Gardens of Knowledge: Teachers in Ben Sira, 4QInstruction, and the Hodayot

Matthew Goff

The Hebrew Bible and the Dead Sea Scrolls, as documents written in the Second Temple period, constitute important evidence that some people in this era achieved a sophisticated level of education. They mastered several fields of knowledge, including the history of Israel, ritual practices, and ethics. It follows not only that there were students being trained but also teachers who themselves had gone through some sort of educational process. In this essay I would like to examine one specific aspect of the broader topic of pedagogy in ancient Judaism: how teachers legitimated their authority and the knowledge that such individuals transmitted to students. To this end I examine three early Jewish texts in which teachers are prominent: 4QInstruction, Ben Sira, and the Hodayot. How is the image of the teacher, as an authoritative and learned figure, constructed in these writings? What sort of knowledge does the teacher offer in them? How is the knowledge he conveys legitimated and understood as valuable and worthy of transmission to students? To what extent can the social setting of instruction be understood?

In my reflections on these questions, I stress three points. The first regards what teachers say in these texts about themselves. Ben Sira, with only a small degree of humility, emphatically endorses himself as a teacher, praising his own wisdom and what students can learn from him. The teacher of 4QInstruction, by contrast, says virtually nothing about himself. In some hymns of the Hodayot, the speaker, not unlike

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Ben Sira, emphasizes his own importance as a source of knowledge for others. Secondly, in different ways these three texts construe as a garden the pedagogical space in which a teacher and student interact. They do this in part by drawing from the language of Gen 2–3. Lastly, these texts in different ways assert that the teacher imparts heavenly knowledge to his students. The authority of the teacher is constructed by construing him as the source of divine knowledge. I also explore at the end of this essay how the garden as an ancient Near Eastern trope may have shaped how teachers utilized this motif.

Ben Sira: A Teacher Irrigates a Garden

I begin with the book of Ben Sira. As is well known, the Jerusalem sage encourages people to acquire wisdom (e.g., Sir 4:11–19; 6:18–37; 14:20–15:10). Wisdom in his instruction is a broad concept, signifying a way of life that encompasses being a pious and ethical person, studying the torah, and understanding the nature of the world. Ben Sira encourages his students to embrace a way of living that is rigorous. Fools, he teaches, regard this way of life as too difficult to accept. Chapter 6 of the book states in the Greek that wisdom “seems very harsh to the undisciplined” (ἀπαιδεύτοις; NRSV), to those without paideia, but the Hebrew asserts that to fools she is עָקָובָה, a word that denotes a steep or hilly path (Sir 6:20; see also 36:25; Isa 40:4). According to Sir 6:22, “wisdom is like her name; she is not obvious to many” (NRSV). The NRSV translation reflects the Greek, which reads σοφία. The corresponding Hebrew, however, is not חכמה but המוסר. This word derives from the root יסר, which can mean “to instruct” (qal) or “to rebuke” (piel). The word המוסר in Sir 6:22, as Israel Lévi observed in 1901, likely relies on a pun with the hophal of the verb סור, denoting some-

3. The Syriac here reads דאלא (“study”; compare the modern Hebrew לַומֵּשׁ). Consult the discussion of this root in the essays by Karina Martin Hogan and Patrick Pouchelle in this volume.
thing which is removed or pushed away.\(^5\) This fits exactly with the image of Sir 6:21, which likens the מוסר that Ben Sira advocates to a heavy stone most would push aside.

Why would a person devote himself to a way of life that many would reject? Wisdom, as the book of Proverbs stresses, is rich in rewards, including not only a successful life but also "an everlasting name," denoting that the wise person will be remembered and praised after his death (Sir 15:6). The way of life that Ben Sira advocates, the sage stresses, is worth the effort. But what way of life does he promote? While study and ethics are central to it, by themselves they are not sufficient. One must find a teacher (Sir 6:34–37; see also 8:8–9; 39:1–5).\(^6\) One should seek him (שחיהו), and "let your foot wear out his doorstep" (Sir 6:36 NRSV). The student should spend time with his teacher, listening to his words.\(^7\) This passage in chapter 6 then stresses constant study of the torah (Sir 6:38). The clear implication is that Ben Sira advocates study of the torah under the tutelage of a great teacher.

