

Deuterocanonical and  
Cognate Literature  
Yearbook 2012/2013

# Deuterocanonical and Cognate Literature

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De Gruyter

# Yearbook 2012/2013

## Family and Kinship in the Deuterocanonical and Cognate Literature

Edited by  
Angelo Passaro

De Gruyter

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## Preface

This volume represents the deposit of careful and detailed research on the concept of family relationships in the biblical tradition, at Qumran, in the ancient Christian literature and in Hellenistic Judaism up to the time of the Judaism of the present day. To summarise very briefly, it shows that family relationships are a metaphor for the situation which Israel and the primitive Christian community are living in their time – a situation determined by the awareness of the presence/absence of the divine, of the need for Wisdom to know the divine plans, etc. – and also a metaphor for the relationship with God. It is within this general frame of reference that the reflection on the relationships within the family (husband-wife, father-child, mother-child, parents-children, children-elders, etc.), but also on every relationship which might have a familial character, is carried out, always with the need for fidelity to the faith and the traditions of the fathers, and in obedience to the Law. The family's task of education (in particular, that of the parents) consists, therefore, in teaching, in recounting the deeds of God and in the transmission of the faith. To be fathers and teachers are complementary tasks; in fact, the figures of the father and the teacher are metaphors for each other, as is the case also with the figure of the mother and that of Wisdom.

The family is the place where there are relationships of freedom, care for the person, and warm affections; never ones that are impersonal or detached. For this reason, it is a guarantee of Jewish identity through the generations, and, for Christians too, it offers the model for the transmission of a precise identity. Particularly in a time when living together in a multi-ethnic setting, especially in a foreign land, had triggered off an inevitable confrontation with cultural and religious pluralism, launching a necessary process of revision in the biblical and Jewish world with regard to the paternal role, to the family, to the woman and to sexuality. It is precisely on the transformation of these roles that, the deuterocanonical books, Tobit and Sirach, display interesting perspectives and offer a picture of the changing situation in which Jewish society was finding itself.

Certainly, the importance given to the family and family relationships is typical of a time of peace. 2 Macc shows how, in a time of violence, fidelity to God is more important than the family; the pre-eminence of familial relationships is a luxury which the Jewish community cannot allow itself. The early Christian community will also have to search for a balance between the relativising of familial links and their importance. What are the bonds which matter in the time preceding the parousia? Bonds which are

not those of flesh and blood but which are not for this reason any less real and strong. Thus, the reflection on the family does not remain stuck in sociological stereotypes, nor does it dwell on exclusive psychological perspectives, but opens itself to the mystery of God to whose discreet but pervasive presence it bears witness.

The production of a volume which is the outcome of an international Conference organised by the International Society for Deuterocanonical and Cognate Literature, is always an opus that requires a patient effort of sharing and participation by so many people who, in different ways, have given of their time, their energy and their skills in work that is often obscure but necessary. For this reason, my gratitude is due particularly to the generous helpfulness of Dr. Giuseppina Zarbo who was Chief Secretary of the General Secretariat of the Conference which was held in Palermo from 27 June to 1 July 2011, but who, above all, has read the manuscript and, with patience and expertise taken care of the sections of the Indices and the Abbreviations. That Secretariat also included Dr. Giovanni Pappalardo who last year returned, suddenly, to his Father's house. To his memory we would like to dedicate this volume. He awaited it with interest, as did Giuseppe Rugolo, Pietro Lo Vecchio, Daniele Centorbi, Luigi Bocchieri, students of the diocesan Seminary of Piazza Armerina and of the Theological Faculty "Saint John the Evangelist", and Antonio Zarcone and Erasmo Schillaci, both students of the same Faculty, all of whom performed the difficult work of the Secretariat with care and accuracy.

My personal gratitude goes to the Theological Faculty "Saint John the Evangelist" which hosted the Conference, as also to Antonella and Giacomo Bucaro of the Conca d'Oro Travel in Palermo who took on the organisation of the travel of all the participants.

This volume would not have seen the light of day but for the scrupulous attention and care of Dr. Michael Tait who with tireless availability and specialised knowledge translated into English texts that were originally in Italian and French. To him are due my most warm thanks which are extended also to Dr. Salvatore Tirrito who has been a valuable and irreplaceable collaborator in IT matters.

Thanks also to Francesco Bonanno, who edited the (selective) Index of biblical and extra-biblical quotations (References) and to my colleagues Giuseppe Bellia and Rosario Pistone for their valuable suggestions.

*Last but not least*, my thanks must go to the publishers, W. de Gruyter: to Dr. Albrecht Döhnert, Katrin Mittmann, Sophie Wagenhofer and Sabina Dabrowski, for having accepted this volume for publication and for the "familial" collaboration which they have constantly offered me.

Palermo, October 2013

Angelo Passaro

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# Abbreviations

AASF	Annales Academiae Scientiarum Fennicae
ABD	Anchor Bible Dictionary
ABG	Arbeiten zur Bibel und ihrer Geschichte
AGJU	Arbeiten zur Geschichte des antiken Judentums und des Urchristentums
AnBib	Analecta Biblica
AncB	Anchor Bible
AOAT	Alter Orient und Altes Testament
ATD	Das Alte Testament Deutsch
AugR	Augustinianum
AzTh	Arbeiten zur Theologie
Bac	Biblioteca de Autores Cristianos
BBB	Bonner biblische Beiträge
BBET	Beiträge zur biblischen Exegese und Theologie
BEATAJ	Beiträge zur Erforschung des Alten Testaments und des Antiken Judentums
BeOr	Bibbia e Oriente
BETHL	Bibliotheca ephemeridum theologiarum Lovaniensium
Bib	Biblica
BiOr	Biblica et orientalia
BK	Biblischer Kommentar
BiLi	Bibel und Liturgie
BiRe	Bible review
BJS	Biblical and Judaic Studies
BKAT	Biblischer Kommentar. Altes Testament
BN NF	Biblische Notizen. Neue Forschung
BOT	De boeken van het Oude Testament
BUL	Biblioteca Universale Laterza
BWANT	Beiträge zur Wissenschaft vom Alten und Neuen Testament
BZAW	Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft
BZNW	Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft
CAT	Commentaire de l'Ancien Testament
CBC	The Cambridge Bible Commentary
CBET	Contributions to biblical exegesis and theology
CBQ	Catholic Biblical quarterly
CBQ.MS	Catholic Biblical quarterly. Monograph series
CEJL	Commentaries on early Jewish literature
CSCO	Corpus scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium
CThM.BW	Calwer Theologische Monographien. A. Bibelwissenschaft
DBS	Dictionnaire de la Bible. Supplément
DCLY	Deuterocanonical and cognate literature yearbook
DCLS	Deuterocanonical and cognate literature studies
DJD	Discoveries in the Judean Desert

