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978-0-521-11743-2 - The Story of Ahikar, Second Edition

F. C. Conybeare, J. Rendel Harris, and Agnes Smith Lewis

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THE STORY OF AHIKAR

FROM THE

ARAMAIC, SYRIAC, ARABIC, ARMENIAN,
ETHIOPIC, OLD TURKISH, GREEK
AND SLAVONIC VERSIONS

BY

F. C. CONYBEARE, J. RENDEL HARRIS,

AND

AGNES SMITH LEWIS

SECOND EDITION

ENLARGED AND CORRECTED

Cambridge:

at the University Press

1913

Cambridge University Press

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CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS

Cambridge, New York, Melbourne, Madrid, Cape Town, Singapore, São Paulo, Delhi

Cambridge University Press

The Edinburgh Building, Cambridge CB2 8RU, UK

Published in the United States of America by Cambridge University Press, New York

www.cambridge.org

Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9780521117432

First published 1913

This digitally printed version 2009

A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library

ISBN 978-0-521-04717-3 hardback

ISBN 978-0-521-11743-2 paperback

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PREFACE

THE story which is here rescued from the Arabian Nights and, with some diffidence, restored to the Biblical Apocrypha, occurs in such various forms and in so many languages that there are few scholars who could edit it single-handed, and I suspect that not many critics will see their way at once through the diverse transmission of the legend to its primitive verity.

In the present edition I have had the assistance of my friends Mrs Lewis and Mr Conybeare in dealing with the linguistic problems; and I am also much indebted to my friend Mr Kennett for his kindness in reading and revising the Syriac sheets. Without their aid, the attempt to edit Ahikar would have been inadequate. As it is, I hope we have been able to clear up some of the difficulties in the text, and to pave the way for its further criticism. The part taken by each of the contributors is indicated by the initials of their names.

J. RENDEL HARRIS

PREFACE TO SECOND EDITION

THE first edition was nearly exhausted, when the story of Ahikar was again brought into prominence by the discovery of a series of papyrus fragments from the island of Elephantiné, dating from the fifth century before Christ. A new edition of the tale was therefore required. We had further material in the discovery of an old Turkish or Tartar version, with which Mr Conybeare has enriched the present edition. We hope it will be found in every way more correct as well as more complete than the first.

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THE STORY OF AHIKAR AND HIS NEPHEW NADAN

INTRODUCTION

(By J. RENDEL HARRIS)

CHAPTER I

ANTIQUITY OF THE LEGEND

THE story of Ahikar has been long known to readers of the Arabian Nights, in the supplement to which it finds a place; but, in common with many other tales which are so liberally heaped up by Scheherezadé, or which have been attached to her collection, it has escaped up to the present time from the close inspection of criticism, into the focus of which it has been slowly drifting; but, as we shall see when we consider the literature that has been quietly accumulating around it during the last few years, there has been an increasing perception that we had in this pretty romance something more and something earlier than a conventional Arab tale of the way in which Ingratitude meets its due, and that the nucleus of the tale, at all events, was Biblical or semi-Biblical in character, however wide the gulf might at first seem between the Hebrew and the Arabic literatures. And it is this perception of the imperfectly recognised debt which one branch of Semitic literature owes to another, and the rectification of ideas involved in the payment of the debt, that furnishes the main motive of the present tract.

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But, before plunging into readings and recensions, into the criticism of texts and the discrimination of sources, let us briefly sketch the main features of the story itself.

Ahikar, or, as he is called in Arabic, Haykar, was the vizier of Sennacherib the king of Assyria, and was famous amongst men for his wisdom in all that concerned morality and politics. But he had a standing grief, in that the wealth and power which he had acquired, and the wisdom which he had attained, could not be perpetuated in a son born of his own body; nor did his prayers to the gods in this regard, nor the successive marriages which he made with sixty wives, result in any male child whom he might bring up as his successor, and to whom he might teach those precepts of virtue which every Sage, from his time onward to the days of Polonius, the Grand Vizier of Denmark, has wished to eternize by gravure thereof upon the youthful mind. At the last his reiterated appeals brought him the reply of the Supreme Power that he should take his sister's son and bring him up as his own offspring¹.

¹ [The folk-lore details of the bringing up of Nadan can be found in the literature of Tibet. Take for instance the detail of the eight nurses.

This seems to be a favourite feature of Eastern story-telling.

The following illustrations from *Tibetan Tales* (von Schiefner and Ralston).

Story of Sūdhana Avadana: p. 52.

'The boy Sudhana was handed over to eight nurses, two to carry him, two to suckle him, two to cleanse him, and two to play with him. As these eight nurses fed him and brought him up on milk, both sweet and curdled, on butter, both fresh and clarified, on butter-foam (Butter-Schaum) and on the best of other things, he shot up rapidly like a lotus in a tank.

By the time he was grown up he was acquainted with reading and writing &c.'

p. 257. Story of Visvantara.

'To the boy Visvantara were given eight nurses, two for carrying, two for suckling, two for cleansing and two for playing, who fed him on milk, curdled milk, butter, melted butter, butter-foam, and divers other excellent kinds of nutriment, so that he grew rapidly like a lotus in a pool. When he had grown up and learnt writing, counting, and hand-reckoning &c.'

p. 273. Story of the Fulfilled Prophecy.

'Let him be named Sūryanemi. When he had received that name, he was entrusted to eight nurses, two for carrying, two for suckling, two for cleansing, and two for playing. These eight nurses nourished him with milk, curdled milk, butter, melted butter, butter-foam, and other excellent kinds of food, and he grew apace

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The babe who is thus brought on the scene grows into man's estate, becomes tall as a cedar (though a mere bramble in heart), and is in due course introduced to king Sennacherib as the successor-designate of the now aged Aḥīkar. He is a 'goodly apple, rotten at the core.' The precepts of his uncle have scarcely penetrated the outworks of his mind, and he seems to have grown up without any taste for the proverbial philosophy which Aḥīkar had so liberally showered upon him.

He commenced to take more than a son's place in the home, and more than a successor's right in the palace. At home he squandered, and at court he intrigued. Finally a suggestion on the part of Aḥīkar to replace his wilfulness and wantonness by the superior fidelity of a younger brother brought the intrigue to a head. Nadan wrote in Aḥīkar's name treasonable letters to neighbouring sovereigns, sealed them with Aḥīkar's seal of office and then betrayed his uncle to the king. When the unfortunate victim of this intrigue is brought before the king, he is unable, through fear and surprise, to utter a word in his own defence, and as he who does not excuse himself, accuses himself more effectively than his slanderers, he is promptly ordered to be done to death.