But where could a student ever find such a wonderful teacher? Not to worry, says Ben Sira. He offers a clear answer to this question: himself. Ultimately wisdom herself is the teacher, as in the book of Proverbs (e.g., Prov 8:4–5). Ben Sira 4:11 asserts that “wisdom teaches [למדנה] her children and admonishes all who can understand her.” The sage's most extensive account of wisdom is in the book's well-known twenty-fourth chapter. This text draws extensively from the description of wisdom as a woman in Prov 8. Ben Sira 24 also envisions wisdom as a verdant tree

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\(^7\) Note the parallel in chapter 6 of _Abot R. Nat. [A]_: "Another interpretation: 'Let your house be a meeting place for the sages' [Avot 1.4]. How so? When a scholar [למדה חכם] comes to your house with the request, 'Teach me,' if it is within your power to teach, teach him; otherwise let him go at once.” In this passage the person coming to the house has attained a higher level of education than the visitor described in Sir 6. See Judah Goldin, _The Fathers according to Rabbi Nathan_, YJS 10 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983), 40; Jonathan Wyn Schofer, _The Making of a Sage: A Study in Rabbinic Ethics_ (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2005).
that takes root in Jerusalem (Sir 24:8–12). The tree gives off beautiful fragrances, alluding to the incense of the temple. Ben Sira 24:15 likens the smell of the tree to fragrant spices such as galbanum and onycha. According to Exod 30:34–35, these spices were to be used to produce the incense for the tent of meeting, a topic that Ben Sira elsewhere emphasizes (Sir 45:16). One is encouraged to eat the fruit of the tree (Sir 24:17–21; see also T. Lev. 18:11). It then states that “all this is the book of the covenant of the Most High God, the law which Moses enjoined on us as a heritage for the community of Jacob” (Sir 24:23; compare Deut 33:4). This verse has been the subject of much discussion. While different interpretations of it are possible, the immediate context suggests not that the torah should be identified as the entire tree but rather as its fruit.


12. This accords with Sir 24:15 and its description of wisdom with terminology that evokes the temple cult. So understood, wisdom is akin to the kabod, the theophanic, overpowering presence of God that resides in the temple. Following the logic of this metaphor, wisdom (the tree) represents the immanent God who gives the torah (the fruit; see 4 Ezra 9:32). Wisdom so understood constitutes a larger concept than the torah, and the two terms are not simply synonymous. Jessie Rogers argues for this position in her “ ‘It Overflows Like the Euphrates with Understanding’: Another Look at the Relationship between Law and Wisdom in Sirach,” in Ancient Versions and Traditions, vol. 1 of Of Scribes and Sages: Early Jewish Interpretation and Transmission of Scripture, ed. Craig A. Evans, LSTS 50; SSEJC 9 (London: T&T Clark, 2004), 114–21. Also note that the image of eating the fruit of the tree (Sir 24:19) can be likened to
The tree in chapter 24 evokes not only Jerusalem but also Eden. While the chapter mentions only one tree, it can reasonably be understood as located within a lush garden with multiple trees (Gen 2:9). Ben Sira 24:25–27 mentions six rivers, four of which are in Eden according to Gen 2:10–14: Pishon, Gihon, Tigris, and Euphrates. Ben Sira adds the Jordan and the Nile. Envisioning the torah as the fruit of a tree irrigated by rivers of Eden helps convey the divine and authoritative status of the knowledge that the Pentateuch contains (see also Sir 17:8–11). Ben Sira 24 is rich in riverine imagery. Ben Sira 24:25 reads: “It is full [πιμπλῶν], like the Pishon, with wisdom, and like the Tigris at the time of the new crops.” Here and throughout the river verses (Sir 24:25–27) the verbs in the Greek are participles in the masculine form. The most immediately preceding noun is a feminine term, “inheritance” (κληρονομία), of Sir 24:23. The participles likely hearken back to the masculine word νόμος (“law”) of this verse. So understood, the torah is signified not only by the fruit of a well-irrigated garden.

