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# Half Way Between Psalm 119 and Ben Sira:

## Wisdom and Torah in Psalm 19

Anja Klein

### *1. Introduction*

The close relationship between wisdom and torah in Ps 19 has long been recognised. Recently, Alexandra Grund has demonstrated that Ps 19 can be interpreted in the context of post-exilic torah wisdom.<sup>1</sup> Though the historical setting of the psalm is quite undisputed in modern scholarship, there is still room to discuss the literary and hermeneutical framework that made the interweaving of the two concepts possible. Contributing to this discussion, the following article will focus on the question, whether Ps 19 can indeed be seen as part of an ongoing literary discourse about the relationship between wisdom and torah. It will be demonstrated that Ps 19 serves as an important link merging the torah theology of Ps 119 with other wisdom literature from the Hebrew Bible. As such, the psalm can rightly be seen as a precursor for the teaching of Ben Sira.

The starting point will be some textual observations on Ps 19 that investigate its literary unity and the underlying concept of torah and wisdom. The second part will focus on the relationship between Ps 19 and Ps 119. Here we will argue that Ps 19 represents a sapiential exegesis of Ps 119. A third section deals with the literary traces of Ps 19 in the post-biblical wisdom of Ben Sira. Finally, the results will allow for some concluding remarks, seeing Ps 19 as part of an exegetical discussion that aims at understanding torah in the framework of a sapiential worldview.

### *2. Textual Observations*

Ignoring its heading with the attribution to David in V 1, Ps 19 falls into three clear-cut parts: While V 2-7 take the shape of a hymn to creation, V 8-11 form a hymnic praise of the torah. The Psalm is concluded by a prayer of an individual in V 12-15, in which the

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<sup>1</sup> Alexandra Grund, *“Die Himmel erzählen die Ehre Gottes”: Psalm 19 im Kontext der nachexilischen Toraweisheit* (WMANT 103; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 2004).

speaker meditates upon his relationship to the law. This tripartite division has long determined the exegesis of Ps 19. Older form-critical scholarship concentrated on the break between hymn and praise and differentiated between two independent psalms: a hymn of creation in V 2-7 and a torah psalm in V 8-15.<sup>2</sup> More recent exegesis, by contrast, maintains the general unity of God's praise in both creation and torah, while the prayer in V 12-15 is generally seen as being a later addition.<sup>3</sup> Though I accept the general unity of creation and torah, I am not yet convinced that the prayer in the last part is the result of redactional reworking. The reasons shall be explained below.

The superscription in V 1 labels the psalm as a work of David, which fits well into the context of the first Davidic Psalter in Ps 3-41. The first part of the main body in V 2-7 can be divided further into a hymnic account of God's praise in creation in V 2-5a and the glory of the sun's circuit in V 5b-7. The hymnic account (V 2-5a) shows the regular metre of *parallelismus membrorum*: it starts with two parallel nominal clauses in V 2 that characterize the heavens and the firmament as being heralds of God's glory and the work of his hands (השמים מספרים כבוד אל ומעשה ידיו מגיד הרקיע). With V 3, the style changes to verbal clauses describing the action of day and night: here, day to day is said to pour forth speech and night to night makes known knowledge (יום ליום יביע אמר ולילה ללילה יחזה דעת). The verbal clauses of V 3 are continued in V 5, which complements the temporal proclamation of day and night with the territorial dimension: 'Their measuring<sup>4</sup> has gone forth into all the earth, and their words to the extremity of the world' (בכל הארץ יצא קום ובקצה). This verse poses a number of difficulties. First of all there is the problem to what the subjects – indicated by a plural suffix each (מליהם, קום) – refer. Contrary to the usual explanation that sees the heavens from V 2 as the subject,<sup>5</sup> I would like to link the

<sup>2</sup> See exemplary Hermann Gunkel, *Die Psalmen* (6th ed; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1986), 74-81.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. p.e. Herrmann Spieckermann, *Heilsgegenwart: Eine Theologie der Psalmen* (FRLANT 148; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1989), 60-72; Frank-Lothar Hossfeld and Erich Zenger, *Die Psalmen: Psalm 1-50* (NEB 29; Würzburg: Echter, 1993), 128-30. Opposed to this, Peter C. Craigie and Marvin E. Tate, *Psalms 1-50* (WBC 19; Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2004), 179-80, and especially Grund, *Himmel*, 60-70, argue for the literary unity of the psalm.

<sup>4</sup> The translation follows Grund, *Himmel*, 22; cf. in the following and note 6.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. Spieckermann, *Heilsgegenwart*, 63; similarly Grund, *Himmel*, 28-9.

verse to the preceding context in V 3. What has gone out over the world is the proclamation of day and night: ‘their measuring’ and ‘their word’. Similarly, the difficult reading of קום as ‘their measuring’ should be retained.<sup>6</sup> It has a parallel in Job 38:5 that allows for an understanding of the term קו as referring to the divine creational order.<sup>7</sup> Apparently, in Ps 19 this order is reflected by the structuring of day and night as the work of God.

However, in between V 3 and V 5, V 4 is rather awkward. In contrast to the preceding V 3, V 4 denies the existence of speech and words, thus revoking the possibility of oral transmission by day and night. It is especially the negative resumption of the word אמר (‘speech’) from V 3 in V 4 that makes any explanation along the lines of a different quality of speech difficult.<sup>8</sup> Rather, the inconsistency should be explained by seeing V 4 as a later reworking that denies the cosmic elements comprehensible speech and makes them inferior to torah.<sup>9</sup>

The second subdivision in V 5b-7 describes the circuit of the sun, for which ‘he has pitched a tent in them’ (לשמש שם אהל בהם, V 5b). It is clear that this statement refers back to V 2 implying that God made a dwelling for the sun. As such, the sun is singled out as being a special example for the work of his hands (מעשה ידיו, V 2). Its circuit is compared to the bountiful stride of a groom from his chamber that covers the whole cosmic sphere (V 6-7a), so that nothing is hidden from its heat (ואין נסתר מחמתו, V 7b). The section stands

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<sup>6</sup> The reading קום in the MT has been vigorously debated, as the understanding of קו in terms of measuring has been judged as being difficult to understand. Scholarship has usually been led by the witness of the LXX that translates φθόγγος αὐτῶν and could suggest a Hebrew Vorlage קולם (‘their voice’); cf. Spieckermann, *Heilsgegenwart*, 60; Hossfeld and Zenger, *Psalmen*, 130-31; Klaus Seybold, *Die Psalmen* (HAT I/15; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1996), 85; Craigie and Tate, *Psalms 1-50*, 178. However, Grund rightly points out that the variant of the MT not only presents the more difficult reading from a text critical point of view, but also makes sense in reference to the measure offered by the divine creational order, cf. in detail Grund, *Himmel*, 26-8.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. Job 38:5: מי שם ממדיה כי תדע או מי נטה עליה קו (‘Who determined its measurements - surely you know! Or who stretched the measuring-line upon it?’).

