

Who Bears the Blame for Sin?: Comparing the Interpretations of Adam's Fall in the Book of Ben Sira and the Dead Sea Scrolls¹⁾

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1. Introduction

The narrative of Adam's downfall and the issue of accountability for sin have captivated the attention of both ancient Jewish and early Christian interpreters.²⁾ Among the Second Temple Jewish literature, Sirach and the Dead Sea Scrolls provided the first attempts at explaining the origin of sin by reading the Fall of Adam. Each of these Jewish writings provided different insights and perspectives on the significance and implications of Adam's creation and Fall. This research seeks to perform a comparative assessment of how Adam's Fall is interpreted in the works of Sirach and the Dead Sea Scrolls.³⁾

While exploring the selected passages from Sirach, I will closely examine three specific scrolls: Words of the Luminaries, 4Q

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1) This article was supported by the Research Grants of Korean Bible University (A-2023-03).

2) J. J. Collins, *Jewish Wisdom in the Hellenistic Age* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1997), 80; Concerning the interpretations of the Fall of Adam and Eve in Genesis, see, J. L. Kugel, *Bible as It Was* (Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1997), 67-82.

3) P. Beentjes, ed., *The Book of Ben Sira in Modern Research*, BZAW 255 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1997).

Paraphrase of Genesis, and Exodus and Sapiential Work A. These scrolls, closely connected in time and place with Ben Sira, shed light on interpretations of the Creation narratives in Genesis 1-3.

Comparing the scrolls with Ben Sira's perspective on the Fall of Adam, then, this article will provide a brief overview of how later Jewish and Christian interpretations have further evolved and enriched the understanding of the concept of the Fall.

Drawing from this investigation, I will demonstrate the varying ways in which both Ben Sira and the Dead Sea Scrolls highlight human accountability and depict Adam. Finally, this article demonstrates that the Second Temple Jewish perspectives on the origin of sin and the Fall of Adam remain diverse, reflecting the primary debates and varying viewpoints that existed before a definitive interpretation of Adam's fall was firmly established.

2. Interpreting Ben Sira's Perspective on Adam within Genesis 1-3

The book of Ben Sira, a work of Jewish literature composed around the second century B.C.E., presents theological interpretation of Genesis 1-3 revealing the complexities surrounding Adam's downfall. In the original Genesis narrative, each character assumed a distinct role: God as the creator and judge, Adam and Eve as creations and transgressors, and the serpent as a representative of Satan. By retelling the creation stories, Sirach provides insights into the pursuit of knowledge and the accountability for sin.

2.1. Sirach 15:11-20

The author of Sirach provides the most explicit explanation

for the issue on the responsibility for sin in 15:11-20, a section devoted to the issue of theodicy.⁴⁾ The author's argument begins by denying God's culpability for sin; "do not say, 'It was the Lord's doing that I fell away'; for he does not do what he hates. Do not say, 'It was he who led me astray'; for he has no need of the sinful" (15:11-12).⁵⁾ According to the Hebrew version of Sirach,⁶⁾ verse 11a literally translates to "from God is my sin." The 'פשעי' (my sin) rendered in Greek 'ἀπέστην' (I fell away) refers to the idea of 'sin, transgression' against individuals (Gen 31:26; 50:17), nations (Prov 28:2) or against God (Amos 5:12; Mic 1:5; Isa 58:1).⁷⁾

Sirach 15:11-13 illustrate that human sin does not find its source in God, as he detests it and denies any association with it.⁸⁾ The text states that God loathes evil deeds and abominations (Sir 15:13b) and refrains from engaging in actions he detests (15:11b). Consequently, we cannot attribute human evil to God's responsibility (15:11a, 12b). If God is not accountable for human sin, then the burden of responsibility must rest upon humanity.

In vv. 15:14-17, Ben Sira's understanding of human sin is explicitly stated;

14 It was he who created humankind (אדם) in the beginning,
and he left them in the power of their own free choice.

4) P. W. Skehan, and A. A. DiLella, *The Wisdom of Ben Sira*, AB 39 (New York: Doubleday, 1987), 271.

5) I have consulted the NRSV for the paper unless otherwise indicated. And the emphasis added is mine.

6) For the Hebrew text of Ben Sira, I will consult F. Vattioni, *Ecclesiastico* (Naples: Instituto Orientale Di Napoli 1968). 77; M. T. Segal, *Seper Ben Sira ha-shalem* (Jerusalem: Bialik, 1958).

7) See, BDB, 833.

8) M. Gilbert, "God, Sin and Mercy: Sirach 15:11-18:14," *Ben Sira's God: Proceeding of the International Ben Sira Conference Durham-Ushaw College 2001*, ed. O. Kaiser (New York: W. de Gruyter, 2002), 118-135.

15 If you choose, you can keep the commandments, and to act faithfully is a matter of your own choice.

16 He has placed before you fire and water; stretch out your hand for whichever you choose.

17 Before each person are life and death, and whichever one chooses will be given.

In verse 14a, the Hebrew text translates to “God from the beginning created human (Adam),” which is equivalent to the Syriac text.⁹⁾ The first three words of the Hebrew texts above echo Genesis 1:1, “In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth.” In the context of reflecting on the time of the Creation, Ben Sira addresses the issue in v. 14b; “and he left them in the power of their own ‘free choice’ (יִצְר).”

