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The Judaization of Ahiqar
Story and Sayings

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of the requirements for Ordination
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Referee, Professor Ben Zion Wacholder

Digest

The Judaization of Ahiqar Story and Sayings

Since Eduard Sachau's 1911 publication of the ancient Aramaic version of Ahiqar, scholars have sought to explain the relationship of the various Ahiqar versions which have either a pagan, or monotheistic orientation. Some scholars consider Ahiqar to be a lost work of the Apocrypha, since the Book of Tobit refers often to Ahiqar, even adopting many of the main characters of the story for its own purposes.

The present study regards the Book of Ahiqar as significant as a transitional work between ancient pagan Wisdom and Jewish Wisdom. The story, about a sage and advisor to a king who adopts his nephew and is later betrayed by him, exists in a single ancient Aramaic version, and in many medieval versions with either a pagan, or monotheistic, (Christian, Moslem, or Jewish,) cast. This study builds upon recent work in the field by providing support for and modifying slightly proposed theories of the transmission of the versions of Ahiqar. This provides the framework for exploring the transformation of Ahiqar from a work of pagan Wisdom, to a Jewish and then Christian moral tale influenced by later conceptions of Wisdom.

All of the available evidence for the existence of

a specifically Judaized Ahiqar is presented in chapter 5, except for the evidence from the Book of Tobit. This discussion receives special attention in Chapter 6, which is an attempt to reconstruct the Ahiqar version utilized by Tobit's author, and to explore the possibility that it was a form of the Judaized Ahiqar postulated in the preceding chapter.

Ben Sira is a classic work of Jewish Wisdom which has long been believed to be closely linked to the gnomic sections of Ahiqar. In a new look at the relationship between the two works, this study explores the possibility that there are references to the story of Ahiqar in Ben Sira. The relationships of Ben Sira to the proverbs of Ahiqar in the Elephantine, and then in the late versions of Ahiqar is examined critically in chapters 9 and 10.

Dedication

To Barbara:
Who makes everything possible.

Acknowledgements

Professor Jean Margain of the Institut Catholique of Paris first introduced me to the treasures of Elephantine and sparked my interest in the Ahiqar story. I owe an inestimable debt of thanks to Dr. Isaac Jerusalemi who was my first teacher of Aramaic and who has led me to see new vistas in Syriac, Biblical Aramaic, and Hebrew. To him, and to my other teachers at the Hebrew Union College in Jerusalem and Cincinnati I am grateful for the gift of their learning, which they so generously shared with me. My good friend Arnaud Serandour urged me to pursue my interest in Ahiqar and Aramaic studies generally, and introduced me to many resources in Paris.

Finally, it is a great understatement to say that without the encouragement, patience and intuition of Dr. Ben Zion Wacholder, this project could not have come to fruition.

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Chapter 1: Introduction: The Problem of Ahiqar in Antiquity

In 1911 Eduard Sachau startled the world with the publication of a hitherto unexpected Aramaic work, the Story of Ahiqar.¹ These fragments are written in an Aramaic related to the dialect of the book of Daniel. They tell the story of the life and proverbs of Ahiqar. With this discovery begins the modern puzzle of Ahiqar. Before Sachau's publication, it was widely assumed that the book of Ahiqar originated during the middle ages when such tales were popular. The new discovery presented many puzzles as to the origin and transmission of Ahiqar. That a fifth century (B.C.E.) Jewish military colony possessed a copy of the story of the wise Ahiqar, betrayed by his adopted nephew, and with fragmentary survival of many proverbs, shook many cherished assumptions. Linked to the Ahiqar material are many other questions about the Elephantine community. This isolated outpost of Jewish mercenaries on the upper cataract of the Nile amazingly managed to maintain their own temple cult and worshipped Yaho (Yahweh) along with other gods. They kept a complex legal tradition, and were influential enough to have the government rebuild their temple at least once after its having been

¹ Eduard Sachau, Arämaische Papyrus und Ostraca aus eines Jüdischen Militär-Kolonie zu Elephantine, 2 vols. (Leipzig: J.C. Hinrichs, 1911).

destroyed by a vindictive military contingent. The surviving documents attest that the Jews of Yeb Birta, as the island fortress was known, carried on a correspondence with priests in Jerusalem and Samaria, with Persian functionaries and in addition, with their coreligionists in Memphis and other cities. Many questions remain as to the relationship of the polytheistic cult of the Elephantine Jews to Jewish practices in Judea, Babylonia, and elsewhere in the diaspora. Still unresolved are such questions as: To what extent were pagan influences unique to the isolated outpost, or endemic to fifth century Jewish communities? Did these Jewish mercenaries identify with the Arameans in the Babylonian government and society? What is the relationship of the Elephantine papyri and other Jewish texts? This last question becomes particularly significant in light of the recent discoveries of Aramaic tombstones and texts at Edfu, Egypt as well as the rich Aramaic literary tradition uncovered at Qumran.²

As the Elephantine Ahikar has penetrated the scholarly world many new problems have arisen. One is

² Richard C. Steiner and Charles F. Nims, "Psalm 20:2-6 from the Aramaic text in Demotic Script", Journal of the American Oriental Society, 103 (1983):261-274. On the Qumran texts see the official publications in Discoveries in the Judaean Desert of Jordan, 9 vols., [I-VII including two vols. of plates] (Oxford: Clarendon, 1955-82).

the relationship to the original book of Ahiqar to later versions, as well as Ahiqar's connection to other ancient texts of a similar genre. The discussions of Ahiqar have given rise to new insights, at the same time as other remarkable discoveries have enriched our knowledge of Aramaic and cognate languages. For example, scholars were startled to learn that the Ahiqar tale is not completely fictive. In the 1959/60 excavations in Warka (ancient Uruk) a tablet was found which celebrated the names of authors in the courts of the kings of Babylonian and Assyria. Part of the text reads as follows: "In the time of King Esarhaddon, a-ba-dNINNU-da-ri, whom the Arameans call ma-hu-'u-qa-a-ri, was ummanu."³ Experts believe that the term "ummanu" refers to a literary figure, and the name ma-hu-'u-qa-a-ri may be equivalent to Ahiqar. The existence of this tablet supports the speculation of some scholars that Ahiqar was an historical figure. While the tablet itself dates back to the Seleucid era, scholars presume that it represents an historical tradition reaching back to the seventh century B.C.E. We know that it was standard for the Assyrian kings to employ Aramaic speaking scribes

³ James Lindenberg, The Aramaic Proverbs of Ahiqar, (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1983) 22 and n.38, who quotes J. van Dijk, "Die Inschriftfunde," in H.J. Lenzen (ed.) XVIII. Vorläufiger Bericht über die... Ausgrabungen in Uruk-Warka, (Berlin, 1962) 45, 11. 19-20, 51-52;).

and advisors, a custom that became even more widespread under the reign off the Achaemenid Kings (Second half of sixth century B.C.E.)⁴ The proverbs of Ahiqar have antecedents in the ancient Near Eastern wisdom tradition.⁵ We now know that the literature of wise sayings goes back as far as the 19th century B.C.E., to a work entitled "The instructions of Suruppak son of Ubartutu" whose author is remembered in one version of the ancient Sumerian Kings List.⁶ This literary tradition seems to have been in decline in the period in which Ahiqar is believed to have flourished.⁷ One

4 Franz Rosenthal, A Grammar of Biblical Aramaic, (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1963) 6.

5 A concise discussion of the term "Wisdom" and its applicability to ancient texts is given by W. G. Lambert, Babylonian Wisdom Literature, (Oxford: Clarendon, 1960) 1. Lambert concludes "Though this term is thus foreign to ancient Mesopotamia, it has been used for a group of texts which correspond in subject-matter with the Hebrew Wisdom books, and may be retained as a convenient short description." 1. Ahiqar may serve as a bridge between the older genre of Wisdom, in which intellectual ability is stressed, and Judaic Wisdom, where the emphasis is more on the fear of God, though not so much on law or ritual. In the transition from Elephantine to the later versions, Ahiqar moves from one the outlook covered by the older definition to the newer.

6 Lambert, Babylonian Wisdom, 92. The list and related documents are published in James Pritchard, Ancient Near Eastern Texts, (Princeton: PUP, 1969) 272-274.

7 Lambert, Babylonian Wisdom, 275-6. Lambert explains that the scribes of the Cassite period had libraries of classical proverbs in Sumerian, and translation, and that the conservative nature of the scribal schools may have discouraged new literary production of proverbs in the Akkadian language.

particular letter, retrieved from the archives of Assurbanipal, (reigned 668-626) son of the second king whom Ahiqar presumably served, Esarhaddon, may lend further credence to the historicity of Ahiqar in his role as a royal scribe. A proverb which occurs in the Syriac and Arabic versions of Ahiqar is quoted in this letter attributed by Lambert to Esarhaddon.⁸

Independent corroboration of the Ahiqar story's factual basis is also contained in a reference to a certain Nabu-suma-iskun, son of Merodach-Baladan whom scholars have identified as the executioner in the Ahiqar story.⁹ An Akkadian tablet records that Nabu-suma-iskun was captured by Sennacherib in his eighth campaign. It may be no coincidence that most versions of Ahiqar likewise record that Ahiqar saved Nabusumiskun or someone with a similar name from the wrath of Sennacherib. It was Nabusumiskun's indebtedness to his benefactor that saved Ahiqar, because Ahiqar had previously saved him from death.

Nevertheless, proverbs do turn up in letters, attesting to an active oral literature.

⁸ François Nau, Histoire et Sagesse d'Ahiqar l'Assyrien, (Paris: Letouzey et Ané, 1909) 36; Jonas Greenfield, "Ahiqar in the Book of Tobit", De la Thôrah au Messie, Ed. Maurice Carré et al., (Paris: Desclé, 1979) 329-36; 335 n.20.; Lambert, Babylonian Wisdom, 281.

⁹ Greenfield, "Ahiqar in Tobit", 335 n.21.

The mixed genre "Story and Wisdom of Ahikar"¹⁰ is known to have been widely distributed throughout the ancient world. This broad dissemination is indicated by the few demotic (late egyptian) fragments recently published, (Lindenberger intro\end***) and by the references to Ahikar in the ancient Greek literature, notably the Aesop lore.¹¹ Clement of Alexandria, (d.217) knew of a work, still extant, which he attributed to Democritus (b.460 or 496 B.C.E.) but which scholars now believe to have been written by another, anonymous, author.¹² Clement was attempting to show that Greek philosophy owed a heavy debt to Jewish sources, and he accused Democritus of having copied the proverb collection in question from a certain 'Stele of Ahikar' in Babylonia. Evidently he too recognized that the work was falsely attributed to Democritus. This report is corroborated by Eusebius.¹³ Theophrastus (371-264 B.C.E.) reportedly wrote a work entitled

¹⁰ I have adopted this title after the model of Nau's Histoire et Sagesse d'Ahikar L'Assyrien. Nau notes that some manuscripts adopt the equivalent of "story" and some "wisdom" and some both. Nau concludes "Nous avons choisi comme seul titre adequat: "Histore et Sagesse d'Ahikar.";3.

¹¹ A valuable summary of this material is found in Louis Ginzberg, "Ahikar", Jewish Encyclopedia, 12 vols. (New York: Funk and Wagnalis, 1901) 289-90.

¹² Nau, Sagesse, 35.

¹³ Nau, Sagesse, 36.

"Ahiqaros" according to Diogenes Laertius¹⁴ unfortunately this work has not survived.

Passages in Menander seem also to be dependent on Ahiqar. This Menander text is extant in two very different versions, one in Greek and one in Syriac. The Greek version shows a close likeness to the Greek version of Ahiqar in the Life of Aesop. The Syriac version of this Menander fragment is however much closer to the Syriac Ahiqar.¹⁵

Strabo (b.circa 60 B.C.E.) lists Achaicaros as a sage of the Bosporeniens just as he relates that Moses was the preeminent sage of the Jews. Scholars emend "Bosporeniens" to "Borsippians", a term used by Strabo elsewhere to designate Chaldean sages. It is suggested that Strabo's source was Posidonius (2nd Century B.C.E.).¹⁶ From the totality of these reports one may reasonably conclude that Ahiqar was well known throughout the Hellenistic world, though not necessarily in the same version, and not always under the same name.

¹⁴ Nau, Sagesse, 46; Frederic Cornwallis Conybeare, J. Rendel Harris, and Agnes Smith Lewis, The Story of Ahikar from the Syriac, Arabic, Armenian, Old Turkish, Greek and Slavonic Versions. 2nd ed. "enlarged and corrected", (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1913) xxxix-xlv. [further references are to Rendel Harris, the general editor except when reference is to Lewis for Arabic or to Conybeare for Armenian.]

¹⁵ I rely on Nau, Sagesse, 36.

¹⁶ Nau, Sagesse, 47.

Unfortunately very little in terms of content can be gleaned from most of these isolated references.

One reference stands apart. This is the story of Aesop at the Court of Lykeros King of Babylon, contained in Maximus Planudes' Life of Aesop and dating from the centuries around the beginning of the Common Era.¹⁷ This is unquestionably an Ahikar tale. Aesop adopts a young man, educates him, and is betrayed by him. There is a collection of proverbs, and a journey to Egypt where Aesop proves his acumen to Pharoah in a contest of erudite riddles. All of these elements are echoed in one or another of the Ahikar versions. There are also some unique features. It is possible that this version represents an intermediate tradition between that of Elephantine and the Syriac recensions, and as such may be very valuable for our study.

JEWISH CONTACT WITH AHIQAR TRADITIONS

We have good reason to believe that since antiquity, Jews too have enjoyed the story of Ahikar, and been instructed by Ahikar's wise proverbs. In the last century, evidence of Jewish contact with the Ahikar

¹⁷ Rendel Harris, The Story of Ahikar, xvi.; The sections drawn from Ahikar are reprinted from the edition of Eberhard in Frederic Cornwallis Conybeare, J. Rendel Harris, and Agnes Lewis Smith, "The Story of Ahikar." in The Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament. 2 vols. Ed. R.H. Charles, (Oxford: Clarendon, 1964). 2: 715-84: 780-84.cf 722. [Further references to this article are to Rendel Harris, "Ahikar" unless a co-author is specified.]

material has been slowly accumulating. Firstly we have the evidence from Elephantine, which is immensely significant as the only ancient Aramaic version to have survived and as a rare example of a pagan work found in a Jewish context. The second major piece of evidence is the identification of ancient references to the Ahikar legend is the Apocryphal book of Tobit. Ahikar appears as a character in that work, related to Tobit an exiled Israelite of the tribe of Naphtali. Since Tobit is quintessential Jewish work, and the only early versions of Ahikar known are clearly pagan productions, many scholars have suspected that Tobit's author had before him a Judaized version of Ahikar.

The possibility of gleaning from the versions more information about the contents of Tobit's source, beyond that which Tobit provides has not been fully exploited by scholars. One reason for this is that Ahikar's name had become garbled in most of the recensions of Tobit, and only in the last century was it definitively shown that the references to Ahikar in one rare version of Tobit the Sinaiticus version, were genuine and not interpolations.

The acceptance of this view also had to await confirmation that the Ahikar legend was older than Tobit, which came with the publication of the Elephantine texts.

The materials for a reconstruction of Tobit's Ahiqar text consist of the Elephantine text, the references to Ahiqar in Tobit, and the wealth of medieval versions of Ahiqar.¹⁸ These late versions exist in Old Turkish, Georgian, Armenian, Armeno-Kipchak, Syriac, Slavonic, and Arabic, to name the most often cited versions only. The versions all reflect the influence of Christianity to some extent, yet also show that they are related to the ancient versions, and were already reworked in antiquity, perhaps more than once.

BEN SIRA AND AHIQAR

Besides Tobit, one other ancient Jewish Wisdom text has often been cited by scholars as having used the sapiential portions of Ahiqar as a model in some parts. This is the Wisdom of Ben Sira. Since both Ahiqar and Ben Sira express similar moral lessons, often in nearly identical terms, it has been suggested that Ben Sira drew upon a version of Ahiqar. Yet from which version of Ahiqar could Ben Sira have drawn? The same questions which are raised in regard to Tobit are present here too. But with Ben Sira the difficulties are greater

¹⁸ It should be mentioned that references to Ahiqar are made in the old Armenian literature, in texts dating from the early Christian Centuries, and the influence of Ahiqar has also been seen in the character of Loqman in the Koran. While not terribly helpful in terms of the present study, these references attest further to the wide diffusion and perennial interest in the Ahiqar tale and wisdom.

firstly since Ahikar is not explicitly mentioned, and secondly, because we have mainly proverbs to compare, not nearly as simple a task as comparing narrative elements. The task of comparing Ahikar to Ben Sira, may now be approached on a firmer basis. This is due to the fact that Ben Sira's book has in this century become available in Hebrew, the original language of its composition. The recovery of the Hebrew of Ben Sira we owe to three separate dramatic discoveries in the Cairo Geniza, Qumran, and Masada. Since its discovery the Hebrew text of Ben Sira has been subjected to much study. Thus the groundwork has been laid which indicates that the Hebrew of Ben Sira is largely reliable, obviating the need to consult every version of Ben Sira. This was especially necessary in the case of the Latin of Ben Sira which appears to contain many late interpolations from Ahikar which obscured the evidence of ancient borrowing. Likewise in regard to Ahikar, we now have reliable editions of most of the Aramaic recensions, and translations of the more exotic eastern versions which can be used to make valuable comparisons. Scholars who made broad assumptions about Ben Sira's use of Ahikar may not have been far off the mark, yet the materials for providing a full picture of that use may not have been readily available before this time.

THE JUDAIZATION OF AHIQAR

There exists presently no systematic study of Ahiqar's influence on Jewish literature. The present study would be a contribution towards that larger end, as an attempt to determine whether a Judaized Ahiqar tradition did exist, and if so to examine its possible use by the authors of Tobit and Ben Sira. We suspect that the adaptation of a pagan wisdom text into a Jewish work was not an isolated occurrence in the ancient world. The goal of this study is to attempt to gather evidence towards tracing this process of Judaization.

This study falls conceptually into two parts. After presentation of introductory material, a synopsis of the Ahiqar story, a digest of the major versions, and this introduction, we turn to an examination of the evidence for the growth of the Ahiqar tradition. This is used as in the next chapter as the backdrop for exploring the evolution of themes in Ahiqar which bear directly on the issue of Ahiqar's religion as portrayed in the various versions, and the theological framework of the tale in overall. To this material is added an analysis of the references to Ahiqar in Tobit, and to the use of Ahiqar as a literary model or foil for the plot of Tobit. It is from this material that we attempt to reconstruct the Judaized Ahiqar which may have served as Tobit's source and literary model.

From this basis our study proceeds to analyze the instances of apparent interrelatedness between Ben Sira and Ahiqar in the various versions. In a departure from previous studies, we have considered the narrative portions of Ahiqar as well as the gnomic ones. The data is suggestive of the finding Ben Sira did at times draw upon a version of Ahiqar as a model or source. Among the versions to be considered as Ben Sira's source is the putative Judaized Ahiqar.

It is our hope that this study will contribute to the work which has already been done to trace the dissemination of the Ahiqar throughout the world down to modern times. The relative obscurity of Ahiqar in our day belies that fact that Ahiqar left its mark on the New Testament, the Talmud, and the Koran. The old Armenian literature too provides an unbroken record of Ahiqar readings from the 5th century. So too do Marie de France, La Fontaine and the medieval Jewish literature share a familiarity with some of the proverbs of Ahiqar. Just as the protagonist of Ahiqar suffers bathetic changes of fortune so did the Ahiqar legend itself sink into obscurity, only to rise again to public acclaim. Only a century ago, the Ahiqar story was known mainly as one of a group of additions to the Tales of the Arabian Nights. Today the Wisdom and Story of Ahiqar is recognized by scholars as one of our oldest belletristic

works, and it is studied, with some justification, alongside the biblical Apocrypha. After an episode of unwarranted eclipse, we invite Ahīqar to emerge from the darkness, and to return to his rightful place in literary history.

Chapter 2: The Book of Ahikar¹⁹

Once there was a wise court vizier named Ahikar.²⁰ Ahikar served in the court of Sennacherib, and then of Esarhaddon of Assyria. When Ahikar began to grow older he lamented the fact that despite his having married the sixty wives which his great wealth allowed him to marry, he had not in sixty years fathered a son or daughter. According to some versions, it was earlier foretold by astrologers that he would never father a son. And so Ahikar's first resort was to pray to his pagan gods. The gods (who appear to answer him in most of the versions,) decline to grant his request. Still, Ahikar wished for a son who could become his protégé in the court, honor him in life and provide him a fitting burial. In his despair, Ahikar prays to the One God. God answered Ahikar with a

¹⁹ This synopsis is based on the Syriac versions P, Q, and B and the Arabic which have the most episodes and motifs of all the versions. See chapter 3 for a discussion of these versions.

²⁰ Throughout this study I have standardized the spellings of the characters to these forms, regardless of how they appear in the various versions. For example Ahikar may be spelled Ahikar, Akhiakar, or Ahikar, with or without the addition of diacritical marks, and we may find either Nadan, Natan, or Nadin. Even greater variation is found with the names of secondary characters. In direct quotations from sources I have endeavored to reproduce the spellings found there, however due to technical reasons the diacritical marks could not be reproduced.

suggestion that he adopt his sister's son Nadan and raise him in the way of Wisdom.

Ahiqar does accepted this advice, and so he adopted his nephew Nadan. No sooner had he taken Nadan in, than he began to pamper him and to educated him by means of numerous wise sayings and moral precepts (which vary in number and content among the versions.) This together with the second set of proverbs encountered later in the story, comprise the famous Wisdom of Ahiqar.

Ahiqar's way of raising Nadan is successful only in spoiling Nadan terribly. Perhaps it was due to the lack of proper discipline, that little of the uncle's wisdom was absorbed. Ahiqar was blind to the faults of his adopted son, and in due course he turned over the affairs of the court, as well as the administration of his own personal estate to Nadan.

Nadan lost no time in dissipating Ahiqar's fortune, mistreating his servants and abusing his animals. Ahiqar seeing that he had made a mistake Ahiqar considered grooming Nadan's little brother for the job. This only motivates Nadan to embark on a clever though diabolical scheme to discredit Ahiqar and implicate him in a capital offense before the King.

Nadan's scheme was launched by forging letters in Ahiqar's name to the Kings of Elam and Egypt. These he invited to a rendezvous where Ahiqar would turn over.

Assyria's troops to their control. Nadan then arranged for these letters to be intercepted by the King. At this point the two-faced Nadan presented himself as the King's protector. Eventually, Ahikar was taken into Nadan's custody, though he did not at first realize that he was suspected of treason, and so went eagerly with Nadan to the King. When confronted by the King Ahikar was too shocked to offer a coherent defence and so he was sentenced to death by decapitation. Seeing that the sentence could not easily be averted, Ahikar prevails upon his years of service to the King to be granted one last request, that he be allowed to be executed at his own home and so be accorded a proper burial by his own servants. The King acceded to this last request, recognizing Ahikar's many years of service, and even charged Nadan with making proper arrangements for mourning.

Already Ahikar had a plan. He was heartened by the coincidence that the appointed executioner was indebted to him for his life. It seems that Nabusumiskun had himself been sentenced to death by King Sennacherib, in whose court Ahikar had previously served. Recognizing his potential value to the King, Ahikar had hidden him until such time as the King had lamented his absence. Then Ahikar, at some personal risk, had revealed that

Nabusumiskun still lived. This relationship then was the basis for the sage's scheme to stay alive.

In order to make use of this friendship, Ahikar wrote a letter to his wife, directing her to contact Nabusumiskun with the details of this plan: When the executioner and his companions would arrive with their prisoner, they were to be entertained by a great feast with much drinking. A slave of Ahikar's, already condemned to death, was to be dressed in Ahikar's clothing and executed in his stead. According to the terms of the royal decree, the victim's head was to be removed "a hundred ells from his body", so the substitution of a slave's headless body for Ahikar would not easily be discovered. Upon seeing the executioner and conferring to him the letter, Ahikar prayed to God before begging his friends that the plan be carried out. All goes according to plan, and Ahikar hides in a dark pit under his own home. The reprobate Nadan wastes no time in taking the most outrageous liberties with Ahikar's servants, and even attempting to molest his faithful wife. Instead of mourning his uncle, Nadan engaged in wild revelry with his friends, while in horror Ahikar listened to the activities above him. From the depths of his despair Ahikar called out to God and he requested of Nabusumiskun, who came to feed him, that prayer and sacrifice be made on his behalf to God.

In the days that followed, when word had spread far and wide that the wise Ahikar was no longer advising the King of Assyria, a strange challenge arrived from the Pharoah in distant Egypt. It was a challenge to build a castle in the sky. If this could not be done, then Assyria would owe heavy tribute to Egypt. But if the task could be accomplished, then the tribute would flow northward instead.

It was in fact a challenge to a royal contest of riddles. When asked for a response to the challenge, Nadan's ignorance was instantly exposed, and the King began to lament the loss of Ahikar.

Finally the King blurted out his desire to have Ahikar back from the dead. This provided the opening for Nabusumiskun to reveal that Ahikar still lived, just as Ahikar had done for him years earlier.

The King wasted no time in visiting Ahikar, and bringing him up out of the pit. Ahikar by now had long nails like eagle's claws and long hair. Once reinstated and after a time for recuperation, The King charged him with meeting the Pharoah's challenges.

Ahikar made elaborate preparations to meet the Pharoah's difficult demands. He devised a way to turn the building of a castle in the sky against his adversaries. He tied young boys to eagles, and practiced sending them up into the air and down by means of

tethers. When they were ready, he brought his "builders" to Egypt. Not wishing to tip his hand, Ahikar traveled under an assumed name, Abiqam.

When Ahikar arrived at Pharoah's court, he answered all the riddles and met all the preliminary challenges which the Egyptians could devise. Finally it was revealed that he was not the obscure and uncelebrated Abiqam, but the great sage Ahikar. At this point Ahikar was challenged with the most formidable task the Egyptians could devise. He was to build the castle in the sky. Undaunted, he sent up his "builders" into the sky on their eagle's mounts, and ordered the Egyptians to send up the materials. The Egyptians could not carry out their part of the construction, and so in defeat agreed to send Ahikar home with the equivalent tribute which they had expected to gain from Assyria.

Once back at the court, Ahikar eschewed all reward except that he be given Nadan to do with as he wished. Ahikar began to instruct him with harsh discipline. It is at this time that the second set of gnostic sayings are expressed.

This second set of admonishments are very harsh. They are moralistic similitudes meant to impress upon Nadan the wickedness of his ways. They are more akin to curses than to proverbs. One saying reads:

"O my boy! I wished thee well, and
thou didst reward me with evil and

hatefulness, and now I would fain
 tear out thine eyes, and make thee
 food for dogs, and cut out thy
 tongue, and take off thy head with
 the edge of the sword, and
 recompense thee for thine abominable
 deeds."²¹

At the conclusion of the story, Nadan dies a death by a supernatural means, which varies among the versions. In most versions he swells up like a bladder and explodes. A few lines, by way of an epilogue, paraphrase the certain Psalms in a few passages relating to the just punishment of the wicked: to fall into the pits which they dig and the traps that they set for the righteous.

It should be noted that the details of the story vary from manuscript to manuscript, even within each language grouping. I have indicated some of the major divergences, in order to show the range of variation in the Ahikar material.

²¹ Rendel Harris, The Story of Ahikar, 116, (Arabic version.)

Chapter 3: Versions of Ahikar

THE ELEPHANTINE VERSION

The publication of the Aramaic Ahikar among the riches of papyrus and ostraca of Elephantine first convinced the world that the Ahikar legend derived from antiquity. These fragments of Ahikar are written on reused papyrus with black ink. There are fourteen columns or parts of columns extant.²² The Elephantine Ahikar differs considerably in detail from all the other versions known. Especially puzzling is the proverb collection, of which only a handful of the 100-120 proverbs of E, many of them fragmentary, correspond to those of the later versions. (Only one is identical and four similar to the 286 or so of the main oriental versions, according to one, probably conservative count.²³ The proverbs are different in tone as well, they invoke pagan Gods, morality is not as much an issue as is decorum and wise action, and they are only in a single set. The harsh similitudes which comprise the second set of sayings in the later versions

22 Lindenberger, Aramaic Proverbs, 11-14.

23 François Nau, "Ahikar et Les Papyrus D'Elephantine", extrait de la Revue Biblique, January, 1912: 1-12: 9. Lindenberger, Aramaic, ff is able to identify a much larger number of parallels, however the fact remains that the Elephantine collection is more broadly divergent from the other versions than they differ from each other.

do not occur at all in the fragments.²⁴ The details of the story differ significantly as well from the sketch above. The narrative is much less detailed in many instances. Most significantly the differences are: 1) Ahiqar seems to have no wife, 2) there is no visit to Egypt, 3) the death of Nadan is not recorded nor in fact are any of the events of the story other than the rehabilitation of Ahiqar. 4) E develops the presentation of the young Nadan before the king, and 5) differs markedly in the details of the execution of the substitute victim. Finally, 6) Ahiqar at no time hides in a pit, or offers prayers to other than pagan idols.²⁵

THE AESOP VERSION OF AHIQAR ²⁶

24 The characteristic address of the later proverbs "My son" by which all of the second set of proverbs, and the prologue to the first set begins is found only in isolated proverbs of the Elephantine version. ##4, 14a, 14b, 40, 42, 60. Sayings 39 and 41 do closely parallel sayings in the second set of the later version. This may indicate that the two sets in the later versions are an elaboration of the single set in the Elephantine. This hypothesis is supported by the Aesop material, infra.

