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Ben Sira and the Giants of the Land: A Note on Ben Sira 16:7

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In this short note I address the common claim that Sir 16:7 alludes to Gen 6:1–4. I argue that understanding the verse in this way is not unreasonable but that this position needs to be qualified. The primary reference of the line is not the flood story but archaic peoples of the land. Genesis 6 and early Jewish traditions that pertain to this chapter influence Ben Sira’s description of archaic Canaanite rulers. Ben Sira, in an effort to assert the inevitability of God’s punishment of sin, writes: “He did not forgive the ancient giants, who revolted in their might” (16:7 NSRV).¹ This translation reflects the Greek, which reads:

οὐκ ἐξιλάσατο περὶ τῶν ἀρχαίων γιγάντων, οἳ ἀπέστησαν τῇ ἰσχύι αὐτῶν.

It is commonplace to interpret the verse as an allusion to the famous (or perhaps infamous) offspring of the angels in Gen 6:1–4, a text that has received an enormous amount of attention in recent years because of its adaptation by the Enochic Book of the Watchers.³ Benjamin G. Wright, in his dissertation, writes that Sir 16:7 con-

I thank Eibert Tigchelaar and Gregory Goering for their comments on an earlier draft of this paper.


³ Recent scholarship on the Book of the Watchers includes Annette Yoshiko Reed, Fallen Angels and the History of Judaism and Christianity: The Reception of Enochic Literature (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005); Siam Bhayro, The Shemihazah and Asael Narrative of 1 Enoch
tains “a clear reference to the tradition found in Genesis 6.” Moshe Tsvi Segal, in his important commentary on Ben Sira in Hebrew, also argues that the verse alludes to Gen 6:1–4. More recently, W. Th. van Peursen has also interpreted the verse in this way.4

Discerning a reference to Gen 6:1–4 in Sir 16:7 makes sense, but the Hebrew of the verse complicates the issue. As is well known, the key terms נזלים and בוברים of Gen 6:4 are translated with γίγας (“giant”) in the LXX.5 Neither correspondence is found in Sir 16:7. Rather, this is the only instance of γίγας rendering the relatively rare word דסי (“leader,” “chieftain”). Two slightly different Hebrew witnesses for this verse are available:

Asher la nasu kedem hamorim solam bavorot

Asher la nasu kedem hamorim [רָחֵם]

The two manuscripts preserve the same text for the first half of the verse. B appears to end with בוברים, which would accord with A.7 בוברים is lacking in B (and the Greek). Since this part of the manuscript is fragmentary, it is possible that the word was originally present.8 The core difference is that A has הומרים


5 Wright, Origin of Evil Spirits, 83.


7 Note the fragmentary text of Bm: [ ּ], which can be plausibly reconstructed as [ ּ]. Perhaps B had a slight error in its version of the word, which was corrected in the margin.

8 The equivalent term is in the Syriac, suggesting that מלוול was present in the Hebrew Vorlage used by the Greek translator. מלוול has no counterpart in the Greek, presumably because the translator chose not to translate it. Perhaps he thought it was superfluous since without this word it is still clear that the “chieftains” existed a long time ago (דסי). Solomon Schechter understood מלוול as “world” on the basis of Sir 3:18 (A). The absence of a preposition suggests that it should be read adverbially (“long ago”). See Francesco Vattioni, Ecclesiasticus: Testo ebraico con apparato critico e versioni greca, latina e siriana (Istituto orientale de Napoli, pubblicazioni del Seminario
and B לֹאַהֲרָה and לֹאֶרֶת can both signify some sort of rebellion against God.\(^9\) It is not clear that the variation produces a demonstrably different meaning. Van Peursen has recently suggested that המְרוֹרִים should be pointed as המְרוֹדִים (“the ones who were brought down”).\(^{11}\) Reading מְרוֹדִים would convey that the chieftains were brought down \textit{with} their strength—that is, they used their power but were nevertheless defeated.\(^{12}\) This would imply some sort of physical opposition to God, not unlike reading “rebelling.”\(^{13}\) The original Hebrew text of Sir 16:7 cannot be reconstructed precisely. It is reasonable, however, to understand the verse as stating that the chieftains used their strength long ago to oppose God, who punished them. Ben Sira 16:7 can thus be reasonably translated, “As he did not show favor to the chieftains of old, who rebelled [long ago] with their strength.”