DSD	Dead Sea Discoveries
EHAT	Exegetisches Handbuch zum Alten Testament
EHS.T	Europäische Hochschulschriften. Reihe XXIII, Theologie
EI	Eretz-Israel
EstBib	Estudios Biblicos
EtB	Études Bibliques
ETHL	Ephemerides theologicae Lovanienses
ExpTim	Expository Times
FAT	Forschungen zum Alten Testament
FCB	The Feminist Companion to the Bible
FRLANT	Forschungen zur Religion und Literatur des Alten und Neuen Testaments
Greg.	Gregorianum
GSL.AT	Geistliche Schriftlesung. AT
HAR	Hebrew annual review
HAT	Handbuch zum Alten Testament
HBS	Herders biblische Studien = Herder's biblical studies
HCOT	Historical commentary on the Old Testament
Hen	Henoch
HSAT	Die Heilige Schrift des Alten Testamentes
HSM	Harvard Semitic Monographs
HThK.AT	Herders Theologischer Kommentar zum Alten Testament
HThR	Harvad theological review
HUCA	Hebrew Union College annual
ICC	International Critical Commentary
IDB	Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible
JAJ	Journal of Ancient Judaism
JBL	Journal of biblical literature
JHS	Journal of hellenic studies
JJS	Journal of jewish studies
JQR	Jewish quarterly review
JSHRZ	Jüdische Schriften aus hellenistisch-römischer Zeit
JSJ	Journal for the study of Judaism
JSJ.S	Supplements to the Journal for the study of Judaism
JSNT	Journal for the study of the New Testament
JSNT.S	Journal for the study of the New Testament. Supplement series
JSOT	Journal for the study of the Old Testament
JSOT.S	Journal for the study of the Old Testament. Supplement series
JSP.S	Journal for the study of the Pseudepigrapha. Supplement series
KAT	Kommentar zum Alten Testament
LAPO	Littératures anciennes du Proche-Orient
LBNT	Libri Biblici. Nuovo Testamento
LCL	Loeb Classical Library
LeDiv	Lectio Divina
MPI	Monographs of the Peshitta Institute Leiden
MVÄG	Mitteilungen der Vorderasiatisch-Ägyptischen Gesellschaft
NEB.AT	Neue Echter Bibel. Altes Testament

NETS	A New English Translation of the Septuagint
NRT	Nouvelle revue théologique
NSK.AT	Neuer Stuttgarter Kommentar. Altes Testament
NTS	New Testament Studies
NT.S	Supplements to Novum Testamentum
OBO	Orbis biblicus et orientalis
OTL	Old Testament Library
OTMes	Old Testament Message
PRSt	Perspectives in religious studies
PSV	Parola Spirito Vita
PVTG	Pseudepigrapha Veteris Testamenti Graece
QD	Quaestiones disputatae
RB	Revue Biblique
RdQ	Revue de Qumran
RHPR	Revue d'histoire et de philosophie religieuses
RivB	Rivista Biblica
RivB Suppl.	Supplementi di Rivista Biblica
RStB	Ricerche Storico Bibliche
RTL	Revue Théologique de Louvain
SBL.DS	Society of Biblical Literature. Dissertation series
SBL.EJL	Society of Biblical Literature. Early Judaism and Its Literature
SBL.MS	Society of Biblical Literature. Monograph series
SBL.SCS	Society of Biblical Literature. Septuagint and cognate studies series
SBL.SP	Society of Biblical Literature. Seminar papers
SBS	Stuttgarter Bibelstudien
SETh	Salzburger Exegetische Theologische Vorträge
SJOT	Scandinavian journal of the Old Testament
SOC	Scritti delle Origini Cristiane
SPB	Studia post-biblica
STAC	Studien und Texte zu Antike und Christentum
STAR	Studies in Theology and Religion
STDJ	Studies on the texts of the Desert of Judah
SVTP	Studia in Veteris Testamenti pseudepigrapha
TBT	Theologische Bibliothek Töpelmann
TDNT	Theological Dictionary of New Testament
TDOT	Theological Dictionary of Old Testament
ThBN	Themes in biblical narrative
ThPQ	Theologisch-praktische Quartalschrift
ThWAT	Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Alten Testamen
ThWNT	Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testamen
TRE	Theologische Realenzyklopädie
TSAJ	Texte und Studien zum Antiken Judentum
TThSt	Trierer Theologische Studien
TUAT	Texte aus der Umwelt des Alten Testaments
UTB	Uni-Taschenbücher
VT	Vetus Testamentum
VT.S	Vetus Testamentum Supplement

WBC	Word Biblical Commentary
WMANT	Wissenschaftliche Monographien zum Alten und Neuen Testament
WUNT	Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament
ZAW	Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft
ZB	Zürcher Bibelkommentare. AT
ZNW	Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft

# From Tobit to Ben Sira: from nostalgia to the recovery of fatherhood

GIUSEPPE BELLIA

The only biblical book that tells of the life of the Jewish communities in the Diaspora of Mesopotamia in the obscure Assyrian period, Tobit is a text which is wholly immune to any objective historical configuration and any realistic social environment. Unusual too is its theological and exegetical fortune: rejected from the Jewish canon and taken into the Christian one, it continues to attract criticism and agreement from the specialists on account of its anomalous literary form. The little book by the specialists is presented as a paraenetic novella or it is brought back into the typology of the popular narrative, the so-called folk-tale, and, finally, with Wills it is decided to define it as a "Jewish romance"<sup>1</sup> or, more accurately, a "historico-religious romance."<sup>2</sup> In fact, it is an attractive sapiential tale which incorporates didactic, hymnic and prophetic elements, recounting an edifying event in a family environment.<sup>3</sup> We are before an evident work of fiction, one, however, that claims to be attested as an historical memory within a precise spatial-temporal framework, a setting, however, which is almost entirely imaginary. But how do we read a fictional text historically?

