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Tobit: The First in a Series of Too Little-Known Jewish Classics, 1982.

Tobit: The First in a Series of Too Little Known Jewish Classics Daniel Jeremy Silver February 28, 1982

When we were in Egypt a few weeks ago it was the time of the cutting of the sugar cane. It's an immemorial process. The peasants cut down the cane in the fields. They strip off the leaves. They place the cane on various carts, usually donkey carts, which carry it down to the Nile and then the barges are brought along the Nile bank and are loaded with the cane and they're taken to the refineries where they're in turn processed into the sugar consumed by the society. And as we watched this process there were those technically skilled among us who explained chemically and mechanically all that was transpiring and I thought to myself about the word, cane, which etymologically has one of the most interesting and varied histories of all the words and terms that I know.

It's a word that appears in the Bible, strangely, a noun, kaneh. It's also in Aramaic and probably comes from some old Akadian root. In the Bible it describes those tall marsh reeds that grow on the bank of the Nile or the banks of the Jordan or the Yarmok or any of the rivers of West Asia. It's referred to often in the text. There's a text in the book of Kings. King Jereboam was a man who had the misfortune of marrying an alien princess who brought with her the idols and symbols of her pagan cult and insisted that these be raised in the temple, in the shrine. And a prophet named Ahiel was sent by God to condemn this pious act and he brought to the oracle which said that God will smite Israel, until Israel will shake as the reed does on the side and the shore of the river. And in the book of Job, at the end of the book of Job, in that great theophany where God describes all of the beauties and the powers of nature, all of the animals of nature, and asserts His power over all that is, He describes a behemoth, the largest of all animals, probably the hippopotamus. He describes him as living under the lotus trees in the covert of the reeds and of the kaneh uvaytsa. Now this word kaneh passed over into Greek, kanah, and then into Latin and to all the languages of Western Europe, English ultimately, in a

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variety of ways, some rather beligerent and some rather religious, some military and some theological. The reeds that grow against the Nile, against the Jordan and the banks tend to be hollow and the peasants and those who live along the river banks found that they could cut these reeds down and use them as blow guns to blow little projectiles through the reed at fish or small game and add to their food supply. And ultimately as cannon, the word comes down in our English language to describe those heavy metallic reeds through which the engineers of the armies of all peoples have projected shells and missiles at the enemy.

If you look at the reeds that grow along the bank of the Nile you'll see also that their bark is notched in a rather regular way and the peasants again who lived along the banks of the river learned that they could use the rod which is straight and because of these notches as a measuring device. And so caneh becoming cannon Greek and canon in English ultimately comes to mean that which measures up. We speak of the canon of the mass of the Roman Catholic Church as that which measured those elements of the liturgy which measure up to official requirements and, therefore, are fixed in the liturgy. And we use the word canon to describe, and this is the reason I go through this long history, to describe those books which measured up by virtue of their contents to be part of Scripture. We speak of the Scriptural canon. The Scriptural canon is this canon of those Biblical books which were deemed acceptable by the ancients as part of our tanach, part of our Bible.

Now, it's interesting when one looks at the Biblical canon, and you're all familiar with it, you all have Bibles in your home and you've looked at them often and probably taken courses in the Bible and you know the books that are included, at one point in time there were two canons of Biblical materials: the one that we are familiar with which was established largely by the leaders of Judaism in Palestine, in Judea and Palestine beginning in the sixth pre-Christian century and going down to the second century of our era; and another which was established in the diaspora, largely in the Egyptian diaspora by the Greek-

speaking Jews which included all of the books with which we are familiar and a number of others, and these other books, books which were part of the diaspora of the canon, are the books to which in a little mini-series which I'm going to begin today I'd like to draw your attention. Most of them are included in a collection which is called the Apocrypha. Being the Bible of the Greek-speaking world, most of them have come down to us in Greek rescensions. They were probably written originally in Hebrew or Aramaic. We owe their survival not to the rabbis and not to the synagogue but to the church because they are the canon of what we call the Septuagint, the translation by the 70 which was the name given to the earliest Greek translation of the Bible which was begun in the third century B.C.E. and proceeded through the various texts down for several centuries. The Septuagint was a book which was particularly important to the early church, most of whose members spoke Greek rather than Hebrew, and that canon became what they accept as Scripture. And so if you look at a Roman Catholic version of the Bible you'll find that they print side by side with what they call the Old Testament our scripture, the New Testament their scripture. They also print the apocrypha, a Greek word which means the hidden books, the books which the Jews set aside which were part of the canon of the Septuagint and it is to these books which are ancient classics of our people, beloved by our people, believed inspired by thousands of our people, that I'd like to call your attention. And the book to which I'd like to call your attention today is a little novella known as the book of Tobit after the name of its chief protagonist.

