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## Assyrian Diaspora as Background for the Book of Tobit

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MICHAŁ WOJCIECHOWSKI, OLSZTYN

## ASSYRIAN DIASPORA AS BACKGROUND OF THE BOOK OF TOBIT

The main hero of the Book of Tobit is an Israelite from the northern tribe of Naphtali, deported to Assyria and living in Nineveh. It directs our attention to the phenomenon of the Israelite diaspora, which came to being after the Assyrian invasion against the Northern Kingdom (Israel) in the eighth century B. C and subsequent deportations.<sup>1</sup> Does Tobit stem from this circle? Does it contain information about this diaspora? In the first part of this article we shall discuss the provenance of the book; it will enable us to answer the first question. In the second part we shall raise some problems and texts from Tobit which can be explained in relation to such a background and provide information about it.

### Tobit and its sources

In its present form this book is clearly related to the Judean context, because it attributes to Tobit an exclusive worship in Jerusalem (Tob 1: 4ff). Later usages, namely tithes, are projected into past. Moreover, a Judean and deuteronomistic perspective is visible in the prayer of Tobit (Tob 13) and in many single verses (e. g. Tob 3: 4f). Therefore hypotheses suggesting the composition of the book in the northern tradition are not very popular.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> This Assyrian diaspora was studied by W. Chrostowski, *Asyryjska diaspora Izraelitów i inne studia*, Rozprawy i Studia Biblijne 10, Warszawa 2003; he does not discuss Tob.

<sup>2</sup> J. T. Milik, *La patrie de Tobie*, RB 73/1966, p. 522-530 (Tob was written in the land of Israel and for the Samaritan diaspora). The origin from the northern diaspora was proposed by R. Bauckham, *Anna of the Tribe of Asher (Luke 2: 36-38)*, RB 104/1997, pp. 161-191; pp. 187-191: *Additional Note: the Place of Origin of the Book of Tobit*. Rabenau (see below) has associated the core of the book with the Samaritan milieu, and its development with the Judaism of the Maccabean period.

a) Many scholars assume (openly or tacitly) that Tobit was created by a single author. It is most improbable. The question of the origin and the sources of the book is more difficult. Big differences between the preserved Greek texts,<sup>3</sup> and also between Aramaic and Hebrew manuscripts of Tobit found in Qumran, prove that the book was edited. The same results from the differences between the core of Tobit and its deuteronomic sections. The editorial work seems to be done in many stages. Their detailed reconstruction seems therefore out of our reach.

The first major attempt in this direction, presented by P. Deselaers,<sup>4</sup> is a failure, because he assumed that the shorter text was older. Proposals made by M. Rabenau are much better:<sup>5</sup> he started from the longer (S) text and separated an earlier basic story and three layers of additions, identified with the help of literary analysis. These results seem far-fetched, because such a precise reconstruction of the history of the book is not possible, but Rabenau is quite right showing that many sections were written by later editors. For the question examined in this article it will be sufficient to identify the main features of the original story and of the editorial additions.

As for the starting point, many scholars looked for the source of Tobit in the folklore. The role of Rafael-Azariah can be associated with the motive of the grateful dead, found in many fairy tales.<sup>6</sup> Other tales feature the motive of woman married to a monster or imprisoned by him; the monster kills rivals, but is finally defeated. There are also stories on women dangerous for their admirers be-

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<sup>3</sup> The Greek text was probably a translation from the Aramaic original. For textual and other questions, see commentaries: C. A. Moore, *Tobit*, Anchor Bible 40A, New York 1996; B. Ego, *Buch Tobit*, Jüdische Schriften aus hellenistisch-römischer Zeit II/6, Gütersloh 1999; H. Schüngel-Straumann, *Tobit*, Herders Theologischer Kommentar zum Alten Testament, Freiburg/B 2000; J. A. Fitzmyer, *Tobit*, Commentaries on Early Jewish Literature, Berlin-New York 2003. Cf. B. Otzen, *Tobit and Judith*, Guides to Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha, London 2002. In Polish: S. Grzybek, *Księga Tobiasza*, Pismo Święte Starego Testamentu VI, 1, Poznań 1961. My own commentary is in print.

<sup>4</sup> P. Deselaers, *Das Buch Tobit. Studien zu seiner Entstehung, Komposition und Theologie*, Orbis Biblicus et Orientalis 43, Freiburg/S-Göttingen 1982.

<sup>5</sup> M. Rabenau, *Studien zum Buch Tobit*, BZAW 220, Berlin-New York 1994. It is also an important commentary.

