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# Prayer in Tobit

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SETON HALL UNIVERSITY

PRAYER IN TOBIT

A THESIS SUBMITTED TO  
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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

A Aramaic

B Vaticanus

CD Damascus Document

G Greek

G<sup>I</sup> Short Greek recension

G<sup>II</sup> Long Greek recension

LXX Septuagint

MSS Manuscripts

P Codex Corbeiensis

Q Codex Regius

R Biblia de Roda

Vg Vulgate

VL Vetus Latina

W Codex Reginensis

X Codex Complutensis

1QS The Qumran Community Rule (Manual of Discipline)

1QH The Qumran Thanksgiving Scroll (Hodayot)

## **INTRODUCTION**

God is with us, even in the midst of trouble and suffering. This is the theme that the author of Tobit develops in his story about life among the Israelite exiles in Assyria. Tobit is an attractive story, a moral lesson of virtue and piety rewarded. The date, place, and language of the original composition are a matter of scholarly controversy. It is the purpose of this paper to explore the roots of the book, focusing on the formation of prayers of its characters, in order to place them within the greater network of Jewish communal and private prayer.

The Book of Tobit was highly respected in Jewish circles from an early date. References to it have been detected in the Book of Daniel, in the Psalms, and in other works of the Hasmonean period; copies of the work in Hebrew and Aramaic have been discovered at Qumran. There are also allusions to it in the New Testament, which show that it was still popular in the first century of Christianity. Its continuing popularity is witnessed by surviving Aramaic, Hebrew, and even Jewish Persian manuscripts which show that the story of Tobit was told and retold as a living tradition up to the Middle Ages and even later. It has also

served as the subject of numerous paintings, dramas, and musical compositions.<sup>1</sup>

The Book of Tobit occupies a time-honored place in the Jewish apocryphal literature. Of course, the book is of unique interest to the student of intertestamental literature; how it relates to other books of its genre in ideas, rationale and character, how it mirrors Jewish sentiment and thought, and how it affiliates with the teaching of the priest, prophet, and psalmist, and organically with later Jewish thought. Tobit is of greatest interest to the student of religion, and of Judaism in particular<sup>2</sup>, for inherently the story deals with God and man, and man's relationship with man; the problem of evil; the message of faith; the assurance of Israel's restoration, sin and repentance, God's mercy; and the duties of the Jew to his family, his kinsmen, and his people.

For Jews and Protestant Christians, the Book of Tobit is outside the canon of the Bible, being counted among the Apocrypha. Catholics, however, along with the [Greek and Russian] Orthodox branches of Christianity, regard the book as part of the Bible in the sense that it is

<sup>1</sup> DeLange 103

<sup>2</sup> Study to determine how Halakhah has developed as well as Haggadah regarding such issues as marriage, tithes, pagan food, death pollution-burial, vision of the Temple, and life after death.

"Deuterocanonical," i.e. part of the Greek translation known as the Septuagint. Although scholars for the most part believed that Tobit has originally been written either in Hebrew or Aramaic, the Semitic original version was long lost.

Three basic forms of the Book of Tobit have been transmitted to us from antiquity. The long form, which is represented by the Qumran Semitic texts (four Aramaic and one Hebrew), the Greek text of Sinaiticus and MSS 319, 910 and the Vetus Latina (VL); a secondary shorter form, represented by the Greek texts of Vaticanus, Alexandrinus, Venetus, and most cursive manuscripts (MSS); and a third intermediary form is found in the Greek MSS 44 106 107.<sup>3</sup>

Prior to the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls, the text of the Book of Tobit was known only from these various ancient translations. The most important of these were the versions in Greek and Latin, but the book was also preserved in ancient Arabic, Armenian, Coptic, Ethiopic, and Syriac translations.

Although the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls dates from 1947, the year in which Qumran Cave 1 was found, no fragmentary text of the Book of Tobit turned up until the massive jigsaw puzzle of the thousands of fragments of

<sup>3</sup> Skemp 2

Qumran Cave 4 was being worked on. Cave 4 had been discovered by the Ta'amireh Bedouin in 1952, and the scouring of the cave was completed eventually by archeologists in that year. It was not until 1956, however, that the first report was published on the work that was being done by the international team that had been established to study the Cave 4 fragments. In it J.T. Milik reported that the Book of Tobit was represented by fragments of three manuscripts, one in Hebrew and two in Aramaic. Another report was made by Milik at the Strasbourg meeting of the International Organization of Old Testament Scholars later in 1956, in which he announced that he had been able that very year to identify a third Aramaic text written in a fine semi-cursive script, which contained a small part of Tobit 14:2-6. Subsequently, a fourth Aramaic copy of Tobit was discovered among the Cave 4 fragments.

No one suspected before 1952 that the texts of Tobit, if they were to show up in the Qumran Scrolls, would agree normally with the long form of the book found in the Greek recension of MSS Sinaiticus (S), 319, and 910 or with the long recension of the Vetus Latina (VL). There are a few instances, however, where the Aramaic or Hebrew forms in the Qumran texts agree with Vaticanus, but it is more noteworthy that the Qumran fragments of Tobit not only

support the Greek Long Recension and VL, but are at times even fuller than the so-called long recension, and that they agree at times more with the long recension of the VL than that of Greek MS S. This had been noted early on by Milik himself.<sup>4</sup>

In the five fragmentary texts of Tobit there are a total of 69 fragments or groups of fragments. Among these, there are a number of small pieces which, though containing few legible letters, cannot be assigned with certainty to any particular part of Tobit; this is especially the case with 4Q196. The Qumran fragments of Tobit differ considerably from the medieval Aramaic and Hebrew forms of the Book of Tobit that were known prior to 1952.

As described earlier, the oldest textual evidence for Tobit comes to us from fragments that belonged to five manuscripts discovered in Cave 4 near Khirbet Qumran off the northwest shore of the Dead Sea, with their dates ranging from around 100 BCE until the early part of the 1<sup>st</sup> century CE. Since their preliminary discussion and publication in the *Discoveries in the Judean Desert* series by Joseph Fitzmyer, they have understandably received considerable attention, especially by those scholars whose

<sup>4</sup> Fitzmyer 9-10

interests have focused on how this evidence relates to the Greek and Latin recensions.

All of these manuscripts support the long recension of Tobit known from the Greek. It is now clear that the short Greek version never had a Semitic counterpart and is nothing more than an abbreviation of the long Greek text. Until very recently, however, Bible translations into modern languages had always relied upon the shorter text. In the wake of the Qumran discoveries, translators have begun to work instead with the longer text—still unfortunately, having only the Greek witness; no more than a few isolated phrases of the Qumran Semitic forms have been published previously.

Eisenman and Wise point out in their work *The Dead Sea Scrolls Uncovered* that, "The Semitic texts of Tobit will certainly require adjustments even of the translations that have worked with the superior long Greek text," giving the following example:

"For example, in the portion presented here (Tobit 1:19-2:2), the latter half of that Aramaic text of 1:22 is preferable to the Greek. The New Revised Standard Version translates the portion in question thus: 'Now Ahigar was chief cupbearer, keeper of the signet and in charge of administrations of the accounts under King Sennacherib of Assyria; so Esarhaddon *reappointed* him,' (italics ours).

The Aramaic makes it clear that Esarhaddon did not merely reappoint Ahigar, but raised him up to a position second

only to the king himself."<sup>5</sup> This is just one example of what we can expect in the improvements in the understanding of this book now that the Semitic texts have brought us much closer to the original.

Jerome's claim to have translated his version of Tobit indirectly from a "Chaldean" original, first turned into Hebrew for him, long reinforced the belief that the earliest version of the book was composed in a Semitic language. This belief has, in recent years, become something closer to certainty, with the discovery of the five very fragmentary manuscripts corresponding to the book at Qumran. Any dispute now centers more simply on the question of whether the Hebrew or the Aramaic is earlier. Such a development is, of course, to be welcomed by those whose primary interest lies in uncovering the origins and earliest form of the book. It has, however, displaced a fascinating branch of Tobit scholarship, which raises important questions about the subsequent spread and development of the text, and offers unusual insights into Jewish use of the apocryphal books, and even into aspects of Jewish-Christian relations.

The Qumran manuscript fragments are hardly the only Hebrew and Aramaic versions of Tobit: in fact, there are

<sup>5</sup> Eisenman and Wise 98



five other texts—or better—textual traditions known in Hebrew, and one in Aramaic. Several can be traced back as far as the 12<sup>th</sup> century, and may be considerably older. None, however, is obviously a direct descendent of the Qumran materials and it is difficult to pin down an earlier text that would have provided a direct source for any of them. Even the relation between various versions remains obscure, and no serious attempt has been made in recent years, since the shift in scholarly focus, to establish the origin or purpose of any of them.<sup>6</sup>

Prior to the Qumran finds, the Book of Tobit existed among the Apocrypha in two, a long and a short, Greek recensions and in various ancient versions. Cave 4 has revealed remains of four Aramaic (4Q196-9) and one Hebrew (4Q200) manuscripts, of which two scrolls, the papyrus Tob<sup>a</sup> (196) and the leather Tob<sup>b</sup> (197), have yielded copious extracts. They all basically represent the Semitic original from which the longer Greek recension, attested by the 4<sup>th</sup> century CE Codex Sinaiticus, and the Old Latin version were made.

Tob<sup>a</sup>, Tob<sup>c</sup> and Tob<sup>d</sup> are paleographically dated to the first century BCE and Tob<sup>b</sup>, as well as Hebrew Tob<sup>e</sup>, to the turn of the era (30 BCE-20CE). The translation of a

<sup>6</sup> Stuckenbruck 72

composite Aramaic text is followed separately by that of the Hebrew fragments. The Aramaic and Hebrew overlap only in Tob 14:1-2. Of the two, the Aramaic, represented by older and more numerous manuscripts, is likely to be the original language of the composition.

The following illustrate some of the differences between the Aramaic (A), and the Greek (G) Tobit:

1:22 (A) He was the son of my brother, of my father's house and of my family.

(G) He was my brother's son of my kindred.<sup>7</sup>

2:1 (A) On the day of the Festival of Weeks

(G) At the feast of Pentecost which is the sacred festival of the seven weeks

6:6 (A) Also he salted the rest for the journey. Both of them were going together

(G) and left part of it salted. And they journeyed both of them together.<sup>8</sup>

6:12 (A) and her father loves her

(G) and her father is an honorable man

14:2 (A) He was fifty-eight years old when he lost his sight and afterward he lived fifty-four years

(G) He was sixty-two years old when he was maimed in his eyes (Sinaiticus)

<sup>7</sup> There are various explanations for the variations between the Aramaic and the Greek texts, this example showing the difference in the concept of concrete and abstract ideas in the language and culture. The A recension demonstrating the physical relation of the persons, more specifically that within the house and the family. Alternately, the G uses the concept of kinship, the abstract idea.

<sup>8</sup> These last three examples show minor difference within the texts, demonstrating the affect of time and multiple redactions of texts.

He was fifty-eight years old when he lost his sight and after eight years he regained it (Vaticanus).<sup>9</sup>

The following verse shows basic correspondence 4:4a of the various versions of the Book of Tobit known today.