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16. The phrase “the book of the covenant” (βιβλίος διαθήκης) in Sir 24:23 is composed of feminine terms.
tree. It is also imagined as the water that nourishes the tree. As Michael Fishbane has pointed out, early Jewish and rabbinic literature is replete with images of flowing water that evoke the torah (e.g., CD 6:3–10; 4 Ezra 14:38–41; b. Tâ’an. 7a). Psalm 1, which compares those who study “the law of the Lord” to bountiful trees that grow beside streams of water (Ps 1:2–3), is important for the history of this motif.

According to Sir 24, students who devote themselves to the sage can, in a sense, get back into the garden. Or perhaps it is better to say, through Ben Sira they can partake of its fruits. To understand this point, the chapter’s mingling of the tree and river imagery is crucial. One does not need to enter Eden. Rather one needs access to the water that flows from it. After comparing the torah to abundant waters, Ben Sira likens himself to water: “As for me, I was like a canal from a river, like a water channel into a garden” (Sir 24:30 NRSV). Ben Sira presents himself as a tributary of the water streaming from Eden. The water no longer symbolizes only the torah but also the sage himself. It is difficult to separate the dance from the dancer, as Frank Kermode has stressed. And so it is, asserts Ben Sira, with wisdom and the sage.

In Sir 24:30 the water, which clearly comes from the Edenic garden where the tree of wisdom is found, flows into a garden. According to Sir 24:31, the sage says: “I will water my plants, my flower bed I will drench.” Ben Sira 24:30 uses the term παράδεισος (Syr. ܓܢܐ) to refer not to Eden but rather to the garden that Ben Sira himself irrigates. It is in this garden, if you will, that the sage teaches his students. Ben Sira compares his teaching in this garden to shining light and prophecy, both images of divine revelation (Sir 24:32–33).

22. Alex P. Jassen, *Mediating the Divine: Prophecy and Revelation in the Dead*
utterances mingles with the language of water that flows from Eden. The sage gives his teachings authority and legitimization by presenting himself as a conduit through which divine wisdom flows, from one garden (Eden) to another (Ben Sira’s). The words that come from his mouth have a revelatory status. Ben Sira makes clear that he speaks not for himself but for anyone who seeks instruction (Sir 24:34). This emphasis suggests that he understands himself as representative of a broader class of people who offer instruction. Ben Sira’s authority and self-presentation as a sage involve an aggressive campaign of self-promotion, in which he presents himself to his students, and prospective students, as a source of divine knowledge.

4QInstruction: Students Laboring in a Garden

As its modern title expresses, 4QInstruction is an instructional text. The composition is thoroughly pedagogical. It is addressed to a mevin (מֵבִין). For monographs on this composition, see Matthew J. Goff, 4QInstruction, WLAW 2 (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2013); John Kampen, Wisdom Lit...
or “understanding one." The text of 4QInstruction emphasizes to him the value of learning. In 4Q418 81 17 one reads, for example, “Improve greatly in understanding and from all of your teachers get ever more learning” (4Q418 221). Another fragment of the work hails angels as tireless students, who are presented as models for the mevin to follow (4Q418 221).

He is often addressed in the imperative form, to encourage him to study. In 4Q417 1 I, 6–7 one reads, for example: “[… day and night meditate upon the mystery that] is to be and study (it) constantly. And then you will know truth and iniquity, wisdom [and folly]” (compare 4Q418 43 4–5). This passage urges that the mevin study the raz nihyeh. The “mystery that is to be” could signify a written text, as Daniel Harrington has argued, or the torah itself, as Lange has stressed. The nature of this raz is on a vast and cosmic scale (see further below). Its meaning, in my opinion, should not be restricted to a particular text.

