

SIRACH

Pamela M. Eisenbaum



Introduction

Like Proverbs, Sirach is a loosely structured work that poetically strings together proverbial recommendations for living and observations on a wide variety of topics, including women. Among the books of the Bible, Sirach easily stands out as the most misogynistic. There is nothing subtle or reserved about such statements as "Better is the wickedness of a man than a woman who does good; it is woman who brings shame and disgrace" (26:14), or "From a woman sin had its beginning, and because of her we all die" (25:24). So negative are Sirach's views on women that one scholar has argued that the text reveals an author whose misogyny is pathological even by the male-dominated standards of the author's own day (Trenchard). Most scholars, however, consider Sirach's negative attitudes toward women typical of the ancient world, rather than idiosyncratic.

Commonly known as Ecclesiasticus in the Roman Catholic canon, Sirach constitutes a collection of wisdom teachings generated during the Hellenistic period. Typical of wisdom literature, its teachings are conventional, traditional, and generic enough to have broad, multicultural appeal. Still, Sirach displays knowledge of most of Hebrew scripture and even connects the Torah with Wisdom personified. Distinctly Jewish yet broad in scope, the wisdom of Sirach represents an amalgamation of Jewish tradition and Hellenistic culture.

When speaking of hellenization or Hellenistic Judaism, scholars do not simply refer to an overlay of Greek culture upon Jewish culture, but rather to the mutual interaction between Hellenism and Judaism. Sirach re-

flects this interaction. Although the author has nothing critical to say regarding his Jewish tradition, beliefs, and practices, his teachings betray a way of life that has been significantly altered by hellenization.

Social and Historical Context

The text of Sirach provides more historical information than is typical of wisdom literature. "Jesus son of Eleazar son of Sirach of Jerusalem" is named as the book's author (50:27; 51:1; hereafter referred to as "Ben Sira"). The Prologue, which was written by Ben Sira's grandson, explains that he translated his grandfather's originally Hebrew work into Greek late in the second century B.C.E. while in Egypt.

Sirach's origins can be specified with considerable precision. The well-known "Hymn to the Ancestors," a lengthy catalogue of biblical heroes found in chaps. 44–50, culminates by eulogizing the high priest Simon II. Simon, though not a biblical character, presided over the Jerusalem Temple from 219 B.C.E. until 196 B.C.E. Because Sirach ends with Simon's eulogy, the majority of scholars assume it was written shortly after Simon's death, between 190 and 180 B.C.E., when the land of Israel was controlled by the Seleucid dynasty. Although Israel experienced major cultural and political upheavals as it passed from one Hellenistic dynasty to another, the first quarter of the second century B.C.E. was calm compared to what came both before and after in Jewish history. Prior to Simon II's reign, during the high priesthood of Onias II, the Jerusalem aristocracy extended its power

by brutal forms of taxation. Later, in 167 B.C.E., a popular and eventually successful revolt ensued under the leadership of the Maccabean family. This rebellion arose in response to an attempt at a through-going cultural and religious campaign of hellenization by the Seleucid ruler Antiochus IV Epiphanes and the Jewish aristocracy loyal to him, including the high priest, Jason, who was, ironically, Simon II's son. Ben Sira's tone is neither polemical nor apologetic; it reflects the period of relative peace that characterized Simon's reign.

The extent to which the Jews of the early second century were hellenized is not clear. It is probably safe to assume that people experienced varying levels of cultural transformation, depending on social position and residence in city or country. As a well-educated scribe (34:39; 38:24) and perhaps also a priest, Ben Sira was surely a member of the upper echelon of Jerusalem society and consequently exposed to Hellenistic practices, values, and aesthetics.

Sirach's Patriarchal Perspective

In his concern for the public values of honor and shame, Ben Sira reflects the cosmopolitan worldview of ancient Mediterranean society. This worldview helped create solidarity among male elites who had a vested interest in political alliances and foreign trade. Crucial to the preservation of this solidarity, the complementary concepts of honor and shame also provide the keys to understanding Ben Sira's valuation of women.

The inherent connection between the acquisition of honor and the construction of masculinity in the honor/shame system illuminates Ben Sira's gendered perspective. As the anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss long ago pointed out, in the social economy women are objects of exchange, while men are the subjects who exchange them. Sirach reflects such a social system: "A woman will accept any man as a husband, but one girl is preferable to another" (Sir. 36:26). In other words, women function as commodities from among whom men choose wives, whereas wives cannot choose their husbands. Wives are symbolic possessions who help to "place" their husbands in the social hierarchy. Indeed, men

create and maintain relationships among themselves through the exchange of women.

