלין.	

Abbreviations:

Sa ⇒ Simon as actant, Sb ⇒ Simon as subject of consideration, V ⇒ people, P ⇒ priests, Aa ⇒ YHWH as actant, Ab ⇒ YHWH as subject of consideration, nom. ⇒ nominal clause.

While Ben Sira is clearly striving for comprehensiveness, he condenses totality into a number of core concepts such as עזרה מקדש (11d), מערכות (12b) and עטרה (12c), which occur only rarely or are combined and interpreted in a unique way. He establishes a relationship with the beginning of the praise of Simon in 50:1a via the key word הפארה (11b) and conjoins 5a with 11d via the verb הדר, which expresses Simon's keenness to bestow splendour to the sanctuary.

### Interpretation: Sir. 50:11a,b

The opening infinitive c. preceded by the preposition ב constitutes a characteristic feature of the text, as was the case with 50:5a,b. With the suffix 3p.s.m. this verbal form acquires nominal value (Joüon/Muraoka, §124g). By way of a threefold repetition in 11a, 11c and 12a, together with the following infinitive c. *hithpa'el* לבש, imperfect *qal* הדר and perfect *niph'al* יצב, Ben Sira introduces a style figure in which the aspect of activity predominates and the accent is placed on Simon (יהוה in 12b). The author employs this syntactic structure to provide an animated portrayal of the temple liturgy as it would have been celebrated while Simon was alive. The repetition



of בְּנֵי is not a source of difficulty. Penar justifies it as part of the distinctive description of the garments of the High Priest.<sup>198</sup> Syndetic parallelism is established by the infinitive c. and suffix 3p.s.m. עָטָה ‘to robe oneself’ in 11a and לָבַשׁ ‘to clothe oneself’ in 11b, the latter occurring in the *hithpa’el* form only here.<sup>199</sup> The term כְּבוֹד ‘glory’ expresses a high degree of esteem intended to highlight the unique value of everything human hands can manufacture. In the priestly tradition, this qualification gives expression to the value of the temple and the liturgy.<sup>200</sup> In the Praise of the Fathers כְּבוֹד serves to determine both the beginning and the end of the description of Simon. In the introduction it signifies the ‘honour’ apportioned by the Most High to his people (44:2) and to Abraham (44:19b). Ben Sira employs the term in order to express the surplus value that takes concrete form in a life lived in accordance with the Torah. Aaron received the High Priestly commission from the Holy One himself (45:7b) who clothed him with כְּבוֹד הַפְּאֵרֶת ‘perfect glory’ (45:8a) and the exclamation “Holy!” was inscribed on his forehead. By way of the key words הַפְּאֵרֶת, כְּבוֹד and הוֹד in 45:7–12 Ben Sira thus establishes a relationship with 50:1–11.<sup>201</sup>

It would appear that the key word הַפְּאֵרֶת ‘glory’ in 50:11b provides an extra dimension to the High Priestly garments, in the same way as the concept הוֹד ‘majesty’ did with respect to the altar. Simon is the one who bestows splendour on the sanctuary as a whole. The accent is placed on the sanctuary, the High Priestly commission and clothing and the order of the sacrificial liturgy, however, rather than

<sup>198</sup> Penar suggests Ex. 29:21 as an example of a double reference to the sacred garments of Aaron and his sons together with Ex. 31:10, 35:19, Lev. 8:30 and Ez. 44:19. According to Penar this constitutes evidence of a topos from the priestly tradition (p. 85). It is apparent here also that many commentators take G as their point of departure.

<sup>199</sup> D.J.A. Clines ed., *The Dictionary of Classical Hebrew*, IV, Sheffield 1998. This new lexicon refers to the *hithpa’el* of לָבַשׁ in Sir. 50:11 as a hapax.

<sup>200</sup> H. Wildberger, *Jesaja*, BK X.2, Neukirchen 1978. According to Wildberger, the cult is based on the revelation given to Moses on Sinai (Ex. 25:1–31:18), in which everything was handed down to the last detail according to the heavenly model. While the tabernacle was seen as a tent, the description is clearly conceived from the perspective of the temple liturgy: “der כְּבוֹד sichert die Heiligkeit des Ortes, markiert die Heiligkeit des heiligen Gottes und ermöglicht den Vollzug des gottesdienstlichen Handelns, das Heiligkeit und Heil des Jahwevolkes sichert” (p. 949).

<sup>201</sup> The term הוֹד is employed only once in the Torah in Num. 27:20, in which Moses passed on his glory to Joshua. Ben Sira does not employ this term in 46:1–8. A meticulous translation of Sirach 45 based on H can be found in P.C. Beentjes, *Jesús Sirach en Tenach*, Nieuwegein 1981 (pp. 201–204).

on Simon himself. Next to the information provided by biblical texts, the function of the High Priest is also known to us from the tractates *Tamid* and *Yoma*. While the Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice found among the texts of Qumran (4Q405) 4Q*ShirShabbf*, Frag. 23, Col. II.7 provide a description of the High Priestly garments, the focus here is on the heavenly liturgy that replaced the temple service in Jerusalem when the latter had become unacceptable on account of the purification and dedication thereof by the Maccabeans. Besides detailed information on the temple of Herodes in *De Bello Judaico*, Josephus' *Antiquitates Judaicae* also contains a number of details, including a description (*Ant.* XII, 17–50) that agrees with the pseudo-epigraphical letter of Aristeas (92–99).<sup>202</sup> This letter is intended as a recommendation of the Jewish tradition and includes, side by side with a description of the temple's water supply system, a depiction of the garments of the High Priest Eleazar, expressing the same reverence and wonder as we find in Sirach 45 and 50.

One can conclude, therefore, that with the help of a quotation from 45:8a, Ben Sira establishes an extremely concise association with the preceding expression of wonder (50:5) and alludes to the Aaronite origin of the High Priesthood, thereby obviating the need to return in detail to the information already provided in Sirach 45. He is now free to proceed to the activities of Simon around the altar of burnt offerings.

### Sir. 50:11c,d

Simon's activities in the temple continue with the infinitive c. of עלה 'to go up, to ascend' with suffix 3p.s.m. preceded by ב. In the figurative trajectory of the text we see him ascend על מזבח הוד 'towards the raised altar' (50:11c). Accessible via a staircase, the altar of burnt offerings<sup>203</sup> was located on an elevated platform on the east side of the temple.<sup>204</sup> The High Priest would thus have been

<sup>202</sup> R.J.H. Shutt, 'Letter of Aristeas', in J.H. Charlesworth ed., *The Old Testament Pseudepi-grapha*, II, London 1985, 7–34.

<sup>203</sup> W. Zwickel, 'Die Altarbaunotizen im A.T.', *Biblica* 73 (1992) 533–546. Zwickel refers to a short summary of history in his listing of altar construction and references to an altar in the Old Testament from Noah, Abraham, Jacob, Moses, Aaron, Bileam, Joshua, Gideon, Samuel and Elijah, to the kings Saul, David, Solomon, Jeroboam, Asa, Ahab, Ahaz, Manasseh and after the exile Jeshua and Zerubbabel (p. 545).

<sup>204</sup> M. Dijkstra, 'The Altar of Ezekiel: Fact or Fiction?', *VT* XLII (1992) 22–36.

most clearly visible from within the temple's interior forecourts.<sup>205</sup>

According to Schechter, the use of the term הדר in the description of the altar of burnt offerings is unique. In his own fashion, Ben Sira expresses the elevated character of the temple *pars pro toto* in the virtually unique word combination הדר והדרר 'majesty and splendour', which is only found elsewhere in Ps. 96:6 and in the Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice (4Q403) 4QShirShabbd, Frag. 1, Col. I.45).

According to Ben-Hayyim,<sup>206</sup> the author employs the *pi'el* form of הדר to this end, a form documented only in 11d. The verb is documented on three occasions in the *qal* (Ex. 23:3; Lev. 19:15,23) meaning 'to show preference, to honour'. Clines prefers to refer to the term as a *qal* although he also indicates the possibility of a *pi'el* reading and translates with 'honour, make glorious'.<sup>207</sup> This allows us to translate the expression 'he bestows splendour on', which further alludes to the expression of wonder in 50:5a in which הדר is found in the *niph'al* form. Far from artificial, the author's elevated style has a parallel in the evocation in 49:14–16 and bears witness to a carefully considered procedure in which the attention is focused more and more on the sanctuary, the liturgy and all those involved therein.

Ben Sira particularises his description of the sanctuary with the word combination עזרת מקדש (50:11d). Commentators have raised

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Traditionally the altar described in Ez. 43:13–17 is connected with a *ziggurat*. Dijkstra reconstructs the step form with the rim, the gutter, the lower enclosing wall, the upper wall with rim and gutter, the platform with horns on the corners and the steps on the eastside. The design found in Ezekiel 43 agrees with the Talmudic data found in *Middot* 5.1–2. Dijkstra proposes a bronze altar-table resting on a stone altar-platform (2 Chron. 4:1).

<sup>205</sup> It is difficult to obtain a clear picture of the staging of 50:5–21 based on the description of the tabernacle and the Second Temple. According to Ex. 27:1–8, the altar in the tabernacle was moveable and portable. Indeed, the law concerning altars in Ex. 20:24–26 forbade the use of hewn stone in their construction. The situation in the First Temple remains unclear. According to 1 Kgs 8:64, the copper altar (2 Chron. 4:1) in the tabernacle would appear to have been too small. The offerings were brought to the centre of the forecourt. The quantity of sacrificial animals referred to in 2 Chron. 7:5 (22,000 oxen and 120,000 sheep) is clearly hyperbolic. The altar of burnt offerings in the Second Temple was reconstructed on the existing foundations (Ezra 3:3). According to 1 Macc. 4:44–47, the desecrated altar of burnt offerings was dismantled and the stones set aside in an appropriate place until the coming of the prophet (Deut. 18:15) and his definitive judgement. There was evidently sufficient space for the priests to encircle the altar during the sacrificial liturgy (*z'ebahim* 6.3).

<sup>206</sup> Z. Ben-Hayyim, *The Book of Ben Sira*, Jerusalem 1973 (p. 125).

<sup>207</sup> D.J.A. Clines ed., *Dictionary of Classical Hebrew*, II, Sheffield 1995. For this word combination Clines' new lexicon refers exclusively to Sir. 50:11 (p. 500).

questions concerning the author's specific intention at this juncture. Is he referring to the forecourt, the temple, the temple together with the forecourt or the entire temple complex? Smend translates עזרה with *Umgang*, while Ryssel and Sauer employ the more general term *Umfriedigung*. Lévi and Di Lella translate on the basis of G περιβολή ἀγιάσματος with 'forecourt'. The translational options are clearly quite disparate. In line with G we opt for the translation of עזרה מקדש with 'the walled enclosure of the sanctuary'.

Our explanation is based on the ground plan of the temple with the holy of holies, the sanctuary and the forecourt. As is evident from Exodus 24–31, Ezekiel 40–48 and 1 Chronicles 29, Tanakh offers a variety of perspectives on the temple buildings. The Temple Scroll (11Q19) makes reference to three forecourts in a concentric formation with the forecourt of the priests (*Col. XXXVI*), the forecourt for the men of Israel (*Col. XXXIX*) and the third forecourt for the ritually pure as well as the women and the foreigners who belong among the children of Israel (*Col. XL*). The forecourts in question were quadrangular in form, the third, measuring 1600 el, being the most extensive. The surrounding walls contained twelve gates, one for each of the tribes of Israel.<sup>208</sup> *Col. XLVI* speaks of the construction of terraces, which offered stepped access to the sanctuary, and a surrounding wall measuring 110 el in breadth, which divided the sanctuary from the city. Toilets were constructed outside the city and at an even greater distance from the temple (3000 el; cf. Deut. 23:12–13). The division between the sanctuary and the city was strictly implemented.<sup>209</sup> The Temple Scroll consists of an ideal vision of the temple and may be identical to זֹאת תִּרְרֶה הַבַּיִת 'this is the law for the house' in Ez. 43:12.<sup>210</sup>

An alternative ideal temple plan is ascribed to King David in 1 Chron. 28:11–19, which he passed on to Solomon on the basis of a document received, probably by Moses, from the hand of the Lord

<sup>208</sup> J. Maier, *Die Tempelrolle vom Toten Meer*, Munich 1978. Notes on column 3–48 (p. 67).

<sup>209</sup> This form is also employed in the design of the pages of the Talmud with the Mishnah text in the centre and the various commentaries surrounding it.

<sup>210</sup> F. García Martínez/A.S. v.d. Woude, *De rollen van de Dode Zee*, I, Kampen 1994 (p. 135). G. Vermes, *The Complete Dead Sea Scrolls in English*, London 1997. While Vermes dates the Temple Scroll in the second century BCE, it may also have had an antecedent history reaching back to the pre-Qumran age (p. 191).

on Mount Sinai (Exodus 24–31). The plan found in Ezekiel 40–48 may also be employed as a point of comparison. On account of the variety of descriptions of the temple found in the biblical sources, however, it remains impossible to determine a total picture thereof.

Josephus writes on the basis of his familiarity with the Second Temple of Herodes. The Talmudic tractate *Middot* speaks of seven doors בעזרה ‘in the forecourt’, which consisted of the forecourt of the women, the Israelites and the priests (2.6). The measurements of כל העזרה ‘the entire temple square’ are to be found in *Middot* 5.1; in total 187 el in length and 135 el in breadth. Another Talmudic tractate (*Kelim* 1:6–9) makes reference to ten degrees of holiness: the land of Israel, the cities surrounded by a wall, Jerusalem within the city walls, the Temple mount, the rampart (the court for the gentiles), the court for the women, the court for the men of Israel, the court of the priests, the area between the porch and the altar, the sanctuary and finally the Holy of Holies.<sup>211</sup>

Ben Sira approaches the subdivisions of the temple in his own unique fashion. He begins in the city (50:1–4) and enters the temple (50:5–24). He moves from the Holy of Holies to the sanctuary (50:5–10) and stands on the elevated platform next to the altar of burnt offerings (50:11–16), which formed part of the forecourt of the priests and was directly connected to the lower lying forecourt of the men of the assembly of Israel. He makes no reference to the forecourt for the women. In 50:17 all people together, including those in the most exterior forecourt, hear the trumpets and know that at that moment the prayers had begun and the blessing had been given, even although they are unable to see what was actually going on in the sanctuary. The High Priestly blessing was intended for all the people of the land (19a).<sup>212</sup> Given the description in 50:17, it follows that all people were involved in the prayers, even those who found themselves in the most exterior forecourt. Ben Sira is clearly referring at this

<sup>211</sup> J. Neusner, *The Mishnah*, New Haven 1988. Neusner notes a total of eleven stages in the text of *Kelim* 1:6–8. Rabbi Yose comments that the sanctuary was equivalent in holiness with the space between the entrance hall and the altar (1:9G).

<sup>212</sup> R. Meyer, *Zur Geschichte und Theologie des Judentums in hellenistisch-römischer Zeit*, Berlin 1989. In his analysis of ‘Am ha-Ares’ Meyer points to the development after Ezra of a distinction in the maintenance of the Torah. In *Pirke Abot* 2.6 Hillel notes: ולא עם הארץ הסיד ‘an ignoramus cannot be pious’. Meyer includes Jewish groups that were considered to be religious and social minorities among the ‘Am ha-Ares’ (p. 35).

juncture to the pagans who were permitted to enter the most exterior forecourt while remaining distinct from the entire people of the land. In contrast to Ezra's concept of the holy people, Ben Sira included the latter among the entire community of Israel.<sup>213</sup>

Ben Sira's concept of the sanctuary appears to envisage the various forecourts in an inclusive manner. The translation *'Umgang'* draws the boundary at the most interior area of the temple, thus excluding the forecourt for the people. The translation *'forecourt'* is likewise too general since it does not distinguish between the four forecourts. Based on the degrees of holiness referred to in *Kelim*, the walled territory would appear to include all the forecourts and even the entire temple mount. One can conclude, therefore, that Ben Sira employed the expression עזרה מקדש to represent the entire walled area surrounding the temple.

Ben Sira's vision of different groups of people is clearly adapted to his concentric concept of the temple. He begins with Simon who holds the central position in the sanctuary. The second circle consists of the priests who form a crown around him at the altar of burnt offerings. The latter are portrayed as אחיו *'his brothers'* (1a) and referred to as בנים *'sons'* (12c), as כל בני אהרן *'all the sons of Aaron'* (13a) and as בני אהרן הכהנים *'the sons of Aaron, who are priests'* (16a). As with Ezra,<sup>214</sup> he does not mention the Levites and the Zadokite priests by name. In the most interior forecourts of the temple we find כל קהל ישראל *'the whole assembly of Israel'* (13c, 20b) forming a third circle around Simon and the priests. The fourth circle is made up of כל בשר *'all people'* (17a) standing in the most exterior forecourt and subtly distinguished from כל עם הארץ *'all the people of the land'* (19a). All groups of people are given a place within the *'walled enclosure'* of the temple (11d).

<sup>213</sup> There is a direct relationship between the name עזרא Ezra (written under Aramaic influence with a concluding aleph) and the term עזרה in Ez. 43:14–20, 45:19 and 2 Chron. 4:9; 6:13, with which Ben Sira sets the boundaries of the temple and establishes space for Israel and the nations. According to Ezra's vision of things (10:8), the priests were referred to first, followed by the Levites with the Israelites forming a third group. All those not belonging to one of these three groups did not belong to the community of Israel and thus had no place in the most interior forecourts. They were counted among the pagans.

<sup>214</sup> P. Höflken, 'Warum schwieg Jesus Sirach über Esra?' *ZAW* 87 (1975) 184–202. Höflken argues that theocracy was already present in the temple. This perspective, however, is too static. Simon is envisaged differently from Aaron, who is engaged in an internal conflict with Korah (45:18–19), while Ben Sira addresses himself personally to the Samaritans in his *Scheltrede*.

**Sir. 50:12a**

Simon comes to the fore once again as he receives the sacrificial portions from the hands of his brothers. As with 11a and 11c, the present colon begins with an infinitive c. with suffix 3p.s. preceded by ׀, thereby reinforcing the literary unity of the segment in its representation of the three actions performed by Simon: robbing himself, ascending and receiving the portions. The verb קבל 'to take' only occurs in the *pi'el* in post-exilic literature. The term נהתים 'sacrificial portions' is derived from נהה 'to cut off'. The procedure for slaughter varied according to the sacrificial animal in question. In Ex. 29:15–18 it is mentioned that rams were cut into parts. Specific regulations with respect to the arrangement of the wood and the sacrificial portions are to be found in Lev. 1:3–9. *Tamid* IV.1 provides detailed prescriptions with respect to the correct procedure for the slaughter, beginning with the place of slaughter and the position of the slaughterer who cuts the animal's throat, followed by the total bleeding of the animal, the removal of its head and the stripping of the hide, the cutting out of the heart, the removal of the intestines, the purification thereof and the arrangement of the various portions of the carcass.<sup>215</sup> The dismembered parts were carried by the priests in six portions together with the gift of wheaten flour (Ex. 29:3, Num. 28:5), the cakes as offering of the high priest and the wine (Ex. 29:40, Num. 28:7).<sup>216</sup>

<sup>215</sup> J.W. Baretta ed., *Handboek voor de slager*, Amsterdam 1965/2, I. The procedure for the slaughter of a sheep (pp. 143ff.) runs parallel to *Tamid* IV. This handbook contains a description of ritual slaughter according to Jewish tradition by Chief Rabbi A. Schuster (pp. 179f.).

<sup>216</sup> According to *Tamid*, the daily offering was prescribed for the early morning at sunrise. This Talmudic tractate contains details concerning the fire and the wood, the arrival of daylight, the slaughter and transportation to the altar of the dismembered parts together with flour, cakes and wine (mentioned only in G50:15) by 9 priests. The blessing, consisting of the 10 words of the *Shema*, follows. The first among the Levites to offer sacrifice is determined by lot. *Tamid* VII explains the procedure required in the event that the High Priest himself should desire to bring the daily offering. The prefect then accompanies the High Priest as he ascends, followed by the 9 priests bearing the gifts. The latter pass the gifts to the High Priest who tosses them into the fire. After processing around the altar they descend. The temple supervisor then waves a flag and 2 priests with silver trumpets sound a three-note signal: a prolonged sound, a wavering sound and a prolonged sound. The Levites sing a song accompanied by the cymbal, after every verse of which the people prostrate themselves. A different psalm is employed for each day, beginning with Psalm 24 and followed by Psalms 48, 82, 94, 81, 93 and Psalm 92 on the Sabbath. Reference is made in *Yoma* II.2c–7f to the drawing of lots (4x) for the purification of the altar. In this instance the offerings are brought by 13 priests.



With the term אָדָמֵי 'his brothers' Ben Sira not only implies the priests but also the Levites.<sup>217</sup> This terminology is customary in Chronicles for the circle of the Levites. By using the term from the beginning (50:1) the author establishes the tone, insisting on an inclusive approach to the temple service whereby the Levites and the Zadokite priests are not referred to by name.

### Sir. 50:12b

At the beginning of the colon the personal pronoun אָנֹכִי draws explicit attention to Simon. The verb צָב only occurs in biblical Hebrew in the *hithpa'el*. This verb, however, would appear to be inappropriate at this juncture in the text, commentators and text editors, such as Ben-Hayyim, preferring the related root צָב 'to stand, to position oneself' in the perfect *niph'al* 3p.s.m. This reading is widely accepted, in spite of the presence of a smudge in the original of page B XIX. The phrase אָנֹכִי נֹצֵב 'he is the one who presides' expresses the dynamic character of the action in a *perfectum punctualis*. The emphasis is placed firmly on Simon,<sup>218</sup> who bears the primary responsibility for the correct arrangement of the wood, the order of the sacrifice and the correct arrangement of the sacrificial portions. He limits himself to the most important matters, which become the responsibility of the priests in his absence. *Yom Kippur* was the only day on which the temple services were reserved for the High Priest alone. Given the description in 50:12–14 we would appear to be dealing with a daily sacrifice or a Sabbath offering according to the rules found in *Tamid*. Elements found in *Yoma*, such as the provision of two he-goats, clearly do not apply.

On the basis of G על מַעֲרֹכֹת is mostly explained 'standing by the hearth' (Di Lella). For want of a better translation, Ryssel, Lévi, Peters, Smend, Box, Sauer and Van Peursen resort to 'by the wood blocks'.

<sup>217</sup> P.C. Beentjes, 'The Concept of 'Brother' in the Book of Ben Sira', in FS M. Gilbert, *Treasures of Wisdom*, Leuven 1999, 75–90. Beentjes considers the 'brothers' (50:12a) and the 'sons' (12c) to be priests, in spite of the specific qualification 'priest' being added in 50:16a in relation to the specific task of sounding the trumpets.

<sup>218</sup> S.E. Fassberg, 'On the Syntax of Dependent Clauses in Ben Sira', in T. Muraoka/J.F. Elwolde eds, *The Hebrew of the Dead Sea Scrolls and Ben Sira*, Leiden 1997, 56–71. As an example of a circumstantial clause, Fassberg refers to 50:12, a nominal clause introduced by א and a participle אָנֹכִי נֹצֵב. Given the syntactic structure of the text with 4 infinitivi c. + suffix 3p.s.m. (11a, 11b, 11c and 12a) and imperfect c. (11d), however, *consecutio temporum* would appear to require a perfect *niph'al* in a verbal clause (12b).



Ben-Hayyim only mentions the singular מערכה as an independent form. The *hiph'il* of ערך is employed in 50:18 for the arrangement of the lights.<sup>219</sup> The reference is thus clearly not to the wood blocks but to the correct sequence of sacrificial portions and their arrangement on the altar of burnt offerings. The term מערכה thus refers to the arrangement of the temple services both in 50:12b and 14b, the High Priest having the most expertise in the correct ordering and arrangement of the sacrificial portions. The emphatic use of ודוא points to Simon as bearing primary responsibility for the order of sacrifice. Simon likewise serves as an example to the priests referred to in 12c,d,e.

### Sir. 50:12c

The focus of attention shifts from Simon (11a–12b) to the priests. The author's use of the expression עטרת בנים '*a crown of sons*' signals his amazement once again for Simon, who stands out far above the priests. With the expression סביב לו '*around him*' Ben Sira makes a double allusion to Ps. 128:3 in which blessing and peace for Jerusalem are the consequence of respect for YHWH and the table fellowship in which sons are כשתלי זיתים '*like olive shoots*'. The author clearly had this symbolism in mind since the sons come to the fore in 50:12d כשתלי ארזים בלבנון '*as seedlings of the cedars of Lebanon*', forming a crown around Simon similar to the sheaves in the dream of Joseph in Gen. 37:7. The intention here is not to highlight Simon's position of power but to focus on his qualification as *primus inter pares* on behalf of the continuation of the priestly tradition.

The עטרה '*crown*' serves to indicate the status of all the sons of Aaron in their splendour (45:25f). Far from an unrealistic ideal, this cluster around Simon (50:12c) is both a gift and a task. As first High Priest, Aaron was עטרת פז מעיל '*attired with a crown of gold*' (45:12a).<sup>220</sup>

<sup>219</sup> Ex. 39:37 speaks of the setting of the golden lamp stand and the המערכה נרה '*lamps that were to be set*'. This rare form in the status constructus pl. m. is interpreted in Prov. 16:1 as the '*plans of the heart*' and translated by Buber/Rosenzweig as '*die Entwürfe des Herzens*'. The verb ערך is known in the *qal* from Gen. 22:9 in which Abraham arranges the wood for the sacrifice of Isaac. The term is also to be found in the tractates *Tamid* 2.3–5 and *Yoma* 4.5e in relation to the wood blocks. Lev. 1:6,12 speaks of the arrangement of the wood together with the arrangement of the sacrificial portions.

<sup>220</sup> The concept מעיל raises some difficulty in connection with the crown, the turban, the rosette and the golden plate engraved with the word 'holy' and the

Since they have no possessions (Num. 18:1–24; Deut. 18:1 and Sir. 45:22a,b), the priests receive their heritage in the form of the first-fruits (45:20d),<sup>221</sup> אֲשֵׁי יִי 'the burnt offerings' (45:21a,22c)<sup>222</sup> and נַחֲלָה אֵשׁ 'the heritage of the burnt offering' (45:25c). This right is established in the priestly covenant with Phinehas, which Simon continues to guarantee.

The crown is evidently a weighty concept in the context of both the king and the High Priest.<sup>223</sup> Ben Sira makes use of the term from the beginning (1:18) to refer to the crown of wisdom, which implies an attitude of reverence towards YHWH. Wisdom is thus borne as a crown and a garment of honour (6:31). Simon serves as the personification thereof.<sup>224</sup>

### Sir. 50:12d

The line of thought of 12c is continued with the comparison: 'as seedlings of the cedars in Lebanon'. In the context of tree symbolism, the cedar from the mountainous regions of the Lebanon is familiar to us in an expression of God's powerful voice from Ps. 29:5. In Ps. 92:13–15 the cedar stands for the righteous one, planted in the house of YHWH. Simon himself is portrayed elsewhere as a shoot (פֶּרֶה) from the Lebanon (50:8c). Ben Sira employs this symbolic language in a combination of allusions to a complicated terminology שְׂתִילֵי אֲרָזִים. The translations differ widely. The term 'shoot' is derived from the verb שָׂתַל 'to plant' (hapax). Ben Sira likewise alludes at this juncture to Ps. 128:3b. Peters notes the rather free translation found in G 'young cedars'. While Ryssel and Sauer translate with 'Setzlinge', the associated verb 'to make a cutting' does not render the correct process

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Name. J. Levy suggests a nominal form 'outer garment' that associates מַעֲלַת verbally with 'to clothe' and 'to wrap' as an alternative to מֵעַל as a preposition. עֲטֶרֶת פִּז מֵעֵל 'a crown wrapped with gold' can thus be considered a single entity on the basis of Ex. 28:36; 39:30 and Lev. 8:9 (III, p. 190).

<sup>221</sup> Sir. 45:20d is damaged in MS B. It is possible to supplement the end of the damaged line with a ך: [בְּכֹרֵי אֲרָזִין] הַלְקִין 'the first fruits of the land' (Num. 18:13).

<sup>222</sup> The reading אֵשׁ 'fire' has frequently been emended to read אִישׁ 'man'.

<sup>223</sup> The עֲטֶרֶת 'crown' refers to the elevated status of the human person (Psalm 8) and the High Priest. Only Ps. 21:4 speaks of a crowned king, although the term נֹצֵר 'diadem' is found in this regard in 2 Kgs 11:12. YHWH himself is a 'crown of beauty' (Isa. 28:5) in contrast to Samaria (Isa. 28:1–3). Ezekiel observes how Jerusalem's crown has fallen (16:12). In Zech. 6:9–16, the crown intended for the future Messiah is made available to Joshua.

<sup>224</sup> "There are three crowns (כִּתְרֵי): the crown of Torah, the crown of priesthood and the crown of royalty, but the crown of a good name exceeds them all." *Abot* 4:17.

of propagation since the cedar is a seed bearing tree type. Levy makes reference to the Talmudic tractate j.*Maasroth* (5.1) that speaks of the transplantation of a plant.<sup>225</sup> The shoot referred to in Ezekiel's prophecy of doom (17:3–24) remains unmentioned.<sup>226</sup>

Ben Sirā may also simply have used his knowledge of botany as the source and background of his comparison. The relationship between Simon and the priests would seem to be best illustrated on the basis of cedars, which propagate in the form of seedlings. An inclusive picture is thus established of the shoot in 50:8c that, as a young cedar tree, is now surrounded by immature yet growing seedlings. The author's use of terminology from the widely familiar topos of the cedars of Lebanon serves to focus on the generative aspect of priestly succession.<sup>227</sup>

### Sir. 50:12e

The circle of priests surrounding Simon is portrayed from a different perspective. The verb נקף in the *hiph'il* means 'to make an enveloping movement, to surround'. The term is employed in Ps. 48:13 in which the addressees are invited to go all round Zion in similar fashion to the surrounding of Jericho in Josh. 6:3–11.

The tree type ערבי נהל is known to us as the *Salix alba*, the brook willow that grows rapidly on riverbanks and in wadis. The same tree type is employed for the construction of Succoth (Lev. 23:40) and its branches for the *lulav*, with which those celebrating the feast of Succoth make circular processions around the altar for a period of seven days (*Sukkah* 4.1–5). The brook willow is known for its rapid growth and serves as a symbol for the speedy restoration of Jacob and Israel in Isa. 44:1–5. Di Lella incorrectly translates 50:12e as 'like poplars', based on the fact that poplars are known as *populus*

<sup>225</sup> J. Levy, *Wörterbuch über die Talmudim und Midraschim*, IV (p. 618).

<sup>226</sup> W. Zimmerli, *Ezechiel*, BK XIII, Neukirchen 1969. In the *masal* concerning the eagle that removes the top of the cedar, Ezekiel exercises critique against Zedekiah, the last king of Judah. Zimmerli summarises the significance thereof as follows: "Es steht eben in Wirklichkeit weder die Zeder noch der Weinstock vor Augen, sondern der alle Herrlichkeit an sich tragende Gottesbaum am ragendsten, herrlichsten Ort" (p. 389).

<sup>227</sup> P.C. Beentjes, *Jesus Sirach en Tenach*, Nieuwegein 1981. Beentjes points to the existing expression, which is not related to the presupposed quotation of Nah. 1:3b–8 in 50:8c. The ambiguity of this topos is linked with the preference for cedar wood in the construction of the temple (pp. 168f.).

*Euphratica*. G offers a rather free translation ‘*palms*’.<sup>228</sup> As a consequence of the latter, we are presented with a somewhat static image of Simon, surrounded by his brothers as lofty, towering palms. While the palm may be a larger and more noble tree type, the dynamic picture of priests in procession with their sacrificial portions in hand is lost with its use. The brook willow, on the other hand, has an every-day character and a lack of any particular beauty. Given their supple yet sturdy constitution, the branches of this willow are indeed useful for weaving. The *Salix alba* is exceptionally fast growing and provides new branches each year that are similarly supple and strong. It is for this reason that we must distinguish this so-called *shooting willow* from the related sort of brook willow, the *Salix aemophylla*.

The use of the brook willow on Succoth gives an extra dimension to the tree symbolism in the wisdom tradition. Those who sit under such branches in their Succoth are brought once again by YHWH to the awareness that they themselves did not plant the trees that provide us with food in abundance. This awareness leads in turn to reflection on the meaning of vanity and to the distinction between the wilderness and the land of promise, between the option for life or death, to name but a few of the themes associated therewith.

The circular processions associated with Succoth and the rapid growth of the brook willow provide their symbolic use with a dynamic character, which is given expression in the portrayal of the crown of priests at the altar of burnt offerings (50:11c,12e), who turn around Simon, the central focus of the entire image.

### Sir. 50:13a

Simon’s brothers are further qualified as כל בני אהרן ‘*all the sons of Aaron*’. Ben Sira is clearly thinking inclusively by placing the accent on כל. He makes room for both priests and Levites although he completely refrains from making explicit reference to the relationship between the two groups.<sup>229</sup> As a matter of fact, he makes no

<sup>228</sup> Smend points to an unfamiliar interpretation of נַחַל ‘*palm*’, which is to be found in Num. 24:6 and Song 6:11 where it is translated ‘*river valley*’. His suggestion, however, remains nothing more than a hypothesis.

<sup>229</sup> Ben Sira employs the term כל to sum up his work as *sofer* (39:1,16,17, 19,21,27,33). He makes similar use of this terminology in his theology of אלוהי כל (45:23c).

single reference to the Levites whatever and only mentions the Zadokite priests on one occasion in Sir. 51:12i. Even reference to Ezra and Melchizedek which, given the tensions surrounding the priesthood may well have been expected, remains wanting. Evidence of such tensions can be found in Ezra 8:15 in which it would appear that none of the Levites were prepared to return to Jerusalem from Babylonia. Neh. 13:10–13 speaks of the precarious economic situation to which Ben Sira makes reference in 35:9–17, encouraging the joyful donation of tithes. The colon concludes with the key concept כבוד ‘splendour’. All enjoy a share not only in Simon’s glory but also in the glory with which all are crowned by YHWH in 45:25f. In the exhortatory blessing of 45:25e–26c, the invitation to bless יי הטוב at the conclusion of part I is directed to everyone. This exhortation is given a new dimension in the temple liturgy via the unique position of Simon, the High Priest in his magnificent garments full of splendour and glory, in the midst of all the sons of Aaron, priests and Levites together. A figurative trajectory is evident in the portrayal of Simon, growing in intensity from ‘his brothers’ (12a) to ‘the sons’ (12c) to ‘all the sons of Aaron’ (13a). All those involved in the temple liturgy are given their proper place around Simon who stands in the central position. The interpolation ‘those who are priests’ draws attention to a specific task for the first time in 50:16a.

### Sir. 50:13b

The יי אש ‘burnt offerings for YHWH’ determine the glory of the priests since they alone are permitted to eat thereof (45:21a). This right was given by YHWH to Aaron as a heritage (45:20b) and established once again in the הק ‘covenant of friendship’ for Phinehas (45:24a). The priests share in this בריה שלום ‘covenant of peace’ (45:24b) by maintaining the sanctuary. Their own maintenance is foreseen via the נהלה אש ‘the heritage of the burnt offering’ (45:25c),<sup>230</sup> which is established as part

<sup>230</sup> P.C. Beentjes, *Jesus Sirach en Tenach*, Nieuwegein 1981. Beentjes provides a meaningful interpretation of לפני כבודו אש נהלה on the basis of H45:25c. From the perspective of content, נהלה אש ‘heritage of fire’ in 45:25c is determined via syndetic parallelism by נהלה אהרן ‘the heritage of Aaron’ in 45:25d. The heritage of fire thus contains the basis for the heritage of all the descendants of Aaron. This heritage has to do with their task of bearing the offerings before יי. The relationship with the glory of God in לפני כבודו is clearly established, having already been introduced in the description of the heritage of Aaron in 45:20a–22d. The said offerings provide an excellent representation of the specific task of the priests, as is appar-

of the heritage of Aaron (45:25d). The burnt offerings for YHWH<sup>231</sup> thus provide the priests with an eternal guarantee of the continuity of the priestly tradition in the service of the temple, passed on from the time of Aaron with a view to the future.

The specific significance of these burnt offerings remains unclear.<sup>232</sup> In the biblical context, burnt offerings (אִשָּׁה לַיהוָה) are referred to both in the singular (Ex. 29:25, Leviticus 2 and 3) and in the plural אִשֵּׁי יְהוָה. The sons of Aaron have the exclusive right to eat of these offerings. Lev. 7:30ff. ordains that the right thigh is to be set-aside for the priests while the fat is to be burned.

### Sir. 50:13c

The preposition נִגַּד does not mean 'for' in the sense of 'for the benefit of' but rather 'before' in the sense of 'in front of'. This is better translated by the German 'angesichts' (Ryssel and Sauer) than with 'vor' (Smend and Peters) or 'in the presence of' (Lévi, Box and Di Lella). The term refers to the location in which the activity is taking place between the forecourt of the priests and the forecourt of the men of Israel adjacent to the altar of burnt offerings. The women are able to view the sacrifice through an open door referred to in the temple of Herodes as 'the Nicanor gate'.<sup>233</sup> They belong to כָּל קְהָל יִשְׂרָאֵל 'the whole assembly of Israel' that serves here as an inclusive concept.

### Sir. 50:14 a,b

The literary unit is rounded off with Simon and the offering at the altar of burnt offerings.<sup>234</sup> The preposition עַד functions as a temporal indicator to bring the liturgical activities to an end. This is expressed with an infinitive c. *piel* of כָּלָה 'to be ready, to end'. The

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ent from 50:9a, in which Simon is compared with the 'ardour of incense', and from the bringing of burnt offerings in 50:13b.

<sup>231</sup> O. Rickenbacher, *Weisheitsperikopen bei Ben Sira*, OBO 1, Göttingen 1973 (pp. 19–21).

<sup>232</sup> The Talmudic tractate *Ṣebahim* discusses procedures surrounding the various offerings in great detail. *Ṣebahim* 12.1 cites the command of Lev. 7:33 with respect to the priestly portion in similar fashion to *Hullin* 10:1. Sir. 50:9a clearly refers to the grain offering (Lev. 2:3) upon which אִשֵּׁי לְבִנְיָה 'the ardour of incense' was placed.

<sup>233</sup> E. Wiesenber, 'The Nicanor gate', *JJS* 3 (1952) 14–29. Wiesenber establishes a relationship between 1 Macc. 7:33v.; 2 Macc. 14:31–33 and the discovery of an ossuary with the name Nicanor in a bilingual inscription in H and G.

<sup>234</sup> Sir. 50:15 is found only in G.

conclusion of the sacrificial activities is described with the verbs שרת and סדר (infinitive c. with ל). The word combination שרת מזבח 'the serving at the altar' without a preposition is only found in the announcement of doom in Joel 1:13 in which the priests are referred to as 'servants of the altar'. The *pi'el* of סדר 'to arrange' is a hapax in Sir. 50:14b, underlining the arrangement of worship in 50:12b.<sup>235</sup> Reference to pieces of wood (Ryssel, Peters, Box and Sauer) is out of place at this juncture. Lévi and Smend translate with the arrangement of worship. The rules for the מערכות 'arrangement' of worship are described in the Mishnah and the Talmud in the tractates *Tamid*, *Zebahim* and *Hullin*. In the days of Ben Sira and Simon they may have still belonged to the unwritten facts of experience, which were passed on from generation to generation, as would appear from the ritual sacrificial practice in 50:12a. The Praise of the Fathers begins with עליון in 44:2<sup>236</sup> and the sacrifice ends with this name here in 50:14b. The repetition of the name of the Most High in 50:16d and 17c serves to substantiate the relationship between the literary unit 'Simon in function of the sacrifice' in 50:11–14 and 'Simon at the feast' in 50:16–19.

### 3.3.4 Sir. 50:16–19 Simon at the feast

16a,b	: בחצצרות מקשה	או יריעו בני אהרן הכהנים
16c,d	: להזכיר לפני עליון	ויריעו וישמיעו קול אדיר
17a,b	: ויפלו על פניהם ארצה	כל בשר יחדו נמהרו
17c,d	: לפני קדוש ישראל	להשתחוות לפני עליון
18a,b	: ועל המון העריכו נרו	ויתן השיר קולו
19a,b	: בתפלה לפני רחום	וירנו כל עם הארץ
19c,d	: ומשפטיו הגיע אליו	עד כלותו לשרת מזבח

- 16a Then they blow, the sons of Aaron, the priests,  
 16b on the trumpets of hammered metal  
 16c and while they blow they sound a mighty flourish,  
 16d to summon the remembrance before the Most High.  
 17a All people together speed along  
 17b and they fall prostrate to the ground

<sup>235</sup> The nominal form סדירה 'arrangement' is also found in Sir. 10:1b, based on the same root. The rabbinic literature distinguishes a number of derived forms: סדור, סדר, סדרא and סדרין, representing, among other things, the arrangement of the portions, the subdivision of the bible and the page layout of the Talmud.

<sup>236</sup> The Praise of the Creator in M would appear to exhibit a preference for ארני in 42:15a,16b,17c and 43:5a,10a where MS B employs a variety of names.

- 17c to worship before the face of the Most High,  
 17d before the face of the Holy One of Israel.  
 18a And he raises his voice in the song,  
 18b and above the thunderous noise they [all] esteem his light  
 19a and they rejoice, all the people of the land,  
 19b in prayer before the face of the Merciful One.  
 19c Until he is finished with the service of the altar,  
 19d and his prescriptions he brings to his goal.

Sir. 50:16a–19d constitutes a literary unit consisting of a concentric structure of seven lines surrounding the core text 17c,d, which contains the divine names *עליין* ‘the Most High’ and *קדוש ישראל* ‘the Holy One of Israel’.<sup>237</sup> Simon is not mentioned until 19c,d. The priests serve as acting subjects in 50:16, and the people again in 50:17a,b,c, 18b and 19a. In the opinion of the present commentator, we should read YHWH as acting subject in 50:18a and not Simon or the people. As with 50:14a,b, 50:19c,d concludes the unit with Simon bringing the service of the altar to its end and fulfilling the various prescriptions associated therewith. Verses 14a and 16a begin with the preposition *עד* and the adverb *אז* respectively, the same sequence being present in 19c and 20a. As a literary unit, 50:16–19 is thus marked in relationship with the preceding segment (50:11–14) in which Simon offers sacrifice and the following segment (50:20–21) in which Simon gives his High Priestly blessing.

The entirety of Simon’s activity around the altar of burnt offerings in 50:11–21 is framed by his ascent (*בעלותו* 50:11c) and the moment of his descent (*ידד* 50:20a). The priests (50:16c,d) constitute the central focus of this literary unit (50:11–21) as they sound their trumpets and summon the people to prayer.

The divine names in 50:17c,d and the moment they come into play represent the particular focus of the textual unit. Serving as a key word, *לפני* draws attention on four occasions to the more common divine name *עליין* (16d,17c) and to the more unusual divine names *קדוש ישראל* ‘the Holy One of Israel’ (17d) and *רחום* ‘the Merciful One’ (19b), all of which are referred to as subject of consideration. The significant role of the people is worthy of note. The identity of the one to whom the suffix 3p.s.m. in *קולו* and *גרו* (18a,b) refers remains a question.

<sup>237</sup> J.P. Fokkelman, *Narrative Art and Poetry in the Book of Samuel*, I, Assen 1981 (p. 99).



In schema:

Verse	Person	Theme	
16a	P7	Introductory זא, sons of Aaron, הכהנים	רוע
16b		on the trumpets	/nom.
16c	P8,9	the priests blow, sound the flourish	שמע, רוע
16d	Ab3	לפני עליון 'before the Most High'	
17a	V4	ידו כל בשר יהוה all people together	מהר
17b	V5		fall prostrate נפל
17c	V6 Ab4	לפני עליון	worship הוה
17d	Ab5	לפני קדוש ישראל 'before the Holy One of Israel'.	
18a	Aa1	He, raises his voice (in song)	נתן
18b	V7 Ab6	they [all], they esteem נרו his light	ערך
19a	V8 Ab7	כל עם הארץ all the people of the land rejoice	רנן
19b		לפני רחום 'before the Merciful One'	/nom.
19c	Sa16,17	Concluding עד, he is finished כלה with service	שרת
19d	Sa18	he brings [. . .] to his goal.	נגע

Abbreviations:

P ⇒ priests, V ⇒ people, Aa ⇒ YHWH as actant, Ab ⇒ YHWH as subject of consideration, Sa ⇒ Simon as actant, nom. ⇒ nominal clause.

The characteristic representation of the temple liturgy, with the sound of trumpets, the mighty flourish, the remembrance, worship, song, light and the prayer, tends to point to a specific feast.

### **Interpretation: Sir. 50:16a,b**

Ben Sira would appear to have a specific concept of the sanctuary in mind that leads him to an explicit vision of the priests in 50:16a in בני אהרן הכהנים. The qualification כהן is consciously inserted in 50:16a with a view to the specific priestly task of sounding the trumpets. Ben Sira tends to say little concerning the priests. Respect for the latter is apparent from the word-play around Simon the High Priest, who is גדול 'highly esteemed' in relation to הכהן 'the priest' (50:1a,b). Besides 49:14, in which כהניך is found in the facsimile, the noun itself only occurs elsewhere in 7:29,31 in which Ben Sira invites the people to honour the priests by giving them their allotted portion. The verbal form of כהן is employed on three occasions in relation to Aaron in 45:15, Samuel in 46:13 and the sons of Zadok in 51:12. For this reason, Smend and Peters consider 'the priests', which is lacking in G50:16a, to be a gloss. In so doing they incorrectly ignore the fact that the author clearly intends to accentuate the unity of

the entire priestly group. Whether he does so on the basis of a *pan-Aaronide ideology*<sup>238</sup> or from another conceptual perspective remains a question.

Ben Sira makes no specific reference to the Levites in Sirach 50 although, according to the customary interpretation of אֹהֲרֵן לַמִּשְׁמָה לֵוי (45:6a), he does refer to the Levitical origin of Aaron. Our explanation of 'the staff of Levi' offers further detail in this regard. A more profound conflict raises its head after the exile, rooted in the underestimation of the Levites who traditionally took second place to the priests.<sup>239</sup> It is for this reason that Ezra, in spite of his efforts, was only able to motivate a small group of Levites to return to Jerusalem from Babylon. Their social status changed little<sup>240</sup> on account of the abundance of priests who were divided into 24 *mishmarot*<sup>241</sup> and might be referred to as the first part-time workers.<sup>242</sup>

Understood as a demonstrative, the adverb אֵל in 50:16a indicates

<sup>238</sup> S.M. Olyan, 'Ben Sira's Relationship to the Priesthood', *HTR* 80 (1987) 261–286. In contrast to the pan-Levitical vision of the priesthood of all Levites found in association with the Deuteronomist, the Chronist's vision of the Levites as servants of the priests and the Zadokite claim to the exclusive right of the priests (Sir. 51:12), Olyan places Ben Sira in the pan-Aaronide tradition in which the Levites do not figure (p. 276). Nevertheless, Ben Sira places full emphasis on 'all the sons of Aaron' in the line of Phinehas (45:24 and 50:24) and leaves the covenant with David intact. Olyan's position with regard to the support of Ben Sira for the Oniads' claim to the High Priesthood, against the Tobiads (p. 271) lacks credibility on account of other important remarks Ben Sira makes concerning the outsider who is not to wear the High Priestly garments (45:13) and his accentuation of the covenant with Phinehas (50:24).

<sup>239</sup> E. Rivkin, 'Ben Sira—The Bridge between the Aaronide and Pharisaic Revolutions', *Eretz Israel* 12 (1975) 95–103. Rivkin motivates the special attention given to Phinehas on the basis of the authority of Aaron and his sons with respect to the Torah, which Ben Sira identifies with wisdom.

<sup>240</sup> H. Mantel, 'Dichotomy of Judaism during the Second Temple', *HUCA* XLIV (1973) 55–87. The disagreement concerning tithes in Neh. 13:10 is referred to as a source of conflict between priests and Levites. The denial of their right to such tithes led to their refusal to go to Jerusalem (p. 69). Ezra focuses his attention on teaching and governance, not on the temple service (p. 63).

<sup>241</sup> The calendar question gave rise to serious conflicts with respect to the arrangement of the 24 *mishmarot* and the schedules for priestly service in the temple. García Martínez/Van der Woude, *De rollen van de Dode Zee*, II, Kampen 1995, turn to Qumran for an example in which a six year cycle was followed and a period of 13 weeks service was allotted to each of the priestly ranks. Their calculations are based on a cycle of  $6 \times 364 = 2184$  days, in which the 24 priestly ranks each served for 91 days or 13 weeks (pp. 463–469).

<sup>242</sup> H. Stegemann, *Die Essener, Qumran, Johannes der Täufer und Jesus*, Freiburg 1993. On account of the exchange, each of the priestly ranks served twice on the major feasts, the latter providing increased income (p. 233).

the moment at which the priests sound the *trumpet* *הַצְּבָרָה*.<sup>243</sup> The design of this wind instrument is familiar to us from a number of ancient coins and can also be seen on the Titus Arch in Rome, which depicts two trumpets side by side with other temple treasures. The verb *רָוַע* imperfect *hiph'il* usually means 'to blow/sound'. The trumpet being somewhat rare in Tanakh should be clearly distinguished from the shofar. In spite of the fact that the translations refer to the shofar or the trumpet in the festival calendar of Leviticus there is no evidence of a musical instrument in *זָכְרוּן הַרְוָעָה* in Lev. 23:24. The trumpets are only mentioned specifically in 2 Chron. 5:12 in association with the dedication of the temple of Solomon, during which they were to be sounded by the ideal number of 120 priests.

In the Talmud *Tamid* VII.3f offers a more detailed picture in which two priests are portrayed sounding the trumpet during the drink offering and after each couplet of the song. The psalm of the day was to be sung by the Levites while the people engaged in worship.

The *War Scroll* from Qumran (1QM, Col. VII.9–IX.9 and 4Q493) contains a detailed description of the manner with which the signal was to be given in order to indicate a call on a rallying trumpet and on the trumpets for the memorial, a reminder, the alarm, the pursuit, the re-assembly and a commemoration of the dead. In most such instances the shofar was used, both in the context of war and in the liturgy. This was not a priestly duty but part of the task of the Levites and the people.

The trumpets are given special mention in Num. 10:1–10. As the terminus technicus *מִקְשָׁה* (derived from *קָשָׂה* 'to make hard') indicates that they are to be made of 'hammered work'. They are to be used for summoning the congregation,<sup>244</sup> breaking camp and for the remembrance before the Lord God (Num. 10:9b). Beentjes points out the similarity between Num. 10:8a and Sir. 50:16a, although he leaves the question of the function of the 'perpetual institution' (Num. 10:8b) in Sirach 50 open.<sup>245</sup>

<sup>243</sup> W.Th. van Peursen, *The Verbal System in the Hebrew Text of Ben Sira*, Leiden 1999. Van Peursen ascribes a past significance to *אֶס* with the imperfect (p. 98). Repetition of *יָדַעַו* and *יָדַעַו* (16a,c), however, places the accent on the momentary aspect (p. 133) 'to remember'.

<sup>244</sup> The trumpets associated with the gathering of the assembly are referred to in CD-A XI.22.

<sup>245</sup> P.C. Beentjes, *Jesus Sirach en Tenach*, Nieuwegein 1981. According to Beentjes,

**Sir. 50:16c**

The trumpets are heard (שמע *hiph'il* imperfect c.) as they sound a קול אדיר 'a mighty flourish'. The adjective אדיר 'mighty' serves to indicate the power of YHWH (Ps. 8:2,10; 76:5; 93:4 and Isa. 10:34). The trumpets are rarely mentioned as musical instruments. Based on 2 Sam. 6:5 and Psalm 150, it would appear that, in contrast to the resounding cymbals בצלצלי־שמע, the ringing cymbals בצלצלי־הרוע, and other instruments such as the shofar, the harp, the zither, the tambourine, the stringed instruments and the flute, the trumpets did not have a specific function in the temple orchestra as a whole. The qualification הרועה 'ringing' is derived from the verb רוע with which 50:16a begins. In most instances its use implies some kind of alarm signal. It is clear that Ben Sira is referring to a familiar and recognisable signal, one that functioned in the temple liturgy to draw the attention of those present prior to a summons or announcement. Lévi considers the repetition of 'blowing' (50:16c) out of place and maintains that it should be scrapped on the basis of dittography, as is the case in G and S.<sup>246</sup>

In the broader context of Sir. 50:11–21 with its 17 verses, the cola 50:16c and 16d constitute a focal point (8+1+8) in the description of Simon in the temple. The intention of the text is evident from the invitation להזכיר לפני עלין 'to the remembrance before the Most High'. The remembrance is clearly central, is continued in the prayer to the Most High, the Holy One of Israel (17c,d) and to the Merciful One (19b) and is oriented towards the blessing of YHWH and the representation of the name of YHWH (50:20–21). The repetition of the 'blowing' of trumpets<sup>247</sup> and the accumulation of divine names is characteristic of the descriptive praise intended to give expression to God's majesty.<sup>248</sup> The mighty flourish of the trumpets must have

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there is evidence of a *structural use of Scripture* when Ben Sira constructs his text on the basis of elements from one text in Tanakh (p. 39). As such he excludes the possibility of interpreting הכהנים as a gloss (pp. 120f.).

<sup>246</sup> P.A.H. de Boer, *Gedenken und Gedächtnis in der Welt des Alten Testaments*, Stuttgart 1962. According to De Boer, the causative of the root זכר means 'to make mention of, to proclaim' with the intention that the remembrance take place (p. 44) particularly in Sirach 44–50. He translates 50:16: 'da posaunten die Söhne Aarons mit gewaltigem Schall, um es zu proklamieren vor dem Höchsten'.

<sup>247</sup> H. Seidel, *Musik in Altisrael*, Frankfurt a.M. 1989. Seidel mentions the enthusiasm and emotions brought about by the songs (39:12–35) as well as the function of the trumpet (50:16).

<sup>248</sup> C. Westermann, *Das Loben Gottes in den Psalmen*, Göttingen 1963. Descriptive praise is typified by flowing and overflowing exaltation (p. 100).

been an unmistakably special signal, familiar to all those who visited the temple.

### Sir. 50:16d

Ben Sira makes his intention clear with the infinitive *c. hiph'il* of כָּרַר with ל: the remembrance before the presence of the Most High (16c,d). The remembrance is referred to in the Torah in Num. 10:10 where it is associated with a trumpet blast. The history of interpretation of Jesus Sirach has struggled with the identification of the festivities being celebrated at this juncture: Yom Kippur or the daily offering, *Yoma* or *Tamid*?<sup>249</sup>

### Excursus II *Yoma, Tamid and Rosh Hashanah*

In search of the *Sitz im Leben* of the trumpets in Sirach 50 and their mighty flourish, we are inevitably led into the discussion surrounding the identification of the feast to which the text refers: Yom Kippur or a ferial day? In other words: *Yoma* or *Tamid*?

The general conviction among scholars in this regard has tended in the past to maintain that Ben Sira's portrait of Simon in Sir. 50:1–24 should be read against the background of the feast of Yom Kippur. Indeed, virtually every monograph dealing with the Praise of the Fathers upholds this perspective. Ó Fearghail, by contrast, draws attention to the daily offering described in the tractate *Tamid*. In their commentary, Skehan/Di Lella take over his argumentation in its entirety.

Ó Fearghail bases himself on G 50:15 in which the wine offering is described, a verse lacking in H. The hermeneutical circle would appear to be complete and the answer to the question *Yoma* or *Tamid* incontestable: the *Sitz im Leben* is *Tamid*! Unfortunately, this line of thought does not offer much in the way of new insight.

A comparison with the information found at Qumran leads Lehmann to conclude that Sirach 50 does not run parallel with the customary liturgical arrangements associated with Yom Kippur. He attributes this to the fact that the text's primary aim would appear to be a poetic homage to Simon.<sup>250</sup> Lehmann's argumentation remains problematic

<sup>249</sup> F. Ó Fearghail, 'Sir 50,5–21: Yom Kippur or The Daily Whole-Offering?', *Biblica* 59 (1978) 301–316. While Ó Fearghail correctly disputes the idea that reference is being made in Sirach 50 to Yom Kippur, his arguments are not decisive. He mentions 50:5b on account of the house of the veil but neglects to make reference to Lev. 16:2,12,15. The use of the definite article הַ instead of the preposition ל in בַּיִת לַכַּפֹּרֶת does not designate Yom Kippur.

<sup>250</sup> M.R. Lehmann, "'Yom Kippur' in Qumran", *RQ* 9 (1961) 117–124. The argumentation in *Yoma* is borrowed from the Pharisaic struggle against Sadducaic

on account of the fact that the liturgical arrangements for Yom Kippur are based on the Talmudic tractate *Yoma*, which stems from a later date.<sup>251</sup>

In the analysis that follows, we will endeavour to approach the text from an alternative perspective and to postulate an entirely different feast. Our argumentation has its roots in 50:16d, namely in the function of the trumpets, the specific task of the priests, the summons to the remembrance and the central position of 50:16c,d in the burnt offering passage as a whole (50:11–21). The key to a solution is to be found in the significance of the infinitive *hiph'il* הִזְכִּיר with ל 'to summon to the remembrance' and the characteristic trumpet flourish.<sup>252</sup> The use of the *hiph'il* of זָכַר signifies an active human behaviour, which Schottroff considers appropriate in the context of the sacrifice since the trumpets do not only draw the worshippers' attention to the offering itself but also serve to stimulate the remembrance.<sup>253</sup> The specific significance of the trumpets is described in Num. 10:1–10. The priests are to sound a trumpet blast on the days of rejoicing, on the appointed feasts and on the days of the new moon over the burnt offerings and the shared-offerings 'as a reminder on your (the people's) behalf before the Lord your God: I am the Lord your God'.

The word combination יָמֵי שְׂמֵחָה זָכַר 'your days of rejoicing' is only known to us in Tanakh from Num. 10:10 and from two other references.<sup>254</sup> The feasts intended here are arranged in special lists in Leviticus 23 and with respect to the festival offerings in Numbers 28–29, in order to provide an overview of the festival calendar. The sounding of trumpets in Num. 10:10 is associated with the temporal expression יָמֵי הַחֹדֶשׁ הַרְשִׁים 'your days of the new moon'. The said 'days of the new moon'

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heresies with respect to sacrificial practice. The reference to the fact that the Name, YHWH, was no longer used as part of the blessing since the time of Simon, the Just (b*Yoma* 39b) is worthy of note.

<sup>251</sup> J. Neusner, *A History of the Mishnaic Law of Holy Things*, Leiden 1980.

<sup>252</sup> P.C. Beentjes, *Jesus Sirach en Tenach*, Nieuwegein 1981. The combination of זָכַר with לִפְנֵי is rare. Beentjes makes reference to Ex. 28:30 in which the breastplate is worn over the heart as a perpetual remembrance before the face of YHWH (p. 120).

<sup>253</sup> W. Schottroff, "GEDENKEN" im Alten Orient und im Alten Testament. *Die Wurzel zakar im semitischen Sprachkreis*, WMANT 15, Neukirchen 1964. Schottroff endeavours to find the connection between the human activity of remembrance and cultic engagement (pp. 313–325). Sir. 50:16 together with Ps. 27:6 and Num. 10:10 serve as references to the musical accompaniment of sacrificial activity. While he notes the sounding of trumpets on New Year's Day (*Rosh Hashanah* IV,5a–6b) he insists that: "Opfer sind nach 70 n.Chr. ja nicht mehr vorauszusetzen". He takes the Feast of Weeks as his example (Jub. 6:22; the Rule of the Community (1QS), Col. X.5) on account of the זָכְרוֹן (p. 324).

<sup>254</sup> Tanakh associates the יוֹם שְׂמֵחָה 'day of joy' with the post-exilic feast of Purim, which is portrayed as such in Est. 9:17,18. Song 3:11 also describes the crowning of King Solomon by his mother on his wedding day, on his day of joy.

are mentioned in Tanakh in the sacrificial lists detailing the burnt offerings to be brought on the first day of the new month (Num. 28:11; 29:1) and in the prophecies of Isa. 1:14 and Ez. 46:6.

Isaiah proclaims that he hates *הַדְּשִׁיכִם* 'your new moon days' (Isa. 1:14) with all his soul, employing precisely the same terminology as we find in Sir. 50:25a. Ezekiel insists that the gate of the inner court that faces east is to be opened on the day of the new moon to allow the prince to enter. The people of the land<sup>255</sup> are likewise to bow down at the entrance to the same gate on the days of the new moon (Ez. 46:1–6). In the context of his vision of the new temple, these new moon days are associated with two other temporal stipulations. The temporal reference *בְּרֵאשִׁיטוֹן בְּאַחַד לַחֹדֶשׁ* 'on the first day of the first month' is linked with the celebration of Passover on the fourteenth day of the first month (Ez. 45:18). The second stipulation is to be found at the beginning of Ezekiel's vision: *בְּרֵאשִׁיטוֹ הַשָּׁנָה* 'at the beginning of the year' (Ez. 40:1).<sup>256</sup> Ezekiel thus makes reference to the beginning of the New Year in both passages. Such references to the designation Rosh Hashanah in the context of the prophet's vision are unique in Tanakh.

The association of the New Year feast with the first day of the seventh month stems from a later date (Lev. 23:23, Num. 29:1).<sup>257</sup> While the festival calendar has clearly undergone a development with respect to Rosh Hashanah (and indeed Purim and Hanukkah also), little is available in the way of concrete evidence in this regard. The later Jewish New Year feast falls on the first day of the seventh month. According to the festival calendar of Lev. 23:24, this day is traditionally to be announced with a blast of shofars or trumpets, but the Hebrew text makes no reference to a specific instrument.

<sup>255</sup> W. Zimmerli, *Ezekiel*, BK XIII.2, Neukirchen 1969. Zimmerli mentions Sir. 45:25 and 46:1 with regard to the *עַם הָאֲרֶץ*, the landed gentry who owned property. He criticises Würtewein who sees the people of the land as a newly formed assembly after the exile. According to Zimmerli, the meaning of this key expression has changed in the course of history (p. 1163).

<sup>256</sup> M. Konkel, 'Das Datum der zweiten Tempelvision Ezechiels (Ez 40,1)', *BN* 92 (1998) 55–70. According to Konkel, Rosh Hashanah first became a terminus technicus for the New Year feast in the Tannaitic period. The biblical festal calendars and the association with Lev. 25:9 have always had a role to play in the explanation of the first day of Tishri. Konkel endeavours to find an explanation in the Babylonian New Year feast that coincided with the beginning of the year in the month of Nisan. There is also evidence of a comparable feast in the month of Tishri. This suggests a development in the Jewish festal calendar whereby the Babylonian months were generally accepted in every day life but not in the temple liturgy.

<sup>257</sup> J. Morgenstern, 'The Calendars of Ancient Israel', *HUCA* X (1935) 1–148. Morgenstern combines the data in Num. 29:1 and Lev. 23:24 with Rosh Hashanah (p. 74), whereby he indicates three phases of development in P (Priestly Code) towards a lunar calendar with Babylonian names (referred to as Calendar III) in the period 400–335 BCE (pp. 78, 146).

Rashi interprets שבתון זכרון תרועה מקרא־קדש (Lev. 23:24) in the rabbinic tradition as a trumpet blast and refers in this regard to Siphra R. Hashana 32a. Buber/Rosenzweig translate 'ein Feier, Gedächtnisschmettern, Ausrufen der Heiligung'. The New English Bible translates Lev. 23:24 'In the seventh month you shall keep the first day as a sacred day, a day of remembrance, and acclamation, a day of sacred assembly'. The festival calendar of Numbers 28–29 adds: יום תרועה יהיה לכם 'this day shall be a day of rejoicing for you!' to the first day of the seventh month (29:1). Both festival calendars agree with respect to the use of תרועה, terminology derived from the verb ריע with which Ben Sira begins the passage concerning the feast by associating rejoicing with the sounding of the trumpet. The repetition of יריע in 50:16a and יריעו in 16c takes on a different perspective in relation to להזכיר in 16d when viewed against the background of Lev. 23:24. In the latter's festival calendar, the feast on the first day of the seventh month is likewise associated with the remembrance זכרון, which is characterised by its liveliness.

The fact that Ben Sira mentions the priestly trumpet blast in combination with the call to remembrance (50:16a/16d) is unique with respect to the Second Temple period. Conclusive evidence in Torah in support of Rosh Hashanah, however, remains extremely limited. While Lev. 23:24 makes no reference to a day of rejoicing, it does speak of a Sabbath and commemoration with the flourish of trumpets together with a food offering by fire for the Lord. Num. 29:1–6, in contrast, clearly makes reference to a day of rejoicing and insists on a grain offering and a sin offering to accompany the burnt offering to YHWH in addition to the monthly offering and the daily offering. With respect to the offerings we conclude that a degree of development is evident.

The literature of Qumran offers a limited number of clues in our search for the appropriate festal background for our text. In 4QCalendar Document A (= Mishmarot A, 4Q320), Frag. 4, Col. III, IV, V and VI and in 4QCalendar Document B<sup>a</sup> (= Mishmarot B 4Q321) in Frag. 2, Col. II, III, IV, the Day of Memorial is consistently referred to as the first week of the seventh month, in association with the Day of Atonement and the feast of Tabernacles (Succoth), and is reckoned from the beginning of the full moon (in contrast to the lunar calendar).<sup>258</sup>

The damaged upper-portion of Col. XXV of the Temple Scroll (11Q19) contains reference to the first day of the seventh month:

Yadin's text edition documents and translates this Hebrew text:

<sup>258</sup> F. García Martínez/A.S. van der Woude, *De rollen van de Dode Zee*, II, Kampen 1995. Given the script employed here, the manuscript is relatively old and stems from the end of the second century BCE. García Martínez/Van der Woude provide a summary of the major feasts of the year in Table III. The Day of Remembrance falls on the 1st of the 7th month (pp. 468f.). F. García Martínez, *The Dead Sea*



line 2            [ובח[ודש השביעי]]            [[ [     ]] ]  
 line 3            [באחד להודש יהיה לכמה] \שבתון זכ/רון תרועה מ[קרא קודש]  
 line 4            [ועשיחמה עולה אשה ריח ניהוח ל]פני יהוה והק [רבחמה פר]

- 2 [ . . .] And in (?) the [seventh] mon[th]  
 3 [on the first day of the month, you shall observe] a day of solemn rest, a memorial proclaimed with the blast of trumpets, [a holy] con[vocation.]  
 4 [And you shall offer a burnt offering, a pleasing odour b]efore the Lord, and you shall sa[crifice on]<sup>e259</sup>

The author of the *Temple Scroll* goes on to establish a link between the first day of the seventh month (XXV, 2–10) and the tenth day, the Day of Atonement (11–16), marked by extended spacing. Such references to the Day of Remembrance and זכרון תרועה are important and serve as a point of contact with the situation in which Simon functioned in the Second Temple. More than 50 years after Ben Sira wrote his book, the Qumran community turned against the temple service on account of its difficulties with the priestly succession, which it considered illegitimate. The Temple Scroll offers a new plan for a future temple as a draft based on the model revealed to Moses on Mount Sinai (Exodus 25–31). This revealed model is ascribed the authority of Torah, which serves as the point of departure for the criticism of the Second Temple and the proposal of the new model as the basis for a complete renewal. The aim here is not so much a refinement of the construction style or the extensive expansion of the temple courtyard by Herodes, but rather a spiritual renewal based on the norms of Torah.

The function of the trumpet blast is taken for granted in the Temple Scroll, forming a parallel with Num. 10:10 and Lev. 23:24. Yadin, García Martínez and Vermes translate זכרון תרועה with ‘the blast of the trumpets’ in spite of the fact that any reference to a musical instrument is lacking. The trumpet blast is possible because the shofar functioned in general use after the destruction of the temple in 70 CE and as such it is presumed by the rabbinic tradition. Based on the combination of the Day of Remembrance and the blast of the trumpet that summoned those present to remembrance, one may be able to consider Rosh Hashanah and not Yom Kippur as the background to Sir. 50:16.<sup>260</sup>

*Scrolls Translated*, Leiden 1994 (pp. 451–455). G. Vermes, *The Complete Dead Scrolls in English*, London 1997 (pp. 339–348).

<sup>259</sup> Y. Yadin, *The Temple Scroll*, Jerusalem 1983 (pp. 111–114).

<sup>260</sup> J. Morgenstern, ‘Two Prophecies from Fourth Century BC and the Evolution of Yom Kippur’, *HUCA* XXIV (1952–53) 1–74. Morgenstern looks to the calendar issue for a solution to the separation of Rosh Hashanah from Yom Kippur and the relocation of New Year’s Day from the tenth of the seventh month to the first thereof. In the Deuteronomic calendar the months are still referred to numerically.

Our search for the appropriate feast in 50:16 would thus appear to lead us neither to *Yoma* nor to *Tamid*!

While the evidence so far remains limited, two further elements might serve to broaden the base of our argumentation. The Samaritan tradition begins the T'ru'ah feast on 1 Tishri with the blast of trumpets according to Num. 29:2 on the basis of Num. 10:10. According to Ibrâhîm ibn Ja'kûb and Aaron b. Joseph, the sounding of the shofar was to serve as a call to repentance and penance.<sup>261</sup>

Furthermore, the synagogal liturgy refers to Rosh Hashanah as 'the Day of Remembrance' as well as 'the Day of the Trumpet Blast'.<sup>262</sup>

In summary, the description of the feast of Rosh Hashanah in the discussion surrounding *Yoma* and *Tamid* is based on a few scant details from Tanakh and the rabbinic tradition. The combination of information from Qumran and the Samaritan and synagogal tradition relating to Sirach 50:16 provides us with a new perspective. It is evident from the Talmud that the feast of Rosh Hashanah developed through time as the Jewish New Year's day into an exceptional festival and acquired a fixed place in the festival calendar.<sup>263</sup> Further later developments can also be traced with respect to other Jewish feasts such as Purim and Hanukkah, feasts that are generally accepted in spite of their lack of reference in Torah.

On the first day of the seventh month, the day on which Ezra read the law to the people, there is no trace of Rosh Hashanah (Neh. 8:2). The development of Rosh Hashanah has its roots in the Second Temple period and is established in the Talmud. In the context of this development, Ben Sira together with the authors of Jubilees, 1 Enoch and the community of Qumran would appear to have taken a stand against the growing influence of the later normative lunar calendar.

The Mishnah and the Talmud also contain traces of a variety of traditions surrounding this feast, Rosh Hashanah, which also exhibit

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The following step is the relocation of Rosh Hashanah from the tenth to the first of the seventh month. The calendar in Ez. 45:18–25 makes no mention of this, although the expression *הַיּוֹם הַשִּׁבְעִי* is mentioned nevertheless in Ez. 40:1. The third step is the lunar calendar with its Babylonian terminology introduced under the influence of Ezra and employed in the temple by Jonathan in 152 BCE. Morgenstern does not deal with the period between Sirach 50 and Qumran.

<sup>261</sup> S. Hanover, *Das Festgesetz der Samaritaner nach Ibrâhîm ibn Ja'kûb. Edition und Uebersetzung seines Kommentars zu Lev.23 nebst Einleitung und Anmerkungen*, Berlin 1904.

<sup>262</sup> S.Ph. de Vries, *Joodse rit en symbolen*, Amsterdam 1986 (p. 77f.).

