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'Between righteousness and alms' in *Tobit*: What was the author's real intention?

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Before the Semitic fragments of 4QTobit were found at Qumran, the 4th-century Greek GI version of *Tobit* was thought to be original and was regarded as 'a lesson on almsgiving and its redeeming powers'. In his presentation of the 4Q196–4Q199 (Aramaic) and 4Q200 (Hebrew) fragments of *Tobit*, Fitzmyer, in 1995, reconstructed and rendered the Semitic lexeme צדקה (literally, 'righteousness') as 'almsgiving', as in Mishnaic Hebrew. He referred mainly to the 4th-century Common Era Greek and Old Latin versions. The hypothesis of this article is that the Aramaic lexeme צדק may not yet have had the meaning of 'almsgiving' in the original composition; thus, the original authorial intention may be masked in Fitzmyer's presentation. Therefore, the emphasis on almsgiving for ultimate personal gain found in the later copies of *Tobit* may be a secondary, reductionist application by subsequent scribes of the lexeme צדקה. To test this hypothesis, the relevant reconstructions and English translations as 'almsgiving' of the Semitic copies of *Tobit* found at Qumran are examined and reconsidered. In the beginning of the narrative, in 4Q196 (and in GI and GII) the rather self-righteous Tobit is 'accidentally' blinded while performing an act of charity to his own kin, which he believed was the way to gain righteousness and thus be rewarded by God. In the end, when he has recovered his sight, Tobit redefines the way to achieve true righteousness: to bless God and extol his majesty to all nations with truthfulness in heart and soul.

Contribution: The comparison of the Semitic fragments from Qumran with the Septuagint versions suggests that the first reconstructions and translations of 4QTobit may have been overly influenced by the long-standing Greek versions. Whereas the Greek versions tend to emphasise almsgiving as a means to gain righteousness, the older Aramaic versions tend to highlight righteousness and truthfulness as the primary value.

Keywords: 4QTobit; Semitic Tobit; Septuagint; Tobit GI; Tobit GII; Qumran; Fitzmyer 1995; Righteousness; Almsgiving.

Introduction

> they have given to the poor; their righteousness endures forever. (Ps 112:9b, New Revised Standard Version [NRSV])

The Book of Tobit is a multilayered Jewish wisdom tale with many folkloristic strands, but it is also a sophisticated and carefully crafted narrative incorporating biblical interpretation (Dimant 2009:121).[1] For hundreds of years, the shorter Greek version GI, which lays great stress on the rewards of almsgiving and its redeeming powers, was thought to be the oldest version. The complex textual transmission of *Tobit* has been called 'one of the great text-critical puzzles' (eds. Weeks, Gathercombe & Stuckenbruck 2004:1). Before the Qumran discoveries, the earliest extant copies were contained in Codices Alexandrinus and Vaticanus, which both date to the 4th century Common Era (CE). However, when the five Semitic copies of the Book of Tobit came to light in Cave 4 at Qumran, it became apparent not only that the longer Greek version GII (Sinaiticus, 4th century CE) is closer to the Semitic fragments, but also that the *Vorlage* was probably written in Aramaic (Fitzmyer 1995:2). The Qumran Semitic fragments are dated to between 100 Before Common Era (BCE) and 50 CE, according to the scheme developed by Moore Cross (1961:149). These copies represent only one-fifth of the Book of

1.Tobit, who describes himself as a devout Jew, is accidentally blinded while performing his pious duties, including almsgiving towards his own race and kin. As a result, he is no longer able to earn a living, so he sends his son Tobiah to go on a long journey to retrieve money that he, Tobit, had left with a relative. The reader is let into the secret that the angel Raphael, incognito, accompanies Tobiah. Sara, the daughter of a relative, has also been suffering undeservedly. The reader is told that her prayers and those of Tobit were heard simultaneously in heaven. On the journey, the angel helps Tobiah to obtain the innards of a fish to use to drive out a demon that is tormenting Sara. Tobiah drives out the demon and marries Sara. When the couple arrive home, Tobiah cures his father's blindness with the gall of the fish, and Tobit expresses new insight into the requirements for righteousness.

Note: Special Collection entitled Septuagint SA, sub-edited by Johann Cook (SUN).

Tobit (Fitzmyer 2003:145), but they provide crucial evidence in an extremely complex reception history.[2] *Tobit* was probably composed between 225 and 175 BCE, but the date of translation is uncertain (Stuckenbruck & Weeks 2015:240–244).[3]

