

In verse 17 Wisdom had spoken of herself in terms of the vine and its fruits and these, we must assume, will be part of the spread she will lay on for her guests.⁵⁷ The only other species bearing edible fruits in the third stanza is the 'olive tree' (v. 14). Wine and olive oil are two of the essential ingredients of the Israelite sacrificial meal. Indeed, it is striking that in the previous section our author has avoided any mention of foodstuffs *not* consumed in the Temple, such as figs, dates, pomegranates, citrus and other fruits. Furthermore, whilst Wisdom *contrasts* her meal with the sweetness of honey, this foodstuff is in fact banned from the Israelite cult (Leviticus 2:11), although it is otherwise widely used in the sacred meals of the ancient Near East where it is part of the gods' stable diet. These are all important hints at the kind of meal those who accept Wisdom's invitation will receive.

Finally, we should consider the language in verse 20a. There Wisdom proclaims that 'the memory/memorial of me is sweeter than honey (τὸ γὰρ μνημόσυνόν μου ὑπὲρ τὸ μέλι γλυκύ)'. The word μνημόσυνόν is frequently given a subjective sense of the *act* of human remembering and the phrase is variously translated 'You will remember me...';⁵⁸ 'Denn meiner zu gedenken ...';⁵⁹ 'Denken an die Weisheit'.⁶⁰ The result of this translation is that the meal imagery is given a primarily metaphorical meaning: the meal is not a literal one, but one achieved by reflection upon Wisdom and the kind of instruction compiled by ben Sira.

However, this cannot be the meaning of the Greek: the word τὸ μνημόσυνον normally has a clearly objective, static semantic character: 'remembrance', 'memorial' and in this sense 'memory'. That is, it does not normally carry the subjective and active sense which commentators intuitively feel should be present here. The word is a favourite of the Greek translator of ben Sira's work,⁶¹ and, with but one *possible* exception (41:1), it always carries a clearly objective sense (10:17; 23:26; 35:6; 38:11, 23; 39:9; 44:9; 45:1; 45:9, 11, 16; 46:11; 49:1, 13; 50:16).⁶²

It is generally recognized that the description of the adulterous woman at the close of the previous chapter (23:22-27) is set up as an antithetical parallel to the praise of Wisdom in chapter 24. One of the points of contact between what is said of the adulterous woman and lady Wisdom is the difference between the former's accursed

⁵⁷ Since the 'blood' of the grape (cf. Sirach 39:26; 50:15 LXX) could symbolize the blood of the creature (Genesis 49:11; 1 Macc 6:34), it is just possible that in that verse the author had in mind the cattle and wild animals of Genesis 1:24-25.

⁵⁸ Skehan & DiLella, *Wisdom of Ben Sira*, p. 328.

⁵⁹ Smend, *Die Weisheit*, p. 42.

⁶⁰ Marböck, *Weisheit im Wandel*, p. 76, who follows M.Z. Segal, *Sefar Ben Sira' ha ššalem* (Jerusalem: 1959), p. 149 in appealing to Sirach 41:1 for this translation.

⁶¹ It variously translates זכר and זכרון in 10:17; 38:23; 41:1; 44:9; 45:1, 9, 11; 46:11; 49:13 and להזכיר in the expression εἰς μνημόσυνον in 50:16.

⁶² It is by no means certain that in 41:1 τὸ μνημόσυνόν should be taken as an act of thinking about death (so NRSV). That translation makes an interpretative judgement, and it could equally well be translated 'remembrance' or 'memory'.

memory ('τὸ μνημόσυνον αὐτῆς', 23:26) and the blessed memory of Wisdom (23:20). The τὸ μνημόσυνον of the adulterer is clearly an objective reality, with the sense, from the previous verse (23:25), that the accursed memory is constituted by a failure to bear children. This strongly suggests that, also, in 24:20 τὸ μνημόσυνον is a concrete external reality - Wisdom's memorial.

Whilst commentators have struggled to see how the primary sense of τὸ μνημόσυνον could make sense in this context, the thoroughly cultic setting of what has preceded now gives that meaning clarity of purpose in our context. *The memorial of Wisdom is the Israelite cult, since Wisdom's actions in creation (and history) are recorded, rehearsed and engrained upon the people's corporate memory through the structure and drama of the cult.* This is how we are to understand Wisdom taking up residence in the Tabernacle and the Temple state of verses 8-11. So Wisdom invites us to a meal which is designed to call to mind all that Wisdom has been. In the context of the hymn thus far, this will be a meal which celebrates the work of creation.

Conclusion to Chapter 24

Given the constraints of this paper the rest of chapter 24 need not detain us. In as much as it is concerned with primeval history it draws only upon Genesis 2. And the fact that it is concerned principally with Genesis 2 confirms our contention that the author of this chapter is working systematically through the early chapters of Genesis, beginning with Genesis 1.

Sirach 24:1-22 is, throughout, a carefully crafted sapiential meditation on the Priestly account of creation, which means, therefore, that it is indebted not simply to Genesis 1:1-2:4, but also to the correspondences between the seven-day creation therein and the (P) instructions to Moses for the building of the Tabernacle. But there are signs that this is not a self-contained literary unit. Neither creation, the macro-temple, nor the temple, the microcosm, are really complete. There has been no mention, for example, of the sun, moon and the stars and it is unclear where humanity as God's true image is to be found. Key aspects of the temple-as-microcosm theme, such as the bronze laver's representation of the sea, have not been mentioned. For these we have to read on.

In the mean time one corollary of our reading of chapter 24 should be highlighted. Hitherto, commentators have been uncertain as to whether or not Wisdom is in fact a creator, or co-creator, in Sirach 24. There can be no doubt now that, however the passage's author would want to nuance the relationship between Wisdom and the one creator God, her life history is identical to that of the creator, though she is also, quite clearly, a creature (v. 9) who is closely identified with the created order (v. 13-17).

According to ben Sira's view of the world 'all things come in pairs, one opposite the other, and he has made nothing incomplete' (42:24, cf. 33:15). This would be a fitting comment on the Priestly vision of creation and Tabernacle. It is also a fitting introduction to Sirach 50 where we find a carefully polished mirror reflecting both the images of Sirach 24:3-23 and of those of the Priestly vision of creation and cult.

Sirach 50

Sirach 50 has been marginalized in the study of Sirach and it is only recently that its treasures have begun to be unearthed. With the priestly intratextuality between creation and Tabernacle and the rehearsal of this theme in chapter 24 in mind, we are now in a position to decipher the wonders of its literary code.

Whereas for chapter 24 there is only extant the Greek and other secondary versions (Syriac, Latin) we are blessed with a Hebrew text of chapter 50 (the Geniza ms. B). However, this is not all boon since the relationship between that Hebrew and the Greek (and other versions) is far from straightforward. The Hebrew is certainly corrupt at several points, the order of two important verses (2 and 3) is different in the Greek and Hebrew, one verse – verse 15 - is completely missing from the Geniza text, the Greek translator may well have had a slightly different Hebrew text before him and, in any case, it differs substantially from the Hebrew in many instances.⁶³ Despite these differences both the extant Hebrew and the Greek are clearly organized along the lines of the Priestly creation-Tabernacle heptadic structure. This is more pronounced in the Greek text, though this is perhaps partly because, whereas we have a Greek version of chapter 24 which mediates between the biblical P and chapter 50, no such Hebrew text of chapter 24 allows us to see the intricacies of the Hebrew of chapter 50 in all their original detail.

A full demonstration of our thesis would require a careful examination of both the Hebrew and the Greek texts in their own right. For the constraints of this essay we limit ourselves to a hastier trek through the text's landscape drawing on the details of the two versions where they clearly signpost our desired journey.⁶⁴ Accordingly, there follows an English translation of the main body of the chapter (vv. 1-21) which attempts to do justice to the salient features of both the Greek and the Hebrew text.⁶⁵

⁶³ For a thorough discussion of the versions and their relationship see Smend's commentary (*Die Weisheit*), and for more recent reflections on the relationship between the Greek and the Hebrew see B.G. Wright, *No Small Difference. Sirach's Relationship to Its Hebrew Parent Text* (SCS 26; Atlanta, GA: Scholars, 1989).

⁶⁴ Other issues, such as the historical context of the passage and the use of language and imagery from particular festivals is ably covered in the secondary literature (see esp. Hayward, *Jewish Temple*, pp. 38-84).

⁶⁵ The text follows the Greek in vv 1b-2-b not the Hebrew which differs substantially

49:16 Shem and Seth and Enosh (שׁוּמַי) were cared for (טָרַם),
but above every living thing is the beauty (תְּהָרַם) of Adam.⁶⁶

50:1 Greatest of his brothers and the beauty (תְּהָרַם) of his people
was the priest, Simeon ben Johanan⁶⁷,

Day 2 Who in his life undergirded (ὑπέρραψεν) the house
/In whose generation the house was cared for (τράμ),
and in his days made firm (ἔστερέωσεν) the sanctuary.
2 And by him was laid the foundation of the height (ὕψος) of the double (waters?),
the high *analemma* (ὑψηλὸν ἀνάλημμα) of the temple enclosure.