To understand the purpose of Tobit I must remind you that in the days of the Second Temple in late Biblical times one of the basic theses and themes of Jewish life was a Deuteronomic claim that God rewards and God punishes, that as a man does so will it be done to him. If you are willing and obedient ye shall eat of the good of the land; if you violate the terms of the covenant the heavens will be shut tight and you will be driven off the land. On Yom Kippur we still read in the synagogue the great summation of this theme: See, I've set before you

this day life and death, the blessing and the curse, choose life that ye may live. Now, this idea that life was like a classroom where good work is rewarded and shoddy work is graded down is a morally bracing idea. It's, after all, the basis of child rearing and has been so since time immemorial. It says to us what we'd like life to be like, that if we do what is right things will be right for us. If we study and prepare for life, life will open to us and we will lead a good life. Unfortunately, as Biblical man himself knew, experience does not prove this out. Not only is Deuteronomy in the Bible but the book of Job is, after all, in the Bible. And I saw a classic example of this in our papers just two days ago. Did you read about this fire in Euclid in which a young mother and a daughter were killed. And this young woman seems to have been a rather remarkable woman who though she was just beginning her own life had adopted five or six children from Vietnam and Salvador, from the trouble spots of the world, and raising them in her own home as her own, and yet she is the victim of a fire. And so this question of theodicy, that is, the question of whether in fact the good is rewarded and evil is punished as the Bible claims, was what was the troubling question which faced Biblical man. And it's the question to which the book of Tobit addresses itself in the form of a lengthy story. And the story, not to waste any more time with introductions, is the story of two deserving human beings, the hero, an elderly man named Tobit, and a lovely, beauteous and virtuous maiden by the name of Sarah. The book of Tobit was written probably in the third century B.C.E., possibley in Egypt, possibly in Persia, but its setting is the eighth century.

Tobit is born in Israel in the Northern Kingdom just before the Assyrians come down and destroy the Northern Kingdom and take the leadership and nobility into exile to the east. And his was the tribe of Naftali and he says in the introduction, because much of the story is written in the first person, that though most of his fellow tribes people had abandoned their faith to the extent that they no longer bothered to come on pilgrimage to Jerusalem, they no longer

paid the tithes that were due to the temple and to the priesthood. He came faithfully. He tithed his food. He tithed the produce of his field. He was loyal to the covenant in all respects; yet, when destruction came on Israel because of their sins he, too, was among those who were taken captive. But when he was taken to Ninevah, the Assyrian capital, his virtue is seen and he rises to a position of authority as a purveyor of food to the crown and all seems to come out right for this fine human being. Unfortunately, he is so virtuous that he undoes his good fortune. It's a troubled time. It's a time in which kings ruled tyranically and one of the ways kings punished their recalcitrant subjects was to sentence them to death and to order that their bodies be flung into the street to be displayed publicly for their crimes. Now, many of the crimes which Judeans of the time were held libel were of tribes trying to move from one area to another without royal permission in order to come together again with their own families. And one day when Tobit is out in the city he sees that there is a dead corpse lying in the street, a Judean, and despite the royal mandate to let this corpse lie there undisturbed, he takes the body and sees that it is given a proper burial. He was reported to the authorities and he has to flee. And he remains in exile, if you will, for a number of years until finally some of his friends who know of his quality resurrect him and tell a new king of his quality and he is allowed to come back to live in Ninevah and to resume something of his previous life. But again his virtue gets in his way. Again he is out in the city. This time he has prepared a festival meal and it is the custom to go out and find the poor of the city to invite them to the meal. They did that in those days not only for Pesach but for Shavuot, the Pentecost, and while he was out looking for the poor to invite home to dinner he sees another one of these men who have been killed by arbitrary royal authority lying as a corpse in the street, and though he knows the price of his actions, after all he has paid the price once, he takes the corpse and takes it home, puts it aside, prepares for a burial that evening,

digs the grave and buries the body. And that night, because according to the tradition he is ritually impure for having touched a corpse, he cannot enter his home until the morning when he can bathe in the river and purify himself, he sleeps in the open, and some bird droppings fall into his eye, this is where the story gets a little bit complex, and he goes blind and he prays to God to die, to be allowed to leave. Again and again, trying to do the good, having done the good, this man is rewarded with suffering.

