

A CLOSER LOOK AT THE NEWLY DISCOVERED SIXTH HEBREW MANUSCRIPT (MS. F) OF BEN SIRA

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To my colleague Th. C. de Kruÿt,
on the occasion of his 65 th birthday.

The discovery of a sixth Hebrew manuscript of the Book of Ben Sira at the Library of Cambridge in 1982 by the Hungarian scholar A. Scheiber was unnoticed till 1988, since the report of the finding had been published in a rather unknown Hungarian periodical¹. It must be placed to A. A. Di Lella's credit to have spread abroad Scheiber's discovery in a more influential periodical². Whereas Scheiber is presenting a transcription of the Hebrew Ms. F provided with notes referring to Segal's text edition³, which he used "as the basis"⁴, Di Lella not only offered a general introduction to Ms. F⁵, but also provided his transcription of Ms. F with an extensive text-critical apparatus relying on the authoritative text editions as well as the Greek, Syriac, and Old Latin Versions.

Neither of both presentations, however, has been accompanied by a more or less systematical approach of characteristic features which can be detected in Ms. F. In this contribution the present author therefore will

¹ A. Scheiber, "A Leaf of the Fourth [*sic*] Manuscript of the Ben Sira from the Geniza": *Magyar Könyvszemle* 98 (1982) 179-185.

² A. A. Di Lella, "The Newly Discovered Sixth Manuscript of Ben Sira from the Cairo Geniza": *Biblica* 69 (1988) 226-238.

³ M. Z. Segal, *ספר בן-סירא השלם* (Jerusalem 1958).

⁴ Scheiber, *o. c.*, 180.

⁵ Di Lella, *o. c.*, 226-230.

describe a number of such features in Ms. F by comparing them synoptically with the text(s) of two other Hebrew Ben Sira manuscripts (Ms. B, Ms. E) covering the same passage(s) as the newly discovered sixth text. Ms. F, representing the most recent textual evidence, could urge Ben Sira scholars to re-evaluate, or even to reconsider, some generally accepted views relating to the Hebrew text of the passage under discussion.

Ms. F, which has inconceivably been identified by Scheiber as a part of Ms. D, the so-called Rothschild-manuscript (Paris)⁶, in a stichometrical presentation contains the Hebrew text of Ben Sira 31,24-32,7 (*recto*), and of Ben Sira 32,12-33,8 (*verso*). Together with the Hebrew text of Sir. 32,8-11 this entire section has also been preserved in Ms. B⁷, whereas the newly discovered Ms. F partially coincides with Ms. E which includes the Hebrew text of Sir. 32,16-34,1⁸.

Apart from being already in itself a historical and cultural phenomenon, the discovery of Ms. F for a number of reasons must be considered an important contribution towards a reconstruction of the "original" Hebrew Ben Sira text and its transmission. A small example could illustrate this. The rather odd opening colon ישה תוכחות איש חכם⁹ of Sir. 32,17 (Ms. B) does not fit the context at all. On account of the marginal reading חמוס (and the Greek ὀμωραλώς) it gave cause to the generally accepted emendation איש חמוס¹⁰. In the recently discovered text of Sir. 32,17

⁶ I. Lévi, "Fragments de deux nouveaux manuscrits hébreux de l'Écclésiastique": *REJ* 40 (1900) 1-30. One should notice that Lévi is referring to this Rothschild-manuscript as Ms. C!

⁷ S. Schechter / C. Taylor, *The Wisdom of Ben Sira* (Cambridge 1899); G. Margoliouth, "The Original Hebrew of Ecclesiasticus XXXI,12-31 ...": *JQR* 12 (1899-1900) 1-33.

⁸ J. Marcus, "A Fifth Ms. of Ben Sira": *JQR* 21 (1930-1931) 223-240; M. L. Margolis, "Notes on 'A Fifth Ms. of Ben Sira'": *JQR* 21 (1930-1931) 439-440; I. Lévi, "Un nouveau fragment de Ben Sira": *REJ* 92 (1932) 136-145; A. Vaccari, "Ecclesiastici hebraice fragmentum nuper detectum": *VD* 11 (1931) 172-178; M. Z. Segal, "The Fifth Manuscript of Ben Sira": *Tarbiz* 21 (1930-1931) 295-307 (Hebr.); G. R. Driver, "Ecclesiasticus: A New Fragment of the Hebrew Text": *ET* 49 (1937-1938) 37-39.

⁹ "A wise man turns aside warnings" (cf. Syriac: "A wise man is hiding instruction").

¹⁰ E. g., R. Smend, *Die Weisheit des Jesus Sirach. Hebräisch und Deutsch* (Berlin 1906) 28; N. Peters, *Das Buch Jesus Sirach oder Ecclesiasticus* (EHAT Band 25; Münster 1913) 268; P. W. Skehan / A. A. Di Lella, *The Wisdom of Ben Sira* (Anchor

(Ms. F) the opening words **אִישׁ חָמוֹס** can now be updated as a solid reading.

