

## *Original Paper*

# The Influence of the Lists of Virtues and Vices in the Jewish Literature of the First Century

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### **Abstract**

*Biblical texts were part of a broader literary context. Indeed, the Greco-Roman literature influenced of the first century the intertestamental literature and other Jewish Apocryphal books. One of these influences was the lists of virtues and vices from the popular philosophical schools of the time. These lists presented a group of attitudes and behaviors that should be applied or rejected for the proper functioning of society. Different Jewish groups of the Second Temple Period adapted such lists to their teachings, presenting, in a concise manner, those attitudes that did not correspond to their vocation, as well as confirming the morality proper of the “people of the covenant.”*

### **Keywords**

*intertestamental literature, late Judaism, second Temple period apocryphal, Qumran, virtues, vices, rhetoric, Greco-Roman culture, first century*

### **1. Introduction**

The appearance of lists of virtues and vices was common among ancient cultures, especially around the Mediterranean basin. Not only the behavior of an individual was enough to tag him or her either as good (virtuous) or evil (vicious) but also labeling as good or bad different social groups, clans, tribes, or states (Note 1). It was the way they could maintain the ethnic purity inside the group while distancing themselves from others unless converted from their evil deeds. Members of a clan or their friends were virtuous or kind. Instead, the enemies, that is, the others, were identified as vicious or malefactors. The Greco-Roman culture was not an exception. Their religious and philosophical schools used these types of lists to teach a virtuous life that ensured the well-being and honor of their disciples

while warning them about the vices that may dishonor them and ruin their life. This style of ethical teaching also influenced the Jewish communities of the Second Temple period (Note 2). Some sort of lists of virtues and vices appeared in the literature of the Jewish communities of Alexandria and the books of some Jewish religious groups in Palestine (Note 3).

These lists of virtues and vices, especially from the Stoicism, served as an intellectual bridge between the Jews and their non-Jewish fellow citizens. For them, any virtuous act was God-inspired because it helped the growth of the human person. On the other hand, a vicious action was shameful or sinful because it went against the plan of God and ended up destroying the future of the chosen people. Thus, their peculiar lists of vices and virtues invited to their conversion and repentance of their wrongdoing while waiting for the day when God would make all evil and corruption disappear from the world. These philosophical concepts, especially Stoicism, will be reflected in the world of intertestamental literature in which Christianity also was born.

## 2. Method

In this article, I intend to include some examples of the apocryphal books that do not appear in the Jewish Sacred Scriptures but used for teaching their code of behavior. I will also include some cases of the literature of the Jewish philosopher Philo of Alexandria, which strongly influenced the way of thinking of Judaism of the Diaspora, and some texts from the Dead Sea Scrolls that belonged to the Jewish community at Qumran. I will read their Jewish primary sources, first in the original language and, then offer a good translation of the same, in which these lists appear clearly. As a visual aid to identify the components of these catalogs, I will write in **bold** an item presented as virtue or right action, and underline an element shown as a vice or evil act. However, I will give examples of how these lists appeared in Greco-Roman Literature. Then, I will be able to compare and contrast those lists with the ones found in Jewish Literature.

## 3. The Popularity of the Greco-Roman Lists of Virtues and Vices

The ancient Greeks defined virtue as the continuous practice of noble actions that allowed a human to distinguish easily between what is good and what is evil (Note 4). Their philosophical schools taught their disciples to practice virtues of an honorable life (knowledge, prudence, temperance, strength, etc.), and to avoid any shameful behavior or vice (cowardice, pleasures, insults, perjury, etc.). Thus, a virtuous person was one who acted motivated only by the goodness of the action, following natural reason. On the contrary, a vicious person was one who behaved with a lack of integrity or defect of intention.

In Aristotle's *Treatise on Virtues and Vices*, there is an excellent example of this grouping of vices and virtues. Here, the philosopher grouped them in a small list to show the consequences those behaviors may carry for a good citizen:

If in accordance with Plato the spirit is taken as having three parts,

**wisdom** is goodness of the rational part,  
**gentleness** and **courage** of the passionate,  
of the appetitive **sobriety of mind**, and **self-control**,  
and of the spirit as a whole **righteousness**, **liberality**, and **great-spiritedness**;  
while badness of the rational part is folly,  
of the passionate ill-temper and cowardice,  
of the appetitive profligacy and uncontrol,  
and of the spirit as a whole unrighteousness, meanness, and small-mindedness (Note 5).

The early Stoics organized their lists of virtues and vices using the tetrahedral scheme of the four cardinal virtues, just as Plato and other philosophers did. The philosopher Chrysippus (third century BCE) agreed that happiness was the goal of life. For him, as well for all Stoics, happiness consisted of nothing other than virtue (*De Finibus* III.44), and vice was, then, the essence of unhappiness. Stobaeus recorded in his *Anthology* a catalog of virtues attributed to Chrysippus. It is the most detailed record of a list of virtues by any individual Stoic:

Some of the virtues are primary; the other [virtues] are subordinated to the primary.

