

Key Aspects and Themes in Recent Scholarship on the Book of Ben Sira

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1. Five Reasons for the Current Blossoming in the Scholarship of Ben Sira

Ben Sira scholarship finds itself in a time of considerable bloom. There are manifold reasons for this. First, it is participating in the current blossoming of Qumran and Septuagint scholarship that started with the publication of almost all the Qumran texts known at that time in the early 1990s and with the large Septuagint translation projects of Bible d'Alexandrie, New English Translation of the Septuagint, Septuaginta Deutsch, and La Biblia griega.¹ Second, because of the relatively solid date of its putative Hebrew original version and its first Greek translation to around 180 BCE and 120 BCE respectively, it has come to be viewed in literary-historical terms, like Deuteronomy, as something of an Archimedean Point for Israelite-Jewish literature. Third, in terms of methodology, the foundationally new understanding of the relationships between text criticism and compositional criticism, as well as from textual history and literary history in Old Testament studies has led to viewing the divergences in textual traditions as valuable for something other than the reconstruction of a hypothetical "Urtext." Text variants are instead viewed as empirical literary-historical

1. Marguerite Harl, ed., *La Bible d'Alexandrie: Traduction et annotation des livres de la Septante* (Paris: Cerf, 1986); Albert Pietersma and Benjamin G. Wright, eds., *A New English Translation of the Septuagint and the Other Greek Translations Traditionally Included under That Title* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007); Wolfgang Kraus and Martin Karrer, eds., *Septuaginta Deutsch: Das griechische Alte Testament in deutscher Übersetzung* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2009; 2nd ed. 2010); Natalio Fernández Marcos and María Victoria Spottorno Díaz-Caro, eds., *La Biblia griega: Septuaginta* (Salamanca: Sígueme, 2008).

evidence for the redaction history of a book. The various ancient versions are now understood in terms of composition and reception history as distinct literary works containing their own structures, statements, and histories of effects. Fourth, current biblical studies, ancient history, and Jewish studies have developed a particular interest in the Greco-Roman period as the formative epoch for the history, culture, and religion of ancient Judaism and early Christianity.² Fifth, the blossoming of Ben Sira scholarship is also conditioned by the religious confessions of researchers. While the literary-historical, reception-historical, and theological value of the Apocrypha, or rather the deuterocanonical works, was with few exceptions only appreciated by Roman-Catholic scholarship until the early 1970s, since then Protestant biblical scholarship has also dedicated itself extensively to investigating the Apocrypha. Several examples include (1) the establishment of the series *Jüdische Schriften aus Hellenistisch-Römischer Zeit* by the Marburg New Testament scholar Werner Georg Kümmel (together with Christian Habicht, Otto Kaiser, Otto Plöger, and Josef Schreiner), continued by the Tübingen New Testament scholar Hermann Lichtenberger; (2) the expansion of the commentary series *Altes Testament Deutsch* to include commentaries on the Apocrypha—Georg Sauer authored the Ben Sira volume (2000),³ which represents the first comprehensive Protestant commentary on Ben Sira since the primarily text-critically concentrated elucidations by Otto Zöckler (1891), Victor Ryssel (1900), and Rudolf Smend (1906);⁴ and (3) the seminal revision of the Apocrypha within the context of the review of the Luther translation for 2017, which is the first time in the context of the Luther-Bibel that the complete, that is, the expanded, later Greek text (G-II) that includes the Prologue will serve as the textual basis for the translation.⁵ It is necessary to keep in mind

2. On this, see the contribution by Oda Wischmeyer in this volume.

3. Georg Sauer, *Jesus Sirach/Ben Sira*, ATD Apokryphen 1 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2000).

4. Otto Zöckler, *Die Weisheit Jesus Sirachs*, in *Die Apokryphen des Alten Testaments: Nebst einem Anhang über die Pseudepigraphenliteratur*, Kurzgefaßter Kommentar zu den heiligen Schriften Alten und Neuen Testaments sowie zu den Apokryphen, Altes Testament 9 (Munich: Beck, 1891), 255–354; Victor Ryssel, *Die Sprüche Jesus, des Sohnes Jesus Sirachs*, APAT 1 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1900), 230–475; Rudolf Smend, *Die Weisheit des Jesus Sirach erklärt* (Berlin: Reimer, 1906); Smend, *Die Weisheit des Jesus Sirach: Hebräisch und deutsch; Mit einem hebräischen Glossar* (Berlin: Reimer, 1906).

5. Cf. Markus Witte, “Es hat nämlich nicht die gleiche Kraft, wenn etwas in der

here that a revised translation of the prayer of Sir 51:12a–o (cf. Ps 136) that only appears in Hebrew and in the B manuscript that is important in terms of liturgy and literary history as well as theology (though perhaps secondary),⁶ will be added in an appendix. The *Einheitsübersetzung* (1980; rev. ed. 2016/2017), the New Revised Standard Version (1989/1992), and La Bible—Traduction Oecuménique (2010) also include it.

In the following, I will sketch five subfields within recent Ben Sira scholarship. My intention is not to offer the history of scholarship, but rather to name central questions, to provide a short presentation of selected studies from the past fifteen years that I view as seminal, and to formulate several pressing challenges. This will be carried out in connection with the more recent introductions to the book of Ben Sira and the recent histories of scholarship provided by Friedrich V. Reiterer, Johannes Marböck, Pancratius C. Beentjes, Frank Ueberschaer, and Maurice Gilbert.⁷

eigenen Sprache auf Hebräisch gesagt wird und wenn es in eine andere Sprache übersetzt wird' (SirProl 21f.): Anmerkungen zur Übersetzung der Apokryphen in der Revision der Lutherbibel 2017," in "Was Dolmetschen für Kunst und Arbeit sei": Die Lutherbibel und andere deutsche Bibelübersetzungen, Beiträge der Rostocker Konferenz 2013, ed. M. Lange and M. Rösel (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2014), 273–89.

6. See Otto Mulder, "Three Psalms or Two Prayers in Sirach 51? The End of Ben Sira's Book of Wisdom," *DCLY* 2004: 171–201, esp. 182–87 (what counts for Mulder is Sir 51:12e+–zj+); Burkard M. Zapf, *Jesus Sirach 25–51*, NechtB AT 39 (Würzburg: Echter, 2010), 392–94. On the anthology like character of the prayer, which adopts material from numerous older biblical texts, see already Norbert Peters, *Das Buch Jesus Sirach oder Ecclesiasticus*, EHAT 25 (Münster: Aschendorff, 1913), 442–45, as well as more recently Françoise Mies, "Le Psaume de Ben Sira 51,12a–o Hébreu," *RB* 116 (2009): 336–67, 481–504.

7. Friedrich V. Reiterer, "Review of Recent Research on the Book of Ben Sira (1980–1996)," in *The Book of Ben Sira in Modern Research*, ed. Pancratius C. Beentjes, BZAW 255 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1997), 23–60; Reiterer, "Text und Buch Ben Sira in Tradition und Forschung: Eine Einführung," in *Bibliographie zu Ben Sira*, ed. Friedrich V. Reiterer, BZAW 266 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1998), 1–42; Reiterer et al., *Zählsynopse zum Buch Ben Sira*, FSBP 1 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2003), 1–77; Johannes Marböck, "Zur Einführung—Neuere Studien und Hilfsmittel zur Arbeit am Sirachbuch," in *Weisheit und Frömmigkeit: Studien zur alttestamentlichen Literatur der Spätzeit*, ed. Johannes Marböck, ÖBS 29 (Frankfurt: Lang, 2006), 11–13; Marböck, "Sirach/Sirachbuch," in Marböck, *Frömmigkeit*, 15–21; Marböck, *Jesus Sirach 1–23 übersetzt und ausgelegt*, HTKAT (Freiburg: Herder, 2010), 21–34; Pancratius C. Beentjes, "Some Major Topics in Ben Sira Research," in *Happy the One Who Meditates on Wisdom* (Sir. 14,20): *Collected Essays on the Book of Ben Sira*, ed. Pancratius C. Beentjes, CBET 43 (Leuven: Peeters, 2006), 3–16; Frank Ueberschaer, *Weisheit aus der Begegnung: Bildung nach*

2. Five Fields of Study in Recent Ben Sira Scholarship

2.1. Text and Language

2.1.1. Text

The most important challenge facing current scholarship on Ben Sira consists of the preparation of a critical edition of the Hebrew text. While Joseph Ziegler prepared a critical-eclectic edition for the Greek Text (G) in 1980⁸ and one was begun for the Latin text (La) that was completed as far as Sir 28:24 by Walter Thiele (1987–2005) and is being continued by Anthony J. Forte (2014–) for the *Vetus Latina*,⁹ critical editions are missing for the Hebrew and the Syriac texts. With regard to the Hebrew text (H), this is compensated on a provision basis by the diplomatic edition of the Hebrew fragments presented by Beentjes (1997, revised 2006).¹⁰ In the case of the Syriac text (Syr), there is the diplomatic edition on the basis of the facsimile edition of Codex Ambrosianus (7a1), the oldest extant codex of the Peshitta (seventh century CE) edited by Núria Calduch-Benages, Joan Ferrer, and Jan Liesen (2003).¹¹ The critical edition in preparation by W. Th. van Peursen and K. D. Jenner as part of the Leiden Peshitta will also be a diplomatic edition based on Codex Ambrosianus.

The edition by Calduch-Benages, Ferrer, and Liesen provides Syr in an easily accessible form. The text is printed in two columns and contains

dem Buch Ben Sira, BZAW 379 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2007), 3–24; Maurice Gilbert, “Methodological and Hermeneutical Trends in Modern Exegesis on the Book of Ben Sira,” in *The Wisdom of Ben Sira: Studies on Tradition, Redaction, and Theology*, ed. A. Passaro and G. Bellia, DCLS 1 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2008), 1–20; Gilbert, “Où en sont les études sur le Siracide?,” *Bib* 92 (2011): 161–81.

8. Joseph Ziegler, *Sapientia Iesu Filii Sirach*, 2nd. ed., SVTG 12.2 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1980).

9. Walter Thiele, *Sirach (Ecclesiasticus)*, VLB 11.2 (Freiburg: Herder, 1987–2005); Anthony J. Forte, *Sir 25,1–28,24*, part 1 of *Sirach (Ecclesiasticus): Pars altera*, VLB 11.2 (Freiburg: Herder, 2014).

10. Pancratius C. Beentjes, *The Book of Ben Sira in Hebrew: A Text Edition of All Extant Hebrew Manuscripts and a Synopsis of All Parallel Hebrew Ben Sira Texts*, VTSup 68 (Leiden: Brill, 1997; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2006).