In the Hebrew Bible, the noun 'יצר' refers to 'pottery' (Isa 29:16), 'form,' 'purpose' or 'frame of mind' (Ps 103:14), and usually alludes to the bad tendency in man.¹⁰ The 'יצר' occurs twice in the narrative of the Flood (Gen 6:5; 8:21), connecting it with evil.¹¹ In contrast to the negative usage in the Hebrew Bible, Ben Sira refers to neutral 'inclination or deliberation,' equivalent to Greek and Syriac word 'κλίση,'¹² rather than conveying the specific idea of 'bad inclination' as the Rabbinic traditions do.¹³

God's creation of Adam.¹⁶⁾ Even though the reader might consider that 'יצר' is given by the creator, Genesis 1-3 does not mention the endowment of this concept from God. Ben Sira does not differentiate between good and evil inclinations, claiming that one's inclination is to be guided by Torah. Ben Sira interprets 'יצר' as referring to the individual's ability to make free choices rather than to the wrong or evil inclination specifically. This idea is clarified by the following verse; "If you choose, you can keep the commandments, and to act faithfully is a matter of your own choice. ... and whichever one chooses will be given" (Sir 15:15-17, emphasis added). Since the creation of mankind, individuals were given the freedom to choose either good or evil. Sirach implies that the 'יצר' is endowed to mankind in the beginning and therefore puts the word, 'יצר' which carries a negative connotation in Gen 6:5 and 8:21, in Sirach's creation story.

In this passage, Ben Sira juxtaposes "fire and water" (Sir 15:16a) as well as "life and death" (15:17a), echoing Deut 30:19 ("I call heaven and earth to witness against you today that I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. ...").¹⁷⁾ By alluding to Deuteronomistic images, Ben Sira maintains that human beings are free to choose either good or evil. The fact that Sirach borrows the forceful insistence of Deuteronomy makes it clear that the readers are asked to choose to do good or evil just as the Israelites were asked to choose for or against the commandments.

Moreover, by echoing the scene of the endowment of the covenant to Israel in the book of Deuteronomy, Ben Sira insists that the situation of Adam is no different from that of Israel and that he has a power to choose according to his own inclination. According to the view of Sirach, the idea of human

An emphasis is added.

16) J. J. Collins, *Seers, Sibyls and Sages* (Leiden: Brill, 1997), 373.

17) DiLella, *The Wisdom of Ben Sira*, 272.

inclination demonstrates the repetition of situations to choose either good or evil that Israel experienced in Deuteronomy (Deut 29:14-15; 30:19). Sira's understanding of Genesis 1-3 shows that Adam is not the one who leaves sin to his descendants, but rather "the paradigmatic human being."¹⁸⁾

Sirach 15:11-20 does not focus on what humans are, but states what God created them to be, borrowing narratives from Genesis. Ben Sira defends human freedom by mentioning the incompatibility of God and evil: "the Lord hates all abominations" (15:13a). He points out that humans are given an inclination (15:14; **יִצָּר**), a capacity to choose freely (15:15) and rely on this freedom to direct their own lives.¹⁹⁾ By repeating the verb **חָפֵץ** ('to choose,' Sir 15: 15, 17), Ben Sira acknowledges that humans choose their own way and act according to their own desires and inclinations.

2.2. Sirach 17:1-24

In chapter 17:1-24, the sage continues to argue against the objector who doubts God's sovereignty. Ben Sira defends his argument by supplementing the understanding of creation of mankind by rephrasing Genesis. Sirach 17:1-12 presents the explanations of human creation alluding to Genesis 2:7 and 3:19;

1The Lord created human beings out of earth²⁰⁾, and makes

18) J. J. Collins, "Before the Fall: the Earliest Interpretations of Adam and Eve," *The Idea of Biblical Interpretation: Essays in Honor of James L. Kugel*, ed. H. Najman and J. H. Newman (Boston: Brill, 2004), 299.

19) J. R. Leison, *Full of Praise: An Exegetical Study of Sir 39, 12-35* (Leiden: Brill, 2000), 238.

20) **"יִי בָרָא אָדָם מִן הָאֲדָמָה."** Moshe T. Segal, *Sefer Ben Sira ha-shalem* (Jerusalem: Bialik, 1958). An emphasis is added.

them return to it again.

2 He gave them a fixed number of days, but granted them authority over everything on the earth.

3 He endowed them with strength like his own, and made them in his own image. ...

6 Discretion and tongue and eyes, ears and a mind for thinking he gave them.

7 He filled them with knowledge and understanding, and showed them good and evil.

8 He put the fear of him into their hearts to show them the majesty of his works.

9 to proclaim the grandeur of his works.

10 And they will praise his holy name,

11 He bestowed knowledge upon them, and allotted to them the law of life.

12 He established with them an eternal covenant, and revealed to them his decrees.

In the passage, while Sirach retells the creation and the endowment of knowledge to humankind, he excludes some stories; God's creation of male and female (Gen 1:27), the existence of the tree of the knowledge (Gen 2:9), the prohibition of God (Gen 2:17) and the fall of Adam (Gen 3:6).

