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The Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs

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Structure and genre

The Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs (T12P), a pseudepigraphon originally written in Greek, consists of twelve parts or 'testaments'. Each Testament contains the last words of one of the twelve sons of Jacob addressed to his sons (and other relatives) at the end of his life. It has a stereotyped structure. The 'farewell speech' which forms the bulk of a Testament is always preceded by an introductory passage indicating that what is to follow is the Patriarch's farewell discourse and giving some details about the circumstances under which the speech was delivered. All Testaments end with a small passage giving some information about the Patriarch's death and burial. The framework and above all the stereotyped introductory and concluding passages have been grafted upon Old Testament examples, particularly upon Gen. 49 (Jacob's 'farewell speech' to his sons).

The 'farewell speech' itself usually consists of three parts. First, the Patriarch tells his sons about his life in the past and describes his own moral behaviour (the biographical part). Above all, his former relation towards Joseph forms a constituent element in the description of his ethical attitude in the past. Some of the Patriarchs, like Simeon, Dan and Gad, plead guilty and point to their sins, which consist of vices like hatred, jealousy, envy, anger and lying. Zebulun, however, stresses his goodness to Joseph. The biographical part serves as a kind of introduction to the second part, the parenetic (that is, hortatory) section. Now the patriarch turns to his sons to exhort them not to fall into the same sins or, if he has been a virtuous man, to exhort them to imitate him. This part usually contains all kinds of details about particular virtues or vices. This section runs into the third part of the speech, where the Patriarch foretells what will happen to his sons in the future and usually adds some words about the future salvation of the people of Israel (and the Gentiles), which will be brought about by God 'at the end of times' (the passage dealing with the future or the eschatological part). For a fine example of this tripartite structure, see T1ss (translated and commented on below).
The Ti2P do not provide the only examples of 'farewell discourses'. There are plenty of examples in the Old Testament, in other Jewish writings as well as in the New Testament, e.g. Gen. 49; Deut. 33; Josh. 23; 1 Kings 2:1-10; John 13-17; Acts 20:17-38 (and in early Christian literature). Nevertheless, the 'farewell discourse' as a genre with its particular features is a rather late literary product. It was a favourite genre in the intertestamental period and one of the first examples is found in the book of Tobit (chapters 4 and 14). In all instances of 'last words' - 'testament' may be a misleading term, since 'farewell discourses' are not juridical at all and can quite easily do without the actual term *diathēkē*, 'testament' - the emphasis lies undeniably upon the parenesis. The Ti2P are no exception to the rule. At his death-bed the Patriarch makes a final and dramatic call on his sons who are standing around his bed, to be obedient to God and to do his commandments. Besides he seems to be inspired in those moments just before his death and has acquired knowledge of future events.

**Joseph as an ideal of virtue**

One of the basic elements of the pareneses of the Ti2P is the exemplary role of Joseph. He is a good example for his sons in his own farewell speech, and he is introduced as an illuminating example in some of the other Testaments. Above all he is a representative of the author's ideal of man. For the author, a 'good man' is somebody who loves God and his neighbour. Love to God is put into practice by keeping God's - obviously moral - commandments. Love to one's neighbour requires a noble social behaviour. It implies above all mercy and compassion, forgiveness, sympathy, sexual purity, steadfastness and endurance, and it is characterized by 'singleness' or 'simplicity', that means by absolute integrity. TBenj, the twelfth and last Testament, contains some kind of résumé summing up in one continuous discourse all the scattered statements concerning the author's ethical ideal of man (see TBenj 4-6 translated and commented on below).

**Traditions and sources**

In the parenetic sections of the Testaments the author clearly shows his great dependence on the Old Testament, or rather on the Septuagint. In particular the Psalms and Jewish wisdom literature (above all Proverbs, Job, Ecclesiastes, and the book of Jesus Sirach) have influenced the author deeply. On the other hand, the hellenistic background is
obvious, far more than in the wisdom books found in the Septuagint. The parenesis of the Ti2P cannot be considered as typical Jewish or typical Christian. Moreover, Christianity adopted (nearly) all the standard topics of Jewish parenesis.

Certainly, the author made use of all kinds of oral and written sources. It is even possible that he belonged to a school or circle of wisdom where biblical passages and every kind of source and tradition were discussed. If this is considered a likely explanation for the composition of the parenetic sections, it seems certain for the biographical and eschatological passages. For here we have at our disposal some (old and fragmentary) manuscripts found partly in the Cairo Genizah, partly at Qumran and partly elsewhere, showing that the author of the Ti2P was acquainted with stories and traditions very similar to those found in these documents. This is particularly obvious from the biographical sections in the Ti2P where the author gives much more information about the Patriarchs’ lives than can be drawn from Genesis alone.