11. Núria Calduch-Benages, *La sabiduría del escriba/Wisdom of the Scribe: Edición diplomática de la versión siríaca del libro de Ben Sira según el Códice Ambrosiano, con traducción española e inglesa/Diplomatic Edition of the Syriac Version of the Book of Ben Sira according to Codex Ambrosianus with Translations in Spanish and English*, Biblioteca Midrásica 26 (Estella, Navarra: Verbo Divino, 2003; 2nd ed., 2015).

the readings in continuous text of the respective columns of the codex as well as the verse and chapter numbers oriented toward to the Greek version edited by Ziegler. Line numbers for every five lines appear in the margin. The footnotes mention the obvious textual errors of the Milan Codex and provide suggested emendations as well as explanations of the English and Spanish translations. A likewise bilingual introduction guides the reader into the text, the nature of the translation, and the most important editions of Syr, while also listing idiomatic expressions with their translation equivalents.

The preparation of a critical edition of H would, however, presuppose a new viewing of all the Hebrew documents, which are the fragments from the Cairo Genizah, from Qumran, and from Masada. As is seen by the new fragments of manuscripts C and D of the Cairo Genizah published in 2007/2008 und 2011,¹² it can be expected that further new Ben Sira texts will be found in the collection of fragments from Cairo. This also raises hope that Hebrew equivalents will be found to the central chapters 1, 17, and 24, which have so far only surfaced in G, Syr, and La. Even when there are very high quality photographs of all known Ben Sira fragments from the Cairo Genizah, Qumran, and Masada are available online,¹³ the preparation of a critical edition still requires viewing the fragments on site, though in spite of the high quality conservation efforts will become successively more difficult to read.

The fundamental problem of preparing a critical edition of H is, as is well known, that none of the six manuscripts of A–F features a complete

12. On C: Shulamit Elizur, "A New Fragment from the Hebrew Text of the Book of Ben Sira," *Tarbiz* 76 (2007):17–28; Elizur, "Two New Leaves of the Hebrew Version of Ben Sira," *DSD* 17 (2010):13–29; Renate Egger-Wenzel, "Ein neues Sira-Fragment MS^C," *BN* 138 (2008):107–14; Jean-Sébastien Rey, "Un nouveau bifeuillet du manuscrit C de la Genizah du Caire," in *Florilegium Lovaniense: Studies in Septuagint and Textual Criticism in Honour of F. García Martínez*, ed. M. Vervenne et al., BETL 224 (Leuven: Peeters, 2008), 387–415. The fragment contains the cola 3:27a.b (cf. H^A); 6:5a–10b (cf. H^A); 6:12a–15b (cf. H^A); 6:18a, ba; 20:30a–31b; 21:22a–23b, 26a, b; 22:11a–12b, 21a–22b; 23:11a, b; 25:7c, d; 36:24b (cf. H^{A/Bmg}); 37:1a.2–2b (cf. H^{B/Bm/D}).

On D: Shulamit Elizur and Michael Rand, "A New Fragment of the Book of Ben Sira," *DSD* 18 (2011): 200–205; Jean-Sébastien Rey, "Un nouveau feuillet du manuscrit D de Ben Sira," *RevQ* 25 (2012):395–422. The new fragment contains the text of Sir 7:18–8:18 (cf. H^A: 7:20–21, 23–25; 8:7, and H^C).

13. <http://tinyurl.com/SBL060467h>; <http://tinyurl.com/SBL060467j>; <http://tinyurl.com/SBL060467i>.

text. If one desires, as a result, to do more than simply print the manuscripts separately or synoptically in cases where they overlap like Beentjes's edition,¹⁴ then the only remaining possibility is a mixed text like the editions by Francesco Vattioni (1968) and Ze'ev Ben-Hayyim (1973).¹⁵ This means that in succession, at any one time, *each* manuscript is printed where it contains the relevant text. When variants from another manuscript are extant, these are noted in an apparatus. This apparatus would also include the divergences from H in G, Syr, and La. The recovery of the as yet unattested Hebrew texts through the reverse translation from the Greek short text (G-I) as the oldest representative of a full version of the book, as undertaken by, for example, Moshe Z. Segal (1933) and Abraham Kahana (1936/1937),¹⁶ is problematic for two reasons. First, as the pertinent investigations by Benjamin G. Wright and Antonino Minissale prove, G constitutes a relatively free translation.¹⁷ Second, G is also extant only in later recensions.

The fact that Ben Sira texts were also found among the texts from Qumran and Masada indicates that scholarship on Ben Sira should be closely interlocked with Qumran scholarship.¹⁸ This includes a systematic

14. Cf. also the older editions by Pietro Boccaccio and Guido Berardi, *Ecclesiasticus: Textus Hebraeus secundum fragmenta reperta* (Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1986).

15. Francesco Vattioni, *Ecclesiastico: Testo ebraico con apparato critico e versioni greca, latina e siriana*, Pubblicazioni del Seminario di Semitistica 1 (Neapel: Istituto Orientale di Napoli, 1968); Ze'ev Ben-Hayyim, *The Book of Ben Sira: Text, Concordance and an Analysis of the Vocabulary*, The Historical Dictionary of the Hebrew Language (Jerusalem: The Academy of the Hebrew Language and the Shrine of the Book, 1973).

16. Moshe Z. Segal, ספר בן סירא השלם [*The Complete Book of Ben Sira*], 3rd ed. (Jerusalem: Bialik Foundation, 1972); Abraham Kahana, "דברי שמועון בן-סירא," in *הספרים החיצונים*, 2 vols. (repr., Raanana: Ben Zion Kahana, 2006), 2:435–530.

17. Benjamin G. Wright, *No Small Difference: Sirach's Relationship to Its Hebrew Parent Text*, SCS 26 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1989); Wright, "Access to the Source: Cicero, Ben Sira, the Septuagint and their Audiences," in *Praise Israel for Wisdom and Instruction: Essays on Ben Sira and Wisdom, the Letter of Aristeas and the Septuagint*, ed. Benjamin G. Wright, JSJSup 131 (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 247–73; Antonino Minissale, *La versione greca del Siracide: Confronto con il testo ebraico alla luce dell'attività midrascica e del metodo targumico*, AnBib 133 (Rome: Pontificio Istituto Biblico, 1995); cf. also Beentjes, "Topics," in *Happy*, 6.

18. 2Q18 with minimal remains from Sir 1:19–20 or more likely from 6:14a–15 and 6:20a–22b, 26a–31b (first century BCE), 11QP^s^d/11Q05 XXI with sections not

view of all possible citations or allusions from the book of Ben Sira in the extant Qumran texts corpus in the manner that has already been accomplished (in part) for the rabbinic literature. The first detailed studies for the Qumran texts are available, of exemplary nature are the essay by Émile Puech on 4Q525 2 II, 2 and 4QInstruction as well as the comprehensive study by Jean-Sébastien Rey on 4QInstruction.¹⁹

A special note for future scholarship on the text lies in the analysis of the additions to the Hebrew (Long-) Text (H-II) and in the Greek (Long-) Text (G-II), as well as on the plusses exhibited by La and Syr. In addition to the direct contribution to the textual history, this work would also clarify the literary, social, and religious-historical backgrounds of the ancient versions. The fact that the dissertation completed in 1951 by Conleth Kearns (1902–1985) on the Greek long text was (first) published in 2011 signals the need for further research.²⁰ Kearns offers a careful investigation of G-II, namely, on how it is reflected in Codex Vaticanus and in several Greek minuscules, on the one hand, and on how it is mirrored in the Vetus Latina which is integrated in the Vulgata and—with characteristic modifications—in Syr, on the other.²¹ In this respect Kearns represents the

written in verse of 51:13–20, 30b (early first century CE) and Mas/H^M/Mas 1^h with seven columns written in verse, representing 39:27–44:17 (between 125/100 and 50/25 BCE); cf. Beentjes, “Book,” 19, 113–25; Eugene Ulrich, ed., *The Biblical Qumran Scrolls: Transcriptions and Textual Variants*, VTSup 134 (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 719–20.

19. Émile Puech, “Ben Sira and Qumran,” in *The Wisdom of Ben Sira: Studies on Tradition, Redaction, and Theology*, ed. A. Passaro and G. Bellia, DCLS 1 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2008), 79–118; Jean-Sébastien Rey, *4QInstruction: Sagesse et eschatologie*, STDJ 81 (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 17–21, 333–34.

20. Conleth Kearns, *The Expanded Text of Ecclesiasticus: Its Teaching on the Future Life as a Clue to Its Origin: Enlarged with a Biographical Sketch of Kearns by Gerard Norton, an Introduction to Kearns's Dissertation by Maurice Gilbert, Bibliographical Updates (1951–2010) by Núria Calduch-Benages*, ed. Pancratius C. Beentjes, DCLS 11 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2011).

21. On the importance of La for the history of the text, especially for the textual history of G, see also Maurice Gilbert, “The Vetus Latina of Ecclesiasticus,” in *Studies in the Book of Ben Sira*, ed. G. G. Xeravits and J. Zsengellér, JSJSup 127 (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 1–9, as well as Anthony J. Forte, “The Old Latin Version of Sirach: Editio Critica and Textual Problems,” in *The Texts and Versions of the Book of Ben Sira: Transmissions and Interpretation*, ed. Jan Joosten and Jean-Sébastien Rey, JSJSup 15 (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 199–214; Forte, “Veteris Latinae Ecclesiastici: Apologia pro interprete latino,” *JSCS* 47 (2014): 69–92; Thierry Legrand, “La version latine de Ben Sira: État de la question, essai de classement thématique des ‘additions,’” in Joosten and Rey, *Texts and*

first attempt to classify the expansions that G-II manifests in comparison with the older and more original short text (G-I) and locate them in terms of the religious-historical setting on the backdrop of the Jewish writings from the Greco-Roman period (esp. in comparison to Dan 12, 1 Enoch, Jubilees, Wisdom of Solomon, and Psalms of Solomon). His investigation remains quite relevant for the understanding of Judaism during the period from 200 BCE to 100 CE. Even though Kearns was not able to draw upon the presently available critical editions and diplomatic versions of G, Syr, La, and H, and the fact that his argument for the Essene provenance of the G-II text as a systematic eschatological revision of the G-I text hardly remains convincing in light of the present state of Qumran scholarship—Kearns wrote in the early days of this development²²—scholarship is still in debt to Beentjes for preparing Kearns's manuscript for publication. Also helpful is the bibliographic supplement provided by Calduch-Benages on the main themes treated in the dissertation such as the long text of G-II, Ben Sira's view of death, his view of the afterlife, and Ben Sira's conceptions of resurrection and messianism. With regard to the additions in La and Syr, one can expect that there will be further insights on the nature of writing and the hermeneutics of early Christianity and its relationships to Jewish understandings of writing as well as the theological peculiarities of these versions.