<sup>6</sup> First C. Simrock, *Der gute Gerhard und die dankbaren Toten*, Bonn 1856, pp. 131-132; later e. g. G. H. Gerould, *The Grateful Dead*, Publications of the Folklore Society 60, London 1908 (reprint 1973), esp. pp. 45-47. Today e. g. B. Otzen, *Tobit and Judith*, pp. 8-20.

cause of hate or witchcraft. However, these elements lack clear analogies in the ancient sources.<sup>7</sup>

A more promising parallel to Tob is offered by stories on Ahikar.<sup>8</sup> Their hero is directly mentioned in the book (Tob 1: 22; 2: 10; 11: 19; 14: 10), albeit in a secondary role, as a nephew of Tobit. Nevertheless the author had to know traditions about him. They were transposed into the Tobit story: Tobit, as Ahikar, had fallen into royal disgrace and hid in the darkness (Tob 14: 10). The Aramaic Ahikar text from Elephantine proves it was known in the Jewish diaspora. This version describes in detail the adventures of Ahikar and quotes his instructions given to a nephew, which bear some resemblance to the farewell speech of Tobit to his son in Tob 4.<sup>9</sup>

From these parallels we may infer that the pre-biblical story, adapted next in the Book of Tobit, was initially a didactic tale, stressing the adventures of Tobit and Tobias and incorporating some wisdom sayings. Related texts contain this sort of materials.

This primitive story was later developed in two directions. Religious issues gained prominence. Some prayers appeared, the piety of Tobit was stressed, the plot was referred to the God's will and providence. These supplements were most probably added by sta-

<sup>7</sup> The story of the possessed Egyptian princess (fifth century B. C.) is quoted in this context cf. Gerould, 47ff and many commentaries (J. A. Wilson /ed./, *The Legend of the Possessed Princess*, in: *Ancient Near Eastern Text Relating to the Old Testament*, Princeton 1969<sup>3</sup>, pp. 29-31). Sara means „princess” in Hebrew, but the motive of exorcism is the only common point of both stories.

<sup>8</sup> Ahikar traditions: F. C. J. Conybeare, J. R. Harris, A. S. Lewis, *The Story of Ahikar*, London 1898, 1913; F. Nau, *Histoire et sagesse d'Ahikar l'assyrien*, Paris 1909; E. Sachau, *Aramäische Papyrus und Ostraka aus einer jüdischen Militär-Kolonie zu Elephantine*, Leipzig 1911 (in Aramaic); H. L. Ginsberg, *The Words of Ahikar*, in: *Ancient Near Eastern Text Relating to the Old Testament*, Princeton 1969<sup>3</sup>, pp. 427-430; I. Kottsieper, *Die Geschichte und die Sprüche des weisen Ahikar*, Texte aus der Umwelt des Alten Testaments 3/1, Gütersloh 1992, pp. 320-347; J. M. Lindenberger, *Ahikar*, w: *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, t. 2, London 1985, pp. 479-507. In relation to Tob: F. Altheim, R. Stiehl, *Der Roman: Ahikar und Tobit*, in: *Die aramäische Sprache unter den Achemeniden*, t. 1, Frankfurt/M, pp. 182-195; J. C. Greenfield, *Ahikar in the Book of Tobit*, in: *De la Torah au Messie*, Fs. H. Cazelles, Paris 1981, pp. 329-336. L. Ruppert, *Zur Funktion der Ahikar-Notizen im Buch Tobias*, *Biblische Zeitschrift* 20/1976/, pp. 232-237; A. Millard, *Judith, Tobit, Ahikar and History*, in: *New Heaven and New Earth, Prophecy And the Millenium*, Fs. A. Gelston, *Vetus Testamentum Suppl.* 77, Leiden 1999, pp. 195-203; B. Otzen, *Tobit and Judith*, pp. 24-26 etc. Other, biblical stories on a courtier fallen out of grace: Gen 37ff, Dan 3; 6; Esther.

<sup>9</sup> Some sayings are the same. Tob 4: 17: „Pour your wine on the grave of the righteous, but give none to sinners” (textual difficulty); cf. Ahikar 2: 10. Cf. also Tob 4, 10; 4, 12.15.17.18 and Ahikar 8: 41; 2: 5-6,43,10; 2: 9-11.

ges, e. g. the first part of the hymn of Tobit in Tob 13 is older than the second one (on Jerusalem).

