



The Torah likened with nurturing water of Rivers in Sirach

24:23-34: Eco-theological Significance

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Abstract

Sirach 24:23-34 is not about water, but uses water-related metaphors to depict the Torah and its wisdom. Previous studies do acknowledge the relevance of Ben Sira's use of water images, but none has devoted thoroughly its focus on the retrieval of their ecological significance. This article explores ecological insights that might have informed Ben Sira's use of water-related metaphors in his attempt to describe the significance of the Torah. In addition to elements of socio-historical approaches and agricultural features of the text, this study is enabled by a hermeneutics of suspicion and retrieval as well as the Earth Bible principle of intrinsic.

Keywords: River, Torah, wisdom, water, ecological hermeneutics.

Introduction

Sirach 24:23-34 uses water-related metaphors to describe the great wisdom of the Torah. In verses 23-27, the Torah overflows with wisdom similar to the abundant and life-giving waters of the four rivers of the paradise in Genesis 2:11-14 (Pishon, Tigris, Euphrates, and Gihon), and two vital rivers for Judah (the Jordan) and Egypt (the Nile). In verses 28-29, Sirach uses the metaphors of the greatness and depth of the sea to depict the Torah as teeming with wisdom in such abundance that its meaning cannot fully exhausted (Stadelmann, 1980:251).

In verses 30-31, Sirach thinks at first to use the life-giving water to irrigate his own garden, but suddenly his canal became a river and a sea implying a cosmic dimension of wisdom. Ben Sira's wisdom is simply the Torah, of which he was the first to benefit, and that has to be taught to others (vv.32-34) (Skehan & Di Lella, 1987:337).

In all the three parts of Sirach 24:23-34 (vv.23-27; 28-29 & 30-34), water-related metaphors are used to highlight the nurturing potential of the Torah's wisdom. The texts emphasize that water is of vital importance for life, a sign of blessing (see also Sir 15:3; 21:13) (Schnabel, 1985:73). Indeed, the text is not about water, but the use of these water-related metaphors to depict the priceless book of Israel highlight is ecologically insightful.

A great number of studies underline the equivalence of the Torah and Wisdom in this text. While inspired by most of their insights, this article concentrates on the vehicle (water) used to convey



this identification of Torah as wisdom. This article pledges to retrieve the ecological wisdom of water-related images of Sirach 24:23-34. The question is which assumptions about or attitudes towards water are revealed in Sirach's use of these specific water-related images in an attempt to explain the abundant and life-giving wisdom of the Torah? Alternatively, what is the driving ecological significance behind these water-related metaphors profiling the Torah?

The answers to these questions touch on the perceptions the author might have about the *value* or the *intrinsic worth* of these water-related entities and images in the Ancient Near East. Wisdom's instruction is for instance, equated with the fertility of the land made possible by the Nile and the Jordan that spill over their banks with beneficial gifts to nurture Egypt and Israel (Crenshaw, 1997:758). Thus, the analysis takes seriously the historical and agricultural contexts of the text in order to retrieve its ecological insights. Prior to the analysis, let us first present an overview on prevailing readings of Sirach 24.

Brief overview of approaches to Sirach 24:23-34

To my knowledge, there is to date no study on the ecological significance of water images in Sirach 24:23-34. Commentaries are interested in the significance of the identification of the Torah and wisdom, which is the theme of the text (Sheppard, 1980:89 ; Perdue, 2007:247). The driving ecological relevance behind the use of water metaphors has not yet been a focus of a study. Previous studies do acknowledge the use of water images in the text, but none has devoted its focus on their ecological significance.

Therefore, this article is devoted to the ecological relevance of the metaphor of water in Sirach 24:23-34. Given its manifold nature, water turned into a central metaphor through which Israel could express, formulate, reformulate and communicate in intelligible ways concepts that would have been difficult to say differently (Ben Zvi, 2014:27).