And now we move some few hundred miles further east to the second city of the Assyrian Empire, to a city called Ixpatana and at Ixpatana there's a lovely young lady by the name of Sarah. Sarah is virtuous and Sarah is lovely and she is a maiden and she is being berated by her servants because seven times she has been betrothed to a young man and seven times the marriage has been celebrated and seven times they have gone into their nuptial chamber and seven times a devil by the name of Ashmodai has appeared who has a particular longing for this girl and he has destroyed the young man who is to be her husband before the marriage can be consummated so she is seven times a widow, yet still a virgin and she is a woman who is being demeaned by her servants. And she utters a prayer to God in which she said she has contemplated suicide, such is her shame. She doesn't know what will befall her. She doesn't know why it has befallen her, but she knows that if she were to commit suicide she'd violate the will of God because she, too, is virtuous and concerned, that's the basis of this story. And so she has decided that she will bear as best she can her burden, but she asks God somehow in His mercy to relent and give her peace. The two prayers ascend to Heaven. God hears the prayers and God summons one of the archangels, Raphael, the one who heals, and sends the archangel down to earth to make all things right. And, of course, all things become right. But we have a way to go.

Now, it turns out that as Tobit contemplates his fate, he's now been blind almost eight years, he thinks that he is about to die, he's lived on a mere pittance, he remembers that twenty years before he placed some money with a friend of

his in Akpatana and so he summons his only son, Tobias, to him and he says to Tobias: before I die I want to make provisions for your mother, that's the responsibility of a good husband. The only thing I have left is a sum of money that I placed once with this friend of mine Patana. I know the way is dangerous but you will be safe, I pray, God will watch over you. I want you to go. Here is a receipt for the money. Go and bring it back so that I may die in peace, knowing that your mother is taken care of. And Tobias, being a dutiful son, everyone is virtuous in this story, Tobias assents immediately. Hannah, the mother, is in tears. She will lose not only her husband and all that he has but her son. The father reassures her and being a dutiful wife, she submits, and Tobias sets out but not before he has met up with Raphael in the guise of a fellow traveler, Azariel, the god who helps, and the two of them set out on the way to go to Ixpatana. Now, there's only one incident on this great adventure and that is one night they go to camp near a river bank, we're back to the canes, and when they go to wash their hands in the river a great fish jumps out to try and swallow Tobias. He doesn't succeed, it's not the Jonah story, but Raphael says to Tobias, quickly grab the fish and haul him up to land and Tobias manages to do so, and Raphael then says to Tobias, this angel in the guise of a fellow traveler, slit open the fish, take its heart, take its liver and take its gall because these have magical properties. They slit open the fish which is their evening meal and they take these three elements of the fish and Tobias, naturally being inquisitive, says, why these particular organs of the fish, and Raphael says to him, I know that if you take the liver and the heart of a fish and you burn it in front of a demon, the demon is powerless. We're back, remember, 2500 years ago when people believed in demons and things of this kind, charms of this kind.

And what about the gall? Well, Raphael says, I believe that the gall is a particular kind of salve which if you put into the eyes of those who are blind will allow them to see. So, off they go to Ixtapana, and as they approach

Ixtapana, Azariel Raphael tells Tobias about this lovely maiden and her plight. And he tells him also that he is somehow related to this maiden. And Tobias is stimulated by the story, by the chance of rescuing a maiden from the devil, and he has in his hands the weapons to make this possible, so he pleads with the maiden's father to allow the marriage and the father, though he fears for the young man's safety, allows it. And that night when Asmodai appears in the bridal chamber the gall and the liver and the heart of the fish are burned and the devil leaves for the furthest reaches of Egypt. The young couple are happily consummated in their marriage. In the meantime, while they are dallying together they ask Azariel Raphael to go on to the house of the man who holds the pledge, to get the money that is owed Tobit, and then Tobias, with a bridal dowry, with his new wife and with the money owed his father, travels back to Ninevah. And there's a great family reunion and as you can well imagine the salve works beautifully and after eight years of blindness Tobit is allowed to see.

Now, this little story, a romantic story, a folk story in which virtue triumphs over all the suffering of the people. The extent of the suffering of Tobit, I suspect, is a reflex of the suffering of the diaspora, one trouble after another. The diaspora, after all, already suffered exile. They suffered not being in the land and then one after another they suffer it from the high tribute and taxation of various kings, they suffered from many of the viccisitudes of fortune.