The second probable direction of editorial changes can be deduced from the apparent contradiction found in the book. Although Tobit stemmed from northern Israel and was deported to Assyria from his land, his piety is featured as typically Judean, concentrated on the worship in Jerusalem and the law of Moses. These are traces of a deuteronomistic redaction; deuteronomistic theology is clearly present.<sup>10</sup>

Let us take as example the problem of the undeserved suffering. The core of the book is close to the Book of Job – good people suffer unjustly. In the light of the happy-end these sufferings appear as tests; prosperity on earth is possible. On the redactional level (e. g. Tob 3: 3-5; 14: 3-11) it is largely contradicted by the scheme dictated by the deuteronomistic concepts (cf. Dt 28; 30):<sup>11</sup> the suffering has to be a punishment for sins and prosperity results from the fidelity to God.

The deuteronomistic features of the present book can be separated from its core. The first stage of redactional work on Tobit reflected the northern, Samaritan context, most probably the Assyrian diaspora, where the action of the book is placed. It stressed piety related to family ties and expressed in wisdom style. The Judean and deuteronomistic redactor did approve these features, but he artificially attributed to Tobit the worship in Jerusalem and a great concern for the Law.

Some OT influences visible in Tobit probably come from the earlier stage. Moral teachings were drawn from the wisdom tradition. There are common points with Genesis,<sup>12</sup> and also with Jud-

<sup>10</sup> Cf. esp. W. Soll, *Misfortune and Exile in Tobit. The Juncture of a Fairy Tale Source and Deuteronomistic Theology*, CBQ 51/1989, pp. 209-231; A. A. Di Lella, *The Deuteronomistic Background of the Farewell Discourse in Tob 14: 3-11*, CBQ 41/1979, pp. 380-389.

<sup>11</sup> See A. A. Di Lella, *The Deuteronomistic Background...*; W. Soll, *Misfortune and Exile...*; cf. I. Nowell, *The Book of Tobit. Narrative Technique and Theology*, diss. Washington 1983. It applies e. g. to the interpretation of exile as a punishment, cf. B. Otzen, *Tobit and Judith*, pp. 43-45. There is no hope for the future life in Tobit.

<sup>12</sup> See I. Abrahams, *Tobit and Genesis*, *Jewish Quarterly Review* 1/1993, pp. 348-350 (insisting on burials); Rdz 24 (wife for Isaac): P. Deselaers, *Das Buch Tobit*, pp. 293-296; story of Joseph (in relation to Ahikar): P. Deselaers, *Das Buch Tobit*, pp. 438-448; L. Ruppert, *Das Buch Tobias – ein Modell fall nachgestaltender Erzählung*, in: *Wort, Lied, und Gottesspruch*, Fs. J. Ziegler, *Forschung zur Bibel* 1, Würzburg 1972, pp. 109-119 (biblical and other sources). Summary C. A. Moore, *Tobit*, pp. 8-9.

ges<sup>13</sup> and Job<sup>14</sup>; Tob 2: 6 quotes Amos; Tob 14: 4 mentions Nahum. It can be interpreted as an acceptance for the canon including Law and Prophets. More cautiously, it would be a proof that the author knew traditions on patriarchs, the entry to Canaan, basic wisdom teachings and northern prophets. Such a perspective could be attributed to an Israelite representing the northern tribes.

b) As for the place and time of composition of Tob, scholars usually chose the eastern diaspora or the land of Israel in the third century B. C. The place of action (Assyria and Persia) strongly suggests the diaspora in Mesopotamia, where the inhabitants of Israel and Juda were deported. It is not excluded by some geographical mistakes (which can be attributed to the redaction and to the translation into Greek).

The story supposes life in dispersion among foreign nations. There is no major contradiction with our knowledge about history, geography and way of life in this part of the world. The land of Israel is seen from a distance; it is an early recollection, not a vivid reality. The descent of Tobit from Naphtali, a northern tribe, and his stay in Nineveh strongly suggest the Assyrian diaspora.

It applies primarily to the original story, created in this environment. The stress on the role of Jerusalem and other deuteronomic elements could very well come from a later editor, living in Judah. The book in its present shape could be written there (or perhaps in the Judean diaspora in Babylonia). It explains its popularity in Qumran.

If the story was written initially in Aramaic, its birth could correspond to the period when this language dominated the Near East, including the Jewish world, namely the Persian period (fifth and fourth century B. C.), or slightly later. On the other hand, from the second century on (the Maccabean wars) the attitude of Jews towards the external world was more antagonistic than Tobit suggests (Tob 13: 11; 14: 6-7).