25 For a concise treatment of these differences, see François Nau, "Ahiqar et Les Papyrus", 8-9.

26 This version is reproduced in Harris, "The Story of Ahiqar", 780-784 from Fabulae Romanenses Graece Conscriptae ed. Eberhard 285-297 and cxxiii - cxxxii. According to Harris, there is a much variation in the versions of these legends. (Harris, The Story of Ahiqar, xxvii.) The same Greek text (only) was also reproduced by the same author in his The Story of Ahiqar, 162-167. For further bibliography see Lindenberg, Aramaic Proverbs, 28, n. 4.

While in this tale included in the Aesop lore the name of Aesop is substituted for Ahikar and that of Ennus for Nadan, there is no question however that this is a variant of the Ahikar story. In the Aesop borrowing from Ahikar, The first section of the story is highly abbreviated, and has the character of a preamble or the rehashing of a well known tale. However, unlike the late versions of Ahikar, the Greek text has only one set of instructions. These come not at the adoption of the boy, but after his plot has been foiled, and before the journey to Egypt. The character of the proverbs are a mixture of the type of general instructions of the first group in the later versions, and the harsh reproaches of the second group, though they do not parallel closely either set in Ahikar. This version seems to conflate the two sets found in the late versions, and to place the single collection between where the two sets resided in the late versions of Ahikar. Alternatively, the single set may carry forward the single set arrangement of proverbs from the practice of the Elephantine version. Compared to the later versions, the vindictive aspect of the evil son's reeducation are softened, as Aesop takes back his adopted son and tries to educate him in kindness. The result was that Ennus, as the story relates,

was compunct in soul as with an arrow at his words, and by his own

conscience, and not many days after he departed this life."²⁷

Another significant feature of this version is the absence of a wife. A brief mention of Aesop having a concubine occurs in a passage explaining the evil behavior of Ennus:

Ennus played false with the concubine of his adoptive father...

This detail of Ennus' arrogating his stepfather's sexual prerogative is consistent with the later versions. However aside from this one instance, women play no role in the Greek tale, and there is no mention of a wife helping to save Aesop. Instead, a friend of Aesop's, Hermippus, is solely responsible for saving Aesop.

This version has little in the way of a religious references. The greatest emphasis in this version is to show Aesop's wisdom at the court of King Nectenabo of Egypt. This elaborate tale corresponds to the adventure of Ahikar in Egypt contained in the Oriental versions of Ahikar.²⁸

The complete absence of a religious theme in the narrative, and the undeveloped role of a wife seem to indicate that this version also bears some similarities

27 Rendel Harris, "The Story of Ahikar", 782.

28 Ginzberg rejects on linguistic grounds the idea that the Aesop lore is the source of the Egyptian adventure in the late versions of Ahikar. Thus he rejects Meissner's view that the original version of Planudes' work heavily influenced the late Ahikar versions. Ginzburg, "Ahikar", 288.

to the Elephantine text. Since this version dates to the first century C.E., we are not surprised to find a version that stands developmentally, as well as chronologically between the Elephantine and the late versions of Ahiqar.²⁹

LATE VERSIONS OF AHIQAR

1. The Armenian

We refer in this work to two Armenian recensions, the Armenian A and Armenian B (Arm. A & Arm. B.) The Armenian Ahiqar has long been recognized as having certain unusual features of great value in reconstructing the more primitive versions.³⁰ The

²⁹ K  chler dates this to as early as 30 B.C.E. Max K  chler, Fr  hjudische Weisheitstraditionen, (G  ttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht; Freiburg Schweiz: Universit  tsverlag, 1979) 338 and chart 413.

³⁰ (A convenient list of the most important manuscripts is in Harris, "The Story of Ahiqar", 721. and Harris The Story of Ahiqar, xxv-xxvii. I have had access to the two recensions, Armenian A and Armenian B published in the above. Linguistically, the oldest version goes back to at least 450 C.E., according to Harris and Conybeare (the Armenian specialist of the Harris publication), though the manuscripts are late, the oldest he had access to going back to the late fifteenth century. Martirosviana located dated manuscripts dated 1321 and 1347. (see below.) Unfortunately these versions as well as a previously unknown Turkish version in Armenian characters are discussed only in Armenian and so have been inaccessible to this author. The linguistic evidence would make the Armenian version the third oldest version, after the Elephantine and Aesop. (See also Conybeare there 176-177. On the age of the version, 174-176.) Judging from the French digest, a more in depth examination of the Armenian recensions has been published by A.A. Martirosviana; "La L  gende de

many references to Ahikar by Armenian writers of the fifth century indicate the antiquity of the version, and Conybeare can only give a terminus ad quem. How far back we can extend the Armenian version will depend upon further literary analysis.

What is so interesting about the Armenian is that it is so difficult to locate in the "family tree." Conybeare commented "

...the agreement of the Armenian and the Syriac is so close as to warrant the conclusion that one is a translation of the other. It is not easy however to decide to which the priority belongs.³¹

Suffice it to say that the vast majority of the proverbs in the Armenian Ahikar and the Syriac are identical or extremely close. On the other hand, as Conybeare explains in the same paragraph, the Armenian shows a greater affinity to the proverbs of the E text!

Again there can be no doubt that the Armenian best preserves the aphorism found in the Aramaic text of Elephantine :

Khikar et ses Sources." french précis of Iistoriia i paucheniia Khikara premudrago povest Armianskaia redaktsiia, (Erevon: Izd-vo; Akad. navk Armianskoi SSR, 1969) 62-70. On the value of the Armenian versions Martirosiana writes that it "possesses particular value along with the Assyrian, Arabic, and Slavic versions." 66. [my translation]. Martirosiana's work includes a critical edition of the Armenian versions based on more than 70 manuscripts, grouped into six families.

31 Conybeare in Harris, The Story of Ahikar, 182.

Son, rejoice not thou in the number
of thy children, and in their
deficiency be not thou
distressed....

Another coincidence of the Armenian
with the ancient Aramaic is in
Aphorism 10 of the second series :
Son, thou hast been to me like him
that shot his arrow up to heaven;
and he was not able to reach
thereto, but reaped the reward of
his lawlessness, and the arrow
returned on his head.

The Syriac has:

My son, thou hast been to me like a
man that threw a stone at the
heaven, and it did not reach the
heaven; but he incurred sin against
God. ³²

Finally we note that Lindenberg³³ offers new
evidence that the Armenian closely parallels the E
sayings ## 3, 22, 24, and 54.

Conybeare lists partial parallels in the other
versions, and then concludes that "Here the Armenian
alone reflects the Aramaic in full."³⁴ It should be
noted that Conybeare leaves off any comparison to the
Syriac B recension to which Harris had such strong
objections. Thus it is seen on the evidence of the

³² Conybeare in Harris, The Story of Ahikar,
182-183.

³³ Lindenberg, Aramaic Proverbs, n.6 p. 29.

³⁴ Conybeare in Harris, The Story of Ahikar, 183.

proverbs alone scholars conclude that the Armenian reflects a very ancient version of the proverbs of Ahiqar, and is closer than the Syriac to the Elephantine Wisdom text.

The frame story presents other difficulties. Conybeare leaves open the possibility that the Syriac derives from the Armenian.³⁵ Lindenberger goes seems to accept this possibility as he says:

"Scholars studying the versions of Ahiqar concluded that the Syriac and the Armenian (which is evidently based on a very old Syriac tradition) represents the most archaic form of the text."³⁶

On the other hand, Lindenberger's chart³⁷ shows the Armenian stemming from the Syriac.

2. Armeno-Kipchak versions of Ahiqar.

The recently published Armeno-Kipchak version of Ahiqar, available in a full French translation show signs of the transition from the Elephantine Ahiqar to the other versions.³⁸ (The publishers of this

35 Conybeare in Harris, The Story of Ahiqar, 184.

36 Lindenberger, Aramaic Proverbs, 5.

37 Lindenberger, Aramaic Proverbs, 7.

38 Jean Deny, and Edward Tryjarski, "Histoire du sage Hikar dans la version armeno-kiptchak", Rocznik Orientalistyczny 27 (1964): 7-61. Doubtless some of the questions of the origin of this version are treated by Martirosiana, Isstoriia i pchucheniia Khikara who indicates that this version is included in her critical

version tentatively suggested that it is an abridgement of the main Armenian recensions, and that it is rather late in that it shows signs of a rigorous process of monotheistic reworking.)

It may be however that this manuscript represents a completely new recension which is closest to the Elephantine of all the later versions in the frame story.

Certain characteristics set this version apart from the other Armenian recensions that we have seen. It is in fact lacking in many of the characteristic narrative elements of the other late versions. This Deny and Tryjarski attribute to abridgement and elimination.³⁹ For example the details of the journey to Egypt are reduced to three words, "il alla, règla, et arrangea."⁴⁰ Deny and Tryjarski note that secondary details are eliminated. The letters of Nadan to Sennacherib, the efforts to save Ahikar, and the second set of sayings, the harsh admonishments.⁴¹ We read in the version "après un

edition.

39 Deny, "Histoire", 9.

40 Deny, "Histoire", 25.

41 Deny, "Histoire", 9.

long discours, je dis un mot et mes esclaves le fouttaient."⁴²

This latter element again recalls the Aesop material and the Elephantine text, in that one set of proverbs is found. Contrary to the initial impressions of Deny and Tryjarski, it may be that this version is different from the other Armenian versions, and closer to the Elephantine.

3. The Syriac Versions L and C:⁴³

⁴² Deny, "Histoire", 26.

⁴³ A convenient list of the most important Syriac manuscripts is in Harris, "The Story of Ahikar", 721. and Harris The Story of Ahikar, xxii. The two versions and their translations are found in that volume. Harris lists the manuscripts which he had access to as S1-S8. By L we refer to a single leaf from the twelfth or thirteenth century B.M. Cod. Add. 7200. By C we refer to S2, dated 1697, Cambridge Univ. Cant. Add. 2020. To these should be added another manuscript published by Nau, which we have not referred to in this work since it offers little in the way of new material. François Nau, "Histoire et Sagesse d'Ahikar D'après Le Manuscrit De Berlin Sachau 162" ROC 1 (XXI) n.1 1918-1919, 148-60. Another version published by Nau from the same manuscript is found in the article: "Préceptes Anonymes et Histoire D'Ahikar; D'après Le Manuscrit Syriaque De Berlin Sach. 162". ROC 9 (XIX) 1914 209-14. More information about the Syriac manuscripts of Ahikar may be gleaned from the following publications: Moses Goshen-Gottstein, The Wisdom of Ahikar; Syriac and Aramaic, (Jerusalem: Hebrew UP, 1965); Moshe Goshen-Gottstein, Syriac Manuscripts in the Harvard College Library: A Catalogue, Harvard Semitic Studies 23. (Missoula, Montana: Scholars Press, 1979).; Sebastian Brock, "Notes on some Texts in the Mingana Collection", Journal of Semitic Studies. 14:2 1969, 205-226.

L contains only the beginning of the tale and the first few proverbs, but is very old. It is much like C which is complete. This version is unusual in that it is monotheized from the first moment. Ahikar has no contact with idolatry, save in one of the proverbs. The anachronism of the order of the Assyrian Kings is found in this version, as in most of the late versions.

4. The Syriac Versions P and G.

These versions are regarded by Nau as belonging to the same family as C and L.⁴⁴ The former pair apparently are representative of a much older recension of the better known later type, yet because of their special features, such as an address to idol. These two versions, each have lacunae which are filled with younger manuscripts. Since the gaps are different, and the versions are very close, they can be used to complement each other. As far as we can determine, this pair of manuscripts has received no scholarly attention since Nau's initial publication. G was copied in 1908 from a manuscript in the monastery of Rabban Hormizd of Kurdistan. P is mainly an old Nestorian manuscript,

⁴⁴ François. Nau, The attribution of G (Gr.) to the same family as L and C was made by Nau, Sagesse, 283-284. "Documents Relatifs à Ahikar; Edition et Traduction d'un Manuscrit de Mgr. Graffin (G), avec les Principales variantes d'un Manuscrit de M. H. Pognon (P). ROC 1 (XXI) 1918-1919 n.3 274-307. ROC 1 (XXI) 1918-1919 n.4 356-400 (Fin).

dated by Nau to the 16th to 18th centuries, completed in a modern hand.

5. B version of the Syriac Ahikar

This is the version represented by Berlin Sachau 336. It was made by Nau the basis of his edition.⁴⁵ This version is similar to P and G which were discovered after this was utilized by Nau for his critical edition.

6. The Arabic Version

We refer to the Arabic version published by Harris in English translation, (the Arabic is given as well there as well.)⁴⁶ This version is from a Karshuni text, (Arabic written in Syriac characters the script used for most of the Arabic versions listed by

⁴⁵ François Nau, Sagesse, There the version is presented in French translation with commentary and variants from the other versions. The Syriac text was partially published, (proverbs only,) with a German translation by Grünberg. Smil Grünberg. Die Weisen Sprüche Des Achikar, (Giessen: H. Itzkowski, 1917). Incidentally the B manuscript referred to in his notes is Sachau 162 (published by Nau, see my note 24.) and not Berlin Sachau 336 which he refers to differently. Grünberg disagrees with Harris' judgment that B is of little value, being a late back-translation from the Arabic. Rather, he agrees with Noldeke that Nau's B is basically an old independent recension, and that only the end of B is a fill from a later version.⁴⁶ Harris' view that the manuscript is late is expressed in The Story of Ahikar.

⁴⁶ Harris, The Story of Ahikar, 130-161.

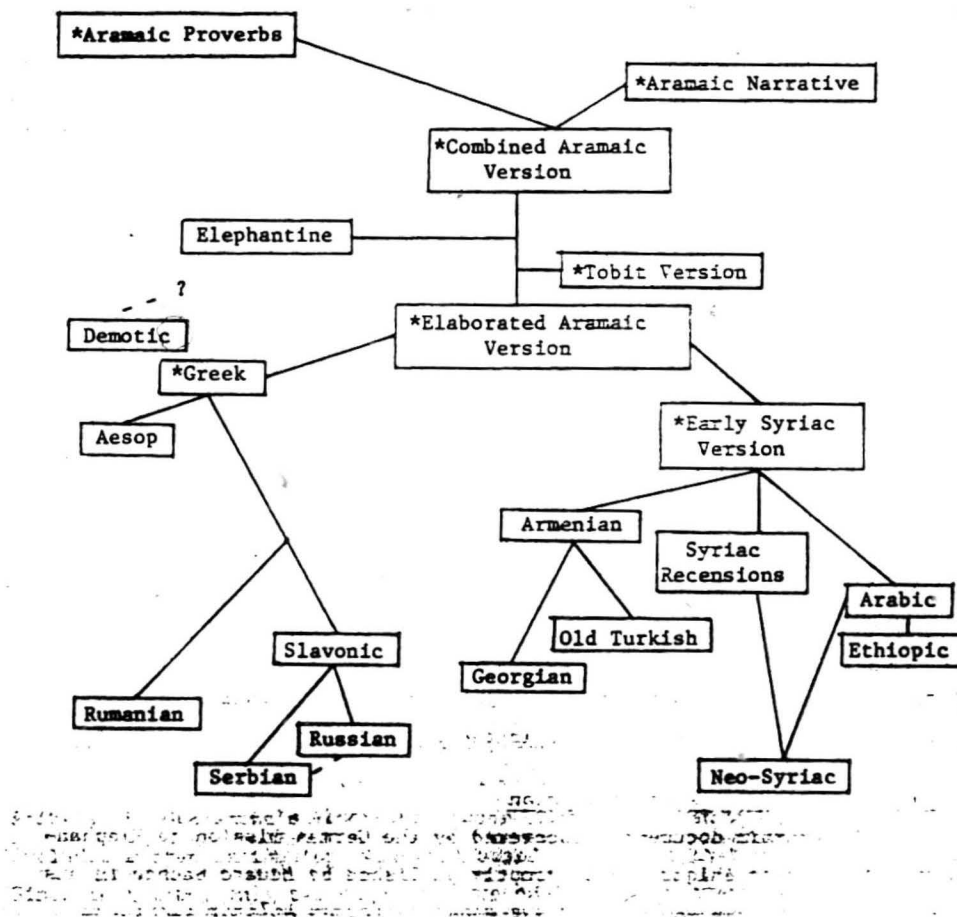
Harris).⁴⁷ We rely on Nau's judgment that this version stems from the Syriac, and not vice versa.⁴⁸ It resembles the Syriac B, P, and G in many respects.

We have not attempted to discuss all of the versions of Ahikar, or even all of the versions available in English or French translation. Rather we have chosen those versions which could suggest to us the process of transition from the Elephantine version to the late versions. Only in this way could the hypothesis of a Judaized version of Ahikar be explored. Lindenberger developed a chart upon which he located all of the versions of Ahikar known to him. This we reproduce here. As we look to Lindenberger's chart reproduced here.

47 Lewis in Harris, The Story of Ahikar, xxiii and "The Story of Ahikar", 721 indicates that her Arabic text is republished from Salhani, Contes Arabes: Beyrouth, while here translation is based on the manuscript K1 Cambridge Cod. Add. 2886 dated 1783 and supplemented by K2, British Museum Cod. Add. 7209 (no date indicated). Lewis and Harris evidently regard this version as very late.

48 Nau, Sagesse, 286-287.

Diagram 1 49

Relationship of the Ahisar Versions

* indicates versions which are not extant.

49 Lindenberg, Aramaic Proverbs, 7. Lindenberg n.3, 28 for his source on the Slavic and Rumanian versions. From the version in Harris I cannot judge why Lindenberg judges these to be influenced by the Aesop tradition.

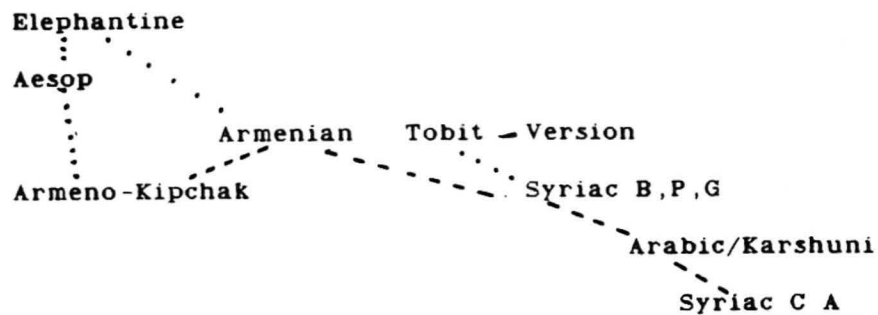
Of the versions treated above, only the ancient Greek based on a Judaized version has not been found. On that branch is added Rumanian, Russian and Serbian. On the other branch Lindenberger adds Armenian, Old Turkish, and Georgian.⁵⁰

We find that we must however amend this chart in a few points. A literary approach focusing on five key versions has suggests that within the context of the frame story there is clear evidence of the progression from the pagan to the Judaized version. That is to say that one can chart the movement from E to the Oriental versions in several intermediate steps.

If our analysis is eventually supported by linguistic and other evidence it may be necessary to emend the chart of the relationship of the Ahiqar versions to reflect this new data. The importance of this will be seen later on as we approach the influence of Ahiqar upon later literature.

50 Lindenberger, Aramaic Proverbs, 4-7.

Diagram 2 Thematic Affinities*



*Key: ---Strong Affinity ... Weaker Affinity

8

Chapter 4: Tracing the Traditions of Ahikar

THE WIFE MOTIF

Students of Babylonian Wisdom and Hebrew Wisdom note that the former is concerned mainly with practical advice for living, while the latter involves moral content and fear of God.⁵¹ By tracing the evolution and addition of new themes in the Ahikar tradition, we are able to track the transition from one type of literature to the next. Since the motifs develop in a largely orderly and logical fashion, we are able to view in a new light the development of the story of Ahikar.

The post Elephantine Ahikar tale contains new or evolved motifs which allow for the story to these two conceptions, partly by The first thematic feature which distinguishes the versions of Ahikar is that of the role played in some versions by Ahikar's wife. We begin here and treat this at length because this motif offers valuable evidence concerning the relationship of the versions to each other. In the Elephantine version, having read the formulaic openings of the later versions, would have led us to expect a mention of Ahikar's wife or wives, but we are met with silence. It must be admitted that the opening lines of the story are damaged and suffer from lacunae. However the fact remains that not a sign of one or many wives is to be

⁵¹ Lambert, Babylonian Wisdom Literature, 1-2.

found.⁵² We may have the reason in the section of the story dealing with the ruse by which Ahiqar is saved. The executioner and his contingent find a substitute victim for Ahiqar:

Immédiatement, le capitaine Nabûsumiskun dit à ses compagnons, à ces deux hommes qui étaient avec lui: ...Ne le tuons pas, lui, un innocent! Je vous donnerai un serviteur à moi, un eunuque: Qu'il soit tué entre ces deux montagnes à la place de ce 'Ahiqar! Lorsqu'on l'apprendra, le roi enverra d'autres hommes après nous pour voir le corps de ce 'Ahiqar. Ensuite, ils verront le corps de cet eunuque, mon serviteur, ...⁵³

Even with the minimal reconstruction of the text, as indicated by underscoring, the clear understanding is that the body of a eunuch could be substituted for that of Ahiqar. Scholars seem to have overlooked the quite reasonable deduction that Ahiqar was himself a eunuch, not at all unusual for a high court official of his day. Again we note that the entire plan to rescue Ahiqar is carried out by the loyal Nabûsumiskun and his men, not with the help of Ahiqar's wife. This stands in contrast to the later versions also, as we shall see.

What is important to realize is that there was no woman and certainly no wife involved in this early version of the narrative, and that Ahiqar was most

⁵² Grelot, Documents, Col 106 432-433.

⁵³ Grelot, Documents, 450-51, col. 4, 56-63.

likely a eunuch, without any need for a wife, thus the motif of divine punishment by withholding from him a child cannot apply here.

How did the wife motif enter into the Ahiqar tale, and what is its significance? The Greek version in Aesop has only the most minimal mention of a concubine who is the subject of Ennus's improper advances. There is no mention of multiple wives, nor, most significantly, does a woman play any role in Ahiqar's deliverance.

We have already noted that the rift between Ennus and Aesop began only when Ennus took liberties with his stepfather's concubine, and that a friend of Aesop's, Hermippus, is solely responsible for saving Aesop so that no wife played a role.

Somewhere in the transformation of Ahiqar, he acquired many wives. In all of the versions where he has many wives, one particular wife is named, (the names differ) who plays a significant role in the story. While scholars tend to locate the Armeno-Kipchak version as later than the Armenian, the treatment of the wife motif suggests that the version may possibly draw from very old traditions. Let us compare the opening statement on Ahiqar's wives in this version with the other late versions.

Moi, le sage Hikar, arrivé à
l'âge de soixante ans, je

pris pour épouse une
femme, mais je n'en eus ni
fils, ni fille.⁵⁴

This version seems to rely on a tradition that it was Ahiqar who was unable to have children. He evidently had never married, and then at an advanced age (especially for pre-modern cultures,) he married a single, possibly his first wife. This represents major departure from the story as known from all other versions. However, since the role of this single wife is minimal in A-K, and seems to reflect an addition to a tradition where Ahiqar simply had no children, we are able to see the development from Elephantine, to the Greek, and then to most likely to the Armeno-Kipchak.

Let us examine the role of the wife in one of the better known Armenian versions. Here we read:

In the times and in the reign of
Seneqarim King of Nineveh and of
Asurestan, I Khikar Notary of
Seneqarim the King took sixty wives
and builded me sixty palaces. And I
Khikar was sixty years of age and I
had not a son. (RHp.24)

This version conforms more fully to the notion that some supernatural force prevented Ahiqar from having children, since here there is every indication that he was married to many wives, for some time, and had every expectation of having children were it not for the moral or religious impediment.

54 Deny, A-K, 19.

The Syriac versions follow the Armenian in this respect. The A (p. 56,) C, (p58), and B (146-147) traditions all agree on the sixty wives and the sixty palaces. They omit however the "sixty years of age", which was the feature added in the A-K to account for Ahiqar's impotence in the case of having had only one wife. Perhaps it was reasoned that having sixty wives, to wait to the age of sixty to conclude that he would not have a natural son, and decide to adopt. Further, this Syriac motif subtly focuses attention on Ahiqar's realization that he was being punished for particular sins.

The supernatural explanation for Ahiqar's childlessness is most highly developed in the Syriac B. This version utilizes fortune tellers, and wise men to predict that Ahiqar will have no son.

Il dit: Lorsque je vivais à l'époque
de Sennacherib, roi de Ninive;
lorsque moi, Ahiqar, j'étais jeune,
les devins, les mages et les sages
me dirent: "Tu n'auras pas
d'enfant." J'acquis une grande
richesse, j'étais comblé d'un bon
superflu, j'épousai soixante femmes
et je leur bâtis soixante palais,
vastes, merveilleux et admirables,
ainsi que de nombreuses maisons, et
j'arrivai à l'âge de soixante ans,
et il n'en était pas né d'enfant
55

55 Nau, Sagesse, 146-147. J. Halévy, Tobie et Akhiakar, (Paris: Libraire de la Société Asiatique de L'Ecole des Langues Orientales, 1900.) 49, suggests that the introduction of "devins", "mages", and "sages", is an imitation of Daniel 2:2, 10; 4:4; 5:7.

The late introduction of the motif of the sixty wives into the Ahikar tale, corresponds to the elimination of the eunuch motif, and serves to preserve the focus on Ahikar's inability to have children while allowing for the introduction of a new element, that of the faithful and resourceful wife. And both of these in turn serve to heighten the theological elements of the story, and to provide further material for moral contrasts between Ahikar and Nadan. The punishment by God by means of denying Ahikar a son is much less meaningful if he is already a eunuch, and the introduction of a wife allows for a more complete betrayal by Nadan and feeling of despair on the part of Ahikar. It is this very theological dimension in its many aspects which now deserve our attention.

Here we begin to see how the proverbs function to establish a moral code which is then breached by Nadan in the frame story.

While it is reasonable to conclude that the proverbs have undergone a large degree of development as a group, independent of the story, it is equally true that a good number of proverbs bear an organic relationship to the details of the Ahikar story. One example of this is the concern shown in the proverbs for chastity and marital fidelity. From the Greek Aesop

version down through the later versions, a similar concern with sexual purity is maintained. Characteristic of these proverbs are the following from the Syriac:

Syr C #25.

My son, lift not up thy eyes and
look upon a woman that is
bedizened and painted; and
do not covet her in thy
heart; for if thou
shouldest give her all
that is in thy hands, thou
findest no advantage in
her; and thou wilt be
guilty of sin against God.

Syr C #26.

My son, commit not adultery with the
wife of thy neighbour;
lest others should commit
adultery with thy wife.

Syr B #8

Mon fils, si tu vois une femme parée
de (beaux) habits et
parfumée d'agréables
parfums et que son
caractère soit abject,
querelleur et impudent,
que ton cœur ne la desire
pas. Quand même tu lui
donnerais tout ce que tu
as, tu trouverais que cela
ne tourne pas à ta gloire,
mais tu irriterais Dieu et
tu le mettrais en colère
contre toi.

Armenian A#2

Son, raise not up thine eyes to look
on a lovely woman, rouged
and antimonied. Desire her
not in thy heart. For if
thou shouldest give her
all thy riches, thou dost
get nothing the more out
of her; but art condemned
by God and by mankind. For
she is like unto a
sepulchre which is fair on

the upper side and below
is full of the rottenness
and bones of the dead.

