



Universal and Particular Law in the Letter of James and Early Judaism

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Benjamin Wold

School of Religion, Trinity College, Dublin, Ireland

Abstract

In the letter of James, ‘law’ (*νόμος*) is mentioned in three passages: 1.21-25, 2.8-12 and 4.11-12. This article focuses on Jas 1.21-25 and the relationship of *λόγος* at the beginning of the passage (1.21-23) with *νόμος* at the end (1.25; cf. 2.12). The question asked is whether James reflects Stoic views or not by analyzing this passage alongside occurrences of the expression *רז נהיה* (‘mystery of existence’) in 4QInstruction, the Community Rule and 1QMysteries. The broader aim is to consider how this passage of James may be situated within both Jewish Hellenistic literature and sapiential traditions discovered at Qumran in order to challenge straightforward identifications of Jas 1.21-25 with Stoicism. In conclusion, it is not simply that James is seen to align with these Qumran discoveries over and against Stoic thought, but rather all of these traditions are operating with comparable bridging concepts.

Keywords

Letter of James, 4QInstruction, 1QMysteries, Community Rule, *logos*, Torah, *nomos*, Stoicism, Philo

1. James 1.21-25 and Natural Law

Nóμος in Jas 2.8-12 and 4.11-12 refers to Mosaic Torah, and yet this same law is reinterpreted in James in reference to God’s rule over his renewed people in a messianic and eschatological context.¹ In the setting of Jas 1.21-25, the

1. Bauckham 1999: 145; alternatively, see Ruzer 2014: 75.

Corresponding author:

Benjamin Wold, School of Religion, Arts Building, Room 5031, Trinity College, Dublin 2, Ireland.
Email: woldb@tcd.ie

relationship between *λόγος* and *νόμος* complicates the precise meaning of *νόμος*. More precisely, there are two basic approaches to interpreting this passage, either (1) word and law are *identical* or (2) law is a *part or aspect* of the word. The ‘law of liberty’ (*νόμου ἐλευθερίας*) occurs in both Jas 1.25 and 2.8-12 and is otherwise not to be found in the NT. James 1.21-25 reads:

²¹Therefore rid yourselves of all impurity and excessive wickedness, and *take* (*δέξασθε*) with humility the implanted word (*ἐμφυτον λόγον*) that has the power to save your souls (*ψυχὰς ὑμῶν*). ²²Be doers of the word (*λόγου*) and not merely hearers who deceive themselves. ²³For if any are hearers of the word (*λόγου*) and not doers, they are like those who look at themselves in a mirror; ²⁴for they look at themselves and, on going away, immediately forget what they were like. ²⁵But those who *gaze* (*παρακύψας*) into the perfect law, the law of liberty (*νόμον τέλειον τὸν τῆς ἐλευθερίας*), and persevere, being not hearers who forget but doers who act – they will be blessed in their doing.²

The ‘implanted word’ in James has been viewed as reflecting the Stoic concept of ‘natural law’. The relationship of ‘natural law’ to Mosaic Torah is most often discussed in relationship to Philo, Josephus, Pseudo-Phocylides, the *Letter of Aristeeas* and *Testament of Naphtali*.³ The main issue that the Hellenistic Jewish authors addressed is how to reconcile a universal God with the particularism of Mosaic Torah.

In the Hebrew Bible natural law is found in prophetic and wisdom traditions, which are developed in early Jewish thought, often in dialogue with the Stoic concept of *νόμος φύσεως* (‘natural law’). Philo associates the ‘law of nature’ with the ‘pre-Sinaitic law’ and creation with ‘right reason’. For Philo, the Mosaic Torah is the perfect copy of the universal law of nature and it is possible to lead a virtuous life even if one does not have access to the written Law of Moses (Najman 2003: 76, 87). Philo views that the unwritten law of nature is perfectly expressed in the Mosaic Torah and that Torah embodies the law of nature and is authoritative as a particular written copy of it. He endeavors to illustrate that Moses as lawgiver and the Torah provide a universal and perfect copy of the law of nature. He associates the ‘law of nature’ with ‘reason’ and describes it as imparting freedom to the wise. Philo, in *Every Good Man Is Free*, writes that right reason ‘is the fountain from which all other laws spring’ and that to participate in it is ‘freedom’ (*ἐλευθερίας*). Indeed, John Martens observes that in Philo’s writings, ‘God gave the law to Moses; God also created the world and with it the law of nature. The law of Moses, divinely given, could in no way contradict the

2. Translation adapted from NRSV.

3. See Najman 2010: 87-118; Sterling 2003: 64-80; Stone 1991: 457-67 discusses the orderly course of creation in *1 En.* 2–5; *Sir.* 16.24-30; *T. Naph.* 3.2-4.

law of nature, *divinely implanted* in the world at creation'.⁴ Therefore, one might view James along similar lines as Philo.