<sup>263</sup> B.Z. Wacholder/S. Wacholder, 'Patterns of Biblical Dates and Qumran's Calendar: The Fallacy of Jaubert's Hypothesis', *HUCA LXVI* (1995) 1–40. An ancient solar calendar was followed in Qumran that agrees with the information found in Jubilees and 1 Enoch. The latter counted 12 months of 30 days each giving a total of 360 days. The year was divided into 4 seasons, to each of which an extra day was added giving a total of 13 weeks or 91 days per season. This calendar, with its six-year cycle, served as the guiding principle in the temple up to the reign of Antiochus IV (p. 28) and was maintained as *theologoumenon* in Qumran (p. 37).

variant perspectives, being devoted entirely to the day in question.<sup>264</sup> In 1.1, for example, reference is made to four New Year feasts: the first day of Nisan, the first day of Elul, the first day of Tishri and the first day of Shebat as the New Year for trees according to the school of Shammai, the latter being determined on the fifteenth day of the same month according to the school of Hillel. 3.2 contains reference to the sounding of two silver trumpets as an older tradition in addition to the shofar, the latter being made by preference with the horn of an antelope, while the horn of the cow is forbidden. We consider the arrangement of the blessing in 4.5 to be of great importance on account of the following sequence: אבות *'the fathers'*; ונברוהו *'the powers'*; וקדושת השם *'the sanctification of the name'* and בלכזיוה *'the kingship'*, which constitute the structure of the synagogal liturgy to this day.<sup>265</sup>

We can conclude that Ben Sira, in his description of Simon, has clearly placed significant emphasis on the priestly task of sounding the trumpets to draw the attention of those present in the temple with a mighty flourish and thereby invite them to remember. The day of the trumpet blast of remembrance (זכרון הרועה) had long been associated with the first day of the festival month in preparation for Yom Kippur and Succoth (Lev. 23:24) and is documented in the literature of Qumran.

Ben Sira makes no pronouncement concerning a specific point in time for the beginning of the New Year.

As the day of remembrance, Rosh Hashanah provides a context for the rewriting of Israel's history in the Praise of the Fathers in which the portrayal of Simon in Sirach 50 can be considered the climax of the remembrance, the latter being eternal for some (44:13a) and non-existent for others (44:9a).

This analysis underlines the importance of MS B, particularly with reference to 43:7a<sup>266</sup> and 50:6b, in which קָבִין *'for the differentiation of*

<sup>264</sup> J. Neusner, *The Mishnah. A New Translation*, New Haven 1988 (pp. 299–306). In *Shabbat* 19.5, *Menahot* 11:9, *Erubin* 3:7 and *Arakhin* there is evidence of a New Year Feast lasting two days. M. *Arakhin* 2:5 II, moreover, mentions two trumpets.

<sup>265</sup> J. Dasberg, *Siach Jitschak. Gebed van Jitschak, Siddoer*, Jerusalem 1977. The Siddur contains reference to three subdivisions: *Malchiot*, the kingship of God over all the world, *Zichronot*, the remembrance with a view to the return to the good and *Shoferot*, the call to battle against the enemy and against the self, aimed at seeing these three blessings as a call to freedom in remembrance of the *'akedah'* of Isaac and the revelation on Sinai. In addition to other texts in Tanakh, the Siddur alludes to Num. 29:1–6 and Psalm 150 and establishes a link with Num. 10:10, in which the trumpets serve to recall: *'I, the Eternal One, am your God'*. It is for this reason that Num. 29:1 places the emphasis on: *'it shall be a day of rejoicing for you!'* (p. 300).

<sup>266</sup> M.D. Herr, 'The Calendar', in S. Safrai/M. Stern eds, *The Jewish People in the First Century*, CRINT I.2, Assen 1976, 834–864. Herr offers a survey in line with the theory proposed by J. Morgenstern with an original count of the months referred to numerically and the Babylonian calendar with terms Nisan, Sivan, Elul, Kislev, Tebeth, Shebat and Adar, all of which are to be found in Tanakh. In the post-exilic literature both the numerical and the Babylonian references appear side

the festival days can be read. A derisive critique on the part of Ben Sira is evident in the conscious reversal of the conceptualisation of the new moon and the full moon, which enjoys a parallel in *M. Rosh Hashanah*.<sup>267</sup>

The pseudepigraphal writings Jubilees and 1 Enoch,<sup>268</sup> which came into existence in the same period as Sirach, offer evidence of conflicts concerning the use of the solar and lunar calendars,<sup>269</sup> conflicts that would also appear to be part of the Samaritan claim to liturgical purity.

This issue served as a source of tension in priestly circles in Jerusalem from the time of Ezra. Ben Sira exhibits close kinship with priestly circles in which the traditional calendar was defended. He clearly holds his own position with respect to eschatological and speculative perspectives (50:27–28).

The inspiration behind Ben Sira's desire to write down his vision of Simon, the righteous one, as a conclusion to his *שבח אבות עולם*, may have had its roots in the need to provide content to the liturgical renewal required for a special celebration of the day of remembrance during the period of Simon's ministry. The synagogal prayer tradition similarly focuses the remembrance on the men of great name in the history of Israel in the *Zichronot*. The genre of the Praise of the Fathers can thus be qualified as a *זכרונות 'remembrance discourse'*.<sup>270</sup>

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by side. Herr appeals in support of the lunar calendar to Ben Sira 43:6–8 according to the reading of Yadin (p. 839) and follows the reading of M, Bmargin, G and S with *ל* or *ב*, while MS B reads *ב*. He denies the possibility that this original calendar could have been functional in the Second Temple period (p. 841) and ignores the possibility of a gradual change with the introduction of the lunar calendar system that later became normative. With the arrival of Ezra, this lunar calendar came to influence social life but did not find its way into the temple liturgy until after Onias III. Herr describes Rosh Hashanah in the 1st century CE on the basis of Philo and the early strata of the Tannaitic literature: "the biblical 'day of remembrance' or 'day of sounding of the shofar', the first of Tishri, came to be defined as the New Year" (p. 843).

<sup>267</sup> Based on *Rosh Hashanah* 1.7–3.1 we note the distinction made incorrectly by Tobias in evaluating the witness of his son in comparison to that of his free slave. An additional aspect is the need to serve copious meals to all the witnesses in the Bet Yazeq (the room in which people gathered to await the report of the appearance of the new moon), so that the witnesses would persevere in the meeting.

<sup>268</sup> H. Stegemann considers the content of the calendars in Jubilees and 1 Enoch as apologetic material against other Jewish groups (p. 241).

<sup>269</sup> B.G. Wright, 'Fear the Lord and Honor the Priest', in P.C. Beentjes ed., *The Book of Ben Sira in Modern Research*, Berlin 1997, 189–222. Wright's hypothesis is that Ben Sira's *pan-Aaronide view* (Olyan) leads to a positive perspective with respect to the priests. We doubt whether this can be understood as an implicit critique of Levitical and Zadokite claims. As *sofer*, Ben Sira is not bound to a specific priestly group. Pro-Hellenistic tendencies only emerge in Jerusalem after Onias III. The fractured relationship with the Samaritans constitutes a far greater problem in Sir. 50:25–26 (see 3.3.7).

<sup>270</sup> W. Schottroff, "'GEDENKEN" im Alten Orient und im Alten Testament', WMANT

**Sir. 50:17a**

כל בשר *‘all people’* constitutes the acting subject of נמהדרו *niph'al* perfect 3p.pl., which is usually translated *‘to be in haste’*. Two further actions follow: *‘falling to the ground’* (17b) and *‘worshipping’* (17c,d). The use of perfect forms is striking at this juncture after the manifold use of imperfects, infinitives and participles, which serve to render Simon’s activity actual. There is evidence of a momentary aspect of activity. Ben Sira turns his gaze towards all those who find themselves within the walled domain of the temple.

The *niph'al* of מהדר is rare in Tanakh (Job 5:13; Hab. 1:6; Isa. 32:4; 35:4) and means *‘to be overhasty, impetuous’*. The commentators tend to turn to G with *‘to be in a hurry’*. A more appropriate translation of the *niph'al*, however, would be *‘to speed’*, on account of the etymological relationship between *speed* (arch. success) and *spatium* (space), *spes* (hope). We opt, therefore, for a positive translation: *‘all people together speed along’*.

The expression כל בשר *‘everything that lives’* is widely familiar. The word combination כל בשר יחדו, by contrast, is virtually unique and is only found elsewhere in Job 34:15 and Isa. 40:5. Ben Sira thus exhibits a degree of kinship with the wisdom of Job and the universalistic prophecy of salvation characteristic of Deutero-Isaiah. All the major commentaries would appear not to ascribe any particular significance to the addition of יחדו to כל בשר.<sup>271</sup> In so doing, however, three important elements are left out of the overall picture.

1. Ben Sira’s use of כל aims at rendering an all-inclusive perspective in which he speaks about his work as *sofer* in the autobiographical passages. (39:16–33).

2. The term בשר *‘flesh’* has a broader meaning than *‘sacrificial flesh’* in the context of the temple where it can also refer to *‘people, human beings’*. In Ez. 44:7,9, for example, it is considered an abomination that the foreigner, the uncircumcised of heart and body, should enter

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15, Neukirchen 1964. Schottroff links the noun זכרון with human remembrance as religious and cultic activity and points out: “Da für den Neujahrstag keine eigene Festlegende überliefert ist, kann man nicht sagen, auf welche Tradition(en) sich das Gedenken richten soll” (p. 322). He only refers to Sir. 50:16 in association with the supervision of the sacrificial cult (p. 321).

<sup>271</sup> O. Rickenbacher, *Weisheitsperikopen bei Ben Sira*, OBO 1, Göttingen 1973. Rickenbacher elaborates the use of כל בשר in schematic fashion and translates for the most part with ‘human person’. In 44:18, 45:4 and 50:17 he translates with Israel, thereby missing the universal tendency on account of G50:17 with ὁ λαός.

the sanctuary. With the expression **כל בשר יהודי**, however, Ben Sira involves everyone in the temple liturgy, including those who fall under the laws of purity.<sup>272</sup> While it is true that the sanctuary itself is not open to everyone, all people nevertheless have access to the most exterior forecourt. The dividing line between those who belong to the holy assembly and those who do not, therefore, is drawn along the boundary between the interior forecourts and the exterior forecourt.<sup>273</sup>

3. The term **יהודי** signifying ‘*together, community*’ specifies the essential core of the community of Qumran. The scroll 1QS containing the Rule of the Community is entitled 1QSerek *ha-Yahad*, because the Teacher of Righteousness wished to express the unity of all Israel thereby.<sup>274</sup>

With the addition of **יהודי** Ben Sira accentuates the universalistic significance of **כל בשר**. To this end he refers first to ‘*all people together*’ in the structure of 50:16a–19d prior to ‘*all the people of the land*’ and ‘*the entire community of Israel*’ in 50:13c,20b.

### Sir. 50:17b

The action is continued with the verb **נפל** imperfect c. 3p.pl. ‘*and they fall upon their face*’, which is further intensified with the addition of **ארצה** ‘*to the ground*’. The word combination **ויפלו על פניהם** would appear to be without difficulty if the commentaries are anything to go by. Be that as it may, this *geprägte Form* is only documented on three occasions in Tanakh (Num. 16:22; 20:6 and Judg. 13:20), in each instance in association with the manifestation of the glory of YHWH. Moses and Aaron ‘fall on their face’ in prayer, begging

<sup>272</sup> **בשר** is important in the context of the temple liturgy for the determination of purity (Leviticus 11–15). The continued tradition is recorded in the tractate *Nega'iem*.

<sup>273</sup> Counter to Skehan/Di Lella, who opt for the noun **הִלָּק** in Sir. 44:2a: ‘*perfect glory is the inheritance of the Most High*’, we prefer to read **הִלָּק** as perf. *qal* ‘*the Most High ascribed to them perfect glory*’. The distinction between a verbal and nominal reading of **הִלָּק** clearly leads to a completely different theological perspective.

<sup>274</sup> H. Stegemann, ‘The Qumran Essenes’ in J. Treballe Barrera/L. Vegas Montaner eds, *The Madrid Qumran Congress*, Leiden 1992, 83–166. Stegemann distinguishes between *ha-yahad* ‘*a confederation of all existing Jewish groups*’ and *ha-qahal* ‘*the cultic assemblies*’, between the *edah* ‘*the local communities*’ and *haburah* ‘*companionship*’ and finally *ha-‘am* ‘*every Jew by birth*’. The Teacher of Righteousness introduces the term *ha-yahad* as a new datum on account of the fact that he excludes all sinners and evildoers from *ha-‘am*, in order to continue to view all Israel as a whole (p. 155).

God not to extend his judgement against Korah and his companions over the people as a whole (Num. 16:20). When the people begin to murmur, Moses and Aaron enter the tabernacle to pray after which Moses strikes the rock to obtain water (Num. 20:6). In the third reference, the angel of the Lord appears to Manoah in the flame of his sacrificial offering (Judg. 13:20). Given this context, the people's hurry in 50:17a is necessary, not out of fear or lack of insight, but out of respect for Him and the fear of catching a glimpse of the manifestation of YHWH. Indirect reference to a divine manifestation in Sirach 50 might be claimed in *השיר קולו* in 50:18a and in *נרו* in 18b.

### Sir. 50:17c,d

The verb *הרה* in infinitive c. *hišṭaph'al* with *ל* 'to bow down' or 'to worship' is not employed as a variant parallel to or a variant of *נפל* in 17b. Both actions have their own semantic context. By placing *נפל* in 17b in the foreground, the idea of intentionality in the activity of worshipping is underlined via the infinitive c. Ben Sira chooses familiar words and provides them with an extra dimension by inverting the customary order. The goal of the entire sacrificial liturgy in 50:11–21 is brought to the fore in the attitude of reverence and respect for YHWH, to commemorate that which is essential for all people who live in His light (50:28). The worship of the Most High and the Holy One of Israel is focused on this act of remembrance. The fact that everything is encompassed before the face of God is apparent from the characteristic use of *כל*, which is repeated four times: *all* the sons of Aaron (13a), the *entire* assembly of Israel (13d, 20b) and *all* people (17a). All together! Ben Sira employs *יחדו* to underline his inclusive perspective (39:16–33).

In the same all-inclusive manner, the term *לפני* 'before the face of' serves to accentuate the powerful manifestation of God made evident in the divine names *עליון* 'the Most High'<sup>275</sup> and *קדוש ישראל* 'the Holy One of Israel'.<sup>276</sup>

<sup>275</sup> H.J. Kraus, *Psalmen*, BK XV.1, Neukirchen 1972. Kraus examines the name *עליון* in *Die Kulttraditionen Jerusalems* in which he detects a universalising tendency. He concludes: "der 'Universalismus' in der Theologie der alttestamentlichen Psalmen ist nicht das Spätprodukt eines religiösen Entwicklungsprozesses innerhalb der Geschichte Israels, sondern vielmehr ein im Typus der Verehrung des "höchsten Gottes" bereits vorgegebenes Element der kanaänischen Welt" (pp. 197–201).

<sup>276</sup> Three books in Tanakh speak repeatedly of the Holy One: Leviticus 19 in



Ben Sira draws attention to three activities before the face of the Holy One of Israel, which are to be considered as one single activity: in 17a all people hurry together speedily (נמהרו perfect *niph'al*), in 17b they fall to the ground (ויפלו imperfect c. *qal*) and in 17c they worship (השתחוה with ל infinitive c.).

From the perspective of syntax, this temporal clause implies two instantaneous actions (Jouon/Muraoka § 166c), aimed at a particular goal in combination with the infinitive שתה with ל, which is further expressed in the activity of worship. On the day of remembrance, all people are actively involved together in the process of worship in which the remembrance itself is realised. The signal given by the trumpets points to the actual presence of the Holy One of Israel. Thematic unity is strengthened in 50:17 via the key concepts פניהם and לפני.

### Sir. 50:18a

Based on the structural contours of 50:16–19, one can determine a change of subject from 3p.s.m in 18a to 3p.pl. in 18b. The entire people of the land rejoice thereafter in 50:19. The syntax would appear at first sight to be fairly simple. Commentators, however, have drawn attention to the discussion surrounding the identity of the acting subject(s) in these cola. Is השיר 'the song' subject of יתן imperfect c. of נתן 'to give' and is קולו 'his voice' related to the song as an attributive adjunct or as object? The issue of the acting subject is clearly a complex one.

It is evident from the commentaries and the translations that the problem is not resolved by the fact that G introduces the Levites as singers at this juncture. Peters argues on this basis for an alternative H version and proposes that we read השיר as synecdoche, as *pars pro toto* for the choir. Smend observes that S abbreviates the text somewhat arbitrarily. Lévi, Peters, Smend and Hayward follow G with its choir of Levites.

Such explanations remain unsatisfactory if one prefers to base oneself on H. In search of an alternative explanation, we propose the following potential acting subjects: Simon, the song and YHWH.

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the self-revelation 'I am holy!'; the Psalms in which the praise of the Holy One of Israel is sung (Psalm 71; 78; 99 and 106); Isaiah in which the Holy One of Israel serves as a topos (Isa. 30:15; 41:13–14; 43:1–44:28). In Isaiah 40–66, He is the first and the last, the Holy One, Creator and Maker.



1. The history of exegesis does not point at Simon. Indeed the literary structure makes any identification of the acting subject as Simon unfeasible. The thematic perspective of 17c,d and 19a,b is determined in its entirety by the prayer of ‘all the people’ addressed to YHWH, the Holy One of Israel. While Simon was clearly involved in this prayer, his participation locates him nevertheless in the midst of the people.

2. Schechter and Lévi focus attention on the song and the trumpets on the basis of 2 Chron. 29:28 in which *‘the song of the Lord was raised and the trumpet blast sounded . . . the entire assembly bowed down, the song was sung and the trumpets sounded—all this continued until the burnt offering was finished’*. ‘All this’ (הכל) refers to a liturgical service associated with the inauguration of the temple in the time of Hezekiah and designated as the שיר יהוה *‘the song of YHWH’*. A further alternative suggests that Ben Sira had a particular song in mind that functioned as subject (Ryssel, Box, Sauer and Di Lella). The literature of Qumran (4Q405) 4QShirShabbf, Frag. 18) makes reference to a psalm in which a voice was given articulation:

*‘they hurry to the voice of glory [. . .]*  
5 *[. . .] wonderful psalms in a serene voice [. . .].’*<sup>277</sup>

Newsom associates this voice with the ‘sound of sheer silence’ with which YHWH spoke to Elijah in 1 Kgs 19:13.<sup>278</sup> In 50:18a,b, however, reference is clearly being made to the combination of ‘the song’ (השיר) and ‘his voice’ (קולו). Ps. 81:6c–15b entails a change of subject between the voice of YHWH in 1p.s. (81:6c)<sup>279</sup> and the people (81:12a) in 3p.s.m.: ולא-שמע עמי לקולי *‘my people did not listen to my*

<sup>277</sup> F. García Martínez, *The Dead Sea Scrolls, The Qumran Texts in English*, Leiden 1994 (p. 428).

<sup>278</sup> C.A. Newsom, ‘Merkabah Exegesis in the Qumran Sabbath Shiroi’, JJS XXXVIII (1987), 11–30. In the hymns of Qumran reference is not only made to the voice of the cherubim (Ez. 3:12) but also to voice of the ophannim in the Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice (4Q403), Col. II.12.

<sup>279</sup> A. Weiser, ‘Zur Frage nach den Beziehungen der Psalmen zum Kult: Die Darstellung der Theophanie in den Psalmen und im Festkult’, in W. Baumgartner ed., FS Alfred Bertholet, Tübingen 1950 (513–531). The question remains as to the manner in which the theophany was enacted in the cult. The presentation of YHWH in 1p.s. on the lips of the priest in Ps. 81:6f. goes hand in hand with a certain obligatory dramatisation. Weiser points to the cloud of smoke, the flourish of shofars as an indication of the voice of God (Ex. 19:16,19; 20:18; Ps. 47:6 and Isa. 58:1) and the pervasive *Festjubil* (p. 523).

voice'.<sup>280</sup> 'My voice' קוֹלִי indicates an *agreement in respect of person* (Jouïon/Muraoka §151) when the human organ as acting subject is in agreement with the person (Ps. 3:5; 27:7; 142:2). This phenomenon brings us to the third possibility.

3. YHWH lets his voice be heard. The word combination נָתַן קוֹלוֹ 'he raised his voice' would appear to enjoy significant usage in the prophetic idiom and in the songs of thanksgiving after battle (2 Sam. 22:14; Joel 2:11; 4:16; Amos 1:2; 3:4; Hab. 3:10 and Ps. 18:14) together with 'he caused his voice to be heard' (Isa. 30:30; 42:2 and Ez. 19:9). In each of these instances YHWH is present as acting subject. Sir. 50:18 is not the only text in the Praise of the Fathers in which this form of divine manifestation is evident. YHWH lets his voice be heard to Moses on Sinai in 45:5a. He is present in the temple in the sound of the golden bells<sup>281</sup> attached to the clothing of the High Priest as a reminder to his people in 45:9d,e. YHWH thunders from the heavens and makes his voice heard with a mighty sound in 46:17b.

The word combination עֲלִיוֹן יְהוָה קוֹלוֹ 'the Most High raised his voice' is explicitly referred to in Tanakh in the identical texts of 2 Sam. 22:14 and Ps. 18:14. 2 Samuel 22 contains David's address to the Lord in which he reflects at the end of his life on being saved from the hands of his enemies. The *Sitz im Leben* of this divine utterance tends to be explained as either historical or mythological.

The raising of YHWH's voice is thus similar to the trumpet blast in 50:16c,d as it calls to זָכֵר 'remember' and to make the correct choice in the tradition of the fathers. The interpretation of G 50:18a with its choir of Levites does not thus deserve preference.

The acting subject here in the Praise of the Fathers is neither Simon nor the song but the Most High,<sup>282</sup> who raises his voice for

<sup>280</sup> H.J. Kraus, BK XV.2, Neukirchen 1972. Kraus refers as the only possibility to the feast on the first day of the seventh month on account of the two temporal indicators חֹדֶשׁ 'new moon' and כֶּסֶה 'full moon' (p. 563). In terms of *Sitz im Leben* he differs from Mowinckel and Schmidt who opt for an enthronement of YHWH.

<sup>281</sup> C. Houtman, 'On the Pomegranates and the Golden Bells of the Highpriest's Mantle', *VT* XL.2 (1990) 223–227. The pomegranates symbolise the word of God (Prov. 25:11) and the bells likewise on account of the sound they make (p. 225).

<sup>282</sup> S.R. Hirsch, סְדוּר תְּפִלַּת יִשְׂרָאֵל, *The Hirsch Siddur*, Jerusalem 1978. In his commentary on the prayer for Rosh Hashanah Hirsch insists that we must remember until the time that God shall reign over all his works on Mount Zion and that we must sound the shofar in order to break with the sins of the past. For God,

a third time in a song after the bells of Aaron and the thunder of Samuel. This divine utterance is expressed in Hezekiah's inaugural feast in the aforementioned 'song of YHWH', which was sung by the choir of Levites (2 Chron. 29:28) in a choral exchange with the assembly in the temple.

M.*Rosh-Hashanah* 4.5 makes reference to these impressive songs of remembrance. After the אבות 'the fathers', the גבורות 'the powers', and the קדושת השם 'the sanctification of the Name', the זכרונות 'the songs of remembrance' resound to the blast of the shofar in the סדר ברכות 'order of the blessing'.<sup>283</sup>

From the perspective of syntax, therefore, השיר should be interpreted as an accusative of the internal object,<sup>284</sup> which is qualified by the action.<sup>285</sup> Based on the above line of reasoning we opt for the translation: 'And he raises his voice in the song'.

### Sir. 50:18b

The interpretation of this segment is even more diverse in the history of exegesis than it is with respect to 50:18a. The noun המון is generally translated 'crowd', a large gathering of people. Other possibilities include 'the tumult, the uproar of the peoples',<sup>286</sup> 'the noise of the city', 'the lament of the multitude' (Ezekiel 32), 'the roar and movement of the water' (50:2b).

The initial swarming of the crowd changes after the trumpet blast into an orderly, kneeling assembly of Israel. The preposition על 'before'

Rosh Hashanah is a day upon which He remembers us (p. 619). He is summoned in *Zichronot* with אָתָּה זֹכֵר 'You, who remember' (636f.), for the hope of קָל־בְּנֵי בְּשָׂר 'all mortal beings' is established on Him (p. 634).

<sup>283</sup> In the Siddur, the remembrance connects everything that is created (p. 639), Noah, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the covenant with Abraham and the land, the prophets. In Jer. 31:19 YHWH says 'Is Ephraim my dear son? Is he the child of my delight? As often as I speak against him, I remember him. אֶרְחַמֶנּוּ לִי לֵךְ הָיָה אֶרְחַמֶנּוּ I will surely have mercy on him'. YHWH is called upon to remember everything, for He is YHWH, הַנֶּחֱמָה 'merciful and compassionate'.

<sup>284</sup> P. Joüon/T. Muraoka, *A Grammar of Biblical Hebrew*, Roma 1991. Special attention is given to קוֹל with verbs that give expression to the voice. In 50:18a, 'his voice' belongs to the characteristic word combination קוֹל גִּתָּן with השִׁיר in the accusative (p. 451).

<sup>285</sup> The voice of God is mentioned several times in Hirsch, *Siddur*, in the *Shoferot*. He appears to them בְּקוֹל שֹׁפָר 'in trumpet blast'. Hirsch comments: "If He is to be our Helper, He must first become our King." (p. 642).

<sup>286</sup> W. Beuken, 'Does Trito-Isaiah reject the Temple? An Intertextual Inquiry', in FS B. van Iersel, *Intertextuality in Biblical Writings*, Kampen 1989, 53–65. Beuken associates the voice קוֹל with tumult שֹׁאֵן and המון (p. 60).

gives expression to the position of the crowd as it turns towards the Holy of Holies. The priests are then the acting subjects of העריכו *'they present his light before the crowd'*. To what then does נרו *'his light'* refer? Ryssel maintains that it refers to the lamps set up along the west side of the temple courtyard. In terms of content, the idea of lamps should not be dismissed too readily, given the attention afforded them by the Temple Scroll (11Q19), Col. IX.12 in which the priests are portrayed as duly taking care of the lamps according to the regulations (Lev. 24:4). Another alternative might be the Menorah, which Hayward considers and then rejects on the basis of *Tamid*.<sup>287</sup> Knohl makes reference to the נר המייד *'the everlasting light'* that according to Lev. 24:2 is to be kept burning. While the latter is also mentioned in Ex. 27:20–21, Knohl considers this to be a later version.<sup>288</sup>

Interpretations clearly vary considerably. Schechter proposes a textual emendation: ועל המון העריכו רנן, because G appears to focus on the sweet sound of the melody. Lévi in addition points to the possibility of reading ן instead of ן with respect to נר. Peters considers the given text to be corrupt<sup>289</sup> and follows G with an appeal to Amos 5:23 and its reference to God's hatred of the feasts. Smend laments finally: "Der Fehler ״עריכו״ hat aber auch das sinnlose נרו herbeigeführt."

In contrast to the above both the facsimile and the photograph copies are unequivocal when it comes to the reading נרו. Textual emendation thus tends to lead to awkward and indeed arbitrary solutions, as is apparent from the interpretation of G with its singing Levites.

An alternative possibility with respect to the interpretation of 18b lies in the semantic study of על, המון, ערך and נרו as the relevant terms and word combinations found therein, in Tanakh as a whole

<sup>287</sup> C.T.R. Hayward, *The Jewish Temple. A Non-Biblical Sourcebook*, London 1996. Hayward considers H to be corrupt and opts for G (p. 59). He translates 'they set in order His lamp' (p. 43).

<sup>288</sup> I. Knohl, 'The Priestly Torah versus the Holiness School', *HUCA* LVIII (1987), 65–117. Knohl distinguishes two layers in the laws described in Torah; a first layer with the PT (*Priestly Torah*, counting Numbers 28–29 as part thereof) and the second layer with the HS (*Holiness School* in Lev. 17–26; Num. 10:1–10; Ez. 44). Both elements are included in Leviticus 23. Kaufmann, by contrast, is of the opinion that HS forms a part of PT and that there is evidence of an integrated work (p. 101). He counts Ex. 27:20–21 together with Lev. 4:1–4 as part of HS.

<sup>289</sup> Peters (1913) notes a further alternative reading based on Lev. 24:4 with the Menorah and the lights mentioned by Perles המנורה העריכו נרות *'und auf dem Leuchter zündeten sie die Lichter an'* (OLZ 1902, p. 495).

and elsewhere in Ben Sira, presuming that 17a–18a contains a continuation of the discourse, which is then clarified by the line of thought presented in 50:18–19. Once this is established we must also endeavour to determine the context in which the terms in question functioned in the temple with the people and the priests surrounding Simon.

- The preposition על ‘above/high’ serves to determine location and indicates a difference in height between the forecourts and the sanctuary, the latter being accessible by a stairway. The altar of burnt offerings is also located on a raised platform (50:11c).
- The noun המון might refer to the crowd of ‘all people’ (17a) or to the entire assembly of Israel (19a). It renders the tumult of the water in 50:2b and the uproar caused by the raising of God’s voice.
- The verb ערך in its *niphʿal* form can have a variety of meanings: ‘to contrast one thing with another, to evaluate’. Possible subjects (3p.pl.) thereof: the priests, the people, everyone together.
- The noun with suffix 3p.s.m. נרו ‘his light’ can refer to the light of the Menorah (Lev. 24:40). The Menorah itself may also be the point of reference since the term is derived from נור. The lampstand is described in detail in Ex. 25:31–40; 37:17–24. Ben Sira compares the Menorah, ‘a light, a radiant light on a sacred candelabrum’, with the beauty of a woman who adorns the home (16:17). Isaiah sees God himself as the light (אור עולם), whereby the sun and the moon no longer function according to the laws of nature (Isa. 60:19–20).

It is evident from the above analysis that the variety of perspectives only serves to promote a significant degree of confusion. As with 50:18a, the Most High himself may be the acting subject, נרו with suffix 3p.s. thus referring to ‘his light’. The verb העריכו (*hiphʿil* ערך, 3p.pl.), however, is determinative when it comes to the question of the acting subject.

On closer inspection, the semantic significance of המון is essential if we still wish to presume that Ben Sira is continuing the discourse he established in 17–18a. If this scenario is correct then Ben Sira is here offering further elaboration on the song in 18a. In this case the author is clearly thinking of the powerful theophany referred to in the already mentioned texts of 2 Samuel 22 and Psalm 18 that resound with metaphors from Tiamat mythology (Ps. 18:8–16), or

the shuddering and shaking of the earth or the quivering and trembling of the mountains (Ps. 42:8).

Ben Sira's allusion to Ps. 18:14b *'the Most High raised his voice'* is related to wisdom theology, which provides human beings with access to the knowledge of YHWH and creation, summarised in the theologoumenon *'all these'* (39:16–33). All this concerns כל בשר *'all people'* (50:17a).

The main theme of Ben Sira's discourse in 50:17–19 becomes clear via the parallel with 2 Samuel 22 and Psalm 18. The song wherein He lifts קולו *'his voice'* (43:16c; 45:5a,9d) gives expression to the universal tendency so characteristic of his theology. For the people, God's voice is to be heard in the gentle sound created by the High Priest as he moves about the holy of holies, a call to remember. This sound represents the same voice that was heard in the rumbling thunder in Samuel's day (46:17b) and in the roaring sound created in the temple by the song and the trumpets in Simon's day (50:18a).

On Rosh Hashanah, the remembrance constitutes the basis of the people's respect for YHWH and is designed to allow the voice of the Most High to resound in the powerful song intoned in the temple on this day of joy. The המון does not express itself in the violent tumult of downfall and destruction, but in the elevated arrangement of the song in which YHWH's voice calls for a new beginning on Rosh Hashanah and the ten days of repentance prior to Yom Kippur.<sup>290</sup> All people and the entire temple orchestra join in the song. For this reason we opt for the translation of ועל המון as *'above the thunderous noise'*.

The perfect העריכו (*hiph'il* 3p.pl. ערך) is determinative for the vision of נרו *'his light'*, the activities of the priests and the reaction of the people in 50:19. An alternative form of ערך is employed in 50:12b and 14a to refer to the מערכות *'the arrangement'* of the wood and sacrificial portions according to the rules, written and unwritten, passed on by the priests from one generation to the next. Ben Sira employs the same verb ערך in 50:18b. We are left with the question

<sup>290</sup> J. Dasberg, *Siach Jitschak, Siddoer*, Jerusalem 1977 (p. 299). Allusion is made in the Siddur to Psalm 150, in order to express the immense greatness of YHWH with shofar (in NEB wrongly trumpet), lute and harp, tambourine and dance, strings and flute, clanging and clashing cymbals. Let everything that breathes sing "Halleluiah!" to the Lord. Isa. 18:3; 27:13 and Zech. 9:14–15a follow after Psalm 150.

whether the priests alone are the acting subjects at this juncture since all the people who joined in the action of 50:17 and 19 may also be actively involved in העריכו.

Semantic analysis of ערך *'to contrast, to evaluate'*, reveals that the use of the *hiph'il* form is extremely limited. The strikingly frequent use of the term in Leviticus 27 is related to the 'evaluation' that had a significant role to play in the temple and in daily life with respect to merchandise of every kind, livestock, marriage and divorce. Such evaluation brought order to the people's entire existence and served to determine the beginning of the New Year as an important moment of reassessment. *Arakhin* 2.5 makes reference to a minimum of six lambs for the Sabbath and speaks of the two days of the New Year feast and a minimum of two trumpets. 9.1 insists that the evaluation for the New Year feast in the jubilee year should be done with joy (Lev. 25:15).

Based on the assumption that they determine how God's voice is to be heard in the המון as a thunderous noise in the singing of the mighty song and how they see themselves in his light, all people together (50:17a) is to be qualified as the subject of העריכו (3p.pl.) This interpretation is in line with the expression of personal experience found in Ps. 42:5, which serves as an illustration of both evaluation and remembrance: *'These things I remember, as I pour out my soul: how I went with the throng, and led them in procession to the house of God, with glad shouts and songs of thanksgiving, a multitude keeping festival.'*

The individual prayer of entreaty forms the context of an evaluation of the sounds of festival and continues in the remembrance of YHWH. The day of remembrance must be a day of joy (*Arakhin* 2.5).

Finally, one might consider כל בשר יהדו *'all people together'* (50:17a) as the subject of העריכו *'they esteem'*. With his characteristic accent on universality, Ben Sira excludes no one. It is not a question of the priests *or* the people but rather of the priests *and* the people, of all people יהדו *'together'*, including Simon!

Simon, as High Priest, is part of the action and, as individual, he too joins in the remembrance of YHWH and the estimation of his light. He is unique in that he alone presides over all the proceedings and he alone enters the Holy of Holies on Yom Kippur. We thus consider this most inclusive understanding of 'all people together' to be the most appropriate explanation of subject of העריכו. The elevated estimation of the light of YHWH is given form in a life of respect for the Lord by fulfilling the necessary evaluations and prepar-

ing oneself for the Great Day of Atonement. Rosh Hashanah is, therefore, a feast of remembrance and a day filled with joy.

### Sir. 50:19a,b

The description of the celebration of the first day of the seventh month continues. Rosh Hashanah serves as the beginning of the great festival month that includes Yom Kippur and Succoth. The feasts commence with the day of remembrance, which is determinative for the *Sitz im Leben* of Simon's sacrificial activities in 50:11–21. Having spoken of 'all people together' in 17a, Ben Sira now speaks of כל עם הארץ 'all the people of the land' (19a), an expression that includes all native-born Israelites and all those who have merged themselves into the population of the land as a whole. Lévi makes reference to the reaction of the people of the land in 2 Chron. 33:25, a text which deals with the land owning inhabitants. As Meyer has demonstrated from the perspective of the sociology of religion, the meaning of this expression underwent a significant change under the influence of Ezra.<sup>291</sup> Finkelstein offers a schematic sub-division of population groups in order to highlight the various degrees of tolerance afforded to foreigners living in Jerusalem, Judea and Galilee.<sup>292</sup> The sociological pattern that emerges in his study reveals different grades of involvement depending on the group's proximity to the temple or lack thereof.

The verb רנן 'to rejoice' in imperfect c. continues the action established in the preceding ערך 'to esteem highly' in 18b. The subject is 'all the people of the land'. Given the inclusion established by Ben Sira

<sup>291</sup> R. Meyer, *Zur Geschichte und Theologie des Judentums in hellenistisch/römischer Zeit*, Berlin 1989. Meyer's research in the context of the sociology of religion into the significance of the 'people of the land' indicates a major change in meaning between Ezra and the birth of Jesus. He bases himself on the most ancient text in which Hillel teaches that a person who does not keep the law and does not fear sin does not belong to the Am-ha-Ares (*Pirke Abot* 2.6). Thus is the person who does not live a pious life, does not recite the *Shema*, does not wear the *Tephillim*, does not wear a prayer shawl and does not fasten a *Mezuzah* to his doorpost (*b.Ber.* 47b). Meyer does not include the book of wisdom of Ben Sira in his study.

<sup>292</sup> L. Finkelstein, *The Pharisees, The Sociological Background of Their Faith*, Philadelphia 1966. Finkelstein presents the complexity of the various Jewish groups in schematic form, accounting for 5 social layers ranging from the 'upper classes' to 'submerged groups' and their geographical circumstances in Jerusalem, Judea and Galilee (p. 4v.). He locates Ben Sira among the circles of the Patricians (p. 225) and among the opponents of Hellenism and refers to Sir. 10:11; 17:27; 41:3 in his repugnance towards the doctrine of the resurrection (p. 152).



between *כל קהל ישראל* in 13c and 20b, such terminology does not necessitate limitation to a particular group. The burnt offerings are made for ‘*all the people of the land*’ and all receive Simon’s High Priestly blessing. The thunderous sound of the song has its effect on everyone. The rejoicing of those present is placed in a different context by way of the expression ‘*in prayer*’ (*בתפלה*), which introduces a transition from collective to individual activity. Each individual is personally involved in the remembrance, the high estimation of his light and in the prayer before the face of *רחום* ‘*the Merciful One*’. The first day of the seventh month is not a day of distress but a day filled with joy. In Tanakh *תפלה* can be interpreted in both senses,<sup>293</sup> whereby possible word play should not be excluded. The concept ‘*prayer*’ is employed with frequency in the Psalms. Ben Sira employs it in the joyous sense in 48:20c and 50:19b.

The divine name *רחום* is employed only once in the Praise of the Fathers<sup>294</sup> although Ben Sira uses it elsewhere in 5:6, where it is combined with *י* and set against a series of 30 negations (in 5:1–5 contains 7 privative expressions that follow upon 13 privatives in 4:22–31 and a further 10 from 5:7 onwards) in a sequence of numbers intended to stimulate remembrance: *‘you shall not say without reason: a Merciful One is YHWH’*. While it is true that *רחום* occurs with relative infrequency in Tanakh as a whole, it remains striking that this divine name is employed repeatedly in summaries of Israel’s history.<sup>295</sup>

### Sir. 50:19c

Activities associated with the altar of burnt offerings are brought to a close. Lévi considers the repetition of 14a at this juncture to be problematic and blames its presence on the fact that Ben Sira wants to imitate 2 Chron. 29:29,30. This, however, would presuppose a

<sup>293</sup> With the same consonants *תפלה* means ‘*absurd, annoying*’, a form found three times in Tanakh (Jer. 23:13; Job 1:22; 24:12). Mandelkern’s concordance notes *תפלה* in line with Codex Leningradensis in Job 24:12, in contrast with the vocalisation *תפלה* ‘*prayer*’ in BHS.

<sup>294</sup> O. Camponovo, *Königtum, Königsherrschaft und Reich Gottes in den frühjüdischen Schriften*, OBO 58, Göttingen 1984. Camponovo refers primarily to the fact that G differs considerably from H. G speaks more inclusively about God and the references to Israel are absent (p. 134).

<sup>295</sup> In Tanakh: Ex. 34:6; Deut. 4:31; Ps. 78:38; 86:15; 103:8; 111:4; 112:4 and 145:8; Joel 2:13; Jonah 4:2; Neh. 9:17,31; 2 Chron. 30:9.

dependence that is without foundation. The repetition of 14a can be explained on the basis of the literary structure in which Ben Sira describes the celebration of the feast in the temple.

The interchange of persons in 50:16a–19b focuses attention on the priests and the entire people. In unison with Simon, all those present intone the song that gives expression to the raised voice of YHWH, who is worshipped as the Most High, the Holy One of Israel and the Merciful One.

Simon is once again subject of the verb שָׁרָה *‘to serve’* in 19c. He has completed his service at the altar and he descends (20a) to give his blessing at the foot of the altar of burnt offerings. The evident agreement between 14a and 19a, however, is less significant than the striking difference between 50:14b and 19d with מִשְׁפָּטָיו *‘his prescriptions’*.

### Sir. 50:19d

Ben Sira employs מִשְׁפָּטָיו with suffix 3p.s. to indicate that God’s commandments are at issue here. This is also evident from the preposition לְ with suffix 3p.s. Such prescriptions are rarely mentioned in Tanakh with respect to the service of the temple and the sacrifices. In the context of Torah, the reference is to a second dove, to serve as a burnt offering for the atonement of sins (Lev. 5:10) and to the burnt offerings (Lev. 9:16 and Num. 15:24e). In the seventh month, the festival month, all the burnt offerings, grain offerings, sin offerings and associated drink offerings are summed up according to the prescriptions of the priestly Torah (Num. 29:1–38). The rules have their roots in the ongoing interpretation of Torah. The task of instruction is given to the High Priests Aaron, Phinehas and Simon who are to explain the Torah and to preside over the הֻקּוּ *‘ordinances’* and the מִשְׁפָּט *‘legal statutes’* (45:17b,d). Together with the older prescriptions in Leviticus, this priestly doctrinal tradition is established in Numbers 28–29 in order to guarantee continuity with respect to the good order of the daily services in the Second Temple.<sup>296</sup> Once the completion of the written Torah had been realised, the interpretation of the correct temple procedures was continued in the oral Torah. The Second Temple required a well-ordered organisation and

<sup>296</sup> I. Knohl, ‘The Priestly Torah versus the Holiness School’, *HUCA* LVIII (1987) 65–117.

distribution of tasks on account of the part-time function of the priests, the complexity of the regulations and the financial and logistic problems surrounding the sacrificial animals, the incense and the wood for the altar of burnt offerings.<sup>297</sup> The management of the temple services<sup>298</sup> and the function of the temple, with its unique economic and political interests, in society as a whole were based on a centuries old tradition that was passed on from generation to generation.<sup>299</sup> Given the fact that Simon is mentioned in *Pirke Abot*, there can be little doubt that he was something of an expert in the matter.

Besides Torah, Ben Sira was also able to attune his description of the temple services to the Prophets, in particular to the הוררה הבית 'the law of the house' in Ez. 43:12. Ben Sira clearly had all the regulations related to the service of the temple in mind. Schechter limits himself to the ordinances governing the prescribed sacrifices and is followed in this by the majority of commentators.

G speaks exclusively at this juncture of the completion of the song of praise. This implies a serious limitation of the scope of the prescriptions. Simon, however, is aware that he is bound (50:9c) and personally responsible as High Priest. He is obliged to use all his authority to maintain control of the ongoing processes of change. Given this context the present author prefers to interpret 'his prescriptions' in the broadest possible sense.

The verb נגַּח in the *hiph'il* means 'to touch, to reach' and is primarily used as such in post-exilic literature to indicate the end. The combination with the preposition לָ, however, is somewhat rare and

<sup>297</sup> Z.W. Falk, *Introduction to Jewish Law of the Second Commonwealth*, AGJU XI.1, Leiden 1972. As is evident from the building activities referred to in Sir. 50:2–3, the task of the High Priest apparently extended beyond the temple liturgy. The High Priest was also responsible, among others things, for the *agoranomoi* with respect to weights and measures (p. 63).

<sup>298</sup> S. Applebaum, 'Economic Life in Palestine', in S. Safrai/M. Stern eds, *The Jewish People in the First Century*, CRINT I.2, Assen 1976, 631–700. Economic activities were concentrated primarily in Jerusalem on account of the position of the temple in every day social affairs. Thousands of people were involved on a daily basis with the maintenance of the temple liturgy. Monetary transactions were also substantial on account of the fact that the temple served as a sort of central bank (pp. 683f.).

<sup>299</sup> M. Broshi, 'The Role of the Temple in the Herodian Economy', *JJS* XXXVIII (1987) 31–37. Broshi studies the sources detailing the economic activity of the Second Temple, particularly the influence of agricultural produce, the export of balsam, transit trade, pilgrimages and the temple contribution of a half shekel from every Jew (estimated at 500,000).

its associated contexts entirely divergent.<sup>300</sup> The semantic significance of the *hiph'il* turns around the notion of touching something, whereby the nominal form  $\text{נָגַע}$  acquires the meaning 'plague', especially leprosy. The required prescriptions in relation to purity are presented in the tractate *Nega'im*. The verb  $\text{נָגַע}$  with the accusative signifies the attainment of a desired goal or destination, as with Jacob's ladder that 'reached' up to the heavens. With respect to the prescriptions of Torah, the *hiph'il* form refers to the achievement of a result or objective. Simon fulfils his duties in this regard at every level and to the highest standards. He enjoys the capacity to further develop the prescriptions in daily practice in order to bring them into line with the model received by Moses and witnessed by Ezekiel in his vision.

In combination with the preposition  $\text{לְ}$  with suffix 3p.s.m. we opt for the translation 'to bring to his goal'. The perfect form gives expression to the continuity of the priestly traditions in Simon the High Priest.<sup>301</sup>

The complexity of the question of continuity in Simon's days has its roots in the payment of tribute, which was in the hands of Joseph son of Tobias for 22 years until his death in 187 BCE (*Ant.* XII, 158–236), and in the financing of and exemption from the toll that was guaranteed in agreement with Antiochus III (*Ant.* XII, 138–144). Under Onias III, a number of conflicts relating to the freedom of the temple service and the payment of tribute rose to the surface. The tribute question later evolved into more serious disagreements between Onias and his brother Jason and after the latter was in turn deposed by Menelaos.

<sup>300</sup> The verb  $\text{נָגַע}$  is found in Est. 9:26 in the context of the experiences that led to Purim, in Ez. 13:14 in the context of the demolition of the whitewashed walls, in Ex. 12:22 in connection with the smearing of blood on the door lintel and in 1 Sam. 14:9 in which Jonathan says: 'wait until we come to you'. In Zech. 14:5 it is stated that 'the valley between the mountains shall reach to Azal'. Jastrow interprets  $\text{נָגַע}$  as 'reach' and 'to cause to reach'. Based on an example from *Nedarim* 8.1, Levy speaks of a specific boundary: until the time of Pesach arrives.

<sup>301</sup> H.G. Kippenberg, *Religion und Klassenbildung im antiken Judäa, Eine religionssoziologische Studie zum Verhältnis von Tradition und gesellschaftlicher Entwicklung*, SUNT 14, Göttingen 1978.

3.3.5 *Sir. 50:20–21 Simon and the High Priestly blessing*

20a,b	: על כל קהל ישראל	או ירד ונשא ידיו
20c,d	: ובשם יי' יהפאָר	וברכת יי' בשפתיו
21a,b	: [מברכי א'] ל מפניו	וישגו לנפל שניה

- 20a Thereafter he descends and raises his hands,  
 20b over the entire congregation of Israel,  
 20c the blessing of YHWH on his lips,  
 20d and in the name of YHWH he reveals his glory.  
 21a And once again they fall down, a second time,  
 21b [*the blessed of God*] before his face.

Via the adverb אָ Ben Sira establishes a shift in temporal perspective and via Simon's descent a shift in location. A new scene is introduced. Simon is the acting subject of ירד 'to descend' and נשא 'to raise' in perfect *qal* (20a) and of פאָר 'to manifest oneself in glory' in imperfect *hithpa'el* (20d).<sup>302</sup>

The text of 21b is partly missing. Text-critical analysis supports the reading : [מברכי א'] ל מפניו in line with G.

The connection with the preceding verses (50:17–19) is immediately apparent in the structure of the text, Simon serving as the primary link between the two literary units. A second link is established by the divine names עליון and קדוש ישראל and in addition to the double use of יי'. The most important link, however, is to be found in the further specification of the subject in 50:20b and 21a,b with respect to כל בשר יהדו 'all people together' (50:17a,b), whereby the image shifts to all those present in the temple as they react to Simon's blessing over כל קהל ישראל (50:20b). Further specified in 50:21b as 'the blessed of God', they fall to the ground for the second time (50:21). The reinforcement of the verb שנה with שניה provides the people's gesture of respect with an extra accent and establishes a relationship with their 'falling prostrate' in 50:17b. It is apparent from the parallel between על פניהם 'upon their face' (17b) and אל מפניו 'before his face' (21b) that the perspective on the situation has been changed and that כל בשר יהדו as acting subject in 17a,b is being described here in 20b and 21a in the context of the blessing. The arrangement of this 6 cola textual unit is characterised by a struc-

<sup>302</sup> See our text-critical analysis (3.1.3) in which we argue that Segal's reading with יהפאָר instead of יהפאָר is confirmed by recent photos.

ture in which three actants, Simon, the people and יְהוָה, each come into focus three times.

In schema:

Verse	Person	Theme	
20a	Sa19,20	Simon descends, raises his hands	יָרַד נִשָּׂא
20b	V9	over כל קהל ישראל,	
20c	Sb18 Ab8	[he] with the blessing of <span style="font-size: 0.8em;">יְהוָה</span> on the lips	
20d	Ab9	in the name of <span style="font-size: 0.8em;">יְהוָה</span>	
	Sa21	Simon reveals his glory יִחַפֵּא	פָּאֵר
21a	V10	They (כל בשר יהודי) fall (2nd time) down	נָפַל
21b	V11 Aa2	[they מברכי אל God] blessed by	בָּרַךְ

Abbreviations:

Sa ⇒ Simon as actant, Sb ⇒ Simon as subject of consideration, V ⇒ people,  
Aa ⇒ YHWH as actant, Ab ⇒ YHWH as subject of consideration.

### **Interpretation: Sir. 50:20a,b**

The initial adverb נִשָּׂא is deployed to introduce the activity of Simon once again as the continuation of 19c,d, where it is introduced by עָרַב. The subdivision of the scene is comparable with the transition between 14a with עָרַב and 16a with נִשָּׂא. Ben Sira employs נִשָּׂא—עָרַב in Sirach 50 to distinguish three parts: 50:11–14, 50:16–19 and 50:20–21. This extremely rare temporal demarcation (Josh. 10:12; 20:16) should be considered part of the author's unique idiom for describing the function of the High Priest. He only employs נִשָּׂא as a temporal indicator once in Sir. 51:11 יְהוָה שָׁמַע קוֹלִי 'then YHWH heard my voice' in the response to the prayer. The use of the perfect form of the verb is to be explained on the basis of the succession of actions with Simon as subject.

The sequence of temporal factors establishes cohesion between Simon's activities at the altar, the feast and the blessing. In the temporal sense, the explanation of the use of the perfect lies in the succession of the actions of 'descending' and 'raising the hands', whereby every accent is brought to bear on the 'revelation of God's glory' (פָּאֵר). All those present in the temple, including the women, כל קהל ישראל 'the entire congregation of Israel' see him. This emphatic accentuation is borrowed from the Deuteronomistic tradition,<sup>303</sup> on account of the need to reinforce the unity of the people.<sup>304</sup>

<sup>303</sup> H.D. Preuss, *Deuteronomium*, EdF 164, Darmstadt 1982 (pp. 182–185).

<sup>304</sup> Israel holds firm as a unity around the temple and as the people of God and

The expression ‘*the entire congregation of Israel*’ qualifies a particular group as sometimes political (1 Kgs 12:3) although mostly cultic. After the construction of an altar on Mount Ebal (Josh. 8:30–35), the entire congregation of Israel, including the women, the children and the foreigners who had accompanied them, stood in front of Mount Gerizim and Mount Ebal in order to learn of the difference between blessing and curse. Solomon blessed the entire congregation of Israel when the ark was brought up in 1 Kgs 8:14. The High Priest atones for himself, his house and the entire congregation of Israel in Lev. 16:17. With the exception of 1 Chron. 13:2, however, the Chronistic tradition speaks of ‘all Judah’ (2 Chron. 20:13) and ‘all the Israelites, the whole assembly that came out of Judah and out of Israel’ (2 Chron. 30:25f.).

Ben Sira’s use of this expression enjoys its own particular perspective (50:13c, 20b). He is not focussed on the restrictions characteristic of the Chronistic tradition but harks back rather to the more ancient tradition that envisages the people as a whole. His discourse is all-embracing in 50:13c and 20b with *כל קהל ישראל*, within the inclusion of *כל בשר יהודי* in 17a and *כל עם הארץ* in 19a. He concludes with the blessing given by Simon to ‘*the entire congregation of Israel*’ (20b).<sup>305</sup>

Simon raises his hands in blessing. Ben Sira describes this action in the expression *נשא ידיו* thereby alluding to Lev. 9:22: ‘*Then Aaron raised his hands over the people and blessed them; thereafter he descended . . .*’. In spite of the fact that this action of blessing sounds familiar, the word combination would appear to be unique,<sup>306</sup> while there is no other mention of the raised hands of the High Priest, even in *Yoma*.<sup>307</sup>

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his inheritance all native-born Israelites form one single congregation (Deut. 5:22; 9:10; 10:4; 23:2–8 and 31:30). The division of the land and the Diaspora served to undermine the importance of the natural cohesion of the individual tribes and to lay emphasis on personal responsibility. This became an important theme in the prophecy of Ezekiel (18:1–32).

<sup>305</sup> J. Marböck, ‘Die “Geschichte Israels” als “Bundesgeschichte” nach dem Sirachbuch’, in E. Zenger ed., *Der Neue Bund im Alten*, QD 146, Freiburg 1993, 177–198.

<sup>306</sup> J. Renz/W. Röllig, *Handbuch der althebräischen Epigraphik*, I, Darmstadt 1995. The symbolic language of raised arms and hands pointing upwards is known to us from the Hazor stele. The hand represented the entire person (pp. 202–211).

<sup>307</sup> B. Nitzan, *Qumran Prayer and Religious Poetry*, STDJ XII, Leiden 1994. The elevation of the hands by the High Priest is not documented in *Yoma*, only in Sir. 50:20 (p. 44).

At any event it is possible that the invocation of the most holy name יְהוָה may have been audible outside in the temple forecourts, in which all people together cry out: כבוד מלכותו לעולם ועד *'blessed is the glorious name of your kingship forever and ever'* (Yoma VI.2c).

The only comparable text in Tanakh is Hab. 3:10, in which the towering deep ידיו נשא *'raised high its hands'* in despair as the God of Israel advanced in battle.<sup>308</sup> It is evident from 50:18a that Ben Sira was familiar with such poetic language. This representation of Simon's blessing stands entirely on its own.

### Sir. 50:20c,d

Simon administers the blessing<sup>309</sup> with the name יְהוָה on his lips.<sup>310</sup> Tanakh regularly makes use of such synthetic conceptualisation whereby a single part of the body<sup>311</sup> gives expression to the attitude of the entire person.<sup>312</sup> Interaction between God and human persons follows in יְהוָה בֵּרַכְתָּ *'the blessed of YHWH'*.

Ben Sira borrows his description of Simon's blessing from the Songs of Ascent Ps. 128 and 129 and quotes the word combination in Ps. 129:8 : בֵּרַכְתָּ יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ בְּשֵׁם יְהוָה *'the blessing of YHWH be upon you, we bless you in the name of YHWH'*.

<sup>308</sup> A.S. van der Woude, *Habakuk/Zefanja*, POT, Nijkerk 1978. According to Van der Woude, יְהוָה *'the exalted one'* is an appellative for the sun, the former lifting his hands just as the latter sends out its rays. He maintains, therefore, that reference is being made here to the epiphany of YHWH and that the raising of the hands is a gesture of fear and overwhelming at such an awe-inspiring event. In Habakkuk, the terminology and symbolism of God's manifestation is mythical-historical (p. 74).

<sup>309</sup> In tractate *Rosh Hashanah* 4.5A, the order of the blessing is discussed in the *Abot*, the *Geurot*, the sanctification of the name, including the *Malchiot* and the *Zichronot*. *Rosh Hashanah* 4.5B makes reference to the blessing of the sacrificial liturgy, the thanksgiving and the priestly blessing (Num. 6:24–26).

<sup>310</sup> F.Ó Fearghail, "Sir 50,5–21: Yom Kippur or The Daily Whole-Offering?" *Biblica* 59 (1978) 301–316. The invocation of the divine name in the priestly blessing came to an end after the death of Simon, the Just (*Tosephta Sotah* 13.8).

<sup>311</sup> The lips serve to render a variety of human attitudes. Ps. 50:14,23, for example, makes reference to the sacrifice of the lips while Ps. 106:33 alludes to the use of rash words. Prov. 26:24 refers to the enemy who 'dissembles in speaking' and Mal. 2:6 of the injustice of the lips. Job did not sin, not even with his lips (2:10). Praise is rendered in 1QS IX.26 and X.8 by the sacrifice of the lips.

<sup>312</sup> S. Schroer/T. Staubli, *Die Körpersymbolik der Bibel*, Darmstadt 1998. Schroer and Staubli render the speaking person in the interaction of mouth, lips, tongue, words and language. They severely criticise H.W. Wolff, *Antropologie des Alten Testaments*, Munich 1977, on account of his apparent prejudice in matters of gender and religious denomination. The רֵוַמְב *'reomb'* is lacking together with the eye in spite of the fact that the latter occurs 868 times in comparison with the face 2040 times and the hand 1617 times.



The content of the blessing is normally not given. The spectrum of possible interpretations is thus enormous. In the priestly tradition the blessing included all creation as well as the cult (Num. 6:23–27).<sup>313</sup> In the Deuteronomistic tradition blessing in the name of YHWH was the task of the priests (Deut. 21:5)<sup>314</sup> and served as a guarantee that YHWH would not abandon his people. Opinions on the name YHWH itself vary considerably. Van der Woude rejects any elaborate Deuteronomistic theology of the name YHWH out of hand.<sup>315</sup> Kraus presupposes that the *praesentia Dei* on Zion is revealed in the prayer of the assembly,<sup>316</sup> and not in the anticipation of battle chariots.<sup>317</sup> In his historical analysis of the name YHWH, De Moor argues in favour of an early dating.<sup>318</sup> These approaches do not suffice, however, to explain Sir. 50:20.

<sup>313</sup> J. Renz/W. Röllig, *Handbuch der althebräischen Epigraphik*, I, Darmstadt 1995. The archaeological discoveries found in Jerusalem in 1979 near Ketef Hinnom, at a cemetery next to the Scottish church, serve to confirm the widespread use of the Aaronite blessing (Num. 6:24–26). The two miniature silver scrolls served as a memorial gift (8th century BCE) and document the possibility that the content of this blessing may have been used by Simon (pp. 447–456). A. Yardeni, 'Remarks on the Priestly Blessing on two Ancient Amulets from Jerusalem', *VT* XLI (1991) 176–185. The blessing was initially assigned to the Levites (Deut. 10:8; 21:5); in the priestly tradition this was limited to the priests. According to 1QS, *Col.* I.2, the sons of Zadok blessed the other members of the Qumran community. The blessing of Aaron exhibits a pyramid structure with 3, 5 and 7 words and a threefold repetition of YHWH. It contains a total of 60 letters.

<sup>314</sup> Th.C. Vriezen, 'Ehje 'ašer 'ehje ', in *FS A. Bertholet*, Tübingen 1950, 498–512. The name with which YHWH made himself known to Moses contains the paradigmatic relative expression of the divine reality in the actuality and existentiality of his "Da-sein". "Diese göttliche Versicherung ist der Ausgangspunkt für alles, was weiter geschieht, und sie ist der Hintergrund, die Basis des israelitischen Glaubens überhaupt" (p. 510). Such intensity of involvement on God's part is also evident in Ex. 33:19 and Ez. 12:25. The sentence construction can imply total surrender in the context of human activity (Gen. 43:14 and Ester 4:16). In his *Nachtrag* Vriezen makes reference to the blessing of Jacob (Gen. 49:28b) as a striking example: "Und er segnete sie, einen jeden mit dem Segen, mit dem er sie segnete." Jacob is interactively involved in the blessing expressed with three verbal forms of יָרַךְ.

<sup>315</sup> A.S. van der Woude, 'Gibt es eine Theologie des Jahwe-Namens im Deuteronomium', in *FS A.R. Hulst, Übersetzung und Deutung*, Nijkerk 1977, 204–210. Van der Woude denies that "im Deuteronomium der 'Name Jahwes' hypostasenhaft als Vertreter Gottes von Jahwe abgehoben ist."

<sup>316</sup> H.J. Kraus, *Psalmen*, BK XV.1 Neukirchen 1972 (pp. 164–167).

<sup>317</sup> G. von Rad, *Der Heilige Krieg im alten Israel*, Göttingen 1965 (pp. 73–82).

<sup>318</sup> J.C. de Moor, *The Rise of Yahwism, The Roots of Israelite Monotheism*, BETL XCI, Leuven 1990. De Moor insists on an early dating for the Yahwistic religion, possible pre-Mosaic (p. 169). He bases his argument on the prohibition against images in contrast to the image of YHWH in Judges 17–18, the teraphim in David's possession in 1 Sam. 19:13,16 and Jehu's position on the issue of Bethel and Dan in

An alternative approach is offered by the Praise of the Creator with the characteristic change of divine name from  $\text{אלהים}$  and  $\text{אל}$  in MS B into  $\text{אדני}$  in M (42:15c,16b and 17c), while the divine name  $\text{אל}$  is to be found in both versions in 42:15a and 17a. Penar's analysis evidently gives preference to MS B on account of the parallelism between  $\text{אל}$  (17a) and  $\text{אל}$  (17b) which the author considers to be a break up of  $\text{אל יהוה}$  (cf. Ps. 118:27) comparable with Pss. 18:31 and 68:21.<sup>319</sup> In these Psalms and in 42:15–17 there is evidence of an accumulation of diverse divine names leading to a degree of reinforcement. This follows from B42:17c in which  $\text{אלהים}$  as third divine name points to the intention in 17d  $\text{להתחזק לפני כבודו}$  'to strengthen oneself before the face of his glory'. A textual emendation is evident in M with a clear preference for the divine name  $\text{אדני}$  in 42:15c, 16b and 17c.<sup>320</sup>

Ben Sira employs the name  $\text{אל}$  frequently in the Praise of the Fathers together with other divine names. The pattern of reinforcement is to be found in the description of Aaron and of Simon with the expression  $\text{אלשי}$  (45:21,22 and 50:13) and in the call to bless  $\text{אל}$  (45:25e–26c and 50:22a). The name occurs with frequency only in the description of the struggle between Joshua, Caleb, the judges and Samuel (46:3,6,10,13,17,19 and 20), and in a couple of isolated places thereafter in 47:11 and 48:5. The frequency increases once again in 50:13b,20c,20d,22a and 28c. The double reference to  $\text{אל}$  in 50:20c,d in relation to  $\text{אל מפני}$  in 50:21b is intended without doubt to reinforce the value of the blessing in which Simon reveals his glory. The discourse of the Praise of the Fathers contains an identifiable link between the call to bless YHWH (45:25e–26c and 50:24a), the action of blessing in his name performed by Simon (50:20–21) and the confirmation of the covenant with Phinehas (50:24) as climax of the chain of covenants.<sup>321</sup>

2 Kgs 10:18–28. Historically speaking, Yahwism does not fit appropriately in or after the Babylonian exile (p. 220).

<sup>319</sup> T. Penar, *Northwest Semitic Philology and the Hebrew Fragments of Ben Sira*, Rome 1975. In Penar's analysis Sir. 42:17a,b is important (pp. 72–73) together with 43:30a,b (p. 84).

<sup>320</sup> E. Puech, 'Le livre de Ben Sira et les manuscrits de la Mer Morte', in FS M. Gilbert, *Treasures of Wisdom*, Leuven 1999, 411–426. On the basis of the emendation of  $\text{אל}$  to read  $\text{אדני}$  in 42:15–17, Puech argues that MS B represents an older, more original text edition than M. The copy of H contained in the Masada scroll renders a later revision of the text while MS B and A hark back to an older manuscript dating from the 2nd century BCE (p. 416, n. 23).

<sup>321</sup> G. von Rad, 'Das Gottesvolk im Deuteronomium' in *Gesammelte Studien zum*

It is in this context that we must seek to explain פָּאָר (imperfect *hithpa'el* 3p.s.m.) in 50:20d. The blessing of "" and the name of "" are related to the presence of the תְּפִאֲרָה 'the glory' (49:16; 50:1,11b) and are given expression in a verbal form with Simon as acting subject thereof. His active role in the mediation of the name "" takes on an alternative perspective in the history of exegesis of the Praise of the Fathers when based on the reading with יְהִפְאֵר. Smend considers the repetition of "" appropriate in relation to the reading הִתְפַּאֵר (perfect *hithpa'el* 3p.s.m.) and translates demonstratively: 'mit dem Namen des Herrn stand er herrlich da'. In the translation of Lévi: 'glorifié par le nom de Dieu', Simon's involvement is understood as passive. Ryssel translates reflexively 'und des Namens Jahwes rühmte er sich', as does Box 'and he glorified himself with the name of the Lord', both placing the accent on the instrumental function of the name. Hayward translates in the passive 'and in the Name of the Lord he was glorified'. Van Peursen ignores this verb altogether.

The verb פָּאָר and the noun תְּפִאֲרָה (49:16b and 50:1a,11b) function here as key concepts. Simon is acting subject for the last time in 50:20d. In the *pi'el*, פָּאָר means 'to give glory'<sup>322</sup> and in the *hithpa'el* 'to glorify oneself'. With the exception of Judg. 7:2 פִּן יִתְפַּאֵר עָלַי יִשְׂרָאֵל 'lest Israel glorify itself against me' YHWH is always subject of פָּאָר in Tanakh. The alarm in Judges is raised against the notion that Israel had saved itself and not YHWH.

While Simon is acting subject in 50:20d there is no evidence of self-aggrandisement at this juncture. Ben Sira would have been familiar with such a consideration. Rooted in the wisdom tradition, however, he offers an entirely new understanding of the notion of involvement as a responsible individual<sup>323</sup> in the exemplification of

*Alten Testament II*, Munich 1973 (1929), 9–108. Von Rad places the accent on a process of individualisation among the prophets: "wir begegnen einzelnen Volksschichten, Parteien, einem Rest oder gar zuletzt dem verabsolutierten Individuum" (p. 87).

<sup>322</sup> In H45:8,12 Aaron is clothed by YHWH with glory and power and the name YHWH is engraved on the crown. Simon, on the other hand, reveals glory in his activities.

<sup>323</sup> O. Kaiser, 'Der Mensch als Geschöpf Gottes. Aspekte der Anthropologie Ben Siras', in R. Egger-Wenzel/I. Krammer eds, *Der Einzelne und seine Gemeinschaft bei Ben Sira*, Berlin 1998, 1–22. According to Kaiser, Ben Sira's anthropology has its roots in the *Entscheidungsethik* in the Deuteronomistic tradition with its characteristic choice between good and evil (p. 12).

M. Hengel, '» Was ist der Mensch? «. Erwägungen zur biblischen Anthropologie

God's glory. This can be derived from his representation of the physician in 38:6 who receives insight from God: להתפאר בנבורתו 'to reveal His glory in his power' in contrast to the ploughman who glorifies himself in the drover's staff (38:25).<sup>324</sup> In the same fashion, Simon mirrors God's glory in a worthy manner in his service and his radiance as High Priest.<sup>325</sup> Simon is involved in the interaction as acting subject in the *hithpa'el* התפאר 'he reveals his glory'. A comparable situation is to be found in 50:9c, in which Simon 'is aware that he is bound'.<sup>326</sup>

The verb פאר is clearly the primary key concept in Isaiah 60–62 where it is employed 10 times (elsewhere in Tanakh 61 times). Images echo in this prophecy of salvation that Ben Sira employs in his portrayal of Simon: e.g. the house, the shoot of Lebanon, the light and the crown. Isaiah brings about a breakthrough in the hopeless situation of the exiles in Babylon. Ben Sira sees this glory concretised in his own day in the Simon's fulfilment of the ministry of High

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heute', in FS G. von Rad, *Probleme biblischer Theologie*, Munich 1971, 116–135. In a polemical way, Ben Sira's wisdom represents an ethical optimism that reached its final phase in Pharisaic and Rabbinic Judaism (p. 121).

<sup>324</sup> M.R. Lehmann, '11QPs<sup>a</sup> and Ben Sira', *RQ* 42 (1982) 239–252. This contrast is familiar from a parallel in *Col. XXII. 6* with 38:6,25 and 50:20, in addition to a further parallel in 50:22.

<sup>325</sup> M. Hengel, *Judentum und Hellenismus*, WUNT 10, Tübingen 1973. Hengel has developed a theological anthropology on the basis of the wisdom tradition and rooted in the freedom of the will (p. 256) and the intentionality of created reality (p. 261), in which everything comes in pairs (33:15; 39:16–33) to ultimate unity in the God of all (36:1; 45:23c), who is all (43:27). According to Hengel, Adam holds an incomparable position in the line of heroic individuals (*de viris illustribus*), although the emphasis in the Praise of the Fathers is placed on the glory that finds its expression in Simon (p. 269). There is evidence of an apologetic stance on the part of Ben Sira with respect to the continuity and value of the tradition of Torah and Prophets in the light of Chokma. Hengel presumes the presence of a profound Hellenistic influence, in spite of the fact that he insists on the necessity to envisage Ben Sira in the Jewish context of his time.

<sup>326</sup> J. Neusner, *The Mishnah. A New Translation*, New Haven 1988. To what extent is human involvement determinative? *MRosh Hashanah* 3:8 refers to the struggle against Amalek:

- A. Now it happened that when Moses held up his hand, Israel prevailed, and when he let his hand fall, Amalek prevailed (Ex. 17:11).
- B. Now do Moses' hands make war or stop it?
- C. But the purpose is to say this to you:
- D. So long as the Israelites would set their eyes upward and submit their hearts to their Father in heaven, they would grow stronger. And if not, they fell. (pp. 304f.).

The determining principle is established in the obligation to bear responsibility for a personal deed. Only as such can one also bear the obligation for the community.

Priest in the temple and as builder in the city of Jerusalem. His praise of Simon is determined by this interactive manner of functioning.

### Sir. 50:21a

The repetition of the act of falling prostrate in prayer in 17b and 21a to receive the blessing, provides Peters (1913) with sufficient reason to point to *Yoma* and to propose that מַפְנִי in G is incorrectly associated with God instead of Simon. In his 1902 edition, Peters expresses his opinion much more directly by envisaging G with its reading παρὰ ὑψίστου as nothing more than *eine pedantische Erläuterung zu מַפְנִי*. He thus sets the tone for further interpretation, made all the more difficult by the omission of an important part of colon 21b.

The word combination of the verb שָׁנָה and שְׁנִיָּה, a feminine form of the ordinalia, is determinative in 50:21a. The combination of both forms is not found elsewhere in Tanakh and belongs as such to the typical terminology of Ben Sira. The author thus places the accent firmly on the event itself that takes place for שְׁנִיָּה ‘a second time’ in 21b and not on the repetition of the verb נָפַל ‘to fall down’. Precisely this verbal form, which is intended to express the action, is missing in the facsimile.

### Sir. 50:21b

The final word מַפְנִי ‘before his face’ is well documented. Given the suffix 3p.s.m. it remains possible that Simon himself is at issue here although YHWH also may be intended. Colon 21a with its subject in 3p.pl., namely the entire congregation of Israel (50:20b), serves as a logical response to both interpretations. The people are obliged to react to the blessing (Gen. 12:2), otherwise the transition to the appeal in 50:24a would be meaningless.

Based on text critical considerations מְבָרְכִי can be read here as a participle *pu'al* pl.st.c., which fits well in terms of thematic content. The *pu'al* form of בָּרַךְ ‘to be blessed/to be blest’ is frequently employed throughout Tanakh. While the entire congregation of Israel then repeat what they did in 50:17b, the passive form of the blessing gives rise to a significant difference: they now fall prostrate before the face of Simon.