It happens, however, that Aḥīkar had on a previous occasion saved from the wrath of his majesty King Sennacherib, the very person who is now directed to cut off the head of Aḥīkar and throw it a hundred ells from the body. An appeal to his gratitude results in a scheme by which a substitute is found in the condemned cells at Nineveh to undergo the extreme penalty, while Aḥīkar is safely ensconced in a dark underground excavation beneath his own house, where he is secretly supplied with food, and has occasional visits of consolation from his friend the

like a lotus in a pool. When he had grown up he learnt writing, reckoning, drawing and hand reckoning and the arts and accomplishments.'

p. 279. Story of the two brothers.

'Let him be called Kshemankara. This name was given to him and he was entrusted to eight nurses, two to carry him, two to suckle him, two to cleanse him and two to play with him. These nurses brought him up on various milk products and other excellent forms of nourishment, so that he shot up like a lotus in a pool.']

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Executioner. Here he has the maddening experience of hearing the overhead revels of Nadan and his boon companions and the shrieks of his beaten men and maids, and occupies his loneliness by fervent petitions to the Lord for a rectification of his lot, which prayers were, if we may judge by subsequent events, more closely allied to the vindictive Psalms than to the Sermon on the Mount.

The liberation of the imprisoned Vizier comes at length through political dangers in which his wise head and steady hand were needed and not found. The king of Egypt, presuming on the reports of Ahikar's death, sends a series of absurd demands to Sennacherib of a type which Eastern story-tellers affect, demanding answers to fantastic questions and the performance of impossible requirements¹. *Inter alia*, he will have a castle built in the air and ropes twisted out of sand². All the while he conceals beneath these regal amenities the desire to damage the Assyrian kingdom. Ahikar is now in demand: Assyria has need of him; and the prudent Executioner plays the friend's part by confiding to the king that the Sage is still living. The re-instatement of the buried outcast affords material for the story-teller to dilate upon, as he records how the wasted and withered old man, with nails

¹ [For a parallel, take Wiedemann, *Popular Literature in Ancient Egypt* p. 43: 'The papyrus evidently described an encounter between the rival potentates, Apepi, the Hyksos of Avaris, and the leader of the national party Râ-sakenen (Soknunri) whose dwelling-place was in Upper Egypt. Each propounded to the other riddles and difficult problems, on the solution of which the fate of his adversary was to depend.']

² [On the demand to make ropes out of sand, we may compare :

Tales from Tibet (v. Schiefner and Ralston) p. 138.

Story of Mahansadha and Visakha.

'King Janaka sent a messenger to Pūrṇa, the head man of the hill-village Pūrṇakatshtshha with an order to send a rope made of sand one hundred ells long. When the messenger had arrived and communicated the order, Pūrṇa was greatly alarmed. From his birth upwards he had never seen nor heard of such a thing, and he would therefore have to expect a reprimand...Mahanshadha asked him to send for the messenger, saying that he would reply to the king. Thereupon he said to the messenger, "Make known to the people this my request, without forgetting it. As the people of our country are slow-witted, unintelligent and stupid, may it please the king to send an ell of that kind of rope as a pattern, like unto which we will twine a hundred, nay, a thousand ells, and will send them to him"...The king was astonished.'

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grown like eagle's talons and hair like the shaggy fells of beasts, is brought back to his place of power.

And here Justice might well step in and avenge on Nadan his intrigue and crime. But the moral action of the story is checked while it is related (it must be admitted that it is done too much in detail) how Aḥīkar answered all the hard questions and evaded the absurd demands of Pharaoh of Egypt. Then, when Aḥīkar returns enriched with gifts, and with an enhanced reputation for wisdom, and appears before Sennacherib as the saviour of his country, there comes the moment when Nemesis is on the heels of Nadan, who is delivered up to his uncle, that he may work his vengeance on him.

The wretched young man is tamed by the preliminary discipline of flogging, followed by a black-hole with bread and water, and his uncle enriches his mind with further instruction of a very personal character and application; and when, at the close of this preliminary treatment, Aḥīkar is preparing the extreme penalty for Nadan, the nephew simplifies the action of the play by swelling up and bursting asunder in a melodramatic manner which satisfies all the instincts of Justice.

Such, in brief, is the story which has come to light in the Arabian Nights and elsewhere. Whether it be actually a part of the recitations by which for 1001 nights the faithful and ingenious Scheherezadé whiled away the impatience and wore out the mistrust and wrath of the Sultan, or whether it is only a supplement to that collection, is not of immediate importance. We may make its acquaintance, if we will, in the Arabian Nights; but the real question which has arisen is the possible transference of the story, either wholly or in part, into the borders of a much older and more reverend literature.

Now it would not at all surprise us, if in the study of a collection so rich in material for the history of religion and so full of folk-lore as the Arabian Nights, we should be able to find instructive parallels by which to elucidate what is obscure in Biblical or Patristic writings.

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How full, for example, is such a story as that of the ‘Two Sisters who envied their younger Sister’ of matter borrowed from the very earliest folk-lore: and all folk-lore is elucidatory of the history of belief. But this general correspondence becomes minute and particular in such a case as the description, in the story alluded to, of the Singing Tree, which is known to the students of Christian Martyrology in the Visions of Perpetua as one of the plants of Paradise.

And not only do the Tales of the ‘Thousand Nights and a Night’ elucidate ecclesiastical literature, they are themselves also reciprocally elucidated by Biblical and Patristic parallels. To take a single instance, in the story of ‘the Linguist Dame, the Duenna and the King’s son,’ we have one case out of a cycle, in which the asking of hard questions is made a prominent feature. This kind of questioning goes on in the story of the Linguist Dame with some of the same material that is found in the catechising of Ahikar by the Pharaoh of Egypt: that is to say, the matter is recurrent and cyclical. The Biblical parallel, *par excellence*, is, of course, the catechising of Solomon by the Queen of Sheba, which furnished abundant scope to the fertile imaginations of those who desired to speculate on the kind of riddles that might have perplexed the wisest of kings. Among these questions in ‘the Linguist Dame’ there is one which involves early Syriac Commentaries upon the Bible. The king’s son is asked by the lady to inform her ‘concerning the Naqus or Gong, who was the inventor thereof and at what time it was first struck in the history of the world?’ The riddle is immediately solved by the king’s son, who declares that the Naqus was invented by Noah and was first struck by him in the Ark. The answer seems, at first sight, to be almost as perplexing as the question. But a reference to the Syriac Literature helps us: thus in the *Cave of Treasures*, commonly attributed to St Ephrem, we find the directions for making of a Naqus by Noah, and the information is given that he struck it three times in the day, once in the morning, so as to gather the workmen for building the Ark, and at midday for the workmen’s