Day 3 3 In whose generation the water-pool (תּוּקָא, ἀποδοχείον ὑδάτων) was dug
(נכרה)/reduced (ἠλαττώθη),
a bulwark against *the sea* in its multitude (Heb)/bronze, as *the sea* in circumference (Gk).
4 Who took care for his people to preserve them from robbery (Gk ἀπὸ πτώσεως),
and made his city strong against the enemy (צַר, Gk 'in siege').

Day 4 5 How glorified he was as he gazed forth from tent (לְהַמּוֹת בְּהַשְׁתַּחֲוֹתָא)/in the procession (ἐν
περιστροφῇ) of the sanctuary,
and as he went forth from the house of the curtain.
6 As a star of light (Gk 'morning star') from among the clouds,
and the full moon in the days of festival
7 As the sunshining resplendently on the palace of the king,
and as a bow which appears (Gk 'shining') in the cloud (Gk 'clouds of Glory).

8 As blossom on branches on festival days (Gk 'flower of roses of first fruits')
and as a lily by streams (Gk 'a spring') of waters.
As a shoot of Lebanon on summer days.

Day 5 9 And as fire of incense (תּוּבַחַת, λίβανος) upon the offering (Gk 'on the censor'),
as a golden vessel, wholly mixed/beaten (ὄλοσφύρητον),
which is overlaid (Gk κεκοσμημένον, 'ornamented') on delightful (Gk 'precious') stones.
10 As a luxuriant olive full of berries,
and as a Cypress exalted in the clouds (Gk)
(Heb: 'as an oil tree laden with branches').

⁶⁶ The 'beauty' (תְּהָרַם) of Adam here, and of Simon in the next verse, is missing in the Greek.

⁶⁷ Greek: 'Simon son of Onias was the high priest'.

Day 6 11 When he wrapped himself (בַּעֲשׂוֹתוֹ) in the garment of Glory (בְּגֵד־כְּבוֹד, στολήν δόξης),
as he clothed himself with garments of beauty (בְּגֵד־תְּפָאֲרִית)/perfection of boasting
(συντέλειαν καυχήματος),

When he went up to the altar there was majesty,

And he made glorious (רָדָה, ἐδόξασεν) the court of the sanctuary.

12 When he received the portions from his brothers' (Heb, Gk 'the priests') hands,
as he stood over the arranged pieces (Gk 'he was standing by the hearth of the altar'),

around him was the crown (עֲטָוֶת) of his sons (Heb, Gk 'his brothers'),

As shoot(s) of cedar trees in Lebanon,

and as willows of the brook (Gk 'as trunks of palm trees') they surrounded him.

13 All the sons of Aaron in their glory (בְּכְבוֹדָם)

and the fire offerings of the LORD in their hands (בְּיָדָם)

before the whole congregation of Israel.

Day 7 14 *Until he finished ministering at the altar* (עַד כְּלֹחֵת לְשֵׁרֶת מוֹבַחַת, Gk 'and the perfection
(συντέλειαν) ...)

And set in order (רָסַד, κοσμήσαι) the arrangements (מַעֲרֻכּוֹת) of the Most High

15 (missing in the Hebrew) He stretched out his hand to the libation cup,

And poured out of the blood of the grape,

At the foundations of the altar he poured out

A sweet-smelling savour to the Most High, the King of all.

16 Then the sons of Aaron, the priests, sounded forth

on trumpets of turned metal-work:

So they sounded and made heard the glorious noise,

To make remembrance (זָכַר, εἰς μνημόσυνον) before the Most High.

17 All flesh (Heb כל בֶּשָׂר, Gk 'all the people') hastened together

and fell on their faces, to the ground,

To worship before Most High,

before the Holy One of Israel (Gk 'their LORD, the almighty, God Most High').

18 And the singers gave their voice

and at the sound they set in order his lamp (הִעֲרִיכוּ נֵרִי)/

Sweet (ἔγλυκάνθη) was the melody (μέλος) (made) with the greatest sound.

19 And all the people of the earth (כָּל עַם הָאָרֶץ) gave a ringing shout

in prayer before the Merciful One,

Until the cosmos of the LORD was completed (ἕως συντελεσθῆ κόσμος κυρίου)

and they completed (ἐτελείωσαν) his service/

(Heb: *Until he finished ministering at the altar* (עַד כְּלֹחֵת לְשֵׁרֶת מוֹבַחַת).

20 Then he went down and raised his hands
 Over all the congregation of Israel,
 And the blessing of the LORD was on his lips
 And in the Name of the LORD he beautified himself
 (ובשם יי חתפאר) / he boasted (καυχῆσασθαι)
 21 and they fell down (in worship) again a second time,
 To receive a blessing from the Most High.

The Praise of Simon and the Praise of Wisdom

Hayward has highlighted the way the vegetative portrayal of Wisdom is picked up in the portrayal of the high priest Simon in the central verses of the main body of chapter 50. But he has only scratched the surface of a much more complex set of parallels between the two chapters.

The first indication that Sirach wishes us to read chapter 50 as a mirror image of chapter 24 is the Hebrew of the very first line. In the Hebrew the praise of Simon begins by acclaiming Simon as 'the beauty (תפארת) of his people.' Simon's beauty picks up the beauty of Adam in the last verse of the previous chapter.⁶⁸ This not only makes the high priest the true, or second, Adam, it also emphasizes a word with which the Hebrew of chapter 24 had probably begun. In Sirach 24:1-2 Wisdom twice proclaims that she will boast (καυχῆσεται). It is probable that behind the Greek there stood the root פאר.⁶⁹ Wisdom praises herself, according to 24:1-2, in the midst of a cultic assembly and the whole panoply of the creation which manifests something of her own divine presence. Similarly, Simon is praised among his brothers and his people (50:1a, cf. vv. 12-21) at whose head he stands as the supreme representative of the order of the cosmos which they all enact.

Although in P the high priest recapitulates God's original creation of light in the tending of the menorah, and although in Sirach 24:3-4 Wisdom variously fulfills the responsibilities for the first day of creation, the retelling of creation in Sirach 50 passes over both Genesis 1:1-5 and Exodus 25:1-30:10, and all the possible cosmogonic material associated with the first seventh of the creative process. In fact the canonical order of creation over the first two days is, at first, only hesitantly followed in the Hebrew text. In the Greek it begins in earnest with the creation of the upper and lower realms on the second day.

⁶⁸ See Hayward, *Jewish Temple*, pp. 44-47.

⁶⁹ Smend, *Die Weisheit*, p. 216; Skehan, 'Structures', p. 374. The Syriac has תפארת and תהלה which Smend thinks translated an original תפארת and תהלה.

50:1b-2b: Simon Recapitulates God's Creation of the Firmament (Day 2)

After introducing the high priest Simon, both the Greek and Hebrew then speak of his upkeep and strengthening of the Temple (Gk. 1b-2b; Heb. 1c, 3?⁷⁰). Already in the Hebrew Bible the temple is thought to span the vertical distance of the cosmos. Psalm 78:69 says God 'built his sanctuary like the high heavens, in⁷¹ the earth, which he has founded forever'. This is a brief statement of a widely assumed fact: that the temple, as the cosmic mountain, covers the expanse between the upper and the lower realms.⁷²

In the priestly cosmogony this vertical distance is the work of God on the second day of creation made possible by the separation of the upper and lower waters and the creation of a firmament betwixt the two. The grammar of ancient temple mythology demands that the temple should somehow correspond to this firmament and the distance it creates. This, indeed, is what we find in late biblical psalmody. In the opening verse of Psalm 150 there is a call to

Praise the LORD! Praise God in his sanctuary (שְׁבַח, ἐν τοῖς ἁγίοις αὐτοῦ);
praise him in his mighty firmament (בְּרִקְיָה עִזּוֹ, ἐν στερεώματι δυνάμεως)!

In what follows there is no suggestion that this praise is to be offered in an utterly supernal world and, so, the obvious conclusion is that as the place of praise the sanctuary *is* the firmament, the רִקְיָה of Genesis 1:6-8. This was probably in view in the original Hebrew of Ben Sira 50:1b and it was certainly the way ben Sira's grandson understood Simon's work on the Temple.⁷³

In numerous respects the Greek speaks for this identification. Twice we are told of the 'height' (ὕψος/ὕψηλόν) of the Temple and yet Simon is also responsible for laying *foundations* (ἐθεμελιώθη). The vertical orientation and attention to the upper and lower limits of the cosmos is as obvious here as it was for Wisdom's traversing the heaven above and the abyss below in 24:5. Simon, we are told, ὑπέρραψεν the house. The

⁷⁰ The order of the Hebrew of verses 2-3 is the reverse of that in the Greek. This means that the second mention of the temple building works comes *after* description of the water pool. This *may* be because in the Hebrew verse 3 is meant to function as a equivalent of the creation of the dry land, from which the sea is separated in Genesis 1:9-10.