39(RH p. 29)

Son, commit not adultery with thy
friend's wife, lest God be
angry and others commit
adultery with thy wife.

The Aesop version, as we have already alluded to in chapter 3 mentions the liberties taken by the adopted son with his stepfather's concubine. But the moral and religious significance of this act is emphasized to a much greater degree in all of the later versions, the A-K included. In all of the later versions we see that Nadan attempted to take liberties with Ahiqar's wife thinking that Ahiqar had been done away with. As it says in the A-K:

...il voulut porter la main sur ma
femme nommée Apesdan qui l'avait
élevé depuis l'enfance jusqu'à l'âge
de raison. (A-K p.25)

Or in the A version we read

And even for Abestan my wife he had
no respect, but desired to fornicate
with her, that had brought him up..
(A p.43.)

In the later versions the focus of the Ahiqar story has shifted to the deliberate breaching of religious morality on the part of Nadan. At the same time, the role of the virtuous wife is expanded, until it is as much through her efforts as those of the executioner that Ahiqar is saved.

THE PROPER BURIAL MOTIF

The growing Ahīqar tradition seems to indicate that certain strands of the Syriac are the most highly evolved. But all this serves in the story not as central motif, but only to show how deep was Ahīqar's despair, and how far gone Nadan's depravity. In the Elephantine tale, and the A-K these show simply how evil men can become and how people do suffer. There is only a hint of a theological motif. In the other versions, (except strangely the A) the suffering of Ahīqar is even more intense, he is made to wait in a pit, and to see his wife violated, his funeral neglected, as well as his goods and servants abused. As in the Elephantine version, the executioner, loyal to Ahīqar, hides Ahīqar with the help of two unnamed friends. In this version the name of the executioner is not recorded. However the story needs to account for how a slave, murdered in Ahīqar's place, could be mistaken for him, especially now that the distinguishing characteristic, that of a eunuch's genitals is no longer in harmony with the story's details. The A-K version accounts for this only very weakly,

Et ces gens-là et les bourreaux
n'oublièrent point mes bontés [litt. mon
pain et mon sel]. Je me prosternai, je
priaï et je dis: "J'ai chez moi un homme
qui me ressemble et qui a commis un crime
passible de mort: coupez-lui la tête à ma

place et cachez-moi, car je serai
nécessaire un jour à mon roi". Ils
cachèrent Hikar et exécutèrent
l'homme. (A-K p. 25 f60v)

This execution ruse both in the role of the wife in carrying out the request of Ahiqar contained in a letter to her from prison, and in explaining how it is possible that Ahiqar could be mistaken for a servant, is much more developed in the other versions. To account for the resemblance, the executed slave is dressed in Ahiqar's clothing so that he may be substituted. Also, in all the later versions the victim's head is removed far from his body, ostensibly as a sign of dishonor and shame, but serving also to allow in the story for the misidentification.

In the Elephantine text, it is impossible to determine whether or not one of Ahiqar's reasons for wanting a son was so that he would receive a proper burial.

It is not mentioned in the Aesop material either. The concern for a proper burial, as a motivating force in adopting a son is first evident in the late versions of Ahiqar. In all of the later versions, this is one of the central reasons for wishing to have a son.

In the A-K, Ahiqar prays to his idols and says

"...veuillez me donner un fils pour
que ce Hikar ne meure pas tout à
fait, pour que les hommes ne disent
pas que le sage et subtil Hikar est

mort sans laisser de fils pour
l'enterrer et assurer la pérennité
de sa fortune au point de pouvoir
dissiper jusqu'à dix quintaux d'or
par jour, un fils qui ne ruinerait
pas mon bien et qui aurait jeté de
ses deux bras de la terre sur moi,
qui aurait été un souvenir (après
moi?)" (A-K p.20)

In all of the other versions similar sentiments are expressed. The proper burial motif is heightened and accentuated in almost the same way in all of the Ahikar versions except the A-K and E. In these former two, the motif is apparently not mentioned [E], or it is mentioned only in the first lines. In C, B and L however we have further development of the theme.

In C, the desire for a proper burial is restated by Ahikar, the King orders that it be done, and Nadan disobeys a direct royal command. We pick up the story at the King's command to the executioner:

'Arise, go slay Ahikar, and separate
his head a hundred ells from his
body.'

Following this Ahikar narrates his request of the
King:

'My lord the King, live for ever.
Seeing, my lord that it hath pleased
thee to kill me, thy will be done. I
know, however, that I have not
sinned against thee. But command
them, my lord the King, that they
kill me at the door of my house:
and let them give my body to
burial.' And the King said to
Nabusemakh... 'Go, kill Ahikar at the
door of his house, and give his body
to burial.' (p.69)

After the ruse whereby the slave is executed and Ahikar goes into hiding the following is related:

Then Sennacherib the king called my son Nadan, and said to him, 'Go make a funeral feast for thy father Ahikar, and then return to me.' And when Nadan my son came, no funeral feast did he make for me, nor any remembrance at all; but gathered him the vain and lewd folk, and set them down at my table, with singing and with great joy; and my beloved servants and handmaidens he stripped and flogged without mercy. Nor had he any reverence of my wife Eshfagni, but sought to do with her the way of man with woman. ..."(p71.)RH

Nadan's betrayal of Ahikar is complete and devastating. the stage is set for Ahikar to undergo the most intense spiritual suffering. The moral dimension of the reworked proverbs is given the fullest negative demonstration.⁵⁶

Our brief analysis of these themes also supports previous theories as to the relationship of the versions, adding the possibility that the A-K may in some respects reflect traditions older than the other Armenian versions, and that the Aesop also represents a transitional state between Elephantine and the monotheized versions.

⁵⁶ One might here use the term Aggadah which Dr. Jerusalmi claims is Rabbinic equivalent of the Syriac תחיתא, proof or demonstration.

Chapter 5: The Judaization of Ahikar

The tradition of a Jewish Ahikar has been accorded scant scholarly attention since the discovery of an ancient Aramaic version of Ahikar with Pagan motifs. Once it was no longer possible to maintain that the story was written originally in Hebrew or Jewish Aramaic, the subject seems to have lost much of its appeal. Yet it has long been maintained that a Jewish adaptation of Ahikar once did exist. Ginzberg wrote after examining the evidence available to him that:

...it seems fair to conclude that the Ahikar maxims represent some ancient collection of Jewish popular proverbs, which at a later period were combined with the legend of the Babylonian sages.⁵⁷

When identification of Tobit with the Ahikar of the medieval versions was made, many scholars were led to suggest that the Ahikar legend was originally composed in Hebrew and that it was a Jewish production. Halévy attempted in 1900 to show that the Ahikar tale was authored by the same hand that penned Tobit. The discovery of an ancient Aramaic version of Ahikar, just a few years after Halévy's publication, rendered moot most of his attempts to show a Jewish origin for Ahikar. Yet some of Halévy's original arguments may have value

⁵⁷ Louis Ginzberg, "Ahikar", Jewish Encyclopedia, New York: Funk and Wagnalis, 1901. 290.

for supporting the thesis of a Jewish version of Ahiqar.

As Halevy states:

Pour notre etude actuelle, il suffit
de constater l'entree de la sagesse
d'Akhiakar dans la litterature
sapiientiale du judaisme
post-biblique en qualite de
collaboratrice d'agadoth
sectaires.⁵⁸

It is also possible that the present Syriac versions stem from a Hebrew revision such as we have been proposing. Lidzbarski, said of such a version (He is assuming an original, since the Aramaic is not yet known,)

"Elle peut donc avoir ete
primitivement redigee aussi bien en
grec qu'en hebreu."⁵⁹

M. Reinach⁶⁰ argues on the basis of the religious details of the monotheistic versions of Ahiqar, that they are reworkings of a well-known pagan Babylonian tale, and that only can account for the remnants of idolatrous practices in the versions. Reinach allows for the possibility that a Jewish Aramaic or Hebrew version was produced from a pagan Aramaic version. He does not suggest though that this version was marked by a monotheistic character. The geneological connection of

⁵⁸ Halevy, Tobie et Akhiakar, 51.

⁵⁹ quoted in Halevy, Tobie et Akhiakar, 15.

⁶⁰ also cited by Halevy, Tobie et Akhiakar, 15-16.

Tobit to Ahikar is considered by him to be a later addition. The author of Tobit had only meant to introduce the example of Ahikar as a person punished by God for worshipping idols.⁶¹ Halévy's own arguments though intended to prove that Ahikar was originally written in Hebrew, may be quite useful in suggesting what a Hebrew version of Ahikar might have looked like, a version that may have been utilized by the author of Tobit, by Ben Sira, by the Rabbis and the authors of other post-biblical books.^{62/f}

Even before the discovery at Elephantine, Ginzberg could not accept this conclusion. He recognized that Jewish elements in the Syriac Ahikar and came up with this conclusion:

Although the weight of the preceding testimony is in favor of the suggestion that the Ahikar legend and the system of legends and maxims connected therewith point to a Jewish substratum, the material extant hardly warrants the conclusion that it is a product of genuine Jewish folk-lore. For a purely Jewish work there is too little religious material in it; a fact which in the postexilic period-- is somewhat surprising. The Ahikar of the Book of Tobit and the Ahikar of the legend have many points of similarity; but it cannot

61 in Halévy, Tobie et Akhiakar, 20-21.

62 Halévy, Tobie et Akhiakar, 24-27.

be said with certainty that they are identical.⁶³

The question of whether the Ahiqar of Tobit is identical with that of the legend(s) we will treat in the following chapter. Here we shall address the fundamental objection which Ginzberg raised to the identification of Ahiqar with Tobit, and that is the supposed lack of a Jewish religious theme in Ahiqar.

We do not intend to show that Ahiqar was originally a Jewish text, this point has been mooted by the Egyptian papyri. It is in some ways more interesting to consider now the possibility that a Assyrian wisdom text, without a strong Jewish component could have been adapted to the needs and tastes of an ancient Jewish community.

We should not be too hasty however in ruling out completely the thought that the tradition of Jewish Ahiqar might conceivably have been based on ancient tradition known to the Babylonian Jews, and extending to the days of the exile. If such an historical legend existed, Isaiah 39:7 may provide a clue. Isaiah warns Hezekiah that "some of your own sons, who are born to you, shall be taken away; and they shall be eunuchs in the palace of the king of Babylon." Since this warning was occasioned by the approach of Sennacherib's troops,

⁶³ Ginzberg, "Ahiqar", 290.

Isaiah may be referring to events which had already occurred when the Northern Kingdom fell to Sennacherib, and its people carried off into captivity. It is entirely possible that among the fates awaiting Israelites of the northern Kingdom was that of serving as a eunuch in Sennacherib's court. Since the book of Tobit connects Ahiqar's lineage to Tobit who was exiled from the Northern Kingdom we are alerted to the possibility that an ancient tradition may have connected an Israelite eunuch with service to the court of Sennacherib, the same setting as the tale of Ahiqar.

As was discussed in chapter 4, the Ahiqar tale quickly moved away from an image of Ahiqar as a eunuch, and converted him into an erstwhile paterfamilias. This probably added to the possibilities for broadening the appeal of the moral tale of Ahiqar to Jewish audiences, by adapting the tale to the Jewish conception of Wisdom. In this chapter we shall outline all of the many elements that were added to the Ahiqar tale to make it implicitly Jewish in ethos and theology, suggesting a conscious adaptation of Ahiqar to a Jewish conception of wisdom. These elements may mark the later versions of Ahiqar as a Jewish tale almost as definitively as an explicit reference to Ahiqar as a Jew.

The only explicit reference to Ahiqar as a Jew to have come down to us has received little scholarly

notice. This is contained in the superscription to the Nestorian Ahiqar manuscript G.

Il y avait donc aux jours de Sennachèrib et de Sarhèdôm, rois d'Assur et de Ninive, un homme nommé Ahikar, juif sage, et écrivain et scribe et mobed (gouverneur) des rois susdits; il se tenait constamment à leur service sans aucune faute, quand Sennachèrib, roi d'Assur, mourut, l'an 679 avant le Christ.⁶⁴

This late notation may indeed reflect a very old tradition.

RELIGIOUS DIMENSIONS IN AHIQAR

The transformation of the religious dimension of Ahiqar in terms of prayer can easily be demonstrated.

We begin with the Elephantine version. In the frame story of E there is no religious reference. Though the beginning of the story is partly damaged, there seems to be no invocation of divine help in the conception of a child. The Elephantine proverbs themselves however make clear the religious context of the composition. For example proverb 25 speaks of the king's power as like that of El, while proverb 26 completes the poetic parallelism by likening a king's glory to Shamash:

AA#25-26
A king is like the Merciful,

even his voice is haughty.
 Who is there who could withstand him
 but one with whom El is?

A King is as splendid to see as
 Shamash and his majesty is glorious,
 to them that tread the earth in
 peace.

Although the religious aspect of the Aramaic Ahiqar
 proverbs is often explicit in the mention of divinities,
 these divine beings do not feature in the Elephantine
 narrative.

The Aesop version too is nearly devoid of reference
 to deity and religious concepts. If we are to take the
 addition of the "faithful wife motif" as a guide, the
 next closest version of Ahiqar to the Elephantine is the
 Armeno-Kipchak. This version, as we have mentioned, has
 been little studied and is in our view a link between
 the Elephantine version and the Judaized Ahiqar.

This version has certainly undergone some radical
 editing of proverbs which might not meet with the
 approval of a Christian cleric.⁶⁵ Nevertheless it
 is still betrays signs of an incomplete and unsystematic
 reworking based on a version with pagan orientation. We
 have discussed in the previous chapter the features of

⁶⁵ Deny, "Histoire", 10 comments on "le procédé
 d'une "christianisation" rigoureuse à laquelle s'adonne
 le traducteur de notre text (probablement le
 représentant du clergé arménien lui-même)." While we
 agree with this comment, we cannot accept that a simple
 process of abridgment from an old Armenian version can
 account for the divergences from the extant Armenian
 versions published by Conybeare.

this version which identify it as an independent version, linked to the Elephantine tradition.

Here we can present further of evidence A-K's transitional characteristics among the versions. It lies between the E and Arm. versions in terms of its uneven treatment of religious motifs. It is here that the A-K now holds for us its greatest significance. Most striking in the A-K is the lack of transitions from the frame story to the proverbs. This is a feature which is also somewhat in evidence in the Arm. versions. It will be necessary to demonstrate what we mean by a lack of transition in the A-K and Armenian versions.

IN SEARCH OF TRANSITIONS

The A-K story begins, as do many of the later versions, with Ahikar quickly turning to his pagan gods for help in having a child:

Je me présentai devant mes dieux
[texte:tengrim, sg.] je déposai
toutes sortes d'offrandes, de
nouveau je m'agenouillai devant eux
et je dis: "O, mes seigneurs et mes
dieux -- le nom de l'un d'eux était
Pilchim, du deuxième Chilim, du
troisième Chahmil -- veuillez me
donner un fils pour que ce Hikar ne
meure pas tout à fait, pour que les
hommes ne disent pas que le sage et
subtil Hikar est mort sans laisser
de fils ... A ce moment j'entendis
la voix de mes dieux disant: "Hikar,
il est ordonné que tu aies un fils.
Adopte le fils de ton frère, tu
auras soin de lui et tu l'élèveras
pour te succéder." (A-K p.20)

Remarkably, Ahikar receives a verbal reply from the Gods! This in itself is evidence of an original pagan orientation, as we would expect the idols to remain silent in a truly monotheized version. The answer of these gods stands in stark contrast to the extreme monotheism of the proverbs which largely accord with the Armenian versions, except that they are perhaps even more monotheized. We must consider the possibility that the Armeno-Kipchak frame story is based on an older version of the story than the proverbs which may have been grafted on from a more heavily monotheized version. In any event we may speculate that the first addition to the Ahikar story was the addition of a religious element to the frame story itself, probably even before the story began to be adapted to a monotheistic outlook. Precisely why this would become necessary within a pagan context is difficult to imagine. Perhaps as the story lost its connection to historical events and entered the realm of folklore, the religious element began to take precedence.

The lack of a adequate transition from the pagan frame story to the monotheistic orientation in the proverbs in the A-K version is even more strongly sensed after examination of the Armenian versions to which the A-K is so intimately related. The Armenian invocation of pagan gods is similar to that of the A-K.

"O my lords and gods, Belshim and Shimil and Shamin, ordain and give to me male seed. For lo, Khikar dieth alive....Then there was a voice from the gods and they said:..."⁶⁶

What the gods said is less important than that the gods replied at all to Ahikar! And once again in the Armenian versions too, without explanation, the proverbs are marked largely by a monotheistic theology, though in a few notable instances remnants of idolatrous proverbs remains. In this the Armenian and A-K show a great deal in common. We still see the essential polytheistic context, familiar from Elephantine, but reworked into a more fluid style.

It is our belief that a Judaized version of Ahikar was adapted not from a version of the story evidenced by the Elephantine fragments or the Aesop tale, but from a version which had adapted the narrative to a pagan religious context. Perhaps the proverbs were adapted first for use in a Jewish setting, and only then was the need to make the tale conform to the pious proverbs recognized. This would explain the much more satisfactory transitions found between the proverbs in the Syriac versions (which are largely the same as the

⁶⁶ Harris, Ahikar, 24-25.

Armenian), and the story, which differs in other details.⁶⁷

A much more coherent transition seems to be found in some of the Syriac versions, which we regard as older than the more Christianized Syr L and C. Only in B and G of the traditions we have examined, does the rejection of Ahikar by the idols lead directly to Ahikar's prayer to the One God. The B text reads:

...Cependant moi, Ahikar, j'allai offrir des sacrifices et des présents aux dieux; je brûlai pour eux l'encens et les aromates et je leur dis: "O dieux, donnez-moi un fils dans lequel je me complaise jusqu'au jour où me mourrai et où il me succèdera; il fermera mes yeux et m'ensevelira. Et depuis le jour..." Les idoles ne lui répondirent rien, aussi il les laissa et fut rempli de peine et d'une grande souffrance. Il changea alors son discours, pria Dieu, crut(en lui), le supplia dans l'ardeur de son cœur et dit: "O Dieu du ciel et de la terre, Créateur de toutes les créatures, je te demande de me donner un fils dans lequel je me complaise, qui... Une voix vint et lui dit: "Puisque tu t'es confié dans les dieux, que tu as mis ton espoir en eux et que tu leur as offert des présents, tu mourras sans fils et sans filles; cependant, je te le dis, voici que tu as Nadan, fils de ta soeur,

⁶⁷ I do not mean to suggest that the Armenian versions were originally composed in that language, but that they may reflect Aramaic versions antedating but closely related to the surviving Syriac manuscripts.

prends-le, enseigne-lui toute ta science et il aura ton héritage. 68

The G manuscript shows a similar transition:

Les idoles ne lui répondirent
absolument rien et c'est avec
confusion et douleur qu'il retourna
du temple des idoles à sa maison. Et
il commença à prier avec un cœur
triste devant le Seigneur en disant:
'O Dieu du ciel et de la terre ! o
Créateur des créatures! regarde et
vois mes larmes, accueille ma prière
et donne-moi un fils, afin que j'en
reçoive consolation, qu'il soit mon
héritier, qu'il assiste à ma mort;
il me fermera les yeux et
m'ensevelira.' 69

This is the transition which the proverbs of the Armenian versions presuppose, but which is lacking from them. The solution of the Syriac G, B, and the Arabic which stems from them is to provide an explanation of how of Ahikar can pray to the one God, without introduction, and why his proverbs provide teachings in keeping with a monotheistic theology. These versions assume that Ahikar is already was acquainted with monotheism, and had only lapsed into polytheistic practice. 70

From a literary point of view the motif of a rejection of false idols, and a turning in prayer to God

68 Nau, Sagesse, 147-149. Nau noted this special feature of B.

69 Nau, "Documents", 295.

70 This will be a significant point when we turn to our discussion of the Tobit material.

provides a vehicle for the teaching of proverbs which reflect a monotheistic, or Judaic ethical and religious ethos. From a theological point of view, the story itself becomes much more acceptable to a pious Jewish audience. The return to monotheism may require a degree of penance or punishment, not the conversion to monotheism of a pagan. This point was made by Halévy, without knowledge of the manuscript G which in fact explicitly gives this rationale in the continuation of the passage above. G continues:

Alors il lui vint une voix qui dit:
'Puisque tu as erré, que tu as eu
confiance dans les dieux, que tu
leur as offert de l'encens et que tu
n'as pas travaillé pour moi, à cause
de cela je t'ai laissé sans enfant;
qu'il te suffise de ne pas être
frappé. Mais voici Nadan, le fils de
ta soeur, il te sera un fils à qui
tu pourras tout apprendre à mesure
qu'il grandira en âge.' A ces
paroles, je fus de nouveau affligé
et je dis : 'O Seigneur, Dieu
puissant, si tu me donnes pour fils
Nadan, le fils de ma soeur, pour
jeter de la poussière sur moi après
ma mort et me fermer les yeux, sera-
t-il mon héritier ou non?' Et il ne
répondit à aucune de ces
paroles.⁷¹

The rationale for the Judaized Ahiqar is contained in this passage. It is only found in the B and G family of Syriac manuscripts, that is to say only in these versions is Ahiqar apparently a monotheist by origin,

⁷¹ Nau, "Documents", 295.

perhaps a Jew who already is expected to behave as a worshipper of the One God. If Ahiqar had been born a Pagan, then, as Halévy argued, he should have been welcomed by God into His service, once having discovered that prayer to idols was of no avail. As Halévy wrote:

Les légendes talmudiques abondent de récits dans lesquels les païens d'origine ont sauvés de grands dangers par une invocation du vrai Dieu. Ne sont passibles de peines que les Juifs renégats qui retournent à la foi de leurs pères après une période d'infidélité de propos délibéré. C'est d'ailleurs le cas de toutes les religions de décharger les prosélytes de tous leur méfaits antérieurs. Akhiakar était donc nécessairement un monothéiste de naissance...⁷²

Halévy, it must be admitted, was in his day attempting to show that the original Ahiqar story was written in Hebrew, and was a Jewish production. However he was writing without benefit of the subsequent discovery of an ancient Aramaic Ahiqar. We should not take lightly his reasoning however, which still reflects the underlying religious rationale of the Syriac versions available to him, and is even more explicit in the G version which was not yet known in the West when he wrote.⁷³

⁷² Halévy, Akhiakar, 25.

⁷³ The fact that this manuscript B bears the following dedication is intriguing: "Au nom du Dieu vivant, le serviteur coupable commence à écrire une histoire ninivite: Ahikar l'Assyrien. --Jacques d'Edesse

A FURTHER TRANSFORMATION

The Syriac versions C, A, and Berlin Sachau 162, provide a further elaboration which obviates the need for a religious transition. Ahikar is from start to finish a believer in the one God. Amazingly the L and C narratives show no sign of idolatrous worship! Syriac L reads:

Then I built me a great altar of incense and vowed a vow, and said, O Lord God give me a male child, that when I shall die he may cast dust on my eyes. Thereupon there was heard by me this voice, saying, O Ahikar, ... (RH p.56)

The monotheistic C version puts into Ahikar's mouth these words:

'Thereupon I, Ahikar, built me a great altar, all of wood; and kindled fire upon it, and laid good meat thereon, and thus I spake: 'O Lord, my God; when I shall die and

la composa en langue syriaque d'après la tradition de Mar Ephrem l'ancien -- il mourut en pays chaldéen, l'an 1252 des Grecs." (Nau Sagesse, 145. The story of Mar Ephrem too begins with an invocation of a pagan idol, then continues with a conversion to monotheism. The opening of Ephrem's story is in a way modeled after Ahikar with one important difference in this context, Ahikar must be punished for his earlier sins for the story to have coherence. Ephrem is blameless, supposedly because he never had commerce with pagan idols though raised in their presence. He was meant to be a model for pagans converting to Christianity, and punishment of past sins would have been an untenable theological point for recruiting. That this version of Ahikar was maintained on the authority of Mar Ephrem is a point worthy of consideration.

leave no son, what will men say of me? thy will say that this, then, is Ahikar the just and good and God-serving: he is dead... But I ask of thee, O God, ..." (RH p.59)

Such pious phrases pepper Ahikar's talk in this version. Only in the B of the Syriac is the invocation of the pagan idols maintained.

This solution of the religious orientation of Ahikar in the later versions actually causes new problems. Ahikar's Jewish roots, so painstakingly established in the earlier version, are excised, but so is a great deal of the religious motivation of the frame story. For if Ahikar is not in penance for his earlier sins, then his punishment at the hands of God becomes even more problematic than that of Job, as there is no dark angel to try him, no rationale for his suffering.

It is not only with the addition of the transition in the opening of the story from pagan, to recidivist Jewenitent, to simple ill-starred monotheist that the versions betray a religious development. The entire theme of prayer in the versions reveals an analogue process.

SUFFERING IN DARKNESS

A-K begins with the invocation of pagan Gods. ~~With~~ no transition, the proverbs, as far as the translation indicates, mention only the God of monotheism. This

indicates a great discontinuity between the proverbs which show a great similarity to the Land C, to B and to the frame story which is the closest to E. In A-K there is no scene where Ahiqar is in a dark pit. The only reference to prayer that Ahiqar be saved is the following: "Je me prosternai, je priaï, et je dis: '...'" (A-K p. 25 f. 60) There Ahiqar relates his plan to substitute a condemned slave for his own body, hoping that the executioner will agree to the ruse. Later when Ahiqar is needed by the King, and it is revealed that he is still alive, the King anachronistically replies: "Gloire a Dieu qui fit ressusciter aujourd'hui Hikar d'entre les morts!" (A-K p. 25, f. 61) Later when Nadan is placed in the hands of Ahiqar, Ahiqar prays again:

"Mon fils, mon Dieu me conserva
selon mon innocence et te ruina
selon tes méfaits. Que Dieu prononce
Son jugement entre toi et moi" (A-K
p. 26 f. 62).

The A-K seems to preserve the distinction between Ahiqar the polytheist and Ahiqar the monotheist. Ahiqar is plausibly the same recidivist Jew here as he is the more highly developed B. Yet the theological niceties of the version B are simply not present.

Syriac A follows the same pattern as A-K. There is an invocation of pagan Gods, no transition to the monotheistic teachings of the proverbs, then a return to the narrative. The pit and darkness do occur however,

but Ahiqar offers no prayer from the pit. Again at the conclusion first Nadan (here called Nathan,) expresses sentiments of a religious nature.

Nathan began to speak and said: My father Khikar, men sin unto God, and He forgives them, when they say: I have sinned. Father, I have sinned unto thee. Forgive me, and I will be to thee a slave henceforth for ever. (RH p. 54, #24)

Ahiqar answers with a parable and then adds:

Son, God hath rescued me because of my innocence, but hath destroyed thee because of thy lawlessness. God passes judgment between me and thee... (RH p. 55 #26)

As in the A-K there is no evidence of a sincere repentance, nor do the proverbs seem to match the events of the frame story.

Perhaps the most revealing scene, which serves to illustrate this point is the prayer which Ahiqar offers before the executioner. This prayer is virtually absent in C, as it was in A-K. In C Ahiqar says only "Look towards God, and remember the love that there was between us, brother..." (RH p. 70)

After Ahiqar's wife is violated, we read "And I, Ahikar, was cast into darkness in the pit beneath. And I was hearing the voice of my bakers..." Ahiqar prays again when the faithful Nabusemakh came to Ahiqar to bring food, water, and comfort, Ahiqar bids him:

'When thou goest forth from me, remember me before God, and say, O

God, just and righteous, and that showest grace upon the earth, hear the voice of thy servant Ahikar, and remember that he sacrificed to thee fatted oxen like sucking lambs. And now he is cast into the darksome pit where he seeth no light. And dost thou not save him that crieth unto thee? O Lord, hear the voice of my colleague, [I pray thee.] (RH p. 71)

The final scene is similar to that of the A, where Ahikar attributes his redemption to God, and leaves Nadan's punishment also in His hands.

Various nuance attend the prayers of Ahikar in the Syriac B version. There Ahikar invokes his pagan idols but in contrast to all other versions, he receives no reply. He turns immediately to the one God, and prays in sincerity:

Il changea alors son discours, pria Dieu, crut (en lui), le supplia dans l'ardeur de son coeur et dit: 'O Dieu du ciel et de la terre, Créateur de toutes les créatures, je te demande de me donner un fils dans lequel je me complaise, qui (me) console au moment de ma mort, me ferme les yeux et m'ensevelisse.' Une voix vint et lui dit: 'Puisque tu t'es confié dans les dieux, que tu as mis ton espoir en eux et que tu leur as offert des présents, tu mourras sans fils et sans filles; cependant, je te le dis, voici que tu as Nadan, fils de ta soeur, prends-le, enseigne-lui toute ta science et il aura ton héritage.' (Nau p. 149)

Immediately we see that the monotheistic cast of the proverbs is well integrated with the frame story of B.