<sup>8</sup> So Craigie and Tate, *Psalms 1-50*, 181 (‘the paradox of ‘inaudible noise’’); similarly argued by Hossfeld and Zenger, *Psalmen*, 132, and Grund, *Himmel*, 108-12.

<sup>9</sup> Cf. Spieckermann, *Heilsgegenwart*, 60, 64. Oswald Loretz, “Ugaritologische und kolometrische Anmerkungen zu Ps 19A,” *UF* 18 (1986): 223-30, 224, mainly because of metric reasons, assumes a literary gloss.

out from its context as the poetic metre changes from bicola to tricola. This can, however, be explained as being a poetic reflection of the sun's circuit.<sup>10</sup>

The second part of Ps 19 in V 8-11 comprises a beautifully composed praise of torah. It consists of a series of eight bicola, the first six of which show a recurring composition. The introductory naming of the 'torah of Yhwh' (תורת יהוה) in V 8a is varied with five different terms in the following half verses: 'testimony of Yhwh' (עדות יהוה, V 8b), 'stipulations of Yhwh' (פקודי יהוה, V 9a), 'commandment of Yhwh' (מצות יהוה, V 9b), 'fear of Yhwh' (יראת יהוה, V 10a) and 'regulations of Yhwh' (משפטי יהוה, V 10b). Significant is the inclusion of the fear of Yhwh that represents not only the sole exception of a *genetivus obiectivus* amongst a series of subjective genitives, but also applies a sapiential concept to the notion of torah. All six terms open up a nominal clause in the first half of the bicola describing the character of the torah. The first characteristic is exceptional here as the adjective תמימה attributes cultic and ethical perfection to the תורת יהוה (V 8a). It serves as kind of an umbrella term that encompasses the following qualities emphasising both the righteousness of the divine law (נאמנה, V 8b; ישרים, V 9a; אמת, V 10b) and its purity (ברה, V 9b; טהורה, V 10a).<sup>11</sup> Correspondingly, each second half of the bicolos describes the impact of the divine law upon the human being. Again, the first notion seems to carry special weight, as torah is literally said to 'bring back life' (משיבת נפש, V 8a).<sup>12</sup> In this way, creational impact is attributed to the divine law since it is regarded as being the divine agent that grants life.

The following list of the torah's effects covers the whole sphere of human life. It makes the simple wise (מחכימת פתי, V 8b), it lets the heart rejoice (משמחי לב, V 9a), it enlightens the eyes (מאירת עינים, V 9b), it endures forever (עומדת לעד, V 10a) and it is entirely right (צדקו יחדו, V 10b). The praise climaxes in V 11 in two comparative sayings that emphasize torah's worth and attractiveness. Using the plural form that stands for the entity of the

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<sup>10</sup> Similarly Spieckermann, *Heilsgegenwart*, 69.

<sup>11</sup> Cf. Grund, *Himmel*, 222.

<sup>12</sup> Cf. Grund, *Himmel*, 228.

divine law, 'they' are praised to be more desirable than gold and sweeter than honey (הנחמדים מזהב ומפז רב ומתוקים מדבש ונפת צופים) (V 11).

In the third part of the psalm in V 12-15, the focus shifts from the character of the torah to the individual who relates to it. Addressing God directly, the speaker acknowledges the illuminating effect of the law, whose observance promises great reward ( גם עבדך נזהר בהם ) (בשמרם עקב רב, V 12). However, the following two statements convey that things are not that easy on the human side. The speaker feels his conduct being threatened both by involuntary, 'hidden' sins (נסתרות, V 13) and by the allurements of insolent people (זדים, V 14). Thus, the torah-corresponding wholeness (איתם, V 14) can only be brought about by God who is asked to acquit the speaker of hidden sins and let the insolent ones not rule over him (V 13b, 14a). The psalm is concluded by the speaker's final appeal to be granted favor by his God whom he calls his rock and his redeemer ( יהיו לרצון אמרי פי והגיון לבי לפניך ) (יהוה צורי וגאלי, V 15); a combination of titles that has a single parallel in the historical psalm Ps 78:35. The dismissal of the final part of Ps 19 as a secondary addition has mostly been justified with reference to its rather negative view of torah.<sup>13</sup> Some evidence suggests, though, that the prayer is an integral part of the psalm. First of all, the different view towards torah can be explained by a change of perspective: While the character of torah might be pure perfection, its relationship to humankind is always overshadowed by man's shortcomings. Secondly, an original psalm without the prayer part remains a fragment, the transmission of which is difficult to imagine. There is no evidence that torah psalms have been handed down in collections, but it is the prayer part in V 12-15 that makes Ps 19 fit into its literary setting between the royal psalms Ps 18 and Ps 20f.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Cf. Spieckermann, *Heilsgegenwart*, 70-1, who hears in 19:12-15 the voice of someone frightened by the law ("In V. 12-15 spricht nicht mehr der Toraverliebte, sondern der Toraverängstigte.") that contrasts the preceding praise of torah. Similarly, Hossfeld and Zenger, *Psalmen*, 130, 134, state a shift in the torah piety, whereby torah has become more distanced.