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dinner, and at night that they might cease from work. And this legend, which may be found elsewhere in Syriac, underlies the question in the story of 'the Linguist Dame.' So that we need not be surprised that Biblical and Patristic learning should be elucidatory of obscurities in the Arabian Nights, nor that a converse statement should be possible. It is, however, a very little step indeed, to show that the two literatures are mutually explanatory: and what we have proposed is the much more startling thesis that a curious story in the Arabian Nights belongs to the fringe and penumbra of the Biblical Literature itself.

The *a priori* improbability of this thesis may be diminished by observing that there is one proved case of transfer from the Apocrypha of the Old Testament into the body of the Arabian Nights. The story of Susanna is incorporated, canonized we may say, by Scheherezadé, although it is the most demonstrably Greek of all the Biblical Apocrypha. 'Susanna and the Elders' is an antilegomenon in one literature, an accepted part of another. Why, then, may not a somewhat similar statement be true of the story of Ahikar?

Those who were the first students of the book had observed the Biblical colouring of the story. Thus Salhani, who was the publisher of the Arabic text, remarks: 'on y reconnaît le style vulgaire de Syrie et le ton simple, naïf et sans apprêts d'un lecteur de la S^{te} Bible. Plusieurs avis mis dans la bouche du sage Haiqar sont tirés des proverbes de Salomon.' According to Salhani, then, the style of the book is due to the fact that its author was a Bible-reader: he did not suspect, however, that he might have been a Bible-writer.

Burton, also, was much impressed with the same feature. His notes, unpleasant and irritating as they sometimes are, show that he understood that there was Biblical matter in what he was translating: e.g. p. 2, 'The surroundings suggest Jehovah, the tribal deity of the Jews': p. 4, 'This barbarous sentiment [as to the value of the rod in the education of children] is Biblical—inspired': p. 9, 'The simplicity of the old Assyrian correspondence

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is here well preserved.' His judgment is, however, surprisingly aberrant and self-contradictory when he declares of the great idol Bel, to whom Aḥīkar had compared his master Sennacherib, that 'Bel may here represent Hobal, the biggest idol in the Meccan Pantheon, which used to be borne on raids and expeditions to give plunder a religious significance.' This is going out into the wilderness with a vengeance! Were the gods of Nineveh so obscure and so unknown that they had to be displaced in favour of a Meccan fetish?

Kirby, who has added some notes to Burton's great translation, points out that of Aḥīkar's precepts, many find their parallels, not only in Proverbs and Ecclesiastes, as we might reasonably expect, but in the Havamál of the Elder Edda! It is unfortunate that he did not carry the subject of Biblical parallels a little further, in which case he might actually have found the leading characters in the story of Aḥīkar existing in the text of the Septuagint!

I believe it was Hoffmann who first carried the discussion of the Biblical element in the story of Aḥīkar out of mere conjectural resemblances into demonstrated consanguinity. His famous tract entitled *Auszüge aus Syrische Erzählungen von Persischen Märtyrern*, appeared in the viiith volume of the *Abhandlungen für Kunde des Morgenlands* in the year 1880. On p. 182 of this beautiful piece of investigation into the history of the Syrian Church, he points out how frequently the monastic legends of Syria are affected by geographical and historical details derived from the ancient kingdom of Assyria. And he suggests as a special instance, that the story of Aḥīkar¹, which he had come across in the mss. of the British Museum, had some connexion with the book of Tobit. Accordingly he points out that the name Aḥīkar stands in Tob. xi. 17 as Ἀχιχάρ in the so-called B-recension² of the Greek text, while the nephew of Aḥīkar appears in the same place as Ναβᾶδ. From which he concludes

¹ e.g. in Cod. Add. 7200, our S₁.

² Which has nothing, however, to do with Codex B.

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that the Syrians of Athor (the Ancient Assyria) made use of the book of Tobit in one of the recensions in which this book has come down to us¹.

If Hoffmann's view had been correct, I suppose we should have been obliged to say that the story of Aḥīkar was written (in part, at all events) to explain certain allusions in the book of Tobit. These are certainly puzzling enough to the modern reader, who does not see why the dying Tobit should mingle with his last commissions and instructions a reference to the ill-treatment of Aḥīkar by his adopted son: and what the modern reader feels, is reflected in the manner in which the scribes of the Tobit legend have striven to mend the passages in question by inserting better known and, as they supposed, more appropriate names.

For, to take the leading passage referred to, viz. Tob. xiv. 10, the reader of the English Apocrypha finds the following abrupt transition in the last words of Tobit:

'Bury me decently and thy mother with me: but tarry no longer in Nineve. Remember, my son, how Aman handled Achiacarus that brought him up, how out of light he brought him into darkness, and how he rewarded him again: yet Achiacarus was saved, but the other had his reward, for he went down into darkness. Manasses gave alms, and escaped the snares of death which they had set for him: but Aman fell into the snare, and perished.'

The perplexity which this passage has caused to the scribes is evident from the emendation of the proper names. Nadan has been replaced by Aman, and Aḥīkar by Manasseh! It is fortunate that Achiacarus has not altogether disappeared, or the whole recognition of the characters might have been lost.

We are indebted, then, to Hoffmann for identifying the characters which appear so obscurely in Tobit with those that occur in the story of Aḥīkar: but he leaves the matter almost as perplexing as he found it to the critical enquirer, who wishes

¹ Hoffmann, *l. c.* pp. 182, 183.

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to know, not whether any one has been explaining obscure passages in Tobit, so much as the reason why those passages are obscure.