As for the eschatological sections, the situation seems to be more complex. There is not only a great variety in the sections in the Ti2P that deal with the future, but Jewish and Christian elements seem to be mixed up here. Nevertheless, two or three regularly recurring ‘patterns’ can be distinguished. First, there are the so-called ‘Sin–Exile–Return’ passages, giving a description of Israel’s future sins, their punishment by God (exile) and finally God’s compassion and Israel’s return to the promised land. These passages obviously have their background in the ‘deuteronomistic kerygma’. Secondly, there are ‘Levi–Judah’ passages, where the Patriarch exhorts his sons to honour Levi and Judah, since the priesthood has been given to Levi and the kingship to Judah, and Israel’s salvation will spring from these two tribes. Connected with the latter motif, some passages are found dealing with the future Messiah (and the future resurrection), and here the Christian elements are most numerous and prominent, such as when the Patriarchs refer to the coming of Jesus Christ who will save Israel together with the Gentiles. For an example, see TJud 24 translated and commented on below.

**Jewish or Christian?**

This brings us to the rather difficult question of whether the Ti2P are originally Jewish (with some Christian additions or interpolations) or Christian. In spite of the many ingenious attempts to argue for different stages of redaction or extensive interpolations in an originally Jewish
document, it seems wiser to regard the text as a literary product and as a coherent unity. That means, to regard the text either as a Christian composition in which a number of Jewish sources and traditions have been incorporated, or as a Jewish document which was thoroughly christianized so that it has become impossible to remove ‘Christian’ elements without affecting the whole of the Ti2P. In any case, the text of the Ti2P as it lies before us now seems to be an attempt of a Christian in the second century to show Jews and Christians that the Jews were wrong in having rejected Jesus Christ as God’s Messiah and that their own famous forefathers had foretold their disobedience and had warned them, when they gave their final exhortations to their sons and instructed them to pass their teachings on to their children (and so on). Nevertheless, the Christian author (or redactor) of the Ti2P also points to the future salvation, not only of the (righteous) Gentiles (the Christians), but also of the people of Israel, as foretold by the Patriarchs.

Witnesses to the text

Remarkably, there are only a few clear references to the Ti2P in early Christian literature (in Origen and Jerome), which implies that the role of the Ti2P within the early Church was not very important. The ‘history’ of the Ti2P until the ninth or tenth century remains rather obscure. At least from that time onwards the Ti2P was a popular writing as is attested by the fifteen manuscripts, some of them containing a continuous Greek text and others only excerpts, dating from the tenth to the eighteenth century, and by the many versions (Armenian, Slavonic, Serbian, Latin and New Greek) all made from the Greek text. (For details see the Leiden edition of 1978.)

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GREEK TEXT:

MODERN TRANSLATIONS:
SECONDARY LITERATURE:


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THE TESTAMENT OF ISSACHAR ON SIMPLICITY

Each Testament centres round a particular theme, usually a virtue or a vice that has played some part in the Patriarch’s own life. If possible, it is linked up with some data about the Patriarch found in the Genesis stories or in Jewish tradition. In the case of Issachar the author of the Ti2P deals with the Patriarch’s life and work as a farmer, a theme suggested by the Greek translation of Gen. 49:14-15: ‘...having seen the resting-place that it was good, and the land that it was fertile, he subjected his shoulders to labour and became a farmer’. Next, being aware of the positive appreciation of the farmer’s life and virtues in Greek and hellenistic thought, he introduces the virtue of ‘simplicity’ as characteristic of Issachar, since agriculture, hard work and ‘simplicity’ in food, clothing, dwelling and other aspects of life, were considered as belonging together. In T12P ‘simplicity’ or ‘singleness’ means the integrity of the pious man who has chosen God wholeheartedly and who is obedient to him alone, which includes the fulfilment of the two great commandments and fidelity to the law. For the virtue of ‘simplicity’ elsewhere, cp., e.g., 1 Macc. 2:37, 60; Job 1:1 (LXX, variant); 1:8 (LXX, variant); Matt. 6:22; Luke, 11:34; Col. 3:22; Eph. 6:5.

Issachar’s birth and namegiving: Tiss 1-2

This section retells (and changes) the story of the mandrakes, the apples that bring fertility, found in Gen. 30:14-18 LXX (see also 30:19-24).
1:1 A Copy of the words of Issachar.

After having called his sons he said to them:
Listen, children, to Issachar your father,
give ear to (his) words, you beloved of the Lord.

2 I was born as the fifth son to Jacob, in exchange for the mandrakes.

3 For Reuben brought the mandrakes from the field, and Rachel, meeting him before, took them. But Reuben wept and at his voice my mother Leah came out. – Now these (mandrakes) were sweet-smelling apples which the land of Aram produced on a high place below a ravine of water. – Rachel said: ‘I shall not give them to you, for they will be to me instead of children.’