A final desideratum is a critical edition of the Coptic text of Ben Sira, which according to the analysis by Frank Feder belongs to the text types represented by the Greek uncial manuscripts of B, S, and A.²³

The work on the text of Ben Sira would ideally end with a critical polyglot that would replace the synopsis by Vattioni (1968). The numbering synopsis prepared in 2003 by Reiterer and his team at the Salzburg Sirach Research Center is an irreplaceable aid for such a synopsis and in handling the chaos of the numbering, which has especially been generated by the transposition of pages in the regular codex of G in range of chapters 30–36 as well as the

Versions of the Book of Ben Sira, 215–34; Bonifatia Gesche, “Die Vetus Latina-Version des Buchs Jesus Sirach als Zeuge für die Version Griechisch II,” in *Die Septuaginta—Text, Wirkung, Rezeption*, ed. W. Kraus and S. Kreuzer, WUNT 32 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2014), 698–712.

22. On the relationship between texts of Essene origins and Sira, see Puech, “Ben Sira and Qumran.”

23. Frank Feder, “The Coptic Version(s) of the Book of Jesus Sirach,” in Joosten and Rey, *Texts and Versions of the Book of Ben Sira*, 11–20.

different verse numbering in La.²⁴ Reiterer's work offers a synopsis of the differing verse and chapter numbers in H, G, Syr, and Vg/La as well as in four modern translations. The numbering as a whole is aligned to the polyglot text-critical edition of the book on the basis of the numbering in G-I, which is currently in preparation by Reiterer. It includes all passages contained in G-II, in the Hebrew fragments from Qumran, Masada, and the Cairo Genizah, in Syr, and in La. The textual plusses of the individual versions are marked. For H it will list the editions by Ben-Ḥayyim and Beentjes;²⁵ for Syr the editions of Calduch-Benages, Ferrer, and Liesen,²⁶ Paul de Lagarde, and the Mosul edition;²⁷ for G the editions of Ziegler, Alfred Rahlfs, and Henry Barclay Swete;²⁸ for Vg/La, the Roman edition and the edition of the Stuttgart Bible Society.²⁹ The modern translations are represented by the New Revised Standard Version, the *Einheitsübersetzung*, the *revidierte Lutherübersetzung* (2017), and the transmission by Sauer (1981).³⁰

24. Reiterer, *Zählssynopse*, 174–96. On the problem of the transposition of pages, see also Christian Wagner, *Die Septuaginta-Hapaxlegomena im Buch Jesus Sirach: Untersuchungen zu Wortwahl und Wortbildung unter besonderer Berücksichtigung des textkritischen und übersetzungstechnischen Aspekts*, BZAW 282 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1999), 33–35; and Franz Böhmisch, “Die Blattvertauschung (Lage 12 und 13) im griechischen Sirachbuch,” *PzB* 14 (2005): 17–22.

25. See nn. 15 and 10.

26. See n. 11.

27. Paul Anton de Lagarde, ed., *Libri Veteris Testamenti Apocryphi Syriace* (Leipzig: Brockhaus, 1861), 2–51; *Biblia Sacra iuxta versionem simplicem quae dicitur Pschitta*, 2nd ed. (Beirut: Imprimerie Catholique, 1951), 2:204–55.

28. See n. 8 as well as Alfred Rahlfs, ed., *Septuaginta: Id est Vetus Testamentum graece iuxta LXX interpretes, Duo volumina in uno*, 9th ed. (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1979); Henry Barclay Swete, *The Old Testament in Greek according to the Septuagint*, 3rd ed. (Cambridge: University Press, 1907; repr., 4th. ed, 1922), 2:604–754.

29. *Sapientia Salomonis; Liber Hiesu Filii Sirach cum praefationibus et variis capitulorum seriebus; Biblia Sacra, iuxta latinam Vulgatam versionem ad codicum fidem iussu Pauli PP. VI cura et studio monachorum Abbatiae Pontificiae Sancti Hieronymi in Urbe Ordinis Sancti Benedicti edita XII* (Rome: Typis Polyglottis Vaticanis, 1964); Robert Weber, ed., *Biblia Sacra iuxta Vulgatam versionem*, 2nd ed. (Stuttgart: Württembergische Bibelanstalt, 1975), 1028–95.

30. Georg Sauer, *Jesus Sirach*, JSRHZ 3.5 (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 1981).

2.1.2. Language

Belonging also to the field of study of Text is the special exploration of the nature of language, primarily of H, but also of G and Syr, in the latter especially from the perspective of its translation technique.

H is especially consulted as a witness for the evaluation of the Hebrew between the Hebrew of the latest books that became part of the canon of the Hebrew Bible and the Mishnah and in comparison to the diverse Hebrew of the nonbiblical texts from Qumran. For the study of Ben Sira's Hebrew in recent scholarship, reference should be made especially to the comprehensive study by van Peursen on the verbal system (2004) and to two volumes of essays edited by Jan Joosten and Rey (2008/2011), but also to the detailed investigation by Johannes F. Diehl on Ben Sira's use of אִשְׂרָי (2013).³¹ Particularly the volume edited by Joosten and Rey in 2011 provides for the development within the history of scholarship with regard to the appreciation of the language and literature of the various versions as discrete texts,³² rather than merely as quarries for filling in the lacuna of the Hebrew fragments.³³ To that effect, this volume offers separate linguistically oriented studies of select Hebrew manuscripts, studies of translation techniques of various Greek versions, as well as studies on the tradition-historical and theological nature of Syr and the shape of the text of La.

For G, the important studies by Christian Wagner on the Septuagint hapax legomena (1999) as well as the useful concordance on the 135 (in Ziegler's counting) additional lines of the G-II Text by Jean Marie Auwers

31. W. Th. van Peursen, *The Verbal System in the Hebrew Text of Ben Sira*, Studies in Semitic Languages and Linguistics 41 (Leiden: Brill, 2004); Jan Joosten and Jean-Sébastien Rey, eds., *Conservatism and Innovation in the Hebrew Language of the Hellenistic Period: Proceedings of a Fourth International Symposium on the Hebrew of the Dead Sea Scrolls and Ben Sira*, STDJ 73 (Leiden: Brill, 2008); Johannes F. Diehl, "'šry 'nwš, der über Weisheit meditiert und zur Einsicht aufschaut' Sir 14,20: Überlegungen zur 'ašrê-Formel bei Ben Sira, in der Hebräischen Bibel und in Qumran," in *Weisheit als Lebensgrundlage*, ed. R. Egger-Wenzel, DCLS 15 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2013), 47–64.

32. Jan Joosten and Jean-Sébastien Rey, eds., *The Texts and Versions of the Book of Ben Sira: Transmissions and Interpretation*, JSJSup 150 (Leiden: Brill, 2011).

33. Cf. the exemplary work of Friedrich V. Reiterer, "Die Differenz zwischen Urtext und Ausgangstext: Beispiele zur Entwicklung der sirazidischen Versionen," in *From Qumran to Aleppo: A Discussion with E. Tov about the Textual History of Jewish Scriptures in Honor of His Sixty-Fifth Birthday*, FRLANT 230 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2009), 123–40.

(2005) should be named.³⁴ Nonetheless, further investigations on the Greek of G-I and G-II, both in light of the nature of the translation and their location in the context of the contemporary Greek are necessary. A thorough analysis of the prologue by the grandson would be desirable, which examines its linguistic-historical placement, its approach to translation, its text-pragmatics, and its cultural-historical location within the context of ancient paganism and Jewish translation and early Jewish diaspora literature. One can provisionally refer to the shorter studies by Stefan Schorch (2008), Siegfried Kreuzer (2009), Wright (2011), and Stephan Lauber (2013).³⁵

On Syr, mention should be made of the comprehensive investigation by van Peursen (2007).³⁶ His book represents the fruit of the Leiden project “Computer-Assisted Linguistic Analysis of the Peshitta” (CALAP). Part 1 offers a traditional description of the textual history, the translation technique, and the religious characteristics of Syr. It argues that it is a free translation not influenced by G, but with tendencies like the Targums from a Jewish-Christian milieu of the second/third century CE. Part 2 presents the methodology of CALAP, an attempt to attain an objective synchronic version of the text and description of it that requires rather than presenting the antithesis of classical philological analysis, supplementing classical philology in places where exegetes’ intuition fails. The focus of the computer-sup-

34. Wagner, *Septuaginta-Hapaxlegomena*; Jean Marie Auwers and Églantine Proksch-Strajtmann, *Concordance du Siracide (Grec II et Sacra Parallela)*, CahRB 58 (Paris: Gabalda, 2005).

35. Stefan Schorch, “The Pre-eminence of the Hebrew Language and the Emerging Concept of the ‘Ideal Text’ in Late Second Temple Judaism,” in Xeravits and Zsen-gellér, *Studies in the Book of Ben Sira*, 43–54; Siegfried Kreuzer, “Der Prolog des Buchs Ben Sira (Weisheit des Jesus Sirach) im Horizont seiner Gattung: Ein Vergleich mit dem Euagoras des Isokrates,” in *Geschehen und Gedächtnis: Die hellenistische Welt und ihre Wirkung*, ed. J.-F. Eckholdt, Antike Kultur und Geschichte 13 (Münster: LIT, 2009), 135–60; Benjamin G. Wright, “Why a Prologue? Ben Sira’s Grandson and His Greek Translation,” in *Emanuel: Studies in the Hebrew Bible, Septuagint and Dead Sea Scrolls*, ed. S. M. Paul, VTSup 14 (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 633–44; Wright, “Translation Greek in Sirach in Light of the Grandson’s Prologue,” in Joosten and Rey, *Texts and Versions of the Book of Ben Sira*, 75–94; Stephan Lauber, “Hi 32 als hellenistisches Proömium,” *ZAW* 125 (2013): 607–21; cf. the article of Knut Usener in this volume.

