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Almsgiving as a rhetorical device in 4QTobit?

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This article is a sequel to an earlier exploration of the possibility of a shift in the Book of Tobit from the Deuteronomistic theological perspective in the beginning to a more nuanced concept of theodicy in the end. The Semitic versions of Tobit found at Qumran are regarded as the earliest witnesses to the story of Tobit, dating from ca. 100 BCE to the early part of the 1st century CE. They are very fragmentary, but the theme of almsgiving recurs at regular intervals in the narrative. In the beginning the Deuteronomistic theological perspective is expressed in terms of Tobit's belief that God will reward with prosperity those who give alms to their own kinsmen, but towards the end the ideology appears to shift from the rather self-centred 'prosperity cult' orientation to a different motivation for almsgiving. The aim of this article is to test the possibility that the almsgiving references are rhetorical hinges that mark the movement of the narrative into a different ideological viewpoint. The complexity of the manuscript transmission of the story of Tobit in the larger matrix of diachronic cultural and religious trends in the ancient Near East is kept in mind when text-critical problems are encountered.

Introduction

> Persuasive speech attempts to effect change of some sort.
> (Newsom 2010:688)

This article follows on an earlier exploration of the possibility that there may be a deliberate shift in the Book of Tobit from the Deuteronomistic theological perspective in the beginning to a more nuanced concept of goodness and righteousness in the end.[1] The four Aramaic copies of Tobit (4Q196–199) and the one Hebrew copy (4Q200) are the primary focus of this article. All the translations of the quoted fragments are by Fitzmyer (1995). This article tests the possibility that the recurring almsgiving references in the oldest versions are rhetorical hinges that mark the movement of the narrative from a Deuteronomistic ideology with the tendency to promote what could perhaps be seen as the seeds of a simplistic 'prosperity cult' towards a more nuanced understanding of the worship of God. A tentative suggestion is made to try to correlate the narrative development to diachronic trends in the Jewish and Christian religions. Collins (2011:34, 41) recognises that the Deuteronomistic writers 'radically transform literary and legal history in order to forge a new vision of religion and the state'. They make 'a pious effort to convey what is taken to be the essence of earlier traditions', but it is clear that 'revelation was a contentious matter'. He (2011:26, 28) recognises an 'extraordinary ambivalence' in that 'even when law is understood prescriptively, its exercise always requires a competent authority to interpret it' and that in the case of Deuteronomistic ideology the credibility of Moses as narrator was employed. Clines (1995:85, 90) points out that 'legitimacy in interpretation is really a matter of whether an interpretation can win approval by some community'. In his lecture at the Old Testament Department, University of Stellenbosch, in 2012 Douglas Lawrie provided an apt definition of the mechanism:

> a loosely connected set of ideas, commitments and attitudes … that inform practices within a distinctly definable broader or narrower context … [*It*] serves as a mechanism of inclusion and exclusion, determines who has agency and voice in the context in which the ideology functions.[2]

Deuteronomistic theology posits a simplistic theodicy in which there is a direct connection between act and consequence, instigated by a just God who is present in the holy of holies in the centralised Jerusalem Temple. A prominent aspect of Deuteronomistic theodicy was communal guilt.[3] Collins (2011:24, 29) has noted the remarkable variation in the Hebrew scriptures from the

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1. Evans (2016).

2. Brueggemann, Placher and Blount (2002:20–21): 'Ideology is the self-deceiving practice of taking a part for the whole, of taking "my truth" for the truth'.