First are the following four: **practical wisdom, temperance, courage, and justice**.

Practical wisdom is about appropriate actions;

temperance is about the impulses of man;

courage is about cases of endurance;

justice is about distributions.

From the class of virtues which are subordinated to these, some are subordinated to practical wisdom, some to temperance, some to courage, and some to justice.

Subordinated to practical wisdom are:

**good judgement,**

**good practical overview,**

**quick moral sense,**

**discretion, [shrewdness],**

**inventiveness in difficulties;**

to temperance:

**good ordering,**

**propriety,**

**sense of honor,**

**self-control;**

to courage:

**perseverance,**

**confidence,**

**magnanimity,**

**mental stoutness,**

**industry;**

to justice:

**piety,**

**kindness,**

**sociability,**

**blameless companionship** (Stob. 2.59.4-62.6) (Note 6).

The later Stoics, like Andronicus (first century BCE), enlarged these lists by dividing them into subgroups that adapted to the moral practices of each place (Note 7), but sharing the same principle: To have wisdom was to live virtuously and to live viciously was a rebellion against human nature (Note 8). Towards the second half of the first century BCE, the typical lists of vices and virtues were used more as a pedagogical aid to guide the disciples of different philosophical schools to their ultimate goal in life. However, these lists were no longer exclusive to the academy by different Greco-Roman poets and orators. The Roman poet Virgil, in his work *the Aeneid*, and Horace, in his *Epistles*, used the vocabulary of the Stoics within their popular literature with less rigid form and more oriented and adapted to the masses.

The popularity of Stoicism influenced even the way many religions around the Mediterranean basin proclaimed their beliefs, proclaiming eternal damnation to those who viciously behaved unless they repented and embraced a life of virtue. For this reason, it was common to find a list of vices more than of virtues because their pedagogy consisted of presenting the idea of why all needed to convert. Among those religious groups were Hellenistic Judaism.

#### **4. The Jewish Literature of Alexandria**

King Ptolemy II Philadelphus of Alexandria arranged the translation of the Jewish Sacred Texts from Hebrew into Greek (known popularly as the Septuagint). It was one of the earliest extant Koine Greek translations of Hebrew books (Note 9). This translation included additions made to some of the original texts and other books mostly written originally in Greek—known today as apocryphal (Note 10). The Septuagint could help us, then, to better understand the theology, philosophy, and practices of the Hellenistic Jewish communities of the first century CE. However, the *Book of Wisdom*, one of the apocryphal texts written in Greek, dedicated most of its pages to a treatise about wisdom and her relation to God and humans.

##### *4.1 The Book of Wisdom*

The *Book of Wisdom* (ca. 50 BCE), written by a Jew in Alexandria, denoted an influence of the philosophy, religion, and popular morality of Hellenism propagated during those last two centuries. The author's concept of God was of an infinitely powerful being (11: 21), omnipresent (1: 7; 12: 1), and all-loving (11: 24). For him, the power of God as the creator is not because God made the world out of nothing, but rather God made an orderly cosmos out of a formless matter (11: 17 interpreting Gen 1: 1;

Si 1: 2-9). Wisdom played a significant role in this creation. She appeared personified as a woman (6: 12-21) that was with God, sat next to God's throne, knew God's thoughts, and was "God's partner" at the beginning of creation (8: 3; 9: 4.9), and she permeated all things as an emanation of the glory of the Almighty (7: 7- 25). That was why everything followed unwritten laws, and the cosmos had an organization without equal, following closely to the Hellenistic understanding of the cosmos as harmonious. Thus, the author concluded that creation was the conversion of chaos into cosmos. It is the order and beauty of the universe that amazes the author, not the fact that God created everything out of nothing (11, 20; 12, 3) (Note 11).

In the *Book of Wisdom*, chapter 8, there was a discourse on the attributes that wisdom produced in a righteous life. This discourse had notable similarities with the discussion *on the Virtues* by Heraclitus, as presented in the work of Xenophon *Memorabilia II* (1: 37). Interesting enough was to find a presentation of the cardinal virtues just as taught in the Platonic and Aristotelian philosophy—wisdom, fortitude, temperance, and justice:

Or if one loves righteousness, whose works are virtues,

for she teaches **temperance** and **prudence**

**justice** and **fortitude**

and nothing in life is more useful than these (pp. 8-7).

Later on, the *Book of Wisdom* also presented a long list of vices that the Jewish mentality attributed to the depravity of the pagans that rejected to know God or to ask him for wisdom:

Then it was not enough for them to err in their knowledge of God;

but even though they live in a great war resulting from ignorance,

they call such evils peace.