It follows that among the many sins of Nadan, he fails to absorb this monotheistic teaching, replying in both C and B, when confronted with problems he cannot solve: "Les dieux ne pourraient pas faire de telles choses, comment les hommes le pourraient-ils?" (Nau p. 206)

One particular prayer is found in only a few versions. This is the prayer to God before the executioner, as alluded to in L and A-K but found in fullest form in B:

Je louai Dieu, maître du ciel et de
la terre, de tout ce qui avait lieu
et je dis: 'O Dieu, sauveur du
monde, toi qui sais ce qui a été et
ce qui sera, vois-moi d'un oeil
miséricordieux devant Nabousemak.'
(Nau p. 199)

Ahiqar addresses one final prayer to God, through the agency of Nabousemak, in nearly the same words as in C. This is the prayer uttered in the depth of despair, from the darkness, the point of deepest misery where he is forced to endure the scenes going on above him with no means of response. It was this terrible abyss, of a physical and spiritual nature which finally brought the response of God. Only in B is this response fitting to the case of a pious return to faith.⁷⁴

ADAPTATION OF THE PROVERBS

⁷⁴ Compare the G prayer chap. XV p. 305.

We can only begin here to suggest how the change in religious orientation of the proverbs to a monotheistic theological framework occurred. It is likely that a radical transformation of the Ahiqar proverbs to a moral and ethical doctrine acceptable in Jewish circles preceded the adaptation of the narrative story. It is also likely that the proverbs were first adapted, and only then was the story brought into harmony with the proverbs. Such a scenario might explain the origin of the A-K and Armenian versions which, disregarding the later Christian influence, have a stories closer to that of Elephantine, and proverbs which are similar to the extant Syriac versions yet have no adequate bridge between them. On the other hand, though the majority of the Ahiqar proverbs from the Elephantine collection are unknown in the later versions, the handful that are closely paralleled there indicate that the proverb collection from Elephantine served as at least one source for the revision of the collection in the Judaized version.⁷⁵

Significant here for us is the addition of the theological dimension to one of the Elephantine proverbs present in the later versions.

AA#24

Exult not over a multitude of son,

⁷⁵ Lindenberger, Aramaic, ff. See for example AA## 30, 59, 24 etc.

[not be sad] over a meager number of them.

In the Armenian version this has become:

Arm B #27

Son, in the multitude of thy children rejoice not, and in their deficiency be not distressed; for thy possessions are bestowed by God. The rich man is made poor, and the poor man is enriched.⁷⁶

God plays a role in this proverb in the late versions of Ahikar, while in a similar proverb in the Elephantine version there is no theophoric element. If there were one, we would expect to see Shamash or El.

BIBLICAL INFLUENCES ON LATER VERSIONS

A further element of the Judaization process seems to have been the addition of Biblical motifs and citations to add a Jewish coloring to the narrative. The similarities to the book of Daniel have often been cited in this respect.⁷⁷ For example, Ahikar's neglected state after emerging from his hiding place is described in these terms:

...the hair of my head had grown down on my shoulders, and my beard reached my breast; and my body was

⁷⁶ Lindenberger, Aramaic, p. 92 and note 257 gives full parallels in the versions.

⁷⁷ For example, Rendel Harris, Ahikar, lx-lxi.

foul with the dust, and my nails
were grown long like eagles.⁷⁸

כד סערא דרשי רסא על כתפתי
ודקני סטא לחדיי
וגושסי סחבא בעפרא
וטפרי אריכין איך דנשרא

This has been compared to Daniel 4:30 where
Nebuchadnezzar is driven from human company.

...until his hairs were grown like
eagles⁷ and his nails like birds.

די שיערה כנשרין רבה וטפרוהי
כצפרין

Other examples of this type from Daniel may be
given, yet Harris' caution that these expressions which
appear also in Daniel "may be a part of the stock-in-
trade of an Eastern story-teller in ancient times"⁷⁹
requires us to look elsewhere than Daniel for proof of
Biblical influence.

Biblical influence on the later versions of Ahikar
may be seen in the use of allusions to Psalms and
Proverbs. In the C version of the Syriac, the citations
from Psalms and Proverbs at the death of Nadan are woven
silently into the text:

C RH p. 127
My son, I taught thee that there is
a God: and thou risest up against
good servants, and beatest those
that have not sinned; and like as

⁷⁸ Rendel Harris, Ahikar, 116. The Syriac text is
found on page 1"J of that volume.

⁷⁹ Rendel Harris, Ahikar, lx.

God has kept me alive on account of my righteousness (or almsgiving-)⁸⁰ so hath He destroyed thee for thy works.... Thereat Nadan swelled up like a bag and died. And to him that doeth good, what is good shall be recompensed: and to him that doeth evil, what is evil shall be rewarded. And he that diggeth a pit for his neighbour, filleth it with his own stature. And to God be glory, and His mercy be upon us. Amen.

The Syriac B explicitly indicates these last lines as a biblical citations:

B Nau p. 254-6

Celui qui m'a tenu en vie, mon fils, Dieu qui sait tout et qui rend a chacun selon ses oeuvres, celui-la sait et juge entre moi et toi. Moi je ne te dis rien; Dieu te rendra selon tes oeuvres. Lorsque le jeune Nadan eut entendu cette parole, son corps gonfla aussitot et devint comme une outre pleine, et ses entrailles sortirent de ses lombes. Sa preoccupation mauvaise l'enflamma, il brula, dessecha, s'affaiblit, se perdit et mourut. Sa fin le conduisit a la perdition et il tomba dans la gehenne parmi les envieux et les orgueilleux, comme il est dit dans le livre des Proverbes et des Psaumes du roi David: Le fils creusa et pecha et il tomba dans la fosse qu'il fit, et: Celui qui fait le mal l'entasse pour la perdition, et: Celui tend un piège a son frere y tombera.

Nau has suggested the following parallel in Psalms,

Psalms 7:16

בּוֹר כָּרַח וַיַּחַפְרוּ וַיַּפֵּל בַּשַּׁחַת יַפְעַל

⁸⁰ Greenfield, "Ahiqar in the Book of Tobit", 333.

[The wicked is described:] He hath
 digged a pit, and hollowed it, And
 is fallen into the ditch which he
 made.

While traditionally, the entire book of Psalms is attributed to David, it may be that this tradition does not reach back to the second or third centuries B.C.E. In any event, the parallels to Psalms are ubiquitous.⁸¹ The idea of the evil being caught in their own trap is found also in Ps. 119:110. But it is in the series of Psalms, 140-142 that we see most clearly the thematic connection to the life of King David. In Ps. 140:6 David laments that "The proud have hid a snare for me, and cords..." He prays that his enemies might be (Ps. 140:11) "...cast into the fire, Into deep pits, that they rise not up again." In Psalm 141 David is seeking refuge he repeats the theme of the previous psalm in terms of a supplication:

Ps. 141:9
 Keep me from the snare which they
 have laid for me, And from the gins
 of the workers of iniquity. Let the
 wicked fall into their own nets,
 Whilst I withal escape.

Finally, in Psalm 142:4 after once more alluding to the snare David cries out in 142:8 "Bring my soul out of

⁸¹ Harris goes so far as to suggest that the Psalms may be influenced by Ahiqar and may contain a "Psalm of Ahiqar" which he prayed from the depths. The Story of Ahiqar liii. The parallels to Ps. 141 are discussed there lviii, lix.

prison." All of the thematic elements in Ahiqar are present in this group of psalms, the trap, the pit, and the punishment of the wicked. Even more interestingly is the connection of events in David's life to those of Ahiqar. We now recall that David too was forced to hide in a cave, not unlike Ahiqar. David too was betrayed by court intrigues. And like the Judaized Ahiqar, David prayed from the depths of his despair that Divine justice prevail over the evil. These parallels between the lives of David and Ahiqar were apparently not lost upon the adapters of the Ahiqar legend to the Jewish Wisdom tradition.⁸²

⁸² Nau, Sagesse, 256 gives only the first reference to Psalms, but adds these other Biblical parallels:

Proverbs 26:27

כרה שחת בה יפל וגלל אבן אליו תשוב

Whoso diggeth a pit shall fall therein; And he that rolleth a stone, it shall return upon him.

Qohelet 10:8

חפר גומץ בו יפול ופרץ גדר ישכנו נחש

He that diggeth a pit shall fall into it; And whoso breaketh through a fence, a serpent shall bite him.

Ben Sira expresses similar ideas 27:29. Nau speculates that the Psalms themselves may have been influenced by the Ahiqar legend. Psalm 88 does parallel the Ahiqar story in many respects, in that the subject is imprisoned in a pit abandoned by friends. Nau, "Documents", 276.

The betrayal of Ahikar while he suffered in darkness serves as a graphic representation of Ahikar's despair, and also of Nadan's depravity. The emphasis on evil, on immorality with a theological overtone, what might be termed "sin" is nearly absent in the Elephantine tale, in Aesop, and in the A-K.

THEOLOGICAL MOTIF

In the other versions, (except strangely the A) the suffering of Ahikar is even more intense, he is made to wait in a pit, and to see his wife violated, his funeral neglected, as well as his goods and servants abused. It is this depth of betrayal which causes him to cry out to God, and to have his prayers answered, just the type of story that Tobit supposes. Nadan's betrayal of Ahikar is complete and devastating. He is made to endure the horrific scene, As Tobit said: "See, my son, what Nadab did to Ahikar who had reared him, how he brought him from light into darkness, and with what he repaid him. But Ahikar was saved, and the other received repayment as he himself went down into the darkness." Tobit knows of the pit where Ahikar was hidden. It is likely that he knows what Ahikar was forced to endure in the darkness. Yet this critical scene is again missing from the E and the A-K versions! In both E and A-K we learn only that Ahikar is hidden, where we do not know. In E there is no

wife to be assaulted, nor is there an order by the king to hold a funeral feast. In A-K Ahiqar mentions in passing that his wife was assaulted, yet does not say how it was he knew. It is quite clear that the details of the Ahiqar story contained only in the A, and S traditions correspond both to the spirit and the letter of the tale Tobit knew.

CONCLUSIONS

It appears to be the case that the evolution of the omission, addition and elaboration of narrative elements in the evolving Ahiqar story followed closely the changing religious orientations of its editors. The cultural context of the Aramaen courts, or of the Jewish mercenary colony of Elephantine could apparently accept a story in which a protagonist and imparter of wisdom could be a lustful eunuch whose cleverness allowed him to outwit the Gods and prevail over his evil adopted son. It seems equally clear that a Jewish community in the second or third century B.C.E. Babylonia or Egypt could not accept such a tale, and so adapted the story to reflect more closely their religious and cultural sensibilities, while still retaining many of the elements which lent it an aura of historicity. So too, in a Christian milieu, certain elements of the tale, and of the proverbs too must have been deemed unacceptable,

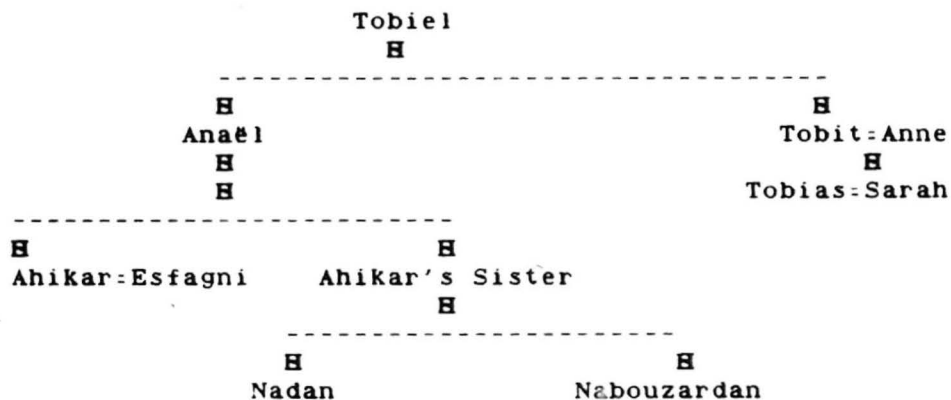
and so were modified however haphazardly. This broad outline, is a reconstruction of a process which doubtless was more complex than we have intimated, and may preclude us today from knowing with absolute certainty the way in which the Ahiqar story was made to reflect each locale and circumstance. On the development of the religious theme, we are most concerned here with showing how a key pagan wisdom text was transformed into a work consonant with Jewish theology, ethics, and customs. This we can demonstrate with some confidence.

The addition of the helpful and clever wife motif to Ahiqar, together with Ahiqar's "remasculation" which we traced in the previous chapter, were not necessarily random variations on the Ahiqar theme which storytellers added through the ages. Rather, the addition of the helpful wife allowed for a transformation of the religious theme of Ahiqar, and follows closely the addition of other motifs such as the addition of monotheistic prayer, of Biblical allusions, and of a degree of Jewish ethical teaching in the proverbs and frame story. The total effect of the addition of these new elements, those outlined in the previous chapter and those to be presented here, was to make of the Ahiqar narrative a completely acceptable Jewish work in the Wisdom tradition.

Chapter 6: Ahiqar in the Book of Tobit

The Book of Tobit is the tale of a pious man, and his dutiful and righteous son. It is a Jewish text, written in Aramaic during the period of the Second Temple, possibly in the third century B. C. E. However the frame of the famous story contains figures who are known to have flourished in Assyria in the late eighth and early seventh centuries B. C. E. The author of Tobit makes believe that his subject Tobit lived in the days of Ahiqar, even making the ancient sage his nephew.⁸³ Most significantly, the author of the book of Tobit knew Ahiqar since he alludes to it four times in the course of the work⁸⁴, and as he goes so far as to adopt several of its leading characters. The references to

⁸³ The following chart is provided by Nau, Sagesse, 11, and reprinted in Simpson, "Tobit", 191:



⁸⁴ Tobit 1:20-22; 2:10; 11:18; 14:10 Frank Zimmermann, ed., trans., The Book of Tobit, (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1958). There are other types of similarities between the books which are discussed infra.

Ahiqar in Tobit are of major interest for the understanding of the book of Tobit as well as to the traditions of Ahiqar in ancient Judeo-Aramaic writings.

Frank Zimmermann in his edition of Tobit writes:

It is apparent that the author of Tobit, utilizing the various motifs...and trying to weave in the Ahiqar story, claimed this historical Ahiqar as his relative in order to endow his folk tale with some verisimilitude, supplying this contact with reality also to enhance his own stature, for he claims that this famous Ahiqar, a man of power, had seen fit to come to Tobit's help.⁸⁵

More recently, Jonas Greenfield has argued that Tobit's indebtedness to Ahiqar is far greater than has hitherto been assumed. In contrast to Zimmermann's minimalist view, Greenfield has shown that Tobit's dependence on Ahiqar constitutes an integral part of Tobit's substructure.⁸⁶ Both the beginning and end of Tobit contain allusions to Ahiqar. Also, basic motifs of Tobit

⁸⁵ Zimmermann, Tobit, 14.

⁸⁶ Jonas Greenfield, "Ahiqar in the Book of Tobit", 329-36. We have not seen Paul Vetter's article on Ahiqar and Tobit, published in Tübingen Quartalschrift, 1904 321-365, 512-539; 1905 321-370, 497-546. His views are summarized by Harris, The Story of Ahiqar, xcvi. We are in basic agreement with Vetter's conclusion that a Jewish version of Ahiqar existed, composed between 100 B.C.E. and 200 C.E., though this may be a bit late. Vetter's theory that the references to Ahiqar in Tobit are early interpolations does not seem probable. Further bibliography from the turn of the century is given by Harris in his introduction.

seem to be superimposed on essential points of Ahiqar's tale. Characteristically, Tobit's son Tobias' good deeds stand in stark contrast to the evil deeds of Nadan.

These facts make Tobit a subject of great significance for students of the Sapiential tradition of antiquity. They are also indispensable for the study of how pagan wisdom materials were molded into judeo-pietistic writing. Thus the practical wisdom of ancient Babylonia was converted into a religious folktale. Scholars have long conjectured that Tobit's allusions to Ahiqar represent more than casual familiarity with the legend of Ahiqar. That Tobit, the exemplar of the Jewish piety modeled his ethical teachings on those of the pagan scribe has long puzzled commentators. The question arises whether it was the author of Tobit who Judaized Ahiqar or, alternatively, whether the story of Ahiqar has already been Judaized at the time of the composition of Tobit, circa third century B.C.E. It was this realization which prompted Lindemberger to write:

It is entirely possible that Tobit's version [of the Book of Ahiqar] explicitly described Ahiqar as Jewish. Even if not, it can hardly have depicted him as a gentile worshipper of other gods, as the late recensions (particularly the Arm.) still do.⁸⁷

⁸⁷ James Lindemberger, "Ahiqar", The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha, ed. James H. Charlesworth, 2 vols., (New York: Doubleday, 1985) 2:479-93 :489. Lindemberger was evidently unaware of the line of reasoning used by

Our curiosity is aroused by the possibility that there existed a Judaized Ahiqar prior to the composition of the Book of Tobit. It is one of the goals of this study to establish a description of the Ahiqar which might have been available to the author of Tobit. This conjectural Ahiqar will be based on the relevant data in Tobit and the traditions of Ahiqar in the later versions of Ahiqar.

THE DATING OF TOBIT

The dating of Tobit as well as its place of composition pose some problems. We are most inclined to follow Zimmermann who argues convincingly that the bulk of the book was composed around 165 B.C.E.⁸⁸ Oesterley too believes that the book could not have been pre-Maccabean, although there is no sign of Pharisaic theology which would place it later than the Maccabees. This leaves a narrow window of fifty years or so, 175-125 B.C.E.⁸⁹ The range of scholarly opinions seems

Halévy discussed here in the previous chapter, and the important variants from the Syriac B and G manuscripts. Otherwise he would have seen that he was correct in his deduction, and that a witness to the text he was seeking exist.

⁸⁸ Zimmermann, Tobit, 24.

⁸⁹ William Oscar Emil Oesterley and Theodore H. Robinson, An Introduction to the Books of the Old Testament, (New York: Macmillan, 1934) 169.

to center between the second and fourth centuries B.C.E., and some date the work much earlier than that. It is the prohibition on burying the dead which was the policy under Antiochus IV as recorded in II Macc. 9:15 which is decisive for Zimmermann in placing Tobit at that era.⁹⁰ Using this date as a guide, one may suppose that it would be impossible to write openly against the Seleucid reign, and to set the story in their capitol of Antioch, so the ancient Assyrian capitol of Nineveh might be used as a stand in. It is certain that Tobit's author was unfamiliar with the geography and historical events of the seventh and eighth centuries B.C.E., when the book's events are purported to have taken place.⁹¹

For purposes of comparison it will be helpful to have at hand a synopsis of the book of Tobit. The direct allusions to Ahiqar are presented in quotation.

Synopsis of Tobit With Citations of Allusions to Ahiqar in Tobit

The Book of Tobit begins with Tobit's narration of his genealogy and the traumatic events of his lifetime. When the Northern Kingdom still existed, He alone among

⁹⁰ Zimmermann, Tobit, 22-24 and 22 n.1.

⁹¹ Zimmermann, Tobit, 15-21.

his kin in the tribe of Naphtali went on pilgrimage to Jerusalem, made the proper tithes, and refused to worship idols. He married Anna, and had a son Tobias. Some time after or before his marriage, Tobit was taken captive and transported along with his countrymen to Assyria. He was eventually released and resettled his family in Nineveh.

After settling in Nineveh for a time, Tobit became a purchasing agent for Shalmaneser in Media until the rise of Sennacherib to power. Under Sennacherib Tobit suffered a reversal of fortunes. During this entire period Tobit had continued to lead an extremely virtuous life, refusing to eat the food of the heathens, worshipping God, and making special efforts to provide food and clothing to the poor, and especially to bury the dead. It was this latter custom which caused him to lose his fortune, since leaving executed prisoners unburied was a part of the prescribed punishment under Sennacherib, and burying these convicts constituted a serious crime. Tobit was eventually forced to flee to Nineveh, and all of his goods were confiscated. Tobit relates that:

Tobit 1:20-22

Then all that I possessed was confiscated, so that nothing was left for me which was not seized for the royal treasury, even Anna my wife and my son Tobias. But there did not elapse forty days before two of his sons [Esarhaddon's] murdered

him. Then they fled to the mountains of Ararat. And when Esarhaddon his son reigned after him, he appointed Ahikar, son of my brother Aneael, over all the revenues of his kingdom. Consequently, he had authority over all his administration. After that, Ahikar petitioned for me, and I came to Nineveh; for Ahikar was chief cupbearer and in charge of the seal, affairs and business for Sennacherib, king of Assyria, and Esarhaddon appointed him a second time; now he was my cousin and of my close kin.

This was to be the first of Tobit's many trials. Nevertheless we see that Tobit received aid from his nephew Ahikar, who was appointed to the position of vizier to Esarhaddon who acceded to power after Sennacherib's short reign.

Soon however, another righteous act caused Tobit much suffering. As the Shevuot feast was being prepared, Tobit charged his son Tobias with the honorable task of fining a poor Israelite to join in their holiday repast. Tobias returned with the dismal news that an Israelite had of late been executed, and that he was in need of burial. Tobit rushed out, at great personal risk since this was still an illegal act, to bury the man. That evening Tobit lay in the courtyard of his home to escape from the heat. (Some scholars believe he lay outside because contact with a corpse rendered him unclean to participate in the holiday celebration.) As Tobit lay there, bird droppings fell into his eyes causing a type

of blindness. Ahigar again came to the rescue and provided financial support for two years. This support was interrupted when Ahigar went on a journey to Elam.

Tobit 2:10

But I knew not that there were sparrows on the wall above me; and their droppings settled warm in my eyes, and brought on white films until I was completely blind. I was without the power of sight for four years. And all my kinsmen grieved for me; however, Ahigar supported me for two years before he went to Elymais.

In the following years blindness and poverty took their toll on Tobit. He wrongfully accused his wife of having stolen a goat which was actually received as a bonus for weaving which she had done. Tobit, realizing his error of having accused his wife of prostitution, prayed to God that his life would be ended.

The story then shifts to another locale, to Media, where Tobit's kinswoman Sarah is also praying that God will release her from her suffering. She was in deep despair after having lost seven husbands, each on their wedding nights, due to Sarah's being possessed by a demon. Both Tobit's and Sarah's prayers are answered, not by death but by the dispatch of a single divine emissary, the angel Raphael.

Soon Tobit recalls that before his troubles with the law, he had left a large sum of money on deposit in Media. Tobias is chosen to retrieve the funds, but

before undertaking the journey, his father fortifies him with a discourse of moral maxims and prescriptions. Tobit then bids him to find a servant who will accompany him on the journey. A man, actually the angel Raphael, is chosen for the task.

Tobias, Raphael, and Tobit's dog departed for Media, and soon they came to the river Tigris. As they were bathing a large fish snapped at Tobias' feet. The angel instructed him to capture the fish, and to prepare it in a special way: to reserve the gall, heart, and liver for medicinal remedies. The heart and liver made a potion for exorcising demons, while the gall produced a cure for blindness.

Once on the outskirts of media, Raphael insisted that Tobias lodge in the home of a relative of Tobit's, that of Raguel father of the despondent Sarah. Raphael speaks honestly of Sarah's tragedies and of her demonic possession, but allay's Tobias' fears by expressing faith in his potion for exorcism. Raphael praises Sarah's natural qualities and urges Tobias to consider marrying her. Tobias has the right to claim Sarah according to the biblical custom of levirate marriage, since he is the last eligible male relative to survive. Sarah's parents are quickly convinced to allow the marriage, although they expect the worst, and actually prepare a grave for Tobias on the wedding night. However

the marriage ceremony is followed immediately by a successful exorcism, and preparations for a wedding feast begin the next day. Raphael retrieves the family funds from the trustworthy Gabael, while Tobias' father-in-law promises half of his own fortune to Tobit and family.

Two weeks of feasting come to a close in the house of Raguel, and then Tobias and Sarah along with Raphael and a contingent of servants, and animals laden with possessions set out on the return journey to Nineveh. Tobias and Raphael rush ahead to restore Tobit's eyesight with the second potion made from the fish. When they return and cure Tobit, a great rejoicing takes place. Notable among the celebrants are Ahikar and Nadan, returned from their journey.

Tobit 11:18

On this day there was joy among all the Jews who were at Nineveh. And Ahikar and Nadan, his kinsmen, came rejoicing to Tobit.

Raphael is paid a fair wage for his services, then he instructs Tobit and Tobias with a short set of religious and ethical precepts. He reveals at this time that he is an angel sent to test Tobit and to heal both him and Sarah. He exhorts them not to fear, to thank the Lord, and to write all that has happened to them in a book. Raphael then informs father and son that all that they

have experienced with him has been in actuality a vision.

Tobit's response is a psalm of praise composed extemporaneously. In his song he predicts the rebuilding of the Temple of Jerusalem, and the dawning of a golden age.

In an additional chapter it is stated that Tobit lived to the age of 112. Before his death he charged Tobias to leave Nineveh which Nahum had prophesied would be destroyed, and move to Media where peace would reign for a time. Tobit also pronounced at this occasion a second set of ethical instruction, reminding Tobias of the duty of a son to bury his parents properly, and that the giving of alms may save one from an untimely death. He specifically recalls the example of Ahiqar in this connection.

Tobit 14:10

See, my boy, what Nadan did to Ahiqar who had reared him, Was he⁹² not brought down, while living, to the dust? But God turned his shame back upon his face, and Ahiqar came forth into the light while Nadan went into the eternal darkness, because he had sought to slay Ahiqar. It is because he gave alms that he came forth from the snare of death which Nadan had set for him. Nadan, however, fell into the snare of death, and it destroyed him. So therefore, my children,

92 Zimmermann inserts a parenthetical note here indicating that the pronoun "he" refers back to Nadan and the Greek contains a mistake as the context shows.

consider what almsgiving does, and on the other hand what evildoing does, that it brings death. But now, my spirit faints away...

Tobias carried out Tobit's wishes by burying Tobit and Anna when they died. Tobias then moved his family back to his in-laws home in Media. When Raguel died at the age of 117, he too was buried honorably. The story relates that Tobit's warning about Nineveh came true also as it was destroyed within Tobias' lifetime. At the book's close, Tobias thanks God for wreaking revenge on Assyria, presumably for their destruction of the Kingdom of Israel.

THE AHIQAR OF TOBIT

From the explicit references to Ahiqar in Tobit, we glean the following points. These will be treated at length:

1. Ahiqar and Nadan are relatives of Tobit, presumably they are Israelites of the tribe of Naphtali.
2. Ahiqar and Nadan went on a journey to Elymais, although E. J. Dillon⁹³ believes this to mean the Ahiqar went into hiding. At the conclusion of this

⁹³ Dillon thinks that the Greek text reflects a corruption of Hebrew אֲחִיקָר, meaning that Ahiqar went into hiding. E. J. Dillon, Contemporary Review, March 1898: 367n. Zimmermann feels that the Greek is accurate and refers to a province of Persia. Zimmermann, Tobit, 58n.

journey, Ahiqar and Nadan greeted Tobias and celebrated Tobit's renewed fortunes.

3. Ahiqar served in the court of Esarhaddon. The reference to his being appointed "a second time" accords with the reinstatement of Ahiqar in all of the versions. 94

4. Ahiqar was known for his giving of alms.

5. Ahiqar raised a son named Nadan who betrayed him, tried to kill him, sent him down into "the dust," then was paid back with the same as Ahiqar came up into the light and he, Nadan, descended into eternal darkness.

ANALYSIS OF FEATURES

94 Tobit contains the correct sequence of kings, Sennacherib being Esarhaddon's father. The Elephantine Ahiqar also has this correct, while most of the later versions have the order reversed. This led some scholars to stress the connection of the Elephantine version to Tobit over the later versions. Simpson, "Tobit", 191. In fact this problem in some of the Syriac versions could have been explained as a misunderstanding by the scribes. While L and C do reflect this blunder, B does not have contain this anachronism, stating only that Ahiqar lived during the reign of Sennacherib. Nau, Sagesse, 146.; G accords with the Elephantine, Tobit and the historical record, stating that he Ahiqar served Esarhaddon, son of Sennacherib. Nau, "Documents": 277; 291; This fact vitiates the argument that the Elephantine is closer to Tobit's Ahiqar in this regard. In connection with the other evidence at our disposal, the correct sequence of kings would urge us to look more closely at G and its associated manuscript P for connections to Tobit.

