

## **Ben Sira in Conversation with Traditions**

# **Deuterocanonical and Cognate Literature Studies**



Edited by

Friedrich V. Reiterer, Beate Ego, Tobias Nicklas,  
and Kristin De Troyer

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# **Ben Sira in Conversation with Traditions**

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A Festschrift for Prof. Núria Calduch-Benages  
on the Occasion of Her 65th Birthday

Edited by  
Francis M. Macatangay and Francisco-Javier Ruiz-Ortiz

In Collaboration with Renate Egger-Wenzel

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Prof. Núria Calduch-Benages, MHSFN



# Preface

*It All Began at Soesterberg in 1996*  
*In Appreciation of Núria Calduch-Benages*

Looking at an old photograph of the famous Ben Sira scholars who were invited by Pancratius C. Beentjes to Soesterberg on 28–31 July 1996 to mark the hundredth anniversary of the rediscovery of the Hebrew manuscripts of Ben Sira, I see Núria standing there in the middle of the first row. I remember very well all the important specialists of this book of wisdom literature coming together: Pancratius Beentjes, Christopher Begg, Alexander A. Di Lella, Maurice Gilbert, Johannes Marböck, Antonino Minissale, Stefan C. Reif, Friedrich V. Reiterer, Benjamin Wright ... and we, the young generation.

Núria began her studies at Barcelona University (Bellaterra). Thanks to her parents' support and encouragement, she studied philosophy, German, and English philology, finishing her bachelor's degree in her hometown before she went to Rome to become a theologian. First came another bachelor's degree at the Pontifical Urban University. In 1991, after her license degree at the Pontifical Biblical Institute, Núria was appointed assistant professor at the Pontifical Gregorian University. She completed her doctorate in 1995 with the thesis *En el crisol de la prueba. Estudio exegético de Sir 2,1–18*<sup>1</sup> at the same Institute under the supervision of Maurice Gilbert and was promptly appointed associate professor at the Gregorian University.

Núria was not entirely clear why she received an invitation to the Ben Sira conference in Soesterberg but one afternoon the telephone suddenly rang, and it was Pancratius Beentjes calling to invite her to that Ben Sira Conference in the Netherlands.

Of course, English had to be the language of that meeting but Núria's thesis had been written in Spanish. Núria has a great love and an enormous talent for languages and had, in addition to her mother tongues of Catalan, Spanish, and French, also studied German, Russian, Greek, Hebrew, Italian, Latin, Swahili, and Vietnamese. However, she was not yet fluent enough in English to translate with ease an excerpt of her thesis. She therefore asked a fellow student, Jan Liesen, a later ISDCL member and now bishop of Breda, for his assistance. The snag was that he expected it to be a translation into English from Italian, not from Spanish. After an intensive collaboration, a rather nervous young Núria attended the conference and presented her paper brilliantly. This "golden opportunity," as Núria

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<sup>1</sup> Núria Calduch-Benages, *En el crisol de la prueba. Estudio exegético de Sir 2,1–18*, ABE 32, Estella: Verbo Divino, 1997.

told me much later, had occurred because a professor had declined to participate, and she had been invited to fill in at the last minute.

That conference in Soesterberg was in many respects also the starting point of our plans at Salzburg University to promote a more intensive study of the deuterocanonical books. Friedrich Reiterer had already started with a Ben Sira research project. In 2002, he initiated a meeting in Salzburg, inviting Pancratius, Núria, and Jeremy Corley to plan further steps. So it was that Núria became one of the founding members of the International Society for the Study of Deuterocanonical and Cognate Literature (ISDCL) and at the inaugural meeting in 2003 was also elected as a member of the advisory board. At this juncture, we also created two new series at the publishing house, Walter de Gruyter. Núria was invited to become co-editor of the series Deuterocanonical and Cognate Literature Yearbook (DCLY) to ensure, together with her colleagues, the high-quality publication of the papers read at our international conferences. In 2013, she was duly elected vice-president and holds this position to the present.

Meanwhile, Núria built her career in Rome; she became Book Review Editor of the journal *Biblica* and later also a member of the editorial boards of the journals *Estudios Bíblicos*, *Gregorianum*, *Storia delle donne*, *Vetus Testamentum*, and its Supplement series.

In 2003, she received an appointment as extraordinary professor at the Gregorian University and became full professor seven years later. In 2006, Núria also became an advisor of the *Cardinal Bea Centre* at the same institution. Since 2016, she serves as an Invited Professor at the Pontifical Biblical Institute. From 2014 to 2019, she was appointed a member of the Pontifical Biblical Commission, a position that was later renewed until 2025; she serves now as its secretary. In 2016, Núria joined the Papal Commission for the Study of the Diaconate of Women.

These many distinguished and important assignments did not prevent Núria from publishing regularly in the field of wisdom literature. Ben Sira is her favored book in which her scholarly expertise is internationally acknowledged and will hopefully be crowned with the conclusion of a commentary after her retirement. She is also interested in biblical anthropology and feminist hermeneutics.

Núria's colleagues hold her in high esteem and her students love her. The editors and contributors of this Festschrift wish Núria strength and health for many more years of productive scholarship and join with the sage in stating, "Praise will come forth from the mouth of the wise and by her will proverbs be studied" (Sir 15:10). We may appropriately conclude by repeating the praise offered by Núria's *Doktorvater*: "That lady is fascinating, joyful, dynamic, enterprising and a hard worker."

Renate Egger-Wenzel  
President of the ISDCL

December 27<sup>th</sup>, 2021



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# Introduction

Students attending the lectures of Professor Núria Calduch-Benages at the Jesuit-run Pontifical Gregorian University in Rome who wish to consult the professor have to climb the stairs to the fifth floor of the building where the offices of the lecturers are located. Once there, the student walks down a hallway with no natural light while looking for the proper room number. Upon finding it, the student, accustomed to the magisterial and spacious classrooms of the university, knocks on the door of a surprisingly small office. The student who is welcomed by Prof. Calduch-Benages notices some shelves holding dissertation volumes on the left, a clothes hanger on the right, a desk opposite the door, and a couple of chairs on either side of the desk, and realizes that these items represent the total furniture of the tiny office. The window behind Prof. Calduch-Benages draws one's attention to the only picture on the wall behind her: a finely written Hebrew text on a parchment. Any advanced student of Hebrew soon understands the text and recognizes it as the final verses of the book of Proverbs, the poem on the *eshet hayil*.