<sup>14</sup> Cf. Leslie C. Allen, "David as Exemplar of Spirituality: The Redactional Function of Psalm 19," *Bib* 67 (1986): 544-46, 546: "Ps 19 seems to have been placed beside Ps 18 in order that its second half might serve to develop those hints of David as a role model which were already evident in the royal psalms." Frank-Lothar Hossfeld and Erich Zenger, "'Wer darf hinaufziehen zum Berg JHWHs?': Zur Redaktionsgeschichte und Theologie der Psalmengruppe 15-24," in *Biblische Theologie und gesellschaftlicher Wandel* (ed. G. Braulik; Freiburg i. Br.: Herder, 1993), 166-83, 169, 179, also observe the links between Ps 19:12-

Consequently, this suggests that the original psalm in 19,(1)2f.5-15 was composed to fit into the collection of royal psalms, either as a prayer of David or as an instruction of the king on divine law. The main theme is the praise of torah that emerges from and corresponds to God's praise in creation. The cosmic elements have something to say about God's glory and as they convey both measuring and knowledge, their proclamation betrays a sapiential worldview. However, at the same time torah exceeds cosmic praise. While the cosmos bears witness to God's glory (כבוד אל, V 2), the divine name is only conveyed in connection with the divine law (תורת יהוה, V 8; cf. יהוה, V 8-10). The sequence also suggests that torah has come to be understood as a further example of the 'work of his hands' (מעשה ידיו, V 2). While this expression is normally reserved for the creational work of God, the example of Ps 111:7 shows that the term מעשי ידיו could at least be brought into connection with the law, as the divine works are paralleled with his trustworthy stipulations (מעשי ידיו אמת ומשפט נאמנים כל פקודיו). Turning back to Ps 19, the later addition in V 4 changes the balance of creation and torah against creational praise. It emphasizes the difference of quality, as day and night are secondarily denied comprehensible speech.

What can be said about wisdom and torah in Ps 19? First of all, the psalm speaks of torah as an encompassing quality that exceeds by far the concept of a legal term. This observation might also explain why the aspect of history is only present in the divine titles of God as rock and redeemer. Torah is not considered to be actual law given to the people at a specific time in history, but it is a quality that is rooted in creation and claims humankind as a whole.<sup>15</sup> By sustaining life and making wise, it shares qualities of wisdom. The most obvious point of contact, however, is the inclusion of the fear of Yhwh into the sequence of legal terms. In doing so the sapientialization of torah can be seen in progress. In order to illuminate the underlying literary process, let us turn now to Ps 119, which represents the closest parallel to the concept of torah in Ps 19.

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14, 15 and the royal psalms in the context; they, however, trace these links back to a redaction that secondarily inserts Ps 19 into its present literary context by adding verses 19:12-14, 15.

<sup>15</sup> Similarly Hossfeld and Zenger, *Psalmen*, 134.

### 3. The Torah Wisdom of Psalm 19 in Its Context

#### 3.1 The Predecessor: Psalm 119

Though the close connection between the two psalms has long been acknowledged, Ps 119 is usually understood as a mixed-type elaboration of Ps 19 that in its brevity represents the purer and consequently the older type.<sup>16</sup> This view has recently been challenged by Alexandra Grund who suggested that Ps 19 has to be understood as a development of motifs, features and topics of Ps 119.<sup>17</sup> Following her proposal, I would like to investigate the parallels between the two psalms and hope to demonstrate that Ps 119 serves as a literary predecessor for the torah conception of Ps 19.

Ps 119 is the longest psalm in the Book of Psalms. It can be described as an acrostic with 22 strophes consisting of eight bicolans each. As such, it offers a lengthy account of a first person's meditation on his relationship with torah. Notwithstanding shorter enumerations of legal terms (such as Dtn 4:1f. or Neh 9:13), Ps 119 comes closest to the collection of synonymous expressions for the law in Ps 19:8-11. While Ps 19 uses six variants for the divine law, Ps 119 features eight different terms. Both psalms share five expressions (תורה, <sup>18</sup>עדות/עדות, פקודים, מצוה and משפט), but more interesting are the variations in each: Ps 119 seems to concentrate on rather legal terms and exclusively uses the synonyms אמרה, דבר, and חק, which are missing in Ps 19. Ps 19 on the other hand includes the sapiential fear of Yhwh (יראת יהוה) as an expression for the divine law. The motif of fearing God is not absent from Ps 119,<sup>19</sup> but it is not used as a synonym for the divine law. Rather, in

<sup>16</sup> Cf. Gunkel, *Psalmen*, 80; Artur Weiser, *Die Psalmen* (ATD 14/15; 7th ed; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1966), 136; Allen, *Psalms 101-150*, 180; Jon D. Levenson, "The Sources of Torah: Psalm 119 and the Modes of Revelation in Second Temple Judaism," in *Ancient Israelite Religion* (ed. P. D. Miller Jr.; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987), 559-74, 561-62.

<sup>17</sup> Cf. Grund, *Himmel*, 285-89, 289.

<sup>18</sup> While in Ps 19:8b the singular form עדות occurs, Ps 119 uses the plural עדות with the single exception of 119:88 (ואשמרה עדות פיך). Grund, *Himmel*, 219, 288, explains this with an emphasis on the priestly tradition by Ps 19; a priestly background for the singular form in Ps 119:88 is also assumed by Alfons Deissler, *Psalm 119(118) und seine Theologie: Ein Beitrag zur Erforschung der anthologischen Stilgattung im Alten Testament* (Münchener theologische Studien, 1. Historische Abteilung 11; München: Zink, 1955), 188.

<sup>19</sup> Cf. Kent A. Reynolds, *Torah as Teacher. The Exemplary Torah Student in Psalm 11* (VT.S 137; Leiden / Boston: Brill, 2010), 39-40.



three instances the fear of God serves as a group-marker (119:63, 74, 79), while in 119:120 the dread of God is paralleled with the fear of his regulations (סֹמֵר מִפְּחָדָךְ בִּשְׂרִי (וּמִמְשַׁפְּטֶיךָ יִרְאֵתִי). What both psalms have in common, though, is the exceptional position of the torah within the group of variations. In Ps 119, torah is not only the most frequently used idiom,<sup>20</sup> but it also inaugurates the psalm's main topic and it is the only term used in a genitive construction with the divine name (תּוֹרַת יְהוָה, 119:1). Apart from Ps 19:9 and 119:1, this combination occurs only in Ps 1:2, so that a literary dependence is most likely. Ps 1, however, can be taken out of this discussion, as its author betrays clearly an acquaintance with the torah wisdom of both Ps 19 and Ps 119.<sup>21</sup> In the introductory Ps 1 their wisdom concepts are referred to and undergo a further interpretation.