The concept of almsgiving, as such, does not appear in the Hebrew Bible. In biblical Hebrew, צדקה has the meaning of 'righteousness', but in Mishnaic usage the Hebrew lexeme צדקה underwent a semantic change from the biblical concept of righteousness to 'alms' – according to the Mishnah, all Jews are expected to practise almsgiving in order to obtain righteousness. The Mishnah had a long oral period before the written version was completed in the 2nd century CE. Von Wiessenberg, Pakkala and Martila (eds. 2011:7) observe that the growth of a text is evidently the result of scribal activity – scribes were independent and produced 'creative reshaping'. In the course of time, the giving of alms out of mere pity became a meritorious practice possessing the power of atoning for man's sins and redeeming him from calamity and death (Kaufmann Kohler 1906). The New English Translation of the Septuagint (NETS) of *Tobit* GI and GII renders the 4th-century CE Greek word ἐλεημοσύνας as 'mercy' or 'almsgiving', and it almost always appears in association with δικαιοσύνην [righteousness]. In his presentation of the four 4Q196–4Q199 Aramaic and one 4Q200 Hebrew copies of *Tobit* (which date from about 100 BCE to 50 CE), Fitzmyer (1995) has reconstructed and translated the lexeme צדקה as 'alms' by referring mainly to the 4th-century CE Greek and Old Latin versions. However, Beentjes (1997:35) and Weeks et al. (eds. 2004:1, 5) have warned that by referring to later copies for reconstruction, there is a danger of reinforcing ideas that only developed subsequently.

Zanella (2013:270, n. 4) provides evidence that the diachronic change in the semantic use of the lexeme צדקה from Biblical Hebrew to the later Mishnaic Hebrew is actually evident at Qumran, but that at Qumran the Aramaic lexeme צדקה does not seem to attest to the meaning of 'alms'.[4]

Stuckenbruck and Weeks (2015:240–241) recognise that the three Greek translations, I, II and III, give an impression of three readily separable versions.[5] However, they state in spite of minor differences that the five Qumran witnesses 'all attest what is essentially a single version of the book'. However, as this study proceeded it appeared that the five Semitic texts could not be lumped together; even in their fragmentary state they reveal significant differences, and even the Hebrew copy from Qumran must be separated from the Aramaic copies. My contention is that, by referring to later versions, Fitzmyer's (1995:1–75) reconstructions and translation of the lexeme צדקה as 'alms' may mask the original authorial intention, and that the traditional interpretation of GI as 'a lesson on almsgiving and its redeeming powers' may have carried undue weight. In the original composition, the Aramaic lexeme צדק may not yet have had the meaning of 'almsgiving'.

Methodology

In this article, the relevant reconstructions and English translations as 'almsgiving' of the Semitic copies of *Tobit* found at Qumran are examined and reconsidered. The only Hebrew copy (4Q200) contains a fragment that witnesses to what may be an important difference between 4Q200 and the four Aramaic copies (4Q196–4Q199). The focus of this study is on the Aramaic copy 4Q196 because it is the most complete of the Aramaic copies. There are 19 fragments identified as 4Q196 by their hand, dated from as early as 50 BCE. Of these fragments, Fitzmyer has reconstructed or inserted the lexeme צדקה in Fragments 10, 17ii and 18, which preserve Tobit 4:7, 13:6–12 and 13:12–14:2. To supply continuity of the narrative, and for purposes of comparison, other versions, especially GII and GI (dated to the 4th century CE), are consulted where relevant.

The texts

In the introduction, Tobit's own voice is present; his tendency to self-righteousness is hinted at in his statement that, unlike his compatriots, he alone is obedient to all the requirements for piety in terms of Second Temple Deuteronomistic theology.[6] For instance, he says that he tithes conscientiously and unlike his fellow Jews goes up annually to the Temple at Jerusalem. At 4Q196 Fragment (Frg) 2, Lines 12–13, *Tobiah* 2:2b, he tells the reader that he sent his son Tobiah out to the streets to find any other of their own kin to share his sumptuous meal (also in GI, GII). It then transpires that this

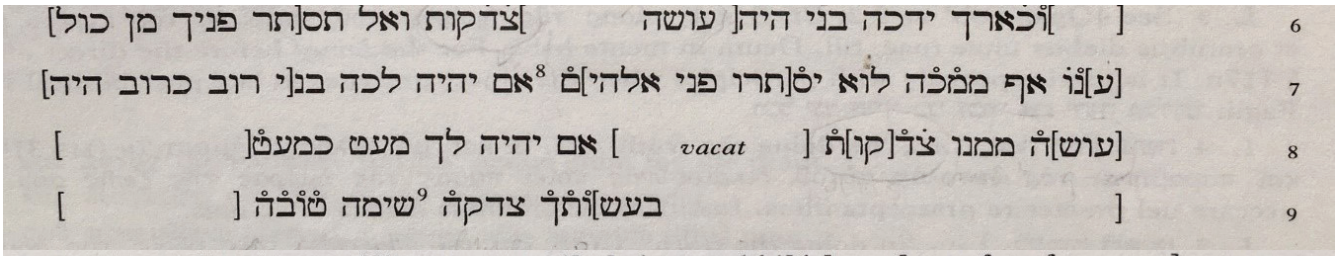
2.For instance, Origin (d. c.256 CE) wrote that the Jews do not use *Tobit*, but in the 4th-century CE Jerome recorded that he translated the Vulgate copy of Tobit from an Aramaic version.

3.Stuckenbruck and Weeks note that 'there is nothing to preclude an early translation' so 'the Qumran witnesses to the Hebrew and Aramaic may post-date the earliest version of the Greek'.