⁷¹ Following the LXX and Syriac against the MT (כִּאֲרָה) (cf. Victor (Avigdor) Hurowitz, *I Have Built You an Exalted House. Temple Building in the Bible in Light of Mesopotamian and Northwest Semitic Writings* (JSOTS 115; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1992), pp. 335-7).

⁷² For Mesopotamian parallels see B. Janowski, 'Tempel und Schöpfung. Schöpfungstheologische Aspekte der priesterschriftlichen Heiligtumskonzeption', in *Schöpfung und Neuschöpfung* (JBTh 5; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1990), pp. 37-70 (39-41); Hurowitz, *I Have Built You an Exalted House*, pp. 335-7.

⁷³ See Adam S. van der Woude, 'Zion as Primeval Stone in Zechariah 3 and 4', in W. Claassen (eds.), *Text and Context: Old Testament and Semitic Studies for F.C. Fensham* (JSOTS 48; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1988), pp. 237-248 (243) for the 'stone of division' in Zechariah 4:10 as a description of Zion as that which separates the upper and the lower.

word *ὑπορράπτω* means to 'stitch underneath'.⁷⁴ Simon did not simply 'repair' the Temple (so NRSV), he maintained its demarcation of the lowest cosmic boundary.

The Septuagint translated *שָׁרַף* as τὸ στερέωμα as ben Sira's grandson probably knew when he chose to say that Simon made firm (ἔστερέωσε) the sanctuary in verse 1. The verb, in fact, is used several times in the Greek Bible to describe God's stretching out of the heavens and the earth (Pss. 32:6; 135:6; 92:1; Isa. 42:5; 44:24; 45:12).

That the creation of both the upper and the lower heavens is in the translator's mind might explain the otherwise puzzling presence of the word *διπλῆς* (some mss. *διπλοῦν*) after ὕψος ('... the height of the double ...'):⁷⁵ the construction ascribed to Simon has the double aspect of creation described in Genesis 1:6-8 which has been alluded to already in 24:5. In this case the noun qualified by the adjective *διπλῆς* is deliberately unexpressed because the reader is meant to think of the two waters of Genesis 1:6-7 – the waters above and the waters below – the old Canaanite 'double deep' echoed in Psalm 42:7.⁷⁶ Otherwise the Greek is, frankly, 'senseless'.⁷⁷

Lastly, there is one other highly suggestive word which the Greek uses at this point. According to Sirach 50:2b the Greek says that Simon was responsible for the high *ἀνάλημμα* of the temple enclosure. What is an *ἀνάλημμα*? This is normally translated 'fortification', 'retaining walls' or 'underwork' and, therefore, given a purely architectural sense. Certainly, this meaning is attested elsewhere and such a sense fits both the context here and that of its one other occurrence in the Septuagint – the account of Hezekiah's fortifications in 2Chr 32:5.⁷⁸

Whilst some architectural construction is undoubtedly in view the choice of word here might, also, be a deliberate attempt to connect the design of the temple to the firmament or the construction of the Temple as a model of the cosmos. The word *ἀνάλημμα* is used in Josephus' version of Berossos' account of the building of the so-called hanging gardens of Babylon:⁷⁹

Within this place he erected high stone terraces (*ἀναλήμματα λίθινα ὑψηλά*) and achieving the appearance of *the image of the mountains* (*ὁμοιοτάτην τοῖς ὄρεσι*), planting all manner of trees, he (i.e.

⁷⁴ LSJ 1893. It is otherwise used of the repairing of the soles of shoes.

⁷⁵ Some (e.g. Smend, *Die Weisheit*, p. 480 who is followed by J. Ziegler, *Sapientia Iesu Filii Sirach* (Septuaginta 12/2; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1965), p. 357) correct to ἀλλῆς, for which there is no manuscript attestation.

⁷⁶ The feminine *διπλῆς* will therefore have the ἀβύσσων of 24:5 in mind.

⁷⁷ So Smend, *Die Weisheit*, p. 480.

⁷⁸ Cf., e.g. Dionysius Halicarnassus *Ant.* 3:69:1; 4:59:1; Diodorus Siculus *Hist.* 17:71:4; 20:36:2.

⁷⁹ There are historical problems in this tradition which have been resolved by Stephanie Dalley, 'Nineveh, Babylon and the Hanging Gardens: Cuneiform and Classical Sources Reconciled', *Iraq* 56 (1994), pp. 45-58. Although there are doubts about the reliability of Josephus' version of Berossos (see Dalley, p. 55) this does not pertain to the part of his account with which we are concerned here.

Nebuchadnezzar) constructed and furnished the so-called hanging garden.⁸⁰

Here ἀνάλημμα *may* be simply a civil engineering term. However, its context is important. The ἀναλήμματα are constructed to make a model, an image, of the mountains. This Greek description of palace building corresponds exactly to the accounts in Akkadian texts themselves, according to which royal palaces and temple complexes included models of the cosmic mountains; mountains which were believed to span the distance from the firmament above to the abyss below, upon which their was a garden paradise and from which life-giving streams of water flowed to the rest of creation.⁸¹

By at least the first century B.C. an ἀνάλημμα has attained a certain technical sense as a model or map of the cosmos, particularly the firmament. The first century B.C. Roman author Vitruvius describes at some length the construction, with a compass and rule, of the geometric pattern of the celestial events for any city on a given latitude by which the movements of the sun in the firmament may be followed for the keeping of time by, for example, a sun dial.⁸² Such a geometric pattern he calls an *analemma*, acknowledging the genius of the orient in the development of such technology, whilst borrowing what is obviously an older Greek word in his Latin work dedicated to Emperor Octavian. His discussion of sundials and clocks in Book 9 is indebted to the Chaldeans in general and Berossos in particular (see esp. 9:6; 9:8:1). A prominent feature of his discussion of the cosmos in this section is also the division of the firmament into twelve sections for the twelve signs of the Zodiac. There is clearly a semantic transition between the use of the word ἀνάλημμα in Berossos (as cited by Josephus) and Vitruvius' *analemma*, but both agree that the word, in its oriental context, pertained to the mapping or modeling of the cosmos.

That the Greek of Sirach 50:2 has chosen a word which can refer not only to fortifications but also to a model of the firmament would fit well with 24:5, the parallel to 50:1cd-2b, where the Greek translator says that Wisdom has '*compassed the vault of heaven and traversed the depths of the abyss*'.⁸³ The language in the first half of that

⁸⁰ Extant in Josephus *Ant.* 10:226 = *C. Ap.* 1:141.

⁸¹ See, in particular, the recent discussion by L.E. Stager, "Jerusalem and the Garden of Eden", *Eretz-Israel* 26 (1999), pp. 183-194 and cf. E. Lipinski, 'Garden of Abundance, Image of Lebanon', *ZAW* 85 (1973), pp. 358-59.

⁸² Vitruvius *On Architecture* 9:1:1; 9:7:1; 9:8:1; 9:8:8; 9:9:1. (For a recent translation with diagrammatic commentary see I.D. Rowland, T.N. Howe and M.J. Dewar, *Vitruvius: Ten Books on Architecture* (Cambridge: CUP, 1999)). For later authors using the word in the same way see LSJ Supp. *ad loc.*

⁸³ For the importance of astronomical and sundial technology in the priestly circles of the Second Temple period see now Gleßmer and M. Albani, 'An Astronomical Measuring Instrument From Qumran', in D.W. Parry and E. Ulrich (eds.), *The Provo International Conference on the Dead Sea Scrolls. Technological Innovations, New Texts, and Reformulated Issues* (STDJ 30; Leiden: Brill, 1999), pp. 407-442, and the literature cited therein.

verse is already architectural and would very well describe the act of making one of Vitruvius' *analemmas*. This would also fit with other indications from literature of the period that visions of the ideal temple (Ezek. 40-48; 11QT 3-13, 30-45), with its carefully designed geometry were designed to correspond to the firmament, and its meteorological and astrological configuration.⁸⁴ With the twelve gates of the Temple (Ezek. 48:30-35; 11QT 39:11-42:17) we should compare those texts in the Enoch tradition which give twelve gates, three at each compass direction, for the winds and diverse weathers (1 *Enoch* 33-36; 76).⁸⁵ Margaret Barker has argued that the measurements of the future temple in the *Temple Scroll* create dimensions which allow a measurement of the sun's exact position of rising (and setting) at the two equinoxes and summer and winter solstice.⁸⁶

50:3-4: Simon's Creation of the Land the Sea (Day 3)

In both the Hebrew and the Greek, verses 3-4 [Heb. vv. 2, 4] are a straightforward recapitulation of Genesis 1:9-10; Exodus 30:17-21 and Sirach 24:6 all of which relate the third act of creation; the making of the sea. Simon makes a 'water-pool (πηρῶν)' or a 'reservoir (ἀποδοχείων)' which is explicitly identified with the sea (עַי, ὡσεὶ θαλάσσης). This man-made reservoir is to the sea over which Wisdom holds sway in chapter 24 (24:6a), what the laver of Exodus 30:17-21 is to the sea of Genesis 1:9-10. Indeed, whilst some Greek texts say in v. 3b that this was a cistern (λάκκος) others make explicit the connection with the *bronze* laver of the Tabernacle - 'You shall make a bronze (χαλκοῦν) basin with a bronze (χαλκῆν) stand for washing', (Exod. 18:18, cf. 1Chr. 18:8) - when they say that Simon's water-pool was also bronze (χαλκός).