Our approach to Sirach 24:23-34

This paper agrees with previous interpretations of the text, but focuses on the ecological retrieval of the metaphor. The question is why the author found the metaphors of the six mighty rivers and other aspects of water appropriate vehicle to depict the Torah. In response to this question, this article relies on geographic and agricultural features presumed in the text before embarking on the retrieval of the ecological significance of water as a metaphor to the Torah/wisdom.

In addition to the suspicion and retrieval hermeneutics, this article uses the Earth Bible principle of *intrinsic worth* to underscore the ecological wisdom of water as a suitable metaphor for the Torah in Sirach 24:23-34. A hermeneutics of suspicion implies that the reader suspects that biblical texts, written by humans and written for human readers, might have only been read from the interest of humans (The Earth Bible Team, 2008:39).

By means of a? hermeneutics of retrieval or trust, this paper focuses on features of the text that can enable to recover insights of intrinsic value of water from the metaphorical styles of Sirach 24:23-34. The reader assumes that the water-related metaphors in Sirach 24 may convey ecological wisdom that went unnoticed in human-centred readings of the text. By the principle of intrinsic worth/value, we elucidate the Earth Bible principle suggesting that "the universe, Earth and



all its components have value in themselves, not only because they are useful for humans.” (The Earth Bible Team, 2008:43).

Overview on the book of Sirach

The date and context of Sirach

The book of Sirach, also called Ecclesiasticus, openly names its author: Jesus Ben Sira. The book was initially written in Hebrew¹ about 180 BCE (Rogers, 1996:142). Ben Sira probably wrote and published his work before the threat of Antiochus IV since the book contains no direct or indirect link to the persecution of the pious Jews (Skehan & Di Lella, 1987:10). Indeed, Sirach reacted against the threat of the Hellenism, but not in an overly critical way because the danger that the Greek philosophy (Hellenism) posed to the traditional Judaism was not as great in Palestine as it was elsewhere.

That is why Ben Sira intended not to provide a bold controversial thesis against the Hellenism. His objective consisted on trying to convince Jews and some Gentiles that the inspired books of Israel are the fountains of accurate wisdom (Di Lella, 1976:141). This idea is clearly expressed in Sirach 24:23-34 in which the Torah is presented as overflowing with Wisdom like water of the six vital rivers (Pishon, Tigris, Euphrates, Jordan, Gihon and Nile). The fullness of this wisdom cannot be exhausted compared to the great size and depth of the sea and abyss (vv. 30-34). Sirach presents himself as a canal to channel the abundant water to the garden and afar off.

Texts and versions of Sirach for

This first hand Hebrew text of Sirach, called HTI, was translated into Greek (GI) by Ben Sira's grandson in Alexandria. Between 50 BCE and 150 CE, HTI underwent enlargement and revision resulting in various textual products (Rogers, 1996:142-143). The final product of this process is known as HTII.

The Greek version of Sirach is the most complete. It contains the entire book even though it exists in two main revisions: GI and GII² (Perdue, 2007:235). Still, the Hebrew versions are preferred as they share the culture and language of the original manuscript (HTI). The analysis of Sirach 24:23-34 is based on a reconstructed Hebrew text as proposed by Skehan (1979:374) and the NRSV (1989). However, the ecological exploration of this article combines the insights of both the Greek and Hebrew languages.

Position of verses 23-34 within Sirach 24

Sirach 24 is a long wisdom poem consisting of three distinct units. The first, Sirach 24:1-22, is a first-person Wisdom poem rhetorically similar to Proverbs 8:22-31. The second, Sirach 24:23-29,

¹ For further details about different editions and versions of Sirach, see Rogers (1996:142-143).

² GI refers to the short Greek version of Ben Sira's grandson based on the original Hebrew text (HTI) while GII refers to expanded Greek revisions based on HTII.



is a six-line stanza in which Wisdom flows from the Torah like the life-giving water of the six rivers. The last unit describes Ben Sira's role as a wisdom teacher metaphorically compared to a rivulet channelling water afar off (Sir, 24:30-34).

This study focuses on the second and third textual units of Sirach 24, namely verses 23-29 and verses 30-34 containing plain water-related metaphors depicting the Torah. These two units will be studied separately although the second continues the water imagery of the first.