The later part of the Persian period seems more probable, because the book knows the authority of Law and prophets. Some

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<sup>13</sup> Por. A. A. Di Lella, *The Book of Tobit and the Book of Judges. An Intertextual Analysis*, *Henoah* 22/2000, pp. 197-206.

<sup>14</sup> Por. G. W. E. Nickelsburg, *Tobit and Enoch. Distant Cousins With a Recognizable Resemblance*, *SBL Seminar Papers* 27, Atlanta 1988, pp. 54.

moral precepts correspond to other deuterocanonical books<sup>15</sup> and 1 Henoch.<sup>16</sup> Therefore, the Greek (Hellenistic) version can be placed in the third century B. C. This solution, sometimes accompanied by some additional precisions, prevails among the commentators of Tobit.

It is the date of the present form of the book. Its core is much earlier. Let us observe that the book considers a very long travel of two persons as relatively safe. There is no suggestion that Nineveh and Ecbatana belong to different kingdoms. There is no mention whatsoever on wars. It corresponds to the Persian period, between the conquest of Mesopotamia to the Alexander the Great, and not to the stormy epochs earlier and later. Many minor details can be explained by the Persian influence.<sup>17</sup> The presentation of the life of Assyrian diaspora in Tobit would reflect the situation in this period. Earlier times, shortly after the Assyrian deportation, can be excluded, because the distance between the author of the book and the events described in it seems quite long. He knew, however, the names of Assyrian kings and the character of their rule, and the basic chronology.

c) Tobit never had a canonical status among the Jews, although this book was written before some other biblical books and was known in the Jewish circles (not only in Qumran). Among the possible reasons there are the composition in Aramaic instead of Hebrew and some contradictions with the Law and rabbinic teachings. If the book originated in the Samaritan diaspora, it could also, even if reworked in Judah, provoke a distrust of rabbis.

<sup>15</sup> P. J. Griffin, *The Theology and Function of Prayer in the Book of Tobit*, diss. Washington 1984, p. 69 (C. A. Moore, *Tobit*, p. 41): (a) dietary rules (Tb 1, 11; Dn 1, 8; Jdt 10, 5); (b) burials for the Israelites (Tb 1, 16-18; Syr 7, 33; Jdt 8, 3); (c) marriage inside the family (Tb 1, 9; Jdt 8, 1-2; Dn 13, 1-3; Syr 26, 1-4); (d) fear of God (Syr 1, 9-29; Dn 13, 2; Jdt 8, 8); (e) prayer (Tb 3, 26; Syr 22, 27-3, 5; Dn 2, 19-23; Jdt 9, 2-14).

<sup>16</sup> Cf. G. W. E. Nickelsburg, *Tobit and Enoch...*, pp. 54-68 (cosmology, angelology and demonology, wisdom sayings, analogies between the heroes of Tob and Israel in 1 Henoch). What was the direction of influence? – both writings were found in Qumran. *Idem*, *The Search for Tobit's Mixed Ancestry. A Historical and Hermeneutical Odyssey*, RQ /1996-97, pp. 339-349.

<sup>17</sup> Older works: J. H. Moulton: *The Iranian Background of Tobit*, Expository Times 11/1899-1900, pp. 257-260; *idem*, *The Magian Material of Tobit*, in: *Early Zoroastrianism*, Hibbert Lectures 1912, London 1913, pp. 332-340. The main similarity is the Persian name of Asmodaëus (Tob 3: 8); other ones: stress on almsgiving, angels vs. demons, keeping a dog. Insistence on burial in the ground contrasts with the Persian burial habits; cf. L. M. Wills, *The Jewish Novel in the Ancient World*, Ithaca 1995, p. 80.

### Tobit about the Assyrian diaspora

We shall begin from some general observations. There is no doubt that the religion of Tobit is the religion of the OT. Nevertheless, many accents are placed in a different way. God is first of all good and merciful (only the secondary deuteronomistic sections refer to punishment). Charity is also the main rule of human behaviour, repeatedly mentioned, whereas law is rarely quoted. Charity involves duties towards the poor, the just and needy compatriots, assistance to the hungry and the naked (Tob 1: 3,16; 2: 14; 4: 7-11,16; 12: 9; 14: 9). In this context the Greek word *elemosyne* is used 22 times; its general meaning is „charity”, but it refers more narrowly to almsgiving.

This love is directed towards the members of the people of Israel, defined by family ties, the common origin and destiny, and not by any territorial or state relations.<sup>18</sup> Brotherly love, literally understood, should embrace also the compatriots. Moral precepts of Tobit are often related to this principle. This attitude of the book is to be explained by the context of the diaspora and its difficult conditions.