4.Fitzmyer (1995:1–4, 2003:655–657, 675) notes that the Aramaic fragments frequently agree with GII and Latin (La), but that the Aramaic *Vorlage* contains 'inverted phrases, expanded expressions, and words not rightly understood by either the Greek or Latin translator of these versions'. Vogt (2011:28, 412–243) defines the Aramaic meaning of צדקה as 'justice, righteousness, merit, fidelity'. Johns (1963:105): 'right-doing<righteousness'. Cook (2015:199) includes 'alms' as a possible meaning. Zanella (2013:274) supplies biblical references where other Hebrew words such as ברחהי are used to convey the sense of 'a gift of goodwill'. Lindenberger (1983:346) gives the meaning of צדקה as 'righteous'. He presents a relevant connection to the issue of righteousness in *Tobit* in Saying 48 of Ahiqar (Line 137): '[Do not *amass*] wealth, lest you pervert your heart.' (This wisdom admonition is paralleled in Ben Sira 8:2.)

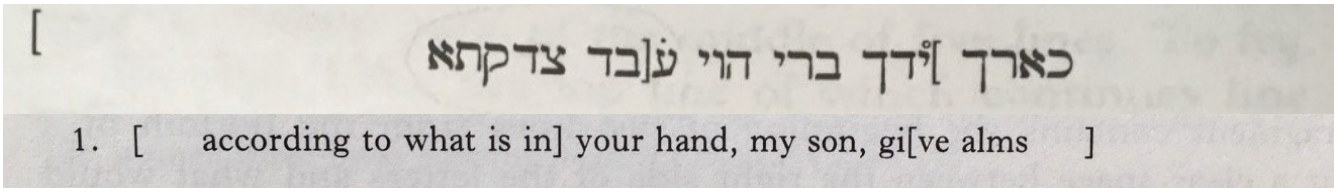
5.Stuckenbruck and Weeks (2015:244, 249, 250, 252) claim that although GII does not reflect the sort of substantial rewriting that characterises GI and GIII, it is simplistic to regard GII as the 'original' version. They stress that the Old Latin is unusually important for *Tobit* because it 'often seems to provide a better reading than Sinaiticus', but they do recognise that it raises many text-critical problems of its own.

6.The Book of Deuteronomy was written between the years 650 and 500 BCE; the creation of scribal circles occurred prior to the reign of Josiah and continued after the fall of Judah. The Deuteronomistic school employed retributive ideology and rhetoric to induce the nation to observe its teaching: reward and wisdom literature were combined to weave material benefits into the Deuteronomic exposition to produce a process of nationalisation (Weinfeld 1972:1, 3, 309). As a collection of material for the public recital of the law that functions in terms of the concept of national reward, the rhetorical character furthers didactic aims that developed as a result of the religious upheaval of the destruction of the Temple and exile (Rose 2000:424, 425). See Di Lella (1979), Kiel (2011, 2012) and Laato and De Moor (eds. 2003) for definitions of Deuteronomistic theology.



Source: Fitzmyer, J.A., 1995, 'Tobit', in *Discoveries in the Judaean Desert XIX: Qumran Cave 4 XIV*, pp. 65, 66, Clarendon Press, Oxford.

FIGURE 1: 4Q200, Hebrew, Fragment 2, Lines 6–9. Tob 4:7–9a. c. 30 BCE to c. 20 CE.



Source: Fitzmyer, J.A., 1995, 'Tobit', in *Discoveries in the Judaean Desert XIX: Qumran Cave 4 XIV*, p. 17, Clarendon Press, Oxford.

FIGURE 2: 4Q196, Fragment 10, Tob 4:7.

dutiful act of kinship almsgiving leads to the accidental cause of Tobit's suffering. Thus, at the beginning of the narrative the underlying perennial issue of 'why bad things happen to good people' is introduced. In the conclusion this theme is addressed again, albeit indirectly.

As the narrative proceeds, a second type of almsgiving, no longer specified as exclusively to the giver's kin, promises some kind of return benefit for the one who bestows the alms.[7] This 'reciprocal' form of almsgiving is prominent in the Greek versions, and also clearly is present in the Hebrew copy 4Q200, where Tobit admonishes his son to give alms to any needy person, but motivates it as a 'good deposit' in terms of a future reward from God.

In Figure 1 4Q200 Hebrew, Frg 2, Tob 4:7-9a, the lexeme צדקה appears in Lines 6 and 9 (Tob 7–9a) in a complete form; it has not been reconstructed. Tobit says to his son 'by your giving alms, you are making a good deposit', that is, it is a good investment for your future prosperity; 'reciprocal almsgiving' is clearly evident. This fragment provides clear evidence that, as in Mishanic Hebrew, the Hebrew lexeme צדקה was already in use as 'alms' (see Zanella 2013:271, diagram 2). However, in the comparable passage in 4Q196 Aramaic, which also refers to Tobit 4:7 (but which could be almost 100 years earlier), Fitzmyer has translated the phrase as if almsgiving is present here too, yet the צדקה lexeme does not appear at all in the 4Q196 fragment (neither does the phrase 'a good deposit' appear).