In regard to Sirach's interpretation of Adam's possession of the fruit of knowledge, Ben Sira omits the prohibition of eating the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, and replaces it with a positive statement; God "filled them with knowledge and understanding" (Sir 17:7). The author of Ben Sira attempts to avoid the implication that God prohibited Adam from acquiring the knowledge of good and evil in order to support his claim that it was God who provided the path of knowledge. It was man who failed to live with the possession of knowledge because of his own inclination. Moreover, Ben Sira regards Adam's eating the fruit as having a positive outcome, namely that he acquired wisdom and this possession resulted in his ability to look at the majesty of God's works and proclaim their grandeur

(Sir 17:8-9).

While Genesis 1-3 speaks of the first humans, Adam and Eve, Sirach tells the story of everyone. Within the Syriac text of 17:20-22, Sirach appears to interpret the creation narrative in a way that broadens its context to encompass all of humanity;²¹⁾

20. Their debts are not hidden for him and the sins of **all human beings** are engraved before him. ...

22. The justification of **all humans** is sealed and secured with Him.

And the goodness of **all humans** is kept safely before Him, as the pupil of the eye.²²⁾

Remarkably, the Syriac book of Ben Sira 17:22 is explicitly different from the Greek Ben Sira: “One’s almsgiving is like a signet ring with the Lord, and he will keep a person’s kindness like the apple of his eye.” In these verses, the Syriac Ben Sira repeats the words, ‘all humans’ three times. It is likely that the emphasis on ‘all humans’ is an attempt at the universalization of his analysis.²³⁾

God gave humankind ‘the life of law’ and ‘the eternal covenant’ which alludes to the endowment on Mt. Sinai (Exod 19:16-19 and Deut 30:11-20).²⁴⁾ For Sirach, there is no time interval between the creation of all and the endowment of the Torah. Rather, he implies that ‘the law of life’ was given from the beginning and “their ways are always before God” (Sir 17:15a). Accordingly, “they cannot be hid from God’s eyes” (Sir 17:15b). The significant point for Sira is not the transgression of Adam as the first human, but the iniquities of men in general

21) Vattioni, *Ecclesiastico*, 87-89.

22) An emphasis is added

23) W. Th. Van. Peursen, *Language and Interpretation in the Syriac Text of Ben Sira: A Comparative Linguistic and Literary Study* (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 205.

24) DiLella, *The Wisdom of Ben Sira*, 282.

who do not keep the commandment that God gave (v. 14). Even though God punished Adam and Eve (Gen 3:15-17) due to their disobedience, Ben Sira does not understand death as the result of the transgression of Adam and Eve, but as God's initial treatment of mankind (Sir 17:1b; "...and makes them return to it again"). Though man was made in the image of God and received every authority over the rest of the creatures, he is given only limited days (Sir 17:2).

Even though sin is real and prevalent, as the Syriac Sirach shows, humanity is still free to choose to be wicked or good. Because of the capacity of man's free choice, one can hope even for the future good of the sinners: everyone can repent.

Turn back to the Lord and forsake your sins; pray in his presence and lessen your offense. Return to the Most High and turn away from iniquity, and hate intensely what he abhors. ... How great is the mercy of the Lord, and his forgiveness for those who return to him! (Sir 17:25-26, 29)

Repentance is possible only because the transgressors are free to decide to abandon sin and return to God's commandment. Ben Sira believes that either repentance or the Fall of mankind may be freely chosen according to the individual's desire. However, man's stupidity or wrong-deeds does not banish him from God's attention. Because God is benevolent to humankind, he does not spy on man to catch him committing a transgression (Sir 17:29).

In Sira's reading of Genesis 1-3, there is no place for the Fall of all humankind, which all will have to inherit and which will change human fate.²⁵⁾ While Sirach emphasizes the responsibility of the individual, his position is still in tension

25) M. Gilbert, "Ben Sira, Reader of Genesis 1-11," *Intertextual Studies in Ben Sira and Tobit: Essays in Honour of Alexander A. Di Lella* (Washington: The Catholic Biblical Association of America, 2005), 89-99.

with the free will of man and God's providence. But no one may say "God made me do this" because sin comes from one's inclination, which may be either good or evil.²⁶⁾

3. Interpreting the Dead Sea Scrolls' View of Adam in Genesis 1-3

The story of Adam's creation and Fall in the Bible was interpreted in diverse ways within the Dead Sea Scrolls, including biblical paraphrases, legal texts, sapiential writings, prayers, and hymns. This section will focus on three particular texts: Words of the Luminaries, 4QParaphrase of Genesis, and Exodus and Sapiential Work A, all centered around the Genesis narrative.

3.1. Words of The Luminaries

Words of the Luminaries (4Q504) is known as the prayers for the consecutive days of the week, ending with the Sabbath. The prayers for all six weekdays contain communal supplications and petitions motivated by historical narratives.²⁷⁾ The story of the creation and fall of Adam is retold in 4Q504 frg. 8;²⁸⁾

[Rememb]er, O Lo[r]d that ... Thou hast fashioned A[dam],
our [f]ather, in the likeness of [Thy] glory; Thou didst breathe
[a breath of life] into his nostrils and, with understanding,
knowledge [Thou didst give him] ... Thou didst make [him]
to rule [over the Gar]den of Eden which Thou didst plant
... and to walk in the land of glory ... he guarded. And Thou

26) In the Hellenistic period, there were already variety of lively debates on the origin of sin; Collins, *Jewish Wisdom in the Hellenistic Age*, 86.