The Greek further makes the connection with the third day of creation through its use of the expression ἀποδοχείων ὑδάτων.⁸⁷ This has already been used in 39:17b where the creation of the sea and the land by the divine word in Genesis 1 is interpreted in terms of the God's parting of the Red Sea in Exodus 15:8:

... the waters stood in a heap, and the reservoirs of the waters (ἀποδοχεῖα ὑδάτων, Heb. יַרְדֵּי־מַיִם) at the word of his mouth.

We have seen how in Sirach 24:6 the separation of land and sea is viewed as one part of a larger *Chaoskampf* complex. In both the Hebrew and Greek of 50:3 the divine

⁸⁴ See Ben Zion Wacholder, *The Dawn of Qumran* (Cincinnati: Hebrew Union College Press, 1983), pp. 35-40.

⁸⁵ M. Barker, 'The Temple Measurements and the Solar Calendar', in G.J. Brooke (eds.), *Temple Scroll Studies* Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1989), pp. 62-66 (65).

⁸⁶ 'The Temple Measurements'.

⁸⁷ Some mss. have ὑποδοχεῖα ὑδάτων which Hayward (*Jewish Temple*, 75, 77) rightly compares with the ὑποδοχείων of *Aristeas* 89. But given the Greek translator's fondness for ἀποδοχείων (1:17, 39:17) it is certainly the more likely original.

warrior's expression of power is reflected in Simon's action. All extant Greek texts of v. 3a say that in Simon's day the reservoir of the waters ἡλαττώθη, 'was reduced, lowered'. This is universally emended to ἐλατομήθη 'cut out, hew' which would be the expected translation of the Hebrew נכרה.⁸⁸ Though this emendation seems at first sight obvious it may not, however, be entirely warranted nor necessary. Whilst our translator uses the verb ἐλαττώω in fifteen other instances (16:23; 18:6; 19:23; 22:3; 23:10; 31:27, 30; 32:24; 39:18; 41:2; 42:21; 47:23) he never once uses the verb λατομέω. The odd claim – in the midst of a recital of his other glorious deeds – that Simon 'reduced' the reservoir may actually be meant as a deliberate evocation of God's fourth creative act in Genesis. In Genesis 1:9 God says, 'Let the waters under the sky *be gathered together into one place*, and let the dry land appear.' This is clearly an act by which the water's coverage of the earth is *reduced*.⁸⁹ Over the language of Genesis 1:9 the translator would have heard passages such as Job 38:8-11 where God imprisons the sea, just as Marduk had imprisoned Tiamat's helpers (*EE* 4:110-120), and Psalm 33[2]:7 where God 'gathered the waters of the sea as a heap (כרד) (or, LXX 'as a bottle (ὡς ἀσκόν)')'.

Although the Hebrew verb כרה, 'dig', in his Vorlage might have suggested the verb λατομέω, in other respects the Hebrew warrants a translation which evokes the authority of the divine warrior. The second half of the Hebrew Geniza manuscript B of this verse says the water-pool was a אשית בם בהמונו. The second word is rightly emended by the commentators to recover a reference to the sea 'ים'.⁹⁰ The half-verse is then translated 'the reservoir in its immensity like the sea (ים)',⁹¹ or 'the pool with a vastness like the sea's'.⁹²

But this translation overlooks the force of the language. An אשית is, strictly speaking, not a reservoir, but a foundation, or a bulwark, a defense against an enemy (Jer 50:15, cf. Ezra 4:12; 5:16; 6:3). This suggests defense against a hostile, chaotic sea, as does the word המון which is many times used for the roaring of the seas (Isa 17:12; Jer 10:13; 51:16, 42; Ps 65:8, cf. Isa 51:15; Jer 6:23; 31:35; 50:42).⁹³ Indeed, this sense of the word אשית accords perfectly with its use in the Aramaic *Targum of Job* at Qumran (11QtgJob 30:3) where God's account of the creation of the earth in Job 38:6-8 is rendered 'Or upon what are its foundations (אשית) held? Or who placed its boundary stone (אבן חוזית) when the stars of the morning shone together? ... Did you hold back the

⁸⁸ E.g. Smend, *Die Weisheit*, p. 480 and Ziegler, *Sapientia Iesu Filii Sirach*, *ad loc.*

⁸⁹ Cf. 4 Ezra 6:42 where the waters on the third day are gathered together to a seventh part of their coverage of the earth.

⁹⁰ Wright, *No Small Difference*, p. 305 n. 218; Hayward, *Jewish Temple*, p. 44.

⁹¹ Hayward, *Jewish Temple*, p. 42.

⁹² Skehan & DiLella, *Wisdom of Ben Sira*, p. 456.

⁹³ The Greek reference to the circumference, 'περίμετρον', of Simon's water pool may then reflect the sensitivity of the translator to the bounded nature of the creative process already stated in the Hebrew אשית and otherwise present in such older passages as Job 26:10: 'He has described a circle on the face of the waters' and Prov. 8:27 '... he drew a circle on the face of the deep'.

sea (יָם) with doors when it broke forth from the bosom of the abyss'.⁹⁴ The form אוֹשִׁים is used consistently in the *Hodayot* of foundations built to withstand the elemental onslaught of chaos or the divine warrior (1QH^a 11:13, 30, 35 [3:13, 30, 35]; 7:4, 9 [15:4, 9]). The Hebrew may best be read, therefore, אֲשִׁיחַ בַּיָּם בְּהִמּוֹנוֹ - with the simple recovery of its missing *yod* – and translated: 'a bulwark against the sea in its tumult'.⁹⁵

In those biblical texts which refer to the roar of the sea the point is frequently made that this tumult is like that of the nations, the enemies of God's people. We have already seen how 24:6 reflects the regular combination of the divine warrior's victory over the forces of chaos with his defeat of the enemies of his people. This too is spelt out in chapter 50 where the very next verse describes Simon's fortification of Jerusalem against the attacks of the enemy (cf. Josephus *Ant.* 12:138-144). Whilst the water-pool symbolizes the sea the rest of the city is like the dry land against which the power of the enemy, whether the nations or the watery chaos and flood, cannot venture.

That Simon should act as the creator fulfilling the role of the divine warrior's restraint of the chaotic waters should not surprise us. In this, as in other respects, the high priest Simon is taking over the older responsibilities of Israel's king.⁹⁶ Already in the Hebrew text of Sirach 45:7-8 Aaron has been described as the divine warrior – the 'horned wild ox' of Numbers 23:22 & 24:8 – dressed in the 'Glory and strength' of the LORD (Pss 29:1 & 97:6).⁹⁷ As I have argued elsewhere, in the near contemporary book of Daniel it is the eschatological high priest – the cloud riding 'one like a son of man' – who is the Baal-like beneficiary of the judgement of the Ancient of Days over the beasts who arise from the *Chaosmeer*.⁹⁸

50:5-7: Simon Embodies the Sun, the Moon and the Stars (Day 4)

⁹⁴ Is the אֲבָן חוֹצֵתָא, literally a "cutting stone" (*DJD* 23, p. 150); the stone which divides between the upper and lower waters (cf. Zech 4:10)?

⁹⁵ For Sirach's familiarity with these aspects of the *Chaoskampf* see 39:17, 28-29, 31; 43:23-26.

⁹⁶ For Israel's king as divine warrior see esp. Psalm 89:26 [Eng. v. 25] and Mark S. Smith, *The Ugaritic Baal Cycle Vol. I. Introduction with Text, Translation and Commentary of KTU 1.1-1.2* (VTSup 55; Leiden: Brill, 1994), pp. 102-108; N. Wyatt, *Myths of Power: A Study of Royal Myth and Ideology in Ugaritic and Biblical Tradition* (UBL 13; Münster: Ugarit-Verlag, 1996), pp. 127-194, 301-2 & 'Degrees of Divinity: some mythical and ritual aspects of West Semitic kingship', *UF* 31 (1999) 853-887. For the responsibilities and privileges of kingship taken up by the priesthood in Sirach 50 see Hayward, *Jewish Temple*, 51.