7 – Now there were two apples. – And Leah said: ‘Let it suffice you that you have taken the husband of my virginity; would you take these also?’ But she said: ‘Behold, Jacob shall be yours this night for the mandrakes of your son.’ But Leah said to her: ‘Do not boast or vaunt yourself; for Jacob is mine and I am the wife of his youth.’ But Rachel said: ‘How so? For he was betrothed to me first and for my sake he served our father for fourteen years. What can I do for you? For the craft and the cunning of men have multiplied and craft prospers on earth. If not, you would not be seeing the face of Jacob; for you are not his wife, but by craft you were led in in my place. And my father deceived me, and removing me that night, he did not let me see it (or: him); for if I had been there this had not happened.’ And Rachel said: ‘Take one mandrake, and for this one I shall hire him to you for one night.’ And Jacob knew Leah, and she conceived and bore me; and on account of the hire I was called Issachar.

2:1 Then an angel of the Lord appeared to Jacob, saying: ‘Two children will Rachel bear, because she has despised intercourse with a man and has chosen continency.’ And if my mother Leah had not paid the two apples for the sake of intercourse, she would have borne eight sons. Therefore she bore six, and Rachel bore the two, because on account of the mandrakes the Lord visited her. For he saw that for the sake of children she wished to have intercourse with Jacob and not for lust of pleasure. For on the next day she
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gave Jacob up again, in order that she might receive also the other mandrake. Therefore, on account of the mandrakes, the Lord listened to Rachel. For though she desired them she did not eat them, but she dedicated them in the house of the Lord, offering them to the priest of the Most High who was there at that time.

1:1. Usual superscription and introduction.
1:2. Theme of chapter 1.
1:5. Note about the mandrakes. the land of Aram: the Hebrew Bible speaks of Paddan-Aram and Laban the Aramean, the Septuagint of Mesopotamia and Laban the Syrian. In the T12P, see TJud 10:1, ‘Tamar...from Mesopotamia, daughter of Aram’.
1:7. the husband of my virginity: cp. Joel 1:8 LXX; Ecclus. 15:2.
1:9. wife of his youth: cp. Prov. 5:18; Mal. 2:14f (and Ecclus. 15:2).
1:10. How so? introduces an objection. he served our father: cp. Gen. 29:15, 18, 20, 25, 30, etc. The fourteen years are mentioned in Gen. 31:41; there they are connected with two daughters, but the view that Jacob served this period for Rachel is in tune with the story in Genesis.
1:11. For the craft and the cunning of men have multiplied: cp. verses 12f; see Gen. 6:5. seeing the face of Jacob: ‘to see the face of’ is a standard expression in the Old Testament, see Gen. 32:21(20); 33:10; 43:3, 5, etc., and cp. also Acts 20:25, 38, etc.
1:15. Cp. Gen. 30:17. For ‘to know’ in this sense, see Gen. 4:1, 17, 25, etc. For verse 15b, cp. Gen. 30:18.

Chapter 2 continues the story of chapter 1; it refers freely to the events mentioned in Gen. 30:19–24 and emphasizes Rachel’s continency and piety.

2:2. Leah sells two apples for two nights with Jacob and ‘loses’ two children. Instead of eight sons for Leah and none for Rachel, the division will now be six for Leah and two for Rachel. visited her: the
same expression is used in Gen. 21:1 in the case of Sarah and in 1 Sam. 2:21 in the case of Hannah.

2:3. The idea that the only purpose of marriage is the procreation of children is often found in hellenistic, Jewish hellenistic and early Christian literature.

2:4. This verse explains verses 1 and 3. listened to: cp. Gen. 30:22.

2:5. Because of extreme piety Rachel dedicated the mandrakes in a temple, offering them to the priest. Wishing to emphasize the unbroken continuity in the succession of priests, the author introduces ‘the priest of the Most High’, adapting the terminology from Gen. 14:18 (Melchizedek, ‘the priest of God, the Most High’).

Issachar’s life and work as a farmer and his ‘simplicity’: TIs 3

3:1 When, therefore, I grew up, my children,
I walked in uprightness of heart,
and I became a farmer for my fathers and my brothers,
and I brought in fruits from the fields according to their season.

2 And my father blessed me, seeing that I walk in simplicity.

3 And I was not a busy-body in my affairs,
nor wicked and malicious against my neighbour;

4 I did not slander anyone
nor did I censure the life of a man
walking (as I did) in singleness of eyes.

5 Therefore, at the age of thirty I took myself a wife,
for my labour wore away my strength,
and I did not think of pleasure with a woman,
but because of my toil sleep overcame me.

6 And always my father rejoiced in my simplicity;
for if I laboured on anything,
I offered all the choice fruit and all the first fruit,
first through the priest to the Lord,
then to my father, and then I myself (took from it).

7 And the Lord doubled the goods in my hands.
And also Jacob knew that God aided my simplicity.

8 For upon everyone who was poor and everyone who was oppressed
I bestowed the good things of the earth in singleness of heart.
3:1–2. General picture. Issachar who works as a farmer also for his family, is blessed by his father because of his virtuous life. *uprightness*: this term finds its origin in the Old Testament; it simplifies true service of God by keeping his commandments, and like ‘simplicity’ it denotes integrity and complete obedience. and *I became a farmer*: Gen. 49:14–15 LXX, ‘Issachar . . . became a farmer’.