The Hebrew text of Sirach 24:23-29³

23 כל זאת ספר ברית עליון

מורשה קהלת יעקב	תורה צוה לנו משה
וכחדקל בימי אביב	25 המלאה כפישון חכמה
וכירדן בימי בציר	26 המציפה כפרת שכל
וכניחון בימי בציר	27 המשפיעה כיאור מוסר
ואף האחרון לא יחקרנה	28 לא כלה הראשון לדעתה
ועצתה מתהום רבה	29 כי מים עצמה מחשבתה

Translation of Sirach 24:23-29

Except for verse 27b, this article adopts the translation of the NRSV (1989). It seems that verse 27b in the NRSV is based on G1 omitting *kai* (and) before Gihon in order to show as if the Nile is the synonym of Gihon as the LXX did in Jeremiah 2:18.

G1 reads: 27 ὁ ἐκφαίνων ὡς φῶς παιδείαν, ὡς Γηων ἐν ἡμέραις τρυγῆτου (It pours forth instruction like the Nile, like the Gihon at the time of vintage).

GII reads: 27 ὁ ἐκφαίνων ὡς φῶς παιδείαν καὶ ὡς Γηων ἐν ἡμέραις τρυγῆτου (It pours forth instruction like the Nile, **and** like the Gihon at the time of vintage).

As seen, the Greek preposition *kai* is attested in GII translating the original Hebrew syntax וכניחון (and like Gihon) in HTI above, and thus, giving a perfect balance to verses 25-27 in terms of one river in each of the six lines of verses 25-27 (Skehan & Di Lella, 1987:337).

³ The original Hebrew text (HTI) lacks verse 24. It seems that a pious Jew later added it in GII as follows: *Do not grow weary of striving with the Lord's help, but cling to him that he may reinforce you. The Lord Almighty alone is God, and apart from him there is no saviour.* This article lines with most modern translations (NRSV, TOB) which simply ignore this pious statement for two reasons: first, GII is a later Greek recension based on a secondary Hebrew version (HTII), and second, this pious verse breaks the rhetoric patterns of the poem that is filled with water-related metaphors.

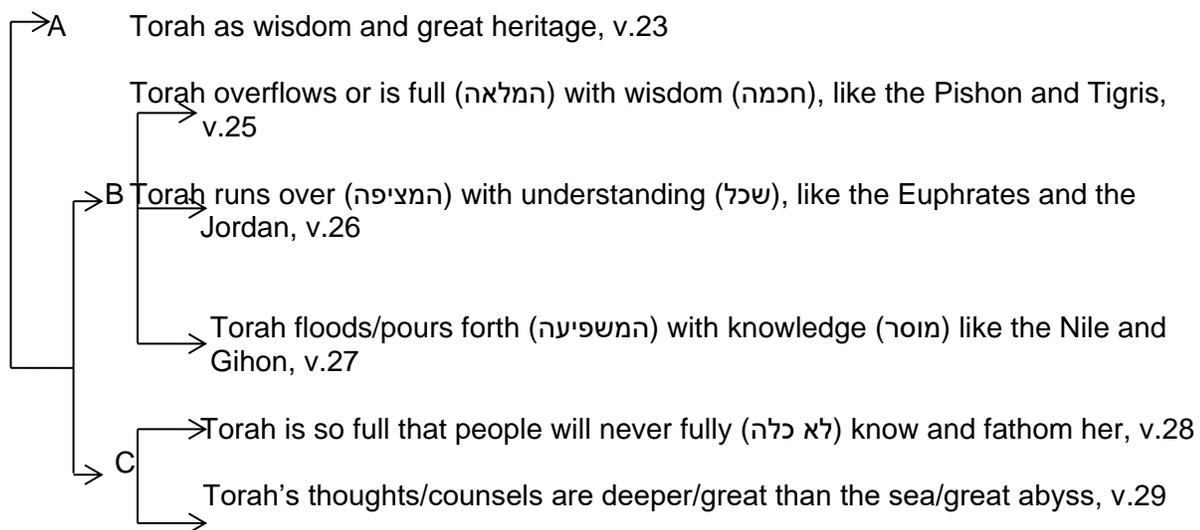


Thus, the translation can be presented as follows:

