

# Hebrew Ben Sira 50

Annotated translation of Ms B (from the Cairo Geniza), following the transcription in P. C. Beentjes, *The Book of Ben Sira in Hebrew* (VTSupps 68; Leiden: Brill, 1997).

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|       | 14 Few have been formed on the earth as your priests/like Enoch, <sup>1</sup><br>and he was even taken (to see God) face to face (נלקח פנים).                    | Gen 5:24                                       |
|       | 15 If, like Joseph, he had been born a man,<br>then his body would also have been cared for (נפקדה).   | Gen 50:25; Exod 13:19; Josh 24:32              |
| Day 1 | 16 Shem, Seth and Enosh (אנוש) were cared for (נפקדו),<br>and above all the living creatures (כל חי)<br>(is/was) the beauty of a man/of Adam (תפארת אדם).        | Ps 8:5<br>Isa 44:13                            |
|       | 50:1 “Greatest of his brothers, beauty of his people (תפארת עמו),<br>(was) Simeon ben Johanan, the Priest,   | Lev 21:10, Exod 28:2, 40. Ben Sira 44:7        |
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| Day 2 | In whose generation (אשר בדורו) the house was taken care of/visited (נפקד),<br>and in whose days the sanctuary was strengthened (חזק).                           |  |
|       | 2 <sup>2</sup> In whose days (אשר בימיו) the wall was built,<br>The corners of the habitation (מעין) in the sanctuary of the King.                               | Deut 26:15 & Ps 68:6?                          |
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| Day 3 | 3 <sup>3</sup> In whose generation (אשר בדורו) the water-pool (מקוה) was dug,<br>a bulwark against <i>the sea</i> in its tumult (אשיה בים בהמונו) <sup>4</sup> . | Gen 1:9–11; Sir 48:17 (Hezekiah);<br>Isa 22:11 |
|       | 4 Who was concerned for his people (to preserve them) from robbery,<br>and who made his city stronger (ומחזק עירו) than the adversary/than Tyre (מצר).           | 3 Macc 2:1–20<br>48:17 (Hezekiah); Neh 3       |
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| Day 4 | 5 How glorified (מה נהדר) he was as he gazed forth from tent (בהשגחו מאהל)<br>and as he went forth from the house of the veil.                                   | Ps 8:4, 6?; Ps 19:4–6<br>43:1–12               |

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1. The extant Hebrew (Ms. B) has כהניך “your priests,” however the Greek translation evidently read a reference to Enoch (כהנוך) and 49:14b also assumes 14a refers to Enoch who was taken up to God at the end of his life (Gen 5:24). The confusion was likely encouraged by the tradition that Enoch was a priest (see *Jubilees*, 2 *Enoch*).

2. This is verse 3 in Ms B. With the majority of commentators, and following the order of verses in the Greek, our translation reverses the order of vv. 2 and 3 in Ms B.

3. This verse 2 in Ms B. See previous note.

4. Ms B has אשיח בם בהמונו which makes no sense (“a cistern in them in its multitude/tumult”?). Most emend בם to כים and translate “a reservoir/pool, like the sea, in its vastness/immensity”. But המון does not readily mean “vastness, immensity” (cf. Sir 45:9; 50:18) and our emendation reflects the centuries-old symbolic significance of humanly constructed water-works in Israel’s sacred city and temple.

