

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

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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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Revised sentence okay? The original “no small degree of humility” implies great humility, which seems contrary to the rest of the sentence.



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.¹ 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 עקובה, a word that denotes a steep or hilly path (Sir 6:20; see also 36:25; Isa 40:4).² 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.³ This word derives from the root יסר, which can mean “to instruct” (*qal*) or “to rebuke” (*piel*).⁴ 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-

1. John J. Collins, *Jewish Wisdom in the Hellenistic Age*, OTL (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1997), 46–54. See also Matthew J. Goff, “Wisdom,” in *T&T Clark Companion to the Dead Sea Scrolls*, ed. George J. Brooke and Charlotte Hempel (London: T&T Clark, forthcoming); Stuart Weeks, *An Introduction to the Study of Wisdom Literature*, ApBS (London: T&T Clark, 2010), 2–3.

2. Patrick W. Skehan and Alexander A. Di Lella, *The Wisdom of Ben Sira*, AB 39 (New York: Doubleday, 1987), 193. Translations, with occasional modification, are taken from this source unless otherwise stated.

3. The Syriac here reads ܩܠܘܢܐ (“study”; compare the modern Hebrew אולפן).

4. 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 (שחריהו), 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 [למדה] 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

5. Israel Lévi, *L'Éclésiastique ou la Sagesse de Jésus, fils de Sira*, 2 vols. (Paris: Leroux, 1898–1901), 2:34. I thank Eric Reymond for this reference. See his review of *Weisheit aus der Begegnung: Bildung nach dem Buch Ben Sira*, by Frank Ueberschaer, *DSD* 21 (2014): 127.

6. Robert Doran, “Jewish Education in the Seleucid Period,” in *Studies in Politics, Class and Material Culture*, vol. 3 of *Second Temple Studies*, ed. Philip R. Davies and John M. Halligan, JSOTSup 340 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 2002), 116–32.

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 [תלמיד 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).⁸ 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.⁹ 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).¹⁰ 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.¹¹ 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

8. See also Sir 50:10; Prov 3:18. See Matthew J. Goff, “The Personification of Wisdom and Folly in Ancient Judaism,” in *Religion and Female Body in Ancient Judaism and Its Environments*, ed. Geza Xeravits, DCLS 28 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2015), 128–54; Collins, *Jewish Wisdom*, 49–53.

9. Skehan and Di Lella, *Wisdom of Ben Sira*, 333; Deborah A. Green, *The Aroma of Righteousness: Scent and Seduction in Rabbinic Life and Literature* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2011), 71.

10. Gerald T. Sheppard, *Wisdom as a Hermeneutical Construct: A Study in the Sapientializing of the Old Testament*, BZAW 151 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1980), 57–58.

11. See, for example, Benjamin G. Wright, “Torah and Sapiential Pedagogy in the Book of Ben Sira,” in *Wisdom and Torah: The Reception of “Torah” in the Wisdom Literature of the Second Temple Period*, ed. Bernd U. Schipper and D. Andrew Teeter, JSJSup 163 (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 163–64; Greg Schmidt Goering, *Wisdom’s Root Revealed: Ben Sira and the Election of Israel*, JSJSup 139 (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 93–96; Sheppard, *Wisdom as a Hermeneutical Construct*, 62–63; Roland E. Murphy, “The Personification of Wisdom,” in *Wisdom in Ancient Israel: Essays in Honour of J. A. Emerton*, ed. John Day, R. P. Gordon, and Hugh G. M. Williamson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 227.

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.¹³ 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.¹⁴ 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).¹⁵ 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 harken back to the masculine word νόμος (“law”) of this verse.¹⁶ So understood, the torah is signified not only by the fruit of a well-irrigated

the trope of people eating scrolls, representing their acceptance of a divine text (Ezek 3:3; Rev 10:9).