For while they practice either child sacrifices or occult mysteries,

or frenzied carousing in exotic rites,

they no longer respect either lives or purity of marriage;

but they either waylay and kill each other, or aggrieve each other by adultery.

And all is confusion:

blood, manslaughter, theft, and dissimulation,

corruption, unfaithfulness, tumults, perjury,

disturbance of good people, forgetfulness of good turns,

defiling of souls, unnatural lust,

disorder in marriages, adultery, and shameless uncleanness.

For the worshipping of idols not to be named

is the beginning, the cause, and the end of all evil (Vol 14, pp. 22-27).

The author was content to gather together the degradation of a pagan life without inviting them to correct such a vicious way of life. For him, their sin was not recognizing God as the author of all order and beauty and, consequently, they lived in chaos, in a total disorder of life (Note 12). Idolatry was, for

him, the origin of all the evil deeds and mistakes because the service (cult) to false gods was the equivalent of ignorance. God granted wisdom to those seeking for her (7: 22), especially the righteous and the rulers of the earth (1: 1-15; 6: 1-22). In conclusion, a virtuous life was one that sought wisdom above any other earthly treasure. It was the closest that a mortal would ever be to God.

#### 4.2 Philo of Alexandria

Philo of Alexandria (ca. 15-10 BCE—5-50 CE) was the most important representative of Hellenistic Judaism. Although many of Philo's writings have survived, the few facts about his life came from occasional hints in his books and a small number of external references like Flavius Josephus (Note 13). His writings provided an accurate view of how the Jewish mentality developed in the communities of the Diaspora that consisted of mixing the traditional midrashic allegories of the Jewish rabbis and the principles of Greek philosophy (Note 14). For example, the argument that God and the cosmos were not of the same divine or eternal nature went against the Aristotelic concept of an eternal universe. Philo made the distinction between the finite beings (creation) and the infinite being (God) as the only efficient and immanent cause in the cosmos. Philosophy was just an aid to understanding the truth that was revealed by God in the Sacred Texts and the Jewish traditions, not the other way around. Therefore, to explain to non-Jews the concepts of their Jewish faith, Philo used the method of allegory. Still, this allegorical method confused this reader quite often. For example, Philo used the same symbols and allegoric names to speak of the divine logos, wisdom, or virtue (Note 15).

His concept of virtues and vices followed the teachings of late Platonism and the Stoic school closely. They were developed, especially in his allegorical discourses on different biblical passages. In his *Treatise on the Sacrifices of Abel and Cain*, Philo followed the Stoic understanding of virtue and pleasure very closely (Note 16). He did this by personifying them as two sisters: "Lady Pleasure" was beautiful and pleasing to the eye. "Lady Virtue", on the other hand, presented herself as a rough woman, more like a maid than a lady. Undoubtedly, he said, men were easily seduced by pleasure and rejected virtue at first sight. Yet, despite the seductions and false promises of complete happiness given by "Lady Pleasure", Philo unmasked her deceptions by publishing a long list of vices (errors) in which anyone who had fallen in love with her will drowned to perdition:

Know, then, my good friend, that if you become a votary of pleasure you will be all these things:

a bold, cunning, audacious, unsociable, uncourteous, inhuman,  
lawless, savage, ill-tempered, unrestrainable, worthless man;  
deaf to advise, foolish, full of evil acts, unteachable, unjust, unfair,  
 one who has no participation with others, one who cannot be trusted in his agreements,  
 one with whom there is no peace, covetous, most lawless, unfriendly, homeless, city-less,  
sedition, faithless, disorderly, impious, unholy, unsettled, unstable, uninitiated,  
profane, polluted, indecent, destructive, murderous, illiberal, abrupt, brutal,  
slavish, cowardly, intemperate, irregular, disgraceful, shameful,  
 doing and suffering all infamy, colorless, immoderate, insatiable, insolent,

conceited, self-willed, mean, envious, calumnious, quarrelsome, slanderous,  
greedy, deceitful, cheating, rash, ignorant, stupid, inharmonious,  
dishonest, disobedient, obstinate, tricky, swindling, insincere, suspicious,  
hated, absurd, difficult to detect, difficult to avoid, destructive, evil-minded,  
disproportionate, an unreasonable chatterer, a prosper, a gossip, a vain babblers, a flatterer,  
a fool, full of heavy sorrow, weak in bearing grief, trembling at every sound,  
inclined to delay, inconsiderate, improvident, impudent, neglectful of good,  
unprepared, ignorant of virtue, always in the wrong, erring, stumbling,  
ill-managed, ill-governed, a glutton, a captive, a spendthrift, easily yielding, most crafty,  
double-minded, double-tongued, perfidious, treacherous, unscrupulous,  
always unsuccessful, always in want, infirm of purpose,  
fickle, a wanderer, a follower of others, yielding to impulses, open to the attacks of enemies,  
mad, easily satisfied, fond of life, fond of vain glory, passionate, ill-tempered,  
lazy, a procrastinator, suspected, incurable, full of evil jealousies,  
despairing, full of tears, rejoicing in evil, frantic, beside yourself, without any steady character,  
contriving evil, eager for disgraceful gain, selfish, a willing slave, an eager enemy,  
a demagogue, a bad steward, stiff-necked,  
effeminate, outcast, confused, discarded, mocking, injurious, vain,  
full of absolute sheer misery (Note 17).