At that moment, one considers possible translations: a virtuous woman, a noble woman, an excellent woman, a capable woman, or simply, a good woman, or wife. But perhaps, the simplest and more literal translation may be the best option: “a strong woman, who can find her?”

The student begins to appreciate that he or she is sitting opposite such a woman, and is in the presence of a hard-working individual who not only produces exceptional scholarship, as attested in the number of articles and books Prof. Calduch-Benages has edited and published, but also supervises a goodly number of doctoral students. Academically demanding and meticulous, she takes outstanding care of those entrusted to her, encouraging their further development. In a firm yet gentle manner, she meets her responsibilities and shares her impressive scholarship and excellent insights with the students at the university, with colleagues at different academic events, and with the public, by way of her publications, both scientific and popular.

Prov. 31:29 continues to describe the woman of substance in this way: “Many women have done excellently, but you surpass them all.” In many respects, this description is wholly fitting for Prof. Calduch-Benages. She is currently the Chair of the Biblical Theology Department at the Gregorian. She has also been the Book Review editor for *Biblica*, an esteemed journal in biblical scholarship, and for the *Gregorianum*, another journal in academic learning, taking the pulse of the current trends in biblical and theological scholarship. She also serves on many editorial boards, including the *Vetus Testamentum* and

its supplements and is presently a Vice-President of the International Society for Deuterocanonical and Cognate Literature (ISDCL). In 2008, Pope Benedict invited her to serve as one of the experts at the Synod on the Word of God. More significantly, she is counted among the first female members named to the Pontifical Biblical Commission and is the first woman to function as Secretary of that academic advisory board in the Roman Catholic Church.

The poem ends with “Let her works praise her in the city gates” (Prov. 31:31). This *Festschrift* volume bears witness to such praise. Colleagues and former students at various city gates around the globe have authored original studies to honor and celebrate the achievements of an extraordinary woman.

The present volume, which follows the honoree’s scholarly interest in Ben Sira, gathers together essays that explore the various relationships between the book of Ben Sira and other mainly Jewish traditions. The word “conversation” in the title of the volume implies an act of engaged listening and interaction. In this case, it means listening to Ben Sira’s text in all its permutations. Doing so also includes hearing, no matter how faintly, some of the other background conversations of the sage’s time; it amounts to discerning Ben Sira’s negotiations with other traditions in light of his own. Ultimately, Ben Sira forms part of a tradition with which later tradents interact. True conversations, of course, often yield insights and delights; it is our hope that this volume offers our honoree and other readers with a storehouse of them.

In their description of such conversations, these contributions employ a variety of approaches ranging from the textual, to the literary, to the theological. The collection is divided into four parts. The first part includes four essays that analyze how Ben Sira represents the Torah he received. The second part’s four essays examine Ben Sira’s links with the prophetic tradition. The third part has four essays that consider the work of Ben Sira in light of the wisdom tradition. The fourth part consists of four essays that study the interconnections between Ben Sira and other literature of the Second Temple. The five studies of the final section investigate how other traditions engaged Ben Sira in conversation, or how his work was later interpreted and received.

John Collins opens the first part with an essay entitled “The Creation of Humanity in Hebrew Wisdom Literature of the Second Century” in which he argues that, despite the number of reflections prompted by the creation stories in Gen 1–2 and Gen 3, Ben Sira does not view any segment of humanity as having been denied the revelation of good and evil because it had a spirit of flesh, as some Qumran documents assert. The differences within the reflections of the period provide a window into the development of dualistic thought in Hellenistic Judea. In “Torah, Paideia, and Sophia in Ben Sira,” Jean-Louis Ska makes a case for considering Ben Sira’s work as a kind of pedagogical hand-

book that prioritizes the Torah, in particular, as the highest and most prestigious form of wisdom that may proudly be set alongside the Hellenistic ideals of *paideia*. Pancratius Beentjes, in “Ben Sira’s Portrayal of Aaron and Phinehas (Sir 45:6–25),” examines how Ben Sira employs scripture in a special way in his portrayal of the priestly families of Aaron and Phinehas in order to underscore continuity in Israel’s history. Finally, Benjamin Wright III looks closely at the Greek translation of Sir 4:1–10, which is considered as Ben Sira’s broad commentary on the covenantal obligations as delineated in Exod 22:22–23, Lev 19:9–10, 23:22 (the poor), Deut 15:7–11 (the poor), and 24:17–22 (widows and orphans), in order to understand how the grandson approached and later represented the thought of Ben Sira on these matters.

The second part begins with Jeremy Corley’s essay entitled “Ben Sira and Ezekiel” which explores connections between the two eponymous writers, starting with the brief note in Sir 49:8–9 that refers to Ezekiel’s inaugural vision, the reference to the revival of bones in Sir 46:12 and 49:10, and the motif of water flowing out of the Jerusalem temple in Sir 24:30–31. Bradley Gregory, in his study “‘Bread to the Hungry and Clothes to the Naked’: A History of a Prophetic-Sapiential Motif from Tobit to the Syriac of Ben Sira,” focuses on the prophetic and sapiential motif “bread to the hungry and clothes to the naked,” tracing its interesting trajectory in Tobit, the Sibylline Oracles 1–2, Pseudo-Phocylides, the Gospel of Matthew, 2 Enoch, and the Syriac version of Ben Sira. In “The Metaphor of a Woman Giving Birth: The Book of Ben Sira in the Light of Prophetic Literature,” Paweł Paszko examines the image of a “woman giving birth” in Sir 19:11–12 and 48:19 in light of the image’s appearance in Isa 42:10–14, concluding that such an image does not symbolize weakness but illustrates inner confusion and anxiety caused by critical life situations. Finally, in “The Banquet of Life in Sir 24:12–23 and Hos 14:5–10? Allusions in the Book of Ben Sira to the Book of Hosea,” Ibolya Balla analyzes the plant metaphors in both Hosea and Ben Sira as a point of connection and concludes that such images reinforce the notion that it is God who is the only legitimate and ultimate provider who sustains a restored Israel and a Torah-observant individual into life, not Baal or other foreign gods in the case of Hosea, or Hellenistic culture in the case of Ben Sira.