3. Hence supplying an 'easy' explanation for the Babylonian exile.

2nd century BCE down to the turn of the era that has become clearly apparent since the Dead Sea Scrolls have become available. Amit (2010:97) goes some way to explain such variation by identifying the presence in biblical texts of 'hidden polemic' as a rhetorical device. She observes that it is used indirectly as a means of persuasion, either to raise discussion or to effect an ideological change. In the beginning of the narrative the Deuteronomistic orientation is clearly present in Tobit's self-righteous description of himself as, unlike his fellow Jews, annually going up to Jerusalem to visit the Temple.[4] Complementing this self-description, early in the narrative Tobit expresses his belief that God will reward with prosperity those who give alms to their own kinsmen. However, by the latter middle of the narrative this view appears to shift away from the rather self-centred prosperity cult orientation. The hypothesis of this research is that the Semitic fragments of Tobit (4Q196–200) may reveal that the motif of almsgiving is employed as a rhetorical marker to insinuate a shift from the Deuteronomistic theological view.

A methodological assumption of this article is that the four fragmentary Aramaic texts of Tobit (4Q Tob 196–199) and the Hebrew text (4Q200) are the oldest sources and that even the Hebrew copy was derived from an Aramaic original.[5] For continuity of the narrative it has been necessary to resort to the GII translation as given by NETS in order to fill in the large gaps in the Semitic fragments. Since the Qumran discovery of the Semitic fragments of Tobit, the scholarly consensus is that GII (based on Sinaiticus, 4th to 5th century CE) is older than GI. Weeks, Gathercombe and Stuckenbruck (2004:5) state that GII has a very early character and they present it in 'a raw and unreconstructed form'. They point out that although the numerous extant versions are genetically linked they differ significantly from one another and that the relationships between them remain 'one of the great text-critical puzzles'. A serious concern is their warning that the standard edition of the Qumran texts has based its restorations, and arguably some of its readings, on the assumption that those texts are closely related to the Sinaiticus and Old Latin traditions – 'an assumption that may be correct but that thereby becomes self-reinforcing'.[6]

Another text-critical stumbling block is the connection between the translation from the Greek as 'alms' of the Aramaic and Hebrew words connected to truth and

righteousness.[7] In the Semitic fragments the following words are all translated as 'almsgiving':

truth	4Q200 (Hebrew) Frg. 2 line 5 הא]מת
	4Q196 (Aramaic) Frg. 17ii line 1 קושׁטא
righteousness	4Q196 (Aramaic) Frg. 10 line 1 צדקתא[8]
	4Q200 (Hebrew) Frg. 2 line 6 [צדקה
	line 8 צד]קות (Tob 4:7, 8)
GII alms	4:5b δικαιοσύνην
	14:02 ἐλεημούνας

The wide range of estimations of the place and date of origin of Tobit is understandable in view of the varied folkloristic and cultural threads, which reflect the complexity of the manuscript transmission.[9] The narrative is set in 727–722 BCE in the days of Shalmanezer (Tob 1:15), when exiles were taken to Nineveh, but it could apply to the Babylonian exile. Flint (2001:87) estimates the 4th or 3rd century BCE for the date of composition, but the narrative could be applicable to the much-later Hellenistic era, possibly even during Seleucid (ca. 200–167 BCE) or Maccabean times (167–63 BCE). Fitzmyer (2003:26) suggests that the final version was written after Daniel but still within the context of Palestinian Judaism.[10]

Almsgiving allusions in the Qumran fragments

There are six allusions to almsgiving (some indirect) in the Qumran fragments of Tobit. They occur in the beginning, early middle, later middle and ending of the narrative. In the beginning of the narrative Tobit describes himself as an observant Jew, concerned with the spirit and the letter of the law, pious and rather self-righteous. In the sense of giving alms he sends his son Tobiah to go out in the street and find kinsmen, specifically their own kinsmen, to share his bounty and eat with him.

