

Another look at the identity of the 'wicked woman' in 4Q184

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In this study, I take another look at the possible identity of the 'wicked woman' in 4Q184. Although a number of scholars attempted to identify the 'wicked woman', I would like to examine two other possibilities that (as far as I know) have not been discussed yet. The first possibility is that it can be seen as a metaphor for the city Jerusalem. This possibility is inspected by comparing the 'wicked terminology' that was used to describe the 'wicked priest(s)' in the Habakkuk commentary with the 'wicked terminology' that was used in 4Q184, as well as in a study of existing traditions in the Old Testament where Jerusalem was portrayed as a woman or wife. The other option is that the 'wicked woman' is a metaphor for foreign wisdom, specifically in the form of Hellenism and Greek philosophy or Hellenistic (non-Israelite) diviners. The fact that 4Q184 refers to 'teaching' and warns against her influence (this kind of wisdom), that she can let righteous and upright people (not foolish young people) go astray might be a very strong possibility that the *Yahad* is warned not to get diverted by this 'upcoming culture' that seems to be so attractive.

Introduction

In this study, I will take another look at the possible identity of the 'wicked woman' in 4Q184. Although a number of scholars¹ have studied this text, I would like to take a look at two other possibilities with regard to 4Q184² that (as far as I know) have not been discussed yet.

This text was named: 'The Wives of the Wicked Woman' by John Allegro (1964:53); and Vermes (2004:417) refers to her as the 'Seductress'. This text is a wisdom poem and is part of the group of texts that Talmon (1994:3) refers to as: 'Prayer and wisdom texts ... which are not marked by any traits of the Covenanters' specific theology, appear to represent Jewish *Gemeingut* of the Second Temple period'. Goff (2009:395) says that most of the recent studies are of the opinion that 4Q184 was written by the *Yahad*.³ The lack of 'sectarian' language and terminology and the absence of 'sectarian' dualism, eschatology and special revelation initiate debates as to whether this specific text is 'sectarian' or not. Tigchelaar (2015:3) refers to the specific reference in 4Q184 1 2 to *Yahad* and says that it can be a 'precursor of, or identical with, the *Yahad* of the "sectarian" texts'.⁴ This study focuses on the possible identity of the 'wicked woman' and so it is important to understand the texts within the framework of *Yahad* ideology. In this regard, I wish to agree with García Martínez (2007a) that:

In view of the character of the Qumran Community it seems to me out of the question that it should have preserved and made use of works incompatible with its own ideology. (p. 9)

Collins (2007:177–192) has argued that manuscripts that do not refer to the sect and their social arrangements may still be seen as sectarian given the fact that the theology and ideology that are reflected in these manuscripts confirm their exclusiveness and the fact that they saw themselves as the elected.

It will not be possible to attempt to identify the 'wicked woman' in 4Q184 without taking the context into consideration for which or against which this text was written. Therefore, I will do a quick survey on the possible origins of the Qumran community (*Yahad*) and the events that could have influenced their ideology.

1. I will discuss the major contributors further on in this study.

2. Whenever I refer to 4Q184 in this study, I refer to 4Q184 1 (fragment 1).

3. See also Ilan's comment on the possibility that this text is not sectarian (2011:538).

4. Tigchelaar (2015:3) says that the use of *Yahad* without the particle can be because of the style of the text (4Q184) as there are no particles used in the text.

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Socio-historical background of the *Yahad*

Whenever we talk about the Dead Sea Scrolls or the Qumran community, it is important to keep in mind that a certain amount of transformation and growth took place in the history of the community, although tracing it with certainty is not quite possible. The community was not structured on the basis of a creed, and there is a possibility that their beliefs changed through transformation (see inter alia Collins 1998). Lim (2000:57–58) also refers to the fact that there is lately more appreciation for the pluriformity of the precanonical biblical texts and a more hesitant stance towards something like ‘authoritative writings’. He says that scholars are more sophisticated in their view of the Qumran community that existed for about 220 years and that the concept of an evolving community with a changing interpretation of biblical texts is the trend of late.

Even so, a certain worldview developed from their texts that can be seen as characteristic of the community, regardless of the fact that a full representation is not necessarily embedded in every Qumran text (Collins 1997a:150). Collins (1997b:125–126) refers to the characteristics as reflected in 4QInstruction. According to this wisdom corpus, there are two choices based on one’s inclination (*yesser*). These choices are determined by whether one’s inclination is according to the resemblance of the angels or to the spirit of the flesh. Everyone who discards the bad and who knows the good is part of the elected community.