⁹⁷ See Hayward, *Jewish Temple*, 66-67; C.H.T. Fletcher-Louis, *All the Glory of Adam: Liturgical Anthropology in the Dead Sea Scrolls* (STDJ 42; Leiden: Brill, 2002), pp. 81-83.

⁹⁸ See Crispin H.T. Fletcher-Louis, 'The High Priest as Divine Mediator in the Hebrew Bible: Dan 7:13 as a Test Case', in *Society of Biblical Literature 1997 Seminar Papers* (Atlanta: Scholars, 1997), pp. 161-193, where I also lay out some of the evidence that Aaron's identity as the divine warrior is fundamental to material in Exodus 28-29.

With the Priestly order of creation now firmly established it proceeds apace in the following verses.⁹⁹ Verses 6-7 are obviously a fulfillment of the creation of the sun, the moon and the stars on the fourth day of creation (Genesis 1:14-19). We have seen how in chapter 24 the creation of the fourth day is only partly fulfilled and where we expected some relationship between Wisdom and the sun, moon and stars we were told instead of the anointing oil. With the service in the Temple that lacuna is now completely filled.

In Sirach 24:1-6 Wisdom acts as (co-)creator, but thereafter she is *identified with* created reality itself. The same ('incarnational'?) shift from activity as creator to identification with creation takes place with the transition from chapter 50 vv. 1-4 to v. 5ff. Where, in the previous verses, Simon has separated the upper and lower waters and re-enacted the division of sea and land in his 'civil' duties, the transition in verse 5 to his activity in the cult also marks a change in his stance from that of creator to his becoming one with creation.

Simon's representation of the heavenly bodies begins in verse 5. There the Hebrew says that Simon 'gazed forth from the tent (לְמַסְכַּת מִדְּבַר)'. The background here is the ancient view of the procession of the heavenly bodies. We should hear, for example, allusion to Psalm 19:4b-6 where God

4b ... has set a *tent* (לְמַסְכַּת) for the sun in the heavens,
 5 which comes out like a bridegroom from his wedding canopy,
 and like a strong man runs its course with joy.
 6 Its rising is from the end of the heavens, and its circuit to the end of
 them;
 and nothing is hid from its heat.

The movement of the high priest in the sanctuary thus corresponds to the rising of sun on its course through the firmament.

The Greek translator was well aware of this symbolism when he decided to paraphrase the Hebrew of v. 5 with the words 'how glorified (was Simon) in the procession (ἐν περιστροφῇ) of the sanctuary'. Again English translations have not done justice to the language. By the second century B.C. the word *περιστροφή* is primarily used to refer to the procession of the heavenly bodies, the stars, the sun, as depicted in Psalm 19:4-6, or of the cosmos itself.¹⁰⁰ In addition to the Greek translator's choice of the word *ἀνάλημμα* in v. 2b, this is another instance of technical astronomical terminology attesting to the profound cosmological significance of the Temple. Where

⁹⁹ The creation of vegetation (Genesis 1:10-12) is only slightly out of order, coming *after* the sun, moon, and stars in 50:8, 10, 12.

¹⁰⁰ LSJ 1389.

verse 2 describes Simon's maintenance of the firmament – the *analemma* – verse 5 gives him the movement of the heavenly bodies – the *peristrophe* – within that firmament.¹⁰¹

The addition of the rainbow to the sun, moon and stars of Gen 1:14-19 serves, as we have seen, the author's desire to identify Simon with God's own anthropomorphic Glory (as described in Ezekiel 1). And the combination of sun, moon, stars and rainbow was evidently firmly established in ben Sira's mind as 43:1-12 shows. But the presence of the rainbow in the Priestly vision of the fourth day's creation is also evident in the Septuagint's translation of Exodus 30:24 (in the fourth speech to Moses). There, in the instructions for the making of the anointing oil, for the Hebrew's קָקַף ('cassia') the Greek has instead ἶρις. The context demands a reference to a plant, as an ingredient in the oil and, accordingly, ἶρις can be taken to refer to the flower of the same name (Iris). However, ἶρις is first and foremost the Greek word for the rainbow. The Septuagint, like the author of ben Sira 50, perhaps thought that the rainbow belongs with the sun, moon and stars in the fourth day's creative activities.

Lastly, we should note that Simon's cosmic function here takes up that of the king in an earlier period. In 2 Samuel 23:4 David says Israel's earthly ruler 'is like the light of morning, like the sun rising on a cloudless morning, gleaming from the rain on the grassy land'.¹⁰²

50:9: Simon as the Sacred Incense (Day 5)

On the fifth day of creation God makes the creatures that swarm in the sea and the birds of the sky. Given that all creatures that swarm, whether birds, creatures of the earth or in the sea, are regarded as unclean in Leviticus (11:10, 29-31, 41-46), it is not altogether surprising that the account of Simon's ministry in the Temple makes no explicit reference to the creatures of the fifth day.

For the fifth day of creation ben Sira returns instead to the subject of the fifth speech to Moses in Exodus 30:34-38, the sacred incense, which he has already included in Wisdom's creation recital in 24:15. There Wisdom was compared to the ingredients

¹⁰¹ Though the majority reading has λαοῦ in v. 5a some mss. have ναοῦ. The latter fits the Hebrew. However, whether the procession is that of the people, i.e. the heavenly bodies, or the sanctuary itself, i.e. the firmament, reflects an ambiguity in the meaning of the word περιστροφή itself.

¹⁰² The linking of the procession of the sun through the firmament with the activity of the high priest in the Temple is perhaps also reflected in the *Temple's Scroll* identification of the central gate of the Eastern face of the Temple, through which the rising sun can be seen at the summer solstice, with the the tribe of Levi (11QT 39:12; 40:14-15). This identification of Levi with the rising sun as it comes up on the eastern horizon over the mount of Olives is clearly assumed in *T. Naph.* 5:1-4.

of sacred incense, now Simon has the very same honour (50:9a cf. Jer. 11:16; Ps. 52:10; 92:12-14; Hos 14:6-7).¹⁰³

The rest of verse 9 clearly focuses on Simon's gold and jewel studded garments. For the Greek translator here too the thought is probably for the sacred incense.¹⁰⁴ The Greek says that Simon is like a golden vessel wholly beaten (ὄλοσφύρητον). This is presumably his translation of the Hebrew of Exodus 39:3 which says that for Aaron's garments sheets of gold were 'hammered out (וּפְרָטוּ) (and cut into threads)'. However, the word ὄλοσφύρητον is not used by the LXX at that point and it is perhaps chosen by Sirach because it has its own associations with the incense. The word ὄλοσφύρητον is a biblical *hapax legomenon*, and is only rarely attested elsewhere.¹⁰⁵ In metallurgical terms its meaning is 'beaten solid', as opposed to a metal which is 'cast' in a mold. The compound form is related to the verbs 'φύρω' and 'φύρω' both of which mean, essentially, the mixing together of something dry and something solid. The latter form is used in the LXX of the kneading of dough (e.g. Gen 18:6; Exod 29:2, 40; Lev 2:4, 5). The sense then seems to be that metal that is ὄλοσφύρητον is 'kneaded'.

Now it can hardly be a coincidence that both the senses of 'mixing' and 'beating' that combine to make the action of kneading appear in the Priestly instructions for the making of the holy incense. In Exodus 30:35-36 Moses is told to

make an incense blended as by the perfumer, mixed (LXX: μεμιγμένον, cf. Heb. מִלְּמָ), pure and holy; and you shall beat some of it into powder (הִרְפֹּשׁ) ...

Where the Hebrew thought incense should be 'salted' the Septuagint thought the principal idea here was that of mixing. The Hebrew verb רָפַשׁ is elsewhere used with precisely the same sense of the beating of solid substances - either to break them down (Job 14:19, cf. Isa 40:15; 45:8; Ps 18:42) or to make them firm like molten metal (Job 37:18, cf. רָפַשׁ, 'sky') - which is inherent in the Greek word ὄλοσφύρητον. So, perhaps, the Greek translator says that Simon is like a golden vessel which is ὄλοσφύρητον because as such he has undergone the same method of manufacture as the sacred incense.

50:11-13 Simon the Image of God ruling over every living creature (Day 6)

¹⁰³ What role the vegetative language of vv. 8, 10 has in the overall creation structure is not immediately clear. It obviously links Simon to Wisdom in chapter 24 where we have seen it fulfills the fourth act of creation in Genesis 1:9-11. In chapter 24 the emphasis was on the *growth* of the different plants, here it is on their coming to *flower and fruition*. The thought is perhaps for the right manifestation of the life force inherent in the two spheres of creation described on the fifth day. The vegetation of vv. 8, 10 is the product of the water and moisture from below (v. 8b) which with the help of the energy of the summer sun in the firmament above (esp. v. 8c) is converted to olives (v. 10).

¹⁰⁴ The Hebrew is damaged at v. 9b.

¹⁰⁵ LSJ 1218. It is perhaps the translator's own rendering of the verb פָּרַט in Exod. 39:3.