The third section examines texts in the book of Ben Sira in connection with the wisdom tradition. In “‘Yet, No One Remembered that Poor Man’: Qoheleth and Ben Sira on the Wisdom of the Poor,” Tova Forti engages in a comparative analysis of Qoh 9:13–10:1 and Sir 10:30–11:3, two passages that employ animal imagery in order to address the wisdom of the poor, and argues that the images underscore the pedagogical gap between Qoheleth’s skeptical ambivalence and Ben Sira’s conservative didacticism. Sergio Rotasperti and F. Javier Ruiz-Ortiz

also analyze animal metaphors as they are applied to women in Sir 25:13–26:27 in light of their use in biblical literature, specifically in its wisdom iteration. In his essay “On the Gifts of the Lord in Ben Sira,” Friedrich V. Reiterer examines in light of Hellenistic ideas the action of the Lord as the giver. Finally, Dinh Anh Nhue Nguyen, in “Family Ethos and Wise Behavior in Proverbs, Sirach, and Vietnamese Folk Sayings,” reads Ben Sira’s teachings on filial piety and wise behavior with Proverbs in mind and also in comparison with Vietnamese folk sayings on the subject, thus emphasizing Ben Sira’s “interculturality.”

The fourth section covers the interconnections between Ben Sira and other literature of Second Temple Judaism. In “Jerusalem in the Books of Tobit and Ben Sira,” Francis Macatangay and Emilio López-Navas compare the views of Jerusalem expressed in Tob 13:7b–18 and Sir 36:1–22 and argue that both evince eschatological expectations. And yet, while Tobit envisions a gloriously rebuilt Jerusalem and temple based on his personal experience of God’s mercy, Ben Sira views the restored institutions of his time, such as the rebuilt Jerusalem and temple, where wisdom ministers, as the basis for the hope that God will restore scattered Israel from their exile. Michael Duggan, in “Wisdom in Disguise and the Heroism of Widows: Ben Sira and Judean Traditions (Sir 4:1–19),” proposes Torah-observant widows such as Tamar, Judah’s daughter-in-law, whose story is told in Gen 38, and the mother who suffers martyrdom after witnessing the executions of her seven sons in 2 Macc 7:20–29, as possible “evocative reference points” for contemplating Woman Wisdom in Ben Sira. In “Path Dependence and Institutional Change: The Portrayal of Alcimus and Jonathan as High Priests in 1 Maccabees,” Barbara Schmitz considers the office of the high priesthood, an element common to Ben Sira and 1 Maccabees, in terms of the socio-political category of path dependence, noting that Ben Sira may be viewed as part of the path dependence that offered a *Traditiongeschichte* which may have facilitated the legitimization of the Hasmonean high priesthood as portrayed in 1 Maccabees. Matthew Goff closes the section with an examination of *yeṣer* in Sir 15:14 in his essay “A Devilish Parallel: Sir 15:14 in its Hebrew Reception,” arguing that the conceptions of the *yeṣer* in late Second Temple literature and rabbinic Judaism may have influenced the expansion of the verse to include ‘snatcher’ and so shaped the transmission of the book of Ben Sira.

The concluding section of the volume deals with the reception of the book of Ben Sira. In “The Book of Ben Sira From a Reception-Historical Perspective: Hubert Frankemölle’s Commentary on the Letter of James,” Oda Wischmeyer compares passages that deal with the tongue in Sir 28:8–26 and Jas 3:1–12 and, going beyond the tradition-historical approach of Hubert Frankemölle in his commentary on James, argues that the Letter of James modernizes Ben Sira’s ethical teachings on the tongue by employing the literary genre of the ethical



epistle; it is a literary work of the early imperial period that is to be understood in terms of its cultural context and literary ambitions. In “Quick to Listen, Slow to Speak, and Slow to Anger (Jas 1:19 and Sir 5:11),” Elisa Estévez López employs the personality model with its three interconnected zones: zone of self-expressive speech (eyes-heart), emotion-fused thought (mouth-ears), and purposeful action (hands-feet), representing a hermeneutical entry point for examining the ethics of language and the proper use of the tongue in the book of Ben Sira and the Letter of James. Maurice Gilbert’s essay, “Reliability and Gentleness: Moses, Jesus, and the Disciple,” examines the two qualities of reliability and gentleness that Ben Sira requires of his students in Sir 1:27b, and points out that these, as it happens, are also the qualities that Ben Sira employs to describe Moses in Sir 45:4a, with its allusion to Num 12:1–10. The essay proceeds to examine these qualities as they are understood in the Gospel of Matthew and the Letter to the Hebrews in light of these previous texts. Juan Chapa, in “Useful for Instruction: The Popularity of Sirach in Christian Egypt,” considers the various surviving Sirach manuscripts from Egypt, both in Greek and in Coptic, and claims that Sirach was used to instruct children and young people. Finally, Stefan Reif completes the volume with his essay “M. H. Segal (1875–1968) and his Abiding Interest in Ben Sira,” which not only looks at the life of Moshe H. Segal and his work on the book of Ben Sira but also provides a useful summary of the main points of Segal’s commentary in Hebrew.

At the initial phase of the preparation of this Festschrift volume, the guidance by way of Zoom sessions of Prof. Renate Egger-Wenzel, the President of the ISDCL, was invaluable. Unfortunately, certain circumstances prevented her from continuing her collaborative work with us. We would like to thank her for her kind encouragement and support. There are also many others who deserve our thanks and we will name a few: all the twenty-three scholars who gladly and enthusiastically contributed to the volume; Michael Duggan who always responded graciously to our many editorial queries; Ms. Teresa Stevenson of Las Cruces, New Mexico for assistance with proofreading; and Alice Meroz of Walter de Gruyter for her wholehearted support of this project. Last but not least, we wish to thank our honoree, Prof. Núria Calduch-Benages, for her gentle mentorship, steady friendship, and for her numerous scholarly achievements. As she turns 65, we wish her many more years of good health and insightful scholarship on the Word of God.