The key issue for interpreting the verse is the word נָסִיך. Alexander A. Di Lella and Patrick W. Skehan contend that Ben Sira chose the expression נָסִיךְ כֹּהֵן in order to allude to Genesis 6 in a way that intentionally avoids the term מִשְׁלֵיהָ. Ben Sira 16:7 attests, they suggest, a “conscious avoidance of the mythological overtones to the Genesis narrative so familiar from the Enoch literature.”\(^{14}\) They assert that the expression “chieftains of old” also refers to kings from earlier eras, such as Nebuchadnezzar.\(^{15}\) So understood, in 16:7 the sage, motivated by disdain for the cir-

\(^9\) Both verbs are used in the Hebrew Bible with the preposition ב, but this occurs much more often with לֹאַהֲרָה than with לֹאֶרֶת. See, e.g., 2 Kgs 18:7; Isa 36:5; Jer 52:3; Hos 14:1. לֹאַהֲרָה is accompanied by ב elsewhere in Ben Sira (30:12).

\(^10\) לֹאַהֲרָה often conveys willful transgression of God’s commandments (e.g., Num 20:24; 1 Sam 12:15) and לֹאֶרֶת can signify some sort of political rebellion (Gen 14:4; Neh 6:6) or one specifically against God (Num 14:9). In the LXX, the verb of Sir 16:7 (ἀφίστημι) is used to translate both terms, although not with equal frequency. It corresponds to לֹאֶרֶת several times (e.g., Josh 22:18–19; 2 Chr 13:6) and once to לֹאַהֲרָה (in the hiphil), in Ezek 20:8.


\(^12\) Ibid., 206. Van Peursen translates the preposition as “because of,” a rendering that emphasizes the chieftains’ strength in their opposition to God. See Bill T. Arnold and John H. Choi, \textit{A Guide to Biblical Hebrew Syntax} (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 105.

\(^13\) Reading “brought down” would, however, open up an interpretative possibility that “rebelling” does not—that the מְרוֹדִים were thrown down into Sheol. As discussed below, Ezekiel 32 asserts that “chieftains” were defeated and sent to the netherworld.


\(^15\) Di Lella and Skehan, \textit{Wisdom of Ben Sira}, 274.
cles who produced the Book of the Watchers, adopts a less mythological approach to Genesis while also invoking other kings.16

Reading a connection to Genesis 6 is problematized by the fact that no attestation of קסן in the Hebrew Bible signifies the antediluvian giants. קסן occurs only four times in this corpus: Josh 13:21; Ps 83:12; Ezek 32:30; and Mic 5:4. In all of these instances except Mic 5:4, the term refers to Gentile chieftains from an early period in the history of Israel.17 Ezekiel 32:17–32 is a diatribe against an Egyptian pharaoh, presumably Hophra (29:1; 32:2, 17), who is imagined as descending to Sheol, where he will join other defeated Gentile enemies of Israel. Among them are “the leaders of the north” (נזכרים צפון), who are associated with the Sidonians (32:30). Joshua 13:15–23 describes the allocation of land to the tribe of Reuben in part by discussing the acquisition of areas previously held by the Amorite king Sihon. He was defeated along with “the princes of Midian” (נשיאי נמל), who are also called “leaders of Sihon” (נזכרים סיהון, v. 21). Psalm 83 is a prayer for God to deliver Israel from its national enemies. The hymn urges that the deity “make their nobles [ będęיו] like Oreb and Zeeb, all their leaders [יבשכמו] like Zebah