4Q196, Aramaic, Frg 10, Tobit 4:7

Fitzmyer (1995:17) renders the following reconstruction and translation of Frg 10 in Figure 2: 4Q196, Frg 10, Tob 4:7 (which reads 'according to what is in your hand …').

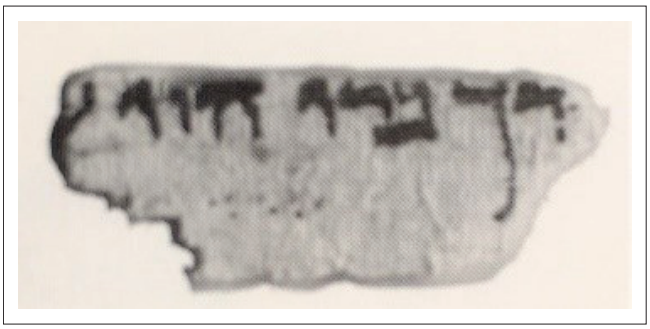
The photograph in Figure 3 proves that none of the letters of the lexeme צדקה are extant on this fragment. Not even the letters that would complete the word 'give' are on the fragment. Neither are the letters for 'according to what is in'. The presentation by Weeks et al. (eds. 2004:29, 141) is also devoid of צדקה andכארך:

A1. [...]ידך ברי הוי ע[...].[8]

The reconstruction of the rest of the letters to render 'make' and then the addition of צדקה and rendering it as 'alms' is actually hypothetical. Not even in GII is there any evidence of almsgiving in this position. Fitzmyer must have decided on 'give alms' by

7.Recent scientific research on altruism is applicable to the concept of almsgiving. Stewart-Williams (2010:208–209) describes the evolution of three main types of altruism: the first two types are recognisable in the sense of almsgiving. The first type, 'kinship almsgiving', is strikingly foregrounded in 4Q196 Frg 2, Lines 12–13, Tobiah 2:2b. In GII Tobiah 1:16, Tobit says: 'In the days of Enemessaros I performed many acts of charity [ἐλεημοσύνας] for my kindred, those of my race' (NETS). Interesting New Testament evidence that kinship almsgiving was still a factor late in the 1st century CE is apparent in Acts 6:1, where there are complaints that the Greek widows were being neglected in favour of the needs of the Jewish widows. The third type of altruism is rare: almsgiving motivated by a genuinely compassionate and merciful relationship (cf. Zanella 2013:280–282).

8.Weeks et al. record that on the left edge of the fragment the final letter visible could possibly be the *ayin* of [בד, and they insert a dot above the *ayin* to indicate that it is not entirely missing or illegible and can be restored with confidence on the basis of the traces. However, above the first *yod* they have inserted a hollow circle to indicate that it is entirely missing and cannot be restored. Zanella (2013:271, n.7) notes that in BH the syntagmic relationship of the lexemes צדקה and 'ד frequently occur in fixed pairs that actually lexicalise 'gift-giving', but this is Aramaic, and the insertion of צדקה here is questionable.



Source: Fitzmyer, J.A., 1995, 'Tobit', in *Discoveries in the Judaean Desert XIX: Qumran Cave 4 XIV,* Clarendon Press, Oxford.

FIGURE 3: 4Q196, Fragment 10, DJD PLATE II.PAM 43.177.Mus.Inv.852 (4QpapTob a ar 296).

referring to GI Tobiah 4:7–19, which tends to stress almsgiving, yet these verses are not present at all in GII. Here the warning by Weeks et al. (eds. 2004:1, 5) against the self-reinforcing hazards of using later copies to reconstruct earlier manuscripts is pertinent. Interestingly, Weeks et al. (eds. 2004:13) regard the 'missing' verses in GII 4:7–19 as carelessness on the part of the scribe, but it is significant that this passage in GI is the very one that stresses almsgiving to such an extent that a kind of 'prosperity cult' comes to mind.[9] This raises the possibility of scribal recension for ideological reasons.

Stuckenbruck and Weeks (2015:255) warn that 'one should be cautious in assigning differences between the recensions to distinguishable ideologies' – style and textual variants should first be considered. Nevertheless, in GII Tobiah 2:14b an interesting juxtaposition of righteousness and self-righteousness occurs. Tobit's wife Edna provides a subversive counterpoint to his wanting to appear righteous when she lashes out at him for his unjustified anger and suspicion that she is being dishonest: 'Now where are your acts of charity? Where are your righteous deeds? See, these things are known about you!' This passage is not extant in the Qumran versions, but it provides a strong hint that Tobit's wife functions rhetorically as a counterpoint to Tobit's self-righteousness, in order to achieve a shift from a mercenary ideological orientation. Another example appears in Figure 4, 4Q197 ar Frg 4i Line 1 (Tob 5:19): Edna bemoans Tobit's over-valuing of money at the cost of their son's safety (NETS GI and GII, Tob 5:19–20: 'Do not add silver to silver, but let it be as a ransom for our child. For as it has been given to us to live by the Lord, that is enough'). Another subtle hint of a deliberate rhetorical critique of a superficial claim to righteousness is to be seen in the Aramaic text 4Q197 Frg 4iii Line 9 (Tob 7:7) in Figure 5: Raguel expresses his approval of his kinsman Tobit when he exclaims to Tobiah 'you are the] so[n of] a righteo[us] man'.[10]

By the approving of his kinsman as righteous (קשיטא), Raguel implies that he himself is a righteous man. However, a sardonic twist later emerges, in the humorous touch that Raguel has secretly prepared a grave for Tobiah, and then when Tobiah survives, Raguel secretly has the grave filled in so that nobody will know.