36. W. Th. van Peursen, *Language and Interpretation in the Syriac Text of Ben Sira: A Comparative Linguistic and Literary Study*, MPIL 16 (Leiden: Brill, 2007); van Peursen, “Ben Sira in the Syriac Tradition,” in Joosten and Rey, *Texts and Versions of the Book of Ben Sira*, 143–65.

ported analysis carried out by van Peursen lies on the graphic, syntactical, and grammatical form of Syr. In addition, the text is completely transliterated, segmented, and analyzed morphologically according to the smallest grammatical units, in order to then describe it in terms of its phrases, clauses, and sentences. In so doing, the computer-supported investigation also incorporates H and G. Van Peursen assigns Syr to a relatively early stage of classical Syriac in terms of its language. His work constitutes a quite helpful aid, which can foster further insights with regard to the composition and interpretation of larger sections such as, for example, the “praise of the fathers” (Sir 44–49, 50). The study is important for the entire field of the exegesis of the Hebrew Bible because of its achievements with regard to translation theory, to translation technique, and to the literary and religious characteristics of the Peshitta as well as to the comparative Semitics (of note here, among others, is the discussion on nominal clauses). However, in contrast to van Peursen, Giovanni Rizzi (2008) argues, after critical review of the main points in favor of the composition of the Peshitta of Ben Sira in Jewish and/or various Christian settings, for its derivation from Syriac Christianity in the fourth century, which—like Aphrahat and Ephraim—was conversant with Jewish exegesis and haggadah.³⁷ In principle, then, there is need of further research to clarify the linguistic and religious-historical character and provenance of the *Vorlage(n)*, the textual layers, and the influences on Syr. Most recently Jan Joosten presents the view that Syr goes back to a Jewish Targum on Ben Sira, as seen in several West Aramaic words, which in a second stage was “syriacized in a purely Christian milieu.”³⁸

On the border between the study of language and the study of form are investigations of poetics and rhetoric. Noteworthy here is the work of Eric D. Reymond (2004).³⁹ The study, which arises from a dissertation completed under the direction of Dennis Pardee at the University of Chicago, offers a poetic analysis of H^{Mas}. After a short introduction to and history of scholarship and methodology into the poetry of the Old Testament

37. Giovanni Rizzi, “Christian interpretations in the Syriac Version of Sirach,” in *The Wisdom of Ben Sira: Studies on Tradition, Redaction, and Theology*, ed. A. Passaro and G. Bellia, DCLS 1 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2008), 277–308.

38. Jan Joosten, “Archaic Elements in the Syriac Version of Ben Sira,” in Joosten and Rey, *Texts and Versions of the Book of Ben Sira*, 175; see also the contribution by Jan Joosten in this volume.

39. Eric D. Reymond, *Innovations in Hebrew Poetry: Parallelism and the Poems of Sirach*, StBibLit 9 (Leiden: Brill, 2004).

wisdom books, Reymond describes the poetic characteristics of Sir 40:11–17; 40:18–27; 40:28–30; 41:1–4; 41:5–13; 41:14b–15; 41:14a [*sic*]–42:8; 42:9–14; 42:15–43:33; 44:1–15. He identifies as marks of Ben Sira’s poetics as (1) the bicolon is the basic pattern of a verse; (2) the largely equivalence in verse length; (3) the high frequency of grammatical parallelism; (4) the infrequent appearance of semantic parallelism in comparison to the proto-canonical wisdom books; and (5) the oft encountered grammatical, repetitive, or semantic parallelism between contiguous verses. Reymond recognizes Ben Sira’s innovation in comparison to the patterns of Proverbs, Psalms, and the book of Job in its creation of new word pairs and metaphors. Comparison between other sections of Ben Sira (5:12–6:1; 10:1–31; 15:1–20; 45:1–22) and Prov 2; Pss 23; 89; 111; and Job 4–5 continue to illustrate Ben Sira’s poetics. In view of the concentration of grammatical parallelism in favor of semantic parallelism and traditional word pairs, Reymond proposes the closeness of Ben Sira’s poetry with that of the author of the Wisdom of Solomon.⁴⁰

2.2. Form and Composition

Scholarship and questions concerning the composition of Ben Sira primarily center around three topics: the genres in the book, the genre of the book, and the source-critical and redaction history of the book.

2.2.1. Genres in the Book of Ben Sira

In line with a generally observed focus within biblical studies on the study of genre, discussion here centers on the identification of the *literary* form, function, and transformation of the genres present in Ben Sira. An emphasis of the pertinent works from recent years lies on the self praise of cosmic wisdom in chapter 24, for which a certain amount of consensus has arisen in identifying it as a song of praise akin to the aretalogies for the Egyptian goddess Isis, whose rose to the status of an universal goddess in the Hellenistic period.⁴¹ Attention has also been accorded to the “Praise of

40. On the poetics of Ben Sira, see also Jeremy Corley, “Rhyme in the Hebrew Prophets and Wisdom Poetry,” *BN* 132 (2006): 55–69. The Tartu dissertation by Jonas Jakobson, likewise dedicated to the peculiar poetics and the parallelism in Ben Sira and strongly marked by a focus on the metrics of the cola, is close to being finished.

41. Cf. basically Johannes Marböck, *Weisheit im Wandel: Untersuchungen zur Weisheitstheologie bei Ben Sira*, BBB 37 (Bonn: Hanstein, 1971); Marböck, “Gottes

the Fathers” in chapters 44–49 (the publications here are legion).⁴² Finally there is the encomium of the High Priest Simeon in chapter 50—here the comprehensive and highly-respected study by Otto Mulder (2003) should especially be noted, which interpreted Sir 50 itself as “remembrance discourse/Zichronot” for a Rosh Hashanah liturgy,⁴³ along with the prayers scattered throughout the book (see below, section 2.4).

2.2.2. The Genre of the Book of Ben Sira

Following upon these discussions are questions concerning the genre of the book as a whole and the current structure of its composition.⁴⁴ Though the questions of composition and outline are controversial,⁴⁵ there is a consensus that the book should not be seen as a more or less arbitrary

Weisheit unter uns: Sir 24 als Beitrag zur biblischen Theologie,” in *Gottes Weisheit unter uns: Zur Theologie des Buchs Sirach*, I. Fischer, HBSStudien 6 (Freiburg: Herder, 1995), 73–87; Marböck, “Einwohnung der Weisheit und das Hauptgebot: Schöpferischer Umgang mit Traditionen im Sirachbuch,” *BN* 154 (2012): 69–81; Bernd Janowski, “Gottes Weisheit in Jerusalem: Sirach 24 und die biblische Schekina-Theologie,” *DCLY* 2008: 1–29; Pancratius C. Beentjes, “Come to Me, You Who Desire Me...’: Lady Wisdom’s Invitation in Ben Sira 24,19–22,” in *Weisheit als Lebensgrundlage*, ed. R. Egger-Wenzel, DCLS 15 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2013), 1–11.

42. Cf. the classic works by Burton L. Mack, *Wisdom and the Hebrew Epic: Ben Sira’s Hymn in Praise of the Fathers*, CSJH (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986); and Thomas R. Lee, *Studies in the Form of Sirach 44–50*, SBLDS 75 (Atlanta: Scholar Press, 1986) as well as the more recent relevant essays by Pancratius C. Beentjes in his collected essays *Happy*, 123–65; Beentjes, “Ben Sira 44:19–23—The Patriarchs: Text, Tradition, Theology,” in Xeravits and Zsengellér, *Studies in the Book of Ben Sira*, 209–28; Jeremy Corley, “Sirach 44:1–15 as Introduction to the Praise of the Ancestors,” in Xeravits and Zsengellér, *Studies in the Book of Ben Sira*, 151–81; Corley, “A Numerical Structure in Sirach 44:1–50:24,” *CBQ* 69 (2007): 43–63; Corley, “The Portrait of Samuel in Hebrew Ben Sira 46:13–20,” *DCLY* 2008: 31–56; Benjamin G. Wright, “The Use and Interpretation of Biblical Tradition in Ben Sira’s Praise of the Ancestors,” in Xeravits and Zsengellér, *Studies in the Book of Ben Sira*, 183–207.

43. Otto Mulder, *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*, JSJSup 78 (Leiden: Brill, 2003); adopted by Corley, “Sirach 44:1–15,” 151–81.

44. Cf. Christine Mitchell, “Chronicles and Ben Sira: Questions of Genre,” in *Rewriting Biblical History: Essays on Chronicles and Ben Sira*, ed. J. Corley and H. van Grol, DCLS 7 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2011), 1–25.

45. Cf. Johannes Marböck, “Structure and Redaction History of the Book of Ben Sira—Review and Prospects,” in *Frömmigkeit*, 31–45; Gilbert, “Les études.”

compilation of sapiential poems and instructions, but a well-planned composition. The location of this composition in the sense of a wisdom book of instruction could be found in the small circle of Ben Sira's students. The question of the social and institutional localization of the circle of disciples is connected to the question of actors, forms, and places for the transmission of education and knowledge—not only—in Hellenistic Judaism.

2.2.3. Composition-Critical and Redaction History of the Book of Ben Sira

It remains open whether the well-planned composition of the book goes back to an author, namely, Ben Sira, or whether this is the product of purposeful scribal expansion that therefore demonstrates literary-historical growth. G-II, Syr, and La show that the book of Ben Sira underwent expansions (and abridgment). Moving on from this point, seldom has scholarship raised the question of the composition and redaction history of the book as a whole. Aside from the assumption of select expansions (especially the prayer and the rescue of Zion in 36:1–22 [G: 33:1–13a; 36:16b–22];⁴⁶ 44:16; 46:12; 48:11*; 49:12*; 51:12a–o are repeatedly named in this context), the actual composition-critical and redaction-historical analysis of the book remains to be done. The model sketched by Jeremy Corley (2008) presents a beginning.⁴⁷ Corley compares the composition of the book with the structures of Proverbs, Job, the Papyrus Insinger, the collection of maxims by Theognis of Megara, and the pre-Maccabean passages of 1 Enoch. He proposes an outline consisting of eight main sections (Sir 1:1–4:10; 4:11–6:17; 6:18–14:19; 14:20–23:27; 24:1–32:13; 32:14–38:23; 38:24–43:33; 44:1–50:24) with an appendix (50:25–51:30) and uses formal criteria to develop a five-stage model for the growth of the book (A: 1:1–23:17 + 51:13–30; B: + 24:1–32:13; C: + 32:14–38:23; 51:1–12; D: + 38:24–43:33; E: + 44:1–50:24; 50:25–26; 50:27–29).

46. In more recent times, again by Zapff, *Jesus Sirach*, 236; for discussion and defense of authorship by Ben Sira, see Maria Carmela Palmisano, “*Salvaci, Dio dell’universo!*” *Studio dell’eucologia di Sir 36H, 1–17*, AnBib 163 (Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 2006), 15–49.

47. Jeremy Corley, “Searching for Structure and Redaction in Ben Sira: An Investigation of Beginnings and Endings,” in *The Wisdom of Ben Sira: Studies on Tradition, Redaction, and Theology*, ed. A. Passaro and G. Bellia, DCLS 1 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2008), 21–47.

2.3. Situation and Tradition

Ben Sira offers an outstanding source for Jewish cultural and religious history in the Hellenistic period because of its relatively certain date and localization in Jerusalem during the first quarter of the second century BCE and its Greek translation in Alexandria during the last quarter of the second century BCE. As a great synthesis of wisdom, cultic, historiographic and prophetic, and legal traditions in ancient Judaism that stands in direct contact with pagan traditions, the book itself provokes a more exact identification of its treatment of the older Jewish traditions and the contemporary pagan philosophical currents. This is especially reflected in current scholarship in four tradition-historically oriented domains.