The raz nihyeh stands at the center of 4QInstruction’s pedagogical program. Several imperatives, such as נבט (“gaze upon”) and הגה (“meditate”), are employed throughout the text to encourage the addressee to study this mystery. As the passage quoted above conveys, 4QInstruction makes some incredible claims with regard to what the mevin can learn from studying this “mystery.” Through it the addressee can attain the knowledge of good and evil (a theme to which I return below), and in this way he can also know “[the path]s of all life and the manner of one’s...


28. All translations of 4QInstruction are those of Goff, 4QInstruction.
32. For the “mystery that is to be” connected with the verb נבט (“gaze upon”), see 4Q417 1 I, 3, 18; 4Q417 2 I, 10. In 4Q416 2 III, 9, 14, it is associated with לַמְדָּר (“examine”); in 4Q417 1 I, 6, with הָנָה (“meditate”); and in 4Q418 77 4, with לְּבִנָּה (“grasp”).
walking that is appointed over one’s deeds” (4Q417 1 I, 6–8, 19). This latter claim betrays a deterministic perspective in which history and creation unfold according to an ordained plan of God, which the addressee can understand through the mystery that is to be. The rāz can provide exceptional knowledge about the nature of reality because, according to 4Q417 1 I, 8–9, God created the world by means of it (ברז ננייה). This mystery is also associated with a tripartite division of time: what has been, what is, and what will be (4Q417 1 I, 3–5 [2x]; 4Q418 123 II, 3–4). The mystery that is to be signifies God’s dominion over reality from creation to the final judgment. The comprehensive scope of the rāz is likely expressed by the word nihyeh, a niphal participle of the verb “to be.” Through the mystery that is to be, the mevin can learn about the nature of history and creation, and God’s control over them.

How did the addressee come to possess the mystery that is be? The mevin is reasonably understood as a member of a community with elect status. God has placed its members, one fragment teaches, in the “lot of the holy ones,” denoting that they are like the angels (4Q418 81 4–5). This same fragment describes this group with the phrase “eter[nal] planting” (לם מתעת עו), a botanical metaphor used elsewhere in early Jewish literature to describe an elect community (4Q418 81 13). The rāz nihyeh constitutes supernatural, heavenly knowledge to which the mevin has access, as part of his elect status. 4QInstruction claims several times that the rāz nihyeh has been disclosed to the mevin, using the verb גלה. Unfortunately, the composition has nothing more to say on the subject. It never states how it was revealed to the addressee. There is no claim that it was disclosed to him in a vision filled with vivid and enigmatic images, in a manner akin to apocalypses such as Daniel or 4 Ezra. The mevin may have received the rāz nihyeh not from his own visionary experience but from a teacher who revealed the mystery to him. The authorial voice of

33. Goff, *4QInstruction*, 144–47.
36. 1Q26 I 4; 4Q416 2 III, 18; 4Q418 123 II, 4; 4Q418 184 2; see also 1QH IX, 23.
4QInstruction takes great interest in the mystery that is to be and strives to ensure that the mevin understands its pedagogical potential. If the student has access to this mystery, his teacher does as well. But concluding that the mevin came to know of the raz nihyeh through a teacher, a position that I find plausible, is problematized by the composition’s silence with regard to this figure. We can reasonably assume the authorial voice of 4QInstruction is that of a teacher since this voice gives teachings to the mevin throughout the work. The speaker of the composition, however, never says anything about himself. It is not clear if we should posit in 4QInstruction a single teacher or if the teacher should be understood as an office occupied over time by various individuals.