Matt Jackson-McCabe offers an in-depth monograph-length study taking as his focal point the Stoic conception of 'natural law' as the background against which the term 'implanted word' should be understood in James.⁵ He concludes that λόγος (1.18-22) and νόμος (1.25) are to be identified with one another. For Jackson-McCabe, Jas 1.21 represents the Stoic conception of natural law found in the notion of 'implanted preconceptions' (ἐμφυτοι προλήψεις). Human beings are born with an unformed λόγος and implanted preconceptions, which allow them to form concepts such as 'good' and 'evil'. The notion of a Stoic natural law, he argues, is fused with the alien conception of the Mosaic Torah. He examines the reception of Stoic theory in several traditions, most notably Philo; however, Philo never uses the phrase ἐμφυτος λόγος, and the closest evidence available for the view that the 'implanted word' relates to natural law is in fact Cicero's understanding of law as *ratio summa insita in natura* (*Leg.* 1.6.18; Jackson-McCabe 2001: 92, 122). The conclusion reached by Jackson-McCabe, that the ἐμφυτος λόγος is a technical term, is hardly substantiated based upon only a few inexact references. It may well be the case that the 'implanted word' and 'perfect law' in James are to be identified with one another, but objections remain to the view that these are terms derived, as Jackson-McCabe concludes: 'from the *Stoic identification* of human reason as a divinely given natural law'.⁶ Moreover, that the 'implanted word' refers simply to human reason is unconvincing because reason does not, as is found in Jas 1.21, save one's soul nor can it be 'welcomed' (δέχομαι).

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4. Martens 2003: 97: 'Philo is thus able to claim more than any Greek or Roman author could or would. Cicero was compelled to say that the civil law is not necessarily also the universal law; but the universal law ought to be also the civil law. But we possess no substantial, life-like image of true Law and genuine Justice; a mere outline sketch is all that we enjoy (*De Off.* 3.69) ... Philo could add [to the Stoics], however, because of the role of a transcendent God in the giving of the written law something the Stoics could not, namely, that the law of Moses, a particular written law, is in full agreement with the law of nature.'
 5. Jackson-McCabe 2001: 131-32: 'The "implanted *logos*" of Jas 1:21 is identified [by early Christian commentators] as human reason and, especially strikingly, associated particularly with the ability to distinguish ethical contraries ... [these are] implanted preconceptions. Dionysius, therefore, without comment or apology, simply identifies ἐμφυτος λόγος as a reference to natural law.'
 6. Jackson-McCabe 2001: 154; elsewhere, when he turns to the 'perfect law of freedom' in Jas 1.25, he identifies it with the Torah as interpreted by the author James (186). Cf. Konradt 2003: 187-89. Italics mine.

2. 'Taking' Λόγος and 'Seeking' Νόμος

Both the singular λόγος ('word') and plural λόγια ('words') are used frequently in biblical literature in reference to divine utterances. In Ps. 147.19-20 God declares 'his word' (דְּבָרָיו; cf. LXX τὸν λόγον αὐτοῦ) to Israel; these are his statutes and ordinances which are not known to the nations. The divine edicts in Balaam's oracle are also referred to as 'words' (λόγια θεοῦ, Num. 24.4, 16). Psalm 119.43 refers to Torah as the 'word of truth' (LXX 118.43, λόγον ἀληθείας), which indicates an early instance when νόμος and λόγος are identified with one another.