Ben Sira probably founded or at least taught in a school for aspiring scribes and future teachers of wisdom. The text of Sirach represents the essence of his teachings, which are addressed to an exclusively male audience. Becoming a scribe required not simply professional training but mastery of worldly wisdom. For Ben Sira, mastering the wisdom of the world meant becoming a man who could successfully make his way in society and thereby earn honor and a lasting name. As the Jerusalem sage tells his students:

If a person is wise to his own advantage, the fruits of his good sense will be praiseworthy. A wise person instructs his own people, and the fruits of his good sense will endure. . . . One who is wise among his people will inherit honor and his name will live forever. (37:22–23, 26)

Given these goals, women in Ben Sira's world are not just objects of exchange in and of themselves but are also objects within the exchange of honor. They are a means—or a hindrance—to the goal set before the appropriately socialized male. Simply put, women function to aid in the acquisition of men's honor. Conversely, if they behave shamefully, they do damage to men's honor. The result of this social system from Ben Sira's exclusively male-oriented point of view is that women are accorded no respect as autonomous human beings.

Thus a reader with feminist sensibilities will find little of redeeming value in Ben Sira's comments on women. Nevertheless, it is important to bear in mind that other texts contemporary with Sirach, such as Judith, offer a more positive attitude regarding women. Sirach may be typical in its reflection of the honor/shame complex and consequent views on women, but this work does not reflect the sum total of that society's valuation of women. Rather, Sirach reflects one dimension—albeit the dominant one—of Second Temple Jewish society. The energy Ben Sira expends teaching young men how to maintain control of their women may mean that women of his time exercised some tangible domestic power.

Comment

Women's Roles

In general, Ben Sira categorizes women according to the social roles they play in relation to men; these roles include mother, wife, and daughter.

Mother (3:1-16; 7:27-28; 23:14; 41:17a).

Mothers are the only women who remain untouched by negative criticism in Ben Sira's text. However, he mentions mothers only in conjunction with, and secondary to, fathers. No doubt underlying all comments on mothers in Sirach is the biblical command to honor one's mother and father (Ex. 20:12; Deut. 5:16). Sirach 3:1-16, the most extensive treatment of this topic, is a poem in which the terms "mother" and "father" must be read together, reflecting the standard practice of parallelism in Hebrew poetry. In synthetic parallelism the two lines of a verse are virtually synonymous or closely related; in antithetic parallelism, they constitute opposing or complementary concepts. Verse 2 reflects the former: "For the Lord honors a father above his children, and he confirms a mother's right over her children." Verse 9 reflects the latter: "For a father's blessing strengthens the house of the children, but a mother's curse uproots their foundations." In either case, both parts of the verse make up one compound statement. The particulars of each line are not gender specific. In other words, the terms "mother" and "father" are used interchangeably to mean "parents." Still, in the two cases of antithetic parallelism (vv. 9,11), "mother" appears in the line containing the negative warning about family life.

The Fifth Commandment (Ex. 20:12; Deut. 5:16) is especially significant for Ben Sira because it explicitly deals with honor. The aspiring male head of household, or patriarch, may one day be required to care for aging parents (3:12-13). Such familial obligations lead not only to material blessings (3:14-15)—as the biblical commandment itself says explicitly—but to opportunities for the accrual of honor: "The glory of one's father is one's own glory, and it is a disgrace for children not to respect their mother" (3:10-11). Ironically, appropriate expressions of humility earn one glory (1:27; 3:17-18; 4:10; 10:19). By fulfilling the commandment to honor one's parents, a man demonstrates his respect for the social hierarchy.

Of course one also acquires honor by hum-

bling others. The demonstration of appropriate respect and complete deference by women and children to the patriarch will help to manifest his glory. The English words "glory" and "honor" usually translate the Hebrew word *kabod*, or the Greek word *doxa*. In Sirach (as well as in many other biblical texts) this term, which also occurs in a verbal form meaning "to glorify," frequently describes God, as in 3:20: "For great is the might of the Lord; but by the humble he is glorified." As is reflected in this verse, one way the Lord acquires glory is through acts of worship practiced by human beings. Worshipers thereby humble themselves in order to elevate God's glory. Similarly, the members of a man's household enrich his glory by means analogous to worship, that is, the demonstration of deference and respect.