Q196 Frg. 2 lines 11–13 (Tob 2:1b–2)[11]

11. a fine dinner, and I reclined to [ea]t. And they brought in the ta[b]le before me, and I saw [that] the delicacies that they offered

12. upon it were many. [I] said [to To]biah, my son, 'My son, go, get anyone [whom you] will find of [our] kinsfolk ברי אזל דבר לכל מן[די ת]השכה באת[י]נא

13. [ ] my son, go [and] get [him], and let him be brought in that he may eat [together] with me, …

The next development in the narrative (details of which are partially supplied from GII) is that the indirect result of Tobit's almsgiving (specifically for his own kinsmen) is that he is blinded by sparrow droppings. Tobit and his wife Hannah suffer increasing poverty because of his disability. GII describes Tobit's legalistic distrust and unjustified anger towards his wife. In response to his unthankfulness and lack of recognition of her care Hannah lashes out verbally at him. By means of the juxtaposition of these two voices the reader is shown that perhaps Tobit's piety and apparent righteousness is false and hypocritical.

The Hebrew copy 4Q200 Frg. 1i has a scrap of Tobit's prayer from Tob 3:6 in which he says that it would be better to die than suffer this false reproach from his wife, whereas ironically it was he who was inflicting unjustified reproach on her. The rather self-righteous Deuteronomistic orientation in Tobit's prayer is juxtaposed against Sarra's prayer: as an aside the reader is told that on the same day Sarra, daughter of Raguel, at Ecbatana in Media prays a similarly desperate prayer but without any hint of a Deuteronomistic theodicy. Part of this is preserved in 4Q196 Frg. 6, in which she reminds God that he knows of her innocence and purity in spite of the fact that she has had seven husbands, all of whom were killed by a demon before consummation of the marriage could take place. Tobit's clearly Deuteronomistic prayer expressing a sense of communal guilt is contrasted with Sarra's prayer in which she also expresses a wish to die but is concerned for her father, whose only possibility for an heir is through her. The chapter ends by indicating to the reader that the prayers of Sarra and Tobit were heard at the same moment 'in the presence of the glory of God' (GII, Tob 3:16).

Chapter 4 follows with the statement that on the same day Tobit remembers that he had placed silver in trust with Gabaelos at Rhaga whilst in exile in Media, and he decides to send his son Tobiah to redeem the pledge. Tobit's farewell speech to Tobiah apparently contains a direct instruction to give alms [צדקתא], but here the first text-critical difficulty arises.

Q196 Frg. 10 line 1 (Tob 4:7)

[　　כאךך　]ידך ברי ע[בד צדקתא　　]

[　according to what is in] your hand, my son, gi[ve *alms*　]

In this Aramaic fragment Fitzmyer translates the reconstructed word צדקתא as 'alms'. The nearest Aramaic word to צדקתא given by Holladay (1988:428) is צדקה [make beneficence]. Greenspahn (1999:228) renders צדקה as 'merit'. Holladay refers to Dan 4:24 as the only biblical example of the word צדקה, the meaning of which he gives as 'decree'. To make matters worse, when one refers to the photograph of this fragment 10, there is no sign of the word צדקתא, although the final letter on the left edge of the fragment could possibly be a צ, but Weeks et al. only present the ע of ע[בד.[12] The word reconstructed by Fitzmyer as 'alms' is not actually extant at

all! The restoration here in the Qumran fragment by Fitzmyer as 'give alms' [ע[בד צדקתא] is doubly doubtful when one takes other witnesses into account: Garcia Martinez (1994:293) does not include this fragment in his translation. The presentation by Weeks et al. (2004:141) confirms the absence: A1. […] ידך ברי הוי ע[…] (Tob 4:07). The word is not extant in the 4th century Greek Codex Sinaiticus either. However, it is present in La. (Vetus Latina), which Fitzmyer (1995:3) regards as corresponding to the Semitic texts, and AB (Alexandrinus and Vaticanus, the short recension). The warning of Weeks et al. that the policy of reconstruction from later versions is self-reinforcing is pertinent here.