16 There has been a spate of scholarship in recent years, led by figures such as Randal A. Argall and Wright, that provides a more nuanced perspective than viewing Ben Sira and the Book of the Watchers as simply opposed to each other. See, e.g., Wright, “Wisdom, Instruction and Social Location in Ben Sira and 1 Enoch,” in In Praise of Wisdom and Instruction: Essays on Ben Sira and Wisdom, the Letter of Aristeas and the Septuagint (JSJSup 131; Leiden: Brill, 2008), 147–63; idem, “1 Enoch and Ben Sira: Wisdom and Apocalypticism in Relationship,” in The Early Enoch Literature (ed. Gabriele Boccaccini and John J. Collins; JSJSup 121; Leiden: Brill, 2007), 159–76; idem, “Ben Sira and The Book of the Watchers on the Legitimate Priesthood,” in Intertextual Studies in Ben Sira and Tobit: Essays in Honor of Alexander A. Di Lella, O.F.M (ed. Jeremy Corley and Vincent Skemp; CQMS 38; Washington, DC: Catholic Biblical Association of America, 2005), 241–54; Argall, 1 Enoch and Sirach: A Comparative and Conceptual Analysis of the Themes of Revelation, Creation, and Judgment (SBLEJL 8; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1995). See also Martha Himmelfarb, A Kingdom of Priests: Ancestry and Merit in Ancient Judaism (Jewish Culture and Contexts; Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006).


18 This also problematizes the proposal that the expression “chieftains of old” in Ben Sira 16 denotes later kings such as Nebuchadnezzar. Micah 5:4 asserts that Israel will raise up eight “rulers” (נוכרים ארם) to oppose Assyria. Understanding the term as referring to specifically Aramean chiefs, Delbert R. Hillers emends נוכרים ארם to נוכרים ארם נוכרים ארם. It is possible that נוכרים can signify a leader who is Aramean, but that is not unambiguously evident in the other biblical attestations of this word. See Hillers, Micah: A Commentary on the Book of the Prophet Micah (Hermeneia; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984), 68. Consult also Bruce K. Waltke, A Commentary on Micah (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007), 290–91.
and Zalmunna” (v. 12 [Eng. 11]). This is a reference to the premonarchic defeat of Midianite rulers, a tradition preserved in the Gideon narrative of Judges 6–8 (cf. 7:25; 8:21).

The word נֵכֶר with the meaning “chieftain” is even rarer in early Jewish Hebrew and Aramaic texts, suggesting that it became an archaic term that fell out of use. It is not attested in the Dead Sea Scrolls. In Ben Sira it occurs only in 16:7. The sage uses the word in a way that is similar to its employment in the Hebrew Bible. Verse 7 is part of a brief unit (vv. 5–10) that assembles evidence from the national history of Israel in order to support a basic axiom: the inevitability of God’s punishment of the wicked. The pericope reads:

16:5 Many such things my eye has seen, even more than these my ear has heard.
16:6 Against a sinful band fire is enkindled; upon a godless people wrath flames forth.
16:7 He forgave not the chieftains of old (נסיכים קדומים) who were rebellious in their might;
16:8 He spared not the neighbors of Lot, abominable in their pride;
16:9 Nor did he spare the doomed people who were dispossessed because of their sin;
16:10 Nor the six hundred thousand foot soldiers who went to their graves for the arrogance of their hearts.

The dominant theme of this unit is the divine punishment of the wicked, both Canaanite and Israelite, in premonarchic Israel. Verse 8 accuses the people of Sodom of arrogance (ὑπερηφανίαν) and claims that they were not spared, a patent reference to their destruction in Genesis 19. Verse 9 invokes the biblical trope that the Canaanites lost possession of the land because of their iniquities (e.g., Lev 18:24). The “six hundred thousand foot soldiers” of Sir 16:10 is a reference to the waywardness of Israel in the desert. This group (except for Joshua and Caleb; cf. Sir 46:8) died without entering Canaan because, Ben Sira asserts, God punished their insolence (σκληροκαρδίᾳ; e.g., Num 11:21; 14:22–24). The destruction of sinners by fire in Sir 16:6 may also be an allusion to the punishment of rebellious Israelites, since God sends fire against some of them at a place named Taberah (Num 11:1–3). Ben Sira 16:5–10 emphasizes the early history of Israel, not the