## 1. Introduction

If scant historical value is generally attached to the writings of the wise scribes of Israel on account of their didactic intent, it is withheld wholly from the Book of Tobit because of its declared apologetic intent in support of the Deuteronomistic doctrine. Because of their pedagogic purpose, their desire to give advice and impart maxims of perennial and universal value, the writings of the sages show little interest in defining concrete

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- 1 Cf. GRABBE, Tobit, 736-737; MOORE, Tobit, 588b-589a; SOLL, Tobit and Folklore Studies, 39-53; WILLS, The Jewish Novel, 68-92; ZAPPELLA, Tobit, 18-20.
  - 2 SOGGIN, Introduzione, 523-524; FITZMYER, Tobit, 31-33; TOLONI, Echi omerici, 13. For the biblical narrative more generally, cf. ALTER, L'arte della narrativa biblica; GROTTANELLI, Sette storie bibliche, 17-21 and 22-38; NAVARRO PUERTO, Racconti biblici.
  - 3 DESELAERS, Das Buch Tobit, 278-279; FITZMYER, Tobit, 46-49.

contexts. Their reflections mirror the eternal problems of man, and so their sayings transcend times and places, cultures and institutions, social customs and attitudes. This is an even more pertinent observation when a text, as is the case with Tobit, locates itself right from the beginning as an instructive parable of human faithfulness rewarded by divine justice. To show the benefits of an existence which is blessed from on high if lived in conformity with the laws and traditions of the fathers pushes the author on to the ethical plane of persuasion and certainly does not require compelling historical details on the literal level.<sup>4</sup>

In my opinion the historico-anthropological approach that has been used many times in the past for the wisdom texts can also be applied to the trajectory of the paternal function which extends from the Book of Tobit to the text of Ben Sira, allowing the reading of those cultural traits that underlie every literary communication and are necessarily shared by the author and his readers.<sup>5</sup>

The historico-anthropological reading must show itself to be respectful of the definitive conditions in which a biblical text reaches us taken in its formal interest, both from the literary point of view for its final redaction and from the theological point of view for its peculiar canonical configuration. However, a text speaks for itself when it becomes significant to mention also the voids, the lacunae, the blank spaces of the communicative act. Precisely in these spaces of memory or narrative voids one can profitably insert an honest dialogue "between exegesis and psychology or psychoanalysis in view of a better understanding of the Bible" as recommended by the important document of the Pontifical Biblical Commission in 1993.<sup>6</sup>

An explanation is, however, necessary on the task of these last two disciplines which have already been employed in the past with different degrees of fortune in the interpretation of the different levels of reality expressed in the biblical texts, helping a better understanding of the experiences of life narrated and the rules of behaviour set down. The Book of Tobit and the subject chosen for this paper lend themselves to delicious and suggestive psychoanalytic forays which are difficult to control on the objective plane. In this research, therefore, the psychoanalytical investigation, above all, remains in the background.<sup>7</sup> The possible affinities, agree-

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4 SOLL, *Misfortune and Exile*, 209-231; BAUCKHAM, *Tobit as a Parable*, 433-459.

5 BELLIA, *Proverbi*, 56-63; ID., *An historico-anthropological reading*, 49-51.

6 PCB, *L'interpretazione della Bibbia nella Chiesa*, 56.

7 Cf. the analysis of DREWERMANN, *Il cammino pericoloso*, and, on the psychological plane, STANCARI, *Il libro di Tobia*.



ments or allusions will be indirect and marginal, always induced from an historico-anthropological perspective, alert to analogy and previous human and religious developments recorded in the artistic and literary testimonies of the dominant Hellenistic culture.

Following the approach already adopted for the books of the sapiential pentateuch, I shall present first of all, in summary, the historico-literary framework in which the Book of Tobit is situated. By means of a sociological and anthropological investigation of the text, I shall try to draw out the family and religious culturology beneath the redactional tapestry. I shall, therefore, be seeking a comparison with an analogous and preceding recovery of the figure of the father recorded in the literary testimonies of the dominant Hellenistic culture. Finally, by means of an historico-anthropological reading, I shall trace some features of the path trodden by the paternal function from the Eastern Diaspora to the Jerusalem of the Second Temple which, at the time of Ben Sira, seems to have started to recompose itself in the furrow of a renewed tradition which carries, however, the oblique signs of a restorative intention.

## 2. The search for the historico-literary framework

For an anomalous literary genre like that of the Book of Tobit, where events, plots and characters are interwoven, it is an irksome job, and one which cannot be carried out with the normal criteria of research, to define the spatial-temporal coordinates of the work, identifying the author, addressees, and date and place of composition. A deeply dramatic fiction hinged on the account of the miracle of the cure of Tobit's blindness brought about by his son, so that it may be situated suitably, it requires that elements of comparison and literarily adequate points of reference be identified. In reality, the book contains numerous references to the foundational texts of Judaism by means of the adoption of theological theses or the reformulation of narrative themes, if not exactly by means of the mirroring of equivalent events.<sup>8</sup> Beside the biblical influences, we also find traces of not a few influences foreign to the world of the Bible, which, together with infra-biblical agreements, combine to draw a more likely ideological atmosphere, illuminating the historico-literary climate

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8 MOORE, Tobit, 20-21; VÍLCHEZ LÍNDEZ, Tobit, 74-75; NICKELSBURG, *The Search*, 340-342; ZAPPELLA, Tobit, 16-18; DI LELLA, *The Book of Tobit and the Book of Judges*, 197-206.

nearest to the work, its authors and addressees.<sup>9</sup> It is useful to be aware of these connections, reviewing them briefly.

The principal source of theological inspiration for the Book of Tobit is recognised in the imposing Deuteronomistic theological tradition. It has already been noticed that the author makes his story turn on the theology of the covenant, the observing of which procures salvation and blessing to the people as to each Israelite (Deut 7:12-15; 28:1-30; Tob 4:6), while infidelity provokes the curse of exile (Deut 4:27-28; Tob 3:3-4; 12:10). Beside this dominant idea we can glimpse other secondary theological elements:

- the centrality of the Jerusalem cult (Deut 12:1-14; Tob 1:4-6; 13:11-18);
- the command to fear and love God (Deut 6:13; Tob 4:21; 14:7);
- the summons to the prayer of blessing and praise (Deut 8:10; Tob 13:7);
- the certainty of his great mercy (Deut 30:1-4; Tob 13:2-6);
- the assurance of being assembled to live as blessed ones in the land promised to Abraham's descendants (Deut 1:8; 6:10; 12:10-11; Tob 13:13; 14:7);
- above all, the characteristic 'theology of remembrance' which also marks the highly paradigmatic theme of the journey (Deut 8:18; Tob 4:5).<sup>10</sup>

On the narrative level, the preeminent inspiration appears to belong to the figure of Job whose story seems to be taken up again in several ways, not only with regard to the key theme of the suffering of the righteous, but also in the weaving of the narrative.<sup>11</sup> The agreements in the structure of the two accounts can be summarised in the story of a righteous man proved by God in his faith (Tob 1:1-8; Job 1:1-5) who, after the trial of illness (Tob 2:10-11 and Job 2:7-8), regains his health, blessing and honour (Tob 11:13-21; 14:1-4; Job 42:12-15) on account of his faithfulness. In the two works, different journeys are narrated and the Book of Tobit offers different narrational innovations required by its own cultural context beyond that of its specific literary setting.

The commentators have pointed out the numerous analogies and multiple agreements with other biblical places. The unfolding of the plot seems to be inspired by the account of the patriarchs: the theme of the

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9 Cf. VÍLCHEZ LÍNDEZ, *Tobia*, 21-22.