The intricacy of establishing a Hebrew Ben Sira text which can be said to be close to the author's "original" can be shown by two different clusters of data.

I. TWOFOLD TEXTUAL WITNESS

a) In a number of cases the text of Ms. F is rendering a sequence of lines which is similar to Ms. B. E. g. Sir. 31,27-28 runs as:

	Ms. B	Ms. F
(1)	למי היין חיים לאנוש אם ישתנו במחכנתו	חיים לאנוש אם ישתנו
(2)	מה חיים חסר היין שהוא מראשית ל.מ. . .צד.	חסר היין סה. מרא
(3)	שמחת לב וששון וערוי יין נשתה בעתו וראי	לב וששון וערוי יין נש. ה. ב.
(4)	חיי מה לחסר חירוש והוא לגיל נחלק מראש	חיים למה יחסר חירוש והו לגיל

In spite of a number of authoritative text editions¹¹, which in their presentation of Ms. B have adapted the Hebrew text of Sir. 31,27-28 to the Greek verse order¹², the textual evidence of Ms. F shows Ben Sira scholars should proceed with caution in rearranging too soon Hebrew Ben Sira passages according to the Syriac, Greek, or Old Latin Versions. Whether the final line (4) is a doublet of the second one or not, the discovery of Ms. F in any case makes it clear that the Hebrew text of Sir. 31,27-28 as reflected in a number of text editions should be handled with caution, as the editors have created their own text instead of handing down the text of the manuscript(s) exactly as they have been written down¹³.

Bible 39; New York 1987) 395, 397.

¹¹ R. Smend, *o. c.*, 26; F. Vattioni, *Ecclesiastico* (Testi I) (Napoli 1968) 167; Z. Ben-Hayyim, *The Book of Ben Sira* (Jerusalem 1973) 31.

¹² (1) - (2) - (4) - (3), whereas in the Greek translation line (3) has disappeared.

¹³ A very interesting article on Sir. 31,27-28 has been offered by A. A. Wieder,

b) An interesting case undoubtedly is offered by the anaphora-lines (דורש) of Sir. 32,14-15. The reader of Ms. B is confronted with a quartet of such lines:

Ms. B

(1)	ומחלהלה ¹⁴ יוקש בה	דור. ל. קוה רצון
(2)	ומשחרהו ישיג מענה	דורש אל יקה מוסר
(3)	ויענהו בחפלתו	דורש חפצי אל יקה ¹⁵ לקח
(4)	ומחלהלה יוקש בה	דורש תורה יפיקנה

The first colon of line (1) in the margin of Ms. B has been provided with the variant reading: דרש אל חי וקוה רצון.

Whereas Ms. B is rendering four lines, Ms. F has handed down just two:

Ms. F

(1)	..... ומחלהלה י	..... חי וקוה רצון
(2)	..... ויענהו בכל חפ	..... פצי ... מוסר לקח

The first one is exactly the same as has been transmitted by the marginal variant of Ms. B, while the second one coincides with the third bicolon of Ms. B. With this textual evidence Ms. F poses a very intriguing problem, for Ben Sira scholars almost unanimously consider precisely those two lines to be secondary or doublets: "Of the four bicola in Ms B here, the two that provide the basic text are the second and the fourth"¹⁶. The newly discovered Ms. F, however, shows that in specific cases on the basis of the Hebrew textual evidence scholars can be forced to reconsider widely accepted theories which, partly anyway, have been built upon textual evidence of another kind, especially the Syriac, and Greek Versions.

"Ben Sira and the Praise of Wine": *JQR* 61 (1970-1971) 155-166.

¹⁴ Vattioni, *o. c.*, 171, erroneously has printed this bicolon as the final one!

¹⁵ Marginal reading: ישא.

¹⁶ P. W. Skehan / A. A. Di Lella, *o. c.*, 395. This opinion has been adopted from earlier studies, e. g. I. Lévi, *L'Éclésiastique* II (Paris 1901) 156-158; R. Smend, *o. c.*, 28; H. L. Strack, *Die Sprüche Jesus', des Sohnes Sirachs* (Schriften des Institutum Judaicum in Berlin, Nr. 31; Leipzig 1903) 26; N. Peters, *o. c.*, 268.

II. THREEFOLD TEXTUAL WITNESS

Whereas in the cases mentioned above a close relationship between Ms. F and Ms. B could be established, the matter becomes more complicated in respect of those lines where, in addition to Ms. B, also the text of Ms. E is available to be compared with Ms. F. For there can be found a relatively large number of occurrences in which words or cola from Ms. F do correspond to Ms. E's text, but are different from the wording of Ms. B. A couple of such texts will be presented now.