Back to Ps 19 and Ps 119, further parallels strengthen the assumption that a literary relationship exists.<sup>22</sup> As far as form and structure are concerned, the hymnic praise of the law in 19:8-11 has some widespread parallels in Ps 119, though no exact lexical match for the pairing of torah synonym and respective predication from Ps 19:8-11 occurs.<sup>23</sup> Overall, in Ps 119 the elements of an individual's lament and statements of confidence prevail. This form reminds one of the third part of Ps 19. Furthermore, the two texts are comparable in describing the life-sustaining effect of the law (19:8a; cf. 119:25, 50, 93, 107, 116, 149, 154, 156) and its conveyance of wisdom (19:8b; cf. 119:98-100, 104, 130, 144, 169), while they even share lexical linkages in describing its desirability. There are differences, however. Whereas the comparative saying in Ps 19:11 deals with gold and honey in one sweep (הִנְחַמְדִּים מִזֶּהָב וּמִפֶּזֶז רֶב וּמִתּוֹקִים מִדְּבַשׁ וּנְפֶת צֹפִים), Ps 119 features three separate comparisons: Twice the Psalmist declares his preference for the divine law above precious

<sup>20</sup> The term appears 25 times within the psalm (119:1, 18, 26, 34, 44, 51, 53, 55, 61, 70, 72, 77, 85, 92, 97, 109, 113, 126, 136, 142, 150, 153, 163, 165, 174). On the concept of torah in Ps 119 see in general Erich Zenger, "Torafrömmigkeit. Beobachtungen zum poetischen und theologischen Profil von Psalm 119," in *Freiheit und Recht: Festschrift für Frank Crüsemann zum 65. Geburtstag*. Edited by Christof Hardmeier et al. Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 2003, 380-96, and the article by Karin Finsterbusch in this volume.

<sup>21</sup> The literary dependency of Ps 1 on both Ps 19 and Ps 119 has been demonstrated convincingly by Reinhard G. Kratz, "Die Tora Davids: Psalm 1 und die doxologische Fünfteilung des Psalters," *ZThK* 93 (1996): 1-34, 8-12.

<sup>22</sup> For the parallels cf. also the compilation by Grund, *Himmel*, 286.

<sup>23</sup> See the overview in the table provided by Grund, *Himmel*, 234.

metal (119:127, על כן אהבתי מצותיך מזהב ומפז; 119:72, טוב לי תורת פיך מאלפי זהב וכסף) and once above honey (119:103, מה נמלצו לחכי אמרתך מדבש לפי). It is only in these two texts that the word for honey, דבש, occurs in connection with the divine law. Finally, a remarkable parallel to the creational part in Ps 19 exists in the beginning of the lamed-strophe Ps 119:89-91. Here, the divine word is established in the heavens (דברך נצב בשמים, V 89) and the universe stands according to his regulations (למשפטיך עמדו היום, V 91).<sup>24</sup> In this statement, Ps 119 seems to go further than Ps 19, as it explicitly recognises a cosmic dimension of the divine word.<sup>25</sup> On the other hand, Ps 19 offers the more detailed conception of the relation between creation and torah, even if it is only implicitly stated.

There remains the question how these parallels can be assessed. Though a literary dependence seems to be a safe bet, the direction of such a dependence can only be decided if it can be shown that one text relies on the other and that it then represents an interpretation of its content.<sup>26</sup> To my mind, the decisive evidence is the inclusion of the fear of Yhwh in Ps 19, which clearly betrays an exegetical interest.<sup>27</sup> The author of Ps 119 apparently knows fear as the adequate mind-set towards the divine law (cf. 119:120), but only his successor in Ps 19 goes so far as to transform the moral quality itself into a variation of torah.<sup>28</sup> Hence, an approximation of torah and wisdom is intended that exceeds the torah wisdom of Ps 119. Furthermore, the three comparative sayings of Ps 119 (119:72, 103, 127) compared to the sole comparison in Ps 19:11 points to the same direction. Apparently, the author of Ps 19 seeks to systematise the different comparisons of Ps 119 in one statement. However, this still leaves the absence of the three synonyms דבר, אמרה, and חק.

<sup>24</sup> That Ps 119:91 refers to the heavens (119:89) and the earth (119:90) as a subject for the plural verb עמדו, e.g. the whole universe, is argued convincingly by Reynolds, *Torah*, 125; cf. also Deissler, *Psalm 119*, 192, and Grund, *Himmel*, 103.

<sup>25</sup> Cf. Grund, *Himmel*, 287.

<sup>26</sup> Cf. the methodological considerations of Michael Fishbane, *Biblical Interpretation in Ancient Israel* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1988), 285, and their application by Anja Klein, *Schriftauslegung im Ezechielbuch: Redaktionsgeschichtliche Untersuchungen zu Ez 34-39* (BZAW 391; Berlin / New York: de Gruyter, 2008), 22-3.

<sup>27</sup> Similarly Grund, *Himmel*, 289, who sees in the inclusion of the fear of Yhwh a movement whereby Ps 19 goes a step beyond Ps 119.

<sup>28</sup> On the interpretation of the fear of Yhwh in terms of a variation of the law see also Joachim Becker, *Gottesfurcht im Alten Testament* (AnBib 25; Rom: Päpstliches Bibelinstitut, 1965), 267-69.

in Ps 19 to be accounted for. As for the last two ones, the easiest explanation is that Ps 19 concentrates on the written rather than the oral transmission of torah.<sup>29</sup> Nevertheless, it is also worth considering that the oral transmission in Ps 19 is reserved for the cosmos, so that the days pour forth speech (יביע אמר, 19:3) and convey words together with the nights (מליהם, 19:5). Apparently, the idea of God's control over the cosmos by means of his word from Ps 119 is interpreted in Ps 19 by handing over the oral part to the cosmic elements. Finally, in the case of the term חק, it has been assumed that the term had intentionally been left out. It unites creation and torah in its semantic field, which would run contrary to the scope of Ps 19.<sup>30</sup> I would suggest, however, that the synonym fell prey to the insertion of the idea of the fear of Yhwh.