More uncertainty follows when one is led to wonder how the word צדקתא came to signify almsgiving. Intertextuality provides further clues. A pointer to the difficulty of how this word (in Tob 4:7) should be understood in its Deuteronomistic context is the use of צדק at the end of Deuteronomy 33:19b:[13] 'there they shall offer sacrifices of righteousness' (KJV). Even here, the complexity is demonstrated in the NRSV, which has: 'there they shall offer the right sacrifices'. The LXX renders 'the sacrifice of righteousness'. Another intertextual reference that casts light on this problem is the later Greek version of Ben Sira (Sir 29:12), which indicates that 'good works can bring an eternal credit'. However, when one searches for this passage in the original Hebrew version of Ben Sira, one finds that it is not there! Beentjies (1997:34, 35) voices a similar warning to that of Weeks et al. (2004:1, 5) in relation to the differences between the original Hebrew version of Ben Sira and the much later Greek copies.[14]

In GII 4:5b–6 Tobit states: 'Do righteous (δικαιοσύνην) acts all the days of your life, and do not walk in the ways of injustice'. If one compares this passage in the later GI version one finds that an extra 12 verses have been added in GI, extolling the virtue of almsgiving, specifically to any poor person. These verses (7–18) are not extant in GII.[15] After verse 6 GII continues coherently at verse 19:

> For those who keep to the truth will succeed in all their deeds. And to all those who do righteousness (δικαιοσύνην) … the Lord will give to them good counsel. And if the Lord wishes, he casts down to deepest Hades.

This entire sentence from 5b and 6 with the jump to verse 19 is coherent, but note that the retributive reference to Hades indicates that at this stage the narrative still has a strongly Deuteronomistic flavour.[16] Thus it seems at this stage that the

12. See Fitzmyer 1995, Plate III. 196. 4QpapTob a ar PAM 43.177; Mus.Inv. 852. Unfortunately, the Leon Levy Dead Sea Scrolls Digital Library only adds to the confusion, as their fragment does not conform to the photograph in Discoveries in the Judaean Desert (DJD), although it is identically labelled.

13. [שם יזבחו זבחי־צדק]

14. However, I am indebted to Kevin Chau, who has referred me to the Modern Hebrew word for 'almsgiving' נדבה צדקה and to the translation principle of metonymy, whereby a summarising word is used for several words in the original language. Metonymy creates relationships within one conceptual domain (Chau 2014:633–652). This may have been the principle that Fitzmyer applied here.

15. The NETS translation of GI Tobit 4:6–11: For if you keep to the truth, there will be successes in your deeds. And to all who do righteousness ⁷give alms from your possessions and do not let your eye be envious when you give alms. Do not turn your face away from any poor person, and the face of God shall not be turned away from you. ⁸If you have abundant possessions, give alms from them accordingly; if you have a little, do not be afraid to give alms according to that little. ⁹For you will be storing up a good treasure for yourself against the day of necessity. ¹⁰Therefore, alms delivers from death and prevents entering into the darkness. ¹¹For alms is a good gift to those who give them in the presence of the Most High.

16. The Hellenistic term 'Hades' is foreign to the Semitic religious context.

extension of almsgiving not only to own kinsfolk but to 'any poor person' was not present in this early Deuteronomistic stage of the narrative, whereas in the earlier Greek version GII it is the legalistic aspect of righteousness that is a concern. The phrase 'any poor person' may well be a later addition.

Yet, contrary to my expectation, in the Hebrew version (4Q200 Frg. 2 line 6) the instruction to give alms to 'any poor person' does appear at this stage in the narrative:

Q200 HEBREW Frg. 2 lines 6–9 (Tob 4:6–9)

6. [   ] According to your ability, my son, gi[ve] alms כול [עוסה צדקות], and hi[de] not [your face from any]

7. [p]oor person.Then [Go]d['s face] will not be h[idden] from you.