1. *Ben Sira 32,20*¹⁷

(Ms. B)	ואל החקל בנגף פעמים	בררך מוקשה אל חלך
(Ms. E)	ואל החקל בררך פעמים	אל חלך
(Ms. F)	ואל החקל בררך נגף	בררך מוקשה אל חלך

The final words of the second colon in my opinion present a good example to show that every different reading between the manuscripts should be examined at its own textual value. In Sir. 32,20 it immediately strikes the eye that בררך, which is the opening word of the first colon, is repeated in the second colon of both Ms. E and Ms. F, but is missing in Ms. B. It can also hardly be accidental that in Ms. E the second בררך is attended with פעמים, in Ms. F however with נגף, being precisely the two words at the end of Ms. B's second colon. There can be hardly any doubt that Ms. B has transmitted here the more original reading, because, in the first place, it must be considered the *lectio difficilior* which, in addition, is supported by the Syriac ("On a path which is stony do not travel, lest you stumble twice on a rock") and probably by the Greek¹⁸. And, thirdly, from a structural point of view an additional argument can be adduced, as from Sir. 32,14 onwards Ben Sira displays a marked preference to anaphoric elements which always are to be found in every *first colon* only:

¹⁷ Cf. A. A. Di Lella, "Authenticity of the Genizah Fragments of Sirach": *Biblica* 44 (1963) 189-191.

¹⁸ According to J. Hart the Greek reading λιθώδεσιν should be read as λίθω δις, which perfectly would agree with both the Hebrew text of Ms. B and the Syriac Version; J. H. A. Hart, *Ecclesiasticus. The Greek Text of Codex 248* (Cambridge 1909) 184.

Sir. 32,14-15	דורש
Sir. 32,17-18	איש
Sir. 32,23-24	שמור נפש

In respect of Sir. 32,20-21 this literary feature is looked after by בדרך in the first colon. The occurrence of בדרך in the second colon, as is the case in both Ms. E and F, would weaken this remarkable literary feature.

2. Ben Sira 32,21-33,2

For several reasons this passage must be paid special attention to as, on the one hand, in both Ms. E and Ms. F Sir. 32,23 is missing¹⁹, whereas on the other hand, in the same manuscripts the verse order of Sir. 32,24 and 33,1 has been transposed²⁰.

	Ms. B	Ms. E	Ms. F
(32,21 ^a)	אל תבטח בדרך מתחף ובאחריהך השמר		
(32,21 ^b)	אל תבטח בדרך רשעים ובאחריהך הזהר	דרך רשעים ובאחריהך היה זהיר	אל תחזר בדרך רשעים ובאחריהך היה זהיר
(32,23 ^a)	בכל דרכיך שמור נפשך כי כל עושה אלה שומר מצוה		
(32,23 ^b)	בכל מעשיך שמור נפשך כי עושה זה שומר מצוה		
(33,1)		... .. יפנע רע כי אם בניסוי ישוב ונמלט	ירא יי לא יפנע רע כי אם בניסוי ישוב ונמלט
(32,24)	נוצר תורה שומר נפשו ובושח ביי לא תבוש	... .. נוצר נפשו ובושח ביי לא יבוש	נוצר תורה נוצר נפשו ובושח ביי לא יבוש
(33,1)	ירא יי לא יפנע רע כי אם בניסוי		
(33,2)	לא יחכם שונע תורה ומתמוטט במס....	... .. שונא תורה ומתמוטט כמסערה אזנו	לא יחכם שונא תורה ומתמוטט כמסערה אזנו

¹⁹ In a number of text editions and commentaries this verse is numbered 32,22: F. Vattioni, *o. c.*, 173; I. Lévi, *o. c.*, 160-161; I. Lévi, *The Hebrew Text of the Book of Ecclesiasticus* (Semitic Study Series, n° III; Leiden 1969) 35; I. Knabenbauer, *Commentarius in Ecclesiasticum* (Paris 1902) XLII.

²⁰ Sir. 33,3 is missing in Ms. E, Ms. F, and Syriac. Between Sir. 33,4 and 35,10 no Hebrew text of Ms. B is available.

Sir. 32,21 according to Ms. B is obviously lodging a doublet. Although the Greek translation is apparently reflecting the first Hebrew colon²¹, we should take into account the highly *theological* context of the entire passage (Sir. 32,14-33,6)²² in which especially the worldly notion חֲתָף ("robber") in 32,21a would entirely be out of place²³. In Sir. 32,21^{II}, however, both the characterization רְשָׁעִים ("sinners") and the parallel word-pair בָּרַךְ / בְּאֵרַח, being part of a chiasmic pattern, play a very organic part. The second Hebrew bicolon of Sir. 32,21 is therefore to be considered the original one²⁴. I therefore disagree with Di Lella, who without any argument states that "the original bicolon is found in *a* and *d*"²⁵.