- 23 All this is the book of the covenant of the Most High God,
 the law that Moses commanded us
 as an inheritance for the congregations of Jacob.
 25 It overflows, like the Pishon, with wisdom,
 and like the Tigris at the time of the first fruits.
 26 It runs over, like the Euphrates, with understanding,
 and like the Jordan at harvest time.
 27 It pours forth instruction like the Nile⁴
 and like the Gihon at the time of vintage.
 28 The first man did not know wisdom fully,
 nor will the last one fathom her.
 29 For her thoughts are more abundant than the sea,
 and her counsel deeper than the great abyss.

Literary structure of Sirach 24:23-29

The poem presents itself in the following structure:



Sirach 24:23-29 presents itself as an ABC structure. A contains the main subject, which is the Torah (v. 23). B is made of three parallel verses (vv. 25-27) each containing two rivers and one agricultural season (Kavusa, 2016:207). B underlines the vital role of the Torah via the metaphor of the life-giving waters of six rivers (Pishon, Tigris, Euphrates, Jordan, Nile and Gihon) fertilising the land at precise seasons (the times of first fruits, harvest and vintage). The Hebrew version of

⁴ The Greek translation misunderstood the Hebrew word יאור as light instead of the Nile, combining thus the verb אאיר (for shining) used in verse 32b to underline the role of Sirach to send forth teachings to shine like the dawn. However, the Syriac Peshitta understood the Hebrew word יאור in verse 27a as the Nile.



the text organises the poem in such a way that the beginnings (ה) and endings (בימי-) of lines in verses 25-27 almost carry identical resonance (Skehan, 1979:379).

C turns to the idea of abundance of the Wisdom, which is more profound than the depths of the sea and greater than the abyss. That is why people never fully exhaust its insights from the very remote time. B and C are, thus, the depiction of the vitality of the subject of A.

Sirach 24:23-29 purposely started with Pishon and end with Gihon on the list so that the Nile and the Jordan appear as further streams of the paradise (Sheppard, 1980:69). The Nile and the Jordan are two remarkable rivers in the Ancient Near East. For Sirach, these two rivers deserve a place among the cosmic rivers channelling water from Eden toward the whole earth (Gn. 2:10). Water is therefore a metaphor of life in Sirach 24:23-29.

Ecological retrieval of water metaphors in verses 23-29

This section attempts an ecological retrieval of Sirach 24:23-29. It focuses on the relevance of the textual patterns used in verses 23-27 to compare the actions of the Torah with that of the life-giving water of the six mighty rivers before concluding with additional ecological significances in verses 28-29.

Brim-full like Pishon and Tigris (verse 25)

The Torah is said to be full (המלאה) of Wisdom (חכמה) like the Pishon and Tigris at the time of new crops, namely in springtime when rivers are at their highest water level (Skehan & Di Lella, 1987:336). The Hebrew verb is מלא (to be full) and recalls that of Genesis 1:28 when אלהים confers on humans the blessing of fullness (מלא) and fertility. Thus, Sirach 24:25 presumes the fullness of the life-giving waters of Pishon and Tigris enabling land fertility for the crops to spring up.

Sirach 24:25-27 also implies Psalm 1 where the metaphor of water is used to contrast the wicked with those who abide by the Torah. In Psalm 1:3, the righteous are like evergreen trees planted by streams of water (על-פלגי מים) that yield their fruits in season. From the perspective of Sirach 24:25-27, water not only flows to allow fertility but also at the time needed. The Torah fertilises its listeners at the time of need.

We should finally observe that Pishon and Tigris figure among the four rivers of Genesis 2:10-14 canalising water from Eden to fertilise the garden. The hydrological data of the Ancient Near East tells us that an inconsistency in the flow of the Tigris can cause devastating floods in some years and disastrous droughts in others (Rasmussen, 1989:66). In this sense, Sirach 24:25 puts the emphasis on “overflows with wisdom” picturing a life-giving function of the Tigris overflowing only at the time of new crops.