Ben Sira’s grandson goes his own way in G, translating freely ‘the face of the Most High’ in line with 50:17c,d. Finally, the letter ל, which is well documented, deserves the necessary text-critical attention

and calls for some degree of closure. Given the available space in line 17 B XIX verso, it seems reasonable to assume that this ל should be preceded by another letter. An additional ם would thus form the divine name םל. As a consequence, Godself becomes the subject of the act of blessing, which Simon performs interactively in his name. While ברך occurs in a number of places in Tanakh in combination with םל, Ben Sirach's unique idiom serves as the proof of the sum with respect to this solution. The use of a nominal form in combination with םל<sup>327</sup> is strikingly frequent in Sirach. Indeed such combinations with םל can be included among Ben Sirach's most frequently used forms. A parallel can be found in 42:17 with קדושי םל 'those sanctified by God', since this participle is based on the same principle as מברכי םל 'the blessed of God'.

### 3.3.6 Sir. 50:22–24 Doxology

22a,b	:	עתה ברכו נא את יי אלהי ישראל המפליא לעשות בארץ
22c,d	:	המנדל אדם מרחם ויעשהו כרצונו
23a,b	:	יתן לכם חכמת לבב ויהי בשלום בניכם
24a,b	:	יאמן עם שמעון חסדו ויקם לו ברית פינחס
24c,d	:	אשר לא יכרת לו ולזרעו כימי שמים

- 22a Now bless YHWH, the God of Israel  
 22b who works wonders on earth.  
 22c He who advances humankind from the womb  
 22d and deals with him according to his kindness.  
 23a He gives you wisdom of heart  
 23b and he will be in peace in your midst.  
 24a Abiding is his mercy towards Simon  
 24b and the covenant with Phinehas will stand firm for him,  
 24c which shall not be broken for him and for his descendants  
 24d as long as the days of the heavens endure.

A new literary unit of five bicola with the form-critical characteristics of a doxology is here introduced by the exclamatory עתה 'and now'. Such exclamatory appeals serve as a typical introduction to the praise of the God of Israel. Bicolon 22a,b is written over the entire width of the manuscript and functions as *catch line*, indicating a new

<sup>327</sup> The following should be considered: ברכת םל in A11:20; רצון םל in B16:3; כברא םל in A16:26; שיר םל in B32:5; ביראת םל in B32:12; מעשה םל in E36:15 and B39:33; מעשי םל in B42:15; חלק םל in B38:1 and B40:1; קדושי םל in B42:17; ברבר םל in B43:10 and B48:3; ויד םל in B43:12; אהרי םל in B46:6.

beginning. YHWH is further portrayed via the epexegetical genitive as אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל 'the God of Israel'. He is acting subject of five verbal forms (50:22b–23b) and he is indirectly involved on three occasions in the abiding nature of his mercy, in the lasting nature of his covenant with Phinehas and in the unbroken nature thereof with respect to Simon (50:24).

Virtually all of the translations are rendered in the subjunctive, thus rendering our reading of 50:22–24 as a prayer of entreaty instead of a doxology. From the perspective of *Formgeschichte* we are dealing here with descriptive praise of YHWH, the God of Israel, who does wonders.<sup>328</sup> Descriptive praise, however, lacks the characteristic adversative  $\gamma$  of the prayer of entreaty, which serves to introduce a contrast. Generally speaking, the content of descriptive praise is set in the context of direct speech in both Tanakh and in the Akkadian psalms. In contrast to praising, extolling, honouring, glorifying and serving, however, thanksgiving does not belong among the forms of expression typical of this genre.<sup>329</sup> Descriptive phrase tends to be elaborated in three characteristic phases:

- a call to praise in the form of an imperative (22a),
- a summary of all the good things YHWH has done for humanity (22b,c,d) and for the group in question (2p.pl.), which is addressed directly (23a,b).
- a conclusion that points to the intention of YHWH's abiding mercy (24a–d). The affirmation that the covenant with Phinehas will not be broken is set in contrast with the positive validity thereof for Simon and his descendants.

<sup>328</sup> C. Westermann, *Das Loben Gottes in den Psalmen*, Göttingen 1963. Based on a comparison with the Babylonian psalms (p. 31), Westermann argues that the adversative  $\gamma$  is a characteristic of the lament psalms (pp. 53f.). In terms of structure, the imperative call to give praise stands at the beginning of the descriptive psalm of praise (p. 97). The unfolding of God's majesty and goodness then follows in every possible way, flowing and overflowing with words (p. 100).

<sup>329</sup> Westermann describes a later development in this genre whereby the emphasis came to be placed on one single motif, such as God's creation (Psalm 8; 19; 104; 139). The same genre can be found in Sir. 39:12–35, which begins (12–15 only G) and ends with מַעֲשֵׂה אֱלֹהִים כֻּלָּם 'the works of God, they are all of them good' (33a). The poet is aware of this on the basis of his own experience and wisdom, turning his perspective from the Creator to the created, whereby a further characteristic of descriptive praise comes to the fore in a typical summary of that which is most important for the life of a human person.

The imperative **בָּרְכוּ** serves to summon a particular group to the praise of **י**. Smend presumes that the sons of Aaron are intended, although the context suggests on the contrary the entire congregation of Israel as target group.

In schema:

Verse	Person	Theme	
22a	BS1 V12 Ab10,11	Ben Sira's appeal [addressed to the people] with <b>י</b> and <b>אלהי ישראל</b> as object,	<b>בָּרְךְ</b>
22b	Aa3	[YHWH] <b>פלא/עשה לעשות</b> (part. <i>hiphil</i> ) + <b>המפליא</b>	
22c	Aa4 V13	<b>אדם</b> (part. <i>piel</i> ) advances <b>המגדל</b>	<b>גָּדַל</b>
22d	Aa V14	and deals with <b>ויעשהו</b> him (suff. 3p.s.m.)	<b>עָשָׂה</b>
23a	Aa6 V15	[YHWH] gives wisdom <b>לכם</b> (2p.pl.m.) [people]	<b>נָתַן</b>
23b	Aa7 V16	and is in peace <b>ביביכם</b> in your midst (2p.pl.m.)	<b>הָיָה</b>
24a	Aa8 Sb19	[YHWH] c.q. his mercy <b>יאמן</b> for Simon	<b>אָמַן</b>
24b	Aa9 Sb20	and for him <b>לָךְ</b> [Simon] the covenant stands firm	<b>קָוַם</b>
24c	Aa10 Sb21	it remains <b>לָךְ</b> [Simon], <b>לא</b> unbroken	<b>כָּרַח</b>
24d	P10	and for his descendants, <b>כימי שמים</b>	

Abbreviations:

BS ⇒ Ben Sira, V ⇒ people, Sb ⇒ Simon as subject of consideration, Aa ⇒ YHWH active, Ab ⇒ YHWH as subject of consideration, P ⇒ priests.

Ben Sira alludes in the context of praise to a universal vision of **אדם**, the human person in the general sense, and establishes a connection thereby with 49:16 in the form of an inclusion around Simon in his glorious activities in 50:1–21 as a whole. In terms of content it is significant that YHWH gives the **הפארה** 'glory' to Adam (49:16) and to Simon from the depths of his **רצון** 'benevolence' (22d).

The key concept **בריה פינהס** 'covenant with Phinehas', which does not occur elsewhere in Tanakh in this combination, is structurally central to the 'teaching moment' at this juncture. This priestly covenant has its roots in Aaron (45:15c,d) and shall endure as long as the heavens endure. It is characteristic of Ben Sira's wisdom that the spatial unity of heaven and earth does not function as a traditional theme, the heavens serving rather as a unit of time. By way of the temporal indicator **כימי שמים** 'as long as the days of the heavens endure', the author establishes an historical link between Simon, Aaron and Phinehas. Ben Sira addresses his audience with these unique word combinations in 50:24 and in the transition from **אדם** 3p.s. (22c) to **לכם** 2p.pl. (23a). In a personal appeal to 'you', he creates a space for his audience to endorse his words of praise on the basis of the



experience of well-being achieved in Simon and guaranteed for the future by God's promise of continuity.

Instead of Moses and Aaron, Phinehas would appear to be the key figure in the Praise of the Fathers, serving as an example for Simon. Phinehas' enthusiasm לאלוהי כל *for the God of all*' and his voluntary action (45:23e,f) are expressed in active participation rooted in personal choice and responsibility.

Significant differences emerge in the major commentaries when G is taken as the point of departure instead of H. Phinehas does not in fact enter the picture!<sup>330</sup> Peters concludes the text after 24a,b, emends 24b to read : ובימי יושענו : *Und er helfe uns in seinen Tagen!* and considers 24c,d to be a gloss. Smend relocates ולזרעו to 24d but leaves the remainder of the text unaltered. Segal, Ben-Hayyim and Beentjes follow H in line with the facsimiles.

### **Interpretation: Sir. 50:22a**

The call to praise עתה ברכו נא is usually compared in various ways in the commentaries to texts in Sirach and in Tanakh that function as parallels.

Schechter makes reference to 1 Sam. 25:32 and Ps. 31:22, in spite of the fact that they lack the said appeal. Peters makes a comparison with the conclusion of the five primary subdivisions of the book of Psalms, naming Ps. 42:14; 72:18; 106:48, but ignoring Ps. 89:53 and Psalm 150. The character of a conclusion to a book segment, however, is absent in the present text, as is the particularistic tendency he detects in YHWH, the God of ישראל in contrast to τῷ Θεῷ πάντων in G.

Lévi notes the repetition of 45:25e–26c to which Smend adds 39:35. Di Lella considers ועתה *'and now'* to be a standard means of formulating a conclusion (Prov. 8:32) and describes the present text as a didactic summary at home in the context of teaching in the synagogue. Beentjes accentuates the unity of the doxology in 45:25e–26c and 50:22–24 whereby both passages relating to Aaron, Phinehas and Simon are rounded off.<sup>331</sup>

<sup>330</sup> Phinehas' zealotness for the law is mentioned in the discourse of Mattathias in 1 Macc. 2:49–68 as the reason why he received the covenant of everlasting priesthood (2:54).

<sup>331</sup> P.C. Beentjes, *Jesus Sirach en Tenach*, Nieuwegein 1981 (pp. 52, 195f.).

The character of descriptive praise so evident in the exuberant portrayal of Simon in the temple tends to be lacking in all these exegetical perspectives, even though this is quite apparent in the qualification of Aaron's garments in 45:12c: הוד כבוד ותהלת עו 'a glorious splendour and a mighty praise'.

The call to praise in 50:22–24 is typified by a striking codicological form.<sup>332</sup> The bicolon 50:22a,b is written over the entire width of the manuscript as a means to demarcate the text. The same can also be found in 44:16 at the end of page B XIII verso, serving as the opening and in 45:26a,b,c as the conclusion of the first part of the Praise of the Fathers.<sup>333</sup> The opening line 50:22a,b is given an extra accent because it is written as the concluding line (18th l. of B XIX verso).<sup>334</sup> While the imperative ברוך in combination with the divine name יי אלהי ישראל sounds familiar, as the introduction to descriptive praise it remains quite unique. In Tanakh, however, the use of the participle pass. ברוך in such word combinations is predominant (1 Sam. 25:32; 1 Kgs 1:48; 8:15; Ps. 41:14; 72:18; 106:48; 1 Chron. 29:10; 2 Chron. 2:11; 6:4).

Ben Sira addresses himself with this appeal to the entire congregation of Israel and in so doing he advances a thesis that only becomes clear when compared with 1 Chron. 29: 10–19. In the opening of his song of praise in Chronicles, David extols YHWH with great enthusiasm. Everything, even the temple buildings, comes from God and is realised by the people. The king speaks of uprightness of heart, because his people have given everything freely (*hith-pael* נרב). It is for this reason that he calls upon YHWH, God of our fathers Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (29:17–18). The opening words of 1 Chron. 29:10: יהוה אתה יהוה אלהי ישראל אבינו 'blessed are You,

<sup>332</sup> M. Beit-Arié, *Hebrew Codicology*, Jerusalem 1981 and *The Making of the Medieval Hebrew Book, Studies in Paleography and Codicology*, Jerusalem 1993. The practical side of codicological research focuses attention on the material employed in writing, the composition of quires, the technique involved in line division, page types, enumeration, lay-out, the distance between lines and the use of *catchwords*. Given the fact that they attract attention, *catchwords* are often found at the end or at the beginning of a page as points of recognition to help orientate the reader (pp. 34f.).

<sup>333</sup> M. Haran, 'Book-Size and Device of Catch-Lines in the Biblical Canon', *JJS* XXXVI.1 (1985), 1–11.

<sup>334</sup> P. van der Lugt, *Strofische structuren in de Bijbels-Hebreeuwse poëzie*, Kampen 1980. The Psalms tend for the most part to employ bicola. Tricola and colometrically mixed strophes are thus intentionally inserted in a poem. A tricolon, for example, can serve as an opening or closing line of a poetic segment (p. 530).

*YHWH, God of our father Israel*' clearly differ from Ben Sira's call to praise *אלהי ישראל ברכו* 'bless *YHWH, the God of Israel*' with respect to the divine name, giving rise to a substantial theological difference in the author's vision of God. In Chronicles, Israel is understood as 'our father', with Jacob and the ancient ideal of the unbroken tribal bond as its background.

Ben Sira, by contrast, envisages Jacob from a traditional perspective as a characteristic theme of prophetic preaching (49:10c). Elsewhere he considers Jacob as a totality (36:11, 46:10), or as Israel as a whole *כל קהל*. He is establishing a different set of boundaries around the community. Though the difference would appear at first sight to be rather subtle, the elaboration thereof is quite significant in practical terms. This positive evaluation of the temple and the position of King David is typical of the Chronistic history. In this context, David institutionalises the community on the basis of the fatherhood of Israel and thereby limits it to native-born Israelites. Such a perspective clearly sets the stage for Ezra's theological concept of the sacred community.

In his prayer (H36:1–17), however, Ben Sira envisages Israel assembled as the tribes of Jacob, called together in the midst of the nations, which God in his mercy has summoned by his name and destined as first born, 'then all the ends of the earth will know that you are the God of [. . .]'. The last word is missing from MS B, but the damaged text can easily be supplemented with the word *עולם*, and translated as in G with 'of the world' (G36:19). In spite of the text-critical problems associated with H36:17 the main features of the author's vision of Israel remain clear.<sup>335</sup> Ben Sira represents a movement, stemming from the prophets and the wisdom tradition, which offers a universal perspective on the election of Israel and stands in contrast to the position adopted by the Ezra group with their particularistic concept of the holy nation.

Ben Sira's universal vision is fully elaborated in his description of Simon in the midst of *כל בשר יחדו* 'all people together' in the temple (50:17a) gathered to praise *אלהי ישראל* 'YHWH, the God of Israel' (50:22a). The theological context is borrowed from Deutero-Isaiah

<sup>335</sup> In *Jesus Sirach en Tenach*, P.C. Beentjes notes the close association between the prayer in de Sirach 36 and the 'Book of the comforting of Israel' (Isaiah 40ff.), in spite of the generally recognised uncertainty concerning the reading of *עולם* in 36:17d (pp. 130f.).

in which we encounter the same characteristic accentuation of this divine name (Isa. 41:14; 43:1; 45:4; 48:1).<sup>336</sup> After the prophecy of salvation in Isa. 44:5 a choice is presented by way of response in the form of a numerical proverb.<sup>337</sup> It would then appear that in spite of every expression of judgement against Jacob and Israel, the people ultimately come saying *'I am of YHWH'* accepting the name Jacob or writing *'of YHWH'* on their hands and accepting the name of Israel.<sup>338</sup> In 44:5b Isaiah employs the *pi'el* of כָּנָה *'to give a name of honour'*, a form that only occurs elsewhere in Tanakh in Job 32:21 and in the call of Koresh in Isa. 45:4b. Ben Sira employs כָּנָה in his prayer (36:12) and in the Praise of the Fathers to describe Jacob (Bmargin 44:23b) and to ascribe David with a name of honour (47:6b). This extremely rare verb indicates the extent of the relationship between and Ben Sira's theological concept and Deutero-Isaiah with its concept of YHWH, King, redeemer and creator, the Holy One of Israel and Jacob.

Ben Sira refers to Jacob and Israel in one and the same breath (45:5e,f), placing the emphasis on all the descendants of Jacob (46:10a). He portrays Samuel united with the אֱלֹהֵי יַעֲקֹב *'God of Jacob'* (46:14b) and in 51:12/1 he speaks of אֲבִיר יַעֲקֹב *'the Mighty One of Jacob'*. Only in 49:10c do we find the name Jacob standing alone in the context of the Twelve Prophets, whose bones shall send forth new life from the grave and make Jacob whole.<sup>339</sup> The name Israel is only mentioned

<sup>336</sup> P.C. Beentjes, 'Relations between Ben Sira and the Book of Isaiah', in J. Vermeylen ed., *Le livre d'Isaïe*, Leuven 1989, 155–159. Every parallel requires a contextual reading (p. 157).

<sup>337</sup> Isa. 44:5 is translated in NBG 1951, KBS 1995, Segond 1963 and the Jerusalem Bible 1966 as a numerical proverb structured around three reactions, the latter of which is the most important. NEB 1970 and the Luther Bible employ a twofold subdivision with two reactions.

Buber/Rosenzweig translate: *'Der wird sprechen: Ich bin Sein, der sich auf Jaakobs Namen berufen, der als seine Handmarke schreiben: IHM! und sich auszeichnen mit Israels Namen.'*

<sup>338</sup> K. Elliger, *Deutero-Jesaja 40,1–45,7*, BK XI.1, Neukirchen 1978. Elliger even accepts the possibility of a tattoo, which would appear to have been common practice in the slave trade at the time. He bases his argument on an Aramaic inheritance agreement written on papyrus and dating from the 5th century BCE and proposes that the reference is to proselytes rather than native born Israelites. The oracle of salvation in Isaiah 44 *'sprengt den rein physischen Begriff des Gottesvolkes'* (p. 394).

<sup>339</sup> R.T. Siebeneck, 'May their Bones Return to Life!—Sirach's Praise of the Fathers' *CBQ* XXI (1959), 411–428. According to Siebeneck, the apologetic character of the Praise of the Fathers is related to the eschatological context of the period, in which the Enoch literature in the Qumran texts has its point of origin.

in the description of Elijah,<sup>340</sup> who turned the hearts of fathers to their children and in the doxology 'YHWH, the God of Israel' (50:22a).

Ben Sira affirms this prophetic language with his unique word combinations, expressions that would have been quite familiar to all those in Jerusalem. Nevertheless, his call to descriptive praise in 50:22a contains echoes of the same polemic we encountered earlier against the limitation of the walled area of the temple (50:11d) and against the idea of the holy nation as a faith community based on birth (50:17a–d, 20b).

### Sir. 50:22b

Ben Sira continues his descriptive praise from the perspective of the wisdom tradition, focusing attention on the marvels of creation and pointing to the wondrous things YHWH has done. As is apparent from the author's use of the unusual form **המפליא**, these wonders escape our capacity to understand them, at least in part.

Penar refers to this verbal form as an *internal hiph'il* and limits himself further to formal linguistic and grammatical characteristics. From the semantic perspective, **פלא** in the *hiph'il* refers to the revelation of something miraculous. Ben Sira describes Elisha in 48:13a and 14a with **פלא** in the *niph'al*. Nothing was too wondrous (**נפלא**) for Elisha who performed wonders (**נפלאות**) while he was alive and continued to do marvellous things (**תמדי מעשה**) even after his death. In spite of all this, the people continued to sin and the downfall of the Northern Kingdom was unavoidable. In the demarcation text 48:15a–16b Ben Sira formulates the contrast in the attitude of the people in the form of an announcement of judgement, employing the style characteristics of prophetic language (3.2.4).

When it comes to hidden things, Ben Sira's wisdom teaching is unequivocal as far as his disciples are concerned. He exhorts them in 3:21 not to concern themselves with the **פלאות** 'the hidden things'. Wright endeavours to establish a relationship with 48:25, in which the prophet Isaiah reveals **נהיה** 'what is to occur' and **נסתרות** 'the hid-

<sup>340</sup> P.C. Beentjes, 'De stammen van Israël herstellen', ACEBT 5, Kampen 1984, 147–155. Beentjes accentuates, in the form of an *apostrophe* (48:4–11), the unique position of Elijah in verse 10a with **הכרוז** 'of whom it is written' (Mal. 3:24a in H) in order to turn the hearts of the children back to the fathers. Ben Sira quotes freely by interpolating and omitting, since the restoration of the tribes of Israel is not to be found elsewhere in Tanakh (p. 152).

*den events*’, and points out the connection with the astronomical book and the book of watchers in 1 Enoch.<sup>341</sup> Insight into the נגלוה ‘revealed things’ and the נסתרות ‘hidden things’ in Qumran is based on the interpretation of Deut. 29:28.<sup>342</sup>

Ben Sira consciously establishes a critical tone with the use of פלא in 50:22 since he can only have borrowed the unique word combination of המפליא with לעשות from Judg. 13:19f., the only other place in Tanakh that it occurs. Judg. 13:19f. describes how Manoah underwent a theophanic experience (the angel of the Lord appeared in the flame of the altar) while he was offering sacrifice to the Lord. God worked a wonder while Manoah and his wife looked on. In asking the name of the angel, Manoah was not given a direct answer to his question beyond a possible reference to יהוה-פלא ‘he is wonderful’ (13:18).<sup>343</sup>

The warning against concern for the hidden things, the allusion to a theophany and the reference to Elisha (48:13–14) all serve to justify the presupposition that Ben Sira was preoccupied with the revelation of these marvellous things. In that case, such theological questions must have been intensely important at his time, given the issues surrounding the mediation of revelation through the Torah, the wisdom tradition, divine names, angels, the priestly service, the songs in the temple liturgy, the visions of Enoch, the glory of Adam and other witnesses from the past alluded to in Sirach 50. At the same time, these themes are elaborated in a broad and multifaceted eschatological framework in the pseudepigraphal literature.

Given the interest in the revelatory character of the marvellous things, the interpolation of בארץ ‘on earth’ is far from redundant. Frequently employed in Tanakh, this word combination with the

<sup>341</sup> B.G. Wright, ‘Fear the Lord and Honor the Priest’, in P.C. Beentjes ed., *The Book of Ben Sira in Modern Research*, Berlin 1997, 189–222. Wright quotes Argall who presumes that the disciples of Ben Sira were familiar with this association in the context of rival wisdom circles.

<sup>342</sup> A. Shemes/C. Werman, ‘Hidden Things and Their Revelation’, *RQ* 71 (1998) 409–428. Shemes and Werman refer to the Damascus Document (CD-A), *Col.* III.9–21; V.20–VI.11 in which positive things are said with respect to the hidden things, the sacred days of rest, the magnificent feasts, God’s just witness, his faithful ways and the desires of his will, whereby human persons have life. Warning is given, on the other hand, against the false ways that result from pushing back boundaries. All the glory of Adam is for those who remain steadfast in it.

<sup>343</sup> W.Th. van Peursen, *The Verbal System in the Hebrew Text in Ben Sira*, Leiden 1999 (p. 232).

preposition ב is only found in Sirach in 50:22b, in spite of the fact that the concept 'earth' is otherwise highly significant in the wisdom of Ben Sira as a whole. Reference can be made in the Praise of the Fathers, for example, to 46:20e in which Samuel raises his voice בְּאֶרֶץ *'from the earth'* in a prophetic utterance, even after he had died (20c). In 47:15 Solomon covers the earth with the breath of life. Preceded by the preposition עַל, the earth is mentioned in the context of the theological issue of the priesthood: מִעַם נֹצֵר עַל הָאָרֶץ *'who on earth was ever created . . .'* in 49:14. Besides the references in 50:17,19, the accent is explicitly placed בְּאֶרֶץ *'on earth'* via the localisation of the wondrous things in 50:22b.

### Sir. 50:22c

The portrayal of God's deeds begins with a participle *pi'el* of נָדַל *'He who advances'*. Ben Sira sums these up in six elementary verbal forms: imperfect c. 3p.s.m. עָשָׂה (22d), נָתַן (23a) and הִיָּדָה (23b). God's works continue indirectly with אָמַן by way of his mercy (24a), with קָוָה in the covenant with Phinehas (24b) and with כָּרַה (24c,d) in the form of a negation. YHWH is acting subject and He turns towards אָדָם *'humankind'* (50:22c). Given the objective suffix 3p.s.m. in 22c,d, humankind is the object of advancement from the womb and the one who experiences God's kindness.

By his use of the participle הַמְנַדֵּל, Ben Sira places an extra accent on YHWH as acting subject<sup>344</sup> and establishes a connection with the noun נְדוּל in 50:1. In the Praise of the Fathers, the nominal form וְנִדְלָה refers to עֲלִיּוֹן as subject (44:2b) and the verb נָדַל to the sin of Jeroboam (47:24b). In 49:11, the question is asked at the beginning of the post-exilic period: . . . מַה [נִנְדָּל] *'how can we esteem [Zerubbabel] highly?'* whereby the author foreshadows Simon in 50:1b.

By employing נָדַל to place the emphasis fully on God's activities with respect to אָדָם *'humankind'* in general, Ben Sira establishes an inclusion between 49:16 and 50:22–24.<sup>345</sup> Given the special reference to Adam in 49:16b and here in 50:22c, the author reinforces the vision of humanity he had in mind while writing the Praise of the

<sup>344</sup> In the same characteristic fashion we encounter a participle in הַדּוֹנָה (50:4a) and הַמְאֻדָּה (50:9c).

<sup>345</sup> Ben Sira warns against delusions of grandeur in 3:18a. The human person can only find mercy in God, כִּי רַבִּים רַחֲמֵי אֱלֹהִים, *'for great is the mercy of God'* (Sir. 3:20).

Fathers.<sup>346</sup> He sets the tone in his introduction (44:2), stating that the Most High has shared his greatness (גדלו) with the Fathers, and concludes with Simon (49:16) as bearer of the תפארת אדם.

The addition of מרחם 'from the womb' serves as a topos for the creation of humankind and in particular for the call of a prophet or a Nazarite, as in the case of Jeremiah: והוא מרחם נוצר נביא 'and he, he was created a prophet from the womb' (49:7 and Jer. 1:5; 20:17,18).

### Sir. 50:22d

Ben Sira's positive tone is continued on the basis of God's רצון 'kindness'. The semantic significance of this term can be derived from the verbal form רצה 'to accept'.<sup>347</sup> In post-exilic literature, the meaning shifts in the direction of 'decision' or the general concept 'will'. Kindness or benevolence is characterised by a positive disposition. Hebrew does not have an equivalent for what we would understand as the will with its free and restricted aspects.<sup>348</sup>

Two elements return time and again in Ben Sira: the activity of humankind, which accomplishes the benevolence of God by showing love (4:12), directs all its activities to his will and lives according to Torah (15:15; 16:3; 32:20), and the benevolence of YHWH towards humankind (46:13), in his dominion (39:18), in his teaching (42:15), in his word that brings together all the work of his creation (43:26) and in the resurrection of the dead (48:5; 51:2), which goes hand in hand with the realistic portrayal of bitterness, cares and the fear of death (40:1–10).

God is subject in 50:22d, acting according to his רצון. In Tanakh, however, this is usually associated with human persons who act according to their own will and according to their own pleasure

<sup>346</sup> J. Hadot, *Penchant mauvais et volonté libre dans la Sagesse de Ben Sira*, Brussels 1970. Ben Sira's vision of life is far from pessimistic. In his own unique fashion he develops a *religion personnelle* rooted in *la sagesse prophétique* (p. 82).

<sup>347</sup> G. Gerlemann, רצה, in THAT II (pp. 810–813). M. Kister, 'The Lexigraphy of Ben Sira', in T. Muraoka & J.F. Elwolde, *Sirach, Scrolls, and Sages*, Leiden 1999, 160–187.

<sup>348</sup> G. Maier, *Mensch und freier Wille. Nach den jüdischen Religionsparteien zwischen Ben Sira und Paulus*, Tübingen 1971. In the context of human free will, Ben Sira contrasts rejoicing praise in 39:16ff. with lament in 40:1–10, which Maier explains on the basis of the *Vergeltungswille Gottes* (p. 69), rooted in an eternal order of creation. While he considers the Praise of the Fathers to be an original realisation on the part of Ben Sira (p. 50), he does not include 44–50 in his analysis of God's will, human free will, predestination and theodicy (pp. 85–112).



(Neh. 9:24; Esther 1:8 and Dan. 8:4; 11:3,6,36). The most striking parallel is to be found in the *Gerichtsrede* with which Ezra accuses the people of breaking faith, commanding them in 10:11 to give honour to יהוה אלהי-אבותיכם ועשו רצונו *'to YHWH, the God of your fathers and do what is pleasing to him!'* In contradiction to Ezra's succinct command, Ben Sira turns the tables and states: ויעשהו כרצונו *'He deals with him according to his kindness'* (50:22d). In his doxology YHWH is acting subject who deals with the human person אדם according to God's own pleasure.

### Sir. 50:23a

YHWH turns directly to his people לכם *'to you'*. Such a change of object is unusual in a doxology. In spite of the fact that it is rare in the Psalms, Kraus maintains nevertheless with respect to Ps. 81:6c–15b: “diese Anrede entspricht der lehrhaft-paränetischen Form sapientielle Unterweisung”.<sup>349</sup>

The verbal forms יהי and יהן in 50:23a,b are generally interpreted by commentators as jussives intended to express a wish or desire, consistent with G 'us' (1p.pl.).<sup>350</sup> A different approach, however, is evident in H.<sup>351</sup>

The gift of wisdom of heart is without parallel in Tanakh. In 45:26a, YHWH gives wisdom לבו חכמה *'according to his heart'*. The word combination לבב חכמה would appear to establish a construct relationship between לבב in the absolute and חכמה in the status c. A third combination לבו יהכם is to be found in 50:28b. All three word combinations with לב are typical of Ben Sira, who follows his own path in the identification of wisdom with Torah. Wisdom is praised in Sirach 24 in a fashion comparable to the praise of Simon

<sup>349</sup> H.J. Kraus, *Psalmen*, BK XV.2, Neukirchen 1972 (p. 862).

<sup>350</sup> T. Penar, *Northwest Semitic Philology and the Hebrew Fragments of Ben Sira*, Rome 1975. Penar's study focuses entirely on 50:24. He maintains that יכרה is a *yiqtol* form employed, as is often the case in Ugaritic, for expressing the past. He translates, nevertheless: *'Steadfast be His love towards Simon and the covenant with Pinehas endure for him'* (p. 86).

<sup>351</sup> In spite of the fact that יהן is not a typically jussive form, Van Peursen also argues for a jussive at this juncture based on the context at the beginning of a new sentence (p. 165). He notes in addition that Qimron gives priority to syntax over semantics in the analysis of *weyiqtol* as *waw* + *jussive* (p. 152). His comparison of Sir. 50:23–24 with Num. 6:24–26 is not relevant (p. 154), while YHWH is subject in the Aaronite blessing. In the context of descriptive praise, however, he is object and acting subject in his great deeds, which are described in the 3p.s.m.

in Sirach 50 by way of cosmic comparisons (24:7–10; 50:6–7) and tree symbolism (24:12–17; 50:8,10,12).

Ben Sira addresses himself in 50:23 to an otherwise undetermined group, probably the entire congregation of Israel, employing the addressation ‘you’ (2p.pl. אַתְּכֶם) and in similar fashion to 45:25e–26c. The tone of the praise invites active participation in the wisdom that stands out as גִּבּוֹר לְבוֹ ‘a voluntary deed of his heart’ (45:23e).

### Sir. 50:23b

The terminology takes a more concrete form in the ‘*peace in your midst*’. This passage has given rise to a great deal of speculation. The change of person from 2p.pl. in H to 1p.pl. in G has profoundly influenced the history of exegesis. Schechter proposes a textual emendation to comply therewith by reading שְׁלוֹם instead of בְּשְׁלוֹם. Smend maintains the presence of a scribal error: “in בְּשְׁלוֹם wollte der Schreiber schon בְּיַיְחִים anfangen”.

Lévi translates: ‘*Et que la paix règne au milieu de vous!*’ Others, Ryssel among them, follow this line of thought: ‘*und damit Friede unter ihnen sei*’ and Box ‘*and may there be peace among you*’. Di Lella rejects the customary translation based on G ‘*and may peace abide among you*’. He suggests that we read a *beth essentialis* at this juncture and translates ‘*and may he abide among you as peace*’. The essence of Ben Sira’s discourse, however, is not a comparison of peace with YHWH but rather the insistence that He is present in peace in the midst of his people.

The combination of the terms שְׁלוֹם and בְּיַיְחִים is not found elsewhere in Tanakh. The locative בְּיַיְחִים always indicates in intermediary position, as is the case with Moses in Deut. 5:5 who stands between the people and YHWH. In Josh. 22:28, Phinehas’ mediation between the tribes of Israel leads to the recognition of the altar of the Trans-Jordanian tribes that functions as a witness בֵּינֵינוּ וּבֵינֵיכֶם ‘*between us and between you*’ and not as a co-existing parallel with the altar in the tabernacle.<sup>352</sup>

<sup>352</sup> The unique place chosen by God for his altar has a background role to play at this juncture and did not serve as a source of conflict. Problems are evident in Ben Sira’s day, however, not so much on account of the YHWH-sanctuary at Elephantine, but rather on account of the temple of the Samaritans that rivalled the temple in Jerusalem. Onias IV was later to build a temple in Leontopolis as a gesture of protest.

This understanding of בניכם becomes actual in Simon's day on account of the evidence of a rival altar in Samaria. The ongoing question of the Samaritan schism must have constituted a most sensitive issue for Ben Sira with respect to Jerusalem in which internal rivalry and competition governed the order of the day. There was apparently every necessity to establish a closed front within the priestly circles. The power of the Seleucid's increased rapidly and then decreased after 190. During the reign of Onias III, the priests became acutely aware of Jason's exaggerated payment of tribute that served to guarantee the freedom of the Jews to live according to the Torah.

The significance of the preposition בִּין with suffix 2p.pl. with YHWH as subject in וַיְהִי is problematic, as is the characteristic formula בשלום 'in peace', which only occurs in Tanakh in Ps. 29:11; Job 15:21 and Isa. 55:12.

In all probability the explanation is that YHWH is present 'in the midst of you' in peace. The question remains whether this peace is already realised or whether it is still to come. In association with 50:24, the durative significance of the imperfect c. 3p.s.m. וַיְהִי would seem more likely. As 'gleaner', the last in line of the prophets, Ben Sira follows his own path with regard to this peace, as he does with respect to the ברית שלום 'the covenant of peace' made concrete in Phinehas and Simon.

### Sir. 50:24a

Simon is included 'in the midst of you' (בניכם) as part of the entire congregation of Israel. He is mentioned here for the second and last time as functioning High Priest while he was still alive. As representative of the אֱנֹשִׁי הַסֹּד (44:1a,10a) his name remains in remembrance. The name Simon in 50:1b and 50:24a serves to establish a framework around the entire description of his activities either as subject thereof or as subject involved in their consideration. In 50:23 all the people together with the entire congregation of Israel are involved in the scene via the transition in style to לכם and בניכם. The acting subject of the descriptive praise in 50:22–24 is YHWH: He is the one who does wondrous things (הַמַּפְלִיא), advances (הַמַּנְדִּיל) and deals with humankind (וַיַּעֲשֶׂה) kindly, gives (יָתֵן) and is present (וַיְהִי) in peace in their midst. As subject, God is indirectly associated with Simon in 50:24a via הַסֹּד 'his mercy' and in 24b he provides a point of guarantee via the ברית פִּינְחָס. His kindness is established just as the 'covenant with Phinehas' stands firm. The semantic value of

*niph'al* אמן suggests stability based on proven fidelity. Together with the preposition עמ the verb means 'to be faithful to' and is to be interpreted in the *consecutio temporum* as an imperfect with present significance on account of its durative aspect. It is followed by an imperfect consecutive (ויקם) with the same durative significance.

In Isaiah 55 the word combination ואתם הסוד is associated with the verb הנאמנים (participle *niph'al* pl.m.). Conformity between Ben Sira's descriptive praise of YHWH and this prophecy of Deutero-Isaiah is quite striking:

- The opening invocation: 'Come!' After a rhetorical question the prophet continues: 'Listen! . . . incline your ear and come to me, listen, so that you may live' (55:1–3a).
- The summary: : ואכרתה לכם ברית עולם חסדי דוד הנאמנים 'I will make with you an everlasting covenant, my steadfast, sure love for David' (55:3b). God's deeds are described in the form of major contrasts (55:4–11) and further accentuated seven times with כי (55:5,8,9,10a, 10b,11b and 12).
- The conclusion: : והיה ליהודה לשם לאות עולם לא יכרה 'it shall be to YHWH for a memorial, for an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off' (55:13). The structural and semantic affinity between Ben Sira and Isaiah 55 is unmistakable in this terminology. The moment of instruction is to be found in the contradiction of the negation לא יכרה in 55:13, with the positive statement of a name and sign, which is made known in history in the everlasting covenant that remains steadfast in YHWH's sure love for David (55:3). YHWH takes the initiative here in order to interactively spur humanity on to action.

Simon is involved in the same manner in 50:24. Rooted in YHWH's initiative, the continuity of the priestly tradition is guaranteed for the future (50:24c,d) by bringing Simon into line with Phinehas (50:24a,b). The covenant with Phinehas remains intact, serving as the ברית שלום 'covenant of peace' (45:24b). Ben Sira articulates the period of time that this covenant shall last via the topos 'as long as the days of the heavens endure'.

In the context of the doxology, Ben Sira clearly endeavours to actively involve his audience as allies in the realisation of the promise that YHWH, the God of Israel, shall be 'in peace in your midst'. He wants everyone to enjoy the insight that the remembrance implies a positive choice for life. Humankind is called to make a fresh start on the day of the remembrance, at the beginning of a New Year,

to look forward to Yom Kippur and to live on the basis of his רצון *'benevolence'* (50:22d). Westermann qualifies this unequivocal response with "dieser eine Satz ist Bekenntnis".<sup>353</sup> Ben Sira thus involved, addresses his appeal to 'you', to join in the praise of YHWH in 50:22–24. In the same context he expresses his words of protest in 50:25–26 and as *sofer* gives his unqualified assent to the name and the devotion in awe of YHWH in 50:27–28.

### Sir. 50:24b

The covenant with Phinehas is confirmed in Simon with the verb קום, the former having been qualified as the ברית שלום *'the covenant of peace'* in 45:24b intended for the continuation of the temple service. Given the detailed descriptions of Aaron and Simon, it has become common practice to consider both High Priests side by side in the explanation of the Praise of the Fathers since they are both portrayed in all their glory. Phinehas is placed thereby in the background since the חק *'ordinance'* applicable to him (45:24) stands side by side with בריתו עם דוד *'his covenant with David'* (45:25).

The present author considers this approach to be outdated. Ben Sira offers the reader a rewritten history. After Aaron and Eleazar, Phinehas takes his place as the third High Priest. He serves as the key that allows us to see Simon in glory. No matter how magnificent Simon may have been in his High Priestly garments, his exercise of the High Priestly ministry and his unity with the name of YHWH in the temple have pride of place. In the Praise of the Fathers, the ברית פינחס *'covenant with Phinehas'* is last in the 'chain of covenants'.<sup>354</sup> According to M and G this chain begins with the covenant with the fathers (44:12) and continues with the covenant with Noah (44:12) and the covenant with Abraham (44:20), Isaac and Jacob (44:23). It is particularly striking that Ben Sira makes no mention of the covenant with Moses on Sinai. On the contrary, he focuses all his attention on the everlasting covenant with Aaron and Phinehas together with the covenant with David in Sirach 45. Human involvement and the activity of God are subtly described by Ben Sira in his own idiomatic

<sup>353</sup> C. Westermann, *Das Loben Gottes in den Psalmen*, Göttingen 1963 (p. 101).

<sup>354</sup> P.C. Beentjes, *Jesus Sirach en Tenach*, Nieuwegein 1981. Beentjes observes loose references to the covenants and notes the use of ברית seven times in 44–45 (44:12 in M and in MS B 44:17,20,22 and 45:15,24,25). He singles out 50:24b as the culminating point (p. 195).

– O. Rickenbacher, *Weisheitsperikopen bei Ben Sira*, OBO 1, Göttingen 1973 (p. 166).

fashion in which he accents a number of aspects in the description of Aaron and Phinehas that are important for his vision of Simon.

Based on the information we have concerning Aaron from Tanakh in comparison with Sirach 45, it seems possible to further determine Ben Sirach's vision of the High Priesthood:

YHWH is primary subject in 44:21a–45:14b and he exalts Aaron לוי לְמִטָּה 'with the staff of Levi'. He establishes the priestly order (הַקָּהָן) for Aaron (45:6a,b) as he does for Phinehas (45:24a).

In the second instance, Moses is subject in 45:15a–17d. He hands everything over to his brother, anoints him with holy oil (45:15a,b), gives him the task of explaining the commandments (45:17a) and executing judgement (45:17b–d).<sup>355</sup>

In 45:18a–19d explicit reference is made to the revolt of Korah and his kin (Num. 16:1–35). YHWH has Aaron share anew in his glory. Ben Sirach refers to the sign of the blossoming לְבֵית לְוִי 'staff of Aaron for the house of Levi' (Num. 17:23) at the beginning of 45:6a and not here. On the other hand, he does not allude to the murmuring of the people and the punishment thereof nor to the death of the two oldest sons of Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, which Aaron observes in silence (Lev. 10:1), nor to the exoneration of the two younger sons of Eleazar and Itamar, who are also in error (Lev. 10:12–19). He remains silent with respect to the misdemeanour of Aaron who gave his personal approval for the construction of the golden calf and played a leadership role in the construction of the golden image (Exodus 32). The idealisation of Aaron is clearly not in evidence in Sirach 45, given the potential for significant negative commentary in his regard. Phinehas alone serves as an example for Simon in the voluntary character of his קִנְיָן 'zealotry' for his God (45:23e,f)<sup>356</sup> during the revolt of Korah and during his intervention in the conflict with the Benjaminites (Judg. 20:28), when there was no king in Israel. Phinehas' zealotry characterises the reciprocal

<sup>355</sup> This High Priestly task is lacking in Tanakh. In Qumran, the sons of Zadok are elected to establish the priestly covenant for eternity and to teach the commandments to the people in the place YHWH has chosen for himself. Cf. 1QR*Rule of the Blessing* (1Q28b[1QSB]), Col. III.26: 'For you may he renew the covenant of the [eternal] priesthood. May he grant you a place [in the] holy [residence]' in F. García Martínez, *The Dead Sea Scrolls Translated*, Leiden 1992, (pp. 432–433).

<sup>356</sup> M. Hengel, *Die Zeloten*, Leiden 1976. It is possible that the Zealots emerged in line with Phinehas and Elijah in the Maccabean period as a group driven by the ideal of zealotry for God.

relationship between Jewish groups during and after the Hasmonean period.<sup>357</sup>

In Sirach there is likewise no trace of a Chronistic idealisation of the first High Priest Zadok. Melchizedek is absent altogether, in spite of the fact that this priestly figure is known to us from Qumran and the pseudepigraphal literature.<sup>358</sup>

One can conclude, therefore, that Phinehas personally served as a key figure in Ben Sira's historical writing, his voluntary zealousness functioning as the normative factor in the priestly covenant. While he is referred to in third place (45:23a-f) after Aaron and Eleazar, the birth line would not appear to be decisive in this regard. Phinehas functions *בְּקִנְאוֹ לְאֱלֹהֵי כָל* 'on account of his zealousness for the God of all' as the example par excellence for Simon at a time when the priestly tradition and the formation of factions was still in development.

Marböck confirms this unusual emphasis on the priestly covenant while the Mosaic covenant and the new covenant (Jer. 31:31) remain out of view. We share his conclusion that the covenant is not the all-embracing and dynamic theological category of the Praise of the Fathers but rather the Torah in relation to the fear of YHWH and wisdom.<sup>359</sup>

### Sir. 50:24c,d

The final statement follows after the appeal and the review of God's deeds, couched in the characteristic contrast of descriptive praise. The relative subordinate clause introduced by אֲשֶׁר is determined in terms of content by the negation in the formulation of its purpose, namely that the covenant shall not be broken (לֹא יִכְרַת).<sup>360</sup> The

<sup>357</sup> C.T.R. Hayward, *The Jewish Temple. A Non-Biblical Sourcebook*, London 1996. Hayward places Phinehas' voluntary decision in a broader context in relation to נֶדֶב. He refers to the construction of the tabernacle and the temple, engagement in holy war and the maintenance of Torah. He also alludes to a younger tradition relating to Phinehas' resistance to the sanctuary established by Micah (Judges 17) (p. 62).

<sup>358</sup> Woude, A.S. van der, 'Melchisedek als himmlische Erlösungsgestalt in den neugefundenen eschatologischen Midraschim aus Qumrân, Höle XI', OTS XIV, Leiden 1965, 354–373.

<sup>359</sup> J. Marböck, 'Die "Geschichte Israels" als "Bundesgeschichte" nach dem Sirachbuch', in E. Zenger ed., *Der neue Bund im Alten. Zur Bundestheologie der beiden Testamente*, Freiburg i.B. 1993, 117–198.

<sup>360</sup> J.F. Elwolde, 'Developments in Hebrew Vocabulary between Bible and Mishnah', in T. Muraoka/J.F. Elwolde eds., *The Hebrew of the Dead Sea Scrolls and Ben Sira*, Leiden 1997, 17–55. Elwolde translates 24c 'which he will not cut for him'

covenant with Phinehas remains valid for him (Simon לו) and for his descendants (ולוֹרְעוֹ). Via a phonetic word play with three times “lo”, the doxology concludes with a positive statement after the negation of *niph'al* כִּרְה.

The positive goal of this statement is highlighted by the contrasting negations. In other words, the covenant is not to be broken by humankind in the future as was the case with respect to Korah. For YHWH the covenant shall endure ‘as long as the days of the heavens endure’.

In 45:15 Ben Sira couples the temporal reference כִּימֵי שָׁמַיִם ‘as the days of the heaven’ to the eternal covenant with Aaron, having borrowed the categorisation from Ps. 89:30 with its parallel in Deut. 11:21: כִּימֵי הַשָּׁמַיִם עַל-הָאָרֶץ ‘the days of the heavens above the earth’. He ascribes the characteristic of an indication of eternity to this topos, whereby the cosmic and spatial features are subordinated to the time and the person in question.<sup>361</sup>

Ben Sira employs three verbal forms to express the positive formulation of his purpose: the participle *niph'al* of אָבַדן ‘to be abiding’ (50:24a), the imperfect *hiph'il* of קָוַם ‘to stand firm’ (50:24b) and the negation of the verb כִּרְה in 50:24c,<sup>362</sup> which serves as a *terminus*

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with בְּרִיהַ as antecedent and אֲשֶׁר as final conjunction and describes this as a ‘striking example of ideolectical loss of figurative meaning’ in comparison with Tanakh as a whole. The syntactic construction, however, would appear to be based on a word play in which the negation לֹא is located between a double occurrence of לוֹ in 24b and 24c, further underlining God’s kindness and mercy. Elwolde does not appear to be aware of the parallel in Isa. 55:13 and the possibility of reading יִכְרַה as imperfect *gal* and *niph'al*.

<sup>361</sup> C.J. Labuschagne, *Deuteronomium*, Ib, POT Nijkerk 1987. The heavens are supported by the earth and both function as ever-present witnesses. The temporal reference ‘as the days of the heavens’ serves as a synonym for ‘forever’ (p. 270). Labuschagne refers in addition to Job 14:12 and Ps. 72:5,7,17.

<sup>362</sup> F.V. Reiterer, ‘The Hebrew of Ben Sira Investigated on the Basis of his Use of כִּרְה: A Syntactic, Semantic and Language-Historical Contribution’, in T. Muraoka & J.F. Elwolde eds, *Sirach, Scrolls, and Sages*, Leiden 1999, 253–277. According to Reiterer, the word combination לֹא כִרְה בְרִיהַ without subject is unique (p. 277). The *niph'al* of כִּרְה is to be found in 44:18a as a *passivum divinum* (p. 266). The author examines Elwolde’s interpretation in some detail and observes ‘how quickly semantics force their way into syntactic discussion’ (p. 275). He is unable to find an example in Tanakh of an active use of the expression בְּרִיהַ כִּרְה, with the possible exception of Judg. 2:2 (p. 276). The present author is of the opinion, however, that Ben Sira bases himself on Isa. 55. Isa. 55:13 constitutes a parallel in which the contrast is reinforced, as is the case with descriptive praise, and יִכְרַה is to be read as an imperfect *niph'al*. YHWH is indirect subject in his covenant with Phinehas, which is determinative for the entire priestly tradition and, for God’s part



*technicus* for the establishment of the covenant and signifies in the *niph'al* 'to be annihilated, to be broken'. The combination of ברייה and לא יכרה in 50:24c has its parallel in Isa. 55:3,13; 56:6 and 50:23b with בשלום in Isa. 55:12.

In the context of descriptive praise, the negation in 50:24c establishes a sharp contrast effect in 50:22–24 and provides the appropriate framework within which the *Scheltrede* in 50:25–26 can be located.

Our interpretation of the doxology serves as background for the following four observations:

1. The literary genre of the Praise of the Fathers should be understood as a remembrance discourse ('Zichronot'), written for the liturgy of the feast of Rosh Hashanah. Ben Sira illustrates during Simon's lifetime how the latter formed the climax of his conception of history in his exercise of the High Priestly ministry. He summons all to the remembrance of YHWH at the beginning of a new year.

2. Rooted in the wisdom tradition, Ben Sira formulates his perspective on humankind and on YHWH, God of Israel, in which he exhibits a degree of kinship with the prophecy of Isaiah (40–66). He is familiar with speculative ideas and visionary images. He establishes the criterion for the remembrance of the men of name and for his vision of a worthy exercise of the High Priesthood in the voluntary zealotness of Phinehas for the God of all. The emphasis is thus placed more on praxis and less on natural descent or dogma.

3. In the function of High Priest, Simon serves as the true representative of כהניך *your priestly service*'. After the evocation of Enoch, Joseph, Shem and Seth he is placed on a single line with Adam in his glory (49:16 and 50:22c).

4. Ben Sira is a creative writer who employs the style of descriptive praise with which he provides a multifaceted presentation of the person of Simon by way of unique word combinations and symbolic language borrowed from elsewhere in Tanakh. He introduces con-

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at least, shall not be broken. Reiterer considers Ben Sira to have two aims here, the unbroken character of the covenant and the idea of continuous succession. Our understanding of the text differs at this point. The contrastive character of Ben Sira's descriptive praise associates this promise with the appeal to participate wholeheartedly therein. In the demarcation texts in Sirach 44–50 he makes clear that such wholehearted participation was lacking in the Davidic covenant (47:22; 48:15–16; 49:4–6). While Simon's participation is evident on the basis of the priestly covenant with Phinehas, it is lacking with respect to the Samaritan opposition (50:25–26).

trast effect in his descriptions and presupposes the background of Jerusalem, the temple and the temple liturgy. He outlines his vision of the developments at work in the society of his day, in which the unity of the people threatened to disintegrate in face of faction forming and rivalry with respect to the Samaritans.

### 3.3.7 *Sir. 50:25–26 Ben Sira's Scheltrede*

25a,b	: והשלישית איננו עם	בשני נזים קצה נפשי
26a,b	: ונזי נבל הדר בשכם	יושבי שעיר ופולשת

- 25a Two peoples my soul detests  
 25b and the third, that is a non-nation:  
 26a the inhabitants of Seir and Philistea  
 26b and the foolish people that wanders in Shechem.

Ben Sira expresses his abhorrence of three population groups in 50:25–26 in the form of a numerical aphorism. The history of exegesis of these two verses is fraught with disagreement.<sup>363</sup> Van den Born brands Sirach an inveterate chauvinist.<sup>364</sup> Ryssel argues in favour of the text's authenticity. Smend offers some reflections on a concrete historical background for Ben Sira's invective but does not develop them in greater detail. Peters (1913) alludes to the absence of a response concerning the temple in Elephantine<sup>365</sup> and to the conflict with the Samaritans. The numerical aphorism is clearly determinative<sup>366</sup>

<sup>363</sup> P.C. Beentjes, *Jesus Sira en Tenach*, Nieuwegein 1981. The idea that the numerical aphorism lack's any connection with the preceding text (Hamp, Middendorp) stands in contrast to the opinion that Ben Sira himself introduced it (Smend). Peters and Purvis presuppose a conscious use thereof in order to promote a shock effect (pp. 169–170).

– Id., 'Sirach 22:27–23:6 in zijn context', *BTF* 39 (1978) 144–151. In addition to 22:27–23:36 Beentjes mentions 25:1,7; 26:5,28 and 50:25 on account of the characteristic I-form and the numerical aphorism in G23:16–27.

– Id., 'De getallenspreuk en zijn reikwijdte', *BTF* 43 (1982), 383–389. The comparable numerical aphorism in 26:28 places the emphasis on the last element ( $x + 1$ ) (p. 385).

<sup>364</sup> A. van den Born, *Wijsheden van Jesus Sirach (Ecclesiasticus)*, Roermond 1968 (p. 240).

<sup>365</sup> B. Porten, *Archives from Elephantine, The Life of an Ancient Jewish Military Colony*, Berkeley 1968 (p. 291). According to Porten, the refusal of the High Priest in Jerusalem has its roots in the disinclination to sanction a sanctuary outside the city (p. 293).

<sup>366</sup> H.P. Rüger, 'Die gestaffelten Zahlensprüche des Alten Testaments und aram. Achikar 92, *VT XXXI* 2 (1981) 229–232. Rüger distinguishes two forms of numerical aphorism: one with a cardinal number in both parts of the aphorism and one

for the summary presentation of the three peoples,<sup>367</sup> leading to an explosive exclamation of the core of the *Scheltrede*<sup>368</sup> in its final colon. In Ben Sira's view, the third 'non-nation' clearly does not constitute an excluded people within the congregation of Israel as a whole. The author's detestation is expressed in 25b in a nominal sentence structure as a given datum, which is in essence an unacceptable situation. The unchangeable character of this given situation further reinforces the sense of abhorrence and the concluding qualification 'foolish'. Ben Sira directs these terms from the wisdom tradition against the people that wanders in Shechem, who serve to disrupt the unity of Israel. The powerful denunciation אִינְנִי עַם 'that is a non-nation' carries a profound theological charge and must have been a cause of scandal within the circles surrounding Ben Sira in Jerusalem.

In schema:

Verse	Person	Theme	
25a	BS2 No1,2	2 peoples my soul detests and	קִרְץ
25b	No3	the 3rd (people)	
	Na1	the 3rd is a non-nation	
26a	Na2,3	those who dwell: 1st Seir, 2nd Philistea	
26b	Na4	the foolish people that wanders (the 3rd people) in Shechem	דֹרֵר

Abbreviations:

BS ⇒ Ben Sira, No ⇒ nation as object, Na ⇒ nation as actant.

Based on the structure of this numerical aphorism there is evidence of synthetic parallelism between bicola 25a,b and 26a,b. The climax is reinforced by the fact that the third people can be considered from the semiotic perspective first as object and then twice as actant (עַם) in 25b, while the first and second people (גֵּוִים) are object in 25a

with a cardinal number in the first part and an ordinal number in the second. (Sir. 23:16; 25:7; 26:5; 26:28 and 50:25).

<sup>367</sup> W.M.W. Roth, *Numerical Sayings in the Old Testament*, VTSup XIII, Leiden 1965. Roth notes seven numerical aphorisms in Sirach in which undesirable and desirable social phenomena are represented (p. 39). He presumes the present aphorism (50:25–26) to be a reflection on social existence at the national level (p. 41). He considers the distance between this and Isa. 45:22f. and 49:6 to be great!

<sup>368</sup> U. Wilckens, *Die Missionsreden der Apostelgeschichte*, WMANT 5/3, Neukirchen 1974. Wilckens qualifies Acts 7:2–53 as a summary of history and 7:51–53 as a *Scheltrede* (p. 209).

and subject in 26a in a nominal clause. At the conclusion of the aphorism, the third person, this time נִי, is acting subject of דָּוָר and is qualified as foolish. The verbal form (דָּוָר) stands in significant contrast to the verb in דָּוָר in 50:5a, 11d. The contrast between עַם and נִי in 25a,b is further reinforced by the repetition of נִי in 26b.<sup>369</sup> The overall effect is that the accent is firmly placed on the final colon.<sup>370</sup>

### **Interpretation: Sir. 50:25–26 as Scheltrede**

The *Scheltrede* (50:25–26) helps us establish our bearings with respect to the form of the text. Westermann maintains a distinction in the form-critical analysis of prophetic judgement speeches between *drohen* and *schelten*.<sup>371</sup> A threat differs from an announcement of doom, the latter being exclusive and unconditional and grounded in God's sovereignty. A threat, in addition, leaves the manner in which the one threatened is to be dealt with open ended. The act of threatening another contains an element of warning, whereby the means to be used is, for the most part, explicitly mentioned. A prophetic accusation cannot serve as a *Scheltwort*, because the accusation as such is based on given facts that are placed at the door of the accused. Although Westermann does not offer further detail, if one takes his line of thought a step further one can determine that it has to do with an outburst of emotion couched in the form of a stopgap or filler word, a common and familiar manner of expressing negative emotions. It is uttered spontaneously without prior notice and enjoys a variety of degrees of intensity. Besides invective, the semantic value of *schelten* includes curse, reprimand, taunt, censure, admonition and scream. When one's failure to achieve a highly valued goal reaches breaking point, disappointment is expressed in negative terms in an emotional discharge. There is a lighter form of taunting that is often expressed in animal terms such as 'bulldog!'

<sup>369</sup> A.R. Hulst, עַם/נִי, in THAT II, 290–325. Israel is called upon in Torah to live as a נִי קְרוֹשׁ and described as a kingdom of priests (Ex. 19:6) and as a עַם קְרוֹשׁ (p. 323).

<sup>370</sup> S. Mowinckel, 'Die Metrik bei Jesus Sirach', *ST IX* (1955) 137–165. Mowinckel maintains that Sir. 50:25–26 consists of a single strophe, which he divides into two periods.

<sup>371</sup> C. Westermann, *Grundformen prophetischer Rede*, Munich 1978. Although Westermann further explains *drohen* he does not do the same for *schelten* and the *Scheltwort* (pp. 46ff.).

or 'pig!' or in terms of illness such as 'a plague on both your houses . . .', the latter being more scathing and more likely to offend. A direct curse *ad hominem*, such as that found in the Sermon on the Mount: 'empty headed fool' (Mt. 5:22), tends to be significantly more serious, disrupting relationships or expressing intense disappointment in relationships that are already shattered. Ben Sira's *schelten* belongs to this latter category.

In terms of content, Ben Sira's *Scheltrede* is related to the song of Moses (Deut. 32:21c,d), in which the expressions אִינְנוּ עַם 'non-nation' and נְבִילֵי נֹבֵל 'foolish people' stand side by side in the words of complaint addressed by God to his own people. By way of these typical concepts, the author positions himself against the Shechemite attacks that dogged the contemporary High Priesthood in Jerusalem.<sup>372</sup> The intensity of his reaction and explosive outburst requires us to account for the exasperation and resentment he must have experienced as a result of protracted yet shattered fraternal relationships.

The Psalms (137:7–9; 139:19–22) provide us with a form of this genre characterised by an abrupt transition from descriptive praise to cursing or taunting. A parallel between the invective against the three nations here in 50:25–26 is evident in the descriptive praise of Ps. 60:1–7, which is followed by an oracle of salvation (60:8–10) with YHWH as subject, who is victorious in the holy war waged against Shechem, Moab, Edom and Philistea (in line with Ps. 108:8–14). Besides its historical roots, this psalmic tradition of hostile power also exhibits mythical characteristics.<sup>373</sup> Westermann, in addition, provides a form-critical analysis of prophetic speech in this context, taking Isa. 43:22–28 as his example, in which God remonstrates against his people on account of Jacob's laxity. Prophetic judgement discourse tends to exhibit a typical structure: *Begründung, Anklage, Entfaltung der Anklage, Botenformel, Gerichtsankündigung, Eingreifen Gottes und Folge des Eingreifens*.<sup>374</sup> Westermann alludes to a number of borrowed forms, including judicial ruling, dispute, comparison, lament and prophetic Torah, as embellishments of the prophetic word. The call to change

<sup>372</sup> P.C. Beentjes, *Jesus Sirach en Tenach*, Nieuwegein 1981 (p. 171).

<sup>373</sup> H.J. Kraus, *Theologie der Psalmen*, BK XVI.3, Neukirchen 1979. According to Kraus, Israel's praise was not free from temptation by hostile forces in nature and in history (pp. 156ff.).

<sup>374</sup> C. Westermann, *Grundformen prophetischer Rede*, Munich 1978 (pp. 122–126).

one's behaviour characteristic of the complaint<sup>375</sup> only makes sense if the appeal is directed, in the form of a *Gerichtsrede*,<sup>376</sup> against God's own people who ought to be familiar with the Torah. The people's history with God, presented in summary form, serves to reinforce the complaint.<sup>377</sup> Prophetic discourse directed against the other nations, by contrast, tends to consist of an announcement of doom without motivation and akin to invective.

In the post-exilic period this form of announcement of judgement either vanished or was replaced, as in Deutero-Isaiah, by an appeal to the people to repent and do penance.<sup>378</sup> While the complaint or accusation was taken up in the appeal, the undetermined announcement of judgement made way for a determined announcement of salvation. It is striking, however, that with the prophetic call to repentance and interior reflection, prophecy against the nations virtually disappeared from view. Cautionary allusion to history in summary form, by contrast, remained in vogue on account of its paranetic function, as is evident in Nehemiah 9 and Sirach 44–50 (likewise Judith 5; Wisdom of Solomon 10 and 1 Macc. 2:51f.).

Given the above-mentioned development in Tanakh, it is apparent that Ben Sira follows his own path with the descriptive praise of the doxology (50:22–24). In his own concrete situation he extends

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<sup>375</sup> The evocation is placed in the forefront in Sir. 49:14–16 (3.2.6) in order to pass in *steigernd* fashion from Enoch to Adam and then to continue the descriptive praise of Simon in a similarly high tone and to present a summary in the doxology. The invective that follows has the character of an *Appellationsrede* intended to prevent those who hear it from following the same path as the foolish people in Shechem. The negative example reinforces the contrast with the preceding praise of Simon and thereby also the rhetorical potential of the call to assent to the praise of YHWH and to repent in preparation for the Day of Remembrance with a view to Yom Kippur.

<sup>376</sup> H.J. Boecker, 'Anklagereden und Verteidigungsreden im Alten Testament', *EvT* 20, NF 15 (1960) 398–412.

<sup>377</sup> A.S. van der Woude, *Micha*, POT Nijkerk 1976. Van der Woude considers both Mic. 6:1–8 and Jer. 2:1–4:4 to be proto-Deuteronomistic preaching with the summary of history as a paranetic element intended to promote repentance (p. 203). In his opinion this preaching has its *Sitz im Leben* in a day of penance in which Israel obliged itself to renew the covenant. On the basis of his analysis one can establish a relationship with Rosh Hashanah as the day of remembrance in 50:16.

<sup>378</sup> O.H. Steck, *Israel und das gewaltsame Geschick der Propheten*, WMANT 23, Neukirchen 1967. Based on Westermann's analysis of prophetic speech, Steck explains the *Scheltrede* as a form employed for the Deuteronomistic announcement of judgement against Jerusalem. Given the appropriateness of the terms '*Scheltrede*' and '*Drohwort*', he calls for a degree of reserve in this regard (p. 52).

the conclusion thereto with 50:25–26, thus reinforcing the contrastive aspect of the entire plan of Sirach 50. This aspect has become so intense on account of the numerical aphorism that any idea of a content related association with the preceding doxology seems inappropriate. The outburst of abhorrence against the Samaritans, therefore, stands in sharp contrast to the entire congregation of Israel, which does not function as a unity in the praise of God. The unity surrounding Simon is in danger of disintegrating on account of growing divisions concerning the legitimacy of the priesthood and the temple in Jerusalem between the two rival population groups of Samaria and Jerusalem, namely the Samaritans and the Jews. The influence of Ezra, which is left unmentioned in Sirach 49, reinforces these internal oppositions and promotes fragmentation by sowing dissent with respect to the interpretation of Torah, the significance of the prophetic and wisdom traditions and the value of the temple liturgy as unifying factors. In his functioning as High Priest, Simon himself serves as a unifying factor. The unity of heterogeneous groups is often maintained by a powerful personality. Such unity, however, is likewise bound to the said person and period in which he or she functions. It is evident from the reference to Simon and the temporal element ‘as long as the days of the heavens endure’ in 50:24 that Ben Sira was extremely aware of the precarious balance that characterised his concrete situation.

In summary:

The *Scheltrede* contains the primary instructive moment in the descriptive praise, which is given expression in the contrast effect established between the doxology in Jerusalem and the foolishness in Samaria. Ben Sira chooses the form of a numerical aphorism, so loved by the wisdom tradition,<sup>379</sup> for his invective. The numerical aphorism in Tanakh as a whole<sup>380</sup> enjoys a reflexive character in the

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<sup>379</sup> H.J. Hermisson, ‘Weisheit und Geschichte’ in FS G. von Rad, *Probleme biblischer Theologie*, Munich 1971, 136–154. Hermisson considers the methodical limitation to Tanakh as a misunderstanding of the significance of the wisdom literature referred to with respect to Sirach by G.von Rad, *Weisheit in Israel*, Neukirchen 1970 (p. 220).

<sup>380</sup> W.M.W. Roth, *Numerical Sayings in the O.T. A Form-Critical Study*, VTSup XIII, Leiden 1965. Roth distinguishes between lists and numerical aphorisms and between the narrative, the reflective and the exhortatory character thereof. According to his schematic survey (p. 98), Sir. 50:25–26 is part of the group of *reflective numerical sayings* (pp. 40–41).

description of nature, society and the human person and in the reflection on theology, history and wisdom, in which the exhortatory form is most frequently employed.<sup>381</sup> Ben Sira uses the form to refer to three peoples, alluding thereby to Psalms 60 and 108 and the song of Moses by the Sea of Reeds (Ex. 15:14–15). The latter refers in sequence to the inhabitants of Philistea, Edom, Moab and Canaan. He picks up the traces of this song by subtle use of the autobiographical style, speaking of the abhorrence of נפשי 'my soul' (50:25a). His invective contains neither accusation nor motivation and lacks any form of explanatory historical summary. His profound detestation as *sofer* for the foolish people in Shechem constitutes the nadir of his discourse.<sup>382</sup> Viewed from the perspective of the *lehrhaft-paränetische Form sapientieller Weisheit*, Ben Sira clearly wants to put a check to this foolishness.

### Sir. 50:25a,b

Ben Sira lists three nations in the context of a numerical aphorism, placing all three in a negative framework. While the first two peoples already arouse his abhorrence, the third does so in the most aggravating fashion. Edom and Philistea are referred to as נ"י with their own language and religion. The author sees Israel as a chosen people (עם), a holy nation (עם קדוש) in Isa. 62:12; 63:18) and God's own people (עם סגולה) in Deut. 7:6; 14:2; 26:18).

The verb קרץ perfect *qal* 3p.s. expresses disgust and feelings of loathing.<sup>383</sup> The use of נפשי serves to deepen his personal emotional involvement. In order to press home his sense of repugnance he adapts עם איננו from Deut. 32:21c,d: וְאֲנִי אֶקְיָאֵם בְּלֹא-עָם בְּנוֹי נֹכַח 'therefore I shall make them jealous with what is no people, with a foolish nation . . .'

<sup>381</sup> O. Plöger, *Sprüche Salomos, Proverbia*, BK XVII, Neukirchen 1984. Plöger mentions examples from Tanakh (Am. 5:1; Mic. 5:4; Ps. 62:12) and refers to Sirach 23; 25 and 26 (p. 357). In this way it is possible that the numerical aphorism was employed with frequency in Ben Sira's house of instruction (Sir. 51:23b).

<sup>382</sup> L. Schrader, *Leiden und Gerechtigkeit*, BET 27, Frankfurt 1994. Schrader's vision of the Edomites (Seleucids), the Philistines (Romans) and the foolish people in Shechem (Hellenistic party) is related to the Maccabean period and not to the contemporary conflict situation (p. 94).

<sup>383</sup> P.C. Beentjes, *Jesus Sirach en Tenach*, Nieuwegein 1981. In spite of the same word combination קצה נפשי in Num. 21:5a, in which the people complained about the 'miserable food' they had to eat in the wilderness surrounding Edom, Beentjes insists that the context has no parallel, the concept נפשי lacking sufficient specificity (p. 170).



and introduces a reversal of the line of thought represented therein, the negatively adjudged foreign nation serving in Deuteronomy as an example for God's own people.

In so doing, Ben Sira takes a stand against external criticism directed against Jerusalem. The polemical situation is evidently highly charged with theological arguments opposed to the uncontaminated legitimacy of the entire cult in Jerusalem versus far reaching Hellenisation in Samaria. He clearly reacts in the offensive, attacking the pretensions of the Samaritans.

The motivation for this hypothesis lies in the repudiative  $\text{אין}$  and the suffix 3p.s.m. with which the author reinforces his position. He employs a particle of negation that occurs with some frequency in Tanakh (46x) in the form  $\text{אִינֹו}$ . The majority of these occurrences are concentrated in specific locations and related to specific individuals: e.g. Enoch who walked with God and 'was no more' (Gen. 5:24) and Joseph (Gen. 37:30; 42:13,32,36 and 44:26,30,44), or with respect to the burning bush (Ex. 3:2), the lament of Rachel (Jer. 31:15) and Jeremiah's prophecy against Edom (49:10) and Babylon (50:20). The negation is relatively speaking most frequent in the wisdom literature (Job 5x, Qoheleth 7x). Van Peursen maintains that this form is never employed with a substantive as predicate of a nominal clause.<sup>384</sup>

Ben Sira does not only repudiate the third nation, he also provides his reason for doing so: this nation cannot be designated as  $\text{עם}$ . The city of Shechem is mentioned by name for the first time in 50:26b. He consciously avoids direct reference to Samaria or the Samaritans in order to focus attention entirely on the location of the sanctuary. G, by contrast, precedes the reference to Shechem with Samaria.

The feminine form  $\text{השלישיה}$  is problematic on account of the suffix 3p.s.m. of  $\text{אִינֹו}$ . Peters suggests a textual emendation and reads  $\text{והשלישי}$ . Penar proposes an alternative solution without emendation of the  $\text{אִינֹו}$  and reads  $\text{והשלישי תאִינֹו}$ , whereby  $\text{תאִינֹו}$  is understood as a denominative verbal form of  $\text{אין}$  'nothing', which functions here as a declarative *pi'el* with  $\text{נפשי}$  as subject. Our objection to Penar's extraordinarily

<sup>384</sup> W.Th. van Peursen, 'Negation in the Hebrew of Ben Sira', in T. Muraoka & J.F. Elwolde eds., *Sirach, Scrolls, and Sages*, Leiden 1999, 223-243. Van Peursen refers to two examples of the negation  $\text{אין}$  in a nominal clause: Sir. 30:19 and 50:25b (p. 224).

subtle grammatical solution lies in the fact that the sought for relationship with *'my soul'* is not relevant to the explanation of 50:25b. Within the form of the numerical aphorism, the first element in 25a serves as a point of comparison with the second element 25b whereby dependence between the two is entirely unnecessary. On the contrary, in 25b השלישית *'the third'* (fem.s.c.) stands on its own and goes together with ע (m.) in the nominal clause. Although this phenomenon is rare in Tanakh, from the grammatical perspective a feminine form can be used to express a fragment or segment.<sup>385</sup> In the context of a numerical aphorism, therefore, 25b constitutes the repudiation of any particular place for ע. Ben Sira opts for the positive terminology in ע in order to reinforce his negative evaluation of the third people, which does not behave as a chosen people and does not live a holy existence. The irony of the situation takes on a bitter, cynical tone. Protest against the claims of the Samaritans firmly resounds in the definitive statement *'the third, that is a non-nation'* in 25b. The Samaritans had formed the opinion that they had built their temple in *the* location par excellence, basing themselves on Torah.<sup>386</sup> The chosen location for the temple is not mentioned in further detail in Deut. 12:4–5.<sup>387</sup> Jerusalem is out of the question because it was captured by David from the Jebusites at a much later date and only then established as a capital city. Samaria enjoyed a degree of legitimacy because Deuteronomy 27 makes reference to Mount Ebal, adjacent to Mount Gerizim. The Samaritans could thus lay claim to the Torah as their primary source of evidence. Their argumentation remains indecisive, however, when scriptural evidence is detached from the required precondition of living as a holy nation.