Wife (23:22-26; 25:16-26; 18; 36:26-31).

In Sirach, there are two kinds of wives, the good and the bad. Eschewing finer distinctions, Ben Sira's characterization of each amounts to the polar opposite of the other. Chapter 26 provides the most substantial description of the good wife, who possesses the following qualities: (1) she makes her husband happy and can lengthen his life (vv. 1-4); (2) she cooks well and keeps a tidy home (vv. 13, 16b); (3) she holds her tongue and possesses self-control (v. 14); (4) she is chaste (v. 15); (5) she has a beautiful face and body (vv. 17-18; cf. 11:2). Additionally, in 36:29-30 she is called a "helper" and "pillar of support," and is regarded as a stabilizing force: "Where there is no fence, the property will be plundered; and where there is no wife, a man will become a fugitive and a wanderer."

In stark contrast to the good wife, a bad wife is a woman who defies her husband's control. "A bad wife is a chafing yoke: taking hold of her is like grasping a scorpion" (26:7). Warnings about the defiant wife more than once involve analogies with poisonous creatures: "There is no venom worse than a snake's venom, and no anger worse than a woman's wrath" (25:15). Of course a husband need not be irredeemably burdened by such a woman; he can dissolve an undesirable marriage in most cases if he so chooses. To be sure, if she talks too much (25:20), drinks too much (26:8), or is unchaste (26:9), the Jerusalem sage recommends exercising the prerogative of divorce (25:26).

The worst-case scenario of the bad wife is the "woman who leaves her husband and pre-

sents him with an heir by another man" (23:22). Sirach 23:22–27 does not simply represent another warning against an unchaste wife. Here the issue is not a wife whose sexuality is unchecked (cf. 26:9) but an illicit heir. The man to whom this text is directly addressed seems to be a husband who colludes with his wife's adulterous behavior. Two recent interpretations are offered by scholars to explain why a man would encourage such seemingly disloyal behavior. The first suggests that an infertile couple desirous of an heir might choose to send out the wife to engage in intercourse so as to produce a child (cf. Wisd. Sol. 3:13). The second interpretation points to evidence that in eastern Mediterranean society the wives and daughters of poor men sometimes engaged in prostitution with wealthier men in order to supplement the household income. If such a social reality lies behind Sirach, then the unintended result could be children fathered by another man.

Two difficulties arise from the first interpretation. First, it assumes a recognition of male infertility—which seems unlikely (cf. the assumption of female infertility in the narratives concerning Sarah in Genesis 16 and Rebekah in Genesis 25). Second, given the patriarchal structure of the society and its views on adultery, it seems unlikely that an Israelite man would agree to another man impregnating his wife. Hence the second interpretation offers a more plausible explanation, though there is minimal evidence for the practice in Hellenistic Jewish texts. Ben Sira would presumably disapprove of any kind of prostitution, but he would surely condemn poor married women having sexual relations with wealthy men, because such conduct introduces the added danger of relinquishing economic control of the household to the wife (25:21–22). Furthermore, since the paternity of any child born to the wife/prostitute would be in question, the husband might end up giving his estate to another man's child. Because the male loses control of his property, dishonor results. As a deterrent, then, Ben Sira warns that the shame brought on by such an illicit union is irrevocable; the resultant children can never be a credit to one's name (23:24–26).

In addition to his discussion of good and bad wives, Ben Sira discusses other aspects of the marriage relationship. In 25:1 Ben Sira claims to value marital harmony, although the list of the attributes of the good wife makes it evident that such harmony results from the contentment of the husband alone. Indeed, the total

absence of any mention of pleasing one's wife (e.g., a woman's conjugal rights) is noteworthy. In the teachings of Ben Sira, a husband has virtually no obligations to his wife (cf. Prov. 31:28–31). In fact, much more is required of a householder vis-à-vis his slaves (33:25–33).