10 DI LELLA, *The Book of Tobit*, 197-206.

11 TOLONI, *La sofferenza del giusto*, 17-58; cf., also, the monograph of NOWELL, *The Book of Tobit*.

daring expedition to find a spouse of the same family descent (Gen 24); the figure of Tamar, a woman who bears death but from whom will come the descent (Gen 38); Joseph, the foreign slave who rises to honour in the court of the great monarch (Gen 41).<sup>12</sup> The historical framework seems to derive from the Book of Kings, while the frequent appeals to the Law of Moses (cf. Tob 1:6, 8; 4:5; 6:13; 7:10, 12) refer to legislative norms present in the Pentateuch and in particular in Deuteronomy.<sup>13</sup> Multiple too are the contacts of the book with the sapiential texts, with Proverbs especially, and with the Psalms. Finally not without importance, a quotation of Amos (8:10) in Tob 2:6, while, in 14:4, the redactor evokes the prophetic figure of Nahum to confer authority on his own writing, but perhaps also to signal a hermeneutical orientation which claims to interpret historical events according to the style of actualising commentary of the Qumran *pesharim*. It is precisely in the caves of Qumran that a good four Aramaic and one Hebrew manuscripts of Tobit have been found.<sup>14</sup> Is this common prophetic address perhaps the scarlet thread which links Tobit to the men of that community?

No less interesting for our research is the correct valuation of the possible literary influences foreign to the biblical world and hailing from the non-Jewish, middle Hellenistic environment. Let us begin with the clearest data. Among the Greek texts, symptomatic but also surprising is the reference to the pedagogic story of Ahikar (1:21-22; 2:10; 11:19; 14:110) which the author of Tobit uses anecdotally, perhaps to reinforce the universal import of his moral lesson of the innocent who is unjustly accused but in the end rehabilitated by direct divine intervention.<sup>15</sup> It can be supposed that our author would have known of these or other similar popular legends that were widely diffused in his time and would have drawn from them only in part; it is certain, however, that he was able to integrate the fabulous elements with fertile inventiveness within a historico-religious plot entirely consonant with his own tradition.<sup>16</sup>

On the other hand, common and universal themes like those alluded to above, which are present in all cultures, present the problem of the real influence which a Jew, and especially a Jew of the Diaspora could have been subject to, not so much from the more widespread popular tales as rather from the pervasive and dominant Greek culture. It is unthinkable

12 DESELAERS, Das Buch Tobit, 292-303; MOORE, Tobit, 8-9

13 FITZMYER, Tobit, 35-36

14 SCHMITT, Die hebräischen Textfunde, 569.

15 Cf. CONTINI – GROTANELLI, Il saggio Ahikar, 22-26; TOLONI, Tobi e Ahikar, 141-165.

16 DESELAERS, Das Buch Tobit, 280-292; MOORE, Book of Tobit, 588; Id., Tobit, 11-12.

ble that an educated author like ours would not have had an adequate knowledge of the Greek classical world as it was taught in the Hellenistic schools of the period. It is enough to observe the prolix narrative with a happy ending that has been announced beforehand, the skilful weaving of the plot, the poorness of the historical and geographical details, the subtle and neat use of irony, the presence of animated dialogues and stretches of interior monologues which, with some mastery, are turned into prayer. This and other rhetorical expedients employed in the book reveal an advanced awareness of narrative techniques of the Hellenistic school which the author puts at the service of a didactic-sapiential project in support of his religious creed. In the past, with varying success, some authors have sought to explore the existence of thematic influences and literary agreements between the Book of Tobit and the works of classical Greece.<sup>17</sup>

More than other themes, the journey of Tobias to the East and the return of the long-suffering Ulysses to Ithaca have attracted the attention of scholars, pressing them into a comparison between Tobit and the Odyssey. Recently, these insights have been taken up again and weighed up starting from the literary genre of the two works, held to be close to the popular tale, and from their comparable compositional structure, in order to be able to pass on to a review of the numerous thematic analogies and the most significant similar *motifs*. I am not going into the merit of these readings. I limit myself to taking notice of a comparison between the two works that is certainly possible and really suggestive. I am able to indicate: the daring voyage to the remote regions of the East; the dangers and the unexpected happenings of an unknown journey; the dramatic world of family affections; the intense affair of conjugal love.<sup>18</sup> Among the shared narrative elements are to be signalled: the laborious father-son relationship; the symbolic presence of the faithful dog and the divine intermediaries; the humanity bare of tears; the trust in drugs and magic potions; and, finally, the decisive metaphor of blindness also.<sup>19</sup>

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17 Those who favour this point of view are: FRIES, *Das Buch Tobit und die Telemachie*, 54-87; GLASSON, *The Main Source of Tobit*, 275-277; critical, on the other hand, is VATTIONI, *Studi e note sul libro di Tobia*, 241-284.

18 Cf. TOLONI, *Echi omerici*, 17-22; for a comparison with the Greek world, cf. the volume edited by GRABBE, *Did Moses Speak Attic?*; in particular: ALBERTZ, *The end of the confusion?*, 31-45; BECKING, *The Hellenistic Period*, 78-90; LEMCHE, *The Old Testament – A Hellenistic Book?*, 287-318; AVERINCEV, *Atene e Gerusalemme*; WENDLAND, *La cultura ellenistico-romana*; HENGEL, *Ebrei, Greci e barbari*; *Id.*, *Giudaismo ed ellenismo*.

19 TOLONI, *Echi omerici*, 22-30. Cf., also, FINLEY, *Il mondo di Odisseo*, 199; GENTILONI, *Abramo contro Ulisse*; VERTOVA, *Il viaggio di Abramo*, 287-307.

It is possible that the last hagiographer re-elaborated an ancient tale of Tobit and Tobias with Greek assonances in order to give an energetic response to the questions of the Israelites of the Diaspora. It is likewise possible that he exploited the widespread knowledge of the Homeric narrative in view of the success and the enormous diffusion which the story of Odysseus had met with in the Hellenistic age, in order to confer a greater prestige and a vaster resonance on his own work, and to reanimate the expectations of the community by prophesying a return laden with blessing as had happened to the young and obedient son of Tobit. That the *Odyssey* is the inspiration of the Book of Tobit is an acceptable thesis but not a convincing one on account of some forcings in the parallels and the fact that the same authors have explained that we can detect a moral rather than a formal dependence on the part of our hagiographer on the Homeric model.<sup>20</sup> One can only point out a use of the folk-tale of the narrative of Odysseus as the ideal archetype which, in the manner of the Book of Job, acts as framework for the whole book.<sup>21</sup> However, judgement on the real influence exercised by the preponderant Greek thought on the fervent literary vein of the biblical authors of that period remains suspended. On this question, there is need of further research to understand what has allowed the hagiographer to carry out a theological operation aimed at protecting the hope of his coreligionists with compositional procedures which, far from the land of the fathers, must not cut a sorry figure before the superior technique of Hellenistic writing.

