A Fragment of Instruction (Inv. MOTB.SCR.000123)

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DSS F.Instruction1 is a single fragment from the Museum of the Bible Collection (inventory number MOTB.SCR.000123) that has been identified with a composition called Instruction, known from the Qumran scrolls, and has the closest affinities with the script and material characteristics of 4Q415. In the new system of nomenclature of Eibert Tigchelaar, this fragment has been given the designation DSS F.202 (DSS F.Instr1). This wisdom text, written sometime in the Second Temple period, contains ethical and practical admonitions and cosmological observations, all couched within an underlying eschatological concern. Although seven or eight copies have been discovered in Caves 1 and 4 at Qumran (1Q26, 4Q415–4Q417, 4Q418, 4Q418a, 4Q418c, and 4Q423), Instruction lacks specific references to the sectarian community that occupied the site, and it is likely not a sectarian work. Even so, it has literary, terminological, and theological resonances with core sectarian texts such as the Community Rule and the Hodayot,1 and the number of copies discovered at Qumran likely indicates the popularity of Instruction in the sectarian community.

Prior to its official publication in this volume, this fragment has been incorrectly identified and transcribed in a series of museum guides, editions, and monographs. In 2004 Lee Biondi, a private antiquities dealer, published a low resolution photo of this fragment of Instruction in an exhibition guidebook.2 The image’s caption indicates that the fragment belongs to 4Q418 (4QInstruction4), even though an identical passage was already attested in another fragment of the same manuscript (4Q418 frg. 148). This misrepresentation is surprising because Hanan and Esther Eshel were working as consultants for the exhibition starting in September 2003.3 Three years later, Eshel and Eshel used

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3 Hanan Eshel and Esther Eshel, “A Preliminary Report on Seven New Fragments from Qum-
Biondi’s photos to produce their own preliminary edition in *Meghillot: Studies in the Dead Sea Scrolls v–vi* [in Hebrew], and they determined that it belonged to another copy, 4QInstructionb (4Q416).4 They designated the fragment as 4Q416 frg. 23.5 Their transcription may have been hampered by the poor quality of the photograph because they offered no readings for letters on line 1 and misread the final letter on line 2.

After the Eshels’ edition, Biondi produced another exhibition guide (2009) with the same image of the fragment, still erroneously labeled as 4Q418.6 In subsequent years, two monographs on *Instruction* (John Kampen, 2011; Matthew Goff, 2013) have mentioned this fragment, both using the Eshels’ designation.7 Elisha Qimron’s edition followed the Eshels’ identification of the fragment as 4Q416 frg. 23, but he corrected the reading of the last letter on line 2 from a *vav* to a *tav*.8 Qimron did not attempt to read any of the letters on the first line.

Although this edition addresses the brief publication history of the fragment, there is little that can be said about its provenance and authenticity. Beyond the details of this fragment’s publication and incorporation into the Museum of the Bible Collection, there is little additional information available about who has owned this fragment or to which archaeological site or cave it might belong. Eshel and Eshel briefly state that it came from Khalil Eskander Shahin (Kando) but they do not account for how it came into Biondi’s possession.9 The only known copies of *Instruction* have come from the caves of Qumran, so it is certainly plausible that it came from the same site. However, it should also be noted that DSS F.Instr1 and 4Q418 frg. 148 overlap suspiciously in such a way that the text of DSS F.Instr1 could have been copied from the more extensive text of 4Q418. DSS F.Instr1 only began to circulate in private collections (2003) a few years after 4Q418 was published (1999). In other words, DSS F.Instr1 contains no significant additions of words that were not already known after 4Q418 was

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7 John Kampen, *Wisdom Literature* (ed. Martin Abegg Jr. and Peter W. Flint; ECDSS; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2011), 38, 152; Matthew J. Goff, 2 n. 9, 4 n. 18.