19 The LXX translation of Mic 5:4 also gives this impression. In the other three biblical instances of this word the term was understood, since ἄρχων corresponds to רעך. In Mic 5:4, however, the translation is δηγμα (“bite”), producing the odd phrase “eight bites (or: stings) of men.” The Hebrew verb “to bite” is לֶשׁ (e.g., Amos 5:19). The translator presumably did not know the meaning of the word נֵכֶר in his Vorlage and considered it a mistake for a similar Hebrew term, which he then translated. See Hillers, Mica, 68; Waltke, Commentary on Mica, 290.
20 After Sir 16:7 the Hebrew of the pericope is available only in A.
21 Di Lella and Skehan (Wisdom of Ben Sira, 273) discern this allusion. Maurice Gilbert understands the verse as describing a “general principle” (God’s punishment of sinners) rather than a reference to a specific verse. The unit’s biblical allusions indicate that both perspectives are valid—
antediluvian period. This suggests that, at the very least, the primary intent of 16:7 is not to refer to the era before the flood. The immediate context suggests that the chieftains of this verse are early Gentile rulers in the land of Israel. This understanding of the verse is evident in its Syriac translation. The Syriac states that God did not forgive “the ancient kings” (عَلَاثُّ مَهْمَعَ), presumably reflecting the view that מַדְקַי מַדְקַי denotes aboriginal leaders of early Canaan.

Since the pericope of vv. 5–10 and the core word קַיָּם suggest that the rulers of Sir 16:7 should not be located in the primordial period, one could conclude that this verse does not refer to Genesis 6. Maurice Gilbert has, for example, asserted that the Hebrew verse refers instead to Genesis 14—the story of the Canaanite kings who rebel against the Elamite monarch Chedorlaomer. There is some rationale for this interpretation. Genesis 14 would fit with the focus in Sir 16:5–10 on the early history of the land. The Canaanite kings of this chapter, while famously enigmatic, are archaic Gentile rulers, which would accord with the usage of קַיָּם elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible. Reading a reference to Genesis 14 in Sir 16:7 would also help explain why the next verse brings up Lot, who is captured by Chedorlaomer and his allies, to be rescued by Abram (Gen 14:12, 16; cf. 1QapGen 22:3, 11). However, key elements of Sir 16:7 are not well explained by an appeal to Genesis 14. The story never emphasizes the strength of the kings. Neither the eastern nor the Canaanite


22 For the view that the Syriac of Ben Sira is translated from the Hebrew, see Di Lella and Skehan, Wisdom of Ben Sira, 57. It has also been argued that the Hebrew manuscripts attest some degree of retroversion from the Syriac. For an overview of this issue, see van Peursen, Verbal System in the Hebrew Text of Ben Sira, 20-23. Consult further Michael P. Weitzman, The Syriac Version of the Old Testament: An Introduction (University of Cambridge Oriental Publications 56; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 79.

23 Gilbert understands the Greek version of the verse, with its “giants,” as alluding to Genesis 6. He proposes his interpretation of the Hebrew as a corrective to the view of Di Lella and Skehan that the phrase “chieftains of old” harks back to Nebuchadnezzar. Gilbert argues that positing an allusion to this Babylonian figure would disrupt the historical flow of the passage, which follows the canonical order of the Torah—the kings of Genesis 14 (Sir 16:7) followed by the destruction of Sodom in Genesis 19 (Sir 16:8). The dispossession of the Canaanites (Sir 16:9) does not happen, however, before the punishment of the wilderness generation (v. 10). Also, as discussed above, v. 6 may allude to an episode in Numbers 11. This is probably why Gilbert understands this verse, as mentioned in n. 21, as asserting a general point rather than referring to a specific biblical passage—an allusion to Numbers 11 in this verse would disrupt the historical sequence of biblical allusions in Sir 16:5-10. See his “Ben Sira, Reader of Genesis 1-11,” in Corley and Skemp, Intertextual Studies in Ben Sira and Tobit, 89–99, esp. 92.
monarchs rebel against God. The rulers led by Chedorlaomer are defeated by Abram, not through divine punishment.