27) A. E. Killebrew, "Words of Luminaries." *Encyclopedia of Dead Sea Scrolls* 2:989-991.

28) M. Baillet, *Qumran Grotte 4 III (4q482-520)*, DJD 7 (Oxford, 1982), 162-163.

didst enjoin him not to st[ray ..] ... he is flesh and to dust [he will return(?)] .. And Thou, Thou knowest .. for everlasting generations ... a living God and Thy hand ... man in the ways of ... [to fill the] earth with [vi]olence and to shed [innocent blood]...²⁹⁾

This prayer begins with the imperative form, “remember Lord,” praising God’s wondrous works and describes the Creation and the Fall of Adam as part of the Creation narrative in Genesis. This fragment retells the narrative of Genesis 2:7-3:19, God’s creation of Adam and endowment of life (Gen 2:7), Adam’s rule over the Garden of Eden (Gen 2:8), Adam’s transgression and God’s subsequent punishment (Gen 3:19).

According to the passage, the verb ‘to rule’ reminds its readers of God’s blessing to Adam to have dominion over the creatures (‘...and have dominion over...’; Gen 1:28).³⁰⁾ 4Q504 emphasizes the glory of God’s creation and his blessing to Adam and contrasts it with Adam’s disobedience. In the Words of the Luminaries, ‘he is flesh and to dust [he will return]’ alludes to Genesis 3:19 as God’s punishment for Adam’s disobedience. Moreover, Adam was created with the possession of God’s knowledge (“Thou didst breathe [a breath of life] into his nostrils and, with understanding, knowledge [Thou didst give him]”). In following lines, the passage implies Adam’s disobedience and God’s punishment by rephrasing God’s prohibition and punishment in Gen 3:11 and 19.

After retelling the story of Adam, the subsequent passage (“And Thou, Thou knowest ... [to fill the] earth with [vi]olence and to shed [innocent blood]...”) makes a reference to the

29) G. Vermes, *The Complete Dead Sea Scrolls in English* (London: Penguin Books, 2004), 380.

30) The verb (מָשַׁל) in 4Q504 frag. 8 means ‘to rule,’ and the verb (רָדָה) in Genesis 1:28 conveys the idea of ‘to rule’ and ‘to govern.’ In the both texts, the meanings of each verb are equivalent; BDB, 605, 921.

narrative of the Flood in Genesis 6:5. The specific phrase, "... he is flesh and to dust [he will return]," serves as an account of God's punishment for Adam's transgression and also sets the context for the Flood as God's retribution, alluding to Genesis 6:3 and 6:12. Consequently, this phrase plays a crucial role in connecting both biblical events, intending to highlight the sin-punishment theme's structure. It links Adam's transgression and God's punishment in Genesis 3 with the broader theme of human sin and Divine retribution in Genesis 6.³¹⁾ The consecutive arrangement of these two biblical episodes reveal the pattern of human sin and God's judgment, serving as an admonition to readers about the gravity of sin and the importance of passing down these narratives to future generations.

In the Words of the Luminaries, Adam is depicted as a sinner and a negative character. Despite being created with divine knowledge, he failed to uphold God's commandments and eventually returned to dust. The passage perceives Adam as a patriarch, representing Israel and serving as a significant figure in the theological theme of sin and punishment. While the passage does not argue for the inheritance of Adam's sin by his descendants, it emphasizes that history perpetually reenacts the same sin for every succeeding generation.

3.2. 4QParaphrase of Genesis and Exodus

4QParaphrase of Genesis and Exodus (4Q422), comprising nine fragments, similarly presents the narratives from Genesis, specifically focusing on the Creation, the Flood, and the Exodus accounts, arranged in biblical chronological order. Like the Words of the Luminaries, 4Q422 Col. I Line 6-13 recounts the tale

31) Chazon, "The Creation and Fall of Adam in the Dead Sea Scrolls," 15.

of God's creation and Adam's dominion over all living creatures;³²⁾

[The heaven and the earth and all] their host He made by [His] word. ... [He put man on the ear]th **to rule over** it and to eat the fruit[s of the ground] ... **w[ith]out eating** from the tree of the kn[owledge of good and evil] ... **He rose against Him** and they forgot ... with an evil inclination and for deed[s of] ... peace/payment...³³⁾

Similar to the usage in the Words of the Luminaries, “to rule over” is used for describing the authority of Adam over creation while the phrase ‘without eating’ expresses God’s prohibition to Adam in Genesis 2:17 (“but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat”).

The text clearly acknowledges God’s prohibition of eating fruit from the tree of knowledge as well as Adam’s disobedience in light of this prohibition. The phrase ‘he rose against Him’ implies the rebellious action of Adam against God.³⁴⁾ After mentioning the prohibition and implicitly reminding the reader of Adam’s transgression of God’s commandment, the consecutive line explicitly recounts Adam’s transgression against God. ‘Evil inclination’ emphasizes free agency as the reason for Adam’s Fall; Adam could have indeed chosen what was right. The reference to evil inclination at the end of the fragment suggests that Adam’s transgression is that committed by an individual rather than a divine will.³⁵⁾ According to 4QParaphrase of Genesis and Exodus, Adam violated God’s commandment because he followed his own inclination. This inclination (Q422

32) T. Elgvin and E. Tov, “Paraphrase of Genesis and Exodus,” *Qumran Cave 4 VIII: Parabiblical Texts, Part I*, DJD13, eds. H. Attridge et al. (Oxford 1994), 421.