Ostensibly, sexuality is the one arena in which Ben Sira circumscribes a man's behavior toward his wife. The sage cautions strongly against adultery (25:2c). Yet, because adultery is traditionally defined as having sexual relations with another man's wife, it does not constitute an offense against one's own wife, but is viewed as a violation of another man's property rights. Ben Sira goes further by discouraging sexual relations outside of marriage in general (23:18; 41:17), but again, not because it would hurt one's wife! For him submission to sexual desire reveals a lack of self-control. It therefore hurts the husband by diminishing his honor and potentially leads to ruin (18:30–19:3).

Another interesting omission—though perhaps not without precedent in wisdom literature (cf. Proverbs 31)—is the lack of mention of a wife's fertility or her child-rearing skills. It is a reasonable assumption that fertility would be important, even from a patriarchal point of view, because one's children aid in the preservation of one's name (40:19; 44:9–14). In Sirach, however, the emphasis falls on earning a good name, not through descendants but through accomplishment and status (33:23–24; 39:8–11; 44:1–8). The catalogue of heroes in chaps. 44–50 (which, as is typical of ancient Jewish hero lists, includes no women) reflects this emphasis. Although wives are essential for the preservation of the family line, Ben Sira has no appreciation of their procreative role.

In addition, a wife's parenting skills are not of much concern to her husband, especially for the rearing of boys. Since the wife/mother cannot earn honor for herself through guiding children to adulthood, any involvement she has in raising children is subject to the husband/father's authority. The father hopes to maintain ultimate authority over the children, so as to insure that they do not dishonor him. The wife's authority over her children (3:2) simply assists in this process.

As 36:29 makes clear, a wife, like a slave, has the status of property: "He who acquires a wife gets his best possession, a helper fit for him." Although Ben Sira seems to reaccentuate the romantic connection between husband and wife in this verse by echoing Gen.

2:18, his understanding of that connection is based on the domestic hierarchy as well as a sense of ownership. Since the wife is the husband's property, she is not supposed to demonstrate autonomy; her will is not her own. The good wife in Sirach is an extension of her husband's personhood—which is certainly one way of reading Gen. 2:18–25! The husband must, therefore, maintain complete control over his wife and household.

Daughters (7:24–25; 22:3–5; 26:10–12; 42:9–14). Unlike mothers and wives, daughters do not receive a single appreciative comment in Sirach. On the contrary, “the birth of a daughter is a loss” (22:3), something to be feared. A man can only hope that his daughter will be dutifully complacent and that she will become someone else's pride or from whom one derives joy. Worse than that, they create anxiety for their fathers for a host of reasons enumerated in a poem on the dangers of daughters in 42:9–14.

Why is Ben Sira so vitriolic concerning daughters? The answer lies within the realm of economics as well as the honor/shame system. Economically, a daughter counts as a deficit. She has no earning power but must be clothed, fed, sheltered, and protected from anything that could damage her marriageability. If she never marries, she remains her father's responsibility. If she marries but turns out to be flawed in some way—not a virgin, unfaithful, or barren—she can be divorced by the husband and forced to return to the charge of her father. A daughter, therefore, has the potential to be a lifelong financial drain on her father.

More threatening than the economic burden is the girl's potential to dishonor her father through her sexuality. While an unfaithful wife can be divorced and a widowed mother does not usually carry the potential for sexual deviance, a nubile daughter with sexual propensities can spell disaster: “She may make you a laughingstock to your enemies, . . . and put you to shame in public gatherings” (42:11b).

The only hope a father has for relieving his anxiety consists in literally controlling his daughter's body (7:24; while the NRSV reads “chastity” here, “body” or “flesh” is the more literal translation). In 42:9–14 Ben Sira recommends keeping the girl as confined as possible. The focus of his concern does not lie with her being unwillingly defiled, seduced, or raped, but rather with her powers of attrac-

tion, which she might use to fulfill her own sexual desires (42:11c–12a). Thus a daughter must not have contact with married women (42:12b) because their knowledge and sexual experience could exacerbate what Ben Sira believes is a young woman's natural tendency toward unrestrained sexuality. As one astute reader of Sirach has put it:

[A man's] wives and sons both stand to gain from adopting the ideology of shame [security of marital status and children, and inheritance respectively]. Daughters, however, are a wild card. As his property, he is honor-bound to prevent encroachment on them; as women, they share the “woman's wickedness” of indiscriminate sexual inclination; unmarried, they have no stake in regulating their own honor; awakened to their own sexuality in marriage, they may have even less restraint. (Camp, 36)

Indeed, Ben Sira views the daughter as the paradigmatic lustful woman who knows no sexual restraint. “As a thirsty traveler opens his mouth and drinks from any water near him, so she will sit in front of every tent peg and open her quiver to the arrow” (26:12). Although some have argued that this verse was originally meant to apply to the wicked wife and not the daughter, the analogy and the not-so-subtle genital metaphors make it in any case the most obscene comment about women penned by Ben Sira.