Hengel (2000) says that the Qumran community has its roots in the Maccabean revolt and can therefore be seen as ‘a movement of strict opposition against the expansion of Hellenistic civilization in Jewish Palestine’ (p. 46). García Martínez (2007b) confirms the origin of the community as being the Maccabean revolt but also emphasises that:

Certainly we know very little about the prehistory of the Qumran movement, its formative period before it settled in Qumran. But it is commonly accepted that its origins have their roots in the movement of the Pious Ones, the Hasidim of the period the Maccabean revolt, or in any case, that the respective positions of both movements are closely related. (p. 59)

Perdue (2008) states that the main part of the Qumran community originated possibly as early as the mid-second century BCE, when the high priesthood in Jerusalem was corrupted by the Hasmonean rulers. He says that it could not be later than the first half of this century, after the oppression of Antiochus Epiphanes IV, which steered towards the Maccabean revolt. He emphasises the corrupt behaviour of the priests:

[P](p)olitical appointments continued. The high priesthood was a powerful and wealthy post. The priestly control of this cultic site led to significant prestige, financial wealth and internal political power for the families of the high priest. The sectarians withdrew from this corrupt behaviour in Jerusalem, with the Teacher of Righteousness as their initial leader. (p. 372)

Hengel (2000) stresses the fact that the Qumran community was anti-Hellenistic. He says that: ‘For the Essenes the *da’at*,

the divine knowledge, revealed to themselves, and the *hokmâh yêwânit*, the Greek wisdom, were two absolutely opposite entities’ (p. 46). Hengel (2000:46–52) confirms the Qumran community’s fundamental opposition to Hellenism by referring to the contradiction between the lavish Herodian palaces in Jericho or Masada and the poor buildings from Khirbet Qumran; he also refers to the opposition in language by indicating the community’s linguistic purism and lack of Greek loanwords; he says that they imitated the technical superiority of the Hellenistic civilisation, especially in the *War Scroll*; he also refers to the *Yahad* as a personal and voluntary association by comparing it with the Greek *koinon*; and he links the Persian loanword *raz*, which is used so often in the wisdom literature of 4QInstruction with the Greek mysticism. Hengel concludes by saying: ‘It is a law of the history of thought that the enemy is often influenced by the opinions against which he is fighting’ (p. 55).

Viewpoints with regard to the identity of the ‘wicked woman’

Goff (2007:104) describes 4Q184 as a text containing a depiction of ‘a woman who leads people to sin and death’. Allegro (1964:53) thought that the wicked woman represents Rome akin to the way the book of Revelation does, whilst Strugnell (1970:266–267) said that she should be understood in the framework of the wicked woman of Proverbs 1–9. Burgmann (1974:323–359) said that she must be interpreted as an allegory for Simon the Maccabee. Naudé (2006), Goff (2007), Ilan (2011) and Lesley (2012) all give similar lists of different viewpoints: some scholars think that she is the personification of the sect’s dualistic ideology and that she represents darkness or the way of evil; Broshi (1983) interprets it as the fear of the community for women; Baumgarten (1991) argues that she is a demonic figure; Moore (1981) sees her as the personification of the abstract notion of evil and Carmignac (1965) sees her as a hidden critique of a group or person that opposes the community; some scholars see her as the personification of all that is evil; some see her as the beginning of all the ways of perversity (cf. Goff 2007:104–105; Ilan 2011:531; Lesley 2012:107–108; Naudé 2006:372–373).

Goff (2007:105) says that it is necessary to understand this text with regard to its relationship to Proverbs 1–9, and that it is important to understand it as a wisdom text. He says that both corpuses link the wicked woman with death but that 4Q184 ‘emphasizes more than Proverbs that she dwells in *Sheol* ... 4Q184 appropriates the Strange Woman of biblical wisdom and reconfigures her into an evil dweller of *Sheol*’ (p. 105).

Naudé (2006:373–374) says that this feminine image must be seen in cosmological terms, associated with the netherworld. According to him, she is the personification of chaos opposing the established order. He says that intercourse with her leads to *Sheol*. Some scholars are of the opinion that she is Madam Folly, in other words the personification of wickedness (Crawford 1998:358).

4Q184 has led many scholars on different roads (cf. Ilan 2011:530–531). In a study on canonisation and gender in

Qumran, Ilan has shown the matching parts with Proverbs 1–9.⁵ Tigchelaar (2012:11) emphasises more than once⁶ that the poet of 4Q184 used Proverbs 1–9 ‘intensively’ (p. 11). It is clear that 4Q184 was influenced by certain parts of Proverbs 1–9, referring to a dangerous and wicked woman. Most scholars are also convinced that this text was not concerned about the danger posed by a sexually experienced woman to a young innocent person, as in Proverbs 1–9 (and Proverbs 7 in particular). Scholars are of the opinion that the images in this text are metaphors used with a specific purpose to warn against something (cf. Ilan 2011:531). It is this ‘something’ that I attempt to find in this study. Harrington (1996) is also not sure if this text must be seen as an instruction: ‘Whether the description of Lady Folly in 4Q184 should be classified as a poem or an instruction is not entirely clear’ (p. 82). Tigchelaar (2015:2) says that this ‘work had a literary and interpretive purpose, rather than a pedagogical or didactic one’.

Lesley (2012:3) is of the opinion that 4Q184 is not a sectarian reuse of language borrowed from Proverbs. He says that it is a work of extremely careful interpretation. He connects the folly character from Proverbs 1–9 with the figure of sin in Isaiah 59 and links it to 4Q184.