Life in the land of Israel, worship, sacrifices and ritual rules are virtually absent from the core of the book; some mentions about them were added on the redactional level (Tob 1 and 13). The deuteronomistic sections add to the book the motive of the nation, punished for sins and exiled, but promised a return. These key themes of the OT are absent in the core of the book. Religious and moral life is based on family ties. People or nation appear as secondary notions, they are just a larger family, group of relatives.

The role of women in Tobit is relatively important. Men do prevail in the decision-making, they teach and pray, but women accompany them actively and manifest their personalities. It does not prove any special interest of the author for the social functions of women. To some extent their significant presence can reflect the

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<sup>18</sup> A.-J. Levine, *Teaching Jews How to Live in the Diaspora*, Bible Review 8 (1992) 4, pp. 42-51; B. Ego, „*Heimat in der Fremde*”. *Zur Konstituierung einer jüdischen Identität im Buch Tobit*, in: H. Lichtenberger, G. S. Oegema (ed.), *Jüdische Schriften in ihren antik-jüdischen und urchristlichen Kontext*, Studien zur JSHRZ 1, Gütersloh 2002, pp. 170-183; G. Witaszek, *Rodzina miejscem identyczności narodowej i religijnej (Księga Tobiasza)*, in: *Wychowanie do życia w rodzinie*, Lublin 1996, pp. 137-145.



situation in the Israelite diaspora in Assyria, where the position of women could have been better than in the Judean form of Israelite religion. On the other hand it results from the fact that family life is the leading subject of the book and women play a great role in the family, either in the antiquity or now.

Chapters 4 and 12 contain collections of wisdom sayings. They are presented as farewell speeches: the speech of Tobit pronounced to Tobias (Tob 4) and the speech of Raphael (Tob 12). These collections could reflect the tradition of the diaspora in Assyria, they were probably used in the education of the youth. When the book gives commandments, it does not appeal to God or law. The ethics is based on the authority of the father. Moral rules are simply just and right, because good deeds lead to welfare and evil ones bring disaster. Family life is the context of moral education. Moral teaching of Tobit belongs to the wisdom tradition and remains unrelated to the law codes of the OT.

Angelology and demonology of Tobit appear on the „fairy tale” level of the book. Therefore it is doubtful whether the author intends it as a part of his confession of faith. We cannot be sure whether this look on angels and demons was accepted in the Assyrian diaspora; it is, indeed, very untypical for the OT and is better conceived as an element of the literary attire of the book.

Now I shall discuss some particular texts.<sup>19</sup>

**1: 1.** „The book tells the story of Tobit the son of Tobiel son of Hananiel son of Aduel son of Gabael son of Raphael son of Raguel of the descendants of Asiel, of the tribe of Naphtali”.<sup>20</sup>

The Israelite tribe of Naphtali lived west and north-west of the Sea of Galilee. Already in the prologue of the book we are confronted with information on the origin of Tobit from the northern tribes, subject to Jerusalem kings only in 10<sup>th</sup> century B. C. The names of Tobit’s ancestors contain the theophoric element *-el* (and not *-ya*; El and not Yahve). It confirms their relation to the northern tribes. The names convey deeper sense: God is understood as goodness (*tob*), mercy (*hanan*), joy (*hedwah*), sublime (*gabah*), he-

<sup>19</sup> Cf. My commentary to Tob (in print).

<sup>20</sup> Translation quoted is NRSV. Verse numbers are taken from the critical edition (longer S text): R. Hanhart (ed.), *Tobit*, Septuaginta. Vetus Testamentum Graecum VIII, 5, Göttingen 1983.

aling (*rafa'*), friend (*re'eh*).<sup>21</sup> It confirms that the tradition of Assyrian diaspora perceived God, above all, as good and merciful.

**1: 2.** „... who in the days of King Shalmaneser of the Assyrians, was taken into captivity from Thisbe, which is to the south of Kedesch Naphtali in Upper Galilee above Asher toward the west and north of Phogor”.

The deportation of young Tobit took place during the reign of Shalmaneser V (727-722 B. C.). It was the common fate of the Israelites from the Northern Kingdom. The names of places are taken from its territories.<sup>22</sup>

**1: 3-22.** Verse 3 continues verse 2, presenting the situation of Tobit in Assyria after the deportation. In the next verses the story returns to the life of Tobit in the land of Israel and concentrates on a new subject, fidelity to the Jerusalem temple and to the Law of Moses. These principles are known from the deuteronomic tradition and presented in its specific language. These verses, at least vv. 4-8a and 9-12, are obviously an editorial addition.