**Vg** memor enim esse debes quae et quanta et quanta pericula passa sit propter te in utero suo

**G<sup>II</sup>**(short Greek recension)

(v4a) μνησθητι αυτης, παιδιον, οτι κινδυνους πολλους εωρακεν επι σοι εν τη κοιλια αυτης

**G<sup>I</sup>**(long Greek recension)

(v4a) μνησθητι, παιδον, οτι πολλους κινδυνους εωρακεν επι σοι εν τη κοιλια

**VL** (v4a) Memor esto, fili, quanta pericula passa sit pro te in utero suo

vacat [ ] ה] ·עב ןכחא גובו

(4QTob<sup>e</sup>2,2) [ ] and she bore you in [her] womb [ ]

In all versions Tobit tells Tobias to be mindful of or remember (Vg "you ought to be mindful of"; G<sup>II</sup> "remember her, child"; G<sup>I</sup> "remember, child"; VL "Be mindful, son") Tobit does not say "child" or "son" (G<sup>II</sup> and G<sup>I</sup> παιδιον; VL *fili*) in Vg. Jerome probably added the conjunction *enim* (so also 3:6; 4:7; 14:6; cf. 5:25). Each version refers to the dangers that Tobias' mother endured (Vg "what and how many dangers she endured for you [while you were] in her womb";

<sup>9</sup> Vermes 558-559

G<sup>II</sup> "that she saw many dangers for you [while you were] in her womb"; G<sup>I</sup> "that she saw many dangers for you [while you were] in her womb"; VL "how many dangers she suffered for you [while you were] in her womb"; Q<sup>e</sup> "and she bore you in [her] womb. Only Q<sup>e</sup> reads the infinitive absolute, 71301, "and she bore." Vg is closer to VL than to the Greek versions. Nine out of the fifteen words in Vg correspond exactly to VL. Moreover, neither of the Latin versions has the equivalent of the Greek verb εωρακεν.<sup>10</sup> This is just a sample of the texts; multiple versions are available in each of the languages of which Tobit exists.

The Qumran fragments of Tobit differ considerably from the medieval Aramaic and Hebrew forms of the Book of Tobit that were known prior to 1952. The discovery of the Qumran texts of Tobit has done much for the development in research on the original form, in language and length, of the narrative. What is striking about the Qumran Tobit texts, both Aramaic and Hebrew, is that they not only agree with the longer form of Sinaiticus and Vetus Latina but are also at times longer than either of them. This has been public knowledge since the 1950s, when preliminary reports were issued about the kinds of biblical texts recovered from Qumran. Since then, vernacular Catholic Bibles,

<sup>10</sup> Skemp 130-1

including *The Jerusalem Bible*, began incorporating the longer Tobit story of the Sinaiticus and Vetus Latina. Although Tobit in the *Revised Standard Version* of 1957 was translated from the short version of the manuscripts Alexandrinus and Vaticanus, the *New Revised Standard Version* of 1991 presents the longer version of Sinaiticus, supplemented by the Vetus Latina. All of these developments have been spurred from the discovery of these Qumran texts, the most important contribution of the texts of Tobit being the fact that the Qumran fragments have yielded an earlier version of the story, one that is much closer to the source.

With this introduction, we begin the examination of prayer in Tobit. There are at least six prayers in the book of Tobit: Tobit's prayer for death (3:2-6); Sarah's prayer for death (3:11-15); Tobias' prayer before lying down with his new bride Sarah (8:5-8); Raguel's prayer of praise that Tobias survived his wedding night with Sarah (8:15-17); Tobit's prayer of praise for regaining his sight (11:14-15); and Tobit's call to praise and hymn on Jerusalem (13:1-18).

## CHAPTER 2: TOBIT 3:2

In the following examination of the text of Tobit the prayers of Tobit, Sarah, Raguel and Tobias are studied. First, an introduction to some of the characters, Sarah is a kindred soul who resembles Tobit both in simplicity of heart and in trials and afflictions. Presumably about the age of Tobit's son Tobias, she lives in Ecbatana, some 325 miles from Nineveh. She had been married to seven<sup>11</sup> husbands, whom "Asmodeus the wicked demon had killed before they had been with her as is prescribed for wives" (3:8), although neither she nor the maids had known about the demon causing the deaths.<sup>12</sup> Apparently, Sarah's plight caused her to be short-tempered with one of her maids who then blurted out, "You are the one who strangled your husbands! Look, you have already been given to seven husbands and you have had no joy with any of them. Why do you beat us concerning your husbands? Because they are dead? Go with them! And may we never see a son or a daughter of yours" (3:8-9). This last statement was especially hurtful, for sterility was considered a

<sup>11</sup> Seven is a significant number for both Tobit and Sarah. For it represents Sarah's seven dead husbands; and Tobit's seven calamities (1) deportation (1:2;10); (2) exile and loss of property (1:19-20); (3) blindness (2:10); (4) Anna's harsh words (2:14, similar to those of Job's wife in Job 2:9-10); (5) deep depression (3:1-6); (6) worry for Tobias (10:1-3); (7) Anna's disrespectful retort (10:7). To set things right the Lord blesses Tobias and Sarah with seven children (14:3); and in 12:15 it states, "I am Raphael, one of the seven angels who approach and enter the glory of the Lord." Seven also being representative of woe in Hebrew (Lev 26:21, 28).

<sup>12</sup> But Tobias knows, he states in 6:15 that the demon killed Sarah's husbands because he loved her.

chastisement from God (Gn 30:23; Jg 11:37). Deeply grieved by the death of her seven husbands<sup>13</sup> and then by the maid's insults, Sarah went in tears to an upstairs room, intending to hang herself. But she reconsidered because of the disgrace her suicide would bring upon her father (3:10). Regaining her composure and drying her tears, she decided, like Tobit, to pray for death so that she might no longer hear such things (3:11-15).

It should be noted that both Sarah and Tobit prayed for death only after hearing angry and cutting remarks made by members of their own households. Such remarks are all the more hurtful coming as they do from persons who should be sources of consolation and comfort. The author reflects here the sad experience of many other people then as well as now.

#### **PRAYER FOR DEATH**

According to Deuteronomistic doctrine, Tobit because of his unswerving observance of the Law (1:3-18) and Sarah because of her innocent life (3:14-15) should have enjoyed a life of prosperity and peace here on earth, for there was no expression of hope for rewards and punishments after death. This doctrine of course allowed for adversity and

<sup>13</sup> In the later tradition of the Tannaim (Babylonian Talmud Yehamot 64b), a woman whose husbands have died is not allowed to remarry.

suffering as a test of fidelity<sup>14</sup> (Jg 2:22-3:6; Sir 2:1-6). In fact, Raphael says explicitly to Tobit, "I was sent to you to test you" (12:14).<sup>15</sup> But the anguish of the innocent sufferer remained nonetheless, as is clear from the Book of Job and experiences of Jeremiah and countless others. When Azariah finally revealed his true identity as Raphael<sup>16</sup>, "One of seven angels who approach and enter before the glory of the Lord" (12:15), he told Tobit that he himself had presented his and Sarah's prayers to God (12:12) <sup>17</sup>

The prayers of Tobit and Sarah for death are reminiscent of what Ben Sira writes, "Better is death than a wretched life, and everlasting sleep than constant illness" (Sir 30:17). This thought is similar to Antigone's lament, "Anyone who lives in misfortune, as I do, is bound to be better off in death."<sup>18</sup>

<sup>14</sup> נִסִּיּוֹן Testing or trial is a known tradition throughout the Second Temple period, i.e. the 10 trials of Abraham in Jubilees, Pirke Avot 5:4 and even Jesus' Pater Noster, "Save us from the time of *trial* and deliver us from evil" (written personal communication by Rabbi Asher Finkel).

<sup>15</sup> Strangely there is no mention of Sarah being put to the test, even though her trial came from a demonic force.

<sup>16</sup> "With the coming of Raphael as mediator of God's redemptive help, the author harks back to Israel's wilderness wanderings (Ex 14:19; 23:20, 23; 32:34; 33:2; Num 20:16) and to Gen 24:7; Ps 91: 11; Dan 3:25. Both the names Raphael (God heals) and Azariah (YHWH helps) reveal the redemptive help of God," Haag translation by Frizzell.

<sup>17</sup> This is a 1<sup>st</sup> century development of angelology. See "angels of Prayer," Danielou, 185.

<sup>18</sup> Sophocles' *Antigone*



## G<sup>1</sup> 3:2-6

2 Δικαιος ει, κυριε, και παντα τα εργα σου και πασαι αι οδοι σου ελεημοσυνη και αληθεια. και κρισιν αληθινην καιδικαιαν συ κρινεις τον αιωνα. 3 μνησθητι μου και επιβλεψον επ' εμε μη εκσικης ταις αμρτιαις μου και τοις αγνοημασιν μου και των πατερων μου, α ημαρτον ενωπιον σου. 4 παρηκουσαν γαρ των εντολων σου εδωκας ημας εις διαρπαγην και αιχμαλωσιαν και θανατον και παραβολην ονειδισμον πασιν τοις εθνεσιν, εν τοις εσκορπισμεθα 5 και νυν πολλαι αι κρισεις σου εισιν αληθιναι εξ εμου ποιησαι περι των αμαρτιων μου και των πατερων μου, οτι ουκ εποιησαμεν τας εντολας σου ου γαρ επορευθημεν εν αληθεια ενωπιον σου 6 και νυν κατα το απεστον ενωπιον σου ποιησω μετ εμου επιτζον αναλαβειν το πνευμα μου, οπως απολυθω και γενωμαι γη διοτι λυσιτελει μοι αποθανειν η ζην, οτι ονειδισμους ψευδεις ηκουσα, και λυπη εστιν πολλη εν εμοι επιταξον απολυθηναι με της αναγκης ηδη εις τον σιωνιον τοπον, μη αποστρεψης το προσωτον σου απ εμου.<sup>19</sup>

<sup>19</sup>“Do not hide your face from me,” found frequently in Psalms. One is to stand before God, for that is what prayer is meant to be.

2 Διακιος ει, κυριε, και παντα τα εργα σου και πασαι αι οδοι σου ελεημοσυνη και αληθεια, και κρισιν αληθινην και δικαιαν συ κρινεις εις τον αιωνα. 3 και νυν συ, κυριε, μνησθητι μου και επιβλεψον και μη με εκδικησης ταις αμαρτιαις μου και εν τοις αγνοημασιν μου και των πατερων μου. ημαρτον εναντιον σου. 4 και παρηκουσα των εντολων σου, και εδωκας ημας εις αρπαγην και αιχμαλωσιαν και θανατον και εις παραβολην και ιαλημα και ονειδισμον εν πασιν τοις εθνεσιν, εν οις ημας διεσκορπισας 5 και νυν πολλαι σου αι κρισεις υπαρχουσιν αληθιναι ποιησαι εξ εμου περι των αμαρτιων μου, οτι ουκ εποιησαμεν τας εντολας σου και ουκ επορευθημεν αληθινως ενωπιον σου 6 και νυν κατα το αρεστον σου ποιησω μετ εμου και επιτζον αναλαβειν το πνευμα μου εξ εμου, οπως απολυθω απο προσωπου της γης και γενωμαι γη διο λυσιτελει μοι αποθανειν μαλλον η ζην, οτι ονειδισμους ψευδεις ηκουσα, και λυπη πολλη μετ εμου. Κυριε, επιταξον οπως απολυθω απο της αναγκης ταυτης, απολυσον με εις τον τοπον τον αιωνιον και μη αποστρεψης το προσωπον σου, κυριε απ εμου διο λυσιτελει μοι αποθανειν μαλλον η βλεπειν αναγκην πολλην εν τη ζωη μου και μη ακουειν ονειδισμους.