I am also of the opinion that the ‘wicked woman’ is a metaphor that needs to be interpreted in the context of the community’s ideology.

Two possibilities that have not received attention yet with regard to the ‘wicked woman’s’ identity are (1) the metaphor of a woman referring to a city and (2) the metaphor of a woman referring to wisdom (in this case foreign wisdom).⁷ In order to explore the first option, I will first take a look at the way 1QpHab has used the image of the wicked priest and compare it with the image of the wicked woman. I will also examine the metaphor of a woman referring to a city against the background of existing traditions. For the second option, I will have a look at specific references in the texts of 4Q184 that can strengthen this option.

The Wicked Woman in conversation with the Wicked Priest and existing traditions

In this section, I will bring the ‘wicked’ qualities of the *Wicked Priest* in conversation with the ‘wicked’ qualities of the *Wicked*

5. Ilan made some comparisons with the woman in 4Q184 and the one(s) in Proverbs 1–9:

1. The root *הלך* is used to describe the words of both women.
2. Their ways are said to lead to death.
3. Both women possess houses or the like.
4. Both are depicted as doing the same things as men: lie in ambush, try to trap men with their bodies.
5. Both are located in the same place – the squares.
6. Both women’s feet are depicted as ‘descending’.
7. Both are associated with going astray.

Therefore, it can be said that the portrait in 4Q184 has been composed in the shadow of the ‘foreign woman’ in Proverbs 1–9; however, there are some variations.

6. See *inter alia* Tigchelaar (2008) where he talks about ‘the close relation of this composition to Proverbs 1–9’ (p. 381).

7. Goff (2008) touched upon this option, but his emphasis focused too much on the part in 4Q184 that refers to *Sheol* and not enough on the ‘woman’s’ teaching; her smooth words; and the fact that she led the righteous (not the foolish and the young) astray with smooth words.

Woman in 4Q184 and reflect on the possible identity of the ‘wicked woman’ by referring to existing traditions where the feminine metaphor was used to refer to a city.

In this study, I only examine the Habakkuk commentary in so far as it gives information pertaining to the identity and meaning of the wicked priest. Van der Woude (1982) has shown how the identity of the wicked priest cannot be linked to only one person but rather to a succession of high priests. Van der Woude (1982:350) refers to the relative clauses and says that they: ‘... define the person in question rather than provide additional information about an individual discussed in an earlier passage’.

Van der Woude (1982:352) also refers to the different tenses (starting with past tense verbs and ending with future tense verbs) to prove the succession of priests. He argues that the community were confronted with more than one wicked priest and that the term ‘wicked priest’ was not limited to one person. The way that these priests were portrayed seems to be in chronological order, describing the succession of Jerusalem high priests, starting with Judas Maccabaeus⁸; with only one missing – Aristobulus I, but Van der Woude (1982:359) emphasises that he was high priest for only 1 year. García Martínez (2007b:54) supports this theory of Van der Woude.

Van der Kam (2011:367) says that the wicked priest must be seen as a specific person and that Jonathan seems to fit the best to this description.

In 1QpHab, the community’s loathing of the Jerusalem high priest(s)’ activities are emphasised by terminologies, such as: ‘repulsive acts’; ‘defiled the Sanctuary of God’; ‘violence done to the country’; ‘plundered the possessions of the poor’; ‘rebelled against God’; ‘performed repulsive acts by every type of defiling impurity’; ‘who build a city with blood and found a city on wickedness’; ‘Spreader of the Lie’.

García Martínez (2007b:64) refers to Van der Woude, who concluded that the violent men in the Habakkuk commentary can be identified as members of the Hellenistic party on the basis of the equivalence of 1 Maccabees 6:18–27.

It is clear how the Qumran community used loathing terminology to describe their utmost aversion towards the Jerusalem high priest(s). This terminology is the same kind of terminology that was used to describe the ‘wicked woman’, although not verbatim, but with the same sense of revulsion.

The terminology used to describe this woman reveals a sense of disgust and revulsion. It is terminology like: ‘leading the community astray’; ‘she prepares traps ... and nets’; ‘defiled with iniquity’; ‘she acts wickedly and walks in crimes’; ‘her hands take hold of the pit, her feet go down to act wickedly and to walk in crimes’; ‘a lot of transgressions are on her wings’; ‘she has no inheritance among those who shine’;

8. Although he was not a high priest, he usurped the functions of the high priest (cf. García Martínez 2007:53–66; Van der Woude 1982:354).

'she is the beginning of all the paths of injustice'; 'she destroys those that inherit her and ruin those that grasp her'; 'she lets the straight turn from the path'; 'she prevents the righteous elect to keep the commandment'; 'she causes the straight ones to change the ordinance'; 'she causes the poor to turn against God'; 'she side-tracks humanity with smoothness'; 'and she seduces the sons of men'.

