

TOBIT 8-10

¹When they had finished eating and drinking they wanted to retire; so they took the young man and brought him into the bedroom.

²Tobiah remembered the words of Raphael, and he took the fish's liver and heart out of the bag where he had them and put them on the embers of the incense. ³The odour of the fish so repelled the demon that he fled to the remotest parts of Egypt. Raphael followed him, and at once bound him there hand and foot.

⁴When the parents had gone out and shut the door of the room, Tobiah got out of bed and said to Sarah, "Sister, get up, and let us pray and implore our Lord that he grant us mercy and safety." ⁵So she got up, and they began to pray and implore that they might be kept safe.

Tobiah began by saying, "Blessed are you, O God of our ancestors, and blessed is your name in all generations forever. Let the heavens and the whole creation praise you forever.

⁶You created Adam, and you made his wife Eve his helper and support. From the two of them the human race has sprung. You said, 'It is not good that the man should be alone; let us make a helper for him like himself.' ⁷I am taking this kinswoman of mine, not because of lust, but in truth. Grant that she and I may find mercy and that we may grow old together." ⁸And they both said, "Amen, Amen."

⁹Then they went to sleep for the night.

For Raphael's words see 6:8.

The demon flees to the driest part of Egypt, the kind of wilderness which demons were thought to inhabit (see Isaiah 13:21; 34:14; Matthew 12:43; Revelation 18:2).

The author puts no focus on the exorcism (we know its outcome already anyhow). His focus throughout this passage is on prayer.

Tobiah and Sarah stand (as is customary) to pray. For calling one's spouse 'sister' see Song of Songs 4:9.

The opening words of Tobiah's prayer recall the Prayer of Azariah in the Greek additions to the Book of Daniel (see Daniel 3:24-45).

Eve is mentioned by name in the Septuagint only here and in Genesis 3:20 and 4:1.

'Lust' translates the Greek *πορνεία* (*porneia*: literally, the kind of sexual behaviour indulged in by prostitutes). Like his father (see 3:1), Tobiah acts 'in truth'. Included in Tobit's advice to his son were the words:

Those who act in accordance with truth will prosper in all their activities.

– Tobit 4:6

Tobit taught his son that 'all God's ways are mercy and truth' (Tobit 3:2).

The reader knows, but Raguel does not, that this time a grave is not needed.

The peaceful sleep being enjoyed by Tobiah and Sarah recalls the following:

I will both lie down and sleep in peace; for you alone, YHWH, make me lie down in safety.

– Psalm 4:8

God's 'holy ones' are those whom God has set aside as his own (see Psalm 34:10; Daniel 8:24).

Raguel declares God's mercy four times in verses 16-17 (see also Tobiah's prayer, verse 5).

'Master' translates the Greek δέσποτης, which customarily translates the Hebrew מֶלֶךְ ; 'adōnāy).

⁹Meanwhile Raguel arose and called his servants to him, and they went and dug a grave, ¹⁰for he said, "It is possible that he will die and we will become an object of ridicule and derision." ¹¹When they had finished digging the grave, Raguel went into his house and called his wife, ¹²saying, "Send one of the maids and have her go in to see if he is alive. But if he is dead, let us bury him without anyone knowing it."

¹³So they sent the maid, lit a lamp, and opened the door; and she went in and found them sound asleep together. ¹⁴Then the maid came out and informed them that he was alive and that nothing was wrong.

¹⁵So they blessed the God of heaven, and Raguel said, "Blessed are you, O God, with every pure and holy blessing; let all your holy ones and all your creatures bless you, and let all your angels and chosen ones bless you for ever.

¹⁶Blessed are you because you have made me glad. It has not turned out as I expected, but you have dealt with us according to your great mercy. ¹⁷Blessed are you because you had compassion on these two, each an only child. Be merciful to them, O Master, and keep them safe; bring their lives to fulfillment in happiness and mercy."

¹⁸Then he ordered his servants to fill in the grave before daybreak.

Preparations for the wedding banquet

¹⁹After Raguel had told his wife to prepare a big banquet, he went out to the herd and brought two steers and four rams and ordered them to be slaughtered. So they began making preparations.

²⁰Then he called for Tobiah and swore on oath to him in these words: "You shall not leave here for fourteen days, but shall stay here eating and drinking with me; and you shall cheer up my daughter, who has been depressed. ²¹Take at once half of what I own and return in safety to your father; the other half will be yours when my wife and I die. Take heart, my child. I am your father and Edna is your mother, and we belong to you as well as to your wife now and forever. Take heart, my child."

'Fourteen days' (verse 20) is twice the usual duration for a wedding feast (see Tobit 11:19; Genesis 29:27; Judges 14:12). Once again Raguel is portrayed as a generous host.

The dowry, too, is exceedingly generous. That a daughter could inherit property is clear from the legislation found in Numbers 27:1-11.

Unfortunately we are not told whether the camels (Greek: καμήλος, kamēlos) have one hump (which would suggest an Egyptian or Near-Eastern provenance for the folktale) or two humps (which would suggest somewhere further east).