What shall we make of this story? What was its virtue besides a personification of the hopes of the exile that ultimately the loyalty of the people would be rewarded? One of the beauties of the story and the reason that it has any relevance and is worthwhile talking about on a day like today is it includes what was probably the first ethical will ever written by one of our people. I don't know if you know what an ethical will is, but there was a lovely tradition among Jews in the Middle Ages and before, that in addition to the paper in which they made provisions for their wives and for their children, the father would set

down a will in which he would speak of life, of virtue, and give good advice. He would speak to his children and his grandchildren of what was important to him, what he felt to be the essent requirements of decency and honor and rectitude and virtue. And some of these ethical wills were among the most beautifully documents which have come down to us from antiquity and I've often thought that it would be a lovely gesture if some of us today would begin to write such a document, worry less about what our children knew about our net worth and help them to understand what we consider worthy, of what our worth really consists of. In this case the ethical will is a set of paragraphs spoken by Tobias Tobit on a bed which he believes will be his death bed as he sends him off on this journey, and it bespeaks the hamish's sense of virtue, the sense concerned with generosity, concern with honor, the concern with family which was part of the essential themes of Jewish life 2300 years ago very much as it is today. Let me read it to you.

"My son, when I die, bury me, and do not neglect your mother. Honor her all the days of her life; do what is pleasing to her, never grieve her. Remember, my son, that she faced many dangers for you when you were yet unborn. When she dies, bury her beside me in the same grave.

Remember the Lord our God all your days, my son, and refuse to sin or to transgress his commandments. Live uprightly. Do not walk in the ways of wrongdoing. If you do what is true, your ways will prosper through your deeds. Give alms from your possessions to all who live uprightly, and do not let your eye begrudge the gift when you make it. Do not turn your face away from any poor man, then the face of God will not be turned away from you. If you have many possessions, make your gift from them in proportion; if few, do not be afraid to give according to the little that you have. For charity delivers from death and keeps you from entering the darkness; and for all who practice it charity is an excellent offering in the presence of the Most High.

Beware, my son, of all immorality. Take a wife from the descendants of your fathers. Remember, my son, that Noah, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, our fathers of old, all took wives from among their brethren. They were blessed in their children, and their posterity will inherit the land. So now, my son, do not disdain your brothers, nor the sons and daughters of your people. In pride, my son, there is ruin and great confusion; and in shiftlessness there is loss, a great want, because shiftlessness is the mother of famine. Do not hold over till the next day the wages of any man who works for you. Pay him at once; and if you serve God you will receive your reward.

Watch yourself, my son, in everything you do, and be disciplined in all your conduct. What you hate do not do to another.

You remember there used to be a very popular debate as to who spread the Golden Rule first, Jesus or Hillel? Well, here, three, four centuries before either of them you have the Golden Rule stated. It was a common idea in Jewish life in ancient times.

What you hate do not do to another. Do not drink wine to excess. Do not let drunkenness go with you on your way. Give of your bread to the hungry, of your clothing to the naked. Give all of your surplus to charity. Do not let your eye begrudge the gift when you make it. Seek advice from every wise man, and do not despise any useful counsel. Bless the Lord on every occasion; ask him that your ways be straight and that your paths may prosper.

Do not be afraid, my son, because we have become poor. One has great wealth if he fears God and refrains from every sin and does what is pleasing in his sight.

That's not bad. What we have in Tobit then is a document which reveals to us a great deal of the conventional morality, the conventional sense of virtue and the values of our people in late Biblical times. It's a very high sense of what's ethical, of responsibility. There's that wonderful sense of family which has characterized Jewish life through the ages. There's a sense of responsibility to another and overarching all of this the tension which underlies what is, after all, the greatest Jewish affirmation of faith. People say faith is the belief or disbelief in the existence of God. That's not really it. Everyone believes in some overarching power. The real question of faith is whether or not we believe that right is worth the doing. There are those to whom the only thing worth the doing is that which brings immediate advantage. These are the true atheists of the world. Their only moral standard is will it help me, what will I gain from it. The religious person must alternately do the right in the hope that he will gain peace of mind or prosperity or return to Zion or whatever the promise for which he longs, but he must do it regardless because it is God's will and it is right to do. And his faith consists in the affirmation that ultimately the right is worth the doing. And even if he does not or she does not benefit from the good, others will ultimately gain from it. Civilization is, after all, the gift of the good who are

dead, and the living who can take advantage of it.