Studies on Jas 1.21-25 focus on the nouns λόγος and νόμος together with their respective adjectives, while the activities associated with them are less frequently explored. The verb used of the 'implanted word' in James is δέχομαι – second person plural imperative – which can be translated either as 'take' or 'receive'. 'Receive', 'welcome' and 'accept' are overwhelmingly preferred in English translations. The Hebrew term קָחַ is almost always translated as δέχομαι in LXX; however, קָחַ is very rarely used with a semantic range that includes 'receive' and is overwhelmingly used as 'take', which can include the sense of 'learn'.⁷ The qal verb קָחַ occurs a number of times in Proverbs – particularly informative for the study of sapiential literature – in regard to 'taking' instruction, e.g.:

Prov. 1.3 מוֹסֵר לְקַחְתָּ לֵךְ (LXX: δέξασθαι τε στροφὰς λόγων)

Prov. 4.10 וְקַח אֶמְרֵי יְהוָה וְלֵךְ (LXX: Ἄκουε, υἱέ, καὶ δέξαι ἐμοὺς λόγους)

קָחַ is not typically used of the Mosaic Torah; instead it is 'given' to Moses at Sinai and is to be 'kept' (e.g., Exod. 16.28). In Exod. 24.12 (cf. Lev. 26.46; Deut. 4.8) we read that: 'The Lord said to Moses, "Come up to me on the mountain, and wait there; and *I will give* you (תָּתִיבָה לְךָ; LXX δώσω σοι) the tablets of stone, with the law and the commandment, which I have written for their instruction". Although only partially preserved at Qumran, in *Jubilees* (4Q216 1 3) this statement appears to be rewritten using the verb לקח.⁸

[סיני בעלותו ל]ק[חת לוחות האבן התורה והמצוה] בדבר יהוה בדברו

[Sinai, when he went up to] re[ceive the stone tablets of the law and the commandment] by the word of the Lord, [according to his word]

7. BDB: 543 קָחַ in qal: predominately 'take'; cf. Fabry and Dahmen 2016: 532-37 who emphasize use as 'learn'.

8. DJD 13: 5-7, the theoretical Hebrew reconstruction is reliant upon the Ethiopic and Exod. 24.12. VanderKam and Milik comment on this line that '[t]here is a dot at the left top edge of fig. 1. It may belong to the downstroke of *qop*'. Denis 1970: III, 70. Charlesworth 1985: II, 52 follows Ethiopic text 'to give'.

If this reconstruction is correct, then the use of קָלַף may be explained by Deut. 9.9, where Moses recounts in first person going up to Sinai actively to ‘receive/take’ stone tablets ($\text{בָּעֲלֹתַי הָיִיתִי לְקַחַת לִי־חֵת הַבְּנִיִּים}$; cf. LXX λαβεῖν).⁹ Deuteronomy 9.9 presents the first time that Torah is given (cf. second time, Deut. 10.1-3; Exod. 34.1-4) and how Moses seeks them by means of 40 days of fasting. When Moses descends, he finds rebellious Israel and throws the tablets down, smashing them (Deut. 9.17; Exod. 32.19).¹⁰ Another way to consider the difference between God ‘giving’ and Moses ‘taking/receiving’ is Stephen’s speech in Acts 7; when recounting the story of Moses, the author writes (Acts 7.38) that Moses ‘is the one who was in the congregation in the wilderness with the angel who spoke to him at Mount Sinai, and with our ancestors; and he received/took [ἐδέξατο] living oracles [λόγια ζῶντα] to give to us’. Here in Acts not only is the description of ‘taking’ important, but also Mosaic Torah is referred to with λόγος rather than νόμος .¹¹

3. Seeking the Mystery of Existence

LXX never uses the verb δέχομαι to recount Moses receiving the Torah at Mt Sinai; the use of the Greek term in this context is only known from Acts 7.38. In the Qumran discoveries, the majority of uses of קָלַף are found in ordinary contexts (e.g., taking a wife in marriage); however, there are two instances of ‘taking’ revealed wisdom and/or visions. 11QPsalms^a (11Q5 22 13), in an Apostrophe to Zion, instructs Zion to ‘acquire a vision (קַח־חֵן) spoken in your regard, and dreams of prophets requested for you!’