The earlier story, contained in vv. 3,8b-9,13ff was more precise on the historical level. It placed the marriage of Tobit and the birth of Tobias in Assyria, and not before the exile. It makes the dates from their lives better adjusted to the Assyrian chronology, especially if we assume that vv. 9 and 13 refer to parallel events (family and career). At the beginning of the reign of Esar-haddon (about 680 B. C.) Tobit could have been 62 years old (Tob 14: 2) and Tobias about 20; later he could live till the fall of Nineveh (612 B. C.; Tob 14: 15). The correct use of Assyrian chronology confirms that the primitive version of the book originated in the Israelite diaspora in Assyria.

**1: 8-9.** „A third tenth I would give to the orphans and widows and to the converts who had attached themselves to Israel. I would bring it and give it to them in the third year, and we would eat it according to the ordinance decreed concerning it in the Law of Moses and according to the instructions of Deborah, the mother of my father Tobiel, for my father had died and left me an orphan. When

<sup>21</sup> Cf. A. Tronina, *Od śmierci do życia. Konstrukcja literacka Księgi Tobiasza*, in: *U źródeł mądrości* (Fs. S. Potocki), Rzeszów 1997, 324-325.

<sup>22</sup> These places are not identified with certainty: J. T. Milik, *La patrie de Tobie*, pp. 522-530, has proposed places near to Samaria, associating Tobit with the Samaritan tradition.

I became a man I married a woman, a member of our own family, and by her I became the father of a son whom I named Tobias”.

The references to tithes and Law clearly indicate the Judean influence and redaction. On the other hand the names of persons are of northern origin. Deborah was called after the prophetess from Judges 4-5. The name of Tobit’s wife, Hannah (given in the shorter recension of the book) is also related to the northern tribes, because in the Bible it is also the name of the Samuel’s mother (1 Sam 1: 2) and of the prophetess from the tribe of Asher (Luke 2: 36).<sup>23</sup>

**2: 3-5.** „So Tobias went to look for some poor person of our people. When he had returned he said: «Father!» and I replied, «Here I am, my child.» The he went on to say, «Look, father, one of our own people has been murdered and thrown into the market place, and now he lies there strangled». Then I sprang up, left the dinner before even tasting it, and removed the body from the square and laid it in one of the rooms until sunset when I might bury it. When I returned, I washed myself and ate my food in sorrow”.

Tobit washed himself after touching the dead; it probably had a ritual aspect, he wished to remove uncleanness. Numbers 19: 11 prescribes this rite, but with a longer, seven day period of cleansing. Rules of purity in the Assyrian diaspora would have been more simple than in the Pentateuch. Cf. Tob 2: 9.

**2: 6.** „Then I remembered the prophecy of Amos, how he said against Betel: «Your feasts shall be turned into mourning, and all your songs into lamentation». And I wept”.

A direct quotation from another book is not frequent in the OT (including deuterocanonical books). Amos is quoted as authority. He lived in the Northern Kingdom, therefore this reference constitutes one link more between Tobit and northern Israelite background. Amos 8: 10 is directed against Israel and the rich people and not against Betel. In the primitive story it was quoted as illustration. „Betel” looks as a secondary addition made by a Judean editor, who considered this sanctuary schismatic.

**2: 7.** „When the sun had set, I went and dug a grave and buried him”.

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<sup>23</sup> Cf. R. Bauckham. Anna, mother of Mary, could also be of a northern tribe.

This form of burial differs from the usual biblical habit of burying the dead in natural or artificial caves. Either the habits of northern Israelites were different, or people living in the diaspora simply lacked caves. Cf. the same form of burial in Tob 8: 10f. 18.

**4: 12-13a.** „Beware, my son, of every kind of fornication. First of all, marry a women from among the descendants of your ancestors; do not marry a foreign woman, who is not of your father’s tribe; for we are the descendants of the prophets. Remember, my son, that Noah, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, our ancestors of old, all took wives from among their kindred. They were blessed in their children and their posterity will inherit the land. So now, my son, love your kindred, and in your heart do not disdain your kindred, the sons and daughters of your people, by refusing to take a wife for yourself from among them”<sup>24</sup>.

The commandment of marriage inside one’s own family is repeated quite often in Tobit (1: 9; 6: 11-13; 7: 9-13; 8: 13). By marrying Sarah, Tobias will fulfill it. Endogamy is one of the peculiarities of this book. It seems to reflect such a principle of the Israelite diaspora in Assyria, very important for the survival of this community.