The Hebrew text of Sir 16:7 is better explained by positing that Ben Sira describes aboriginal Canaanite rulers with language that evokes Genesis 6. is a common word and should not in every instance be understood as an allusion to the famous of that biblical chapter. The phrase in Sir 16:7, however, can be legitimately interpreted in this way. The term “chieftains,” and the entire context of vv. 5–10, signifies the early history of Israel, not the primordial period, as I have argued. The physical strength of the Canaanites, however, is not a major trope in the Hebrew Bible. Yet it is present. Some of the aboriginal inhabitants of the land are of great height and, naturally enough, are understood as physically powerful. Amos 2:9 asserts that the Amorites were tall as cedars and strong as oaks. The Anaqim in particular are understood as mighty. Deuteronomy stresses that they are tall and powerful (1:28; 9:2; cf. 2:20–21). Genesis 6:4 provides no physical description of the . In Num 13:33, the only other reference to them in the Bible, they are strong and of great size (vv. 31–33). So understood, the are similar in terms of stature to early Canaanite peoples such as the Anaqim. Numbers 13 connects these two groups, although the precise relationship between the two is not clarified. The spies also saw the Anaqim and observed that they too are strong (vv. 22, 28). Verse 33 claims that “the Anaqim come from the .” They are thus construed as a predecessor group from which some of the early Canaanites originate, but this assertion is probably a gloss.

Since the Torah associates the with some of the early inhabitants of Canaan, it should not be surprising that Ben Sira, who relied extensively on the Torah, describes archaic Canaanite leaders with language that derives from Genesis 6. Numbers 13 presumably made it easier for the sage to discuss early Canaan-

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24 One could suppose that the word in B adapts the assertion that the Canaanite kings rebel (מְרָדָה) against King Chedorlaomer (Gen 14:4).


26 This statement is not in the LXX, which suggests that it is an addition. It has been speculated that Num 13:33 as a whole is secondary, written to emphasize a link between the Anaqim and the . The version of the spies episode in Deuteronomy asserts that they encounter the Anaqim, without ever mentioning the (1:28). See Baruch A. Levine, Numbers 1–20: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary (AB 4A; New York: Doubleday, 1993), 359.

27 Later Judaism preserves traditions regarding the primordial gibborim that influence conceptions of early Canaanites. In Tg. Ps.-J. Deut 2:2 and 3:11 the Canaanite kings Og and Sihon are giants, “the sons of Ahijah, the son of Shemhazai,” the famous watcher of 1 Enoch. This adopts the view, based on Num 13:33, that some Canaanites descend from the , embellished by early Jewish traditions regarding the identity of their angelic fathers. See further Admiel Kosman, “The
ites with terminology inspired by this chapter of Genesis.²⁸ This would explain why these rulers are "of old" (ךְָדָם). The phrase “chieftains of old” (מסרי קדש) may reformulate the expression “the mighty men who are of old” (הנהוגים אשורים טומל) of Gen 6:4.²⁹ Several of the biblical attestations of כָּפָן discussed above have martial overtones, such as Ezek 32:30. This suggests that the term “chieftains” can be easily understood as denoting leaders who have a military function. This is similar to the gibbôrîm of Genesis 6, since this term can also signify powerful warriors (e.g., Ezek 39:20; Joel 2:7). Ben Sira may have thought that the early Canaanite rulers in question were of large height, but there is not enough evidence in Sir 16:7 to state this conclusively.³⁰

The book of Ezekiel also associates כָּפָן with physical strength by using language that evokes Genesis 6. The chieftains are placed in Sheol with other defeated peoples who existed long ago: “The chieftains of the north [מסרי צמח] are there [in Sheol], all of them, and all the Sidonians, who have gone down in shame with the slain, for all the terror that they caused by their might [מנוהרה]; they lie uncircumcised with those who are killed by the sword, and bear their shame with those who go down to the Pit” (Ezek 32:30).³¹ This verse, like Sir 16:7, mentions the strength of “chieftains” (and the Sidonians). Ezekiel 32:17–32, when enumerating

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²⁹ Recall the word מָלֵךְ in ms A. Note also, as discussed below, that Ezek 32:27 probably had the phrase מִשְׁמַרְתָּם originally (cf. 26:19–20). See James L. Kugel, The Bible As It Was (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1997), 111.