Verses 11-13 are a relatively distinct literary unit. Whereas in vv. 5-10 Simon is imagined coming out of the sanctuary, in vv. 11-13 he is described serving at the altar surrounded by his fellow priests. There are several reasons to think that ben Sira wants us to imagine here the true image of God ruling over every living creature which he was given on the sixth day of creation.

In verse 11ab Simon puts on his priestly clothing. He wears the garment(s) of Glory. Given the identification of Simon with the Glory of God of Ezekiel 1:26-28 in v. 7, verse 11ab describes the investiture of the divine image.¹⁰⁶ The Hebrew of chapter 50 has already identified Simon with Adam by aligning each with the beauty (תפארת) of the other (49:16-50:1). Once again the Hebrew reminds the reader that the high priest's garments are those of the pre-lapsarian Adam when it says he clothes himself with the 'garments of beauty (תפארת)'.¹⁰⁷

The language in verse 11 harks back to 45:7-8 where similar language has been used of Aaron:¹⁰⁷

7 ... and he gave to him majesty (הוד) and he (Aaron) ministered to him in his (God's) Glory (וישרתהו בכבודו) and He girded him with the horns of a wild ox (ויאזרהו בתועפות ראם) and clothed him with bells

8 He clothed him with the perfect beauty (כליל תפארת) and beautified him (ויפארהו) with Glory and strength (ועוז) (ויכבוד), the breeches, tunic and mantle,

7 ... He blessed him with stateliness (ἐν εὐκοσμίᾳ), and girded him in a glorious robe (περιέζωσεν αὐτὸν περιστολήν δόξης).

8 He clothed him in the perfection of boasting (συντέλειαν καυχήματος), and strengthened him with the vessels of might (σκεύεσιν ἰσχύος), the linen under-garments, the long robe, and the ephod.

The Hebrew of 45:8 ascribes to Aaron what Israel's Psalmody gives to the LORD the creator (cf. Pss. 29:1 & 97:6). Whilst 50:11 picks up this earlier vignette of the garments of glory and beauty (or 'boasting') it adds another biblical text to the picture. The Hebrew of 50:11 – 'when he wrapped himself (בעשיהו)' – recalls Psalm 104:1-2 where the God who stretches out the heavens is 'clothed with honour and majesty (הוד והדר),

¹⁰⁶ The dressing of the statue of a god with its golden, jewel bedecked garments is probably in view here. On this see A.L. Oppenheim, 'The Golden Garments of the Gods', *ANES* 8 (1949), pp. 172-193 and Fletcher-Louis, 'The Worship of Divine Humanity'.

¹⁰⁷ The divergences between the Greek and Hebrew at 45:7-8 are notoriously difficult. See Wright, *No Small Difference*, pp. 171-3 and Hayward, *Jewish Temple*, pp. 65-6 for discussion.

wrapped with light (עֲפָה אֹרֶךְ) as a garment'.¹⁰⁸ Dressed in God's garments, the garments of Glory, Simon is his veritable image. Unlike the post-lapsarian Adam he has no shame, because his nakedness is covered with 'the perfection of *boasting*' (Greek, cf. 24:22a). He wears the garments which only true obedience to Wisdom can provide (6:29-31 & 24:22a).

In Genesis 1:28-30 God gives to Adam *dominion* over every living thing. At that time and then later (Gen 9:1-5) the true humanity is also given to eat of the whole of (the clean) creation; both vegetation and animals. In Sirach 50:12-13 the true Adam receives again sacrificial offerings at the LORD's own table, the altar. Simon stands with the power of life and death over the same offerings, his fellow priests symbolizing 'the crown' of his divine kingship (v. 12bc). Adam was commanded to *multiply* and *fill* creation as a manifestation of God's own divine kingship (Gen. 1:28, cf. Isa 6:3). The manifestation of the image in Israel's chief priest means the cultic microcosm, the 'court of the sanctuary', is now *filled* with honour (הַדָּר) or glory (δόξα) (v. 11d) and the Glory of the chief priest is now extended and *multiplied* to all his sons (v. 13a).

Whilst Genesis 1:26-30 is thus clearly in view it is also likely that the sixth day of creation is being interpreted through Psalm 8, an OT passage which is regularly cited as a conceptual parallel to the view of mankind taken in Genesis 1.¹⁰⁹ Verses 4-8 [Eng. 3-7] of that hymn praising humanity is perhaps beneath the surface of much of our chapter and it certainly rises up to the surface of the Hebrew text in vv. 11-13. The relevant verses read:

- 3 When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers,
the moon and the stars that you have established;
4 What is man (אָנוֹשׁ) that you remember him (תִּזְכְּרֵנִי),
the son of man (בֶּן אָדָם) that you care for him (תִּפְקְדֵנִי)?
5 Yet you have made him a little lower than God,
and crowned him (תַּעֲמִידֵהוּ) with glory and honour (כְּבוֹד וְהַדָּר);
6 You have given him dominion over the works of your hands (מַעֲשֵׂי יָדֶיךָ);
you have put all things under their feet,
7 all sheep and oxen, and also the beasts of the field, ...

Just like the psalmist in verse 3 ben Sira surveys the heavens – as they are manifest in the Temple and the moon and the stars as they appear from the sanctuary in the person of Simon. In answer to the questions of verse 4 of the psalm Ben Sira 49:16 says that both Seth, the Son of Adam, and Enosh were cared for (נִפְקְדוּ), presumably by God,

¹⁰⁸ Cf. also Isa 59:17. The allusion to Psalm 104:2 is picked up in some of the Greek manuscripts of Sirach 50:11 where ἐν τῷ ἀναβάλλειν picks up the ἀναβαλλόμενος of the LXX of Psalm 104:2. The majority reading, ἐν τῷ ἀναλαμβάνειν, perhaps echoes Job 40:10 and Deut. 1:41.

¹⁰⁹ For Psalm 8 in Sirach 49:16 and what follows see J. K. Aitken, 'The Semantics of 'Glory' in Ben Sira - Traces of a Development in Post-Biblical Hebrew,' in T. Muraoka and J. F. Elwolde (eds.), *Sirach, Scrolls, and Sages. Proceedings of the Second International Symposium on the Hebrew of the Dead Sea Scrolls, Ben Sira, and the mishnah, held at Leiden University, 15-17 December 1977* (STDJ 33; Leiden: Brill, 1999), pp. 1-24 (10).

as was Israel's house under Simon, the true Adam (נִפְקֵד, 50:1) and her liturgy is confidently carried out as for a memorial (לְזִכְרוֹת) to the Most High (v. 16). But the clearest allusion to Psalm 8 comes in verses 11-13 where Simon, wearing the garments of Glory (כְּבוֹד) gives honour (יְהַדֵּד) to the court of the sanctuary as he ascends the altar and is surrounded by his fellow priests – his crown (עֲשֵׂרֶה) – in their glory (בְּכְבוֹדָם). When he has mounted the altar the Hebrew says that there 'he stood over the arranged pieces (i.e. the sacrificial offerings)'. The language is odd, and the Greek has, understandably, changed it to 'he was standing by the hearth of the altar'. The oddity is explained if the language is deliberately chosen so that the scene fulfills Psalm 8:7: here we see the true Adam ruling over all God's works, with all things under his feet; all sheep, oxen and beasts of the field.

As far as the imaginative possibilities of the cultic realm allow, this is a vision of the sixth day of creation as God had always intended it. This is also the banquet to which Wisdom had invited her readers in 24:20-22. But is there the sabbatical rest of God?

50:14-21: The Completion of Creation (Day 7 Part A)

Verses 14-21 are another distinct literary block, the details of which fulfill the vision for the seventh day of creation prescribed by the Pentateuch.

Thus far we have concentrated on the intratextuality between the seven days of creation and the seven speeches to Moses in Exodus 25-31. It is well known that the relationship between creation and Tabernacle erection is also expressed through linguistic correspondences between the last verses of the creation account on the seventh day (Genesis 2:1-3) and the last verses of the second block of Tabernacle material (Exodus 35-40) where the instructions of chapters 25-31 are carried out:¹¹⁰

[Exod. 31:18 When God finished speaking (כָּלֵלָה לְדָבָר) with Moses on Mount Sinai, ...]

Gen. 2:1 Thus the heavens and the earth were finished (וַיֵּכֶל, σὺντετελέσθησαν), and all their multitude (ὁ κόσμος αὐτῶν). Exod. 39:32a In this way all the work of the tabernacle of the tent of meeting was finished (וַיֵּכֶל);

Gen. 2:2 And on the seventh day God finished (וַיֵּכֶל, σὺντετέλεσεν) the work (מְלָאכָה, τὰ ἔργα αὐτοῦ) that he had done, and he rested on the seventh day from all σὺντετέλεσεν ... τὰ ἔργα). Exod. 40:33 He set up the court around the tabernacle and the altar, ... So Moses finished the work (מְלָאכָה ... וַיֵּכֶל).