Women and Sex

An honor/shame social system may include two kinds of shame: in Ben Sira's words “there is a shame that leads to sin, and there is shame that is glory and favor” (4:21). The latter amounts to an acquired, sophisticated knowledge of the rules that govern social intercourse and their implementation. In fact, teaching these rules is Ben Sira's ultimate purpose throughout his text. In a few places the sage lists specific behaviors of which one should be appropriately ashamed. He commands men to be ashamed of such things as ignorance (4:25), breaking agreements (41:19), and meddling with servant girls (41:22). As a characteristic of women, shame is analogous to modesty. A woman must be aware of her humble status, which she displays through restraint of her own desires. Possessing this kind of shame prevents a woman from engaging in behavior that could lead to shame of a different kind.

In contrast to “shame that is glory and fa-

vor," there is shame that is the opposite of honor; it consists in the public defacing of an individual, resulting in the degradation of that person's social status. Behaviors that cause such shame certainly include any criminal or sinful act, but, more significantly, they include any infraction of the rules of social intercourse as mapped by the honor/shame system. Shame of this sort means public embarrassment at the very least and could mean complete ruin of the person's reputation.

Many kinds of improprieties can bring shame upon a man and his household, but the greatest threat to his honor resides within the realm of sexuality. Thus, the goal of a patrician male is the complete control of his own sexual drive as well as the sexuality of all the women for whom he is responsible. The Jerusalem sage's preoccupation with the control of sexuality appears throughout the pages of Sirach and at times seems almost driven by paranoia.

Do not fall into the grip of passion,
or you may be torn apart as by a bull.
Your leaves will be devoured and your fruit
destroyed,
and you will be left like a withered tree.
Evil passion destroys those who have it,
and makes them the laughingstock of
their enemies.

(6:2-4)

In addition to generic admonitions concerning a man's need to restrain his sexual desires, the author gravely warns his readers about specific seductive situations and the wiles of women. As already mentioned, Ben Sira believes women have an almost unrestrainable sexual urge. Thus, Ben Sira's trepidation is not confined to women at home but extends to those outside the household as well, that is, prostitutes, adulteresses, or "strange" women in general. Chapter 9, for example, provides a litany of warnings similar to those in Proverbs to avoid such women and the places they frequent.

Ben Sira, however, may have reasons for his anxiety that did not exist for the compiler of Proverbs. The sage's detailed concern for table manners elsewhere in Sirach betrays knowledge of Greek-style banquets popular at the time (31:12-32:13). These banquets often involved the copious consumption of wine (warnings about the dangerous combination of women and wine appear in 19:2), as well as the presence of courtesans and female entertainers. The aspiring scribal elites addressed

in Sirach must have attended such banquets, because they provided an opportunity to make important contacts, to demonstrate one's refinement, and, ultimately, to trade in the commerce of honor. The sage in no way forbids participation at such festive meals; he simply circumscribes the behavior of his readers so as to insure the best possible gains and mitigate the potential losses (13:8-13).

As his views of banquets demonstrate, Ben Sira's concern for self-discipline does not extend to ascetic extremes. On the contrary, he says to his readers, "Those who are cheerful and merry at table will benefit from their food" (30:25). Ben Sira appreciates many of life's pleasures, such as food, wine, and companionship (40:18-27). Reflecting popular Greek ethics, he advocates moderation as the guiding force in man's social life (31:22b).

With regard to sexuality, however, Ben Sira's teachings reflect a relentless emphasis on restraint. Although he never argues for abstinence from sexual intercourse, nowhere does he reveal an appreciation for sexual pleasure. He describes the good wife as beautiful, but does not connect her appearance with sexual desire (the one exception may be 36:27). In general, Ben Sira demands the avoidance of anything that might inspire sexual desire. Sex is necessary and sexual desire is very real, but in distinction to, for example, food or the desire for food, sexual pleasure is too dangerous to enjoy.