Francis M. Macatangay  
F. Javier Ruiz-Ortiz



# Select Bibliography

The writings of Prof. Núria Calduch-Benages extend over 450 entries in a variety of languages (Spanish, Catalan, Italian, English, and German). These writings encompass exegetical and scholarly works as well as popular and pastoral ones. The main interest is the book of Ben Sira. Topics such as metaphors and the role of women are also scholarly concerns. Below, we provide a selection of Prof. Calduch-Benages's writings:

## 1 Books

1. *For Wisdom's Sake. Collected Essays on the Book of Ben Sira.* BZAW 499. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2021.
2. *Pan de sensatez y agua de sabiduría. Estudios sobre el libro de Ben Sira.* Artículos selectos 1. Estella: Verbo Divino, 2019.
3. *La Sabiduría del Escriba. Wisdom of the Scribe. Edición diplomática de la Peshitta del libro de Ben Sira según el Códice Ambrosiano con traducción española e inglesa. Diplomatic Edition of the Peshitta of the Book of Ben Sira according to Codex Ambrosianus. With Translations in Spanish and English.* Second Edition. Biblioteca Midrásica 26. Estella: Verbo Divino, 2015.
4. *Perdonar las injurias.* Colección obras de misericordia 11. Madrid: Publicaciones Claretianas, 2015.
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8. *Saboreando la Palabra. Sobre la lectura orante o creyente (lectio divina).* El mundo de la Biblia. Horizontes 11. Estella: Verbo Divino, 2012. English translation: *Savoring the Word. On Prayerful Faith-Filled Reading (Lectio Divina).* Estella: Verbo Divino, 2017.
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10. *En el crisol de la prueba. Estudio exegético de Sir 2.1–18.* ABE 32. Estella: Verbo Divino, 1997.

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1. With Guadalupe Seijas de los Ríos-Zarzosa. *Mujer. Biblia y sociedad. Libro homenaje a Mercedes Navarro Puerto*. Estella: Verbo Divino, 2021.
2. With Michael W. Duggan and Dalia Marx. *On Wings of Prayer. Sources of Jewish Worship. Essays in Honor of Professor Stefan C. Reif on the Occasion of His Seventy-Fifth Birthday*. DCLS 44. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2019.
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5. With Jan Liesen. *History and Identity. How Israel's Later Authors Viewed Its Earlier History*. DCLY 2006. Berlin/New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2006.
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## 3 Essays and Articles

1. “‘Columnas de oro sobre pedestales de plata ...’ (Sir 26.18). Metáforas del cuerpo femenino en Ben Sira.” Pages 143–65 in *Mujer. Biblia y sociedad. Libro homenaje a Mercedes Navarro Puerto*. Edited by Núria Calduch-Benages and Guadalupe Seijas de los Ríos Zarzosa. Estella: Verbo Divino, 2021.
2. “‘A human being has pity on his neighbour; the Lord on every living being’ (Sir 18:13ab). Mercy in the Book of Sirach.” Pages 73–93 in *Theology and Anthropology in the Book of Sirach*. Edited by Bonifatia Gesche, Christian Lustig, and Gabriel Rabo. SCS 73. Atlanta: SBL Press, 2020.
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## Part I: **Ben Sira in Conversation with the Torah**



John J. Collins

# The Creation of Humanity in Hebrew Wisdom Literature of the Second Century BCE

**Abstract:** The creation stories in Gen 1 and Gen 2–3 have been the source of reflection on human nature. One of them comes from Ben Sira who reconfigures the tale and states that humanity was filled with knowledge and understanding. Qumran documents such as 4QInstruction also offer reflections on what was given to humanity, on what was fashioned in the beginning, and on whether humanity has access to wisdom and the potential to know good and evil. These reflections provide a window on the development of dualistic thought in Hellenistic Judea.

**Keywords:** creation, knowledge of good and evil, mystery of existence, fleshly and spiritual people, dualism

The stories of creation in Gen 1 and Gen 2–3 have loomed large in Christian theology. The second creation story, which tells of Adam and Eve and the Fall, has been especially important, beginning with the letters of Paul in the New Testament. It comes as a surprise, then, that they do not enjoy similar prominence in the Old Testament.<sup>1</sup> Apart from passing allusions in Qoheleth 3:19–22 and 12:1–7,<sup>2</sup> we find no reflection on these foundational stories until the book of Ben Sira in the second century BCE.<sup>3</sup> It is noteworthy that the earliest reflections on these chapters are found in sapiential writings. Creation had always been a subject of interest to the sages because of their philosophical or theological interest in the nature of things. Only in the second century BCE, however, do we get sustained reflection on the creation and consequently, the nature of humanity, drawing on the opening chapters of Genesis.<sup>4</sup>

An obvious problem posed by the text of Genesis concerns the different portrayals of human origins in the priestly account in Gen 1 and the story of Adam and Eve, which is usually attributed to the Yahwist, although some Euro-

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<sup>1</sup> Collins, "Pre-Christian Adam," 273–88.

<sup>2</sup> García, *On Human Nature*, 29–35

<sup>3</sup> García, *On Human Nature*, 36–56; Mulder, "Adamic Traditions," 401–20. Mulder provides a list of Adamic references in Ben Sira on p. 402.

<sup>4</sup> Collins, "Interpretation of Genesis," 157–75; Goff, "Genesis 1–3," 114–25; Wold, "Genesis 2–3," 329–46.

pean scholars now regard it as “post-priestly.”<sup>5</sup> Gen 1 presents an exalted view of humanity created in the image of God.<sup>6</sup> In the story of Adam and Eve, the original couple are expelled from the garden for their disobedience.<sup>7</sup> The earliest interpretations, however, show great freedom in adapting these narratives.

## 1 The Two Creation Stories in Ben Sira and in Qumran Wisdom Texts

Ben Sira conflates the two creation stories in Genesis but most notably, he denies what modern interpreters take to be the plain meaning of the Adam and Eve story. Rather than prohibiting them from eating from the tree of knowledge, “he filled them with knowledge and understanding and showed them good and evil” (Sir 17:7).<sup>8</sup> Death is not a punishment; human beings were allotted a fixed number of days from the start (17:2). In the words of Jean-Sebastien Rey, “what is striking in this text is the way the author grounds its discourse in the Genesis account by radically reconfiguring the tale and writing a new story in a sapiential context.”<sup>9</sup> Ben Sira expounds a vigorous doctrine of free will. When God created human beings, “he left them in the power of their inclination. If you choose, you can keep the commandments, and to act faithfully is a matter of your own choice” (15:15). But Ben Sira is not entirely consistent on this point. In Sir 33:11–12, we read that when humanity was created from the dust:

In the fullness of his knowledge the Lord distinguished them  
And appointed their different ways.  
Some he blessed and exalted,  
And some he made holy brought near to himself;  
But some he cursed and brought low and turned them out of their place.

