

Wisdom, Apocalypticism, and the Pedagogical Ethos of 4QInstruction

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Introduction

The Qumran wisdom text 4QInstruction (1Q26, 4Q415-18, 423) is devoted to the moral and intellectual training of its addressee, or, as the text calls him, the *mebin* (“understanding one”). In this paper I will argue that 4QInstruction combines the eudemonistic and educational ethos of traditional wisdom with an apocalyptic worldview.¹ To show this I will examine not only the kinds of knowledge the *mebin* can learn but also the role of revealed wisdom, in the form of the *raz niyeh*, in his instruction. I will also consider why the *raz niyeh* is presented as an important source of wisdom.

Pedagogy and Knowledge in 4QInstruction

The pedagogical ethos of 4QInstruction is clear from texts such as 4Q418 81 17: “Be very intelligent, and from all your teachers increase learning (xql @swh hklykvm lwk dym).” In a similar vein, 4Q416 2 iii 14-15 reads: “Have understanding in all the ways of truth, and all the roots of iniquity perceive.” There is continuity between the educational mission of 4QInstruction and that of Proverbs as laid out in its prologue (1:1-7). John Collins has emphasized that one common thread throughout wisdom literature is “its use as instructional material.”² 4QInstruction’s stress on learning is characteristic of the sapiential tradition, and is one reason why it is designated a wisdom text, along with its practical advice and frequent admonitions. There is also, however, an emphasis on learning in some apocalyptic texts.³ According to *I Enoch* 82 and 105, for example, Enoch is enjoined to teach knowledge that he received through revelation.

There are many different kinds of knowledge that the addressee of 4QInstruction can learn. Some are in keeping with traditional wisdom, while others reflect an apocalyptic worldview. He learns, for example, to practice moderation with food (4Q416 2 ii 18-20) and the importance of paying off debts quickly (4Q416 2 ii 4-6), both commonplace in the sapiential tradition.⁴ He also learns about his elect status, being told, for example, that he is among the lot of the angels (4Q418 81 4-5). He can also obtain knowledge about the final judgment (4Q417 2 i 10-12). The knowledge that the addressee can learn is drawn from both the sapiential and apocalyptic traditions.

Acquiring Wisdom in 4QInstruction—The *Raz Nihyeh*

How does the *mebin* obtain this wisdom? The most important source of wisdom for the addressee is the *raz nihyeh*. This enigmatic phrase occurs over twenty times in 4QInstruction,⁵ occurring elsewhere only three times, in the Book of Mysteries and the Community Rule (1Q27 1 i 3-4 [2x] [par 4Q300 3 4]; 1QS 11:3-4).⁶ The phrase combines the word *raz*, which means “mystery,” with the Niphal participle of the verb “to be.” There has been much debate on how to translate this phrase. I prefer the translation “the mystery that is to be,” rather than options that more strongly emphasize the future sense of the *raz nihyeh*, such as the “mystery to come,” for reasons that I explain later in this paper.

The mystery that is to be is a focal point of instruction. This is clear, for example, from 4Q417 2 i 10-11: “[Gaze upon the mystery] that is to be, and grasp the birth-times of salvation and know who is inheriting glory and who ini[qu]ity.” In this instance, the *raz nihyeh* makes eschatological knowledge available to the *mebin*. Throughout the composition the mystery that is to be provides knowledge on other topics, such as history

and creation. The *raz nihyeh* is also connected to knowledge concerning more mundane aspects of the addressee's life. For example, the *mebin* is told that knowing the mystery that is to be should encourage him to practice filial piety (4Q416 2 iii 18-19).

The mystery that is to be is able to provide different kinds of knowledge because it refers to a divine plan that orchestrates the flow of events. 4QInstruction has a deterministic mindset.⁷ 4Q417 1 i 11-12 emphasizes the revelation of a deterministic framework to the addressee: "... in proper understanding were made [known secr]ets of his plan (wtbvxm // yrt[sn w/]dwn)." Lines 18-19 of this fragment make clear this divine "plan" has been revealed to the addressee: "And you, understanding son, gaze into the mystery that is to be and know [the path]s of all life."⁸ 4QInstruction teaches that God arranged the structure of the world and that its guiding framework is revealed to the *mebin*.