With regard to how the speaker in 4QInstruction presents himself, the contrast between this text and the book of Ben Sira could not be starker. Ben Sira, one can say, offers a teacher-focused model of pedagogy—students learn primarily because of the brilliance of their teacher and his access to privileged knowledge. The text of 4QInstruction envisages pedagogy in a more student-focused manner. This Qumran text stresses not what the teacher provides but what the student does with it. In 4QInstruction the mevin learns primarily not through the disclosure of supernatural revelation but through its contemplation.

A major text for understanding the mevin’s possession of knowledge is 4Q423 1.37 This fragment describes a garden filled with trees that can make one wise (4Q423 1 1). The text of 4Q423 1 never suggests that the fruit of any tree in the garden is prohibited, as is also the case in Ben Sira (4Q423 1 1; compare Sir 17:7). The second line of the same fragment makes the incredible claim that the mevin has been given authority over this garden: “he has given you authority [המשיל] over it to till it and keep it” (4Q423 1 2). While the garden likely evokes, as in Ben Sira, the pedagogical space in which students learn from a teacher, the rhetorical strategy of 4Q423 1 is quite different from that of Ben Sira. Whereas Ben Sira and 1QH 16 (see below) stress that an authoritative teacher controls the garden and makes it available to students, the teacher figure in 4Q423 proclaims that the student is in charge of the garden. The speaker does not emphasize his control over the garden. The student receives authority over the garden not from the teacher but from God. Line 2 of 4Q423 1 states that “he”—not the speaker—gives the mevin this authority. The text of 4Q418 81 3 uses the

37. Goff, 4QInstruction, 289–98.
same verb, הממשיט, to express that God has given the student his special “inheritance,” a reference to his elect status. The rhetorical strategy of the teacher in 4Q423 1 is not to stress, as one finds in Ben Sira (and in column 16 of the Hodayot), his own possession of exceptional knowledge. Rather the teacher helps make the mevin aware of what God has given to him.

The garden that the mevin possesses evokes Eden. Line 2 of 4Q423 1 asserts that the addressee is to “till” and “keep” the garden (לעבדו ולשמרו), using the same verbs that express in Gen 2:15 Adam’s labor in the garden (“to till it and keep it”; לעבדו ולשמרו). Line 3 of the fragment has the phrase “thorn and thistle” (קוץ ודרדר; 4Q423 1 3). In Gen 3:18 this language (קוץ ודרדר) denotes the dry and unproductive nature of the land outside of Eden, with which Adam must contend when growing food. In 4Q423, it seems to me, the expression “thorn and thistle” is applied to the garden itself. The fragment, though admittedly fragmentary, includes no discussion of expulsion from the garden. It is up to the mevin to keep the garden in its verdant state through his work in the garden. If he neglects his duties, it will turn into a place of “thorn and thistle.”

Elsewhere 4QInstruction stresses that the addressee can learn the knowledge of good and evil from the mystery that is to be (4Q417 1 1, 6–8). The text of 4Q423 1 appropriates the theme of Adam laboring in the garden of Eden to underscore the importance of the addressee’s study of the raz nihyeh. The book of Ben Sira likewise uses the image of agricultural work to signify the intellectual labor of a student, although never in connection with a garden (Sir 6:19). In 4QInstruction, Eden imagery helps convey an elect community’s possession of divine revelation and their cultivation of knowledge through the study of this revelation. The teacher, by encouraging the mevin to study, helps him fulfill the special destiny that God had allotted to him through his elect status. The Eden imagery in 4Q423 1 likely gives further elaboration to the construal of the elect community as an “eternal planting.”