The reasons given to this commandment have virtually no parallels in the Bible and also seem to reflect the tradition of the northern diaspora. Tobit presents a positive and biblical justification for this method of choosing the future wife, whereas the OT texts against marriages with foreign women usually contain polemics; they denounce pagan origin and influence of such wives (Gen 28: 1-2; Ex 34: 16; Dt 7: 3-4; Ezra 9: 2,12; Neh 10: 30; 13: 25; Mal 2: 11; *Test. Levi* 9: 9-10).

First of all, Israelites are „sons of the prophets”; this metaphor identifies them as preachers of the word of God. This expression is rare (Acts 3: 25), and the usual OT meaning is different (1 Kings 20: 35; 2 Kings 2: 3,5,7,15). Putting this argument at the beginning suggests that the religious tradition of Israel is above all prophetic. The patriarchs of Israel are also, untypically, assimilated to prophets (cf. Ps 105: 15; Jubilees 8: 18; 11QPSa 27: 2-11; Acts 2: 30). It probably represents the look peculiar to the northern tradition.

<sup>24</sup> See M. Wojciechowski, *Pouczenia Tobita dla Tobiasza (Tb 4, 1-21)*, in: W. Chrostowski (ed.), *Miłość wyrwa do końca* (Fs. S. Pisarek), Warszawa 2004, pp. 426-438.

Secondly, this patriarchs-prophets, including Noah, married their relatives. The stories of Genesis were treated as sources of law, what corresponds to the fact that this book belongs to the Law/Torah (the same explanation is valid for the references to Genesis in the NT, e. g. Matthew 19: 4-5). The sentence „They were blessed in their children and their posterity will inherit the land” contains a deuteronomistic motive (cf. Gen 28: 13; Dt 28: 4; Isa 60: 21; Ps 37: 22; 112: 2), being probably a secondary addition.

Third point: marriage in one’s own people is an act of brotherly love and of humility.

**5: 5.** „Tobias said to him, «Where do you come from, young man?» «From your kindred, the Israelites,» he replied, «and I have come here to work.» The Tobias said to him, «Do you know the way to go to Media?»”

Azariah came to Nineveh looking for job. The Israelites abroad were not necessarily exiled, captives etc. Some of them quite willingly emigrated to the rich capital. This detail indicates that the author of the book was aware of the conditions of life in the diaspora and did not submit to stereotypes.

**6: 2.** „And the dog came out with him and went along with them. So they both journeyed along, and when the first night overtook them they camped by the Tigris river”.

This mention of the dog, although quite secondary, was widely commented, because dogs were recognized unclean in the Bible (Dt 23: 18), they devoured corpses (1 Kings 14: 11; 21: 24; 2 Kings 9: 36; Ps 59: 6,14), they were despised and disliked (2 Kings 8: 13; Eccl 9: 4; Ps 22: 16,20) and associated with the homosexual prostitution (1 Kings 15: 12; 2 Kings 23: 7; Rev 22: 15; Philem 3: 2). Only exceptionally, under foreign cultural influences, they were presented as useful guardians (Job 30: 1; Isa 56: 10-11). The Israelite diaspora in Assyria did not abhor dogs, partaking the positive attitude to them known from Mesopotamia, Persia and Greece.

**7: 9-17.** Scenario of this section on the marriage between Tobias and Sarah is probably based on the rites of marriage accepted in the world of the author. This rite is not known from other sources, but it corresponds roughly to the culture of the period. It contains some contradictions with the later Jewish usage.

The obligation to give one’s daughter and heir to the next of kin is strengthened by the threat of death penalty. Law of Moses is qu-

oted for support, but the Pentateuch does not contain such a rule. Perhaps it was known only to the diaspora in Assyria.<sup>25</sup>

7: 11. „I have given her to seven men of our kinsmen, and all died on the night when they went in to her. But now, my child, eat and drink, and the Lord will act on behalf of you both.» But Tobias said, «I will neither eat or drink anything until you settle the things that pertain to me.» So Raguel said, «I will do so. She is given to you in accordance with the decree in the book of Moses, and it has been decreed from heaven that she be given to you. Take your sister;<sup>26</sup> from now on you are her brother and she is your sister. She is given to you from today and forever. May the Lord of heaven, my child, guide and prosper you both this night and grant you mercy and peace.»”

Saying to Tobias „Take your sister” Raguel meant something more than their kinship, although Jews did call cousins „brothers” and „sisters”. With these words Tobit regularly describes husband and wife (Tob 7: 11,15; 8: 4; 7: 21; 10: 6.12; cf. Song 4: 9,10,12; 5: 1). It explains the unique formula „from now on you are her brother and she is your sister”.