³⁰ The biblical tradition that the Canaanites were gigantic is attested in early Jewish literature. Jubilees 29:9–11 locates Gilead as the former home of the Rephaim, who were between seven and ten cubits tall. Further, the Testament of Judah contains traditions about old Canaanite kings being giants: “Achor, the king, a giant of a man, was shooting arrows before and behind while on a horse; I lifted a stone of sixty pounds weight, hurled it at his horse, and killed it. . . . My father, Jacob, killed Belisath, king of all kings, a giant of a man in strength, twelve cubits tall” (T. Jud. 3:3, 7). That the chieftains were of large size would also explain in part why כָּפָן is translated with γίγας in Sir 16:7. This is not necessarily the case, however, since this Greek term can signify powerful warriors who are not necessarily monstrously large creatures. This is the case, for example, in the brief reference to γγαντωτες in Hesiod’s Theogony (lines 183–87). See M. L. West, Theogony (Oxford: Clarendon, 1966), 220; Jenny Strauss Clay, Hesiod’s Cosmos (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 97.

³¹ For the difficult syntax of this verse, see Greenberg, Ezekiel 21–37, 666–67.
defeated Canaanite peoples in Sheol, lists antediluvian *gibborim* as well. Ezekiel 32:27a MT reads: “They do not lie with the mighty, those fallen of the uncircumcised” (בָּאָלֶיהָ אֶרֱגְּבוֹרִים מִפְּלָתָם מַעֲרַלָם). Several scholars reasonably suggest that *Mylr(m* should be emended, on the basis of the LXX, to *Mlw(m*. So understood, the verse mentions “mighty men who fell long ago,” using the root נֶפֶל, a clear reference to Genesis 6. The original Hebrew text of Ezekiel 32 presumably asserted that the antediluvian נֶפֶלִים and מַעֲרַלָם of early Israel were both defeated and are now in Sheol. Ben Sira does not describe the chieftains and the primordial giants as now residing in the netherworld. But the sage, like Ezekiel, presents early Canaanites and the creatures of Gen 6:4 as groups that have a degree of compatibility. Terminology and tropes characteristic of one can be used to describe the other. Presumably this is because, as discussed above, the Torah itself attests some overlap between entities prominent in the antediluvian period and those who lived during the early history of the land.

Ben Sira 16:7 also reflects the influence of early Jewish traditions regarding the *gibborim* of Genesis 6. This explains why the chieftains struggle against God by using their strength. The verse presumably does not allude exclusively to the trope that the Canaanites as a whole were wicked, since this theme is invoked in v. 9. It is not a major motif in the Bible that Canaanite chieftains rebelled against God with their strength. The mighty *nēpîlîm* of Numbers 13, though large and intimidating, are never described as physically opposing God or even Israel. In Genesis 6 itself, neither the *nēpîlîm* nor the *gibborîm* struggle against God. But in the rich early Jewish traditions about these creatures, most fully expressed in the Enochic Book of the Watchers and the Qumran Book of Giants, they use their strength to commit heinous acts on the earth, such as murder and cannibalism. The giants do not rebel against God in the sense of a military uprising against him, as one finds with the titanomachy or gigantomachy of Greek mythology. Through their actions,