33) Vermes, *The Complete Dead Sea Scrolls in English*, 478. An emphasis is added.

34) In the Words of Luminaries, the idea of Adam’s disobedient action is also appeared in the story about Adam (4Q504 Frag. Line 8).

35) Collins, *Wisdom, Apocalypse*, 378

Col. Line 12) connects Adam's Fall in the Genesis stories with the beginning of the account of the Flood in the following column and illustrates the causal reasons for sin in both narratives. 4QParaphrase of Genesis and Exodus understands the evil inclination as a cause which results in sin.

Thus, in 4Q422, 'inclination' associated with 'evil,' causes Adam to fall and evokes the context of the Flood (Gen 6:5). While 'inclination' itself is a neutral reference, eluding neither to good nor evil,³⁶⁾ it is the cause of man's action. Adam's Fall resulted from following his own evil inclination, rather than obeying God's commandment.³⁷⁾ Both texts show the cycle of the sin-punishment theme, while the accounts of other events emphasize God's glorious works. Concerning the story of Adam in Genesis, the passage of 4Q422 portrays Adam as a disobedient person. It portrays Adam as a negative character and as an individual transgressor, but not one who imparts a hereditary sin on all his posterity.

3.3. Sapiential Work A

Sapiential Work A (4Q423) and the Sirach are most frequently regarded as early Jewish wisdom literature.³⁸⁾ While the appeal to the Creation story reveals concerns regarding a world view common to both Sirach and 4Q423, it also reveals prominent theological differences between both texts;³⁹⁾

...and every fruit that is grown and every tree is pleasant and

36) Elgvin and Tov, "Paraphrase of Genesis and Exodus," 421.

37) Chazon, "The Creation and Fall of Adam in the Dead Sea Scrolls," 15.

38) D. Harriogotn, "Words of Luminaries," *Encyclopedia of Dead Sea Scrolls* 2:825-826.

39) J. Strugnell and D. J. Harrington, eds., *Qumran Cave 4 XXIV*, DJD XXXIV (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1999), 507-508.

desirable providing understanding. Is this not a pl[essant and desirable] garden providing much understanding? He made you (Adam) rule over it to cultivate and guard it. ... [the soil] will sprout for you thorn and thistle and it will not give you its strength ... because of your unfaithfulness. ... she (Eve) gave birth and all the sentiments of her who has concei[ved] ... all your secrets ... and all your affairs. For it will sprout [for you] everything ... [knowing] evil, knowing good...⁴⁰⁾

The text provides a short exhortation of nine lines on wisdom and reconstructs the story in Gen 2:8-9 and Gen 3:1-19. The author generalizes the biblical context to that of his readers by saying, “[the soil] will sprout for you thorn and thistle and it will not give you its strength ... because of your unfaithfulness.”⁴¹⁾ 4Q423 conceptualizes the language and messages of the Bible in sapiential terms.⁴²⁾ For instance, one is instructed in Sapiential Work A to cultivate wisdom just as Adam was commanded. Failure to do so will produce ‘thorn and thistle’ in one’s life, just as Adam was punished when he failed to cultivate and guard wisdom and ignored God’s prohibition (Gen 3:18). It is clear that the dominion of Adam over the Garden is generalized and that the context of the Garden is applied to the affairs of the author’s contemporary readers.

What is interesting in this fragment of the Sapiential Work A is that God’s prohibition of touching the tree of knowledge (Gen 2:17; 3:3) is described in positive terms; “... and every fruit that is grown and every tree is pleasant and desirable providing understanding.”⁴³⁾ This phrase reminds readers of the account of the tree of knowledge in Gen 2:9 (every tree that is pleasant

40) Vermes, *The Complete Dead Sea Scrolls in English*, 437.

41) Emphases are added.

42) Collins, *Seers, Sibyls and Sages*, 377.

43) Vermes, *The Complete Dead Sea Scrolls in English*, 437.

to the sigh”) and Gen 3:6 (“the tree was to be desired to make one wise”).⁴⁴⁾ Specifically, ‘desired’ (נַחֲמוֹד) in Gen 2:9 and 3:6 is connected with the phrase, “every tree is pleasant and desirable” (4Q423 frag. line 1).⁴⁵⁾ This positive perspective in Sapiential Work A implies that sin does not come from the possession of the wisdom from the tree, but from the disobedience of man against God and from failing to walk in the correct way.⁴⁶⁾

4Q504, 4Q422, and 4Q423 portray Adam as the first human to rule over the Garden, magnificently created by God’s word, but who ultimately disobeyed God’s commandment. All of these passages explicitly acknowledge that Adam failed to adhere to God’s prohibition, although they offer different explanations for the cause of Adam’s Fall. Within the historical cycle of the sin-punishment theme, Adam is cited as the primary transgressor, serving as a reminder to the readers of God’s judgment. However, the texts do not focus on the specific consequences of Adam’s Fall; instead, they encourage the reader to remember that God’s judgment awaits contemporary transgressors, just as God punished their ancestors.