The Hodayot: A Teacher’s Garden

The last text I examine is the Hodayot. First person language is prominent in this composition. There is a long history of understanding the speaker,

38. Contrast Ezek 36:35 and Isa 51:3, in which a dry and desolate land becomes like the garden of Eden.
39. Unless noted otherwise, translations of the Hodayot follow Hartmut Stege-
at least in some of the hymns, as their author, and that this individual is none other than the Teacher of Righteousness. Gert Jeremias in 1963, in his Der Lehrer der Gerechtigkeit, turned extensively to the Hodayot to write in essence a biography of this figure. Gert Jeremias in 1963, in his Der Lehrer der Gerechtigkeit, turned extensively to the Hodayot to write in essence a biography of this figure. This maximalist view is in general not held today. More recent scholarship, by commentators such as Carol Newsom and Angela Harkins, stresses that various members of the Dead Sea sect could, when reading the Hodayot in a performative ritual context, understand themselves as the “I” mentioned in these hymns. As discussed below, in some texts of the composition the “I” is reasonably understood not as a persona any member of the Dead Sea sect could identify with but more likely as an entity associated with leaders or teachers within the sect.

The idea that the “I” derives from a single leader figure is the basis of the conventional designation “Teacher Hymns” for columns X–XVII, whereas the others are typically classified as “Community Hymns.” It is not clear that this bifurcation should be continued. It can create the impression of an overly rigid distinction between the two blocs of material, making it difficult to appreciate points in common in both groups or to understand the diversity of material within each putative unit. Nevertheless one can, without reifying the Teacher Hymns category, observe
that some hymns portray the “I” as someone who possesses divine revelation that he makes available to others. For example, 1QH XII, 28–29 reads: “Through me you have illumined the faces of many…. For you have made me understand your wonderful mysteries.” 44 Here the speaker, not unlike the configuration of the teacher in Ben Sira, is a teacher who transmits heavenly knowledge.

The texts of 1QH XIV and XVI contain poignant descriptions of gardens. The relevant texts are from two different hymns of the Hodayot collection. 45 Julie Hughes has observed that these hymns use imagery from Gen 2–3, including explicit references to Eden (1QH XIV, 19; XVI, 21), and that they have extensive allusions to prophetic texts of the Hebrew Bible that discuss gardens and trees, such as Isa 5 and Jer 17. 46 James Davila understands primarily 1QH XVI but also column XIV in terms of heavenly ascent traditions, suggesting that hekhalot mysticism is rooted in late Second Temple traditions evident in the Hodayot. 47 Harkins has significantly developed the perspective that the Hodayot should be understood as a catalyst for visionary activity. 48 The two poems, she argues, were generated by an author’s religious experience, which a subsequent reader, by identifying himself with the “I” of the text, could reenact, engendering his own visionary experience of paradise. 49 While reading or hearing the Hodayot in antiquity could have certainly triggered some sort of ecstatic

44. Compare 1QH XIII, 27, in which the speaker praises God because he has shown his “gre[atness] through me.”
46. Julie A. Hughes, Scriptural Allusions and Exegesis in the Hodayot, STDJ 59 (Leiden: Brill, 2006), 135–83. She understands 1QH XVI, 5–XVII, 36 as a description of a person’s suffering and vindication that is heavily reliant on Second Isaiah. See also Harkins, Reading, 23; Svend Holm-Nielsen, Hodayot: Psalms from Qumran, ATDan 2 (Aarhus: Universitetsforlaget, 1960), 165.
49. Ibid., 217, 225, 246.
experience, in neither column XIV nor XVI, nor in the composition as a whole, are there explicit accounts of people having visions or ascending to heaven. I suggest that the garden imagery of the Hodayot, much like that of Ben Sira, evokes the pedagogical space in which a teacher transmits divine knowledge to students.

The Hodayot stresses the special status of those who are with the speaker. In column XIV the phrase “eternal planting,” as in 4QInstruction, describes the special allotment given to an elect community: “they become your princes in the [eternal] lot and their [shoot] opens as a flower [bloom, for] everlasting fragrance, making a sprout grow into the branches of an eternal planting” (מטעת עולם; 1QH XIV, 17–18; compare Ezek 31:14). Using hyperbolic, expressive language that is characteristic of the Hodayot, the tree is incredibly large, extending up to the heavens and down to tehom (1QH XIV, 18–19). The text, not unlike Sir 24:30–31, states not only that Eden is well irrigated but also that its water leads outward into an ocean: “All the rivers of Eden [make] its branches moist, and it will (extend) to the measure[less] seas” (1QH XIV, 19–20). The water is also called in line 20 a “spring of light” (מעין אור).