These names given to consorts define the bond between them as an authentic proximity and family love, compared to ties between brothers and sisters who grew up together and unconditionally support one another. In the Jewish tradition husband could sometimes be called brother etc. (1QapGen 2, 9 and papyri;<sup>27</sup> perhaps 1 Cor 9: 5).

Brotherly love is perceived in Tobit as most obliging and constant. The same language applied to marriage indicates that it was perceived as a durable union. This view is immediately confirmed by the next words of Raguel, „She is given to you from today and forever”. This formula had some currency, what is confirmed by the Elephantine marriage contracts (papyri 2: 3-4; 7: 4). Accordingly, mother and father-in-law became true parents (Tob 10: 12-13; cf. 4: 3-4; 8: 21; 11: 13). Moreover, the durability of marriage is assumed in the prayer of Tobias and Sarah which finishes with words

<sup>25</sup> „Law” is usually interpreted as the example given by the patriarchs from Gen (cf. Tob 4: 12-13); levirate marriage (Dt 25: 5-10 and inheritance of daughters (Num 27: 1-11; 36: 1-12) are also quoted. The threat of capital punishment remains unexplained.

<sup>26</sup> NRSW: „kinswoman”.

<sup>27</sup> J. A. Fitzmyer, *Tobit*, p. 219.

„that we may grow old together” (Tob 8: 7). Both family ties and marriage bind for life.

It is not so surprising, because the stereotype view that the OT allowed divorcing is largely false. In the Hebrew Bible they are forbidden by Mal 2: 14-16. Dt 21: 1 legalized divorce only in a special case of „indecency”, *‘erwat dabar*, best understood as physical repugnance.<sup>28</sup> It is therefore quite possible that in the Israelite diaspora in Assyria marriage was considered undissoluble by its very nature.

**14: 2b.** „He was sixty-two years old, and was buried with great honor in Nineveh”.

The shorter (A) text and one Qumran fragment mention 58 years and add (with Old Latin) that Tobit lived still 54 years after recovering sight (it makes together 112 years of his life, as in the longer text). Syriac translations and Vulgate contain other calculations, 62 is supported by Old Latin. The difference between 62 and 58 could stem from an arithmetical system based on 60, as in Assyria and Babylonia. It would make possible a mistake between „60 and 2” and „60 without 2”.

**14: 4.** „Hurry off to Media, for I believe the word of God that Nahum spoke about Nineveh, that all these things will take place and overtake Assyria and Nineveh”.

The Book of Nahum can be a witness of the Israelite diaspora in Assyria.<sup>29</sup> Here we meet one more trace of the connection between Tobit and this background.

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The provenance of the core of Tobit from the Israelite diaspora in Assyria in the Persian period seems very likely. Therefore this book is a valuable source of information about the life and faith of this diaspora, or at least about one current of its habits and opinions. To some extent they were rooted the Northern Kingdom tradition.

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<sup>28</sup> On the indissolubility of marriage in the OT: M. Wojciechowski, *Jedność etyki Starożytności i Nowego Testamentu*, w: idem (ed.), *„Miłość jest z Boga”*. Studium ofiarowane ks. prof. dr. hab. Janowi Łachowi, Warszawa 1997, pp. 451-453. Ezra/Neh recommends divorce, but only with pagan wives.

<sup>29</sup> Cf. W. Chrostowski, *Asyryjska diaspora Izraelitów*, pp. 69-98.

Religious and social life of this diaspora concentrated in the family. Brotherly ties between distant relatives, marriages inside family and perceiving marriage as an obligation for life helped to survive in the foreign environment. It involved also a certain degree of isolation, although Israelites in diaspora did engage in the social life and even became rich.

The conditions of diaspora life favored abandoning sacrificial worship, temple, dietary laws and rules of cleanness. They did not become an arduous mark of Jewishness, as in the later diaspora in the Hellenistic world. Active charity, help to compatriots in need, became the central moral obligation. God was perceived as good and merciful.

If we put aside the separatism of the diaspora Israelites, these ideas proper to Tobit can be found in the NT: its vision of God, commandment of love, charity, distance towards official worship and rituals, ban on divorcing. Although we do not have direct proofs for it, this legacy of the northern tribes of Israel, Samaria and Galilee, could influence the NT. Some Judeans (*Ioudaioi*) called Jesus „a Samaritan”... (John 8: 48).

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