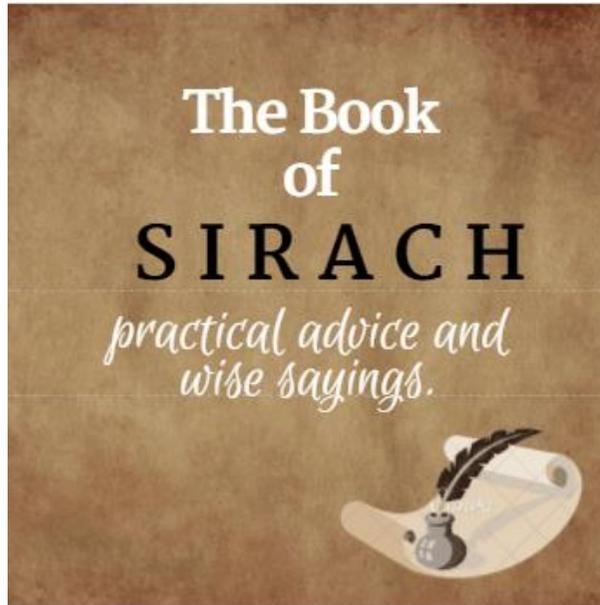


WOOLHAMPTON PARISH

‘THE GOD WHO SPEAKS’ – YEAR OF THE BIBLE

BRIEF GUIDE TO BOOKS OF THE BIBLE

## BOOK OF SIRACH



The full title of the book is “**The Wisdom of Jesus Ben Sirach**”. The standard text is in Greek, translated from the Hebrew by the grandson of the author, for use by Greek-speaking Jews of Alexandria. The original Hebrew was probably written

190 and 180 B.C. and in the last 150 years large portions of the Hebrew have been found in various places, so that now about two-thirds of the Hebrew text is known.

It is **also called “Ecclesiasticus” or “The Church Book”**, because it gives advice on a wide variety of moral matters. The author was obviously passionately devoted to Jerusalem and to the Law, so that he

regards the Law as the expression of all wisdom and sees its source and centre as the Temple of Jerusalem.

*So the first half of the book ends with a lyrical description of how wisdom was sent to take its seat at Jerusalem. The second half ends with a paean of praise for the ancestors, climaxing in an enthusiastic description of the great high priest Simon (220-195 BC), whom the author obviously remembers.*

The order of the arrangement of topics follows no further pattern; we seem to slide from one topic to another. Many of the passages are exactly 22 lines long, the number of letters in the Hebrew alphabet. The author is stern and strict on such matters as discipline and punishment, though he can be humorous as well. About women he is decidedly mistrustful and even cynical; he grants women no rights of their own and would have them rigidly controlled by men. He is clear that virtue is rewarded and vice is punished, but he has no conception of life after death.

(from *The Bible – A Reader’s Guide*, by Henry Wansborough)

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**Now read Sirach, chapter 2**

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or contact the Parish Office.