Existing tradition of the metaphorical uses of the woman – Textual references to cities (Jerusalem in particular) as a woman

In this section, I want to take a look at existing traditions, with specific reference to the metaphorical use of the image of a woman as a city. The tradition or custom to refer metaphorically to a 'woman' is well-known in Second Temple literature. Crawford (1998:355) refers to the female figures found in wisdom literature as Lady Wisdom and Dame Folly. She says that they could possibly only be literary creations because in Greek as well as in Hebrew, the noun for wisdom is feminine in gender. The other option is that she is 'an actual divine figure, a female hypostasis of Yahweh ... indicating a female divine presence in Israelite religion...' (Crawford 1998:355).

In different books there are different referrals to a woman and most of them are metaphorically intended.

Mandolfo (2007) refers to the marriage metaphor where a city is portrayed as a woman and wife of YHWH, or even an adulteress. She also says that metaphors can 'die' through long use and:

... they become so ingrained in our shared consciousness that they come to be viewed as nearly literal representations of reality rather than metaphorical ... It is probable that ancient Near Eastern cities were so commonly considered female, and often as the wives of patron gods, that no one really thought consciously anymore about what the analogy connoted. Israel's prophets employed this metaphor but with a twist that 'reactivated' it. The city is not only a woman and wife, but a deviant and unfaithful one. They chose to activate aspects of the metaphor that were latent and thereby created a fresh and disturbing image of Israelite cities and their inhabitants. (p. 25)

Mandolfo (2007) says that the prophets thought the nation misunderstood what was expected of them and they came up with a comparison that no male in Israel could misunderstand: 'They tapped into the rage and shame every husband would feel if his wife shared herself sexually with other men' (p. 26). Sexuality proved to be an appropriate metaphor because Israel's identity relied on the extremes of holiness and pollution as well as on illustrating borders between themselves and the other nations.

Galambush (1992:26, 94, 106) studies the metaphorical use of Jerusalem as the wife of YHWH in Ezekiel. In Ezekiel 16 and 23, she is depicted as an unfaithful wife. Galambush says that this metaphor is fading away in the last chapters of Ezekiel and is replaced by the image of Jerusalem as the refined and returned city. Galambush (1992:59) determines from her

study of the Old Testament that the tradition of the ancient Near East where the city was seen as the consort goddess to the city's patron god was transformed by the Old Testament prophets to another tradition in which the city is temporal, corrupt, exposed and adulterous in relation to YHWH and he penalised the unfaithful wife. She says that:

Given Ezekiel's sensitivity to the symbolic connection between the womb of Yahweh's wife and the inner sanctum of Yahweh's temple, his graphic depiction of a Jerusalem polluted from within by unclean blood has disastrous implications. At the level of the vehicle, Yahweh's wife is unclean in both her behaviour (adultery) and her substance. Intercourse, the penetration of her unclean body, would be an abomination, even if performed by a (merely) clean male; such contact between the Holy One and a bloody woman would be unthinkable. (p. 104)

Fuller Dow (2010) has studied Zion traditions and noticed a few places where Jerusalem is metaphorically depicted as the wife of YHWH. In Isaiah 40–66, Jerusalem is portrayed in a state of grief, where she thinks that YHWH has forgotten and abandoned her (2010:89–90). In Ezekiel, 'the main relationship metaphor for God with Israel, and especially Jerusalem, is that of husband and wife' (p. 94). Fuller Dow (2010:94) says that the marriage and adultery metaphor is used to show how rotten the city's actions have been. Jerusalem is pictured in Isaiah 49:18; 54:6–7; 62:5 as the bride of YHWH, purified from her unfaithfulness and with a new beginning (p. 106).

Mandolfo (2007) identified a few places in the Old Testament where this metaphor was utilised (Jr 2–3; 13:20–27). Jeremiah 2 begins where YHWH addresses 'Woman Jerusalem' directly and once again in verse 17. Mandolfo highlights that (like in Hosea) feminine Jerusalem's backsliding is linked to her selection of associates, namely Egypt and Assyria (Jr 2:18) (Mandolfo 2007:38–40). Mandolfo (2007) also refers to Ezekiel and says that Ezekiel varies from Hosea and Jeremiah in its usage of the marriage metaphor in the sense that it:

couches its speech to the woman in a more discursive fashion and with a sustained narrative. In fact, we are treated to a long narrative recounting of YHWH's betrothal and marriage to Jerusalem, from her youth to her downfall. This narrative of their relationship offers an unusually deep and systematic account of YHWH's perceptions of his wife's behaviour. (pp. 45–46)

She says that this metaphor focuses specifically on the female body 'both as defiled and defiling ... the feminized city metaphor implies a feminized temple' (p. 46) but that Jerusalem is never quoted as the subject who speaks. She is always seen as the object that was spoken to by YHWH who is the subject.