Strikingly, towards the end of the narrative in 4Q196 ar, Frg 17ii (Tob 13:6–9) in Figures 6 and 7, Tobit's voice has changed. A clear shift away from materialism and self-interest is apparent.

The word קושטא appears four times in the passage. Vogt (2011:299) gives the meaning as 'truth' and 'justice', as for example in the contemporaneous text Daniel 4:34. Yet, in every instance (in Lines 1, 3, 5 and 9), Fitzmyer renders the lexeme קושטא as 'righteousness'/'righteous'.

Compare the rendering of the passage up to line 5a by Garcia Martinez (1994), where the lexeme קושטא is rendered as 'truthfully/justice/justly'. There is no mention of righteousness (Martinez 1994):[11]

> [Y]our heart and with all your soul to act truthfully before him. Then, he will turn to you and no longer hide his face from you. And now, consider what he has done for you and give him thanks with your whole mouth, and bless the Lord of justice, and exalt the eternal king. I, in the land of exile, give you thanks and declare his power and his greatness to a nation of sinners. Turn, you sinners, and with all your heart act justly before him. (p. 296)

In this passage there is no direct mention of almsgiving, but in Fitzmyer's translation, although there is no direct mention of almsgiving, it seems that not having translated צדקה as righteousness throughout the narrative, he here translates קושטא as 'righteous' and thereby reinforces his interpretation of צדקה as 'almsgiving'. In effect, such a choice reinforces the reciprocal almsgiving ethos that is so prominent in GI, whereas Garcia Martinez's translation tends to bring out a different nuance: 'to act truthfully before him. Then he will turn to you …' (Line 1).[12]

Here again, in Figure 8, 4Q196 Frg 18, Tob 14:2, the Aramaic lexeme that Fitzmyer presents as 'gave alms' is not actually present on the fragment at all.[13] In fact, the lexeme צדקה does not appear unreconstructed anywhere in 4Q196. If Fitzmyer's reconstructions are discounted, צדקה does not actually appear in any of the 4Q196 fragments.[14]

Discussion

Di Lella (1979:387) claimed a Deuteronomistic orientation in *Tobit*. In Deuteronomy, charity to the poor is expressed in terms of reward to the giver. In the Greek GI and GII copies of *Tobit*, the Deuteronomistic theological perspective is expressed in several ways, for example, Tobit's iterative view that God will reward with prosperity those who give alms, at first to their own kin ('kinship altruism'), later on to any poor

9.Di Lella (NETS) states that the numbering of NETS follows GII, but if GII has priority over GI, note the anomaly that these verses are regarded as a minus in GII, not a plus in GI.

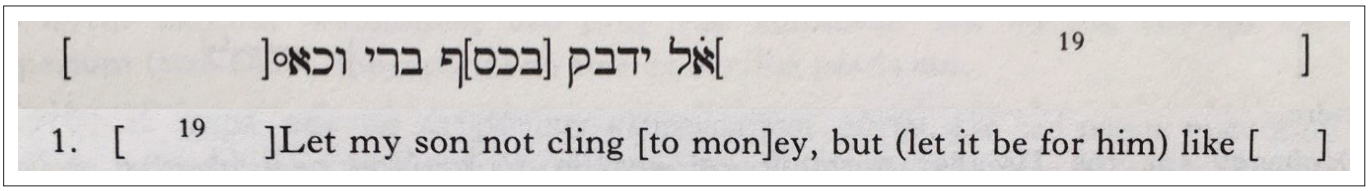
10.Cook (2015:214) defines the adjective קשׁיטא as 'honest' or 'true'.

11. After line 5a the text becomes very fragmentary.

12.The emphasis on truthfulness [קושטא] towards the ending of *Tobit* in 4Q196 Frg 17ii makes an interesting connection to the relation of mercy to truth [ואמת חסד] in Proverbs 3:3 and 14:22.

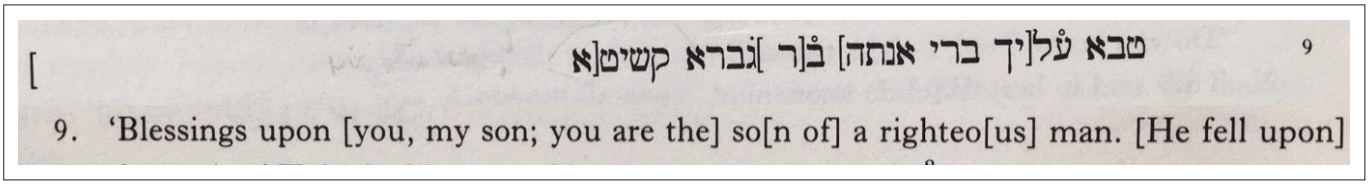
13.Fitzmyer 1995, Plate V, Frg 18.