No version of Ahikar accords absolutely with all of these elements, since in no version does Ahikar travel to Elam, though he does visit Egypt in the later versions. However for this to accord with the Tobit version, we would not expect Ahikar to have returned with Nadan and to have celebrated with him. If we take the reference to mean that Ahikar was in hiding at the time of the reference, we are faced with the same difficulty. A possible solution to this problem may be found in the details of the plot which Nadan uses to defame Ahikar. Nadan forges letters from Ahikar to the "King of Persia and Elam." The King is instructed to meet Ahikar in a certain location in Assyria, and there the kingdom would be handed over to him without bloodshed. Nadan's plot required Ahikar to marshall the royal troops in the field and to appear as if ready to attack his own king. Nadan, at Esarhaddon's side, convinces him that Ahikar has betrayed him, and then to allow Nadan to bring him into custody, rather than to provoke an open conflict. Nadan goes to Ahikar, convinced all along that he is following royal orders, and gives him further orders which make it appear that he is surrendering to Nadan. Nadan and Ahikar leave in friendship, and it is only later, in an audience before the King, that Ahikar is accused of a crime and realizes Nadan's deception.

If we connect the proposed meeting with the King of Elam, with the reference in Tobit to a visit to Elam, we are faced with a possibly dramatic literary juxtaposition. Ahiqar and Nadan rejoice with Tobit and Tobias, at the moment of Tobias' greatest celebration as a dutiful and righteous son, a worthy heir and pious Jew. It is also, if we speculate correctly, the moment of Nadan's greatest duplicity, since he is about to hand over Ahiqar to the king to face charges of treason, all the while leading him to believe he is in the king's good graces.⁹⁵

Also problematic is the question of Ahiqar's almsgiving, over which we shall have much to say further on. There may be some references to this in the later versions, yet nowhere is it given the weight which is implied when Tobit says:

⁹⁵ This scene is in G. Nau Documents, 301, B, Nau, Sagesse, 189-90, RH, Story of Ahiqar, xxxvi relates that this feature is found in the Syriac C, in a corrupted form in the Arabic, and not at all in the Armenian. It would seem that here again the Syriac shows affinity to Tobit over other versions. Greenfield of course stresses the contrast in Tobit and Ahiqar between the Tobias and Nadan. Greenfield, "Ahiqar in Tobit", 333. Simpson "Tobit", 186; follows those scholars who see the reference to Elymais in Tobit to be a deliberate attempt to remove references to Egypt in that work. This would allow the attested journey of Ahiqar to Egypt to stand as a parallel for the trip to Elymais referred to in Tobit. I do not accept this solution, since then it would be impossible to explain Ahiqar and Nadan celebrating together. The theme of literary contrast, already well attested by Greenfield, is well served by the solution I have suggested.

14:11 "It is because he gave alms
that he came forth from the snare of
death which Nadan had set for him."

Since no extant version of Ahiqar can be said to be in complete accord with the version presupposed by the references in Tobit, we must next seek to determine whether any of the traditions of Ahiqar are close to the picture painted above. It is to the Syriac versions that we turn, and in fact scholars have tended to focus on the Syriac parallels when citing Tobit's reliance on Ahiqar. Specifically, most scholars have relied upon the Cambridge Syriac to make this identification. Rendel Harris in the Charles edition of the Apocrypha cites references to the Cambridge Syriac [C] and once the Arabic recension.⁹⁶ In his discussion of Tobit and Ahiqar in his 1913 edition of Ahiqar, Harris seeks to connect Tobit with the Syriac in his edition, though the problems with this identification are carefully laid out. In all of Harris' publications the B manuscript was virtually passed over, perhaps because Harris felt it to be a late text. Simpson, accepts Rendel Harris' argument with some reservations, and implicitly connects the Syriac traditions to Tobit over all other traditions of Ahiqar. He credits Harris for providing the rationale for this identification. A close examination of Harris'

96 Rendel Harris, "Ahiqar", Charles APOT II, 717-718.

work reveals that this was an unstated assumption, that the Syriac and the Cambridge Syriac specifically reflected the tradition closest to Tobit.⁹⁷ While Simpson relied on Harris for the identification of Tobit with the Syriac, he did cite parallel teachings both of the main Syriac versions published up to that time, the Cambridge and the Berlin B published by Nau in French translation.

The tendency to favor the Syriac over versions of Ahiqar in all other languages and the Cambridge family of manuscripts over all others in the Syriac in connection to Tobit has continued to recent times. We find that Greenfield too expressed a preference for the Syriac versions in relation to Tobit, but cited only the C.⁹⁸

The validity of connecting Syriac Ahiqar and Tobit may be well justified. There are scenes in the Tobit version of Ahiqar reflected only in the Syriac, teachings paralleled only in the Syriac, and literary parallels for which the Syriac is the most likely model. Nevertheless, as we take up each of these classes of evidence, we should not be too hasty in identifying one

97 D. C. Simpson, "Tobit." Vol. 1 of The Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament, Ed. R. H. Charles, 2 vols, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1963) 191.

98 Greenfield, "Ahiqar in the Book of Tobit." 329-36.

version over another as reflecting most closely the text of Tobit's author. Besides examining the B and C parallels, we should also include in our study the old sections of the manuscripts G and P published by Nau both in Syriac and French translation, and belonging to the same family as B. These valuable manuscripts may offer new evidence for determining the relationship of Tobit to the Ahiqar tradition.

The first priority for citing parallels must go to the direct references in Tobit to Ahiqar. Since Ahiqar is clearly an Israelite in Tobit, we would seek a version of Ahiqar most in accord with this point. We have already shown that the Syriac B and its associated G and P are most in accord with a Jewish Ahiqar. We also pointed out that the superscription to G, while not part of the original text, relates a tradition that Ahiqar was a Jew.

The other point which we would mention here is the question of almsgiving. No version of Ahiqar stresses this to the extent that Tobit does when using Ahiqar as the example. However Ahiqar is delivered from a dark fate by virtue of his righteousness. However since almsgiving is placed in apposition to evil-doing, it is not unlikely that the Greek editor of Tobit read the Hebrew or Aramaic equivalent of "Tzedaka." in

Ahiqar.⁹⁹ Rendel Harris supported this theory.¹⁰⁰ He notes that in some places in Tobit there are signs of a double translation of the term Tzedaga.¹⁰¹ Nevertheless he did not feel it necessary that the giving of alms be an integral part of the Syriac Ahiqar for it to be identified with Tobit's source. Harris wrote:

It could still be held that the prominence which is given to the virtue of almsgiving in Tobit has been artificially projected back upon the earlier story, and the doctrine of charity has been made the link between the two compositions.¹⁰²

The weakest portion of this entire argument is that nowhere is the word Tzedaga attested in Ahiqar. It is still possible to connect Ahiqar's righteousness in general to the concept of Tzedaga. Harris did this by citing two Syriac proverbs, extant only in one

99 Nau, Sagesse, 59. Gaster argues however that the word Tzedaga only acquired the meaning of almsgiving in the rabbinic period which would make such a misreading difficult to maintain. Moses Gaster, "Contributions to the History of Ahiqar and Nadan", Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society, offprint. April 1900: 301-19.

100 Rendel Harris, Ahiqar, p. xlix. He argues that the word Tzedaga may have acquired the meaning of almsgiving at a fairly early date, though certainly it is possible that it was after the composition of a Judaized Ahiqar.

101 Rendel Harris, Ahiqar, 1.

102 Rendel Harris, Ahiqar, xlviii, xlix.

manuscript of Ahiqar. They are the real basis of Harris' theory. Ahiqar's just nature having been responsible for saving his life is attested in C by the following sayings:

My son, I set thee on the throne of
honour; and thou hast cast
me down from my throne.
And as for me, my
righteousness has saved
me.

אנא ברי על כורסיא דאיקרא אותבתן
ואנט סן כורסי סחפתני
ולי כאנותי שוובתני

RH 1913 p. 123 Syr p. 67 par. 2

My son, I taught thee that there is
a God: and thou risest up
against good servants, and
beatest those that have
not sinned; and like as
God has kept me alive on
account of my
righteousness so hath He
destroyed thee for thy
works.

ברי אנא אלפתן דאית אלהא
ואנת על עבדא טבא קאם אנת
וסנגד אנת להון דלא סכלו
ואיכנא דלי אחי אלהא טטל כאנותי
ד נובד טטל עבדיך

RH 1913 p. 127 Syr p. 72 par. 37

It may be, as Greenfield argues, that the Syriac term כאנותי is a translation of an Aramaic צדקטא which was then understood by Tobit's author or Greek editor as almsgiving. Greenfield notes that this was the same interpretation made by Tobit's author of Tzedaga in

Prov 11,4 quoted in Tobit 4:10 and 12:9.¹⁰³

Nevertheless we are reluctant to attach too much weight to this point.

Another Syriac tradition, that of the manuscripts B, does not contain these passages in any form. The manuscript G (P here is a recent fill,) has a text which contains the general idea of Ahikar's righteousness and Nadan's sinfulness and of just rewards. G however has an additional proverb, unknown in any other version which goes far in disassociating Ahikar from any tradition of almsgiving.

Mon fils, si tu prêtes de l'argent
au pauvre, tu l'as acheté pour toi
ainsi que ses enfants.
G p. 299 #61

ברך אן תונפ לססכנא כספא ובנתייהו לך
ובננהו

Syr. G p. 286 #61

Given this negative evidence from the Syriac, which is otherwise closest to the Tobit version of Ahikar, we conclude that the story of Ahikar utilized by Tobit was either somewhat different than versions which have survived, or that some liberty was taken with the text. In terms of textual evidence linking the Syriac Ahikar with Tobit, there is a curious locution in Tobit 14:4 and 14:15 "Assyria and Nineveh" in the first instance, and "Nineveh and Assyria", in the second. This unusual

¹⁰³ Greenfield, "Ahikar in the Book of Tobit, 333.

juxtaposition of terms has been noted by scholars, who note that this is a feature of the Cambridge Syriac.¹⁰⁴ This feature is absent from B, but is present in the manuscript G both in the superscription and in the body of the text. This then seems to be a fairly ubiquitous feature of the Syriac Ahiqar, one which links it closely to Tobit.¹⁰⁵

STRUCTURAL AFFINITIES

Thus far we have shown that the Ahiqar of Tobit contains elements which either do not occur in later versions, or occur only in the various Syriac traditions. We now turn to the more challenging subject of comparing the literary substructures and motifs of the various Ahiqar versions, especially the Syriac, with those of the book of Tobit as a whole.

We begin with the observation made most recently by Greenfield that Tobit and the later versions of Ahiqar are alike in that they contain two sets of proverbs. In Ahiqar the first set comprise the instructions of Ahiqar which are designed to educate and edify his stepson. Later in the tale, after the betrayal and the reversals of fortunes, comes a set of harsher admonitions which

¹⁰⁴ Rendel Harris edition, 58, 67 and 69. This was cited also by J. D. Simpson, "Tobit" 191

¹⁰⁵ Nau, "Documents", 291, #1; 375 #2. Nau also notes this as a feature of the Neo-Syriac, Sagesse, 147. This locution is used in the younger part of P, "Documents", 383.

reflect the changed nature of the relationship between Ahikar and Nadan. This format is a feature common to the Ahikar versions while only the fragments from Elephantine and the Aesop version appear to lack the latter set, although the Aesop text's single set bear some similarity to both sets in the later versions. It is therefore noteworthy that Tobit seems to base its structure on the model of the late versions of Ahikar, and not the Elephantine version.

One further point attaches the later versions of Ahikar with Tobit. This is the scene of Ahikar's refuge in a dark pit and the horrific scene of dishonor which he is made to endure in silence. As we stressed in the preceding chapter this scene holds great importance in the adaptation of Ahikar to a scheme of Jewish morality and reveals the influence of the Psalms and biblical Proverbs. The metaphor of darkness as evil, and light as just reward is used by Tobit as well. Most significantly, Tobit does this as he calls upon the example of Ahikar and Nadan:

Tobit 14:10
See, my boy, what Nadan did to
Ahikar who had reared him, Was
he¹⁰⁶ not brought down, while
living, to the dust? But God turned
his shame back upon his face, and

106 Zimmermann inserts a parenthetical note here indicating that the "he" refers back to Nadan. This is a mistake as the context shows.

Ahiqar came forth into the light while Nadan went into the eternal darkness, because he had sought to slay Ahiqar. It is because he gave alms that he came forth from the snare of death which Nadan had set for him. Nadan, however, fell into the snare of death, and it destroyed him...

In the later versions of Ahiqar, (the Armenian, and the Syriac and their daughter versions), he is made to wait in a pit, and to see his wife violated, his funeral neglected, as well as his goods and servants abused. It is this depth of betrayal which causes him to cry out to God, and to have his prayers answered. In these versions the suffering of Ahiqar is most intense, presumably, just the type of story that Tobit supposes. Nadan's betrayal of Ahiqar is complete and devastating. He is made to endure the horrific scene, As Tobit said:

'See, my son, what Nadab did to Ahiqar who had reared him, how he brought him from light into darkness, and with what he repaid him. But Ahiqar was saved, and the other received repayment as he himself went down into the darkness.'

The graphic description of this theme in the Syriac and Armenian versions contrasts with the E, Aesop, and Armeno-Kipchak versions. In both E and A-K we learn only that Ahiqar is hidden, where we do not know. In E there is no wife to be assaulted, nor is there an order by the king to hold a funeral feast. In A-K Ahiqar mentions in passing that his wife was assaulted, yet does not say

how it was he knew. This specific reference in Tobit to the Ahiqar story is paralleled only in the Armenian and Syriac and Arabic traditions among those which we treat in this study. The highly developed theme of suffering in darkness, and reward to the just as being represented by coming out into the light is characteristic of a Jewish Ahiqar. It may be to such a version that Tobit refers.

Having cited some of the evidence for a textual connection between the later versions of Ahiqar, the Armenian and especially the two families of Syriac manuscripts, it is now possible to proceed with an analysis of the structural affinities between Tobit and Ahiqar. Scholars have long recognized similarities in structure between versions of Ahiqar and the book of Tobit.¹⁰⁷ The similarity in structure between Tobit and the late versions of Ahiqar may be summarized in this way:

1) Both works are narrated in the first person. This is a feature of all the versions, from Elephantine on.

2) Tobit and Ahiqar both give brief summaries of their previous fortunes. Tobit 1:3, and the opening of all the Ahiqar versions.

¹⁰⁷ D. C. Simpson, "Tobit", 191; Jonas Greenfield, "Ahiqar in the Book of Tobit" xxx and ff.

3) Both books feature prominently a series of wise instructions, offered by the father to his son. This is a feature of all Ahiqar versions, and is the basis for Tobit 4:3-19.¹⁰⁸ Tobit begins 4:3 with the following address:

So he called Tobias his son, and he came to him. Then he charged him:...

The passage also has a distinctive ending:

Tobit 4:19
Therefore, my boy, remember these commandments, and do not allow them to be blotted out from your heart.

This epilogue has parallels in various epilogues and prologues of the first set of Ahiqar's teaching to Nadan.¹⁰⁹ The Armenian, Syriac and Arabic exhibit

¹⁰⁸ Some of the parallels with the later versions are also worth noting in this regard. D. C. Simpson has briefly reviewed these. "Tobit", 191.

¹⁰⁹ The parallels are as follows:

Armenian A

Prologue p. 25 RH 1913 :

I bowed my head to my lord, and taking Nathan I led him into my dwelling and thus spake in my teaching...

Epilogue, p. 35 RH

And I say to Nathan: Son, receive into thy mind my precepts and forget them not.

Armenian B

Prologue p. 57 RH :

Hear, my son—my words, and write thou my teaching in thy book; and forget not that the years of thy life shall be multiplied, and in glory and greatness or wealth thou shalt reach old age. The instructions of Khikar, which he spake to Nathan his sister's son...

Epilogue RH p. 73 :

End of the precepts and parables, which Khikar addressed

to Nathan, his sister's son, and it was all for nought.

Syriac L (S1)

Prologue RH p. 99:

Hear my teaching, my son Nadan; and come to my understanding, and be mindful of my words, according to the following sayings; and thereupon Ahikar began to teach Nadan his sister's son, and answered and said to him:...

Epilogue not extant

Syriac C (S2)

Prologue RH p. 103:

Hear, O my son Nadan, and come to the understanding of me, and be mindful of my words, as the words of God.

Epilogue p. 109:

This is the teaching which Ahikar taught to Nadan his sister's son.

Arabic

RH p. 132 Prologue:

Thus he taught him saying: O my son ! Hear my speech and follow my advice and remember what I say.

Epilogue p. 138:

Thus spake Haiqar...

Syriac B (S3)

Prologue Nau p. 154:

O mon fils Nadan, écoute mes paroles, suis mes conseils et souviens-toi de mes discours, comme l'a dit le Seigneur. Oui, mon fils Nadan, si tu entends mes paroles, enferme-les dans ton coeur et ne les révèle pas à autrui...

Epilogue:

Ahikar arrêta ici les sages paroles qu'il adressait à Nadan...

Syriac G

Prologue p. 296:

Ecoute, mon fils, mes paroles et prête-leur attention. Elles resteront dans ton coeur, et tu ne révéleras pas ma parole à autrui,...

Epilogue G p. 300:

Ahikar arrêta ici les sages paroles qu'il enseignait à

this feature. 4) Both works also include somewhat later on in the story a set of admonishments, though in keeping with the different circumstances of Tobit and Ahikar, Tobit's final instructions are cast in less caustic terms. All of the versions except for the Elephantine have this feature, although the fragmentary nature of the papyri make it impossible to establish with certainty that this was not originally a feature.

5) The protagonist of each story addresses two prayers to God. In Ahikar these prayers are more developed in the later versions, while the motif of prayer is hardly developed in the E and A-K versions. In the Syriac and later versions this is an element which is given more attention. This would lead us to connect Tobit more with the later versions. Also we recall that Ahikar, in the Syriac only, prays implicitly for forgiveness for his former idolatry, besides his personal salvation.

Nadan...

Armeno-Kipchak

Prologue p. 20:

En enseignant mon fils nommé Natan, je lui disais ceci:
Mon fils, garde dans ton coeur ce que tu as entendu à la
porte du roi...

Epilogue. p. 25:

Tel était le conseil que moi, Hikar, ai adressé à Natan,
fils de mon frère.

For use to ascribe to Tobit's prayers any relationship with the prayers of Ahikar, we must expect Ahikar's prayers to express a similar theology. There is some evidence of this as Tobit prays not only for individual deliverance, but for forgiveness for the sins of his ancestors. Let us refer directly to Tobit's prayer:

Tobit 3:2-6

Thou art righteous, O Lord,
and all thy doings are just,
all thy ways, too, are kindness and
truth, a true and just judgment thou
givest away.

And now, O Lord, be mindful of me,
and do look upon me;
judge me not according to my sins,
nor my transgression, nor those of
my fathers who have sinned before
thee.

For they have transgressed thy
commandments; and thou hast given us
for spoil, and captivity, death,
for a proverb, and a byword, and a
reproach, among all the nations among
whom thou has scattered us.

And now, thy many judgments are
true, in exacting from me the penalty
of my sins, because we did not carry
out thy commandments, and we did not
walk truly before thee.

And now, according to thy goodness,
do thou with me, so that I may be
released from the surface of the
earth, -- for it is more profitable
for me to die than to live,
for I have heard unwarranted
insult, -- and I am overwhelmed with
grief.

O God, command that I may be
delivered from this anguish;

release me to the eternal place!
 But do not turn thy face away, O
 Lord, from me!

Therefore it is more profitable for
 me to die than to see so much
 trouble in my life,--than to hear
 such humiliation!"

Tobit's reiteration of the sinful practices of his ancestors is a probable reference to their worship of other Gods. Punishment of both the people's sins, and Tobit's personal sins are mentioned explicitly. While the prayers of Ahiqar and Tobit are quite different, the circumstances of the Ahiqar tale in the Syriac versions is the one most closely resembling the circumstances mentioned in the prayer of Tobit.

6) Ahiqar endures in the darkness, while Tobit is afflicted with the darkness of loss of sight. Greenfield has noted that the stress on this symbol or metaphor of darkness begins and ends both Tobit and Ahiqar. This point we develop infra.

7) The angel in Tobit urges that his teachings be written down, just as Ahiqar urges that Nadan write down his teachings.

8) Many of the teachings of Tobit appear to draw on Ahiqar's precepts.

9) Tobias as the good son is the fitting contrast of Nadan, the evil son.

We have attempted to present the evidence linking Tobit with the putative Judaized Ahiqar. The evidence presented thus far relates to the substructure of Tobit, and to the contrasting character types in terms of the morals and actions of the two sons. The plot of Tobit is much enriched by implicit and occasionally explicit references to the earlier legend. We believe that we have established the possibility of such a significant connection between the works. Therefore it is necessary to look for evidence of direct borrowing from the words of Ahiqar as found in the extant versions of Ahiqar and the instructions of Tobit to his son.

Greenfield acknowledged that there are few formal parallels in the gnomic portions of Ahiqar and Tobit.
 110 We have found that most of the few seeming affinities cited by scholars, between Ahiqar and Tobit in the contents of their teachings, rest on weak evidence.

For example let us review Tobit's instruction to Nadan regarding sexual morals in the choice of a wife:

Tobit 5:12-13.
 My boy, guard yourself against all
 unchastity and above all, take a
 wife from the stock of your
 ancestors. Take not an alien wife
 who is not of your father's tribe,
 for we are the sons of prophets.
 Remember, my boy, Noah, Abraham,
 Isaac and Jacob, our fathers of old

time, and that all these took wives of their kinsmen: they were blessed in their children, and their seed shall inherit the world!

And now, my boy, love your kinsmen: be not too arrogant in your heart toward your kinsmen, the sons and daughters of your people, to wed you a wife from them. For in arrogance there is destruction and trouble without end.

Ahiqar never instructs his nephew on the background of the wife he is to marry. It has been suggested that both Tobit's and Ahiqar's authors shared a disdain for marriages with relatives of the female line. To support this claim, it is noted that Ahiqar raises his sister's son, and this culminates in disaster. However if we seek a connection between the two works on this point, a much more likely one is to suggest an intentional contrast between Tobias' endogamy and chastity and Nadan's lechery. Furthermore, we may see an implied criticism of Ahiqar and his harem of sixty wives. It is a reasonable conjecture that Ahiqar's wives would be assumed not to be of Israelite origin. Perhaps this conclusion underlies Tobit. Nevertheless Tobit reserves explicit criticism for Nadan, while Ahiqar is portrayed positively. There is also an implied contrast between Ahiqar and Nadan. Ahiqar as Tobit's nephew is the model relative, while Nadan, as Ahiqar's nephew is evil. In any event while proverbs against adultery in Ahiqar add only to a general theme of contrast between the two

works, but give little evidence of direct borrowing.¹¹¹

One supposed parallel teaching in Tobit and Ahiqar rests on Tobit's articulation of advice for Tobias for the road:

Tobit 4:17b:
Do not drink wine to drunkenness,
nor let intemperance accompany you
on your journey.

The supposed parallel to this is an Ahiqar proverb which upon close examination does not seem to mention alcohol or drinking!¹¹² The confusion rests on Harris' translation of C #43, where the text "My son, withdraw at the first cup and tarry not for lickerish draughts; lest there by to thee wounds in thy head." This seems to be a mistranslation.¹¹³ The mistake does not occur in Nau's French translation of this proverb, where

¹¹¹ Some of the versions warn against marrying the daughter of a judge, e. g. G #56, B#77. A cruel statement about how one should treat a sister's son whom one has raised reflects so directly upon the story of Ahiqar that it is difficult to imagine that it was a generalized proverb. See G ##101-102, B ##140-141.

¹¹² Greenfield, "Tobit in the book of Ahiqar", 332.

¹¹³ They Syriac text of C #43 is:

ברִי סוֹ סַשְׁתוּתָא וּדְסִיָּא פֻטְר
לֹא תִבְתֵּר לְסַשְׁחָנָא [לְסַשְׁחָנִין] בְּסִיָּא
וְלֹא נִהְיִין לְ צוֹלְפָתָא בְּרִשְׁרָ:

The correct translation as well as the text of B is in Nau, Sagesse, 171. C#43: Mon fils, pars le premier du festin et n'attends pas les parfumes suaves, de crainte qu'ils ne deviennent des contusions pour ta tête. [emphasis mine.] The other Syriac versions read similarly, e. g. G and P #26 in Nau, Documents, 297.

we see that it is an instruction to depart early from a banquet. The danger of drinking to excess may be the motivation, but it may also be the danger of being exposed to lewd women, of speaking to excess, or of overstaying one's welcome. We cannot assume that Tobit borrowed here a teaching of Ahiqar.

Another dubious instance of borrowing is that of the "golden rule" in its negative formulation as it appears in Jewish sources. Tobit 4:15a teaches:

And that which you hate, do not do
unto any man.

This does find a similar expression on the Armenian, as has been noted previously:

Arm A #88a
Son, that which seems evil unto
thee, do not to thy companion...

Tobit could have drawn this popular sentiment from any number of sources. Similarly Tobit's prayer that death would be preferable to his suffering on earth does not necessarily draw upon the Ahiqar proverb.

Yet another doubtful parallel which has been cited in the literature is that based on expressions by Tobit and Ahiqar of a willingness to die rather than to continue living in suffering. This idea is expressed by Tobit within the context of prayer:

Tobit 3:6
And now according to thy goodness,
do Thou with me,

And command my spirit to be released
 from the surface of the earth and
 become earth, --
 For it is more profitable for me to
 die than to live,
 For I have heard unwarranted
 insult, -- and I am overwhelmed with
 grief.
 O God, command that I may be
 delivered from this anguish;
 Release me to the Eternal Place!
 But do not turn Thy face away, O
 Lord from me!
 Therefore it is more profitable for
 me to die than to see so much
 trouble in my life, -- than to hear
 such humiliation.

A similar justification for welcoming death is found in
 all the Syriac versions and may well have been a genuine
 feature of the Judaized Ahiqar. A single characteristic
 example will from the Syriac will suffice:

G ##34-35
 Mon fils, la mort vaut mieux que la
 vie pour l'homme qui n'as pas de
 repos; --et le bruit des gémissements
 l'emporte sur le bruit de la danse,
 sur la joie et sur le chant. 114

The prayer of Tobit and this Ahiqar proverb do show some
 resemblance in the sentiments, yet in Tobit the context
 is one of a key prayer, while in Ahiqar this is an
 isolated proverb. More significantly, it is a commonly
 stated proverb in Jewish literature, notably Eccles-
 iastes 4:2 and 7:2 and so cannot be exclusively
 identified with Ahiqar.

114 P is nearly identical, Nau, "Documents", 298 n.;
 The possible parallel has been cited by many scholars,
 most recently Kuchler, Frühjüdische, 383. The numbers
 in B is #66.

There is only one clear formal parallel between Tobit's teachings and the proverbs of Ahiqar which can be regarded as evidence of interdependence. The Tobit passage is cited first in the RSV version.

Tobit 4:17

Place your bread on the grave of the righteous, but give none to sinners.

Zimmermann explains that this text is an obvious mistranslation from a semitic text which substituted wine for bread. He argues that the underlying Greek is actually "pour out your bread" here,¹¹⁵ and Zimmermann's translation of the Sinaiticus text of Tobit reads much differently here:

Pour out your wine on the grave of the righteous, but give not to sinners.

Because of the importance of this passage, the Syriac Ahiqar versions in all major variants is cited here:

C #10

Pour out your wine on the graves of the righteous, rather than drink of it with evil men.

B #13

Mon fils, verse to vin et mêle-le sur les tombeaux des justes.

G #53

Mon fils, verse ton vin sur le tombeau des justes, et ne te bois pas avec les insensés.

The Armenian versions feature an elaborated ending as well as other differences:

¹¹⁵ Zimmermann, Tobit, 70 n.

Arm A #7

Son, pour out thy wine, and drink it
not with the senseless and the
lawless, lest thou be despised by
them.

Arm B #7

Son, pour out thy wine on the earth,
and drink it not with the lawless,
lest thou be regarded even as they.