13. Terje Stordalen, “Heaven on Earth—Or Not? Jerusalem as Eden in Biblical Literature,” in *Beyond Eden: The Biblical Story of Paradise (Genesis 2–3) and Its Reception History*, ed. Konrad Schmid and Christof Riedweg, FAT 2/34 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008), 28–57; Peter T. Lanfer, *Remembering Eden: The Reception History of Genesis 3:22–24* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 127–57; Jon D. Levenson, *Sinai and Zion: An Entry into the Jewish Bible* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1987), 128–33. For an overview of early Jewish texts that appropriate the garden of Eden, see Jacques van Ruiten, “Garden of Eden—Paradise,” *EDEJ* 658–61; Eibert J. C. Tigchelaar, “Eden and Paradise: The Garden Motif in Some Early Jewish Texts,” in *Paradise Interpreted: Representations of Biblical Paradise in Judaism and Christianity*, ed. Gerard P. Luttikhuisen, TBN 2 (Leiden: Brill, 1999), 37–57. Consult also Sandra R. Shimoff, “Gardens: From Eden to Jerusalem,” *JSJ* 26 (1995): 144–55; Rachel Elijor, “The Garden of Eden is the Holy of Holies and the Dwelling of the Lord,” *StSp* 24 (2014): 63–118.

14. Nira Stone, “The Four Rivers that Flowed from Eden,” in Schmid and Riedweg, *Beyond Eden*, 227–50. For Ben Sira’s interpretation of Genesis, see Shane Berg, “Ben Sira, the Genesis Creation Accounts, and the Knowledge of God’s Will,” *JBL* 132 (2013): 139–57; Maurice Gilbert, “Ben Sira, Reader of Genesis 1–11,” in *Intertextual Studies in Ben Sira and Tobit: Essays in Honor of Alexander A. Di Lella, O.F.M.*, ed. Jeremy Corley and Vincent T. M. Skemp, CBQMS 38 (Washington, DC: Catholic Biblical Association of America, 2005), 89–99.

15. Rogers, “It Overflows like the Euphrates,” 116.

16. The phrase “the book of the covenant” (βιβλος διαθήκης) in Sir 24:23 is composed of feminine terms.

tree. It is also imagined as the water that nourishes the tree.¹⁷ 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. Ta’an. 7a).¹⁸ 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.¹⁹

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.²⁰ 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. ܦܪܕܝܣܘܨ) 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.²¹ Ben Sira compares his teaching in this garden to shining light and prophecy, both images of divine revelation (Sir 24:32–33).²² The imagery that describes the sage’s

17. Sheppard, *Wisdom as a Hermeneutical Construct*, 69.

18. Michael A. Fishbane, “The Well of Living Water: A Biblical Motif and Its Ancient Transformations,” in *Sha’arei Talmon: Studies in the Bible, Qumran, and the Ancient Near East Presented to Shemaryahu Talmon*, ed. Michael A. Fishbane and Emanuel Tov (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1992), 3–16. The image is used not only for the torah but also to signify other kinds of revealed knowledge (e.g., 1 En. 48:1).

19. See also Pss 36:8–10; 92:12; Rev 22:1–2. William P. Brown, *Seeing the Psalms: A Theology of Metaphor* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2002), 131–32; Fishbane, “Well of Living Water,” 5.

20. Frank Kermode, *Romantic Image* (London: Routledge and Paul, 1986), 91.

21. Compare Sir 39:13: “Listen, my faithful children: open up your petals like roses planted near running waters” (see also 4Q302 2 II).

22. Alex P. Jassen, *Mediating the Divine: Prophecy and Revelation in the Dead*

utterances mingles with the language of water that flows from Eden.²³ 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.²⁴ Ben Sira makes clear that he speaks not for himself but for anyone who seeks instruction (Sir 24:34).²⁵ This emphasis suggests that he understands himself as representative of a broader class of people who offer instruction.²⁶ 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.²⁷ The composition is thoroughly pedagogical. It is addressed to a *mevin* (מבין)

Sea Scrolls and Second Temple Judaism, STDJ 68 (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 309–29; Martti Nissinen, “Transmitting Divine Mysteries: The Prophetic Role of Wisdom Teachers in the Dead Sea Scrolls,” in *Scripture in Transition: Essays on Septuagint, Hebrew Bible, and Dead Sea Scrolls in Honour of Raija Sollamo*, ed. Anssi Voitila and Jutta Jokiranta, JSJSup 126 (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 513–33; Leo G. Perdue, “Ben Sira and the Prophets,” in Corley and Skemp, *Intertextual Studies*, 136.