¹¹⁰ See, for example, U. Cassuto, *A Commentary on the Book of Exodus* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1967), pp. 476-77, 483; Weinfeld, 'Sabbath, Temple and the Enthronement of the Lord', 502ff; Levenson, *Creation*, pp. 84-86; Janowski, 'Tempel und Schöpfung', pp. 46-47.

the work that he had done.

συνετέλεσεν ... τὰ ἔργα).

The parallels between the conclusion to the creation account and the conclusion to the preparation of the Tabernacle mean that what Moses does for the former is in imitation of, or an extension of, God's work in creation.¹¹¹ The same point is made through the theme of blessing in the two parts of P's work:

<p>Gen. 1:28 God <i>blessed</i> them (man and woman) (יְבַרֵךְ אֱדָם, ηὐλόγησεν αὐτούς), ...</p> <p>Gen. 2:3 So God <i>blessed</i> (יְבַרֵךְ, ηὐλόγησεν) the seventh day and hallowed it, ...</p>	<p>Exod. 39:43 [LXX v. 23] When Moses saw that they had done all the work (כִּלְמַלְאכָה, πάντα τὰ ἔργα) just as the LORD had commanded, he <i>blessed</i> them (יְבַרֵךְ, εὐλόγησεν αὐτούς).</p>
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Exodus 39:43 is the only act of blessing in the whole of Exodus 25-40 and it is comprehensively ambivalent: Moses blesses both the people and their works. Moses' blessing thus echoes God's blessing of both humanity and his works, especially the sabbath (cf. also Gen. 1:22).

Now, both the themes of creation-tabernacle's completion and the divine blessing thereon constitute the heart of the seventh block of text in Sirach 50. The two parallel statements in Genesis 2:1-2 and Exodus 39:32; 40:33 are echoed in Sirach with two parallel statements (vv. 14, 19) followed by Simon's blessing of the people in the penultimate verse of the hymn:

<p>14 (Heb) Until he finished ministering at the altar, (עַד כְּלוּתוֹ לְשֵׁרֶת מִזְבַּח) ...</p> <p>And set in order the arrangements of the Most High</p> <p>...</p>	<p>14 (Gk) And the perfection (συντέλειαν) of the service/servants at the altars, To adorn (κοσμήσαι) the offering of the Most High, the Almighty</p> <p>...</p>
<p>19 ... until he finished ministering at the altar (עַד כְּלוּתוֹ לְשֵׁרֶת מִזְבַּח) ...</p>	<p>19 ... until the cosmos of the LORD was completed (ἕως συντελεσθῆ κόσμος κυρίου) and they completed (ἐτελείωσαν) his service.</p>

¹¹¹ The point was well known in Antiquity as Josephus *Ant.* 3:180-181 attests. There Moses is a divine man in his construction of the microcosmic Tabernacle.

20 Then he went down and raised his hands
 over all the congregation of Israel,
 And the *Blessing of the LORD* (ברכה יי, εὐλογία κυρίου) was on his lips,
 and in the Name of the LORD he beautified himself.

It is not just the Greek of 50:19 which picks up the LXX of Genesis 2:2 (so Hayward); the whole of this unit, in both the Greek and the Hebrew is a highly self-conscious affirmation of the priestly vision for the completion of creation picking up Genesis 2:1-3, on the one hand, and Exodus 39:32; 39:43 and Exodus 40:33 on the other.

Just as Moses participates in God's 'being', by virtue of his recapitulation of cosmic creativity and blessing, so also here Simon 'is beautified/boasts' in the Name of the LORD, which of course he both utters and wears on his turban (Exod. 29:36; 39:30). Simon's 'Blessing of the LORD' is probably the Aaronic blessing of Numbers 6:23-27 through which it is only the *people* of Israel who are blessed.¹¹² But, at least for the Hebrew original of Ben Sira, the cultic community are *representative of all flesh* (v. 17 בשר כל) and *all the peoples of the earth* (v. 19 כל עם הארץ). And so Simon's blessing is at once the blessing of Israel (Exod. 39:43), the whole of humanity (Gen 1:28) and the rest of creation (Gen. 1:22; 2:3; Exod. 39:43).

One other detail of the Hebrew leaves us in no doubt about which portion of scripture and what day of creation is in the author's mind. The verbal root ערך, 'to arrange, order' appears twice in this block of material. In verse 14b Simon 'set in order the arrangements (מערכות) of the Most High and in verse 18b at the sound of the trumpet the singers 'set in order the lamp (העריכו נר)'. The same root is used on six occasions in Exodus 25-40 of which five all come in the closing verses of the account of the Tabernacle's preparation (Exod. 39:37; 40:4 twice; 40:23 twice, cf. 27:21). Sirach 50:18b picks up Exodus 39:37 where 'lamps of the arrangement (המערכות) and all its utensils' are brought by the Israelites to Moses' (cf. 27:21). The image in v. 18b is thus a metonymic one, capturing in a snapshot the closing stages of the Tabernacle's construction.

In like manner Simon's ordering of the 'arrangements (מערכות) of the Most High' in verse 14b picks up God's commandment to Moses in Exodus 40:4: 'You shall bring in the table, and arrange (ערכה) its setting (ערכו); and you shall bring in the lampstand, and set up its lamps' which is promptly obeyed in Exodus 40:23 when, having put the table in the tent of meeting, Moses 'arranged (יערך) upon it the order (ערך) of the bread before the LORD' (i.e. the Shewbread). The plural מערכות may have in mind the arrangement of the table and the bread as two distinct acts of ordering. That ben Sira is ultimately

¹¹² The account of Aaron's descent from the altar and blessing of the people and the people's singing for joy in Lev. 9:22-24 is also in view throughout Sirach 50:16-20 (cf. Smend, *Die Weishiet*, p. 488).

interested, in particular, in the order of the Shewbread is likely given that the word מערכה occurs nine times in the Hebrew Bible for the rows or stacks of twelve loaves in the sanctuary. Sometimes we encounter the expression 'לחם מערכה' (Neh 10:34; 1Chr. 9:32, 1Chr. 23:29, cf. 2Chr. 13:11) and on one occasion the Shewbread is referred to as 'מערכות המיד' (2Chr. 2:3). But ben Sira has chosen the absolute form used in 1Chronicles 28:16, 2Chronicles 29:18, Leviticus 24:6 'שהים מערכות שש המערכה' and Leviticus 24:7 (cf. Lev. 24:8).

That ben Sira 50:14b focuses, in particular, on the arrangement of the Shewbread is important because this is yet another indicator that we have here to do with the Sabbath. The removal and replacement of the Shewbread which Sirach here describes is an act which is specifically set for the Sabbath (Lev. 24:8; 1Chr. 9:32; Philo *Spec. Leg.* 1:172; Josephus *Ant.* 3:255).

50:14-21: Wisdom's Banquet and Sabbatical Rest (Day 7 Part B)

We have seen how the closing verses of the retelling of the Genesis 1 creation account in Chapter 24:3-22 pointed forward to a fulfillment of the seventh day of creation in Israel's sanctuary. The details of Sirach 50:14-21 make it abundantly clear that Simon's officiation completes Wisdom's cosmic banquet.

In Sirach 24:20 Wisdom called her banquet a memorial meal (τὸ μνημόσυνόν μου) and given the story of her life which she had just told we expected that memorial to be one which recounted the history of creation. That is precisely what we have now witnessed in chapter 50 and so it is fitting that Simon's activities are concluded with a trumpet blast 'for a memorial (להזכיר, εἰς μνημόσυνον)' before the Most High in verse 16.

In the Greek of 24:20 Wisdom's memorial is sweeter than honey (τὸ ... μνημόσυνόν μου ὑπὲρ τὸ μέλι γλυκύ). So, too, the Greek of Sirach 50 is brought to a liturgical crescendo, what verse 18 calls 'the greatest sound', with a blast of the trumpets and the singers praising in a sweetened melody (ἐγλυκάνθη μέλος) (v. 18b). Thus, the sanctuary's worship is an auditory ambrosiac and those who 'possess' it (cf. 24:21b) will have entered the incorruptible, eternal, life of the cosmos in which they, along with their high priest (Gk 50:20d), can 'boast' without shame (cf. 24:22a).

In Sirach 24:22b Wisdom had promised 'those who work in me will not sin'. With Sirach 50:14-21 this is now fully intelligible. In these verses the seventh day of creation is completed in the cultic microcosm. Significantly, however, nowhere does the text speak of rest; neither for Simon, his people or, for that matter, for God. In fact the activity here is the busiest it has been since the beginning of chapter. Simon 'sets in order the arrangements of the Most High' (v. 14b Heb), he gives a cosmic adornment to God's offerings (v. 14b Gk), he stretches out his hand to make a libation offering (v. 15ab Gk), the priests blow their trumpets, all the people 'hastened together and fell on

their faces' (v. 17ab), not once, but twice (v. 21) and the singers praise with their voices (v. 18a). The final act of the drama is hardly restful: it seems more like a frenzy.