3:3–4. These verses describe the faults which man should avoid. *not a busy-body*: simplicity excludes meddlesome curiosity.

3:5. Issachar’s attitude towards women, introduced by the clause ‘in singleness of eyes’ (verse 4); cp. 7:2; and TBenj 6:2–3. ‘Singleness of eyes’ leads to chastity.


3:7. *And the Lord doubled*: this theme is particularly found in traditions concerning Job; cp. Job 42:10 LXX; TJob 4:7; 44:5; 53:8. Job was rewarded because he was steadfast in his troubles and did not give up his trust in God, but also his generosity towards the poor is mentioned.

3:8. *poor . . . oppressed*: helping the poor is a well-known theme in the Old Testament, Jewish and Christian literature; this help is often carried out in the provision of food; see TJos 3:5; TJob 10:6; 12:1; 13:4; Philo, Spec Leg ii.105; Virt 90; 97. *the good things of the earth*: cp. Ezra 9:12; Isa. 1:19; 1 Esdras 8:82; TJob 17:3; Philo, Det Pot Ins 156.

*The parenetic section of the Testament*: TIss 4:1–5:3

4:1 And now, listen to me, children, and walk in singleness of heart, for I have seen (that) all the pleasure of the Lord (rests) upon it.

2 The single(-minded) man does not covet gold, he does not overreach his neighbour, he does not desire a variety of food, he does not want varied apparel, he does not plan to live a long time, but he only waits for the will of God,

4 and the spirits of deceit have no power against him. For he does not look to welcome the beauty of a woman, lest he would pollute his mind with perversion;

5 no envy will invade his thoughts,
no malice will make his soul pine away
nor does he think of money-getting with insatiable desire.

6 For he walks in uprightness of life
and looks at all things in simplicity,
not welcoming with the eyes bad things that come from the
deceit of the world,
lest he would see anything in the commandments of the
Lord in a perverted way.

5:1 Keep, therefore, the law of God, my children,
and acquire simplicity,
and walk in guilelessness,
not meddling with the commandments of the Lord and
the affairs of your neighbour.

2 But love the Lord and your neighbour,
show mercy to the poor and the weak.

3 Bow down your back to farming,
and be at work in the works of the earth in all sorts of farm work,
offering gifts to the Lord with thanksgiving.

4:1. Direct parenesis; central theme: ‘singleness’ (of heart); cp. 3:8; 5:1.


4:2. The combination of ideas expressed in the four negative
phrases constitutes a hellenistic *topos*. ‘Simple’ life advocates simple
food, plain clothing, modest houses and the absence of greediness.

4:3. *He does not plan to live a long time*: the motif that the righteous
man should not ask God for a long life is derived from the story of
Solomon who asked for wisdom instead of wealth or a long life or the
lives of his enemies (1 Kings 3:10f; 2 Chron. 1:11). *He only waits for the
will of God*: cp. TGAD 7:1ff; Jas. 4:15. Man cannot take his future in
his own hands.

4:4-5. Waiting only for the will of God means that ‘the spirits of
deceit’ will have no hold on a person. Consequently, vices connected
with these spirits are foreign to the ‘single-minded’ man’s nature. *He
does not look to welcome the beauty of a woman*: warnings against ‘the
beauty of women’ are often found in the Ti2P. *Make his soul pine away*: cp. Ecclus. 18:18; 31:1; Plutarch, *De sera numinis vindicta* 27 (Mor. 566A), ‘...that the intelligent part of the soul is dissolved away...by
pleasure’.
4:6. *in uprightness of life...in simplicity:* cp. 3:1. The expression *the deceit of the world* (cp. Justin, *Dialogue* 113:6) characterizes the real nature of all the evils mentioned in this chapter.


5:1. *walk in guilelessness:* cp. Ps. 26:1, 11; 84:11; and Hermas, *Visio* 2, 3, 2.

5:2. *love the Lord and your neighbour:* sums up the essential in keeping the law of God (cp. verse 1a). The love for one's neighbour is specified as: *show mercy to the poor and the weak,* with this phrase the author returns to 3:8.


*The blessings bestowed on Issachar and his tribe, on Levi and Judah (a 'Levi–Judah' passage), and on Gad: TIss 5:4–8*

5:4 Because with the first fruits of the earth the Lord blessed you even as he blessed all the saints from Abel until now.

5 For no other portion is given to you than that of the fatness of the earth whose fruits are raised by toil.

6 Because our father Jacob blessed me with blessings of the earth and first fruits.

7 And Levi and Judah were glorified among the sons of Jacob, for (to them) the Lord gave an inheritance among them, and to the one he gave the priesthood and to the other the kingdom.

8 Do you, therefore, obey them and walk in the simplicity of your father.

For also to Gad it has been given to destroy the bands that come against Israel.

5:4–6. The tribe of Issachar has been charged by God with agriculture. This is motivated by a reference to Jacob's blessing of Issachar (cp. 3:2) found in Gen. 49:15 LXX.