14.Tobit describes his act of kinship altruism in the beginning of the narrative 4Q196 ar Frg 2 (Tob 2:2b), but the lexeme צדקה is not used.



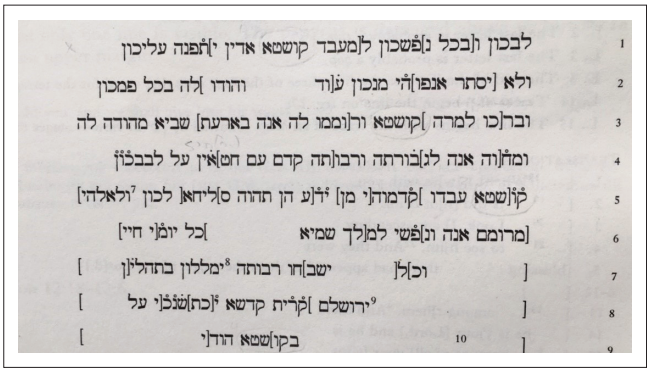
Source: Fitzmyer, J.A., 1995, 'Tobit', in *Discoveries in the Judaean Desert XIX: Qumran Cave 4 XIV*, p. 45, Clarendon Press, Oxford.

FIGURE 4: 4Q197, Fragment 4i, Tob 5:19.



Source: Fitzmyer, J.A., 1995, 'Tobit', in *Discoveries in the Judaean Desert XIX: Qumran Cave 4 XIV*, p. 53, Clarendon Press, Oxford.

FIGURE 5: 4Q197, Fragment 4iii, Tob 7:7.



Source: Fitzmyer, J.A., 1995, 'Tobit', in *Discoveries in the Judaean Desert XIX: Qumran Cave 4 XIV, p. 25,* Clarendon Press, Oxford.

FIGURE 6: 4Q196, Fragment 17ii, Tob 13:6–9.

person, but in GI always with the mention of an ultimate personal reward to the giver ('reciprocal altruism'). However, Kiel (2011:145–155) warns that 'while there is evidence of an ideological thread in the biblical materials that could be called "Deuteronomistic", its influence and pervasiveness can often be oversimplified and overstated' (also see Stuckenbruck & Weeks 2015:255).[15] Kiel (2011:281) observes that in *Tobit* the Deuteronomistic orientation shifts during the course of the narrative, and suggests that the shift may have been conceived of as a critique of the Deuteronomistic view of theodicy.[16] He (2012:268) regards the 'oft-repeated and insistent remarks on the practice of righteousness and almsgiving' (e.g. Tob 4:6–7; 12:8–9; 14:9) as an ironic part of Tobit's theological misreading of his situation; statements by Tobit himself that posit a close connection between act and consequence do not mean it is the point of view of the author (see Macatangay 2016:5–6).

In the Hebrew copy 4Q200, the word צדקה is extant in an unreconstructed form and is rendered as 'almsgiving'. Anderson (2013:1–14) explains the rationale for Fitzmyer's translation by unravelling a crucial link between the concept of almsgiving and righteousness. He (2013:1) recognises the 'significant semantic development that occurred in Second Temple Hebrew' when sin came to be regarded as a debt that must be repaid. Thus, the new idea developed that one could eliminate one's culpability for sin by means of almsgiving; almsgiving was seen as a means of storing up 'credits' with God.[17] This principle is first seen biblically in Aramaic Daniel 4:24 *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia* (BHS) (4:27 NRSV) where Daniel advises Nebuchadnezzar to atone for his sins with righteousness [צדקתה] (Septuagint [LXX] ἐλεημοσύνας) and his iniquities with mercy to the oppressed, so that his 'prosperity may be prolonged' (NRSV).[18] Daniel 4:24 and the Hebrew copy of *Tobit* are the earliest witnesses to צדקה as 'almsgiving'. Anderson (2013:1) suggests that the concept of righteousness as almsgiving had crystallised by the time the Aramaic versions of *Tobit* were copied, but it should be kept in mind that the date of composition of *Tobit* could be about 50 years earlier than that of Daniel (167/8 BCE).[19]