This assumption finds some support when we look at the introductory aleph-strophe of Ps 119. This stanza represents the closest parallel to Ps 19:8-11 and thus offers a good example to demonstrate further the differences between the two psalms. It clearly falls into two halves:<sup>31</sup> The first one comprises 119:1-4 and sets the stage by praising those whose way is blameless because they adhere to the torah of Yhwh (אשרי תמימי דרך ההלכים) (בתורת יהוה, V 1). As mentioned above, this is the only instance where the law in the form of torah is combined with the divine name. Two further macarisms specify the blameless way of life as one of keeping the divine testimonies (אשרי נצרי עדתיו בכל לב ידרשוהו, V 2) and walking in the ways of God (אף לא פעלו עולה בדרכיו הלכו, V 3). V 4 concludes the first half by addressing God as the law-giver whose stipulations are to be kept (אתה צויתתה פקדיך) (לשמר מאד). The second half in 119:5-8 focuses on the lifeworld of the speaker, who wants to fulfil the described ideal. Though he is aware of his own shortcomings, he prays to God that he might be able to observe the divine statutes (לשמר חקיך, V 5), to regard all his commandments (בהביטי אל כל מצותיך, V 6), to learn his righteous regulations (בלמדי משפטי, V 7) and finally to observe his statutes (את חקיך אשמר, V 8).

<sup>29</sup> Cf. Grund, *Himmel*, 288.

<sup>30</sup> As argued by Grund, *Himmel*, 219.

<sup>31</sup> A two-fold division is suggested by Frank-Lothar Hossfeld and Erich Zenger, *Psalmen 101-150* (HThKAT 27; Freiburg: Herder, 2008), 361; Leslie C. Allen, *Psalms 101-150* (WBC 21; rev. ed.; Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2002), 185. Reynolds, *Torah*, 68-70, observes the introductory function of verses 119:1-3 for the psalm as a whole.

First of all, the division into a part about the benefit of the divine law and a part in which the Psalmist reflects his situation, reminds one of the division of torah praise and prayer in Ps 19:8-11 and 19:12-15. The introductory verses in Ps 119:1-3 actually represent the only section of the psalm where the torah variations are used with a third person suffix similar to the enumerations in Ps 19:8-11. Furthermore, the sequential order of the synonyms is nearly congruent. In both cases, the mention of the torah of Yhwh opens the list (19:8a; 119:1) and is followed by the legal terms עֲדָה/עֲדוֹת (19:8b; 119:2), פְּקוּדִים (19:9a; 119:4), מִצְוָה (19:9b; 119:6) and מִשְׁפָּטִים (19:10b; 119:7). The only difference applies to the term חֵק, in whose place Ps 19 presents the fear of Yhwh. It does not take the corresponding position of the missing term, but to keep the metric balance, the expression יִרְאֵת יְהוָה could only be included by leaving out one of the six synonyms of the aleph-strophe. Furthermore, it is certainly no coincidence that the praise of torah in Ps 19 comprises eight bicola, which is exactly the length of each of the acrostic's strophes.

Finally, both texts aim at praising torah. Here, however, the differences begin. In Ps 119:1-8, the divine law is not the object of praise, but rather a vehicle to the blameless way of life. If the scope is widened on the psalm as a whole, the observation is confirmed that torah is a relational concept that aims at keeping, obeying and contemplative study.<sup>32</sup> In this respect, some instances of lexical linkages are most striking. Firstly, at the beginning of each section, both psalms use the adjective 'blameless' (תָּמִים) related to torah. While in Ps 19 torah is praised to be without blame (תּוֹרַת יְהוָה תָּמִימָה, 19:8), in Ps 119 blamelessness characterizes the way of those who have chosen the divine torah (אֲשֶׁר־יִתְּמִי (דֶּרֶךְ הַהֲלָכִים בְּתוֹרַת יְהוָה, 119:1). Likewise, the righteousness of Yhwh's stipulations in 19:9 (פְּקוּדֵי יְהוָה יִשְׁרִים) corresponds to the speaker's state of mind in 119:7, who prays for an upright heart (אֲוֹדָךְ בִּישָׁר לִבִּי). Apparently, the predications of torah in Ps 19 are partly derived from Ps 119, where they are used to describe the human side of the relation.

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<sup>32</sup> Cf. Grund, *Himmel*, 286. See also Reynolds, *Torah*, 182-83, who concludes: "Perhaps most importantly, Ps 119 emphasizes the function of Torah in the life of the righteous. In a subtle way this emphasis on what Torah *does* contributes to an expansive conception of Torah that cannot be limited to the five books of Moses." On the concept of torah in Ps 119 that extends beyond a mere identification with the Pentateuch cf. also Levenson, "Sources," 570-71.

While the speaker in Ps 119 is confident that he will achieve the state of blamelessness, his counterpart in Ps 19 is far more aware of any involuntary sins that make him dependent on God's forgiveness.

To sum up: we have been able to demonstrate convincingly that Ps 19 draws on the torah conception of Ps 119. The exegetical interest mainly concerns the concept of torah. While the author of Ps 119 aims at blessing life according to the law, the author of Ps 19 sets torah as an absolute<sup>33</sup> that attracts some of the predication previously attributed to the ideal way of life. This also accounts for the formal separation in Ps 19 that differs between hymnic praise and human prayer. The structural change goes along with a change in humankind's relationship to torah. In Ps 119, the Psalmist apparently ranks himself among those whose life is blameless.<sup>34</sup> The author of Ps 19, however, paints a more negative picture as the speaker in 19:12-15 is to a greater extent aware of his own iniquities that lead to hidden sinning.<sup>35</sup> The question remains whether Ps 119 as predecessor can sufficiently account for the torah concept in Ps 19 or if another background comes into play. Though many scholars have convincingly demonstrated that Ps 119 uses phraseology and motifs of wisdom literature,<sup>36</sup> the sapiential part in Ps 19 exceeds its *Vorlage* mainly in two respects: firstly, the inclusion of the fear of Yhwh among the sequence of torah variations and secondly, the praise of the law in terms of an absolute entity. Therefore, let us now turn to some wisdom texts from the Hebrew Bible that might have contributed to the innerbiblical exegesis of Ps 119 in Ps 19.

The fear of Yhwh is a key term in Old Testament wisdom literature. Especially in Proverbs the concept appears as a gateway towards wisdom (Prov 1:7; 2:5; 9:10; 15:33). The insight that the relation with God is a prerequisite for sapiential knowledge is also reflected in the equation of fear of God and wisdom in Job 28:28 (יראת אדני היא חכמה).