It does not, moreover, seem to have occurred to Hoffmann that the identification which he made between the characters referred to in the two stories might be explained in another way. It clearly was not necessary to assume that Aḥīkar was later than Tobit, and that the existence of the Syriac and Arabic legends of Aḥīkar involved the acquaintance of the East Syrians with the Old Testament Apocrypha. For example, Tobit might be dependent upon Aḥīkar, or both of them upon a third document which has disappeared. If the supposition of Hoffmann were correct, then the story of Aḥīkar would be an apocryphon of the second order, written, in part, to explain obscure allusions in an earlier apocryphon. Its relation to Tobit would then be something like the supplementary position which it occupies in the Arabian Nights; it would be an antilegomenon in two collections. But if Tobit were the later of the two compositions, then Aḥīkar takes its place amongst the Old Testament Apocrypha by right of the firstborn; and the elder ceases to serve the younger. It is now no longer commentary, it has become text; and, so far as one writer is commentator upon the other, it is Tobit that moralizes upon what has been read in Aḥīkar.

It becomes, therefore, of the first importance to determine whether Hoffmann's valuable information concerning the common matter in Tobit and in Aḥīkar should be explained as Hoffmann has done, or whether the relative priority of the two stories should be reversed.

Now we may say at once that the internal evidence of the two stories is sufficient to decide the question in favour of the second alternative. But before making the necessary textual comparison, it may be well to watch a little more in detail the way in which the attention of critics was being drawn to this remarkable legend.

It had already been pointed out by J. S. Assemani in his

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Bibliotheca Orientalis when describing a MS. of the story of Aḥīkar, that a similar story was extant in the Aesop legends¹.

As we shall see by and by, the story of the adventures of Aesop at the court of Lykēros, king of Babylon, are an exact parallel to the story of the wise Aḥīkar. So that the problem is now complicated by the introduction of a third competitor for the place of honour, and this time a Greek competitor.

The importance of this fresh factor was further accentuated by the discovery of a text of the legend which was clearly based upon a Greek original; for it was found to have passed over into Slavonic, and to be, even at the present day, very popular in Russia. And the publication of a translation of this Slavonic text² in 1892 by Jagić rendered a comparison possible between the story as it had come down in Arabic (probably from a Syriac base) and the Slavonic (as it had come down from a Greek base). So that the argument for a Greek original could be maintained from the Aesop legends *plus* the Slavonic version, as against the theory of a Semitic original, based on the Arabian Nights *plus* such Syriac and other Oriental versions as might be recovered.

Nor was the diffusion of the legend of Aḥīkar exhausted even by this statement, for there were parallels and allusions in Eastern literature, not a few, both to the history of Aḥīkar and his ethics and his wise solution of riddles and other peculiarities of the story as current in Greek or in Arabic, which rendered it certain that the story could not be of modern growth or development.

It became necessary, therefore, that a closer investigation

¹ *B. O.* ii. 508. Cod. 40, in indice codd. Arab., continet Hicari Philosophi Mosulani praecepta. [*Mosulani* is the Arabic translation of the Syriac for *Ninevite*?]

B. O. iii. 286. Historia Hicari sapientis et quae ipsi contigere cum Nadan sororis suae filio et cum rege Aegypti. [Cod. Arab. 55.] De Hicaro eadem fere narrantur quae de Aesopo Phryge. Ejusdem Hicari, qui Philosophus Mosulanus appellatur, praecepta Arabice extant Cod. 40.

² *Byzantinische Zeitschrift*, Vol. i. Pt. 1, 1892.

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should be made of the relations between Tobit and the Greek and Semitic forms of the legend of Aḥikar. Accordingly Kuhn, who had added an admirable summary of the materials available for criticism of the legend to the translation published by Jagić, asked especially for a fresh treatment of the Aesop legends. Kuhn, however, still followed Hoffmann in regarding the story of Aḥikar as being dependent upon what is called the B-recension of the book of Tobit.

In 1894 there appeared, in response to Kuhn's appeal, a new and remarkably fresh and exhaustive treatment of the whole subject by Meissner, entitled *Quellenuntersuchungen zur Haiḥar-geschichte*, in which the question of the relative priority of the Greek and Semitic legends was re-examined and an abundance of fresh material relating thereto was brought forward¹.

We shall see presently that Meissner, in spite of the valuable material which he accumulated, drew wrong conclusions in giving to the Aesop legends the priority over those contained in the Arabian Nights: and while recognising, as he could not fail to do, the allusions to the story in the book of Tobit, he treated that story as if it existed, in the days before Tobit, merely in the form of floating legend, and not in the form of a book. According to Meissner, in four passages the author of the book of Tobit alludes to a certain Eastern Sage, whose history he throws into connexion with the hero of his own book. We may then, according to Meissner's view of the case, assume the existence of an ancient Hebrew legend, whose hero was Aḥikar, which legend was transferred by a Greek writer to Aesop. This story was committed to writing by Syrian Christians in the seventh or eighth century A.D., probably with an actual employment of the already existing Greek form.

The person of Aḥikar was thus, according to Meissner, well known to antiquity, and his fame had spread far and wide from Syria. The origin of the Jewish legend was earlier than the book of Tobit, which is, with good reason, referred to the first or second

¹ The tract will be found in *Z. D. M. G.* vol. 48, pp. 171-197.

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F. C. Conybeare, J. Rendel Harris, and Agnes Smith Lewis

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INTRODUCTION

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century B.C. Meissner does not think the story of Ahikar was current much earlier. In any case it was committed to writing in Greek. And at the time when this was done, Hebrew was already an ecclesiastical language, not understood of the people. And this fact, together with the non-religious character of the story, renders it certain that the book was never received into the Apocryphal books, so that it passed into an undeserved obscurity.

Such were Meissner's conclusions. They were promptly challenged by Lidzbarski¹, who suggested as a more probable alternative that the Syriac legends were a translation of a book already existing before the days of Tobit and employed by the writer of that apocryphal story; and Lidzbarski thought it was more likely that the primitive legend was written in Hebrew than in Greek. We shall see presently that this is the true solution.

Lidzbarski followed up his criticism by publishing in 1896 a complete translation² of the Arabic version of the story, and this publication is commented upon by Dr James in the second volume of his *Apocrypha Anecdota*. As might have been expected, Dr James saw that the story was not only involved in the book of Tobit, but that it had also been employed in the New Testament (in the Parable of the Wicked Servant), and he at once conceded its antiquity. 'This romance,' said he, 'is clearly older than Tobit,' and he remarks further, that, 'as the story was clearly popular, and is also clearly prae-Christian, it would be no very strange thing if the Parable [of the Wicked Servant in Matt. xxiv. 48, cf. Luke xii. 45] has borrowed a trait or two from it.' We shall see that its influence upon the New Testament is even stronger than Dr James had imagined³.