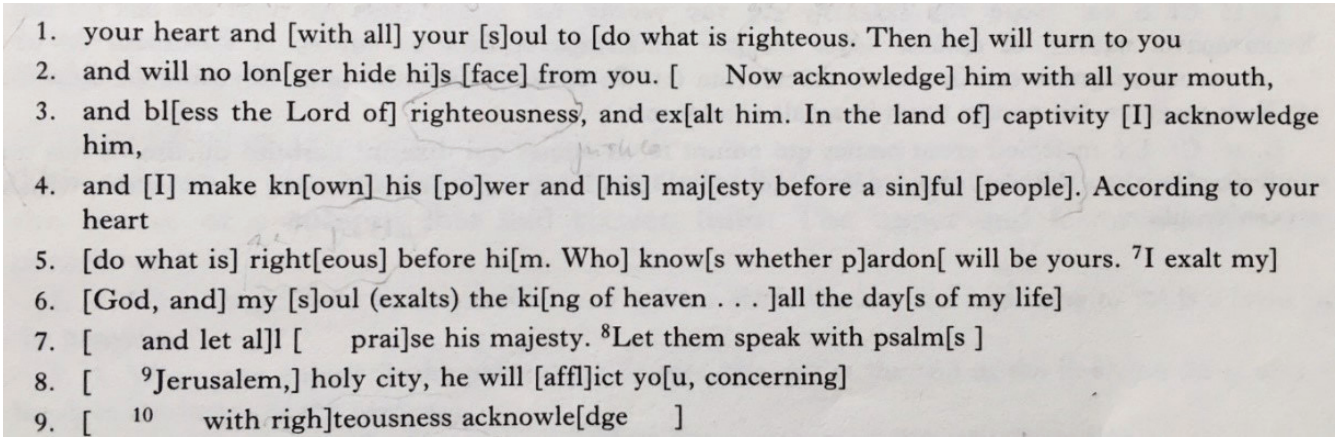
15.The Deuteronomistic view on almsgiving must be nuanced. A distinction must be made between almsgiving to gain righteousness ('putting the cart before the horse') and responding with genuine compassion because wealth is a loan from God, and the rich are positively enjoined to share God's bounties with all poor, as for instance in Deuteronomy 14:29 and 15:10. Weinfeld (1972:310, 316) observes that concepts of reward such as affluence and satiety are prominent in both the Deuteronomistic history and in biblical wisdom literature, for example in Psalms 41 and 112 and in Proverbs 19:17: 'Whoever is kind to the poor lends to the Lord, and will be repaid in full' (NRSV). In Psalms 37:25, 26 mercy and righteousness are connected: the righteous is ever merciful. The rewards of mercy to the poor are mentioned in Proverbs 14:21 and in Psalms 41:3: 'he that hath mercy on the poor, happy is he'; 'Blessed is he that considereth the poor: the Lord will deliver him in time of trouble'. In Psalm 112:9 righteousness is connected to charity: 'he hath given to the poor; his righteousness endureth for ever'. However, this statement in Verse 9 is in reference to Verses 1b and 4b: 'Blessed is the man who feareth the Lord, that delighteth greatly in his commandments … gracious, full of compassion, and righteous' (King James Version).

16.Compare Job 22:5–9, where, as an explanation of Job's suffering, the virtue of charity and the fact that it deserves reward from God is stressed repeatedly by Job's self-righteous friend Elihu. At Job 29:12, 13, Job points out that those forms of righteousness that Elihu is advocating have not saved him from disaster.

17.The idea that almsgiving has 'redeeming powers' was also present in a wide range of later texts. For instance, in the Quran the act of charity is linked to forgiveness of sins if the right of retribution is relinquished concerning the right of retaliation: '[I] f anyone forgoes this [right of retaliation] out of charity, it will serve as atonement for his bad deeds' (Dockrat 2017:279–281, *Surah* 5:45, transl. 2004 by Abdul Haleem). The Greek version of Ben Sira 29:12, which was translated from the Hebrew two generations after the original Hebrew composition, also states that 'good works can bring an eternal credit'.

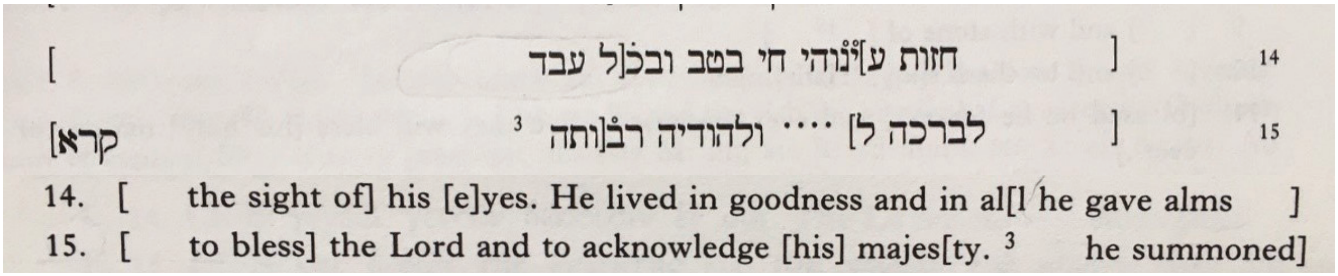
18.Cf. LXX Daniel 4: 'Therefore O king, let my counsel please thee, and atone for thy sins by alms [ἐλεημοσύνας]; and *thine* iniquities by compassion on the poor: it may be God will be long-suffering to thy trespasses'. Here, almsgiving for remission of sins is combined with the specification that it must be for the poor in general. An interesting comparison is found in 4QOrNab.1 Line 5. Nabonides, when smitten with malignant boils, was told to '[m]ake a written proclamation that honour, [greatness and glory] be given to the name of G[od Most]High. And so I wrote …'.