Maier (2003) also did a study on the metaphorical use of women in Isaiah and says that:

In the book of Isaiah, Zion is featured as a place and as a woman and in most of the texts the female and spatial concepts are intertwined. The female image carries a lot of assumptions and its metaphorical value creates a multi-faceted relationship between the place, its inhabitants, and God as the perceived creator of the space's holiness. (p. 4)

Maier (2003:4) also emphasises that there are a number of texts in Isaiah that address a single female figure without directly naming her Zion or Jerusalem. She explains the different roles as follows: the concept of Zion as a female figure depicts the city and its people as female roles in relation to its ruler. Jerusalem will be possessed like a woman and in relation to the people '... she would provide shelter and food like a mother for her children; and in relation to God ...' (p. 9) she will be the daughter that he protects.

In Isaiah 52:1, one finds even a notion of ritual uncleanness, where it says that the uncircumcised and the unclean shall not enter the city any more. It suggests that strangers have defiled the city and specifically on the terrain of the cult. (Refer also to the article of Jobes [1993:299–320] wherein she describes the transformation that happened in Isaiah 54; how it is applied in Galatians 4:21–31; and that everything has to do with 'the colloquial idiom to personify the capital city of an ethnic population as a female ... whose husband was the local patron deity' [p. 308].

Apart from the prophets, there are also existing traditions from the Psalms hidden in 4Q184. Except for the traditional Zion's Psalms in which the city is praised (the opposite seems to happen in 4Q184), there is also a Qumran text that uses the marriage metaphor, namely 11QPs^a 21:11–22:1. Teeter (2013) says:

This psalm is an alphabetic acrostic composition that depicts the quest of an unnamed young man (could be implicitly David) for wisdom personified as a woman, and recounted in allusive and equivocal erotic terms. The interesting part is that much of the vocabulary and imagery are drawn from the book of Isaiah. (p. 262)

It is clear that the images of a woman that are reflected in 4Q184 seem to be existing traditions in the prophets, in certain Psalms and in Lamentations.⁹

Three aspects in conversation

The loathing terminology of 1QpHab that is associated with the wicked high priest(s) of Jerusalem is the same kind of terminology that is used to describe the wicked woman in 4Q184. The images used to describe this woman are considered by most scholars to have a metaphorical meaning – a warning against something that correlates with the community's ideology. Existing traditions indicate clearly that the metaphor of marriage has been used in prophetic literature and in Psalms not only to describe the relationship between YHWH and his people but also to refer to the city of Jerusalem.

The last aspect that I need to highlight is the reference to inheritance in 4Q184 in comparison with other traditions. 'Inheritance' is present in wisdom traditions in the form of 'Wisdom lived in the heights', Proverbs 8:2 and Sirach 24:1–2.

9. See *inter alia* Ilan (2011).

What is most striking about the whole concept of 'inheritance' is how different wisdom traditions applied the concept with different meanings. According to Proverbs 8:27, wisdom circled:

the vault of heaven *alone*, just as God alone stretched out the heavens in Job 9:8. In Job 38:16 God challenges Job whether he 'has walked in the recesses of the deep'. (Collins 1997b:51)

There are remarkable differences between the wisdom theology of Sirach (24:3–7) and some other writings that are characterised as apocalyptic texts. According to Enoch 42:1–2, wisdom couldn't find any place to stay and withdrew to heaven, but according to Sirach, wisdom found her place in Israel (cf. Dt 32:8–9). Collins remarks that this passage is actually a cultic emphasis which says that: 'Wisdom finds expression in the cult of the Jerusalem Temple' (cf. Collins 1997b:51).

This aspect is also emphasised by the findings of Sirach's texts at Qumran:

Ben Sira is found in fragmentary forms at Qumran (in cave 2, but not in cave 4) and Masada ... [but] ch. 24 has not been found either at Qumran or Masada. (Crawford 1998:358)

Why is chapter 24 not part of the Qumran library? The content of this text may reveal the reason. Sirach 24 states clearly that Jerusalem/Zion is the place where YHWH dwells, where wisdom dwells. It is the inheritance of the righteous people.

In 4Q184, there are a few references to inheritance,¹⁰ all saying that the wicked woman has a negative effect on persons who inherit her. Can this be a reference to Jerusalem?

It appears that 4Q184 incorporates different traditions. The wisdom traditions correspond with Dame Folly as in Proverbs 1–9; also the notion about inheritance, the righteous way and the incitement on what is right and what is wrong. The prophetic genre and the Psalms appropriate the metaphorical use of women and/or marriage, referring to the city of Jerusalem or the people.

4Q184 is in contrast with Sirach who believed that wisdom finds expression in the Jerusalem temple cult. If the Qumran community thought that Jerusalem is the place of evil and wickedness, then for them wisdom will not be in Jerusalem. For them the opposite is true – Jerusalem is wickedness, personified as a dangerous and tempting woman.

The wicked woman as a metaphor for foreign wisdom

In order to investigate the possibility that the 'wicked woman' in 4Q184 is a metaphor for foreign wisdom, I will firstly give some background on where this idea originates and which studies have been conducted in this regard. Secondly, I will read through the text and examine the possibility that pertains to the content of the text.