Meanwhile, although “Lady Virtue” was rejected for her rough appearance, at first sight, Philo showed her true identity. She was not a slave but a noblewoman well dressed and adorned with beautiful jewels, who as a free citizen:

She was attended by **piety, and holiness, and truth, and right,**  
**and purity, and an honest regard for an oath, and justice, and equality,**  
**and adherence to one’s engagements and communion,**  
**and prudent silence, and temperance, and orderliness,**  
**and meekness, and abstemiousness, and contentment, and good-temper,**  
**and modesty, and an absence of curiosity about the concerns of others,**  
**and manly courage, and a noble disposition and wisdom in counsel,**  
**and prudence, and forethought, and attention, and correctness,**  
**and cheerfulness, and humanity, and gentleness, and courtesy,**  
**and love of one’s kind, and magnanimity, and happiness, and goodness (Note 18).**

For Philo, endowing the life of people with ethical-moral conduct had priority in any philosophical and spiritual teaching and practice. Virtue was not the result of hard work to acquire the habits of a good life. She was instead the fruit of an excellent maturation of a human life led by reason. The Law of Moses has many examples of a virtuous and mature life (i.e., Noah and the patriarch Isaac).

Another example of his understanding of virtue and vices appeared in his *text: The Allegories of the*

*Sacred Laws*. In it, Philo said that from one fundamental virtue—**goodness**, four virtues emerged: **temperance, prudence, justice, and fortitude (Note 19)**. He did this by using the allegory of the four rivers that came out of the Garden of Eden (cf. Gen 2:10). In contrast, Philo insisted that the passions were ‘superfluous’ and had to be ‘pruned’ because they were not necessary to the soul (Note 20). Finally, in his *Treatise on Abraham*, he pointed out that human senses were often subject to the four Stoic passions of lust, sadness, greed, and fear (Note 21).

In conclusion, Philo of Alexandria was a devoted Jew that saw in his faith the foundation for his morals. Religion indeed helped a person to achieve the virtue that cannot be achieved by herself (contrary to the Stoic thought). Virtue was for the Greeks what Divine Wisdom was for the Jews. God implanted virtue in a person’s life to lead her to walk a virtuous life until she reaches the ecstatic contemplation of God after her physical death (Note 22).

## 5. The Judeo-Palestinian Literature

Not only had the Jews of the Diaspora felt the strong influence of the Hellenistic culture and philosophy. In the Holy Land, certain radical groups of Jews who lived during the Second Temple Period were too, in some way, influenced by the ethical teachings of the Platonic and Stoic school. Some of them assimilated some of the Hellenistic lifestyle (as it was the case of the Sadducee groups). At the same time, others resisted against it (as in the case of the Pharisees and Essenes). Meanwhile, the influence of lists of virtues and vices continued to appear not only among the Jewish communities of the Diaspora but also among those sectarian groups in Judea, with obviously less interested in explaining their beliefs to the Gentiles but marked with a heavy apocalyptic accent. Let us see, for example, how in some writings of the Qumran community and other apocryphal texts, the list of vices and virtues of Hellenistic philosophy may have left their imprint in Palestinian Judaism.

### 5.1 The Qumran Literature

Qumran was a valley on the slopes of the western coast of the Dead Sea, southern Israel, where members of the Essene Jewish community, also known as the Community of the Covenant (second century BCE—first century CE). This movement began probably by supporters of the traditional priestly family descendants of Sadock and against the dynasty of the Hasmonean kings. Many of the texts found in the caves around their settlement (known as the Dead Sea Scrolls) seem to broadly represent the beliefs and practices accepted by this Jewish group of keeping the purity of life and the ancient traditions of Judaism (Note 23). Other texts seem to speak of divergent interpretations and unique or minority commentaries on various books of the Jewish Sacred Scripture, mainly the Torah.