Now, why wasn't the book of Tobit included in our Biblical canon? I suspect, first of all, because of the very proper or improper devil habits at Ashmodai. The existence of a devil in a monotheistic faith is an anacronism. God must be the source of all good. There's a Satan, of course, in Job, but in Job it's all phrased as a test. It's clear that God still is in control. Here Ashmodai is acting on his own and the only thing that ultimately disposses him from his bridal chamber is the gall and the liver and the heart of the fish burned with appropriate charms. And so it has a degree of superstition which the rabbis found unacceptable, though Jewish life in all ages has had, certainly, its elements of superstition.

But I think ultimately there was a deeper reason and that is that the argument put forth in the book, that whatever the viccisitudes of the virtuous, they are ultimately rewarded in this life. All comes out well for Tobit and for Sarah. They live happily ever after so as Tobias' wife, Tobit as the man whose sight is regained, who has the respect of his community, his wealth is his own again, this ultimately is not an answer to the question of reward and punishment theodicy which can be accepted. It was rejected by Job, and properly so. We have no answer but to place this as an answer is to hold out a promise to people that in fact we cannot make good on. Ultimately, the feeling that the good is rewarded is something one must hold on faith, and to promise in any special way that ultimately whatever the viccisitudes of the virtuous may be they will ultimately be rewarded is to give to people a promise which the religious man cannot guarantee, which the Bible cannot guarantee and, therefore, it ought not to be spoken, it ought not to

There you have it, a lovely little book. It has only one other element which I will place before you and then it's time to close the fourteen chapters of Tobit and hope that some day you will turn to it and read it yourself.

On this adventure, that is when he leaves his father and goes to Ixpatana, Tobias takes with him his dog and that's a nice little detail. And we pass over it without much thought except when we recognize that dogs as pets are representative of a rather advanced stage of civilization. The ancients ate their dogs or they used them as hunting dogs. They could not afford pets. They could not afford to feed animals which had no special purpose around the house except to be loving and to be loved. But here we have the first instance in all of literature in which a man's best friend goes along with a man on an adventure and there's no particular reason for the dog to be in the story, it's simply there. And I suspect he appears first in the Jewish story because there's a sense that man must be as careful of his animals as of other human beings throughout Scripture. The Sabbath rule, if you remember, says that the Sabbath is applicable not only to the man, to human beings and even to the slaves but also to the animals, to the ox and to the ass and to all the animals that are in your home. There's a concern about animal life in Jewish thought which is unique and I suspect it allowed our tradition to evolve to a sense that man could enjoy the animal as well as benefit from the labor of an animal or the carcass, the meat of an animal before other civilizations came to this recognition. So when you go home today and you have to walk the dog remember Tobias who walked his dog all the way from Ninevah to Ixpatana and you know you're doing an act which is consecrated if not in the Bible then in the Bible of the diaspora in the book of Tobit.

hese things she to the thought she said, "I am her; if I do this, nim, and I shall n sorrow to the ed by her wined art thou, O ssed is thy holy ever. May all or ever. 12 And turned my eyes e. 13Command the earth and more. 14Thou I am innocent and that I did he name of my captivity. I am and he has no o near kinsman whom I should Already seven e dead. Why be not pleasing command that ne and pity be that I hear re-

th was heard in ory of the great was sent to heal scale away the 's eyes; to give Raguel in marn of Tobit, and he evil demon, titled to possess ment Tobit rehouse and Sarah uel came down

On that day Tobit remembered the money which he had left in trust with Gabael at Rages in Media, and he said to himself: 2"I have asked for death. Why do I not call my son Tobias so that I may explain to him about the money before I die?" 3So he called him and said I'My son, when I die, bury me, and do not neglect your mother. Honor her all the days of your life; do what is pleasing to her, and do not grieve her. 4Remember, my son, that she faced many dangers for you while you were yet unborn. When she dies, bury her beside me in the same grave.

5 "Remember the Lord our God all your days, my son, and refuse to sin or to transgress his commandments. Live uprightly all the days of your like, and do not walk in the ways of wrongdoing. For if you do what is true, your ways will prosper through your deeds. Give alms from your possessions to all who live uprightly, and do not let your eye begrudge the gift when you make it. Do not turn your face away from any poor man, and the face of God will not be turned away from you. 8If you have many possessions, make your gift from them in proportion; if few, do not be afraid to give according to the little you have. So you will be laying up a good treasure for yourself against the day of necessity. 10 For charity delivers from death and keeps you from entering the darkness; "and for all who practice it charity is an excellent offering in the presence of the Most High.