The Epistemology of 4QInstruction

Because of its reliance on revelation, the epistemology of 4QInstruction is much more in keeping with apocalypticism than biblical wisdom. Neither Daniel nor *1 Enoch* include the phrase *raz nihyeh*. But they both use the term *raz* to refer to revealed knowledge.⁹ In the Hebrew Bible the term *zr* only occurs in the Book of Daniel, where it is used nine times (2:18, 19, 27-29, 30, 47 [2x]; 4:6), mostly in chapter 2, referring to knowledge given to Daniel by God. For example, Daniel proclaims "there is a God in heaven who reveals mysteries (!yzIr' aleG"), and he has disclosed to King Nebuchadnezzar what will happen at the end of days" (2:28). The Aramaic manuscripts of *1 Enoch* also attest the word *raz* in reference to revealed knowledge. For example, in chapter 106 Enoch reveals to his father Lamech knowledge about the eschatological judgment.

Enoch concludes by affirming that this information was disclosed to him through divine revelation: “For I know the mysteries (yzt) of the holy ones, for that Lord showed (them) to me and made (them) known to me, and I read (them) in the tablets of heaven” (106:19; 4QEn^a 5 ii 26-27; cf. 93:2).¹⁰ There are abundant examples of “mysteries” in *I Enoch* for which an Aramaic text is not extant.¹¹ Although many of 4QInstruction’s teachings are devoted to the worldly and practical success of its addressee, the epistemology of the composition reflects an apocalyptic worldview.

The Study of Revealed Wisdom

However, one key difference between 4QInstruction’s *raz nihyeh* and the *razim* of Daniel and *I Enoch* should be stressed. In these apocalypses, the revelation of visions and the bestowal of divine knowledge are narrated to the reader. One can look over the shoulders, as it were, of Daniel and Enoch as they receive revelations. In the case of 4QInstruction the situation is somewhat different. The *raz nihyeh* has already been given to the addressee. For example, 4Q418 123 ii 4 talks about “His period which God revealed to the ear of the understanding ones through the mystery that is to be.” In 4QInstruction there are no accounts of visions, otherworldly journeys, or angels transmitting divine knowledge to the *mebin*. The moment of revelation is of paramount importance but has already occurred and is never described.

If Daniel and *I Enoch* emphasize the disclosure of revelation, 4QInstruction underscores its contemplation. The mystery that is to be is normally combined with what Strugnell has called imperatives “of intellection,” verbs that urge the *mebin* to study and contemplate the mystery that is to be.¹² He is told to “gaze” (*jbn*) upon,¹³ “examine” (*vrđ*), and “meditate upon” (*hgh*) the *hyhn zr*.¹⁴ 4Q417 1 i 6-8, for example, makes

clear the benefits of studying the *raz nihyeh*: “[Day and night meditate upon the mystery that is] to be. Inquire constantly. Then you will know truth and iniquity, wisdom and [fol]ly you will [recognize] ... Then you will distinguish between g[ood] and [evil according to] [their] works.” Knowledge is acquired in 4QInstruction not merely through the bestowal of the *raz nihyeh* itself but rather from continued reflection upon it once it has been revealed. Wisdom is a two-step process—revelation then contemplation. You could say that the *raz nihyeh* gives the addressee the key, but he has to open the door himself.

The stress upon the acquisition of wisdom through the study of revealed wisdom reflects a combination of ideas from the sapiential and apocalyptic traditions. The central role of revelation clearly reflects an apocalyptic worldview. 4QInstruction’s repeated stress on study seems to reflect the pedagogical ethos of the sapiential tradition. The Book of Proverbs emphatically stresses the importance of study. The book begins by explaining that its contents are “For learning about wisdom and instruction, for understanding words of insight ... to teach shrewdness to the simple, knowledge and prudence to the young—Let the wise also hear and gain in learning, and the discerning acquire skill” (1:2-5). The value of study is also emphasized in Ben Sira (e.g., 6:32-37). The sapiential tradition places pedagogy in high regard, and 4QInstruction is in continuity with traditional wisdom in that sense. But the composition’s emphasis on revelation is a departure from biblical wisdom. By stressing the study of the mystery that is to be, 4QInstruction combines elements of the sapiential and apocalyptic traditions.