<sup>385</sup> A.E. Cowley, *Gesenius' Hebrew Grammar*, Oxford 1910/1966 (§98b).

<sup>386</sup> M. Hengel, *Judentum und Hellenismus*, Tübingen 1973. Hengel alludes to the establishment of the Torah during the time of Ezra, describing this as *Nomismus* or *Toraverschärfung* and Ben Sira's identification of Torah with wisdom as *Tora-ontologie*. The Samaritans based themselves on Moses as the only authoritative voice and reproached Ezra for having introduced changes in Torah. This was the most serious possible offence (p. 563).

<sup>387</sup> J.D. Purvis, 'Ben Sira and the Foolish People of Shechem, Sir 50,25–26', *JNES* 24 (1965) 88–94. Purvis offers several explanations for Ben Sira's attitude: a traditional anti-Samaritan sentiment; a political motivation based on the change of power from the Ptolemies to the Seleucids; the feast day of Mount Gerizim referred to in the *Megillat Ta'anit* because Simon I was able to frustrate the construction of the Gerizim temple by visiting Alexander the Great in full High Priestly attire; Josephus' description of anti-Samaritan activities during the reign of Antiochus III, in which the Tobiads followed a pro-Ptolemaic line.

**Sir. 50:26a,b**

The three peoples listed in the numerical aphorism are mentioned by name: the inhabitants of Seir, Philistea and the foolish people in Shechem.<sup>388</sup>

The lofty mountains of Seir elicit horror on account of their association with idolatry (Num. 24:21). Ben Sira avoids the name Edom (Ex. 15:14–15; Ps. 60:9–10; 83:7–8 and 108:8–10), which belongs to the tradition surrounding Esau in the context of which a fraternal bond prevailed (Obadiah 8f.; Mal. 1:2–5). This tradition is interpreted in a positive manner in Deut. 23:7 *'You shall not abhor any of the Edomites, for they are your kin'*. On the whole, however, the Edomites were generally perceived as hostile (*Ant.* XIII, 254–258). After the time of David, the territory of Edom around the Arabah was captured and governed with varying degrees of success (2 Kgs 3:1–27).<sup>389</sup> The Edomites sought their revenge after the fall of Judah and Jerusalem in 587 (Ez. 35:5f.) and conflicts arose after the return from Babylon (Obadiah 1–14; Lam. 4:21–22 and Ez. 35:1–15). Edom deteriorated as a power in the 4th century, falling under the influence of the Nabateans who dominated the trade routes along the royal highway from their stronghold in Petra (Job 6:19).<sup>390</sup> In Ben Sira's day the threat of Edom was grounded in the process of adaptation to Hellenistic culture. Josephus refers to Hyrcanus in this regard who established his sanctuary in Σαμόγαβ near Medeba (*Ant.* XIII, 255).

The 'inhabitants of Philistea' refers to the populations of the small city-states along the coastal regions.<sup>391</sup> Originally from Crete (Ez. 25:16), these peoples had adopted the culture of the Canaanites. Isaiah refers to them significantly as שַׁעַר 'gate' (14:28–32), alluding to the strategic importance of Ashdod, Ashkelon, Ekron and Gaza on the coastal road to Egypt (Zech. 9:5–8). The prophets expressed

<sup>388</sup> L. Finkelstein, *The Pharisees*, II, Philadelphia 1966. Ben Sira's dedication to 'Hasidic cultural nationalism' provided the protest against Edom and Samaria with political ballast (p. 589).

<sup>389</sup> P.C. Beentjes, *Jesus Sirach en Tenach*, Nieuwegein 1981. Beentjes translates 36:10a with 'the leaders' of Moab, the symbol of evil and the prototype of an anti-divine power (pp. 128f.).

<sup>390</sup> N. Glueck, 'The Boundaries of Edom', *HUCA* XI (1936) 141–157. Edom constructed fortifications to protect their minerals, copper mines, shipping and trade (p. 114).

<sup>391</sup> R. de Vaux, 'Les Philistins dans la Septante', in J. Schreiner, ed. *FS J. Ziegler, Wort, Lied und Gottesspruch*, Würzburg 1972.

their disapproval of the enrichment of such states via the slave trade (Joel 3:4–8; Amos 1:6–8; Zeph. 2:4–7). The name Philistea calls to mind the arbitrary nature of the power plays of the mighty and the dangers of assimilation to Hellenistic culture.

The third people, the foolish individuals that wander round in Shechem, is not identified by name. Ben Sira is speaking out here against the religious group referred to for the most part as ‘the Samaritans’, which is to be distinguished according to G from the mixed population in the newly built city of Samaria. The author employs virtually the same terminology נַבְל נְכַרִי ‘*a foolish and foreign people*’ in 49:5b for the Babylonians. YHWH executes judgement by passing the horn of the kings לְאַדְוֶר ‘*thereafter, to the future*’ (49:5a). By refraining from naming the foolish people (50:26b) and by denying their existence (50:25b), Ben Sira places the accent on the pernicious activities of the foolish people in Shechem.<sup>392</sup> Keen on word play, his use of phonetically similar terminology underlines the contrast between Jerusalem and Shechem. His use of the participial form with the definite article הַדָּר from דָּר ‘*to wander round*’ would appear at first sight to agree with the verb הָדַר ‘*to give glory*’ (50:5a, 11d) while he includes the similar yet rare verb דָּר (44:3a) in his positive appeal to all, the Shechemites included, to bear their kingly responsibilities as דְּוֵרֵי אֶרֶץ ‘*dwellers of the earth*’. There can be little doubt that he borrowed this contrast, together with the emphasis on the choice to be עַם according to the Deuteronomistic tradition.<sup>393</sup> Ben Sira is familiar with the expression ‘*foolish people*’ which he directs in his capacity as *sofer* against the Samaritans. In the wisdom tradition, the term ‘foolish’ refers to an ill-considered and purposeless action, lacking understanding and insight. As a consequence, such actions are a source of shame, are disruptive of good order and lead to nothing. YHWH’s complaint in Deut. 32:21 is directed against Israel. He ascribes the qualification נַבְל ‘*foolish*’ to his own people, who have forced him to jealousy (קַנָּא) with בַּל־אֱלֹהִים ‘*what is no god*’. For this

<sup>392</sup> F. Dexinger, ‘Der Ursprung der Samaritaner im Spiegel der frühen Quellen’, in F. Dexinger/R. Pummer eds, *Die Samaritaner*, Darmstadt 1992, 67–140. Dexinger inserts Sir. 50:25–26 with Shechem as נַבְל נְכַרִי instead of עַם in the reconstruction of Samaritan history based on 2 Kgs 17:24–41, Ezra 4:1–5, 2 Macc. 6:1–2 and Josephus. He concludes that the monopolisation of the cult in Jerusalem was the cause of the schism (p. 140).

<sup>393</sup> M. Weinfeld, *Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomistic School*, Oxford 1971 (pp. 177f.).

reason, YHWH shall force them to jealousy with *בל־אֵעֶם נִי נַבֵּל* ‘*what is no people, a foolish nation*’. The intention here is that a foolish people should repent and live as a wise people rooted in the *יִרְאָה* ‘*the fear of YHWH*’. The expression ‘*foolish people*’ is also used in Qumran with respect to the Samaritans and reference is made to Joseph.<sup>394</sup>

There is no evidence of the use of the term Samaritans in the pre-exilic period (2 Kgs 17:24–41).<sup>395</sup> The history of the city of Shechem harks back to the tradition of the patriarchs. Abraham dwelt there by the terebinth of Moreh (Gen. 12:6) and Jacob purchased land from the sons of Hamor, ‘the father of Shechem’ where he built an altar with the name *אל אלהי ישראל* ‘*God is the God of Israel*’ (Gen. 33:18–20).<sup>396</sup> There is a significant textual difference in Gen. 33:18 between *שָׁלֵם* ‘*safe*’ in Tanakh<sup>397</sup> and *שְׁלוֹם* ‘*peace*’ in the *Samaritan Pentateuch*. An alternative reading of this text is: “Jacob came to Shalem, a city of Shechem”.<sup>398</sup> The battle resulting from the rape of Dinah has its location here (Genesis 34). Shechem is referred to

<sup>394</sup> E. Schuller, ‘4Q372: A Text about Joseph’, *RQ* 55 (1990) 349–376. v. 11: “all their mountains were appalled at them [fools. . .]”; v.12: “and making for themselves a high place upon a high mountain to provoke Israel to jealousy”; v. 14: “words of deceit they spoke to anger Levi and Judah and Benjamin with their words”; v. 20: “a hostile people is dwelling upon it”. This anti-Samaritan text has its parallel in Sir. 50:25 and Test.Levi 7:2.

<sup>395</sup> J. Zsengellér, *Gerizim as Israel*, UTR 38, Utrecht 1998. Zsengellér envisages 2 Kings 17 from a Jewish context (p. 60) as a composition confirmed by Samaritan sources (p. 107).

<sup>396</sup> J. Bowman, *Samaritan Documents*, Pittsburgh 1977. In the liturgical summary of history, the *Kāṭaf* of Genesis is a passage concerning Jacob (p. 34), that ends with “This is the history of the family of Jacob-Joseph (Gen. 37:2). Now Israel loved Joseph (Gen. 37:3)”.

<sup>397</sup> M. Heidenheim, *Die samaritanische Pentateuch-Version. Die Genesis*, Bibliotheca Samaritana I, Zurich 1884, Neudruck Amsterdam 1971 (p. 44). This text edition mentions *שָׁלֵם*.

<sup>398</sup> H.H. Rowley, ‘Melchizedek and Zadok (Gen 14 and Ps 110)’, in FS *Alfred Bertholet*, Tübingen 1950, 461–472. Rowley quotes Nyberg who presupposes a city named Shalem near Shechem (p. 464). On the other hand, the city of Shalem is not mentioned, even in relation to Gen. 33:18–20, in the list of 13 names of the sacred mountain of God found in *Memar Marqah* (II §10). The latter tends to identify the sacred mountain with Mount Gerizim. Adam prays in this direction, Enoch is familiar with the mountain and Noah builds an altar there (Gen. 8:20) as did Abraham (Gen. 22:9). Isaac sees the mountain, Jacob knows it and Joseph owns it. Moses is seen on this same mountain. The list of the 10 wonders of Moses (II §12) mentions 4 locations, which are ascribed special significance from the third day of creation onwards: Machpela for the righteous, Mount Gerizim for the sanctuary, Mount Hor for the priests and Mount Nebo for the prophets.

as a free city (Josh. 20:7; 21:21; 1 Chron. 6:67) and serves as a coronation city in Judges 9 and 1 Kings 12. Perhaps the most important reference is to be found in Josh. 24:32,<sup>399</sup> which mentions the disputed grave of Joseph.<sup>400</sup> His bones are given a final resting place in the field that Jacob purchased from Hamor.<sup>401</sup> This grave is central to the Samaritan claim to having the most ancient tradition. The meaning of Sir. 49:15 is significant in this context since reference is made therein to the care given to Joseph's mortal remains and to the place of his grave.<sup>402</sup>

In the *Memar Marqah* IV §12 Joseph is ascribed a status equal to that of Moses.<sup>403</sup> The Samaritans consider themselves the descendants of Joseph.

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<sup>399</sup> P.W. van der Horst, 'Korte notities over vroeg-joodse epiek' *NTT* 39 (1985) 102–109. Van der Horst offers a number of illustrative examples in which the inhabitants of Shechem are presented in a more negative light than in Tanakh. The LXX version of Josh. 24:1, for example, names Silo as the place in which the covenant was established instead of Shechem as is written in H, thus implying an anti-Samaritan perspective (pp. 106–107). While Theodotus Epicus' work '*On Shechem*' fragm. I.7 refers to Shechem in the positive sense as a holy city, the story of Dinah in Genesis 38 is highlighted in fragm. VI. 41–47 by referring to the manner in which the inhabitants of Shechem were killed (parallel in *Test. Levi*). Gen. 34:26 suffices with its reference to the death of Hamor and Shechem but Gen. 49:5–7 condemns their killing. H.G. Kippenberg, *Garizim und Synagoge*, Berlin 1971. Kippenberg proposes that we consider the poetical opus of Theodotus Epicus as a justification of the destruction of the temple on Mount Gerizim (p. 129) and of Shechem (109 BCE) by John Hyrcanus (p. 83f.).

<sup>400</sup> Based on 4Q372, E. Schuller points out that Samaritan sources such as '*the Samaritan Chronicle*' (*Sepher Ha-Yamin*) themselves lay claim to Joseph as progenitor. The grave of Joseph at Shechem gives occasion to speak of '*Yosef malkah*'. Luke writes about Stephen using this argument in Acts 6:16 in his summary of Israel's history.

<sup>401</sup> J.A. Montgomery, *The Samaritans, The Earliest Jewish Sect. Their History, Theology and Literature*, New York 1907. Montgomery describes the grave of Joseph at Shechem (p. 107).

<sup>402</sup> Parallel texts include Test.Jos. 20:4 (in Hebron) and Jub. 46:8–9 (in Egypt).

<sup>403</sup> J. Macdonald, *Memar Marqah, The Teaching of Marqah*, II, BZAW 84, Berlin 1963. The 10th statement in IV §12 on 'the day of vengeance' says of Joseph: "Where is there the like of Joseph, illumined, wise, possessing the spirit of God. He possessed the place. Therefore his bones were borne by a prophet who was the faithful one of his Lord's house. There is none like Joseph the king and there is none like Moses the prophet. Each of them possessed high status; Moses possessed prophethood, Joseph possessed the Goodley Mount (Deut. 3:25). There is none greater than either of them!" (p. 186). See Sir. 49:15 (3.2.6.2).

Excursus III *The Samaritans and their Temple*

King Omri was founding father of a new city located on a mountain 10 km from Shechem, which became the capital of the Northern Kingdom. Amos fulminated against Samaria on account of its social injustices and exaggerated wealth. The city was captured by the Assyrians in 722 and the upper levels of the population were deported. Under Persian influence, the city became the centre of government after the Babylonian exile. Little concrete information is available to us<sup>404</sup> concerning the history of the Samaritans as a people.<sup>405</sup>

Disputes arose between the Jews and the Samaritans during the period in which Nehemiah served as governor. Reference is made to the names Sanballat and Tobia, members of the influential Tobiad family. The marriage of one of Sanballat's daughters with the son of Jehoiada, the son of the High Priest Eliashib, ran counter to the rules of Torah. Based on the concept of 'holy seed', employed by Ezra to exclude all non-Jewish women,<sup>406</sup> the couple was driven off (Neh. 13:29).

In 407 BCE a request was dispatched from Elephantine to the High Priest in Jerusalem seeking assistance for the reconstruction of their temple, which had been destroyed by Egyptian priests. A response to this request, however, is lacking. On the basis of papyri from Elephantine, scholars have endeavoured to show that this military colony consisted for the most part of Samaritans.<sup>407</sup> The lack of authentic sources, however, has severely limited the basis upon which this argumentation is grounded.

Josephus refers in *Ant.* XI, 302–312 to the marriage of Nikaso, daughter of Sanballat III to Manasse, brother of the High Priest Jaddua, the latter being confronted with exclusion from the temple (Neh. 13:29). A significant group of priests from Jerusalem would appear to have left with him in order to build a temple on Mount Gerizim with the support of Sanballat. The Samaritan papyri from Wadi-Daliyeh make

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<sup>404</sup> M. Cogan, 'For we, like you, worship your God: Three Biblical Portrayals of Samaritan Origins', *VT* XXXIII.3 (1983) 286–292. Cogan bases himself in Tanakh on 2 Kgs 17:24–33; Ezra 4:1–5 and 2 Chronicles 30 and refers by way of evidence to a few Assyrian inscriptions, papyri from Elephantine and Wadi-Daliyeh and the much younger Samaritan documents.

<sup>405</sup> The proper name Samaritans (Σαμαρείς, Σαμαρίταις) is normally employed as a collective term on the basis of Josephus and the N.T. It is derived from Shomronim (2 Kgs 17:29). The Samaritans themselves never use this name, preferring Shamerim 'the guardians of the truth' in Enc. Jud. 4 (p. 728).

<sup>406</sup> M. Mor, 'Samaritan History, the Persian, Hellenistic and Hasmonaean Period', in A.D. Crown ed., *The Samaritans*, Tübingen 1989, 1–18.

<sup>407</sup> T./M. Thordson, *Qumran and the Samaritans*, Jerusalem 1996. The Thordsons refer to papyrus 18 in which 190 Samaritan family names are mentioned next to 123 Jewish family names. The army listed 150 Samaritans and 80 Jews (p. 96).



reference to the name of Sanballat.<sup>408</sup> The report that Alexander the Great had agreed to the construction of this temple and the counter-report that implementation thereof had been met with obstruction from Jerusalem remain vague. The number of unanswered questions concerning the authenticity of these reports severely restricts the value that can be attached to them.

According to Purvis, archaeological evidence confirms the date of the construction of the Samaritan temple in 332 BCE, mentioned by Josephus in *Ant.* XI, 302–325. Anderson, by contrast, argues that there is no evidence of an extensive temple building, in spite of the excavation of ‘Building B’ by Wright in Shechem (1956–1964). The publications of Pummer concerning the new excavations carried out under the leadership of Magen maintain that this extensive construction should be dated in the Roman period.<sup>409</sup> At this moment solid archaeological evidence clearly does not exist in this regard.<sup>410</sup>

The written sources, particularly Josephus, upon whom Purvis bases his vision of the political question of succession in Samaria after the death of Sanballat, offer more solid ground for discussion. Josephus describes how Alexander appointed Andromachus to govern the province of Syria Coele after his victory over Gaza. The Samaritans refused to accept him and put him to death. The resulting rebellion was put down with immediate force, the Greeks destroying Samaria and then rebuilding it and filling it with a substantial army of occupation. This reconstruction is archaeologically well attested.

Bickermann makes reference to the fact that the temple was built on Mount Gerizim, close to Shechem, while the new city of Samaria became a centre for Greek colonists. G clearly distinguishes both cities. The formation of a religious community around a new temple located in a traditionally sacred place took place according to the usual pattern.<sup>411</sup> The general political upheaval, however, saw to it that Jerusalem

<sup>408</sup> J.D. Purvis, ‘The Samaritans’, in W.D. Davies ed., *The Cambridge History of Judaism*, Cambridge 1989, 591–613. These papyri speak of a certain Sanballat who lived after Sanballat the Horonite (Neh. 2:19; 4:1; 6:1–13). He may have been the grandfather of Sanballat III (p. 598).

<sup>409</sup> R.T. Anderson, ‘The Elusive Samaritan Temple’, *BA* (1991) 104–107. Anderson’s insistence that no temple was found is confirmed by Zsengellér in *Gerizim as Israel* (p. 154).

<sup>410</sup> S. Safrai, *Die Wallfahrt im Zeitalter des Zweiten Tempels*, Neukirchen 1981. Only the *Samaritan Chronicle* speaks of a temple building. More is known concerning the presence of an altar (p. 116).

<sup>411</sup> E.J. Bickermann, *The Jews in the Greek Age*, Cambridge 1988. According to Bickermann, the inhabitants of the city referred to themselves as ‘the Sidonians of Shechem’ and appealed to ancient traditions. Melchizedek is located on Mount Gerizim, the place YHWH had chosen for himself. The Samaritan claims made Jerusalem redundant (p. 11). Bickermann concludes that Ben Sira “contrasts the people ‘upon the mountain of Samaria’ (that is, the Macedonian colony) and the



emerged as the most reliable partner for the Greek oppressors, establishing the context in which a meeting was to take place between the High Priest Jaddua and Alexander the Great. The meeting ultimately led to the destruction of the temple on Mount Gerizim, an event celebrated in the rabbinic tradition on the 25th of Tebeth (Megillat Ta'anit on the 'day of Mount Gerizim'; *b'Yoma* 69a and Leviticus Rabbah XIII.5).

The period 320–301 BCE witnessed a number of changes of power in the land. The defeat of Jerusalem by Ptolemy Soter in 302 led to the deportation of a large contingent of Jews and Samaritans to Egypt. Josephus recalls the discussions that arose among the exiles as to which temple was the most sacred and where one should offer sacrifice (*Ant.* XII, 10). Apollonius, the Egyptian minister of finances, wrote the well-known Zenon-papyri in 259, which provide insight into the economic relations of the period. Under the reign of Ptolemy III Euergetes (246–221 BCE), Joseph son of Tobias was appointed to collect taxes after his uncle, Onias II, had refused to pay tribute following the defeat of Ptolemy by Seleucus II in 242 during the third Syrian war. Shortly thereafter, Ptolemy III visited Jerusalem and appointed Joseph to this position. The fourth Syrian war (221–217) witnessed a repetition of this scenario when Antiochus III conquered Jerusalem and the land. In 217, however, Antiochus was defeated at the battle of Raphia. At that moment Hyrcanus was appointed as Joseph's successor on account of his positive attitude towards the Ptolemaic dynasty. His older brothers refused to accept this situation, supported without doubt by Simon II.

A change in the political situation<sup>412</sup> emerged after the battle of Baniyas in 198, in which Antiochus III was victorious with the help of Simon II from Jerusalem. The decree referred to in *Ant.* XII, 138f. has its proper place in this context. Jerusalem was now under the influence of the Seleucids. In the short period that Simon still had to live, the temple was restored and the city of Jerusalem extended. The Praise of the Fathers was written to honour Simon<sup>413</sup> on the day of

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Philistines—two nations who vex him—to 'the fools who dwell in Sichem', who are no nation at all." (p. 12).

The present author is not inclined to share his conclusion on account of the fact that it does not do justice to the text of either H. or G. Bickermann's hypothesis is based rather on a combination of both. The numerical aphorism in H refers to three peoples and not only to an internal conflict among the Samaritans. Bickermann's argument serves to underline our contention that the text illustrates Ben Sira's fierce protest against the third people in Shechem.

<sup>412</sup> V. Tcherikover, *Hellenistic Civilization and the Jews*, New York 1979. Tcherikover distinguishes a pre-Seleucid group with the High Priest and the members of the *gerousia* consisting of the aristocratic families and the wealthy, among them the sons of Joseph. The schism occurred between 201–198 for political rather than cultural or theological reasons (p. 81).

<sup>413</sup> D. Mendels, *The Land of Israel as a Political Concept in Hasmonean Literature*,

remembrance as a 'man of name'.<sup>414</sup> Around 195 BCE, or perhaps a few years later, Simon died and was succeeded by Onias III, a significantly weaker individual who was to be deposed by Jason.

Antiochus III's defeat in 190 against the Romans at Magnesia introduced a radical change in the political situation. The levy of tribute was increased after the peace of Apamea in 188. The Romans put an end to Seleucid power by forced disarmament and the recuperation of immense sums for the restoration works, which ultimately led to the appropriation of the temple treasures (2 Macc. 3:24–40). After a long period during which he was responsible for economic stability, Joseph son of Tobias died in 187 (*Ant.* XII, 224–229).

Social existence thereafter underwent substantial change on account of the fact that the wealthier classes were open to the Hellenistic culture. In 175 BCE a gymnasium was established in Jerusalem with the intention of turning the city into a polis. With this aim in mind, Jason organised the games of the Tyrric Heracles (Melqart). Menelaos, who did not belong to the High Priestly family,<sup>415</sup> put an end to Jason's High Priesthood by raising the amount of tribute he paid to Antiochus Epiphanes IV. Menelaos himself took on the position of High Priest and had King Onias III killed. After the campaign against Egypt the temple was subject to plundering. A year later and a revolt against Antiochus brought about a bloodbath in Jerusalem. Jason's deposition marks an important turning point in the profanation of the temple in Jerusalem. Jewish groups contributed to the increasing influence of Hellenism,<sup>416</sup> as well as to the self-sufficiency of the economy under the leadership of the Tobiads.

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Tübingen 1987. Mendels presupposes a notion of unity among the twelve tribes of the land (Ezra 8:35; 9:1), which characterised the period around 190 BCE, with its roots in a spiritual and social independence with Jerusalem at its core. He dates the Samaritan claim to legitimacy on Mount Gerizim around 150 BCE, basing himself on Eupolemus' *'On the Kings of Judaea'*. His schematic representation of history tends to be too specific in dating the literary sources and lacks sufficient supporting argumentation. He supplements the sources with non-canonical literature including Sirach, Judith, 1 Maccabees, 1 Enoch, the Testaments of the 12 Patriarchs, Theodotus, Eupolemus and Pseudo-Eupolemus.

<sup>414</sup> M. Mor, 'Samaritan History' in A.D. Crown ed., *The Samaritans*, Tübingen 1989, 1–18. Mor does not accept Sir. 50:25–26 as a source for his historical survey after Antiochus III (p. 13).

<sup>415</sup> In *Ant.* XII.238–239 Josephus does not agree with 2 Macc. 4:24. Josephus bases himself on Menelaos, whom he likewise refers to as Onias. This would then have been the third son of Simon II.

<sup>416</sup> M. Hengel, 'The Political and Social History of Palestine from Alexander to Antiochus III' (333–187 BCE) and 'The Interpenetration of Judaism and Hellenism in the Pre-Maccabean Period' in W.D. Davies/L. Finkelstein eds, *The Cambridge History of Judaism*, II, Cambridge 1989, 35–78 and 167–228. Hengel notes the increase in Jewish literature in Greek. In addition to the Septuagint he refers to the translation of Ben Sira's grandson (p. 203).

The religious claims of the Samaritans brought about a change in the authority of the High Priest, which became less and less dependant on genealogical concerns and more and more on the personal lifestyle of the High Priest himself. After the death of Simon II, and certainly after the assassination of Onias III, the High Priest's authority reached a significant low point. Onias IV fled to Egypt and built the temple at Leontopolis. Josephus mentions his building application in *Ant.* XIII.62–68 together with the positive response he received from Ptolemy Philometor in XIII.70–71. Disagreements arose thereafter between Jews and Samaritans in Alexandria with respect to the status of the temple in Jerusalem and on Mount Gerizim. After a serious dispute between the Jews and the Samaritans on the matter, the king declared the temple in Jerusalem to have been constructed according to Torah (XIII.74–79).

Josephus is our only source of information on the evolution of the Samaritans in the period up to the destruction of their temple by John Hyrcanus in 128 BCE.<sup>417</sup>

Nothing is known of the status of Shechem<sup>418</sup> beyond much later information found in the N.T., the rabbinic tradition and Samaritan documents.

The remark found in the pseudepigraphal literature (*Test. Levi* 7.2): *'From this day forth Shechem shall be called a city of fools'* serves to illustrate how this qualification continued to make itself felt.<sup>419</sup> This is also apparent from a small fragment found in cave 11<sup>420</sup> at Qumran in which reference is made to *הַרִי נְבֵל* (11Q14). The fact that the same fragment speaks of Samaria in a similar fashion serves to confirm the con-

<sup>417</sup> P.W. van der Horst, 'De Samaritaanse diaspora in de oudheid', *NTT* 42 (1988) 134–144. Van der Horst mentions the Samaritans, the members of the Samaritan faith community, alongside the Samaritans who inhabited the city of Samaria. In the context of Diaspora, reference is first made to the inhabitants of Samaria and the inhabitants of Mount Gerizim under the reign of Ptolemy I Soter (Josephus *Ant.* XII,7–10).

<sup>418</sup> H.H. Ben-Sasson, *Geschichte des jüdischen Volkes*, Munich 1978. According to Ben-Sasson, Samaria was never declared a polis and information on the development of the Samaritans as a religious community is lacking (p. 247). A content oriented vision of Samaritan literature would probably have delivered a different evaluation than that established by Ben-Sasson on the basis of its late date.

<sup>419</sup> E.J.C. Tigchelaar, *Prophets of Old and the Day of the End. Zechariah, the Book of Watchers and Apocalyptic*, OTS XXXV, Leiden 1996. Tigchelaar calls for a reflection on the negative evaluation of the contemporary inhabitants of Shechem in *Test. Levi* 7.2 and *Sir.* 50:25–26. He partly blames the reference to the foolish people as a *עַם לֹא מְבָרָךְ* 'non-nation' on the fact that the population of Samaria was mixed. He takes G as his point of departure in which both groups are mentioned side by side. Ben Sira limits himself in H, however, to the religious group in Shechem.

<sup>420</sup> F. García Martínez/E.J.C. Tigchelaar/A.S. van der Woude eds, *Qumran Cave 11*, DJD XXIII, 11Q2–18, 11Q20–31, Oxford 1998 (pp. 249–250). A supplementation is possible in the third line to the usual name *שְׁמֵרִי* (רְיָרִי).

tent of 50:25–26.<sup>421</sup> Ben Sira's protest against the foolishness of the Shechemites characterises mutual relationships between Jerusalem and Gerizim, indicating an uninterrupted development from the time of the Samaritan schism.<sup>422</sup> Two generations after the Simon, however, the situation around Shechem and Samaria had completely changed. At the time of Ben Sira's grandson the Samaritans were themselves divided into two groups. Mor refers to the Samaritan Hellenists together with the conservative Samaritans who upheld the Torah and lived according to traditional customs.<sup>423</sup> Significant similarities exist on this point with developments in Jerusalem that resulted in a revolt after Antiochus IV desecrated the temple by setting up an altar to Zeus in its precincts. There is no evidence, however, that the Samaritans offered support to the Maccabean revolt. This explains the fact that diverse and rival faction existed in Jerusalem as well as in Shechem and Samaria who were either unable or unwilling to cooperate with one another.<sup>424</sup> The sources of this rivalry have their roots in varying and contradictory points of departure and theological perspectives,<sup>425</sup> among them the claim to liturgical purity, the possession of the original Torah, the one place chosen by God for worship and the authentic festal calendar.<sup>426</sup> The final response was to come four years after the Ben Sira's

<sup>421</sup> J.D. Purvis, 'The Samaritans', in W.D. Davies ed., *The Cambridge History of Judaism*, Cambridge 1989, 591–613. The first open conflict between the inhabitants of Samaria and Jerusalem took place around 200 BCE at the time of the transfer of power from Ptolemy V to Antiochus III, as mentioned by Josephus in *Ant.* XII, 154–156. R. Marcus, *Josephus, Jewish Antiquities*, XII–XIII, LCL 365, Cambridge 1943/1998. Rich Samaritans of Greek origin took possession of land and held slaves (*Ant.* XII, 156).

<sup>422</sup> Jesus of Nazereth exhibits a positive attitude towards the Samaritans as does the Talmudic tractate *Kuttim*. The dispute between the Jews and the Samaritans is fully alive in the N.T. and is based on traditional theological debate (Jn. 4:9).

<sup>423</sup> *EncJud*, XIV, Jerusalem 1971 (pp. 723–758). The literature of the Samaritans has its origins in a long process of transmission and a late assignment to writing. The sources include traditions that may have been familiar during the time of Ben Sira. In addition to the *Samaritan Pentateuch*, other important documents include the *Memar Marqah* (Targum) and the calendar system in the *Tolidah* with its authentic calculation of transmission from Adam via Shem, Eber, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and finally Moses who passed on the system to Phinehas. The transmission continued from the latter along the High Priestly line to Shalmiah ben Phinehas (1613–1624) and continues to the present day via a different Levitical family branch. This tradition is also known in *Chronicles A*, the *New Chronicles* (Adler), the history of which is referred to in *Chronicles II* and the *book of Joshua*. The *Defter* contains liturgical texts.

<sup>424</sup> J. Zsengellér, *Gerizim as Israel*, UTR 38, Utrecht 1998. Zsengellér compares the problems between Judeans and Samaritans to those of the churches (p. 181) and considers the term 'schism' inadequate.

<sup>425</sup> R. Bergmeijer, Zur Frühdatierung samaritanischer Theologoumena, *JSS* V (1994) 121–153. H.G. Kippenberg, *Gerizim und Synagoge*, Berlin 1971.

<sup>426</sup> The Samaritan festival calendar counts seven feasts: the four *mo'adim*: Pesach,

grandson completed his translation with the destruction of the Samaritan temple by John Hyrcanus in 128 BCE (see 4.3.7).

One can conclude that the existence of an alternative temple in Samaria served to illustrate a crisis in authority with respect to the legitimation of the temple in Jerusalem at the time of Ben Sira. Grounded in history, the Samaritans were better placed than the priests in Jerusalem to insist on the basis of Torah that YHWH had chosen Samaria as the first and only legitimate location for the temple (Deut. 12:5v.).

The erosion of the central position of Jerusalem clearly accelerated after the assassination of Onias III (around 170 BCE). His son, Onias IV, founded a temple in Leontopolis,<sup>427</sup> which functioned alongside Jerusalem and Samaria. In addition to this, documentary evidence exists of a functioning sanctuary at Elephantine in Egypt from the beginning of the Persian period. The weakening of the authority and unicity of the temple in Jerusalem had its beginnings after Onias III and was reinforced by the desecration of the temple by Antiochus IV. The re-establishment of the liturgy and the fulfilment of the High Priestly responsibilities by the Maccabeans only served to increase distrust for the temple in Jerusalem by the Essenes in Qumran.

Four theological arguments can be mentioned in this context that are relevant to the opposition between Jerusalem and Samaria:

- regard for Torah and the accusation of interpolations on the part of Ezra,
- the position of Joseph as progenitor and teacher of wisdom, who is given a status similar to that of Moses,
- the continuity of the Aaronite line in the High Priesthood,
- the esteem shown for Phinehas as High Priest and guardian of right order.

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the feast of the 7th month (the 1st day being Rosh Hashanah), the day of Reconciliation and the Shemini Azeret (on the 22nd of the 7th month) 7 days after Succoth and the three pilgrim feasts (37): the feast of unleavened bread (on the 21st of the 1st month) and the feasts of Shevuoth and Succoth.

<sup>427</sup> E.J. Bickermann, *The Jews in the Greek Age*, Cambridge 1988. In spite of the fact that Onias IV, a son of Zadok, served as High Priest in Leontopolis, this temple is not to be compared with Zion. "Simon II was the last Zadokite High Priest whose authority was indisputable." (p. 145).

In the *Tolidah* Phinehas is the central figure who calculates the festival calendars and ensures the authentic sub-division of the jubilees in order to guarantee the continuity of the High Priestly tradition from Adam onwards.<sup>428</sup>

In the context of the theological legitimation of the priesthood in Jerusalem and the rapid political changes of his day, Ben Sira has every reason to exploit these aspects. He links his description of Simon with the priestly tradition surrounding Enoch, placing Simon on one and the same line with Adam. Simon is not referred to as the son of Zadok but rather as the direct descendant of Aaron. Lineage, however, takes second place at this juncture to the personal attitude of the High Priest and his fulfilment of his priestly duties according to the example provided by Phinehas.

### 3.3.8 *Sir. 50:27–28 Ben Sira's epilogue and blessing*

27a,b	:	מוסר שכל ומושל אופנים לשמעון בן ישוע בן אלעזר בן סירא :
27c,d	:	אשר ניבע בפתור לבן ואשר הביע בחבונות :
28a,b	:	אשרי איש באלה יהנה ונותן על לבו יחכם :
28c	:	כי יראה יי חיים :

27a Instruction concerning insight and the mastery of the wheels,  
 27b by Simon, son of Jesus, son of Eleazar, son of Sirach,  
 27c which he brings forth in pure elucidation,  
 27d which he causes to effervesce in insights.  
 28a Happy the person who dwells on these things  
 28b and he who sets his heart on them is wise,  
 28c for the fear of YHWH is life.

Cola 50:27a and 27b are written over the full width of the manuscript, thus serving to demarcate the concluding statement.<sup>429</sup> Given the notation and the decreasing size of the script, the name *בן סירא* was clearly added at a later date to *בן אלעזר*. Without reason of content, *Sir. 50:28c* and *51:1a,b* are written on a single line at line 10 of B XX recto, although it would seem more evident that line 7 with *50:27a,b* and line 9 with *50:28a,b,c* should serve to demarcate the conclusion.

The discourse followed by Ben Sira in his concluding words runs as follows:

<sup>428</sup> J. Bowman, *Samaritan Documents*, Pittsburgh 1977 (pp. 37–61).

<sup>429</sup> P.C. Beentjes, *The Book of Ben Sira in Hebrew*, VTSup LXVIII, Leiden 1997 (p. 90).

מוסר *'instruction, exhortation'* in 50:27a stands in apposition to שכל *'understanding, insight'* and the otherwise unfamiliar word combination אופנים ומושל *'and the mastery of the wheels'*. The impression is that we are dealing with a superscription. The name שמעון *'Simon'* preceded by ל follows in 27b and is determined three times according to his descent *'son of Jesus, son of Eleazar, son of Sirach'*.

Ben Sira's instruction is elaborated in 50:27c,d in two relative subordinate clauses, both introduced by אשר and two forms of the verb נבע: a perfect *pi'el* 3p.s.m. ניבע *'he brings forth'* (27c) and a perfect *hiph'il* 3p.s.m. הביע *'he causes to effervesce'* (27d), whereby Ben Sira himself is acting subject.

A new initiative is evident in the beatitude אשרי איש *'happy the person'* in 50:28a,b,c. This universal salutary greeting is addressed to everyone who is willing to listen and to יהנה באלה *'dwell on these things'*. The person who does this of his/her free will constitutes the subject, represented in the form of a participle *gal* 3p.s.m. ונותן על לבו *'he who sets his heart on them'* and a nominal clause *'he is wise'*.

The concluding colon begins in 50:28c with כי, which consciously links יראה *'the fear of YHWH'* with חיים *'life'*. Via a nominal clause, חיים is portrayed as object of human awe and subject in giving life. Ben Sira employs the expression *'the fear of YHWH'* in the form of an inclusion between the beginning (1:8,18) and the end (50:28) to sum up his entire book.

Exegetes tend to reject לבו in 27c on text-critical grounds (3.1.3). Ben Hayyim and Beentjes, for example, read בפתור לבן. Further text-critical research, however, tends to confirm this *lectio difficilior* לבן as the starting point for exegetical analysis.

In schema:

Verse	Person	Theme
27a		Instruction מוסר, insight and mastery of the wheels
27b	BS3	Simon, son of Jesus/Eleazar/Sirach
27c	BS4	he brings forth, pure elucidation נבע, פתור לבן
27d	BS5	he causes to effervesce in insights. נבע
28a	M1	Happy the person אשרי איש, who dwells on these things באלה הנה
28b	M2,3	wise is he חכם, who sets his heart on נתן לבו
28c	Ab 12	fear of YHWH חיים יראה is חיים

Abbreviations:

BS ⇒ Ben Sira, Ab ⇒ YHWH as subject of consideration, M ⇒ human person.

The final sentence of Sirach 50 in MS B is written by the copyist on two lines, whereby colon 50:28c is coupled with 51:1a,b. In terms of content, 50:28c belongs to the conclusion of Sirach 50, as is apparent from the delimitation of the text and the narrative analysis thereof. The numerical structure of the Praise of the Fathers in Sirach 44–50 with  $4 \times 61 = 244$  lines is to be considered regular in MS B, should 50:28 a,b,c be considered as written on one single line. In the present author's calculation of the numerical proportions of the text this is taken to be a copyist's error. The latter appears to have placed bicola 46:19a,b and 46:19c,d on line 1 of B XVI verso,<sup>430</sup> and he neglects a demarcation at the end of the Praise of the Fathers between 50:28 and the beginning of the psalm in 51:1. Syntactical analysis reveals that Ben Sira wanted to bring about a change in his audience by use of the concluding word *חיים* 'life', so that they would not become like the third people, *עם איננו עם* 'a non-nation' (50:25b), or like the group that together with its descendants enjoys no remembrance, as if they had never existed (44:9).

### **Interpretation: Sir. 50:27a**

Ben Sira rounds off his discourse with a syndetic circumstantial clause, employing the same anticipative style as he did with respect to Moses, Joshua, Samuel, Solomon, Rehoboam, Jeroboam, Elijah and Simon in 50:1b.

Exegetes differ widely in their interpretation of 50:27a. The colon locates *מוסר* at the same level as *שכל* and *ומושל אופנים* as two distinct forms of instruction. The epexegetical genitive *שכל* represents a characteristic of this *מוסר*: 'instruction concerning insight'.

The unique combination of *מוסר* 'exhortation, instruction' and *שכל* is not found elsewhere in Tanakh. Ben Sira employs the term *מוסר* to introduce two superscriptions: 'instruction concerning bread together with wine' (31:11) and 'instruction concerning shame' (mentioned three times in 41:15), both of which are comparable with 50:27a.

<sup>430</sup> In his notation of 51:1–12 the copyist of MS B follows his own path by accentuating *אודללה* in the middle of line 10 B XX verso and line 11 B XX recto and by placing *פ* in the margin of 51:12a at the beginning of the second psalm by way of a sign. This sub-division of Sirach 51 suggests a degree of regularity with the song of praise (51:1–12) marked by the cohortative *אודללה*, the song of thanksgiving (51:12a–o) opening with *הודו* (repeated 14x) and the acrostic (51:13–29). After the concluding statement (51:30a–d) a second reference to the name Ben Sira follows (51:30e–h). This reference is not written colometrically but rather on 3 lines over the entire breadth of the manuscript.



The noun שכל *'insight, understanding'* is found mostly in apposition and is derived from the verb שכל that occurs with a degree of frequency in the *hiph'il* (Prov. 1:3). As a teacher of wisdom, the author of Proverbs alludes to the acquisition of more profoundly rooted insight in the Torah and in day to day life, which he summarises with the expression שכל־טוב *'a good insight'* (Prov. 13:15).

The meaning of מושל ומושל אופנים constitutes the most serious problem at this juncture, the term מושל being frequently emended to read משל *'instructional proverb'*. Exegetes occasionally base themselves on the rather free reworking found in G. Argall, for example, follows the reconstruction proposed by Skehan on this basis.<sup>431</sup>

Ben-Hayyim derives the term אופנים from אפן, which he vocalises as אָפֶן (50:27a), referring to אופן in 33:5. The present author, however, considers the text transmitted in MS B to be correct and opts for the translation of מושל אופנים as *'and mastery of the wheels'*, since מושל occurs regularly as a participle *qal 3p.s.m.* *'master'*<sup>432</sup> in addition to the form משל. The example of the ant found in Prov. 6:7 is illustrative here: *'consider its ways and be wise, it has no chief, no officer and no master'*.<sup>433</sup> The participle מושל is related to Ben Sira, the subject of 50:27b. The question remains, however, as to the correct interpretation of the unfamiliar word combination מושל אופנים in the context of Ben Sira's book. As an active participle, מושל is a common form (4:27; 7:6; 10:24; 13:12) to be found at a crucial location in the demarcation text introducing the Praise of the Fathers in 44:4b.

Based on the most recent photographs, the damaged text of B44:4b can be established with certainty: : מושלים במשמרותם *'masters of the liturgical order'* (3.2.1). Skehan, for example, follows a completely different path in this regard, reading משמרה *'nail'* and hypothesising

<sup>431</sup> R.A. Argall, *1 Henoch and Sirach*, SBLEJL 8, Atlanta 1995. Argall takes MS B as his point of departure and translates 50:27a,b: 'Instruction in good sense and timely proverbs were written in this book' in contrast to Di Lella: 'Training in wise conduct, and smooth-running proverbs, have been written in this book'. Argall hypothesises: "אשר נכתב בספר" could be corrupt for an original *בספר* ("which was written in [this] book")" (p. 89).

<sup>432</sup> Examples of מושל in Tanakh: the just rulers David in 2 Sam. 23:3 and Solomon in 2 Chron. 7:18 and 9:26. Reference is made to God as ruler in Ps. 89:10; 1 Chron. 29:12 and 2 Chron. 20:6 and in Mi. 5:1; Prov. 23:1; 28:15; 29:26; Qoh. 9:17; 10:4 in the general sense of the term.

<sup>433</sup> This allusion to Prov. 6:7 already occurs in the Praise of the Fathers in 48:15f via the employment of the rarely used concept קצין *'leader'*.

a reference to letters that were nailed up for public information.<sup>434</sup> Yadin suggests we read *במ* [שמחות] derived from *שמה* and translates 'on their feasts'.<sup>435</sup> The reading proposed here agrees with the text edition of Ben-Hayyim and Beentjes<sup>436</sup> and is reminiscent of Neh. 13:30, in which the priestly code is administered with respect to the arrangement of the annual feasts and the ordinances governing the temple liturgy (50:8a, 12a, 14b, 19b and 21a). *מושל* (*gal* participle act. with ל *auctoris*) is thus to be understood as a nominal form and translated 'mastery'. The interpretation of *אוּפְנִים* is extremely complex.<sup>437</sup> Schechter refers to Prov. 25:11, but *על-אפניו* 'in the correct manner, at the correct time' is derived from *אָפֵן*. The lexica make reference to *משל* 'parable' but this ignores the semantic content of the term *אוּפֵן* 'wheel'. The term is to be found in this sense Tanakh in the context of the wheels of a chariot (Ex. 14:25; Nah. 3:2), the wheels of a threshing sledge (Isa. 28:27) and the wheels supporting the ten bronze stands in the temple (1 Kgs. 7:27–37).<sup>438</sup> A more specific use of the term is to be found in Ez. 1:15–21; 3:13; 10:6–19 and 11:22 with reference to the *merkabah*. In the description of the throne chariot in Ez. 10:2, 6, 13 *אוּפֵן* is employed as a synonym of *לגלגל* 'wheel' and characterised as rattling wheels. Ben Sira portrays Ezekiel with two characteristics: *מראה* 'the vision' (49:8a) and *וני מרכבה* 'the forms of the throne chariot' (49:8b).<sup>439</sup>

<sup>434</sup> P.W. Skehan, 'Staves, and Nails, and Scribal Slips (Ben Sira 44, 2–5)', *BASOR* 200 (1970) 66–71.

<sup>435</sup> Y. Yadin, *The Ben Sira Scroll from Masada*, Jerusalem 1965 (p. 36).

<sup>436</sup> P.C. Beentjes, 'The "Praise of the Famous" and its Prologue', *BTFT* 45 (1984) 374–383. Beentjes argues here in favour of an 'inner-Israelite situation' (p. 337) in explaining the twelve occupations or functions.

<sup>437</sup> J.F. Elwolde, 'Developments in Hebrew Vocabulary between Bible and Mishnah', in T. Muraoka/J.F. Elwolde eds, *The Hebrew of the Dead Sea Scrolls and Ben Sira*, Leiden 1997, 17–55. BHS refers to Prov. 25:11 *על-אפניו*. Elwolde takes the same context as his point of departure, in spite of the fact that the exact significance thereof is unclear. He understands *אוּפֵן* to mean 'plan, method (of interpretation)' (p. 41). The problem remains, however, that MS B has *אוּפְנִים*.

<sup>438</sup> W. Baumgartner ed., *Hebräisches und aramäisches Lexicon zum Alten Testament*, I, Leiden 1967. L. Koehler ed., *Lexicon in Veteris Testamenti Libros*, Leiden 1958. Koehler remains open with respect to *אוּפֵן* 'both wheels c.q. verse halves'. Baumgartner notes the hapax in 50:27 with '(rechte) Art, Sir. 50:27 in rechter (metrischer?) Form'. In his recent lexicon, Clines suggests we read 'discipline of intelligence and being master of (appropriate) occasions (or em. *משל* proverbs of, i.e. suited to occasions)'. Levy alludes to Ophan as the name of an angel or Ophannim as a generic name.

<sup>439</sup> T. Gruenwald, *Apocalyptic and Merkavah Mysticism*, AGJU XIV, Leiden 1980. In the mystical tradition, the *Ma'aseh Merkavah*, the work of the divine throne chariot and the *Ma'aseh Bereshit*, the work of the creation of the world, provide content

This concentration on the visionary element is of importance given the translation found in G49:8 ἐπὶ ἄρματος χειροβῖν *‘on the chariot of the cherubs’*.<sup>440</sup> According to Marböck 49:8b constitutes an unmistakable reference to the *merkabah* tradition.<sup>441</sup> It is surprising that Ben Sira does not develop the *merkabah* tradition further, considering the fact that an increasing interest in visionary representations is evident in the prophetic tradition<sup>442</sup> in Tanakh as a whole,<sup>443</sup> intended to provide deeper insight into divine revelation.<sup>444</sup> Efron employs the term *historiosophy* to argue that the unity of Torah and wisdom lies at the basis of the elaboration of the *merkabah* tradition in later Jewish mysticism.<sup>445</sup>

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to esoteric teaching. In 49:8 Ben Sira uses the term *merkabah*, which is also familiar from the literature of Qumran (p. 74). Priests contributed to this mysticism via their experience in the holy of holies. *J.Yoma* 42c notes that the High Priest, Simon known as the Just, spoke every Yom Kippur in the holy of holies with an old man dressed in white garments (p. 96).

<sup>440</sup> N.A. van Uchelen, *Joodse mystiek, Merkawa, tempel en troon*, Kampen 1983. Van Uchelen only quotes G49:8–10 and considers the role of the prophet to be that of a passive receptor of the message (p. 122). On the contrary, the prophet is clearly active in H, observing and reporting what he sees (p. 36).

<sup>441</sup> J. Marböck, ‘Henoch—Adam—der Thronwagen; Zu frühjüdischen pseudepigraphischen Traditionen bei Ben Sira’, *BZ NF* 25 (1981) 103–111. Based on 49:8, Marböck maintains that Ben Sira is part of the *Wirkungsgeschichte* of the *merkabah* tradition (p. 109), namely with respect to the figures referred to in Ez. 1:15–21; 10:9–17. He sees the ‘wheels’ as independent angelic beings, the ‘ophannim’. While he makes reference to 1 Chron. 28:18, he does not include Sir. 50:27–28 as part of his considerations.

<sup>442</sup> F. Horst, ‘Visionsschilderungen der alttestamentlichen Propheten’, *EvT* 20 NF 15 (1960) 193–205.

<sup>443</sup> B.G. Wright, *No Small Difference*, SBLSCS 26, Atlanta 1989. Ben Sira was familiar with the prophetic books on the basis of the name of the prophet (p. 129).

<sup>444</sup> M. Hengel, *Judentum und Hellenismus*, WUNT 10, Tübingen 1973. See his excursus: “*Höhere Weisheit durch Offenbarung*” (pp. 381–394).

<sup>445</sup> I. Efron, ‘Merkabah’ in FS M.M. Kaplan, *Prophecy, Wisdom and Apocalypse*, New York 1953, 215–223. While mediation between God and human persons usually takes place via angels, these latter beings are clearly not part of Ben Sira’s perspective. Speculation over the *merkabah* tended to feed a dualistic separation between the world above and the world below. The human person was seen as receiver of the message and God as one who comes in fire or speaks through the prophets. The apocalyptic literature denied this means of communication with God, elevating the human person to be able to receive the secrets of heaven with the help of angels via a mystical path to knowledge rather than by divine revelation.

Efron argues that the law, which included wisdom, established the possibility of a philosophy of history that he refers to as *historiosophy*. Based on prophecy and wisdom, full attention is afforded herein to the individual and his/her ethical behaviour. Efron contests the Hellenistic influence that Oesterley considers to be the foundation of individualism. The focus on human glory and magnificence is highly

A broad spectrum of visionary images can be found in the non-canonical literature. In the pseudepigraphal 1 Enoch 14:18, Enoch has a vision of the wheels, which appear as the rays of the sun. In the visions of speculative apocalyptic (3 Enoch), Enoch is given every attention in the list of the generations of Israel, from Adam, Noah, Shem, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, Joshua, the judges, the kings and the prophets. Enoch is allowed to see the Meshiach, the son of Joseph and the Meshiach of David in their struggle for Israel. The complete revelation of the end time is made known to him behind the veil.<sup>446</sup> In 3 Enoch we enter the domain of speculative apocalyptic and the mystical tradition of the *merkabah*.

The *merkabah* tradition is a regular feature of the texts of Qumran. Perhaps the most spectacular is the explanation of this vision with its reference to the four living beings—the lion, the eagle, the calf and the human—in 4Q*Pseudo-Ezekiel* (4Q385), *Frag.* 4.<sup>447</sup> The same images can be found in Ez. 1:10; 10:14, albeit in a different sequence. Ez. 1:16 *האופן בתוך האופן* is interpreted in *Pseudo-Ezekiel* by way of the interpolation: *אופן חובר אל אופן* 'wheel joined to wheel as they went'. The participle m. *po'el* of *הבר* designates unity in the progress of the wheels on every side without changing direction. The references in 4Q*ShirShabb* (4Q405), *Frag.* 20–22.12 and 4Q*Berakot*<sup>a</sup> (4Q286) *Frag.* I, *Col.* II.2–13 offer a new perspective in relation to the voice of God.<sup>448</sup>

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significant in *historiosophy*. Rooted in his vision of wisdom, Ben Sira remains with such knowledge within the framework of 'this world' and 'our days'.

<sup>446</sup> P. Alexander, '3 (Hebrew Apocalypse of) Enoch', in J.H. Charlesworth ed., *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha. Apocalyptic Literature & Testaments*, London 1983, I, 223–315.

The *merkabah* is described in 3 Enoch 6:2; 7:1; 10:5; 25:5. Enoch is the prince of wisdom and insight, the prince of the divine presence. In *Sefer Heykalot*, Metatron, who is identified with Enoch, leads Yishma'el before the veil of heaven and the latter sees all the deeds of the generations of this world until the end thereof.

<sup>447</sup> D. Dimant/J. Strugnell, 'The Merkabah Vision in Second Ezekiel' (4Q385 4), *RQ* 55 (1990) 331–348. This fragment contains an elaborate version of the visions of the prophet. The authors maintain that Ben Sira was familiar with this tradition on account of his use of the term *merkabah* as a *terminus technicus* for Ezekiel's vision (p. 338) and make reference to Sir. 37:17 (p. 339). They suggest that further research should be done on Daniel 7; 1 Enoch 14 and 71, the Songs of the Sabbath and other *Hekhalot* literature (p. 347) but do not include Sir. 49:8; 50:28a as part of their list.

<sup>448</sup> C.A. Newsom, 'Merkabah Exegesis in the Qumran Sabbath Shiroṭ', *JJS* XXXVIII (1987) 11–30. Comparison of the text in *Sabbath Shiroṭ* with Ezekiel reveals the liturgical context and the importance of the *קִל* of the cherubim and the

Besides 50:27a,<sup>449</sup> Ben Sira only employs **אוֹפֵן** in his wisdom book in the comparison of **הוֹרֵר מִחֻשְׁבוֹתָיו וְאוֹפֵן חוֹרֵר** ‘the revolving axle of the wheel’ with the turning thoughts of the foolish (33:5b).<sup>450</sup> The comparison of the **קַל נִלְנֵל** ‘the lightly turning cart-wheel’ with the directionless heart of the foolish (**לֵב נִבְלֵל**) precedes this in 33:5a (MS F). As *sofer*, Ben Sira is not unfamiliar with the *merkabah* tradition, which served as a source of inspiration for the circles surrounding Enoch in Jerusalem and the Samaritan tradition.<sup>451</sup>

Ben Sira’s observations concerning the hidden things reveal a high degree of reserve with regard to speculative insights in his portrayal of the work of the *sofer* (39:1–8). In 42:15–43:33 he describes the insight to remember God’s works and to study the hidden things (42:15–19). This same field of tension between human knowledge and divine revelation is also evident in Dan. 1:17; 2:22,30,47. For Ben Sira, the knowledge and mastery of the wheels constitutes a new perspective in the tradition history of the *merkabah* that has found its way into his description of Simon in 50:5b and 9b.

One can conclude, therefore, that Sirach 50 (50:5b,9b,11a,b,22b and 27a) is of significance for the *merkabah* tradition. Ben Sira transcends the boundaries of Tanakh (50:5b)<sup>452</sup> and would appear to be focused

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ophannim. Reference is made to 1 Kgs 19:11–12 in Newsom’s study. Any comparison with Sirach 49–50, however, is lacking. Nevertheless, a connection between ‘his voice’ (50:18a) and the *merkabah* tradition (50:27a) will be apparent.

<sup>449</sup> R.A. Argall, *1 Enoch and Sirach*, SBLEJL 8, Atlanta 1995. Argall argues that there is no dependence between the bearers of the Enoch tradition and Ben Sira, only a degree of familiarity and interaction. He sees Ben Sira as a prominent wise man in Jerusalem (p. 13). His analysis of 50:27–29, however, does not indicate any connection with the *merkabah* tradition.

<sup>450</sup> **הוֹרֵר** cannot be derived from Tanakh. Levy limits himself to **הוֹרֵר** ‘*Umwringung*, *Umkreisung*’ and Clines refers to **הוֹרֵר** as a hapax in Sir. 36:5 (III, p. 193).

<sup>451</sup> R. Bergmeier, ‘Zur Frühdatierung samaritanischer Theologoumena’, *JSS* V.2 (1974) 121–153. Bergmeier makes reference to a Samaritan tradition of the hidden tabernacle (**מִשְׁכָּן**), which has a parallel in 2 Macc. 2:4–8 on Jeremiah’s concealment of the tabernacle, the ark and the altar of fragrant offerings. He refers to Josephus *Ant.* XVIII, 85 as the oldest source for this tradition in which an appeal is made to go up to Mount Gerizim to uncover the sacred vessels that Moses himself is said to have buried there.

<sup>452</sup> J.L. Koole, ‘Die Bibel des Ben-Sira’, in P.A.H. de Boer ed., *כֹּהֵן 1940–1965*, OTS XIV Leiden 1965, 374–396. According to Koole, the Praise of the Fathers concludes the prophetic canon with Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel and the Twelve Minor Prophets. Job is added to the list and Ben Sira considers himself as the gleaner in the vineyard in which the prophets had gathered the first harvest.

on Rosh Hashanah rather than Yom Kippur. Everything related to this Jewish New Year feast is determined by the characteristic accentuation 'remembrance' (50:16d), which leads to a specific knowledge of the hidden things (42:15). It is possible that Ben Sira was one of the few to have shared this knowledge and wisdom concerning the mastery of the wheels with Simon.<sup>453</sup>

Ben Sira sets to work as *sofer* in Sirach 39:1–11, as one who reflects on the Torah and studies wisdom.<sup>454</sup> He is the teacher of wisdom who focuses his attention on the secret things hidden in parables, wisdom, prayer, counsel and insight, in order to meditate on the hidden things of YHWH. In his eyes, such hidden things can only be known to a certain degree (39:19).<sup>455</sup> For YHWH, by contrast, nothing is hidden (καὶ οὐκ ἔστιν κρυβῆναι).<sup>456</sup> In spite of this he determines in 39:32 to write his book. He is an independent author with a keen eye for developments in the faith tradition that took place in the rapidly changing political situation during the reign of Antiochus III.

<sup>453</sup> J. Neusner, 'The Development of the Merkavah Tradition', *JSS* II.2 (1971) 149–160. Neusner limits himself to the rabbinic literature (*Tos.Hag.* 2:1–2) in which Rabbi Yohanan ben Zakkai informs his pupil Eleazar ben Arakh of the need to avoid teaching an individual about the throne chariot if he is not wise and has insufficient control of his own knowledge (p. 151).

<sup>454</sup> J. Marböck, 'Sir 38,24–39,11: Der Schriftgelehrte Weise. Ein Beitrag zur Gestalt und Lehre Ben Siras', in M. Gilbert ed, *La Sagesse de l'Ancien Testament*, Leuven 1979, 293–316.

<sup>455</sup> L.L. Grabbe, 'Poets, Scribes, or Preachers? The Reality of Prophecy in the Second Temple Period' in J.M. Halligan/P.R. Davies eds, *SBL 1998 Seminar Papers Part Two*, Atlanta 1998, 524–545. Grabbe formulates Ben Sira's vision of prophecy and establishes a relationship between Sir. 39:1–3 and 20–21 on the basis of the hidden mysteries characteristic of proverbs and parables. He establishes a further relationship between Isaiah (48:24–25) and Joshua (46:1), the latter succeeding Moses in his prophetic task (p. 530).

<sup>456</sup> A. Shemesh/C. Werman, 'Hidden Things and their Revelation', *RQ* 71 (1998) 409–427. Ben Sira employs the same terms in the Praise of the Creator (42:16,19) to speak of the נסתרות 'hidden things' and the נגלות 'revealed things'. Based on Deut. 29:28, Shemesh and Werman limit their research to the sectarian vision of Qumran in the Damascus Document<sup>d</sup> (CD-A) III.9–20 and the rabbinic vision. The development of the halachah of Deut. 29:28 is thus older and known in the wisdom literature dating from the beginning of the 2nd century BCE. For Ben Sira, the question of the authenticity of the interpretative process is likewise of essential importance (p. 425). This can be determined from the use of the same terminology in Sir. 39:19 (in G) and in the Septuagint τὰ κρυπτὰ κυρίῳ (Deut. 29:28).

**Sir. 50:27b**

Ben Sira mentions his name introduced by the ה *auctoris*.<sup>457</sup> Little unanimity can be detected in the history of exegesis with respect to the name and individual referred to here at the conclusion of the Praise of the Fathers. The problem is further complicated by the anomalous name referred to in 51:30. In our analysis of the results of Ben Sira research, three specific aspects have come to our attention up to the present:

- An author who emerges from his anonymity and provides his name is unique in the literary tradition of Tanakh.
- Traditions in H and G surrounding the name of the author in Sirach 50 are divergent:

*‘Simon, son of Jesus, son of Eleazar, son of Sira’* (B50:27b)<sup>458</sup> and  
*‘Jesus, son of Sirach Eleazar, from Jerusalem’* in G50:27c).

- The concluding verses of Sirach 50 and 51 are more or less in agreement in MS B:

*‘Simon, son of Jesus, son of Eleazar, son of Sira’* (B50:27b) and  
*‘Simon, son of Jesus, called Ben Sira’* only in B51:30f.<sup>459</sup>

In 1899 Schechter defended the name Simon as the real name of Ben Sira against those who maintained the presence of a clerical error and adapted the passage to G and S. In his reaction to this proposal Nöldeke insists that the triple reference to the name Simon in Sirach 50 and the double reference in Sirach 51 is insufficient evidence of authenticity.<sup>460</sup> Lévi notes in 1901 the parallel with

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<sup>457</sup> P. Jouion/T. Muraoka, *A Grammar of Biblical Hebrew*, Roma 1991 (§130b, §133d).

<sup>458</sup> S. Schechter & C. Taylor, *The Wisdom of Ben Sira*, Amsterdam 1979 (p. 65). Schechter notes that Sa’adia Gaon indicates the same pedigree with respect to the ancestors of Ben Sira. Smend notes in addition that Sa’adia mentions Jesus, son of Eleazar in the *Sefer hagalui* and does not only make reference to the son of Sira. Smend insists, however, that it is possible to make reference to a person by providing the name of the grandfather. He offers two familiar examples, the Masoretes Ben Asher and Ben Naphtali, in support of his argument (p. 493).

<sup>459</sup> It is presumed, for the most part, that Sirach 51 was added later as an appendix.

<sup>460</sup> T. Nöldeke, ‘Bemerkungen zum hebräischen Ben Sira’, *ZAW* 20 (1900) 81–94. Customarily Nöldeke argues that the agreement between G and S provides sufficient evidence to maintain that the name Simon from 50:24 found its way into 50:27 and into the conclusion in 51:30 (p. 82).



51:30 and maintains, in spite of S which has 'Jesus, Son of Simeon, called "Bar Asira"', that the name in MS B is nonetheless authentic (p. 216). He bases his argument on an appeal to Sa'adia Gaon and qualifies the interpolation 'son of Sira' as a patronymic. Lévi also maintains the possibility that the first name Jesus has its roots in a birth legend referred to by Ginzberg<sup>461</sup> that serves to illustrate the importance of Ben Sira in the legendary tradition.<sup>462</sup>

The perspective emerges in the discussion between Fitzmyer and Roth that the name Simon was avoided because of its frequent use and later replaced during the Roman period by a patronymic or other epithet such as Bar Kosiba, Bar Giora and Ben Zoma, on account of the patriotic connotations associated with the name Simon.<sup>463</sup> In recent years, Reiterer has opted for the name 'Jes(ch)ua, son of Simon' on the basis of S, to which he gives priority over the H version in MS B.<sup>464</sup> While the name Simon is not customary, the patronymic Ben Sira is. A glance at the survey of divergent exegetical

<sup>461</sup> L. Ginzberg, *The Legends of the Jews*, VI, Philadelphia 1906–1946. Understood as an anti-Christian polemic, the legendary description of Ben Sira's miraculous birth is portrayed in n. 42, which refers to IV, *Jeremiah's Journey to Babylon*' (pp. 310–312). The virgin daughter of Jeremiah is said to have become pregnant in the bath after the prophet was forced to masturbate therein under threat of sodomy. The child born to her was called Ben Sira.

<sup>462</sup> The name שִׁירָא has the same numerical value 271 as יְרֵמְיָהוּ, the latter having become famous on account of his wisdom. Even Nebuchadnezzar was willing to relinquish his throne to him but he refused and his wisdom saved him. This event is also mentioned in a legendary book *'The Alphabet of Ben Sira'*. Such fabled identifications, which are also applied to Jesus and Daniel, indicate a haggadic expansion of the wisdom tradition in which the name Sira continued to be preserved. A recent example can be found in modern literary tradition in H. Mulisch, *De procedure*, Amsterdam 1998, who not only mentions Abraham referring to Shem, the son of Noah, for advice but also Jeremiah referring to his son Ben Sira in the study of the *Sefer Jetsirah* (p. 49).

<sup>463</sup> J.A. Fitzmyer, *Essays on the Semitic Background of the New Testament*, London 1971. In light of Fitzmyer's article 'The name of Simon' (*HTR* 56 (1963) 1–5), C. Roth points to the change of the name Simon of the apostle Peter to 'Simon-Peter' (*HTR* 54 (1961) 91–97). Fitzmyer disagrees with Roth, who defends the *nickname* Peter with an argument based on the frequent use of a patronymic (p. 111), making reference only to Sir. 51:30 (p. 107).

<sup>464</sup> F.V. Reiterer ed., *Bibliographie zu Ben Sira*, BZAW 266, Berlin 1998. In his introduction, Reiterer observes that the name is 'Jes(ch)ua, Sohn des Simon' and that the title of the book is *'die Weisheit des Ben Sira bzw. vom Siraziden'*. He further observes that the two names Jes(ch)ua and Simon are familiar to H, G and S. MS B, however, follows a different sequence: Simon, the son of Jesus. Reiterer solves the Eleazar question by referring to 2 Macc. 6:18–31.



perspectives<sup>465</sup> provided by Reiterer makes it clear that the interchangeable sequence of the names Jes(ch)ua and Simon in MS B and G is an unsolvable problem.<sup>466</sup>

How then should we interpret the name Sira? Krauss was first to publish an article on the matter in 1899. Taking the many autobiographical passages as his point of departure, he raised the question as to whether this unusual name Sira might offer some clues as to the meaning of the book as a whole.<sup>467</sup> He presumes that סִירָא is an abbreviated form of סִירָאָס from the verb אָסַר 'to bind'. The name סִירָא is familiar from the generations of Korah (Ex. 6:24; 1 Chron. 6:22). The prefixed אָ, however, remains a problem.

Ryssel likewise, and simultaneously, focused his attention on the name Sira (p. 234). He refers to the superscription '*The book of Jesus, the son of Simon, the prisoner*', which is transmitted in S, and suggests a possible corruption in light of the Talmud in which the בְּרִיטִירָא is found. The semantic significance of סִירָא alludes only to 'Simon, the prisoner', on account of its suggestion of an enclosed four-sided space, e.g. the kernel of a walnut, the courtyard of a prison or the inner quadrangle of a military garrison.<sup>468</sup> In Tanakh the term סִירָא or סִירָה only occurs in Isa. 34:13 as a 'thorn bush' and in Amos 4:2 בסִירוֹת דוֹנָה as 'with fish hooks'.

Ben Sira's use of symbolic terminology and his apparent knowledge of botany leaves us with the idea that he may have employed the unique name סִירָא as an image or indeed as a form of self-mockery. More than a hunch with respect to the significance of the name, however, remains impossible in light of the limited information we have at our disposal. It is also impossible to determine on the basis of his name alone that Ben Sira was a priest.<sup>469</sup>

<sup>465</sup> M. Gilbert, Jesus Sirach, in E. Dasmann ed., *Reallexikon für Antike und Christentum*, XVII, Stuttgart 1997, 878–906. Gilbert maintains that the problem cannot be solved.

<sup>466</sup> F.V. Reiterer, 'Review of Recent Research on the Book of Ben Sira', in P.C. Beentjes ed., *The Book of Ben Sira in Modern Research*, Berlin 1997, 23–60.

<sup>467</sup> S. Krauss, 'Notes on Sirach', *JQR* 11 (1898/99) 150–158.

<sup>468</sup> M. Jastrow, *A Dictionary of the Targumim, the Talmud Babli and Yerushalmi, and the Midrashic Literature*, Philadelphia 1903. J. Levy, *Wörterbuch über die Talmudim und Midrashim*, Darmstadt 1963.

<sup>469</sup> H. Stadelmann, *Ben Sira als Schriftgelehrter. Eine Untersuchung zum Berufsbild des vor-makkabäischen Sofer unter Berücksichtigung seines Verhältnisses zu Priester-, Propheten- und Weisheitslehrentum*, WUNT 2/6, Tübingen 1981.

As *sofer*<sup>470</sup> and *counsellor*<sup>471</sup> Ben Sira is able to describe Simon the High Priest from close quarters in the context of the temple in Jerusalem. A significant degree of contact with Simon can thus be presumed. As *sofer*, wisdom teacher and educator he may have contributed to the instruction of Simon's sons by introducing them to the trustworthy ways of the Fathers. He was aware of the consequences of the division of the people once unified around the temple into rival factions based on different claims to the authentic interpretation of Torah. He made a contribution to the liturgical formation of the feasts (Rosh Hashanah) and reacted to the claims of the Samaritans. He was familiar with Hellenism in relation to his knowledge of wisdom. He became acquainted with new modes of thought via the younger generation. In his lifetime, the enormous influence of the Tobiads on economic affairs in the land tended to distract from the theological conflict with the Samaritans, given that the organisational order and economic responsibility for the temple was in the hands of Simon the High Priest.

Ben Sira is a lively and many-sided figure who describes Simon with a deep sense of solidarity in colourful and imaginative terms and in a style of writing that reveals polemical overtones. For those familiar with the Scriptures his perspectives must have been surprisingly new. He himself had a profound knowledge of the Scriptures, oral law, history and nature, whereby he was able to familiarise himself with new ideas concerning the Torah and wisdom and human nature in all its magnificence and glory. He reflected on the revelation of YHWH on the basis of new insights, practised creative forms of prayer, associated the visionary images of the Enoch group with the priestly service, avoided speculation about the future, approached the expectations of Isaiah with a positive disposition, rooted in a sense of hope and trust in God. He stimulated unity among the people and wisely avoided reference to Ezra, taking a stand against the latter's particularistic line of thought. He surveyed

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<sup>470</sup> J. Marböck, 'Sir. 38,24–39,11: Der schriftgelehrte Weise. Ein Beitrag zu Gestalt und Lehre Ben Siras', in M. Gilbert ed., *La Sagesse de l'Ancien Testament*, Leuven 1979, 293–316. Marböck summarises Ben Sira's attitude under a number of themes: the wise man as *sofer*, freedom, 'engagement total' (p. 300), religious aspects of the fear of YHWH, study and prayer, the spirit of insight (pp. 301ff.).