The *communis opinio* is that 4QInstruction is not a Yahad document, but rather belongs to a broader stream of ancient Jewish thought. In 4QInstruction

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9. Ps. 68.18-19 describes God ascending on Sinai and in v. 19 is ‘you took gifts on account of man’ ($\text{מִתְּנוּתַתְּ בְּאֶרְצָם}$); *b. Šabb.* 89a applies this ‘taking’ of Torah to Moses who ascends to the heavens to argue with angels to give Torah to humanity.
10. Jas 1.23-24 emphasizes those who forget their own image after looking in a mirror; cf. the ‘remember and do not forget’ theme in Deut. 9. In *b. Šabb.* 88b ‘hearing’ and ‘doing’ are related to: (1) merely accepting Torah (= seeing with one eye) and (2) performing *mitzvot* (seeing with both eyes); in Jas 1.25 ‘looking’ and not forgetting is to be ‘doers who act’.
11. Hearon 2016: 75: ‘In Acts 7:38, Stephen speaks of the “living oracles” (λόγια ζῶντα) received by Moses in order that he might give them “to us”, while Paul speaks of the Jews having been entrusted with the “oracles of God” λόγια τοῦ θεοῦ [Rom 3:2] ... In each instance, the expression assumes that what is written is encountered as an active voice, speaking in and to the present. Thus, the written word transcends time and space; but more than that, it is represented not so much as a written word as a “living voice”. Since these examples do not single out specific passages or words as “living oracles” ... the phrase ... is shown to connote the nature of the written word as a whole’.

the imperative of לָקַח is used explicitly of the רִז נְהִיָּה ('mystery of existence') on one occasion and elsewhere relates to other aspects of wisdom:¹²

1. 4Q418 77 2 '[mystery of existence and take the generations of man and see what is right' (רִז נְהִיָּה וְקַח תּוֹלְדוֹת אָדָם וּרְאֵה בְּכוֹשֵׁר), then shortly thereafter (4Q418 77 4) 'and take by/in the mystery of existence all the measures' (וְקַח בְּרִז נְהִיָּה עַל מִשְׁקָל);
2. 4Q416 2 i, 6 'take the birthtimes of salvation and know who shall inherit glory and toil' (וְקַח מוֹלְדֵי יֵשַׁע וְדַע מִי נוֹחַל כְּבוֹד וְעַמַּל);
3. 4Q418 177 4 'take understanding, give ear to['] (קַח בִּינָה הָאֵיזִינָה לְ); and
4. 4Q418 197 3 'take commandments' (קַח מִצְוֹת).

The 'implanted word' in James has the power to save souls, and in 4QInstruction the taking of the mystery/wisdom is closely associated with salvation, judgment and reward (see esp. 4Q416 2 i, 6). One of the few other occurrences of רִז נְהִיָּה in the whole of ancient Jewish literature is in 1QMysteries where we read (1Q27 1 i, 3-4):

and they did not know the mystery of existence (רִז נְהִיָּה) and former things they did not understand, and they did not know what was and would come upon them, and their souls (נַפְשֵׁמָה) did not escape (לֹא מִלְטוּ) from the mystery of existence (מִרִז נְהִיָּה).

Like the 'implanted word' of Jas 1.21, the notion of taking the 'mystery of existence' is explicitly connected with salvation of one's soul. Moreover, this 'mystery of existence' is closely associated with the natural order and cosmology (see esp. 4Q416 1; 4Q417 1 i) and plays an important role when distinguishing between 'good' and 'evil'.¹³

In addition to 'take', other verbs are used in regard to the mystery of existence. Most frequently, either God or parents 'uncover one's ear' by the mystery of existence (גִּלָּה אָזְנוֹכָה בְּרִז נְהִיָּה).¹⁴ The addressee is encouraged to 'gaze' (נִבַּט) upon the mystery on several occasions, and in one instance it is in synonymous parallel with 'taking the birthtimes of salvation' (4Q416 2 i, 5b-6a).¹⁵ Another

12. רִז נְהִיָּה occurs only in the Community Rule, 1/4QMysteries, and 1/4QInstruction. The niphil participle נְהִיָּה from the word 'to be' (הָיָה), which qualifies רִז ('mystery'), has a temporal meaning that spans the entire plan of God from creation to the end-time. García Martínez and Tigchelaar (1999) translate as 'mystery of existence'; Rey (2009): 'mystère de l'existence'. See Wold 2018: 3 n. 8; in 4QInstruction this mystery relates to Sinai and as an authority construct precedes and even supplants Mosaic Torah (Wold 2018: 192-95).