8 If you have [much, my] son, [according to (your) bounty]

8. [giv]e al[m]s [ק]ת[עושׂ]ה ממנו צד , from it [vacat] If you have little, according to the little (you have) [   ]

9. [By] your [giv]ing alms, 9 a good deposit [you   ]
[[בעשׂ]ותך צדקה שׂימה טובה]¹⁷

Thus already here in the early middle section of the narrative the Hebrew version contains the motive for almsgiving: if Tobias were to be honest and give alms (here, at this stage, to 'any poor person') according to what he has himself, God will be with him. However, he attaches a rider: by your giving alms you will receive a good deposit. The Deuteronomistically oriented concept (reminiscent of a prosperity cult) that if you give alms God's face will not be hidden from you, in line 7, is reinforced in line 9. Intertextual comparison here yields very interesting information: the Greek version of Ben Sira 29:12–13 confirms the content of the quotation shown of line 9. In the Aquinas Study Bible on this passage Fr. William Most (2017) explains:

> Almsgiving (ἐλεημοσύνας) can be stored up as a treasury. More than a shield and a heavy spear it will profit in a fight against an enemy … in other words, good works can bring an eternal credit.

However, another surprise awaits: Chapters 28 through 31 are not extant in the original Hebrew version of Ben Sira! Sirach was completed in Hebrew after 190 BC, and three-quarters of the original Hebrew has been recovered from the Cairo Geniza, Masada and Qumran. Sirach's grandson translated it into Greek in Egypt in 132 BC. However, the Greek copies we have are about a millennium later than the original. Thus intertextually, too; my hypothesis that the giving of alms not just to Hebrew kinsfolk but to any poor person could be a post-Christian development is still viable at this stage in the investigation.

As far as the Semitic fragments of Tobit go, two issues arise here. While the first part of this later Hebrew fragment promotes the giving of alms to any poor person, the second

part, specifically line 9, is self-contradictory in that it still betrays a Deuteronomistic value system by touting the reward: 'a good deposit'. According to the hypothesis being tested in this article, it is questionable whether Tobit has already made the transition at this early middle stage in the narrative to the realisation that alms should be given to 'any poor person'. Here the presence of almsgiving for reward could be an indication that the presence of this specification in the Greek versions was a later, possibly Christian, addition. The oldest Aramaic version that we have, 4Q196, dates from 50 BCE, but the Hebrew copy (4Q200) could be as late as 20 CE (Weeks et al. 2004:29). Interestingly Acts 6:1, which describes the early Jewish phase of the spread of Christianity, indicates that even at that stage the Jewish Christians still tended to prioritise the giving of alms to their own kinsfolk. 'Now during those days, when the disciples were increasing in number, the Hellenists complained against the Hebrews because their widows were being neglected in the daily distribution of food'.

Taking the rhetorical structure of the Tobit narrative into account, I would like to suggest that it is not likely that the author intended that Tobit would have already broken loose from the Deuteronomistic requirement to care only for kinsmen (those who are righteous) in this early middle part of the narrative. Interestingly, Anderson (2013) unravels a crucial link between the Deuteronomistic concept of sin as a debt with the concept portrayed by Tobit's speech of almsgiving as a means of storing up 'credits' with God.

In the Aramaic version the first hint of a countering of a prosperity cult only appears in the latter part of the middle section of the narrative at Tob 5:19 in 4Q197.¹⁸ It comes from Tobiah's mother, Hannah, who does not want her son to be sent away on a long and perilous journey for the sake of money. She expresses her fear that they will lose their son because of the danger of the long journey to a foreign land.

Q197 Frg. 4i line 1 (Tob 5:19)

[19   ] Let my son not cling [to mon]ey, but (let it be for him) like [   ].