Thanks to these texts, we know today that the members of this community committed themselves to practice piety towards the “Deity” (*to theión*) and justice towards humanity. They accepted all the Hebrew Scriptures as divinely inspired, the reverence to the name of the angels, the belief in an immortal soul, and their reward after death (Note 24). They also maintained a pure lifestyle, abstaining from crimes and any immoral activity, to transmit their norms, traditions, rituals, and to preserve their



books without corruption. To what extent was this community influenced by the Hellenistic philosophy? Two aspects called the attention in this matter: First, their dualistic understanding of justice and evil, light and darkness, shaped primarily by the duality of righteousness and unrighteousness, following a model found in the Greek dualistic understanding of the human being. Second, this community showed a preference for addressing the issue of virtue and vice adapted, of course, to their religious principles, but in an incredible parallel with the use of the lists of virtues and vices of the Greco-Roman rhetoric. One example of it was their book, commonly known *The Community Rule* (1QS) or *The Manual of Discipline* where two lists of virtues and vices distinguish those led by fear of God's God from those dominated by the spirit of lies (Note 25):

The Angel of Darkness leads all the children of righteousness astray,  
and until his end, all their sins, iniquities, wickedness and all their unlawful deeds  
are caused by his dominion in accordance with the mysteries of God [...]

But the God of Israel and His Angel of Truth will succor all the sons of light (1QS 3:22-24).

And later on, it continues saying:

These are their ways in the world for the enlightenment of the heart of man, and that all the paths of true righteousness may be made straight before him, and that fear of the laws of God may be instilled in his heart:

**a spirit of humility, patience, abundant charity,**

**unending goodness, understanding, and intelligence;**

(a spirit of) **mighty wisdom** which trusts in all the deeds of God  
and leans on His great loving kindness;

**a spirit of discernment in every purpose,**

**of zeal for just laws, of holy intent with steadfastness of heart,**

**of great charity towards all the sons of truth, of admirable purity**

which detests all unclean idols,

**of humble conduct** sprung from an understanding of all things,

and **of faithful concealment of the mysteries of God.**

These are the counsels of the spirit to the sons of truth in this world[...]

But the ways of the spirit of falsehood are these:

greed, and slackness in the search for righteousness,

wickedness and lies, haughtiness and pride, falseness and deceit,

cruelty and abundant evil, ill-temper and much folly

and brazen insolence, abominable deeds (committed) in a spirit of lust,

and ways of lewdness in the service of uncleanness,

a blaspheming tongue, blindness of eye and dullness of ear,

stiffness of neck and heaviness of heart,

so that man walks in all the ways of darkness and guile (1QS 4:3-11).

The *Book of Jubilees* provided with another list of vices (Note 26):

I see, my son,

That all the works of the children of men are sin and wickedness,

And all their deeds are uncleanness and abomination and pollution,

And there is no righteousness with them (4Q *Jub* 21:21).

*The Book of Jubilee* highlighted the supremacy of the Law of Moses, especially the norms and conducts of the Levitical ordinances, and the terrible effects of a life without it while attacking the pagans and apostates, events that took place during the Maccabean period (Note 27). It was during this period that the apocalyptic literature was born, presenting the hope for that day when God will wipe away all evil from the land and reward those who act in righteousness but punish all the wicked. One representative of this apocalyptic literature was the apocryphal *Books of Enoch*, traditionally attributed to Noah's great-grandfather (Note 28).

### 5.2 *The Book of Enoch*

*The Book of Jubilees* in Qumran mentioned a set of books, owned by Abraham and his descendants, containing the wisdom of the patriarchs. However, they were written by several Jewish with an apocalyptic tone typical of the late theology in Judaism, and subsequently, of the emerging Christian movement authors (third century – mid-first century BCE). To this group belonged *The Books of Enoch*, *The Secrets of Enoch*, *IV Esdras*, *the Apocalypses of Baruch* (Greek and Syriac), *Apocalypse of Zephaniah*, *Apocalypse of Elijah*, and others.

In the *First Book of Enoch* (Note 29), there was a small list containing those evil acts (vices) that God will cleanse from the earth in an eschatological time:

[You] will purify the earth

from all oppression,

from all injustice,

from all crime,

from all impiety,

and from all the pollution

which is committed upon it. Exterminate them from the earth (1Enoch 10: 20) (Note 30).

*The Second Book of Henoc* (probably written at the end of the first century CE) described, first of all, those who will live in paradise forever and, secondly, to those who God will punish in the place of eternal torment:

And those men said to me:

This place, O Enoch, is prepared for those who dishonor God,

who on earth practice sin against nature,

which is child-corruption after the sodomitic fashion,

magic-making, enchantments, and devilish witchcrafts,

and who boast of their wicked deeds, stealing, lies,

calumnies, envy, rancor, fornication, murder,  
 and who, accursed, steal the souls of men,  
 who, seeing the poor take away their goods and themselves wax rich,  
injuring them for other men's goods;  
 who being able to satisfy the empty, made the hungering to die;  
 being able to clothe, stripped the naked;  
 and who knew not their creator, and bowed to the soulless (and lifeless) gods,  
 who cannot see nor hear, vain gods,  
 (who also) built hewn images and bow down to unclean handiwork, for all these is prepared this place  
 among these, for eternal inheritance (2Enoch 10:3) (Note 31).