13. Wold 2018: 154-60, esp. 157.

14. 1Q26 1 4; 4Q416 2 iii, 18; 4Q418 184 2; 4Q418 123 ii, 4; 4Q423 7 7. 4Q416 2 iii, 18: parents are honored because they uncovered their children's ears to the mystery.

15. See also 4Q417 1 i, 3; 4Q417 1 i, 18.

activity related to the pursuit of the mystery is ‘seeking’, which occurs only twice in the extant fragments, and 4Q416 2 iii, 14 reads: ‘seek (דרוש) the mystery of existence and understand all the ways of truth and all the roots of iniquity you shall see’.¹⁶ On one well-known occasion, the mystery is the subject of ‘meditation’ (הגה) in allusion to Ps. 1.2b (4Q417 1 i, 6). The notion of ‘testing’ by the mystery is also preserved in a fragmentary context (4Q415 6 4): ‘by the mystery of existence test these [things]’ (ברו נהיה בחן אלה).

The verb used of ‘perfect law’ in Jas 1.25 is παρακύπτω (‘look intently’, ‘gaze’), which is an activity that does not express the process of textual analysis or study of legal code. Is this ‘perfect law’ simply, as Dan McCartney comments, ‘christologically completed Torah [that] enables a person to become an active doer and receive its blessing’ (2009: 122)? As noted above, ‘gazing’ (גבט) is also found in 4QInstruction, where the addressee is repeatedly urged to gaze upon the נהיה רז. Among writings in the NT, παρακύπτω is only used in two contexts: (1) Peter and Mary ‘look intently’ into the empty tomb (Lk. 24.12; Jn 20.5, 11) and (2) in 1 Pet. 1.10-12 salvific knowledge about the good news of Christ is ‘revealed’ by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven before the author offers this parenthetical comment: ‘angels long to look (παρακύψαι)’ into these revealed things. The activity of ‘gazing’ in 1 Peter, like 4QInstruction, associates this action with revelation, mysteries and the acquisition of wisdom.¹⁷ Like 4QInstruction, where the addressee is frequently exhorted not to weary in the pursuit of the mystery (e.g., 4Q418 69 ii), James also emphasizes perseverance in the act of gazing (1.25). The tenacious pursuit of wisdom in Sir. 14.23 is described as one who ‘peers (παρακύπτω) through her windows and listens at her doors’.¹⁸ In the Community Rule (1QS III 6-7) we find that, when someone joins the purified community, atonement is made by God’s spirit, which results in their gazing upon the light of life: ‘it is by the spirit of the true counsel of God that the paths of man, all his iniquities, are atoned to look at the light of life (להביט באור החיים)’. Therefore, in this column of the Community Rule the desired object of gazing is ‘living light’, which takes up the same description of the ‘living word’ found in Acts 7.38.¹⁹

16. See also 4Q416 2 iii, 9.

17. Cf. regarding גבט Ps. 119.18: ‘Open my eyes, so that I may behold wondrous things out of your law’ (גַּלְעֵינִי וְאֶבִיטָה נִפְלְאוֹת מִתּוֹרַתְךָ).

18. παρακύπτω only occurs seven times in the LXX and OT Apocrypha and never translates גבט. Cf. Sir. 33.14-15 (not extant in Heb.), ‘Good is the opposite of evil, and life the opposite of death; so the sinner is the opposite of the godly. Look at (ἐμβλεψον) all the works of the Most High; they come in pairs, one the opposite of the other.’

19. When the wicked are described in 1QS, they ‘gaze’ (גבט) upon darkness as though it were light; we read in 1QS III, 3-4 that: ‘he looks upon (יביט) darkness as paths of light, in the perfect spring/source (עין תמימים) he shall not be counted’.

‘Gazing’ is associated with revealed wisdom in 4QMysteries (4Q300 1 ii) where the wicked are chastised for not understanding hidden wisdom:

¹[Consider the sooth]sayers (החרטם), those teachers of sin. Say the parable, declare the riddle before we speak; then you will know if you have truly seen (הבטתם) ²[...] your foolishness, for the seal of the vision is sealed up from you, and you have not truly seen (לא הבטתם) the *eternal mysteries* (רזי עד) and you have not become wise in understanding. ³[...] for you have not truly seen (הבטתם) the *origin of wisdom* (שורש חובמה); but if you should unseal the vision ⁴[...] all your wisdom, for to you is the par[able ...] Hear now what is ⁵[the] hidden [wisdom ...]