2.3.1. Ben Sira/Jesus Sirach and the “Biblical Canon”

Both the work of Ben Sira itself and the Greek translation by his grandson support the esteem, one could also say the authoritative standing, of certain traditions within distinct communities of faith that was accorded to writings that became noncanonical in later Judaism, such as the Enoch writings. Ben Sira and his grandson do not attest to the canonicity, in the strict sense of the word, to any Jewish texts except the Torah. Ben Sira and his grandson are still quite distant from an unchangeable text in the sense of a standardized textual tradition,⁴⁸ as is apparent in their free interaction with citations of tradition. At the same time, on a macro level, Ben Sira assumes the Torah and the Prophets as Holy Scripture and explicitly accesses texts from the Torah and the Prophets especially within chapters 16–17, 24, and 44–49.⁴⁹ As a result, numerous recent studies are dedicated

48. Following Philip R. Davies, “How to Get Into the *Canon* and Stay There Or: The Philosophy of an Acquisitive Society,” in *The Canon of Scripture in Jewish and Christian Tradition*, ed. P. S. Alexander and J.-D. Kaestli, Publications de l’Institut Romand des Sciences Bibliques 4 (Lausanne: Zèbre, 2007), 11–25, one could speak here of a “tertiary canonization” or a “canon of the third order.” On the question of when this process concluded within Judaism, see Philip S. Alexander, “The Formation of the Biblical Canon in Rabbinic Judaism,” in *The Canon of Scripture in Jewish and Christian Tradition*, ed. P. S. Alexander and J.-D. Kaestli, Publications de l’Institut Romand des Sciences Bibliques 4 (Lausanne: Zèbre, 2007), 72–74.

49. Markus Witte, “Der ‘Kanon’ heiliger Schriften des antiken Judentums im Spiegel des Buchs Ben Sira/Jesus Sirach,” in *Kanon in Konstruktion und Dekonstruktion: Kanonisierungsprozesse religiöser Texte von der Antike bis zur Gegenwart—Ein Handbuch*, ed. E.-M. Becker and S. Scholz (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2011), 215–41.

to Ben Sira's relationship with the Jewish writings that became canonical (and those that did not become canonical). In connection with this, note should again be made of the works by Beentjes, who has published numerous case studies on scriptural exegesis in the book of Ben Sira since his dissertation (1981),⁵⁰ not to mention the overviews provided by Wright and Reiterer.⁵¹

Ben Sira cites selections especially from the Torah and the Prophets, though the term "citation" must be understood broadly as an allusion to the Torah and the Prophets, combining afresh the formulas and motifs from the Jewish texts that had become canonical and integrating them into his own wisdom argumentation. It also explicitly demonstrates a critical discussion with the wisdom discourses of the books of Job, Qoheleth, and Proverbs.⁵² Ben Sira provides an exemplary intertextual work in his inter-

50. Pancratius C. Beentjes, *Jesus Sirach en Tenach: Een onderzoek naar en een classificatie van parallellen, met bijzondere aandacht voor hun functie in Sirach 45:6–26* (Ph.D. diss; University of Nieuwegein, 1981). In addition to the relevant contributions in Beentjes's volume *Happy*, the following essays of his should be noted: Beentjes, "A Rereading of the Primeval Narratives: Ben Sira 40:1–17 and 16:26–17:4," in *Wisdom for Life*, ed. N. Calduch-Benages, BZAW 445 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2014), 201–17; Beentjes, "The Book of Ben Sira and Deuteronomistic Heritage: A Critical Approach," in *Changes in Scripture: Rewriting and Interpreting Authoritative Traditions in the Second Temple Period*, ed. H. von Weissenberg, BZAW 419 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2011), 275–96; Beentjes, "Ben Sira and the Book of Deuteronomy," in *Houses Full of All Good Things*, ed. J. Pakkala and M. Nissinen, Publications of the Finnish Exegetical Society 95 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2008), 413–33; Beentjes, "In Search of Parallels: Ben Sira and the Book of Kings," in *Intertextual Studies in Ben Sira and Tobit*, ed. J. Corley, CBQMS 38 (Washington: The Catholic Biblical Association of America, 2005), 118–31.

51. Benjamin G. Wright, "Biblical Interpretation in the Book of Ben Sira," in *A Companion to Biblical Interpretation in Early Judaism*, ed. M. Henze (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2012), 363–88; Friedrich V. Reiterer, "Sira und seine Bibel," in *Die Vollen- dung der Gottesfurcht ist Weisheit* (Sir 21,11): *Studien zum Buch Ben Sira (Jesus Sirach)*, ed. Friedrich V. Reiterer, SBA 50 (Stuttgart: Katholisches Bibelwerk, 2011), 43–99.

52. On Job: Friedrich V. Reiterer, "Das Verhältnis Ijobs und Ben Siras," in *Alle Weisheit stammt vom Herrn ...* *Gesammelte Studien zu Ben Sira*, ed. R. Egger-Wenzel, BZAW 375 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2007), 345–75; Renate Egger-Wenzel, "Der Gebrauch von מַמְתָּא bei Ijob und Ben Sira: Ein Vergleich zweier Weisheitsbücher," in *Freundschaft bei Ben Sira*, ed. Friedrich V. Reiterer, BZAW 244 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1996), 203–38; Egger-Wenzel, "Faith in God' Rather Than 'Fear of God' in Ben Sira and Job," in *Intertextual Studies in Ben Sira and Tobit*, ed. J. Corley and V. Skemp, CBQMS 38 (Washington, DC: Catholic Biblical Association of America, 2005), 211–26.

action with Israelite-Jewish literature that interprets scripture in the mode of new literature, in contrast to the commentaries (pesharim) and Florilegia (see, e.g., 4Q174) known from Qumran. The degree to which this represents a pre-form of midrashic exegesis is controversial in scholarship.⁵³ The use of Scripture and the related interpretation of Scripture should be surveyed for each particular version, in as much as G, Syr, and La each had available to them a specific corpus of holy writings that had grown beyond their (Hebrew) *Vorlagen* and their own individual networks of scriptural references. At least with regard to La and Syr, the New Testament should also be taken into account (see below, §2.5). Also to be identified is the manner in which G, Syr, and La interpret their supposed *Vorlage(n)* with recourse to other writings and each construct their own theological system of references. Marböck has carried this out in an exemplary fashion for H and G in their use of the term ברית resp. διαθήκη. Burkard M. Zapff has shown this most recently in several examples for Syr.⁵⁴

In addition to the question regarding Ben Sira's treatment (in its various forms) of the texts that were becoming, or, as the case may be, had become canonical, the question of its own canonical status arises. The transmission of two different Greek versions, both as canonical texts, shows that, in addition to its canonicity for Syr and La, there is not *one* canonical book of Ben Sira. Primarily Roman-Catholic exegetes like Gilbert, Calduch-Benages, Franz Böhmisch, and Marböck have shown through diverse studies that the book of Ben Sira, like the books of Jeremiah, Daniel, Tobit, and Esther, does not have a *single* canonical text.⁵⁵ It instead—like all biblical books—assumes a canonical pluralism.

On Qoheleth: Maurice Gilbert, "Qohelet et Ben Sira," in *Qohelet in the Context of Wisdom*, ed. A. Schoors, BETL 136 (Leuven: Peeters, 1998), 161–79; Jeremy Corley, "Qohelet and Sirach: A Comparison," in *Wisdom for Life*, ed. N. Calduch-Benages, BZAW 445 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2014), 145–55.

On Proverbs: Jeremy Corley, "An Intertextual Study of Proverbs and Ben Sira," in Corley and Skemp, *Intertextual Studies in Ben Sira and Tobit*, 155–82.

53. Minissale, *La versione greca*.

54. See the contribution by Burkard M. Zapff in this volume.

55. Maurice Gilbert, "L'Éclésiastique: Quel texte? Quelle autorité?," *RB* 94 (1987): 233–50; Gilbert, *Les études*, 179–80; Núria Calduch-Benages, "Ben Sira y el Canon de las Escrituras," *Greg* 78 (1997): 359–70; Franz Böhmisch, "Die Textformen des Sirachbuchs und ihre Zielgruppen," *PzB* 6 (1997): 87–122; Johannes Marböck, "Fragen und Impulse eines Buchs an einer Wende," *PzB* 19 (2010): 77–88. However, see the earlier discussion of Peter Rüger, "Le Siracide: Un livre à la frontière du canon," in *Le canon*

While this notion of a flexible understanding of canon (at least for Ben Sira) seems generally to have prevailed within biblical studies, the question remains open as to why the book of Ben Sira itself did not make it into the Tanak. The late date of its composition could not be the reason, given the even later date of the final form of the book of Daniel and the continual expansion of individual Psalms into the Hasmonean period. Neither is the omission of Ben Sira from the Tanak to be explained by its possible critical view of Ezra that could be concluded from Ezra's omission from the "Praise of the Fathers," given the acceptance of the Ezra-critical book of Ruth into the Ketuvim. One reason could be that Ben Sira does not place his wisdom under the authority of Solomon like the books of Proverbs and Qoheleth and wrote in his own name. However, on the other hand, there are also anonymous wisdom writings, like, for example, 4Q524 and 4QInstruction, which were left out of the Tanak.⁵⁶ Therefore, the nonadoption of Ben Sira by the Hebrew Holy Scriptures is perhaps connected to the conflict over the Jerusalem high priesthood in the beginning of the second century BCE that culminated in the Zadokite-Aaronide priesthood that was so highly valued by Ben Sira being taken over by non-Zadokites in 175/172 BCE. Further investigation is necessary, which should also incorporate the competition between different priestly circles in Jerusalem mirrored in the latest layers of the Pentateuch in its consideration.⁵⁷

de l'Ancien Testament, ed. J. D. Kaestli and O. Wermeligen (Geneva: Labor et Fides, 1984), 47–69.

56. Charlotte Hempel et al., eds., *The Wisdom Texts From Qumran and the Development of Sapiential Thought*, BETL 159 (Leuven: Peeters, 2002); Matthew J. Goff, *Discerning Wisdom: The Sapiential Literature of the Dead Sea Scrolls*, VTSup 116 (Leiden: Brill, 2007); Rey, *4QInstruction*.

57. See Reinhard Achenbach, *Die Vollendung der Tora: Studien zur Redaktionsgeschichte des Numeribuches im Kontext von Hexateuch und Pentateuch*, BZAR 3 (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2003); and Christoph Berner, "Vom Aufstand Datans und Abirams zum Aufbegehren der 250 Männer: Eine redaktionsgeschichtliche Studie zu den Anfängen der literarischen Genese von Num 16–17," *BN* 150 (2011): 9–33; Berner, "Wie Laien zu Leviten wurden: Zum Ort der Korachbearbeitung innerhalb der Redaktionsgeschichte von Num 16–17," *BN* 152 (2012): 3–28.