Whereas Sir. 32,21 (Ms. B) opens with אֵל תְּבַטַּח, the same colon of Ms. F is characterized by the very notable verbal form אֵל תִּחַחֵר. A tentative translation of it runs as: "Do not feel vexed with the way of sinners, / but be warned against your future (or end)". Whilst in Ms. F the first colon of Sir. 32,21 is about the reader's feelings, in Ms. B the author's warning is about his pupil's *conduct* and its outcome, which constitutes the essence of the entire pericope. Sir. 32,21 according to Ms. B then could even be considered an elaboration of the preceding line. But for another reason too the opening words אֵל תְּבַטַּח (Ms. B) much better fit the context. For the verb בָּטַח is used again in verse 24b (וּבִטַּח ... בֵּינִי), being exactly the counterpart of אֵל תְּבַטַּח of verse 21a:

"Do not trust the way of sinners

.....

Whoever trusts (in) the LORD".

²¹ Cf. מוֹחֵף / ἀποσκόπη (?); השמר / ψύλαξαι; ובאחריהך / ἀπὸ τῶν τέκνων σου.

²² For an analysis of Sir. 32,14-33,6: J. Haspecker, *Gottesfurcht bei Jesus Sirach* (AnBib 30; Rome 1967) 219-227, 262-268.

²³ מוֹחֵף of Sir. 32,21 has been listed as a noun by D. Barthélemy / O. Rickenbacher, *Konkordanz zum hebräischen Sirach* (Göttingen 1973) 141; Z. Ben-Hayyim, *o. c.*, 150. In their respective glossaries Lévi and Strack, however consider מוֹחֵף of Sir. 32,21 to be a *verbal* form; I. Lévi, *Text*, 80; H. L. Strack, *o. c.*, 62.

²⁴ D. Barthélemy / O. Rickenbacher, *o. c.*, 104, do not differentiate between זָהַר I ("to warn") and זָהַר II ("to shine") as does Z. Ben-Hayyim, *o. c.*, 131.

²⁵ A. A. Di Lella, "The Newly Discovered Sixth Manuscript...": *Biblica* 69 (1988) 236.

Both phrases can be considered an *inclusio* representing the central issue of the entire pericope.

The reading **אל תתחר** of Sir. 32,21a (Ms. F) could be very well brought about by a copyist who, having noticed Ben Sira's predilection for the Book of Proverbs, was acquainted with the combination of **רשעים** and **אחרית** (sic!) in Prov. 24,19, and thereupon in his manuscript has harmonized the opening colon of 32,21 with the biblical statement²⁶.

Compared to Ms. B, the Hebrew text of Sir. 32,23 is missing in both Ms. E and Ms. F. In the subsequent lines both manuscripts display a reversed verse order which by a number of modern Ben Sira scholar's²⁷ has not been indicated at all:

Ms. B:	32,21-22	32,23	32,24	33,1	33,2
Ms. E, Ms. F:	32,21-22	---	33,1	32,24	33,2

There can hardly be given a rationale to his marked phenomenon. A possible explanation could be the expressions **נוצר תורה** (32,24) and **שונא תורה** (33,2), which in Ms. B are separated by 33,1, both in Ms. E and Ms. F have been put together more closely in order to emphasize their antithetical position and content, and their similar pattern of rhyme as well: **נוצר תורה / שונא תורה**. The omission of 32,23 in both Ms. E and Ms. F no doubt has facilitated this inversion, because the necessity to couple **שומר נפשוך** (32,23) with **שומר נפשו** (32,24) as in Ms. B is absent now. I hold **שומר** of 32,24a (Ms. B) not to be the original wording, but the twofold **נוצר** of Ms. F (and Ms. E ?). A copyist of Ms. B under the influence of **שומר נפשוך** in the preceding line (32,23a Ms. B) has most probably altered **נוצר** into **שומר**²⁸.

²⁶ Ben Sira scholars should always be aware of this kind of 'parallelomania'. More examples can be found in my doctoral thesis: P. C. Beentjes, *Jesus Sirach en Tenach* (Nieuwegein 1981) esp. 111-114.

²⁷ J. Haspecker, *o. c.*, 262-263; P. W. Skehan / A. A. Di Lella, *o. c.*, 395; G. Sauer, *Jesus Sirach* (JSHRZ III,5; Gütersloh 1981) 585.

²⁸ Cf. Prov. 16,17b (**שמר נפשו נצר דרכו**), 24,12c (**ונצר נפשוך הוא ירע**); 28,7a (**נוצר תורה בן מבין**).