Hannah objects that Tobiah's dangerous journey is undertaken just for the sake of money. She counters the materialistic value system and expresses contentment with what the Lord has provided. This seems to be another reflection that in spite of Tobit's pious directive to give alms (to his kinsmen) his wife recognises that he values prosperity and money too highly.¹⁹ The character of Hannah supplies a nuanced and subtle counterpoint to the concept of almsgiving as a way to earn a material reward from God. In this way her love becomes the fulcrum upon which the narrative swings into a different ideological orientation from the Deuteronomistic one. Here in this middle section there is a juxtaposition of Tobit's concern for material security against the demonstration that

17.Compare the translation of Garcia Martinez (1994:298): 4Q200Tob e Frg. 2–3 lines 6–9 (=Tob 4:4–7): [...] According to the size of your hands, my son, be [*generous in doing*] just deeds (alms), and do not wit[*hdraw*] ⁷[*your face from any poor*]person, so that from you [*the face of God does*] not [*withdraw.*] If, my son, you have [*much,*] ⁸[*do*] ju[*st*] deeds with it. [*blank*] If you have little, according to the lit[*tle*] ⁹[do just deeds, and do not fear to do a small] just deed: a [*good*] store.

18.Dated to ca. 25 BCE through CE 25 (Fitzmyer 1995:41), that is, later than 4Q196 Frg. 4i line 1.

19.See 4Q Instr.

God is in control of the entire situation and has heard the prayers of both Sarra and Tobit. The angel Raphael (a non-Deuteronomistic motif), in disguise as a distant kinsman, Azariah, appears just at the right time and volunteers to accompany Tobiah on his journey. Interestingly, even in GII Tob 5:12, in Tobit's interview with Azariah, a rather negative reflection of Tobit is portrayed. He tells Azariah that it is his son Tobiah who wishes to go to Media, not that he, Tobit, is sending him. His overly self-centred investigation of Azariah's kinship is reinforced by Azariah himself, who states, 'Why do you need a tribe?'[20]

In the next stage of the journey and the narrative, through the intervention of Azariah on the journey to Ecbatana, Tobiah is even equipped with the necessary cure for Sarra's malady. When Tobiah and Azariah reach the home of Raguel, Raguel avers that Tobit is a righteous man ('Blessings upon [you, my son; you are the] so[n of] a righteo[ous] man' [4Q197 Frg. 4iii line 9]). This statement subtly reinforces the mutual bond of Tobit and Raguel to a Deuteronomistic value system.

Tobiah falls in love with the beautiful Sarra, and it is settled that he is to marry her immediately. Amusingly, the father-in-law-to-be doesn't know that on their journey Azariah helped Tobiah to acquire the necessary magical ingredients to deal with Sarra's problem and secretly digs Tobiah's grave in the meantime – a telling aside on Raguel's character, reflecting a rather inhumane concept of righteousness, especially in view of his effusive response to finding that Tobiah is his kinsman Tobit's son. The marriage is successfully consummated and in another touch of authorial humour Raguel orders his servant 'that they should fill up the hole' (4Q197 Frg. 5 line 2).

Prolonged celebration follows but Sarra's parents eventually allow Tobiah, Azariah and Sarra to journey further to fulfil the mission of retrieving the silver. Here the narrative portrays a new ethos. Tobiah, Azariah and Sarra return to Tobiah's parents and Tobiah follows Raphael's instructions to effect the healing of Tobit's blindness with the fish's gall.[21] The Semitic fragments from Qumran are particularly valuable here because of the great variety of 'spin' in the later Greek and other versions of the ending in terms of giving alms to the poor. In contrast, the earliest Aramaic ending indicates that God's presence is connected not to 'act and consequence' ideology but to truthfulness in heart and soul.

Q196 Frg. 17ii line 1 (Tob 13:6)

Your heart and [*with all*] your [s]oul to [*do what is righteous. Then he*] will turn to you

לבבון ו [בכל נ]פשכון ל[מעבד קושטא אדין י]תפנה עליכון

Note that here Fitzmyer has reconstructed קושטא and translated it as 'what is righteous', whereas the word means 'truth'. Compare Garcia Martinez (1994:296): 'your heart and [*with all*] your soul to [*act truthfully before him. Then, he will turn to you*]'.

20.GI phrases it in a less markedly confrontational way.