Last of all, a discussion of the legend, with a fresh translation from the Syriac, was given by Dr E. J. Dillon, in the *Contemporary Review* for March 1898. Dr Dillon does not discuss the question

¹ Lidzbarski's tract will be found in *Z. D. M. G.* vol. 48, pp. 671-675. *Zum weisen Achikar*.

² Lidzbarski, *Geschichten und Lieder*.

³ Since then Dr James has treated the story at some length in a communication to the *Guardian* (Feb. 2, 1898), in which he discusses some further parallels.

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of the Biblical Parallels, but he brings forward fresh reasons for believing that Aḥikar is a survival from 'the numerous Hebrew writings which, having no direct bearing upon religion, were passed over when the Canon was formed and nearly all of which were thus lost for ever¹.'

Such is the record, expressed in the briefest terms, of the investigations which have been accumulating with regard to this beautiful and interesting Eastern romance. They result in a general consent as to the antiquity of the story, and in an intimation of its close connexion with the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments.

Having thus briefly described the slow advance of the critical wave that has been breaking upon the shore, we will now set down in order some of the materials that are available for the restoration of the story to its earliest form.

¹ Our own studies of Aḥikar were publicly announced before the appearance of Dr Dillon's article; we should gladly have left the whole field to him, if we had known in advance the labour that he had bestowed on the subject, of which only a very small part appears in the article in the *Contemporary Review*. We are indebted to him for many valuable suggestions.

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CHAPTER II

MATERIALS FOR CRITICISM

THE diffusion of the story of Ahikar is so wide, that it requires somewhat more than an average linguistic equipment to treat the whole of the forms and versions that have come to light.

We shall see reason to believe that it is a companion to the book of Tobit and, in a less striking degree, to the book of Daniel; and that it ought to be bound up with other biblical and semi-biblical matter of the same kind under the heading of 'Ninevite and Babylonian legends.' But if it be such a volume as that title would indicate and belong to the same period which produced Tobit and Daniel, then the probability is that it has, like them, an original form that was either Hebrew or Aramaic. And we should expect, *a priori*, that this original would give rise to two main versions, a Syriac and a Greek. We must apply critical methods to test this hypothesis, just as we should do in the case of Tobit.

When we have settled that question it will not be so difficult to determine what subordinate versions depend on the Greek and Syriac respectively. That is, we should naturally expect that the Slavonic version would come from a Greek base, even though we have not succeeded in actually recovering such an underlying document. The case of the adaptations which pass as 'lives of Aesop' will require a separate treatment. On the Oriental side, there will probably be little difficulty in deriving the Arabic version from the Syriac and the Ethiopic from the Arabic. But the problem of the origin of the Armenian version will be more

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difficult. Whether there are other lost versions is another point that must be reserved for further study. It is quite possible that the story may have passed into India by way of the Old Persian, in which case it may perhaps be still lurking amongst the Parsee literature. Benfey went so far as to attempt to connect the story with the earlier Indian literature and to recognize *Ahikar* in the wise Vizier *Çakatala* of the *Çukapasati* legends, but his suggestion has not been favourably received.

We shall be satisfied if we can find sufficient evidence for an underlying Hebrew or Aramaic text, and if we can throw some light upon the early Greek and Syriac texts in their relation to this lost primitive and to one another.

But in order to open the discussion on these points, we must describe the sources from which our extant versions are derived and from which they may be emended.

(1) *The Syriac version.*

Of the Syriac, properly so called, there is not much extant. We have, however, a fragment in the British Museum, a copy in the Cambridge University Library and a copy at Berlin.

(S₁). The fragment in the British Museum is a single leaf in a Nestorian MS. of the 12th or 13th century: it is numbered 7200 amongst the Additional MSS. and the leaf that contains *Ahikar* is the 114th. It is a good deal water-stained and is consequently difficult to decipher. We have printed it separately, as the text appears to be good.

(S₂). The Cambridge MS. belongs to the collection that was formerly in the possession of the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, and is now numbered Add. 2020 in the University Catalogue. The following is the description of it in the Catalogue:

Univ Cant. Add. 2020.

Paper, about 12 in. by 8: 190 leaves, of which several are soiled and mutilated, especially f. 158. F. 190 is blank. The

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quires were originally twenty in number, but the first and second and one leaf of the third have been lost, and their place is taken by the modern supply ff. 1—5. The remaining quires have 10 leaves, except  [8],  [22] and  [5]. There is a lacuna after f. 184. The writing (27 to 30 lines in a page) is a good Nestorian *serṭā* of the year 2009 = A.D. 1697.

This volume contains

1. Histories of saints and other matters chiefly theological.
5. The proverbs or history of Aḥīkar the wise, the scribe of Sanḥēribh, king of Assyria and Nineveh f. 66^a.
6. A short extract from the maxims of Solomon f. 78^a.
7. Fables of the wise Josephus (Aesopus) f. 78^a.
10. Other fables of Josephus (Aesopus) f. 105^b.
etc. etc.

(S₃). The Berlin ms. is Cod. Sachau. 336. I am sorry not to have been able to collate it.

(S₄, S₅, S₆). These signs refer to three more copies that have come to our knowledge as being in the possession of the American Mission at Ooroomiah. All of them are modern transcripts, but one of them (S₄) is said to be made from an exemplar of an early date.

(2) *Arabic and Karshuni texts.*

We have given especial attention to the Arabic text as published from a Karshuni ms. by Salhani (*Contes Arabes*: Beyrout), and to certain copies in the University Library at Cambridge and in the British Museum.

(K₁). Of these the most important is a Cambridge ms. (Add. 2886), formerly in the collection of the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge. It is a very late Karshuni text, on paper. The story of Aḥīkar begins on f. 81^a and goes to f. 106^a.

(K₂). Next to this comes a ms. in the British Museum from

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the collection of Claudius J. Rich, and numbered Add. 7209. It is a Karshuni MS. on paper and contains the story of Aḥīkar on ff. 182^b—213^b.

(K₃). We have not examined the Gotha MS. 2652 which contains on ff. 47^b—64^b a Karshuni text of the legend. The No. of this MS. is given by Cornill, *Buch der weisen Philosophen* p. 32, as 589, but by Kuhn in *Byzantin. Zeitschrift* I. 129 as 2562. The text of the sayings of Aḥīkar was printed from this MS. by Cornill.