### 3. The social environment of Tobit

Up to now, something has been observed of the environment of the Book of Tobit, something in truth more ideological than historical. We must now take into consideration the possibility of a sociological and anthropological investigation of the text to seek to grasp its more realistic human and social environment. For this investigation, a valid model from which to take comparative patterns and parameters with which to understand the biblical data starting from their own cultural context is the Mediterranean anthropology of Malina.<sup>22</sup> In order to compare the characteristic

20 TOLONI, *Echi omerici*, 34-35, where he cites TREBOLLE BARRERA, *La Biblia judía*, 200.

21 Cf. CANTILENA, *Odysseus tra folk-tale e leggenda eroica*, 9-21.

22 Cf. MALINA, *Nuovo Testamento e antropologia*, 41-72; in addition, the pioneering works of PITT RIVERS, *The People of the Sierra*; CAMPBELL, *Honour, Family and Pa-*

social actions of the Mediterranean area today with the historical data transmitted by the Scriptures (from the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BCE to the 2<sup>nd</sup> century CE), one must, however, pay attention to the fact that a certain cultural homogeneity has been safeguarded over a long period in such a way as to ensure that the paradigms of traditional life have not been upset by the processes of accelerated and untidy modernisation. In this perspective, the cultural Graeco-Roman *koinè* assures a trustworthy ethical framework of social mediation between the ancient world of the Jewish Diaspora and the collective imagination of the Western Mediterranean world where certain cultural stylemes and certain moral behaviour are still in vogue.<sup>23</sup>

The Book of Tobit is situated within the period considered by Malina, within the lively Hellenistic age, for it is the common opinion that it was composed around the third century BCE when the prophets had already been received as Scripture (Tob 14:4). The key values of the ancient Mediterranean culture proposed by Malina are too well-known to be re-exhibited here. For our enquiry, however, it seems useful to me to record that the three systems of social demarcation constituted by authority, by status of class and by respect, still quite common in the Mediterranean world, mark out where they coexist, today as in the past, that claim to socially recognised value called *honour*. An added reference should be made to the other significant value of the Mediterranean world represented by *collectivism*. The honour of the group to which one belongs requires the constant domination of the individual conscience by the collective conscience because the choice of the collective well-being must always be put before the search for individual well-being.<sup>24</sup>

In the Book of Tobit, it is precisely the symbolic and social value assigned to honour which plays an essential role in identifying the legitimate and acknowledged place which the characters occupy in society, defining their actual social position. In fact, "from a functionalist point of view, honour is the value of someone in his own eyes together with the value of

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tronage, and the volume edited by PERISTIANY, Honour and Shame; and, finally, GILMORE, Honor and Shame and the Unity.

- 23 BRANDES, Reflections of Honor and Shame, 121-134; CHANCE The Anthropology of Honor, 139-151; cf., also, the methodological reflections of HERZFELD, Honour and Shame, 339-351; for shame in biblical literature, cf. STIEBERT, The construction of shame, 25-86; DESILVA, The Wisdom of Ben Sira, 433-455.
- 24 MALINA, Nuovo Testamento e antropologia, 42-44 and 75-83. PITT RIVERS had distinguished honour as virtue from 'precedence' and from moral reputation (The People of the Sierra, 72), while HERZFELD had explained the semantic difference between the English honour, of Victorian origin, and the honour understood as 'respect' in Southern Italy (Honour and Shame, 340).

this person in the eyes of his social group."<sup>25</sup> In the light of this scenario of honour, the affairs of the different characters, male and female, treated in the book have been interpreted as the parable of a way of redemption, moral and religious, where the initial honour, threatened, damaged and lost, is unexpectedly regained, restored and recovered. We shall briefly glide over the steps of this socio-anthropological itinerary of recovery of lost honour, following the narrative order of the fourteen chapters.<sup>26</sup>

The initial genealogy of the book (1:1) itself signals the importance of the honour attributed to each person simply by force of his belonging to the family and clan. The opening framework (1:3-8) describes with light touches the honourable existence of Tobit in his serene and comfortable youth, in order to go on to recount his exemplary life as an adult (1:9-18). But already at the end of the first chapter (1:19-22), the path of Tobit's humiliation begins to be outlined when he is forced to hide and to flee after he has been accused before the king of having buried the dead. The narrative continues by describing the descending parabola of the reputation of the righteous and pious Israelite who, in the evening, in the shade of the sunset, weeps in his solitude (2:1-8). His descent along the path of progressive loss of honour has still to register a further let-down. After having been mocked cruelly by his neighbours (v. 8), he has to undergo the affront of apparent divine neglect which, as had already happened with Job, permitted the evil lot to rage upon Tobit. Deprived of all his goods, he is now put to the test in his own physical person, becoming blind, and then in his soul by undergoing the resentful rebukes of his wife (2:9-14). His physical blindness reveals to him his human and religious blindness as a righteous man, rigid keeper of the Law, the full observance of which he praises but which does not give him the ability to see and recognise the good in those around him who serve him and love him. Now having sharpened awareness of his disastrous condition of human and spiritual limitation, he retires to ask from God a liberating death (3:1-6). His prayer, although mirroring the tone of the lamentations and penitential psalms is the disconsolate entreaty of one who has lost his reputation in the eyes of the world, in the eyes of his dear ones, and in his own eyes: it is the terminal prayer of a man without honour.<sup>27</sup>

At this point, the skilful weaving of the plot introduces, with perfect narrative synchrony, an analogous journey of loss of honour, describing

25 MALINA, *Nuovo Testamento e antropologia*, 68.

26 GILMORE, *Introduction: The Shame of Dishonor*, 2-21.

27 DREWERMANN, *Il cammino pericoloso*, 29-36. Cf., also, STIEBERT, *The construction of shame*, 3-12; GIOVANNINI, *Female Chastity*, 61-74.



in the feminine the shameful condition of Sara (3:7-11a). Insulted by a slave on account of her status as an impure woman because possessed by a demon which causes the death of whoever get close to her, at the low point of her bitter humiliation, she thinks of committing suicide. The tormenting thought of her father prevents her; so as not further burden the already compromised reputation of her father, she too blesses God and seeks death from him (3:11-15). It is here that the 'great prolepsis' of the Book of Tobit is effected: anticipating the hearing of the two supplications, the dramatic force of the two misfortunes is unexpectedly softened, without causing a loss of interest and rhythm to the account.<sup>28</sup> The prayer of the two humiliated individuals, now arrived at the nadir of their state of being forgotten by God and rejected by men (cf. Ps 130:1), is accepted by the benevolent divine will: God, the God of the fathers, always listens to the prayer of men without honour (3:16-17). Unaware of the provident plan of God with regard to him, but certain of being heard by God in his request for death, Tobit disposes of his goods entrusting Tobias with his spiritual testament.<sup>29</sup> Imitating a literary genre that was widespread in the intertestamental literature of the Hellenistic period, he utters his farewell discourse, offering his young son the opportunity of preserving and rescuing the paternal honour, entrusting him, together with a list of counsels and precepts to be observed, with a fabulous and far-off inheritance to be recovered and of which he has regained the memory only at the point of death (4:1-21).<sup>30</sup>