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<sup>5</sup> See Collins, “Pre-Christian Adam,” 273–74. The attribution to the Yahwist is defended by Baden, *The Composition of the Pentateuch*, 68. For the “post-priestly” view, see especially Otto, “Die Paradieserzählung Genesis 2–3,” 167–92. See Carr, *The Formation of Genesis 1–11*, who argues that the bulk of Gen 1–11 was created out of a combination of a Priestly source and an earlier non-Priestly source.

<sup>6</sup> See Garr, *In His Own Image and Likeness*; Smith, *The Priestly Vision of Genesis 1*.

<sup>7</sup> See especially Barr, *The Garden of Eden*; Mettinger, *The Eden Narrative*.

<sup>8</sup> The Hebrew of this passage is not extant. See García, *On Human Nature*, 37–46. This passage has rightly been identified as basic (grundlegende) for Ben Sira’s understanding of humanity by Ueberschaer, *Weisheit aus der Begegnung*, 137; Rey, “In the Garden of Good and Evil,” 473–92, here p. 481.

<sup>9</sup> Rey, “In the Garden of Good and Evil,” 481.



This passage does not relate the rise or fall of humanity to its conduct. Human beings are in the hand of their maker like clay in the hand of the potter. Ben Sira is not known for consistency but he gives a sense of some of the ways that sages thought about human nature in the early second century BCE.<sup>10</sup>

Ben Sira was not alone in claiming that God had endowed humanity with knowledge and wisdom. The Words of the Heavenly Luminaries (4Q504) also conflates the two creation stories. When God fashioned Adam in the image of his glory, “the breath of life you blew into his nostrils, and intelligence and knowledge.”<sup>11</sup> The same interpretation is presupposed in the fragmentary 4QMeditation on Creation (4Q303), which mentions “the knowledge of good and evil” before the creation of Eve.<sup>12</sup> Some of these texts, however, acknowledge a prohibition. The Words of the Heavenly Luminaries notes: “you imposed on him not to tu[r]n away ...”.<sup>13</sup> The Paraphrase of Genesis and Exodus (4Q422), which runs the two creation accounts together, is more explicit about the nature of the prohibition: “that he shoul[d] not eat from the tree that gives know[ledge of good and evil].”<sup>14</sup>

Not all texts in the Dead Sea Scrolls, however, attribute the origin of evil to a “Fall.” The Treatise on the Two Spirits in the Community Rule is also an instructional text that directly addresses the creation and nature of humanity.<sup>15</sup> This text is strongly deterministic. God established the designs of all things before they came into being and they perform their tasks in accordance with his design. The treatise paraphrases the creation of humanity in Gen 1: He created the human being (אָנוֹשׁ) to rule the world, and yet, it continues to expound a doctrine that has no basis in Genesis. God designed two spirits for humanity, one of light and one of darkness.<sup>16</sup> At the end of the Treatise, there is an elliptic statement that God allots them (the spirits) to humanity so that they may know good and evil, echoing the language of Gen 2:9, 17; 3:5, but there is no Fall here either. The spirits are assigned to humanity by God.

The most controversial discussion of creation in a wisdom text, however, is in 4QInstruction, which is preserved in fragmentary form in several manuscripts

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10 See further Collins, *Jewish Wisdom in the Hellenistic Age*, 79–84.

11 Chazon, “Creation and Fall,” 15.

12 Lim, “303. Meditation on Creation A,” 152–53; Goff, *Discerning Wisdom*, 268–70.

13 Chazon, “Creation and Fall,” 16–17.

14 Elgvin and Tov, “Paraphrase of Genesis and Exodus,” 421–2; Elgvin, “Genesis Section of 4Q422,” 185.

15 See especially Alexander, “Predestination and Free Will,” 27–49. On the discussion of Genesis, see Schwartz, “Exegetical Character of 1QS 3:13–4:26,” 31–65.

16 This formulation shows clear influence of Persian dualism, although it adapts the tradition in significant ways. See de Jong, “Iranian Connections in the Dead Sea Scrolls,” 479–80.

from Qumran.<sup>17</sup> 4QInstruction does not expound its doctrine of creation directly but alludes to it parenthetically and, partly for this reason, remains highly disputed.<sup>18</sup> The key passage is found in 4Q417 i 1. It begins with an exhortation to the “understanding one” (מבין) to meditate day and night on the רז נהיה, which is variously translated as “the mystery that is to be” or “the mystery of existence,” so that one may know truth and iniquity and their consequences and inherit one’s reward: “because engraved is that which is ordained by God against all the in[iq]uit[ie]s of the sons of Sheth, and the book of remembrance is written before him for those who keep his word.” This book of remembrance is further identified with “the vision of Hagu.” God, we are told, “gave it as an inheritance to אנוש with a spiritual people, for according to the likeness of the holy ones he fashioned him. And moreover, he did not give the Hagu to the spirit of flesh, for it did not distinguish between good and evil according to the judgment of its spirit.”

## 2 The רז נהיה

The expression רז נהיה occurs thirty times in this text but elsewhere only in 1QS 11:3–4 and in the Book of Mysteries (1Q27 1 i 3–4; 4Q 300 3 3–4). Despite the influential translation of J. T. Milik as “le mystère futur,”<sup>19</sup> it is clear that the phrase can refer to past, present, and future, and entails a comprehensive knowledge of time.<sup>20</sup> It can refer to eschatological “visitation” or punishment (פקודה), as in 4Q417 1 i 7–8 but it also says that God laid out the foundation of truth by this mystery (4Q417 1 i 8–9). By it, one knows truth and iniquity or deceit (עול) and probably, if the editors’ restoration is accepted, also discerns between good and evil (line 8, but the words good and evil are not actually

<sup>17</sup> 1Q26, 4Q415–418, 4Q423. A reconstruction based on a concordance was published in Wacholder and Abegg, *A Preliminary Edition of the Unpublished Dead Sea Scrolls*, 54–154. Summaries of the major fragments were provided by Harrington, “Wisdom at Qumran,” 137–52. The text was officially published by Strugnell and Harrington, “4Q417,” with an edition of 4Q423 by Elgvin in *Qumran Cave 4*.