12 "Beware, my son, of all immo-

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n Other authorities read the great Raphael. And he
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rality. First of all take a wife from among the descendants of your fathers and do not marry a foreign woman, who is not of your father's tribe; for we are the sons of the prophets. Remember, my son, that Noah, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, our fathers of old, all took wives from among their brethren. They were blessed in their children, and their posterity will inherit the land. 13So now, my son, love your brethren, and in your heart do not disdain your brethren and the sons and daughters of your people by refusing to take a wife for yourself from among them. Fes in pride there is ruin and great confusion; and in shiftlessness there is loss and great want, because shiftlessness is the mother of famine. 14Do not hold over till the next day the wages of any man who works for you, but pay him at once; and if you serve God you will receive payment.

"Watch yourself, my son, in everything you do, and be disciplined in all your conduct. 15 And what you hate, do not do to any one. Do not drink wine to excess or let drunkenness go with you on your way. 16 Give of your bread to the hungry, and of your clothing to the naked. Give all your surplus to charity, and do not let your eye begrudge the gift when you make it. Place your bread on the grave of the righteous, but give none to sinners. 18 Seek advice from every wise man, and do not despise any useful counsel. 19Bless the Lord God on every occa-

sion; ask him that your ways may be made straight and that all your paths and plans may prosper. For none of the nations has understanding; but the Lord himself gives all good things, and

according to his will he humbles whomever he wishes.

'So, my son, remember my commands, and do not let them be blotted out-of your mind. 20 And now let me explain to you about the ten talents of silver which I left in trust with Gabael the son of Gabrias at Rages in Media. ²¹Do not be afraid, my son, because we have become poor. You have great wealth if you fear God and refrain from every sin and do what is pleasing in his sight."

Then Tobias answered him, "Father, I will do everything that you have commanded me; 2but how can I obtain the money when I do not know the man?" Then Tobit gave him the receipt, and said to him, "Find a man to go with you and I will pay him wages as long as I live; and go and get the money." 4So he went to look for a man; and he found Raphael, who was an angel, but Tobias did not know it. Tobias^p said to him, "Can you go with me to Rages in Media? Are you acquainted with that region?" The angel replied, "I will go with you; I am familiar with the way, and I have stayed with our brother Gabael." Then Tobias said to him, "Wait for me, and I shall tell my father." 8And he said to him, "Go, and do not delay." So he went in and said to his father, "I have found some one to go with me." He said, "Call him to me, so that I may learn to what tribe he belongs, and whether he is a reliable man to go with you."

9 So Tobias^p invited him in; he entered and they greeted each other. ¹⁰Then Tobit said to him, "My

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^{8:} The name Asmodeus means "destroyer." 11-15: Sarah's prayer, traditional beginning of a Jewish prayer (compare 8.5, 15 and see angel Raphael is sent in answer to both the prayers. 17: The name ." Entitled to possess her, 6.11. The phrase at that very moment is a thens the interest of the story.

nd his son for the trust-money, Tobit imparts his philosophy of life. , 1.14. 5-19: This section of general ethical counsel epitomizes the . There are many close parallels with other books of wisdom, such 5: Morality guarantees prosperity; a dogma of orthodox Hebrew -30). 7-11: The value of almsgiving; the emphasis is typical of the Sir.3.30; 35.2; Mt.6.2-4). 12-13: One should marry within his own

family group; this is a keynote of the book (1.9; 3.15; 6.11-12). 13: Pride, Pr.16.18. Shiftlessness, Pr.19.15; Sir.22.1-2. 14: Lev.19.13. 15: What you hate, do not do, the Golden Rule (Mt.7.12) in negative form, which was enunciated also by the great Jewish teacher, Hillel (flourished in the time of Herod the Great, 37-4 B.C.). Wine, Pr.23.29-35; Sir.31.29-31. 16: Compare vv. 7-11. 17: Placing food on graves was a pagan practice, forbidden in the Old Testament (Dt.26.14) and deprecated by many Jews (compare Sir.30.18). Some interpret the verse as a reference to the meals provided the mourners at funerals (compare Jer. 16.7; Ezek. 24.17). 19: A sound moral life needs to be sustained by prayer.

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