(K₄). A similar MS. appears to be described by Assemani as No. xxxii. of Syriac MSS. from Aleppo; and

(K₅) Meissner appears to have another of the same type from the Sachau collection at Berlin. This MS. seems to be a later acquisition than those described in the *Kurzes Verzeichniss der Sachau'schen Sammlung*. It is written in a Neo-Aramaic dialect; and if we rightly understand Lidzbarski (*Geschichten und Lieder* p. x) it is a translation made from the Arabic by the deacon Isaiah of Kullith in the Tur-Abdîn. On this MS. (?) and on the printed text of Salhani, Lidzbarski bases his translation.

Of Arabic texts proper, there may probably be found examples in the library at Copenhagen and in the Vatican Library.

(A₁). Copenhagen. Cod. Arab. ccxxxvi., written in 1670, and containing on ff. 1—41, 'historiam fabulosam 'Haiqâri, Persici philosophi, qui San'haribi aetate vixisse fertur.'

(A₂). Assemani notes Cod. Arab. xi. (written in 1766) from the collection of Pope Innocent XIII.:

(A₃) and Cod. 55 amongst the Arabic MSS. in the Vatican.

(3) *Aethiopic.*

Next in order comes the Aethiopic text of the Sayings of Aḥīkar, which has been published by Cornill in his *Buch der weisen Philosophen*.

(Ae₁) (Ae₂). Cornill has two MSS., one from Frankfort and the other from Tübingen, which he designates by the signs F and T.

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We have not ventured to print the Aethiopic text, but have made some use of Cornill's rendering of it.

(4) *Armenian version.*

Of this version Mr Conybeare gives us the following description, including both copies and printed texts.

(Arm₁=Bod.). A MS. in the Bodleian Library, not yet catalogued or numbered. This is a paper MS., in a rare form of *notergir* or small cursive. The first page of Khikar has been torn out in such a way as to leave the beginnings of the last six lines on recto and verso.

(Arm₂ = Ven.). No. 482 in the Library of San Lazaro in Venice, written in *bolorgir* or large cursive, on parchment, undated, but of the late fifteenth or early sixteenth century.

(Arm₃ = Paris 92). In the Bibliothèque Nationale of Paris, Ancien Fonds Arménien No. 92, on paper. In this MS. only the last half of Khikar is contained from p. 141 of the printed text to the end. The scribe has added at the end of it the date 1067 of the Armenian era = A.D. 1619. The hand is a peculiar one, and the piece begins on fol. 179.

(Arm₄ = Paris Supp. 58). Bibliothèque Nationale, Fonds Arm. Supplément No. 58. On paper, in *notergir* or small cursive, ill-written in the seventeenth century. The text occupies fol. 253 to end of the MS. but is incomplete, and breaks off at p. 141.

(Arm₅ = Paris 131). Bibliothèque Nationale, Anc. Fonds Arm. No. 131, contains the text on foll. 213—228, written on paper, probably late in the seventeenth century, in an untidy *notergir* hand.

(Arm₆ = Paris 69). Bibliothèque Nationale, Anc. Fonds Arm. No. 69. A large quarto, well-written in large *bolorgir* or cursive, on charta bombycina in the seventeenth century. The text of Khikar begins with the precepts, the prelude being absent.

(Arm₇ = Bod. Canon). Bodleian Library, MS. Canon. Orient. 131; written in large clear *bolorgir* or cursive on charta bombycina.

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Khikar occupies foll. 1—36^v. This codex was written in New Djulfa or Ispahan A.D. 1697 by Hazrapet the priest for the use of a person named Israel.

Khikar is followed by the Romance of the Seven Sages and by the story of Barlaam and Josaphat.

(Arm._s = Edjm.). In the Library of Edjmiatzin, No. 2048 in the new Catalogue, a small well-written codex, in *notergir* or small cursive, on charta bombycina of about A.D. 1600. Of this codex Mr Conybeare transcribed in the year 1891 the exordium and the first eighteen precepts.

To the foregoing may be added the following copies contained in catalogues or otherwise known to exist :

In the catalogue of the library of Edjmiatzin printed in Tiflis in 1863,

| | | |
|-----------------------|---|--------------------------------|
| Nos. 1633 [A.D. 1604] | } | all on paper in small cursive. |
| 1995 [A.D. 1605] | | |
| 1986 [A.D. 1623] | | |
| 51 [A.D. 1642] | | |

Recently acquired by the British Museum, a small cursive ms. on paper, written in the 18th cent. The Berlin Library contains (see Dr Karamian's catalogue of Arm. ms.) a ms. of Khikar (No. 83 = MS. Or. Peterm. I. 147) of the year 1698, which contains the precepts on ff. 1—26^v. In this ms. as in Bodley Canon. Or. 131 Khikar is followed by the History of the Seven Sages.

It should further be noticed that the Armenian Khikar has been three times printed at Constantinople. Details of the three editions are given in the Armenian Bibliography issued at San Lazaro, Venice, in 1883. The first was printed in 1708 under the title 'The Book of the History of the Brazen City, and the Questions of the Damsel and Youth. And the History of Khikar and of king Phohloula and so forth, which is a picture of the world.' The editor was one Sargis.

The next edition was in 1731 under the title, 'The Book of the History called the Brazen City. And the instructive and helpful sayings of the wise man Khikar, with other profitable sayings.

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Printed in the year of our era 1106 (= A.D. 1731) in the press of the humble Astouatsatour.

The third edition was in 1862 at the press of R. J. Qurqdshean.

(5) *The Greek version.*

(Aes.). For the elucidation of this version we have printed those parts of the legends of the life and death of Aesop which appear to be an adaptation of the story of Aḥīkar. Our text is taken from Eberhard, *Fabulae Romanenses Graece conscriptae*. The part that corresponds to the story of Aḥīkar begins on p. 285, cxiii, and continues to p. 297, end of cxxxii. There is a good deal of variation in these Aesop legends.

(6) *The Slavonic version.*

(Sl.). Our text of this version is a translation from the German of Jagić, printed in *Byzant. Zeitsch.* i. pp. 107—126. No attempt has been made to follow up the Russian investigations of the subject. [There is also a Rumanian version; see Kuhn in *Byzant. Zeitsch.* i. p. 130.]

These, then, are the chief authorities for the text and its tradition. The editions of the Arabian Nights, and especially the translations, are hardly to be taken as authorities, on account of the freedom with which they handle the matter.