5:7–8. Now the Patriarch emphasizes the particular privileges and tasks allotted to Levi and Judah and asks his sons to obey them. *priesthood...kingdom:* see TJud 21:2; 17:3; TLevi 5:2; 8:2; see also Ecclus. 45:6–7 and 45:23–6.
5:8c. A clear reference to Gen. 49:19 LXX. Why Gad's task is mentioned here is not quite clear.

The part of the Testament dealing with the future (introduced by the 'Levi-Judah' passage in 5:7-8), giving a 'Sin-Exile-Return' passage: TIss 6:1-4

6:1 I know, my children, that in the last times your sons will forsake simplicity and will cleave to insatiable desire, and leaving guilelessness they will draw near to wickedness, and forsaking the commandments of the Lord they will cleave to Beliar,

2 and leaving (their) farm work they will follow after their wicked thoughts and they will be dispersed among the nations and will serve their enemies.

3 And do you, therefore, say this to your children in order that, if they sin, they may quickly return to the Lord.

4 For he is merciful and will deliver them, to bring them back into their land.

6:1-2a. Description of the future sins of Issachar's children. They will give up their farm work, and consequently, simplicity, guilelessness, in short, the law of God. in the last times: in the future, cp. Gen. 49:1. Beliar: the prince of the spirits of deceit, God's adversary who will be destroyed by Jesus at the end of times. Beliar, or Belial, is also found elsewhere as the name of the devil: see, e.g., 1QS i.18, 24; ii.5; CD iv.13, 15; v.18; Jub 15.33; Ascenls 4:2; 2 Cor. 6:15.

6:2b. Exile; cp. TJud 23:3; TNaph 4:2; and also Deut. 28:48; Jer. 15:14.

6:3. Repentance (cp. TJud 23:5; TZeb 9:7; TDan 5:6; TNaph 4:3; and also 1 Sam. 7:3; Isa. 31:5f, etc.). do you...say this to your children: this is one of the sentences in which the purpose of the Testaments is explicitly mentioned; future generations are warned.


The concluding section of the Testament: TIss 7:7-9

After some other verses about the Patriarch's exemplary life ending with a reference to the two great commandments practised by Issachar (TIss 7:1-6), we read finally:
7:7  Do you also these things, my children, and every spirit of Beliar will flee from you and no deed of wicked men will rule over you and every wild beast you will subdue, having with you the God of heaven, walking together with men in singleness of heart.

8  And he commanded them that they should carry him up to Hebron, and bury him there in the cave with his fathers. And he stretched out his feet and died, the fifth (son of Jacob), at a good old age, (still) having every limb sound; and being strong he slept the eternal sleep.

7:7. General exhortation. *every spirit of Beliar...you will subdue:* on the virtuous man the spirits of evil, wicked men and wild beasts have no hold (cp. TDan 5:1; TNaph 8:4; TBenj 3:3–5; 5:1–2). *having with you the God of heaven:* cp. TDan 5:2. God’s presence in the life of the good man is expressed in various ways in TBenj 6:1, 3, 4. Now, this idea takes an eschatological turn: *walking together with men in singleness of heart,* referring to the coming of God in Jesus Christ. This phrase, and thereby the whole verse, is, therefore, most probably understood as referring to the eschatological future realized in Jesus Christ. Cp. TJud 24:1 where a similar phrase occurs in connection with the coming of Christ on earth (translated and commented on below).


THE ETHICS OF THE T12P

A fine example of the ethics of the T12P is found in the Testament of Benjamin, particularly in TBenj 3–6. In this Testament the author gives one continuous discourse concerning his ethical ideal of man. This résumé centres round the ‘good man’ (the man with a ‘good mind’), the personification of this ideal. And since Joseph corresponds to this ethical ideal, it is he who is introduced as an illuminating
example, whereas the role of Benjamin himself is restricted to a
minimum.

First we find exhortations to fear and love God, to keep his command-
ments and to love one's neighbour, together with an explanation of
the beneficial effects of such an attitude and a clear reference to the
career of Joseph (TBenj 3). Then Benjamin gives a first description of
the ideal of the 'good man' in chapter 4:

4:1 See, children, the end of the good man.
    Be followers, therefore, of his compassion with a good mind,
    that you also may wear crowns of glory.
2 The good man has not a dark eye.
    For he shows mercy to all men,
    even though they are sinners;
3 even though they devise with to do him harm,
    by doing good he overcomes the evil,
    because he is shielded by the good.
    But he loves the righteous as his own soul.
4 If anyone is glorified, he is not envious;
    if anyone is rich, he is not jealous;
    if anyone is valiant, he eulogizes him;
    the virtuous man he trusts and praises;
    on the poor man he has mercy;
    with the weak man he feels sympathy;
    unto God he sings praises.
5 As for him who has the fear of God, he protects him as with a
    shield;
    him who loves God he helps;
    him who rejects the Most High he admonishes and turns
    back;
    and him who has the grace of a good spirit he loves as his own
    soul.