III. THE ABSENCE OF SIR. 32,8-11 IN MS. F.

Apart from a small lacuna at the right covering the opening word, the final line of Ms. F folio 1a (= *recto*) is rendering the Hebrew text of Sir. 32,7²⁹. With this line the author starts a new paragraph, which can be documented very convincingly, as this final verse of Ms. F *recto* is preceded by a blank line. And precisely subsequent to that space, a particular group (נער) is addressed. The first legible line of Ms. F *verso*, which is heavily damaged however, renders the Hebrew text of Sir. 32,12³⁰. This line can hardly be considered to be the uninterrupted continuation of 32,7. Firstly, because the lines from 32,12 onwards lack any specific admonition relating to the young ones; what purpose should the address נער of 32,7 have? Secondly, one must be aware that in Sir. 32,14 a complete new section is called into existence. The previous paragraph in any way must have lodged more than three lines only (32,7; 32,12-13). I therefore reach the conclusion that Ms. F *verso* at the top originally must have handed down a number of verse lines which are dealing with warnings and admonitions in the address to the pupil similar to those in Sir. 32,8-11 according to Ms. B. I do not exclude the possibility that folio 1a and 1b of Ms. F originally counted 24 lines each, being exactly the same number as has been handed down by Ms. E *recto*³¹.

IV. TRANSPOSITION OF LETTERS

Friedrich Delitzsch in his classic³² has abundantly demonstrated that, in spite of the process of scrupulous transcription of the Hebrew text of the Old Testament, clerical errors were inherent to the transmission of this canonical corpus³³. The Hebrew text of the Book of Ben Sira, being a

²⁹ נער צורך אוהך / פעמים ושלש אם ישאלך [...]

³⁰ [.....]בין / בני[.....]. This rendering coincides with the text of Sir. 32,12 according to Ms. B.

³¹ According to J. Marcus, *o. c.*, 223 Ms. E *verso* has 21 lines.

³² F. Delitzsch, *Die Lese- und Schreibfehler im Alten Testament* (Leipzig 1920).

³³ See also: R. W. Klein, *Textual Criticism of the Old Testament* (Philadelphia 1974); J. Weingreen, *Introduction to the Critical Study of the Text of the Hebrew Bible*

non-canonical work, during its process of transcription was subjected to clerical errors too. The Persian glosses in the margin of Ms. B at Sir. 32,1; 35,20; 40,22; 45,9 are documentary evidence copyists had at their disposal more than one Hebrew Ben Sira manuscript³⁴.

As for Ms. F, A. A. Di Lella did an excellent work listing all its variant readings compared to Ms. B and Ms. E; it does not have to be done over again here. In Ms. F, however, there is a small number of words to which some attention should be paid because of the transposition of letters which in comparison with other Hebrew Ben Sira manuscripts in some cases creates a new text.

1) *Sir. 32,6ab*

The Hebrew text of Sir. 32,6 as handed down by Ms. B runs: כרביד זהב ובו נפך וספיר / כך נאים דברים יפים על משחה היין ("Like a golden necklace with a precious stone and a sapphire on it, so lovely are appropriate words at a banquet of wine").

This bicolon belongs to a quartet of comparisons in which the pleasures of a banquet of wine are compared to precious jewelry. A majority of Ben Sira commentators referring to the Syriac and Greek hold the view both 32,5 and 32,6 lodge a doublet³⁵. It strikes the eye, however, that Ms. F is handing down a similar quartet of lines, which moreover are almost identical to those of Ms. B!

The text of Sir. 32,6ab (Ms. F) runs as: כרביד זהב בו נופך וספיר / נואי דברי על ?? מ?? היין /.

- First of all, the penultimate word of this verse line needs some comment. It has been composed of a מ followed by a character (or a combination of letters) which can not be identified with certainty. The transcription מלי as given by Scheiber³⁶ must be considered almost impossible, as in Ms. F the letter ל all the time clearly displays a different

(New York 1982).

³⁴ S. Schechter / C. Taylor, *The Wisdom of Ben Sira* (Cambridge 1899) 56, 59; W. Bacher, "Zwei Bemerkungen": ZAW 20 (1900) 308-309. Text editions and commentaries do not always render, however, the text of these Persian glosses.

³⁵ R. Smend, *Die Weisheit des Jesus Sirach erklärt* (Berlin 1906) 287-288; I. Lévi, *L'Écclésiastique* II, 154-155; N. Peters, *o. c.*, 264; P. W. Skehan / A. A. Di Lella, *o. c.*, 387.

³⁶ A. Scheiber, *o. c.*, 183.

shape. I do agree with Di Lella who holds the view that after the מ "the scribe wrote what appears to be a broken ש with a small vertical line over it"³⁷. It obviously functions as an abbreviation of מִשְׁתָּה ("banquet") which can be found as the penultimate word at the end of the two previous lines too.

Apart from the vertical line over it the broken ש of Sir. 32,6b (Ms. F) is rather like the symbol which has been found in the Hebrew text of Sir. 4,21a according to Ms. C (folio I verso). Some years ago I brought out the opinion that that symbol in Ms. C should be considered an ע³⁸; the resemblance between both characters has now convinced me, however, it should be part of a ש, as had been suggested by A. A. Di Lella³⁹.