Both Ahiqar and the Syriac Tobit show knowledge of the ancient custom of pouring libations of wine upon graves. Jubilees. 22:17 warns Jews not to follow this heathen custom, a sure sign that it was practiced by some.¹¹⁶ The Armenian Ahiqar shows evidence of alteration in accord with the concerns of Jubilees. The Syriac versions however are quite close to the Sinaiticus version of Tobit, especially C and G. Analysis of the proverb in its Ahiqar context shows it to be embedded in a series of four proverbs suggesting that the proper company of a young man is with the wise. Read in this context the proverb would mean that it is better to keep the somber company of the graves of just and wise men, than to enjoy wine with those who are unworthy. This is the sense of the preceding saying:

- C #9

My son, it is better to remove
stones with a wise man than to drink
wine with a fool.

¹¹⁶ Zimmermann, Tobit, 70 n.

Tobit shares not only the general respect for the dead but specifically in the context of this proverb under discussion exhorts his son to seek out the company of the wise. Tobit 4:17 is followed by these words:

Tobit 4:18
Seek out counsel from every wise
man, and scorn not advice that can
be useful.

It is unlikely that this juxtaposition of motifs is accidental. Lindenberger has already noted that the association of wine to wisdom is very rare in ancient literature. Aramaic Ahiqar #12 is a rare exception, and is followed by a poem lauding the figure of Wisdom. The text according to his reconstruction is:

#12 There are two things which are
good,
and a third which is pleasing to
Samas:
one who drinks wine and shares it,
one who masters wisdom [and observes
it;]
and one who hears a word but tells
it not.
Now that is precious to Samas.
But one who drinks wine and [shares
it] not,
whose wisdom fails,
who has seen...?

#13 From heaven the peoples are
favored;
Wisdom is of the gods.
Indeed she is precious to the gods;
Her kingdom is et[er]nal.
She has been established by Samayn;

Yea, the Holy Lord has exalted her.
117

Lindenberger expressed his opinion that the association of wisdom and wine in #12 had little to do with the proverb in the later versions of Ahiqar which we have been discussing. Certainly they are distant in spirit. However the parallel to Tobit was not considered by him and is worthy of note. It may provide the link between the earlier and later versions of Ahiqar. We continue where we left off in Tobit's advice for Tobias' journey. Tobit continues with the following words:

Tobit 4:19
And at all times bless the Lord your God, and pray Him that your ways be made smooth; then all your ways and counsels will prosper; because it is not given to all men to have counsel, yet it is God who will give them good guidance. And whom He will, the Lord humbles unto the nethermost regions. Therefore my boy, remember these commandments, and do not allow them to be blotted out from your heart.

The words of Tobit 4:19 bear a certain similarity to the paeon to wisdom in the Elephantine text. The occurrence of this fairly common wisdom motif with very different theological references in these two texts would be of limited significance if they did not both follow a strong and rare association of "wisdom" and "wine".

This sequence of proverb and prayer is not found in the later versions of Ahikar, and therefore may represent a link between a version between the Elephantine and later versions.

Another bond between the Elephantine and the Vorlage of Tobit is the lack of a mention of Ahikar's journey to Egypt and the fate of Nadan. This absence of this feature would appear to be shared by the Elephantine text.

It should be mentioned that some scholars, who wished to show that Tobit was composed in Egypt, used the Ahikar story to support their contention. According to this view the Egyptian author,

excludes all unnecessary references to the specifically Egyptian life around him. His heroes are made to live out their lives in that distant part of the Diaspora, where Ahikar, like Nehemiah, had held important positions at court... This, too, is the motive for the author's careful substitution of Elymais in ii.10 for Egypt, which appears in Ahikar as the country whither the sage journeyed to demonstrate his wisdom; he felt that Ahikar was too good and noble a Jew ever to have been domiciled in Egypt or compelled to participate in the deliberations of the Egyptian court.; 118

Simpson is aware that the Elephantine text does not have an Egyptian episode, so explains that perhaps the

118 D. C. Simpson, "Tobit", 186. cf. note 9.

Egyptian Jews there had already removed that section so well known to from the later versions. To my mind it seems a much simpler explanation to explain the journey to Elymais as we have above, to regard the Elephantine version as having lacked the episode in Egypt, and the Tobit source as well, and to explain the lack of Egyptian motifs in Tobit as evidence that the book was composed elsewhere. Zimmermann's observation that the devil Asmodeus being sent to Egypt is an indication that country was very far away. 119

We must be cautious here however because this is an argument from silence, Tobit does not indicate anything at all about the ending of the Ahikar story which was behind it.

If there is a possible link between the Elephantine Ahikar and Tobit, there is a much stronger interdependence between the later versions, especially the Syriac B, G, and P. The connection between the narrative of the Syriac and the story of Ahikar in Tobit, as well as the literary interdependence expressed by means of conscious contrasts of plot indicate a close relationship between the narratives of the two texts. Strange however is the finding that in these two Jewish wisdom texts, which have so many similarities and connections in structure and general content, have so

119 Zimmermann, Tobit, 17.

few formal parallels in the gnomic sections of any Ahiqar version. This requires a certain amount of explanation. It may be that for the most part, the proverbs of the Judaized Ahiqar which Tobit's author knew were considerably different from those represented in the later versions which came down to us. The sequence and associated motifs of the Elephantine proverbs suggest that the Judaized version underlying Tobit may have had certain affinities to the Elephantine text in subject and sequence, though probably not in theology.

There may however be a simpler explanation. Tobit and Ahiqar, while belonging to the general classification of Jewish Wisdom texts, do not necessarily belong to the same genre altogether. Proverbs and Ben Sira are primarily collections of proverbs, arranged thematically and with the barest of narrative content. Ahiqar strikes a precarious balance between a collection of wise sayings, and a folk tale with a moral. Tobit however is primarily a complex moral tale with a few brief sections of instructions of father to son. The intent seems to have been to stress but a few themes, the burial of the dead, honor to father and mother, and the giving of alms. It is perhaps a mark of the creativity of the author of Tobit that on these few points he found it preferable to frame these sentiments

in a personal mode of expression. We may also suggest that if Ahiqar and especially Nadan were used as negative examples in Tobit, that a certain distance from the teachings of Tobit would be in order. In this connection we suggest that the attitude of Tobit to Ahiqar is one of gratitude, it is also one of caution. Alms may save one from death, even one who has erred in idolatry as had Ahiqar. Even in the distance which Tobit keeps from the actual words of Ahiqar we may detect the contact with the Judaized Ahiqar.

Our conclusions in terms of the Ahiqar narrative are in substantial agreement with Jonas Greenfield that Tobit's author made extensive use of an Ahiqar version. This version was substantially like that of the Syriac recensions, especially those of B, G, P, and to a lesser extent C and A. The book of Tobit, may offer a snapshot of the evolving Ahiqar tradition, in its most Judaized stage before becoming adapted once again to the religious needs and fashions of Christian readers.

Chapter 7: Ben Sira and Ahiqar

Ben Sira's famous book, known variously as The Wisdom of Ben Sira, Sirach, Ecclesiasticus or simply "Ben Sira" is a work of religious piety as much as a book of practical manners and advice.¹²⁰ It contains hymns to wisdom, and an ode to the heroes of the Jewish past. It is a book which contains much folk wisdom, but it is the creation of an intellectual, probably a headmaster of an exclusive school in ancient Jerusalem.¹²¹ Most properly, it is a creative expression in the tradition of scholarly works known as the Jewish Wisdom literature, whose best known examples are Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Job. The book of Ben Sira has been transmitted to us with a prologue by Ben Sira's grandson, explaining the circumstances of the book's composition and subsequent translation. Another feature of note are Ben Sira's paeans to wisdom,

¹²⁰ For the purposes of this paper, we utilize the English translation of the Oxford Bible as a representative of the Greek versions. The New Oxford Annotated Bible With The Apocrypha, ed. Herbert G. May and Bruce M. Metzger, (New York: Oxford UP, 1973). For the Syriac, and the Hebrew we rely on the versions published by Vattioni which contain variant readings, and are indexed to the various versions including the quotations from rabbinic literature. Francesco Vattioni, ed. Ecclesiastico: Testo ebraico con apparato critico e versioni greca, latina e siriaca, (Naples: Istituto Orientale Di Napoli, 1968).

¹²¹ Warren C. Trenchard, Ben Sira's View of Women: A literary Analysis, Brown Judaic Studies 38, (Scholars Press: Chico, California, 1982) 3.

hypostatized in the form of a woman. The book proper begins with such a hymn to wisdom 1:1-14, of which we present a few lines:

All wisdom comes from the Lord
and is with him for ever...

The Lord himself created wisdom;...

She dwells with all flesh according
to his gift, and he supplied her to
those who love him.

To fear the Lord is the beginning of
wisdom;

She is created with the faithful in
the womb...

We may well imagine Ben Sira using these words to set the proper tone for his students, and to offer an explanation of the manner in which all knowledge stems from God, and is therefore required subject matter.

In the chapters which follow, Ben Sira apparently goes on to inculcate the proper attitude of the student, and the expectations which he as teacher requires of him. We cite B. S. 1:22; 23; 26:

Unrighteous anger cannot be justified,
for a man's anger tips the scale to his ruin.

A patient man will endure until the
right moment, and then joy will
burst forth for him.

If you desire wisdom, keep the commandment,
and the Lord will supply it for you.

Each of the next three chapters and some subsections begins with a direct address such as "My son", and treats various points of morality such as respect for parents, the value of friendship, hard work, humility, concern for the poor, to name but a few.¹²² Ben Sira, in chapter after chapter, brilliantly portrayed the curriculum of a lifetime by reducing essential knowledge to its barest principles. The themes are often reviewed or restated in a manner suggesting both a sense of pedagogic technique, and a long process of composition.

Many of the themes treated by Ben Sira are similar to those expounded upon in other works in the wisdom tradition, such as the proverbial material of Ahiqar, Egyptian and Hellenic wisdom works, and Jewish works such as the biblical book of Proverbs. Since in the world of Ben Sira's time there was a powerful diffusion of ideas by means of oral and informal exchange, direct borrowing from these works, other than the Bible has been difficult to prove. One scholar has argued that Ben Sira utilized the works of at least one Greek author,

¹²² See W. O. E. Oesterley and G. H. Box, "Sirach". APOT 2: for a very detailed listing of the themes treated by Ben Sira.

Theognis, and one Hellenistic text from Egypt, Phibis.

123 The evidence is not entirely convincing.

Ben Sira contains more than gnomic sayings and elaborations. One of the most interesting deviations from the pattern is the poem beginning with chapter 44. It opens:

Let us now praise famous men,
and our fathers in their generations.

This hymn in praise of the fathers contains much of interest.¹²⁴ We note that the incipit may be broad enough to cover non-Jewish sages whose works also reflect divine wisdom, though after the mention of Enoch and Noah only Israelite leaders are mentioned by name and the poem has a more parochial content. The long conclusion emerges from the haze of the Israelite past to praise one of Ben Sira's contemporaries, Simon the high priest.

123 I have examined the evidence presented by Jack T. Sanders, Ben Sira and Demotic Wisdom, (Scholars Press: Chico, California, 1983) 45; 98-99, and found that the parallels to the Hellenistic literature are rather unconvincing. The Phibis text is the closer of the two, and it dates to the first century C.E., long after Ben Sira wrote. For the Phibis text see François Lexa, Papyrus Insinger, 2 vols. (Paris: Librairie Orientaliste Paul Geuthner, 1926). For Theognis I have consulted (Theognis) Elegy and Iambus with Anacreontea, 2 vols. Loeb Classical Library, (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1968.)

124 Burton L. Mack, Wisdom and the Hebrew Epic, (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1985) devotes his entire study to this poem.

Two final autobiographical additions deserve our notice here. The first is a hymn of thanksgiving for personal deliverance. (B. S. 51:1-12) In it Ben Sira recounts in a manner much influenced by the Psalms, an occasion his life with parallels to the life of Ahiqar, and possibly Tobit as well. He was faced with death from "the snare of a slanderous tongue" and he languished in "the depths of the valley of Hades." Because of this "slander of an unrighteous tongue to the King" his life was in grave danger. It was that time that he began to pray:

I sent up my supplication from the earth,
and prayed for deliverance from death.

My prayer was heard,
for thou didst save me from destruction
and rescue me from an evil plight.
Therefore I will give thanks to thee and
praise thee,

A second biographical section, an alphabetical acrostic depicts Ben Sira as a young man who prays for the inspiration of wisdom:

While I was still young, before I
went on my travels,
I sought wisdom openly in my prayer.
Before the temple I asked for her,
and I will search for her to the last.

In the final verses of the book, Ben Sira is revealed as an eternal student, the consummate scholar, and the young acolyte of wisdom.

BEN SIRA'S METHOD AND SOURCES

The principles of organization utilized by Ben Sira in his work are not absolutely certain since the level of deliberate structure is greater near the end and lesser in the beginning. This has led some scholars to conclude that the book was composed gradually, over many years, giving the work a less than uniform quality and uneven organization.¹²⁵ Thus the book was originally composed as 1:1-23:27 and 51:1-30 which omits the prologue and the various additions at the end but preserves the original conclusion which was displaced to near the end of today's book. The additions added successively would be 24:1-32:13; 32:14-38:23; 38:24-50:29.

What clues did Ben Sira leave us as to his method of writing? Trenchard has collected Ben Sira's few comments about his own activity as author:

Ben Sira has left clues concerning his compositional technique. In 33:16-18 (30:25-27) he describes himself as "one who gleans after the grape-gatherers; and who fills his wine press " for all who seek instruction." In 39:1 he notes that the student of the law "will seek out the wisdom of all the ancients." In 18:29 he suggests that those who study sayings become capable of producing proverbs themselves. Thus, both by his testimony and by the evidence left in the text itself we are safe to consider the book a

¹²⁵ Trenchard, Ben Sira's View of Women, 5.

composite of traditional materials and his own composed materials.¹²⁶

The question of the scope of Ben Sira's borrowing is perhaps much more open to discussion than Warren Trenchard seems to argue. Did Ben Sira in fact go beyond the traditional materials? We do not know for certain how Ben Sira worked, or even which books he knew and quoted aside from the Bible. One view is that Ben Sira's method was to seek out the wisdom of all peoples, and to measure their expressions against the yardstick of Yahwism and practical value. In this scenario he would have collected the sayings, combined edited and arranged them into extended discourse on particular themes ending with a summation by means of a wise apothegm. If indeed Ben Sira was so eclectic in his selection of source materials as to utilize many foreign sources, then he was equally creative in reworking them. Seen in this way the Book of Ben Sira may be regarded as a creative work, as well as a special type of anthology with commentary. As one scholar put it:

The originality that one may attribute to Ben Sira lies in his choice and manner of appropriation of accumulated wisdom than in novel thoughts. In this way, of course, a tradition grows and moves but remains an identifiable tradition. Ben Sira relied on his Judaic tradition --both on the wisdom tradition and on the (Deuteronomic) tradition

¹²⁶ Trenchard, Ben Sira's View of Women, 4.

of Torah; but he also used and Judaized Hellenic sources, and he used and Judaized Egyptian sources to an even greater extent.... There was nothing remarkable or forbidden to Ben Sira in reading and using foreign literature. Wisdom belonged to all people...¹²⁷

If Sanders is correct in his assessment, then even when Ben Sira reworks his materials, his creativity lies mostly in the combination and the summarization of borrowed sayings by the addition of stichs on the same theme.¹²⁸

Is this the work of a parochial Sadducean scholar who limited his research to the Judaic tradition, or is this the production of a Hellenistic intellectual, dedicated to the possibility of coexistence of Judaism with the experience based wisdom of the nations? Did Ben Sira mean to encourage his students to make their own far-ranging perusals of the intellectual riches of the world, and to harmonize them within a Sadducean religious and intellectual framework? Or did Ben Sira intend to present to his students — less of an intellectual challenge, and a more conservative Jewish outlook? That these questions still defy a scholarly consensus will affect the certainty of any conclusions we may make on Ahiqar and Ben Sira

¹²⁷ Sanders, Demotic, 105-106.

¹²⁸ It should be noted that the sources of Ben Sira are far from being identified. Trenchard, Ben Sira's View of Women, 5.

IMPORTANCE OF BEN SIRA FOR AHIQAR STUDIES

Many students of the Wisdom tradition and Ben Sira, and most of the scholars who have treated Ahiqar note the strong parallels that exist between the works. As early as 1898 Conybeare et al noted the strong resemblance of certain portions of Ahiqar with Ben Sira.¹²⁹ Lindenberger, in his edition of the Elephantine version of Ahiqar gives copious references to Ben Sira in the body of the text, judging from the index thirty-one instances, more than for any other non-biblical work other than the other Elephantine papyri.¹³⁰ Yellin too noted the strong similarities. He says:

בין ספרי הכתובים האחרונים לספרנו הוא ספר
הקרוב סמסלי אחיקר, אחדים יסצאו כתבניתם בספר
בן-סירא.¹³¹

Oesterley, in his brief introduction to The Wisdom does not mention Ahiqar by name when mentioning that Ben Sira borrowed from "the earlier wisdom books."¹³² Rendel Harris and his collaborators speak with some reserve in noting many parallels between later versions of Ahiqar and Ben Sira, as well as many other ancient works. They wish first to establish the age of the

¹²⁹ Conybeare et al, The Story of Ahiqar, lvi-lvii.

¹³⁰ Lindenberger, The Aramaic Proverbs of Ahiqar, 353 and ff.

¹³¹ Yellin, אחיקר החכם, 25.

¹³² Oesterley, Introduction to the OT, 152.

various versions before committing themselves and Ben Sira to literary dependence.

The investigation of such quotations is, ... complicated by the uncertainty as to whether all parts of the Ahikar-tradition are substantially of the same age. If we could assume that they were, then, in view of the great age of the Elephantine-papyrus and the still greater age of the original from which it is derived, we could at once infer that the Ahikar story was an influencing factor in a number of Biblical Psalms and in certain of the Sapiential books, such as Proverbs and Sirach, as well as in Daniel and in Tobit, in the Book of Jubilees and in the Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs. ¹³³

O. S. Rankin in his work in Wisdom literature accepts without question the cautious suggestions of other scholars that Ben Sira utilized a text of Ahikar. ¹³⁴ Rankin states:

The Assyro-Babylonian Book of Ahikar, a story of benevolence and ingratitude, was known to the Jews in Elephantine in Egypt who possessed it in an Aramaic version. The story is referred to in the Book of Tobit (cf. 14:10), and this book, Proverbs, (especially 23:12f.)

¹³³ Frederic Cornwallis Conybeare et al, "The Story of Ahikar; Introduction", APOT, 716.

¹³⁴ See for example Box and Oesterley, "Sirach", 296: "It is difficult to determine priority of date in the case of Ben-Sira's relation to Ahikar and Tobit. The parallels may merely imply the presence of common matter from older source. A strong case, however, can be made out for the priority of Ahikar." They go on to list a number of parallels which we will have occasion to discuss at length.

and Sirach all show that the maxims of Ahikar had currency in Israel.¹³⁵

The scholars are not divided on the degree of similarity between certain passages in Ben Sira and Ahikar rather on questions of the relationship. This question is very difficult to treat because of the great differences in the composition and the ages of the Ahikar versions. The whole question of literary dependence begs a careful examination. On what principles might such an examination be based? Firstly on an attempt to compare each of the major versions of Ahikar independently to Ben Sira's book in its most authentic form, and then to attempt a judgment of likelihood that any or none were Ben Sira's sources. A further value might accrue to this study as well, if it can be shown that Ben Sira did use one or more of the versions of Ahikar. That is to provide valuable data on the history of the development of the Ahikar tradition.

VERSIONS OF BEN SIRA

The Book of Ben Sira was written in Hebrew and, as the prologue to the work records, Ben Sira's grandson translated the book into Greek in the year 38 of Euergetes rule. This would indicate a date of

¹³⁵ Rankin, Israel's Wisdom Literature, 5, cf 2n.

composition of 132 B. C. E.¹³⁶ Scholars believe the Greek version to have gone through a rather involved history and divide extant manuscripts into two main versions. Both of these in turn influenced the Syriac, and both of the Greek and the Syriac influenced the recensions of the Hebrew which came down through the ages. The Hebrew of Ben Sira was lost from the early medieval period down to the turn of the twentieth century, when a number of manuscript fragments were found in the Cairo Geniza. These manuscripts, which show the influence of the other versions mentioned above, represent about two-thirds of the original composition. The Hebrew manuscripts discovered more recently at Masada and at Qumran present additional evidence and lay to rest any claims that the Geniza manuscripts might have been purely the product of translators. The sections of Ben Sira preserved in the Masada and Qumran texts are however deemed to be closer to the original Hebrew than the Geniza fragments. One other source for the reconstruction of the original text is found in the scattered quotations from Ben Sira in the Rabbinic literature.¹³⁷ For the most part these quotations

¹³⁶ W. O. E. Oesterley, The Wisdom of Ben-Sira (Ecclesiasticus), (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1916) 5.

¹³⁷ Moses Hirsch Segal, offprint "The Evolution of the Hebrew Text of Ben Sira". JQR ns 25. 2 (1934):136-7.

are from memory, in a colloquial Hebrew or Aramaic, and rarely offer significant insights into the original text. 138

138 A. E. Cowley, and Ad. Neubauer, The Original Hebrew of a Portion of Ecclesiasticus, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1897) xix-xxx. Moses Segal, בן סירה חכמת, (Jerusalem, תשי"ג, ביאור, [1953]) 133-140. Vattioni, Ecclesiastico, xix-xxix gives full bibliography on the versions including the most recent discoveries at Qumran and Masada.

Chapter 8: Ben Sira and the Ahiqar Narrative 139

In discussions of Ben Sira's possible borrowing from the Ahiqar material, scholars have tended to rely on the formal parallels between the two sets of proverbs, while ignoring instances where Ben Sira may point to Ahiqar himself and key elements of his story. For example, Rendel Harris stated that "the general resemblance between the ethics of Ahiqar and Proverbs, Ecclesiastes and Sirach has been observed by earlier students."¹⁴⁰ Harris's enumeration of parallels draws only from the proverbs of Ben Sira and Ahiqar. However Ahiqar is more than a collection of proverbs, it is moral tale which is illustrated by proverbial material, and as such the figure of Ahiqar and key events may well have been used by Ben Sira to illuminate the latter's moral lessons when they coincide with the central teachings of the Ahiqar tale. Ben Sira too clearly refers to other types of literature than collections of proverbs. Therefore there may be other

¹³⁹ In this chapter we explore the possibility of interdependence between Ben Sira and Ahiqar. Wherever possible we have quoted the Hebrew of Ben Sira. In other cases we have relied upon the RSV English translation of the Septuagint Greek, except in cases where a Syriac reading is different enough to warrant mention.

¹⁴⁰ Rendel Harris et al, Ahiqar, 1913, lv.

material at the disposal of scholars which can be used to determine the extent of interdependence between the two works.

In an approach which is a departure from earlier work, it may be possible to identify passages in Ben Sira which appear to indicate familiarity with the narrative elements of Ahiqar, not simply of proverbs which may have been transmitted to Ben Sira independent of the story.

The first apparent instance of correlation is found in BS 16: 1-5. The Hebrew and Septuagint traditions vary slightly, we present both here:

Heb BS 16:1

אל תתאוה תואר נערי שוא ואל תשסח בבני עולה:
וגם אם פרו אל תבע במ אם אין אתם יראת יי:
אל תאסין בחייהם ואל תבטח בעקבותם:
כי לא תהיה להם אחרית טובה:
כי טוב אחד עושה רצון סאלף
וסות ערירי ססי שהיו לו בנים רבים
לה וסאחרית זדון:
סאחד ערירי ירא יי תשב עיר וססשפחת בגדים תחרב:
רבות כאלה ראתה עיני ועצמות כאלה שסעה אזני:

BS 16:1-5

Do not desire a multitude of useless children, nor rejoice in ungodly sons. If they multiply, do not rejoice in them, unless the fear of the Lord is in them. Do not trust in their survival, and do not rely on their multitude; for one is better than a thousand, and to die childless is better than to have ungodly children. For through one man of understanding a city will be filled with people, but through a tribe of lawless men it will be made desolate. Many such things my eye

has seen, and my ear has heard
things more striking than these.

This extended passage recalls strongly to us the
passage in Ahiqar for which the Elephantine text is
(AA#24):

Exult not over a multitude of sons
Do not desire a multitude of sons,
[Nor be sad] over a meager number of
them.

בשגיא בנן לבבך לא / יחדה
ובזעריהם [לא]

Lindemberger cited this in connection to Ben Sira, Yet
special attention needs to be paid to it. It is possible
that in this instance Ben Sira may refer not to an
isolated proverb, but to stories which he has heard in
which a figure in history or folklore desired sons, and
had to accept the negative consequences of their
"ungodly" or unruly nature. 141

This point brings to fore the question of the
relationship between the story and the proverbs in the
Ahiqar material. Since as we have discussed in chapter
two, the frame narrative and the composition of the
gnomic collections vary to a large degree between
versions, some scholars have sought to disassociate the
story from the proverbs. The occurrence of the proverb
is in both the Elephantine and later versions marks it
as significant as a central teaching of the Ahiqar

141 Lindemberger, Aramaic, 92.

tradition. It is remarkable that Ben Sira quotes such a proverb, then refers to having heard and seen instances which would illustrate this teaching. One possibility is that Ahiqar is one of the unnamed sources.

The teaching that one should not desire children who are likely to turn out evil is arguably one of the central concerns of the Ahiqar tale. We recall that Ahiqar would be the paradigm of a man who would be better off childless than to have an ungodly stepson. Certainly there are scriptural examples that Ben Sira could have relied on. Yet within the proverbial tradition, is there a more striking model than Ahiqar? Both Ahiqar and Ben Sira apply a similar proverb. Yet Ahiqar elaborates upon it by means of a narrative, while Ben Sira prefers a poetic elaboration. The parallel and commentary in Ben Sira provide some of the strongest evidence that Ben Sira had Ahiqar in mind and at his disposal as a literary Wisdom text.

In the later versions of Ahiqar the concept of "יראת השם" the fear of God as a factor in the desire to have children, or the ultimate nature of children conceived, is stressed, in a manner close to that of in Ben Sira:

Arm A #34 RH p. 60

Son, in the multitude of thy children rejoice not, and in their deficiency be not distressed; for children and possessions are bestowed by God. The rich man is

made poor, and the poor man is enriched.

Arm B ##34-35 RH p. 29

Son, rejoice thou not in the number of thy children, and in their deficiency be not distressed.

Son, children and possessions are bestowed by God. The rich man is made poor, the poor man is enriched; the humble is exalted, and the exalted is humbled.

Turk ##34-35 RH pp. 90-91

My son, children and chattels are the gifts of God. Yea, the rich man is made poor, and the poor is made rich; and the lowly becometh great, and the great man is brought low

Armeno Kipchak p. 22

Mon fils, ne te réjouis pas du grand nombre de tes enfants et ne t'afflige pas du petit nombre. Mon fils, les enfants et le bien sont don de Dieu, certes, le riche s'appauvrira et le pauvre s'enrichira et quiconque s'abaissera sera élevé et quiconque s'élèvera sera abaissé.

It is interesting to note the complete absence of this proverb from the Syriac versions! This provides some evidence that Ben Sira may have utilized a version of Ahiqar which was intermediate between that used by Tobit's author, that is to say a fully Judaized text, and that of Elephantine. This analysis would rely on the interpretation discussed in an earlier chapter that the Armenian and Turkish texts do generally represent an intermediate version of the story and proverbs between the Elephantine and Syriac versions.

We may cite now another passage from Ben Sira which may indicate a connection to the narrative frame of Ahiqar, as well as to the proverbs. The parallel between the proverbs has already been noted in the literature, however as in the previous example scholars have not thought to suggest an allusion to the actual characters and plot of the Ahiqar tale.¹⁴² Individual verse numbers are indicated here for convenient reference.

B. S. 8:1-9

1) Do not contend with a powerful man, lest you fall into his hands.

2) Do not quarrel with a rich man, lest his resources outweigh yours; for gold has ruined many, and has perverted the minds of kings.

3) Do not argue with a chatterer, nor heap wood on his fire.

4) Do not jest with an ill-bred person, lest your ancestors be disgraced.

5) Do not approach a man who is turning away from sin; remember that we all deserve punishment.

6) Do not disdain a man when he is old, for some of us are growing old.

7) Do not rejoice over any one's death; remember that we all must die.

¹⁴² Parallels to BS have been noted by Lindenberger, Aramaic, 142-144, and by Küchler, Frühjüdische, 382. To this we add Jean Deny, Histoire, 21: "Mon fils, ne lutte pas contre cet homme qui est plus fort que toi et ne t'oppose pas à lui, autre ment il te détruira et te tuera."

8) Do not slight the discourse of the sage, but busy yourself with their maxims; because from them you will gain instruction, and learn how to serve great men.