[To the foregoing must now be added

(7) The Old Turkish version which we have here given is a transliteration and a translation from a Vienna MS. (Cod. 468 of the Mechitarist Library)

and,

(8) which ought really to be first and foremost, the Aramaic version from Elephantiné, which we have described below.]

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CHAPTER III

OF THE PRINCIPAL CHARACTERS IN THE STORY OF AHIKAR

WE will commence our investigation into the primitive legend which underlies all the versions described above by enquiring into the tradition of the names of the chief personages in the story, with the view of determining the proper forms of those names, and of finding out anything further about the leading characters. First of all, with regard to the spelling of the name of the hero of the legend. We have found him described as Haykar [Heykar, Hiḱar] in the Arabic story: from two Karshuni MSS. which contain the story (K₁ and K₂) we have the spelling Ahiḱar and Hiḱar. The Syriac MS. in the British Museum has Ahiḱar, and so have the Cambridge and Berlin Syriac MSS. The Armenian text has *Khikar* which does not agree perfectly with any of the forms quoted, nor with the transliteration of Ἄχιάχαρος in the Armenian Tobit.

The evidence suggests a Syriac form *Ahiḱar* from which the Arabic, Karshuni and Aethiopic are derived. The Slavonic form is *Akyrios* which can hardly be primitive.

Now let us turn to the book of Tobit. The book exists in two Greek recensions and in Aramaic: of the two Greek recensions, that found in the Sinaitic MS. differs so radically from the text of the Vatican and Alexandrian MSS. that the Cambridge editors have felt obliged to print it separately at the foot of the text which is based on the Vatican MS. We must, then, examine carefully the evidence that is furnished by the two recensions when they may happen to differ. The passages to be examined are as follows:

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Tobit i. 21...

Vatican text.

καὶ ἐβασίλευσεν Σαχερδονός ὁ υἱὸς αὐτοῦ ἀντ' αὐτοῦ, καὶ ἔταξεν Ἀχιάχαρον τὸν Ἀναήλ υἱὸν τοῦ ἀδελφοῦ μου ἐπὶ πᾶσαν τὴν ἐκλογιστείαν τῆς βασιλείας αὐτοῦ καὶ ἐπὶ πᾶσαν τὴν διοίκησιν. καὶ ἠξίωσεν Ἀχιάχαρος περὶ ἐμοῦ, καὶ ἦλθον εἰς Νινευή. Ἀχιάχαρος δὲ ἦν ὁ οἰνοχόος καὶ ἐπὶ τοῦ δακτυλίου καὶ διοικητῆς καὶ ἐκλογιστῆς, καὶ κατέστησεν αὐτὸν ὁ Σαχερδονός, υἱὸς, ἐκ δευτέρας· ἦν δὲ ἐξἀδελφός μου.

Sinaitic text.

καὶ ἐβασίλευσεν Σαχερδονός υἱὸς αὐτοῦ μετ' αὐτόν, καὶ ἔταξεν Ἀχίεχαρον τὸν Ἀναήλ τὸν τοῦ ἀδελφοῦ μου υἱὸν ἐπὶ πᾶσαν τὴν ἐκλογιστείαν τῆς βασιλείας αὐτοῦ, καὶ αὐτὸς εἶχεν τὴν ἐξουσίαν ἐπὶ πᾶσαν τὴν διοίκησιν. τότε ἠξίωσεν Ἀχίεχαρος περὶ ἐμοῦ, καὶ κατῆλθον εἰς τὴν Νινευή. Ἀχίεχαρος γὰρ ἦν ὁ ἀρχιοινοχόος καὶ ἐπὶ τοῦ δακτυλίου καὶ διοικητῆς καὶ ἐκλογιστῆς ἐπὶ Σενναχηρείμβασιλέως Ἀσσυρίων, καὶ κατέστησεν αὐτὸν Σαχερδονός ἐκ δευτέρας. ἦν δὲ ἐξἀδελφός μου καὶ ἐκ τῆς συγγενίας μου.

καὶ ἐπὶ Σαρχεδόνος βασιλέως...

c. ii. 10.

καὶ ἐπορεύθην πρὸς ἰατρούς, καὶ οὐκ ἀφέλησάν με· Ἀχιάχαρος δὲ ἔτρεφέν με ἕως οὗ ἐπορεύθην εἰς τὴν Ἑλλημαίδα.

καὶ ἐπορευόμην πρὸς τοὺς ἰατροὺς θεραπευθῆναι, καὶ ὅσῳ ἐνεχρίσάν με τὰ φάρμακα, τοσοῦτ' ἄλλο ἐξετυφλοῦντο οἱ ὀφθαλμοί μου τοῖς λευκώμασιν μέχρι τοῦ ἀποτυφλωθῆναι. καὶ ἤμην ἀδύνατος τοῖς ὀφθαλμοῖς ἕτη τέσσερα. καὶ πάντες οἱ ἀδελφοί μου ἐλυποῦντο περὶ ἐμοῦ, καὶ Ἀχιάχαρος ἔτρεφέν με ἕτη δύο πρὸ τοῦ αὐτὸν βαδίσει εἰς τὴν Ἑλυμαίδα.

c. xi. 17, 18.

καὶ ἐγένετο χαρὰ πᾶσι τοῖς ἐν Νινευὶ ἀδελφοῖς αὐτοῦ. καὶ παρεγένετο Ἀχιάχαρος καὶ Νασβᾶς ὁ ἐξἀδελφός αὐτοῦ.

ἐν τῇ ἡμέρᾳ ταύτῃ ἐγένετο χαρὰ πᾶσι τοῖς Ἰουδαίοις τοῖς οὖσιν ἐν Νινευή, καὶ παρεγένοντο Ἀχικάρ καὶ Ναβᾶδ οἱ ἐξἀδελφοὶ αὐτοῦ χαίροντες πρὸς Τῶβειν.

c. xiv. 10.

τέκνον, ἴδε τί ἐποίησεν Ἀδὰμ Ἀχιαχάρῳ τῷ θρέψαντι αὐτόν, ὡς ἐκ τοῦ φωτὸς ἤγαγεν αὐτὸν εἰς τὸ σκότος καὶ ὅσα ἀνταπέδωκεν αὐτῷ· καὶ Ἀχιάχαρον μὲν ἔσωσεν, ἐκείνῳ δὲ τὸ ἀνταπόδομα ἀπέδότη, καὶ αὐτὸς κατέβη εἰς τὸ σκότος. Μανασσῆς ἐποίησεν ἐλεημοσύνην, καὶ ἐσώθη ἐκ παγίδος θανάτου ἧς ἔπηξεν αὐτῷ, Ἀδὰμ δὲ ἐνέπεσεν εἰς τὴν παγίδα καὶ ἀπώλετο.