<sup>18</sup> Extensive bibliography prior to 2009 can be found in Tigchelaar, “‘Spiritual People,’” 103–18, especially 102–105. The most recent discussions are those of Wold, *4QInstruction*, 95–145 and García, *On Human Nature*, 251–67.

<sup>19</sup> Milik, “‘Livre des Mystères,’” 103; compare 1Q26, on p. 102. Milik’s formulation presumably influenced that of Strugnell and Harrington, “the mystery that is to come.”

<sup>20</sup> See the thorough discussions by Goff, *The Worldly and Heavenly Wisdom*, 51–79; Rey, *4QInstruction*, 284–92. In an Oxford seminar on February 8, 2021, Arjen Bakker suggested “the secret of time.”

preserved). Armin Lange translates the phrase as “the mystery of being and becoming”<sup>21</sup> and suggests that it reflects the Greek *το μυστήριον τοῦ εἶναι*.<sup>22</sup> Rey opts for “mystère de l’existence.”<sup>23</sup> While Hebrew lacks abstract philosophical terminology, “the mystery of existence” is a reasonable translation in the context. Since *לִהְיוֹת* is a verbal form, a sense of temporality is implied and “existence” is preferable to “being.”

The duality of truth (*אמת*) and iniquity or deceit (*עול*) is pervasive in the Community Rule and characterizes the two spirits of Light and Darkness in 1QS 3:18–19. It is probably derived from Persian dualism, although 4QInstruction is not so overtly dualistic as the Treatise.<sup>24</sup> It is not clear that the mystery is enshrined in any writing. The best analogy in Hebrew tradition is provided by the concept of wisdom, insofar as it entails a comprehensive view of the order of creation. Neither is it clear just how the mystery relates to the book of remembrance or the vision of Hagu. The book of remembrance is derived from Mal 3:16, where it relates to divine provision for the righteous. It seems clear that the vision of Hagu, or Meditation, enables people to grasp the mystery and this in turn is what enables people to distinguish between good and evil and consequently, to live rightly. It contains the record of that which is ordained by God against the sons of Sheth, presumably the eschatological punishment of the wicked.<sup>25</sup>

### 3 To Whom was the Mystery Bequeathed?

The main point in dispute in the interpretation of this passage is whether this vision is available to all of humanity or only to one type of human being. A key issue for this question is the understanding of the term *אנוש*. The editors allowed that it could refer either to mankind or to the son of Seth, the patriarch.<sup>26</sup>

<sup>21</sup> Lange, “Wisdom Literature and Thought,” 464. In his earlier work in German, *Weisheit & Prädestination*, 60, he rendered the phrase as “Das Geheimnis des Werdens.”

<sup>22</sup> On affinities between 4QInstruction and Greek thought, see also Najman, “Jewish Wisdom in the Hellenistic Period,” 459–72.

<sup>23</sup> Rey, *4QInstruction*, 291–2; see pp. 286–87 for an overview of proposals.

<sup>24</sup> Tigchelaar, “Changing Truths,” 395–415. See also Hultgren, “אמת,” *ThWQ* 1:227–37; Newsom, “עול, עולה, עול,” *ThWQ* 3:47–53. The Persian background was pointed out by Koch, “History as a Battlefield of Two Antagonistic Powers,” 185–99.

<sup>25</sup> Tigchelaar, “Reflections,” 107, suggests that the “book of remembrance” may have contained “the acts of all individual persons, or perhaps their names and destinies.”

<sup>26</sup> Strugnell and Harrington, “4Q417,” 164.

Armin Lange, followed by Jörg Frey, opted for the patriarch.<sup>27</sup> In this, they were influenced by the mention of the שׂוֹת בְּנֵי שֵׁת or שֵׁת בְּנֵי שׂוֹת in the previous line.<sup>28</sup>

According to Gen 4:26, people began to call on the name of the Lord in the time of Enosh. Jub. 4 says that Enosh was the first to do so. In contrast, rabbinic tradition associates the beginning of idolatry and the fall of the angels with the wickedness of the sons of Seth.<sup>29</sup> Seth himself was sometimes implicated.<sup>30</sup> Lange reads “the sons of Seth” here in light of the later rabbinic tradition but we do not read of the wickedness of the sons of Seth in Second Temple writings. Also, as Strugnell and Harrington noted, the patriarch’s name is spelled defectively as שֵׁת.<sup>31</sup> They suggest that the reference is to Num 24:17, where the scepter that comes out of Jacob will smite the Shethites, a group conquered by the Israelites at the time of the conquest. שֵׁת is also spelled defectively in the biblical text of Numbers but the passage is cited in the Scrolls with the *plene* spelling in 1QM 11:6 and 4QTestimonia (4Q175) 13. This suggestion has been widely accepted.<sup>32</sup> Enosh was not regarded as a revealer figure in Second Temple Judaism and a reference here is unlikely.

The word אֲנוּשׁ is commonly used in the Hodayot in the sense of “humanity” and is also attested in this sense elsewhere in 4QInstruction.<sup>33</sup> It is taken in this sense in this passage by Torleif Elgvin<sup>34</sup> and Rey,<sup>35</sup> and this interpretation has been argued repeatedly by Benjamin Wold.<sup>36</sup>

Strugnell and Harrington already raised one objection to this line of interpretation. If אֲנוּשׁ refers to humanity in general, then the reference to a spiritual people is tautological, “being only another general name for the same group.”<sup>37</sup> The word אֲנוּשׁ is followed by the words עַם רֹחַ with the second עַם inserted above the line. The uncorrected text could arguably be read “he bequeathed it

27 Lange, *Weisheit & Prädestination*, 87; Frey, “Flesh and Spirit,” 729.

28 The letters *yod* and *waw* are notoriously difficult to distinguish in the Scrolls. Strugnell and Harrington transcribed שׂוֹת, but Lange שֵׁת.

29 Fraade, *Enosh and His Generation*, 226–27; Schäfer, “Der Götzendienst des Enosch,” 134–52.

30 Fraade, *Enosh*, 153–54.

31 Strugnell and Harrington, “4Q417,” 163.

32 Goff, *4QInstruction*, 158; *The Worldly and Heavenly Wisdom*, 92; Macaskill, *Revealed Wisdom*, 80–81 n. 46; Rey, *4QInstruction*, 297. Tigchelaar (“Reflections,” 106) suggested a variant spelling of שֵׁת (devastation, perdition). Wold (*4QInstruction*, 105) translates “sons of perdition” but takes this as a reference to Num 24:17.