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34 According to Mathias Delcor, the reference to rebellion in Sir 16:7 evokes the Greek gigantomachy. While this allusion can be reasonably discerned in the Greek of the verse, it is unlikely that Ben Sira, writing in Hebrew, knew of this tradition. References to the Titans and Tartarus in the LXX indicate that Jewish translators of Hebrew texts incorporated knowledge of Greek mythology (e.g., 2 Kgdms 5:18; Prov 30:16). However, although Ben Sira shows some knowledge of Greek culture, there are no unambiguous references to this story in his Hebrew instruction. See Delcor, “Le mythe de la chute des anges et de l’origine des géants comme explication du mal dans le monde dans l’apocalyptique juive: Histoire des traditions,” *RHR* 190 (1976): 3–53, esp. 31. For more on the gigantomachy, consult Timothy Gantz, *Early Greek Myth: A Guide to Literary and Artistic*
however, they oppose God's dominion on earth. God clearly understood this as a challenge to his sovereignty and he punished them (1 En. 10:9; 15:8–12). The claim in Sir 16:7 that Canaanite rulers used their strength to rebel against God adapts the idea that the antediluvian giants were wicked and committed iniquitous deeds that merited recompense. The statement in the verse that God did not forgive the chief-tains may evoke the trope that the watchers unsuccessfully sought through Enoch a petition of forgiveness not only for themselves but for their sons the giants as well, as Argall has suggested (1 En. 10:10; 12:6; 13:6; 14:6–7).35

Although the chieftains of Sir 16:7 are not explicitly described as arrogant, this is a major trope of vv. 5–10. This motif is consistent with early Jewish traditions about the antediluvian giants. In the passage the wicked are punished not only for opposing God with their strength but also for their arrogance. Late Second Temple traditions about the giants of Genesis 6 combine these two motifs. 3 Maccabees 2:4 connects strength and arrogance (θράσει), stating that the giants were punished for their excessive trust in these traits. Josephus also attests this combination, writing that the watchers produced children “who were overbearing [δύσθραστας] and disdainful of every virtue, such confidence they had in their strength” (Ant. 1.73).36 In Genesis 19, the men of Sodom are heinous and dangerous. The text never emphasizes that they are arrogant, although that can easily be inferred. According to Ben Sira, this is why God punished them (16:8). Similarly, in v. 10 he attributes the denial of the exodus generation’s entry into the land to “the arrogance of their hearts.” The assertion of Sir 16:5–10 that the wicked were punished both for their arrogance and for the rebellious use of their strength shows the influence of early Jewish traditions regarding the giants of Genesis 6 on Ben Sira’s description of early inhabitants of Canaan. This claim is supported by the fact that other early Jewish texts associate the gibbôrim of Genesis 6 with the inhabitants of Sodom.37

I agree with the widespread view that Sir 16:7 alludes to Gen 6:1–4. The verse, however, discusses the early history of Canaan, not the antediluvian period. The


35 Argall, 1 Enoch and Sirach, 230; Nickelsburg, 1 Enoch 1, 238.
36 Wisdom 14:6 similarly asserts that the “arrogant” giants were punished.
37 Like the giants, the men of Sodom are indicated as a historical example of God’s punish- ment against the wicked. 3 Maccabees, after mentioning the giants, discusses the destruction of Sodom in the next verse (2:5). Jubilees 20:5 combines “the judgment of the giants and the judg- ments of the Sodomites.” Similarly, Gen. Rab. 26:5 describes both the sexual debauchery of the generation of the flood and the iniquity of Sodom (cf. Jude 7). See J. A. Loader, A Tale of Two Cities: Sodom and Gomorrah in the Old Testament, Early Jewish and Early Christian Traditions (CBET 1; Kampen: Kok, 1990), 76; Eibert J. C. Tigchelaar, “Sodom and Gomorrah in the Dead Sea Scrolls,” in Sodom’s Sin: Genesis 18–19 and Its Interpretations (ed. Ed Noort and Eibert J. C. Tigchelaar; Themes in Biblical Narrative 7; Leiden: Brill, 2004), 47–62.

core issue regarding Sir 16:7 is not the sage’s opposition to Enochic traditions, as Di Lella and Skehan suggest. Rather, it is that the verse reflects an understanding of archaic Canaanite rulers that is shaped by the language of Genesis 6 and early Jewish traditions about the primordial giants of this chapter.\footnote{In the Qumran Book of Giants one finds a similar phenomenon, in reverse, in that traditions about early rulers of the land influence the composition’s portrayal of the antediluvian giants. One of the giants, for example, is named Ahiram (4Q531 frg. 7 line 1). This was the name of a legendary king of Byblos. Another giant is named Gilgamesh, which also evokes ancient Near Eastern tradition. See Émile Puech, 

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