4. Combining and Expanding Perspectives: Sirach and the Dead Sea Scrolls on Adam’s Fall, and Subsequent Jewish and Christian Interpretations

Ben Sira and the scrolls offer their own depictions of Adam,

44) Emphasis is added.

45) The word ‘נַחֲמוֹד’ is a *niphal* participle from verb ‘נָחַם.’ The participle is used adjectivally as meaning ‘desirable.’

46) Chazon, “The Creation and Fall of Adam in the Dead Sea Scrolls,” 18; Benjamin Wold, *Qumran Wisdom and the New Testament: Exploring Early Jewish and Christian Textual Cultures* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2022), 190-191.

creatively interpreting the Genesis narratives and providing insights into the biblical story. Despite differences arising from their exegetical objectives and historical contexts, both the Qumran texts and Sirach share certain aspects in their portrayals of Adam, particularly concerning God's creation of Adam, his transgression, and the ensuing consequences.

4.1. Analyses of the portrayal of the Fall of Adam in Ben Sira and the Dead Sea Scrolls.

In the Dead Sea scrolls, it is clear that God granted humans knowledge and Adam ruled over creatures. In Sapiential Work A and Paraphrase of Genesis and Exodus, the tree of knowledge symbolizes wisdom and is positively portrayed as 'pleasant and desirable.' Genesis 3 prohibits Adam from the tree's fruit (Genesis 3:3-6), but 4Q423 suggests all fruits offer understanding. 4Q423 generalizes Adam's situation to humanity through 'you.' While the other scrolls don't explicitly generalize, they connect Adam's actions and God's judgment to an ongoing historical pattern, which extends to readers.

Like the three scrolls, Sirach also mentions that God provided his image and strength to humanity and endowed it with sovereign power over all other creatures. Sirach omits God's prohibition to eating the fruit from the tree of knowledge in order to avoid the implication that God prevented Adam from acquiring wisdom. In contrast to the view of Ben Sira, the paraphrase of Genesis explicitly mentions the prohibitive command, "w[ith]out eating from the tree of kn[owledge of good and evil]" as well as Adam's transgression, "he rose against Him." However, Ben Sira holds that God filled mankind with his magnificent wisdom and understanding from the beginning.⁴⁷⁾ Like the Sapiential Work A, Ben Sira provides a sapiential instruction and universalizes

the context of the Creation even though Genesis 1-3 regards only the first man in the Garden. To Ben Sira, the meanings of Genesis 1-3 are true for all of humanity.

Concerning the interpretations of the Fall of Adam, like the Words of the Luminaries and 4QParaphrase of Genesis, Ben Sira also links Genesis 1:26-27⁴⁸⁾ and 2:7⁴⁹⁾ in order to evoke the context of God's creation of mankind and mankind's dominion (Sir 15:14; 17:1-3). Similar to Sapiential Work A, Sirach also points out that the possession of wisdom is no cause for guilt because "all wisdom is from the Lord, and with him it remains forever" (Sir 1:1).⁵⁰⁾ In relation to the understanding of the 'inclination,' 4Q422 is likely to interpret sin as the result of following evil inclination, and depicts 'צַר' ('inclination') negatively and as something which is harmful to humanity. In the Scrolls and Sirach, 'צַר' is neither independent reality nor power but rather inclination as an immanent ability in the human heart. The scrolls portray Adam as one who showed his unfaithfulness (4Q423), who "rose against" God (4Q422) and who failed to keep God's commandment (4Q504). Sirach and the scrolls also share similarities, as they both contain the idea that Adam was punished because of his own choice to disobey God's prohibition.

Even though Ben Sira attempts to exonerate God's responsibility for introducing sin into the world, his argument is still enigmatic.⁵¹⁾ While he warns, "Do not say, 'It was the

47) Collins, "Before the Fall," 300.

48) "...Then God said, "Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the wild animals of the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth." So God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them." (Gen 1:26-27)

49) "...Then the LORD God formed man from the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and the man became a living being." (Gen 2:17)

50) Skehan and Di Lella, *The Wisdom of Ben Sira*, 283.

Lord's doing that I fell away'; for he does not do what he hates." (Sir 15:1), he also declares "Good things and bad, life and death, poverty and wealth, come from the Lord" (Sir 11:17). In spite of his ambiguous arguments, it is evident that while humans possess the capacity for both virtue and vice, and God's knowledge and creative power are all-encompassing (Sir 15:18-19), individuals still retain the power to opt for either the path of life or death (Sir 15:17). In the perspective of Sirach, the inner drive (צַר) that enables both negative and positive actions grants humanity the independent choice to repent and turn back to God based on one's own decisions (Sir 17:25-26).⁵²⁾

While 4Q504 claims that Adam's disobedience results in God's judgment that Adam must return to dust (Gen 3:19), Ben Sira interprets mortality as God's initial intention. Like all other earthly creatures, man lives an ephemeral existence bound to the Earth. What is clear is that death does not result from the effect of Adam's transgression, but from the nature of God's creation. For Sirach, death is not to be feared but is a realistic, eventual, and natural fate. Mortality is a part of God's creation and is morally neutral, unassociated with Adam's transgression. Humanity's transient nature requires the need for wisdom and becomes a reason to pursue wisdom for spending life appropriately according to what God intended (Sir 41:3-4, "Lord's decree for all flesh").