<sup>471</sup> P.A.H. de Boer, 'The Counsellor', in FS H.H. Rowley, *Wisdom in Israel and in the Ancient Near East*, Leiden 1955, 42–71.

all things in pairs, bridged diverse oppositions, tested everything according to the values that had been entrusted to him and integrated the limitations of the human person in an attitude of faith based on the fear of YHWH.

### Sir. 50:27c,d

Both cola are introduced by אֲשֶׁר and two different forms of the verb נָבַע. Given the fact that 50:27b and 27d are lacking in S and depart considerably from the Hebrew text in G, Peters suggests in his 1902 commentary that we emend 27b to read הָלֹו לְבִי נֹבַע בַּכְּתוּב הַלֹו לְבִי *'sprudelt mein Herz hervor in diesem Buche'*. In 1913, however, he withdrew this suggestion. Smend would also appear to be uncomfortable with the two forms of the verb נָבַע. He reads the first (27c) as נִבְּא *'was er [Göttliches verkündete] in der Deutung seines Herzens'*.

Lévi, Segal, Ben-Hayyim and Beentjes read the verb as a perfect *pi'el* 3p.s.m. נִבְּע *'he makes known'* in the sense that Ben Sira makes the mastery of the wheels crystal clear based on his unique knowledge thereof (Ps. 78:2b). Smend correctly points out that the lack of an occurrence of the verb elsewhere in the *pi'el* constitutes a problem. The aim of the text is clearly to accent the uniqueness of his knowledge and to reinforce this via the parallelism. The second form (27d) in the perfect *hiph'il* 3p.s.m. הִבְּיעַ means *'he caused to effervesce'*. The semantic significance of the expression has to do with the effervescence of water bubbling from a well (Ps. 19:3; 119:171; 145:7; Prov. 18:4) or the pouring out of the spirit (Prov. 1:23) and of evil (Prov. 15:2,28 and Qoh. 10:1). This image is also evidently preferred in the wisdom of Ben Sira (10:13; 16:25; 42:14 and 43:2). The meaning נָבַע *'to make known'*, however, lacks the dynamic character of *'to bring forth'* in the *pi'el* and *'to cause to effervesce'* in the *hiph'il*, the latter expressing the vibrant character of the teaching process. As *sofer* Ben Sira remains acting subject and the two perfect forms of the verb נָבַע typify his teaching style.

The majority of exegetes (Lévi, Ryssel, Smend, Box, Di Lella, Sauer) follow Schechter who is reluctant to place ך after לָב and presupposes לָבוּ *from his heart*. The facsimile, however, is unequivocal at this juncture with לָבֵן, which deserves preference as the *lectio difficilior* (3.1.3). A completely different translation emerges in combination with בַּפְתוֹר to the compromise solution proposed by Lévi *'comme l'Euphrate'*, the latter being well aware that his translation does not help to clarify Ben Sira's concluding statement. The colon is lack-

ing in S. The term is usually derived from the verb פָּהַר 'to explain, to clarify', which is employed in Genesis 40 and 41 in relation to the explanation of Joseph's dream.<sup>472</sup> In terms of syntax, an infinitive c. with preposition ב follows the perfect *pi'el* of נָבַע, a construction that renders 'bringing forth' and 'explaining' as simultaneous. In combination with the reading לָבוּ one can imagine an explanation on the part of Ben Sira that comes from deep within, as befits a *sofer* who participates in the learning process with heart and soul. Di Lella thus paraphrases 'who poured them out from his understanding heart'. The repetition of לָבוּ (28b) in the concluding statement, however, remains unlikely. The term לָבֵן introduces a different quality to Ben Sira's explanation, making it 'pure, unadulterated'. At issue here is Joseph's question with respect to the explanation of dreams לְאֱלֹהִים פְּתָרִים הֲלוֹא 'does not interpretation belong to God?' (Gen. 40:8). Our interpretation 'to elucidate', therefore, appropriately renders the character of this indescribable secret knowledge.

The repetition of אִשֶּׁר in a relative subordinate clause in 50:27d serves to place the accent on Ben Sira as subject.

The author regularly employs the term הַבִּינָה 'insights' as a *terminus technicus* (4:24; 14:20,21; 15:3,15; 44:3; 45:5d). Passages from elsewhere in his book continue to have an echo in his concluding benediction: e.g. the allusion to 14:20 and the free quotation from 45:5d : תּוֹרַת הַיּוֹם וְהַבִּינָה 'the Torah of life and insight' in 50:27d and 28c.

### Sir. 50:28a

Synonymous parallelism is evident between the first two cola with an impersonal subject אִישׁ in 3p.s.m. and the third colon with an asyndetic causal subordinate clause<sup>473</sup> introduced by כִּי. By way of an apotheosis, the fear of YHWH resounds in relation to הַיּוֹם.

The form of the blessing with אִשֶּׁר אִישׁ (50:28a) appears for the fourth time in the book of Ben Sira. The author employs the expression of a beatitude to begin the second part of his work (14:1,2,20). Such terminology is not exceptional in the context of male-female

<sup>472</sup> P.C. Beentjes, 'Jesus Sirach 38:1–15\* Problemen rondom een symbool', *BTFT* 41 (1980) 260–265. The verb פָּהַר 'to make known' is more familiar than פָּרְשָׂה 'diagnosis' (38:14b).

<sup>473</sup> S.E. Fassberg, 'On the Syntax of Dependent Clauses in Ben Sira', in T. Muraoka/J. Elwolde eds, *The Hebrew of the Dead Sea Scrolls and Ben Sira*, Leiden 1997, 56–71. Fassberg refers to examples of asyndetic relative clauses following אִשֶּׁר in MS A 14:1,2,20 and in MS B 34:8 and 50:28.

relations (25:8; 26:1). In 31:8 (G34:8), however, in which the human person is to be considered happy when he is found perfect (תמים), as was the case with Enoch (44:16) and Noah (44:17), the usage is somewhat unusual.

The text of Sir. 14:20: אֲשֶׁרִי אֲנוֹשׁ בַּחֲכָמָה יִהְיֶה וּבַחֲבוּנָה יִשְׁעָה *happy the person who meditates on wisdom and has regard for insight*' (MS A) is virtually identical to the concluding sentence in 50:28a with the exception of the reference בְּאֵלֶּה 'on these things'. The fact that 'these things' are not further elaborated serves to place the verb הִנָּה 'to silently consider' in a general context (50:28a),<sup>474</sup> referring to what was said in the preceding verse 50:27a–d.<sup>475</sup>

The term אֲשֶׁרִי is employed in the Praise of the Fathers with respect to three other individuals:

- the man Moses, who found favour in the sight of all living beings (44:23f.),
- the judges who are known by name but remain unidentified (46:11),
- the man Goliath, experienced in battle, who was defeated by David (47:5).

Further research into the context of the blessing אֲשֶׁרִי אֲשֶׁרִי in the book of Ben Sira reveals parallels with H31:8–11, a text which has tended to go unnoticed in recent research<sup>476</sup> on account of the highly divergent G version.<sup>477</sup>

Sir. 31:8–11 can be characterised as a didactic speech, beginning with the beatitude אֲשֶׁרִי אֲשֶׁרִי *'Happy the person . . . !'* followed by a four-fold repetition of the rhetorical question מִי הוּא (Who is he?)

<sup>474</sup> Semantic analysis of הִנָּה suggests 'cooing (of doves), murmuring to oneself in thought and reading in a subdued voice'. The combination with ב 'to dwell upon' is relatively rare. Ben Sira employs the verb for reflection on the commandments (6:37) and for the groaning of the heart (43:18).

<sup>475</sup> F. García Martínez, *The Dead Sea Scrolls Translated*, Leiden 1994. The *Damascus Document*<sup>a</sup> (CD-A, XIII.2 and XIV.7–8) allude to סֵפֶר הַהֲנוּה 'the Book of HAGY (Meditation)' (pp. 43–44). This was understood to be a holy book, which was the subject of study in Qumran from youth to old age. An experienced priest was to serve as a guide in this regard.

<sup>476</sup> P.C. Beentjes ed., *The Book of Ben Sira in Modern Research*, Berlin 1997. This important passage is not mentioned in the index. In spite of the fact that the title וַיִּן יְהוֹדוּ מוֹסֵר לָהֶם follows thereupon on page IV recto, the verse is likewise not to be found in the various proposed subdivisions of the book Sirach.

<sup>477</sup> Smend considers אֲשֶׁרִי to be original (p. 276). While Di Lella's commentary is entirely based on G, the general theme tends to be oriented towards riches, well-being and property (p. 379).

(31:9a,10a,10c,10g).<sup>478</sup> These rhetorical questions are twice further explained in the following colon introduced by כִּי (31:9b,10c) and answered in 31:10b,10d,10f. The final conclusion follows after על כֵּן (11a). Three cola end with the key word תַּפְאֵרָה (31:10b,d,f).

Ben Sirā invites his audience in this context to provide their own answer.

Agreement with Sirach 50 in terms of content is significant:

- הפְּלִיאָ לַעֲשׂוֹהָ *'he does wonders'* (31:9a) and its parallel in 50:22b: המְּפַלֵּיאָ לַעֲשׂוֹהָ *'He who works wonders on earth'* with YHWH as subject.
- תַּפְאֵרָה as noun in 31:10b,d,f is in agreement with 50:1a, 11a.

Besides the unique word combination of שְׁלוֹמִים with הֵייוּ (31:10c,e), שְׁלוֹמִים as noun in 31:10b,c,e and as verb (imperfect c. qal) שְׁלַם *'to fulfil'* in 31:10e have a parallel in the doxology (50:23b) and in the concluding statement (50:28c). Life, peace and blessing determine the content of the questions.

The change of subject in אֶהְיֶה לְךָ לַתַּפְאֵרָה *'I shall be there for you as glory'* (31:10d) is intriguing on account of the 1p.s. The identity of this 1p.s. is treated in the following question: מִי בֵרַכְוּ וַיִּשְׁלַם הֵייוּ *'Who is it who blesses him and fulfils his life?'* (31:10e).

Ben Sirā consciously leaves out the answer in his didactic speech, his use of rhetorical questions serving to invite the audience to provide their own answer. H31:8–11 would appear to be an authentic fragment of a dialogue between Ben Sirā and his disciples in the context of his teaching concerning the core of his wisdom.

In summary:

In the didactic speech (H31:8–11) we discover that the blessing of peace has its fulfilment in the glory (תַּפְאֵרָה) that is bestowed by God in the life of every human person. This aside, however, life in the present verse (50:28c) is founded in the fear of YHWH and is aimed at the concretisation of such glory (49:16; 50:1) in human lives (תַּפְאֵרָה). Simon serves as the example par excellence and Ben Sirā is conscious without doubt of the need to live as the אֲשֶׁרֵי אִישׁ by dwelling on 'these things'.

<sup>478</sup> E. Puech, '4Q525 et les péripécopes des Béatitudes en Ben Sirā et Matthieu', *RB* XCVIII (1991) 80–116.

**Sir. 50:28b**

The theme is determined by the verb **הכם** ‘to be wise’. The word combination **נתן על לבו** is not found elsewhere in Tanakh although the combination of **על-לבו** with **שים** ‘to determine’ in the book of Daniel (1:8) and the expression **נחה את-לבוך** ‘you have set your heart upon’ (Dan. 10:12) exhibit some degree of affinity therewith. Ben Sira formulates his concluding statement in his own style, rooted in the wisdom tradition that shares significant terminology with Daniel. In 50:28b the author makes use of a participle **נתן** and an imperfect *gal* 3p.s.m. of the verb **הכם** in combination with **לבו**.

This terminology echoes that found in the doxology (50:23a) which states that God **הכמת לבב** grants the wisdom that emerges in the heart of the human person. Ben Sira employs a different syntactical link with **לבו הכמת** in the demarcation text of the exhortatory blessing (45:26a) in order to describe the wisdom that comes from the heart of YHWH. Interchange of actant is typical of the author’s writing style.

The significance of **לבו על ונותן** in 50:28b serves as a variation on the same theme. The human person is subject 3p.s.m. of the verb **הכם**, which in the imperfect *gal* form means ‘to be/become wise’. By setting the heart on wisdom, Ben Sira signals a resilient and enduring life option. Wisdom is not a future acquisition but rather a durative present condition ‘being wise’. It is for this reason that we translate 50:28b: ‘he who sets his heart on them is wise’.

**Sir. 50:28c**

The causative subordinate clause, introduced by **כי**,<sup>479</sup> contains the word combination **יראה** ‘the fear of YHWH’ that determines the beginning of Ben Sira’s book of wisdom in 1:8,18 and its end 50:28c. As a topos of the wisdom tradition **יראה** is well known throughout Tanakh.

This word combination is found in a verbal form (15:1,13; 16:4; 32:16; 33:1 and 43:2) and as a noun (10:22 and 16:2). The fear of YHWH is more a source of joy than of riches and power (40:26). In his typically imaginative style, Ben Sira compares the fear of

<sup>479</sup> M.Z. Kaddari, ‘The Syntax of **כי** in the Language of Ben Sira’, in T. Muraoka/J.F. Elwolde eds, *The Hebrew of the Dead Sea Scrolls and Ben Sira*, Leiden 1997, 87–91. Kaddari notes the positive recommendation in Sir. 50:28, although he refers here to 50:29.

YHWH with the garden of Eden and every possible glory that can 'cover a person' (40:27). Haspecker maintains this to be a summary form of the primary theme.<sup>480</sup>

The concept חיים *'life'* occurs roughly 40 times in the book of Ben Sira and serves as a key word for the understanding of the essential goal of his teaching.

This is most evident at the beginning of the Praise of the Fathers: :וְדָרֹרָהּ [וְדָרֹרָהּ] חַי לְדֹר וְדֹר וְשֵׁם חַי *'their name lives from generation to generation'* (44:14), in the comparison with the glory of Adam that extends beyond every created being כֹּל חַי (49:16) and here in the concluding statement (50:28c) with the pithy and concise חיים!

### 3.4 *Translation of the Hebrew Version* *Sir. 50:1–28*

- 1 Highly esteemed among his brothers and the glory of his people  
is Simon, the Son of Jochanan, the priest,  
since during his ministry the house [of God] was inspected  
and he, in his days, restored the temple.
- 2 Since, in his time, a reservoir was dug out,  
with a dividing wall therein on account of the water flow.
- 3 Moreover, in his days, a wall was built  
[with] fortress towers for a royal palace.
- 4 It is he who takes care of his people against robbery  
and he makes his city stronger than the enemy.
- 5 How glorious is he when he looks out of the tent  
and comes out of the house of the veil,
- 6 as a luminous star in the midst of the clouds,  
as the full moon determining the festal days,
- 7 as the sun brightly rising over the royal palace,  
as the rainbow which manifests itself in the clouds,
- 8 as flowering sprigs in the springtime,  
as a lily on the flowing streams of water,  
as a shoot from Lebanon in the days of summer,
- 9 as ardour of incense on the food offering,  
as golden vessels according to the proposed pattern  
knowing himself bound by the stones of prosperity

<sup>480</sup> J. Haspecker, *Gottesfurcht bei Jesus Sirach*, AnBib 30, Rome 1967.



- 10 as a luxuriant olive full of ripe fruit,  
as an olive willow that refreshes its branches.
- 11 When he robes himself in a garment of eminence  
and clothes himself in a vestment of glory,  
when he ascends towards the raised altar  
and bestows splendour on the walled enclosure of the sanctuary,
- 12 when he takes the portions from the hands of his brothers  
then he is the one who presides at the order of worship  
[of the sacrifice].  
Around him a crown of sons,  
as seedlings of the cedars in Lebanon  
and they encircle him as willows from the river bank
- 13 all the sons of Aaron in their splendour  
with burnt offerings for YHWH in their hands  
in front of the whole assembly of Israel.
- 14 Until he has finished serving at the altar  
and arranging the order of worship of the Most High.
- 16a Then they blow, the sons of Aaron, the priests,  
on the trumpets of hammered metal  
and while they blow they sound a mighty flourish,  
to summon the remembrance of the Most High.
- 17 All people together hurry along speedily  
and they fall prostrate to the ground  
to worship before the face of the Most High,  
before the face of the Holy One of Israel.
- 18 And He raises his voice in the song,  
and above the thunderous noise they [all] esteem his light
- 19 and they rejoice, all the people of the land,  
in prayer before the face of the Merciful One.  
Until he is finished with the service of the altar,  
and his prescriptions he brings to his goal.
- 20 Thereafter he descends and raises his hands  
over the entire congregation of Israel,  
the blessing of YHWH on his lips  
and in the name of YHWH he reveals his glory.
- 21 And once again they fall down, a second time  
[*the blessed of God*] before his face.
- 22 Now bless YHWH, the God of Israel  
who works wonders on earth.

- He who advances humankind from the womb  
and deals with him according to his kindness.
- 23 He gives you wisdom of heart  
and He will be in peace in your midst.
- 24 Abiding is his mercy towards Simon  
and the covenant with Phinehas will stand firm for him,  
which shall not be broken for him and for his descendants  
as long as the days of the heavens endure.
- 25 Two peoples my soul detests  
and the third, that is a non-nation:  
26 the inhabitants of Seir and Philistea  
and the foolish people that wanders in Shechem.
- 27 Instruction concerning insight and the mastery of the wheels,  
by Simon, son of Jesus, son of Eleazar, son of Sirach,  
which he brings forth in pure elucidation,  
which he causes to effervesce in insights.
- 28 Happy the person who dwells on these things  
and he who sets his heart on them is wise,  
for the fear of YHWH is life.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### SIMON IN THE GREEK VERSION OF JESUS SIRACH

#### 4.1 *The Greek text*

The Greek version (G) of the Praise of the Fathers has the same structure as that of H although it differs from the latter in a number of places on the level of content. In order to facilitate comparison with H, the exegesis of G follows the same arrangement. A second Greek translation (GII) has not survived in its entirety in manuscript form. Only minuscule L248 contains references to GII of which Smend provides a survey.<sup>1</sup> Segal has developed an evolutionary model to distinguish GI from GII.<sup>2</sup> GII is demonstrable in the Praise of the Fathers in 50:29. Ziegler's text edition serves as the basis for our exegetical analysis.<sup>3</sup>

#### 4.1.1 *The grandson's translation activity*

In the prologue to his work, the grandson states Ben Sira's intentions (1–14). He apologises in advance and encourages everyone to be observant in their reading, admitting that in spite of his best efforts he has been unable to render the Hebrew of the original perfectly in his translation (15–22). He likewise points out that the same is apparently true for translations of the Torah, the Prophets and other Writings (23–27). The translation was completed and published (28–36) in the 38th year of the reign of King Euergetes (132 BCE). Scholars differ considerably on the question of the grandson's knowledge of Hebrew and indeed of Greek for that matter.<sup>4</sup> Smend presumes

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<sup>1</sup> R. Smend, *Die Weisheit des Jesus Sirach*, Berlin 1906 (pp. IC–CXIII).

<sup>2</sup> M.H. Segal, 'The Evolution of the Hebrew Text of Ben Sira', *JQR* 25 (1934/1935) 91–149.

<sup>3</sup> J. Ziegler, *Sapientia Jesu Filii Sirach*, Septuaginta XII/2, Göttingen 1980/2 (p. 74).

<sup>4</sup> L.H. Feldman, 'How much Hellenism in Jewish Palestine', *HUCA* LVII (1986) 83–111. Feldman suggests that Hengel has overestimated Hellenistic influence (p. 97). He presupposes that the grandson resided for a while in Egypt although he maintains that "Sira is a work definitely emanating from the Land of Israel."

that he was familiar with the Septuagint, which served as a dictionary for his translation: "Oft genug kommt er aber auch über wörtliche Unbeholfenheit nicht hinaus" (p. LXIII). Wright denies such dependence and concludes that the grandson offers a free translation.<sup>5</sup> Ziegler explains the problematic character of the transmission of G48:17: "In Sirach steht die Zahl der Emendationen und Konjekturen unter allen Büchern der Septuaginta an der Spitze" (p. 75).

He notes in addition that the problem of a 'free translation' in G has its roots in the various *Vorlagen* in H and that one should be careful with the term 'free'.

#### 4.1.2 *The relationship between G and the Urtext*

G serves as the primary source for about one third of research into the book of Sirach. This is not the case with respect to Sirach 44–50 for which MS B and (partly) M are available to us. In spite of the fact that G is an, albeit primary, translation, a number of exegetes tend to base themselves thereon even when H is available. The traditional preference for G has also given rise to a number of endeavours to establish the *Urtext* on the basis of G and S.

Reiterer's research typifies this approach to the study of Sirach. In search of the *Urtext* he compares H with the textual witness of S, G and L with respect to 44:16–45:26.<sup>6</sup> On the basis of Peters' prolegomena,<sup>7</sup> S is given priority over G although this is not demonstrated with much conviction.<sup>8</sup> Agreement between G and H in MS B and (partly) in M (44:16–17a) by contrast is quite significant. His

<sup>5</sup> B.G. Wright, *No Small Difference, Sirach's Relationship to Its Hebrew Parent Text*, SBLSCS 26, Atlanta 1989. The issue of free or literal translation is based on the discussion between Barr and Tov in which 4 perspectives for further research are of significance: 1. *word order*, 2. *segmentation*, 3. *quantitative representation*, 4. *lexical representation* (p. 10). Wright observes strikingly little dependence on the Septuagint (p. 173f.).

<sup>6</sup> F.V. Reiterer, «*Urtext*» und Übersetzungen, *Sprachstudie über Sir 44,16–45,26 als Beitrag zur Sirachforschung*, St. Ottilien 1980.

<sup>7</sup> N. Peters, *Der jüngst wieder aufgefundene hebräische Text des Buches Ecclesiasticus*, Freiburg i.B. 1902. Peters notes in his prolegomena: "daß Syr. mit seiner Vorlage zwischen T. (die ursprüngliche Lesart) und der Vorlage des Gr. steht, so daß sein Text sich als Weiterentwicklung des Textes der Vorlage des Gr. charakterisiert, während T. ihm gegenüber als jüngere Textesform erscheint" (p. 72\*). This prioritisation of S is valid for the entire book.

<sup>8</sup> R. Smend, *Die Weisheit des Jesu Sirach erklärt*, Berlin 1906. He argues: "Die Übersetzung des Sirach ist wohl das schlechteste Übersetzungswerk der syrischen Bibel" (p. CXXXVII).

presupposition that the (relatively) most original H tradition lies at the foundations of G is open to argument.

### 1. Codicological arguments:

- Reiterer considers the three cola in H44:16 to be exceptionally long and on the basis of G he judges נמצא המים to be an addition. The priority of H is to be based on the catch-line 18 B XIII recto that serves as a point of demarcation. The omission of Enoch in M44:16a,b and in S indicates that variants in H are conceivable at an early stage on account of his controversial position (49:14).
- In H45:20a Smend suggests we read [וַיִּשְׁנֶה] 'And he doubled' as a retro-translation of προσέθηκεν in G in imperfectum c. *qal* שנה 'to do something for a second time' that is related to a person, in this case Aaron, who sees God's glory (Num. 17:18). Reiterer follows Lévi, Peters, Segal and Vattioni with [וַיִּסְתַּף] 'and he multiplied', presupposing a ך finalis obscured by a tear or fracture. The facsimile, however, shows no evidence of this. In addition, his method of comparing S, G and L with H remains insufficient without an examination of the facsimile with respect to 45:20c, 22a, 22c, 22d (B XV).

### 2. Theological arguments:

- In G45:6b the expression ἀδελφὸν αὐτοῦ 'his brother' is an addition intended to explain the position of Aaron relative to Moses, which Reiterer considers a gloss. It goes without saying that while Aaron belonged to the tribe of Levi, his name is not found in Tanakh in direct association to the expression לַמִּטָּה לְוִי 'from the tribe of Levi'. Reiterer borrows the significance of the expression from the parallel in Num. 17:16–28 H and notes the double meaning of מִטָּה 'tribe' and 'staff'. He nevertheless ignores the translation 'by the staff of Levi' in order to accentuate קדוֹשׁ 'the Holy One', who exalted Aaron (3.2.2).
- Reiterer further argues that the addition of ἱερατεῖαν λαοῦ 'the priesthood of the people' in G45:7b suggests an interpretation dating from the Hasmonean period. Since the expression is otherwise unknown, he considers the emendation to be a conscious *Umdeutung*, although he excludes any political dimension. Based on the priority of H, however, the theological importance of this interpolation becomes clear: the people bestowed the High Priestly dignity on Simon the Maccabean in 140 BCE.

I conclude, therefore, that Reiterer's research into the relationship between H, S, G and L has run adrift on the formality of his approach to these versions (see 1.4). The desirability of content-based arguments is only mentioned in passing in his concluding *Rückblick und Ausblick* (p. 251). From the perspective of methodology, efforts to establish the *Urtext* have turned out to be of little value for exegesis.<sup>9</sup> In the recent discussion surrounding the Hebrew of Ben Sira in comparison with the literature of Qumran and the Mishnah Reiterer insists:

Es wurden kaum widerlegbare Argumente für originales Hebräisch vorgebracht. Es scheint klar zu werden, daß Sira ein hervorragender Repräsentant einer späten Sprachstufe ist.<sup>10</sup>

In the present study we opt to take H as our point of departure followed by G. Based on existing research<sup>11</sup> we propose 4 guiding criteria for the exegesis of the demarcation texts and of Sirach 50 in the Greek version:

1. Establishment of the text and text-critical options based on Ziegler's edition;
2. The observation of variations based on interpolation, omission, variant syntax and delimitation;
3. The observation of descriptive differences rooted in variant word order, interpolation and omission;
4. The observation of thematic variations.

#### 4.2 *Demarcation in Sirach 44–49*

The structure of the Praise of the Fathers in G follows that of H. G consists of 498 cola and H of 502 written over 244 lines.

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<sup>9</sup> N. Peters, *Das Buch Jesus Sirach oder Ecclesiasticus*, Münster 1913. Peters notes in his 1913 *Vorwort*: "Auf die nach Lage der Dinge immer zum guten Teile hypothetisch bleibende Rekonstruktion des Urtextes, wie in meinem Buche von 1902, bin ich in diesem Kommentar weniger ausgegangen. Der erste Zweck war die Erklärung der überlieferten Texte."

<sup>10</sup> F.V. Reiterer ed., *Bibliographie zu Ben Sira*, BZAW 266, Berlin 1998 (p. 25).

<sup>11</sup> A. Minissale, *La versione greca del Siracide*, AnBib 133, Rome 1995. Minissale studies the translation of G from H based on the technique of Targum and Midrash.

4.2.1 *Sir. 44:1–15 Introduction*

Πατέρων ὕμνος

- 1a Αινέσωμεν δὴ ἄνδρας ἐνδόξους  
 1b καὶ τοὺς πατέρας ἡμῶν τῇ γενέσει·  
 2a πολλὴν δόξαν ἔκτισεν ὁ κύριος,  
 2b τὴν μεγαλωσύνην αὐτοῦ ἀπ' αἰῶνος.  
 3a κυριεύοντες ἐν ταῖς βασιλείαις αὐτῶν  
 3b καὶ ἄνδρες ὀνομαστοὶ ἐν δυνάμει·  
 3c βουλευόντες ἐν συνέσει αὐτῶν,  
 3d ἀπηγγελκότες ἐν προφητείαις·  
 4a ἠγούμενοι λαοῦ ἐν διαβουλίαις  
 4b καὶ συνέσει γραμματείας λαοῦ,  
 4c σοφοὶ λόγοι ἐν παιδείᾳ αὐτῶν·  
 5a ἐκζητοῦντες μέλη μουσικῶν  
 5b καὶ διηγούμενοι ἔπη ἐν γραφῇ·  
 6a ἄνδρες πλούσιοι κεχορηγημένοι ἐν ἰσχύι,  
 6b εἰρηνεύοντες ἐν κατοικίαις αὐτῶν·  
 7a πάντες οὗτοι ἐν γενεαῖς ἐδοξάσθησαν,  
 7b καὶ ἐν ταῖς ἡμέραις αὐτῶν καύχημα.  
 8a εἰσὶν αὐτῶν οἱ κατέλιπον ὄνομα  
 8b τοῦ ἐκδιηγῆσασθαι ἐπαίνους·  
 9a καὶ εἰσὶν ὧν οὐκ ἔστιν μνημόσυνον  
 9b καὶ ἀπώλοντο ὡς οὐχ ὑπάρξαντες  
 9c καὶ ἐγένοντο ὡς οὐ γεγονότες  
 9d καὶ τὰ τέκνα αὐτῶν μετ' αὐτούς.  
 10a ἀλλ' ἢ οὗτοι ἄνδρες ἐλέους,  
 10b ὧν αἱ δικαιοσύναι οὐκ ἐπελήσθησαν·  
 11a μετὰ τοῦ σπέρματος αὐτῶν διαμενεῖ,  
 11b ἀγαθὴ κληρονομία ἔκγονα αὐτῶν·  
 12a ἐν ταῖς διαθήκαις<sup>12</sup> ἔστι σπέρμα αὐτῶν  
 12b καὶ τὰ τέκνα αὐτῶν δι' αὐτούς·  
 13a ἕως αἰῶνος μενεῖ σπέρμα αὐτῶν,  
 13b καὶ ἡ δόξα αὐτῶν οὐκ ἐξαλειφθήσεται·  
 14a τὰ σώματα αὐτῶν ἐν εἰρήνῃ ἐτάφη,  
 14b καὶ τὸ ὄνομα αὐτῶν ζῆ εἰς γενεάς·  
 15a σοφίαν αὐτῶν διηγῆσονται λαοί,  
 15b καὶ τὸν ἔπαινον ἐξαγγελεῖ ἐκκλησία.

## Praise of the Fathers

- 1a Let us now praise the men of renown  
1b and our fathers from the beginning.  
2a Much glory has the Lord accomplished,  
2b his greatness from eternity.  
3a Rulers in their kingdoms  
3b and men know by name because of [their] vigour,  
3c counsellors with their insight,  
3d preachers by way of prophecies.  
4a Leaders of the people in the deliberations  
4b and teachers of the people by [their] insight,  
4c eloquent wise men in their teaching.  
5a Researchers of the composition of music,  
5b compilers of narratives in books.  
6a Men rich in influence on account of their power,  
6b creators of peace in their residences.  
7a All these were honoured by their contemporaries  
7b and were renowned in their days.  
8a Some of them have left a name behind,  
8b whereby [their] praise is passed on.  
9a But there are others for whom there is no remembrance  
9b and they have vanished as if they never existed  
9c and they have become as if they never were,  
9d just like their children after them.  
10a The first, however, are the men who perform good deeds,  
10b whose righteousnesses are not forgotten,  
11a among their posterity it holds firm [in the covenants],  
11b their descendants are the good inheritance.  
12a In the covenants<sup>12</sup> their posterity stood fast  
12b and their children on account of them.  
13a To eternity their posterity shall remain  
13b and their glory shall not be wiped out.  
14a Their bodies are buried in peace  
14b and their name lives from generation to generation.  
15a Their wisdom shall be handed down by the peoples  
15b and [their] praise the community proclaims.



*Interpretation*

The versions exhibit a number of typical variations. Sir. 44:3a,b is to be found in MS B and G and is lacking in M. 44:4d is missing in G, whereby the unity of the twelve groups (3a–6b) is disrupted. 44:12a,b is present in M and G but not in MS B. L248 offers an alternative reading, which Ziegler includes and designates as 12 in the middle of 44:12a, since the latter would otherwise be too short. 44:15 is documented in G as well as in M and Bmargin. The translator abbreviates the title to read *‘Praise of the Fathers’*, the concept עולם as a determinative of quality being difficult to render in Greek.

The characteristic cohortative נא אהללה in H44:1a is translated as a 1p.pl., in order to harmonise with the praise in the introduction. The change of person from 1p.s. to 1p.pl. thus provides the call to praise with a more general quality. From the beginning of the Praise of the Fathers, G abandons the personal element in the cohortative. This is not the case, however, with respect to Sir. 33:19; 39:12–13; 42:15 and 51:1. This serves as an indication of the unique position ascribed to the Praise of the Fathers in the book of Sirach as a whole.

The translation of אנשי הסדר with ἄνδρες ἐνδόξους in 44:1a and with ἄνδρες ἐλέους in 44:10a reveals just how complicated the task of the translator had become at a time when the Chassidim had come to organise themselves more and more into groups.

The terms כבוד (44:2a,13b in M) and תפארה (44:7b) are dulled somewhat in translation with δόξα *‘glory’* and κάχημα *‘renown’*.<sup>12</sup> Both concepts also have a negative connotation in Greek, the former suggesting *‘pretence’* and the latter *‘boasting’*. The theological dimension does not have a role to play in the semantics of these Greek concepts, although it does emerge under the influence of the Septuagint. The reading of MS B is confirmed by G44:2a which takes YHWH as the subject of the verb הלק.<sup>13</sup> The most striking difference is

<sup>12</sup> D.A. DeSilva, ‘The Wisdom of Ben Sira: Honor, Shame, and the Maintenance of the Values of a Minority Culture’, *CBQ* 58 (1996) 433–455. DeSilva maintains that both concepts *‘honour’* and *‘glory’* had a moral value in Hellenism, alluding to Sir. 1:11–14 in which the concepts δόξα and κάχημα both stand in relation to the fear of the Lord.

<sup>13</sup> P.W. Skehan, ‘Staves, Nails, and Scribal Slips (Ben Sira 44,2–5)’, *BASOR* 200 (1970) 66–71. Di Lella adopts Skehan’s vision in *The Wisdom of Ben Sira*, New York 1987 (p. 498), in contrast to Lévi, Smend, Peters, Segal and Minissale (p. 130). Y. Yadin, *The Ben Sira Scroll from Masada*, Jerusalem 1965 (p. 36) proposes an emended reading במשמחה meaning: *‘speakers of proverbs at the festive gatherings where they recite their wise sayings’*.

evident in the fact that by omitting H44:4d G mentions only eleven professional groups. Ben Sira introduces the Praise of the Fathers from within a general context with the intention of concretising the magnificence of the human person. God's attribution of magnificence to human persons is lost, however, in G. The latter focuses primarily on the actions of God that bring about glory. Ben Sira's grandson completely omits *במשמרוהם ומושלים* 'the masters of the rules of service' (44:4d). It is possible that the significance of this expression for the temple service was beyond the grandson's conceptual horizon. Indeed, he similarly tends to place specific knowledge in a more general context elsewhere (50:27a). This phenomenon is found in G44:15a, in which the universal significance of wisdom is given prominence and is transmitted by *λαοί* 'peoples' in contrast to M (*עדה*) and B-margin (*קהל*).<sup>14</sup>

The contrast between 'some' and 'others' determines the content of H44:8–15 with the help of the 'living name' (44:8a,14b) and the 'continued remembrance' of their descendants (44:9a,13a). Remembrance is an elementary concept in Ben Sira's line of thought, as is apparent from his accentuation of Rosh Hashanah as the day of remembrance in 50:16d (3.3.4, Excursus II).

The expression *σπέρμα αὐτῶν* 'their posterity' is employed after 11a in both 12a and 13a, shifting the emphasis from active remembrance to the descendants themselves who continue to eternity. The source of this shift of meaning lies in G44:8b. The grandson employs an infinitive aorist pas. *ἐκδιηγέομαι* 'to tell, pass on', as interpretation of H44:8b with two forms of *שעה* 'to regard' in B-margin together with *להשתענותה*, *hišta'phal* *ענה* 'to answer in turn' in MS B, with *ἐπαίνους* 'praise' as object. G lacks an acting subject at this juncture in contrast to H with *בנהלהם* 'their inheritors', who answered in turn. The distinction between 'some' (8a) and 'others' (9a) is weakened by the absence of the involvement of the descendants in the remembrance, in order to 'prove their worth reliable' (H.44:11). Their continued remembrance constitutes the conclusion of the introduction in H44:13a. The translator does not render the core concept *זכר* 'remembrance' at

<sup>14</sup> O. Rickenbacher, *Weisheitsperikopen bei Ben Sira*, OBO 1, Tübingen 1973. In addition to Sir. 44:15 both terms occur in two further places 31:11b and 39:9–11 (p. 92).

this juncture but repeats  $\text{עֲרֵךְ}$  ‘descendants’ (12a). The suggestion that we are dealing here with a misinterpretation on the part of the translator is supported by the extremely strange notion of a ‘posterity that shall remain to eternity’.<sup>15</sup> Di Lella goes a step further by applying a theological emergency measure in his interpretation of 10a *‘Yet these also were godly people’*, implying that God will not forget the group without remembrance (44:9) and will preserve them in his covenant.<sup>16</sup> The tension established by the contrast between ‘some’ and ‘others’ completely vanishes in such an explanation. Ben Sira, however, is far from certain that this will be the case. On the contrary, he calls upon the people via the remembrance to root their fundamental life option in the  $\text{יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ}$ , which determines life in its entirety (50:28c). The person who dwells on these things is to be considered happy and the one who sets his heart on them wise (50:28a,b).

#### 4.2.2 *Sir. 45:26a–d An exhortatory saying*

- 26a δόξη ὑμῖν σοφίαν ἐν καρδίᾳ ὑμῶν  
 26b κρίνειν τὸν λαὸν αὐτοῦ ἐν δικαιοσύνῃ,  
 26c ἵνα μὴ ἀφανισθῆ τὰ ἀγαθὰ αὐτῶν  
 26d καὶ τὴν δόξαν αὐτῶν εἰς γενεὰς αὐτῶν.

- 26a May he give you wisdom in your hearts,  
 26b to judge his people in righteousness,  
 26c so that the good shall not vanish for them  
 26d and the glory for them and for their generations.

<sup>15</sup> A. Minissale, *La versione greca del Siracide*, AnBib 133, Rome 1995. Together with Yadin, Minissale reads  $\text{לֹא תִכְרַח לֹא וְצִדְקָתָם}$  44:10b based on M instead of  $\text{מִן הַתְּקוּמָה}$  in MS B (p. 131) with its parallel in G. He is critical of the suggestion that we should read  $\text{עַל}$  instead of  $\text{עֲרֵךְ}$  in 44:11 due to a scribal error and gives preference to MS B. He observes with respect to the question of translation technique that there is an evident preference for the repetition of  $\text{συνέσει}$  (44:3c and 4b) and  $\text{σπέρμα αὐτῶν}$  44:12a and 13a) (p. 135).

<sup>16</sup> P.W. Skehan/A.A. Di Lella, *The Wisdom of Ben Sira*, New York 1987. Skehan/Di Lella reject the idea that ‘the others’ without remembrance (44:9a) and the godless were apostate Israelites. In 44:10a they connect ‘these also’ with the others who have been forgotten (44:9). The core of 44:10 is thus that God shall not forget them. They maintain that Ben Sira addressed himself to this forgotten group in 44:1–15 and to the heroes in 44:16–49:16 who enjoy remembrance (p. 501). Their authoritative commentary, however, tends not to associate the appeal to remembrance with a contrast between two different groups. By relating 44:10 to 44:9 instead of 44:8 the idea of a God who forgets no one is applied as a sort of theological stop gap.

*Interpretation*

Sir. 45:25e,f is omitted in G, whereby the character of the blessing is transformed into a particular saying. The exhortatory element is reinforced by the addition of G45:26b, the underlining of the judgement with ἴνα μὴ and the summary of the consequences in 45:26c,d. The omission of 45:25e,f reveals that the translator had not detected any rounding-off of the first part of the Praise of the Fathers with its focus on the Torah. Ben Sira employs the introduction (44:1–15) and the exhortatory blessing to establish a framework within which he presents a number of figures from the Torah.

The 2p.pl. in H45:26a is maintained in the translation with ὑμῶν. The discourse in G, however, differs considerably from H and does not appear to have the character of a demarcation text. Conditionality in G is expressed in a much more negative fashion than in H with an appeal 'not to forget'. The transition to 'his people' in G45:26b as object of judgement is awkward, since αὐτῶν is mentioned three times with emphasis, commonly translated as a possessive genitive 'their good', 'their glory' and 'their descendants'. An objective genitive would seem more appropriate at this juncture. In the context of the exhortation, the verb ἀφανίστημι 'to vanish' is related to τὰ ἀγαθὰ αὐτῶν 'the good for them' and τὴν δόξαν αὐτῶν 'the glory for them' (26c,d), while the preposition εἰς with accusative γενεᾶς αὐτῶν indicates the intention of the statement and is translated as 'for their generations'. Opinions differ on the identity of the group intended here, annotated with the new terminology γενεά compared with 44:11–13.

Sمند draws a link between 45:26a and 50:23a and suggests that the exhortation is directed to all Zadokites whose internal dissensions were playing into the hands of the Tobiads. Middendorp maintains that the appeal is directed towards the priests of the house of Aaron who administered justice (45:17) for the people (עַם).<sup>17</sup> This leads him to the far reaching conclusion that the Jewish people is intended to be understood as political entity similar to the *demos* of a Greek polis.

The difference between the giving of 'wisdom according to his [God's] heart' in H and 'wisdom in your hearts' here in G is quite substantial and important for the interpretation of 50:23a. Wisdom in H is

<sup>17</sup> T. Middendorp, *Die Stellung Jesu ben Siras zwischen Judentum und Hellenismus*, Leiden 1972 (p. 167).

regulated according to Torah and comes forth from God who is described as *טוב ה' יי* (45:25e). In G, by contrast, the translation τὰ ἀγαθὰ is based on *טובכם אמונתכם* ‘the good that is entrusted to you’. The generalising terminology of G makes the difference immense. One can observe that G tends to reflect more general concepts and that wisdom takes on its own status as a universal concept of thought.

#### 4.2.3 *Sir. 47:22a–f Conformation of the promise*

- 22a ὁ δὲ κύριος οὐ μὴ ἐγκαταλίπη τὸ ἔλεος αὐτοῦ  
 22b καὶ οὐ μὴ διαφθείρῃ ἀπὸ τῶν λόγων αὐτοῦ  
 22c οὐδὲ μὴ ἐξάλειψῃ ἐκλεκτοῦ αὐτοῦ ἔκγονα  
 22d καὶ σπέρμα τοῦ ἀγαπήσαντος αὐτὸν οὐ μὴ ἐξάρῃ·  
 22e καὶ τῷ Ἰακωβ ἔδωκεν κατάλειμμα  
 22f καὶ τῷ Δαυιδ ἐξ αὐτοῦ ρίζαν.

- 22a But the Lord does not abandon his mercy  
 22b and he does not go back on his words,  
 22c nor does he destroy the posterity of his chosen ones  
 22d and the prosperity of those who love him he does not root out  
 22e and to Jacob he has given a remainder  
 22f and to David from himself a root.

#### *Interpretation*

The variant style of this demarcation text is recognisable in the form of four negations in the remains of the severely damaged Hebrew text. These negations are similarly determinative in G for the actions of God who does not abandon (ἐγκαταλείπω), does not go back on (διαφθείρω), does not destroy (ἐξάλειψω) and does not root out (ἐξάρω).

The topos *נִים וְנִכַר* ‘shoot and sprig’ (Isa. 14:22) does not have an equivalent in G.<sup>18</sup> YHWH’s unfaltering fidelity with respect to his people is central in G47:22d, the latter being called to love Him (part. aor. ἀγαπάω). The supplementation of MS B to read *וְיִי* [וְיִי] may be possible on the basis of G.

<sup>18</sup> T.R. Lee, *Studies in the Form of Sirach 44–50*, SBLDS 75, Atlanta 1986. Lee refers to three kings in the *Beispielreihe* (44:16–49:16) who are critically discussed: Solomon, Rehoboam and Jeroboam. These kings do not form a sequential series with the other kings, however, since a distinction is made in 47:22 which Lee fails to mention.

4.2.4 *Sir. 48:15a–16b Announcement of judgement*

15a Ἐν πᾶσιν τούτοις οὐ μετενόησεν ὁ λαὸς  
 15b καὶ οὐκ ἀπέστησαν ἀπὸ τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν αὐτῶν,  
 15c ἕως ἐπρονομεύθησαν ἀπὸ γῆς αὐτῶν  
 15d καὶ διεσκορπίσθησαν ἐν πάσῃ τῇ γῆ.  
 15e καὶ κατελείφθη ὁ λαὸς ὀλιγοστός,  
 15f καὶ ἄρχων ἐν τῷ οἴκῳ Δαυιδ·  
 16a τινὲς μὲν αὐτῶν ἐποίησαν τὸ ἀρεστόν,  
 16b τινὲς δὲ ἐπλήθυναν ἁμαρτίας.

15a In spite of all this the people did not repent  
 15b and they did not refrain from their sins,  
 15c until they were deported captive from their land  
 15d and were dispersed over the whole earth.  
 15e And a very small people remained over  
 15f and a prince in the house of David.  
 16a Some of them did what is pleasing,  
 16b but others multiplied [their] sins.

*Interpretation*

In his presentation of the colometric structure of G48:15a–16b, Ziegler leaves a white line at the beginning and end of this segment in order to demarcate a literary unit. The translator precisely renders the H-text  $\text{וְכָל לְבַב}$  with Ἐν πᾶσιν τούτοις in parallel with Isa. 9:11 and Jer. 3:11. The Septuagint of Isaiah with ἐπὶ τούτοις πᾶσιν . . . καὶ ὁ λαὸς οὐκ ἀπεστράφη (9:11–12) exhibits evidence of an allusion to the present text. The same formula is found word for word in the prophetic judgement speech of Jeremiah against Israel and the faithless Judah καὶ ἐν πᾶσιν τούτοις οὐκ (3:11).

Refraining from sins in G is rendered in the plural ἀπὸ τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν αὐτῶν. G48:15c employs the rare verb  $\text{פָּרַס}$  ‘to tear away’, freely translated with an aorist pas. *προνομεύω* that features regularly in the Septuagint and means ‘to sweep away, disperse’. S states without further ado ‘to carry into exile’. The temporal aspect of the deportation is rendered appropriately in G with ἕως. The fact that G omits the reference to Judah leads Smend to note: “vielleicht ist der griechische Text verstümmelt.” The translator’s motivation, however, would appear to support the suggestion that he is simplifying the text for the sake of a broader readership. The repetition of ἁμαρτίας (48:15b, 16b) in combination with the aorist *πληθύνω* ‘to multiply’ leads to a degree of imprecision when compared with H in which the act of

'infidelity' is underlined. The contrast between alternative fundamental life options familiar from the introduction (H44:8–9) is followed closely at this juncture, suggesting an effort on the part of the translator to render H as faithfully as possible.

#### 4.2.5 *Sir. 49:4a–6b Concluding retrospective*

- 4a Πάρεξ Δαυιδ καὶ Εζεκίου καὶ Ἰωσίου  
 4b πάντες πλημμέλειαν ἐπλημμέλησαν·  
 4c κατέλιπον γὰρ τὸν νόμον τοῦ ὑψίστου,  
 4d οἱ βασιλεῖς Ἰουδα ἐξέλιπον·  
 5a ἔδωκαν γὰρ τὸ κέρασ ἀυτῶν ἐτέροις  
 5b καὶ τὴν δόξαν ἀυτῶν ἔθνει ἀλλοτρίῳ.  
 6a ἐνεπύρισαν ἐκλεκτὴν πόλιν ἀγιάσματος  
 6b καὶ ἠρήμωσαν τὰς ὁδοὺς ἀυτῆς  
 7a ἐν χειρὶ Ἰερεμίου·

- 4a With the exception of David and Hezekiah and Josiah,  
 4b all were guilty of sin,  
 4c for they have abandoned the law of the Most High,  
 4d the kings of Judah have reached their end.  
 5a They even gave their power over to others  
 5b and their glory to a foreign nation.  
 6a They set the chosen city of the sanctuary on fire  
 6b and depopulated her streets  
 7a by the hand of Jeremiah.

#### *Interpretation*

The action in 49:4b is reinforced by the association of the accusative of ἡ πλημμέλειᾶ *'fault, sin'* with the verb πλημμέλεω *'to be guilty of'*. The translator freely renders the essence of H and the contrast between David, Hezekiah and Josiah and 'all' together with the kings of Judah (49:4d) by using two verbs from the root λείπω. 'All' (4b) are subject in 4c of the aorist of καταλείπω *'to abandon'* and the kings of Judah in 4d of ἐκλείπω *'to reach an end'*.<sup>19</sup> On the basis of νόμος ὑψίστου Middendorp draws a far reaching conclusion, arguing that

<sup>19</sup> J.L. Ska, 'L'Éloge des Pères dans le Siracide (Si 44–45) et le canon de l'Ancien Testament', in FS M. Gilbert, *Treasures of Wisdom*, Leuven 1999, 181–193. Ska observes a significant difference between the 'golden years' of David and Solomon in Chronicles and the version of Ben Sira, which is silent with respect to the priests and the Levites from the construction of the temple (47:13) to the destruction thereof (49:6).

Ben Sira had a theocratic state in mind under the leadership of the High Priest.<sup>20</sup> He is unable to discern a specific literary form in 49:4–6, in which three positively appreciated kings are presented in contrast to all the rest in similar fashion to 44:8–9 and 48:16.

The change of subject in the concluding retrospective from 3p.s. in H to 3p.pl. in G in which the kings are acting subjects should not go unnoticed. These kings handed over the κέρως ‘power’ to ἑτέροις ‘others’ (49:5a), referred to in the second instance as an ἔθνει ἀλλοτριῷ ‘foreign nation’ (49:5b).

The difference in meaning in G with respect to H is quite substantial at this juncture. YHWH is subject in H and He passes the קֶרַן ‘horn’ to the future. In G, the kings even (γαρ) pass on their power to others. G omits the qualification לְנַבְלֵי נָי ‘foolish people’, thereby losing the link with 50:26b.

In 49:6a, ἁγιάσματος ‘of the sanctuary’ stands in a genitive relationship with the chosen city. This is better understood as a designation of quality rather than a possessive. Hence the translation: ‘the chosen city of the sanctuary’.

A codicological problem is apparent with respect to the notation of 49:7a in relation to 49:6 in G. Ziegler begins with a white line and closes with a white line after 49:7a in order to demarcate the literary unit 49:4a–7a. The position of Jeremiah, however, is called into question by this procedure. In H, Jeremiah belongs to 49:7f., the prophet standing apart from the concluding retrospective (49:4–6). The translation of בִּיד יְרֵמְיָהוּ as ἐν χειρὶ Ἰερემίου in G gives rise to a difference in interpretation. It is important to note that by its literal translation of H, G establishes a causal relationship between the fall of the city and the appearance of the prophet. A sharp contrast is rendered in H in the prophet’s disappointment with his own people in spite of his vocation ‘from the womb’. In G, on the other hand, Jeremiah is acting subject.

A summary of Jeremiah’s activities follows the expression of this contrast. In Tanakh Jer. 1:10 speaks of six activities while a seventh is added in MS B. The Septuagint only mentions five activities: ἐκριζοῦν καὶ κατασκάπτειν καὶ ἀπολλύειν καὶ ἀνοικοδομεῖν καὶ καταφυτεύειν ‘to uproot, to undermine to wipe out in order to rebuild and to plant’.

<sup>20</sup> T. Middendorp, *Die Stellung Jesu Ben Siras zwischen Judentum und Hellenismus*, Leiden 1973 (p. 164).



While G similarly refers to five actions on the part of the prophet, the style is quite different as is the second verb: ἐκριζοῦν καὶ κακοῦν καὶ ἀπολλύειν ὡσαύτως οἰκοδομεῖν καὶ καταφυτεύειν ‘to uproot and to destroy and to wipe out, and likewise to build and to plant’. Compared with the Septuagint, G would appear to represent a free translation.

#### 4.2.6 Sir. 49:14a–16b Evocation

- 14a Οὐδεὶς ἐκτίσθη ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς τοιοῦτος οἶος Ἐνοχ·  
 14b καὶ γὰρ αὐτὸς ἀνελήμφθη ἀπὸ τῆς γῆς.  
 15a οὐδὲ ὡς Ἰωσηφ ἐγενήθη ἀνὴρ  
 15b ἡγούμενος ἀδελφῶν, στήριγμα λαοῦ,  
 15c καὶ τὰ ὀστέα αὐτοῦ ἐπεσκέπησαν.  
 16a Σημ καὶ Σηθ ἐν ἀνθρώποις ἐδοξάσθησαν,  
 16b καὶ ὑπὲρ πάντων ζῶων ἐν τῇ κτίσει Ἀδαμ.

- 14a No one on earth was created equal to Enoch,  
 14b for he was taken away from the earth.  
 15a Likewise, none like Joseph has been born,  
 15b a leader of the brothers, a support for the people,  
 15c and his bones were highly esteemed.  
 16a Shem and Seth were honoured among human beings  
 16b but above all that lives in creation [is] Adam.

#### Interpretation

Sir. 49:15b is added in G, probably on the basis of H50:1a. By leaving the key concept אָבִימִלֵּךְ untranslated, G disrupts the compositional unity of the Praise of the Fathers and the connection between 49:14–16 and 50:1–29 is broken. In G49:15b the terms ἀδελφῶν and λαοῦ are not determined by the possessive pronoun 3p.s. in contrast with translations based on the relocation of G50:1a.

Smend refers to the opening line οὐδεὶς ἐκτίσθη in G as *vergröbernd*. Rickenbacher employs a schematic survey<sup>21</sup> to point out that while κτίζειν ‘to create’ serves for the most part in G as the translation of בָּרָא<sup>22</sup> it is also used to translate אָבַר and בָּרַח.

<sup>21</sup> O. Rickenbacher, *Weisheitsperikopen bei Ben Sira*, OBO 1, Freiburg 1973 (p. 142).

<sup>22</sup> F.V. Reiterer, ‘Die immateriellen Ebenen der Schöpfung bei Ben Sira’, in FS M. Gilbert, *Treasures of Wisdom*, Leuven 1999, 91–127. In his list of 99 references, Reiterer alludes to 49:14 and its translation of בָּרָא with κτίζειν (p. 92). He mentions Adam in the context of creation (H50:22c) and Enoch in the lists of illustrious people from history (G49:14a) (p. 123).

The translator would appear to be aiming at the establishment of a parallel between Enoch and Joseph via the use of two parallel negations οὐδεὶς . . . οὐδέ. The translation of פְּנִים as ἀπὸ τῆς γῆς is clearly a compromise solution rooted in the parallelism between 14a and b. This results in a relatively smooth text.<sup>23</sup> The reference to Enoch in G49:14a is taken as self evident and included as such in all later translations. On the whole, therefore, we prefer to adopt כַּהֲנִיךְ as *lectio difficilior* in H.

In spite of the interpolation of 49:15b, concern for the bones of Joseph remains in the foreground (Gen. 50:25; Ex. 13:19; Josh. 24:32), being explained in more detail when compared with H. The reason for this would appear to be rooted in the difficulty of translating the concept נִיָּה into G. The Septuagint usually employs σῶμα 'body' (Gen. 47:18; Ez. 1:11,23) and occasionally πτώμα 'corpse' (1 Sam. 31:10,12).

The grandson follows his own path at this juncture by introducing his far reaching interpretation via τὰ ὄστω based on information found throughout Tanakh. Although the majority of commentators maintain, nevertheless, that 50:1a has been relocated this hypothesis remains open to dispute since G49:15b 'a leader of the brothers, a support for the people' is completely detached from Simon. The elements 'his brothers' and 'his people' are only significant in H50:1a. Joseph is referred to as ἡγούμενος 'leader' of the brothers. It is striking that neither a definite article nor a possessive pronoun is employed at this juncture. G portrays Joseph in general terms and not in historical association with his brothers. The historical context of Joseph and his brothers would appear to be so evident, however, that virtually every recent bible translation has tended to emend the Greek text according to Ziegler's edition to read 'his brothers' and 'his people'.<sup>24</sup>

Ben Sira's grandson would seem to have a completely different image of Joseph in mind in his interpretation of H to that familiar from Genesis 37–50. He clearly employs the strikingly general terms 'the brothers' and 'the people' to refer to the Samaritans who were known as the בני־יוסף. They were responsible for preserving the bones of Joseph on the piece of land purchased by Jacob from the Shechemites

<sup>23</sup> A. Schmitt, *Entrückung-Aufnahme-Himmelfahrt. Untersuchungen zu einem Vorstellungsbereich im Alten Testament*, FzB 10, Stuttgart 1973 (p. 181).

<sup>24</sup> By way of example we refer, in addition, to the NEB (only 'his brothers'), the Good News Bible, the Jerusalem Bible, Ryssel, Sauer (referred to as 15c), Van den Born, and Michaud.

that had remained down through the centuries in the possession of the ‘sons of Joseph’ (Josh. 24:32). The translation of ἐπεσκέπησαν (aorist pas. 3p.pl. ἐπισκέπτομαι) with τα ὀστᾶ αὐτοῦ as subject is somewhat problematic. This verbal form is found 18 times in the Septuagint, mostly in relation to the enumeration of groups. The verb is not found in association with ‘bones’. For this reason we have opted for the translation: ‘to be highly esteemed’.

The grandson follows his own unique vision in G, providing the tradition of esteem for the bones of Joseph with an entirely new perspective. There is no evidence of a relocation of H50:1a to G49:15c, but rather of a different context in which the Samaritans’ concern for the bones of Joseph enjoys pride of place.

As several commentaries note, Enosh is not mentioned in G,<sup>25</sup> only Shem, Seth and Adam. In both H and G, Sir. 49:16b is formulated in a nominal clause. The absence in G of a translation of הַפֶּרֶשׂ serves to indicate the complexity of Adam. Sheppard refers to the unique significance of this figure, the wise man par excellence praised in the context of wisdom.<sup>26</sup> The nominal clause הַיֵּלֶכֶל is translated in a Hebraising manner with ὑπὲρ πᾶν ζῴων.

Ben Sira’s grandson offers his own interpretation of Adam with the phrase ἐν τῇ κτίσει ‘in creation’. He locates him in history as the starting point of time and avoids speculative conceptualisations. Lee argues for a relationship with 50:1–29. He considers the preceding chapters (Sirach 44–49) as the γένος in the encomium of Simon<sup>27</sup> in which Enoch has a place but not Joseph. Adam constitutes the high point prior to the climax in Simon (50:1–24).<sup>28</sup>

<sup>25</sup> P.W. Skehan/A.A. Di Lella, *The Wisdom of Ben Sira*, New York 1987. Enosh is mentioned in Gen. 4:26 as well as in the genealogies in 1 Chron. 1:1 and Lk. 3:38 (p. 545).

<sup>26</sup> G.T. Sheppard, *Wisdom as a Hermeneutical Construct*, BZAW 151, Berlin 1980 (p. 81).

<sup>27</sup> T.R. Lee, *Studies in the Form of Sirach 44–50*, SBLDS 75, Atlanta 1986 (p. 12, 210, 229f.).

<sup>28</sup> B.A. van Groningen, *In the grip of the past*, Leiden 1953. Greek philosophers “seek a principium and they formulate an initium. They seek the eternal and timeless and they discover the past, the beginning. In this manner the past and the original starting point express the essence itself” (p. 76f.). The term ἀρχή is employed in G to describe the beginning of wisdom (Sir. 1:14; 19:18; 24:9; 25:12; 39:25; 39:32; 51:20), in addition to the joy of wine (G31:27), the days of prehistory (36:11), the deeds in the beginning (36:15) and the word as the beginning of every work (37:16).

4.3 *Interpretation of Sirach 50*

The structure of Sir. 50:1–29 in G can be summarised in the same 8 literary units that determined the structure of H. Ben Sira's grandson would thus appear to have left the segmentation largely intact.

The structure of H50:1–4 with 5 bicola is altered by the interpretation of G50:1. Closer inspection reveals that a segment of 50:1a was not relocated to G49:15b. The grandson's own unique vision of Joseph is at issue here. He also provides his own particular vision of Simon as builder by the interchange in G of 50:2 and 50:3.

The structure of H50:5–19, characterised by its harmonious arrangement of 3 times 7 cola in 50:5–10, 50:11–14 and 50:16–19 is interrupted by the interpolated verse G50:15a,b,c,d.

Within the framework of the four perspectives on Simon in his function as High Priest in the temple, at the sacrifice, at the feast and at the blessing (50:5–21), G offers its own interpretation in various places of the symbolism employed to render praise of Simon in H.

While the grandson leaves the numerical aphorism (50:25–26) largely intact, in the doxology he nevertheless introduces significant changes into a prayer of entreaty (50:22–24) and he completely modifies the closing statement (50:27–29). These concluding segments of the description of Simon and Ben Sira can be considered as an entirely unique version:

In schema:

Segm./Verse	Thematic role	Statistics
1. 50:1–4	Simon as builder	9 cola, 51 words
2. 50:5–10	Simon as High Priest	14 cola, 74 words
3. 50:11–15	Simon in function of the sacrifice	18 cola, 91 words
4. 50:16–19	Simon at the feast	14 cola, 67 words
5. 50:20–21	Simon and the blessing	6 cola, 30 words
6. 50:22–24	prayer of entreaty	9 cola, 54 words
7. 50:25–26	Sira's <i>Scheltrede</i>	4 cola, 29 words
8. 50:27–29	Sira's conclusion and blessing	10 cola, 58 words

From the statistical perspective, Sir. 50:1–28 is written in H in 40 lines, 79 cola and 292 words.

The content of Sirach 50:1–29 in G is written in 84 cola and 454 words.

4.3.1 *Sir. 50:1–4 Simon as a builder*

- 1a Σιμων Ονίου υἱὸς ἱερεὺς ὁ μέγας,  
 1b ὃς ἐν ζωῇ αὐτοῦ ὑπέρραψεν οἶκον  
 1c καὶ ἐν ἡμέραις αὐτοῦ ἐστερέωσεν ναόν·  
 2a καὶ ὑπ' αὐτοῦ ἐθεμελιώθη ὕψος αὐλῆς,  
 2b ἀνάλημμα ὑψηλὸν περιβόλου ἱεροῦ·  
 3a ἐν ἡμέραις αὐτοῦ ἐλατομήθη ἀποδοχεῖον ὑδάτων,  
 3b λάκκος ὡσεὶ θαλάσσης τὸ περίμετρον·  
 4a ὁ φροντίζων τοῦ λαοῦ αὐτοῦ ἀπὸ πτώσεως  
 4b καὶ ἐνισχύσας πόλιν ἐν πολιορκήσει.

- 1a Simon, the son of Onias, the High Priest,  
 1b it was he who, in his lifetime, restored the house of [God]  
 1c and in his days reinforced the temple.  
 2a And by him the foundations were laid for a high forecourt,  
 2b the mighty supporting wall of the temple enclosure.  
 3a In his days a reservoir was dug out,  
 3b a cistern like the sea in magnitude.  
 4a He protected his people from downfall  
 4b and he strengthened the city against a siege.

H50:2 and 50:3 have been switched in G. Ben-Hayyim's text edition of H follows G's versification without further argument. Segal notes the verse division of G but follows MS B in his text edition. Beentjes switches H50:2 and 3 but refrains from doing so with respect to 50:15.

The opening word ὃς in 50:1b is reminiscent of the opening of H50:4a and 12b, both of which place a similar accent on Simon. In G, however, this has disappeared.

The expression ὑπ' αὐτοῦ 'by him' has been added in 50:2a. The translation of the concept כב הישׁא (H50:2) in 50:3 leads one to presuppose that the translator was unable to locate the reservoir. Some manuscripts have the term χάλκος 'copper', while codex A has λάκκος 'cistern'. The latter also presupposes that כים 'as the sea'—translated in G with ὡσεὶ θαλάσσης—should be read instead of כב 'therein'.

While the accent in G50:4a is placed on 'his people' the same cannot be said for 'his city' in spite of עיר (4b). Simon is acting subject of the restoration of the temple in G50:1b,c, while the building activities are described in H in the passive form with a perfect *niph'al* (50:1c,2a,3a). The buildings are thus the centre of attention in H while Simon is the centre of attention in G, restoring (God's) house (1b) and reinforcing the temple (1c). The high forecourt came to fruition through his efforts.

In schema:

Verse	Person	Theme	
1a	Sb1	Simon, High Priest	/ nom.cl.
1b	Sa1	Simon restored (God's) house	ὑπερράπτω
1c	Sa2	in his days, Simon reinforced temple	στερεόω
2a	Sa3	by him, forecourt foundations laid	θεμελιόω
2b	Sb2	supporting wall of temple	/ nom.cl.
3a		in his days, reservoir dug out	λατομέω
3b	Sb3	cistern like the sea	/ nom.cl.
4a	Sa4	Simon protected his people	φροντίζω
4b	Sa5	Simon strengthened the city	ἐνισχύω

Abbreviations:

Sa ⇒ Simon active, Sb ⇒ Simon as object of consideration.

*Interpretation:* Sir. 50:1

Based on G and rooted in the frequent use of aorist forms in 50:1–3, Simon is envisaged in virtually every commentary as a figure from the past. In line with H, the translator closes the literary unit (50:1–4) with two participle forms. The syndetic circumstantial clause—in which Simon is mentioned in the second instance—enjoys a different interpretation in G on account of the omission of 50:1a. The word-play with נָדַר at the beginning of 50:1a and הִכְהֵן at the end of 50:1b is thus lost.<sup>29</sup> The loss of the connection between 49:16 and 50:1 on account of the untranslated הַפְּאִרָה 'glory', however, is more significant. The idea that the glory of God could be made visible in human form in Adam and Simon would appear to have been beyond the conception of the translator.<sup>30</sup>

The transition from Adam to Simon is blurred by the abbreviated introduction of the name 'Simon, the son of Onias, the High Priest'. The name Simon is translated in the Greek together with the interpolation 'son of Onias'.<sup>31</sup> Names serve as an indication of the extent

<sup>29</sup> M.O. Wise, 'The Teacher of Righteousness and the High Priest of the Intersacerdotium: Two Approaches', *RQ* 53 (1989), 587–613. Based on 50:1, Stegemann argues that the Teacher of Righteousness functioned as High Priest with the title הִכְהֵן in the 7 years between Alcimus and Jonathan, the so-called intersacerdotium. Wise considers H problematic on account of G. The word play evident in H would appear to support the hypothesis of Stegemann.

<sup>30</sup> M. Hengel, *Judentum und Hellenismus*, WUNT 10, Tübingen 1973 (p. 256).

<sup>31</sup> A. Jansen, 'Einige textkritische und exegetische Bemerkungen zum Buche

to which a language is familiar in every day life.<sup>32</sup> Translating around 130 BCE, Ben Sira's grandson must have considered the name Onias as something of an eponym for priests of the house of the Oniads.

There can be little doubt that the history of the Oniads after Simon is determinative for the translation. While it is true that the grandson was relatively close in time to Ben Sira and Simon, the world around him had taken on a completely different appearance. Changes gathered momentum after the removal of Onias III in 175 BCE by his brother who took the Greek name Jason. The murder of Onias III in 170 was so shocking for the Essenes that they came to consider 170 as the beginning of the final 100 year countdown to the last judgement. The death of this legitimate High Priest served as a precursor to the crisis<sup>33</sup> in which Antiochus Epiphanes IV was to violently enforce the process of Hellenisation, particularly in the liturgy and in the temple. General upheaval had already been set in motion by the appointment of Menelaus as High Priest in 172 BCE, permission for which was granted by Antiochus IV in exchange for an increase in the payment of tribute. The fact that Menelaus traced his lineage to the house of Bilga and as such was unable to lay claim to High Priestly roots is essential at this time. His successor Alcimus, who could lay no claim to the priesthood whatsoever, nipped every protest in the bud by having the envoys who had complained about his succession killed.

After the murder of his father in 170, Onias IV was able to serve for a short period as High Priest, departing thereafter for Egypt where he built a temple at Leontopolis.<sup>34</sup> The authority of the temple

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Ekklesiastikus: Eccli. 33,3; 50,1-5; 50,24a', BZ 4 (1906) 20-24. Onias is the Greek name of Hananiah.

<sup>32</sup> H.H. Ben-Sasson, *A History of the Jewish People*, Cambridge 1994. Ben-Sasson points out the widespread introduction of Greek names from 200 BCE onwards into every level of the population, including the High Priestly families. As a typical example he mentions the Jewish sage Antigonus of Sokho. The Maccabeans turned against this development (p. 197).

<sup>33</sup> H. Stegemann, *Die Essener, Qumran, Johannes der Täufer und Jesus*, Freiburg 1993. According to Stegemann, the period of final judgement is determined on the basis of the Damascus Document<sup>a</sup> CD-A I,5-8, which alludes to a period of 390 years (Ez. 4:5). This period is calculated from the beginning of the Babylonian exile to the murder of Onias III in 170 BCE. The following 100 years are decisive for the final judgement in 70 BCE. The Teacher of Righteousness emerges onto the scene from 150 BCE onwards (pp. 173ff.).

<sup>34</sup> B. Porten, *Archives from Elephantine, The Life of an Ancient Jewish Military Colony*, Berkeley 1968. Evidence of a Jewish community in Elephantine dates back to 650 BCE. During the term of Manasseh they built a temple to YHW (occasionally YW),

in Jerusalem fell even further into disrepute. The sanctuary at Elephantine had already challenged the exclusivity of the temple in Jerusalem as early as the 4th century BCE.<sup>35</sup> Prior to Onias IV taking office, just one generation earlier, the authority of Jerusalem during the time of Simon was still taken for granted, in spite of Samaritan claims to the only true place of worship.

The period between Antiochus' plundering of the temple in 169 and the moment that Jonathan assumed the High Priesthood as military leader in 152 BCE is referred to as the *intersacerdotium*, an interlude in which there was no functioning High Priest in the temple. With respect to the High Priestly succession and the Teacher of Righteousness, Stegemann offers an alternative vision of the community of the Essenes to that upheld by the so-called Groningen hypothesis.<sup>36</sup> After a period of revolt and the restoration of the temple, Jonathan functioned as High Priest until 143 BCE. He was succeeded by Simon who liberated Jerusalem in 140 BCE.

The grandson's translation came into existence in the Egyptian diaspora during the Hasmonean period following the profound crisis that had undermined the Jewish religion's right to existence and had led to the desecration of the temple. The political map had changed completely under the leadership of the High Priests who were more military commanders than religious leaders. The unity of the people had crumbled, to be replaced with a variety of conflicting factions. The character of the age in which the grandson made his translation was totally unlike the period of peace in which his grandfather Ben Sira had enjoyed close familiarity with Simon the High Priest.

Temporal indications in G are limited to ἐν ἡμέραις in 1c and 3a, while the expression בדרורי in H (1c and 2a) refers with greater precision to the ministry of Simon. The temporal character of G is clearly more general and less defined.

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oriented towards the temple in Jerusalem (p. 121). The Elephantine papyri contain letters about the rebuilding after the destruction of the temple in 410 BCE to Bagohi the governor of Judah in Samaria and to Johanan the High Priest that would appear to have been left unanswered in Jerusalem (p. 291).

<sup>35</sup> B. Couroyer, 'Le temple de Yaho et l'orientation dans les papyrus araméens d'Eléphantines', *RB* LXXV (1968) 80–85.

<sup>36</sup> H. Stegemann, 'The Qumran Essenes—Local Members of the Main Jewish Union in Late Second Temple Times', in J. Trebelle Barrera/L. Vegas Montaner eds, *The Madrid Qumran Congress 18–21 March*, 1991, Leiden 1992 (pp. 83–166).



Sir. 50:2–3

As subject Simon is not only detached at this juncture from his immediate surroundings, in which the brothers, the priests, the Levites and the people all have a role to play, but he is also detached from the works that he himself undertook. G no longer speaks of 'his city'. H places עִיר (1a and 4a) on the same level as עִירָא, while G speaks in general terms with πόλιν 'city'.