10. 4Q184 1 7,8,11

Background for the metaphor of foreign wisdom

The undertaking of this part of the study is based on a possibility that was introduced by Hengel (1973, 1:156). Hengel claims that the 'strange woman' of Proverbs becomes a symbol for foreign wisdom in the LXX Proverbs and that this image in the LXX Proverbs points to Hellenistic philosophy. He also claims that 4Q184 can be best understood in light of this image in the LXX Proverbs.

Cook (1994) has done a study on the 'strange woman' in LXX Proverbs questioning whether the strange woman in the LXX could be 'foreign wisdom'. He refers to Aletti who has shown that the adulterous woman doesn't seduce with physical things but through her speech (Cook 1994:462). He says that the image is:

reinterpreted in order to make a theological point, for it is not the sexual that leads astray, but bad counsel, not things external, but what lies within. Not, what one eats or enjoys sexually, but what one hears, namely wisdom, foreign wisdom. (p. 464)

Cook (1994:474) also refers to the fact that the dangers that the LXX texts refer to can be seen as sexual, but it is clearly metaphorical and he concludes in his summary (p. 476) that the reader is warned against foreign wisdom and that is 'Greek philosophy as encountered in the Hellenistic period of circa 200 BCE'.

Hengel (2000:46–52) has shown how the Qumran community was in opposition to Hellenism.

Goff (2008:22) refers to studies that both Fox and Cook undertook and says that: 'Neither Fox nor Cook engage Hengel's claim that 4Q184 should be understood in light of the Strange Woman of LXX Proverbs', and he Goff (2008) attempts to do that. Although Goff did touch on this possibility,¹¹ this study wants to have a different scope. This study will not compare the LXX Proverbs with 4Q184 but will examine 4Q184 individually¹² to see if the metaphor

11. He didn't investigate the possibility that the woman in 4Q184 was not as erotic as the one in Proverbs and he also didn't scrutinize the possibility that she was seducing with words and not with sexuality. His study focused a lot on the part that refers to *Sheol*.

12. For reference sake, I quote an own translation of the text here (refer to Geysers-Fouché (2016) for a discernment of the text as well as an explained translation):

(1) [...] She produces futility and in [...] perversions she seeks diligently continually to teach diligently the words of [her mouth] (2) [...] and derision and she smoothens and she derides (the) community with worthless iniquity. Her heart prepares his traps and her kidneys [nets. Her eyes] (3) are defiled with iniquity. Her hands take hold of the pit, her feet go down to act wickedly and to walk in crimes [transgression... (4) [...] (are) foundations of darkness, and a lot of transgressions are in her wings. Her [...] are gloom of night and her clothes [...] (5) Her veils are shadows of the twilight and her adornments are plagues of the pit. Her beds (her couches) are couches of the pit [...] (6) depths of the cistern. Her lodging places are couches of darkness, and in the midst of night is her realm. From the foundations of darkness (7) she pitches to dwell and she dwells in tents of silence in the midst of eternal fire. She has no inheritance among all (8) those who shine (.) bright light. And she is the beginning of all the paths of injustice. Alas, she is for all that inherits her and she destroys/ruins all (9) those that grasp her because her roads are roads of death and her ways are paths of sin. Her trails lead astray (10) towards iniquity, and her pathways to the guilt of transgression. Her gates are gates of death, and in the entrance of her house treads *Sheol*. (11) All those [who go to her will not] return and all those who inherit her, they will go down to the pit. And she lies awaiting in secret places [...] (12) [...] All [...] in the city squares she veils herself, at the gates of the city she stations herself and there is no rest for her (13) from (her) incessant [fornicat]ing [...] [...] her eyes (goes) hither and thither (for) the wise and her eyelids with wantonness she exalts to spot a (14) just ma[n] and to overtake him and a mighty man to make him stumble; the strait to turn (from) the path; and the righteous young man/elect (15) from keeping the commandment; the ones that are steady of [mind] to let those that walk straight be ridiculous with wantonness and

of the 'wicked woman' of 4Q184 can be interpreted as 'foreign wisdom'.

Goff (2008) touched upon this option but his emphasis focused too much on the part in 4Q184 that refers to *Sheol*. I am of the opinion that when 4Q184 refers to *Sheol*, the pit or the netherworld, it must be seen as the effect or result that was caused by following this 'woman'. The text states clearly that she (the woman) is the beginning of iniquity. This means that she starts that which is wrong. The text as a whole, with special attention pertaining to her 'teaching', her 'smooth words' and the fact that it is the righteous (the strait walker) who is influenced by her smooth words, must be elaborated more.