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|       | 6 As a star of light (ככוכב אור) from among the clouds (מבין עבים),<br>and a full moon bringing understanding in<br>/determining (מבין) the festival days (בימי מועד).  | <b>Gen 1:14–19</b><br>Sir 43:7; Ps 8:4   |
|       | 7 And as the crimson sun lighting up (כשמש משרקת) the palace (היכל) of the king,<br>and as a bow appearing in the cloud (כקשת נראתה בענן).  | 2 Sam 23:4<br>Ezek 1:26–28; Exod 16:10; Num<br>17:7; Isa 60:1–3; Gen 9:14  |
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| Day   | 8 As blossom (כנוץ) on branches in their season/in festival days,<br>5 and as a lily (כשושן) in streams of water.<br>As a shoot (כפרח) of Lebanon (לבנון) on summer days.   | Sir 24:12–17; <b>Gen 1:12–13</b><br>Hos 14:6–7<br>Nah 1:4  |
|       | 9 And as fire (כאש) of incense (לבונה) upon the offering,<br>as vessels (ככלי) of gold [ .....]<br>which is held in place on delightful stones (אבני הפז).  | Sir 48:1 (Elijah); Lev 6:8<br><br>Sir 45:11; Isa 54:12.  |
|       | 10 As a green olive (כזית רענן) full of berries,<br>as an oil tree (כעץ שמן) laden with branches.   | Ps 52:8; Zech 4:11–14; Hos 14:7  |
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| Day   | 11 When he wrapped himself (בעטותו) in the garments of Glory (בגדי כבוד),<br>6 and clothed himself in garments of beauty (התלבשו בגדי תפארת),<br>When he ascended (בעלותו) upon the altar there was majesty (הוד),<br>and he made glorious (ויהדר) the court of the holy place.   | Exod 28:2, 40; Ps 104:1–2; Sir 45:7–<br>8; Job 40:10; Isa 52:1<br>Pss 8:6–9; 96:6<br><b>Gen 1:26–28</b>  |
|       | 12a When he received (בקבלו) the sacrificial portions from his brothers' hands,<br>and he himself stood over (והוא נצב על) the arranged pieces/ordered assembly<br>(מערכות),<br>Around him was the crown (עטרה) of his sons,<br>As seedlings of cedar trees in Lebanon (כשתילי ארזים בלבנון),<br>and as willows of the brook (ערבי נחל) they encircled him.   | Lev 1:3–9<br><br>Ps 8:6<br>Pss 92:12–14; 128:3<br>Lev 23:40  |
|       | 13 All (כל) the sons of Aaron in their glory (בכבודם)<br>and the fire offerings of the LORD in their hands (בידם)<br>before the all (כל) the congregation of Israel.  | Sir 45:45  |
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| Day   | 14 <i>Until he finished ministering at the altar</i> (עד כלותו לשרת מזבח),<br>and set in order (לסדר) the arrangements of the Most High (מערכות עליון).   | <b>Gen 2:1–2</b> ; Exod 31:18a; 39:32a;<br>40:33b; Lev 24:6, 8   |
| 7     | 16 Then the “ <i>sons of Aaron, the priests, sounded forth<br/>on trumpets</i> ” (יריעו בני אהרן הכהנים בהצצרות)<br>So they sounded (ויריעו) and made heard the majestic sound (קול אדיר),<br>to make remembrance (להזכיר לפני עליון) before the Most High.<br><br>17 All flesh (כל בשר) made haste together (יהדו נמהרו),<br>and fell on their faces, to the earth (על פניהם ארצה),<br>To worship before the Most High (לפני עליון),<br>before the Holy One of Israel (לפני קדוש ישראל), | <b>Num 10:8</b> ; 8:2, 9–10; Lev 23:23–25;<br>Exod 34:22; <b>Num 10:10</b> ; 2 Chr<br>29:28–29; Ps 8:2, 10<br>Sir 24:20; Ps 8:5<br><br>Exod 34:8 |
|       | 18 And He rased His voice (ויתן ... קולו), the Song,<br>and over the tumult (המון) they set in order (העריכו) His lamp (נרו).   | Ps 18:14; 2 Chr 29:27<br>Exod 27:20–21; 39:37; Lev 24:4  |

- 19 And all the people of the earth/land (כל עם הארץ) gave a ringing shout  
in prayer before the Merciful One (רחום),  
*Until he finished ministering at the altar* (עד כלותו לשרת מזבח),  
and with His judgements he touched Him (משפטיו הגיע אליו).
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- 20 Then he went down and raised his hands,  
over all the congregation of Israel,  
And the blessing of the LORD (ברכת יי) was on his lips,  
and in the Name of the LORD he beautified himself (ובשם יי הִתְפַּאֵר)  
21 and they fell down (in worship) again a second time,  
[.....] from his face (מפניו).
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- 22 Now bless the LORD (יי), the God of Israel,  
who does wondrous deeds on the earth (בארץ),  
Who causes a man to grow up (המגדל אדם) from the womb  
and makes him according to his goodwill.  
23 He gives you wisdom of heart,  
and He will be in your midst in peace.  
24 He confirms with Simon his lovingkindness (חסדו),  
and he will establish for him the covenant of Phinehas,  
Which shall not be cut off for him and for his seed (ולזרעו),  
like the days of heaven (כימי שמים).
- 25 Two nations my soul detests, and the third is no people:  
26 The people who dwell in Se'ir and the Philistines,  
and the foolish nation that dwells (הדר) in Shechem
- 27 Instruction concerning insight and the mastery of the wheels (מושל אופנים),  
by Simon, ben Joshua, ben Eleazar, ben Sira,  
Who pours forth in pure elucidation,  
Who makes to effervesce with understanding.
- 28 Blessed is the man who meditates on these things,  
and the one who takes them to heart, he is wise.  
29 Because the fear of the LORD is life.

Exod 34:6-7; Sir 36:17-18  
**Gen 2:1-2**; Exod 31:18a; 39:32a;  
40:33b; 2 Chron 29:28

Lev 9:22;  
Num 6:22-25; Gen 1:28; 2:3; Exod  
28:36; 39:30; 39:43; Isa 60:21, 61:3  
Lev 9:24

Sir 49:16

Sir 45:23-25  
Ps 89:30; Sir 45:15

Deut 32:21

Exod 34:7; Deut 32:21

Sir 24:25-33; 49:16; **Ezek 1:1-28**;  
Ps 8:7

Sir 1:8, 18

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5. Following the transcription in Beentjes, *The Book of Ben Sira in Hebrew*, 90. Others, e.g., Mulder (*Simon the High Priest in Sirach* 50, 199), read יתפאר.