Simon is seen as an historical figure who completed a number of building activities in and around the temple and the city while he was still alive. In spite of the correct translation of λακκος 'cistern', the hyperbolic statement 'like the sea in magnitude' serves to reveal that the translator was not familiar with the temple's water provisions. Moreover, the interchange of 50:2 and 3 serves to disrupt the sequence of the building works. For G it is the temple that comes first as a symbol of national political independence,<sup>37</sup> to be followed by the exterior wall. The 'royal palace' has disappeared in G. It is probable that the expression was deliberately avoided on account of the changed situation after the death of Simon the Maccabean, the latter having been chosen as High Priest in 140 BCE with the people's approval on the condition that this interim solution would remain in effect until the emergence of the true prophet (1 Macc. 14:41). Simon the Maccabean did not belong to the Zadokite families who enjoyed a claim to the High Priesthood. Not every group, however, was equally satisfied with this option. After Simon's death, the Pharisees pressed John Hyrcanus (134–104 BCE) to renounce the High Priesthood (*Ant.* XIII, 288–296). The murder of the envoys totally disrupted relations with the Pharisees. According to Josephus, 6000 Pharisees were put to death together with several other dissidents during the reign of

<sup>37</sup> D. Mendels, *The Rise and the Fall of Jewish Nationalism*, New York 1991. Mendels divides this turbulent period into five phases:

1. 200–180 the temple is autonomous and the people have religious and spiritual leaders,
2. 180–164 the temple and the High Priest are used for the purpose of Hellenisation,
3. 164–152 the temple is purified, the High Priesthood is under Hellenistic influence or vacant,
4. 152–142 the break up of Hellenisation,
5. 142–76 the autonomous Jewish state and the temple are symbols of independence.

Although Jerusalem came under attack once again in 132 from Antiochus VII Sidetes, John Hyrcanus was able to counter it, albeit with extreme difficulty (*Ant.* XIII, 234–249).

Hyrchanus' successor Alexander Jannaeus (*Ant.* XIII, 372–373). Against this historical background, the expression 'royal palace' would clearly have been open to misunderstanding.

The magnificence and glory of Simon presented with such eloquence in H as the climax in the line of Adam is absent in G. Hayward notes the vagueness and distance adopted by the grandson's translation of his Hebrew original.<sup>38</sup>

Sir. 50:4

The passage concerning Simon as builder is rounded-off with this verse. Simon protects the people *ἀπο πτώσεως* 'from downfall' and strengthens the city *ἐν πολιορκήσει* 'against a siege'. The term *ἡ πολιορκία* is a characteristic Greek translation of *מַצָּוָה* (H50:4b) and can refer to a concrete event.

In his 1913 commentary, Peters suggests that reference may be being made here to the fall of Jerusalem under Antiochus III (*Ant.* XII, 133). At the same time, however, he also mentions the prayer of Simon, the Just in 3 Macc. 2:1–20, in which reference is made to the delivery of Jerusalem from the siege of Ptolemy IV. A further possibility is the revolt under the leadership of High Priest Jason against the regime of Antiochus IV following rumours that the latter had died during a military campaign in 168 BCE. The rumours turned out to be unfounded and Antiochus sought his revenge by destroying the city on the Sabbath and plundering the temple of its treasures (2 Macc. 5:14–16). The temple was rededicated to Zeus Olympus in 167 BCE (2 Maccabees 6; Dan. 11:31).

#### 4.3.2 *Sir. 50:5–10 Simon as High Priest*

- 5a ὡς ἐδοξάσθη ἐν περιστροφῇ ναοῦ,  
 5b ἐν ἐξόδῳ οἴκου καταπετάσματος·  
 6a ὡς ἀστήρ ἐωθινὸς ἐν μέσῳ νεφελῶν,  
 6b ὡς σελήνη πλήρης ἐν ἡμέραις ἐορτῆς,  
 7a ὡς ἥλιος ἐκλάμπων ἐπὶ ναὸν ὑψίστου,  
 7b ὡς τόξον φωτίζον ἐν νεφέλαις δόξης,  
 8a ὡς ἄνθος ρόδων ἐν ἡμέραις νέων,  
 8b ὡς κρίνα ἐπ' ἐξόδων ὕδατος,

<sup>38</sup> C.T.R. Hayward, *The Jewish Temple. A Non-Biblical Sourcebook*, London 1996. Hayward bases himself on Isa. 22:11 and makes reference to the letter of Aristeas (89). In so doing, he wrongly establishes a connection with the water provisions built by Hezekiah which are not at issue in Sirach 50 (p. 77).

- 8c ὡς βλαστὸς Λιβάνου ἐν ἡμέραις θέρους,  
 9a ὡς πῦρ καὶ λίβανος ἐπὶ πυρείου,  
 9b ὡς σκεῦος χρυσίου ὀλοσφύρητον  
 9c κεκοσμημένον παντὶ λίθῳ πολυτελεῖ,  
 10a ὡς ἐλαία ἀναθάλλουσα καρπὸν  
 10b καὶ ὡς κυπάρισσος ὑψουμένη ἐν νεφέλαις.

- 5a How glorious was he as he went round in the temple  
 5b and as he went out of the house of the veil.  
 6a As the morning star in the midst of the clouds,  
 6b as the full moon during the festal days,  
 7a as the sun that shines on the Temple of the Most High,  
 7b as the rainbow that gleams against the luminous clouds,  
 8a as a rose in the period of early spring,  
 8b as a lily by the water sources,  
 8c as a shoot from Lebanon in the days of summer,  
 9a as fire and incense on the fire pan,  
 9b as a vase of embossed gold,  
 9c decorated with all kinds of precious stones,  
 10a as an olive laden with fruit,  
 10b and as a cypress lofty in the clouds.

The structure of G50:5–10 follows H with its comparative description of Simon. G accentuates these eleven comparisons by translating  $\pi\omega$  in 50:5a with ὡς.

In schema:

Verse	Person	Theme	
5 a	Sa6	Exclamation ὡς glorious is Simon,	δοξάζω
5 a	Sb4	as he walks round	ἡ περιστροφή
5 b	Sb5	as he goes out of	ἡ ἐξοδος
6 a,b	Sb6, 7	ὡς as the morning star, as the full moon	/ nom.cl.
7 a,b	Sb8, 9	as the sun, as the rainbow	
8 a,b	Sb10, 11	as the rose, as the lily	
8 c	Sb12	as a shoot from Lebanon	
9 a	Sb13	as fire and incense (λίβανος)	
9 b	Sb14	as a vase	
9 c		that is decorated	
10 a,b	Sb15, 16	as an olive, as a cypress	

Abbreviations:

Sa ⇒ Simon active, Sb ⇒ Simon as object of consideration.

*Interpretation:* Sir. 50:5

A few manuscripts have λαοὺ 'people' in 50:5a instead of ναοῦ 'temple'. Tov points out that this may be due to the fact that the letters ν and λ are subject to graphic confusion as is apparently the case in some manuscripts of Jon. 2:5; Ps. 27:4 and Sir. 49:12.<sup>39</sup> The translation differs in terms of content from H in a number of significant places.

The particle ὡς serves to introduce the eleven following comparisons (50:6a–10b). Simon is situated in the temple. G employs nominal forms for the infinitive c. *hiph'il* הָרַר and the *gal* of אָצַע that can be translated as actions.

Sir. 50:6–7

The comparison of Simon with the heavenly bodies runs parallel here with H. Together with Smend, Rickenbacher reads νεφελῶν in line with L248.<sup>40</sup> The interpretation of מִבֵּין as a preposition determines the position of the ἀστὴρ ἑωθινὸς 'morning star' in the midst of the clouds. The term is not found in the Septuagint.

The meaning of מִבֵּין as participle *hiph'il* of בֵּין 'as distinct from' would appear to be beyond the range of the translator. The full moon is related in G to the determination of the major feasts.

The temple of the Most High is referred to explicitly in G50:7a. The free translation of מִלֵּךְ הַיַּבֵּל (50:3b, 7a) serves to simplify the symbolism.

Akin to H, the rainbow emerges as a sign of the covenant with a participial form of φωτίζω 'to gleam'.

Sir. 50:8

Simon is compared with three different flowers in 8a,b,c. The rose suggests a free translation. The seasonal distinctions found in H are clearly rendered in G.

Sir. 50:9

The reference ἐπὶ πυρείου 'fire pan' in 9a calls to mind associations with the smoke offering in the conflict between Aaron and Korah

<sup>39</sup> E. Tov, *The Text-Critical Use of the Septuagint in Biblical Research*, Jerusalem 1997 (p. 52).

<sup>40</sup> O. Rickenbacher, *Weisheitsperikopen bei Ben Sira*, OBO 1, Göttingen 1973 (p. 133).

and his kin (Num. 16:40). The translator thus alludes here to a familiar episode in history. The food offering in H refers to Simon who guarantees the priests what they need for survival. The grandson makes use of the word play between Lebanon and λίβανος ‘incense’ in order to make the transition from the world of botany to the world of sacrifice.

A completely different image is employed in G50:9b to that found in H, the latter referring to the golden vessels fashioned according to the given pattern.

G speaks instead of a ‘vase of embossed gold’. It is possible that the grandson is alluding here to a vase and other treasures plundered from the temple by Antiochus IV. An alternative vision is conceivable, however, based on the report concerning קבר, the hidden dwelling of YHWH on Mount Gerizim (2 Macc. 2:4–8; *Ant.* XVIII, 85).<sup>41</sup>

In 50:9c G follows the structure of H but interrupts the discourse with the participle κεκοσμημένον ‘decorated’. The precious stones belong in G to the golden vase.

Ben Sira’s presentation of Simon as one who knows himself bound to his task as High Priest must have stood in sharp contrast to the grandson’s experience during the time of John Hyrcanus.

#### Sir. 50:10

It would appear from this verse that the grandson did not share his grandfather’s refined knowledge of botany well enough to be able to make a distinction between the olive and the olive-willow which refreshes its branches.

G50:10b alludes to the cypress tree with its branches raised towards the heavens. Sir. 24:13 employs the same concept κυπάρισσος ‘cypresses on the heights of Hermon’ to express the elevated character of wisdom, the true magnitude of which cannot be conceived by human beings. The symbolism of the olive willow which refreshes its branches does not square with the image of the cypress.

<sup>41</sup> R. Bergmeier, ‘Zur Frühdatierung samaritanischer Theologoumena’, *JSS* V.2 (1994) 121–153. Bergmeier is critical of Kippenberg, who endeavours to argue in *Garizim und Synagoge* that the Samaritan documents suggest evidence of a hidden treasure on Mount Gerizim.

4.3.3 *Sir. 50:11–15 Simon in function of the sacrifice*

- 11a ἐν τῷ ἀναβάλλειν αὐτὸν στολὴν δόξης  
 11b καὶ ἐνδιδύσκεσθαι αὐτὸν συντέλειαν καυχῆματος,  
 11c ἐν ἀναβάσει θυσιαστηρίου ἁγίου  
 11d ἐδόξασεν περιβολὴν ἀγιάσματος·  
 12a ἐν δὲ τῷ δέχεσθαι μέλη ἐκ χειρῶν ἱερέων,  
 12b καὶ αὐτὸς ἐστὼς παρ' ἐσχάρα βωμοῦ,  
 12c κυκλόθεν αὐτοῦ στέφανος ἀδελφῶν  
 12d ὡς βλάστημα κέδρων ἐν τῷ Λιβάνῳ  
 12e καὶ ἐκύκλωσαν αὐτὸν ὡς στελέχη φοινίκων,  
 13a καὶ πάντες υἱοὶ Ααρων ἐν δόξῃ αὐτῶν  
 13b καὶ προσφορὰ κυρίου ἐν χερσίν αὐτῶν  
 13c ἔναντι πάσης ἐκκλησίας Ἰσραηλ,  
 14a καὶ συντέλειαν λειτουργῶν ἐπὶ βωμῶν  
 14b κοσμηῆσαι προσφορὰν ὑψίστου παντοκράτορος,  
 15a ἐξέτεινεν ἐπὶ σπονδαίου χεῖρα αὐτοῦ  
 15b καὶ ἔσπεισεν ἐξ αἵματος στραφυλῆς,  
 15c ἐξέχεεν εἰς θεμέλια θυσιαστηρίου  
 15d ὀσμὴν εὐωδίας ὑψίστω παμβασιλεῖ.

- 11a By being swathed in his glorious robe  
 11b and clothing himself in perfect splendour,  
 11c in the ascent to the sacred altar of burnt offerings  
 11d he bestowed his glory to the walled enclosure of the sanctuary.  
 12a By receiving the sacrificial portions from the hands of priests,  
 12b while he himself stood by the hearth of the altar,  
 12c a garland of brothers was formed around him;  
 12d [he was] as a young cedar from Lebanon  
 12e and they surrounded him as stalks of palms.  
 13a And all the sons of Aaron [were there] in their glory  
 13b [with] an offering for the Lord in their hands  
 13c in front of the entire congregation of Israel.  
 14a And as completion of the liturgical activities at the altar,  
 14b for the arrangement of the offering to the Most High, the Almighty,  
 15a he stretched out his hand to the bowl  
 15b and he poured out a libation of the blood red juice of the grape  
 15c and cast it at the foot of the altar of burnt sacrifice,  
 15d a pleasing odour for the Most High, the King of all.

G50:12a translates וְיָרֵם 'his brothers' with 'priests'. While this is probably due to the omission of the brothers in 50:1a, the latter would appear to retain their role in 12c.

The structure of *Sir. 50:11–15* is profoundly changed by the interpolation of 50:15. The formal features of H clearly had no role to play in the translation.

In schema:

Verse	Person	Theme	
11a	Sb17	Simon, swathed in δόξα	ἀναβάλλω
11b	Sb18	clothed with καυχήμα	ἐνδιδύσκω
11c		the ascent to the altar	/ nom.cl.
11d	Sa7	Simon bestows glory	δοξάζω
12a	Sb19 P1	Simon receives from priests	δέχομαι
12b	Sa8	Simon stands	ἵσθημι
12c	Sb20 P2	priests as a garland around Simon,	/ nom.cl.
12d		cedar	/ nom.cl.
12e	Sb21 P3	priests surround Simon as palms	κυκλόω
13a	P4	priests /all the sons of Aaron	/ nom.cl.
13b	Ab1	offering for κύριος	/ nom.cl.
13c	V1	entire congregation of Israel	/ nom.cl.
14a		completion at the altar	/ nom.cl.
14b	Sa9 Ab2	arrangement [Simon] ὑψίστος παντοκράτωρ	κοσμέω
15a	Sa10	Simon stretches out his hand	ἐκτείνω
15b	Sa11	pours out wine	σπένδω
15c	Sa12	Simon casts	ἐξίημι
15d	Ab3	for ὑψίστος παμβασιλεύς	/ nom.cl.

Abbreviations:

Sa ⇒ Simon active, Sb ⇒ Simon as object of consideration, P ⇒ priests, V ⇒ people, Ab ⇒ YHWH as object of consideration.

*Interpretation:* Sir. 50:11

Simon holds the central place in 11a–12d. The characteristic structure of H is partly maintained in G. The translator employs a Hebraising construction in 11a and 11b with the infinitive and the accusative of αὐτόν. He departs from this procedure in 11c with the noun ἡ ἀναβάσις introduced by the preposition ἐν. Smend has noted the *Steigerung* in this literary unit. Simon is clothed with δόξα and καυχήμα. The translator opts at this juncture for כבוד and תפארת, the same terms as in 44:7. The translation of יהוה with ἅγιος ‘holy’ is less consistent. G would appear to have had few available terms that would do justice to the semantic content of these Hebrew concepts.

Simon is located on the stairway leading to the altar of burnt offerings. The traditional translation ‘court of the sanctuary’ does not provide the accurate picture in G of the περιβολή ‘the walled enclosure’ which meticulously renders H. The same is true for θυσιαστηρίον ‘altar of burnt offerings’ (11c) as distinct from βωμός ‘altar’ (12b) and the plural βωμοί (14a).

## Sir. 50:12

Simon receives the μέλη [sacrificial] portions' as he stands by the ἐσχάρα 'hearth' of the altar. He stands in the midst of the priests who form a garland around him. The notion of a crown is avoided at this juncture with the help of the more neutral term στέφανο 'garland' as a mark of honour. The representation of Simon and the priests who surround him like palm trees in G (φοῖνιξ 'palm') differs considerably from H. In contrast to the seedlings surrounding the cedar in H50:12d, Simon virtually disappears as a young cedar surrounded by mighty palms in G.

## Sir. 50:13

The noun כבוד is translated here with δόξα, while the verb ררר is rendered with δοξάζω in 50:5a. The term προσφορά is unusual in the Septuagint for 'offerings' although the noun is familiar from Ps. 40:7 (G39:7). The 'ש' 'burnt offerings' in H50:13 would appear to be beyond the grandson's field of vision.

As in H, a change of actant is evident in 12e (3p.pl.). In the form of a nominal clause (13a,b,c), the priests who surround Simon are referred to as the sons of Aaron. Once again as in H, the entire congregation of Israel comes into view in 13c. The climax of the unit is reached with the offerings for the Lord in 11a-13c.

## Sir. 50:14

The conjunction και with the accusative συντέλειαν λειτουργῶν expresses the moment at which the service at the altars comes to an end. Besides ἐπὶ βωμῶν 'altars', λειτουργῶν is also rendered in the plural. The translator clearly had an offering in mind that was performed at more than one altar by different groups of priests, the latter being involved in the arrangement κοσμήσαι (aorist infinitive of κοσμέω). Lévi considers this an exact translation of ולסדר מערכות 'the arrangement of the services'. The verb κοσμήσαι, aorist infinitive of κοσμέω 'to arrange', has προσφοράν 'offering' as its object in 14b. Divergence from H is evident in the divine names.

## Sir. 50:15

The pouring out of wine is added at this juncture in G in which verses 14 and 15 are considered a unity. In 15a,b,c Simon is acting subject of the three verbs ἐκτείνω, σπένδω and ἐξίημι, all of which are related to the libation that formed part of the order of



the daily offering *Tamid* IV.12b; VII.3f. Interpretations hereof differ considerably.<sup>42</sup>

Schechter refers to the phonetically similar conclusions of H14b and 15d as an example of *homoioteleuton*. Lehmann refers to a coin with the political motif of a vine on one side and the image of a cup or amphora on the other which he recognises in G50:15a.<sup>43</sup> Segal argues in favour of a different solution with his retro-translation of קְשֹׁרֶה *‘pitcher [for a libation]’* with which the High Priest sprinkled wine on the altar. He uses Rabbi Eli‘ezer’s commentary on Gen. 40:10 found in tractate *bHullin* 92a as the source of his argument.<sup>44</sup> Such rabbinic symbolism, however, need not suggest an association with G50:15. The interpolation of the libation at this juncture would appear to be the sole responsibility of the grandson.

The divine names in G50:14–15 are more elevated than in H50:14b (עֲלִיּוֹן *‘the Most High’*) The terms παντοκρατώρ and παμβασιλεύς suggest an element of theological development that may be the result of either Hellenistic influence or the pluriform use of the divine name typical of the wisdom tradition.<sup>45</sup> Rickenbacher speaks at this juncture

<sup>42</sup> The libation is mentioned in Ex. 29:38f.; Num. 28:3f. and in 11Q*Temple* in relation to the extra offering on the Sabbath (XII.13) and on the first day of the month (XIV.4,14).

<sup>43</sup> M.R. Lehmann, ‘Ben Sira and the Qumran Literature’, *RQ* 9 (1961) 103–116. Lehmann maintains an alternative verse division (50:20 instead of 50:15a). He argues that Ben Sira, rooted in his ‘pre-Hasmonean environment’, placed greater emphasis on the Davidic king than on the High Priestly messiah in the Sadducean tradition and that this is in harmony with the main line of thought in Qumran (p. 115). Our explanation of the relevant texts in the present study does not support Lehmann’s hypothesis.

<sup>44</sup> H. Freedman/M. Simon eds, *Midrash Rabba Genesis*, II, London 1983. In *Midrash LXXXVIII*. 1–5 on Gen. 40:9 reference is made to Ps. 80:9, in which Israel as a vine is brought from Egypt and planted in prepared soil so that it can spread out towards the sea and its branches to the river (Sir. 50:10b). Such imagery clearly bears universal and messianic features. The *Midrash* in question compares the three ranks to Moses, Aaron and Miriam (p. 816).

<sup>45</sup> O. Kaiser, ‘Anknüpfung und Widerspruch. Die Antwort der jüdischen Weisheit auf die Herasuforderung durch den Hellenismus’, in *Gottes und der Menschen Weisheit*, BZAW 261, Berlin 1998, 201–216. Kaiser’s conclusion: “Ben Sira bot gegen die skeptische Infragestellung der sich im Leben des einzelnen und der Völker vollziehenden Gerechtigkeit Gottes, dessen Providenz, Omniscienz und Omnipotenz auf und verarbeitete dabei gedanken der stoischen Kosmologie” is questionable on account of Sir. 43:27 הוּא הַכֹּל הוּא *‘He is all’*. The divine name *‘King of all’* (G50:15d) is not found in MS B and in Tanakh.

of a *Freizone oder Niemandsland* with respect to the divine names,<sup>46</sup> but offers no further comment on what might lie behind such transcendent language concerning God.

#### 4.3.4 *Sir. 50:16–19 Simon at the feast*

- 16a τότε ἀνέκραγον υἱοὶ Ααρων,  
 16b ἐν σάλπιγξιν ἐλαταῖς ἤχησαν,  
 16c ἀκουστήν ἐποίησαν φωνὴν μεγάλην  
 16d εἰς μνημόσυνον ἔναντι ὑψίστου·  
 17a τότε πᾶς ὁ λαὸς κοινῇ κατέσπευσαν  
 17b καὶ ἔπεσαν ἐπὶ πρόσωπον ἐπὶ τὴν γῆν  
 17c προσκυνῆσαι τῷ κυρίῳ αὐτῶν  
 17d παντοκράτορι θεῷ ὑψίστῳ·  
 18a καὶ ἤνεσαν οἱ ψαλτῶδοι ἐν φωναῖς αὐτῶν,  
 18b ἐν πλείστῳ ἤχῳ ἐγλυκάνθη μέλος·  
 19a καὶ ἐδεήθη ὁ λαὸς κυρίου ὑψίστου  
 19b ἐν προσευχῇ κατέναντι ἐλεήμονος,  
 19c ἕως συντελεσθῆι κόσμος κυρίου  
 19d καὶ τὴν λειτουργίαν αὐτοῦ ἐτελείωσαν.

- 16a Thereafter the sons of Aaron cried aloud,  
 16b they caused the trumpets of beaten metal to resound,  
 16c they delivered an impressive sound,  
 16d as a remembrance before the Most High.  
 17a Thereupon the entire people hastened in common  
 17b and they fell upon their face to the ground,  
 17c to worship their Lord,  
 17d the Almighty God, the Most High.  
 18a And the singers joined in harmoniously,  
 18b with the greatest echo the song resounded sweetly.  
 19a And the people implored the Lord, the Most High,  
 19b in a prayer before the face of the Merciful One,  
 19c until the song of praise for the Lord was concluded  
 19d and they had completed the service to Him.

G does not alter the structure of this segment of H with its 2×7 cola. Indeed, the translator follows H quite closely in this regard, in spite of the fact that he introduces a number of significant changes and offers a rather free interpretation of his original side by side with the already observed simplifications.

<sup>46</sup> O. Rickenbacher, *Weisheitsperikopen bei Ben Sira*, OBO 1, Göttingen 1973 (p. 22).

There is clearly evidence of a change, for example, in G's vision of the sons of Aaron which is extended to include the singers and is not limited, as in H, to the priests. This independent group of Levites (P8 in the schema) is acting subject in 18a. Their song (P9) takes over as subject in 18b and their song of praise in 19c. The priests and Levites with their song of praise function as acting subject of 50:19c,d and not Simon, the latter being further mentioned in G only in 50:20a. The fundamental difference between G and H thus lies in the grandson's vision of Simon. The liturgical arrangements and the feast that serves as background thereto are described with great brevity. The resulting ambiguity has given rise to the ongoing discussion as to the identity of the feast in question, namely Yom Kippur<sup>47</sup> or the daily offering. In our explanation of H we determined that Rosh Hashanah is at issue.

In schema:

Verse	Person	Theme	
16a	P5	The sons of Aaron cry aloud,	ἀνακράζω
16b	P6	they cause the trumpets to resound	ἠχέω
16c	P7	they deliver an impressive sound	ποιέω
16d	Ab4	remembrance	ὑψίστος / nom.cl.
17a	V2	The entire people hasten	κατασπευδω
17b	V3	they fall to the ground	πίπτω
17c	V4 Ab5	they worship	κύριος προσκυνέω
17d	Ab6	παντοκράτωρ θεός ὑψίστος	/ nom.cl.
18a	P8	the singers (P) join in harmoniously	αἰνέω
18b	P9	the song (of P) sounds 'sweet'	
19a	V5 Ab7	the people implore	κύριος ὑψίστος δέομαι
19b	Ab8	in prayer before the Merciful	ἐλεήμων / nom.cl.
19c	P10 Ab9	the song (of P) before	κύριος is concluded συντελέω
19d	P11 Ab10	they complete the service to Him	αὐτός

Abbreviations:

P ⇒ priests (and Levites), V ⇒ people, Ab ⇒ YHWH as object of consideration.

<sup>47</sup> F.Ó Fearghail, 'Sir 50,5–21: Yom Kippur or The Daily Whole-Offering?', *Biblica* 59 (1978) 301–316. I refer the reader to Excursus II: *Yoma*, *Tamid* and *Rosh Hashanah* (3.3.4).

*Interpretation:* Sir. 50:16

It is already apparent at this juncture that the vision of the sons of Aaron has been altered. G50:16a lacks an equivalent for the inter-polation הכהנים *'the priests'*. Smend considers this in H to be a gloss. The primary version is available to us in H, however, since the more detailed presentation of the sons of Aaron is lacking in G, while the priests alone have the task of blowing the trumpets. The singers, i.e. the Levites, have a clear role to play in G (50:18). The sounding of the trumpets refers to the feast of Rosh Hashanah.

The verbal character of the *hiph'il* of זכר *'to cause to remember'* does not find its full expression in the nominal form τό μνημόσυνον *'the remembrance'*. The rallying function of the trumpets is thus lost in G in which the sounding of the trumpets is placed on the same level as the remembrance. In H, on the other hand, the audience is not yet engaged in the action of remembrance. Nevertheless, remembrance is the primary theme of Rosh Hashanah.

Ben Sira's conception of the temple and its liturgy may have been influenced by the *Temple Scroll*.<sup>48</sup> The festival tradition continued after the Maccabean period. The youngest feasts in the festival calendar—Purim, Rosh Hashanah and Hanukkah—are determined by the theme of remembrance of liberation from affliction.

Sir. 50:17

The grandson translates the people's haste literally in this verse. He limits the key concept כל בשר יהודי *'all people together'* (50:17a) to his own people by translating *'the entire people in common'*. The use of ὁ λαός in 19a is somewhat imprecise when compared with כל עם הארץ.

The universalising tendency so characteristic of H is no longer applied to all people, rather it exhibits transcendent qualities in the divine names Most High (50:16b, 17d and 19a) and Almighty (17d). The divine name קדוש ישראל in 50:17c,d is generalised in G.

In comparison with H, the divine names κυριός (17c, 19a and 19c), παντοκράτωρ and ὑψίστος (50:14d, 17d and 19a) acquire a more transcendental character in G.

<sup>48</sup> H. Stegemann, *Die Essener, Qumran, Johannes der Täufer und Jesus*, Freiburg 1993. Stegemann dates the period in which the Temple Scroll came into existence to around 400 BCE (p. 137).

Sir. 50:18

By rendering God as acting subject of *'the voice in the song'* in 50:18, H represents an idea that is not found in the Greek translation. The term  $\eta\gamma\gamma$  *'his light'* is likewise left untranslated in G.

The song of  $\text{οἱ ψαλτῶδοι}$  *'the singers'*, in contrast, which G understands to be a Levite choir, is described with great enthusiasm. The plural voices ( $\text{φωνή}$ ) together with the verb  $\text{αἰνέω}$  suggests polyphony in the singing of the song in line with the tractate *Rosh Hashanah* 4.5. The musical effect is described in G with an aorist pas.  $\text{γλυκαίνομαι}$  *'to become sweet'*, whereby  $\text{τό μέλος}$  would appear to refer to *'the song'* as such rather than *'the melody'*. G clearly offers its own version of things at this juncture. The translator's interest is clearly focused on the impressive effect of the antiphony and its echo which resonates sweetly as the choir sings the song. The semantic significance of  $\text{γλυκαίνομαι}$  *'sweet'* remained in use up to and including the Middle Ages as a term for evaluating melody and sound. Given G's endeavour to render the experience of the sound created by the singers, the translation *'sweetly'* seems appropriate.

Sir. 50:19

The 'people of the land' is rendered in a neutral fashion in G with  $\text{ὁ λαός}$  *'the people'* without any indication to the political and social context.

The name  $\text{רַחֻם}$  is translated as  $\text{ἐλεήμων}$  *'Merciful One'* (50:19b), a term employed for the most part as a characteristic of God and rarely as a name.<sup>49</sup>

By changing the subject of the action in 50:19d (3p.pl.), G offers a completely different perspective on the act of offering when compared to H (3p.s.). Counter to Lévi's suggestion that H19c,d is a repetition of 14a intended to imitate 2 Chron. 29:29, H clearly focuses on Simon who brings the offering to its conclusion according to the prescriptions of Torah. The repetition of the suffix 3p.s.m. of  $\text{אָלַי}$  further accents Simon's aspiration to be in complete agreement with God's intentions. H50:14a,b and 50:19c,d function thus as a literary parallel referring to the conclusion of a sequence of two liturgical acts.

<sup>49</sup> J. Marböck, *Weisheit in Wandel*, BBB 37, Bonn 1971. Marböck makes no reference to this name in his excursus "das Erbarmen Gottes" (p. 28).

G, however, offers a quite different vision of the order of the liturgy.<sup>50</sup> Prayer, song of praise and sacrificial action form a chain of independent liturgical activities that fit as a whole within the framework of the daily offering *Tamid*.

The translation of ὁ κόσμος is open to a number of possibilities, from order of service and liturgy to world order.<sup>51</sup> The ‘*song of praise*’ serves as a second meaning.<sup>52</sup> Within the structure of the liturgical action, the musical segment is concluded with ὁ κόσμος ‘*the song of praise*’ in 19c. The conclusion of the λειτουργία as a whole follows in 19d and in the blessing of 50:20–21.

#### 4.3.5 *Sir. 50:20–21 Simon and the High Priestly blessing*

- 20a τότε καταβάς ἐπήρην χεῖρας αὐτοῦ  
 20b ἐπὶ πᾶσαν ἐκκλησίαν υἱῶν Ἰσραηλ  
 20c δοῦναι εὐλογίαν κυρίου ἐκ χειλέων αὐτοῦ  
 20d καὶ ἐν ὀνόματι αὐτοῦ καυχῆσασθαι·  
 21a καὶ ἐδευτέρωσαν ἐν προσκυνήσει  
 21b ἐπιδέξασθαι τὴν εὐλογίαν παρὰ ὑψίστου.

- 20a Thereafter having descended he raised his hands  
 20b over the entire congregation of the sons of Israel,  
 20c to give the blessing of the Lord with his lips  
 20d and to glorify his name.  
 21a And for the second time they were in veneration,  
 21b to receive the blessing from the Most High.

The damaged text of MS B can be reconstructed on the basis of the facsimile corresponding to the content of G. Simon comes to the fore for the last time in G50:20a–d, raising his hands, descending (participle), giving the blessing and glorifying in his name (2x infinitive).

<sup>50</sup> O. Rickenbacher, *Weisheitsperikopen bei Ben Sira*, OBO 1, Göttingen 1973. In his schematic presentation Rickenbacher makes reference to λειτουργέω in 45:15 with Aaron as subject and 50:14 and 19 with Zion as subject. He also sees a parallel with wisdom in 24:10. His allusion to Christ is speculative (p. 51).

<sup>51</sup> C.T.R. Hayward, *The Jewish Temple. A Non-Biblical Sourcebook*, London 1996. Based on Gen. 2:1, Hayward is inclined to understand κόσμος as the universe. In 50:14b he translates ‘*to adorn the offering*’, while the text clearly refers to the ordering of the sacrifice. He translates 50:19c ‘*until the order of the Lord was completed*’. On the contrary, κόσμος as ‘*song of praise*’ is evidently associated with the song that resounds sweetly in 50:18b (p. 79).

<sup>52</sup> The term κόσμος in classical Greek bears the secondary significance of ‘*praise, song of praise, exaltation*’. This implies that the grandson did not rely exclusively on the Septuagint for his terminology.

The structure of G runs more or less parallel to that of H at this juncture. G employs τότε to introduce 50:16a and 20a, rendering Hebrew נ. The same term is employed, however, in G 50:17a with the result that the three actions of the priests (16a), the people (17a) and Simon (20a) are conceived as a unity.

In schema:

Verse	Person		Theme
20a	Sa12	Simon, descending,	καταβαίνω
	Sa13	raises hands,	ἐπαίρω
20b	V6	the entire congregation of υἱῶν Ἰσραηλ	/ nom.cl.
20c	Sa14 Ab11	to give the blessing	κυρίου δίδωμι
20d	Sa15 Ab12	to glorify the name	αὐτοῦ καυχάομαι
21a	V7	they [πάσα ἐκκλησία] 2× in veneration	/ nom.cl.
21b	V8	to receive	ἐπιδέχομαι
	Ab13	the blessing παρὰ ὑψίστου	

Abbreviations:

Sa ⇒ Simon active, V ⇒ people, Ab ⇒ YHWH as object of consideration.

*Interpretation:* Sir. 50:20a,b

While G provides an almost literal translation of H at this juncture, employing τότε as a temporal indicator, a number of apparently minor changes remain significant. G speaks, for example of πᾶσαν ἐκκλησιάν υἱῶν Ἰσραηλ 'the entire congregation of the sons of Israel', the translator having added υἱῶν to H's כל קהל ישראל 'the entire congregation of Israel'. Women, children and foreigners were commonly included (Josh. 8:35; 1 Kgs 8:14). After the exile this tends to restrict the perspective to the institutionalised cultic community in 1 Chron. 29:10, 2 Chron. 30:25, Neh. 8:3. In spite of the limited character of the difference between G and H here, the expression υἱῶν Ἰσραηλ nevertheless presents a completely different reality in the community in the temple.

Sir. 50:20c,d

The term δοῦναι is added here in order to describe the act of blessing. The same is true with respect to the preposition παρὰ in 50:21b which serves to clarify Simon's role as intermediary. Blessing as a direct action would appear to be unknown to the translator. His purpose is to provide, where possible, an unadulterated translation of H, a fact made all the more evident from the translation of

יִשְׁפָּח with ἐκ χειλέων αὐτοῦ ‘on his lips’ and the parallel with the High Priestly blessing Num. 6:24–26 with its emphasis on κύριος as the subject of the blessing.

Just as הַפִּרְסָה is translated with καύχημα (44:7) the grandson opts for the verb καυχάομαι ‘to glorify’ as his translation of פִּרְסָה. In terms of content, however, this serves as a something of a reduction when compared to H with הִפְאִיר ‘he revealed his glory’. G clearly reduces Simon’s role to that of intermediary in giving the blessing of the Most High.

The parallel between וּבְרַכַּתָּהּ (50:20c) and בְּשֵׁם יְיָ ‘in the name of YHWH’ (50:20d) is translated in G with two *verba* intended to express the blessing (δίδωμι) and the name (καυχάομαι). The accentuation of God the Almighty’s all-embracing power found in G50:16–19 continues to function here.

#### Sir. 50:21

The fact that Simon’s role continues to be reduced in this verse has led Smend to propose that we associate מְפַיֵּי with Simon on the basis of G. G, however, does not support such a reading. All people receive the blessing from the Most High. Simon fades into the background, functioning significantly less as an actant in G’s version of Sirach 50 (Sa15) than in H (Sa21). Such a fundamental change provides reason to consider G as an independent version with its own vision of God, the temple, the faith community and Simon. The relationship between the remembrance character of the Praise of the Fathers and Rosh Hashanah is no longer apparent.

#### 4.3.6 Sir. 50:22–24 Prayer of entreaty

- 22a Καὶ νῦν εὐλογήσατε τῷ θεῷ πάντων  
 22b τῷ μεγάλα ποιοῦντι πάντη,  
 22c τὸν ὑψοῦντα ἡμέρας ἡμῶν ἐκ μήτρας  
 22d καὶ ποιοῦντα μεθ’ ἡμῶν κατὰ τὸ ἔλεος αὐτοῦ.  
 23a δόξη ἡμῖν εὐφροσύνην καρδίας  
 23b καὶ γενέσθαι εἰρήνην ἐν ἡμέραις ἡμῶν  
 23c ἐν Ἰσραὴλ κατὰ τὰς ἡμέρας τοῦ αἰῶνος·  
 24a ἐμπιστεῦσαι μεθ’ ἡμῶν τὸ ἔλεος αὐτοῦ  
 24b καὶ ἐν ταῖς ἡμέραις ἡμῶν λυτρωσάσθω ἡμᾶς.

- 22a Praise then now the God of all,  
 22b who does great things in every place,



- 22c who increases our days from the womb  
 22d and who treats us according to his loving kindness.  
 23a May he give us a joyful heart  
 23b and may peace come in our days,  
 23c in Israel as in the days of old.  
 24a May his loving kindness be entrusted to us  
 24b and in our days may He liberate us.

The dative τῷ θεῷ πάντων in 50:22a is changed in L248 into the accusative τον θεόν τό μεγάλα ποιῶντα, the latter fitting appropriately with the verb εὐλογέω. The divine name יהוה ישראל is changed in G to the ‘*God of all*’. Ziegler notes a number of manuscripts with πάντες instead of πάντων. The supplementation of המפליא ‘*the great things*’ with בארץ in 50:22b remains untranslated.

G50:22c speaks of the increase of ἡμέρας ἡμῶν ‘*our days*’ instead of H’s ימים, just as 50:23b interprets ביניכם ‘*in your midst*’ in H with ‘*in our days*’. The transition in the discourse from 2p.pl. to 1p.pl. serves to increase the abstraction and generalisation characteristic of G and likewise introduces a change in the form.

50:23a is lacking in L248. The content of הכמה לבב is altered in G50:23a to read a ‘*joyful*’ heart. The general temporal reference τὰς ἡμέρας τοῦ αἰῶνος ‘*in the days of old*’ is added in G50:23c.

A number of manuscripts read the infinitive λυτρωσάσθαι in 50:24 as a variant of the imperative λυτρωσάσθω. Similarly, the verb γενεσθω is documented next to the infinitive γενέσθαι. The explanation would appear to lie in the reading of ἐμπιστεύσαι as an aorist optative or as an aorist infinitive. Peters opts for the infinitive on the basis of *credere* in L. Ziegler prefers the optative.

Simon is no longer seen within the framework of the covenant with Phinehas. The addition of G50:23c and the alteration of G50:24 disrupt the structure of H, in which YHWH is actant in the appeal at the beginning of the doxology (22a,b) directed to ימים (22c,d), to *you*’ (23a,b) and to Simon (24a,b,c,d).

G’s discourse follows the appeal (22a,b) with seven cola describing God’s action with respect to ‘*us*’ (22c–24b). This 1p.pl. refers to the human person in general or to the people.

The accent on ‘*us*’ (7x 1p.pl.) indicates a different literary concept, as is also apparent from the temporal references to ‘*the days*’ (4x).

In schema:

Verse	Person	Theme	
22a	V9 Ab14	Appeal (all) to praise God of all	εὐλογέω
22b	Aa1	He, who everywhere does great things	ποιέω
22c	Aa2 V10	who increases	ἡμέρας ἡμῶν ὑπόω
22d	Aa3 V11	who acts	μεθ' ἡμῶν τὸ ἔλεος ποιέω
23a	Aa4 V12	May he give	ἡμῖν διδόναι
23b	V13 Ab15	let peace come	ἐν ἡμέραις ἡμῶν γιγνομαι
23c	V14	in Israel	κατὰ τὰς ἡμέρας τοῦ αἰῶνος / νομ.ζῆν
24a	V15 Ab16	entrusted	μεθ' ἡμῶν τὸ ἔλεος ἐμπιστεύω
24b	V16	ἐν ταῖς ἡμέραις ἡμῶν	
	Aa5 V17	May he liberate	ἡμᾶς λυτρόω

Abbreviations:

V ⇒ people, Aa ⇒ YHWH active, Ab ⇒ YHWH as object of consideration.

Presented in H in the language of descriptive praise, the doxology is transformed in G50:23a into a prayer of entreaty on the part of the people (1p.pl.), which is introduced by δόη (aorist optative) and directed towards a joyful life, peace and the gift of God's loving kindness and redemption as know to Israel of old (23c).

*Interpretation:* Sir. 50:22

The translator changes the descriptive praise of the doxology H at this point by reading 1p.pl. instead of 3p.pl. More importantly, however, Simon disappears from view, being set apart in Sirach 50 from the Fathers described in Sirach 44–49.

The series of actions in G50:22a–d employs a participial form in order to render God's deeds with respect to 'us'. The consequence of this transition to 1p.pl. is that אֱלֹהִים is no longer object but rather ἡμέρας ἡμῶν 'our days', the latter being increased by God 'from the womb'. Such terminology is unusual. Scholars frequently suggest the presence of an allusion to Isa. 63:9 in the context of the prayer of entreaty (Isa. 63:7–64:12). In terms of content, however, the liberation by Moses from Egypt does not seem to be at issue, nor is there any reference to זָכַר (in G μνημονεύω 'to remember'), which serves as the primary theme of H. Moreover, the typification of the name YHWH and the dwelling as הַבַּיִת (Isa. 63:14) is ignored together with the unusual divine addressation אַתָּה יְהוָה אֱבֹרֵינוּ 'You Lord, our Father' (Isa. 63:16), which the Septuagint translates with σὺ, κύριε, πατὴρ ἡμῶν. One can conclude, therefore, that Ben Sira's grandson

changed the character of the doxology in line with his own insights. He evidently did not allow himself to be influenced in this by the Septuagint.

The combination of τὸν ὑψοῦντα with ἡμέρας ἡμῶν and ἐκ μήτρας (50:22c) acquires significance in association with the opening words of the prayer (καὶ νῦν ‘now then’ 50:22a) and the content of 50:23–24. The emphasis is clearly on the term ‘now’, on the concrete reality of the grandson who focuses on ‘our days’ (23b and 24b) in contrast to ‘the days of old’ (23c). These temporal references serve to relate the ideal to its origin. A joyful heart and the desire to live in peace reflect an ideal rooted in Israel’s origin (ἀρχή) that is still to be realised ἐν ἡμέραις ἡμῶν ‘in our days’ (50:22c).

From 50:22d onwards the 1p.pl. in μεθ’ ἡμῶν ‘with us’ becomes the object of God’s merciful deeds. God addresses his deeds to ‘us’ (1p.pl.) in 50:23–24, i.e. to every individual including Simon. This generalising approach is rooted in the divine name Θεός πάντων ‘the God of all’ (50:22a). The disappearance of אלהי ישראל likewise implies the disappearance of the codicological phenomenon of two cola written over the full width of the page in H50:22.

Ziegler gives preference to the reading with the divine name Θεός πάντων over that with θεός πάντες ‘God of all/everything’. The objective genitive interpretation ‘the God for all’ witnesses to the universality of the divine will. Di Lella’s translation contains both possibilities: “And now, bless the God of all.” The interpretation ‘God of all’ seems most appropriate at this juncture since it is evident that G has abandoned any specific approach to Israel with respect to the nations in contrast to H’s אלהי ישראל ‘YHWH, the God of Israel’. The context in G is similarly determined by the adverb παντα ‘everywhere’, which reinforces the all-embracing character of 50:22b.<sup>53</sup>

<sup>53</sup> C.T.R. Hayward, ‘Sacrifice and World Order: Some Observations on Ben Sira’s Attitude to the Temple Service’, in S.W. Sykes ed., *Sacrifice and Redemption*, Cambridge 1991 (pp. 22–34). In addition to the strongly individual spirituality, Hayward endeavours to associate the universal aspects with a world order that he recognises in the temple liturgy. In *The Jewish Temple. A Non-Biblical Sourcebook*, London 1996 (pp. 73–84), he bases himself on G50:19c ‘until the order of the Lord was completed’. He considers the omission of Phinehas as an expression of loyalty towards the new leaders in Judea (p. 82). 50:19 and 22, however, do not offer sufficient support for such far reaching conclusions. Our translation of κοσμος as ‘song of praise’ suggests that G has a different approach to the matter.

Sir. 50:23

Reference to God's deeds 'with us', in 'our days' and in Israel is continued in the temporal phrase *κατὰ τὰς ἡμέρας τοῦ αἰῶνος* 'as in the days of old'. The ideal of earlier times is given clear expression in this formulation. Given the reinterpretation of H in G50:23a with its prayer for a *joyful heart*, it would appear that the translator was no longer familiar with the determination of wisdom as a quality of the heart. The same is true with respect to the notion that YHWH dwells in peace in our midst. G employs the infinitive *γενέσθαι* to express the urgent desirability of the advent of peace in the form of a prayer of entreaty. The content of the prayer is focused on the final request for actual liberation as the realisation of original peace in 50:24b.

Sir. 50:24

The content of G is significantly altered with respect to H at this juncture. Simon disappears from the picture and together with him the enduring *בְּרִית* that was confirmed by God in the covenant with Phinehas. The repetition of *ἐν ταῖς ἡμέραις ἡμῶν* 'in our days' points once again to the concept of an ideal origin (*ἀρχή*) that is still to be realised in the future. The motivation of the prayer of entreaty is rooted in the ideal of peace, offering perspective at a time and in a situation that clearly did not square with the ideal. There is no peace, and the loving kindness that the people pray will be entrusted to them (*ἐμπιστεύσαι*, aorist optative) is far from evident. The plea for the liberative intervention of the God of all in 50:24a,b thus acquires an urgent and essential character via the imperative medium aorist *λυτρώσασθω* 'may He liberate us', which functions as a wish (50:24b).

The doxology concludes in H with the temporal phrase *כִּימֵי שְׁמַיִם*, characteristic of the covenant with Aaron (45:15). In G45:15d, the grandson translates this expression in a Hebraising fashion with *ἐν ἡμέραις οὐρανοῦ* 'in the days of the heavens'.<sup>54</sup> In 50:24b, however, he turns his attention to his own days. Two generations after Ben Sira, the claims of the Samaritans are barely relevant, the temple on

<sup>54</sup> J. Barr, *Biblical Words for Time*, SBT 33, London 1969/2. With reference to *כִּימֵי עוֹלָם*, Barr points to the aspect of permanence, depending on the object with which *עוֹלָם* is associated (p. 74).

Mount Gerizim having been destroyed (128 BCE), shortly after the appearance of G.

The ideal of joy and peace was kept alive in the diaspora in the prayer for God's loving kindness and liberation (50:24b). The grandson, who lived in Egypt, concludes the wisdom book of Jesus Sirach in 50:1–29 and adds Sirach 51 as an appendix with the title *'prayer of Jesus son of Sirach'* (G51:1), similar to the superscription *'wisdom of Jesus son of Sirach'* found at the beginning of the book (1:1).

#### 4.3.7 *Sir. 50:25–26 Ben Sira's Scheltrede*

25a Ἐν δυσὶν ἔθνεσιν προσάχθισεν ἡ ψυχὴ μου,  
 25b καὶ τὸ τρίτον οὐκ ἔστιν ἔθνος·  
 26a οἱ καθήμενοι ἐν ὄρει Σαμαρείας καὶ Φυλιστιμ  
 26b καὶ ὁ λαὸς ὁ μωρὸς ὁ κατοικῶν ἐν Σικίμοις.

25a Two nations my soul detests  
 25b and the third is no nation.  
 26a Those who reside on Mount Samaria and the Philistines  
 26b and the foolish people that dwells in Shechem.

The people that reside on Mount Samaria is mentioned in G50:26a instead of Seir in H. Based on this textual variation, Van den Born is inclined to consider the reading οἱ καθήμενοι ἐν ὄρει Σαμαρείας to be an error. Lévi speaks of the Samaritans as *une secte détestée*. The translation of □ϛ (25b) with ἔθνος serves to undermine Ben Sira's protest against the Shechemites. The third people in G (25b) is independent of the other two. The translator makes a sharp distinction between the first people, residing on Mount Samaria, and the third, the foolish people in Shechem. Smend, on the other hand, refers to the 'Samaritans in Shechem' without further distinction.

In schema:

Verse	Person	Theme
25a	JS1 No 1,2	2 nations I (my soul) detests
25b	Na 1	the 3rd is no nation
26a	Na 2,3	those (1st) residing on Mt Samaria and the Philistines (2nd)
26b	Na 4	those (3rd) the foolish people in Shechem

Abbreviations:

JS ⇒ Jesus Sirach, No ⇒ nation as object, Na ⇒ nation as actant.

*Interpretation:* Sir. 50:25

The verb ἴσθω is translated with προσοχθίζω 'to experience aversion, revulsion', which is familiar to us from the Septuagint (e.g. Gen. 27:46).

The first two nations are referred to as ἔθνοι in similar fashion to the third in the negation οὐκ ἔστιν ἔθνος 'is no nation' (25b). The translator's indignation is reinforced by the mention of ὁ λαός in 50:26b, the self-awareness of the Jewish people having grown significantly during the Hasmonean period. Judas went to war with a small army made up of Jewish soldiers and no mercenaries. His army ultimately became a power against which the pagans (ἔθνοι) were unable to hold out (2 Macc. 8:5–7). These wars acquired the character of holy wars in the books of Maccabees (1 Macc. 3:18–4:18; 7:40–43; 9:1–22; 2 Macc. 12:13–16). Such Jewish self-awareness was stimulated in Qumran, the Temple Scroll and the War Scroll, as well as in Jubilees 37–38 and Judith 15:3–7.

Sir. 50:26

The form of the numerical aphorism is not disrupted in G. Roth notes, by contrast, that G differs at this juncture from H and L (Vulgate).<sup>55</sup> The structure of the numerical aphorism clearly has the conventional *title-line*, in which three nations are mentioned without reference to their identity (25a,b). According to Roth's analysis, however, the *list* is incomplete on account of the absence of Seir in G, in contrast to H with three neighbouring peoples, the Edomites, the Philistines and the 'heretic' Samaritans. While Roth neglects G, we maintain that more than two groups are to be distinguished therein. Indeed, the *list* is in fact complete in G in which 'the Samaritans'<sup>56</sup> are understood as two different groups: namely those in Samaria and those in Shechem.

The first group to be distinguished is the καθήμενοι 'those who reside on Mount Samaria', which includes the powerful Tobiad family who exercised considerable economic influence with respect to the collection of taxes for a succession of occupiers.<sup>57</sup> The participle of

<sup>55</sup> W.M.W. Roth, *Numerical Sayings in the Old Testament*, VTSup XIII, Leiden 1965 (pp. 40f.).

<sup>56</sup> P.W. van der Horst, 'De Samaritaanse diaspora in de oudheid', *NTT* 42 (1988) 134–144. Van der Horst makes a distinction between the Samaritans and the Samaritans (p. 135).

<sup>57</sup> Josephus describes how Onias II handed over the responsibility for the collection of taxes to Joseph, the son of Tobias, (*Ant.* XII, 160). Simon the High Priest

καθίζω is consciously translated with the somewhat negative sounding 'to reside' rather than the more neutral 'to sit'. The reference to τὸ ὄρος Σαμαρείας is borrowed from Shemer, who sold the mountain to Omri for two talents of silver (1 Kgs 16:24). Samaria is located 10km north-west of Shechem.<sup>58</sup> Amos fulminated against this new city (4:1) on account of its social injustices. The Assyrians conquered the city as the capital of the Northern Kingdom in 722. After the Babylonian exile, the city became the new seat of government of the Persians. With the arrival of Alexander the Great, the Persians competed with Jerusalem for the favours of this successful military campaigner who ultimately destroyed Samaria and had a Hellenistic city built in its place for former soldiers. It is evident from the Zeno papyri that the Ptolemaic rulers governed their territory from fortified cities in which the military were charged with the task of developing the land.<sup>59</sup>

Mentioned after the Philistines, the second group to be distinguished is the Samaritan religious community in Shechem, a community faithful to the Torah who worshipped in their own temple on Mount Gerizim. Shechem has a rich history in Torah on account of the altar built there by Abraham, the well of Jacob and the reprisals against Shechem that followed the rape of Dinah. The grave of Joseph is also located in Shechem. It was a Levite city, employed for the coronation of Israel's kings, which also functioned as a centre for refugees. The sanctuary built in the 4th century BCE was destroyed by John Hyrcanus in 128 BCE.

A long and established tradition exists whereby the inhabitants of Shechem were referred to as 'foolish'. Such *Schelten* clearly had a religious background.<sup>60</sup> The use of the collective term 'the Samaritans', which is based on data from the N.T., witnesses to the fact that the importance of any distinction between both groups was under threat

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came into conflict with Hyrcanus, the youngest son of Joseph (p. 104). During the term of Onias III, Hyrcanus' property was preserved in the temple in Jerusalem (2 Macc. 3:11).

<sup>58</sup> E.J. Bickerman, *The Jews in the Greek Age*, Cambridge 1988 (p. 12).

<sup>59</sup> V. Tcherikover, 'The Political Situation from 332 B.C.E. to 175 B.C.E.'—'Social Conditions', in A. Schalit ed., *The World History of the Jewish People. The Hellenistic Age*, VI, London 1976, 53–86 and 87–114. The Zeno papyri make reference to tax officials together with soldiers and their wives and children in *cleruchies* (p. 90).

<sup>60</sup> E. Schuller, '4Q372 1: A Text about Joseph', *RQ* 55 (1990) 349–376. According to Schuller, this text on Joseph refers to the Samaritans as 'fools' in order to drive Israel to jealousy (p. 355).

of disappearing. There is evidence in G of a conscious emendation of H50:26. The καθήμενοι constituted the rich upper-crust who exercised power in Samaria. The κατοικοὶ ἐν Σικίμοις were considered foolish with respect to their religious views and sinful behaviour.<sup>61</sup> Ben Sira's grandson should be understood at this juncture as a reviser of the Hebrew perspective rather than a neutral translator.

In spite of their late date, Samaritan sources give the impression of having their own standpoint with respect to the continuity of the High Priestly tradition stemming from Adam.<sup>62</sup> The Samaritans remained faithful to the commandments and recognised Moses as the law-giver. Their transmission of the Torah goes back to Abisha and their wisdom tradition begins with Adam and makes reference to Enoch and Joseph.<sup>63</sup>

The *Samaritan Chronicle II* describes the history of the people's entry into the promised land from the time of Joshua and offers a commentary on 2 Samuel–2 Kings.<sup>64</sup>

- Joshua destroys Ai and enters the city of Luzah, otherwise known as Bethel. He builds an altar on Mount Gerizim, the chosen place (Deut. 12:5). The glory of God manifests itself over the people and above the ark (Joshua §K–M). Joshua establishes the temple (Joshua §Q,G\*). Phinehas takes responsibility for the correct calculation of the calendar and his son Abisha copies the Torah into a scroll that is still preserved in Shechem (Joshua §W,D\*–F\*).
- The Samaritan Israelites are distinguished as 'the descendants of Phinehas the son of Eleazar the priest, and the descendants of Joseph who believed in the chosen place Mount Gerizim Bethel' (1 Samuel §H,E\*).
- David buys the threshing floor from Arauna and sets about building the temple but there is resistance on the part of the Samaritan Israelites. He halts the building activities and sends all the offerings to Mount Gerizim (2 Samuel §B,H\*). Immediately after his pilgrimage

<sup>61</sup> J. Marböck, *Weisheit im Wandel*, BBB 37, Bonn 1971. The term 'foolish' belongs to the semantic field of formation and instruction in wisdom (p. 128).

<sup>62</sup> J. Bowman, *Samaritan Documents*, Pittsburgh 1977. Succession in the *Samaritan Chronicle Tolidah* begins from Adam and reaches a climax in Phinehas.

<sup>63</sup> J. Macdonald, *Memar Marqah*, II, BZAW 84, Berlin 1963. This book contains 5 parts on Moses from the moment of his call to his death. Chapter VI contains a number of homilies, among them §2 'The use of wisdom'. Adam, Abel, Enosh, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, Aaron, Eleazar, Phinehas, Joshua and Caleb all had access to wisdom.

<sup>64</sup> J. Macdonald, *The Samaritan Chronicle No II (or: Sepher Ha-Yamim) From Joshua to Nebuchadnezzar*, BZAW 107, Berlin 1969.



- to Mount Gerizim (Bethel) he completes the construction of the sanctuary at Jebis (2 Samuel §D,J\*).
- Zadok acclaims Solomon king in Shechem (1 Kings 1–11 §A,B\*).
  - The tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh, the sons of Joseph, protest against the central sanctuary at Jebis so as not to dishonour Mount Gerizim as the chosen place (1 Kings 1–11 §F,C\*).
  - Solomon appoints Jeroboam over 'house of Joseph'. This community of Samaritan Israelites (1 Kings 12–22 §D,B\*) rebels against Rehoboam in Shechem, the latter having set up two golden calves in Samaria (Sebaste) and in Dan (1 Kings 12–22 §E,J\*). Joseph is named as patriarch of Shemer on the purchase and construction of Samaria by Omri (2 Kings 12–22 §I,A\*). The inhabitants are referred to as the Shomronim after Har Shomron.
  - The chosen place is Mount Gerizim, which is clearly distinguished from Mount Samaria (2 Chronicles §D,C\*). The Chronicle concludes with the destruction of Jebis and the temple of Solomon by Nebuchadnezzar (§O–P).

In spite of its late date, *Chronicle II* offers an answer to a number of issues relating to the legitimation of the chosen place, the sons of Joseph, the High Priestly tradition and Torah. It is probable that Ben Sira is venting criticism of these Samaritan theologoumena in 49:14–16 and 50:25–26. The difference between Samaria and Shechem, to which his grandson refers in the Greek version, represents an important stage in the development of Israel's history in which opposition between the various social and religious groups had grown in intensity. Ben Sira's focus on the covenant with Phinehas with a view to representing the exemplary behaviour of Simon no longer serves as a convincing argument for his grandson. After the murder of Onias III, the personal commitment of the High Priest had become a matter of irrelevance. The High Priests who emerged from Maccabean circles were unable to find a single reason to justify themselves on the basis of Phinehas's voluntary zeal. The conflict became all the more acute when those in Shechem based themselves on an unbroken tradition running from Adam to Phinehas with respect to the High Priestly succession in the Torah. Such criticism of the legitimation of the temple in Jerusalem could only be warded off by the latter's supporters by treating its source as a sectarian group divided along secular and religious lines. The grandson clearly bears witness to this division by making a geographical distinction between Samaria and Shechem. Within this framework it is evident that the conflict between the temple on Mount Gerizim and the temple in Jerusalem had grown significantly.

Kippenberg maintains that the most important factor among the developments in Jerusalem was the centralisation of political, military and religious power under the Maccabeans, and in particular by Simon in 140 BCE.<sup>65</sup> From the political perspective Judea had been liberated under the latter's rule. The people chose him in order to combine political and military power with the hereditary High Priesthood, which would remain unrestricted until the coming of the prophet (1 Macc. 4:41–46). Internal division undermined any serious resistance to this all-embracing rule and efforts to restore the centuries old division between Samaria and Jerusalem ultimately flagged (*Ant.* XIII.62–79). It is clear from G50:25–26 that the translator made ideological use of evident divisions within the opposition in Samaria and Shechem. He is aware of the problem of legitimating peace in his days, which was later guaranteed under Hasmonean rule by treaties (*foedera aequa*) between the Romans and the Jewish people (ἔθνος), the latter being considered an equal partner. Resistance on the part of Samaritan factions in Shechem dwindled a few years later after the destruction of the temple on Mount Gerizim in 128 BCE.

Two generations after Simon, it has become clear that the Praise of the Fathers in Sirach 50 had clearly undergone a re-interpretation, casting a completely different light on the relations between Jewish and Samaritan factions.<sup>66</sup> Thanks to the grandson's efforts, the wisdom book of Jesus Sirach appeared in G in 132 BCE and continued to be transmitted in this version. The discovery of H in 1896 provided the opportunity to place both versions side by side and to ascertain how quickly the praise of Simon and the polemic surrounding the foolishness of the people in Shechem had become a thing of the past.

<sup>65</sup> H.G. Kippenberg, *Religion und Klassenbildung im antiken Judäa, Eine religionssoziologische Studie zum Verhältnis von Tradition und gesellschaftlicher Entwicklung*, SUNT 14, Göttingen 1978 (pp. 106f.).

<sup>66</sup> F. Dexinger, 'Der Ursprung der Samaritaner im Spiegel der frühen Quellen', in F. Dexinger/R. Pummer eds, *Die Samaritaner*, Darmstadt 1992 (pp. 67–140). Dexinger approvingly quotes K. Haacker who explains the difference between H and G: "daß 'Seir' in der LXX durch 'Samaria' ersetzt wurde, weil diese Fassung erst nach der Bekehrung der Edomiter, die hebräische Fassung aber vorher entstand" (p. 122). The contrast between Samaria and Shechem, however, remains outside his range because he provides a translation based on a compilation of texts: "Die Bewohner von Seir (gr. Samarias) und vom Philisterland und das törichte Volk (לְבַיִט), das in Sichem wohnt" (p. 120). The difference between οἱ καθήμενοι and ὁ μωρός ὁ κατοικῶν becomes clear in the approach of G and H as independent versions.

4.3.8 *Sir. 50:27–29 Ben Sira’s epilogue and benediction*

- 27a Παιδείαν συνέσεως καὶ ἐπιστήμης  
 27b ἐγράραξεν ἐν τῷ βιβλίῳ τούτῳ  
 27c Ἰησοῦς υἱὸς Σιραχ Ἐλεαζαρ ὁ Ἱεροσολυμίτης,  
 27d ὃς ἀνώμβρησεν σοφίαν ἀπὸ καρδίας αὐτοῦ.  
 28a μακάριος ὃς ἐν τούτοις ἀναστραφήσεται,  
 28b καὶ θεὸς αὐτὰ ἐπὶ καρδίαν αὐτοῦ σοφισθήσεται.  
 29a ἐὰν γὰρ αὐτὰ ποιήσῃ, πρὸς πάντα ἰσχύσει,  
 29b ὅτι φόβος κυρίου τὸ ἴχνος αὐτοῦ,  
 29c καὶ τοῖς εὐσεβέσιν ἔδωκε σοφίαν.  
 29d εὐλογητὸς κύριος εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα. γένοιτο, γένοιτο.

- 27a Instruction in understanding and knowledge  
 27b he has inscribed in this book,  
 27c Jesus, the son of Sirach Eleazar, from Jerusalem.  
 27d It was he who let wisdom pour forth from his heart!  
 28a Happy is he who occupies himself with these things,  
 28b and he who takes them to heart shall become wise,  
 29a for when he does them, he shall be skilled in all things.  
 29b The fear of the Lord is his footprint!  
 29c And to the faithful He gives wisdom.  
 29d Praised be the Lord to eternity! Amen! Amen!

The content of H50:27 has been significantly altered in G via the omission of *וּמִשְׁלַ אִוְפְנִים* ‘*and the mastery of the wheels*’. The added colon ‘*he has inscribed in this book*’ (27b) shifts the naming of the writer to 27c. The name itself is changed from *שִׁמְעוֹן* to Jesus, to which Sirach Eleazar is added as a patronymic and ὁ Ἱεροσολυμίτης as a determinative of place.

The content of G50:28 is more or less the same as its equivalent in H, *נָהַן עַל לִבּוֹ* ‘*setting his heart upon*’ being translated in Hebraising fashion as *τίθημι ἐπὶ καρδίαν αὐτοῦ* ‘*to take to heart*’ in G. The expression *τίθημι ἐν καρδίᾳ* is usually employed in contrast to the preposition *ἐπὶ* (accusative).

The concluding colon *כִּי יִרְאָה יְיָ הַיּוֹם* in H50:28c takes on a completely different significance in G. The cola 29c,d were added later to GII as a conclusion to the Praise of the Fathers. For this reason Ziegler’s text edition<sup>67</sup> prints these two cola in a smaller font size and with a distinguishing white line.

<sup>67</sup> J. Ziegler, *Sapientia Iesu Filii Sirach*. Septuaginta Vetus Testamentum Graecum, XII/2, Göttingen 1965. A number of manuscripts have an interpolated closing colon pointing to the intention of Jesus Sirach: *τελος του ιησου υιου σιραχ (σιραχ)*.

In schema:

Verse	Person	Theme	
27a		Instruction in understanding/knowledge	nom.cl.
27b	JS2	[he] establishes in book form	χαράσσω
27c	JS3	Jesus, . . . ., inhabitant of Jerusalem.	/ nom.cl.
27d	JS4	He lets wisdom pour forth from his heart!	ἀνομβρέω
28a	M1,2	Happy is he ἐν τούτοις	ἀναστρέφω
28b	M3,4	he who takes αὐτὰ to heart becomes wise ρίθμηι, σοφίζω	
29a	M5,6	he who does αὐτὰ, is πρὸς πάντα skilled	ισχύω
29b	Ab17 M7	The fear of the Lord is his footprint!	/ nom.cl.
29c	Aa6 V18	He gives wisdom to the faithful	δίδωμι
29d	Ab18	Praised be the Lord	/ nom.cl.

Abbreviations:

JS ⇒ Jesus Sirach, Aa ⇒ YHWH active, Ab ⇒ YHWH as object of consideration, M ⇒ he, indefinite subject, V ⇒ people.

*Interpretation:* Sir. 50:27

The omission of the name of Simon at this juncture raises a number of questions.<sup>68</sup> When compared with H50:27b there would appear to be no clear reason for the omission.<sup>69</sup>

As Rickenbacher has noted, παιδεία is the usual Greek term for the Hebrew מוֹסֵר.<sup>70</sup> Little evidence remains of unusual knowledge with respect to the mastery of the wheels in the general terms συνέσις 'insight' and ἐπιστήμη 'knowledge via science'. G has likewise lost every trace of the *merkabah* tradition in relation to the רוּבִינִים 'wheels'. The translator would appear to have completely ignored such speculative material. It is possible that he took the common Greek perception with respect to the acquisition of knowledge as his point of departure,<sup>71</sup> to which the term ἐπιστήμη may refer in Plato's *Phaedo*, in

<sup>68</sup> J.A. Fitzmyer, *Essays on the Semitic Background of the New Testament*, London 1971. The name Simon functions frequently as a 'patronymic or nickname' (p. 105).

<sup>69</sup> Smend considers the name υἱὸς Σιραχ Ἐλεαζαρ improbable because it occurs in a number of variant forms. The translator may have added ὁ Ἱεροσολυμίτης (p. 492).

<sup>70</sup> O. Rickenbacher, *Weisheitsperikopen bei Ben Sira*, OBO 1, Göttingen 1973 (p. 75).

<sup>71</sup> B.A. van Groningen, *In the Grip of the Past*, Leiden 1953. Seven verbs serve to express the path to knowledge: νοεῖν, φρονεῖν, γινώσκειν, συνιέναι, εἰδέναι, μανθάνειν and ἐπίστασθαι, the meaning of the latter being 'to stand close to' which carries the notion of 'to observe' (p. 66).

which Socrates arrives at knowledge by observation and the remembrance of the original and the idea. The term is so general, however, that the word combination *συνέσεως καὶ ἐπιστήμη* may have simply been a part of the translators vocabulary.

The new colon (27b) would appear to have been added if one accepts the idea that the translator is providing a conclusion to the entire wisdom book in 50:27–29 with the primary title *ΣΟΦΙΑ ΙΗΣΟΥ ΣΙΡΑΧ*. The similar title above Sirach 51: Προσευχὴ Ἰησοῦ Υἱοῦ Σιραχ serves to support this argument. The name Ben Sira is known to us from the Rabbinic tradition. No uniform name can be derived from 50:27c and 51:30 in either H or G. The question remains as to which version one should follow for exegetical purposes. It is agreed, nevertheless, that for the first time in the biblical tradition the name of the author is mentioned explicitly.

The demonstrative pronoun *ὅς* follows in 50:27d, introducing a new beginning in which the vision of Jesus Sirach is finalised. In line with the typically anticipative style of his grandfather, the translator delays mentioning the name of the author until 27c, as he did with respect to Simon in 50:1b.

#### Sir. 50:28a–29a

The benediction is rounded off with the notion of ‘being skilled’ in all things (50:29a). As in 50:27d, Ben Sira summarises the content of what he wants to say in the form of an appeal (50:29b). By placing the emphasis on *αὐτοῦ* in *ἀπὸ καρδίας αὐτοῦ* ‘from his heart’ (27d), *ἐπὶ καρδίαν αὐτοῦ* ‘upon his heart’ (28b) and *τὸ ἕχνος αὐτοῦ* ‘his footprint’ (29b) he establishes a relationship between the epilogue in 50:27 and the benediction in 50:28a–29b.

The translation of *כָּל־יָד* in G with reference to *ἕχνος* ‘foot print’ would appear to be a free interpretation. The translator seems to be suggesting a subtle connection by basing himself time and again in the 3p.s. The term *ὅς* in 50:27d refers back to Jesus, son of Sirach Eleazar. In 50:28a, on the other hand, *ὅς* refers to an indefinite subject ‘everyone’. He further underlines the general character of the content (50:28a–29a) via the indefinite expression *ἐν ταύταις* ‘with these things’ (28a). Reference is made in 28b and 29a to *αὐτὰ* ‘these things’ by taking ‘them’ to heart and doing ‘them’. He thus alludes to the concretisation of wisdom. Wisdom (*σοφία*) as such is only mentioned explicitly in 27d. This explanation is confirmed by the later interpolation of G50:29c,d, which introduces the perspective that God

gives wisdom. Such a vision is in harmony with H50:23a and with the formulation with which Ben Sira begins his book (Sir. 1:1a). Wisdom (27d) constitutes a central concept in 50:27–29 and determines the content of the ‘fear of the Lord’ (φόβος κυρίου) in 29b, the primary theme of the book from the outset Ἀρχὴ σοφίας φοβέσθαι τὸν κύριον *‘the beginning of wisdom is the fear of the Lord’* (1:14).

The benediction in H50:28a–c envisages wisdom as an ongoing activity via the *qal* imperfect קִכֵּן *‘he shall be wise’* (28b). G50:28b translates with a future pas. σοφισθήσεται *‘he shall become wise’*. The translator’s goal here is oriented towards the possibility of realising wisdom in general as the conclusion of the book. The verb ποιήση (aorist conjunctive 3p.s.m.) acquires a hypothetical and conditional character via ἐὰν γὰρ.

Sir. 50:29b

While the relative ὅτι *‘for’* is mostly understood as a causative, the character of the benediction allows for an alternative interpretation. As with the *verba declarandi*, ὅτι can signify a simple declaration in the context of *oratio recta* to be rendered as a colon (:). The declaration thus serves as a pithy summary of what has been said so far. The grandson’s reinterpretation endeavours to remain close to the form of his grandfather’s original (H) while going his own way in terms of a free interpretation in the form of a declaration.

Sir. 50:29c,d

Similarity with the conclusion of the Praise of the Creator (43:33) is striking πάντα γὰρ ἐποίησεν ὁ κύριος καὶ τοῖς εὐσεβέσιν ἔδοκεν σοφίαν *‘all the things the Lord has made and to the faithful He gives wisdom.’* It seems evident that one should interpret the unidentified subject *‘he’* in 50:29c as the Lord instead of Jesus Sirach. He gives wisdom to the εὐσεβεῖς *‘faithful’*, the group of the עֲדֵי־טָוֶה. The concluding colon 50:29d is constructed in the form of a nominal clause and is given the character of a declaration (cf. 50:27) of praise.

A marginal comment with respect to our survey of both versions:

Our analysis of the discourse in H and G reveals that the grandson has elaborated his own independent version of God and Simon in Sirach 50:1–24:

In H: Simon Sa 21 Sb 21 = 42x	In G: Simon Sa 15 Sb 21 = 36x
YHWH Aa 10 Ab 11 = 21x	God Aa 5 Ab16 = 21x

The reflective character of the text is evidently greater in G, a fact that relates to both Simon and YHWH. God is usually referred to in G with names such as κύριος 'Lord' (6x), ὑψιστος 'Most High' (7x), but here in the Praise of the Fathers he is spoken of as ὑψιστος παμβασιλεύς 'Most High, King of all', παντοκράτωρ θεός 'Almighty God', θεός πάντων 'God of all' and finally ἐλεήμων 'Merciful One'. He is thus envisaged in a more transcendental manner, arising from the grandson's reflection on the wisdom of Ben Sira.