While Ben Sira intends to provide an application for the biblical narratives to the universal human situation, the scrolls apply the narratives to their readers, in particular the member of the Qumran sects and provide the motivation for the petition and admonition.⁵³⁾

51) Concerning the issue on the theodicy in Ben Sira, see, J. L. Crenshaw, "The Problem of Theodicy in Sirach: On Human Bondage," *JBL* 94 (1975), 47-64.

52) Gilber, "Ben Sira, Reader of Genesis 1-11," 92.

53) Strugnell and Harrington, *Qumran Cave 4 XXIV*, 513.

Though Ben Sira is convinced that God created good and evil, life and death, and even sinners and the godly (Sir 33:14-15), he does not have any doubt of human capacity for doing good.⁵⁴⁾ Rather, while God knows the mortal condition of humanity, he leads them as his flock and even forgives those who repent sin and return to him (Sir 17:25-26).

4.2. Later Jewish and Christian Interpretations on The Fall of Adam

The interpretations of Sirach and the Qumran documents on the Fall of Adam are explicitly transformed in the era of the Second Temple. In this different historical context (the destruction of the Jerusalem Temple in particular), some of the later Jewish and Christian interpreters regard the view of the effect of Adam's transgression as hereditary sinfulness transmitted to his descendants. In 4 Ezra and 2 Baruch, God decrees that Adam and Eve's punishment would be death, but then extends the punishment to all of humanity;

For the first Adam, burdened with an evil heart, transgressed and was overcome, as were also all who were descended from him. Thus the disease became permanent; the law was in the hearts of the people along with the evil root; but what was good departed, and the evil remained (4 Ezra 3:21-22).

For a grain of evil seed was sown in Adam's heart from the beginning, and how much ungodliness it has produced until now-- and will produce until the time of threshing comes! (4 Ezra 4:30)

And I answered and said: 'O Adam, what hast thou done to all those who are born from thee? And what will be said to the first Eve who hearkened to the serpent? (2 Bar 48:42)

54) Gilber, "Ben Sira, Reader of Genesis 1-11," 99.

4 Ezra describes Adam as the first human created by God and the first transgressor against God, relating Adam's individual depravity to mankind's collective moral depravity.⁵⁵⁾ Adam initiated the defective heart, and all of humanity remains under the condition of this sinful and corrupted life. Because 4 Ezra and 2 Baruch share the apocalyptic conviction and the concern for theodicy, they present similar portraits of Adam as the culprit who introduced sinfulness into the world.⁵⁶⁾ The view on the pervasiveness of Adam's sinfulness and his negative character is preserved and interpreted in the early Christian tradition.⁵⁷⁾ The New Testament writers established the fundamental teaching on sin and its effect;

Therefore just as one man's trespass led to condemnation for all, so one man's act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all. For just as by the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the one man's obedience the many will be made righteous (Rom 5:18-19).

Paul describes Adam as both a representative of humanity and as one who initiated everything sinful. Moreover, Paul expands on his ideas regarding resurrection by drawing insights from the narrative of Adam's Fall. In Paul's perspective, resurrection serves as the sole remedy to counteract death as the consequence of the initial transgression. Initially, Paul portrays Adam as the initial individual to transgress against God. Subsequently, he contrasts this portrayal by likening Adam to Jesus, who becomes the foremost figure to address the predicament of sin;

55) J. R. Leison "Adam and Eve." *The Eerdmans Dictionary of Early Judaism*, 300-302.

56) J. R. Leison, *Portraits of Adam in Early Judaism from Sirach to 2 Baruch* (Sheffield: JSOT, 1988), 145.

57) B. Wold, *Qumran Wisdom and the New Testament: Exploring Early Jewish and Christian Textual Cultures* (Cambridge University Press, 2022), 19.

For since death came through a human being, the resurrection of the dead has also come through a human being; for as all die in Adam, so all will be made alive in Christ (1 Cor 15:21-22).

Sirach highlights humanity's initial mortality (Sir 17:1-2), seeing death as natural (40:11) and God's design (41:3-4). Conversely, some early Christian interpreters, especially through Paul, sees mortality as arising from Adam's transgression. Paul uses this narrative to establish theological principles about sin, including the doctrine of original sin and hereditary sinfulness passed to all of Adam's descendants.⁵⁸⁾

Early Jewish writers tackling Adam's Fall aimed to resolve the tension between human transgression and the omniscient creator. This struggle persisted during Ben Sira's and Qumran texts' times, leading to diverse interpretations aligned with this aim. These early Jewish views on sin and the Fall diverged significantly from early Christianity and later Jewish literature. Notably, the notions of inherited sinfulness and a negative Adam portrayal were absent in Ben Sira and his contemporaries' works.⁵⁹⁾ Consequently, Sirach and the Dead Sea Scrolls function as both a historical and theological context on which later Jewish and Christian scholars built, adjusted, and enlarged the story of Adam's Fall in Genesis 1-3. Nevertheless, these subsequent interpreters didn't completely support his viewpoint.⁶⁰⁾

58) Kugel, *The Bible as It was*, 72.

