CHAPTER SEVEN

PRACTICAL WISDOM: THE INSTRUCTION OF 4Q424

1. INTRODUCTION

4Q424 has an awkward title—"4QInstruction-like Composition B."1 Officially published in 2000, this document consists of four fragments. Most of its text is preserved in fragments 1 and 3, which have, respectively, thirteen and twelve lines. There are five extant lines in fragment 2 and fragment 4 preserves just seven letters.2 Its paleography is in the Herodian semi-formal tradition. Nothing survives of this text that is explicitly its introduction or conclusion. The original structure of the composition cannot be fully recovered. There are no explicit historical markers in the text. It was probably written in the second or first centuries BCE but could have been composed earlier.

4Q424 is a wisdom text. It is characterized by admonitions that offer advice on practical topics such as money and interactions with others. Virtually all of its sayings delineate kinds of people that fall into one of two categories—those who cannot be trusted to carry out

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2 Two other fragments, Unidentified Fragments A and B, have been associated with 4Q424 but are probably not part of the composition. See DJD 36, 346.
tasks successfully and those who emulate virtues such as compassion for the poor. These topics are in continuity with the wisdom tradition. Brin has speculated that the intended addressee may be a “ruler” or “one of the heads of society.”

He is probably wealthy and may come from an aristocratic milieu.

The forms of 4Q424 are quite consistent. A vetitive is typically used, placed after its object, which is usually one of the negative types of people. They are often described with either the phrase “X שב” or “X שָׁנָה,” with the latter preferred, as in 4Q424 1 10: “A greedy man do not put in charge of [your] wealth.” These two forms are also used in instruction in Proverbs and Ben Sira on foolish or wicked types (e.g., Prov 16:27-29; Sir 8:15-17).

2. NEGATIVE TYPES OF PEOPLE

4Q424 contains twelve descriptions of negative types of people and six of positive kinds. The concept of individuality is not prominent in this text. Rather, it is taught that there are good and bad types of people and that the former should be emulated and the latter avoided. Wisdom texts, such as the book of Proverbs and the Egyptian Instruction of Amenemope, often describe negative kinds of people and the consequences of being involved with them (e.g., Prov 29:27;

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2 The first form is used with a vetitive in 4Q424 1 2-5 (cf. II. 6-7), and the second elsewhere in the composition (4Q424 1 7, 8, 10, 13; 4Q424 2 4; 4Q424 3 1, 3, 6). The X שָׁנָה form occurs six times in 4Q424 3 7-9 without a vetitive.

3 *DJD* 36, 335.

4 The negative kinds of people include: “a separatist” (רָאוֹן) (4Q424 1 2); “a dissembler” (רַהֲב) (4Q424 1 4); “one who strays” (רַמְעָה) (4Q424 1 4); “a slothful man” (רַע) (4Q424 1 6); “a man who murmurs” (רַעְעָה) (4Q424 1 7); “a man with devious lips” (רַעְעָה בְּמַעְסֶר) (4Q424 1 8); “a greedy man” (רַעְרָעָה) (4Q424 1 9); “a short-tempered man” (רַעְרָעָה) (4Q424 1 12); “a man who passes judgment before investigating” (רַעְרָעָה בְּמַעְסֶר) (4Q424 3 1); “a man whose eyes are smeared over” (רַעְרָעָה בְּמַעְשֶׁר) (4Q424 3 3); “one dull of hearing” (רַעְרָעָה בְּמַעְשֶׁר) (4Q424 3 4); “a man with a dull heart” (רַעְרָעָה בְּמַעְשֶׁר) (4Q424 3 6). Poorly preserved descriptions of negative types are in 4Q424 1 13 and 4Q424 2 3-4. See also *DJD* 36, 335; Brin, “Wisdom Issues,” 305.