## TRANSLATION

2 Righteous are you, O Lord, and all you deeds are righteous, and all you ways are mercy and truth; you judge the world.<sup>20</sup> 3 And now you, O Lord, remember me and look upon me; and do not punish me for my sins and for the unwitting offenses of mine and my ancestors. 4 They sinned before you, and they disobeyed your commandments. And you gave us over to plunder and captivity and death, and for an object lesson and byword and reproach among all the nations among which you have scattered us. 5 And now your many judgments are true in doing with me according to my sins and those of my ancestors, because we have not kept our commandments and did not walk in truth before you. 6 So now according to what is pleasing to you do with me; and command my spirit to be taken from me, that I may be set free from the face of the earth and become earth. For it is better for me to die than to live, because I have heard false reproaches, and great grief is with me. O Lord, command that I be set free from this distress; set me free for the everlasting abode. And do not turn, O Lord, your face away from me. For it is better for me to die than to see great distress in my life, and do not listen to reproaches<sup>21</sup>

<sup>20</sup>Tobit acknowledges the righteousness of God, thereby accepting his situation as God's punishment.

<sup>21</sup> Translated by Alexander A. DiLella O.F.M. from G<sup>11</sup> text.

The bulk of Tobit's prayer in Vg 3:2-6 corresponds to the other versions. However, the differences are significant. In v2, Vg reads *iudicia tua*, "all your judgments," whereas the other versions read "all your works" (G<sup>II</sup> and G<sup>I</sup> πάντα τὰ ἔργα σου; VL mss QPW add the adjective "great" (*omnia opera tua magna sunt*), which is absent in Vg and VL mss RX. While the Greek versions and VL contain the phrase "you judge forever," G<sup>I</sup> alone adds that God renders "a true and righteous judgment"; in VL God renders a "true judgment" (*iudicium verum iudicas*, lit., "you judge a true judgment"). Vg agrees with G<sup>I</sup> and VL by including "and judgment," absent from G<sup>II</sup>.

Tobit describes his condition when he prayed, "περιλυνος γενομους τη ψυχη και στεναξασεκλαυσα, "Being grief-stricken in spirit and groaning, I wept." Tobit's weeping in his grief was in no way unmanly, but in that culture this was the expected reaction to pain. But then he adds, "και ηρξαμην προσευξερθαι μετα στεναγμων, "and I began to pray with groans" (3:1)—these words set the tone of his prayer. In sharp contrast, when Sarah began her prayer, she was in total control of her emotions.<sup>22</sup>

Tobit's prayer, like Sarah's, is poetic and rhythmical in form. It seems to be divided neatly into three strophes

<sup>22</sup> As we will examine later

with each strophe having a distinct content and Deuteronomistic perspective.<sup>23</sup> The prayer is a classic lament in which Tobit first praises the Lord (3:2) and then frankly confesses his sins and those of his ancestors (3:3-5) as the reason why the Lord in his just judgments has allowed him and his people to suffer so much adversity. This sense of solidarity is an aspect of the concept "corporate person," expressing the dynamic relationship between the individual and the community. Tobit accepts his punishment from God in his opening declaration, one similar to one spoken before punishment handed down by human judges, (see Judges 7:20-21).<sup>24</sup> After his confession Tobit petitions the Lord to let him die so that he might no longer have to experience so much grief or listen to further reproaches from his wife (3:6).

The first strophe (3:2a-3c) begins with an acknowledgement that God is a just judge, *δικαιος εικυριε*, which as an address of the Lord occurs only four times in the LXX: Jer 12:1; Ps 118(119):137a; Greek Dan 3:27 (without *kyrie*); and Esth 14:6, the last two texts also containing a confession of sin, as in Tobit's prayer. Thus, right at the

<sup>23</sup> DiLella, *Two Major Prayers*, 102. This Deuteronomic background is also found in Tobit's Farewell discourse (14:3-11), sharing many of the same intentions as Deuteronomy, the encouragement of the depressed people and exhortation to remain true to the faith, DiLella, *The Deuteronomic Background*, 380-381.

<sup>24</sup> Oral communication, Rabbi Asher Finkel

start of his prayer, Tobit proclaims the justice of the Lord while hoping also for his mercy because of his past observance of the Law. "You are righteous, Lord," is a common feature of biblical prayers, and is seen by some as "the kernel" of the entire prayer.

Deuteronomy emphasizes that the Lord is righteous when he has mercy on Israel for their fidelity, and righteous as well when he condemns the people for their disloyalty to the covenant of Sinai. If the Israelites obey the Lord by keeping the commandments, he will bless them with prosperity both individually and as a nation (Deut 28:1-14). But if they do not obey the Lord and fail to observe his commandments, he will curse them and bring upon them countless disasters (Deut 28:15-68).

Sarah's declaration of God's truthful ways harkens back to Deut 32:4, "The Rock, his work is perfect; for all his ways are justice. A God of faithfulness and without iniquity, just and right is He" (RSV).

After Tobit's acknowledgement comes his lament, "And now, O Lord, remember me and look upon me," this lament and the use of "reproach," echo LXX Lam 5:1 "Remember, O Lord, what has happened to us; look upon us and see our reproach." The poet of Lamentations begins to pour out his heart in a communal lament, begging the Lord to see the

devastation that has happened to Jerusalem, the unfaithful city, and to restore the people to himself (Lam 5:21). In a like manner, Tobit petitions the Lord to remember him and to look down on him with mercy.<sup>25</sup> The theology of remembering is dominant in Deuteronomy: in LXX Deuteronomy, *μυμνησκειν* in religious contexts occurs fifteen times. Remembering is an important theme also in the Book of Tobit where *μυμνησκειν* and its cognate *μνημονευσω* occur thirteen times. Here Tobit, like Lam 5:1, begs the Lord to remember, as Moses does in Deut 9:27; in most other cases, the people are the ones urged to remember the Lord and his commands.

Because Tobit recognizes his solidarity with the nation, he confesses his iniquity, begging the Lord not to punish him for his sins and his unwitting offenses<sup>26</sup>, as well as those of his ancestors.<sup>27</sup> Most likely one of his sins or unwitting offenses is his failure to believe Anna about the goat (2:14). The background of Tobit's petition is Deut 5:9, "For I, YHWH, you God, am a jealous God, inflicting punishments for their ancestor's wickedness on the children of those who hate me, down to the third and fourth generation." Tobit's confession of sin has parallels in Bar 2:4-10 and especially Dan 9:5, drawing on Ps. 106:6,

<sup>25</sup> Use of זָכַר is highly anchored in early Jewish prayer until today. See Rosh Hashanah prayer of Zikkrohot, Mishnah Rosh Hashanah 4:5.

<sup>26</sup> "Unwitting offenses" see Lev 4; Num 15:22-29; Jdt 5:20; 1 Macc 13:39.

<sup>27</sup> This form of prayer is found in Day of Atonement liturgy in early rabbinics, see Mahzor prayer book.

"We have sinned and done evil, acted wickedly and rebelled; we have turned aside from your commandments and your ordinances."

In the second strophe Tobit now laments the fact that his ancestors have sinned and disobeyed the Lord's commandments, and then he lists an unusual combination of words to describe the punishments the Lord has given to them, "And you gave us over to plunder and captivity and death, and for an object lesson and byword and reproach."<sup>28</sup>

In 3:5ab, Tobit avows that the Lord's many judgments are fair and true in punishing him and the people as they deserve, "And now your many judgments are true in doing with me according to my sins and those of my ancestors." Similar sentiments appear also in the confession of sin in LXX Daniel, "For you are righteous in everything which you have done to us, and all your works are true, and your ways are straightforward, and all your judgments are true"(3:27) "and now all the things you have brought on us, you have done with true judgment" (3:31); as well as LXX Ps 118(119):137b, "And your judgment is right."

<sup>28</sup> Tobit's lament is not so unusual, similar elements can be seen in Psalms and the weekday morning *Tachanu*. Also, "lesson and byword" is reminiscent of "proverb and byword" found in Dt 28:37; 1 Kgs 9:7; 2 Chr 7:20.

There are two reasons given for God's chastisement. The first, "Because we have not kept your commandments,"<sup>29</sup> (3:5c) is a typical LXX Deuteronomistic phrase using the verb ποιῶ with the plural noun ἐντολᾶς as direct object. Each word is found seventeen times in Deuteronomy. A typical example is Deut 27:10, "You shall listen to the voice of the Lord your God and keep all his commandments and his statutes that I am commanding you today." Earlier, on Sinai, the people had committed themselves to observe the demands of the covenant: Exodus 24:3 LXX "All the words that the Lord has spoken we shall keep and obey." They repeat the promise in Ex 24:7. The second reason is, "we did not walk in truth before you" (3:5d). Again, this phrasing derives from Deuteronomy which employs the verb πορεύομαι 32 times. One example (Deut 8:6) will suffice: "You shall keep the commandments of the Lord your God by walking in his ways and fearing him."

Tobit now appeals to God's goodness and benignity in the third strophe, "So now according to what is pleasing to you do with me." Though apparently reconciled to God's will, Tobit nevertheless makes his direct appeal for death, begging the Lord to take his πνεῦμα, "spirit," "breath," from him. Unlike Tobit, Sarah leaves it up to the Lord as to how

<sup>29</sup> This is the doctrine of "measure for measure."

he will respond to her prayer. In 3:6, Tobit's wish to be set free "from the face of the earth" and to "become earth," which harkens back to Gen 2:7; 3:19; Qoh 3:20; 12:7; and Ps 103(104):29. His desperate pleas, "For it better for me to die than to live...For it is better for me to die than to see great distress in my life" (3:6), remind us of Jonah's pouting prayer, "And now, O Master, Lord, take my life from me, for it is better for me to die than to live," (4:8-9) Elijah also prayed for death because of his troubles with Jezebel (1 Kgs 19:3-4). Moses too prayed to God: "If this is the way you deal with me, kill me at once, if I find favor in your eyes, that I may not see my distress" (Num 11:15).<sup>30</sup>

Tobit now for the first time gives the reason why he wants to die: "because I have heard false reproaches, and great grief is with me" (3:6). He describes Anna's harsh reproaches as "false," but Anna had good reason to get angry and strike back because Tobit, for no reason, refused to believe her about the goat (2:14). Though Tobit indulges to some extent in self-pity, readers then as well as now can easily understand how Anna's sharp words were too much for him to bear since he had already been depressed by his blindness. Moreover, in that society, a good wife was not

<sup>30</sup> See Job 7:15



supposed to talk like that. Ben Sira writes about a spirited wife like Anna: "A loudmouthed and garrulous wife will be regarded as a trumpet sounding the charge" (Sir 26:27). That is why he describes his added suffering as "great grief," and again asks the Lord be set free of "this distress," and seeks to be released into the "everlasting abode," a phrase that occurs only one other time in the LXX, in Isa 33:14. "The everlasting abode" refers to either the grave (Job 21:26; 34:15; Ps 104:29; Qoh 3:20) or, more likely, to Sheol. Tobit's final appeal for mercy, "And do not turn, O Lord, your face away from me," is an allusion to the similar wording in LXX Deut 31:17,18; 32:20, "I will turn my face away from them." The reason is given in Deut 31:16-21: the people have violated the Covenant by turning to false gods and serving them.