4QMysteries understands the activity associated with נבט as perceiving true wisdom and mysteries. The ‘soothsayer’ or ‘magician’ may claim to have knowledge and insight but are mocked because they have not ‘truly seen’ eternal mysteries.

Returning to the Community Rule, in the final columns of this scroll (X, 9–XI, 22) we find in first-person speech a proclamation of thankfulness for God’s work. On three occasions gazing is related to the wonders and mysteries of the created order.²⁰ While 1QS belongs to the Yahad, the final two columns (X–XI) and the Treatise on the Two Spirits (III, 13–IV, 26) belong to first stages of redaction and therefore likely reflect theological views that are not limited to a single community or movement.²¹ Here we find the other rare instance of the רז נהיה along with 4QInstruction and 1/4QMysteries.

1QS XI, 3-4a

³For from the spring of his knowledge (מקור דעתו) he opened his light, and my eyes have observed (הביטה) his wonders, and the light of my heart (אורת לבבי) the mystery of ⁴existence (רז נהיה).

1QS XI, 5b-7a

⁵From the spring of his justice (מקור צדקתו) is my judgment, and from the wonderful mystery is the light in my heart (אור לבבי).

⁶My eyes have gazed upon (הביטה) what always is, wisdom (תושיה) that has been hidden from humanity, knowledge and prudent understanding [hidden] from the sons of man, fount of justice and well of ⁷strength and spring of glory [hidden] from the assembly of flesh.

20. Metso 1997: 108: ‘The final psalm corresponding to 1QS X-XI did not belong to the composition in the first stages of redaction, either. In 4QS^e it was replaced by the calendric text 4QOtot.’

21. Weise 1961: 5-7. The relationship between these columns in earlier stages of redaction has been the subject of some attention. Among those who are in favour of viewing the end of col. IX and col. X as originally belonging together: e.g., Murphy-O’Connor 1969: 529-30.

1QS XI, 17b-20a

^{17b}For without you no way is perfect (לוא תתם דרך),
and without your will, nothing comes to be.

You have taught ¹⁸all knowledge,
and all that exists (כול נהיה) is so by your will.

Beyond you there is no-one to oppose your counsel,
to understand (להשכיל) ¹⁹any of your holy thoughts,
to gaze (להביט) into the depth of your mysteries (בעומק רזיכה),
to understand (להתבונן) all your marvels or the strength of ^{20a}your might.

Who can endure your glory?

The identification of ‘light’ with God’s revealing and giving (1QS III, 3-4, 6-7; 1QS XI, 3, 5) is also known in Jas 1.17 (‘every perfect gift, is from above, coming down from the Father of lights’). ‘Light’ in the Yaḥad documents denotes ‘truth’ and ‘perfection’. The idea of God ‘opening his light’ (1QS XI, 3) results in the speaker ‘gazing’ upon God’s wonders. The ‘eyes’ that see are in parallel with the light of his own heart and are the instruments with which he perceives the mystery of existence. The activity of gazing consistently has as its object hidden matters, mysteries and wisdom. The verb להביט is in synonymous parallel with להשכיל (‘to become wise’) and להתבונן (‘to understand’). Both in 4QInstruction (e.g., 4Q417 1 i, 12) and elsewhere in early Jewish literature ‘perfection’ (תמים) is the end goal of wisdom. Jas 1.4 introduces the notion of eschatological perfection, of becoming τέλος, which is both the goal of human endeavors and what God ultimately will judge.²²

Translating δέχομαι in Jas 1.21 as ‘taking’ rather than ‘receiving’ is the difference between, respectively, a more overtly active pursuit of the implanted word versus a more passive one. Indeed, Jas 1.5 teaches that God gives wisdom to those who ask, without doubting, which emphasizes human initiation of a revelatory process. If it is correct to translate the imperative ‘take’, this then locates it within sapiential traditions where – whether Proverbs or 4QInstruction – wisdom is taken. The verbs δέχομαι and παρακύπτω are Greek equivalents to the most common terms used in 4QInstruction for the acquisition of revealed wisdom. This is not to say that λόγος/νόμος in Jas 1.21-25 correspond straightforwardly with the ‘mystery of existence’; indeed, we have seen that ‘gazing’ and ‘taking’ are not limited to the ‘mystery of existence’, but are applied more broadly to the search for: (1) the birthtimes of salvation and understanding of the created order