In both books, the emphasis was on the evil acts that God rejected and would cleanse the earth from it. Meanwhile, their group of virtues was not present because the book assumed that a good and pious Jew knew that keeping the commandments of the Law was the way to a virtuous (holy) life.

However, in the apocryphal book *The Testament of the Twelve Patriarch* (Note 32) (around the first or second century CE), each one of the descendants of Jacob gave several councils and warnings against certain particular sins and commended the contrary virtues, illustrating and enforcing the moral by the example or experience of the speaker:

And now, my children, I bid you to **keep the commands of the Lord,**  
 and to **show mercy to your neighbors,**  
 and to **have compassion towards all,**  
 not towards men only, but **also towards beasts.** (Testament of Zebulun 5:1).

**Observe,** therefore, my children, **the commandments of the Lord,**  
 and **keep His Law.**

Depart from wrath, and hate lying,

That the Lord may dwell among you, And Beliar may flee from you.

**Speak truth** each one with his neighbor. So shall ye not fall into wrath and confusion; But **you shall be in peace,** having the God of peace, so shall **no war prevail over you. Love the Lord** through all your life, **and one another** with a true heart

(Testament of Dan 5: 1-3) (Note 33).

It was clear that this intertestamental text adopted the typical list of virtues and vices (or bad behaviors) of the Greco-Roman schools by a Jew or a Jewish Christian to teach that to live in communion with God and neighbor was the way, the virtue that brings true happiness.

## 6. Result

Greek philosophy and culture influenced the Jewish communities scattered throughout the Mediterranean basin, especially in the city of Alexandria, north of Egypt. It was due to the large number of Greek-speaking Jews living in Alexandria in 250 BCE. The rhetorical lists of virtues and

vices were in the literary background of the moral catalogs used in the religious texts of Judaism and, in a diversified or modified sense, in the writings of the New Testament. These catalogs would have specific functions that continue with the classic style of Greco-Roman rhetoric, but with their proper form, typical of the Jewish communities. These lists helped their synagogue exhortative preaching in two ways. The first is the protreptic function, an appeal to escape an old way of life and start a new one. The second was the paraenetic function used in the post-conversion to advise and instruct the neophytes in their new way of life.

The result was that the Jewish moral catalogs were a mixture of virtues and vices along with specific good or evil actions. They were easy to recognize in the Jewish literature that has survived because they contained three or more elements grouped, either as adjectives, nouns, verbs, or short phrases. Moreover, these lists followed two rhetoric styles popularly known in the first century BCE. The first was the polysyndeton style: the elements were joined through the repetition of conjunctions in succession that refer to the same theme. The second was the asyndeton: its components had no connection to each other, despite the presence of grammatical conjunctions among them (Note 34). Finally, some moral lists presented an amplified style: a discursive expansion was necessary to connect some or all of the elements of the list (Note 35).

## 7. Conclusions

As I presented in this article, the motivation behind the use of the different lists of virtues and vices of the philosophical schools was the old-fashioned way of identifying who belongs to whom. The Jews, especially those of the Diaspora, saw themselves a righteous and virtuous. Anyone else, unless they change their behavior and adhere themselves to the community, had to be avoided because they were vicious and acted with unrighteousness (Note 36). Moreover, the lists of virtues and vices were modified to teach correct and irreproachable conduct from the perspective of Jewish morality. The fact that there were few virtues listed in the late Jewish literature could be the fact that keeping the Law in itself was essential to any good Jew who lived in the Diaspora or the Holy Land. For this reason, they endeavored to enumerate those attitudes that a believer had to reject to be part of the people of the Covenant. On the other hand, they also reminded that a life with no communion with God was a futile and meaningless life destined to perish.

The primary value of all this intertestamental literature is their moral teachings typical of the theology of the Judaism of the Second Temple period and intimately connected to the early Christian doctrine because Jesus and his first followers were all embedded by the same theological milieu.

All this summary of the Hellenistic influence on the literature of late Judaism leads us to the dawn of Christian literature found in the New Testament, which has also used these lists of virtues and vices to produce its literary rhetoric from the second half of the first century. The early Christian authors took it to a more personal level. First, the lists of vices were the catechetical instruction of the sinful behavior abandoned to start a new life, transformed by the Spirit who raised Christ from the dead. Second, they

added to their moral catalog the main element proper to the Christian life: the virtue of love (*agape*) – a love that it manifests itself concretely within a fraternal communion in the same spirit.

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## Notes

Note 1. Grouping moral values in the form of a list have emerged in various ancient cultures, from Iran and India to Egypt and the Mediterranean cultures. The religious practices of these ancient civilizations were characterized by the determination and behavior of their members. It was not surprising that different religions used these lists of vices and virtues as a tool to transmit their beliefs. Cf. J. Daryl

Charles, Vice and Virtue Lists, in Stanley E. Porter y Craig A. Evans, *Dictionary of New Testament Background. A Compendium of Contemporary Biblical Scholarship* (Downers Grove: Inter Varsity Press, 2000), 1.252-1.257.