4:1. Direct parenesis. the end of the good man: the 'exaltation' of
Joseph, his kingship given by God as a reward for his pious attitude
during the time of his distress and humiliation as a slave and as a
prisoner. Benjamin's sons are exhorted to be Joseph's imitators. compassion: one of Joseph's main virtues in the Ti2P.

4:2–5. Description of the good man's attitude towards others.

4:2a. has not a dark eye: the good man's mind is not 'blinded' or 'darkened' by evil spirits or vices; cp. 3:2; TDan 2:4; TGad 5:7; TJud 13:6; 14:1.

4:2b–3. he shows mercy to all men...he loves the righteous as his own soul: this twofold attitude of the good man shows qualities that belong to God, for traditionally it is God who 'has mercy on all men' (cp. Wisd. 11:23; and also 15:1; Ecclus. 18:13; Rom. 11:32) and who 'loves the righteous' (cp. Ps. 146:8; and also Prov. 15:9). by doing good he overcomes the evil: cp. 5:2, 4f; TJos 18:2; and esp. Rom. 12:21, 'but use good to defeat evil'.

4:4. In this verse, the good man's attitude towards some specific groups of people (and towards God) is mentioned by way of a climax: towards honourable and rich men, towards virtuous men, towards the poor and weak, and finally towards God. if anyone is glorified, he is not envious; if anyone is rich, he is not jealous: cp. TGad 7:1ff. The background of the motif of envy and jealousy because of another's wealth and glory is to be found in Greek and Jewish Hellenism (see, e.g., Plutarch, De recta ratione audiendi 5 (Mor. 39 E), 'Now the man who is stung by the wealth, or repute, or beauty possessed by another, is merely envious; for he is depressed by the good fortune of others'; Philo, Praem Poen 168; Vit Mos 1.246f). valiant...virtuous: these terms express two of the four main virtues in Greek philosophy, and form a well-known combination in hellenistic and Jewish hellenistic literature. the poor man...the weak man: cp. TIss 5:2; and also Prov. 22:22; 31:9; Polycarp, Philippians 6:1. The attitude of mercy towards the poor is a traditional topic in wisdom literature and Jewish hellenistic writings. he feels sympathy: cp. TZeb 6:5; 7:3f.

4:5. Like verses 2–3, this verse deals with the good man's attitude towards sinners on the one hand and righteous men on the other. he protects him as with a shield...he helps: once more, just as in verses 2–3, the good man is characterized by qualities that belong to God: 'protecting (as with a shield)' and 'helping' the righteous ones are usually actions of God (cp. Deut. 33:29; Ps. 20:1; Prov. 30:5; Isa. 31:5; Rom. 8:28). he loves as his own soul: cp. verse 3.
The wholesome effects of such behaviour upon others, in particular upon wicked men: TBenj 5

5:1 If you have a good mind, children,
both wicked men will be at peace with you
and the profligate will reverence you and turn unto good
and the covetous will not only cease from their passion,
but even give the objects of their covetousness to those
who are afflicted.

2 If you do well,
both the unclean spirits will flee from you
and even the beasts will fear you.

3 For where there is light of good works in the mind,
darkness flees away from him.

4 For if anyone does violence to a holy man, he repents;
for the holy man is merciful to his reviler and holds his
peace.

5 And if anyone betrays a righteous soul, and the righteous man is
humbled for a little – praying (all the time) –,
not long after he appears more glorious,
even as was Joseph my brother.

5:1–2. Wicked men will change for the better, and behave more positively when meeting a good man. Likewise, the ‘unclean spirits’ and wild beasts will flee away and dread him; see TBenj 3:3–5. will be at peace with you: cp. Ecclus. 6:5f; Prov. 15:28a LXX.

5:3. The ‘change of behaviour’ mentioned in verses 1–2 is formulated in more general terms in this verse. darkness, as represented by wicked men, unclean spirits, wild beasts, etc. together with all their dreadful activities cannot rule over the good man; cp. Philo, Som 1.117.

5:4–5. The good man’s attitude towards sinners and wicked men is described in another two conditional sentences. This time his attitude towards those who do wrong to him is dealt with. praying: for salvation from his troubles or for the one who has betrayed him. more glorious, even as was Joseph: a reference to Joseph’s kingship in Egypt.
Another description of the good man's behaviour: TBenj 6

6:1 The disposition of the good man is not in the power of the deceit of the spirit of Beliar;
for the angel of peace guides his soul.

2 He does not gaze passionately upon corruptible things,
nor does he gather together riches for desire of pleasure;

3 he does not delight in pleasure,
he does not grieve his neighbour,
he does not sate himself with luxuries,
he does not err in the uplifting of the eyes;
for the Lord is his portion.

4 The good disposition does not admit of glory or dishonour from men,
and it does not know any guile or lie, fighting or reviling;
for the Lord dwells in him and lights up his soul.
And he rejoices towards all men always.