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<sup>33</sup> Contrast Grund, *Himmel*, 287, who refuses to speak of torah in Ps 19 as a form of absolute entity ("absolute Größe").

<sup>34</sup> See Deissler, *Psalm 119*, 284-85; Reynolds, *Torah*, 69.

<sup>35</sup> Similarly, Grund, *Himmel*, 288, notes a "deeper understanding of sin" ("ein tieferes Sündenverständnis") in Ps 19 compared to Ps 119.

<sup>36</sup> Cf. recently Reynolds, *Torah*, 49-56, 131-33, who has presented a thorough analysis of the links between Ps 119 and wisdom literature as part of his extensive study on Ps 119.

However, this classic concept undergoes a first interpretation in the acrostic Ps 111 that praises the works of Yhwh (מעשי יהוה, 111:2; cf. מעשי ידיו, 111:7) in history and law. The verse 111:10 quotes the saying that the fear of Yhwh is the beginning of wisdom in order to parallel it with the idea that the practice of his stipulations (פקודיו, 111:7) leads to good insight.<sup>37</sup> Hence, the obedience to the divine law is proclaimed as a manner of practicing the fear of Yhwh.<sup>38</sup> From here on it is only a small step to speak of the fear of Yhwh in terms of a variation of torah in Ps 19. Ps 111 thus proves that the exchange between wisdom and torah led to an approximation of the sapiential key term תורת יהוה with the divine law – an exegetical development that culminates in the inclusion of the fear of Yhwh in the list of torah synonyms in Ps 19. It can therefore be assumed that Ps 111 serves as a kind of stopover in the literary process that paves the exegetical way from Ps 119 to Ps 19.

Finally, the special form of the praise of torah in Ps 19 has another close parallel in the self-praise of the Lady Wisdom in Prov 8:4-21. The similarities are quickly summarised.<sup>39</sup> First of all, the first part of the speech Prov 8:4-11 is close to Ps 19:8-11 both in structure and wording. Lady Wisdom begins by addressing the people (אליכם אישים אקרא וקולי אל בני ) (אדם, 8:4); an invitation that is supplemented by a special address to the simple and untaught ones (הבינו פתאים ערמה וכסילים הבינו לב, 8:5). The following four verses 8:6-9 use a series of synonyms for the speech of wisdom and ascribe each a predication. The affinity to Ps 19 can even be observed in the wording, as the predications of Prov 8:7-9 and Ps 19:8-11 are the only instances, in which the combination of the terms אמת, ישר and the root צדק appears.<sup>40</sup> Lastly, both Ps 19:11 and Prov 8:10f. (cf. 8:19) end with a comparative saying. In Prov 8:10f. it is insight that is preferred above silver and gold (קחו מוסרי ואל כסף ) (ודעת מחרוץ נבחר, V 10) and also wisdom above corals and other things that may be desired (כי טובה חכמה מפנינים וכל חפצים לא ישוו בה, V 11). Though the comparative saying in Ps 19

<sup>37</sup> The suffix at the end of the phrase לכל עשיהם in 111:10 refers back to פקודיו in 111:7; cf. Hossfeld and Zenger, *Psalmen 101-150*, 229.

<sup>38</sup> Cf. Becker, *Gottesfurcht*, 273; Hossfeld and Zenger, *Psalmen 101-150*, 225.

<sup>39</sup> On the links between Prov 8 and Ps 19 cf. also the overview and the concise argument by Grund, *Himmel*, 235-40.

<sup>40</sup> Cf. Grund, *Himmel*, 235.

combines the different sayings from Ps 119 (cf. 119:72, 103, 127) rather than drawing upon Prov 8:10f., it can be no coincidence that a similar sequence of predication is both times rounded off with a comparative saying. Therefore, it can be assumed that Prov 8 has served as a literary background for the exegesis of Ps 119 in Ps 19.<sup>41</sup>

This process bears witness to a literary and theological discourse wherein torah undergoes a sapiential interpretation. Drawing on the portrayal of wisdom in Prov 8, the torah from Ps 119 is set as an absolute and attracts both characteristics and predication of classic wisdom. Here, the most significant change is the rise of the fear of Yhwh that has come to be understood as a variation of torah itself. This discourse obviously points to a historic setting in late Persian, or rather, Hellenistic times, when a balance between different ordering concepts such as wisdom and torah is aimed at. The idea of history plays a minor role in this process yet. However, this placement of Ps 19 can find additional confirmation if Ps 19 can be shown to relate to post-biblical literature. The single logical candidate for this question is the wisdom of Ben Sira, which brings us to the last part of our argument.

### 3.2 *The Heir: The Wisdom of Ben Sira*

The following observations will show that the teaching of Ben Sira can in some points tie in with Ps 19, while in other instances a direct reception is likely.<sup>42</sup> The most obvious point of contact can be found in the praise of God as omnipotent and omniscient Lord of all creation in Sir 42:15-43:33. A key motif in this poem is the recollection of the divine works that have been brought into life by the divine word ( *אזכרה נא מעשי אל וזה חזיתי ואשננה* ) ( *באמר אדני מעשיו ופעל רצנו לקחו* 42:15 Ms M). As one of the specific creatures that stands out for the glory of Yhwh in his works, the sun takes a prominent place ( *שמש זהרת על כל נגלת<sup>°°</sup> [וכ]בוד* )

<sup>41</sup> Similarly Grund, *Himmel*, 240, takes the links between the respective comparative sayings as evidence to suggest that the author of Ps 19 reworked the comparisons of Ps 119 against the background of Prov 8.

<sup>42</sup> Michael Reitemeyer, *Weisheitslehre als Gotteslob: Psalmentheologie im Buch Jesus Sirach* (BBB 127; Berlin / Wien: Philo, 2000), 192-95, offers a general overview of the links between Ps 19 and Ben Sira. In the following, the teaching of Ben Sira will be quoted according to the Hebrew original edited by the Academy of the Hebrew Languages (The Academy of the Hebrew Language and the Shrine of the Book, ed., *The Book of Ben Sira: Text, Concordance and an Analysis of the Vocabulary* (The Historical Dictionary of the Hebrew Language; Jerusalem: Keter Press, 1973)) with preference given to the Masada manuscript (Ms M); where no Hebrew manuscript is preserved, the Septuagint version is taken as basis.