The content of 4Q184

The text starts by talking about the fact that she brings הבל¹³ forth. This term is translated most of the time with futility or emptiness and can refer to empty words. This sentence is followed by a sentence with two *pi'el* verbs that emphasise the diligent way in which this woman tries to convert people. She 'seeks diligently' and 'continuously' 'to teach'¹⁴ diligently 'the words of her mouth'. The fact that a word like תמיד is added can be a way of emphasising how relentlessly she operates. Line 2 continues to describe how she derides the *Yahad* with her smooth words and that it leads to seduction. Lines 3–7 tell in dark terms how bad she is. The last part of line 7 and the first part of line 8 refer to the fact that she doesn't belong (has no inheritance) to the people of the light (those who shine), which is a well-known term for the *Yahad*. In line 8, it says that she is the beginning of the paths of injustice. It doesn't say that she is equal to injustice, but rather that she is the start – the instigator. The last part of line 8 and the beginning of line 9 refer to 'inherit' and 'grasp'. This kind of terminology is used in both Proverbs 3 and 4Q185 to refer to the way that wisdom must be grasped. In this case, it says that to inherit and to grasp her, will ruin someone. Lines 9–10 give the reason why she must not be grasped: she ruins people; her roads are roads of death and her ways are paths of sin; her trails lead people astray towards iniquity; her gates are gates of death; and *Sheol* treads in the entrance of her house. This is an indication of how important it is to avoid her, because she is the beginning of death. To get involved with her will open the way to *Sheol*. Line 11 says that all those who go to her will not return. We also find again a reference to לכור ויהליה – to say that all who inherit her will go down to the pit. Line 12 has a lot in common with Proverbs 1:20 (just contra). According to Proverbs, wisdom calls out in the city squares; in 4Q184, it is the 'wicked woman' who does it.

(footnote 12 continues...)

to let them change the ordinance. To let (16) the humble/poor turn against God and to let their steps turn from the paths of justice to bring presumpt[uous]ness [in their hearts] so that they do not walk (17) in the paths of straightness. To let go astray humanity to the paths of the pit and to deceive with smoothness the sons of man.

13. Hearing this word, one thinks spontaneously of a book like Ecclesiastes. This is the term that keeps on repeating in a book where traditional wisdom is criticised.

14. Although most of the scholars translate it with 'she whets/sharpens her words', I think that in this context תמיד can be best translated as 'to teach diligently' with a preposition linking to the *pi'el* infinitive construct of שׁוּן. The other Qumran texts where this word is translated to 'sharpen' are almost always in relation with a sword.

She is not hiding somewhere; she is there in the openness of the public forum where community business was discussed. Line 13 tells about how she seduces and tempts. What is interesting is that none of the erotic elements of Proverbs 7 is present in this description of her. She is depicted as dangerous and tempting but not as suggestive and licentious.

Lines 14–17 describe how she leads men astray. What is interesting is that it is not the young and the foolish (like in Proverbs) that are caught by her, but the mighty ones; the ones that walk straight; the righteous elect; the steady-minded ones (the members of the community?). The terminology used to describe these ones are used in other texts (like 1Q27) to describe the *Yahad*. It seems that this is intended to warn the righteous elect to look out for the tempting ways of this woman. She can make them stumble; she can let them turn away from the right path; she can prevent them from keeping their commandments; she can let the poor¹⁵ turn against God.

It is clear that the image of the woman in 4Q184 is in general more abstract and less physical than in Proverbs. She is not so lascivious and erotically pictured as in Proverbs; her 'victims' are not young and foolish men, but straight and steady-minded (community members) men. The text begins and ends with reference to 'words' and 'teachings', which can be interpreted as something that must be taught, and it can be a certain form of wisdom.

The way that this 'woman' is depicted indicates that she can very easily be the personification of foreign wisdom or counter-wisdom.¹⁶ She is not depicted in the same erotic terms as the woman in Proverbs 7, but she is, like Ilan (2011) says: '... far more dangerous than the foreign seductress of Proverbs 7 ... when she seduces him, she does not mention sex as her object as in Proverbs 7:18' (p. 537).

The community was very knowledgeable with regard to the existing tradition, which means that a reference like 'inherit' and 'grasp' might have been linked spontaneously by them to texts like Proverbs 3 and 4Q185, only in this case it might refer to foreign wisdom (the wisdom that must be avoided, just like a wicked woman must be avoided). If this is the case, then the character of 'sinner' that Lesley (2012) links to Isaiah 59 can still be a possibility. The character of 'sinner' can be seen as another personification of foreign wisdom and demonstrates the threat that this wisdom has for the community.

Conclusion

Van der Woude (1982) stresses the way that certain stereotyped phrases in the Qumran texts are applied to more than one person:

15. Qumran manuscripts, especially wisdom literature, refers to the community as 'poor' – see inter alia 1QM 11:9, 12, 13:14; 1QpHab 12:3, 6, 10; 4Q171 III 10, IV 11; 4Q176 frags 1–2 II 5; 4Q416; 4Q417; 4Q418; 4Q424; 4Q427; 4Q434, etc.

16. As Tigchelaar (2007) refers to it.

'Teacher of Righteousness' can designate the community's founder; but also the expected teacher of the final age. 'Searcher of the Law' may refer to the first named Teacher of Righteousness; but the phrase can also allude to an eschatological figure. 'Anointed' can denote an Old Testament prophet, but it may also point to the coming priest or king. In the book of Daniel, the appellations 'king of the north' and 'king of the south' are applied to a number of Seleucid and Ptolemaic kings, respectively. (p. 349–350)

Lesley (2012:108) also refers to the fact that it was second nature for the community to give existing traditions and/or texts a new interpretation that was coloured with their own ideology. This custom seems to have happened also in constructing 4Q184.