2.3.2. Ben Sira/Jesus Sirach and Pagan Wisdom

Three generations after Alexander the Great's campaign, the Palestinian interior was also completely in the grip of Hellenism.⁵⁸ Ben Sira therefore lived in a world thoroughly saturated with pagan Greek urban, cultural, and intellectual conceptions. This is clearly reflected and uncontested in his work—even heightened in the translation arising in the unrivaled Hellenistic metropolis of Alexandria.⁵⁹ At the same time, the autochthonous traditions of Egypt and Syria remain formative within the culture of Palestine. Therefore, the question as to what degree Ben Sira adopts gentile wisdom extends over three regions that, although merging in the Hellenistic period, stem from distinct tradition-historical and linguistic backgrounds.

(1) From its very inception, *Egyptian along with Mesopotamian wisdom* formed the most important extrabiblical frame of reference for Israelite-Jewish wisdom literature. This was especially the case for Ben Sira, who not only transmitted the well-known “instructions” that reached back to the Old Kingdom and in part forward into the Hellenistic period, but also Demotic wisdom. Through the translations by Miriam Lichtheim, Joachim Quack, and Heinz Thissen, these texts are now easily accessible.⁶⁰ A special note here should be made of the Instruction of Ankhsheshonq⁶¹

58. Cf. John J. Collins and Gregory E. Sterling, eds., *Hellenism in the Land of Israel*, CJA 13 (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2001); Hans-Peter Kuhnen, “Israel unmittelbar vor und nach Alexander dem Großen: Geschichtlicher Wandel und archäologischer Befund,” in *Die Griechen und das antike Israel: Interdisziplinäre Studien zur Religions- und Kulturgeschichte des Heiligen Landes*, ed. S. Alkier and M. Witte, OBO 201 (Fribourg: Academic Press, 2004).

59. On Alexandria, see Tobias Georges et al., eds., *Alexandria, Civitatum Orbis Mediterranei Studia 1* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2013).

60. Miriam Lichtheim, *The Late Period*, vol. 3 of *Ancient Egyptian Literature: A Book of Readings* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980), 159–217; Lichtheim, *Late Egyptian Wisdom Literature in the International Context: A Study of Demotic Instructions*, OBO 52 (Fribourg: Universitätsverlag, 1983), 13–92, 107–304; Joachim Friedrich Quack, *Einführung in die altägyptische Literaturgeschichte III: Die demotische und gräko-ägyptische Literatur*, 2nd ed., Einführungen und Quellentexte zur Ägyptologie 3 (Berlin: LIT, 2009), 113–38; Friedhelm Hoffmann and Joachim Friedrich Quack, *Anthologie der Demotischen Literatur*, Einführungen und Quellentexte zur Ägyptologie 4 (Berlin: LIT, 2007), 239–304; Heinz Thissen, “Die Lehre des Anchsheshonki,” in *TUAT 3:251–277*, 280–319.

61. The manuscripts are from the Ptolemaic period. Quack (*Anthologie der Demotischen Literatur*, 273) places their formation possibly in the sixth/fifth century BCE.

and the instructions transmitted in the Papyrus Insinger (“Phibis”/“The Great Demotic Book of Wisdom”), which was widely disseminated.⁶² The focus for “Phibis” lies on the ethical ideal of maintaining the golden mean and the righteousness of God as the one who determines all things and therefore appears as an inscrutable being and the dispenser of all human fortune.

(2) No later than the work of Theophil Middendorp (1973) and the studies by Martin Hengel, Kaiser, John J. Collins, and Erich S. Gruen on the relationship between Judaism and Hellenism, the question about the influence of *pagan Greek literature and classical Greek education* on Ben Sira has been discussed.⁶³ Homer, the tragic poets, Theognis of Megara, Menander, Plato, Aristotle, the Stoics, as well as the Alexandrian schools of poets and didactic poetry (Aratus of Soli) now belong to the fixed quantities that must be taken into account for understanding Ben Sira’s anthropology, cosmology, theology, and also his culture. The recent standard works on these topics are the studies by Oda Wischmeyer (1997), Ursel Wicke-Reuter (2000), and Ueberschaer (2007).⁶⁴ Worth consid-

According to Lichtheim (*The Late Period*, 159) and Thissen (“Die Lehre des Anscheschonki,” 251), they cannot be dated.

62. The main manuscript is late Ptolemaic. Parallel manuscripts come from the first/second century CE. While Quack (*Anthologie der Demotischen Literatur*, 239) considers composition in the seventh century BCE possible, Lichtheim (*The Late Period*, 184) argues for composition in the Ptolemaic period.

63. Theophil Middendorp, *Die Stellung Jesu Ben Siras zwischen Judentum und Hellenismus* (Leiden: Brill, 1973); Martin Hengel, *Judentum und Hellenismus: Studien zu ihrer Begegnung unter besonderer Berücksichtigung Palästinas bis zur Mitte des 2. Jh.s v. Chr.*, 3rd ed., WUNT 10 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1988); Otto Kaiser, *Der Mensch unter dem Schicksal: Studien zur Geschichte, Theologie und Gegenwartsbedeutung der Weisheit*, BZAW 161 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1985); Kaiser, *Vom offenbaren und verborgenen Gott: Studien zur spätbiblischen Weisheit und Hermeneutik*, BZAW 392 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2008); John J. Collins, *Jewish Wisdom in the Hellenistic Age*, OTL (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1997); Collins, *Jewish Cult and Hellenistic Culture: Essays on the Jewish Encounter with Hellenism and Roman Rule*, JSJSup 100 (Leiden: Brill, 2005); Erich S. Gruen, *Heritage and Hellenism: The Reinvention of Jewish Tradition*, HCS 30 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998). On the predecessors of this line of scholarship (Jakob Freudenthal, Moses Hadas, and Victor Tcherikover) see the contribution by Oda Wischmeyer in this volume.

64. Oda Wischmeyer, *Die Kultur des Buchs Jesus Sirach*, BZNW 77 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1997); Ursel Wicke-Reuter, *Göttliche Providenz und menschliche Verant-*

eration is whether the paradigm of Judaism and Hellenism should not instead be termed Judaism *in* Hellenism.

In his dissertation under Kreuzer at the Kirchliche Hochschule Wuppertal, Ueberschaer furnishes an overview of the nature of schools and education in the ancient Near East, including ancient Israel, and in classical antiquity, and he provides an interpretation of the texts in Ben Sira that present his “educational theory.” Ueberschaer investigates the anthropological statements, identifies the target audience for Ben Sira as young men from the Jewish upper class at the beginning of the second century BCE, develops Ben Sira’s instructional method and content on the basis of his generic choices, describes the roles of God and wisdom as teachers, shows Ben Sira’s self-image to be of pious (not priestly) nature, and specifies the boundaries of knowledge. The aim of the education that Ben Sira communicates, which is only achievable through encountering the wise and their unlocking of wisdom, is passing on wisdom in and for the Jewish community. It is possible that the theme of leisure results from Hellenistic influence, while in contrast to Hellenism’s educational ideal, athletics receive no attention.

While Ben Sira’s references to pagan Greek literature and philosophy have already been extensively if not exhaustively investigated, the mundane texts and images that appear in Greek papyri, ostraca, building, dedication, and funerary inscriptions, seals, bullae, and coins have to this point received little analysis as educational objects and as literary and visual references.

Naturally it is also important here to consider the relationships to pagan Greek literature and education in a differentiated manner with regard to the various versions of the book, especially given the different locations of their composition (Jerusalem, Alexandria).

(3) In addition to the Egyptian and Greek wisdom, recent scholarly insights in the history of Israel and the role of the Arameans in the cultural transfer between Mesopotamia and Syria-Palestine, as well as new editions of the text have brought forth the importance of *Aramaic wisdom* as reference works for Israelite-Jewish wisdom. This is especially the case for the Story of Ahiqar, which is also the largest Aramaic text from the first millennium BCE⁶⁵ and along with the Gilgamesh Epic belongs to the

wortung bei Ben Sira und in der Frühen Stoa, BZAW 298 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2000); Ueberschaer, *Weisheit*.

65. Max Küchler, *Frühjüdische Weisheitstraditionen: Zum Fortgang weisheitlichen*

most beloved material of the ancient Near East. Most noteworthy here is the *opus magnum* by Michael Weigl (2010), which offers a detailed evaluation of the points of contact between the Ahiqar proverbs and Proverbs (esp. Prov 22:17–24:22), Qoheleth, Ben Sira, Job, and the Joseph story (and several passages in the book of Jeremiah).⁶⁶

For a quick overview of Sirach's multifaceted literary interconnect-edness with Greek wisdom as well as the wisdom of the Levant and the ancient Near East, the index of parallels accompanying Kaiser's translation of the book of Ben Sira (2005) proves helpful.⁶⁷

2.4. Themes of the Book of Ben Sira

In light of the abundance of themes that Sirach treats and that Martin Luther (1545) describes with the beautiful image of bees that “aus mancherley Blumen / jr sefftlin seugert / vnd inenander menget” (“from various flowers / suck their nectar / and mingle together”)⁶⁸ there are numerous studies of individual themes in recent scholarship. These especially focus on several key topics.

Denkens im Bereich des frühjüdischen Jahweglaubens, OBO 26 (Fribourg: Universitätsverlag, 1979), 319–413; Ingo Kottsieper, *Die Sprache der Ahiqarsprüche*, BZAW 194 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1990); Kottsieper, “Die alttestamentliche Weisheit im Licht aramäischer Weisheitstraditionen,” in *Weisheit außerhalb der kanonischen Weisheitsschriften*, ed. B. Janowski, Veröffentlichung der Wissenschaftlichen Gesellschaft für Theologie 10 (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 1996), 128–62; Jonas C. Greenfield, “The Wisdom of Ahiqar,” in *Wisdom in Ancient Israel: Essays in Honour of J. A. Emerton*, ed. J. Day et al. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 43–52; Michael Weigl, *Die aramäischen Achikar-Sprüche aus Elephantine und die alttestamentliche Weisheitsliteratur*, BZAW 399 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2010).

66. E.g., the Ahiqar proverbs (1, 97; numbering according to Weigl, *Achikar-Sprüche*, 73–79; 507–9) are also familiar with praise of heavenly wisdom, which can be compared in terms of tradition history with Job 28; Prov 8:22–31; Sir 1:9–10; 24; Wis 7, and 1 En. 42; cf. Küchler, *Weisheitstraditionen*, 46, 380–412; Markus Witte, *Vom Leiden zur Lehre: Der dritte Redegang (Hiob 21–27) und die Redaktionsgeschichte des Hiobbuchs*, BZAW 230 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1994), 210–11.