The poem’s tree and water imagery is on a global scale. This may help convey the text’s assertion of the comprehensive scope of the eschatological judgment (1QH XIV, 21–22; see also XI, 20–37).

The garden recounted in column XVI is not on such a vast scale. Rather the image is of the speaker tending an “actual” garden. This poem, like column XIV, uses “eternal planting” language:

I thank [you, O Lo]rd, that you have placed me by the source of streams in a dry land, (by) a spring of water in a thirsty land, and (by) a watered garden ... a planting of juniper and elm with cedar all together for your glory, trees of life at a secret spring, hidden in the midst of all the trees by the water. And they were there so that a shoot might be made to

50. There are numerous other points in common between the two texts. I have elsewhere suggested that the author(s) of the Hodayot may have been familiar with 4QInstruction. See my “Reading Wisdom at Qumran: 4QInstruction and the Hodayot,” DSD 11 (2004): 263–88.

51. The imagery of boundless waters accords with Sir 24:28–29. These verses, after mentioning the overflowing water that streams from Eden, read: “The first human never knew wisdom fully, nor will the last succeed in fathoming her. Deeper than the sea are her thoughts; her counsels, than the great abyss.”

52. See the discussion above on Sir 24:27 in the Greek and the Syriac.
The poet calls this plantation of trees “a glorious Eden and [an everlasting] splendor” (1QH XVI, 21). The phrase “secret spring” in XVI, 7 emphasizes the hiddenness of the pool that irrigates the grove of trees. According to XVI, 13, a “whirling flame of fire” (להט אש מתחפכת) prevents people from discovering the “fountain of life” and the “eternal trees.” This image utilizes language from Gen 3:24, which describes the flaming and swirling sword (להט החרב המתחפכת) that guards Eden after the expulsion of Adam and Eve. This extraordinary, well-irrigated garden in which the elect are nurtured is presented as a renewal of the garden of Eden. The Hebrew for the phrase “secret spring” is מעין רז, literally a “spring of mystery,” suggesting that it denotes not simply hiddenness but also divine revelation (cf. 1QH XIII, 28; XVI, 12; XVII, 23). The garden metaphor bolsters the perspective that the knowledge conveyed by the teacher has the status of revelation.

The speaker makes it unambiguously clear that the garden is under his control. He states that through his hand “you [God] opened their source” (מקורם), referring to the luxurious garden that he praises (1QH XVI, 22). He continues the hand imagery: “If I withdraw (my) hand, it becomes like a juniper [in the wilderness,] and its rootstock like nettles in salty ground. (In) its furrows thorn and thistle [קוץ ודרדר] grow up into a bramble thicket and a weed patch” (1QH XVI, 25–26). The speaker’s moving away of his hand likely denotes his cessation of labor in the garden. Without proper maintenance it would fall into ruin. It is in wonderful condition, but he could make that change. The Eden imagery emphasizes the authority of the teacher figure within the garden. This point becomes particularly clear when the Hodayot is compared to 4QInstruction. The text of 4Q423 emphasizes that control over the garden is given to the mevin, as discussed above. The text of 4QInstruction affirms that the student must cultivate the garden, whereas in column XVI of the Hodayot the teacher

54. Hughes, Scriptural Allusions, 150–52.
55. Ibid., 135.
56. Ibid., 157.
figure is the one who tends the garden. Both texts use the “thorn and thistle” language of Gen 3:18 in reference to the garden itself, denoting its vulnerability to decay unless properly maintained; this position is explicit in 1QH XVI and implicit in 4QInstruction, as argued above. With regard to this point column XVI is closer to Ben Sira. Both texts situate the revelation of knowledge in a garden in a way that emphasizes the speaker’s control of this knowledge, stressing his authoritative status.