33 4Q418 fr 8, line 12, fr. 55, line 11, fr. 77, line 3. Wold, “אֲנוּשׁ,” *ThWQ* 1:241–47.

34 Elgvin, “Mystery to Come,” 139–47.

35 Rey, *4QInstruction*, 297.

36 Wold, *Women, Men and Angels*, 124–49; Wold, “Universality of Creation in 4QInstruction,” 211–26; *4QInstruction*, 104–108.

37 Strugnell and Harrington, “4Q417,” 165; Goff, “Recent Trends,” 385.

to אֱנוֹשׁ with (a) spirit.”<sup>38</sup> The corrected text is usually understood as “with a spiritual people.” This would seem to require a distinction between these people and אֱנוֹשׁ; the spiritual people cannot be included in the generic אֱנוֹשׁ. To evade this objection, Wold appeals to the suggestion of Cana Werman that reverses the order of “with” and “people,” to read “a people with a spirit.”<sup>39</sup> Humanity and the people with a spirit would then be in apposition. He claims support for this interpretation in 1QH<sup>a</sup> 11:23–24: “you cast for a person an eternal lot with the spirits of knowledge.” However, this is not comparable since the spirits of knowledge are separate beings and not spirits given to humanity.

Wold claims that “[a] consequence of the translation ‘humanity, a people with a spirit’ is that our neat division of ‘a spiritual people’ and a ‘fleshly spirit’ disappears. What is left in the vision of Hagu passage is an explanation that a segment of humanity has lost access to revelation.”<sup>40</sup> But how does “a people with (a) spirit” differ from “a spiritual people”?<sup>41</sup> There are no parallels for either expression. Is the spirit in question the spirit of flesh? The expression רוּחַ בָּשָׂר occurs three times in 4QInstruction (4Q416 1 12; 4Q417 1 i 17; 4Q418 81 2) and three times in the Hodayot (1QH<sup>a</sup> 4:37; 5:15, 30).<sup>42</sup> In the Hodayot, the expression characterizes humanity as a whole.<sup>43</sup> But this is not the case in 4QInstruction. Even Wold says that the fleshly spirit is only “a segment of humanity,” and Rey understands the “spiritual people” and “fleshly spirit” as “un désignation de deux catégories humaines opposées.”<sup>44</sup> It is clear that the Hagu is not denied to all humanity. 4QInstruction repeatedly urges the recipient מְבִינִי to study it and says that he is separated from every fleshly spirit (4Q418 81 + 81a 1–2). Consequently, the spirit with which the people who are fashioned in the likeness of the angels are associated cannot be the “spirit of flesh.”

The use of “a people” in apposition to “humanity” seems very implausible. Rather, the spiritual people, or people with a spirit, stand in opposition to “the spirit of flesh” to which the vision was not given. The people, then, whether we translate “a spiritual people” or “a people with a spirit” is not humankind as a whole but “a special category of humankind.”<sup>45</sup>

38 Tigchelaar, “Reflections,” 112, citing Strugnell and Harrington, “4Q417,” 164–65.

39 Wold, *4QInstruction*, 106; Werman, “What is the Book of Hagu?,” 125–40, here p. 137.

40 Wold, “Universality of Creation,” 10.

41 Wold, “Universality of Creation,” 10: “Humanity is spiritual.”

42 Rey, *4QInstruction*, 299–30.

43 Wold, *4QInstruction*, 119–27.

44 Rey, *4QInstruction*, 298. García, *On Human Nature*, 262, says that אֱנוֹשׁ “is intended, not to depict humanity *in toto*, but rather a specific elect portion of it.”

45 Tigchelaar, “Reflections,” 113. Compare already van der Woude, “Fifty Years of Qumran Research,” 37, who recognizes two types of humanity: “a spiritual people in the likeness of the holy ones and men of a ‘spirit of flesh’.”

In an article originally published in 1999, I suggested another possible way of understanding אָנוּשׁ.<sup>46</sup> In the Treatise on the Two Spirits, we read that God created אָנוּשׁ to rule the world. In this case the reference is clearly to the first creation story in Gen 1:27–28. A similar reference in 4QInstruction makes excellent sense. The statement in 4QInstruction that אָנוּשׁ was created “in the likeness of the Holy Ones” is a paraphrase of the biblical statement that Adam was created in the image of God (taking אֱלֹהִים as the angels or holy ones). In contrast, the statement that the “spirit of flesh” did not distinguish between good and evil points to the second creation story in Gen 2–3. In short, God created two kinds of human beings: the spiritual people represented by אָנוּשׁ/Adam in Gen 1 and those who have a spirit of flesh, as recounted in Gen 2–3. The word יָצַר, “to fashion,” which is used in the second biblical creation story, is used here in connection with the first but it is not used to characterize either kind of human being, as are the allusions to the image of God and to knowing good and evil. This line of interpretation has been elaborated and defended by Matthew Goff and Samuel Adams.<sup>47</sup> Wold accepts that fashioning in the likeness of the holy ones is an allusion to Gen 1 but denies that two different kinds of people are created.<sup>48</sup> Similarly for Rey, it is distinguishing between good and evil, or the failure to do so, that leads humanity to be divided into two categories.<sup>49</sup> Eibert Tigchelaar finds “some form of ambiguity: the text describes two types of humanities, along with their corresponding anthropological distinctions, as founded in some form of double creation; at the same time, this double anthropology seems to be based in behavior.”<sup>50</sup> Jeffrey García recognizes the creation motifs but tries to avoid the ontological implications: “the clear creation motifs may simply signal God’s revelatory act towards a specific lot of humanity, on the one hand, and on the other, a denial without any implication to an ontology.”<sup>51</sup> However, if creation does not determine ontology, we are left to wonder what is meant by ontology in a Jewish context.

Wold objects that אָנוּשׁ in the Treatise refers to humanity, not just to Adam as an individual.<sup>52</sup> Already in Gen 1, Adam represents humanity. Gen 1:27 qual-

<sup>46</sup> Collins, “In the Likeness of the Holy Ones,” 609–18. See also Collins, “Mysteries of God,” 159–80.