23. Ben Sira 24:27, according to the NRSV, reads: “It pours forth instruction like the Nile, like the Gihon at the time of vintage” (see also Sir 47:14). Both the Greek and the Syriac read, however, not “Nile” but rather “light” (φῶς/ܠܝܘܬܐ). This suggests that the Hebrew (which is not extant for this chapter) had אור (“Nile”), which was understood by translators as אור (“light”). See Skehan and Di Lella, *Wisdom of Ben Sira*, 330; Moshe Segal, *The Complete Book of Ben Sira* [Hebrew] (Jerusalem: Bialik Institute, 1958), 146, 150.

24. Here again there is a parallel from chapter 6 of Avot R. Nat. [A]: “And let him [a student] not sit in your presence on the couch or stool or bench. Instead let him sit before you on the ground. And every single word which comes forth from your mouth let him take in with awe, fear, dread, and trembling—the way our fathers received (the Torah) from Mount Sinai: with awe, fear, dread, and trembling.” The translation is that of Goldin, *The Fathers*, 40 (slightly modified).

25. This is also a major theme of the final poem of the book, in which a sage describes his lifelong pursuit of wisdom, urging people to follow his example by studying under him (e.g., Sir 51:23, 28).

26. Wright, “Torah and Sapiential Pedagogy,” 179–80.

27. 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).²⁸ Another fragment of the work hails angels as tireless students, who are presented as models for the *mevin* to follow (4Q418 69 II, 10–15).²⁹ 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.³⁰ 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.³¹ Several imperatives, such as נבט (“gaze upon”) and הגה (“meditate”), are employed throughout the text to encourage the addressee to study this mystery.³² 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

erature, ECDSS (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2011); Jean-Sébastien Rey, *4QInstruction: Sagesse et eschatologie*, STDJ 81 (Leiden: Brill, 2009). Its official edition is John Strugnell et al., eds., *Qumran Cave 4.XXIV: Sapiential Texts; 4QInstruction (Mūsār Lē Mēbin): 4Q415ff.*, part 2, DJD 34 (Oxford: Clarendon, 1999).

Is this added note on the translations correct? 28. All translations of 4QInstruction are those of Goff, *4QInstruction*.
29. Goff, *4QInstruction*, 235–38.
30. Daniel J. Harrington, *Wisdom Texts from Qumran* (London: Routledge, 1996), 49; Harrington, “The *Raz Nihyeh* in a Qumran Wisdom Text (1Q26, 4Q415–418, 423),” *RevQ* 17 (1996): 552; Armin Lange, *Weisheit und Prädestination: Weisheitliche Urordnung und Prädestination in den Textfunden von Qumran*, STDJ 18 (Leiden: Brill, 1995), 58.

31. Matthew J. Goff, “Wisdom, Apocalypticism, and the Pedagogical Ethos of 4QInstruction,” in *Conflicted Boundaries in Wisdom and Apocalypticism*, ed. Lawrence M. Wills and Benjamin G. Wright, *SymS* 35 (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2005), 57–67.

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 דרש (“examine”); in 4Q417 1 I, 6, with הגה (“meditate”); and in 4Q418 77 4, with לקח (“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 *raz* 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 נהיה). 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).³³ The mystery that is to be signifies God's dominion over reality from creation to the final judgment. The comprehensive scope of the *raz* 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 to 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" (מטעת עו[לם]), a botanical metaphor used elsewhere in early Jewish literature to describe an elect community (4Q418 81 13).³⁴ The *raz nihyeh* constitutes supernatural, heavenly knowledge to which the *mevin* has access, as part of his elect status.³⁵ 4QInstruction claims several times that the *raz nihyeh* has been disclosed to the *mevin*, using the verb גלה.³⁶ 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 *raz 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.