5 The good mind has not two tongues,
of blessing and of cursing, of contumely and of honour,
of sorrow and of joy, of quietness and of confusion,
of hypocrisy and of truth, of poverty and of wealth;
but it has one disposition, uncorrupt and pure, concerning all men.

6 It has no double sight, nor double hearing;
for in everything which he does, or speaks, or sees,
he knows that the Lord looks on his soul.

7 And he cleanses his mind
that it is not condemned by God and men.
And every work of Beliar also is twofold and has no singleness.

6:1. Introduction to the whole chapter. The good man's disposition is not in the power of Beliar, the prince of the evil spirits; the last verse refers to the twofold works of Beliar, so making explicit what it means to be in his power. The good man, however, is guided by the angel of peace. And what that means, is explained in verses 2–7. the angel of peace: this angel performs many functions in the Ti2P: he guides the
soul of the righteous man, he welcomes him at his death and comforts him with eternal life (TAsh 6:6), and he strengthens the people of Israel that it may not fall into wickedness (TDan 6:5).

6:2-4. In these verses, some of the actions or rather abstinences of the good man are mentioned.

6:2. The good man’s attitude towards wealth. corruptible things: this term is traditionally applied above all to riches, gold and silver; see, e.g., Philo, Cher 48; Congr 112; 1 Pet. 1:18.

6:3. Other abstinences of the good man, which belong rather to the social sphere. he does not delight in pleasure...he does not err in the uplifting of the eyes: these phrases belong together, both giving a picture of the good man’s attitude in sexual affairs; cp. TJud 13:6; 14:2; TIss 3:4f; 7:2ff; and Ecclus. 23:4; 26:9. The eyes above all are connected with the desire of impurity, cp. PssSol 4:4f; Matt. 5:28, etc. he does not grieve his neighbour, he does not sate himself with luxuries: these phrases, too, are related. ‘Not grieving’ one’s neighbour implies helping oppressed, poor and hungry men by providing them with the things they need. for the Lord is his portion: cp. Ps. 73:26; 119:57.

6:4. does not admit of glory or dishonour from men: the good man is depicted as a kind of hellenistic philosopher who does not care what people think of him; cp. 2 Cor. 6:8; Dio Chrysostom viii.15ff; lxvii.3; Epictetus i.24.6; Philo, Som i.124f, etc. Instead he rejoices towards all men always: cp. 2 Cor. 6:10, ‘in our sorrows, we have always cause for joy’; Epictetus iii.5.8f, ‘I fell sick, when it was your (God’s) will; so did other men, but I willingly. I became poor, it being your will, but with joy.’ Plutarch, De tuenda sanitate praecepta 25 (Mor. 136 CD); Diogenetus 5.11ff, etc. for the Lord dwells in him: cp. TZeb. 8:2; TDan 5:1; TJos 10:2f; and also Philo, Sobr 62, and esp. Hermas, Mandate 3:1; 10:1, 6; Barnabas 16:8ff and lights up his soul: cp. 4:2; TGad 5:7.

6:5-7. This section gives a description of some qualities of the good man, having as its central theme the opposition double–single. The good man is the one who is ‘single’ or ‘simple’, not an hypocrite (cp. TIss).

6:5. The good man belongs to the right side, he is ‘one-sided’: he blesses and does not curse, honours and does not revile, rejoices and has no sorrow, is quiet and not in confusion, tells the truth and is not hypocritical, is poor and not wealthy. of sorrow and of joy, of quietness and of confusion: these phrases refer to the good man’s inner condition, which is not disturbed by all kinds of bad desires and passions.

6:6. The good man knows he cannot hide himself from God. Again,
he is depicted as different from the hypocrite, who is not aware of the fact that God not only looks on his deeds but even knows his intentions.

6:7a. *he cleanses his mind:* he makes his mind 'pure', that is, free from pains, from bad desires and passions.

6:7b. The good man's activities are not twofold, as are all of Beliar's works, but they are characterized by 'singleness', which sums up all the good features and activities of the good man.

**THE COMING OF THE MESSIAH: TJUD 24**

After a section that describes the future sins of Judah's tribe, its punishment and its repentance together with the return to the promised land (a 'Sin–Exile–Return' passage), there is a reference to the coming of Jesus Christ. The author of the Ti2P puts into the Patriarch's mouth all kinds of quotations of or allusions to Old Testament passages (above all from the prophetic books) that in the early Church were regarded as speaking about the coming of Christ. The chapter has a number of similarities with TLevi 18, another passage that deals with the future Messiah.

24:1 And after these things a star will arise to you from Jacob in peace, and a man will arise from my seed like the sun of righteousness, walking with the sons of men in meekness and righteousness and no sin whatever will be found in him.

2 And the heavens will be opened to him, to pour out the blessing of the spirit of the holy Father, and he will pour out the spirit of grace upon you;

3 and you will be sons to him in truth and you will walk in his commandments from first to last.