Flowing like the Euphrates and the Jordan (verse 26)

The Torah runs over like the Euphrates

In this verse, the poem shifts from the idea of “fullness” to that of “movement towards.” Here, the Torah runs over like the Euphrates with understanding (שכל) and like the Jordan at harvest time. In



Isaiah 3:7, the Euphrates is named הַנְּהַר, to mean the river *par excellence*. The words הַנְּהַר הגָּדֹל (the great River) in Deuteronomy 1:7 underlines the same ideal. The size of this river impressed the Israelites who were not familiar with such bodies of water. In this sense, Isaiah 8:6 contrasts its mighty floods with the water of Shiloh that flows gently (לֵאט). In addition, the fact that Sargon II boasted about having crossed the Euphrates during its mighty floods shows how Ancient Near Eastern people feared this river (Reymond, 1958:87).

However, Sirach 24:26 softens the mighty floods of the Euphrates with the Hebrew word שָׁכַל (understanding),⁵ providing them with a nourishing role applicable to the Torah. The inundations of the Euphrates result in the fertility of the land. This is what Sirach 24:26, in my view, equates with “running over with understanding”. In other words, the righteous relies on the Torah for a responsible ethical life, just as life in the Euphrates and Jordan valleys was dependent upon the floods of these two rivers (Snaith, 1974:125).

The Torah flowing like the Jordan

According to Köhler (1939:62), Jordan is the junction of two Iranian words: *dan* (river) and *Jār* (year) denoting the river that permanently flows the whole year. In its yearly flowing, the Jordan irrigated and made attractive the Jordan valley for human settlements. That is why Loth preferred the Jordan valley for his settlement as it was watered everywhere (כָּלָה מְשֻׁקָה) comparable to the garden of YHWH (כְּגַן-יְהוָה) and the land of Egypt (כְּאֶרֶץ-מִצְרַיִם) (Gn. 13:10).

However, like the Euphrates, sometimes the Jordan is inundated with rushing and violent waves. That is why 1 Chronicles 12:16 admire the officers of the army who crossed the Jordan during its flooding time. Still the great floods of the Jordan enabled evergreen plants all along the river and the whole Jordan valley contrasting, thus, with the dryness in the highlands (Reymond, 1958:94). The valley was one of the sole places that yielded plenty of large trees for construction (2 Ki 6:2), thus, denoting the life-giving role of the floods (Gradmann, 1937:176).

The likeness of the Torah with the water of these two rivers is less on the form of their flooding and more on their providence of life-giving water fertilising the land (Kavusa 2016:210). The comparison is not concerned with the violence of the floods, but with what the floods bring to the land: fertility. The Hebrew syntax בְּיָמֵי אֲבוֹתַי (at harvest time or month of harvest) rendered in Greek as ἐν ἡμέραις θερισμοῦ adequately underscores this argument. In other parts of the Bible, the word ἐν ἡμέραις means “a day appointed for a special purpose.”⁶ In Sirach 24:26, the appointed day is “the harvest time” that is made possible by the inundations of the Euphrates and the Jordan just as the Torah’s listeners acquire the understanding, overflowing from it at “an appointed time” of life.

Flooding like the Nile and Gihon (verse 27)

Verse 27 says that Torah inundates with knowledge like the Nile and the Gihon at the time of harvest. In the Greek version of Jeremiah 2:18, the Gihon is identified with the Nile. The same idea

⁵ For meanings of שָׁכַל, see Strong (1999:718).

⁶ See Luke 17:24; Acts 28:23; 1 Corinthians 4:3, Revelation 16:14 etc.



appears in G1 intentionally omitting *καί* (and) before *ὡς ἡ Γων* (like the Gihon).⁷ Contrary to G1, GII has *καί* before Gihon. Possibly, the original Hebrew text (HTI) contained 'and' before 'like' that totalises one river in each line of verses 25-27 (Skehan & Di Lella, 1987:337).