But then the point appears to be that, as Wisdom has already said of herself 'those who work in the sanctuary do not sin', even when their work pertains to the seventh day of creation. This is God's rest which Philo says is 'a working with absolute ease, without toil and without suffering' (*On the Cherubim* 87). The idea was, in fact, well known in the late Second Temple period as a famous passage in the gospels attests (Matt 12:5: 'have you not read in the law that on the Sabbath the priests in the temple break the Sabbath and are guiltless', cf. *Jubilees* 50:10-11).¹¹³ Those who work in the sanctuary, in the place, the time and the rhythm of primordial Wisdom, work in an effortless rest. And in their work, embodied supremely in the duties of their high priest, Wisdom finds her own rest for which she had been searching since the beginning of creation (24:7-11).

50:14-21: The End and the Beginning of Creation

We noted at the start of our discussion of chapter 50 that there is no clear fulfillment of the first day of creation or of the first speech to Moses. Why is this passed over? I am not entirely sure. However, the lacuna is partly filled by the contents of the seventh section of the chapter.

Besides the account in Exodus 39-40 the one other reference to the arranging (עָרַךְ) of the lampstand in Exodus 25-40 is the important command that Aaron arrange (or 'tend') the lampstand in Exodus 27:20-21. This is a key portion of the first speech to Moses linking the work of Aaron in the Tabernacle with the work of God in creating the light on the first day. We might have expected some reference to Simon's tending the lampstand, or an equivalent action, in the very first verses of chapter 50. Instead it comes in the seventh portion of the chapter.

The reason is perhaps that the completion of the work of the sanctuary is not just a *completion* of creation, it is also its beginning. There are other aspects of Sirach 50:14-21 which suggest the chapter looks forward to a new liturgical cycle in which the work of creation is begun anew. The Hebrew of verses 14 and 19 describes the continuation of the cultic service 'until (עַד) Simon finished ministering at the altar which in the Greek of verse 19 is put in terms of the people's prayer 'until (ἕως) the cosmos of the LORD was completed. We are never told when, if at all, this cosmic ministration *is* definitively completed. The reader, of course, knows that it goes on. It continues in both a weekly, seven day, and an annual cycle. The seven day cycle is in view in the setting in order of the arrangements for the table of the Shewbread in verse 14 which is to be done

¹¹³ The idea is anticipated by Ezek. 44:18 where, in the Edenic eschatological sanctuary, there is to be none of the sweat (זְהַר) which characterizes the cursed labour since humanity's expulsion from the Garden (Gen 3:19).

continually (תמיד), every sabbath (ביום השבת ביום השבת) as an eternal covenant (Lev. 24:8). The blowing of the trumpets for a memorial in verse 16 probably has in mind the whole annual cycle of the Israel's festivals. In Numbers 10:10 the blowing of trumpets is prescribed for all Israel's 'days of rejoicing, ... appointed festivals, and at the beginnings of the months'. The blowing of trumpets for a memorial is otherwise particularly associated with Rosh Hashanah (Lev. 23:23-25; Num. 29:16), at the turning of the year (Exod. 34:22).

So, ben Sira is, perhaps, partly silent about the first day of creation at the beginning of chapter 50 because he sees the end of creation within the cultic microcosm as itself a beginning; a moment within the liturgical enactment of the eternal return. Not that Sirach has utterly evacuated salvation-history of all meaning. He looks for the final ingathering of the tribes of Jacob, the fulfillment of the prophetic promises and the defeat of God's enemies (36:1-22). In this sense, too, both the liturgy of the Temple and continual work of the creator in creation will only be complete when the ordered and glorified world which it reveals and makes possible is extended beyond Israel's temple to the whole of creation.

Conclusions

We are now in a position to draw out the main conclusions of our study.

Sirach 24 and 50 are two carefully crafted halves of a literary dyptich modeled on the canonical dialectic between creation and Tabernacle in the Priestly strand of the Pentateuch. It is as such that both chapters have a profound literary integrity which can only be appreciated through the hermeneutical key provided by a prior knowledge of the author's understanding of scripture. According to this hermeneutic Israel's God's creation of the world is in a perfect, if complex, symmetrical relationship to the nation's construction of sacred space and time. Their sanctuary is a mini-cosmos; its maintenance, its liturgical drama and personnel are a 'copy' of the universe in all its parts. As such Israel's worship brings creation towards its completion.

The entire fund of human wisdom, in every sphere of life which is covered in the rest of ben Sira's wisdom collection, owes its origin to the divine person Wisdom who is at once both creator and creature. Her life is the power behind, and the order within, the structure of the cosmos and yet she has taken up residence in the particular people Israel and its cult. Above all she is 'incarnate' in her avatar, Israel's high priest. He, like her, embraces both sides of the creator/creature 'divide', at least, that is, within the framework of his office as high priest and *Ersatz* royal figurehead.¹¹⁴ Simon, the ideal

¹¹⁴ For a perceptive analysis of Sirach's emphasis on the *office* (rather than the *person*) see B.L. Mack, *Wisdom and the Hebrew Epic: Ben Sira's Hymn in Praise of the Fathers* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985), pp. 11-36, 47-52.

high priest, imitates the creator in following in all its essential details the order of creation. And yet, simultaneously, as a creature - as the true human being - he embodies the perfect order of creation, the sun, the moon and stars, and panoply of nature in all its beauty and creative energy.

The self-praise of Wisdom in the text of chapter 24 is actualized in Israel's 'worship' of the high priest in chapter 50. Both Wisdom and the high priest are legitimately worshipped because their lives uniquely and irreducibly instantiate the life of the creator God within the drama of Israel's microcosmically conceived cultic and civil life. Not only is ben Sira's literary piece a hymn in praise of Simon on these grounds, he also thinks the people in the Temple do actually worship the high priest as the embodiment of Wisdom, the Kavod and the creator. When they bow down a second time in verse 21 they do so before the high priest who manifests God's Name (verse 20).¹¹⁵ Just what this all means for the shape of ben Sira's unashamedly *biblical* and *monotheistic* theology would require more critical reflection than is possible here.¹¹⁶

Ben Sira is a work of inestimable value for both OT and post-biblical studies. The author's cultic cosmology and sacramental anthropology is witness to a long history of Priestly temple and creation theology with a particular and sophisticated understanding of Genesis 1 and the Tabernacle material in Exodus. The intratextuality between Sirach 24 and 50 as good as 'proves' the claim of Kearney, Weinfeld, Levenson and others that Genesis 1 and Exodus 25-40 belong together.

Ben Sira shows that the complex theology which the two portions of the Pentateuch attest is known intimately in a Jerusalem based school of scribal activity in the early second century B.C. By its very nature the reading of the Pentateuch which ben Sira knows is one which requires a diligent transmission of the tradition from one generation of bible interpreters to the next. The relationship between the Hebrew original and the translation of Jesus ben Sira's Greek speaking grandson is itself a witness to the way in which the tradition of interpretation was guarded: the younger relative also knows the inner mysteries of the Priestly tradition, giving it his own clarity of expression and some new details. In this respect Olyan's conclusion that in the second century B.C. a 'pure' P tradition is being taught in Aaronid schools for the training of priests has been partially confirmed by our analysis of his cosmology. Only 'partially' confirmed, however, because whilst ben Sira and his grandson know their P material intimately, they have a canonical consciousness interpreting P material in its larger literary context (Genesis 2-3; Prov 8; Job 26). And so it must be doubted that they themselves would have admitted the existence of a distinct literary source which we call P.

¹¹⁵ For the 'worship' of the high priest in contemporary Jewish texts see Barker, , 'The High Priest and the Worship of Jesus' and Fletcher-Louis 'Worship of the Divine Humanity'.

¹¹⁶ See Fletcher-Louis, 'Worship of the Divine Humanity', for further reflection on these issues.

The tradition can, therefore, be securely dated to the end of the second century B.C. The grandson probably wanted his readers to study his grandfather's work in depth, as he himself had done. Though an inner biblical interpretative paradigm, it does not appear to have been esoteric: ben Sira was quite happy to publish a work that could be widely read and which would lend itself to translation and then transmission through the growing Jewish diaspora of the Hellenistic world. Did the tradition peter out? How well known was it outside priestly circles? These questions may be hard to answer with confidence. Elsewhere, I have argued that at least one Jew in the first century A.D. – the author of Colossians 1:15-20 – knew rather well the basic shape of the P-Sirach cosmology.¹¹⁷ But a thoroughgoing assessment of the place of this cosmology in the history of Second Temple Judaism(s) will have to wait for a longer study.

¹¹⁷ 'Wisdom Christology and the Partings of the Ways Between Judaism and Christianity', in S.E. Porter & B.W.R. Pearson (eds.), *Proceedings of the Roehampton Jewish-Christian Relations Through the Centuries Conference February 1999* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000), pp. 48-64.