Creation and the *Raz Nihyeh*

Why is the *raz nihyeh* able to provide the addressee with knowledge about structure of the world? One key reason is the relationship to creation and the *raz nihyeh*. Creation is presented in 4QInstruction as a *raz*, a mystery. When the *mebin* is told to study the *raz nihyeh* in order to learn the knowledge of good and evil in 4Q417 1 i, 4QInstruction explains this by affirming that “the God of Knowledge is a foundation of truth and by means of the mystery that is to be he has laid out its foundation and its works ... (hyf[mw hvwa ta frp // hyhn zrbw)” (4Q417 1 i 8-9).¹⁵ Because the *raz nihyeh* is connected to the moment of creation, it should not be translated in an exclusively futural sense. The mystery that is to be was the means by which God endowed the world with an overarching framework. This explains why this mystery is such a valuable source of wisdom for the addressee. Knowing good and evil is not simply a capacity for moral thought, but represents the acquisition of wisdom about the larger divine framework in which the human realm should be understood. In the Treatise on the Two Spirits, attaining knowledge of good and evil is also associated with an awareness of a deterministic framework: “He knows the result of their deeds for all times [everlas]ting and has given them as a legacy to the sons of man so that they know good [and evil] ([[rw] bwj t[dl)” (1QS 4:25-26). In 4QInstruction one can use the mystery that is to be to understand the natural order in a more comprehensive way because God used it to create the world. Claiming that the act of creation is a “mystery” that requires revelation helps sustain the view that creation bears the stamp of a transcendent deity. The term *raz* not only refers to the means of revelation but also to the heavenly knowledge that is revealed.¹⁶

Conclusion

To conclude: the *raz nihyeh* is the main source of wisdom for the addressee of 4QInstruction. The knowledge that it offers bears on practical and mundane aspects of his life and on more speculative topics such as the moment of creation and the final judgment. The *raz nihyeh* is able to provide such knowledge because it refers to a deterministic divine plan that orchestrates events that is revealed to the addressee. One is able to understand the world by means of the mystery that is to be in part because God created the world by means of this mystery. Knowing the *raz nihyeh* allows the addressee to appreciate the utter scope of God's dominion. The revelation of the mystery that is to be is intended to produce a sense of reverence and humility in the addressee. The mystery that is to be is designed not only to provide knowledge but also to guide behavior. His conduct is to be characterized not only by righteousness but also by study. In 4QInstruction revelation does not provide wisdom outright. Rather it is the result of constant reflection on revealed truth and his instruction. By stressing the study of revealed wisdom, 4QInstruction combines the pedagogical ethos of the sapiential tradition with the revelation of heavenly knowledge that is characteristic of an apocalyptic worldview.

¹ Kasper Bro Larsen, "Visdom og apokalyptik i Musar leMevin (1Q/4QInstruction) [Wisdom and Apocalyptic in Musar leMevin (1Q/4QInstruction)]," *Dansk Teologisk Tidsskrift* 65 (2002): 1-14.

² John J. Collins, "Wisdom Reconsidered, in Light of the Scrolls," *Dead Sea Discoveries* 4/3 (1997), 281.

³ John Strugnell and Daniel J. Harrington, *Qumran Cave 4, XXIV: Sapiential Texts, Part 2. 4QInstruction (!ybml rswm): 4Q415ff. With a re-edition of 1Q26* (DJD 34; Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1999) (henceforth "*DJD 34*"), 28-33.

⁴ Compare, for example, 4Q418 88 3: "Take care for yourself lest you go surety" (br[t hml hkl rmvh) with Proverbs 17:18, "It is senseless to give a pledge, to become surety (hB'ru[] bre[o] for a neighbor" (cf. 22:16).

⁵ See, for example, 4Q415 6 4; 4Q415 24 1; 4Q416 2 i 5; 4Q416 2 iii 9, 14, 18 (par 4Q418 10 1), 21; 4Q417 1 i 8, 18, 21 (par 4Q418 43 6, 14, 16); 4Q417 1 ii 3; 4Q418 43 4; 4Q418 77 2, 4; 4Q418 123 ii 4; 4Q418 172 1; 4Q418 184 2; 4Q418 201 1; and 4Q423 4 1, 4 (par 1Q26 1 1, 4). The phrase has also been plausibly reconstructed in 4Q416 17 3; 4Q417 1 i 3, 6; 4Q417 2 i 10-11; 4Q418 179 3; 4Q418 190 2-3; 4Q418c 8; 4Q423 3 2; 4Q423 5 2; and 4Q423 7 7.

