

“Between Fire and Water: The Evil Inclination and Free Will in Ben Sira 15”

Understanding Sin and Evil, Episode #17

Dr. Miryam Brand

Below are the different relevant versions of 15:11–20 with the Septuagint of verses 14–15, discussed in the podcast – translation of both the Greek and the Hebrew follows those verses. Subscript “add” means that this is “additional” – it is not found in the Greek. Also included are other passages discussed in the podcast: 27:6 and 17:6–7.

Ben Sira 15:11–17

English

Hebrew

11 Do not say “From God is my sin,” for that which he hated he did not make.

11 אל תאמר מאל פשעי
כי את אשר שנא לא עשה:

12 Lest you say “He caused me to stumble,” for there is no need for wicked people (lit., “men of violence”).

12 פן תאמר הוא התקילני
כי אין צורך באנשי חמס:

13 Wickedness and abomination the Lord hates; and will not let it befall those who fear him.

13 רעה ותעבה שנא יי
ולא יאננה ליראיו:

Greek (LXX)	Hebrew (Manuscript A)
14a αὐτὸς ἐξ ἀρχῆς ἐποίησεν ἄνθρωπον	14a אלהים מבראשית ברא אדם 14a _{add} וישתיהו ביד חותפו
14b καὶ ἀφῆκεν αὐτὸν ἐν χειρὶ διαβουλίου αὐτοῦ.	14b ויתנהו ביד יצרו:
15 εἰ θέλῃς, συντηρήσεις ἐντολὰς καὶ πίστιν ποιῆσαι εὐδοκίας.	15 אם תחפץ תשמר מצוה ותבונה לעשות רצונו: 15 _{add} אם תאמין בו גם אתה תחיה:
Translation of Greek (LXX)	Translation of Hebrew (MS A)
14a It was he who from the beginning made humankind,	14a God from the beginning created humankind (lit., “man”) 14a _{add} And placed him in the hand of his snatcher
14b and he left him in the hand of his diaboulion.	14b and placed him in the hand of his yēšer.
15 If you want to, you shall preserve the commandments, and to keep faith is a matter of goodwill.	15 If you wish you will keep (his) commandment and understanding to do his will. 15 _{add} If you believe in him, you too shall live.

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Ben Sira 15:11–17 continued

English

Hebrew

15 If you wish (*thps*) you will keep (his) commandment and understanding to do his will.

15_{add} If you believe in him, you too shall live.

16 There are poured out before you fire and water; to whichever you wish (*thps*) stretch forth your hands.

17 Before (each) human are life and death; that which he desires (*yhps*) shall be given to him.

15 אם תחפץ תשמר מצוה ותבונה לעשות רצונו:

15_{add} אם תאמין בו גם אתה תחיה:

16 מוצק לפניך אש ומים באשר תחפץ שלח ידיך:

17 לפני אדם חיים ומוות אשר יחפץ ינתן לו:

Translation of Ben Sira (Hebrew and LXX) 27:6

Translation of Hebrew (MS A):

Translation of Greek (LXX):

According to the cultivation of the tree, so will the fruit be;

So is the account/reckoning (חשבון) according to the individual's *yēšer*.

Its fruit brings to light a tree's cultivation – so reasoning (*logismos*) (brings to light) notions (*enthumēmata*) of a person's heart.

Translation of Ben Sira (LXX) 17:6–7

6. Deliberation (*diaboulion*) and a tongue and eyes, ears and a heart for thinking he gave them.

7. With knowledge of understanding he filled them, and good things and bad he showed them.