## SARAH'S PRAYER FOR DEATH 3:11-15

G<sup>1</sup>3:11-15

11 και εδεηθη προς τη θυριδι και ειπεν ευλογητος ει, κυριε ο θεος μου, και ευλογητον το ονομα σου το αγιον και εντιμου εις τους αιωνας ευλογησαισαν σε παντα τα εργα σου εις τον αιωνα 12 και νυν, κυριε, τους οφθαλμους μου και το προσωπον μου εις σε δεδωκα 13 ειπον απολυσαι με απο της γης και μη ακουσαι με μηκετι ονειδισμον. 14 συ γνωσκεις, κυριε, οτι καθαρα ειμι απο πασης αμαπτιας ανδρος 15 και ουκ εμολυνα μου ουδε το ονομα του πατρος μου εν τη γη της αιχμαλωσιας μου. μονογενης ειμι τω πατρι μου, και ουχ υπαρχει αυτω παιδιον, ο κληρονομησει αυτον, ουδε αδελφος εγγυς ουδε υπαρχων αυτω υιος, ινα συντηρησω εμαυτην αυτω γυναικα. ηδη απωλοντο μοι επτα ινα τι μοι ζην; και ει μη δοκεισιν μοι αποκτειναι με, επιταξον επιβλεψαι επ εμε και ελεησαι με και μηκετι ακουσαι με ονειδισμον

11 εν αυτω τω καιρω διαπετασασα τας χειρας προς την θυριδα εδεηθη και ειπεν ευλογητος ει, θεε ελεημων, και ευλογητον το ονομα σου εις τους αιωνας και ευλογησαισαν σε παντα τα εργα σου εις τον αιωνα 12 και νυν επι σε το προσωπον μου και τους οφθαλμους μου ανεβλεψα 13 ειπον απολυθηται με απο της γης και μη ακουειν με μηκετι ονειδισμους 14 συ γνωσκεις, δεσποτα, οτι καθαρα ειμι απο πασης ακαθαρσιας ανδρος 15 και ουχι εμολυνα μου το ονομα και ουδε το ονομα του πατρος μου εν τη γη της αιχμαλωσιας μου. μονογενης ειμι τω πατρι μου, και ουχ υπαρχει αυτω ετερον τεκνον, ινα κληρονομησει αυτον, ουδε αδελφος αυτω εγγυς ουτε συγγενης αυτω υπαρχει, ινα συντηρησω εμαυτην αυτω γυναικα. ηδη απωλοντο μοι επτα, και ινα το μοι εστιν επι ζην; και ει μη σοι δοκεισιν αποκτειναι με, και, νυν εισακουσον ονειδισμου μου.

TRANSLATION

11 Blessed are you<sup>31</sup>, O Lord, merciful God! And blessed is your holy and honored name forever; let all your works bless you forever. 12 And now, O Lord, I raise my face toward you, and I lift up my eyes. 13 Command that I be set free from the earth and that I hear reproaches no more. 14 You know, O Master, that I am pure of any impure act with a man, 15 and that I did not defile my name or my father's name in the land of my captivity. I am my father's only child; and he has no other child to be his heir; nor has he a near kinsman or other relative that I should keep myself as wife for him. Seven of mine have already died. So why should I still live? But if it does not please you to kill me, Give the order, look upon me and have mercy on me, And may I no longer hear reproaches.<sup>32</sup>

<sup>31</sup> אלהך אלהיך Blessing is the first of all God's gift of life and then all that relates to it. The ascending response is an act of thanks for the gift and praise to the giver, Frizzell 58. This form of direct blessing is only found twice on the OT (1 Chr 29:10; Ps 119:2). The insertion of the pronoun 'atta into the ancient formula for blessing YHWH reorients the prayer into a direct address to him. The presence of the consecutive element of Jewish prayer, the clause of *baruk 'atta YHWH*, both in late OT texts and in the earliest liturgical traditions should be noted.

<sup>32</sup> Translation by DiLella

The change from Tobit as first-person narrator (1:1-3:6), to the third-person omniscient narrator begins at 3:7, where the narrator says: "On that day it happened to Sarah, daughter of Raguel at Ecbatana in Media, that she also heard reproaches from one of her father's maids." "That day" is the exact time that Tobit heard reproaches. Then the narrator states, "On that day [Sarah] was grieved in spirit and wept" (3:10). Again this is the same time when Tobit tells us, "Being grief-stricken in spirit and groaning, I wept" (3:1). Next, the narrator says, "At that very moment, stretching out her hands toward the window, she prayed and said . . ." (3:11). This moment is precisely when Tobit also prayed for death. Then after both had prayed the narrator tells us, "At that very moment, the prayer of both was heard in the presence of the glory of God" (3:16). Finally, the narrator says, "At that moment Tobit returned from the courtyard into his house, and Sarah daughter of Raguel also came down herself from the upper room" (3:17). These are no mere coincidences; rather, they make the theological affirmation that divine providence is at work: God has indeed listened to their prayers and will respond in his good time, but of course not in the way requested. For Raphael says to Tobit near the end of the story (12:12-14), "When you and Sarah prayed, I presented

and read the memorial of your prayer before the glory of the Lord... And at the same time God sent me to heal you<sup>33</sup> and Sarah your daughter-in-law."<sup>34</sup>

Tobit's and Sarah's prayers are the only ones in the book that receive the extended discussion of divine providence just mentioned. Moreover, only for Tobit and Sarah does the narrator tell us explicitly that God has listened to them and wills to answer their prayers. The family stories of Tobit and Sarah are of course essential to the plot of the book.

In the upstairs room of her father's house (3:10) Sarah prayed, "stretching out her hands," the customary way to hold the hands in prayer, "toward the window," presumably facing Jerusalem<sup>35</sup>, as in Dan 6:10, where Daniel prayed, "in his upstairs room facing Jerusalem." Curiously Tobit tells us nothing about the position of his hands in prayer or where he prayed. He does say, as noted above, that he was in tears when he prayed. As each begins to pray, what strikes the reader is the contrast between calm Sarah, a female and still quite young and impressionable, and the weepy behavior of Tobit, a much older and presumably experienced male. The reader perhaps would have

<sup>33</sup> Raphael (רפאל) is one who heals.

<sup>34</sup> This represents prayer via intercessory angel, an early reference to such prayer.

<sup>35</sup> The rabbis ordained that the worshipper is to stand erect and to face in the direction of the Temple while reciting his Tefillah, see Mishnah Berakhot 4:5. This requirement was derived from King Solomon's prayer (1 Kgs 8).

expected the young Sarah to shed tears and carry on, and the older Tobit to be in control of his emotions.

Sarah's prayer divides easily into two strophes. It too is a lament, but quite different from Tobit's. A major contrast between the two "prayers" is that Sarah does not own up to or confess any personal or national sin, as does Tobit at the beginning of his prayer (3:3).<sup>36</sup> Instead, she begins by extolling the Lord and calling on his works to bless him, and then in typical youthful fashion comes right to the point in asking the Lord for death (3:12-13). Unlike Tobit who makes no claim to innocence, Sarah asserts that she is free of any serious sin. Moreover, unlike Tobit's prayer, Sarah's prayer is highly personal, containing no communal dimension at all. Earlier in the story Sarah, being a dutiful daughter, was concerned only about her father's disgrace and sorrow if she were to hang herself (3:10). Now her prayer for death centers on the relief she seeks because of the reproaches she had heard.

The opening of Sarah's prayer, εὐλογητός εἰ, first appearance of the sixteen times it occurs in Tobit, which the adjective εὐλογητός occurs 80 times in the LXX. The expressions, "Blessed are you" and "Blessed be the Lord (or

<sup>36</sup> Sarah's prayer being one of despair, and Tobit's one recalling sins thereby seeking the Lord's forgiveness.

God)," are traditional openings of prayers or greetings in Tobit: 8:5; 8:15,16,17; 9:6; 11:14; 11:17; and 13:2,18.

The divine title Sarah employs, "O Lord, merciful God," derives from similar expressions in Ex 34:6; 2 Chr 30:9; Pss. 85:15; 114:5. In references to God, Sarah uses three terms: κυριος (twice), θεος, and δεσποτιος. The verb ευλογεω (3:11) is used a total of 28 times in Tobit out of a total of 441 in the LXX. This verb occurs especially in other prayers; see, for example, 8:5; 8:15; 11:14,15; and 13:7,15,16,18. In his farewell speech, Raphael uses the verb five times: in 12:6 (twice), 17,18,20. And ευλογεω recurs five more times in the conclusion of story: 14:2,6,8,15 (twice). That the adjective ευλογητιος (16 times) and the verb ευλογεω (28 times) appear a total of 44 times demonstrates that blessing the Lord is a key theme in the book, and not just in prayers. Blessing, which includes praising the Lord, is of course typical in a lament before or after a petition for relief.<sup>37</sup>

Sarah's words, "And now, O Lord, I raise my face toward you," are reminiscent of LXX Ezra 9:6, which, however, has a different verb, "O Lord, I am ashamed and embarrassed to lift up my face to you." Then Sarah asks the Lord outright to give the command that she "be set free from the earth" (3:13), using the same verb (the aorist

<sup>37</sup> See Pss 27; 76

passive of ἀπολυω)that Tobit employed twice in his request to die (3:6). Only in this way would she be spared from listening to ονειδισμούς (3:13,15), the same term Tobit employed, also twice (3:6). With this term the narrator connects the predicaments of the two petitioners.

In the second strophe, Sarah now declares her total innocence of any sexual immorality or any other sin that would besmirch her name or her father's (3:14-15). Apparently, in her depression, she has no awareness of even unwitting offenses. Her attitude contrasts with Tobit's; he explicitly beseeches the Lord not punish him for his sins and unwitting offenses and those of his ancestors (3:3,5). Unlike Tobit, Sarah does not even mention that she belongs to a sinful people; nor does she say anything at all about the sins the nation has committed or about the punishment the nation rightly deserves according to Deut 28.

In 3:14, Sarah calls the Lord δεσποτα, which occurs more than 50 times in the LXX (mostly in the later book of the OT). The narrator would have us infer that she learned this title from her father Raguel, for in his prayer (8:17) he likewise uses the title, which is the only other occurrence in the book. Sarah reminds us, "An only child I am to my father" (3:15), the exact words Tobias employs in 6:15 to describe himself when he tries to back out of marrying

Sarah. In the book, the adjective *μονογενής* is used only one other time, in the plural, in Raguel's prayer (8:17). In 3:15, she states she is the only heir to her father's estate. According to Num 27:8, YHWH tells Moses, "You shall tell the Israelites: 'If a man dies and he has no son, you shall let his heritage pass on to his daughter.'" According to YHWH's instructions, Moses clarifies this law in Num 36:8, "Every daughter who possesses an inheritance in any tribe of the people of Israel shall be a wife to one of the family of her father's tribe, so that each one of the people of Israel may possess the inheritance of his ancestors." Aware of this second law, Sarah tells the Lord that her father has no more relatives for her to marry. Apparently, her father Raguel never told her about his relative Tobit's son Tobias (6:11). Tobias, however, knew about his relative Sarah and her seven husbands who died on their wedding night, killed by a demon (6:14). Sarah then laments the fact that she had already lost seven husbands, but she does not know why, although the omniscient narrator does tell us that the demon Asmodeus killed them (3:8). Accordingly, she sees no reason to live any longer (3:15).