22. Allison 2013: 154; McCartney 2009: 87; Mußner 1964: 67. Bauckham 1999: 146-47: ‘James’ overarching paraenetic aim of “perfection” (1:4) also has cultic resonances, since the Hebrew תמים, to which James’ use of the τέλειος word-group (perfection, wholeness) corresponds ... must go back to the earliest Palestinian Jewish Christianity. As the example of Qumran clearly shows, it by no means necessarily suggests that such usage substitutes for literal observance of the Mosaic laws of purity and cult.’

(4QInstruction), (2) the origin of wisdom itself (4QMysteries) and (3) the depths of the mysteries of the knowledge of God (1QS). In James, the ‘perfect law’ (1.21) and ‘law of freedom’ (1.25; 2.12) resonate within the context of ‘revealed wisdom’.

4. Conclusions

Wisdom, Logos and Spirit are well known as bridging concepts; they are used to express manifestations of God’s creative activities. In 4QInstruction (4Q417 1 i, 8-9) it is by the mystery of existence that God spreads out the foundation of deeds. Therefore, in 4QInstruction, the mystery of existence may be seen as an instrument used in establishing or creating the order of the cosmos, which recollects Prov. 3.19, where God creates the world with wisdom. Wisdom has similar, but not identical, functions elsewhere. Sirach 43.26 states that ‘by his word all things hold together’. Wisdom pervades the whole world in Wis. 7.24: ‘her [i.e. Wisdom’s] pureness pervades and penetrates all things’ (cf. Ps. 139.7). Philo writes that ‘the spirit ... is everywhere diffused, so as to fill the universe’ (Philo, *Gig.* 27) and also associates Wisdom with the *λόγος* (cf. Philo, *Migr.* 6). Moreover, it is not uncommon for Philo to express ‘mystery’ in relationship to the pursuit of understanding *λόγος*. It was not only Hellenistic Jewish authors who were concerned with how to reconcile a universal God with the particularism of the Mosaic Torah, 4QInstruction was too. The similarities of רז נהיה with the *λόγος* have implications for assessing how traditions are categorized and relate to one another. 4QInstruction, a Hebrew composition dating to the second century BCE, and Hellenistic literature do not appear to be operating within the silos they are frequently perceived.²³

4QInstruction is concerned with questions about the natural order and is widely recognized as establishing its sapiential teaching in ethics from creation. Stoic views, such as those found in Philo, may influence James; however, there are at least two objections to this conclusion: (1) James does not adopt their technical terms, and (2) he uses *λόγος* in ways that are not at home in Stoic thought (i.e. being ‘saved’ by it, and ‘receiving’ it). The brief analysis here begins to demonstrate that the wisdom of רז נהיה has striking similarities with the ‘implanted word’ of Jas 1.21 and the ‘perfect law of freedom’ in 1.25. If it is correct to identify *λόγος* and *νόμος*, then the ‘law’ resonates with Wisdom. James expresses wisdom from above (Jas 3.17) and encourages his audience to ask for

23. The *Logos* idea is used by authors outside of Alexandria without indication of reliance upon Philo. Philo likely offers a glimpse of a common collection of terms and intellectual traditions. The distinction between this ‘reservoir’ and ‘Palestinian’ Judaism is, at least in the case of 4QInstruction, unclear.

wisdom, which is given to the sincere supplicant (Jas 1.5). The letter of James is indeed interested in Mosaic Torah; he cites and alludes to it, and his references to νόμος in ch. 4 clearly indicate that he means Torah. However, not every occurrence of νόμος is functioning the same way, and in 1.21-25 there is no avoiding a relationship between λόγος and νόμος. The λόγος is something that one takes and the νόμος is something that one gazes upon. The reason that the νόμος is 'perfect' is that it relates to 'pure' wisdom that comes from above. νόμος is also described as the 'law of freedom' because its perfection penetrates into the earthly, unspiritual and devilish (Jas 3.13) world below, where 'desire' exists within a human being (Jas 1.14-15). Variegated evil, residing within a human being as well as threatening one from outside, leaves a human being in dire need of emancipation. It is only through revealed wisdom from above that one can find freedom from all that is below.

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