9) Do not disgrace the discourse of the aged, for they themselves learned from their fathers; because from them you will gain understanding and learn how to give an answer in time of need.

It appears that virtually this entire passage may refer to instances in the narrative of Ahiqar. Regarding verses one and two we recall that Nadan did in fact strive with the wealthy and powerful Ahiqar. Ahiqar's personal wealth played a role in the provisions of the banquet at which the switch between Ahiqar and the condemned slave was made, and at which the executioner's detail of soldiers was offered sufficient wine to ensure their inattentiveness. In addition, in the later versions, Ahiqar wins from Pharoah a heavy tribute of gold for the king. It is after the presentation of this gold that Ahiqar is given definitive custody of Nadan. Proverb 8:4 reminds us of the scene in the later versions of Ahiqar, where Nadan engages in revelry with a collection of boorish friends, when he is supposed to be mourning the death of his uncle Ahiqar. 8:5 may apply to Ahiqar, in that he was, in the later versions, a man turning away from the sin of idolatry, and attempting to become a sincere monotheist. Whether Nadan can be

presumed to recognize this is of course another matter. 8:6 and 8:7 may again relate to Nadan's boorish treatment of Ahiqar, while 8:8 and 8:9 are highly reminiscent of Nadan's the unfortunate attitude of Nadan towards Ahiqar's teaching. Further connections may be revealed after examination of the Hebrew of Ben Sira 8:1-9:

- [1] אל תריב עם איש גדול לסה תשוב על [י] דו:
 אל תריב עם קשה ססר [לסה תפול בידו]:
 [2] אל תחרש על איש לא הון פן ישקל סחירר ואברת:
 כי רבים הפחיו זהב והון ישגה לב נדיבים:
 [3] אל תינץ עם איש לטון ואל תתן על אש אץ:
 [4] [אל] תרגיל עם איש אויל פן יבוז לנדיבים:
 [5] אל תכלים איש שב סבשע זכר כי כלנו חייבים:
 [6] אל תבייש אנוש ישיש כי נסנה סוקנים:
 [7] אל תתהלל על גוע זכר כי כללנו נאספים:
 [8] אל תטש שיחת חכסים ובחירתיהם התרטש:
 כי ססנו תלטד לקח להתיעב לפני שרים:
 [9] אל תאסד בשסיעת שבים אשר שסעו סאבתם:
 כי ססנו תקח שכל בעת צ[ר] להשיב פתגם:

The use in verse three of the rare term איש לטון is intriguing. This is found in scripture only once, Ps. 140:12a בארץ בל-יכון בארץ, where it appears also in a pejorative sense. It may however be that the term had also a more neutral meaning. Certainly the term tongue in Biblical Hebrew is neutral. It is often used in a positive way such as Prov. 15:2 and 12:18 where it is used in connection to חכסים, wise men. If we allow for a neutral usage of איש לטון on this basis, we might translate BS 8:3b as follows:

Do not dispute with a man skilled in speech, nor throw wood upon a fire.

In such an instance this verse may also refer to Ahikar and Nadan. In the chapter following the figure of the King's tongue as a powerful instrument in the Ahikar proverbs as well as in Ben Sira is developed. Comparison with these further examples will perhaps suggest that the figure of a burning tongue is more characteristic of a powerful person, than of the idle "chatterer" implied by the Septuagint text. The possible identification of Ben Sira 8:1-9 with the Ahikar tale is supported also by a formal parallel between 8:1-2 and a triplet of Ahikar proverbs, AA#54-56:

With one who is more exalted than
yourself, do not pick a quar[rel],

With one who is nobler and stronger
than yourself, [do not for he
will take] from your portion and
[add] to his own.

(....) Just so is a little man who
[contends] with [a great one].

עם זי רם סנך
[תעבכ בנצ] / 7א

עם זי אצי [ל] ועזיז סנך
[כי ילח] 7א

10 סנתך [בעל] זילה [יהוסף]

The text of this passage of proverbs is close indeed to Ben Sira. In this instance as well as in the previous example the proverb stresses one of the major teachings of the Ahikar story. Finally, we are supported in our consideration of this proverb as intimately linked to

the Ahiqar tradition, in that parallels may also be found in the later versions.¹⁴³

One further passage Ben Sira seems to be based on a scene likely drawn from pagan literature, and perhaps identified with an early Ahiqar tradition. This identification with the Ahiqar material seems to have eluded the notice of scholars to this point:

BS 30:18-20

Good things poured out upon a mouth
that is closed
are like offerings of food
placed upon a grave.

Of what use to an idol is an
offering of fruit?
For it can neither eat nor
smell.

So is he who is afflicted by the
Lord; he sees with his eyes and
groans, like a eunuch who
embraces a maiden and groans.

טובה שפוכה על פה סתום תנופה סצגת לפני גלול
סה יט[ב לאלע] לי הגוים
אשר לא יאכלו ו[לא יריחו] :
כו סי [שי] ש לו עושר ואיו נהנה סהונו :
בעינו [רואה וסתאנח]
כאשר סיריס יחבק נערה וסתאנח כו עושה באונס
סשפט :
כו נאסו לו עם בתולה וייו סבקש סידו :

It is perhaps worth noting in this connection the possibility that Ahiqar was himself a Eunuch who served

¹⁴³ Parallels to BS 8:2-3 in late versions of Ahiqar have been noted by Lindenberger, Aramaic, 142-144, and by Küchler, Frühjüdische, 382. It has not, to our knowledge, been suggested that the entire passage 8:1-9 relates to the Ahiqar narrative. To the parallels to BS 8:2-3 cited previously we add Jean Deny, Histoire, 21: "Mon fils, ne lutte pas contre cet homme qui est plus fort que toi et ne t'oppose pas à lui, autrement il te détruira et te tuera."

the king.¹⁴⁴ This idea we developed in previous chapters where we showed strong evidence which suggests that Ahiqar was originally depicted as a eunuch.¹⁴⁵ Unless one is accustomed to thinking of Ahiqar as a eunuch, as our literary analysis of the tale in chapter one strongly suggests, one may find it difficult to locate Ahiqar in the Ben Sira passage.¹⁴⁶ However once that connection is made, the rest of the would seem to follow. Ahiqar is the most likely source for this image of a eunuch who can find no pleasure with women. The many wives of Ahiqar and his inability to father

¹⁴⁴ The Hebrew above is cited here from Segal, ספר בן סערא השלם, 185. The text reads rather differently in Vattioni's edition, substitutes סירים for an expected סרים behind the Syriac, in any event a common mistake to confuse a samech and a final mem. I have generally followed Segal here, except for 19e which is from Vattioni.

¹⁴⁵ We noted in earlier chapters that Halévy, Tobie et Akhiakar, 24; identified the religious theme underlying the version of Ahiqar which the author of Tobit used as being inspired by Isaiah 55:3-5, in which the figure of a eunuch embraces the one God and is welcomed into Judaism, after a series of trials. In lieu of progency, the eunuch's reward is universal renown. Halévy stopped short of identifying Ahiqar as a eunuch as well, a point which is almost impossible to avoid upon reading the Elephantine version. Neither Grelot, nor Cowley mention discuss this point. Grelot, Documents, 108.

¹⁴⁶ For example T.A. Burkill in his article "Ecclesiasticus". The Interpreter's Dictionary of The Bible. 4 vols. (New York: Abingdon Press, 1982) :16; sees this passage as a critique of idolatrous faith, but does not attempt to locate its source.

Sira. We recall that Ahiqar also worshipped idols for the purpose of obtaining a child. This type of worship is ridiculed in the Ben Sira passage.

Our identification is supported also by the probability that the context in which of this Ben Sira passage appears is heavily dependent on Ahiqar proverbs preserved in early and late versions. As we show in the two following chapters, Ben Sira chapter 30 is mostly concerned with the discipline of children, a topic taken up extensively in Ahiqar as well, often in identical terms.

The evidence cited here and earlier in the chapter is highly suggestive that Ben Sira had knowledge of a story of Ahiqar. However the same evidence also suggests the existence of a version of Ahiqar which was not identical with any of the versions to have been preserved. This is a significant point, and one which can only be addressed after consideration of the formal parallels to Ahiqar first in the Elephantine version, in the following chapter, and then in the medieval versions in chapter 10. Only then may we embark upon a tentative description of the version of Ahiqar which seems to have served as a source for Joshua ben Sira and his book of Wisdom.

Chapter 9: Ben Sira and The Elephantine Ahiqar

CONTROL OF SPEECH

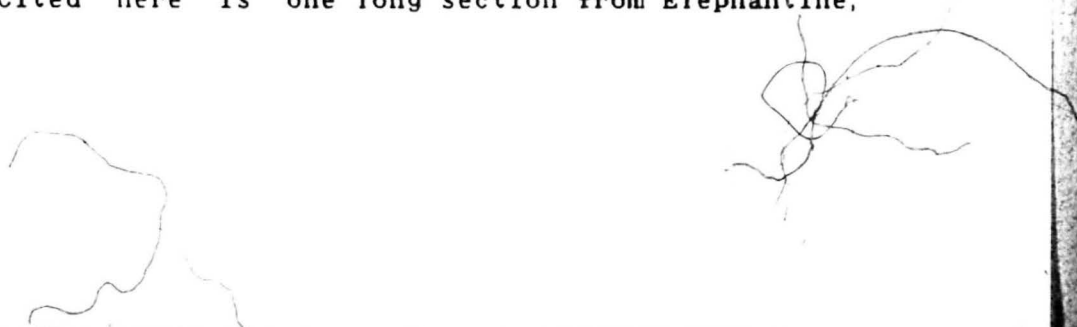
The augmented control of one's speech, in all its many ramifications, is one of the ideals of the ancient Wisdom literature. For example Proverbs 20:19 cautions:

He who goes about gossiping reveals
secrets; therefore do not associate
with one who speaks foolishly.

Ahiqar and Ben Sira share this ideal and a similar interpretation of particular details, utilizing at time identical metaphors to express their teachings. At the least this indicates a great continuity of tradition over a period of many hundreds of years within the context of the Wisdom tradition. Maximally this indicates direct borrowing by Ben Sira of an Ahiqar tradition.

Many lines of Ahiqar's proverbs are given over to admonitions concerning the prudent control of speech, in terms substantially unlike those found in other ancient works which we have come upon, and often quite different from the medieval versions of Ahiqar.

Cited here is one long section from Elephantine,



AA#14-16 together with a shorter passage of related content, AA#53:147

AA#14a~

My son do not curse the day
until you have seen the night.

ב[רי] אל ת[17]ט יוסא
ער תחזה [לי]דה

AA#14b

My son, do not utter everything
which comes into your mind,
for there are eyes and ears
everywhere.
But keep watch over your mouth,
lest it bring you grief!

<ברי אל תאמר כל>
[זי] תאמה על בלד
כזי בכל אתר [עיני]הם באדניהם
ל[הו] פסר אשתסר לך
אל יהוה טרפי[ך]

AA#15

Above all else, guard your mouth;
and as for what you have
h[ear]d, be discreet!
For a word is a bird, and he who
releases it is a fool.

סו כל סנטרה טר פסר
ו[על] זי ש[סעט]
הוקר לבב
כי צנפר הי סלה
וסלחה גבר לא ל[בב]

AA#16

Choose the sayings you shall utter,
then speak (them) to your
[brother] to help him.
For the treachery of the mouth is
more dangerous than the
treachery of battle:

ס[ש]י אחדי פסר
אחרי כו הנפס [לאחו]ך

בעדרה כי עויו ארב פם
סן ארב סלחם

AA#53

Do not reveal your [secre]ts
before your [frien]ds,
lest your reputation with them
be ruined.

[סתר] יך אל / תגלי
קדם [רח] סיר
אל / יקל שסן קדסיהם

AA#46

The liar should have his throat cut,
like a temple virgin who
[exposes] her face; like a man
who does evil, contrary to the
will of the gods.

[?] סכדב גזיר קדלה /
כבתולה תסנה זי [תחזה]
לאנפין כאיש זי יעבד לחיתא
[?] וסן אלהו לא נפקת *

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In the extended passage quoted above, we may identify
five main themes. These are;

- 1.) The necessity of guarding one's speech, and the consequences of failing to do so.
- 2.) The value of speaking out at the correct moment.
- 3.) The danger of a verbal ambush.
- 4.) The figure of a indiscretion of speech as a bird which cannot be controlled.

148 Lindenberger, Aramaic, 130-132. The * here indicates a special aleph used by the scribes in Elephantine to mark the end of a section.

5.) The destructive power of falsehood.

Each of the five themes above, except the first which is very general, is treated below in detail. It should be pointed out that while few of these sayings finds close formal parallels in Ben Sira, nevertheless all of the above themes and figures are found in his work. This is not surprising since most of these themes are extant in the Biblical literature, and elsewhere in the Wisdom tradition.¹⁴⁹

A PROPITIOUS MOMENT FOR SPEECH

Our second theme is found in a number of instances in Ben Sira as it was in the Elephantine Ahiqar:

BS 1:22-24

Unrighteous anger cannot be
justified, for a man's anger
tips the scale to his ruin.

A patient man will endure until the right
moment, and joy will burst forth for him.
He will hide his words until the
right moment, and the lips
of many will tell of his
good sense.

Heb BS 20:6

יש סחריש סאין סענה ויש סחריש כי ראה עת

Heb BS 20:13

חכם סמעט דבר נפשו וטובת כסילים

Heb BS 27:16

מגלה סוד יאמר אמונה ולא יסמא רע לנפשו

BS 5:11-13

If you have understanding, answer your neighbor; but if not, put your hand on your mouth.

Glory and dishonor come from speaking and a man's tongue is his downfall.

Heb BS 20:7

חכם יחריש עד עת וכסיל לא ישסור עת

UNCONTROLLABLE SPEECH

The third theme is that of the uncontrollable nature of speech. Words which have been released without due consideration, are expressed by means of the figure of a bird in the Elephantine Ahiqar, in Ben Sira, and in Biblical literature as well. The Biblical parallels are discussed here at length in order to indicate the proximity of Ben Sira to the Elephantine Ahiqar, and the less striking similarity of the Biblical images.

First cited is the Elephantine proverb in its full context, a series of proverbs all dealing with the need to exercise control over speech. Some of these Aramaic Ahiqar sayings 14a, 15, and 16 (cited above) are closely related to the medieval Ahiqar. At this time we focus on the poetic figure of "a word is a bird," which most closely resembles our Elephantine text.

BS 27:19

And as you allow a bird to escape from your hand, So you have let your neighbor go and you will not catch him again.

Note that the context is clearly that of an insult or indiscretion of speech. Since the Hebrew is not extant for this portion of Ben Sira, we have recourse to the Syriac which is more explicit than the Greek tradition.

Syr BS 22:20

דשדא כאפא בצפרא ספרח לה
סו גלז לחברה
סעבר רחסוטה

This may be rendered in English as:

He who throws a stone at a bird
causes it to fly off, and he
who drives off a friend abuses
his friendship.

The closest Biblical parallels are in Qohelet and Proverbs:

Qoh 10:20

Even in your thought do not curse
the king nor in your bedchamber
curse the rich
for a bird of the air will
carry your voice or some winged
creature tell the matter.

The Biblical examples express rather different sentiments, than Ben Sira or Ahiqar, while applying a similar metaphor. The courtly setting in Qohelet seems to be the setting here. In Ahiqar 14b and 15, the mise-en-scène is more generalized. Even in those ancient centuries, "the walls had ears," and the natural association of birds was made to eavesdroppers for

transmitters of rumors. In this Ahiqar is a more closely allied to Ben Sira.

Closer in spirit to Ahiqar is a section from the Biblical book of Proverbs. This one seems at first glance to bear a resemblance to Ahiqar 15-16:

Prov 26:2
Like a sparrow in its flitting, like
a swallow in its flying,
A causeless curse does not alight.

Upon closer examination, it is necessary to take into account the context of this image. The section of proverbs in which the image is used prescribes at length the proper treatment of fools. It seems that the proper understanding of this proverb would be to read it as a suggestion to disregard the random curses or indiscretions of a foolish person. This is a quite different point than that made by Ahiqar or Ben Sira. Therefore the settings of the Biblical passages cited, which utilized the "word is a bird" metaphor, can be shown to reflect settings different than the setting shared by Ahiqar and Ben Sira in their use of the metaphor.

VERBAL AMBUSH

A related theme in this selection of Ahiqar proverbs deals with the image of verbal ambush. It has been noted by Lindemberger that AA#16 makes use of the word "ארב" which Lindemberger translates as

"treachery", but suggests in his notes may be rendered as "ambush", noting that the theme of a verbal ambush occurs also in BS 8:11. Let us explore this similarity further by placing the proverbs in close proximity:

AA#16

Choose the sayings you shall utter,
then speak (them) to your
[brother] to help him.

For the treachery of the mouth is more
dangerous than the treachery of
battle.

ס[ש]י אחדי פסד
אחרי כן הנפק [לאחיו]
בעדרה כי עזיו ארב פס
סן ארב סלחם

It has escaped the notice of scholars that the same root is used in the Hebrew of Ben Sira 8:11:

150 מל תווח ספני לץ להושיכו כאורב לפנ'ך

This proverb is explained by Segal in the following way:

Do not appear rich and exalted
before the foolish and wicked lest
he ambush you to steal your
possessions. 151

The same theme is expressed elsewhere in Ben Sira. The idea of the verbal ambush is not however explicit in the Hebrew, which reads "מל תווח ספני לץ להושיכו כאורב לפנ'ך". To complicate matters, the Septuagint text differs here:

150 It should be noted that the same root ארב is utilized by the Elephantine proverb and the Hebrew Ben Sira.

151 Segal, סירא בן חכסם, 54; my translation.

BS 5:14

Do not be called a slanderer,
and do not lie in ambush
with your tongue;
for shame comes to the
thief, and severe
condemnation to the double
tongued.

One further passage in Ben Sira uses the image of a verbal ambush:

BS 28:26
 Beware lest you err with your
 tongue, lest you fall
 before him who lies in
 wait.

Once again the Septuagint give the sense of verbal ambush. The Hebrew for this portion has not been recovered. The Syriac seems impoverished by comparison to the Septuagint version:

אזהרך דלמא תפול
 תלך תתראם קדם סנאך

While there are many passages in the medieval versions of Ahiqar with a similar import, the figure of verbal ambush is shared only by the Elephantine Ahiqar and Ben Sira as evidenced in the Septuagint version.

THE KING'S TONGUE BREAKS BONES

The last cited proverb of Ben Sira, 28:26 actually comes at the end of a lengthy peroration on the 'power of the tongue', (or as we might say today, the subject of "the tongue is mightier than the sword.") Ben Sira 28:13-26 deals extensively on this theme. While the impetus for this caution on verbal destructiveness comes in Ben Sira from the subject of slander, and in Ahiqar from a the situation of a courtier not exercising verbal discretion in the presence of the king, both stress the

incredible power of the tongue to translate verbal commands into physical consequences. This awesome force is expressed by both authors by means of many impressive images. For example in AA#18 the king's tongue is a "double-edged dagger", while in AA#20 the royal word is "a flaming fire." Consistent with these metaphors is the attribution to the kings tongue of the power to break bones.

AA #23

The K[ing]'s tongue is gentle,
but it breaks a dragon's ribs.
(It is) like death, which is
invisible.

רַכִּיךְ לָשׁוֹן סִלְלָה
וְעַלְעִי תַנִּין יִתְכַר

כְּסוּתָא זֵי [ל] א סְתִיחָה **

To this latter we compare:

BS 28:17-18

The blow of the whip raises a welt,
but a blow of the tongue
crushes bones.

Many have fallen by the edge of the
sword, but not so many as
have fallen because of the
tongue.

Syriac BS 28:17-18

סְגִיָאן אֲנוּן קִטְרָא עֲבָדָא שׁוּחָנָא
וּסְחֻתָא דְלִשְׁנָא תִבְרָא גִרְסָא
טוֹבוּהִי לְגִבְרָא דִאֲתַפְצִי סִנָּה
וּבַחֲסָתָהּ לֹא אֲתַחֲלֵט
טוֹבוּהִי לְגִבְרָא דְלֹא נִגַד בְּנִירָה
וּבִאֲסוּרָהּ לֹא אֲתַאֲסֵר

Once again the Syriac differs slightly from the
Septuagint Ben Sira. The power of the tongue to burn

flesh, here associated with the underworld as well is expressed in the continuation of the passage both in Syriac and the Septuagint version, except for the underworld motif, this too is part of Ahiqar's catalog of the powers of the tongue. As we have mentioned briefly, AA#20 relates a royal command to "a burning fire. Execute it at once, lest it flare up against you and singe your hands." And the preceding proverb, though heavily restored, relates to this theme. "His anger is swifter than lightning; look out for yourself! Let him not kindle it against your words, lest you depart before your time." 152

It is of great significance that just as in Ahiqar, we find an extended set of metaphors all relating to the power of the tongue. In Ahiqar they are specifically related to the king, while in Ben Sira the metaphors are generalized. The many Biblical parallels which have been cited are: Proverbs 16:14; 14:35; 19:12; 20:2; Ps 55:22; 5:3; and Qoh 10:4. 153 The closest to Ahiqar is Prov 25:15 which includes both the courtly setting and the expression of faith in the tongue's power to break bone. 154

152 Lindenberger, Aramaic, 81-82, AA##19-20.

153 Lindenberger, Aramaic, 80-81.

154 Lindenberger, Aramaic, 81.

With patience a ruler may be
persuaded, and a soft
tongue will break a bone.

While particular images in Ben Sira have counterparts in Biblical literature, it is of great significance that only Ahiqar and Ben Sira share an extensive collection of sayings on the subject. Having noted the similarity here between Prov and Ahiqar, and the somewhat more distant parallel in Ben Sira, we are intrigued by Ben Sira's independence from either source, his tendency to apply the proverb to the more general social problem of slander, than to specific situation of service to a king.

Ahiqar, while specifically concerned about matters of the court, is not reticent about the problem of prevarication. AA#44 Warns against this particular misuse of speech which is of such concern to Sirach. The saying is damaged, yet its intention is clear.¹⁵⁵

...it with your ears, for
truthfulness renders a man
admirable, but lying speech
makes him repulsive.

Ben Sira also finds lying to be particularly shameful.

20:26

The disposition of a liar brings
disgrace,
and his shame is ever with him.

AA#45 continues along similar lines.

At first the throne is [comfortable]
 for the liar; but in the
 end his lies will overtake
 (him), and they will spit
 in his face.

The Aramaic word which expresses the concept of lying here is shown by Lindenberger to include possibly the meanings of "an improper claimant to the throne or a vassal who breaks treaty with his overlord." 156

Though Lindenberger notes a resemblance to the circumstances of the Ahiqar narrative, as known from the later versions, (the ending of the story is not preserved in the AA.) he concludes that "The proverb does not refer explicitly to any of the events of the narrative, and is intelligible apart from it." 157

And because Ahiqar's adopted son did not originally obtain his position through fraud, Lindenberger finds no reason to connect him to this proverb. Ahiqar here has little formal symmetry to Ben Sira, and no particular familiarity with Ahiqar can be adduced from the two sayings. 158

CONTROLLING RAGE OR AVOIDING DEBT

156 Lindenberger, Aramaic, 128.

157 Lindenberger, Aramaic, 128

158 What impact could this proverb have had upon our subject Ben Sira? We find only the most distant of linguistic similarities in the Hebrew Ben Sira 3:8 בְּרִכּוֹת יִשְׁנֹן, and the Aramaic Ahiqar's phrase: יִהְיֶה נִשְׁקֹן כְּרִבְתָּה.

Whether relating to financial advice or destructive emotions, the intent of Aramaic Ahikar 29 is to inculcate the value of self-control. It reads as follows (with the restored final word):¹⁵⁹

I have carried sand and hauled salt,
but there is nothing more
burdensome than
[de]b[t].¹⁶⁰

The biblical passage reads:

A stone is heavy, and sand is
weighty,
but a fool's provocation is heavier
than both.
Wrath is cruel, anger is
overwhelming;
but who can stand before jealousy?

An adequate interpretation of these passages must take into account Ginsburg's restoration of "rage" as the final word of AA#27. This reading is rejected by Lindemberger, yet on the basis of the proximity of the parallel, and the uncertainty of Lindemberger's restoration, we should consider both possibilities in comparing with Ben Sira. Let us first consider this to be a proverb about the dangers of falling into debt. As such it would parallel the content of another AA saying, number 43 which reads as follows:

¹⁵⁹ Lindemberger, Aramaic, 98; Küchler, Frühjüdische, 382, have noted the similarity to Proverbs 27:3-4 both in form and vocabulary. Because the final word of AA#27 is damaged, various interpretations abound as to the actual meaning of the Aramaic proverb.

¹⁶⁰ Lindemberger, Aramaic, 98 restores the final word on the basis of Proverbs 27:3-4 and Job 6:2-3.

Do not take a heavy loan from an
evil man. And if you take
a loan (at all), give
yourself no peace until
[you have re]pa[id] it. A
loan is pleasant as
..., but paying it back is
a houseful.

Ben Sira shares Ahiqar's wariness about the dangers of all kinds of financial entanglements regarding credit transactions. Ben Sira expresses disapproval of accepting loans in at least two instances.

BS 18:33

Do not become a beggar by feasting
with borrowed money, when
you have nothing in your
purse.

Heb BS 18:32

מל תהי זלזל וסובא וסמוס [ה] אין בכיס

The Hebrew is only slightly less explicit of the two versions, as the word זלזל has the distinct connotation of acting irresponsibly in financial matters. Also in 21:8 Ben Sira expresses disdain of borrowing funds.

A man who builds his house with
other people's money is
like one who gathers
stones for his burial
mound.

The restoration of the word "debt" rather than the word "rage" is also supported by a Syriac version of the Ahiqar proverb which he cites as follows:

My son, I have carried salt and
removed lead; and I have
not seen anything heavier
than that a man should pay
back a debt which he did
not borrow.

THE MIND OF A FOOL IS LIKE A BROKEN JAR

Ben Sira 27:4-7 relates a number of physical processes which relate to the testing of the human mind. For example BS 27:5:

The kiln tests the potter's vessels;
so the test of a man is
his reasoning.

כלי יוֹצֵר לְבַעַר כֶּבֶשׂן וְכִסּוּהוּ אִישׁ עַל חֲשֹׁבוֹנָא

Compare also Ben Sira 22:7:

He who teaches a fool is like
one who glues potsherds
together or who rouses a
sleeper from deep
slumber. 161

Heb BS 22:7

סֹדֵבִיק חֲרָשִׁים סִלְסַל אוֹיֵל סֹאִיר יִשָּׁן סִשְׁנָה עֶסְקָה

The image of a broken jar which can hold nothing within it is utilized by AA#27 also. Lindenberger, on the basis of later versions of Ahiqar has interpreted this to refer to discretion in speech. This interpretation rests on a word play in which the word הָדָם, may refer to a "thing," in regard to a jar, or a "word," in regard to a person. Lindenberger also notes that the broken jar is a simile for the mind of a fool in Ben Sira 21:14. 162 This latter citation may well be compared to AA #27.

AA#27

161 Vattioni, Ecclesiastico, 109 gives rabbinic references.

162 Lindenberger, Aramaic, 95 notes BS 21:14 as expressing a similar point.

A good container keeps a thing
 within it,
 but a broken one lets it out.

Ben Sira 21:14
 The mind of a fool is like a broken
 jar:
 it will hold no knowledge.

If the parallel to Ben Sira is taken seriously, then the metaphor in Ahiqar may refer not to discretion in speech, which Ahiqar treats at length in an earlier section, but to intellectual qualities.

PROVIDE FOR ONE'S FAMILY AT ANY COST

Fiscal and familial responsibility coincide in the writings of Ben Sira and Ahiqar.¹⁶³ AA#40 and AA#42¹⁶⁴ exhort the hearer to work hard to provide for his family, and not to despise any form of labor. AA#42 offers a concession to common sense, that it is preferable to go into debt to keep body and soul together, than not to provide for one's family.

"[Hear], Oh my son:
 Harvest any harvest, and do any job;
 then you may eat your fill
 and provide for your
 children.

[Hear], Oh my son: borrow grain and
 wheat, that you may eat

Lindenberger, Aramaic, 120. For biblical and Egyptian parallels of #40. For BS 20:26, p.126.

¹⁶⁴ The division of proverbs is slightly different than in that numbered by Cowley. In Lindenberger's edition, these two proverbs are contiguous.

your fill and provide for
your children with you.

Lindenberger noted the parallel to BS 7:1

Do not hate toilsome labor, or farm
work, which were created
by the most high.