67. Otto Kaiser, *Weisheit für das Leben: Das Buch Jesus Sirach übersetzt und eingeleitet* (Stuttgart: Radius, 2005).

68. Martin Luther, *Die gantze Heilige Schrift Deusch Wittenberg 1545*, ed. H. Volz (Munich: Rogner & Bernhard, 1972), 2:1751.

(1) *Conception of God and theology*, including the question of divine justice.⁶⁹

(2) *Conception of humanity and ethics*, with an emphasis on questions of creatureliness, the relationships between genders, and dealing with poverty and wealth. Special mention should be made here of the study by Bradley C. Gregory (2010).⁷⁰ In his University of Notre Dame dissertation under the guidance of Gary A. Anderson, Gregory offers a foundational philological, tradition-historical, and social-historical analysis of Ben Sira's most important statements about possessions. The center of the study is the interpretive description of Ben Sira's basic approach to poor and rich as well as his specific explanations of the granting of loans, pledges, and alms. Through the essential theological and anthropological coordination of the remarks in Sir 4:1–10; 7:11; 7:29–36; 8:12–13; 10:19–24, 30–11:1; 11:4–6; 11:11–13, 20–22; 12:1–6; 13:2–23; 14:3–19; 21:5; 29:1–20; 35:1–5, and 35:20–22, Gregory identifies the beliefs of God's just retribution and the conviction of the finality of death. Human generosity appears as the fulfillment of the *carpe diem* motif in Ben Sira, where it is a means to acquiring heavenly riches, which God distributes in just retribution from his reservoir. Generosity is also a means of atonement for sin. On one hand, Ben Sira relativizes the importance of wealth in light of other values, on the other, however, he ascribes it a special cultic function. Human generosity with material goods mirrors Ben Sira's understanding of *imitatio dei* as ethical norm.⁷¹ As is proper for the comprehensive study, appropri-

69. Renate Egger-Wenzel, ed., *Ben Sira's God: Proceedings of the International Ben Sira Conference, Durham, Ushaw College 2001*, BZAW 321 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2002); Pancratius C. Beentjes, "Theodicy in Wisdom of Ben Sira," in *Happy*, 265–79; Markus Witte, "Theologien im Buch Jesus Sirach," in *Die theologische Bedeutung der alttestamentlichen Weisheitsliteratur*, ed. M. Saur, Biblisch-theologische Studien 125 (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 2012), 91–128.

70. Bradley C. Gregory, *Like an Everlasting Signet Ring: Generosity in the Book of Sirach*, DCLS 2 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2010); cf. also Benjamin G. Wright and Claudia V. Camp, "Who Has Been Tested by Gold and Found Perfect?: Ben Sira's Discourse of Riches and Poverty," in *Praise*, 71–96; Otto Kaiser, "Arm und Reich bei Jesus Sirach," in *Vom offenbaren und verborgenen Gott: Studien zur spätbiblischen Weisheit und Hermeneutik*, ed. Otto Kaiser, BZAW 392 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2008), 144–60.

71. Cf. Markus Witte, "Begründungen der Barmherzigkeit gegenüber den Bedürftigen in jüdischen Weisheitsschriften aus hellenistisch-römischer Zeit," in *Anthropologie und Ethik im Frühjudentum und im Neuen Testament*, ed. M. Konradt and E. Schlöpfer, WUNT 322 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2014), 387–412.

ate statements on riches and poverty in the Jewish literature of the Hellenistic period, especially in Proverbs and in Tobit, as well as the history of the period and the social-historical context of the early second century BCE all appear.

(3) *Understanding of history*, including the question of eschatology and then connected of messianic conceptions in Ben Sira.⁷²

(4) *Cult and piety*, with an emphasis on the relationship to the Jerusalem priesthood and the temple,⁷³ to fear of God, and the meaning of prayer.

On the final topic, reference should be made to the dissertation by Werner Urbanz (2009) at the University of Graz, directed by Marböck.⁷⁴ After a chronologically organized history of scholarship on the topic of “prayer in the book of Jesus Sirach,” Urbanz offers an overview of all lexemes belonging to the semantic field of “prayer” in G and—as far as it is possible—also of their Hebrew equivalents. He lists their statistical distribution in the book and in each case provides a short localization of the various lexemes in the composition as a whole. In keeping with Claus

72. Jeremy Corley, “Seeds of Messianism in Hebrew Ben Sira and Greek Sirach,” in *The Septuagint and Messianism*, ed. M. A. Knibb, BETL 195 (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2006), 301–12; Benjamin G. Wright, “Eschatology without a Messiah in the Wisdom of Ben Sira,” in *The Septuagint and Messianism*, ed. M. A. Knibb, BETL 195 (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2006), 313–23; Rey, *4QInstruction*; Rey, “L’espérance post-mortem dans le différentes versions du Siracide,” in Joosten and Rey, *Texts and Versions of the Book of Ben Sira: Transmissions and Interpretation*, 257–79; Friedrich V. Reiterer, “Aspekte der Messianologie der Septuaginta,” in “*Die Vollendung der Gottesfurcht ist Weisheit*” (*Sir 21,11*): *Studien zum Buch Ben Sira (Jesus Sirach)*, SBA 50 (Stuttgart: Katholisches Bibelwerk, 2011), 265–83.

73. Mulder, *Simon*; Heinz-Josef Fabry, “Jesus Sirach und das Priestertum,” in *Auf den Spuren der schriftgelehrten Weisen*, ed I. Fischer et al., BZAW 331 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2003), 265–82; Benjamin G. Wright, “‘Fear the Lord and Honor the Priest?’: Ben Sira as Defender of the Jerusalem Priesthood,” in *Praise*, 97–126.

74. Werner Urbanz, *Gebet im Sirachbuch: Zur Terminologie von Klage und Lob in der griechischen Texttradition*, HBS 60 (Freiburg: Herder, 2009); Urbanz, “Die Gebetsschule des Jesus Sirach: Bemerkungen zu Inhalten, Subjekten und Methoden des Gebets im Sirachbuch,” *PzB* 18 (2009): 31–48; cf. also Jan Liesen, *Full of Praise: An Exegetical Study of Sir 39,12–35*, JSJSup 64 (Leiden: Brill, 1999); Michael Reitemeyer, *Weisheitslehre als Gotteslob: Psalmentheologie im Buch Jesus Sirach*, BBB 127 (Berlin: Philo, 2000); Maurice Gilbert, “Prayer in the Book of Ben Sira: Function and Relevance,” in *DCLY* 2004, 117–35; Palmisano, *Salvaci*; Palmisano, “La prière de Ben Sira dans les manuscrits Hébreux et dans les versions anciennes,” in Joosten and Rey, *Texts and Versions of the Book of Ben Sira*, 281–96.

Westermann,⁷⁵ he identifies the basic forms of prayer in Ben Sira as lament and praise. The main body of the study is dedicated to the promotion of the terminological fields of these two basic forms, which culminate in the exhibition of the interdependence of lament and praise. Urbanz differentiates in detail between actual prayers, reflections on prayer, and instructions for prayer. In terms of groups supporting prayer, he first identifies humanity in general, second Ben Sira's students, and third the teacher of wisdom himself. The significant occasions for prayer are based in God himself and in special human situations, either in suffering or in joy. Urbanz highlights the lament in connection to the topic of sin, a characteristic topic for Ben Sira.

(5) The interest in the understanding of *wisdom* and its personification continues unbowed. In connection to the thesis of the sapientialization of Torah and the legalization of wisdom,⁷⁶ the question of the plurivalent understanding of תורה and νόμος in Ben Sira, the relationship of תורה and νόμος to חכמה and σοφία, as well as the relationship between universal and particular wisdom, or as the case may be, general and special revelation (cf. esp. Sir 17:1–10).⁷⁷

(6) Finally, topics that are diversely discussed at present in the social sciences and humanities, the construction of identity versus otherness, of space and time, of ethnicity, of body and gender, the understanding of emotions and personhood and the use of language, especially metaphor, are reflected in the study of the book of Ben Sira. In this setting, scholarship on Ben Sira (like biblical studies in general) could benefit from the cultural studies definitions of structure and reference, methods, and theo-

75. Claus Westermann, *Lob und Klage in den Psalmen* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1977).

76. See on this Bernd U. Schipper and D. Andrew Teeter, eds., *Wisdom and Torah: The Reception of 'Torah' in the Wisdom Literature of the Second Temple Period*, JSJSup 163 (Leiden: Brill, 2013).

77. Friedrich V. Reiterer, "Neue Akzente in der Gesetzesvorstellung: תורה היים bei Ben Sira," in *Gott und Mensch im Dialog*, ed. M. Witte, BZAW 354.2 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2004), 851–71; Reiterer, "Das Verhältnis der חכמה zur תורה im Buch Ben Sira: Kriterien zu gegenseitiger Bestimmung," in Xeravits and Zsengellér, *Studies in the Book of Ben Sira*, 97–133; Markus Witte, "'Das Gesetz des Lebens' (Sirach 17,11)," in *Lived Religion: Conceptual, Empirical and Practical-Theological Approaches*, ed. H. Streib et al. (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 71–87; Greg Schmidt Goering, *Wisdom's Root Revealed: Ben Sira and the Election of Israel*, JSJSup 139 (Leiden: Brill, 2009).

ries.⁷⁸ More recent contributions here include, for example, the studies on Ben Sira by Marko Marttila on the understanding of the nations (2012) and by Theresa Ann Ellis (2014) on the construction of gender.

Marttila works out how Ben Sira establishes Jewish identity in Hellenism by means of adaptation instead of isolation or assimilation.⁷⁹ Ben Sira thereby presents a differentiated view of the nations, classifying them in accordance with the exegesis of pertinent texts from the Torah and the Prophets into “anti-elect nations” (Canaanites, Amalekites, Midianites, and Philistines, who are subject to divine wrath),⁸⁰ “non-elect nations” (enemies of Israel, from whom blessing could be withheld if they do not come to terms with Israel), and the “elect nation” (Israel).⁸¹ Marttila illustrates once again Ben Sira’s role as an exegete.

The dissertation by Ellis at the Brite Divinity School, supervised by Leo G. Perdue, offers a semantic analysis of the conception of gender and gender formation in the Hebrew book of Ben Sira.⁸² After a detailed methodological introduction, she analyzes Ben Sira’s understanding of gender as it appears in his impersonal speech. This addresses not only classical form-critical questions (among others the recourse to Greek-Hellenistic genres), but also the historical contexts of the language (Hellenistic environment and life under Seleucid hegemony). The investigation focuses on linguistic analyses of the texts in which female figures appear in divine types (like personified wisdom) and human types (like mothers, daughters,

78. See Oda Wischmeyer in this volume.

79. Marko Marttila, *Foreign Nations in the Wisdom of Ben Sira: A Jewish Sage between Opposition and Assimilation*, DCLS 13 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2012); cf. also Benjamin G. Wright, “‘Put the Nations in Fear of You’: Ben Sira and the Problem of Foreign Rule,” in *Praise*, 127–46; Friedrich V. Reiterer, “Der Fremde bei Ben Sira: Die Spannungen zwischen der spätalttestamentlichen und hellenistischen Weltauffassung,” in *The Stranger in Ancient and Mediaeval Jewish Tradition*, ed. G. G. Xeravits and J. Dušek, DCLS 4 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2010), 64–83.