- Whereas Sir. 32,6a according to Ms. B opens with כְּרִבִּיר ("like a necklace")⁴⁰, as a result of a transposition of two characters in Ms. F the opening word is read כְּרִבִּיר ("like a backroom [of the temple]"), a very curious reading of course which does not fit the context very well, since both verse 5 and verse 6 are dealing with jewelry. It should be borne in mind, however, this variant reading of Ms. F is not senseless⁴¹.

2) Sir. 32,16d

The Hebrew text of Sir. 32,16cd in Ms. B has been rendered: יִרְאֵי יְיָ / וְכַחֲמוֹת רַבּוֹת יוֹצִיאוּ מִלֵּבָם (וכחמות) in the left margin is attended with the variant reading וְכַחֲמוֹת

³⁷ A. A. Di Lella, "The Newly Discovered Sixth Manuscript...", 234.

³⁸ P. C. Beentjes, "Hermeneutics in the Book of Ben Sira. Some Observations on the Hebrew Ms. C": *EstBib* 46 (1988) 48, note 17. See also: M. Zappella, "Criteri Antologici e questioni testuali del manoscritto ebraico C di Siracide": *Rivista Biblica* 38 (1990) 277, note 15.

³⁹ A. A. Di Lella, "The Recently Identified Leaves of Sirach in Hebrew": *Biblica* 45 (1964) 165, note s.

⁴⁰ The Hebrew word כְּרִבִּיר can be found in Gen. 41,42 and Ez. 16,11.

⁴¹ The noun כְּרִבִּיר elsewhere in the Book of Ben Sira is found twice: 45,9d and 26,16b. Amidst the whole range of emendations which in respect of כְּרִבִּיר in Sir. 26,16b have been brought forward (see W. C. Trenchard, *Ben Sira's View of Women* [Brown Judaic Studies 38; Chico 1982] 9-18, 196 [note 86]), to the best of my knowledge no commentator has ever thrown out the suggestion the Greek translator has read כְּרִבִּיר (ἐν κοσμάτῳ) instead of כְּרִבִּיר. Or would it be too far-fetched to presume such a course of things?

which had already been confirmed by the text of Ms. E: .. יוציאו⁴² וחכמות מלבם. The wording of 32,16cd in the newly discovered Ms. F is completely identical to both Ms. E and the marginal reading of Ms. B: מלבם וחכמות יוציאו⁴³. Whereas Lévi, and independently Di Lella, arrived at the conclusion Sir. 32,16cd must be considered a retroversion from the Syriac⁴⁴, a majority of scholars, however, hold the view that it was the Hebrew text of 32,16cd which gave birth to the Syriac translation of this line. H.-P. Rüger in a careful examination of Sir. 32,16cd in my opinion has adduced documentary evidence Sir. 32,16cd actually must be considered a genuine Hebrew gloss⁴⁵. His view is obviously confirmed now by the discovery of the identical line in Ms. F which, in addition, proves that the resemblance between Ms. E, Ms. F, and a great number of Ms. B's marginal readings must have had a "common ancestor". In fact it also proves that during the process of copying Hebrew Ben Sira manuscripts scribes worked very conscientiously; they appear to have compared nearly almost at least two different manuscripts with each other.

3) Sir. 32,19

In all three extant Hebrew Ben Sira manuscripts (Mss. B, E, and F) which have handed down the Hebrew text of Sir. 32,19 their rendering is identical, with an exception however of the final word. Whereas Ms. E and F have rendered the verbal form תתקפץ, in Ms. B the form תתקצף is found⁴⁶. Both in biblical Hebrew and in the Book of Ben Sira a verb קפץ ("to draw together, shut") does occur. It has been used in Dt. 15,7; Isa. 52,16; Job 5,16; Ps. 77,10; 107,42 (*qal*); Job 24,24 (*nif.*); Cant. 2,8 (*pi.*). In the Book of Ben Sira one can ascertain a kind of "structural exchange" between קפץ and some other verbs. In Sir. 4,23b (Ms. C) the verbal form תתקפץ should be read as תתצפץ according to the same verse

⁴² F. Vattioni in his textcritical apparatus unjustly claims רבוה is to be found in Ms. E too; F. Vattioni, *o. c.*, 171.

⁴³ The same error is found in Sir. 32,18a. Ms. B gives the reading כחמה, which both in the margin of Ms. B, and in Mss. E, and F is rendered חכמה.

⁴⁴ I. Lévi, *L'Éclésiastique* II, 159; A. A. Di Lella, *The Hebrew Text of Sirach* (Studies in Classical Literature, 1; The Hague 1966) 142-147.

⁴⁵ H.-P. Rüger, *Text und Textform im Hebräischen Sirach* (BZAW 112; Berlin) 7-8.

⁴⁶ D. Barthélemy / O. Rickenbacher, *o. c.*, 353 at the lemma קפץ have forgotten to mention Sir. 32(35),19b (Ms. E).

line of Ms. A. And instead of וקפוצה in Sir. 4,31b (Ms. A) according to Rieger one should read קפוררה as does Ms. C⁴⁷. As for Sir. 32,19b there can hardly be any doubt Ms. B (תתקצר) is offering the correct reading.