From then on, under the attentive governance of Azaria/Raphael, unrecognised divine messenger, the steps of a gradual path of liberation from shame and dishonour are articulated. Precisely thanks to the successful path of initiation of the son, it will culminate in the blessing of a happy ending which has already been announced to the reader: the woman is freed from the power of the demon and the father is cured of his blindness. The conclusion of the account which celebrates the reconstituted harmony of the family supplies, however, an important theological lesson which it is worth noticing. The reader who, together with the protagonists of this 'Jewish romance' has travelled the path of the regaining of honour that has been denied or devalued by the imponderability of destiny and human shabbiness, is called, in the Canticle on Jerusalem, to be a witness and participant in the mysterious presence of God in the history of the believers

28 Cf. VÍLCHEZ LÍNDEZ, *Tobia*, 60; ZAPPELLA, *Tobit*, 13-16.

29 DI LELLA, *Two Major Prayers*, 95-116; FITZMYER, *Tobit*, 148-149.

30 VÍLCHEZ LÍNDEZ, *Tobia*, 68 e 79; DREWERMANN, *Il cammino pericoloso*, 51-54; ; STANCARI, *Il libro di Tobia*, 33-40.



and the peoples, confessing the divine mercy and greatness (13:1-14:1). As Raphael recalls before revealing his angelic nature, the legitimate search for human respect should not lead to the forgetting of the absolute primacy of the divine honour (12:6-10). Only God is worthy of honour, and the reputation of the righteous receives dignity and glory from him alone. The light of the eyes given back to Tobit to see and contemplate the secret of the solicitous presence of God should thus help to cure also the blindness of the reader who has doubted divine providence.<sup>31</sup>

This socio-anthropological reconstruction of the story of Tobit, freshly understood in the perspective of honour as a typical value of Mediterranean culture, is undoubtedly loaded with fascination on account of the multiple suggestions which it can provoke, but must be filtered through an historical reading so as not to leave unanswered the search for a realistic setting for the book within the historical contest of the religion of Israel. A reading laid on atemporal data, risks giving the text an achronic understanding, where the actual human, family and social relationships are characterised and perceived as immobile and outside time, indifferent to the historical traumas which were involved in living the faith of the fathers in the land of the Diaspora.<sup>32</sup> The multi-ethnic living together in a foreign land had triggered off an inevitable confrontation with cultural and religious pluralism, setting in motion in the biblical and Jewish world a necessary process of revision in relation to the paternal role, the family, the woman and sexuality. It is precisely on the stratification and transformation of these roles that Tobit has something to say.

#### 4. Post-Exilic piety in the family

The destruction of the monarchy and the end of the temple cult had provoked in the religious circles of the Exile a period of burning disputes over the theological interpretation of the political catastrophe. The war

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31 ZAPPELLA, Tobit, 20; STANCARI, *Il libro di Tobia*, 83-91.

32 PINA-CABRAL (The Mediterranean as a category, 399-406) has shown up the artificial nature of the model of Honour and Shame which has been taken up to interpret Mediterranean society conceived as a single, homogeneous cultural area. The "academic Mediterranean lump" was a clever invention of Anglo-American anthropology which 'tribalised' that Mediterranean which was considered by historians as the cradle of urban civilisation. Ensuing studies, feminist and the like, have proved that that paradigm was not satisfactory to explain the complexity of a geo-historical area studied by anthropologists only on the basis of small and marginal rural communities.

for the acceptance of the prophetic theology of opposition had spurred the Deuteronomists, linked to the tradition of Jeremiah, to carry out a work of missionary teaching to combat the idolatrous contaminations and the syncretism which was widespread in the private sphere, eating away at the traditional religious foundation of the family. With the irreversible crisis of official religion and the dissolution of the political forms of organisation, the only social mediation that had survived was precisely that of the family with its patriarchal organisation. Moreover, family piety had been the pillar of the Yahwistic religion even before the Exile, allowing, in the rapid and sorrowful evolution of events, the preservation in its integrity of the popular soul of personal piety which, precisely from the more reassuring family relations, provided nourishment for an equally authentic and consoling relationship with God.<sup>33</sup> It is not surprising, therefore, that after the Exile recourse was had to the faith of the patriarchs, recovering their exemplarity in the personal relationship with God as an antidote to social and religious dislocation which, in the Diaspora, seemed difficult to contain outside the family structure. The centrality of the family also protected the not secondary role of the woman, mother and wife, to whom was entrusted the early education of the children. Hence the importance of her figure for the maintenance of family traditions.

The need to keep the family united and solid in its traditional features convinced Ezra to join exigencies of a moral type with ethnic conditions as the vital presupposition for his cultic reorganisation. With his rigid reform intended also to protect the Jewish people most compromised with idolatry, he decreed the dissolution of mixed marriages because they were judged a risk of syncretistic deviations or various forms of apostasy (cf. Ezra 9:1-10, 44; Neh 10:31; 13:23-31).<sup>34</sup> Pressing forcefully for endogamous marriage, celebrated in the Jewish Hellenistic literature, both Greek, as is attested also in our book (Tob 4:12) and in the Testament of Job (45:3), and Hebrew (cf. Jub. 4:11), he intended to reduce the pressures which were corroding what remained of the tradition of the fathers. He imposed a practice that was excessively rigoristic and which clearly was not able to find ready acceptance in the Diaspora, where there were confrontations and collisions with the different models of Hellenistic culture, generating quite different reactions within the various forms of

33 ALBERTZ, *Storia della religione*, 461-467 for the pillar type of family piety in the Yahwistic religion; for the piety of the microgroup in the time of the Diaspora, cf. 604-606.

34 Cf., also, Deut 7:2f.; Jos 9:6ff.; 23:7, 12; Jdg 2:2; 3:6; cf. 1 Kgs 11:3f.; 16:31; 2 Kgs 8:18. Cf. SMITH, *The Politics of Ezra*, 73-97.

