Included among the manuscript finds from Qumran are a number of Wisdom texts, which have enlarged our knowledge of that genre in the late Second Temple Period. Fragments of Job (4Q99–101), Proverbs (4Q102–103), Qohelet (4Q109–110), Ben Sira (2Q18, 11Q5 21:11–17; 22:1) and Ps. 154 (11QPs a 18:1–16), previously only preserved in Syriac, have been known to us already, but attest to the presence of a wide range of Wisdom literature available in this period. Two manuscripts of Aramaic Targums to Job (4Q157, 11Q10) that differ from the previously extant Job Targum also witness to a tradition of interpretation of the Wisdom texts. It is not surprising, therefore, to find evidence of a lively tradition of Wisdom writing in the late Second Temple period, and the previously unknown texts from Qumran amply supply this evidence. There are traditional Wisdom formulations describing the righteous person (4Q420, 4Q421) or the actions of the wise (4Q413, 4Q424, 4Q425), a personification of the antonym of Wisdom (4Q184) and an historical review in the context of wisdom (4Q185; cf. Ben Sira 44–50). The many texts allow comparison with the Wisdom of Ben Sira, which until the Qumran discoveries seemed to have introduced a number of new

1 See J.A. Fitzmyer, “The first century Targum of Job from Qumran Cave XI”, <em>CBQ</em> 36 (1974), pp. 503–524, who shows that the language of the Qumran targum dates back at least as early as the first century B.C.E. There is a tradition that R. Gamaliel came across a written Targum of Job at around this period (<em>b. Shabbath</em> 115a), but the account reveals that this targum was officially disapproved of at the time.

2 General surveys of the Qumran Wisdom literature can be found in L.H. Schiffman, <em>Reclaiming the Dead Sea Scrolls: Their true meaning for Judaism and Christianity</em> (New York, 1995), pp. 197–206; and J.J. Collins [1997a], <em>Jewish Wisdom in the Hellenistic Age</em> (Louisville, 1997), pp. 112–31. The texts have been translated with brief commentaries in D.J. Harrington [1996a], <em>Wisdom Texts from Qumran</em> (London, 1996), and volume 4.3 of the journal <em>Dead Sea Discoveries</em> (1997) is devoted to a discussion of them. Translations given here are my own.
features into Wisdom literature, but we can now see that these were part of a more widespread development in this genre. Collins has, therefore, spoken of a divorce of the form and world-view of this literature in the late Second Temple period, applying this particularly to the Qumran material.\(^3\) The most important Qumran text in this regard is the extensive text known as *Sapiential Work A*,\(^4\) which is extant in the manuscripts 1Q26, 4Q415–418 and 4Q423, although it is not impossible that some of the other Qumran sapiential fragments belong to this work.\(^5\)

An obvious feature of the work is that it was at one time very large, although only small sections have survived in the fragments. In this respect it is similar to Ben Sira (c. 190 B.C.E.), the largest of the extant early Jewish Wisdom texts (amounting to 51 chapters), and it reflects an anthological approach comparable to the latter in its arrangement of groups of teaching on different themes without any obvious connection between the groups.\(^6\) Both works also suggest an educational context for the Wisdom instructions, Ben Sira often addressing his words to “my son/pupil” (<יַעַז, e.g. 2:1, 3:17) and *Sapiential Work A* to “you understanding son/pupil” (<יַעַז יַעַז, e.g. 4Q417 2 i:18) or to “you who understand” (<יַעַז יַעַז, e.g. 4Q417 2 i:1, 13–14). *Sapiential Work A* is written in the Herodian script, placing the manuscripts in a period over a century later than Ben Sira, but


\(^4\) Many scholars are beginning to prefer the title *Musar-le-Mevin* (derived from the addresses in the fragments) rather than *Sapiential Work A* for the set of fragments, since they contain much that is unfamiliar from other Wisdom texts. The title *Sapiential Work A* is kept here so that the reader may not be confused, since those works that use *Musar-le-Mevin* will usually indicate that this is also known as *Sapiential Work A*, whilst the reverse is not the case. Indeed, the argument offered here is that Wisdom is a broad concept and that the term ‘Sapiential’ when applied to Ben Sira is also misleading.


\(^6\) A comparison of the two works in some detail has been made by D.J. Harrington, “Two early Jewish approaches to Wisdom: Sirach and Qumran Sapiential Work A”, JSP 16 (1997), pp. 25–28.