4) Sir. 32,21

Apart from the transposition of letters in the opening word of Sir. 32,6, probably far the most interesting example of this phenomenon is found in the second colon of Sir. 32,21⁴⁸. Whereas the Hebrew text of this colon in Ms. E and Ms. F is completely identical, in the text of Ms. B, which as we ascertained must be considered the original one, a small but very significant transposition of letters is met:

Ms. E, Ms. F:	ובאחריתך היה זהיר
Ms. B:	ובארחיך הזהר

The transposition of a plural form of ארה and אחרית can be considered a more or less "classical" phenomenon; see e. g. the Hebrew and Greek texts of Job 8,13a and Prov. 1,19a.

At first sight one is tempted to think the rendering ובאחריתך of Mss. E and F is representing the original reading, because the Greek seems to confirm this: ἀπὸ τῶν τέκτων σὺ. A closer look, however, reveals the fundamental, antithetical chiastic pattern of this bicolon: "Do not trust the way of sinners / and on your paths be warned"⁴⁹. As, in addition, דרך ("way") both in its literal and in its metaphorical sense has an obviously anaphoric function in Sir. 32,20-23, the most plausible inference would be that in verse 21 the synonymous word ארה ("path") is authentic. The wording of Ms. E and Ms. F ("and on your *end* be warned") is contrary to the context, for Ben Sira is producing here in his address to the pupil a lot of admonitions of *present* behaviour !

⁴⁷ H.-P. Rieger, *o. c.*, 33-35.

⁴⁸ Some aspects of it were already dealt with in § III.2.

⁴⁹ The parallel word pair דרך / ארה in the Hebrew Old Testament is found in Gen. 49,17; Ps. 25,4; 139,3; Prov. 3,6; 4,18-19; 9,15; 15,19; Joel 2,7.

V. A CRUX INTERPRETUM: SIR. 33,4

In 1931 Joseph Marcus found out that Ms. Adler 3597, which was in the Library of the Jewish Theological Seminary, contained the text of a fifth Hebrew Ben Sira manuscript, which from that time has been labeled "Ms. E", preserving Sir. 32,16-34,1.

Especially the second half of Sir. 33,4 must be considered one of the most problematic stichoi of the entire manuscript: **וְאִתְּרַח תְּעִשָׂה**
וְבֵית מְנוּחַ וְאִתְּרַח תְּגִיחַ /.

With regard to the first part of the second stichos Marcus suggests that instead of **וְבֵית מְנוּחַ** one should read **וּבְנִית מְנוּחַ** ("build a resting-place")⁵⁰. As for **וְאִתְּרַח תְּגִיחַ** Marcus suggests the translation "and then go forth", to which he has added a question mark. In his comment on the discovery of the fifth manuscript I. Lévi, referring to the conjecture which was made earlier by M. Z. Segal, puts in: "Le mot תְּגִיחַ, qui suit et dont la lecture est incertaine, doit être corrigé en תְּגִיחַ 'tu te reposes'"⁵¹. G. R. Driver proposed a very complicated solution. He takes **בֵּית** as the imperative of a Hebrew **בָּת**, identical with the Aramaic-Syriac **בַּת** ("passed the night")⁵², and **מְנוּחַ** as in the accusativus case describing state or place. The Hebrew text in his view can only mean: "Prepare thy words, and afterwards thou shalt act; and pass the night in rest". The word **תְּגִיחַ** he takes as the *hif'il* of **נָגַה** ("was bright") used metaphorically. The final words of Sir. 33,4b therefore must be rendered as: "and afterwards thou shalt be bright"⁵³.

In 1952 the discussion regarding Sir. 33,4 was reopened by J. Reider⁵⁴. He attempts to explain away the difficulties of these stichoi by altering **וְאִתְּרַח תְּעִשָׂה** to **וְאִתְּרַח תְּשַׁחַח**, and **וְאִתְּרַח תְּגִיחַ** to **וְאִתְּרַח תְּנַחֵחַ**, and translating the resultant text: "prepare thy words, and then converse / and a house for rest, and then

⁵⁰ J. Marcus, *o. c.*, 231.

⁵¹ I. Lévi, "Un nouveau fragment de Ben Sira": *REJ* 92-93 (1932) 136-145 (138). M. Z. Segal, "The Fifth Manuscript of Ben Sira": *Tarbiz* 2 (1930-1931) 259-307 (301). In his commentary Segal gives תְּגִיחַ; M. Z. Segal, **סֵפֶר בְּן־סִירָא הַשְּׁלֵמִים** (Jerusalem² 1958), 210.

⁵² Cf. Babylonian *bātu* (= Assyrian *bādu*) "to pass the night".