Note 2. There are examples of similar lists in the Jewish Sacred Scriptures, although different from the Greek philosophical schools (i.e., Ex 34:6; Is 11:1; Os 2:19-20; Mi 6:8; Pr 6:16-19).

Note 3. The experience of the Diaspora was a turning point in Judaism's syncretism with the Greek culture and the Greek mystical religions. Cf. Andrew D. Benson, *Alexandrian Judaism: the precursor of Christianity*, in *The Origins of Christianity & the Bible* (San Francisco: Prudencial Pub. Co, 2000), 137-155.

Note 4. Etymologically, a virtue (*virtus*, *vir*) was the strength proven in a man ready to serve and protect their city-state. Vice was its opposite, referring to any type of fault or a wrong action perpetrated against society. Cf. Austin Fagothey, *Ética, teoría y aplicación*. 5th Edition (México D.F.: McGraw-Hill, 1995), 155-165.

Note 5. Aristotle, *On Virtues and Vices*, 3-4. Text found in Aristotle, *Athenian Constitution; Eudemian Ethics; Virtues and Vices*, translated by H. Rackham Loeb Classical Library 285 (Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1935), 498-504.

Note 6. Christoph Jedan, *Stoic Virtues: Chrysippus and the Religious Character of Stoic Ethics* (New York: Continuum International, 2009), 82-83.

Note 7. Andronicus created some extensive lists divided into twenty virtues, twenty-seven wishes, twenty-seven sorrows, thirteen fears, and five pleasures.

Note 8. The stoic idea of virtue is debatable as it is a bit inconsistent. By its very notion, virtue is a means since it consists of good habits; and they are good precisely because they lead the individual more easily and comfortably to the fulfillment of some goal in life. In short, virtue is a straight path, a true direction that points to the highest good. But she is not the end in herself.

Note 9. The Jews divided into three categories their Holy Books of Judaism, the Law (Torah), the prophets (Nevi'im), and the Writings (Ketuvim). It was the latest who was more influenced by the Hellenistic culture, especially in the understanding of wisdom. First, the Hebrews understood wisdom as a virtue not attained by human skill but as a gift from God (cf. 2 Cr. 1:7-12; Prov. 2:6; 3:19; 19:20). God was the source of all wisdom, knowledge, and understanding (cf. Ps. 111:10; Job 12:13; Dn 2:20), and blessed was the person who wanted, asked, and received it (cf. Prov.12:15; 24:3-7). Later, wisdom became personified, obtaining a divine status near God (cf. Prov. 1:20-33; 3:13-18; 4:5-9; 7:4-5; 8:1-36; 9:1-2). Cf. E. J. Bickerman, *Studies in Jewish and Christian History: A New Edition in English Including the God of the Maccabees*, 1 vol. (New York: Brill, 2007), 169.

Note 10. The books known as Deuterocanonical are Tobias, Judith, Baruch, Ecclesiasticus, Wisdom, First and Second Maccabees, also certain additions to Esther and Daniel. The LXX, together with these books, were integrated inside the early Christian literature among the texts considered as divinely inspired, just as it appears in the work of Eusebius, *Church History*, Book IV: 26, 14. The Orthodox and

Eastern Churches also included among their sacred texts Psalm 151, The Prayer of Manasseh, Third and Fourth book of Esdras, and Third and Fourth book of Maccabees.

Note 11. The teaching of God creating everything from nothing (*ex nihilo*) comes from late Judaism as evidenced by 2M 7:28, “I urge you, my child, to look at the sky and the earth. Consider everything you see there, and realize that God made it all from nothing, just as he made the human race.”

Note 12. This list has been one of the most influential in the Jewish concept of a pagan society. The stereotypical Jewish mentality of the Second Temple Period was that any group of non-Jews (Gentiles) behaved that way. The book of Wisdom wanted to help the pious Jews in Alexandria in maintaining the traditions of the faith against the development of science and free thought, at the same time as it reminded them of the nobility of their religion compared to that of the pagans.

Note 13. James C. VanderKam, *An Introduction to Early Judaism* (Cambridge: William B. Eerdmans, 2001), 138.

Note 14. Jewish philosophy may have begun with Aristobulus of Alexandria (c. 150 BCE), known as a “religious philosopher.” He made a very positive assessment of Greek philosophy, making extensive use of the Stoic, Platonic and Pythagorean philosophy, opening the teachings of Judaism to the Gentiles in a language familiar to them. Aristobulus seemed to link Judaism with Greek philosophy, so there could be more Gentiles converted to Judaism by interpreting the Law of Moses according to the Greek philosophical standards. Cf. Andrew D. Benson, *Alexandrian Judaism*, 140.