<sup>47</sup> Goff, *The Worldly and Heavenly Wisdom*, 94–97; Goff, *4QInstruction*, 137–68; Adams, *Wisdom in Transition*, 259–61.

<sup>48</sup> Wold, “Universality of Creation,” 7. Fletcher-Louis, *All the Glory of Adam*, 116, also accepts an allusion to Gen 1, despite some quibbles, and takes it as evidence for “angelomorphic humanity,” in contrast to the “spirit of flesh.”

<sup>49</sup> Rey, *4QInstruction*, 304.

<sup>50</sup> Tigchelaar, “Reflections,” 116.

<sup>51</sup> García, *On Human Nature*, 266–67.

<sup>52</sup> Wold, “Universality of Creation,” 8; Wold, *4QInstruction*, 107. Similarly, Popović, “Anthropology,” 1040.

ifies: “male and female he created them” and the NRSV translates אדם as “humankind.” Adam in Gen 1 is an individual who represents humanity metonymically. Consequently, to pose “the first human being” and “humanity” as alternatives is to propose a false dichotomy. The point is that the statement in 4QInstruction is a reference to the first creation story in Gen 1 and the question in dispute is whether the אנוש who is created in the likeness of the angels is all of humanity or only one type of human being.

Crucial for Wold is the interpretation of the word עור in line 17: ועור לוא בתן הגוי לרוח בשר, which he takes in a temporal sense: “and no longer is Hagu given to a fleshly spirit.”<sup>53</sup> Strugnell and Harrington commented: “The sense is probably not ‘not yet ...’ but rather ‘and no more,’ after being given to Enosh/mankind was (the power of) meditation given to the בשר ברוח; since the days of Enosh, the fleshly in spirit have not possessed the power of meditation.”<sup>54</sup> But this interpretation is not inevitable or universally accepted. עור can also mean “yet” or “moreover,” and several scholars do not take it in a temporal sense here.<sup>55</sup> Tigchelaar, who translates it as “moreover,” notes that “we have no single example of ועור לוא with either perfect or participle,” and so, Wold’s thesis has no grammatical basis.<sup>56</sup> García notes that “there are a large number of examples of ועור לוא in rabbinic literature, which render ועור ‘furthermore’ or ‘moreover.’” He argues that Wold does not take enough stock of the fact that עור appears prior to לוא, or that ו signals the beginning of a new informative clause.<sup>57</sup> Goff allows that “no more” is an interpretive possibility but judges it unlikely, since 4QInstruction displays no awareness of a Fall.<sup>58</sup>

Even if “no more” is allowed as a possible translation, however, it is not the only possible way of understanding the passage. Its plausibility depends on our understanding of the passage as a whole. Wold’s interpretation requires that the Hagu/meditation was originally given to the spirit of flesh and, indeed, that the spirit of flesh was originally fashioned in the likeness of the holy ones.

53 Wold, “Universality of Creation,” 9.

54 Strugnell and Harrington, “4Q417,” 166.

55 Lange, *Weisheit & Prädestination*, 53 (“doch”); Rey, *4QInstruction*, 281 (“mais”); García, *On Human Nature*, 257 (“furthermore”); Goff, *The Worldly and Heavenly Wisdom*, 84 (“moreover”). In his commentary, however, Goff translates: “but no more.” Puech, “Apport des textes apocalyptiques,” 138, translates “pas encore,” or not yet.

56 Tigchelaar, “Reflections,” 113 n. 41. He allows that Job 24:20, עור לא יזכר “he is no more remembered,” provides an approximate parallel.

57 García, *On Human Nature*, 261.

58 Goff, *The Worldly and Heavenly Wisdom*, 99. See also Goff, “Being Fleshly or Spiritual,” 41–59, esp. 47 n. 27.

This is difficult to accept, as it undercuts the fundamental dichotomy of the spiritual people (or people with spirit) and the spirit of flesh.

## 4 A Distinction Based on Behavior

Rey argues that “the distinction between the ‘spiritual people’ and the ‘fleshly spirit’ is rooted in an ethical distinction between those who discern between good and evil and those who do not.”<sup>59</sup> Wold affirms this conclusion: “Rey’s interpretation is persuasive in that obedience to God through the pursuit of wisdom separates the Mēvîn from those designated as ‘flesh’.”<sup>60</sup> It is indeed clear that the מְבִין who is the addressee of 4QInstruction needs to meditate on the mystery in order to distinguish between good and evil. As Tigchelaar has remarked, the “double anthropology seems to be based in behavior.”<sup>61</sup> The addressee is not perfect but has the potential to be like the holy ones.

The need for obedience is further emphasized in 4Q423 1, 2, another fragmentary part of 4QInstruction.<sup>62</sup> There we are told that the garden (of Eden) contains every tree which is good, pleasing to give knowledge.” God set the מְבִין in charge of it to till and guard it but it will sprout thorns and thistles if the gardener is unfaithful. There is possibly a fragmentary reference to “[rejecting] the evil and knowing the good.”<sup>63</sup> In this case, the garden of the second creation story in Genesis provides the metaphorical setting of the מְבִין. Wold infers that “all of humanity started out in the garden and each person chose to cultivate wisdom or not. The failure to do so results in this privilege being taken away, which is the description found in the vision of Hagu. The spirit of flesh is ‘no longer’ given the vision of meditation because it did not act according to its spirit in order to know good and evil.”<sup>64</sup>

But as Wold also notes: “4QInstruction is not addressed to the ‘spirit of flesh.’ This is a document directed only to the ‘understanding ones’.”<sup>65</sup> As it says explicitly in 4Q417 1 i 17, the Vision of Hagu is not given to the fleshly spirit.

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<sup>59</sup> Rey, “In the Garden of Good and Evil,” 489. Compare Rey, *4QInstruction*, 304.

<sup>60</sup> Wold, “Universality of Creation,” 16.

<sup>61</sup> Tigchelaar, “Reflections,” 116.

<sup>62</sup> Elgvin, “423. 4QInstructiong,” 505–33.

<sup>63</sup> Elgvin, “423. 4QInstructiong,” 508; Wold, “Universality of Creation,” 11–15. The mention of good and evil depends on joining two fragments, and is not certain. See Goff, *4QInstruction*, 290–91.

<sup>64</sup> Wold, “Universality of Creation,” 15.

<sup>65</sup> Wold, “Universality of Creation,” 16.