Unlike Tobit who simply prays for death and nothing less, Sarah correctly acknowledges that the Lord may not see fit to kill her (3:15). Nonetheless, she asks the Lord



again to give the command to look upon her and to have mercy on her. The clear origin of this expression is Ps 24:16, "Look upon me and have mercy on me, for I am an only child and poor." A similar prayer appears in Sir 36:1, "Have mercy on us, O Master, the God of all, and look down on us."<sup>38</sup> Sarah then concludes her prayer by a final appeal to be spared from any further reproaches, ονειδισμούς (3:15) the word she used in 3:13.

In his first-person narration, Tobit admits that his adversities are fair (3:2) because of his own sins and solidarity with the sinful nation. Into his prayer Tobit has woven many strands from the earlier biblical books, especially Deuteronomy. Though Tobit leaves his fate up to the Lord's good pleasure (3:6), he nevertheless reminds the Lord that he has reached the limits of this endurance and so begs for deliverance from the personal reproaches that he has endured—the drastic deliverance of death. In this regard, Tobit has good biblical company: Elijah (1 Kgs 19:4), Jeremiah (20:14-18), and Job (7:15) also prayed for death.<sup>39</sup> Though to a modern reader Tobit's uncontrollable weeping as he prays may appear to be somewhat overemotional, it provides a theological legitimization for others' suffering from deep depression with nowhere to

<sup>38</sup> Sir 36 is in plural, with liturgical overtones.

<sup>39</sup> Clearly Elijah, Jeremiah and Jonah relate it to the prophetic mission, while Job sought an escape from his pain. The implications of choosing death are in the forefront, for God teaches "choose life" (Dt 30:19).

turn: they can pray honestly and unashamedly and even with a certain amount of self-pity.

The omniscient narrator then presents and contrasts the youthful Sarah, who also has suffered intensely. Though she had a good cry when at first she contemplated suicide, she quickly regains her composure and is self-controlled when she prays. She too is well acquainted with the earlier biblical books, especially the manner of prayer<sup>40</sup>; and she utilizes this material effectively in her prayer. Like Tobit, she admits that the Lord may not be pleased to have her die (3:15); but unlike Tobit who asks for a special remedy (death), Sarah who also prays for death nevertheless allows the Lord to decide what is best for her. Embedded in her prayer is a theology that the Lord does indeed hear the prayers of his people and knows how he will respond in the best possible way to their complaints about the difficult grief and sorrow they experience.

Finally, we may conclude that the prayers of Tobit and Sarah, despite their differences in tone and emphasis, nonetheless complement each other. At the same time, each prayer can speak to particular situation with which the reader can identify.

<sup>40</sup> It is possible that she gets her cues from the Hannah's prayer in 1 Sam 2 with its detailed description of how she prayed.

TOBIAS' PRAYER 8:5-8

G<sup>I</sup> 8:5-8

5 Και ηρξάτο Τοβιας  
λεγειν ευλογητος ει, ο  
θεος των πατερων ημων,  
και ευλογητον το ονομα  
σου το αγιον και ενδοξον  
εις τους αιωνας  
ευλογησατωσαν σε οι  
ουρανοι και πασαι αι  
κτισεις σου.

6 συ εποιησας Αδαμ και  
εδωκας αυτω βοηθον  
Ευαν στηριγμα την  
γυναικα αυτου εκ τουτων  
εγενηθη το ανθρωπων  
σπερμα. συ ειπας ου  
καλον ειναι τον ανθρωπον  
μονον, ποιησωμεν αυτω  
βοηθον ομοιον αυτω.

7 και νυν, κυριε, ου δια  
πορνειαν εγω λαμβανω  
την αδελφην μου ταυτην  
αλλ επ αληθειας επιταξον  
ελεησαι με και αυτη  
συγκαταγηρασαι.

8 και ειπεν μετ αυτου  
Αμην.

G<sup>II</sup>

5 και ανεστη, και ερξαντο  
προσευχεσθαι και  
δεηθηναι οπως γενηται  
αυτιος σωτηρια, και  
ηρξαντο λεγειν ευλογητος  
ει, ο θεος των πατερων,  
ημων και ευλογητον το  
ονομα συο εις παντας  
τους αιωνας της γενεας  
ευλαγησατωσαν σε οι  
ουρανοι και πασα η  
κτισοις σου εις παντας  
τους αιωνας. 6 συ  
εποιησας τον Αδαμ και  
εποιησας αυτω βοηθον  
στηριγμα Ευαν την  
γυναικα αυτου, και εξ  
αμφοτερων εγενηθη το  
σπερμα των ανθρωπων  
και συ ειπας οτι ου καλον  
ειναι τον ανθρωπον  
μονον, ποιησωμεν αυτω  
βοηθον ομοιον αυτω. 7 και  
νυν ουχι δια προνιαν εγω  
λαμβανω την αδελφην  
μου ταυτην, αλλ επ  
αληθειας επιταξον  
ελεησαι με και αυτην και  
συγκαταγηρασαι κοινως.  
8 και ειπαν μεθ εαυτων  
Αμην αμην.

TRANSLATION

5 Thereupon Tobias  
arose from the bed and  
said to her, "Sister,  
arise. Let us pray and  
make supplication to  
our God that he enact  
mercy and deliverance  
for us." whereupon she  
arose and they began  
to pray and make  
supplication that  
deliverance might be  
vouchsafed for them;  
he commenced saying,  
"Blessed art thou"<sup>41</sup>,  
God of our fathers,  
and blessed is Thy  
name for ever and  
ever; let the heavens  
bless Thee, and all  
creation for all  
ages.<sup>42</sup> 6 Thou madest  
Adam and madest Eve  
his wife as helper and  
stay for him; of them  
both there came the  
seed of men, and thou  
didst say, 'It is not  
good that the man  
should be alone; let  
us make a helper like  
unto him.'<sup>43</sup> 7 And  
now, I take not this  
my sister for lust,  
but in truth. Command  
that I and she may  
find mercy, and that  
we grow old together."  
8 And they responded  
"Amen, Amen,"  
together.<sup>44</sup>

<sup>41</sup> With insertion of 'atta, the blessing has become a personal and direct address to God alone, Towner 392.

<sup>42</sup> See *Birkhot Hatanim* (Seven Blessings of the Bridegroom) and *Birkhot Nesu'in*, found in the Talmud, demonstrating continuity of prayer.

<sup>43</sup> Genesis 2

<sup>44</sup> Translation by Frank Zimmermann based upon Sinaiticus. All translations to follow are from this same source.

Contrary to all expectations, prayer (vv 5-8; 15-17), not the showdown between Tobias and Asmodeus (vv 2-4), dominates chapter 8. The prayer offered by Tobias, in which Sarah joins him, is at once one of praise and petitions. It is the third formal prayer in the book. They laud the God of heaven as creator and author of human marriage and beg for his mercy and deliverance.<sup>45</sup> Their prayer echoes somewhat that of Sarah in 3:11, but it also invokes the "heavens" and all "creation" to join with Tobias and Sarah, just as some canonical psalms personify God's creation. Tobias' prayer "Let the heavens praise you, and all your creation," recalls OT texts of the heavens and stars (Pss. 19:1-2; 89:5; 93:3; 97:6; 98:7), the floods (Ps 93:3), the sea (98:7), and the mountains and hills (Isa 55:12).<sup>46</sup> Their prayer also recalls the divine institution of marriage in Gen 2, and Tobias quotes a part of that story to justify his taking Sarah in marriage. This recollection motivates his marriage. Tobias begs God to understand the motivation of his marriage to Sarah and to use that as a reason for a display of His divine mercy, in freeing them from Asmodeus and granting them a long life together, with which his prayer ends, a request that he and Sarah may find favor and

<sup>45</sup> The prayer of Tobias and Sarah evokes the name of God, the Lord's self-manifestation of holiness and glory, Daniélou 148.

<sup>46</sup> Tobias seeks a response to Gen 2:18, which is located in the story of creation, as God wills the creation to reproduce.

long life together. Tobias insists that his motive is  $\alpha\lambda\eta\theta\epsilon\iota\alpha$ , lit. "truth" or "sincerity," which stands in contrast to  $\mu\omicron\rho\nu\epsilon\iota\alpha$ , here understood as "lust." The medieval Aramaic of Neubauer reads:  $\text{לא בדיל זנותא נסבית אחתי דא אלהין}$   $\text{כחלכת אורייתא}$  "that I take this my sister not because of lust but according to the regulation of the law."<sup>47</sup> This prayer can be seen as the continuation of the benedictions of the Jewish marriage service, a private prayer to be said between the new husband and wife.<sup>48</sup>

There are numerous echoes in this part of the Tobit story to the marriage of women in the OT: the story of Rebekah in Gen 24, of Rachel in Gen 29, of Dinah in Gen 34, of Samson's wife in Jg 14, and of Michal in 1 Sam 18. Tobias' prayer is a vehicle whereby the narrator explicitly states his understanding of the nature and purpose of holy matrimony.<sup>49</sup>

<sup>47</sup> The medieval Aramaic version contains similarities to the Mishnaic law of marriage of one being "set apart" or  $\text{שקד}$ , affirms the sacramental oath of marriage.

<sup>48</sup> A. Finkel

<sup>49</sup> The marriage and prayer of Tobias have figured prominently in the liturgy of the Roman Catholic marriage ceremony.

## RAGUEL'S PRAYER 8:15-17

### G<sup>1</sup> 8:15-17

15 και ευλογησεν  
Ραγουηλ τον θεον λεγων  
ευλογητος ει συ, ο θεος, εν  
παση ευλογια και  
ευλογειτωσαν σε οι αγιοι  
σου και πασαι αι κτισεις  
σου και παντες οι  
αγγελοι σου και οι  
εκλεκτοι σου,  
ευλογειτωσαν σε εις τους  
αιωνας. 16 ευλογητος ει  
οτι ηυφρανας με, και ουκ  
εγενετο μοι καθως  
υπενοουν, αλλα κατα το  
πολυ ελεος σου εποιησας  
μεθ ημων. 17 ευλογητος ει  
οτι ηλεησας δυο  
μονογενεις ποιησον  
αυτοις, δεοποτα, ελεος,  
συντελεσον την ζωην  
αυτων εν υγεια μετα  
ευφροσυνης και ελεους.

15 και ευλογησαν τον  
θεον του ουρανου και  
ειπαν ευλογητος ει, θεε, εν  
παση ευλογια καθαρα  
ευλογειτωσαν σε εις  
παντας τους αιωνας.

16 και ευλογητος ει οτι  
ευφρανας με, και ουκ  
εγενετο καθως υπενοουν,  
αλλα κατα το πολυ ελεος  
σου εποιησας μεθ ημων.  
17 και ευλογητος ει οτι  
ηλεησας δυο μονογενεις  
ποιησον αυτοις, δεοποτα,  
ελεος και σωτηριαν και  
συντελεσον την ζωην  
αυτων μετ ευφροσυνης  
και ελεου.

### TRANSLATION

15 Blessing the God of Heaven, he said, "Blessed art Thou, O God, with all pure and holy blessing! Let all thy holy ones and all thy creatures bless thee, all thy angels and all thy chosen ones, let them bless thee forever. 16 And blessed art thou, for thou hast caused me to rejoice and it has not transpired as I supposed; rather thou hast dealt with us according to thy great mercy. 17 And blessed art thou, because thou hast had mercy on two that are the only begotten children of their parents. Show them mercy and deliverance, o Lord, and round out their life with gladness and mercy."