Jewish membership. A minority group of exiles opposed a tenacious and sometimes also intolerant resistance to any openness to mixed marriages. They were obstinately bound to the institution of endogamous marriage as Tobit attests in a didactic and, all things considered, detached way. In the Diaspora, the observance of these norms had become the constitutive hinge of the new way of obeying the Torah, confirmed by the blind Tobit and witnessed to by the mysterious Azariah (6:16), but not taken up again by Raphael among the precepts transmitted by him (12:6-15).<sup>35</sup> In the land of exile, the father-pedagogue of Proverbs had already taught the fear of the contagion of wicked companions and the libertine customs of the foreigner (Prov 1:10-19; 5:1-23) which would have encouraged conformity with the fashions and tendencies emerging from the dominant Hellenistic culture, changing the models and behaviour of the healthy family tradition of Israel in an irreparable way.<sup>36</sup>

The insistence of Tobit on endogamous marriage in the Diaspora came up against the resistance of those who had a vision more open to the multi-ethnicity and multi-piety of the various cultures. For these Jews, the ethnic belonging of the woman to the house of Israel was not binding, although the foreign woman was required to convert to Judaism. To understand the climate of the lively theological debate, it is enough to think of the brief story of Ruth which tells of the salvific journey of the Moabitess, who, from being an immigrant, gleaned as a pauper, becomes part of the community of Israel, numbered among the mothers of Israel (Ruth 4:11-12), becoming the model of all female proselytes in later Judaism (cf. TgRuth 2:16-17). Moving in the same direction is the historical romance of Joseph and Aseneth (1<sup>st</sup> century BCE to 1<sup>st</sup> century CE), a writing characteristic of the Greek-speaking Egyptian Diaspora which celebrates the marriage of the Patriarch Joseph and Aseneth, the daughter of an Egyptian priest, only one who in the fiction of the romance had reached a certain practice of Judaism (JosAs 9:2; 10:1ff.).<sup>37</sup> Indeed, the Jewish tradition of the Diaspora sought in many ways to justify the mixed marriages of the patriarchal period, inventing genealogies, tribal associations and dynastic successions which ought to have reassured those who did not have

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35 ZAPPELLA, Tobit, 21-22.

36 BELLIA, Proverbi, 73-76; BIANCHI, *La donna del tuo popolo*, 74-83; COLLINI, *Famiglia*, 33-96.

37 In a clannish organisation, there could be wives of different or similar race and religion: Abraham (Gen 16:1-4), Esau (Gen 26:34-35), Joseph (Gen 41:50-52), Moses (Exod 2:21-22; cf. also 18:3), David (1 Sam 25:39-43). For Moses, there is mention of a Kenite marriage (Jdg 1:16; 4:11) and of an Ethiopian wife (Num 12:1). Cf. BIANCHI, *La donna del tuo popolo*, 24-68.

the intention of breaking their marriage bonds with foreigners who bore equally the seal of an identical divine blessing.<sup>38</sup> In Tobit, it is not said that the seven husbands were killed by the treacherous Asmodeus because they were not Jews but only because he loves Sarah and is jealous of them (6:14-15). The author of Tobit, then, takes the side of the Ezra tradition but without treating the condemnation of mixed marriages in a ferocious manner.<sup>39</sup>

It would be the family piety of the upper levels of Second Temple society, faithful to the sapiential tradition of the Torah, together with the personal piety of the prophetic-apocalyptic tendency of the lower classes that was to overcome the setback of the disastrous experience of the failed restoration. The Edict of Cyrus (538 BCE) had offered to the Jewish Diaspora in Babylon the opportunity to plan the re-establishment of a cultic community in Jerusalem in the ancient land of the fathers. The inability of those who returned to recover a significant historical and religious identity could not be compensated for by visionary projects of future reconstructions on the part of the disputed priestly caste or by the enthusiasm of groups of devout observants. Once again, the only institution that remained 'strong' and alive after the umpteenth collapse of all the hopes for the reconstruction of the national and cultic order was the family.<sup>40</sup> In the Diaspora, the attention to private religious sentiment, conveyed by the family tradition, had found its optimal form of preservation and increase in the cultic form of the synagogue where elements of the macrocult and the microcult were able to converge. From the Persian period onward, the dynamic and fruitful relationship between the official religion and personal piety will be assured only by fidelity to synagogue practice, helping to overcome that religious and social cleavage in Jewish society of the second post-Exilic age.<sup>41</sup> Here we must ask how on earth there is, oddly, no trace of this fervent synagogal world in Tobit.

To make up for this, the pious hagiographer seems to share, tacitly, the moralising campaign against polygamy, exhibiting long-lived monogamous couples and holding out to the young Tobias the charm of a union

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38 Thus, it is explained that Aseneth, Joseph's wife, would have been the descendant of Dinah, violated in her time by Shechem (TgJGen 41:45; cf. Gen 34:2); while in the tradition of the LXX, Zipporah, the Midianite wife of Moses, would have been a descendant of Moses in the line of Ketura (cf. Gen 25:3<sup>LXX</sup>); there is a list of mixed marriages passages in Jewish apocryphal literature in COLLINI, *Famiglia*, 43-45.

39 BIANCHI, *La donna del tuo popolo*, 83-116; VIRGULIN, *La vita di famiglia*, 159-187; RAVASI, *La famiglia*, 59-72; PITKÄNEN, *Family life and Ethnicity*, 104-117.

40 ALBERTZ, *Storia della religione*, 467 and 665.

41 LEVINE, *La sinagoga antica*, 140-145.

that lasts for ever. An ethical battle, but also a theological one, engaged after the Exile within the zealous movements of opinion and by scribal currents equipped to accept the fact that polygamy did not belong to the original divine blessing. The texts of Gen 1:27 (MT) and of 2:24 (MT), considered as post-Exilic compositions, were not interpreted as hostile to polygamy or divorce. It would be the oral tradition that was to hand to Greek-speaking Judaism in the Diaspora a new take on the foundational text of Gen 2:24, introducing in the LXX translation a small but substantial gloss which established a new interpretation of the real addressees of the divine command and blessing on marriage: "and they two will be one flesh only" (cf. Pesh-TgJ; Pent Sam Gen 2:24). Restricting the primordial blessing to 'those two,' as Giovanni Rizzi shrewdly notes, has the effect of excluding every other relationship, putting polygamy out of bounds.<sup>42</sup> The fact that Tobit does not share or witness to this important evolution of meaning which certainly his time needed, spurs us to fix the place and date of composition of the book towards the Eastern Diaspora of Greater Syria, in a time prior to the Alexandrine version of the Septuagint.<sup>43</sup>

## 5. Blindness and nostalgia for the father figure

In the time of deep religious and social crisis of Jewish society in the second post-Exilic age, the emergence of a series of writings with female heroines has been noted. To the little Book of Ruth, the Moabitess should be added other books which praise heroines like Esther and Judith, not to mention the greater emphasis given to the role of women within the patriarchal narratives. There is agreement over these writings of edifying tales, or, better, true Jewish romances, which oscillate between "inclusive indulgence and exclusive defensiveness," and which exalt feminine qualities and characteristics against the background of a constant absence or insignificance of male figures.<sup>44</sup> In these accounts, it is always the father figure who is hidden or lacking in these narratives. In the Book of Tobit, the author takes care to inform us that his protagonist was an orphan who grew up alone in faithful observance of the Law of Moses, thanks to

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42 A reading censuring polygamy assimilated by Jerome in Gen 2,24<sup>VG</sup> where, despite his proclaimed attachment to the *hebraica veritas*, he knows he has to stick to the meaning introduced by the LXX and translates: "et erunt duo in carne una."