ἴδε, παιδίον, ὅσα Ναδᾶβ ἐποίησεν Ἀχικάρῳ τῷ ἐκθρέψαντι αὐτόν, οὐχὶ ζῶν κατηνέχθη εἰς τὴν γῆν; καὶ ἀπέδωκεν ὁ θεὸς τὴν ἀτιμίαν κατὰ πρόσωπον αὐτοῦ· καὶ ἐξῆλθεν εἰς τὸ φῶς Ἀχίκαρος, καὶ Ναδᾶβ εἰσῆλθεν εἰς τὸ σκότος τοῦ αἰῶνος ὅτι ἐζήτησεν ἀποκτεῖναι Ἀχίκαρον. ἐν τῷ ποιῆσαι με ἐλεημοσύνην ἐξῆλθεν ἐκ τῆς παγίδος τοῦ θανάτου ἧς ἔπηξεν αὐτῷ Ναδᾶβ, καὶ Ναδᾶβ ἔπεσεν εἰς τὴν παγίδα τοῦ θανάτου καὶ ἀπώλεσεν αὐτόν.

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c. xiv. 15.

καὶ ἤκουσεν πρὶν ἢ ἀποθανεῖν αὐτὸν
τὴν ἀπωλίαν Νινευῆ ἣν ἠχμαλώτισεν
Ναβουχοδοноσορ καὶ Ἀσύρος.

καὶ εἶδεν καὶ ἤκουσεν πρὸ τοῦ ἀπο-
θανεῖν αὐτὸν τὴν ἀπωλίαν Νινευῆ, καὶ
εἶδεν τὴν αἰχμαλωσίαν αὐτῆς ἀγομένην
εἰς Μηδείαν ἣν ἠχμαλώτισεν Ἀχιάκαρος
ὁ βασιλεὺς τῆς Μηδίας.

It will be noticed that while the Vatican MS. has Ἀχιάχαρος and once, by some extraordinary confusion, Μανασσῆς, the Sinaitic has Ἀχείχαρος, Ἀχειάχαρος, Ἀχιάχαρος, Ἀχεικάρ, Ἀχίκαρος, and Ἀχείκαρος; and in three cases the Sinaitic text of Tobit has the form which is equivalent to the Syro-Arabic tradition of the legend of Ahikar. Moreover the same form appears in the versions of the book of Tobit, which are derived from the Greek of Tobit. Thus the Peshito as edited by Lagarde has **יאור**, and **יאוא**, of which the former is a scribe's blunder for **יאור**. The Old Latin has the same form *Achicarus*, and the Vulgate, which has corrected this by means of a Chaldee text, has fallen, in the single case in which it has preserved the references to the legend, into the same error that we detected in the Peshito, viz. Achior¹.

Of the other forms in which the Tobit legend occurs we do not need to speak at length.

It is sufficient to have shown that the evidence for the spelling Ahikar is very strong, as far as regards the Septuagint and the versions that are dependent on it².

Turning to the nephew of Ahikar, we find the texts in sad

¹ From this Meissner conjectures that the Chaldee of which Jerome speaks was the Peshito.

² [The name in question has now turned up, and our spelling is justified. The following note by C. J. Ball in the *Expository Times* for July 1908, p. 473 will put the matter clearly. 'An old Babylonian tablet in the Library of St John's College, Oxford, sets at rest the question of the origin of the curious name Achicarus (Tob. i. 21 etc.). Here we find among the witnesses to a deed of sale, executed in the reign of Apel Sin, the fourth king of the First Dynasty (circa 2100 B.C.) a certain *Achu-waqar* (A-chu-wa-qar) the *kamarum* (perhaps priest, cf. Heb. כַּמְרִים Zeph. i. 4). This confirms the חִמְרִיקָא of the Hebrew and Aramaic versions of Tobit, and proves that the name is not Persian, but pure Semitic. Other tablets in the same collection give us *Abam-waqar Uli-waqar*.']

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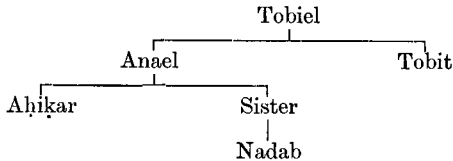
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INTRODUCTION

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confusion, both as regards his relationship to the chief character, and the spelling of his name. The Vatican text treats us to *Nasbas* and *Adam*. Of these it has been suggested that the former is meant for the younger brother of Nadan: the latter arises out of *ἐποίησε Nadám* by a wrong division of the words. The Sinaitic MS. on the other hand varies between *Naβάδ* and *Nadáβ* of which the latter is the proper form to edit. We have thus two related forms *Nadám* and *Nadáβ* to set over against the *Nadán* of the Syro-Arabic *Aḥikar*. It is not necessary to decide which form has the priority in a case where the modifications are mere phonetic variations. As for the versions of Tobit, they show the same variants, *plus* an occasional independent variation in the transcription. The Old Latin has *Nabal* and *Nabad* and the Vulgate the equivalent *Nabath*. The Peshito reads **ܢܒܬܐ** and **ܢܒܬܐ** which are Syriac blunders for *Nadab* and *Nadan*. The Slavonic version of *Aḥikar* reads *Anadan*. The two names, then, can be restored in the LXX. of Tobit into close agreement with the Syro-Arabic forms of the legend of *Aḥikar*. And there can be no residuum of doubt that the same persons are intended.

There is, however, much confusion in the tradition of the Septuagint. According to the legend of *Aḥikar*, Nadab is his sister's son, and the whole story turns on this relationship. But in the Vatican Tobit, we are first told that *Aḥikar* is the son of Tobit's brother, then that he is his *ἐξάδελφος*; then that *Nasbas* (*Nadab*?) is *ἐξάδελφος* to *Aḥikar*, and finally that *Aḥikar* is *Nadab*'s foster-father. We thus have, if we may strain the meaning of *ἐξάδελφος*, a table of consanguinity as follows:



The Sinaitic text of Tob. xi. 18, on the other hand, supported by the Vulgate (*Achior et Nabath consobrini Tobiae*), will have it that both *Aḥikar* and *Nadab* are *ἐξάδελφοι* to Tobit, but this