At the good news brought by the maidservant, Raguel and Edna break into an exultant prayer of praise. This is the fourth formal prayer in the book, in which Sarah's parents praise God for the safety of Tobias and thank God for his mercy and compassion. It is an expression of their joy in learning that Tobias is alive. Their utterance begins as in 3:11 and 8:5, but only here does one find ευλογητοςει συ, θεε, "Blest are you, O God." God is addressed in

the second person singular. Compare similar words of praise found in 1 Chr 29:10; LXX Dan 3:52; 1 Macc 4:30; Jdt 13:17.

Sarah's parents acknowledge God's part in the deliverance of their daughter from Asmodeus, even though they are unaware that Tobias' companion, Azariah<sup>50</sup>, is indeed an angel sent by God to liberate her from the influence of the evil demon.<sup>51</sup> The prayer ends with the third praise of God and a petition that Tobias and Sarah may live in happiness. Sarah is an "only child" (μονογενής), as is Tobias, and so the deliverance of her from the influence of Asmodeus is a great gain for her parents, who might have been tempted to mourn for an only child (Zech 12:10). Since barrenness was considered a disgrace in the biblical culture (1 Sam 1:10-11) and many children a divine blessing, an "only child" was a mark of special favor, a favor that is reflected in the story of Abraham and Isaac in Genesis 22. Cf Jg 11:34.

<sup>50</sup> The doctrine of angels who are put in charge of individuals has antecedents in the Bible and Judaism (Jub 35:17); and also occurs in the NT (Matt 18:10), Danielou 185.

<sup>51</sup> "Looking back on the tradition of YHWH, Healer of Israel, and its interpretation in Tobit, one sees that God manifests his kingship, not as in apocalyptic with its impression that the world will be created anew, but already as saving Helper in Israel's progress through history. Such manifestations of his saving might benefit not only God's people as a collective group . . . but also the individual believers through healing in their needy situation" (Haag, translation by Frizzell).

CHAPTER 6: TOBIT 11:14-15; 13:1-18 & QUMRAN HYMN SCROLL

TRANSLATION

14 και εκκλυσεν και  
ειπεν ευλογητος ει, ο  
θεος, και ευλογητον το  
ονομα σου εις τους  
αιωνας, και  
ευλογημενοι παντες οι  
αγιοι σου αγγελοι.

15 οτι εμαστιγωσας  
και ηλησας με, ιδου  
βλεπω Τωβιαν τον υιον  
μου, και εισηλθεν ο υοις  
αυτου χαιρων και  
απηγγειλεν τω πατρι  
αυτου τα μεγαλεια τα  
γενομενα αυτω εν τη  
Μηδια.

14 και εκκλυσεν και  
ειπεν αυτω Ειδον σε,  
τεκνον τι φως των  
οφθαλμων μου. και  
ειπεν ευλογητος ο θεος,  
και ευλογητον το ονομα  
το μεγα αυτου, και  
ευλογημενοι παντας οι  
αγγελοι οι αγιοι αυτου  
γενοιτο το ονομα το  
μεγα αυτου εφ ημας,  
και ευλογητοι παντεθ  
οι αγγελοι εις παντας  
τους αιωνας 15 οτι  
ατος εμαστιγωσεν με,  
και ιδου βλεπω Τωβιαν  
τον υιον μου. εισηλθεν ο  
υιος αυτου χαιρων και  
απηγγειλεν τω πατρι  
αυτου τα μεγαλεια το  
γενομενα αυτω εν τη  
Μηδια.

14 Then he  
exclaimed, "Blessed  
be God, and blessed  
be his great name,  
and blessed be his  
holy angels. Let  
his great name be  
upon us, and  
blessed be all the  
angels for all  
time. 15 For he did  
afflict me, and  
behold, I see my  
son Tobias!" Then  
Tobit went in  
rejoicing and  
blessing God with  
whole mouth. Then  
Tobias told his  
father that his  
journey had  
prospered, that he  
had brought the  
money, and how he  
had taken Sarah,  
the daughter of  
Raguel, to wife,  
and "Behold she is  
at hand, and is  
near to the gate of  
Media."<sup>51</sup>

<sup>51</sup> Translated by Frank  
Zimmerman, based upon  
Sinaiticus



1 και Τωβιτ εγραψεν  
προσευχην εις αγαλλιασιν  
και ειπεν ευλογητος ο θεος ο  
ζων εις τους αιωνας και η  
βασιλεια αυτου, 2 οτι αυτος  
μαστιγοι και ελεα, καταγει  
εις αδην και αναγει, και ουκ  
εστιν ος εκφευζεται την  
χειρα αυτου. 3  
εξομολογεισθε αυτω, α υιοι  
Ισραηλ, ενωπιον των εθνων,  
οτι αυτος διεσπειρεν ημας εν  
αυτοις 4 εκει υποδειξατε την  
μεγαλωσυνην αυτου, υψουτε  
αυτου ενωπιον παντας  
ζωντος, καθοτι αυτος κυριος  
ημων, και ο θεος αυτος  
πατηρ ημων εις παντας  
τους αιωνας. 5 και  
μαστιγωσει ημας εν ταις  
αδικαις ημων και παλι  
ελεησει και συναξει ημας εκ  
παντων των εθνων, ο νεαν  
οκορπισθητε εν αυταις.

6 εαν επιστρεψητε προς  
αυτον εν ολη καρδια υμων  
και εν ολη τη ψυχη ποιησαι  
ενωπιον αυτου αληθειαν,  
τοτε επιστρεψει προς υμας  
και ου μη κρυψητο  
προσωπον αυτου αφ υμων.  
Και θεασασθε α ποιησει μεθ  
ημων, και εξομολογησθε  
αυτω εν ολω τω στοματι  
υμων, και ευλογησατε τον  
κυριον της δικαιοσυνης και  
υψωσατε τον βασιλεα των  
αιωνων εγω εν τη της  
αιχμαλωσιας μου  
εξομολογουμαι αυτω και  
δεικνω την ισχυν και την  
μεγαλωσυνην αυτου εθνε  
αμαρτωλων Επιστρεψατε,  
αμαρτωλοι, και ποιησατε  
δικαιοσυνην ενωπιον αυτου  
τις γνωσκει ει θελησει υμας  
και ποιησει ελεημοσυνην  
υμιν; 7 τον θεον μου υψω και  
η ψυχη μου τον βασιλεα του  
ουρανου και αγαλλιασεται  
την μεγαλωσυνην αυτου. 8  
λεγετωσαν παντες και  
εξομολογεισθωσαν αυτω εν  
Ιεροσολυμοις 9 Ιεροσολυμα  
πολις αγια, μαστιγωσει επι  
τα εργα των υιων σου και  
παλι ελεησει τους υιοις των  
δικαιων.

1 Και ειπεν ευλογητος ο θεος  
ο ζων εις τον αιωνα και η  
βασιλεια αυτου, 2 οτι  
αυτους μαστιγοι και ελεα,  
καταγει εως αδου  
κατωτατω της γης, και  
αυτος αναγει εκ της  
απωλειας της μεγαλης, και  
ουκ εστιν ουδεν, ο εκφευζεται  
την χειρα αυτου. 3  
εξομολογεισθε αυτω, οι υιοι  
Ισραηλ, ενωπιον των εθνων,  
οτι αυτος διεσπειρεν ημας εν  
αυτοις 4 και υπειδειξεν υμιν  
την μεγαλωσυνην αυτου, και  
υψουτε αυτου ενωπιον  
παντος ζωντος, καθοτι  
αυτος ημων κυριος εστιν  
και, αυτος θεος ημων και  
αυτος πατηρ ημων και αυτος  
θεος εις παντας τους αιωνας  
5 μαστιγωσει υμας επι ταις  
αδικαις υμων και παντας  
υμας ελεησει εκ παντων των  
εθνων, οπου αν  
διασκορπισθητε εν αυταις. 6  
οταν επιστρεψητε προς  
αυτον εν ολη τη καρδια  
ημων και εν ολη τη ψυχη  
υμων ποιησαι ενωπιον αυτου  
αληθειαν, τοτε επιστρεψει  
προς υμας, και ου μη κρυψη  
το προσωπον αυτου αφ υμων  
ουκετι και νυν θεασασθε α  
εποιησεν μεθ υμων, και  
εξομολογησασθε αυτω εν  
ολω τω στοματα υμων και  
ευλογησατε τον κυριον της  
δικαιοσυνης και υψωσατε  
τον βασιλεα των αιωνων.

W 6i-10b are  
missing in Codex S  
through  
homoioteleuton.

## TRANSLATION

1 Then Tobit composed a  
psalm of praise, and  
said: "Blessed be the  
Living God for eternity,  
and his Kingdom. 2 For  
he chastises, then shows  
mercy, he leads down to  
Hades below the earth,  
but he delivers from the  
great abyss and there is  
nothing that can escape  
his hand. 3 Give thanks  
unto him before the  
nations, children of  
Israel, for he has  
scattered you among  
them, and there he has  
shown you his greatness.  
4 Therefore extol him  
before all the living,  
because he is our Lord,  
and he is our God, and  
he is our father,  
verily, he is the Lord  
to all the ages. 5 He  
will chastise you for  
your iniquities; but he  
will show mercy to all  
of you, out of all the  
nations, wherever you  
may be scattered among  
them. 6 When you will  
return to him with all  
your heart and with all  
your soul, to act  
truthfully before him,  
then he will turn unto  
you, and will no longer  
hide his face from you.  
And now, see what he has  
wrought with you; then  
give him thanks with  
your whole mouth, and  
bless the Lord of  
Righteousness and exalt  
the Everlasting King. I,  
in the land of my  
captivity, give him  
thanks, and show his  
strength and majesty  
unto a sinful nation;  
turn, sinners, and do  
righteousness before  
him. Who can tell,  
perhaps he will accept  
you and have mercy on  
you? 7 I shall exalt my  
God, and my soul exalt  
the King of Heaven, and  
shall rejoice in his  
majesty. 8 Let all men  
speak and give thanks to  
him in Jerusalem. 9 O  
Jerusalem, holy city! He  
will chastise you for  
the deeds of your sons,  
but will again have  
mercy on the sons of the  
righteous.

10 εξομολογου τω κυριω  
αγαθως και ευλογει τον  
βασιλεα των αιωνων, ινα παλι  
η σκηνη αυτου οικοδομηθη εν  
αιι μετα χαρας, και ευφραναι  
εν σοι τους αιχμαλωτους και  
αγαπησαι εν σοι τους  
ταλαιπωρους εις πασας τας  
γενεας του αιωνος. 11 εθνη  
πολλα μακροθεν ηξει προς το  
ονομα κυιου του θεου δωρα εν  
χερσιν εχοντες και δωρα τω  
βασιλει του ουρανου γενεαι  
γενεων δωσουσιν σοι  
αγαλλιασιν

12 επικαταρατοι ταντες οι  
μισουντες σε ευλογημενοι  
εσονται ταντες οι αγαπωντες  
σε εις τον αιωνα.