80. See Markus Witte, “‘Barmherzigkeit und Zorn Gottes’ im Alten Testament am Beispiel des Buchs Jesus Sirach,” in *Divine Wrath and Divine Mercy in the World of Antiquity*, ed. R. G. Kratz and H. Spieckermann, FAT 2/33 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008), 176–202.

81. On Ben Sira’s conception of Israel’s and the nation’s election, see also Schmidt Goering, *Wisdom’s Root*.

82. Teresa Ann Ellis, *Gender in the Book of Ben Sira: Divine Wisdom, Erotic Poetry, and the Garden of Eden*, BZAW 453 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2013); cf. also Ibolya Balla, *Ben Sira on Family, Gender, and Sexuality*, DCLS 8 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2011).

and wives—always in juxtaposition to fathers, sons, and male friends). She analyzes in detail the Hebrew texts of Sir 4:11–19; 6:18–31; 7:18–26; 9:1–9; 9:10–16; 14:20–15:8; 22:9–15; 23:16–21; 23:22–27; 25:13–26:3; 26:13–17; 33:20–30; 36:18–26; 37:14–26; 40:18–27; 42:7–9; and 51:13–30. She only considers G when it is necessary to reconstruct a fragmentary Hebrew text. In addition, Ellis constantly looks beyond Sirach itself to comparative biblical texts (primarily Prov and Song), as well as the texts that Ben Sira has taken up from the Torah (i.e., Gen 1–4). She is able to show Ben Sira’s semantic originality and gender discourse in contrast to the social role models of classical antiquity and Hellenism in a balanced manner. On the backdrop of a homo-social world, Ellis refutes the oft-presented position that Ben Sira was basically misogynist. Compared to the pagan world, Ben Sira is marked by according a high value to women and female sexuality, which is shown not least in the erotic metaphor of personified wisdom.

2.5. Reception History of the Book of Ben Sira

In this field as well, Ben Sira scholarship participates in a current trend within the scholarship of the humanities and social sciences, though comprehensive reception-historical scholarship in Sirach is only just beginning. Studies to date mostly concentrate on the modification of the figure of wisdom in the Wisdom of Solomon and citations in rabbinic literature.⁸³ The systematic investigation of Ben Sira’s reception in early Jewish literature, including the writings of Philo and Qumran remains a lacuna. Such an investigation could be expected to provide further information about the textual and transmission history of Sirach as well as on the tradition-historical developments of conceptions of wisdom. Also lacking is a systematic investigation of Ben Sira in early Christian literature, particularly in the New Testament. The outstanding importance Sir 24, for example, has for John 1 and particular forms of wisdom Christology has long been known. A targeted review of the allusions and citations from Ben Sira in New Testament texts would afford a good starting point for the unfolding of a biblical theology.⁸⁴ The evaluation and classification of the Sirach texts

83. Martin Neher, *Wesen und Wirken der Weisheit in der Sapientia Salomonis*, BZAW 333 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2004); Jenny R. Labendz, “The Book of Ben Sira in Rabbinic Literature,” *AJSR* 30 (2006): 347–92; Benjamin G. Wright, “B. Sanhedrin 100b and Rabbinic Knowledge of Ben Sira,” in *Praise*, 182–93.

84. See the preliminary study by Rosario Pistone, “Blessing of the Sage, Proph-

mentioned in the index of the *loci citati vel allegati* of the *Novum Testamentum Graece* (28th. ed., 2012) could form the point of departure.

As is the case with the other fields of study, the various versions of the book, each within its own community of transmission, should naturally be taken into account within the framework of the study of reception history. This is especially the case for the Jewish and Christian histories of reception with Sirach, given its divergent canonical value and the remarkable differences in the various forms, which diverge more significantly than for other biblical books

3. Outlook: Consensus and Disagreement

Perhaps more strongly than in other parts of Hebrew Bible studies, Ben Sira scholarship is marked by considerable consensus in important questions.

The authenticity of the Hebrew fragments found in the Cairo Genizah has been clear at least since the textual discoveries in Qumran and Masada, even when some details, especially in the Hebrew long version, suggest that one should reckon with reverse translations from G or Syr, meaning interdependency between the versions and their different textual histories.⁸⁵

The date of Ben Sira in the first quarter of the second century BCE is likewise undisputed. Even if in detail it is discussed whether Ben Sira is more likely to be dated in the time around 190 or around 175 BCE, there is agreement that it arises before the Hasmonean period. The prayer for the deliverance of Zion in Sir 36:1–22 (G: 33:1–13a; 36:16b–22) can easily be read as a reflection on the time after the defeat of Antiochus III in 190 BCE by the Romans and the increasing pressure by the Seleucids upon Jerusalem that resulted.⁸⁶ The immediate temporal correlation of specific state-

ecy of the Scribe: From Ben Sira to Matthew,” in *The Wisdom of Ben Sira: Studies on Tradition, Redaction, and Theology*, ed. A. Passaro and G. Bellia, DCLS 1 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2008), 309–53; Marko Marttila, “Das Sirachbuch und das Neue Testament: Der Einfluss eines jüdischen Weisheitswerkes auf die frühchristlichen Autoren,” *BN* 144 (2010): 95–116; Jeremy Corley, “Tracing Wisdom from Sirach to the Gospels,” in *Weisheit als Lebensgrundlage*, ed. R. Egger-Wenzel et al., DCLS 15 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2013), 27–46.

85. See the exemplary study by Reiterer, “Differenz,” and Rey, “Feuillet,” 421–22.

86. Johannes Marböck, “Das Gebet um die Rettung Zions in Sir 36,1–22 (G: 33,1–13a; 36,16b–22) im Zusammenhang der Geschichtsschau Ben Siras,” in *Gottes*

ments, for example, the anti-Samaritan notes in 47:12–25 and 50:25–26, remain hypothetical, however.⁸⁷

It is largely uncontested that the Greek short text, including the prologue, goes back to Ben Sira's grandson. The notion that this is secondary and arises first in the context of Christian reception of the book of Sirach, as argued by Bernd Jørg Diebner (1982) and Giuseppe Veltri (2006), dating the prologue to the first or second century CE is an outlying dissenting opinion.⁸⁸

Throughout the scholarship, Ben Sira's systematizing force is recognized. The book forms a powerful synthesis of wisdom, priestly-cultic, legal, and historiographic or, as the case may be, prophetic traditions in ancient Judaism.

In the shadow of the correlation of wisdom and Torah—however the term of Torah is filled in detail and however the exact relationship between wisdom and Torah is determined in Sirach⁸⁹—the book develops a completely individual form of speech about God that is of central importance for biblical theology. The character of the book of Ben Sira is increasingly recognized as a highly creative form of exegesis and viewed in light of the scribal processes in ancient Judaism.

Weisheit, 159. On the attempt to locate Sir 36 in the context of the Heliodor affair (cf. 2 Macc 3) and comparable events under Seleucus IV (187–175 BCE), see the comprehensive study by Palmisano, *Salvaci*, 305–14.

87. See Markus Witte, “‘What Share Do We Have in David...?’—Ben Sira's Perspectives on 1 Kings 12,” in *One God—One Cult—One Nation: Archaeological and Biblical Perspectives*, ed. R. G. Kratz and H. Spieckermann, BZAW 405 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2010), 91–117.

88. Bernd Jørg Diebner, “Mein ‘Großvater Jesus,’” *DBAT* 16 (1982): 1–37; Giuseppe Veltri, *Libraries, Translations, and ‘Canonical’ Texts: The Septuagint, Aquila and Ben Sira in the Jewish and Christian Traditions*, JSJSup 109 (Leiden: Brill, 2006), 196.

89. See Reiterer, “Akzente”; Reiterer, “Verhältnis”; Reiterer, “The Interpretation of Wisdom Tradition of the Torah within Ben Sira,” in *The Wisdom of Ben Sira: Studies on Tradition, Redaction, and Theology*, ed. A. Passaro and G. Bellia, DCLS 1 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2008), 209–31; Timo Veijola, “Law and Wisdom: The Deuteronomistic Heritage in Ben Sira's Teaching of Law,” in *Leben nach der Weisung: Exegetisch-historische Studien zum Alten Testament*, ed. W. Dietrich and M. Marttila, FRLANT 224 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2008), 144–64; Benjamin G. Wright, “Torah and Sapiential Pedagogy in the Book of Ben Sira,” in *Wisdom and Torah: The Reception of ‘Torah’ in the Wisdom Literature of the Second Temple Period*, ed. B. U. Schipper and D. A. Teeter, JSJSup 163 (Leiden: Brill, 2013).

One remaining disagreement is found in the question of how to construct a commentary on the book. The models of a commentary on G as the oldest representative of the complete book (cf. most recently Marböck)⁹⁰ or a commentary on a mixed text, that is of H, where a Hebrew fragment is extant, and otherwise of G (cf. most recently Patrick Skehan and Alexander Di Lella; Sauer; Schreiner and Zapff; Corley)⁹¹ are in competition. None of the newer commentaries follow the model of commenting on the text of a critical reverse translation of G into Hebrew (cf. Segal).⁹² Also conceivable would be a synoptic commentary on G *and* H. Annotated running translations of the Hebrew fragments have been presented in recent years by Charles Mopsik (2003) and Víctor Morla (2012).⁹³ So far there are no modern commentaries from La and Syr. In the sense of a plural understanding of canon, which Sirach itself teaches, and of a truly ecumenical exegesis one may hope that this gap will soon be filled.

90. Marböck, *Jesus Sirach 1–23*.

91. Patrick W. Skehan and Alexander A. Di Lella, *The Wisdom of Ben Sira*, AB 39 (New York: Doubleday, 1987); Sauer, *ATD Apokryphen 1*; Josef Schreiner, *Jesus Sirach 1–24*, NEchtB AT 38 (Würzburg: Echter, 2002); Zapff, *Jesus Sirach*; Jeremy Corley, *Sirach*, New Collegeville Bible Commentary (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2013).

92. See n. 16.

93. Charles Mopsik, *La Sagesse de ben Sira: Traduction de l'hébreu, introduction et annotation*, Collection "Le Dix Paroles" (Lagrasse: Verdier, 2003); Víctor Morla Asensio, *Los manuscritos hebreos de Ben Sira: Traducción y notas*, Asociación Bíblica Española 59 (Estella: Verbo Divino, 2012).