The Hodayot utilizes language from Gen 2–3 to give vivid expression to the idea that an authoritative teacher possesses heavenly knowledge that he transmits to his students. This has ramifications for understanding how the hymns, especially the one that includes column XVI, functioned within the Dead Sea sect. While in general members of the group could have identified with the “I” of some hymns of the Hodayot, anyone who uttered and thus became associated with the speaker in the columns under discussion likely had an important teaching office within the sect, such as the maskil (1QS IX, 12–19), as Newsom has stressed. The “I” may have also been understood as offering an image of the Teacher of Righteousness as an ideal figure, in whose tradition the maskil was to follow, bolstering the authority of the office.

Conclusion

Harkins draws on Foucault to understand the garden in the Hodayot as a “heterotopia.” A heterotopia is a site that is both a real space and outside of real space. Foucault likens such sites to a mirror, which occupies a physical space, with which a person can gaze upon him or herself, creating an image that does not exist in space that nevertheless helps the gazer reflect upon and get a better understanding of himself. As Harkins observes, Foucault’s only ancient example of a heterotopia is a garden. For her the

58. Contra Harkins, Reading, 243, who stresses that 1QH XVI is unique among Second Temple texts for envisioning a garden in which one must labor.
59. This point has been observed by Hughes, Scriptural Allusions, 180.
60. Newsom, Self as Symbolic Space, 297.
61. Ibid., 345.
63. Foucault, “Of Other Spaces,” 25–26, writes: “We must not forget that in the Orient the garden, an astonishing creation that is now a thousand years old, had very deep and seemingly superimposed meanings. The traditional garden of the Persians
ancient garden is, following Foucault, a site of simultaneity and also one of liminality. Gardens in the ancient world, particularly in Mesopotamia and Persia, were beautiful and exclusive.64 They were sites in which a range of flora grew that did not exist together naturally, gathered together to show a ruler’s power, representing the expanse of his territory in one microcosmic site. The lush and diverse garden symbolized the vitality and prosperity of the state.65 Typically adjacent to the palace, the garden was often a liminal space in that it separated royal and common spheres of a city. There were also temple gardens that were thought to be the possession of gods, constituting a liminal space between the human and divine realms.66

Harkins appeals to the ancient garden as a heterotopia to put forward her understanding of garden imagery in the Hodayot.67 By creating an idealized space in which real experiences occurred through performative reading, these texts, she suggests, generated visionary experiences of paradise. Foucault’s heterotopia also offers, I think, a productive way to understand the theme of the garden I have been tracing in Ben Sira,
4QInstruction, and the Hodayot. None of these texts attempts to describe a garden that actually existed. They use, however, the image of the garden to describe a real phenomenon, the education of students by teachers. The garden represents the pedagogical space in which students learn from teachers who possess exceptional knowledge. It is a heterotopic site of self-formation, in which the student acquires learning and prospers. These texts, in particular 4QInstruction, turn to the metaphor of cultivation to understand the labor of study and its rewards, with the acquisition of wisdom represented as a lush garden. The emphasis on the teacher’s control of the garden, a strategy that powerfully conveys his authoritative status that is clearly employed in Ben Sira and the Hodayot, may draw on the cultural trope of the garden symbolizing the dominion of the king. The three texts under discussion also betray a conception of a garden as a liminal site in which the divine and human realms overlap, through use of Eden imagery. None of the texts I have examined buttresses the authority of the teacher by presenting him as a “genius,” a term that denotes the tremendous intellects of famous professors of our era, such as Stephen Hawking. Rather the teacher has a garden because he has access to divine knowledge. All three texts under discussion in different ways convey the extraordinary nature of what teachers transmit to their students through creative appeals to Gen 2–3. These writings illustrate that some Jewish teachers in the late Second Temple period conceptualized the process of students acquiring special knowledge from a teacher as the formation of a luxuriant garden.

Bibliography


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