13 χαρηθι και αγαλλισσαι επι  
τοις υιοις των δικαιων, οτι  
συναχθησονται και  
ευλογησουσιν τον κυριον των  
δικαιων

14 ω μακαριοι οι αγαπωντες  
σε, χαρησονται επι τη ειρηνη  
σου, μακαριοι οσοι ελυπηθησαν  
επι πασαις ταις μαστιξιν σου,  
οτι επι σοι χαρησονται  
θεασαμενοι πασαν την δοξαν  
σου και ευφρανθησονται εις τον  
αιωνα 15 η ψυχη μου ευλογει  
τον θεον τον βασιλεα τον  
μεγαν. 16 οτι οικοδομηθησεται  
Ιερουσαλημ σαπφειρω και  
σμαραγδω και λιθω εντιμω τα  
τεαχη σου και οι πυργοι και οι  
προμαχωνες εν χρυσειω  
καθαρω,

17 και αι πλατεια Ιερουσαλημ  
βηρυλλω και ανθρακι και λιθω  
εκ Σουφιρ ψηφολογηθησονται.  
18 και ερουσιν πασαι αι ρυμαι  
αυτης Αλληλουια και  
αινεσουσιν λεγοντες Ειλογητος  
ο θεος, ος υψωσεν παντας τους  
αιωνας.<sup>52</sup>

<sup>52</sup> The abbreviated G<sup>1</sup> has been explained as the Greek editor's desire not to needlessly offend Roman readers, who would not have appreciated the strong

10 και παλι η σκηνη σου  
οικοδομηθησεται σοι μετα καρας,  
και ευφραναι εν σοι παντας τους  
αιχμαλωτους και αγαπησαι εν  
σοι παντας τους ταλαιπωρους  
εις πασας τας γενεας του αιωνος.

11 φως λαμπρον λαμψει εις  
παντα τα περατα της γης εθνη  
πολλα μακροθεν ηξει σοι και  
κατοικοι παντων των εσχατων  
της γης προς το ονομα το αγιον  
σου και τα δωρα αυτων εν ταις  
χερσιν αυτων εχοντες τω βασιλει  
του ουραδου γενεαι γενεων  
δωσουσιν εν σοι αγαλλιαμα, και  
ονομα της εκλεκτης εις τας  
γενεας του αιωνος. 12

επικαταρατοι παντες, οι ερουσιν  
λογον σκληρον, επικαταρατοι  
εσονται παντες οι καθαιρουντες  
σε και κατασπωντες τα τεαχη  
σου και παντες οι ανατρεποντες  
τους πυργους σου και  
εμπυριζοντες τας οικησεις σου  
και ευλογητοι εσονται παντες εις  
τον αιωνα οι φοβουμενοι σε. 13  
τοτε πορευθητι και αγαλλιασαι  
προς τους υιους των δικαιων, οτι  
παντες επισυναχθησονται και  
ευλογησουσιν τον κυριον του  
αιωνος. 14 μακαριοι οι  
αγαπωντες σε, και μακαριοι αι  
χαρησονται επι τη ειρηνη σου  
και μακαριοι παντες οι  
ανθρωποι, οι επι σοι  
λυπηθησονται επι πασαις ταις  
μαρησονται και οφονται πασαν  
την χαραν σου εις τον αιωνα. 15  
η ψυχη μου, ευλογει τον κυριον  
τον βασιλεα τον μεγαν. 16 οτι  
Ιερουσαλημ οικοδομηθησεται τη  
πολει οικος αυτου εις παντας τους  
αιωνας. μακαριος εσομαι, αν  
γενηται το καταλειμμα του  
σπερματος μου ιδειν την δοξαν  
σου και εξομολογησασθαι τω  
βασιλει του ουρανου. Και αι θυραι  
Ιερουσαλημ σαπφειρω και  
σμαραγδω οικοδομηθησονται και  
λιθω τιμω παντα τα τεαχη αυ  
αι πυργοι Ιερουσαλημ χρυσειω  
οικοδομηθησονται και οι  
προμαχωνες αυτων χρυσειω  
καθαρω. 17 αι πλατεια  
Ιερουσαλημ ανθρακι  
ψηφολογηθησονται και λιθω  
Σουφιρ. 18 και αι θυραι  
Ιερουσαλημ ωδασ αγαλλιαματος  
ερουσιν, και πασαι αι οικια  
αυτης ερουσιν Αλληλουια,  
ευλογητος ο θεος του Ισραηλ και  
ευλογητοι ευλογησουσιν το ονομα  
το αγιον εις τον αιωνα και ετι

negative feelings of Codex  
Sinaiticus toward those who did  
not revere the Holy City.

10 Give thanks to the Lord with  
goodness, and bless the  
Everlasting King! That your  
tabernacle may be built in you  
again with joy, and that he may  
make glad in you all that are  
captives and love in you all that  
are miserable, for all  
generations or eternity. 11 A  
bright light shall shine unto all  
ends of the earth; many nations  
shall come to you from afar, and  
the inhabitants of the utmost ends  
of the earth unto your holy name,  
bearing gifts in their hands unto  
the King of Heaven. Generations  
of generations shall utter praises  
in you, and to the name of the  
elect one, for generations to  
eternity. 12 Cursed shall be all  
they that shall speak an evil  
word; cursed shall be all they  
that demolish you and throw  
down your walls; and all they  
that overthrow your towers, and  
set on fire your habitations. But  
blessed shall be forever those  
who revere you. 13 Then go, and  
be exceeding glad for the sons of  
the righteous, for they shall all  
be gathered together and bless  
the everlasting Lord. 14 Blessed  
shall they be that love you; and  
blessed shall they be that shall  
rejoice for your peace. And  
blessed be all men that shall  
sorrow for you for all your  
afflictions; because in you they  
shall rejoice and shall see your  
joy forever. 15 O my soul, bless  
the Lord, the great King! For  
Jerusalem will be built as his  
house for all ages. Happy shall I  
be if the remnant of my seed  
come to see your glory and give  
thanks to the King of Heaven! 16  
And the gates of Jerusalem shall  
be built in with sapphire and  
emerald and all your walls with  
precious stone. The towers of  
Jerusalem shall be built with  
gold, and their battlements with  
pure gold. 17 The streets of  
Jerusalem shall be paved with  
carbuncle and stone of Ophir.  
And the gates of Jerusalem shall  
utter hymns of exultation, 18  
and all her dwellings shall say,  
'Hallelujah.' Blessed is the God  
of Israel, and the blessed shall  
bless the Name that is holy  
forever and ever.

Before studying the text, a digression seems to be warranted in order to place the book within its place in regards to other texts. The Hymns Scroll, from Qumran cave 1, was published by E. L. Sukenik in 1954-5. The poems contained in the Scroll are similar to the biblical Psalms. They are mostly hymns of thanksgiving, individual prayers as opposed to those intended for communal worship, expressing a rich variety of spiritual and doctrinal detail. But two themes running through the whole collection are the themes of salvation and knowledge. The hymns thank God continually for having been saved from the "lot" of the wicked, and for his gift of insight into the divine mysteries. He, a "creature of clay," has been singled out by his Maker to receive favors of which he feels himself unworthy and he alludes again and again to his frailty and total dependence on God. Whereas some of the hymns give expression to thoughts and sentiments common to all the members of the sect, others, 1, 2, and 7-11, appear to refer to the experiences of a teacher abandoned by his friends and persecuted by his enemies. Several scholars tend to assign the authorship of these to the Teacher of Righteousness, and even consider that he may be responsible for all the hymns. But although this hypothesis is not impossible, no sure conclusion can yet be reached. Nor are we in the position to date any particular composition. The most we can say is that the collection as such probably attained its final shape during the last pre-Christian century.

Philo's account of the banquet celebrated by the Essenes on the Feast of Pentecost may indicate the use to

which the hymns were put.<sup>54</sup> He reports that when the President of the meeting had ended his commentary on the Scriptures, he rose and chanted a hymn, either one of his own making or an old one, and after him each of his brethren did likewise. Similarly, it is possible that the psalms of this scroll were recited by the Guardian and newly initiated members at the Feast of the Renewal of the Covenant. Hymn 4 expressly refers to the oath of the Covenant; Hymn 5 appears to be a poetic commentary on the liturgy marking the entry into the Community. Indeed, the relative poverty of principal themes may be due to the fact that all this poetry was intended for a special occasion and its inspirational scope was thereby limited.<sup>55</sup>

The Book of Tobit may have been a popular work in the Qumran community, read and copied in both Hebrew and Aramaic. Copies are from Cave 4, the so-called 'sectarian library' where copies of works belonging to the proper spiritual tradition of the community were found. The Aramaic text contains no or only few radically new or divergent elements from the story we know in the longer Greek recension (G<sup>II</sup>) taken in scholarly consensus as the 'original' form of the book in which it was composed.

<sup>54</sup> See Dead Sea Scrolls: CD fragment identified the occasion of the Renewal of Covenant oath of 1QS I-II to be celebrated on Shavuoth, written communication by Fr. Lawrence Frizzell.

<sup>55</sup> Vermes 243-4

Chapters 13 and 14, known only from the longer recension, were also preserved in Qumran Aramaic Tobit.

Tobit's hymn of praise in 11:14-15 and 13:1-17 epitomize the book's many exhortations to praise God. Tobit's thanksgiving to God in chapter thirteen is possibly a version of a liturgical composition, reflecting the real usage in the author's time, lending credibility to this portrait of a pious Israelite. Although its vocabulary is reminiscent of the Psalter (especially Ps. 92-118), its themes reflect the concerns of the author's time. The hymn of chapter thirteen is different from all the others in Tobit in that it is much longer, more formal in character (i.e. more psalm-like and prophetic in nature), and says nothing about the characters or events in the Tobit story.

With the opening blessing and explication being reminiscent of a formula prayer of its period it is similar to the *Hymns of Thanksgiving* of the Dead Sea Scrolls [1QH] 5:20; 10:14. Specifically 13:3, addressing the *children of Israel . . . scattered* in exile along with the introduction "I acknowledge you O Lord for. " is also part of the formulaic template of its contemporary hymns.

In 12:17 Raphael counseled Tobit to "praise God at all times." The good Jew that he is, Tobit follows the angel's advice and utters a lengthy prayer in praise of God,

thanking him for his deliverance. It is the sixth formal prayer in the book. Tobit praises God for what he has done for him and other Jewish exiles, and begs that God will do the same for the holy city, Jerusalem. The prayer falls into two parts: (1) Verses 1-8, in which Tobit praises God's mercy and sovereign freedom in the manner of the song of Moses in Exodus 15:1-18 and of the canonical psalms extolling God's kingship; he expresses his concern, too, for deported Israelites still in Assyria. (2) Verses 9-18, in which exiled Tobit sings of a restored Jerusalem and its rebuilt Temple in the manner of prophetic messages of the Old Testament, especially of Second and Third Isaiah, but also Micah and Zechariah.<sup>56</sup>

This prayer is different from all the others in Tobit in that it is much longer, more formal in character, and says nothing about the characters or events in the Tobit story. Tobit prays in every situation: when depressed (3:2-6), in joy (11:14-15), and, here, in gratitude and anticipation.

Tobit in his prayer first acknowledges the sovereignty of the ever-living God, who justly allots out to human beings trials of various sorts, but he extols even more his

<sup>56</sup> See rabbinic Eighteen Benedictions: prayer for return to Jerusalem and rebuilding of the Temple.

gracious mercy toward them.<sup>57</sup> In his Diaspora situation, Tobit calls upon his fellow Israelites to confess their faith and acknowledge their God on the sight of all nations among whom they have been brought to live. For "He is our God; He is our father." Tobit thus recognizes that he and his fellow exiled Jews must turn to God in all fidelity, and that he will no longer turn his face from them. He calls on them to admit what God, the Lord of righteousness and King of ages, has done for them even in their deportation and captivity. This part of Tobit's prayer continues this recognition of God's majesty and the way he has dealt with a sinful people.