On Raguel's oath see 8:20.

Earlier the author envisioned the journey from Rages to Ecbatana taking two days (see 5:6). It would be more like ten to twelve.

Tobiah is just like his father, in appearance, but also in virtue (compare 1:3).

¹Then Tobiah called Raphael and said to him, ²“Brother Azariah, take four servants and two camels with you and travel to Rages. Go to the home of Gabael, give him the bond, get the money, and then bring him with you to the wedding celebration. ⁴For you know that my father must be counting the days, and if I delay even one day I will upset him very much. ³Furthermore, you are a witness to the oath Raguel has sworn, and I cannot violate his oath.”

⁵So Raphael with the four servants and two camels went to Rages in Media and stayed with Gabael. Raphael gave him the bond and informed him that Tobit's son Tobiah had married and was inviting him to the wedding celebration. So Gabael got up and counted out to him the money bags, with their seals intact, and they loaded them on the camels.

⁶In the morning they both got up early and went to the wedding celebration. When they came into Raguel's house they found Tobiah reclining at table. He sprang up and greeted Gabael, who wept and blessed him with the words, “Good and noble son of a father good and noble, upright and charitable! May the Lord grant the blessing of heaven to you and your wife, and to your wife's father and mother. Blessed be God, for I see in Tobiah the very image of my cousin Tobit.”

¹Meanwhile, day by day, Tobit kept counting the days Tobiah would need for going and for returning. When the days had passed and his son did not appear, ²he said, "Is it possible that he has been detained? Perhaps Gabael has died, and there is no one to give him the money?"

³And he began to worry.

⁴His wife Hannah said, "My child has perished and is no longer among the living." And she began to weep and mourn for her son, saying, ⁵"Woe to me, my child, the light of my eyes, that I let you make the journey."

⁶But Tobit kept saying to her, "Be quiet and stop worrying, my dear; he is all right. Probably something unexpected has happened there. The man who went with him is trustworthy and is one of our own kin. Do not grieve for him, my dear; he will soon be here."

⁷She answered him, "Be quiet yourself! Stop trying to deceive me! My child has perished." She would rush out every day and watch the road her son had taken, and she would eat nothing. When the sun had set she would go in and mourn and weep all night long, getting no sleep at all.

⁷When the fourteen days of the wedding celebration had ended that Raguel had sworn to hold for his daughter, Tobiah came to him and said, "Please let me leave now, for I know that my father and mother do not believe that they will see me again. So I beg of you, father, to let me go so that I may return to my own father. I have already explained to you how I left them."

⁸Raguel said to Tobiah, "Stay, my child, stay with me; I will send messengers to your father Tobit and they will inform him about you."

⁹But he said, "No! I beg you to send me back to my father."

¹⁰So Raguel promptly gave Tobiah his wife Sarah, as well as half of all his property: male and female slaves, oxen and sheep, donkeys and camels, clothing, money, and household goods.

A more usual expression of endearment is to call someone the 'apple' of one's eye (see Deuteronomy 32:10; Psalm 17:8; Zechariah 2:8). The 'light' of my eyes (verse 5) is especially appropriate given that her husband is blind.

Tobit's words (verse 6; compare 5:21) brought some comfort earlier, but not now.

The realism of the depiction of the relationship between Tobiah's parents and their different reactions to the delay in Tobiah's return is an especially attractive element in the story.

In verse seven we are back at Ecbatana. Raguel wants to keep Tobiah and his daughter as long as possible, but he graciously responds to Tobiah's urgent desire to get back to his parents.

Raguel honours the generous dowry he has already promised (see 8:20-21).

In the previous scene we experienced the realism of Tobiah's parents. Here the characters of Sarah's parents are depicted with equal skill.

Every parent would agree with Raguel's advice to his son-in-law, and Edna's advice to her daughter.

¹¹Then he saw them safely off; he embraced Tobiah and said, "Farewell, my child; have a safe journey. The Lord of heaven prosper you and your wife Sarah, and may I see children of yours before I die."

¹²Then he kissed his daughter Sarah and said to her, "My daughter, honour your father-in-law and your mother-in-law, since from now on they are as much your parents as those who gave you birth. Go in peace, daughter, and may I hear a good report about you as long as I live." Then he embraced them and let them go.

Then Edna said to Tobiah, "My child and dear brother, the Lord of heaven bring you back safely, and may I live long enough to see children of you and of my daughter Sarah before I die. In the sight of the Lord I entrust my daughter to you. Do nothing to grieve her all the days of your life. Go in peace, my child. From now on I am your mother and Sarah is your beloved wife. May we all prosper together all the days of our lives."

Then she kissed them both and saw them safely off.

¹³So Tobiah parted from Raguel with happiness and joy, praising the Lord of heaven and earth, King over all, because he had made his journey a success. He blessed Raguel and his wife Edna, and said, "I have been commanded by the Lord to honour you all the days of my life."