4 This (is) the branch of God Most High, and this (is) the fountain unto life for all flesh.

5 Then the sceptre of my kingdom will shine and from your root a stem will arise;

6 and in it a rod of righteousness will arise to the nations, to judge and to save all who call upon the Lord.

24:1. The coming of the Messiah. *a star will arise to you from Jacob in peace, and a man will arise from my seed like the sun of righteousness:* cp. TLevi 18:3f; TZeb 9:8; from Num. 24:17 LXX, 'a star will arise
from Jacob, and a man will arise from Israel', and Mal. 4:2 (3:20 LXX), 'for you... the sun of righteousness shall rise', cp. Zech. 6:12, passages taken as references to Jesus Christ in the early Church; see Justin, Apology 1.32.12ff; Dialogue 106.4; 121.2; Origen, Contra Celsum i.59; vi.79, etc. from my seed: cp. Num. 24:7; emphasis on the Messiah’s descent from Judah. walking with the sons of men in meekness and righteousness: cp. TISS 7:7; TDAN 5:13; ‘walking with men’ is an expression frequently used to characterize Jesus’ life on earth in early Christian literature. in meekness and righteousness: cp. Ps. 45:4; Zech. 9:9; for Jesus’ meekness, see TDAN 6:9; Matt. 11:29; 21:5; 2 Cor. 10:1, etc. and no sin whatever will be found in him: cp. Isa. 53:9; PssSol 17:36 (41); 2 Cor. 5:21; Heb. 4:15; 1 Pet. 2:22.

24:2. The outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon Jesus and upon his ‘children’. the heavens will be opened to him, to pour out the blessing of the spirit: cp. TLevi 18:6f; Mal. 3:10; and the events at Jesus’ baptism in the Jordan in Matt. 3:16f and parallels. the holy Father: cp. John 17:11; Didache 10:2; Odes Sol 31:5; Origen, Commentary on John xx.22, etc. and he will pour out the spirit of grace upon you: cp. TLevi 18:11. This phrase refers to Acts 2:1ff, 17ff, 33; and John 15:26; 16:7ff; 14:16f, 26; see also Eusebius, De ecclesiastica theologia iii, 5f. the spirit of grace: cp. Zech. 12:10; and Heb. 10:29; 1 Clement 46:6.

24:3. To receive the spirit from the Messiah implies to be his children and to do his commandments. All this stresses the particular relation between Christ and those who believe in him. you will be sons to him in truth: cp. TLevi 18:8. you will walk in his commandments: for this expression, cp. Lev. 26:3; 1 Kings 8:61; Hermas, Similitude 5:1, 5; and esp. Ezek. 11:20; 37:24. from first to last: for this typical Hebrew (OT) expression, cp. 2 Chron. 9:29; 12:15; 16:11, etc.

24:4. the branch of God Most High: an allusion to Gen. 49:9 (LXX, ‘you have gone up from the branch, my son’), another passage frequently interpreted as referring to Jesus Christ (from the tribe of Judah); see Justin, Dialogue 86.4; Apostolic Constitutions vii.11.10; Hippolytus, Benedictio Jacobi 16; Antichrist 8, etc. the fountain unto life: cp. the expression ‘fountain of life’ as used of God in Jer. 17:13 (see also 2:13; Ps. 36:9); the same or similar expressions are used also in connection with Christ: see Justin, Dialogue 69.5f; Clement of Alexandria, Protrepticus 10 (110.3); Eusebius, De ecclesiastica theologia 1.8.20.

24:5–6. These verses introduce a new theme, viz., Jesus’ righteous kingship, his judgement, and the salvation of all believers, Jews or Gentiles. the sceptre: symbol of power and authority; cp. Num. 24:17. For Jesus as ‘sceptre’, cp. 1 Clem. 16:2. of my kingdom: stresses another
The Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs

theme – Jesus’ descent from Judah and Judah’s eternal kingship. will shine: cp. TLevi 18:4; Isa. 9:2, ‘light has dawned upon them’, frequently understood as an allusion to the coming of Christ (see, e.g., Matt. 4:15f); see further Justin, Dialogue 113.5. and from your root a stem will arise; and in it a rod of righteousness will arise: from Isa. 11:1, ‘Then a shoot shall grow from the stock of Jesse, and a branch shall spring from his roots’, again a passage interpreted christologically in the early Church. a rod of righteousness: cp. Ps. 45:6f; and see Heb. 1:8f; Justin, Dialogue 38.4. rod: symbol of kingship. to save all who call upon the Lord: cp. Joel 2:32 (3:5 LXX), ‘Then everyone who invokes the Lord by name shall be saved’; Acts 2:21; and esp. Rom. 10:12f, ‘there is no distinction between Jew and Greek, because the same Lord is Lord of all, and is rich enough for the need of all who invoke him’ (then follows a quotation of Joel 2:32).
CAMBRIDGE COMMENTARIES ON WRITINGS OF THE JEWISH AND CHRISTIAN WORLD
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