The Nile's⁸ floods were not viewed as life-threatening because they caused the fertility of the land. When the water retreated after the inundations, it left behind a marshy and fertile land ready for agriculture (see Ex 2:3 & Is 19:6). The floods deposited rich black silt in its rise and provided the Egyptians with a great volume of water and a renewed arable land (Ikram, 2010:6).

Sirach 24:27 clearly has this idea in mind. The life-giving water of the Nile inundation renewing the land, and thus food for people, is equated with knowledge flowing from the Torah to irrigate and nourish people's lives. The Nile "floods with knowledge" (v. 27a) means that the river rises at the right time, namely after the dry season of February-June when the dry land actually longs for being hydrated, fertilised and nurtured (Kavusa, 2016:2012).

Gihon has the same fertilising function. In Psalm 110:7, the king drank from the brook (*גִּיחֹן*) – Gihon – showing pride and victory over the enemy. Gihon is, thus, not simply life-refreshing, but the means of the divine help in the defence of Zion (Stordalen, 2000:358). Gihon is mentioned in 2 Chronicles 32:2-4 as being blocked in order to prevent the enemies of Israel to quench their thirst. Gihon is very vital for Israel that his Kings were crowned at Gihon (see 1 Ki. 1:38).

Sirach 24:27ab?? embodies two cultures: Egypt and Israel. While the inundation of the Nile resulted in the fertility of the land of Egypt, in Israel the Gihon flowing waters fertilised nearby vineyards and the city of Jerusalem⁹ (Perdue, 2007:247). The abundant life-giving waters of these two rivers that enrich the land typify the life-giving power of Wisdom.

Sirach 24:23-29 as a metaphor for the Promised Land

In Genesis 15:18, God promised a land "from the river Egypt [Nile] to the great river Euphrates." In Deuteronomy 11:11, Israel is promised a well irrigated land "beyond the Jordan" on condition that they abide by the Torah. The Nile, Euphrates and Jordan are the great river boundaries of the Promised Land full of water (von Rad, 1966:85).

Therefore, through the river metaphors of Pishon, Tigris, Gihon, Euphrates, the Nile and Jordan, Sirach 24:23-29 recalls an Eden-like Promised Land in which the Torah overflows with wisdom (Sheppard 1980:71). The wealth of wisdom is similar to the beneficial potential of these great rivers that timely overflow life-giving water to fertilise and sustain the land. The comparison of the Torah with the flooding of these rivers meant a lot for the people of the Ancient Near East who depended on these rivers to survive. Any attempt that could pollute these rivers was viewed as a criminal and

⁷ Many scholars do agree with G1 that the Gihon is the other appellation of the Nile here (see Snaith 1974:125).

⁸ The Nile inundation was so relevant for Egypt that its calendar was based on it. The Egyptian calendar was divided into three basic seasons: *Akhet* or inundation (June-October); *Peret* or coming forth/growing, when the land rose from water and ready for agriculture (October to mid-February); and *Shemu* or drought, when the crops ripened and were harvested (February-June) (Ikram 2010:8).

⁹ Scholars agree that the Gihon source and stream provide the physical background for the Temple source and river in the vision of Ezekiel 47:1-12 (details, see Stordalen 2000:366-367).



unforgivable act (Pr. 25:26). Here water is an incredible ecological metaphor of fertility and abundance.

Wisdom as deeper/greater than a sea/abyss (verses 28-29)

The expressions “the first human” and “the last human” (v. 28) imply the totality all past and future generations of human beings. Human kind will never exhaust the totality of Wisdom. It is in this sense, that verse 29 likens wisdom with the depth and size of the sea. Amazingly, verse 29 presents a well-balanced chiasmic structure¹⁰ as follows:

- A Her (Wisdom) thoughts
- B Her (Wisdom) counsels
- A' More abundant than the sea
- B' Deeper than the great abyss

The two Hebrew words for water, namely מים and תהום רבה are rendered in Greek as θαλάσσα (sea) and ἀβύσσου μεγάλης (great abyss) referring to two mythological water entities venerated by ancient people as to their massiveness and primeval existence. However, unlike Sirach 46:23-26, Sirach 24 does not focus on the violent potential of these water entities, but the massiveness and universality of Wisdom (Sir, 24:5-6).