In our final chapter, both versions will form the basis for a justification of our vision of Simon the High Priest and our identification thereof with Simon, the Righteous, who is also called Simon, the Just.

#### 4.4 Translation of the Greek version Sir. 50:1–29

- 1 Simon, the son of Onias, the High Priest,  
it was he who, in his lifetime, restored the house of [God]  
and in his days reinforced the temple.
- 2 And by him the foundations were laid for a high forecourt,  
the mighty supporting wall of the temple enclosure.
- 3 In his days a reservoir was dug out,  
a cistern like the sea in magnitude.
- 4 He protected his people from downfall  
and he strengthened the city against a siege.
- 5 How glorious was he as he went round in the temple  
and as he went out of the house of the veil.
- 6 As the morning star in the midst of the clouds,  
as the full moon during the festal days,
- 7 as the sun that shines on the Temple of the Most High,  
as the rainbow that gleams against the luminous clouds,
- 8 as a rose in the period of early spring,  
as a lily by the water sources,  
as a shoot from Lebanon in the days of summer,

- 9 as fire and incense on the fire pan,  
as a vase of embossed gold,  
decorated with all kinds of precious stones,
- 10 as an olive laden with fruit,  
and as a cypress lofty in the clouds.
- 11 By being swathed in his glorious robe  
and clothing himself in perfect splendour,  
in the ascent to the sacred altar of burnt offerings  
he bestowed his glory to the walled enclosure of the sanctuary.
- 12 By receiving the sacrificial portions from the hands of priests,  
while he himself stood by the hearth of the altar,  
a garland of brothers was formed around him;  
[he was] as a young cedar from Lebanon  
and they surrounded him as stalks of palms.
- 13 And all the sons of Aaron [were there] in their glory  
[with] an offering for the Lord in their hands  
in front of the entire congregation of Israel.
- 14 And as completion of the liturgical activities at the altar  
for the arrangement of the offering to the Most High, the  
Almighty,
- 15 he stretched out his hand to the bowl  
and he poured out a libation of the blood red juice of the grape  
and cast it at the foot of the altar of burnt sacrifice,  
a pleasing odour for the Most High, the King of all.
- 16 Thereafter the sons of Aaron cried aloud,  
they caused the trumpets of beaten metal to resound,  
they delivered an impressive sound,  
as a remembrance before the Most High.
- 17 Thereupon the entire people hastened in common  
and they fell upon their face to the ground,  
to worship their Lord,  
the Almighty God, the Most High.
- 18 And the singers joined in harmoniously,  
with the greatest echo the song resounded sweetly.
- 19 And the people implored the Lord, the Most High,  
in a prayer before the face of the Merciful One,  
until the song of praise for the Lord was concluded  
and they had completed the service to Him.
- 20 Thereafter having descended he raised his hands



over the entire congregation of the sons of Israel,  
to give the blessing of the Lord with his lips  
and to glorify his name.

- 21 And for the second time they were in veneration,  
to receive the blessing from the Most High.
- 22 Praise then now the God of all,  
who does great things in every place,  
who increases our days from the womb  
and who treats us according to his loving kindness.
- 23 May he give us a joyful heart  
and may peace come in our days,  
in Israel as in the days of old.
- 24 May his loving kindness be entrusted to us  
and in our days may He liberate us.
- 25 Two nations my soul detests  
and the third is no nation.
- 26 Those who reside on Mount Samaria and the Philistines  
and the foolish people that dwells in Shechem.
- 27 Instruction in understanding and knowledge  
he has inscribed in this book,  
Jesus, the son of Sirach Eleazar, from Jerusalem.  
It was he who let wisdom pour forth from his heart!
- 28 Happy is he who occupies himself with these things,  
and he who takes them to heart shall become wise,  
29 for when he does them, he shall be skilled in all things.  
The fear of the Lord is his footprint!  
And to the faithful He gives wisdom.  
Praised be the Lord to eternity! Amen! Amen!

## CHAPTER FIVE

### SIMON, THE RIGHTEOUS HIGH PRIEST

Having presented our interpretation of Sirach 50 in H and G, we now continue with a summary of our research results (5.1, 5.2) after which we will turn our attention to the question ‘Simon I or Simon II?’ raised by VanderKam<sup>1</sup> against the background of Josephus’ *Antiquitates Judaicae*<sup>2</sup> in his criticism of the generally accepted identification of Simon II as Simon ‘the Just’ or Simon ‘the Righteous’<sup>3</sup> by Moore<sup>4</sup> on the basis of Sirach 50 (5.3). The relationship between Simon and Ben Sira will constitute the primary focus of 5.4.

#### 5.1 *Two visions of Simon*

In the Hebrew version of Jesus Sirach the name Simon serves to form an inclusion around every facet of the imagery employed by Ben Sira to represent the High Priest (50:1–24). The text begins (50:1b) with reference to Simon son of Jochanan including a word play based on גדול *‘the highly esteemed’* and הכהן *‘the priest’*. Ben Sira describes his building activities around the temple and the city (50:1–4) together with his activities in the temple itself (50:5–21). He concludes (50:24a) by praising Simon as his contemporary.

The inclusion between H50:1b and 24a is further reinforced by the thematic unity in the Praise of the Fathers established by the key word תפארה *‘glory’* (44:7a) in relation to אדם (49:16) and Simon (50:1a) and the noun/verb גדל in 44:2b and in 50:1a and 22c, in order to give expression to the greatness of the Most High in Simon’s

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<sup>1</sup> J.C. VanderKam, ‘Simon the Just: Simon I or Simon II?’, in FS J. Milgrom, *Pomegranates and Golden Bells*, Indiana 1995, 303–318.

<sup>2</sup> R. Marcus, *Josephus, Jewish Antiquities, XII–XIII*, LCL 365, London 1943/1998. Marcus provides data on Simon II, whom he considers to be ‘the Just’ or ‘the Righteous’, in Appendix B (pp. 462–466).

<sup>3</sup> The Talmudic tradition speaks of שמעון הצדיק *‘Simon the Righteous’* although without further reference or date. Josephus associates this qualification with Simon I.

<sup>4</sup> G.F. Moore, ‘Simeon the Righteous’, in FS I. Abrahams, *Jewish Studies*, New York 1927, 348–364. Moore follows the exegesis of Lévi, Smend and Box, who opt for Simon II.

exercise of the High Priestly ministry and in the ‘humanity’ of אדם in the general sense of the word (50:22c).

The decidedly distinct Greek version ascribed to Ben Sira’s grandson indicates in 50:1a that the latter understood Simon to be a well-known member of the Oniad family and thus an historical figure belonging to the past. Simon does not have an appropriate place in G50:24 because the times around 132 BCE had totally changed when compared to 195 BCE, the period in which Ben Sira accentuated the cohesion of Sirach 44–50. We are obliged to inquire, therefore, into the relationship between these two differing visions of Simon.

### 5.1.1 *History demarcated*

Our exegetical analysis of both versions has shown Ben Sira to be an independent author, a *sofer* who dealt freely with the tradition by accentuating certain aspects of Israel’s history and by structuring the Praise of the Fathers by way of demarcation texts. In his alternative representation of history, he betrays a universalistic vision of the relationship between YHWH and his people, closely related to Deutero-Isaiah and counter to the Ezra tradition. His opposition to the Samaritans is clear and unequivocal.

Sirach 44–50 is introduced with the superscription שבח אבות עולם ‘*The Praise of the Fathers of All Times*’ and concerns the men who had acquired remembrance. Women are not mentioned. The introduction (44:1–15) provides a framework to create a distinction between the men of name, who continue to be remembered (13a) and those without remembrance (9a), who might as well have never existed (9c). This contrast is determinative of the syntactical structure of the text with its positive aspect highlighted in the evocation and the climax (49:14–50:24) and in the concluding statement focused on זיִים (50:28c), while the negative aspect is implicitly presupposed in the history of Israel (44:16–49:13) and explicitly verbalised in the *Scheltrede* (50:25–26).

Ben Sira structures his rewriting of history in three parts. His own vision thereof is apparent in the qualification of the men of name such as Enoch and Noah who were found to be תמיִם. Only Noah and Job are referred to as צדיִק. Abraham enjoys a glory that lacks nothing (מוֹרִם). The author continues the climax in Adam in the praise of Simon.

- After the first segment (44:16–45:25d) Ben Sira calls upon his audience in an exhortatory blessing (45:25e–26c) to bless יי הטוב *‘YHWH, who is good’*. All those who are crowned with glory ought not to forget the טובכם *‘good entrusted to you’* as stated by Moses and Aaron in Torah. Together with Abraham and Jacob, Moses and Aaron, the latter depicted in full detail, are the אנשי הסדר (44:1a,10a). Given Phinehas’ voluntary actions, it would appear that their goodness (טובם) has remained trustworthy in their offspring and their heritage (ונהלהם) for their children (44:11) in contrast to men such as Dathan, Abiram and Korah.

Ben Sira presents the main lines of his discourse from Enoch to Phinehas: עד עולם יעמד זכרם וצדקתם (וכבודם) לא ימחנה *‘to eternity their remembrance shall remain and their righteousness (honour) shall not be wiped out’* in the introduction, (44:13a).

- In the second segment (46:1–47:21) Ben Sira continues his main line of discourse through Joshua and Kaleb, the judges and Samuel, with David to whom he has already referred in proleptic fashion in the same breath as Phinehas (45:25). He does not describe David as a king, but prefers to draw a comparison with the offering from which the fat has been removed (47:2). YHWH forgives his premeditated sin (פשעו) (47:11a). In reaction to Solomon, who had tarnished (מרום) his honour, Ben Sira alludes in the following demarcation text (47:22) to the promise that YHWH will not abandon his הסדר nor let his words fall to the ground and that he shall provide a root (שרש) for the house of David. In his own words, the author formulates this recapitulation of the promise on the basis of salvific prophecy and the language of the Psalms.
- Ben Sira demarcates his third segment (47:23–49:13), from Solomon to the Babylonian exile, in three parts. An announcement of judgement follows after Elijah and Elisha because the people, in spite of everything (בכל זאת) had not changed their ways. As a result, the exile of the Northern Kingdom was unavoidable, while only a small group (בזער) remained in Judah (48:15a–16b). In his concluding retrospective (49:4a–6b) the author compares all the kings of Israel to Hezekiah and Josiah as the norm, the latter having acted in faith as David did (עשה הסדר). The other kings acted perniciously and their deeds brought about the fall of Jerusalem and the Babylonian exile.

Besides the prophets Elijah and Elisha, Ben Sira also introduces Isaiah with his perspective on the future in association with Hezekiah.

Jeremiah is similarly presented as holding his ground in the face of mistreatment while Ezekiel's vision of the *merkabah* is portrayed. Job is represented as one who pleaded for justice. The twelve prophets are mentioned for the first time in a single breath in order to comfort the entire people (Jacob 49:10c) and provide them with a sense of hope.

The tone becomes even more positive when Ben Sira turns his attention in 49:11 to the period after the exile in which Zerubbabel and Joshua raised the temple and Nehemiah built and reinforced the city. Ezra remains conspicuously out of the picture.

In an evocative retrospective, the author invites his audience to discover the meaning of the priesthood, c.q. Enoch, the position of Joseph, Shem and Seth, and the *תפארת* of Adam, which rises above every living creature.

- Ben Sira continues this *Steigerung* in Sirach 50 with his description of Simon the High Priest. He turns his attention first to the latter's political function in the realisation of building projects in response to the remuneration provided by Antiochus III after his defeat of Jerusalem. During his own lifetime, he is able to witness the progress of the temple and the well being of his people (*עמו*) and his city (*עירו*). Thereafter, he turns his attention to Simon in his function as High Priest at the sacrifice and the blessing against the background of the Day of Remembrance, Rosh Hashanah. The doxology runs on into a revaluation of the priesthood rooted in the unbreakable covenant with Phinehas and the contrast with the Samaritans (50:26). Simon forms the climax of Ben Sira's rewritten history in H. He rounds off the Praise of the Fathers with two autobiographical passages (50:25–28/29) as a *remembrance discourse*.

The translation provided by Ben Sira's grandson tends to follow the basic pattern of the Praise of the Fathers, at least with respect to its primary themes. The omissions and shifts in accent apparent in G, however, provide evidence of the fact that the grandson followed his own path and did not adopt his grandfather's climactic portrayal of Simon nor pay attention to developments surrounding the festival tradition with respect to Rosh Hashanah.

From G49:15 onwards it becomes apparent that the translation has introduced significant differences with respect to H. A completely different image of Simon and Ben Sira is introduced in G50:1–29,

one which Lee and others have described form-critically as a *Beispielreihe*, *encomium* or *eulogy*.

### 5.1.2 *Changes in the content of Sirach 50*

The content of G differs significantly from H on four important points:

- the relationship between God and human beings has changed over a period of two generations,
- the vision of YHWH, God of Israel has shifted to YHWH, God of all,
- the future orientation of the Praise of the Fathers is refocused on ‘our days’,
- the temple in Jerusalem has undergone a revaluation.

We will examine these four aspects more closely in relation to Sirach 50 and the Praise of the Fathers as a whole (5.1.2.1, 5.1.2.2, 5.1.2.3 and 5.1.2.4).

#### 5.1.2.1 *God and his people in two generations*

Ben Sira’s point of departure is rooted in a universal and inclusive understanding of the people and the temple. It is clearly his intention to collect together the entire people, all the tribes of Jacob (36:11a).<sup>5</sup> In the introduction to the Praise of the Fathers (44:1–15), he addresses himself in the general sense to the remembrance of the אֱנֹשֵׁי הַסֵּדָה, those who showed mercy and thereby made history in their own days. This remembrance serves to direct the formation of tradition around Rosh Hashanah. In so doing, Ben Sira differs completely from Ezra and the Chronicistic vision of the people after the return from the Babylonian exile.<sup>6</sup> He leaves Ezra and the Levites unmentioned and attaches no importance to the Zadokite roots of

<sup>5</sup> D. Mendels, *The Land of Israel as a Political Concept in Hasmonean Literature*, Tübingen 1987 (p. 17).

<sup>6</sup> Ben Sira departs in 50:22a from the Chronistic vision of יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אֲבִינוּ ‘YHWH, the God of Israel, our father’, which has its roots in the covenant of the twelve tribes of Israel (1 Chron. 29:10) and adds אֲבִינוּ. The goal is to restore Israel in its entirety so that the holy nation might be justified in bearing such a name in reality. Nehemiah summarises this vision during the days of remembrance (9:36–37): “Now we are slaves, but in the days of the fathers it was different in the land;

the High Priest. These characteristic omissions point to the need to bridge growing oppositions on the basis of the wisdom tradition.

In Ben Sira's days, the increasingly defensive attitude of more traditional perspectives could be ascribed to a variety of different causes: the advance of Hellenism, the Samaritan schism, the diluted function of the temple and the liturgy, the role of the High Priests, political and economic factors, the influence of the Tobiads, internal division with respect to Torah over which the priests had right of judgement (45:17), the significance of the prophets (48–49) and the growth of eschatological and transcendent conceptual images surrounding Enoch (44:16) in relation to the priesthood (49:14–16). Simon focused his attention on the unity of the temple and the entire congregation of Israel (50:11–21), a unity that was under extreme pressure due to the establishment of factions among the people and the consequent threat of national disintegration.

The call to praise (H50:22a) thus serves as a powerful appeal addressed to all people together (17a), all the people of the land (19a) and the entire congregation of Israel (13c,20b), those blessed by God (21b).

Ben Sira's grandson is similarly disinclined to opt for the closed concept upheld by Ezra. G's vision of the God of all (22a) has no limits. The grandson makes distinctions among the people as a whole (17a) by referring to the good inheritance, the descendants who remain faithful to the covenant (44:11), the entire congregation of the sons of Israel (50:20b) and the faithful (50:29c). Subdivision into groups is a characteristic of the Hasmonean period in which the unity of the people had largely disintegrated. The grandson himself is a striking example of the descendants of whom he speaks, one who sought his own identity in the diaspora with the help of the wisdom tradition of his grandfather that upheld a universal vision of God and humanity. He considers this reformulation of Israel's history as a broad framework within which the men of name are portrayed in the form of a *Beispielreihe*. Next to Simon, Jesus Sirach enjoys an exceptional place within this framework as a teacher of

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change is therefore necessary." Use of the 1p.pl. fits well within this perspective. The remedy proposed by Nehemiah and Ezra is an isolated sacred community of men and women faithful to Torah brought about by the exclusion of foreigners and the dissolution of mixed marriages.

wisdom, as is apparent from the prologue<sup>7</sup> and from the title *'the prayer of Jesus son of Sirach'*, which he applies to his concluding chapter 51.

The grandson changes the content of the Praise of the Fathers by referring to the undefined audience described by his grandfather (2p.pl.) as a collective, as *'we'* (1p.pl.), of which he considers himself a member from the outset (44:1a), and by addressing his prayer of entreaty (1p.pl.) to the God of all in 50:22–24.

The appellative character of the Praise of the Fathers is thus reduced together with the dimension of personal involvement expressed in the cohortative and autobiographical aspects. The terms כבוד, הסוד and תפארת, with which H44:3a–6b qualifies the twelve professions, are substantially blurred in the translation and the professional groups limited to eleven instead of twelve. G44:9a,13a no longer makes reference to the remembrance of the Fathers of All Times, but focuses rather on the descendants who hold firm for eternity. The said descendants in G44:11b exclusively represent the good inheritance. The accent, therefore, is no longer placed on אמן *'being faithful'* (44:11b) or עמד *'holding firm'* (44:13a) but on the actual behaviour of human persons rooted in the decisive option for a life according to Torah as described in H50:23a as an essential aspect of wisdom of heart. Ben Sira refers to this attitude, determined by the fear of YHWH, as *'life'* (50:28c). In G50:23, however, life is oriented to the acquisition of a joyful heart and hope for the future to the establishment of peace as in the days of old, which is the destiny of the group of the faithful, later referred to with the term *chassidim* (50:29c).

### 5.1.2.2 *YHWH, the God of Israel and the God of all*

The theological vision of God in G takes on a more general and transcendent quality.<sup>8</sup> The dynamic image of יי אלהי ישראל, who blesses and is blessed, has evolved into a theology of the God of

<sup>7</sup> A. van den Born, *Wijshheid van Jesus Sirach*, BOT VIII/V, Roermond 1968. According to Van der Born, the grandson employs the description οὐ μικρᾶς παιδείας ἀφόμοτον in his prologue, using a denial to forefront the high-minded spiritual life of the Jews in Egypt (p. 17).

<sup>8</sup> M. Hengel, *Judentum und Hellenismus*, Tübingen 1973. According to Smend's index such elevated divine names are most evident in the Psalms, Daniel and the non-canonical literature. The tendency to greater transcendence is more apparent in G than in H (p. 544).



all,<sup>9</sup> the Almighty, the King of all, who rules all and is all.<sup>10</sup> The omission of the call to the people to bless YHWH, to reflect God's glory in the way they live and to maintain the good entrusted to them, sets human interactive engagement based on the Torah of life and wisdom firmly in the background.

The introduction (G44:2) no longer refers to the attribution of greatness to humanity but rather to the glory and greatness of the Lord. The contrast between 'some' and 'others' (44:8–9) is diluted in G by the interpretation of זכרם (13a) as 'their posterity'. As a consequence, a certain group, the good inheritance, is assured of a glorious future based on God's covenant and no longer on the fidelity exhibited by each and every individual.

The exhortatory blessing in H45:25e–26c no longer contains an appeal to humanity, crowned with honour, to bless יי הַמֶּלֶךְ. In G, God is worshipped in the conjunctive, as transcendent subject who gives wisdom and judges with righteousness (G45:26a,b). The human person must actively engage in this relationship, with the accent placed on the conditions thereof and the negative consequences

<sup>9</sup> J. Marböck, *Weisheit im Wandel*, Bonn 1971. Although Marböck considers a pantheistic understanding of the God of all to be over the top, he argues nevertheless in favour of a profound Hellenistic influence based on the Creator of all and the God of all in H36(33):1; H43:33; H45:23; and G24:9; G50:22. Such argumentation, however, is clearly not based on a distinction between the two versions H and G. It is worthy of note that both versions only run parallel in 36(33):1 אלהי הכל c.q. ὁ θεὸς πάντων, while G43:33 translates somewhat conservatively with ὁ κύριος in the context of creation. H45:23c stands alone in orienting the zealotness of Phinehas towards אלהי כל. The importance of this divine name for the position of Phinehas is evident. The grandson, however, has completely altered this text in G45:23, in similar fashion to 50:24 with respect to Simon and Phinehas (p. 150). A systematic perspective is lacking. Marböck's arguments in favour of a Stoic influence (p. 170) based on the name 'Most High' are not convincing since the term ὑψίστο can be found 42 times in G and עליון 14 times in H. This numerical correlation illustrates the essential character of the individual significance of H and G side by side with their mutual rapport and serves to prove that Marböck's exegesis is based on G. Penar's critique of such points of departure in his review in *Biblica* (1974) 103–106 is thus correctly aimed against the undervaluation of H. Marböck's evaluation in 'Gerechtigkeit Gottes und Leben nach dem Sirachbuch. Ein Antwortversuch in seinem Kontext' in FS O. Kaiser, *Gerechtigkeit und Leben im hellenistischen Zeitalter*, BZAW 296, Berlin 2000, 21–52 concerns God's righteousness on the basis of G. In our opinion, Ben Sira appeals to the greatness of humanity in performing good deeds and to be righteous and reliable as Simon was. Nevertheless, the fear of the Lord, the God of all, is life.

<sup>10</sup> The question of the correlation between the wisdom of Ben Sira in H and G and *merkabah* mysticism, apocalypticism and gnosis and logos teaching extends beyond the boundaries of the present study.

underlined (ἰνά μὴ). ‘Wisdom according to his (God’s) heart’ seems too exaggerated and is reduced to ‘wisdom in your heart’.

In his description of Simon, the grandson emphasises the omnipotence of the Most High (14b and 17d) and adds the expression ‘King of all’ (15d). In addition to the familiar divine names ‘Lord’ and ‘Most High’ we also find the personal names ‘Merciful One’ and the ‘God of all’, whereby the accent is placed on universality (G50:24a). The unique covenant relationship between YHWH and his chosen people fades from view in similar fashion to Simon, who no longer lives among ‘us’ and is counted as a figure from the past.<sup>11</sup>

### 5.1.2.3 *The future orientation of the Praise of the Fathers*

Explicit allusions to future expectations are few and far between in the Praise of the Fathers. There is evidence, nevertheless, of a paradigm shift in G, beginning with the superscription in which the temporal reference עולם is left untranslated. The reading ותקוהם *‘and the hope’* in the introduction of MS B differs significantly from *‘the righteousnesses’* in G44:10b in line with the most probable reading in M. There would appear at first sight to be no essential differences with respect to the covenant agreements (ברית) with the fathers (M44:12), Noah (44:17), Abraham (44:20), Jacob (44:22), Aaron (45:15) and Phinehas (45:24b) and with respect to the institution of the High Priest (G45:24d). Nothing could be further from the truth, however, with respect to the ברית שלום *‘covenant of peace’*, established by Phinehas and his descendants to eternity for the maintenance of the sanctuary (45:24), which is confirmed in 50:24a,b in Simon and his descendants as the ברית פנהס *‘covenant with Phinehas’*. The omission of this priestly covenant with Phinehas in G50:24b places Simon in his High Priestly service at a historical distance. After the Maccabean revolt,<sup>12</sup> peace ‘as in the days of old’ becomes the future ideal of the grandson’s world and experience.

With respect to the prophets, only the description of Elijah in G48:11 contains any reference to the resurrection of the dead.<sup>13</sup> By

<sup>11</sup> M. Fang Che-Yong, ‘Usus nominis divini in Sirach’, *VD* 42 (1964) 153–168. Fang Che-Yong compares H and G and concludes: “In G Sir Deus Israel apparet Deus universalis.”

<sup>12</sup> J.L. Ska, ‘L’Éloge des Pères dans le Siracide (Si 44–50) et le canon de l’Ancient Testament’, in FS M. Gilbert, *Treasures of Wisdom*, Leuven 1999, 181–193.

<sup>13</sup> T. Middendorp, *Die Stellung Jesu ben Siras zwischen Judentum und Hellenismus*, Leiden 1972. Middendorp bases hope in life after death on G48:11. The heavily damaged

contrast, both versions allude to the fiery horses accompanying the latter as he was taken up in the storm, the restoration of the tribes of Israel and the many wonders associated with Elisha before and after his death. Other eschatological elements are translated almost word for word, including the Isaianic reference to the *אחרית* 'the end time' with τὰ ἔσχατα and the *נסתרות* 'the hidden things' with τὰ ἀποκρυφα (48:24a,25b), the activities of Jeremiah (49:7c,d), the vision of Ezekiel (49:8), the new life sent forth by the bones of the twelve prophets (49:10b) and the restoration of vigour to Jacob (49:10c).

In his concluding retrospective (49:4a–6b), Ben Sira provides an eschatological perspective in which YHWH 'shall give the horn in the future' (לְאִדְרֹר) as a sign of royal power.<sup>14</sup> In the Greek version, however, the kings hand over their power to others and the theological connotations are absent (49:5a).

It is striking that G completely omits any reference to the 'mastery of the wheels' (50:27a), the latter exhibiting and association with the mastery of the priestly rules (44:4d), the golden vessels according to the proposed pattern (50:9b) and the forms of the chariot throne in the vision of Ezekiel (49:8a).

Reflection on the position of Adam (H49:16) and Simon in the temple is given a new dimension via the identification of wisdom with the Torah in Sirach 24. This provides Ben Sira with access to new conceptual images, which he considers within a framework of hope for change in this world. There is no evidence whatsoever of apocalyptic tendencies. The grandson reduces the eschatological tension in an historical series of men of name beginning with Enoch and rooted in a different vision of Adam. Via the interpolation of ἐν τῇ κτίσει 'in creation', Adam emerges last in the series in G4:16, not as climax, but rather as ἀρχή, the starting point of history.

In his description of Simon, the grandson clearly follows his own path, particularly in the doxology, which he changes into a prayer

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text of H48:11b, however, provides no conclusive arguments. Nevertheless, the author supplements H on the basis of G and observes: "Endlich, so mag ein Leser der neuen 'Auflage' des Lehrbuches festgestellt haben, nimmt Ben Sira eine Aussage der Propheten Maleachi und Jesaja ernst! Wie geschickt, dass er gerade bei Elia so die Hoffnung weckt" (p. 135).

<sup>14</sup> E. Puech, 'Le Livre de Ben Sira et les manuscrits de la Mer Morte', in FS M. Gilbert, *Treasures of Wisdom*, Leuven 1999, 411–426. The anachronistic reference to David (45:25a) is part of Ben Sira's conscious intention to distinguish priest and king. His grandson's contestation of messianic ideas is likewise intentional (p. 422).

of entreaty. Instead of the elevation of אָדָם *‘the human person’*<sup>15</sup> from the womb he speaks of the increase of *‘our days’* by the God of all (G50:24a,c). In H, Simon gives form to the glory of God and takes active part in the covenant on the basis of YHWH’s beneficence, as long as the days of the heavens endure. The grandson also turns this future orientation around by referring to peace in *‘our days’* (G50:23) in the context of looking back (1p.plur.) to *‘the days of old’*. As in 49:16 he roots himself in a reflection on the beginning.

The diversity of perspectives makes any attempt at systematisation almost impossible. Questions surrounding the origins of apocalypticism<sup>16</sup> and a *priestly messianism*<sup>17</sup> make it clear that any eschatological dimensions must first be approached against the background of H.

#### 5.1.2.4 *The temple and the priestly ministry in Jerusalem*

The grandson set about his translation of Ben Sira’s work in Egypt. As one living in diaspora, his knowledge of the temple in Jerusalem could not have been first hand. One can presume that he would have been acquainted with the sanctuary in Elephantine and the temple of Onias IV in Leontopolis (170 BCE).

A change in temporal perspective can be determined on the basis of the grandson’s rendition of the various building works that took place in Jerusalem (50:1–4). The interchange of 50:2 and 50:3, for example, together with the omission of the royal palace, the translations ὑψος ἀόλης *‘the high forecourt’* (50:2a) and περιβόλον ἱερὸν *‘temple enclosure’* (50:2b) serve to illustrate this fact. The term πολιορκία *‘siege’* (50:4b) would likewise appear to allude to a specific attack on the city.

Further striking differences between H and G are evident with respect to the imagery employed in the description of Simon and the temple liturgy. These include the vase of embossed gold (50:9b),

<sup>15</sup> F.V. Reiterer, ‘Die immateriellen Ebenen der Schöpfung bei Ben Sira’, in FS M. Gilbert, *Treasures of Wisdom*, Leuven 1999, 91–127. Reiterer refers to the human person as אָדָם (15:14a; 36:10b,13c; 50:22c,d), the most important concretisation of God’s work of creation (p. 123).

<sup>16</sup> M. Hengel, *Judentum und Hellenismus*, Tübingen 1983. According to Hengel, Ben Sira sets to work with a ‘fast prophetischem Anspruch’, but his vision of Ben Sira in relation to the origins of early apocalyptic (p. 329) and the inheritance of the prophets (p. 455) is highly coloured by Hellenism.

<sup>17</sup> J.D. Martin, ‘Ben Sira—A Child of his Time’, in FS W. McKane, *A Word in Season*, JOSTSup 42, Sheffield 1986, 141–161. Martin locates Ben Sira’s vision of David and Phinehas within this framework (p. 152).

the addition of the wine libation in 50:15a–d, the all-embracing divine names παντοκράτωρ (50:14b), παμβασιλεύς (50:15d) and θεος πάντων (50:22a), the antiphonal singing (50:18a), the sweet sounding song (50:18b) and the song of praise (50:19c). The omission of any reference to the covenant with Phinehas is determinative for the grandson's vision of כהניך 'the priestly service', which is read as כהנוך (49:14a), thus raising questions with regard to Enoch (44:16).

G alters the vision of Simon by omitting reference to 'his brothers' (50:1) and 'his city' (50:4). There is no evidence of a shift in the direction of 49:15b, however, since the vision of Joseph is changed by the addition of G49:15b with 'the brothers' and 'the people'. Joseph is ascribed his position in H between Enoch and Adam on account of his significance for the wisdom tradition. G, on the other hand, serves to illustrate a second tradition surrounding Joseph with respect to the care shown for his remains. The grandson refers to two groups of Samaritans (50:25–26). They honour Joseph as their patriarch and the בני יוסף 'sons of Joseph' (Josh. 24:32) take care of his grave (49:15).

Based on the differences between H and G with respect to Joseph and Simon, however, there would appear to be no reason to consider the genre of the Praise of the Fathers as an *encomium*. On the contrary, it is evident from 49:14–16 and 50:25–26, that the *remembrance discourse* of Israel's history<sup>18</sup> makes it clear that Simon was confronted in his day with critique from Samaritan circles concerning the legitimation of the temple in Jerusalem and his own High Priestly status. In the context of the stable relationship between the Oniads and the Tobiads, this conflict was present, albeit in a latent form, while Simon was alive, and only became explicit after Onias III and the emergence of justifiable criticism of the High Priest. The revaluation of the temple and the priesthood in Jerusalem was still in full swing in the Hasmonean period, during which the conflict with the Samaritans led to the destruction of their temple (128 BCE).

<sup>18</sup> J. Marböck, 'Der Hohepriester Simon in Sir 50. Ein Beitrag zur Bedeutung von Priestertum und Kult im Sirachbuch', in FS M. Gilbert, *Treasures of Wisdom*, Leuven 1999, 215–229. Marböck refers to the remembrance function of Aaron in 45:9c, 11c and 16c. In 50:9a, however, the term אֲזַכְרֶה is not used for the food offering but rather מְנַחֵה (50:9) which, together with עֵל (Lev. 6:8; 24:7), refers to Simon as ardour of incense on the food offering, guaranteeing the day to day maintenance of the priests.

5.2 *Simon, the Righteous High Priest*

Ben Sira must have known Simon as a contemporary and kindred spirit. As *sofer* he considered his task as that of a *counsellor*<sup>19</sup> to which he gave form as part of the charge of the chancellor.<sup>20</sup> For Ben Sira, therefore, Simon exercised a broad variety of assignments as High Priest. A number of characteristic differences can be observed in G.

5.2.1 *Simon as builder*

The use of the perfect *pi'el* פקד in 50:1d refers to a restoration of the temple that had, in the meantime, reached completion. Ben Sira alludes here to King Hezekiah who fortified Jerusalem and provided the city with water supplies within the city walls.<sup>21</sup>

The passive forms פקד, כרה, and בנה focus attention entirely on the building works in progress during Simon's 'ministry' and in 'his days'. The four temporal references contribute to the image of Simon as one who realised these construction projects at the service of and in the midst of his people (50:1a,4a).

The inspection of the temple during Simon's ministry as High Priest is expressed with the verb פקד (*niph'al*) 'to inspect', which is often employed as a terminus technicus for military construction<sup>22</sup> and is used in this sense in two letters of Akkadian origin.

<sup>19</sup> P.A.H. de Boer, 'The Counsellor', in FS H.H. Rowley, *Wisdom in Israel and in the Ancient Near East*, Leiden 1955, 42–71.

<sup>20</sup> J. Begrich, 'Sofer und Mazkir. Ein Beitrag zur inneren Geschichte des davidisch-salomonischen Großreiches und des Königreiches Juda', in *Gesammelte Studien zum Alten Testament*, TB 21, Munich 1964, 67–98. Begrich locates the function of מזכיר side by side with that of the *sofer*, as can be determined from the list of David's officials (2 Sam. 8:16–18; 20:23–26) and from the history of Hezekiah (2 Kgs 18:18,37) and Josiah (2 Chron. 34:8). This independently operative functionary is a "Hofhistoriograph, der die Ereignisse aus der Regierung des Königs niederzuschreiben hatte". Based on the root זכר, Begrich is inclined to identify the figure as a chancellor's spokesperson (p. 80), who would have served as direct advisor to the king in matters of ceremony (p. 88). Such responsibilities are in line with the job description of the *sofer* (39:1–11) and are in harmony with the concluding statement in 50:27–28.

<sup>21</sup> P. Welten, *Geschichte und Geschichtsdarstellung in den Chronikbüchern*, WMANT 42, Neukirchen 1973. According to Welten the verb פקד is characteristic of *Baunotizen*. Such brief reports have their roots in more ancient sources and are valuable for archaeological research. In addition to 1 Chron. 11:8f. and 2 Chron. 8:1–6 Welten refers to 2 Chron. 11:5–12; 14:5f.; 17:12f.; 26:9f.; 27:3f.; 32:5–6a; 33:14.

<sup>22</sup> J.R. Spencer, 'PQD, the Levites, and Numbers 1–4', *ZAW* 110 (1998), 535–546 (p. 96).

The historical value of the *Baunotiz* in 50:1c–3b is apparent from the analysis of the water supplies in the city of Jerusalem. For the most part commentators consider the reference to be to the Stroution, but Ben Sira offers a detailed description of a *מקוה אשיה בם בהמונו* 'reservoir with a dividing wall therein on account of the water flow' (50:2) that points in the direction of the double reservoir at Bethesda (Βηθζαθα) to the north of the temple enclosure.

Bethesda was a water supply introduced by Simon into Jerusalem's infrastructure to serve the needs of the increasing population stimulated by the policy stated in the letter of Antiochus III with a view to reinforcing the city. An expansion thereof outside the city walls can be located in Βεζαθα, a settlement to the north, which was connected to the new city (*Bel. V*, 246).<sup>23</sup> The fortifications referred to by Josephus as the *Baris* are no longer detectable on account of the rebuilding carried out in the Hasmonean period and the later destruction of the city.

We can conclude, therefore, that Ben Sira's version of the construction of the reservoir at Bethesda can be considered a documented historical fact.<sup>24</sup>

The verb *חזק* functions as a *catchword* in 50:1d and 50:4b, serving to compare Simon with *יחזקיהו* (47:17a). Just as Hezekiah fortified the city against Assyrian attack by constructing the tunnel of Siloam so Simon fortified the city 'in his days' with the construction of Bethesda. The *היכל מלך* can refer to both the temple and the king's residence (50:3b,7a). With the same archaising term in 50:5a,b Ben Sira refers to the temple as a tent (*אהל*) and as the house of the veil (*בית הפרכת*).

It is striking that the grandson reverses the order of 50:2–3. The

<sup>23</sup> Josephus is unique in mentioning the Stroution in the vicinity of fortress Antonia (*Bel. V*, 476), on account of its orientation *κατὰ μέσον* towards the defensive wall of the 5th legion. In *Bel. V*, 246 he refers to ἡ Βεζαθα, close to the memorial to the High Priest. The name Simon 'the righteous' is associated herewith at a much later stage.

<sup>24</sup> R.N. Whybray, 'Ben Sira and History', in FS M. Gilbert, *Treasures of Wisdom*, Leuven 1999, 137–145. Whybray considers the historical value of Sirach 50 to be non-existent: "There is no continuity here, no sense of cause and effect, no feeling of a history moving towards a recognizable goal. This is not historiography in any true sense" (p. 139). P. Sacchi, *The History of the Second Temple Period*, JSOTSup 285, Sheffield 2000. Similar to Whybray, Sacchi does not refer to Sir. 50:1–24 in his most recent survey.

temple is thus located in the foreground instead of the reservoir *'like the sea in magnitude'*. In 140 BCE, spiritual and political responsibilities were placed in the hands of Simon the Maccabean with the agreement of the people. Given the current temporal perspective, it seems logical that the grandson would abandon any reference to the *'royal palace'* and distance himself from the disputed position of the new High Priest, an Ethnarch, who enjoyed absolute power as military commander and leader of the Jewish people (1 Macc. 14:41).

It remains plausible that from the Hasmonean period onwards the remembrance of Simon the High Priest would have shifted more and more to Simon *'the Just'*, *'the last of the men of the Great Assembly'* (Abot 1.2), since the latter's term as High Priest was considered the high point in the Second Temple period.

### 5.2.2 *Simon in his function as High Priest*

In his aesthetic description of Simon's High Priestly merit, Ben Sira alludes to the glorious description of Aaron (45:7c–12b), who served as High Priest in conflict with Korah and his kin. Simon, by contrast, served as High Priest in harmony with his brothers, while the conflict with the Samaritans is brought into sharp focus in the *Scheltrede* (50:25–26).

#### 5.2.2.1 *Simon in the temple*

Simon is characteristically portrayed in eleven comparisons employing images related to those used for the praise of wisdom (G24:13–17). Ben Sira's exploitation of cosmic imagery and nature symbolism (trees and plants) reveals his extensive familiarity with the *sapientielle Listenwissenschaft* (50:5–10). The tree symbol *'a shoot from Lebanon'*, which is able to withstand the summer heat, represents his resilience (8c). The image of the seedlings of the cedars of Lebanon forming a crown alludes to the High Priest surrounded by the priests (12c,d). The representation of the divine in human form, swathed in the magnificent garments of the High Priest, stems from the symbolism of the  $\text{עץ זית}$  *'olive willow'*, which provides the oleaster wood used to carve cherubs bedecked with gold leaf (10b).

Simon's personal involvement in the relationship with YHWH is expressed in the reflexive significance of the *niph'al* participle  $\text{יָדַע$  *'he who knows himself bound'* by the stones of prosperity set in the ephod (9c). The expression *'ardour of incense on the food offering'* describes the



responsibility of the High Priest in guaranteeing the day-to-day maintenance of the priests (9a, 13b). Ben Sira also compares Simon with the golden vessel fashioned according to the heavenly pattern, as revealed to Moses on Mount Sinai (9b).

G departs from H at this juncture with a vase of gold, which the Haggadic tradition was later to include among the treasures stolen from the temple and hidden on Mount Gerizim (2 Macc. 2:4–8; *Ant.* XVIII, 85). The *Copper Scroll* (3Q15) contains a list of repositories in which the said treasures were hidden. G50:15 mentions, moreover, a bowl with wine for the libation. This addition serves to disrupt the unity of 3 × 7 lines in H, whereby Simon is described in the temple, at the sacrifice and at the feast.

The house of the veil, preceded by the definite article in *בית הפרכת* instead of the preposition *ל*, represents an archaising reference to the temple. The liturgical context of Yom Kippur is thus not at issue at this juncture, let alone *Tamid*. Misunderstanding with respect to the festival context is to be blamed on traditional associations with Yom Kippur. Ó Fearghail associates the context with *Tamid* on account of the wine libation (G50:15).

Based on H it would appear that the trumpets serve to call the people to remembrance. In G, by contrast, this appeal is placed on the same level as the remembrance itself. The discourse points to the intention of the trumpet call ‘to remember’ before the Most High on Rosh Hashanah. Ben Sira provides a more detailed description of the Day of Remembrance as the beginning of the ten days of repentance prior to Yom Kippur aimed at remembrance (*להזכיר*) before the Most High (50:16d). Torah characterises this Day of Remembrance as one of great jubilation and loud trumpet blast. The synagogue liturgical tradition likewise refers to this New Year’s day as ‘*the Day of Remembrance*’ or the ‘*Day of the Trumpet Blast*’.

Ben Sira compares Simon with the full moon, which serves in 50:6b to distinguish (*מבין*) the major feasts. In 50:6a *מבין* means ‘*between*’ and there is no evidence to support its omission on grounds of dittography. It follows, therefore, that Simon and Ben Sira can be considered defenders of the traditional calendar, which determined the temple liturgy and the festival times, in contrast to the Babylonian lunar calendar, which became normative in the Jewish tradition in the first century BCE under the influence of Ezra.

### 5.2.2.2 *Simon and his universal mission*

Ben Sira's universal vision of the High Priest and the temple can be determined on the basis of the comparison with the rainbow, which becomes subject via the reflexive use of the *niph'al* 3p.f.s. נִרְאָה and manifests itself in the clouds as a sign of the worldwide covenant with Noah (50:7b). This vision is similar to the Praise of Wisdom in Sirach 24, in which the author describes wisdom with the same images. Wisdom exists ἀπ' ἀρχῆς (24:9) and serves YHWH in the tent (24:10) in similar fashion to the High Priest and can be identified with Torah (24:23).<sup>25</sup>

A different perspective on universality can be found in the outline of the temple. The עֲזָרָה בְּקִרְבָּה 'walled enclosure of the sanctuary' consists of the entire temple domain including the forecourts for the pagans, the women, the men and the priests (50:11d). The grandson's translation is in harmony with this perspective.

Ben Sira portrays Simon in the midst of 'his brothers' (50:1a,12a), the sons of Aaron (50:12c,13a,16a). The reference to 'his people' (50:1a, 23b) similarly suggests a high degree of connectedness. The author accentuates the notion of unity with the expression כָּל בְּשַׂר יְהוּדִים 'all people together' (50:17a) and thinks in inclusive terms with respect to 'all the people of the land' (50:19a) within 'the entire congregation of Israel' (50:13c,20b). He approaches the different factions as a unity, employing terminology rooted in the priestly tradition, and is thus not obliged to provide more detail concerning sensitivities surrounding the neglected Levites, the privileged priests of Zadok. He is likewise able to limit himself to the foolishness of the people in Shechem he so detests (50:26). In G, however, there is some evidence of a reduction of the entire congregation to refer more exclusively to 'the sons of Israel', who are confronted with opposition within their own circles and with critique from Shechem (G50:26a,c),<sup>26</sup> in which the

<sup>25</sup> G. von Rad, *Weisheit in Israel*, Neukirchen 1970. In Sirach 24 Torah as wisdom is the *Urdnung aller Welt* (p. 316). Ben Sira provides the Torah with a different prehistory to the traditional exodus, wilderness period and divine revelation on Sinai.

<sup>26</sup> M. Delcor, 'Hinweise auf das samaritanische Schisma im Alten Testament', *ZAW* 74 (1962) 281–291. In addition to Sir. 50:25–26 Delcor alludes to 2 Macc. 6:2 in which the relationship between the temple on Mount Gerizim and the temple in Jerusalem is at issue for the first time. He also makes reference to 2 Chron. 13:3–18, the shepherd allegory in Zechariah 11; 14; Ezekiel 34 and Ezra 4:2–4 with reference to the beginning of the schism.

sanctuary on Mount Gerizim was considered to be the only legitimate place of worship (Deut. 12:5).

The term κόσμος in G50:19c, interpreted by Hayward within a cosmic world-order,<sup>27</sup> does not allude to an individualistic spirituality but rather to the temple liturgy in the sense of a *'song of praise'*. In H, Simon stands in the temple in line with Adam in his glory within the perspective of a universal framework. On account of the understanding of his task, Simon bases his knowledge on wisdom, which has its origins in YHWH. Such active involvement on the part of the High Priest has its proper place within the theological context of the representation of God. Besides the glory of the temple and the High Priestly garments, this can all be observed in the sacrifice, the remembrance, the trumpet blast, the song, the prayer, the light, the blessing, the desire for peace and especially in the wisdom exhibited in the knowledge of the order of sacrifice, and insight into the calendars and the feasts.

On the contrary, G reinforces the transcendence and universality of the Most High by employing the names Almighty, King of all and God of all, while Simon is more the subject of consideration than a living person being described. Ben Sira, however, portrays Simon in his dignity with the freedom of an independent author who interpreted history rooted in the vision of the *gleaner* (33:16b). He allows Simon to come to the fore as a self-conscious individual, participating actively in giving form to God's glory. In so doing he employs the participle **דאנ** (50:4a), the reflexive understanding of the *niph'al* participle **אדו** (50:9c) and of the perfect *niph'al* **יצב** (50:12b) reinforced by the personal pronoun **הוא**. The imperfect *hitpa'el* of **פאר** (50:20d) is important in this context, since Simon himself reveals his glory in the name of YHWH in connection with the key word **הפארה** (49:16b; 50:1b, 11b). Simon dresses himself for his task in the garments of **כבוד** *'eminence'* and the vestments of **הפארה** *'glory'*, as the cherub bedecked with gold leaf and carved from the oleaster wood derived from the olive willow (50:10b).

Such glorious garments are reminiscent of Aaron (45:6–22) and Adam (49:16). The self-conscious activities of the High Priest are continued in relation to the sacrifice. The stones on his breastplate

<sup>27</sup> C.T.R. Hayward, *The Jewish Temple. A Non-Biblical Sourcebook*, London 1996 (p. 79).

serve as a sign of YHWH's favour (50:9c). The High Priest's vestments represent the fullness of glory (50:11). His ascent to the altar bestows splendour on the temple, as do the remaining activities of the High Priest. This is expressed in his offering of the daily sacrifice on the day of remembrance, the distribution of the sacrificial portions and the arrangement of the prescribed ordinances. He serves as guarantor for the day-to-day support of all those who work in the temple. The priests are ascribed a specific task in the liturgy of Rosh Hashanah, namely to firmly blow on the trumpets with a view to summoning all the people, including Simon, to the remembrance before the face of YHWH.

It became apparent in our exegesis of the text that Simon himself, as one of 'those present', participated personally in the moment of prayer and in listening to the voice of God in the song in which all the other voices joined together in harmony. He was first to be able to esteem the light of the menorah as God's light, bursting for joy together with the entire congregation of Israel, until his work at the altar of burnt offerings was complete. Simon's unique charge, moreover, is to impart the High Priestly blessing, the enunciation of which affects his entire being. In performing this sacred act he reveals his glory as High Priest in the name of YHWH (בשם יי' יהפאר) and is included among those blessed by God (מברכי אל) together with all the people gathered in prayer. The very *raison d'être* of the High Priest is to engage in such interaction with YHWH in the act of remembrance itself, the goal of which is to make a new start in one's relationship with YHWH, to share in the reconciliation of Yom Kippur after ten days and to live thereafter in the 'fear of the Lord'.

The covenant with Phinehas serves as the background against which Simon gives concrete form to YHWH's חסד (50:24c,d), since it is YHWH who advances humankind (המנדל אדם) and deals with them כרצונו 'according to his kindness' (50:22c,d). Hengel considers Simon's personal interactive engagement to be the starting point of a theological anthropology, the material for which is to be found in the doxology: the reception of wisdom, participation in the peace of YHWH (50:23) and YHWH's benevolent dealings with humankind (50:22c), which take lasting form in the person of Simon (50:24).<sup>28</sup>

<sup>28</sup> M. Hengel, *Judentum und Hellenismus*, WUNT 10, Tübingen 1973 (pp. 256f.).

Westermann qualifies the response of humankind to YHWH's benevolence as *Bekentnis*. Von Rad speaks of this new element in Ben Sira's teaching as *der von Gott zu politischen oder geistigen Leistungen ermächtigte Mensch*.<sup>29</sup>

### 5.2.2.3 *Simon and the revelation of Torah and wisdom*

YHWH does wonderful things and gives the Torah of life to humankind. While the locative בארץ 'on earth' (50:22b) would appear at first sight to be redundant, it nevertheless establishes an inclusion in the discourse with על הארץ in the evocation (49:14a). The bond with the earth provides a new perspective in that Ben Sira is conscious of the significance of personal individuality in the advancement of humankind from the womb. Grounded in the Torah, he turns himself towards wisdom (Sir. 24:30–34), which gives access to the knowledge of instruction and the mastery of the wheels. Insight into the hidden things has its practical aspect in the priestly tradition of correctly arranging the sacrificial portions (50:14) and maintaining the prescriptions of the temple liturgy (50:19) and thereby preserving the quality of the High Priesthood and the continuum of the covenant with Phinehas (45:24d; 50:1a,24). Rooted in wisdom, Ben Sira rewrites the history of Israel within the framework of the remembrance (Sir. 24:32–33; 39:32 and 50:27).

At certain moments, and within the same framework, Ben Sira makes reference to speculative knowledge based on the exploration of the unknowable. In manifesting himself to the individual human person<sup>30</sup> who sets his heart on wisdom, God gives exceptional knowledge stemming from the contemplation of the *merkabah* and God's wonderful deeds (45:26a and 50:23). In so doing, the author alludes to a tradition surrounding Enoch (כהניך) in which the priesthood (כהניך) is associated with this exceptional knowledge (49:14a).<sup>31</sup> While

<sup>29</sup> C. Westermann, *Das Loben Gottes in den Psalmen*, Göttingen 1963. G. von Rad, *Weisheit in Israel*, Neukirchen 1970. Von Rad draws a comparison with Kant's definition of a human person who abandons infancy (p. 132), combining the critical encounter with the world of experience, in order to create a new form of being responsible.

<sup>30</sup> G. Sauer, 'Gedanken über den thematischen Aufbau des Buches Ben Sira', in FS M. Gilbert, *Treasures of Wisdom*, Leuven 1999, 51–61. The *Einzelperson* is a primary theme that culminates in Simon as cultic servant and Ben Sira as teacher of wisdom (p. 61).

<sup>31</sup> F. García Martínez, 'Profeet en profetie in de geschriften van Qumran' in FS A.S. van der Woude, *Profeten en profetische geschriften*, Kampen 1985, 199–132. In con-

it is not impossible that Ben Sira as *sofer* was familiar with the circles surrounding Enoch,<sup>32</sup> it is firmly established that he continued to dwell on these things (50:28a) within the framework of wisdom and Torah. He thus interprets the High Priest's teaching duty (45:17) as one that holds all things up to the light of the Torah of life, as revealed to Moses on Sinai (45:5d).

The priestly application of Torah in everyday life, with its roots in Moses, authorises Simon to act independently of the factions at work in his day and enables him thereby to preserve unity. Josephus notes (*Ant.* XII, 140) that Antiochus III in his letter to Ptolemy respected this Mosaic tradition *κατὰ τὸν ἐπιχώριον νόμον 'in accordance with their native law'*.

The political upheaval following the victory of Antiochus III in 202 BCE required a High Priest who could act independently and in full awareness of his deeds. Simon was able to secure favourable conditions for maintaining daily life according to Torah and for restoration work on the temple and the city. The Seleucids agreed to tax exemption for the priests and temporary exemption for the city with a view to economic recovery. Simon worked together with Joseph, the son of Tobias, an authoritative fiscal specialist known to us from the so-called 'Joseph romance' (*Ant.* XII, 160–236).

### 5.2.3 *Simon and the priestly traditions*

Besides Aaron and Phinehas, the son of El'azar, Ben Sira mentions only Simon as High Priest in a priestly tradition based on the covenant of peace (45:24), known as the covenant with Phinehas (50:24).

The author alludes to a second priestly tradition in the evocation (49:14a), determined by genealogical heredity and dating back to Enoch and Adam. His polemic against the people of Shechem has its context within this legitimisation of the priesthood familiar to us from the literature of the Samaritans.

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trast to the wisdom and priestly traditions with their roots in the revelation of Torah and prophets, García Martínez proposes the apocalyptic tradition, which maintains direct revelation (p. 127) and prefers to locate the origins of prophecy in the period prior to Moses. According to García Martínez, there is a chain of transmission beginning with Enoch in Jub. 4:17–19 and in like fashion in Sir. 44:16. Ben Sira takes a different track in 49:14a, however, by referring to the priestly tradition in which Enoch played a primary role.

<sup>32</sup> R.A. Argall, *I Enoch and Sirach*, Atlanta 1992 (p. 250).

A third priestly tradition is referred to in 50:16a, one that distinguishes between the tasks allotted to the priests and the Levites and has its roots in the Zadokite tradition and its concern for genealogical matters. The tradition surrounding the sons of Zadok is only made explicit in Sir. 51:12i.

A fourth form of priestly service, the so-called *pan-Aaronid ideology*,<sup>33</sup> can be distinguished within the Zadokite tradition, one that served as a critical movement and accentuated inclusiveness with the expression ‘*all the sons of Aaron*’ (50:13a).

Given the evident classification of four priestly traditions in his work, Ben Sira’s lack of reference to the Levitical line of descent in the Praise of the Fathers is all the more striking in regard to the third and fourth forms of the priestly tradition. In our exegetical analysis we established that YHWH alone commissioned Aaron (45:6a) as High Priest on account of the blossoming staff of Levi (מִטָּה לֵוִי), to the everlasting task (חֵק עוֹלָם) of service in the temple. YHWH bestowed majesty (הוֹרָ) upon him and let him serve in his honour (כְּבוֹדָה; cf. 44:2a; 45:7b, 12c). Ben Sira describes the outstanding position and grandeur of Aaron in some detail (45:6–22). The covenant with Aaron is an everlasting covenant (בְּרִית עוֹלָם), even after the rebellion of Korah and his kin (45:20a). For Phinehas, the third High Priest in line, YHWH established the priestly law (חֵק) for eternity as a covenant of peace (בְּרִית שְׁלוֹם). The conventional reading of this text is based on the levitical priesthood in G, which adds ἀδελφὸν αὐτοῦ ‘his brother’ and provides further explanatory detail with ἐκ φυλῆς Λευὶ ‘from the tribe of Levi’ while Aaron is ordained by Moses (45:15). By placing Simon and Phinehas out of the picture in his prayer of entreaty, the grandson not only changes the doxology completely in G50:24, he also denies the importance of the priestly tradition based on the covenant of peace with Phinehas. In his prayer, peace had still to be realised in ‘our days’ according to the ideal ‘in the days of old’. We assume that the ideals in question are based on a concrete reality that is not further elaborated.

Our inquiry proves that the accent is placed in its entirety on the value of the personal authority of the High Priest, which is expressed in the manner in which Simon gives concrete form thereto in the temple. His lifestyle is later qualified in the epithet attached to his

<sup>33</sup> S.M. Olyan, ‘Ben Sira’s Relationship to the Priesthood’, *HRT* 80 (1987) 261–286.

name *'the righteous'*. Just as the remembrance and the righteousness of such men of name shall never be erased (44:13b), so shall the covenant with Phinehas remain intact for Simon and his descendants (45:24; 50:24). Phinehas is afforded every praise on account of the extraordinary accomplishments he performed *לָבָר לְבָרָו* *'from the free will of his heart'* (45:23e), whereby he brought about reconciliation for the children of Israel. The detailed description of Aaron, the first High Priest, however, does not focus praise on his manner of living. It is striking that while allusion is made to the conflict with Korah, no reference is made to the worship of the golden calf or to the death of Nadab and Abihu and the sins of Aaron's other sons Eleazar and Ithamar.

The fact that Simon is placed first in the context of the priestly covenant with Phinehas (H50:24b) qualifies his exercise of the High Priestly ministry as one rooted in zealous free will. Such zealousness typifies the transformed religious situation during and after the Maccabean revolt against the violation of the right to practice the Jewish religion. In the context of this revolt, the *chassidim* resorted to active intervention and exhibited their readiness to fight. Phinehas fires the imagination in this regard. Such enthusiastic engagement became the primary theme of later groups of zealots who based themselves, according to Hengel, on the activities of Elijah, the latter being similarly characterised for his zealousness (ὁ ζήλος) in 48:2b.<sup>34</sup>

It is significant, however, that the grandson leaves the covenant with Phinehas out of the picture altogether. In so doing he distances himself from the zealous individuals who were to be included in his days among the Pharisees. The reason for his substantial emendation in 50:24 may therefore be related to the fact that the temple and the priesthood in Jerusalem had come to be replaced by the alternative temple of Onias IV in Leontopolis in the Egyptian diaspora. Another possibility is that he may also have fled on account of these zealous individuals who had been violently oppressed by the Maccabean High Priest John Hyrcanus (135–104 BCE).<sup>35</sup>

<sup>34</sup> M. Hengel, *Die Zeloten, Untersuchungen zur jüdischen Freiheitsbewegung in der Zeit von Herodes I. bis 70 n.Chr.*, Leiden 1976/2.

<sup>35</sup> After the murder of his family in 135 BCE, John Hyrcanus was able to hold firm nevertheless. Having concluded a friendship treaty with Rome, he was free to work towards the restoration of unity in his kingdom at the cost of Samaritans and Pharisees (*Ant.* XIII, 228–298).



Ben Sira introduces the polemic against the Samaritans immediately, if unexpectedly, in 50:25–26 after appealing to Phinehas. The conflict between Jerusalem and Shechem is at issue in the second priestly tradition. Different theologoumena are employed in the evocation in 49:14–16, in the first instance to legitimate the priesthood and in the second to allude to the traditions surrounding Enoch, Joseph and Adam. Both texts form an inclusion of his glorious portrait of Simon (50:1–24).

This climax of the Praise of the Fathers of All Times points to Ben Sira's independence as *sofer*. He qualifies Simon as High Priest in the tradition of Phinehas by the *הפארה* 'glory' of Adam (49:16). In his use of symbolism in the praise of wisdom (24:13–17) and in his description of Simon's radiance (50:5–10) he identifies Simon with wisdom created from the beginning to minister in the presence of YHWH in the holy tabernacle, to be established on Zion and to wield authority in the temple of Jerusalem (24:9–11). The beginning of wisdom is to be found in the fear of YHWH (1:4,14) which recurs at the end of Ben Sira's work as the source of *חיים* 'life' (50:28).

His independence is also apparent in the identification of wisdom with the Torah. This inalienable aspect of the priestly tradition is evident in his use of the expression *תורת היים והבונה* 'Torah of life and insight' (45:5c), which Moses received on Mount Sinai, without any reference to the Sinai covenant. Aaron and the High Priests after him derive their authority from Moses to instruct the people in the Torah and wisdom. This priestly duty is not found elsewhere in Tanakh.

#### 5.2.4 *Simon in the Second Temple period*

The Second Temple period, running from the Babylonian exile to the commencement of Antiochus IV's religious oppression, constitutes the framework within which we can determine the historical context of Simon.<sup>36</sup> Little additional source material is available beyond the work of Josephus to assist us in providing a critical and justifiable picture of the period. Sirach 50, however, is based on Ben Sira's eyewitness report of Simon 'in his days', the restoration of the temple, the construction of the double water basin at Bethesda and the fortification of Jerusalem.

<sup>36</sup> P. Sacchi, *The History of the Second Temple*, JSOTSup 285, Sheffield 2000 (pp. 216, 220).

Additional elements can be found in the biblical literature that deal with the post-exilic period. Although the monarchy was not restored after the return from Babylon, the unity of the people becomes evident in the temple liturgy and in the place of the Torah. Besides the prophetic vision of the universal significance of the Second Temple (Isaiah 40–66), a sharp prophetic critique is also evident with respect to the function of the priests, highlighting the vulnerability of the nation and expressed historically in the person of the High Priest who assumed his position on grounds of ancestry and not on account of his personal qualities.

The prophets Malachi and Haggai vehemently protested against illegal practices among the priests, expressing themselves in a variety of negations: the priests do not take the Torah to heart, and as a result there is injustice, infidelity and impure sacrifice.

Malachi strongly criticises the violation of the covenant with Levi: *בריתי היתה אִתּוֹ הַחַיִּים וְהַשְּׁלוֹם* 'My covenant with him was a covenant of life and peace' (Mal. 2:5). Ben Sira clearly subscribes to this prophetic vision (44:14; 45:16a,24b; 46:20b; 49:16b; 50:23b,28).

In Zechariah the High Priest Joshua receives the crown in order to preserve it in the temple for the Shoot, a royal figure of the house of David (Zech. 6:9–14). Ben Sira places David prior to the High Priest Phinehas (45:25). Only in the future, however, shall royal power be restored (49:5a). He makes a distinction between the royal and the priestly covenants, comparable with the two messianic figures in the literature of Qumran.<sup>37</sup>

Deutero-Zechariah predicts that no Canaanites or traders shall enter the temple (Zech. 14:21).<sup>38</sup> Such characteristic language is reminiscent of the Tobiads, intended to regulate economic matters related to the sacrifices and to keep control of the important function of the temple as a bank.<sup>39</sup>

<sup>37</sup> H.G. Kippenberg, 'Het charisma van het Davidengeslacht in de joodse, vroeg-christelijke en gnostische godsdienstgeschiedenis van Palestina', in FS A.S. van der Woude, *Profeten en profetische geschriften*, Kampen 1985, 133–156. The concept of a prince who is to come from the house of David is related to the lengthy political opposition to the Hasmoneans (p. 134).

<sup>38</sup> A.S. van der Woude, *Zacharia, POT*, Nijkerk 1984. Van der Woude supports the idea of merchants specialising in the provisions necessary for the temple liturgy (p. 268).

<sup>39</sup> S. Applebaum, 'Economic life in Palestine', in S. Safrai/M. Stern eds, *The Jewish People in the First Century, CRINT I.2*, Assen 1976, 631–700. Applebaum estimates

The post-exilic writings contain still further allusions to developments surrounding the High Priest in the Second Temple period:

- The Chronistic history portrays David as the ideal king and contains a parallel in the form of a *Baumotiz*, to which Ben Sira alludes in 50:4a.<sup>40</sup> The purity of the ancestry of Aaron and Zadok (1 Chron. 6:1–15) is an issue raised for discussion during the Samaritan schism with a parallel in the *Tolidah*.<sup>41</sup>
- With the approval of Artaxerxes I, Nehemiah brought some order into the matter in 444 BCE, making the temple the centre of the protected city of Jerusalem. Under Persian rule Samaria served as the seat of government. Besides its theological significance, the contrast between Jerusalem and Samaria also had a political significance that served to stimulate internecine conflict between fraternal peoples (Neh. 4:1–8). Tensions were evident within Jerusalem on account of separatists among the group of the returnees from exile in Babylon (Neh. 6:6ff.).<sup>42</sup>
- While Ezra dedicated himself to the pure explanation of the Torah in order to restore unity among the Israelites,<sup>43</sup> this had the opposite effect since separatism only served to reinforce division between the group of the returnees and the people of the land (Neh. 8:18, 9:2).<sup>44</sup>
- The peoples living in the land included those of Ashdod, who governed the coastal region, Ammon and Moab (Neh. 13:24). In Sir. 50:25–26 Edom and Philistea are mentioned next to Shechem. Reference is made to Moab, Edom and Philistea among others

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the extent of economic traffic together with personal investment (p. 674) and the function of the temple as a central bank (p. 683).

<sup>40</sup> P. Welten, *Geschichte und Geschichtsdarstellung in den Chronikbüchern*, WMANT 42, Neukirchen 1973. Welten summarises the Chronistic rewriting of history in three determinative perspectives: building reports, army ordinances and war reports (p. 5f.).

<sup>41</sup> J. Bowman, *Samaritan Documents*, Pittsburgh 1977. The Chronicle of Abu'l Fath (p. 175).

<sup>42</sup> J. Bowman, *Samaritanische Probleme, Studien zum Verhältnis von Samaritanertum, Judentum und Christentum*, Stuttgart 1967. Bowman distinguishes between resistance against the temple and against the reconstruction of the walls (p. 11). Josephus makes reference to resistance against the construction of the temple in the protest letters addressed by the Samaritans to Darius (*Ant.* XI, 302–345).

<sup>43</sup> Id. Bowman argues that the Samaritans began to function as a distinct group on account of the measures initiated by Ezra (p. 77).

<sup>44</sup> P. Höffken, 'Warum schwieg Jesus Sirach über Esra', *ZAW* 82 (1975) 184–202.

in an oracle of salvation in Ps. 60:9–10 and 108:10 and in a list of enemies in Ps. 83:7–9.

- In Nehemiah’s time reference was still being made to the Israelites as an *ethnos*. While Ezra speaks in general terms concerning Judah and Benjamin (1:5; 4:1; 10:9) his correspondence refers to Judeans (4:23; 5:1; 6:7,14).
- The High Priest Eliashib is mentioned as having set to work together with his brothers, the priests, to rebuild the Sheep Gate and reinforce the walls (Neh. 3:1). There is no evidence of the Zadokites enjoying a dominant position.
- Nehemiah expelled the son of Jehoiada, son of the high priest Eliashib, because he had married the daughter of Sanballat (13:28). The latter established the Samaritan temple for him and a group of priests from Jerusalem.

Based on this limited information we maintain that the personality and lifestyle of the High Priest came to have more and more significance for the concretisation of his religious and political responsibilities.<sup>45</sup> After Simon, the need for a strong personality became increasingly clear, especially when Onias III was deposed by his brother Jason, the latter being deposed in turn by Menelaus. General decline had its primary roots in misadministration and its secondary roots in assimilation to Hellenism.<sup>46</sup>

In the period following the Maccabean revolt, the grandson’s perspective on the significance of the Praise of the Fathers shifted towards an ideal of *‘peace as in the days of old’* in 132 BCE.<sup>47</sup> Simon is detached in G from Phinehas in an omission that signified *no small difference*,<sup>48</sup>

<sup>45</sup> J. Vermeulen, ‘Pourquoi fallait-il édifier des remparts? Le Siracide et Néhémie’, in FS M. Gilbert, *Treasures of Wisdom*, Leuven 1999, 195–213. Vermeulen presupposes a robust relationship between Nehemiah and Ben Sira in matters of defence against hostile factions and identifies Seir with the Nabateans.

<sup>46</sup> H. Mantel, ‘Dichotomy of Judaism during the Second Temple’, *HUCA* XLIV (1973) 55–87. Ezra’s goal is directed towards personal religious engagement and the practical concretisation of Torah and the oral tradition. His place of work was the theological study group and not the temple. The High Priests were responsible for a juridical and administrative system and governance that, under the Persians and the Ptolemies, offered a broad range of freedoms. Their goal was to preserve the peace and they paid tribute for the privilege by collecting taxes.

<sup>47</sup> H. Stadelmann, *Ben Sira als Schriftgelehrter*, WUNT 2.6, Tübingen 1980. Stadelmann presupposes an undetermined subject in 50:23 rather than YHWH “und es sei Friede zwischen euch . . .” (p. 283).

<sup>48</sup> B.G. Wright, *No Small Difference*, SBLSCS 26, Atlanta 1989.

given the fact that Phinehas is ascribed a decisive role in the Samaritan tradition with respect to the calculation of jubilees, the festival calendar and the arrangement of the temple liturgy. The list of High Priestly ancestry in the *Tolidah* begins with Adam and reaches its high point in Phinehas.

Based on the literature of the Samaritans it would appear that the tone set by Ben Sira in his *Scheltrede* is strongly theological. The issue at this juncture is the legitimacy of Jerusalem and the new temple (Isa. 56:7) in opposition to the 'chosen place' (Deut. 12:5), an expression applied by the Samaritans to Mount Gerizim on the basis of Torah.

The strength of Ben Sira's invective in his *Scheltrede* against the Samaritans can be explained against the background of his belief in the priesthood and the central position of Phinehas. The Samaritans appealed to a continuous High Priestly succession beginning with Adam and with Phinehas as its high point. Ben Sira, by contrast, makes the latter's voluntary and zealous engagement in the service of YHWH the focal point and considers Simon in the exemplary exercise of his ministry as the climax. After Simon II and his son Onias III, however, such argumentation is no longer relevant. Theological conflicts of this sort sow seeds of hatred and elicit disgust. The grandson alters the vision of Simon and makes a geographical distinction in the numerical aphorism between two groups of Samaritans, one in Samaria the other in Shechem. He likewise abandons the ideal of unity within the entire congregation of Israel. Armed conflict and the destruction of the temple on Mount Gerizim (128 BCE) would appear to have been unavoidable.

### 5.3 *Simon, the Righteous*

Against the background of historical developments Simon stands as a unique personality, a man apart. Besides Sirach 50, little historical information has been documented with respect to the first phase of the Second Temple period up to 165 BCE. Josephus describes Simon, the Righteous who is referred to in the rabbinical literature. A critical study is required of Josephus' history *Antiquitates Judaicae* and his arguments related to the intriguing question: is 'the righteous' to be identified with Simon I or Simon II?

Our knowledge of Simon is based entirely on a few alternative

and often-contradictory sources.<sup>49</sup> In *Pirke Abot* 1.2 Simon, the Righteous, or Shimeon, the Saint,<sup>50</sup> is placed last in the line of the men of ‘the Great Assembly’.<sup>51</sup> Who is this Simon, referred to as הַצְדִּיק *‘the righteous’* to be identified with: Simon I or Simon II? This question serves to summarise an ongoing discussion that has its origins in the 16th century.<sup>52</sup> Moore (1926) and many after him are unequivocal in their answer: Simon II. VanderKam, by contrast, opts for Simon I<sup>53</sup> on the basis of *Antiquitates Judaicae*.<sup>54</sup>

### 5.3.1 *The Righteous: Simon I or Simon II?*

The generally accepted identification of Simon, the Righteous, with Simon II was called into question by VanderKam, basing himself on Josephus and two rabbinic sources (*Megillat Ta’anit* for Kislev 21 and *b.Yoma* 69a) in which Alexander the Great kneels down before the High Priest Simon in his full regalia.<sup>55</sup> Simon asks him to reverse his decision to give the Samaritans permission to destroy the temple in Jerusalem. Alexander is surprised by this request and accedes to it, whereupon the sanctuary on Mount Gerizim is destroyed. A

<sup>49</sup> I.B. Gottlieb, ‘Pirke Abot and Biblical Wisdom’, *VT* XL (1990) 152–164. Gottlieb argues in favour of a significant literary kinship between the *Pirke Abot* and wisdom literature.

<sup>50</sup> A. Kaplan, *Avoth*, published in 1747 by Rabbi Yitzchak (ben Moshe) Magriso, New York 1979 (p. 19).

<sup>51</sup> R. Travers Herford, *Pirke Aboth אבות פְּרָקֵי אֲבוֹת*. *The Ethics of Talmud: Sayings of the Fathers*, New York 1969/2. With respect to the men of the ‘Great Synagogue’ (I.1) Travers Herford observes that the “. . . chronology of the period is very obscure”. He dates Simon I between 310–291 BCE (or 300–270) and Simon II between 219–199. While Josephus is alone in referring to Simon I as *‘the righteous’*, Sirach 50 clearly refers nevertheless to Simon II. Travers Herford argues that Simon II may indeed not have been referred to as *‘the righteous’*, but that the temporal gap between Simon, the Righteous, the last of the men of the Great Synagogue and Antigonus of Sokho and Yose ben Yoezer (160 BCE), is too great (p. 20).