19.Stuckenbruck and Weeks (2015:240) estimate the date of the original composition of *Tobit* to be between 225 and 175 BCE.


1. your heart and [with all] your [s]oul to [do what is righteous. Then he] will turn to you
2. and will no lon[ger hide hi]s [face] from you. [Now acknowledge] him with all your mouth,
3. and bl[ess the Lord of] righteousness, and ex[alt him. In the land of] captivity [I] acknowledge him,
4. and [I] make kn[own] his [po]wer and [his] maj[esty before a sin]ful [people]. According to your heart
5. [do what is] right[eous] before hi[m. Who] know[s whether p]ardon[will be yours. 7I exalt my]
6. [God, and] my [s]oul (exalts) the ki[ng of heaven . . .]all the day[s of my life]
7. [and let al]l [prai]se his majesty. 8Let them speak with psalm[s]
8. [9Jerusalem,] holy city, he will [affl]ict yo[u, concerning]
9. [10 with righ]teousness acknowle[dge]

Source: Fitzmyer, J.A., 1995, 'Tobit', in *Discoveries in the Judaean Desert XIX: Qumran Cave 4 XIV*, p. 27, Clarendon Press, Oxford.

FIGURE 7: 4Q196 Fragment 17ii, Tob 13:6-9.


[חזות ע]ינ֯יהי חי בטב ובכ[ל עבד] 14

[קרא ולהודיה רבֿ[ותה 3 לברכה ל] ....] 15

14. [the sight of] his [e]yes. He lived in goodness and in al[l he gave alms]
15. [to bless] the Lord and to acknowledge [his] majes[ty. 3 he summoned]

Source: Fitzmyer, J.A., 1995, 'Tobit', in *Discoveries in the Judaean Desert XIX: Qumran Cave 4 XIV*, pp. 29-30, Clarendon Press, Oxford.

FIGURE 8: 4Q196 Fragment 18, lines 14–15, Tob 14:2.

Dimant (2009:140, n. 880) suggests that there could have been concurrent contesting schools of *halakah* during Second Temple times. If indeed the idea of giving alms/charity as a means of cancelling debt had already developed by the time the original version of *Tobit* was written, the author's intention could well have been far more nuanced than to convey a lesson on almsgiving and its redeeming powers.[20] Dimant's observation opens up the possibility that the motive for writing *Tobit* could have been to craft a subversive rhetorical shift away from the self-righteous religious observance that Tobit's character portrays in the beginning. Following Dimant (2009) and Kiel (2011, 2012), I argue that 4Q196 reflects a counteractive correction of reciprocal almsgiving as a means to gain righteousness, in order to advocate the 'proper disposition when performing a righteous act'. For instance, Skemp (2000:61, 70) notes that 'both Tobit and the Matthean Jesus stress the need for the proper disposition when performing a righteous act'. The Semitic origin of *Tobit* begins to gain significance in the facilitation of Christianity. In Fitzmyer's presentation of 4Q196, in every instance the lexeme צדקה has been reconstructed or inserted; Tobit's instruction to give alms is not actually extant as such in any of the 4Q196 fragments. The 'great text-critical puzzle' contained in *Tobit* begins to unravel if the motivation of the original author is reconsidered in terms of contested biblical interpretation and the underlying question of why bad things happen to 'righteous' people.

20.Cf. the role of Job's self-righteous friend Elihu in expressing an arguable view of theodicy.

Conclusion

As Kiel (2011:136–137) points out, Tobit's comment near the end of the narrative in 4Q196, Frg 17 Line 5b – '[w]ho knows whether [God] will take pleasure in you and show mercy to you?' – casts doubt on his previous Deuteronomistic formulations of a direct connection between act and consequence. Towards the end of *Tobit* there is an indication of (Kiel 2011):

> [*A*] larger sense of unease, marked by a God whose character is no longer as predictable as Tobit once thought and a world that he now realizes does not function with a tightly ordered connection between deed and consequence … The book of Tobit, at its core, suggests that humans do not have the ability to secure their future by way of their righteousness; God cannot be leveraged toward blessing. (p. 159)

Rather than 'a lesson in almsgiving and its redeeming powers', the author's intention was to use the character of Tobit to describe a shift from kinship almsgiving and self-righteous legalism, in order to restate the biblical message of prophets such as Jonah and Amos who taught that God's mercy is because of all nations. The emphasis on almsgiving as a means to attain righteousness for personal gain that is found in some versions of *Tobit* is a secondary, reductionist application by subsequent scribes. The

conclusion of this article is that the Aramaic copy 4Q196, fragmentary as it is, witnesses to a didactic intention by the author to enter into a discussion on theodicy – after his sight has returned, Tobit restates the prerequisite for a relationship with God: to remain faithful, to bless God and to witness to his majesty to all nations with truthfulness in heart and soul.

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A.H.E. is the sole author of this research article.

Ethical consideration

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