⁶ *DJD* 34, 28-29; Eibert J.C. Tigchelaar, *To Increase Learning for the Understanding Ones: Reading and Reconstructing the Fragmentary Early Jewish Sapiential Text 4QInstruction* (STDJ 44; Leiden: Brill, 2001), 205.

⁷ Elgvin, "The Mystery to Come," 135; Lange, *Weisheit und Prädestination*, 60. Harrington has argued that the hyhn zr refers to a separate instructional text that 4QInstruction urges the addressee to study. See his *Wisdom Texts*, 49. See also his "The Raz Nihyeh in a Qumran Wisdom Text (1Q26, 4Q415-418, 423)," *Revue de Qumran* 17 (1996): 549-53. The teachings associated with this phrase, however, are never construed as citations from a separate document.

⁸ *DJD* 34, 155. Also note 4Q418 77 2: "... the mystery that is to be, and grasp the nature of humankind (~d[a] twdlwt xqw)." Cf. 1QS 3:15; 4:15. See *DJD* 34, 298; Tigchelaar, *To Increase Learning*, 196.

⁹ For surveys of mystery language in the Second Temple period, see Raymond E. Brown, *The Semitic Background of the Term "Mystery" in the New Testament* (Biblical Series 21; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1968); Bockmuehl, *Revelation and Mystery*; Rigaux, "Révélation des Mystères," 237-62.

¹⁰ Michael Knibb, *The Ethiopic Book of Enoch* (2 vols.; Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978), 2.248. See also George W.E. Nickelsburg, *1 Enoch: A Commentary on the Book of 1 Enoch Chapters 1-36; 81-108* (Hermeneia; Minneapolis: Fortress, 2001), 549. The word zr is also used in 4QEna 1 iv 5 (*1 Enoch* 8:3), in which the Watchers reveal "secrets (lyzr) to their wives." This detail is not in the Ethiopic manuscripts, but is in the Greek version of *1 Enoch* 8:3 preserved in Syncellus. See Knibb, *The Ethiopic Book of Enoch*, 2.83. Milik claimed that in the Book of Giants God is praised for knowing all mysteries: "for [you] know all mysteries (ayzr)" (4QEnGiantsa 9 3).¹⁰ This is similar to *1 Enoch* 9:4-11; 63:2-4; and 84:2-6. See J.T. Milik, *The Books of Enoch: Aramaic Fragments of Qumran Cave 4* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976), 316. He also reconstructed the word zr based on a visible *resh* in 1Q23 9+14+15 2, which he understood to be a Book of Giants manuscript. See *ibid.*, 302. For more on the Book of Giants, see L.T. Stuckenbruck, *The Book of Giants from Qumran* (Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 1997).

¹¹ See, for example, *1 Enoch* 41:3, "And there my eyes saw the secrets of the flashes of lightning of the thunder ... and the secrets of the clouds and of the dew ..." (cf. 59:1; 69:16-25; 71:3); 52:2, "there [in the west] my eyes saw the secrets of heaven, everything that will occur on earth ..." (cf. 5:8; 48:1; 49:1); 16:3: "You were in heaven but (its) secrets had not yet been revealed to you and a worthless mystery you knew. This you made known to the women in the hardness of your hearts, and through this mystery the women and the men cause evil to increase on earth" (cf. 9:6; 10:7). See also 103:2; 104:12.

¹² *DJD* 34, 29.

¹³ 4Q416 2 i 5; 4Q417 1 i 3, 18 (par 4Q418 43 14); 4Q417 2 i 10-11. See also 4Q418 123 ii 5.

¹⁴ See 4Q416 2 iii 9 (par 4Q418 9 8) and 4Q418 43 4 (par 4Q417 1 i 6), respectively. In 4Q418 77 4 one is exhorted to "grasp" (xq) the mystery that is to be. See Elgvin, "The Mystery to Come," 133.

¹⁵ *DJD* 34, 151; Tigchelaar, *To Increase Learning*, 52.

¹⁶ Also note 4Q417 1 i 12-13: “Seek these things continually and understand [al] their outcomes (hmtwacwt). Then you will know the glory of his m[ight wi]th the mysteries of his wonder, and the mighty acts of his deeds (wyf[m twrwbgw walp yzr ~[/ wz w][_ dwbkb [dt zaw)” (cf. 4Q418 219 2).