21.Magic is one of the elements that is recognised by Amit (2010:64, 66) as often dealt with in hidden polemics, especially in a Deuteronomistic textual context.

In the last fragment once again 'gave alms' is a reconstruction, and 'alms' is not actually present at all:

Q196 Frg. 18 lines 14, 15 (Tob 14:2b, c)

14. [*the sight of*] his [e]yes. He lived in goodness and in al[l he gave alms   ]

[חזות ע]ינוהי חי בטב ובכ[ל עבד   ]

15. [*to bless*] the Lord and to acknowledge [*his*] majest[y.

[לברכה ל] ולהודיה רב[ותה   ]

Here, too, the term 'alms' is not present at all and is not even reconstructed. However, if indeed the giving of alms was to be a correct assumption in this context and linked to living 'in goodness', the purpose is no longer to receive prosperity from God but simply to bless and acknowledge God's majesty. Thus, in the end Tobit saw the light and came to the realisation that the giving of alms (if i.e. what is meant) is to be done in the spirit of blessing God, not for ultimate personal reward.

Discussion

Amit's (2010) main criteria for identification of a hidden polemic are, firstly, that the author refrain from explicit mention of the subject and, secondly:

> a number of signs by whose means the author directs the reader toward the polemic so that, despite the absence of explicit mention of the polemical subjects, the reader finds sufficient landmarks to uncover it. (p. 97)

In these fragments, by the early middle section of the narrative rhetorical hints lead the reader to begin to suspect an ironic twist to the description of Tobit's legalist and Deuteronomistically oriented righteousness. By the end of the narrative the practice of righteousness and truth is no longer correlated with the expected reward for 'act and consequence' but with cooperation with God's mysterious purposes.[22] The surprising finding of this research is that, indeed, the reference to the 'giving of alms' does not occur anywhere in the Aramaic fragments except in questionable 'self-reinforcing' reconstructions. Another surprise is encountered when one looks at the original Hebrew of Sirach: the source (if any) of the Greek translation of Ben Sira verse 12, which mentions almsgiving, is not extant in Sirach either![23] However, the term does unquestionably occur in the one and only Hebrew fragment from Qumran.[24]

A variety of ethical threads in this narrative preclude any simple straightforward reading of almsgiving. All we can be sure of is that the latter section of 4Q196 states that Tobit's

22.For instance Sarra's prayer in 4Q196 Frg. 6 line 7b Tob 3.11b (Fitzmyer (1995:14): '7. [*Blest be*] your holy [*and honourable name* for[*ever!*] May [all your deeds] bless [you!' 4Q196 Frg. 11 lines 1–2 contains the following extant Aramaic portion of 4:21–5:1: [*the Lord, your God*[   ] L. 2 [All that] you [*have ordered*] me I shall do [   ].

23.Beentjies (1997): The connection of almsgiving to Daniel is striking (Dan 4:24 LXX): Therefore, O King, let my counsel please thee, and atone for thy sins by alms ἐλεημοσύναις and *thine* iniquities by compassion on the poor: it may be God will be long-suffering to thy trespasses.
NRSV presents this quotation as 4:27: 'Therefore O king, may my counsel be acceptable to you: atone for [aram *break off*] your sins with righteousness, and your iniquities with mercy to the oppressed, so that your prosperity may be prolonged'.

24.[*giv*]e al[m]s[קו]ת ממנו צד[עוש]ה, 9. [*By*] your [giv]ing alms ותך צדקה[בעש]. A follow-up text-critical article on this aspect is in preparation.

recovery of sight is mentioned in the context of his living in 'goodness' and 'to bless the Lord and to acknowledge his majesty'. When the original words in the Qumran Aramaic and Hebrew, which have been translated into English as 'almsgiving', are compared to those in the Greek versions, an interesting connection between almsgiving, truth and righteousness appears. Is the author of Tobit using the rhetorical technique of hidden polemic to suggest true unselfish righteousness is a means of glorifying God rather than the retributive Deuteronomistic ideology (in terms of almsgiving being a 'good deposit')?[25]

I would like to suggest that such a rhetorical goal is confirmed in the prominent theme of light versus darkness or blindness versus sight in the ending of the narrative. Tobit announces in the beginning of the narrative: 'My eyes grew dim … For 4 years I remained incapable of seeing' (Tob 2:10), but in the middle section (Tob 3:17) the reader is informed by the narrator that Raphael was sent to cure both Tobit and Sarra: 'Tobit … that he might see with them [*his eyes*] God's light'.