⁵³ G. R. Driver, "Ecclesiasticus: A New Fragment of the Hebrew Text": *The Expository Times* 49 (1937-1938) 87-89.

⁵⁴ J. Reider, *JJS* 3 (1952) 84-85.

repose". Two years later G. R. Driver replies that neither suggestion of Reider can be accepted. For תעשה he proposed a mere transposition of letters to תשעה, to be derived from a Hebrew שעה ("chatter"). The word תניה to his view originates with the Hebrew ננה "struck (with light), shone". The line then means simply: "Prepare thy words, and then chatter; and (prepare) a resting-place, and then sleep on till dawn"⁵⁵.

Whereas in the Hebrew text of Ms. E the opening words of Sir. 33,4 had not been preserved and, in addition, some letters of the two final words are doubtful, the Hebrew text of Sir. 33,4 as handed down by the newly discovered Ms. F, however, is perfectly legible and runs as: הכין אומר ואחר תעשה / ובית מנוח ואחר חניה.

Marcus in his reconstruction of the missing words at the opening of Sir. 33,4 [הכן רבריך]⁵⁶ was obviously guided by λόγος of the Greek. The very rare noun אומר as rendered by Ms. F here in my opinion should be translated "something", as is the case in Job 22,28⁵⁷. "Prepare something thoroughly and then acts", being my translation of Sir. 33,4a (Ms. F), completely fits the context, as is proved e.g. by a similar admonition some lines earlier: "Without counsel do nothing" (Sir. 32, 19a)⁵⁸.

In respect of the second stichos we must keep in mind Sir. 33,4 displays an entirely parallel structure:

imperative + object (X) / ואחר + verbal form⁵⁹ //
 conjunction + object (Y) / ואחר + verbal form.

The words ובית מנוח therefore depend on הכין too: "and (prepare) a house of rest". The wording תניה, as already assumed by Marcus, has positively been identified by Ms. F as a serious and solid reading.

We do not want to repeat here the entire learned discussion over again. There is, however, one aspect which deserves full attention. In the Book of Ben Sira the verb ננה is found just one more time, and in the *hif'il* as

⁵⁵ G. R. Driver, "Ben Sira XXXIII,4": *JJS* 5 (1954) 177.

⁵⁶ On the photograph of Ms. E *recto* I can not identify, however, a trace of this ך of Marcus' reconstruction; Marcus, *o. c.*, opposite 228-229.

⁵⁷ Job 22,28 also lodges both ך and ... the verb ננה !!

⁵⁸ Ms. F : בלא עצה אל הפעל דבר

Ms. E: הפעל דבר

⁵⁹ A similar structure is found in Sir. 32,2a: הכין צרכם ואחר תרבין.

well. I think it is quite curious that very learned scholars like Reider, Driver, and others who have intensively studied and commented this *crux interpretum* did not relate תנייה of Sir. 33,4b to יגיה of Sir. 16,11d⁶⁰. The Hebrew text of Sir. 16,11cd (Ms. A)⁶¹ runs as:

כי רחמים ואף עמו
ונשוא וסולח
ועל רשעים יגיה⁶² רנוז

Theoretically the verbal form יגיה makes sense here: "and on sinners He let shine his wrath". Chance would have it that a text similar to the wording of Sir. 16,11d has been handed down two more times:

Sir. 5,6cd (Ms. A)
כי רחמים ואף []
ואל רשעים ינוח רנוז

Sir. 5,6cd (Ms. C)
כי רחמים ואף עמו
ועל רשעים ינוח רנוז⁶³

It think it very remarkable the verb נגה (hif.) both in Sir. 16,11d (Ms. A), and in Sir. 33,4b (Mss. E, F) must have a similar meaning: "to rest". Considering this, one can finally make a choice between two different options. Either the verb נגה should be considered a synonym to נוח, a possibility which can not be excluded completely. Or we must assume both Ben Sira lines have been subjected to a threefold clerical error at one go: ג - נ, י - ו, ח - ה, all three being classical confusions. Till further solid textual evidence will be discovered, every reader should evaluate this particular Ben Sira material for him or herself.

⁶⁰ Sir. 16,11cd is mentioned by Marcus just in passing; J. Marcus, *o. c.*, 231. He is referring to L. Ginzberg, "Randglossen zum hebräischen Ben Sira", in C. Bezold (Ed.), *Orientalische Studien, Theodor Nöldeke gewidmet II* (Giessen 1906) 609-625 (623).

⁶¹ An extensive analysis of the text and its context is offered by G. L. Prato, *Il problema della teodicea in Ben Sira* (AnBib 65; Rome 1975) 209-299 (226, 258-261).

⁶² Not יגיה as is asserted by A. A. Di Lella, *Text*, 114.

⁶³ According to H.-P. Rüger, *o. c.*, 37, and G. L. Prato, *o. c.*, 213, 226, the reading of Ms. A (ינוח) should be preferred.