<sup>52</sup> G.F. Moore, ‘Simeon the Righteous’, in FS I. Abrahams, *Jewish Studies*, New York 1927, 348–364. Moore refers to Azariah dei Rossi, as the first to raise this question in his book *Me’or ‘Enayim* (1575), together with legendary stories relating to Simon and *Pirke Abot* (p. 348).

<sup>53</sup> J.C. VanderKam, ‘Simon the Just: Simon I or Simon II?’ in FS J. Milgrom, *Pomegranates and Golden Bells*, Indiana 1995, 303–318.

<sup>54</sup> A.L. Baumgarten, ‘Rabbinic Literature as a Source for the History of Jewish Sectarianism in the Second Temple Period’, *DSD* 2 (1995) 14–57. In the strict historical sense, the value of sources such as rabbinic narratives, Josephus and the literature of Qumran remains limited (pp. 52f.).

<sup>55</sup> R. Marcus, *Josephus, Jewish Antiquities, XII–XIII*, London 1943/1998. Appendix B (pp. 462–466).

feast day, Tebeth 25th, ‘the day of Mount Gerizim’, serves as a reminder of the rescue of the temple (b. *Yoma* 69a). A meeting between the High Priest Jaddua from Gaza and Alexander (*Ant.* XI, 317–320) is recorded as having taken place in Sapha near Jerusalem, although Antipatris is mentioned elsewhere. The latter term is based on an anachronism since Herod the Great was the first to name the city after his father Antipater (*Ant.* XVI, 5.2). Although VanderKam appeals without justification to the *Samaritan Chronicle*,<sup>56</sup> his argument that Ben Sira never refers to Simon as the righteous remains difficult to counter. He concludes at the end of his study:

There is only one relevant piece of historical information regarding the identity of Simon, the Just: Josephus gives the epithet to Simon I. There is no historical evidence that relates it to Simon II (p. 318).

Moore does not focus primarily on the historical value of the rabbinic data but rather in the location of Antipatris on the road between Jerusalem and Caesarea (Acts 23:31). It thus becomes plausible to argue that Simon II did not meet Alexander here but rather Antiochus who came from the north. Moore ascribes a significant burden of proof to Sir. 50:1–21. To support his argument in favour of Simon II he refers to Ben Sira’s lively portrayal of events as an eye witness to the temple services and to the construction work in Jerusalem (50:1–4), which are described in similar terms in the letters of Antiochus III. His methodological point of departure, however, namely that any far reaching conclusions can only be drawn on the basis of G, is open to criticism.<sup>57</sup>

As a counter argument VanderKam makes reference to the four temporal allusions in Sir. 50:2–3 that characterise Simon as a *figure of the past*, although the exclamatory יָדָה in 50:5a also functions in

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<sup>56</sup> With regard to the Samaritan High Priest Hezekiah, VanderKam makes use of a secondary source, namely an article by C.H.R. Martin (p. 314 n. 18). According to the list of Samaritan High Priests in Appendix IV.A in J. Macdonald, *The Samaritan Chronicle* No. II (or: *Sepher Ha-Yamim*), From Joshua to Nebuchadnezzar, Berlin 1969, §J(A\*) p. 216 there was a single High Priest named Hezekiah at the time of Saul and David but no further details are available. According to the Adler Chronicle in J. Bowman, *Samaritan Documents*, Pittsburgh 1977, pp. 101–102, there is only reference to a certain Hezekiel, son of Abdiel in the period of Ezra. The latter was said to have had altered the text of the Torah.

<sup>57</sup> J.F. Moore, *Judaism in the First Centuries of the Christian Era. The Age of the Tannaim*, I, Cambridge 1927 (p. 34). Moore argues, nevertheless, in support of the high estimation of Ben Sira’s book (p. 44).

relation to Joshua (46:2), Solomon (47:14) and Elijah (48:4). Based on Lee's *encomium* theory VanderKam maintains that Ben Sira is not an eyewitness.

Our own difficulty with Lee's theory is based on the fact that the rules of rhetoric do not apply to Simon.<sup>58</sup> Neyrey, for example, does not consider the *encomium* adequate for the description of a personality.<sup>59</sup> VanderKam's reasoning is invalid because he restricts himself to G. The use of verbal forms in H makes it clear that Ben Sira wrote as an eyewitness. The four temporal indicators in H50:1c–3a allude in the first instance to a specific period of time. In the final phase of his High Priesthood Simon realised the restoration of the temple. The expression '*in his days*' means during his ministry as High Priest, although other building activities were commenced in his days. Ben Sira's precise description (H50:2) of the double water reservoir at Bethesda bears witness to his familiarity with the facts and reinforces the argument that the letters of Antiochus III should be considered authentic. Josephus employs the said letters as ancient and independent source material containing a general description of the reconstruction of the city, the temple, the galleries and other constructions for which building material must have been brought from Judea. The letters also record an increase in the population on account of the return of refugees and other inhabitants who had been sold into slavery. According to Lucian of Samosata's '*Quomodo historia conscribenda sit*' (120–190 CE),<sup>60</sup> a historian is obliged to base himself in narrating history on *Baunotizen*, letters and edicts as material evidence,<sup>61</sup> which he must then arrange in an artistic fashion and retell in a lively manner.<sup>62</sup> Josephus thus employs letters to this

<sup>58</sup> T.R. Lee, *Studies in the Form of Sirach 44–50*, SBLDS 75, Atlanta 1986. In his theory concerning the form of the *encomium*, Lee takes Simon II as his point of departure but offers no further argumentation (p. 315).

<sup>59</sup> J.H. Neyrey, 'Josephus' Vita and the *Encomium*: A Model of Personality', *JJS* XXV (1994) 177–206.

<sup>60</sup> P. Collomp, 'Der Platz des Josephus in der Technik der hellenistischen Geschichtsschreibung', in A. Schalit ed., *Zur Josephusforschung*, Darmstadt 1973, 278–293. E.J. Bickermann, 'Der seleukidische Freibrief für Jerusalem' in A. Schalit ed., *Zur Josephus-Forschung*, Darmstadt 1973, 205–240. Bickermann considers the letters to be authentic.

<sup>61</sup> M.I. Finley, 'Myth, Memory, and History', in J.M. Alonso-Núñez ed., *Geschichtsbild und Geschichtsdanken im Altertum*, Darmstadt 1991, 9–38.

<sup>62</sup> D. Mendels, "'Creative History" in the Hellenistic Near East in the Third and Second Centuries BCE: The Jewish Case', *JSpe* 2 (1988) 13–20.



end,<sup>63</sup> in similar fashion to the letter of Aristeeas,<sup>64</sup> which provides a great deal of information concerning the temple, the city's water supplies, the garments of the High Priest, the position of Jerusalem and the citadel and the prosperity arising from agriculture and trade (vss. 83–120).

### 5.3.2 *Simon from the perspective of Josephus*

VanderKam's point of departure, which maintains that only Josephus can be employed as a reliable source, gives evidence of an over-estimation of the latter's historical value. A contextual study serves to reveal the *manner* in which Josephus made reference to Simon in his *Antiquitates Judaicae*:

- The first time we encounter a reference to Simon, the son of Onias, the Righteous, is in *Ant.* XII, 43. When he died, he left only an infant son named Onias. His brother Eleazar, therefore, took over the High Priesthood. Simon I is the 'righteous one' on account of his piety towards YHWH and his benevolence towards the people. Following this genealogical observation Josephus goes on to describe Seleucus Nicator's (312–281 BCE) establishment of equal civil rights for Jews, Macedonians and Greeks, drawing a comparison with his contemporaries Vespasianus and Titus (70 CE) in XII, 119–124. In XII, 125–128 he repeats this unexpected reference to his own period. In XII, 133 he briefly mentions the conquest of Jerusalem by Antiochus III (223–187), appealing to Polybius<sup>65</sup> from Megalopolis (XII, 135) and alluding to two letters of Antiochus III (XII, 138–146) containing reference to the priv-

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<sup>63</sup> In *Ant.* XII Josephus makes use of the letters of Ptolemy to the High Priest Eleazar (45–50) and his response (51–56) in the narrative of the translation of the Septuagint (*Ant.* XII, 11–118), the letters of Antiochus III (*Ant.* XII, 138–144 and 145–146) and the letter of Areios, king of Sparta, to Onias III, the son of Simon II, in the history of the Tobiads (*Ant.* XII, 225–227).

<sup>64</sup> R.J.H. Shutt, 'The Letter of Aristeeas', in J.H. Charlesworth ed., *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, II, London 1985, 7–34.

<sup>65</sup> Polybius is the most significant historical writer in the tradition of Thucydides. As a Greek statesman and military commander he wrote 40 historical works of which only the first five have been preserved. He was taken to Rome as a hostage in 166 BCE. He had an enormous dislike for historians who were uncritical of their sources and argued that the writing of history was an educational responsibility towards the people with a political, moral and military aspect.

ileges granted to the city of Jerusalem. Simon is not mentioned at this juncture.

- Simon I, the Righteous, is mentioned once again in *Ant.* XII, 157–159 at the beginning of a genealogical comment as the father of Onias II. This is followed in XII, 160–222 by the so-called ‘Tobiad romance’ relating to Joseph who was married to a sister of the High Priest Onias. Their seven sons made war on their half-brother Hyrcanus, who was responsible for collecting taxes in Alexandria.
- Josephus briefly refers to Simon II in *Ant.* XII, 224–229 on account of his support of the brothers of Hyrcanus in their plan to kill him. While there can be little doubt that Simon II participated in the game of politics it remains highly unlikely that he would have approved of such a plan since this would have tarnished his reputation as ‘*the righteous one*’. The death of Joseph, the son of Tobias (187 BCE), who bore responsibility for economic development for an exemplary twenty-two years, follows in XII, 223.
- Simon II is mentioned for the last time in *Ant.* XII, 238, once again in a genealogical context. In XII, 237 Josephus makes reference to the death of Onias III but not to the fact that he was murdered (174 BCE). He mentions the ousting of Jason by a younger brother, also called Onias. Josephus’ allusion to the three sons of Simon II, namely Onias III, Jesus (Jason) and Onias (Menelaus), however, is incorrect. The people are divided into two parties. The group with Hellenistic inclinations flee to Antiochus IV (175–164 BCE), ask him for a gymnasium (XII, 239–241) and break with the tradition by reversing their circumcision (1 Maccabees 14–15). XII, 242–256 then recounts the history of Antiochus IV Epiphanes, who attacked Jerusalem and after two years plundered both the city and the temple. His persecution is so horrific that the Samaritans as Sidoninas of Shechem declare in a letter to King Antiochus Theos Epiphanes their readiness to dedicate their temple on Mount Gerizim to Zeus Hellenios as a precautionary measure (XII, 257–264). The king’s acquittal follows in *Ant.* XII, 262–263.

We conclude, therefore, that Josephus only mentions Simon in marginal, genealogical comments that serve to link together different themes. Josephus’ artistic arrangement of his material is rooted in a legendary story in which Jaddua reveals to Alexander the Great that, according to the book of Daniel, he would be victorious against the

Medes and the Persians (*Ant.* XI, 317–320). He then draws a link between this and the conflict with the Samaritans concerning the legitimacy of the temple on Mount Gerizim, the latter having been founded by Manasseh, the brother of Jaddua. Josephus presents the genealogical information concerning Simon in a summarised fashion, serving to demarcate the legend surrounding the translation of the Septuagint, the letters of Antioch III on the reconstruction of Jerusalem and the so-called ‘Tobiad romance’.

Moore considers Onias and Simon I to be comparable with Onias and Simon II. He even goes so far as to question the very existence of Simon I by insisting that the references to Simon, the Righteous, in *Ant.* XII, 43 and XII, 157 are only included at a particular stage in the evolution of the genealogy and represent nothing more than an explanation of an epitheton:

he is a link in a genealogy and nothing more.

Substantial, content-based information on Simon is virtually non-existent. Josephus is alone in referring to his εὐσεβὲς ‘piety’ towards God and his εὐνοῦν ‘benevolence’ (*Ant.* XII, 43) as personal characteristics more or less akin to the key concepts יְהוָה יְרֵאָה and חַסָּד found in Ben Sira’s portrait of Simon in Sirach 50. It thus follows that the question “Simon I or Simon II?” clearly has no simple answer.<sup>66</sup>

Historical-critical research into the historical writings of Josephus contains a number of opposing hypotheses. Willrich’s precise historical analysis, on the one hand, goes too far in accusing Josephus of falsification.<sup>67</sup> Bickermann, on the other hand, values Josephus’ work, particularly with respect to the letters of Antiochus III.<sup>68</sup> Dexinger has endeavoured to steer a middle path, reappraising Josephus’ historical writings by distinguishing between the various sources he employed therein.<sup>69</sup> In his broad contextual study, rooted in the his-

<sup>66</sup> *EncJud*, XIV. Simon, the Righteous is identified with Simon I (p. 1567).

<sup>67</sup> H. Willrich, *Urkundenfälschung in der hellenistisch-jüdischen Literatur*, Göttingen 1924.

<sup>68</sup> E. Bickermann, ‘Der seleukidische Freibrief für Jerusalem’, in A. Schalit ed., *Zur Josephus-Forschung*, WdF 84, Darmstadt 1973, 205–240.

<sup>69</sup> F. Dexinger, ‘Der Ursprung der Samaritaner im Spiegel der frühen Quellen’, in F. Dexinger/R. Pummer eds, *Die Samaritaner*, Darmstadt 1992, 67–140. Dexinger distinguishes a variety of sources: the Macedonian source (*Ant.* XI, 304–317) relating events during the period of Alexander the Great, the Sanballat source (*Ant.* XI, 302) in which the construction of a temple on Mount Gerizim is judged positively, the Manasseh source (*Ant.* XI, 306–323) and the Jaddua source (*Ant.* XI, 317–320 and 326–339) relating the meeting between Jaddua and Alexander. He dates the

torical cohesion provided by the political, social, economic and cultural aspects of the Hellenistic process of civilisation, Tcherikover supports the identification of Simon II with 'the righteous'. Grounded in his pro-Seleucid perspective, Simon implemented the concessions made by Antiochus III. While there is no evidence of a cultural schism around 200 BCE, the existence of two factions can nevertheless be substantiated. In this context Tcherikover argues:

there is every ground for supposing that the Simon the Just in person stood at the head of the pro-Seleucid party.<sup>70</sup>

The present author is of the opinion, however, that Tcherikover's hypothesis is too positive and that further nuancing is possible. The content of Antiochus III's first letter would appear to have accommodated Simon's wishes concerning the continuity of the temple tradition and the development of the city. His intention, however, was not to stimulate societal change in the Hellenistic sense, as supported by the pro-Seleucid party.<sup>71</sup> Central to the first letter is Antiochus III's promise concerning the maintenance of a form of government based on the Torah (κατὰ τοὺς πατρίους νόμους) and valid for all those who belong to the people of Israel (πάντες οἱ ἐκ τοῦ ἔθνους). The promise of tax exemption is applicable to specific groups in and around the temple: the council of elders (γερουσία), the priests (οἱ ἱερεῖς), the temple scribes (οἱ γραμματεῖς τοῦ ἱεροῦ) and the temple singers (οἱ ἱεροψάλται). While the tax exemption granted to the priestly groups would appear to have been unlimited, the reduced tax burden granted to the inhabitants of Jerusalem was clearly limited to a period of three years. The scale and extent of these fiscal arrangements make it clear that Simon's negotiating position must have been strong. His authority must have been decisive in acquiring such extensive fiscal exemptions for the temple. It is here, however, that Simon's priorities come to the fore. These are confirmed in H50:9a, in which his concern for the day to day maintenance of 'the brothers' comes

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Jaddua source to the period of Caesar (48–44 BCE) as an initial reaction to the Sanballat source and concludes that Alexander's alleged visits to Jerusalem and Shechem are historically unlikely and probably have their roots in the conflict with the Samaritans.

<sup>70</sup> V. Tcherikover, *Hellenistic Civilization and the Jews*, New York 1979 (pp. 78f.).

<sup>71</sup> In a second letter, Antiochus addresses himself to Zeuxis (*Ant.* XII, 148) with a positive judgement concerning 2000 Jewish families from Babylon who contributed to the protection of the land.

to light in the author's use of sacrificial symbolism 'as incense on the food offering' and in 50:13a in relation to the burnt offerings. Simon's concern for the well being of all the sons of Aaron can be considered a deed of justice. The same is true for the construction of the defences and water supplies in and around the city as an infrastructural measure designed to accommodate the northern expansion thereof near Bethesda motivated by the increasing population.

In summary:

VanderKam opts for Simon I based on the perspective of Josephus' historical works and appealing exclusively to G with regard to the exegesis of Sirach 50. By qualifying H50:1–24 as a *poetic encomium* he does not do justice to the historical information contained therein and tends to overestimate the value of Josephus as an historical source. Willrich, on the other hand, finds reason to doubt Josephus' authenticity on account of the latter's fantasy prohibition against the sacrifice of panthers, foxes and hares (*Ant.* XII, 146), which are not at issue in Torah as a whole. The present author considers this conclusion an over-generalisation. The results of our study comparing both versions of Sirach 50 would tend to support Moore's vision of Simon II.

### 5.3.3 *Simon, the Righteous*

In *Pirke Abot* 1.2 Simon, the Righteous, stands last in the line of the אנשי כנסת הגדולה 'men of the Great Assembly', the only one to be mentioned by name from the Persian period onwards. Englander raises the question of the specific identity of Simon here, Simon I, or Simon II, since Simon the Maccabean can be excluded (1 Macc. 14:28–35).<sup>72</sup> His preference for Simon II is based on Ben Sira's eyewitness portrayal. He considers an almost 300 year disruption of the chain of tradition in the case of Simon I to Hillel and Shammai (*Abot* 1.4) to be highly unlikely.

For Englander the expression 'the Great Assembly' is of overriding importance. The notion of the אנשי כנסת הגדולה as a עצה 'festival gathering' (Neh. 8:19) is not at issue here. He argues in favour of a possible association with the קהל, which is translated in the Septuagint

<sup>72</sup> H. Englander, 'The Men of the Great Synagogue', *HUC.Jub.Vol.* 1875–1925 (1925) 145–169.

as ἐκκλησία as well as συναγωγή, while the עדת is translated exclusively as συναγωγή. The כנסת thus refers to 'the entire body of Israel'.

Englander reads the term הנדולה as הנדולה based on j.*Berakhot* 11c and j.*Megilla* 74a, arguing that these men considered it their task to restore original 'greatness' in spite of the resistance put up by Sanballat, the Samaritans, Tobiah, the Ammonites and Geshem the Arab (Neh. 9:32).<sup>73</sup> Measures introduced by Ezra had led to the exclusion of foreigners from the קהל יהוה 'assembly of YHWH' (Deut. 23:4) and to a subdivision into opposing factions. Englander concludes that during and after the exile 'the men of the Great Assembly' provided the people with leadership. From this perspective it is evident to him that Simon, the righteous should be identified with Simon II. The core problem lies in the fact that Ben Sira, as direct witness of Simon II, never employs the epithet 'the righteous'. In spite of this, however, the text itself would appear to confirm such a qualification.

In his description of the post-exilic period (49:11–13) Ben Sira makes references to the various elements that typify Simon the High Priest. He mentions Zerubbabel and Joshua in connection with the restoration of the Temple and Nehemiah in relation to the reconstruction of Jerusalem. In the evocation (49:14–16) he refers first to the priesthood (כהנין), thereby establishing an association with כהנוך Enoch. He alludes to Joseph as an exponent of wisdom, while G speaks of the latter as the patriarch of the Samaritans. Adam follows Shem and Seth as the pinnacle since his glory (תפארת) extends beyond all living things. Simon is the personification par excellence of the priesthood, of wisdom and of glory.

The depiction of Simon would appear to be authentic when compared with G. Sirach 50 should thus be afforded a positive reappraisal as a source of important information within the framework of the rewriting of history. As an eyewitness, Ben Sira furnishes us with a clear picture of the temple liturgy in the historical context of the transition from the 3rd to the 2nd centuries BCE.

In spite of the diverse factions at work in Simon's day, a degree of cohesion is apparent in his universal concept of God, temple,

<sup>73</sup> J. Vermeylen, 'Pourquoi fallait-il édifier des remparts? Le Siracide et Néhémie', in FS M. Gilbert, *Treasures of Wisdom*, Leuven 1999, 195–213. Vermeylen considers Geshem to be Nabatean (p. 207) in Sir. 50:25–26. He wrongly connects Sanballat with the foolish people of Shechem and Tobias with the Philistines, noting in addition the importance of the Tobiad family from Samaria as the major promoter of Hellenism in Jerusalem (p. 212).

priesthood and people. The word combination כל בשר יהודי (50:17a) is akin to the Rule of the Community (1QS) 1Q<sub>Serek ha-Yahad</sub> in Qumran and provides insight into the early stages of the formation of various Jewish factions.

In summary:

Research into the literary evidence obliges one to conclude, therefore, that Ben Sira's eyewitness report of Simon the High Priest in Sirach 50 does not offer direct grounds for identifying him with Simon, the Righteous.

On the basis of his portrayal of Simon and his introduction thereof with וצדקתם (44:13), however, there would appear to be sufficient evidence to conclude that Simon II is the same as Simon, the Righteous.

An extra dimension can be added at this juncture in light of the far-reaching conformity of ideas upheld by both Ben Sira and Simon, the primary character of his work. Against this background, further research into 50:25–28 might contribute to the question of the identity of Simon.

#### 5.4 *The Sofer and the High Priest*

Autobiographical information relating to Ben Sira provides the reader with a clearer insight into his world of thought and into the consensus he shares with Simon the High Priest.

In the first instance, the reader is treated to a somewhat unexpected outburst of the author's emotions in the form of a *Scheltrede* as he expresses his loathing towards the Samaritans (50:25–26). In the second instance, the author reveals himself and his own intentions in the conclusion to the book (50:27–28).<sup>74</sup>

##### 5.4.1 *Ben Sira and the Samaritans*

Ben Sira's detestation of the foolish people of Shechem resounds loud and clear in his fierce protest against three nations, particularly the Samaritans in the *Scheltrede* (50:25–26). In G 'the Samaritans' are understood as two different groups: those in Samaria and those in

<sup>74</sup> J. Liesen, 'Strategical Self-References in Ben Sira', in FS M. Gilbert, *Treasures of Wisdom*, Leuven 1999, 63–74.

Shechem. In spite of the fact that the text provides no further motivation for the author's outburst, this clearly lies within the context of their legitimization of the sanctuary on Mount Gerizim and their criticism of the priestly tradition and the temple in Jerusalem.<sup>75</sup>

In order to acquire a deeper insight into the relationship between Jerusalem and Mount Gerizim it will be necessary to compare Ben Sira's version with the Samaritan vision of the temple and the priesthood in a critical approach to their traditions, which we derive from their later documents.

#### 5.4.1.1 *Samaritan theologoumena*

Five theological arguments feature with some regularity in the Samaritan documents: God is one (Deut. 6:4), Moses is the prophet par excellence, the Torah is to be regarded as the canon, Mount Gerizim is the 'chosen place' (Deut. 12:5) and there will be a day of vengeance and requital (Deut. 32:35).<sup>76</sup> We summarise the most striking theologoumena in this questionable legitimization drawn from the *Chronicle Tolidah*, *Chronicle II*, *Memar Marqah* and the *Samaritan Pentateuch* (cf. 3.2.6.1, 3.3.7 Excursus III and 4.3.7).

#### – The Manasseh tradition:

Initial reasons for the ongoing opposition between Gerizim and Jerusalem have their roots in the conflict surrounding the marriage of Manasseh and Nikaso. Nehemiah considered the marriage to be a violation of the *ברית הכהנה* 'covenant of the priesthood' (Neh. 13:28). After both individuals were banished from Jerusalem, Sanballat built a temple on Mount Gerizim (*Ant.* XI, 306ff.).<sup>77</sup>

<sup>75</sup> M. Cogan, 'For we, like you, worship your God: Three Biblical Portrayals of Samaritan Origins', *VT* XXXIII.3 (1988) 286–292. Tanakh lacks such content-based elements.

<sup>76</sup> J. Macdonald, 'The Discovery of Samaritan Religion', *Religion* 2 (1972) 141–153.

<sup>77</sup> M.Z. Segal, 'Die Heirat des Sohnes des Hohenpriesters mit der Tochter des Sanballat und der Bau des Heiligtums auf dem Garizim', in F. Dexinger/R. Pummer eds, *Die Samaritaner*, Darmstadt 1992, 198–219. According to Segal, the difference with Nehemiah has its roots in Josephus' intermingling of three aspects: the marriage of Manasseh with Nikaso (*Ant.* XI, 302), the construction of the sanctuary on Mount Gerizim and the victory of Alexander the Great. The dogmatic issue relating to the legitimization of Jerusalem and Mount Gerizim only emerged after the construction of the sanctuary and led to further alienation. Segal considers both movements to be daughters of one and the same mother, as would appear from the evident similarity between Samaritan customs and Zadokite halachah (pp. 217f.).



The exclusion of Manasseh resulted in the fact that dissident priestly factions in Jerusalem offered their support to the establishment of the Samaritan sanctuary. The Samaritans argue on the basis of Torah that their temple is at least equal to if not superior to the temple in Jerusalem.

Dexinger has observed that while the Manasseh tradition may not have an historical basis, the historical fact remains that dissident priests from Jerusalem paved the way for the Samaritan temple.<sup>78</sup> Kinship more than contrast constitutes the real reason for Ben Sira's explosion of loathing and bitterness in (50:25–26). While kinship is evident with respect to Torah and the priesthood, there remain insurmountable differences at the level of content.

– The tradition concerning the chosen place:

Based on Torah, the chosen place (Deut. 12:5) is identified with Bethel (Mount Gerizim). It was here that all the tribes were assembled by Joshua after the entry into the land and the Levites recited the entire law of Moses. Joseph was buried in Shechem, where Jacob built an altar (*Chronicle II* Joshua §M). From the very beginning this chosen place served as a religious centre, favoured by David (§M) yet destroyed by Saul on account of his hatred for the Samaritans (I Samuel §I). Following the intervention of the High Priest Jair, David even suspended the construction of the temple for the ark in Beth-maktesh in the middle of the Jebis (Aelia) (II Samuel §B [L\*]), while making a pilgrimage to Mount Gerizim/Bethel before purchasing the threshing floor from the Jebusite Araunah (§D [I\*]). The schism ultimately took place after the construction of Solomon's magnificent temple (I Kings I–XI §F [C\*]). The conflict thus dates from the time of Saul until Solomon.

– The tradition concerning Joseph in Shechem:

The next point is the completely changed position of Joseph in G49:15b and the grandson's translation of 'the brothers' focusing on the בני יוסף who consider the care of their father's grave as their responsibility. In so doing, the grandson alludes to a particular group of Samaritans who considered Joseph to be their patriarch. In the

<sup>78</sup> F. Dexinger, 'Der Ursprung der Samaritaner im Spiegel der frühen Quellen', in F. Dexinger/R. Pummer eds, *Die Samaritaner*, Darmstadt 192, 67–140.

*Chronicle II* 1 Samuel §H (C\*) the Samaritan Israelite community is divided into Phinehasites and Josephites together with a few stemming from other tribes. In the polemical situation in G, the grave of Joseph serves as an historical fact. In H, on the other hand, Joseph is depicted in the context of wisdom. The purpose of the grandson's emendation becomes clear in 4Q372 from Qumran in which reference is made to a conscious act of provocation on the part of the Samaritans intended to make Israel jealous.<sup>79</sup>

– The beginning of the calculation of the calendar:

A further point of dispute with Jerusalem concerns the method of calculation of the days, months and years, with which the *Chronicle Tolidah* begins:

This is the Hebrew method of calculation by which we know the days, the months, and the years, and which we have inherited from Phinehas, the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron the priest—may the peace of God rest upon him, his forefathers, and his uncle—who learned it from Moses the prophet—the peace of God be upon him. It had been handed down by tradition from the three patriarchs: Jacob, Isaac, and Abraham—peace upon them who acquired this knowledge from Eber, who received it successively from Shem, Noah, Seth, Adam, the angels and the Lord Himself.<sup>80</sup>

The climax of the evocation is reached with Adam in Sir. 49:16. Ben Sira does not offer genealogical information in the climax of the Praise of the Fathers (49:16b) nor does he reflect back in time in search of an original ideal situation or startingpoint for the calculation of the calendar in relation to the glory of Adam. Rooted in the present, rather, he looks to the future by reflecting on history, the high point of which is continued in Simon. In this context he qualifies Simon's תפארתה 'glory' (50:1–24) with תפארת אדם (49:16b). אדם 'humankind', moreover, is advanced 'from the womb' according to God's kindness (50:22c,d). Adam in G serves as the beginning of a *Beispielreihe*.

<sup>79</sup> E. Schuller, '4Q372 1: A Text about Joseph', *RQ* 55 (1990) 349–376.

<sup>80</sup> M. Gaster, 'Die samaritanische Litteratur', in F. Dexinger/R. Pummer eds, *Die Samaritaner*, Darmstadt 1992, 141–186. According to Gaster the literature of the Samaritans is defensive in orientation (p. 144).

– The genealogy of the High Priest and the priestly traditions: In *‘Chronicle Tolidah’* the tradition of the Samaritan High Priests begins with Adam, as is evident from the title: *‘the Chain of the Priests from Adam until the present’*.<sup>81</sup> In the list from Adam via Enoch up to the birth of Noah 707 years are counted and to the flood 1307; from Arpachshad to Abraham 940 years and to Moses’ death 2794 years; in terms of Eleazar, Phinehas and Abisha 50, 60 and 40 years are counted respectively. Apologetic Samaritan arguments are based in the first instance on this priestly tradition with Adam as the source of their ancestry, and Abisha the grandson of Aaron who wrote the Torah scroll. Most important is Phinehas who acted voluntarily against the immorality of the priests and formed the starting point of the priestly covenant of peace that endures forever.

Ben Sira agrees with this central position of Phinehas (50:24). On the contrary he gives no priestly genealogy in the evocation (49:14–16), while ארם establishes an inclusion in 49:16 and 50:22 around Simon in his glory. In 49:14, however, he calls to mind a specific tradition related to the priesthood, namely that virtually no one on earth had been formed to כהניך *‘your priests/your priestly service’*. In the form of a word play a possible reference is made to כהנוך *‘like Enoch’* who was ‘taken up’ in person and who remains in remembrance as הזימן and אות דעה *‘a sign of knowledge’* (44:16a,b).

The Enoch tradition was still being developed around 200 BCE. Argall points to a potential association between Enoch in Sir. 49:14 and I Enoch 14, in which the latter visited the heavenly sanctuary and caught a glimpse of the *merkabah*. This explains the fact that Ben Sira kept his distance from such speculative literature and that he was familiar at most with Enoch circles in Jerusalem.<sup>82</sup> We are inclined, nevertheless, to consider the Enoch tradition important with respect to the purity of the High Priestly lineage. The priestly traditions surrounding Enoch<sup>83</sup> and Zadok are both oriented towards the genealogy of the priests and the Levites, in contrast to the Phinehas and pan-Aaronide tradition with its orientation towards purity of action and the priestly ordinances, duty rosters and the arrangement of matters in and around the temple.

<sup>81</sup> J. Bowman, *Samaritan Documents*, Pittsburgh 1977 (p. 52, n. 26)

<sup>82</sup> R. Argall, *I Enoch and Sirach*, SBLEJL 8, Atlanta 1995 (p. 12).

<sup>83</sup> In 2 Enoch 71:32–35, Enoch is tenth in line of the priests of the order of Melchizedek.

Ben Sira emphasises the unity of the priesthood via the image of the crown of priests surrounding the Simon the High Priest and the covenant of Phinehas. He leaves the Levites and other factions out of the picture. Nehemiah's distinction (13:28–29) between *'the priesthood and the covenant of the priesthood and the Levites'* serves to confirm the categorisation of priestly traditions (5.2.3).

The establishment of the Samaritan sanctuary reinforces the significance of the theological issues surrounding the chosen place and the grave of Joseph in Shechem, particular the ancestry and the order of precedence among the priestly generations. While such issues constitute some problems in the case of Simon II and his sons Onias III and Jason, the conflict raised in terms of their successors Menelaos, Alcimus and the Hasmoneans after the intersacerdotium was based on power and not purity of descent.

#### 5.4.1.2 *The context of Ben Sira's apology*

Ben Sira makes use of the *Scheltrede* to strengthen his appeal by way of the indignant exclamation **עַם אֲנִינוּ עַם** *'that is a non-nation!'*. In doing so he encourages his audience to live as a holy people, as the people chosen by YHWH as his own. His use of the expression is not intended to be understood as an absolute and established fact. In the context of such pointed criticism, Ben Sira's resolute repudiation has its roots in his plea for unity. The wisdom tradition employs such negative examples in the *lehrhaft-paränetischen Form sapientieller Weisheit* to underline a positive goal, which is here contained in the term **יְהוָה**, employed by Ben Sira to represent all people together in prayer before the Most High, the Holy One of Israel (50:17a). In Qumran the term **יְהוָה** *'community'* is employed with a similar meaning in (1QS) 1Q*Serek ha-Yahad* to express the ideal of the unbroken unity of the people of the twelve tribes.

Ben Sira's angry outburst against the pretensions of the Samaritans with the qualification **נָבָל** *'foolish'* is confirmed by the *Apocryphon of Joseph* (4Q372). The recently published text fragments 11Q14<sup>84</sup> documents the use of the expression **נָבָל הַנְּגִי** with the same negative connotations as in 50:26b.

<sup>84</sup> F. García Martínez/E.J.C. Tigchelaar/A.S. van der Woude eds., *Qumran Cave 11*, DJD XXVIII, 11Q2–18; 11Q20–31, Oxford 1998.

In employing this concept Ben Sira remains within the framework of wisdom in his offensive against Samaritan theologoumena.

The legitimation of Mount Gerizim may have had its roots in older traditions in the Torah, but the unity of the people continued nevertheless to be formed around the ark in Jerusalem in spite of the speed with which the state of Israel became divided after Solomon. Similarly, in spite of those who criticised it, Solomon's temple came to be universally recognised, taking on a central position in the tradition of the faith. Reconstruction after the exile provided no particular grounds for conflict. It was only after the establishment of the temple on Mount Gerizim that theological points of difference began to emerge concerning the legitimation of the sanctuary and the priests. It is clear, moreover, that the duties of the High Priest together with his authority and personal characteristics were becoming more and more important, certainly in the case of Simon.

This analysis suggests that Simon's way of living as a righteous individual constitutes a relevant argument in Ben Sira's apology. In contrast to the genealogical ancestry of Phinehas in the vision of the Samaritans, Simon comes to the fore in the Praise of the Fathers in relation to the peace covenant with Phinehas (50:24b), acting according to the freedom of his will and with all his heart in line with the Phinehas tradition (45:23e). He is portrayed with the same glory as Adam and is compared in his priestly service (כהניך) with Enoch (כהנוך), who was found to be המים (44:16a; 49:14a).

The grandson introduces an unusual perspective in G by placing two Samaritan factions and two locations, Shechem and Samaria, on one and the same line.<sup>85</sup> In his universal understanding of כל בשר יהרו, Ben Sira continues to presume a fraternal association between the Samaritan factions who honour YHWH and live according to Torah. In spite of tensions between them, the two factions, one in Jerusalem the other on Mount Gerizim, are not yet completely divided.<sup>86</sup> Two generations later, however, the division is well

<sup>85</sup> According to *Ant.* XII, 257 the temple on Mount Gerizim had been changed into a sanctuary dedicated to Zeus Xenios prior to the outbreak of the Maccabean war. The Samaritans as such had no part in this revolt and only took such precautionary measures for the purposes of self-preservation. In 2 Macc. 6:1-2 the temple in Jerusalem is dedicated to the Olympian Zeus and the temple on Mount Gerizim to Zeus Xenios, God of Hospitality.

<sup>86</sup> H.G. Kippenberg, *Gerizim und Synagoge. Traditionsgeschichtliche Untersuchungen zur samaritanischen Religion der aramäischen Periode*, Berlin 1967.

and truly established.<sup>87</sup> During Simon's period as High Priest divisions would appear to have been bridgeable and there is evidence of a positive appreciation of the Tobiads as fiscal specialists and especially of Joseph who served as tax collector in Syria, Phoenicia and Samaria for 22 years, mentioned by Josephus in the 'Tobiad romance' (*Ant.* XII, 160–224). His mother was a sister of the High Priest Onias II (*Ant.* XII, 160). His qualities at the economic level would appear to have enjoyed Simon's approval, in spite of Joseph's friendly connection with the inhabitants of Samaria (*Ant.* XII, 168).<sup>88</sup> At the end of his lifetime Simon took sides with Joseph's older sons who endeavoured to murder Hyrcanus (XII, 229), their younger half-brother, begotten by the daughter of Joseph's brother Solymius (*Ant.* XII, 186–189).

The balance of power changed significantly after the death of Simon (around 190) and Joseph (187 BCE). Shortly after the defeat of Antiochus II at the battle of Magnesia (190 BCE) national stability had disappeared completely. For the emerging younger generation, the covenant of peace with Phinehas called for a high degree of determination, especially with respect to the obligatory payment of tribute. They came under pressure to resist the influence of Hellenism, in spite of the fact that they themselves had for the most part been its very pioneers. Problems begin to emerge after Onias III, with a downward spiral of instability apparent from the time of Jason until the persecution of Antiochus IV Epiphanes. Armed revolution in Jerusalem served to round matters off, albeit without Samaritan involvement.

We conclude, therefore, that Ben Sira and Simon, in their vision of 'all people together' (50:17a), 'all the people of the land' (50:19a) and 'the entire congregation of Israel' (50:13c,20c), resisted the interpretation of

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<sup>87</sup> J.D. Purvis, 'Ben Sira and the Foolish People of Shechem Sir 50:25–26', *JNES* 24 (1965) 88–94. The feast day of Mount Gerizim in honour of Simon I's frustration of construction plans for the temple after the meeting with Alexander at *Megillat Ta'anit* is highly etiological in character and is rooted in the experience following the destruction by John Hyrcanus in 128 BCE. Purvis argues that Sir. 50:25–26 still does not presuppose a definitive schism, at least from the perspective of Jerusalem (pp. 92f.).

<sup>88</sup> M. Hengel, *Judentum und Hellenismus*, WUNT 10, Tübingen 1973. The removal of Onias III has its roots in a conflict with the Tobiads concerning the *agoranomia* (p. 100).

Torah that would lead to legalism and the exclusion of different groups. The relationship with the Samaritans ran aground in the context of religious aspirations associated with Shechem as the only chosen place in which YHWH had established his name (Deut. 12:5). Resistance from Jerusalem focused itself on the pretensions of the temple liturgy on Mount Gerizim. Objections to the newly constructed city of Samaria with its Hellenistic social climate have their roots in the struggle for power and supremacy.

The appeal in the context of the evocation from Enoch to Adam resounds with indignation on account of the fact that the Samaritans lay claim to traditions prior to Moses and Aaron in their priestly genealogy. The praise of Simon in the context of the covenant with Phinehas exhibits a similarly polemical tendency to which the *Scheltrede* joins in with all its force.

During the time of Ben Sira and Simon there was thus no evidence of a definitive schism between the Jews and the Samaritans.<sup>89</sup> This took place after the Maccabean revolt, when Simon and his two brothers were killed in an act of treachery and John Hyrcanus took power, engaging in an armed offensive against the inhabitants of Shechem, destroying their temple on Mount Gerizim (128) and razing Samaria to the ground (107 BCE).

The Romans broke through the impasse in 64 BCE, forcing both groups to live side by side as two 'brother' nations with all the tensions one might expect from such an arrangement. After the Jewish revolt against the Romans and the fall of the Second Temple in 70 CE, the same tensions were continued in the diaspora. It was not until the 16th century that the existence of a Torah scroll ascribed by the Samaritans to Abisha, son of Phinehas, became known in Europe. At the end of the 19th century exploration of and familiarity with Samaritan literature led to a renewed appreciation thereof. Through his study of these texts and his engagement on behalf of the remaining Samaritans, now a threatened group, the former president of Israel, Jizhak Ben-Zvi introduced a new phase in the Samaritan cause aimed at the study of the Torah as a point of commonality

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<sup>89</sup> J. Zsengellér, *Gerizim als Israël*, Utrecht 1998. The Samaritans included groups of Yahwistic proto-Samaritans and of non-Jews. A group of Yahwistic Judeans and foreigners (Sidonians) joined their ranks during the Hellenistic period. The Maccabean revolt led to a period of Judaization of the people in the land and to a far-reaching subdivision into factions (p. 181).

(יִרְדּוּ). It is our own opinion that Ben Sira brought this very commonality to the fore as an eyewitness to the remembrance of Simon in the context of the אֲנִשׁי הַסֵּד.<sup>90</sup>

This perspective fits appropriately into the *remembrance discourse* of the Praise of the Fathers with respect to Rosh Hashanah, as a means to stimulate reflection and meditation. Ben Sira's rewriting of history has its place in the teaching tradition in which he connects wisdom with Torah so that people will reflect on the essential things of life and take them to heart (50:28).

#### 5.4.2 *Ben Sira, the sofer*

The two primary characters in Sirach 50 are contemporaries who probably knew one another. Kinship between the two in terms of ideas and insight can be gleaned from H50:27–28.

G50:27–29 differs substantially from its Hebrew counterpart, especially with respect to the addition of G50:29c in which only οὐ εὐσεβείς *'the faithful'* are ascribed their part of wisdom. The parallel at the end of the Praise of the creation (G43:33) is worthy of note: πάντα γὰρ ἐποίησεν ὁ κύριος καὶ τοῖς εὐσεβέσις ἔδωκεν σοφίαν *'the Lord has created all things and He has given wisdom to the faithful'*.

While the grandson would appear to be thinking of a particular group at this juncture, Ben Sira points to individuals who have proven fidelity in their own fashion and during their own lifetimes (44:3a–6b). This individual approach locates Simon in a climactic position as the fourth High Priest after Aaron, El'azar and Phinehas. By jumping forward in time from Phinehas to Simon, Ben Sira avoids alluding to specific factions and making reference to questions of descent from Zadok, Aaron or Melchizedek.<sup>91</sup>

He unexpectedly makes reference to himself in his conclusion, presenting two perspectives that point to ideological kinship with Simon.

<sup>90</sup> Z. Ben-Hayyim, *השומרונים של יצחק בן-צבי לחקר השומרונים*, Jerusalem 1964. 'Der Beitrag von Jitzhak Ben Zvi zur Erforschung der Samaritaner' translated in F. Dexinger/R. Pummer eds, *Die Samaritaner*, Darmstadt 1992, 274–280.

<sup>91</sup> A.S. van der Woude, 'Melchisedek als himmlische Erlösungsgestalt in den neugefundenen eschatologischen Midraschim aus Qumrân, Höhle XI', OTS XIV (1965) 354–373.



#### 5.4.2.1 *Insight into and mastery of the wheels*

Ben Sira alludes in 50:27a to the formation of a human being, employing thereby the concept מוּסַר, which is derived from יָסַר 'to nurture, to reprove, to teach, to discipline'. This verb is typical of the wisdom tradition and its focus is on insight and wisdom of life.<sup>92</sup>

The word combination וּמוֹשֵׁל אֶפְנִיִּים is unique and translated by 'the mastery of the wheels' (50:27a). The 'wheels' are known from the *merkabah* tradition and are related here to the active participle of מָשַׁל. A parallel text can be found in 44:4d and 5b. Commentators frequently base themselves on 44:5b and read the present form as מִשַׁל 'proverb' but this necessitates an emendation of text. No decisive argument exists in support of such a textual intervention. Attention is focused on the priestly services and the arrangement of the feasts, the latter being part of the responsibility of מוֹשְׁלִים בַּמַּשְׁמְרוֹתָם 'the masters of the arrangements' in 44:4d and designed to promote a well-organised temple liturgy.

The mastery of the wheels implies a great deal more than the organisation of the temple, the latter consisting of prescriptions and calendar subdivisions. In the course of time, adaptations were made to these arrangements, resulting, among other things, from the reformation of Josiah (2 Kings 22–23). Ezra similarly grounded his disciplinary measures in this ongoing tradition of practical application of Torah, introducing the lunar calendar with which he and the returning Babylonian exiles were familiar. The calendar question (50:6b) constitutes a broader more universal problem. The conventional ordinal reference to the months of the year made way for the introduction of names associated with the Babylonian calendar, names that have remained in common use to the present day.<sup>93</sup> Changes in the calculation and organisation of feasts, however, represent a more significant matter, one that called the explanation of the Scriptures into question. Profound differences were evident with respect to the priestly Torah and the holiness code of Leviticus

<sup>92</sup> J.H. Gunning Wzn, 'De pedagogische wijsheid in het boek Spreuken', in *Keur der werken*, Groningen 1940, 323–340. As an educator, Gunning objects to the over-emphasis on discipline as punishment, which ignores the meaning of מוּסַר as inclusive of one's entire life. The term παιδεία, on the other hand, is related to the general development of children. He summarises the essence of genuine discipline in the expression 'the discipline of love', which leads to true freedom, which, in association with Torah, flows forth from charity.

<sup>93</sup> J. Morgenstern, 'The Three Calendars of Ancient Israel', *HUCA* I (1924) 1–148.

17–26.<sup>94</sup> It is for this reason that Enoch circles were inclined to maintain the traditional solar calendar in line with the Samaritans in the *Tolidah* and the *Samaritan Chronicle II* and with the Essenes. It is apparent from the literature of Qumran that the conflict was a severe one, an immense difference of opinion rooted in the pure explanation of the Scriptures.<sup>95</sup>

The significance of the *אוֹפְנִים מוֹשֵׁל* ‘*mastery of the wheels*’ extends even further and includes the wisdom characteristic of profound insight into all things. The term *כל* ‘*all*’ is indeed a characteristic of Ben Sira’s wisdom (39:17–34) and its insight into the unity of all things that lies in the revelation of the God of all (36:1a; 45:23c; 50:15d).<sup>96</sup>

The visionary *merkabah* tradition is also related to the mastery of the *אוֹפְנִים* ‘*the wheels*’, providing the capacity to fathom the depths of everyday events and the course of history. Deeper insight<sup>97</sup> leads to speculative thinking, typical of the books of Enoch and Jubilees. Knowledge of the transcendent divine world is associated pseudonymously with significant primeval figures such as Enoch and Adam<sup>98</sup> who acquired greater insight on account of an angel or via direct contact with God. The same can likewise be said of Moses who was shown the model of the temple during his sojourn on Mount Sinai.

<sup>94</sup> I. Knohl, ‘The Priestly Torah Versus the Holiness School: Sabbath and the Festivals’, *HUCA* LVIII (1987) 65–117.

<sup>95</sup> F. García Martínez, ‘Profeet en profetie in de geschriften van Qumran’, in FS A.S. van der Woude, *Profeten en profetische geschriften*, Kampen 1985, 119–132. García Martínez distinguishes between prophecy as interpretation of the Torah in the wisdom tradition in (Ben Sira) and prophecy as direct revelation from God in the apocalyptic tradition (p. 128). Ben Sira names all the prophets, including the Twelve, thereby contributing to the process of canonisation (p. 127) on the basis of his duty to provide ‘pure elucidation’ (50:27c).

<sup>96</sup> *כל* is a characteristic concept in the wisdom of Ben Sira (39:12–35, 43:33). There is no evidence of pantheism in H although it seems to be apparent in G with the translation πάντα, and the emendation of the divine name *אלהי ישראל* (50:22) to read τῷ θεῷ πάντων. An exceptional example of word play is evident in 49:9b, in which Ben Sira employs a quotation from Ps. 112:5b in relation to Job. He makes use of the *piḥpal* participle of *כול* in *הַמְכַלְכֵּל כֹּל* ‘*he served (God’s interests) in all things*’.

<sup>97</sup> M. Hengel, *Judentum und Hellenismus*, WUNT 10, Tübingen 1973. According to Hengel the movement seeking to counter Greek influence (2nd century) sought its roots in the Orient and in Egypt (Exkurs Nr. 4: >Höhere Weisheit durch Offenbarung als Wesensmerkmal spätantiker Religiosität, pp. 381–394).

<sup>98</sup> B.G. Wright, ‘“Fear the Lord and Honor the Priest”. Ben Sira as Defender of the Jerusalem Priesthood’, in P.C. Beentjes ed., *Ben Sira in Modern Research*, Berlin 1997, 189–222.

Isaiah refers to this special knowledge, acquired during his prophetic call vision while Ezekiel is unique in referring to the *merkabah* tradition as such.

Ben Sira makes no allusion to the transcendent temple of Ezekiel 40–48. He is clearly unfamiliar with such transcendent thinking, his life and thought being focused within his own temporal framework. As ‘gleaner’, Ben Sira was evidently aware of boundary-breaking ideas, especially in light of the fact that he connects the term לְאֹהֶרֶן with the horn (קֶרֶן) in relation to the lifestyles of three individual kings, David, Hezekiah and Josiah, who serve as positive examples (49:4–5). The wonderful deeds performed by YHWH, the God of Israel (הַמַּלְאִיִּם) are related to this present world (בְּאֶרֶץ) (50:22b).

Ben Sira bases himself in the wisdom tradition and as such avoids the tendency to escape into transcendent, eschatological experience. It would be wrong to assume that the cultural and social changes associated with the term Hellenism<sup>99</sup> changed his way of thinking in any profound way. The present author is inclined to see the crisis of authority brought about by internecine conflict and the formation of factions as a greater potential influence.

Of course Ben Sira does not only reject, he gives serious consideration to the newer insights of his day concerning Elijah (48:1–14), the eschatological visions of Isaiah (48:24–25), the revivification of the twelve prophets (49:10), the *merkabah* tradition in Ezekiel (49:8) and the interest in Job ‘who held fast to all the ways of justice’ (49:9). In his own time, Ben Sira’s wisdom acquired practical form in Simon’s exercise of his High Priestly ministry and in his realisation of the restoration of the temple, the renovation of the city, the reorganisation of the temple liturgy, the festival calendar and the feast of the Day of Remembrance, Rosh Hashanah. Together they strive towards an all-inclusive unity to be found in a life according to Torah and they seek the beginning of wisdom in the fear of YHWH.

<sup>99</sup> M. Hengel, *Judentum und Hellenismus*, WUNT 10, Tübingen 1969. A great deal of criticism has been expressed with respect to the idea of the establishment of cultural unity in the empire of Alexander the Great since Droysen introduced the concept ‘Hellenism’ in 1831. Hengel is correct in noting that the matter is a complex one (cf. *Geschichte und Problematik eines Epochenbegriffs*, IdF 41, Darmstadt 1983) and in his opinion there is no question of an established phenomenon (p. 188).

#### 5.4.2.2 *The pure interpretation of the Scriptures*

The meaning of *לְבַן נִיבַע בַּפֶּתוּר לְבָן* 'he brings forth in pure elucidation' in 50:27c is determined by the explanation of the Scriptures. The *sofer's* unadulterated manner of elucidation is expressed in the teaching process whereby he is obliged to convey the meaning of the Scriptures and bring it to the fore in the tradition in order to guarantee the reliability of every insight, vision, dream and prophecy (24:30–34 and 39:1–7). A highly autobiographical dimension is evident in the elaboration of the task of the *sofer* via the comparison with the full moon (39:12b) and his intention to write down everything in book form (39:32). The inclusion between 39:16 and 33 reveals the content of 'all things', pointing thereby to the works of God.

The dynamic of scriptural explanation<sup>100</sup> was placed under pressure in Simon's time by the closed concept of the sacred community upheld by the Ezra faction, criticism on the part of the Samaritans of textual emendations in the Torah and the apocalyptic visions associated with Enoch circles. Ben Sira alludes to Moses who received the *תּוֹרַת חַיִּים וְחַבּוּנָה* 'Torah of life and insight' from YHWH (45:5a–d). Moses in turn passed on *מִצְוֹתָיו* 'his commandments' to Aaron together with the power to rule *בְּחֹק וּמִשְׁפָּט* 'over ordinance and law' with respect to his people, the Israelites (45:17c,d). In the Praise of the Fathers, this priestly related explanation of Torah and the commission to teach with the authority of Moses serve to determine the boundaries of the pure elucidation of the Scriptures. This also served to guarantee unity in Simon's day as long as the High Priest was capable of giving individual form and content thereto. One must presume, therefore, that an intense degree of cooperation was necessary between the High Priest and the *sofer* as *counsellor*.<sup>101</sup> Such implementation of the pure elucidation of the Scriptures bears witness to a great deal of courage and insight at a time in which the reassessment of the tradition had led to many a conflict. A much later phase of this

<sup>100</sup> H. Stadelmann, *Ben Sira als Schriftgelehrter*, Tübingen 1980. Stadelmann speaks of the inspiration of a *sofer* and denies any relationship with apocalyptic literature (pp. 232f.).

<sup>101</sup> J.G. Gammie, 'The Sage in Sirach', in J.G. Gammie/L.G. Perdue eds, *The Sage in Israel and the Ancient Near East*, Winona Lake 1990, 355–372. Gammie makes reference to the function of the *χρηματιστής* from the tradition of the Ptolemies, a figure who wandered from place to place, giving judgement in matters related to the king, in fiscal questions and in issues related to private law (p. 366).

interpretative tradition emerged with the Sadducees who employed the Torah as their only frame of explanation.

The exegesis of Sir. 50:1–28 reveals that Ben Sira had a characteristic vocabulary at his disposal, in particular a number of word combinations that refer to specific events in both Torah and the Prophets. Schechter was first to provide an overview of the associations between Ben Sira and the O.T. as a whole, alluding to 19 parallels in Sirach 50.

Text	Word/-combination	Quotation/reference
50:5b#*	מבית הפרכה	Ex. 26:33 (etc.)
50:6a#	ככוכב אור	Ps. 148:3
50:7b#	ובקשת נראתה בענן	Gen. 9:14
50:8b#	יבלי מים	Isa. 30:25 (etc.)
50:8c#*	כפרה לבנון	Nah. 1:4
50:9a#	לבונה על המנחה	Lev. 6:8
50:9b*	כלי זהב	Ex. 39:32–41, Num. 31:50
50:9c#	אבני חפץ	Isa. 54:12
50:10a#	כזית רענן	Jer. 11:16
50:10b*	כעץ שמן	Isa. 41:21, 1 Kgs 6:23–33
50:12e#	כערבי נחל	Job 40:22
50:13c#	נגד כל קהל ישראל	1 Kgs 8:22
50:16b#*	בחצצרות מקשה	Num. 10:10
50:17a#	כל בשר	Num. 16:22
50:17d#	קדוש ישראל	Isa. 1:4 (etc.)
50:18a*	קולו	Ps. 81:6c–15b
50:18b*	על המון	2 Sam. 22:14, Ps. 18:14
50:18b*	ערך	Leviticus 27
50:19a#*	וירנו כל עם הארץ	Lev. 9:24; Ps. 42; 43
50:20c*	ברכת יי	Ps. 129:8
50:20d*	יחפאר	Isaiah 60–62
50:22b*	המפליא לעשות	Judg. 13:19
50:22c*	המנדל אדם	2 Kgs 10:6
50:23a*	חכמת לבב	Ps. 90:12
50:23b*	בשלום ביניכם	Isa. 55:12
50:24a*	יאמן . . . חסדו	Isa. 54:10; 55:3
50:25a#	קצה נפשי	Num. 21:5
50:25b#	איננו עם	Deut. 32:21
50:26b#	נוי נבל	Deut. 32:21
50:28a#	אשרי איש באלה יהנה	Ps. 1:1,2 (Prov. 3:13)
50:28c#	יראת יי חיים	Prov. 19:23

The schema contains Schechter's parallels (marked #)<sup>102</sup> supplemented with details from our own research (marked \*).

In his free quotations and refined interaction with the Scriptures he places original interpretations in a new context.<sup>103</sup> As 'gleaner' he considers himself last in the line of the prophets. After careful consideration Ben Sira chooses to publish his insights (39:32) and thus to contribute as gleaner (33:16–18) to the harvest.<sup>104</sup> He brings his insight and perspectives relating to interaction with the Scriptures to the fore (*pi'el* נבע), allowing them to effervescing to the surface (*hiph'il* נבע) like a stream of water (50:27c,d). He also employs the symbol of water effervescing to the surface in the autobiographical remark (16:23 and 24:30–34). This process allows for that which is of value to be separated out, since wisdom of heart has its negative counterpart in the heart of the foolish that can be compared to the spinning of a wagon wheel (33:5). It is for this reason that he endeavours to consider all the works of God לעומה 'in pairs' (33:16).

Ben Sira is personally involved with heart and soul in the study of wisdom. He concludes with a 'benediction' in the form of a beatitude, that might be considered a genre typical of his teaching style and one that functions elsewhere as introduction to a didactic speech (Sir. 14:1,2,20; 31:8–11 and 34:14–20).<sup>105</sup> The verb דנה 'to dwell on'

<sup>102</sup> S. Schechter & C. Taylor, *The Wisdom of Ben Sira*, Amsterdam 1979 (pp. 12–25).

<sup>103</sup> P.C. Beentjes, *Jesus Sirach en Tenach*, Nieuwegein 1981. Beentjes indicates the limitations of such a summary of texts in Tanakh. The case of Sir. 36:1–17 shows that Schechter, Ryssel, Smend, Peters, Lévi, Middendorp and Gasser differ considerably from one another (pp. 6–19).

<sup>104</sup> P.C. Beentjes, 'Profetic bij Jesus Sirach', in FS C. van Leeuwen, *Door het oog van de profeten*, Utrecht 1989, 23–30. Beentjes considers Sirach at this juncture to be the last in the line of those who guarded (the traditions of) Israel. He describes the work of engaging with the Torah in a traditional manner using images from the wine harvest similar to those found in Sir. 24:27b.

<sup>105</sup> E. Puech, '4Q525 et les péripécopes des béatitudes en Ben Sira et Matthieu', *RB* XCVIII (1991) 80–106. On account of Puech's comparison of 4Q525, Sir. 14:20–27 and Mat. 5:3–11 we conclude that a benediction as the introduction to a didactic speech served in part 2 as a guide in the subdivision of the book of Ben Sira (Sir. 14:1–23:27 introduced by seven proverbs in 14:1,20–27). The teaching style characteristic of Ben Sira as *sofer* in the theological academy can be determined on the basis of two other didactic speeches. In the didactic speech in H38:8–11 four rhetorical questions introduced by מַי follow the benediction. Both the questions and their answers echo three times with the terms שלום 'peace' and תפארה

(14:20 and 50:28a) has its place in this context and is expressed in a reflection on the Torah accompanied by a sort of inner murmuring.

Such interaction with the Scriptures in the fear of YHWH is provided a framework in daily life and in the teaching context in which Ben Sira delivers his oration as *sofer*, focused on insight, the mastery of the wheels and pure elucidation (50:27). In the context of the temple, Simon is given the (Aaronic) task as High Priest to teach the Torah to the people (45:17). To this end YHWH gives him his commandments (מצוותיו) and sets him in charge over the ordinances and the statutes (וימשילוהו בהוק ומשפט). On the Day of Remembrance the priests summon all people together with their trumpets, inviting them to live their lives according to Torah. During the ten days that follow, the people are invited to dwell באלה 'over these things' in preparation for Yom Kippur.

In summary:

A significant degree of unity can be presumed between Simon in his teaching responsibilities as High Priest and Ben Sira, the gleaner (33:16), inclined to see both sides of an issue, who called upon the country's leaders to refuse to allow themselves to submit to domination (33:19–21). Both live their lives according to Torah and in fear of YHWH and both are ready and willing to give concrete form to the traditions of wisdom and the covenant of peace. Ben Sira's rewriting of history is focused on Simon and intended to be read in the context of remembrance, as a part of the liturgy of Rosh Hashanah, the latter constituting the *Sitz im Leben* of the Praise of the Fathers. Ben Sira elaborates the Praise of the Fathers in the final segment of his book, which begins with the Praise of the Creator (42:15–43:33) and ends with three psalms in Sirach 51.

#### 5.4.3 *The continuing remembrance of Simon*

Taking the title שבה אבות עולם 'Praise of the Fathers of All Times' found in H as our point of departure, it would appear that the concept עולם has a significant role to play in the introduction to the Praise of the Fathers (44:1–15) alongside that of remembrance. The verb זכר allows the men of name to enjoy their just rewards, in the pos-

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'glory', in order to fathom the depths of the human person as הנמים (44:16a; 44:17a). A didactic speech in the same style can be found in G34:14–20 following upon the journey report.

itive sense of the expression, in the promise *עד עולם יעמד זכרם* 'to eternity their remembrance shall remain' (44:13a). For another group, however, *אין לו זכר* 'there is no remembrance' and it is as if *לא היו היו* 'they had never existed' (44:9a). The contrast in 44:8–15 between remembrance and continued life and lack of remembrance and non-existence is thus firmly in focus. According to the syntactical analysis of Sirach 50, this extreme opposition contains the very core of Ben Sira's discourse (2.3.3.1).

As *sofer* Ben Sira rewrites the history of the men of name as background for his description of Simon, a contemporary and very real individual, in the Praise of the Fathers. Simon witnesses to his own self-awareness of being blessed by God (according to the text-critical supplement to 50:21b) and by actively revealing his glory in bestowing the blessing on the people (50:20). This interaction provides content to the term *חיים* 'life' (50:28c) and leads to the continuing remembrance of Simon.

Virtually every study of this text ignores the superscription in H: *שבה אבות עולם*. Given the idea of continuing remembrance, the temporal indicator *עולם* is clearly of great significance. Hayward opts for a spatial interpretation of the term and translates '*The Praise of the Fathers of the World*'.<sup>106</sup> The concept *עולם*, however, has no preposition and as such it stands in a genitive relationship with *אבות*. The qualitative aspect of the temporal understanding of the term deserves priority over the spatial concept 'world', the translation '*the Fathers of All Time*' thus expressing the quality of durability.<sup>107</sup> The verb *שבה* better expresses the author's intentioned if understood as a substantive 'The Praise . . .' instead of a jussive *pi'el*. The abbreviated title '*Praise of the Fathers*' has survived thanks to the Greek text Πατέρων ὕμνος.<sup>108</sup>

<sup>106</sup> C.T.R. Hayward, *The Jewish Temple. A Non-Biblical Sourcebook*, London 1996 (p. 41).

<sup>107</sup> M. Hengel, *Judentum und Hellenismus*, WUNT 10, Tübingen 1973. Hengel sees the continuity of sacred history as the primary goal of Ben Sira's apologetic stance (p. 249).

<sup>108</sup> P.C. Beentjes, 'The "Praise of the Famous" and its Prologue', *BFTF* 45 (1984) 374–383. According to Beentjes, the question of the superscription is not at issue in relation to the Laus patrum and Sir. 42:15–43:33. Smend notes simply that *שבה* is not Hebrew and Peters considers *עולם* to be secondary on account of its omission in G. Lévi argues that *אבות עולם* is non-biblical although it is found in the Talmud (j.*Hagigah* 7d). He translates '*les pères de l'éternité*' and would appear to be thinking of the patriarchs.



Ben Sira clearly does not only want to look back to times past. On the contrary, his writing is bequeathed to future generations and all seekers of wisdom (24:33–34), intended to accent durability throughout all times (39:9; 44:11). He uses עולם not so much as a temporal indicator but rather as a unique qualification of durability. The author likewise marks the Second Temple period in this manner in 49:12d, the sacred temple rebuilt by Zerubbabel and Jeshua being described as המכוון לכבוד עולם ‘*destined for eternal glory*’. The *polal* participle of כון is employed to render the said durability. Such glory also serves to delineate the quality associated with the concept עולם and the authority of wisdom in the priestly service in Jerusalem commanded by the Creator of the universe (24:8–12). The temple of YHWH is thus qualified as ‘destined for eternal durability’. This term does not appear to have a role to play in Sirach 50, in which Simon is praised in every possible manner. In Sirach 51, by contrast, the refrain כי עולם הסדר resonates throughout the praise of YHWH.

The concept עולם has presented scholars with a translational challenge. Barr agrees with Jenni, who observes that עולם does not refer to a ‘*period*’ of time or a ‘*century*’ but rather to the idea of permanence.<sup>109</sup> The present author follows this line of thought in the translation of אבות עולם ‘*the Fathers of All Times*’. The emphasis is thus on the unique qualities ascribed by Ben Sira to Simon rather than to a specific period of time.

Continuing remembrance is thus an appeal to participate in the history of the אנשי הסדר who are referred to as the אבות עולם rather than an established datum. Their remembrance continues עד עולם ‘*to eternity*’, as long as the days of the heavens endure. All human beings (אדם) on earth are called upon to give expression to this durability (50:22). According to the promise זכרם ‘*their remembrance*’ shall remain and וצדקתם ‘*their righteousness*’ shall not be wiped out (44:13a,b). Among the men of name, Noah is considered צדיק as is Job. Simon follows Adam as climax by revealing his glory. He is highly esteemed among his brothers and is the glory of his people, blessed by God, in service to the temple, insisting on the priestly covenant of Phinehas, a covenant of peace, and living in fear of YHWH.

<sup>109</sup> J. Barr, *Biblical Words for Time*, SBT 33, London 1969. Barr supports the approach of E. Jenni in THAT II, pp. 228–243, who derives the semantic value of a word from its context (p. 73).

In summary:

Simon the High Priest in Sirach 50 is a recognisable figure, a paragon of virtue for everyone. He represents the unity of wisdom and Torah in the priestly tradition in the temple in Jerusalem. Ben Sira wants him to be remembered on account of his righteousness. Identification with Simon II, who later bears the title *'the righteous'* seems evident in contrast to Josephus' rendition of the Second Temple period.

Ben Sira summarises his teaching of wisdom as follows: insight, mastery of the wheels, pure elucidation (of the Scriptures) and insight effervescing to the surface like water. This *sofer* identifies himself by name as the author of an inspiring book on Israel's wisdom. His remembrance continues thanks to his grandson who provided his grandfather's work with its Greek translation, the version later taken up in the canon of the Septuagint. Since their discovery in 1896 and 1964, the Hebrew fragments have allowed us access to the original work and permitted us to read Ben Sira's book of wisdom *e mente auctoris*, elucidating new insight into the authority of Simon the High Priest.

Simon, the Righteous, has survived to the present day in the memory of the Talmudic tradition as the last of the men of the Great Assembly, which briefly and wisely summarised all things as follows:

על שלשה דברים העולם עומד על התורה  
ועל העבודה ועל נמילות הסדים :

On three words the world rests: on Torah,  
on service and on acts of kindness.

(*Pirke Abot* 1.2)

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## ABBREVIATIONS

ACEBT	Amsterdams cahiers voor exegese en bijbelse theologie
AGJU	Arbeiten zur Geschichte des antiken Judentums und des Urchristentums
AnBib	Analecta biblica
AB	Anchor Bible
ATSAT	Arbeiten zu Text und Sprache im Alten Testament
<i>BA</i>	<i>Biblical Archaeologist</i>
<i>BAR</i>	<i>Biblical Archaeology Review</i>
<i>BASOR</i>	<i>Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research</i>
BBB	Bonner Biblische Beiträge
BEAT	Beiträge zur Erforschung des Alten Testaments und des antiken Judentums
BET	Beiträge zur biblischen Exegese und Theologie
BETL	Bibliotheca Ephemeridum Theologicarum Lovaniensium
BGBE	Beiträge zur Geschichte der biblischen Exegese
<i>Bib</i>	<i>Biblica</i>
BibOr	Biblica et orientalia
BibS	Biblische Studien. Neukirchen
BK	Biblischer Kommentar, Alten Testament
<i>BN</i>	<i>Biblische Notizen</i>
BOT	Boeken van het Oude Testament
<i>BTFt</i>	<i>Bijdragen. Tijdschrift voor filosofie en theologie</i>
<i>Bz</i>	<i>Biblische Zeitschrift</i>
BZAW	Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Bibelwissenschaft
<i>CBQ</i>	<i>Catholic Biblical Quarterly</i>
CBC	Cambridge Bible Commentary on the New English Bible
CRINT	Compendia Rerum Judaicarum ad Novum Testamentum
JDJ	Discoveries in the Judaean Desert of Jordan
DSD	Dead Sea Discoveries
EdF	Erträge der Forschung
EHAT	Exegetisches Handbuch zum Alten Testament
<i>EncJud</i>	<i>Encyclopedia Judaica</i>
<i>EstBib</i>	<i>Estudios biblicos</i>
<i>EvT</i>	<i>Evangelische Theologie</i>
FRLANT	Forschungen zur Religion und Literatur des Alten und Neuen Testaments
FS	Festschrift
FzB	Forschung zur Bibel
G	Greek version
H	Hebrew version
HBS	Herder Biblische Studien
HTKNT	Herders theologisches Kommentar zum Neuen Testament
<i>HTR</i>	<i>Harvard Theological Review</i>
HSM	Harvard Semitic Monographs
<i>HUCA</i>	<i>Hebrew Union College Annual</i>
<i>JBL</i>	<i>Journal of Biblical Literature</i>
JBS	Jerusalem Biblical Studies
IdF	Impulse der Forschung
<i>JJS</i>	<i>Journal of Jewish Studies</i>
<i>JNES</i>	<i>Journal of Near Eastern Studies</i>

<i>JQR</i>	<i>Jewish Quarterly Review</i>
JSHRZ	Jüdische Schriften aus hellenistisch-römischer Zeit
<i>JStJ</i>	<i>Journal for the Study of Judaism in the Persian, Hellenistic and Roman Period</i>
JStJSup	Journal for the Study of Judaism. Supplement Series
<i>JTOT</i>	<i>Journal of the Study of the Old Testament</i>
JStOSup	Journal of the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series
<i>JStPE</i>	<i>Journal for the Study of the Pseudepigrapha</i>
JStPESup	Journal for the Study of the Pseudepigrapha Supplement Series
KEK	Kritisch-exegetischer Kommentar über das Neue Testament
LCL	Loeb Classical Library
M	Manuscript from Masada
MS B	Manuscript B from the Cairo Geniza
<i>NTT</i>	<i>Nederlandsch Theologisch Tijdschrift</i>
<i>NT</i>	<i>Novum Testamentum</i>
NTSup	Novum Testamentum Supplements
OBO	Orbis biblicus et orientalis
OTS	Oudtestamentische Studiën
Phil.Ant	Philosophia Antiqua
POT	Prediking van het Oude Testament
QD	Quaestiones Disputatae
<i>RB</i>	<i>Revue Biblique</i>
RGG	Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart
RGRW	Religions in the Graeco-Roman World
<i>RQ</i>	<i>Revue de Qumrân</i>
S	Syriac translation
SBLDS	Society of Biblical Literature Dissertation Series
SBLEJL	Society of Biblical Literature Early Judaism and its Literature
SBLMS	Society of Biblical Literature Monograph Series
SBLSCS	Society of Biblical Literature Septuagint and Cognate Studies
SBLSP	Society of Biblical Literature Seminar Papers
SBT	Studies in Biblical Theology
<i>SJOT</i>	<i>Scandinavian Journal of the Old Testament</i>
STDJ	Studies on the Texts of the Desert of Judah
ST	Studia theologica
SUNT	Studien zur Umwelt des Neuen Testaments
SubBi	Subsidia biblica
TB	Theologische Bücherei
THAT	Theologisches Handwörterbuch zum Alten Testament
TTS	Trierer theologische Studien
TWAT	Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Alten Testament
<i>TZ</i>	<i>Theologische Zeitschrift</i>
UTR	Utrechtse Theologische Reeks
<i>VD</i>	<i>Verbum Domini</i>
<i>VT</i>	<i>Vetus Testamentum</i>
VTSup	Vetus Testamentum Supplements
WdF	Wege der Forschung
WMANT	Wissenschaftliche Monographien zum Alten und Neuen Testament
WUNT	Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament
<i>ZAW</i>	<i>Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft</i>
<i>ZNW</i>	<i>Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft</i>

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