59) H. Harrington, "Sin," *The Eerdmans Dictionary of Early Judaism*, 1230-1231.

60) Collins, "Before the Fall," 308.

5. Conclusion

Sirach's comprehension of Adam's Fall emphasizes human free will, not destiny. Amid choice and God's decree tension, Ben Sira sees people shaping lives and happiness with divine-given power. The author of Sirach counters sin transmission view, ranking disregarding God's law and lacking reverence worse than Adam's disobedience.

The Dead Sea scrolls discuss knowledge in Creation, attributing God as the source via the tree of knowledge. Possessing its fruit isn't intrinsically negative; nurturing it signifies wisdom. Adam's initial wisdom tied to Garden rule is positive, but lack of growth leads to God's punishment. Qumran documents portray Adam as Garden's first ruler, made by God's word, yet he disobeys, prompting reflection on God's judgment.

Ultimately, both Sirach and the Dead Sea scrolls stress the importance of recalling God's commandments, responding faithfully, and taking personal responsibility for one's life to achieve true individuality. Although they are unsure about the origin of sin and don't explore the idea of original sin, they exhibit faith in human capacity to choose good through sincerity in God's teachings.

<Keywords>

Ben Sira, Dead Sea Scrolls, Adam, Sin, Responsibility

<주요어>

벤 시라, 사해문헌, 아담, 죄, 책임

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Abbreviations

- BDB - Brown, Francis. The new Brown, Driver, Briggs, *Gesenius Hebrew and English lexicon: with an appendix containing the Biblical Aramaic*. Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers, 1979.
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<Abstract>

**Who Bears the Blame for Sin?:
Comparing the Interpretations of Adam's Fall
in Ben Sira and the Dead Sea Scrolls**

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The story of Adam's Fall and the question of responsibility for sin have been subjects of significant interest in ancient Jewish and early Christian traditions. This study aims to conduct a comparative analysis of the interpretations of Adam's Fall in the writings of Ben Sira and the Dead Sea Scrolls. Through an examination of the selected passages, this research examines how these ancient Jewish texts depict Adam's role in the origin of sin.

In this study, I highlight Ben Sira's emphasis on human responsibility as a free agent and his positive portrayal of Adam as the first human. In contrast, the Dead Sea Scrolls focus on humanity's disobedience, depicting Adam in a negative light. By closely analyzing these differing viewpoints, this article reveals Ben Sira's distinct understanding of Adam's Fall and its importance when compared to the backdrop of the Dead Sea Scrolls community.

Furthermore, this research analyzes three specific scrolls - Words of the Luminaries, 4Q Paraphrase of Genesis, and Exodus and Sapiential Work A - and offers insights into how these texts shaped their understanding of Adam's Fall.

Finally, this study briefly present later Jewish and Christian interpretations after the destruction of the Jerusalem temple to

demonstrate how the concept of the Fall has evolved over time. By means of this comparative examination, the present article asserts the lack of uniformity and the intricate nature of interpretations concerning the Fall of Adam. This is achieved by displaying the varied perspectives on the attribution of sin within Jewish traditions.

<초록>

죄는 누구의 책임인가?:

벤 시라와 사해문헌에 나타난 아담의 타락에 관한 비교연구

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아담의 타락과 죄의 책임 문제는 고대 유대교와 초기 기독교 전통에서 다루어지는 중요한 주제이다. 본 연구는 벤 시라와 사해문헌에 나타난 창세기 1-3장의 아담의 타락 해석을 비교 분석하는 것을 목표로 한다. 본 연구는 사해문헌들 가운데 본 주제와 관련된 특정 고대 문서들을 선별적으로 탐구함으로써, 고대 문서들이 아담이 죄의 기원을 어떻게 이해하고 묘사하는지 조명한다.

본 연구에서는 벤 시라가 자유로운 주체로서의 인간 책임을 강조하고, 아담을 첫 번째 인간으로 긍정적으로 묘사한 점을 강조하는 반면, 사해문헌은 인간의 불순종에 초점을 맞추며, 아담을 부정적으로 묘사한다. 이러한 대조적인 관점을 주의 깊게 조사함으로써, 논문은 벤 시라의 아담의 타락 이해를 사해문헌과 비교 분석하여 제시한다.

또한, 본 연구는 ‘하늘의 발광체들의 말들’(Words of the Luminaries), ‘창세기와 출애굽기 해설’(4Q Paraphrase of Genesis and Exodus), ‘지혜문서 A’(Sapiential Work A)라는 세 가지 구체적인 문서를 면밀히 조사함으로써 이 논문은 이러한 텍스트가 아담의 타락 이해를 형성하는 데 어떻게 영향을 미쳤는지를 드러낸다.

끝으로, 본 연구는 성전 파괴 이후 유대교 및 기독교의 타락의 개념에

관한 해석을 간략히 살펴보면, 그 개념이 시간이 지남에 따라 어떻게 확장되었는지를 소개한다. 이를 통해, 본 연구는 유대 전통 내에 해석의 복잡성과 다양한 견해를 드러냄으로써 아담의 타락과 죄의 책임에 대한 이해는 고정되었던 것이 아니라 가변적이었음을 주장한다.