Note 15. Philo’s doctrine of the Logos as the archetype of the cosmos of God was built by bringing together different elements of Greek philosophy. For example, he took his concept of the divisive Logos (*to meous logos*) from the doctrine of Heraclitus in his contention of the “principle of movement.” According to Craig S. Keener, some scholars think that Philo of Alexandria’s concept of Logos as a creative principle of God influenced early Christology. Others think both concepts took their information from a common source. Craig S. Keener, *The Gospel of John: A Commentary*, Vol. 1 (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 2003), 343-347.

Note 16. Philo also followed closely the Stoic school of thought, although he was not totally convinced that complete apathy or moderation were the characteristics that identify the virtuous condition of the human being, since, for him virtue identifies itself with divine Wisdom. Cf. Philo of Alexandria, *Leg III*, 129-132.

Note 17. Philo of Alexandria, *Sacr.*, 32.

Note 18. *Ibid.*, 27.

Note 19. Philo of Alexandria, *Leg I.*, 63-76. The works of Philo of Alexandria are taken from Kirby, Peter. *Early Jewish Writings*. 2020. 4 June 2020 <<http://www.earlyjewishwritings.com/>>.

Note 20. Philo of Alexandria, *Spec I.*, 305.

Note 21. Philo of Alexandria, *Abr.*, 238.

Note 22. Cf. Philo of Alexandria, *Leg I.*, 53.

Note 23. In the archaeological excavations carried out since 1950 on the hills around the Dead Sea,

various manuscripts have been found on the history, doctrine, statutes, and regulations of this community. The settlement may have come from the Hellenistic period and was built presumably around the reign of John Hyrcanus (134-104 BCE). This location was the Essense home until destroyed by the Romans in the first century CE, as Flavius Josephus mentioned. Cf. Flavius Josephus, *BelJ* II, 7; *AntJ* XIII, 171-172; *Vita*, 10.

Note 24. Flavius Josephus, *BelJ*, II, 139-142; 153-158.

Note 25. The Community Rule described the lifestyle of the community settled in Qumran, the ideal of the community governed by a priestly presence, the ritual and ceremony to enter in it, the current renewal of the Covenant, and the need for interior conversion. Their dualistic beliefs and a whole set of organizational rules, oaths, and norms also appeared. There was also a reference to a true spiritual temple established in the desert, and with its liturgical calendar. Cf. Geza Vermes, *Community Rule in The Complete Dead Sea Scrolls in English, Seventh Edition* (London: Penguin Books, 2011).

Note 26. R.H. Charles, *Book of Jubilee* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1913), I.

Note 27. The Book of Jubilees was a book of religious fiction. In it, the story of the history of Israel was rephrased in a Midrashim form. It began with the creation of the world until the giving of the Law at Mount Sinai. The scroll contains 50 chapters and claims to be a revelation to Moses by the Angel of the Presence (1:29-2:1). Cf. James H. Charlesworth, *The Pseudepigrapha and Modern Research, with a Supplement* (Michigan: Scholars Press for the Society of Biblical Literature, 1976), 143-144.

Note 28. The Coptic Church considers the Book of Enoch as a canonical book since it also appears in the Septuagint (LXX). The only intact versions of this book remaining are in the liturgical languages of the Coptic Church, but many fragments known in Greek, Syriac, Armenian, Arabic, and Latin. Besides, other pieces were found in Aramaic, and one in Hebrew in Qumran (4Q317), and the Christian Letter of Judas (1:14) seems to contain a passage from 1 Enoch.

Note 29. The Book of Enoch is also mentioned in The Book of Jubilees (4Q 4:19). In fact, Aramaic and Hebrew fragments from four of the five sections of the book the Book of Enoch were discovered among the Dead Sea Scrolls.

Note 30. The text is taken from R.H. Charles, *Book of Enoch* (Oregon: Postomorrow Books, 2013).

Note 31. The text is taken from R.H. Charles, *Book of Enoch* (Eastford: Martino Fine Books, 2017).

Note 32. The so-called “Testaments” of prominent figures in Bible history made a particular class of apocryphal literature. The Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs text narrated the close of the hero’s life, sometimes with a retrospect of his history, last counsels and admonitions to his children, and disclosures of the future. The eschatological element is also present in varying proportions, most likely derived from the Books of Enoch. It calls the attention of the numerous and notorious Christian interpolations in this text.

Note 33. Texts are taking from R.H. Charles, *The Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs* (Eugene: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 2005).

Note 34. Cf. J. Daryl Charles, *Vice and Virtue Lists*, 1253-1254.



Note 35. Cf. Siegfried Wibbing (1959), Die Tugend- und Lasterkataloge im Neuen Testament und ihre Traditionsgeschichte unter besonderer Berücksichtigung der Qumrantexte, Beihefter zur Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft 25 (Berlin: Töpelmann, 1959).

Note 36. Cf. Charles, Virtue Amidst Vice, 112-127.