34. See also 1QS VIII, 5–6; 1 En. 10:16; 93:10. See Patrick A. Tiller, "The 'Eternal Planting' in the Dead Sea Scrolls," *DSD* 4 (1997): 312–35; Goff, *4QInstruction*, 256–57; Shozo Fujita, "The Metaphor of Plant in Jewish Literature of the Intertestamental Period," *JSJ* 7 (1976): 30–45.

35. The word גל signifies supernatural knowledge in the apocalypses Daniel and 1 Enoch, and in numerous other Early Jewish texts. See Samuel I. Thomas, *The "Mysteries" of Qumran: Mystery, Secrecy, and Esotericism in the Dead Sea Scrolls*, EJL 25 (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2009), 136–86.

36. 1Q26 1 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 [הַמְשִׁיל] 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, *המשיל*, 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”; לעבדה ולשמרה). 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.”³⁸

Elsewhere 4QInstruction stresses that the addressee can learn the knowledge of good and evil from the mystery that is to be (4Q417 1 I, 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.³⁹ 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-

I corrected קוץ to קוץ in keeping with the text printed in García Martínez and Tigchelaar, *DSSSE* 2:887.



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.⁴⁰ 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.⁴¹ 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.”⁴² 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.⁴³ Nevertheless one can, without reifying the Teacher Hymns category, observe

mann and Eileen M. Schuller, *Qumran Cave 1.III: 1QHodayota*, with Incorporation of 1QHodayotb and 4QHodayota-f, DJD 40 (Oxford: Clarendon, 2009). Note also Eileen M. Schuller and Carol A. Newsom, *The Hodayot (Thanksgiving Psalms): A Study Edition of 1QHā*, EJL 36 (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2012).

40. Gert Jeremias, *Der Lehrer der Gerechtigkeit*, SUNT 2 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1963). See also Carol A. Newsom, *The Self as Symbolic Space: Constructing Identity and Community at Qumran*, STDJ 52 (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 289–91.

41. Newsom, *Self as Symbolic Space*, 287–346; Angela Kim Harkins, *Reading with an “I” to the Heavens: Looking at the Qumran Hodayot through the Lens of Visionary Traditions*, Ekstasis 3 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2012). Note also Esther G. Chazon, “Lowly to Lofty: The Hodayot’s Use of Liturgical Traditions to Shape Sectarian Identity and Religious Experience,” *RevQ* 26 (2013): 3–19.

42. John J. Collins, “Amazing Grace: The Transformation of the Thanksgiving Hymn at Qumran,” in *Psalms in Community: Jewish and Christian Textual, Liturgical, and Artistic Traditions*, ed. Harold W. Attridge and Margot E. Fassler; SymS 25 (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2003), 75–85. See also now Trine Bjørnung Hasselbalch, *Meaning and Context in the Thanksgiving Hymns: Linguistic and Rhetorical Perspectives on a Collection of Prayers from Qumran*, EJL 42 (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2015).

43. This point is compellingly argued by Harkins, *Reading*, 20–24.

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.”

45. The hymns at issue are, respectively, 1QH XIII, 22–XV, 8 and XVI, 5–XVII, 36. See Harkins, *Reading*, 217; Hartmut Stegemann, “The Number of Psalms in 1QHodayot^a and Some of Their Sections,” in *Liturgical Perspectives: Prayer and Poetry in Light of the Dead Sea Scrolls; Proceedings of the Fifth International Symposium of the Orion Center for the Study of the Dead Sea Scrolls and Associated Literature, 19–23 January, 2000*, ed. Esther G. Chazon, Ruth Clements, and Avital Pinnick, STDJ 48 (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 191–234.

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.