אדני מלא מעשי (42:16 Ms M). Following the praise of the firmament (רקיע, 43:1 Ms M), a detailed description of the sun's beauty and usefulness occurs in 43:2-5. The description starts in V 2 with the motif that nothing remains hidden from the sun's circuit (שמש מופיע) (שמש מופיע, 43:2 Ms M<sup>43</sup>), which also occurs in Ps 19. However, exceeding the account of Ps 19:7, the aspect of judgment prevails in picturing the effect of the sun's burning gaze upon the earth (43:3f.). The number of lexical linkages that relate the passage to Ps 19 (שמש, כבוד אל/אדני, רקיע, מעשי ידיו/ימי/אל) suggests that the psalm was known to the grandfather Ben Sira.<sup>44</sup> To him, however, the sun is only the first of a number of examples of the divine works that stand out for the beauty and usefulness of creation.<sup>45</sup> While Ps 19 only implicitly relates creational order and torah, Ben Sira explicitly speaks of a cosmic structure that is ascribed to the divine word. It is the divine word that brings about the works (42:15), and the example of the moon is used to demonstrate that the order stands because of it (בדבר) (אדני יעמד חק ולא ישה באשמרתם, 43:10 Ms M). While this reminds us of the cosmic structure in Ps 119:89-91, it is foremost the priestly account of creation that is the force behind this description. While the law is left aside in the praise Sir 42:15-43:33, Sir 17 takes an explicit stand in the question of the relationship between creation and law. According to Sir 17, man is created and shown God's wondrous deeds in order to glorify him (ἐθηκεν τὸν ὀφθαλμὸν αὐτοῦ ἐπὶ τὰς καρδίας αὐτῶν δεῖξαι αὐτοῖς τὸ μεγαλεῖον τῶν ἔργων αὐτοῦ, 17:8). The creational endowment of humankind culminates in the granting of the law of life (νόμον ζωῆς, 17:11); a sequence that is reminiscent of Ps 19 which also bases law on the deeds of creation.<sup>46</sup>

<sup>43</sup> Ms B reads: שמש מביע בצרתו חמה מה נורא מעשי יי. The variant reading represents a later interpretation that strengthens the existing links to Ps 19 by replacing נכסה with חמה (cf. חמה, Ps 19:7).

<sup>44</sup> See also Georg Sauer, *Jesus Sirach / Ben Sira* (ATD Apokryphen 1; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2000), 297; Grund, *Himmel*, 348.

<sup>45</sup> Tanja Pilger, *Erziehung im Leiden: Komposition und Theologie der Elihureden in Hi 32-37* (FAT II/49; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010), 221, links the passage Sir 42:15-43:33 to the description of God's dominion over the weather in Job 36:27-37:13. However, the prominent place that is given to the sun in Sir 43:2-5 clearly points to Ps 19.

<sup>46</sup> Cf. Reitemeyer, *Weisheitslehre*, 193. See also Johannes Marböck, "Gesetz und Weisheit: Zum Verständnis des Gesetzes bei Jesus Ben Sira," in *Gottes Weisheit unter uns: Zur Theologie des Buches Sirach* (ed. I. Fischer; HBS 6; Freiburg i.Br.: Herder, 1995), 52-72, 57, who interprets Sir 17:11-14 along the lines that torah has come to be understood as part of God's universal wisdom that underlies creation.



There remains the question of how the general idea of wisdom and torah in Ben Sira relates to the concept in Ps 19. In this respect, a general idea of Ben Sira's teaching can be deduced from a number of key texts that structure the book. Within the introductory part, a possible acrostic poem in Sir 1:11-30<sup>47</sup> about the fear of the Lord strikes the eye, as it offers a close parallel to the torah hymn in Ps 19:8-11. The similarities are firstly of a formal nature, as the fear of the Lord (φόβος κυρίου, 1:11, 12, 18, 21,<sup>48</sup> 27, 28, 30) is praised both for its character and its impact on human life. Comparable to the described effects of the law in Ps 19, it is praised for giving a long life (καὶ δώσει εὐφροσύνην καὶ χαρὰν καὶ μακρομήρευσιν, Sir 1:12; cf. Ps 19:8a) and for bestowing wisdom (Sir 1:19; cf. Ps 19:8b, 9b).<sup>49</sup> However, the fear of the Lord in this respect is foremost related to wisdom rather than to torah, which is proven by a number of equations. With reference to the classic concept, the fear of the Lord appears as the beginning of wisdom (ἀρχὴ σοφίας, 1:14), the fullness of wisdom (πλησμονὴ σοφίας, 1:16) and the root of wisdom (ρίζα σοφίας, 1:20). The law, however, seems to play a subordinate role in this interplay between wisdom and the fear of Yhwh. It is only mentioned once as being a way of practicing wisdom (ἐπιθυμήσας σοφίαν διατήρησον ἐντολὰς καὶ κύριος χορηγήσει σοι αὐτήν, 1:26). One might speak of the law as coagulated wisdom,<sup>50</sup> a concept that underlies the practical instructions of Ben Sira and is summarized in Sir 19:20: 'The whole of wisdom is the fear of the Lord, complete wisdom is the fulfillment of the law' (πᾶσα σοφία φόβος κυρίου καὶ ἐν πάσῃ σοφίᾳ ποιήσεις νόμου).

<sup>47</sup> See Alexander A. Di Lella, "Fear of the Lord as Wisdom: Ben Sira 1,11-30," in *The Book of Ben Sira in Modern Research: Proceedings of the First International Ben Sira Conference 28-31 July 1996 Soesterberg, Netherlands* (ed. P. C. Beentjes; BZAW 225; Berlin / New York: de Gruyter, 1997), 113-33, 115, who concludes that the Greek poem is "a non-alphabetic acrostic of 22 lines or bicola"; he notes further: "Part B begins with οὐ, ςλ in Ben Sira's original, the beginning of the second half of the Hebrew alphabet". It is thus most likely that the Hebrew original represented an alphabetic acrostic.

<sup>48</sup> Sir 1:21 is only transmitted in some Greek manuscripts; however, the verse is usually judged to be original; cf. Patrik W. Skehan and Alexander A. Di Lella, *The Wisdom of Ben Sira* (AncB 39; New York: Doubleday, 1987), 145 ("it must be genuine"); Di Lella, "Fear of the Lord," 116-17, and Sauer, *Jesus Sirach*, 50.