In verse 9, Tobit's prayer focuses on Jerusalem, which he reckons will suffer destruction because of what its "hands have done." Tobit has begun his narrative with praise of Solomon's Jerusalem (1:4-10). Now in 13:9-19 as he ends his narrative, "he picks up the theme of Jerusalem but on the other side of destruction,"<sup>58</sup> envisioning a more glorious city. Exiled Tobit prays that God's tabernacle will once again be erected in that holy city, and that its glory will be reflected "unto all the ends of the earth."

<sup>57</sup> The Deuteronomistic formula of "punishment then pardon" frequently refers to God's treatment of Israel as a nation (Ps 89:32-34; Pss of Sol 7:8-10, 10:1-4; 18:4-7; Wis of Sol 12:22).

<sup>58</sup> Moore 280

This "bright light"<sup>59</sup> symbolizes the dawning of a new day for Israel, as the restoration of Tobit's sight marked a new beginning for him. He prays that many<sup>60</sup> nations will come there to worship God with the Jewish people, and that the city and its Temple will last forever. Tobit also invokes a curse on all who might attack Jerusalem and a blessing on all who will grieve over its fate and rejoice over its peace and prosperity.<sup>61</sup> He begs that Jerusalem be rebuilt in splendor and even describes the precious stones, wood, and gold with which he hopes it will be reconstructed, so that one day the city, its gates, and its houses will cry out, "Hallelujah, praised be the God of Israel!" (v. 18).

Throughout the prayer one notes the theme of God's punishment of evil that has been done in Israel, but also God's gracious mercy, which he is willing to manifest again to His chosen people.

The contents of Tobit's hymn of praise actually relate to more than Tobit's own experiences and that of his family. For this reason commentators have often wondered whether the hymn had a previous independent existence, a

<sup>59</sup> Cf. Isa 9:1

<sup>60</sup> "Many nations" as in Isa 2:3, rather than "all," as in Isa 2:2; Cf. also Isa 60:5; Micah 4:2; Zech 8:22; Pss 86:9; 96:7-8.

<sup>61</sup> While Bar 4:31 cursed the enemies of Jerusalem (but did not bless its friends), earlier Isaac had done both for those who would have dealings with Jacob (Gen 27:29). So did Balaam for Israel's friends and enemies (Num 24:9).



hymn that the author has taken over as an adequate expression of praise of God on the lips of an elderly Tobit, in the way that some other hymns in the OT have often been understood (e.g. the song of Hannah in 1 Sam 2; 1-10; of David in 2 Sam 22:1-51; of the Davidic king in Psalm 18; of Jonah in Jon 2:3-10). This question is raised also because part or all Tobit's hymn is lacking in some versions (e.g. Syriac, medieval Aramaic of Neubauer). Several verses of the hymn are preserved in Aramaic and Hebrew texts of Qumran, which show that the hymn is not a product of secondary incorporation at a later date.<sup>62</sup> Many scholars found it curious that the psalm, on the one hand, says virtually nothing about the experiences of Tobit and his family but, on the other hand, emphasizes eschatology, a perspective found nowhere else in the book. Feeling that the psalm's concept of God here differs from the rest of Tobit, some believe that the author of Tobit incorporated here an already existing psalm of praise, a phenomenon found elsewhere in the Bible, as noted above (1 Sam 2:1-10; 2 Sam 22:8-51; Isa 38:1-20; Jonah 2:3-10). The once popular view that this incorporation occurred sometime after 70 CE

<sup>62</sup> Fitzmyer 304-5

is refuted by the presence of Qumran fragments of chapter 13 in 4QTob<sup>a, e</sup>.<sup>63</sup>

By contrast, Flusser regarded Tobit's prayer as the earliest witness (5<sup>th</sup> or 4<sup>th</sup> century BCE) to a new genre of the Second Temple period, namely, the eschatological psalm. Such psalms "sprang from Israel's longing for deliverance from the foreign yoke and from the eschatological hopes connected with Jerusalem."<sup>64</sup>

Given the importance of the Psalms in Second Temple Judaism, it is not surprising that the influence of the Psalter appears in the Book of Tobit. While there are no actual quotations of the Psalms in the original texts of Tobit (in Aramaic, Hebrew, and Greek), there are numerous instances where the author of Tobit either alludes to or uses language reminiscent of the Psalms.<sup>65</sup>

In general, most of the psalms of the Qumran Hodayot (The Psalms of Thanksgiving) show a threefold development which Hermann Gunkel outlined for thanksgiving songs: the description of the author's distress, the cry for help, and the description of deliverance. This description can be applied to the hymn of Tobit.

<sup>63</sup> Moore 283.

<sup>64</sup> Moore 283

<sup>65</sup> See "The Psalms and the Book of Tobit," Stephen Ryan O.P. in *Intertextual Studies in Ben Sira and Tobit*, Jeremy Corely and Vincent Skemp, eds.

"Blessed be God who lives forever, because his kingdom lasts throughout all ages. For he afflicts, and he shows mercy; he leads down to Hades in the lowest regions of the earth, and he brings up from the great abyss, and there is nothing that can escape his hand" (Tobit 13:1-2). These themes of judgment and mercy are also shown the hymns of the Qumran. For example, Hymn 13 states:

"I thank Thee, O Lord,  
For Thou hast not abandoned me  
Whilst I sojourned among a people [burdened with sin].  
[Thou hast not] judged me  
According to my guilt,  
Because of the designs of my inclination;  
But Thou hast saved my life from the Pit.  
Thou hast brought [Thy servant deliverance]  
In the midst of lions destined for the guilty,  
And of lionesses which crush the bones of the mighty  
And drink the blood of the brave"<sup>66</sup>

Retribution and deliverance for the righteous are both important concepts in Judaism and this is demonstrated through their use in both the hymn of Tobit in chapter thirteen and throughout the Thanksgiving Hymns of the Dead Sea Scrolls.

The Christian presbyter John's apocalyptic description of the city—pure gold, clear as glass; foundations of precious jewels; twelve gates of a single pearl each; street of transparent gold—constitutes John's attempt to overwhelm the hearers with the splendor and majesty of the

<sup>66</sup> Translation by Moore

new Jerusalem. His imagery here is traditional. The idea of the New Jerusalem being made of precious stones is almost certainly from Isaiah 54:11-12, which reads:

O afflicted one, storm-tossed, and not comforted, I am about to set your stones in antimony, and lay your foundations with sapphires. I will make your pinnacles of rubies, your gates of jewels, and all your wall of precious stones.

The author of Tobit expanded on this tradition in his description of the future Jerusalem (13:16). Tobit's hymn of praise in chapter thirteen contains a prediction of the city of Jerusalem being rebuilt in glorious style. His description states:

The gates of Jerusalem will be built with sapphire and emeralds, and all your walls with precious stones. The towers of Jerusalem will be built with gold, and their battlements with pure gold. The streets of Jerusalem will be paved with ruby and with stones of Ophir.

Several fragmentary copies of a "new Jerusalem" text have been discovered at Qumran. The Aramaic work known as "The New Jerusalem" has turned up in Qumran caves 1, 2,3,4,5, and 11 with the most extensive portions to be found in Caves 4 and 5. As the title indicates, it gives a description of the New Jerusalem and the restored Temple, showing deep interest in the ritual of the Temple. Inspired by Ezekiel 40-48 (as is John's vision in Revelation), the author elaborates or extends it into the ideal picture of

Jerusalem.<sup>67</sup> The measurements and furnishings of the Temple are shown in a vision to the seer, who is also acquainted with the liturgical laws which will prevail in the coming days.<sup>68</sup> The fragments tell of an angel guide who measures the New Jerusalem and all its contents. Some of the fragments describe aspects of the city bring made of gold, sapphire, rubies, alabaster, and onyx.

At the very least three theological themes have been noted in the Hodayot: the language and imagery connected with God; the emphasis on salvation and grace; and the vivid imagery connected with the eschatological war and the forces of Belial. The focus of these discussions on God in the Hymns is on His omnipotence. This is certainly an outstanding theme in Tobit's own hymn.

The Hymn Scroll of Qumran and Tobit's song of praise do seem to have many of the same themes and influences. This compatibility with the Dead Sea Community's ideals and mores would explain the book's presence in the library of the sect. Scholars have long recognized that the Book of Tobit and New Testament texts share themes, motifs, idioms, social knowledge, and cultural values. Tobit has rightly taken its place within Septuagint and Qumran literature as providing an invaluable resource for study of the Greco-

<sup>67</sup> Eisenman 39

<sup>68</sup> Russell 47

Roman era Jewish matrix from which sprang the Jesus movement and the New Testament.

The restoration of the shattered Israel is just one of the many themes which these two texts, Tobit's hymn and the Qumran Hymn scroll, have in parallel. The compatibility of the Essene thought with the main-stream is evident in the intertestamental works of the various Jewish communities, and the Book of Tobit is one of these works.

Tobit's prayer in chapter 13 has been characterized as "a studied composition of learned psalmography."<sup>69</sup> As Shalmaneser's purchasing agent (1:13), Tobit had to be literate; but how and when he became so is unknown. It is debatable to what extent the well-known teaching institutions of the Talmudic period should be read back into the Second Temple period. "Tobit composed a psalm of praise" in 13:1, Carey Moore translates it as "a joyous prayer," stating that "joy/joyous/rejoicing" is a recurring theme throughout the hymn, occurring six times (vv 1,7,10,11,13, and 14).

## **CHAPTER 8: CONCLUSION**

Prayer in the book of Tobit is influenced by the earlier traditions of the Old Testament as well as it

<sup>69</sup> Moore 277

relates to later rabbinic formulations, providing evidence of continuity to later rabbinic prayers. It is the culmination of pentateuchal allusions, suggesting the narrative patterns itself to Israel's sacred past, continuing into Israel's exilic present. To be sure, the evocation of "classical" biblical texts such as the Pentateuch was one of the most common compositional techniques among Jewish authors in the early post-biblical period—ending with Israel soon returning to the land promised to it just as its biblical ancestors once did. The prayers of the book of Tobit reflect a literary logic that can only be fully decoded when one recognizes that they have been modeled upon, or intended to invoke Deuteronomy.

The literary complexity of Tobit mirrors the richness of the book's religious expression. Fundamentally, the work makes a multifaceted statement about the interrelationships of God, humanity, and the world, and it does so through many traditional religious themes. Basic is the assertion that a providential God orchestrates the events of life and history for the benefit of Israel and the Israelites. Faithfulness to God and love toward others are rewarded.

The author's assertion about the sovereignty of God does not avoid the problematic aspects of human experience, which are explained in several ways. Evil spirits wreak

havoc on the righteous and innocent. Since the righteous are not perfect, the merciful God must sometimes "scourge" or "chastise" them before providing their due rewards. The dispensing of such rewards is, moreover, no simple matter and involves a complex divine juggling act; final benefit for all requires temporary suffering for some.

A central factor within the book is the inability for human beings to perceive divine activity. This failure to understand is, in an important sense, the point of the work. God's purpose moves on in spite of human ignorance of it. Heaven's decisions and actions are hidden from human knowledge. The healing angel is thought to be merely a friendly and helpful companion. A journey undertaken for one purpose has unimaginably beneficial consequences.

For the author of Tobit, God's merciful, saving activity is cause for doxology, and the book is replete with hymns and hymnic language. Tobit's progress from doubt to affirmation is marked by his successive use of prayer of lament and a hymn of praise. It is not accidental that the book itself is said to be a doxological confession of God's great and marvelous activity (12:16-22).



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