Tigchelaar (2015:2) says that 4Q184 has 'had a **literary and interpretative purpose**, rather than a pedagogical or didactic one' (own emphasis). When the text is seen as one with a 'literary and interpretative' purpose rather than a pedagogical one (like most wisdom texts), it opens up new probable questions, questions like what was the purpose or the meaning of the use of the metaphor of the *wicked woman*? The purpose of this metaphor can be found not only in its relation to the prophetic books and the Psalms but also in its differences from Proverbs. Interesting is the fact that both Psalms and Isaiah were among books that were represented by the most manuscripts found at Qumran, which in general is taken as an indication of their importance to the community.¹⁷

In this study, I have looked at two possibilities for the identity of the 'wicked woman' in 4Q184.

The first possibility is that it can be seen as a metaphor for the city Jerusalem. This possibility was scrutinised by comparing the 'wicked terminology' that was used to describe the 'wicked priest(s)' in the Habakkuk commentary with the 'wicked terminology' that was used in 4Q184, as well as a study of existing traditions in the Old Testament where Jerusalem was portrayed as a woman or wife. It has been indicated how many times the prophets referred to Jerusalem metaphorically as a woman. If this can be used as a possible interpretation of the way that the Qumran texts have used the metaphor of a woman, it can give an answer to the purpose (the interpretative use) of this metaphor. The Qumran text uses a well-known metaphor to refer to Jerusalem as a wicked woman, with the difference that in this case it is not a reflection on the people, but rather on the city and more specifically on the temple and the awful activities that were practiced by the wicked priests. It can make sense that the city where YHWH once had chosen to dwell in can now be seen as wicked and can be personified not as wisdom or a wise woman but as wicked and an adulterous woman, described in loathing terminology.

The other option is that the wicked woman is a metaphor for foreign wisdom, specifically in the form of Hellenism and

17. Ulrich (2001:53) says that Psalms is the most with a total of 37 copies, then Deuteronomy with a total of 32 and in the third place is Isaiah with a total of 22 (all including manuscripts from cave 4).

Greek philosophy or Hellenistic (non-Israelite) diviners (see also Tigchelaar 2007 with regard to this concept). The fact that 4Q184 refers to 'teaching' and warns against her influence (this kind of wisdom), that she can let righteous and upright people (not foolish young people) go astray might be a very strong possibility that the *Yahad* is warned not to get diverted by this 'upcoming culture' that seems to be so attractive. To get involved with her will lead to everything that is bad and also (like the wicked priest) is seen as evil and repulsive. She seems to be the direct opposite of wisdom as described by Proverbs 3:13–23, which makes it possible for her to be wisdom, but the 'wrong' wisdom, the wisdom that the *Yahad* is against. The reference to הבל – the word that is very well-known from the book Ecclesiastes can also be an indication that the topic of reference in this text is wisdom, and in this case the 'wrong' wisdom.

The community was known for the fact that they separated themselves from Jerusalem and everything that happened there, which included Hellenism as well as Greek philosophy and Greek wisdom. In light of their whole attitude to separate themselves and to be an opponent, it only makes sense that a text such as 4Q184, that uses such strong language of revulsion, must be aimed against something that was a clear entity which they experienced as a threat to them. It must have been something more than only folly or the personification of evil. Neither folly nor evil could have been a threat to a member of the community, who walked straight, who was steady of mind, who was seen as a mighty man. If the wicked woman was the personification or the metaphor for foreign wisdom, it makes more sense why this text deviates from Proverbs¹⁸ with regard to the 'person' that she will lead astray, especially since it is clear that Proverbs 1–9 inspired 4Q184.¹⁹ If one takes into account that this was an apocalyptic movement that used apocalyptic features like soubriquets in their scriptures, it makes sense that this 'wicked woman' must represent something that they didn't want to name.²⁰ It seems that this metaphor refers to more than only 'avoiding the wrong path', but rather to 'avoiding the wrong teaching/wisdom'.

A few theological characteristics appear through most of the *Yahad*'s texts. These characteristics discerned the community as a distinctive community. They include a messianic and eschatological apocalypticism; the idea of a new covenant with a remnant of Israel; and the dualistic idea of two spirits. The dualistic theology is the point of departure for the discernment between persons, places and theologies. This discernment happened between the righteous and the wicked, between the wise and the foolish. This is also clear in texts like 4Q184 and 4Q185. Therefore, I am of the opinion that between the two possibilities that this study examined, the latter one was the most probable. Foreign wisdom was the power that they were fighting against and therefore described as a woman that must be avoided, whilst true

18. According to Proverbs it is the young and foolish ones that will fall for her traps.

19. See *inter alia* Tigchelaar (2008:381) & (2012:11); Goff (2007:105).

20. Hacham (2005:19) refers to this way of writing as a 'hidden discourse'.

wisdom was described as a valuable woman that must be held with all one's might and strength.

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