<sup>49</sup> This is also observed by Grund, *Himmel*, 235. Furthermore, this opinion is taken up by the postscript Sir 50:29 (Ms B) that concludes by equating the fear of the lord with life (כִּי יִרְאֶה יְיָ חַיִּים).

<sup>50</sup> Reitemeyer, *Weisheitslehre*, 206 ("'geronnene' Weisheit").

The relationship between wisdom and torah in Ben Sira is further taken up in the programmatic chapter Sir 24 that comprises another hymn at the centre of the composition. However, this time it is the personified wisdom that praises herself in a manner and style reminiscent of Prov 8. Wisdom firstly speaks about the orderly path she takes in the heavens (24:5); a motif that strongly recalls the circuit of the sun in Ps 19:5b-7. The connection is strengthened further by the idea that God has given wisdom a tent in the heights (ἐγὼ ἐν ὑψηλοῖς κατεσκήνωσα, 24:4; κατέπαυσεν τὴν σκηνήν μου, 24:8), just as he has pitched a tent for the sun in Ps 19:5b. However, in Ben Sira wisdom finally takes up a permanent dwelling in the holy tent on Mount Zion (ἐν σκηνῇ ἁγίᾳ ἐνώπιον αὐτοῦ ἐλειτούργησα καὶ οὕτως ἐν Σιων ἐστηρίχθην, 24:10). Here, she calls out to the people and lures them by declaring herself sweeter than honey (Sir 24:20; cf. Ps 19:11). The law again comes into play as a way of practicing wisdom: wisdom takes shape in the Mosaic law that is given as a heritage to the people of Jacob (ταῦτα πάντα βίβλος διαθήκης θεοῦ ὑψίστου νόμον ὃν ἐνετείλατο ἡμῖν Μωσῆς κληρονομίαν συναγωγᾶς Ἰακωβ, 24:23).<sup>51</sup> As a manifestation of wisdom, law grants inexhaustible insight and knowledge (cf. 24:24-34). Interestingly, it is only in this historic setting that the divine law is attributed a number of synonyms that strongly remind one of the variations in Ps 19 and Ps 119. In Sir 45:1-5 the patriarch Moses is praised for his role in the

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<sup>51</sup> Scholarship places different emphases in determining this relationship between wisdom and law. While Skehan and Di Lella, *Wisdom of Ben Sira*, 336, say that Ben Sira “identifies Wisdom with the Law (Torah)”, Marböck likewise assumes an identification (“Identifizierung”) of law with cosmic wisdom (Marböck, “Gesetz,” 59; cf. also Johannes Marböck, “Gottes Weisheit unter uns: Sir 24 als Beitrag zur biblischen Theologie,” in *Gottes Weisheit unter uns. Zur Theologie des Buches Sirach* (ed. I. Fischer; HBS 6; Freiburg i.Br.: Herder, 1995), 73-87, 83). In contrast, Gabriele Boccaccini, “Ben Sira, Qohelet, and Apocalyptic: A Turning Point in the History of Jewish Thought,” in *Middle Judaism: Jewish Thought, 300 B.C.E. to 200 C.E.* (ed. G. Boccaccini; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991), 77-125, 89, argues: “saying that the law is the historical manifestation in Israel of a pretemporal wisdom is far from an affirmation of identity. It is more the indication of a relationship conceived in strongly asymmetrical terms” (cf. also Grund, *Himmel*, 349-50, who stresses the tension between cosmic wisdom dwelling in Israel and the Covenant Code). Reiterer, in his profound study of the relationship between wisdom and law in Ben Sira, similarly comes to the conclusion that there is no evidence for an identification of wisdom and law (cf. Friedrich V. Reiterer, “Das Verhältnis der חכמה zur תורה im Buch Ben Sira: Kriterien zur gegenseitigen Bestimmung,” in *Studies in the Book of Ben Sira. Papers of the Third International Conference on the Deuterocanonical Books, Shim'on Centre, Pépa, Hungary, 18-20 May, 2006* (ed. G. G. Xeravits et al.; Supplements to the Journal for the Study of Judaism 127; Leiden / Boston: Brill, 2008), 97-133, 133); in the case of Sir 24:23-34, he understands the mosaic law to be a special realisation of wisdom (cf. Reiterer, “Verhältnis,” 129).

giving of the law that is denoted with the variations מצוה, תורה, חק, עדות and משפט ( וישם בידו ) 45:5 Ms B). מצוה תורת חיים ותבונה ללמד ביעקב חקיו ועדותיו ומשפטיו לישראל

In summary, the following can be said. Firstly, the reception of some single features such as the sun-motif is convincing evidence that Ps 19 was known to the grandfather Ben Sira. Furthermore, his teaching shows in many respects points of contact with the sapientialization of torah in Ps 19. For example, the connection of creation and law plays a decisive role and the law has been attributed predications of wisdom. However, while in Ps 19 the relationship is developed from the notion of torah, the balance in Ben Sira has clearly shifted in favor of wisdom. The encompassing quality of wisdom manifests itself in the guidelines of the law and its universal presence takes shape in the Mosaic law. In this, however, lies one of the great achievements of Ben Sira, who succeeds in integrating the historical election of Israel into the universal concept of wisdom.<sup>52</sup> One might say that Ben Sira has solved a problem that the author of Ps 19 never had while giving torah a historical setting in the form of the Mosaic law. Finally, no traces have been left of the equalization of the fear of Yhwh and torah. Rather, the fear of Yhwh is back to being in close bond with wisdom, and while in Ps 19 torah has become the object of praise, in Ben Sira the fear of Yhwh has been attributed a hymnic glorification

#### 4. Conclusion

The present argument has dealt with the question of wisdom and torah in Ps 19 from the perspective of innerbiblical exegesis and its continuation in post-biblical writings. I have demonstrated that the Psalm represents an important link in the convergence of wisdom and torah. Coming from Ps 119, the concept of torah has been supplemented with further sapiential predications, in which the equation of the law with the fear of Yhwh takes pride of place. What has, however, proven to be valuable to post-biblical wisdom teaching is the relationship between creation and torah. In this respect, Ben Sira is a worthy heir to the author of Ps 19.

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<sup>52</sup> Cf. Marböck, "Gesetz," 62-4.

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