5 I alone compassed the circuit of heaven, and walked in the bottom of the deep. 6 In the waves of the sea and in all the earth, and in every people and nation, I got a possession.

The point is that just as no one can contain the sea and the abyss, so none can fully master the extent of the Torah's wisdom (Crenshaw, 1997:758). It will remain a mystery for human beings just as water it is.

This universal dimension of wisdom is portrayed in terms of the hugeness and pre-existence of these cosmic waters. That is why the text compares wisdom to the flooding of different rivers of the Ancient Near East as to be inclusive. Sirach 24:28-29 underlines the ecological aspect that water is something bigger than us which we cannot fully control, but also without which we cannot live.

28 The first man knew her not perfectly: no more shall the last find her out. 29 For her thoughts are more than the sea, and her counsels profounder than the great deep.

The idea of abundance and sharing

Sirach boldly see himself as a canal to spread afar off the wisdom as the four cosmic rivers that originated from Eden to water the garden in Genesis 2:10-13. In verses 30-31, Sirach thinks first to use wisdom for his own interest, but suddenly his canal became a river and a sea suggesting a

¹⁰ See Crenshaw (1997:758).



cosmic dimension of wisdom. Likewise, the river that originated from Eden at first to water the garden in Genesis 2:10, suddenly divides and becomes four branches (abundant) to irrigate the whole world. Both Genesis and Sirach underline the idea of abundance and water distribution.

In Sirach 24:30-34 the metaphor sheds light on the referent and vice versa.

30 I also came out as a brook from a river, and as a conduit into a garden. 31 I said, I will water my best garden, and will water abundantly my garden bed: and, lo, my brook became a river, and my river became a sea. 32 I will yet make doctrine to shine as the morning, and will send forth her light afar off. 33 I will yet pour out doctrine as prophecy, and leave it to all ages for ever. 34 Behold that I have not laboured for myself only, but for all them that seek wisdom.

The text highlights the life-giving potential of wisdom/water flowing freely to nurture those on her way. In this sense, the Torah is not considered as Sirach invention. Sirach was the first to benefit of it, and has the responsibility to share this wisdom with others. Whatever we do about water we must be sure that our actions will contribute to the sustainability of water for future generations.

Conclusion

The metaphor of the life-giving waters of six rivers and their roles in the fertility of the land and ecosystem balance is ecologically insightful. Just as the Torah is the great heritage of life (v. 23), the flowing waters of the depicted rivers causes life along their journey. The wealth of wisdom is similar to the beneficial potential of these great rivers that periodically inundates with life-giving water to fertilise and sustain the land and the people who depended on it for their survival.

The text also highlights the idea of abundance. Just as water,¹¹ the wisdom from the Torah is too abundant and relevant, and thus cannot be individualized but shared afar off (vv. 30-34). The words “the first and last human” (v. 28) imply all past and future generations unable to exhaust the fullness of wisdom. Water is an incredible metaphor of abundance and fertility.

Finally, the comparison of the Torah with these rivers has a sociological meaning. First, the named rivers flow regardless political and social realities. Second, they allowed the rise of great empires and civilisations throughout the irrigated lands (the Nile for Egypt, Euphrates and Tigris in Mesopotamia and Jordan for Canaan). Gihon and Pishon are part of four rivers that channel water from Eden in Genesis 2:10-14 to the rest of the world. Just as these rivers made possible the rise of power in the regions, the listeners of the Torah will flourish. There is a link between wealth and access to water.

¹¹ Despite the life-giving role that water plays for people and the ecosystems, it is a surprisingly finite resource. Less than 1% of water on the planet is fresh and accessible. Still, scholars think that even this 1% could be enough if it was adequately distributed. See <https://www.worldwildlife.org/initiatives/fresh-water>.



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