Heb BS 7:1

אל תאיוץ בצבא סלאכת עבדה הו כאל נחלקה

Once again, we must stress that sayings along these lines are known throughout the ancient literature, notably here the Egyptian. Yet we cannot ignore the possible contribution of Babylonian Wisdom to the traditions received by Ben Sira.

Such a process may provide a model by which a pagan Ahiqar could have become a source for Ben Sira, or even the biblical editors. This possibility will be considered at length in the next chapter. We have seen in this section that the points of similarity between our Aramaic Ahiqar and the various editions of Ben Sira are significant and suggestive of a close relationship, whether direct or indirect. Similar thoughts are expressed, often by means of the same metaphors and figures of speech. The possibility of earlier biblical books having served as the medium for the transmission of similar materials is not ruled out, however we have demonstrated that the Biblical parallels are in most cases less explicit than the direct parallels between Ahiqar and Ben Sira.

THE HYMN TO WISDOM

Perhaps the most interesting comparison we may attempt between Ben Sira and The Elephantine Ahiqar fragments is in the area of their respective images of wisdom which they both personify as a woman.¹⁶⁵

AA#13 appears as follows in Lindenberger's reconstruction:

From heaven the peoples are favored;
Wisdom is of the gods.
Indeed, she is precious to the gods;
Her kingdom is et[er]nal.
She has been established by ^Samayn;
Yea, the Holy Lord has exalted her.

Very similar ideas are expressed by Ben Sira with regard to his God:

BS 1:9-10
The Lord himself created wisdom;
he saw her and apportioned her,
he poured her out upon all his
works.
She dwells with all flesh
and according to his gift,
and he supplied her to
those who love him.

¹⁶⁵ Lindenberger, Aramaic, 69; Kuchler, Frühjüdische, 381 list extensive parallels to Proverbs, Ben Sira, I Enoch, Wisdom of Solomon, and further bibliography.

While many ancient parallels have been found to this type of invocation to Wisdom as a Woman, nothing is closer to the image in Ben Sira than the verses from Ahiqar cited above. "Though not as explicit as the Biblical and post-Biblical poems in praise of Wisdom, it is nevertheless the closest non-Jewish parallel to them."¹⁶⁶

Elsewhere in Ben Sira, we find similar imagery.

BS 24:4;6
 I dwelt in high places,
 and my throne was in a
 pillar of cloud.
 In the waves of the sea, in the
 whole earth, and in every
 people and nation I have
 gotten a
 possession.¹⁶⁷

CONCLUSIONS

The evidence presented in this chapter of strong parallels between the Aramaic Ahiqar from Elephantine and the Wisdom of Ben Sira, would tend to argue positively in the direction of direct dependence. In many instances these passages do not exist in any of the medieval versions, or only in much different versions which could be explained by means other than literary

¹⁶⁶ Lindenberger, Aramaic, 68.

¹⁶⁷ Unfortunately the Hebrew is not extant, but the Syriac also shows a startling similarity to the Aramaic Ahiqar, cf. Syriac BS 24:4;6 and AA#13.

dependence. Nevertheless the picture is rather complicated by the strength of many other parallels found exclusively in the later versions of Ahiqar, and especially the Syriac B and C. Also, differences remain between Ahiqar and Ben Sira, even where we suspect interdependence. These differences need to be explained if the possibility of any direct influence is to be accepted. If Ben Sira did utilize Ahiqar, then Ben Sira's creative method of adaptation may have obscured the exact nature of his sources. It is also quite likely that Ben Sira may have used a different version of Ahiqar than we have before us in the Elephantine texts or the medieval versions. All of these possibilities need to be addressed in the following chapters.

Chapter 10: Ben Sira and the Late Versions of Ahiqar

As we have seen in previous chapters, the Elephantine Ahiqar holds a good claim on consideration as a source of The Wisdom of Ben Sira. The seeming validity of these claims have little bearing on other similar claims made on behalf of the medieval versions. Claims have been made that Ben Sira made use of an Ahiqar text. To what extent is this justified? Since most of the more optimistic responses to this question has been based on the later versions of Ahiqar which, as we have seen, differ greatly from the ancient Aramaic and even among themselves, we must closely examine the evidence which stems from these later sources in order to attempt to answer the question which we have posed.

Our method has been to collect the citations from the publications of Nau, Rendel Harris, and others, and to carefully compare them to the various versions of Ben Sira. Much of the previously cited evidence is fairly weak. The degree of similarity between the two works is often rather insignificant. A good example of this pseudo-parallelism may be found in Ben Sira 41:12-13, as compared to B #6 p. 156, B #64-65 pp. 173-174, C 49 p. 107, and Arm A #50. The subject is the concept that "a good name endures" while other aspects of personal existence are fleeting. The Hebrew of Ben Sira reads:

פחד קל שם כי הוא ילון סמלפי מוצרות חכמה
טובת חי יסי סספר וטובת שם יסי אין סספר

The B version reads in translation:

Mon fils, ne désire pas la beauté du
dehors car la beauté
disparaît et passe, mais
une bonne mémoire et un
bon renom demeurent à
jamais.

The other versions have similar readings. Both Ben Sira and Ahiqar add the idea of endurance to the biblical conception. Proverbs 22:1 expresses the idea of the value of a good name:

נבחר שם סקשר רב סכסר וסוהב חן טוב

Qohelet adds a similar conception in terms of a name's precious value in 7:1:

טוב שם סססן טוב ויום הסות סיום הולרר

Even though both Ben Sira and Ahiqar may conceivably be elaborations of this basic Biblical concept, this does not in any way show any connection between the two later texts. And in fact we see that both use the concept of the value of a good name to make entirely different points! Ahiqar teaches that beauty is transient, while Ben Sira teaches that one's good reputation is more valuable than treasures of wisdom. This type of parallel is not especially useful in determining cases of literary dependence. We would hope to have find cases where a similar concept, such as the value of a good name, is used to teach similar lessons, or in

connection with metaphors used consistently in both texts.

A second type of citation which we have eliminated from consideration are parallels cited between versions of Ahiqar and Ben Sira proverbs which are attested only in the Latin. To our surprise, we found that a good number of those cited by scholars, especially Nau, were in this category. It seems that at the time when many of the early studies of Ahiqar were done in this century, the Hebrew Ben Sira materials were only partially digested by the scholarly world, and there was no good reason to exclude Latin Ben Sira proverbs from considerations of this type.¹⁶⁸

Some of the best examples of parallel readings occur in chapter nine of Ben Sira. Many a man in the ancient world must have felt the scorching gaze of a beautiful woman. Helen of Troy's face was said to have "burned the topless towers of Ilium," and the Semitic world too seems not to have lacked its share of searing beauties.¹⁶⁹ BS 9:8 warns of the danger of beautiful women:

¹⁶⁸ Segal, Evolution, 110, traces the Latin BS to the second Greek recension, which he dates to the third century C.E. For this reason we have eliminated Latin proverbs of Ben Sira from consideration.

¹⁶⁹ Sanders, Demotic, pp. 38-9 in a reexamination of the parallels to Homer cited by Mittendorf finds only one that is at all convincing from either the Odyssey or the Iliad: BS 14:18 and Il. 6. 148-49.

הצלים עין סאשת חן ואל תביט אל יפי לא לך :
 בצר אשה [ה] שחתו רבים וכו' אהביה באש תלהט :

Ahiqar also associates the beauty of women with the danger of fire. B does so in at least four instances. This is the closest example:

B #92 p. 184
 Mon fils, que tes yeux ne regardent
 pas la femme qui est
 belle; et ne regarde pas
 la beauté qui n'est pas
 tienne, car beaucoup ont
 péri à cause de la beauté
 d'une femme, et son amour
 (est) comme un feu qui
 brûle.

This proverb does not occur in the Armenian, but in the C we find:

#72 p. 109
 My son, let not thine eyes look
 upon a woman that is
 beautiful; and be not
 inquisitive into beauty
 that does not belong to
 thee: because many have
 perished through the
 beauty of woman, and her
 love has been as a fire
 that burneth.

As Nau noted the Syriac versions of Ahiqar are almost identical to the Hebrew of Ben Sira:

Syriac C p. 46, #72
 ברי באנתתא דשפירא לא נחור עיניך :
 ולא תתבקא בשופרא דלא דילך :
 טל דסגיאא אבדו בשופרא דאנתתא :
 ודחסתה אין נורא דיקדא :

We see that this quote from C is quite close in form and content to Ben Sira.¹⁷⁰ The evidence so far indicates at least a similar source for this portion of Ben Sira and Ahiqar.

In traditional societies, friendship is expected to last for life, or even longer as relationships are passed on to the next generation.¹⁷¹ Not surprisingly, a common concern of Ben Sira and Ahiqar was of the value of maintaining cordial and trusting relations with friends, and in the case of Ahiqar, a friendship with a certain executioner ultimately saved his life. In BS 9:10 value of friendship is expressed in the following way:

אל תטש אוהב ישן כי חדש לא יד... ק...
י[ין] חדש אוהב חדש וישן אחר [תש] תינו

Since the Hebrew is damaged, we provide the Syriac here:

לא תשבוק רחמן קתיקא.
טט דחדתא אל סטא דה.

The first section of this is nearly the exact equivalent of B:

¹⁷⁰ Yellin, - אחיקר פס, 25. He notes the similarity between the C proverb and the Syriac Peshitto version of BS here.

¹⁷¹ Sanders has suggested Theognis as a source for this expression of friendship in BS. Ahiqar is much closer. Unfortunately Ahiqar is not mentioned in Sanders' book. Sanders, Demotic, 31.

III 76 p. 179:

Mon fils, ne t'éloigne pas de ton
premier ami de crainte
qu'il n'y en ait aucun
autre pour le remplacer.

C is much further from Ben Sira, in even the closest
of the many passages which deal with friendship. We find
at best #57 p. 108:

My son, remove not from thy father's
friend, lest perchance thy
friend come not near to
thee.

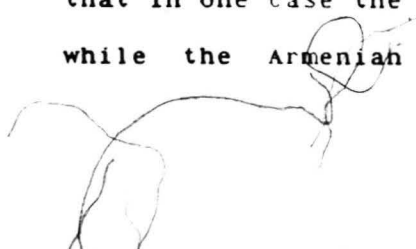
#57 p. 45

ברך [א7] אתרחם סן רחם דאבון
:17 טמ א7
דלס רחנך

Judging from the translation our Armenian A #77,
while closer than the C, is still not as close as B is
to BS.

Son, forsake not thy friend, lest
thou find not another
sharer of thy counsel and
friend.

Thus far, in examples A and B, on the danger of
women and the value of friendship there is a good
correspondence between the Syriac of Ahiqar and sections
of Ben Sira. It seems significant that these two
passages in Ben Sira are nearly contiguous, while they
are separated in the Ben Sira material. Also we note
that in one case the B and C provide similar readings,
while the Armenian has nothing similar, and in the



second example only B has a close parallel, while the one Armenian recension has a saying rather more distant.

In a time before credit bureaus, lie detector tests, and good methods of communication, the judging of man's character by a quick appraisal of outward signs and behavior must have been especially important. It is said that by כִּסּוֹ כְּפָאוֹ , כִּסּוֹ כְּפָאוֹ the Rabbis judged a man's character, and we still look for an honest face or the cut of a person's clothing. Ben Sira was not silent on this subject, though unfortunately the Hebrew of BS 19:29-30 has not been recovered. Therefore the English translation of the Septuagint, and the Syriac provide the best texts of this ancient expression of "clothes make the man."

A man is known by his appearance,
and a sensible man is
known by his face when
you meet him.

A man's attire and open-mouthed
laughter, and a man's
manner of walking
show what he is.

אֵת דָּסֵן חֲזוֹן דִּמְפֹהֵי פָרוּ לֵה גִבְרָא .
וְסֵן קְבוֹל יָדַע לֵה חֲכִיסָא .
חֲזוֹן דִּגְבְּרָא סַחֲקָא צַעֲדוֹהִי .
וּפְסַעְתָּה דִּבְרִנְשָׁא סִסְחָדוֹן עֲלוֹהִי .

B# 89 p. 183 connects the conceptions of a person's outward appearance, being a key to inner character, with the specific instance of determining the persons one

should avoid. This context is clear in Ben Sira, but is more explicit in the Ahiqar quote.

Mon fils, celui qui brille par son
vêtement brille aussi par
son langage, et celui qui
est méprisable dans son
vêtement l'est aussi dans
sa parole.

The other Syriac version is nearly identical C #69
p.109:

My son, he that is elegant in his
dress is elegant also in
his speech, and he that is
contemptible in his dress
is contemptible also in
his speech.

#69 p.47

ברי דהריר בלבושה הדיר אף בסלטה:
ורשיט בלבושה שיט אף בסלטה:

Once again, we find that a proverb with an extremely close parallel is extant only in the Syriac versions of Ahiqar, and not found in the Armenian. The significance of this particular connection to Ben Sira was stressed by Nau in these words:

L'accord de l'Ecclesiastique avec
Ahiqar est assez remarquable, car
cette pensée est un peu paradoxale
et n'a pas de parallèle dans le
reste de la Bible.¹⁷²

This is a very important point, since statements with this particular point of view are extremely rare in ancient literature, and we find a marked similarity between the Syriac Ahiqar and the works of Ben Sira.

Modern children are fond of retorting to teasing and taunting with the phrase "sticks and stones may break my bones, but words can never hurt me." This expresses the opposite of the observation in the ancient world that an inadvertently revealed word, an unwisely shared confidence may unleash consequences much worse than an encounter with physical obstacles. This saying is found in BS 20:18 This saying is not extant in Hebrew, nor does it occur in the Syriac although other proverbs express similar content in other metaphors. In the Greek tradition, as well as the Latin, this proverb finds a voice:

A slip on the pavement is better
than a slip of the tongue;
So the downfall of the wicked will
occur speedily

The Armenian once again has no parallel, while the C #53 does:

C 53 p.107:

My son, let not a word go forth from
thy mouth, until thou hast
taken counsel within thy
heart: because it is
better for a man to
stumble in his heart than
to stumble with his
tongue.

C#53 p.46:

ברך אלהים תפוק סלמא כן פוסך
עסא דתתסלן בגו לבך
טט דטבו לגברא דסתתקל בלבה
אלא סתתקל בלשנה

It can be seen that the Ben Sira proverb injects a strong moral note to the proverb, while in Ahiqar C the emphasis is on the friendship itself, and the need to preserve friendship through the keeping of confidences. These elements are all present however in the BS context as well. 20:16 and 20:23 are specifically concerned with the danger of alienating one's friends through inconsiderate utterances.

Elsewhere in Ben Sira, 27:17, the same idea is expressed in different terms, here the idea that a betrayed confidence may lose one friendship. In this second instance, the metaphor of a slip of the tongue is not repeated. The Hebrew is not extant. The Syriac reads:

נשא חברך ואתתכל עליוהי
אן דין גלא ראוא דהיסנותא לא תאזל בתרה.

Our English Bible reads:

Love your friend and keep faith with
him; but if you betray his
secrets, do not run after
him.

It is rather remarkable that this is paralleled in a second saying also in C, in the preceding proverb, #52:

52 p. 107

My son, restrain a word in thy
heart, and it shall be
well with thee; because
when thou hast exchanged
thy word, thou hast lost
thy friend.

52 p.45

ברי כבוש סלתא בלבך ענטאב 77.
טל דמא דחלפת סלתא אוברת רחסר:

Remarkably, we have here an instance of a doublet on same subject, in two separate expressions both closely mirrored by passages in Ben Sira. That these passages are closely related in the Ahiqar material, and not simply next to each other by an editorial or scribal rearrangement is suggested by the order different text of the B, where the two sayings are intertwined.

B## 70-71 p.176

Mon fils, ensevelis et cache la
parole dans ton coeur et
ne révèle pas le secret de
ton camarade, car, si tu
le révéles, tu as repoussé
(son) amitié loin de toi.
Mon fils, ne prononce pas de parole
qui puisse ensuite
affliger ton coeur.
Il te vaut mieux trébucher du pied
que de la langue.

The reader will notice that one further theme has been added here in the Ahiqar material, that is the idea of the affliction of the heart which may come from revealing something best left unsaid.¹⁷³

The next sets of examples all treat proverbs with a strong thematic connection to the Ahiqar story, or involve moral concepts which are extremely significant in the context of the story. A high degree of similarity

¹⁷³ See chapter 9 of this study.

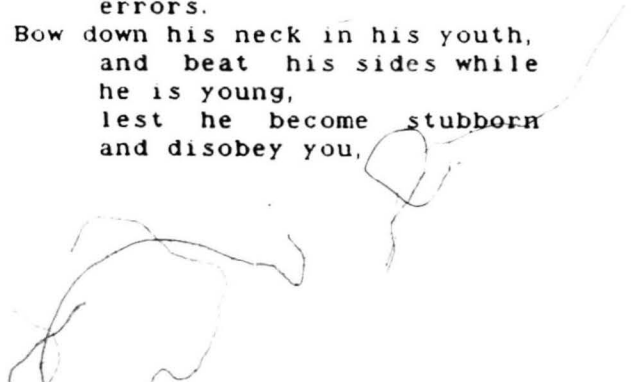
between these and Ben Sira, where no other older source is known, may indicate that Ben Sira was familiar with the story of Ahiqar as well as some of the proverbs which may have been current at the time.

It is only in recent times that the idea of positive reinforcement in education has taken precedence over the theory of education encapsulated in the saying "spare the rod; spoil the child." With this in mind we turn to the explicit instructions to both Nadan and to Ben Sira's students that harsh discipline physical discipline is of value in the education of a young man. Chapter 30 of Ben Sira devotes over half its 25 proverbs to this subject. As we have discussed above, the proverbs connect the corporal punishment of animals to that of young men, making the analogy that restraint is effective and necessary with animals so too with boys so that they will not turn out unruly. (The Hebrew is not extant for 30:1 only.) We provide here selections from the Greek tradition in the English 30:1;11-13.

He who loves his son will whip him
often, in order that he
may rejoice at the way he
turns out.

Give him no authority in his youth,
and do not ignore his
errors.

Bow down his neck in his youth,
and beat his sides while
he is young,
lest he become stubborn
and disobey you.



and you have sorrow of
soul from him.
Discipline your son and take pains with him,
that you may not be
offended by his
shamelessness.

The Hebrew of 30:11-13:

אל תסבילהו בנעוריו ואל תשא לשחיתותיו :
כפתן על חי תפגע רציץ סתניו שעודנו נער :
כי ראשו בנערותו ובלע סתניו כשהוא קטן :
למה ישקה וסרה בך ונולד לו ספח נפש :
יסר בנך והכבד עולו פן באולתו יתלע בך :

We find a double parallel to this in the Ahiqar material, in C, B, and the Armenian versions. It is also found in the Elephantine version, so is deserving of careful comparison. In the versions the idea of discipline as a preventative measure is expressed together with the analogy to animals, and the danger of public embarrassment by means of an unruly son.

B ##32-33 pp. 165-166

Mon fils, ne cesse pas de frapper
ton enfant; le châtiment
du fils est comme le
fumier dans le jardin,
comme le cordon de la
bourse, comme le licol de
l'animal, et comme la
barre de la porte.

Mon fils, arrache ton fils au mal
pour te tranquilliser toi-
même dans ta vieillesse;
instruis-le et frappe-le
tant qu'il est jeune,
fais-le obéir à tes
ordres, afin que peu après
il ne vocifère pas et ne
se rebelle pas contre toi,
qu'il ne te fasse pas
honte au milieu de tes
camarades, qu'il ne
(t'oblige pas à) baisser la

tête dans les places
publiques et les
carrefours, que tu ne
rougisses pas de la
méchanceté de ses oeuvres
et que tu ne sois pas
avili par son impudence
perverse.

C ##22-23 p. 105:

My son, withhold not thy son from
stripes; for the beating
of a boy is like manure to
a garden, and like rope to
an ass [or any other
beast,]¹⁷⁴ and like
tether on the foot of an
ass.¹⁷⁵

My son, subdue thy son while he is
yet a boy, before he wax
stronger than thee and
rebel against thee, and
you be shamed in all his
corrupt doing.

The Syriac version B seems closer to Ben Sira in that
the idea of public embarrassment is highly developed, as
it clearly is in chapter thirty of Ben Sira. The
Armenian, while clearly related to the B is even
further from Ben Sira.

C ##14-15 p. 27

Son, spare not the rod to thy son;
for the rod is to children
as the dung in the garden;
and as the tie and seal
fastening the packet, and
as the tether on the foot
of the ass, so is the rod
profitable to the child.

¹⁷⁴ Rendel Harris et al, Story of Ahigâr, 105 says
this is a gloss.

¹⁷⁵ Sic. The article should be added to tether.

For if thou strike him with a rod
 once or twice, he is
 rendered sensible quietly,
 he does not die. But if
 thou leave him to his won
 will, he becomes a thief;
 and they take him to the
 gallows and to death, and
 he becomes unto thee a
 reproach and breaking of
 heart.

Son, train thy son in hunger and
 thirst, in order that in
 humility he may lead his
 life.


The Armenian proverbs betray their late development by
 the addition of many new ideas, as well as a reference
 to the book of Proverbs 23:13-14. In citing these verses
 we note that Syriac Ahiqar and Ben Sira are closer to
 each other than either is to this Biblical citation to
 which both presumably had access.

Do not withhold discipline from a
 child; if you beat him
 with the rod he will not
 die.

If you beat him with the rod,
 you will save his life
 from Sheol.

We need only compare this now with the section in the
 Elephantine texts.

We come to two expressions of the principle of
 "measure for measure" which was to become a cornerstone
 of the Rabbinic philosophy, but which already is a
 feature of Ben Sira's religious thought, and a key



element in the chastisement of Nadan in the late versions of Ahiqar.

Ben Sira wrote:

BS 27:25-29

Whoever throws a stone straight up
throws it on his own head;
and a treacherous blow
opens up wounds.

He who digs a pit will fall into it,
and he who sets a snare
will be caught in it.

If a man does evil, it will roll
back upon him,
and he will not know where
it came from.

Mockery and abuse issue from the
proud man, but vengeance lies
in wait for him like a lion.

Those who rejoice in the fall of the
godly will be caught in a
snare, and pain will
consume them before their
death.

Except that 27:28 does not occur in the Syriac, the sayings are very similar to the Greek tradition.

דשרא כאפא עלוהי תהפוך
ודסחא כסתר לברנא נתהב.
דחפר גוסצא בקוסתה נסליוהי.
ודצלזא פחא בהון נתתחד.
דחשל בישתא בה נפל.
ולא נדע סו איסכא תאתא עלוהי בישתא.
פחא וסצידתא הליו לידוהיו.
והניו נלון אנון עדסא לינסא דסותהון.

As we have noted, some of these conceptions are found in the Biblical literature which Ben Sira and a Judaized Ahiqar would have had contact with. The idea of a pit dug for another, but which the evil one falls into himself is found in Ps. 7:16 and in Proverbs 26:27 both

the pit and the stone which rolls back is found. Ecclesiastes speaks also of a pit, as well as some other examples which are not picked up by Ben Sira. The biblical quotations are the basis of the quotations at the final lines of the B version Ahiqar where credit is explicitly given for the inspiration for Nadan's punishment.

Sa fin le conduisit à la perdition
et il tomba dans la géhenne parmi
les envieux et le orgueilleux, comme
il est dit dans le livre des
Proverbes et (dans celui) des
Psaumes du roi David: Le fils
creusa et pécha et il tomba dans la
fosse qu'il fit, et: Celui qui fait
le mal l'entasse pour la perdition,
et: Celui qui tien un piège à son
frère y tombera.

We cannot hope to determine which of the sayings of above holds priority for they refer back to the Bible, and we cannot know here if Ben Sira had Ahiqar's application of them in mind. However one saying deserves further attention, that is BS 27:25 and the parallel in Ahiqar. The idea of an arrow aimed at a righteous person turning back on the archer is not precisely paralleled in the Bible. Lindenberger has noted that Psalms 11:2-6 and 64:4-8 and 3-7 in the English contain a related thought. But close examination reveals that in the former case the wicked archer receives back fire and brimstone, but not the arrow, and in the latter case the evil shoot arrows and set snares to harm the righteous

"But God will shoot his arrow at them." This is certainly related to Ben Sira, and especially to the Ancient Aramaic Ahiqar as we have noted. However only in the later versions of Ahiqar does the original arrow come back down upon the head of the evil one.

B#100 p. 239

Tu m'as été comme celui qui jette
une pierre vers le ciel;
elle n'atteint pas le
ciel, et celui qui l'a
lancée a péché devant
Dieu.

C p. 123

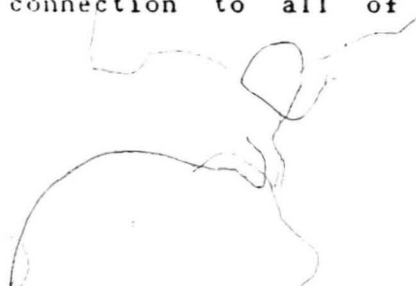
My son, thou hast been to me like
the man that threw a stone
at the heaven, and it did
not reach the heaven; but
he incurred sin against
God.

These sayings are rather distant from Ben Sira, however the Armenian is extremely close:

Arm p. 52 #10

Son, thou hast been to me like him
that shot his arrow up to
the heavens; and he was
not able to reach
thereunto, but reaped the
reward of his lawlessness,
and the arrow returned
upon his head.

It is extremely important to point out that here is case where the same proverb is extant in both the Elephantine Ahiqar and the later versions, and is perhaps quoted by Ben Sira in a form closest to one of the later versions. A fitting way to begin our final analysis of Ben Sira and the connection to all of the versions of Ahiqar



would to cite one further example of a proverb in the Syriac versions of Ahiqar to which Ben Sira appears to refer in a negative way. In Syriac Ahiqar, This is a very strange occurrence, a proverb which favors idolatry.¹⁷⁶ This is evidence that the proverbs collections, which in general are monotheized, even in the Armenian versions where the frame narrative still betrays the pagan origins of the story, come from a pagan source. The context of this proverb is also significant in Ben Sira, it occurs in a section which could refer to the Ahiqar narrative in the Elephantine version. That the idolatrous proverb is not extant in the Elephantine version is not surprising, as we have only fragments. We are very fortunate that this proverb has survived in the later versions where it is clearly out of place.

BS 30:18-20


Good things poured out upon a mouth
that is closed are like
offerings of food placed
upon a grave.

Of what use to an idol is an
offering of fruit?

For it can neither eat nor smell.

So is he who is afflicted by the
Lord; he sees with his
eyes and groans, like a
eunuch who embraces a
maiden and groans.

¹⁷⁶ Yellin, אהיקר, 35; collects references to idolatry in the Syriac versions of Ahiqar.




טובה שפוכה על פה סתום תנופה סצנת לי גלול:
 סה י... לאלדי הגוין אשר לא יאכלון ולא יריחון
 כן סי [שי] ש לו עושר ואין נהנה מסנו [:]
 בעינו [רואה וסתאנח]
 כאשר סיריס יחבק נערה וסתאנח כן עושה באונס ששפט:
 כן נאסו לו עם בתולה ויין סבקש סידו:

What is so important about this passage is that 1. It follows a section which speaks of the discipline of children, a passage closely allied to Ahiqar and also to the theme of the story. 2. The passage refers to an idol which is futilely worshipped, which, as we have discussed in a previous chapter, may refer to Ahiqar who was most probably a eunuch who longed to have children and who had many wives. 3. Ahiqar prays to idols and is rebuffed.


CONCLUSION

We are forced to conclude that even if we find it likely that Ahiqar was known to Ben Sira, we can never be certain whether the version he would have used was closer to that at Elephantine, or to that supposed by our text of Tobit, or that of the other later versions. If it was a polytheistic version, Ben Sira could easily have reworked it. If a monotheistic or Judaized version was available, it may have contained a good many of the proverbs which we know only from Elephantine, and may have contained story elements quite different from those passed down to us. Finally, he may have been confronted



with more than one version of the story, as we are today.

It is likely that Ben Sira drew inspiration and material from some version of Ahiqar. Unless we identify another source Ahiqar in one version or another remains the closest to the literary expressions of many of Ben Sira's gnomic sayings. As Abraham Malamat has said when asked of the veracity of the Biblical account of the Patriarchs, "Abraham may not have existed, but his uncle did." So we may say that if Ahiqar did not have knowledge of the Wisdom of Ahiqar, he almost certainly knew and used materials closely related to Jewish Wisdom within the Babylonian Wisdom tradition, and current among Jewish-Babylonian circles.



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