Wisdom Personified as a Woman

As in the book of Proverbs, wisdom is personified as a woman in Sirach (Sir. 1:1-20; 4:11-19; 6:18-37; 14:20-15:10; 24:1-22, 30-34; cf. Prov. 1-9). Unlike Proverbs, however, Sirach does not contain Woman Wisdom's alter ego, Dame Folly (Prov. 9:13-18). Instead, Ben Sira's portrait of Woman Wisdom functions as the antithesis of ordinary human women whose sexuality so frightens him. More specifically, in place of a man feeling the power of sexual desire for women—which is far too threatening—Ben Sira substitutes a man's quest for possessing Woman Wisdom.

When Woman Wisdom speaks in praise of herself in Sir. 24:1-22, she describes her ability to attract the potential seeker of wisdom in terms ripe with sexual imagery:

Like a terebinth I spread out my branches,
and my branches are glorious and graceful.
Like the vine I bud forth delights,

and my blossoms become glorious and
abundant fruit.

Come to me, you who desire me,
and eat your fill of my fruits.

For the memory of me is sweeter than honey,
and the possession of me sweeter than the
honeycomb.

(24:16–20)

While Woman Wisdom is the object of pursuit, she actively beckons her pursuer, much as the dangerous seductress (9:3; 26:9; cf. Prov. 7:6–23). But Wisdom's appeal is delighted in, not feared. Similarly, when Ben Sira describes how a man should pursue Woman Wisdom, his language echoes that which he so staunchly warned against elsewhere (e.g., 32:16)—the feeling of reckless abandon that often accompanies sexual desire:

Happy is the person . . .
who reflects in his heart on her ways
and ponders her secrets,
pursuing her like a hunter,
and lying in wait on her paths;
who peers through her windows
and listens at her doors;
who camps near her house
and fastens his tent peg to her walls.

(14:20–24)

Again, as in 26:12, the tent peg functions as a phallic metaphor.

Ben Sira also describes Woman Wisdom as mother (4:11; 15:2a), bride (15:2b), and wife (14:26–27). Since she is not a threatening figure, she can sometimes take on dangerous characteristics that men experience as problematic in ordinary women. The best example of this is the description of Wisdom as a controlling, binding force to which a man should succumb:

Put your feet into her fetters,
and your neck into her collar.
Bend your shoulders and carry her,
and do not fret under her bonds.

(6:24–25)

Comparing these comments with the one in 9:2—"Do not give yourself to a woman and let her trample down your strength"—high-

lights the antithetical nature of Woman Wisdom and woman-as-sexual-being. The sage encourages, on the one hand, complete resistance to the allure of real women, and, on the other, total submission to Woman Wisdom.

Ben Sira's interest in cultivating the perfect man, under constraints operative within the honor/shame social system, incited a profound fear of women and sex. Desire, however, has not disappeared; it has only been redirected. The language and imagery used to describe Woman Wisdom suggests that male sexual desire has been, in psychological terms, sublimated in the pursuit of Woman Wisdom.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Camp, Claudia V. "Understanding a Patriarchy: Women in Second Century Jerusalem through the Eyes of Ben Sira." In *Women Like This: New Perspectives on Jewish Women in the Greco-Roman World*, edited by Amy-Jill Levine, pp. 1–41. Society of Biblical Literature Early Judaism and Its Literature 1. Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1991.
- Di Lella, Alexander A. "Women in the Wisdom of Ben Sira and the Book of Judith: A Study in Contrasts and Reversals." In *Congress Volume: Paris, 1992*, edited by John A. Emerton, pp. 39–52. Supplements to *Vetus Testamentum* 61. Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1995.
- Pilch, John J. "Beat His Ribs While He Is Young (Sir 30:12): A Window on the Mediterranean World." *Biblical Theology Bulletin* 23 (1993), 101–113.
- Rubin, Gayle. "The Traffic in Women: Notes on the Political Economy of Sex." In *Toward an Anthropology of Women*, edited by Rayna Reiter, pp. 157–210. New York: Monthly Review Press, 1975.
- Skehan, Patrick W., and Alexander A. Di Lella. *The Wisdom of Ben Sira*. Anchor Bible 39. New York: Doubleday & Co., 1987.
- Trenchard, Warren C. *Ben Sira's View of Women: A Literary Analysis*. Chico, Calif.: Scholars Press, 1982.