Conclusion: Why give alms?

Tobit's sight has been restored at last, and finally the 'light' has dawned for him.[26] He can now aver the true meaning of the narrative: 'he lived in goodness and in all he gave [*alms*] *to bless the lord and to acknowledge his majesty*'. Giving (not necessarily 'alms') is for the glory of God, not for 'storing up credits' with God. In the end in the Hebrew fragment 4Q200 Frg. 5 lines 5b, 6, Tobit sees his son. What more could a Jewish father want?[27] Reif (2010:672) has observed that '[*t*]here appears to have been an ongoing, or recurring tradition to transmit and utilise the book of Tobit in Jewish circles in which progression in freedom from legalism is perceptible'.[28] The story of Tobit seems to review the history of the Jewish religion all the way from Egypt (Ahikar), through the two historical exiles, the rebuilding of the wall of Jerusalem and the Temple, to the watershed book of Daniel.[29] It confirms the message of prophets such as Jonah and Amos, who taught that God's mercy is available to all nations. Very interestingly, the Semitic ending has the instruction to witness to all nations (4Q200). When the Book of Tobit is read in this light its potential to facilitate the reception of Christianity becomes apparent. The Semitic origin of Tobit in the context of Jewish angelology begins to fall into place in the reception of Christianity.[30]

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25. Ethmidiades-Keith van Wyk (2016:156, 157) has pointed out that in the beginning of the narrative Tobit is a rather unlikeable character. Keil (2011:268) questions the Deuteronomistic labelling of the book of Tobit's view of retribution. It seems possible that he regards the 'oft-repeated and insistent remarks on the practice of righteousness and almsgiving' (cf. Tob 4:6–7; 12:8–9; 14:9) as an ironic part of Tobit's theological misreading of his situation (Macatangay 2012:5–6).

26. Tobiah goes on a real journey, accompanied by God's intermediary, but Tobit is on a metaphorical journey to spiritual insight and wholeness.

27. Sarra's prayer expressing concern for her own father dying without an heir is also fulfilled.

28. See Ben Sirach.

29. The pseudonymous name Azariah [Yah helps], son of Hananiah [*Yah favours*], with which Raphael [*El has healed*] introduces himself (Tob 5:10) makes a connection to the Book of Daniel, where Azariah is the Hebrew name of Abednego. Echoes of the Book of Daniel, for instance that as an exile Tobit the pious Jew withheld himself from eating 'the food of the nations' (NETS), support the relatively late date. The dating of Daniel generally accepted by scholars is the time of persecution of the Jews by Antiochus Epiphanes (168–167 BCE). The Septuagint of Daniel has 68 verses inserted at Dan 3:23, the first section of which is a prayer by Azariah, which could be appropriate for anyone suffering oppression. The 15th verse of Azariah's prayer speaks of the absence of civil government and cessation of Temple worship.

30. Fitzmyer (2003:45, 31, 101) describes the story of Tobit as 'a Jewish religious romance composed for an edifying and didactic purpose' and as a 'typical ego-narrative of the ancient romance genre', but I would like to suggest that the Book of Tobit is much more sophisticated than Fitzmyer appears to recognise. For instance ideas of God's heavenly throne, God's majesty and holiness, the heavenly Temple and heavenly worship have been identified as teachings of early Jewish *merkabah* mysticism (Eskola 2001:203), especially noticeable in the *Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice*.