47. James R. Davila, “The Hodayot Hymnist and the Four Who Entered Paradise,” *RevQ* 17 (1996): 457–76. See also Davila, *Hekhalot Literature in Translation: Major Texts of Merkavah Mysticism*, JJTPSup 20 (Leiden: Brill, 2013).

48. Harkins, *Reading*, 206–66.

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] lo[t and] their [shoot] opens as a flower [blooms, for] everlasting fragrance, making a sprout grow into the branches of an eternal planting” (מטעת עולם; 1QH XIV, 17–18; compare Ezek 31:14).⁵⁰ 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 [br]an[ches m]oist, and it will (extend) to the measure[less] seas” (1QH XIV, 19–20).⁵¹ The water is also called in line 20 a “spring of light” (מעין אור).⁵² 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.

sprout into an eternal planting [1]. **מטעת עולם** (1QH XVI, 5–7; see also XV, 21–22)⁵³

The poet calls this plantation of trees “a glorious Eden and [an everlasting] splen[dor]” (1QH XVI, 21). The phrase “secret spring” in XVI, 7 emphasizes the hiddenness of the pool that irrigates the grove of trees.⁵⁴ 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 ההרב המתחפכת) that guards Eden after the expulsion of Adam and Eve.⁵⁵ 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 [קוני ודרדר] grow up into a bramble thicket and a weed patch” (1QH XVI, 25–26).⁵⁶ 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.⁵⁷ 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

53. Fishbane, “Well of Living Water,” 9.

54. Hughes, *Scriptural Allusions*, 150–52.

55. *Ibid.*, 135.

56. *Ibid.*, 157.

57. Goff, “Reading Wisdom,” 286–87.

figure is the one who tends the garden.⁵⁸ 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.⁵⁹

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.⁶⁰ 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.⁶¹

Conclusion

Harkins draws on Foucault to understand the garden in the Hodayot as a “heterotopia.”⁶² 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.⁶³ 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.

62. Harkins, *Reading*, 208–15; Michel Foucault, “Of Other Spaces,” trans. Jay Miskowiec, *Diacritics* 16 (1986): 22–27.

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,

was a sacred space that was supposed to bring together inside its rectangle four parts representing the four parts of the world, with a space still more sacred than the others that were like an umbilicus, the navel of the world at its center (the basin and water fountain were there); and all the vegetation of the garden was supposed to come together in this space, in this sort of microcosm.... The garden is the smallest parcel of the world and then it is the totality of the world. The garden has been a sort of happy, universalizing heterotopia since the beginnings of antiquity."

64. Michaela Bauks, "Sacred Trees in the Garden of Eden and Their Ancient Near Eastern Precursors," *JAJ* 3 (2012): 267–301; Harkins, *Reading*, 208–9; Manfred Dietrich, "Das biblische Paradies und der babylonische Tempelgarten: Überlegungen zur Lage des Gartens Edens," in *Das biblische Weltbild und seine altorientalischen Kontexte*, ed. Bernd Janowski and Beate Ego, FAT 32 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2001), 281–323; W. Fauth, "Der königliche Gärtner und Jäger im Paradies: Beobachtungen zur Rolle des Herrschers in der vorderasiatischen Hortikultur," *Persica* 8 (1979): 1–53; A. L. Oppenheim, "On Royal Gardens in Mesopotamia," *JNES* 24 (1965): 328–33.

65. This is evident for example in Berossus's description of the splendid palace of Nebuchadnezzar II, which he rebuilt with spoils from war. He claims it had terraces planted with trees and discusses the famous Hanging Gardens of Babylon (Josephus, *C. Ap.* 1.141; *Ant.* 10.226). See Gerald P. Verbrugge and John M. Wickersham, *Berosos and Manetho, Introduced and Translated* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1996), 59 (frag. 9a); Julian Reade, "Alexander the Great and the Hanging Gardens of Babylon," *Iraq* 62 (2000): 199.

66. See, for example, the image of a seventh-century BCE temple garden in Nineveh, in Bauks, "Sacred Trees," 281.

67. Harkins, *Reading*, 215.

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.⁶⁸ 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.

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