43 Cf. RIZZI, *Le antiche versioni*, 33-35; BONSRVEN, *Le Judaïsme palestinien*, 207-216; MANNS, *Il matrimonio nel giudaismo antico*, 139-191.

44 ZAPPELLA, *L'immagine dell'elezione*, 199.

the education afforded to him by his grandmother Deborah (1:8). The absence of the father figure has a clear symbolic value and, in a text received as canonical, should bear some theological significance. The story must be read, therefore, not only as symbol of an emotional void for what the absence of the father represents at the level of the family, but rather as a living metaphor of what the symbol can represent for faith in contemporary society.<sup>45</sup>

It is not necessary here to think of or have recourse to the father according to the various and shifting fortunes of the psychoanalytical readings which want him, now as the normative ideal, now as an ideological function, or yet something else. It seems to me more coherent to understand him within the biblical world where the father is seen first of all as the one who procreates, as the witness of the covenant, as the guarantor of the wise divine Law. In order to educate his son in a foreign land, where there is no religious or moral authority that can collaborate in his educational responsibility, the father of the Book of Proverbs has no resources other than his own patient work of persuasion.<sup>46</sup> In this case, the presence of the father figure, even if diminished and weakened compared with the patriarchal models, on account of the lack of support and the useless help of the community, always has a pedagogic role and a paternal responsibility to fulfil.<sup>47</sup> When the father becomes weaker, however, when the father is not there, the absence of the paternal function takes on a significance really most serious and disquieting if related to the corresponding symbolic value which the lack of a father carries on the social and religious level. Biblically, the lack of the father must correspond with the profound loss lamented by Daniel: "We no longer have prince or chief or prophet or holocaust or sacrifice or oblation or incense or place to present you with our firstfruits and to find mercy" (3:38). An irremediable loss, an agonising deprivation because, as the contemporary psalmist emphasises; "No one knows how long." The absence of the father can, perhaps, indicate an institutional void, but in those brief accounts, to the eyes of faith it stands, above all, for the slight authority of that role, the poor reliability of that function, the impracticability of that generating relation.<sup>48</sup>

In the Book of Tobit, the father is there, but he is blind. He is present, but he seeks from God to be allowed to die. He carries out his paternal function scrupulously, but he cannot bear witness to the fruit of the di-

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45 BARBAGLIO, *Simbologia religiosa*, 63-70; RICOEUR, *La paternité*, 458-486.

46 BELLIA, *Proverbi*, 69, 87; PINTO, "Ascolta figlio," 144.

47 POHIER, *Nel nome del Padre*, 13-63.

48 BERGER, *Una gloria remota*, 163.

vine blessing. The hagiographer, however, with his reiterated prolepsis, just as the final redactor of the Book of Job had done, wishes to reassure the reader immediately, letting him know that he is faced with a didactic drama with a happy ending, so that the story is always kept under the control of the watchful and provident divine wisdom, in addition, naturally, to the narrative control of the careful redactor. Nevertheless, the fact of the banal and inglorious blindness of the father and the uncontrollable pressure of death which is grasping father without any honour are episodes recounted in a dramatic and involving way as if there is an intention to indicate to the reader something that goes beyond the events that are being narrated. The attitude of the young Tobias before the destruction of his father does not interest the hagiographer, just as the disgrace of the unfortunate Sarah is registered without any particular involvement; his paraenetic purpose points elsewhere. The hagiographer knows that the facts happen in their bare truth but are not immediately recognisable because a curtain is hiding them; man would like to raise that veil so as to see, but learns that "it is a good thing to keep the king's secret hidden" (12:7) as the faithful divine messenger warns in the solemn finale.

However, what is narrated in an historical romance is parable, allegory, metaphor which refers to something known, to a reality that is not distant or wholly foreign to the experience of the reader. Moreover, the symbol of blindness has a resonance that is immediate and universal, educated and popular. Taken in a biblical-theological key, it would illustrate "the manifestly irrational and uncontrollable course of human affairs despite faith in an almighty and benevolent God."<sup>49</sup> This interpretation would refer thus to the collective and social loss experienced at that time by the men of the Diaspora getting to grips with a troubled reformulation of the covenant. The figure of the father who is old and blind has no precedents in biblical history except in the episode of the old Isaac deceived by Jacob with the complicity of his mother (Gen 27:1).<sup>50</sup> The symbolic value of paternal blindness can lend itself to various readings but should be seen also from the side of the sons. The silence of Tobias before the physical and spiritual decline of the father's role is perhaps functional with respect to his future task of healing his father. For the children of Israel, however, this paternal blindness, this unreliability of their chiefs and institutions,

49 DUMM, *Tobia-Giuditta-Ester*, 794b.

50 Blindness is encountered in the prohibition against offering blind victims to God (Deut 15:21) or in the edict of David who had contempt for the crippled and blind, forbidding them to take part in the temple cult (2 Sam 5:8). These and other Old Testament passages are no help in penetrating the parable of the father who has become blind.



could not avoid provoking discomfort and loss. The very narrative of Tobit, even with its well-timed and repeated reassurances, delivers in the end a drastically reduced figure of the father. It is true that he blesses God and praises his bounty, but now he can only be revealed under the figure of the son of whom he feels himself to be the brother, according to that word of the angel to Tobias which he has already experienced. To the exiles, however, the Book of Tobit should have aroused desires, dreams and expectations which procured living sentiments of lamentation, of nostalgia for an abiding paternal function, for an unbreakable relationship with the father as the biblical story of Cain shows.<sup>51</sup>

The world of classical Greece has already been considered as a possible place of illumination, rather than of inspiration, for the voyage of Tobias, placed in relation to the *nostos* (homecoming) of Odysseus. Perhaps we can look again at the Hellenistic world to see whether blindness and paternity find a fertile background in that literature, and a possible place of comparison too with our learned author. In fact, in the ancient Greek world, blindness is known abundantly as a singular prerogative and exceptional gift conferred on cantors, bards and poets.<sup>52</sup> A kind of reward given by the Muse, in return for the physical disability. To these blind people, other eyes were given to see, beyond the direct view of reality, things that escaped the common man since they were able to look out from the edge of the mystery. It is recounted of Phineas, legendary prophetic king of Thrace, that he voluntarily renounced the use of his sight in order to obtain the gift of seeing into the future. Similar stories are recorded of Tiresias, of Polymestor and of Anchises, father of Aeneas, of the Thracian Tamiris, inventor of the Doric harmony, and – although with a difference – of Oedipus with his complex story, not forgetting the great Homer whom tradition handed down as “the blind man who dwells on the rocky Chios.” Whoever has eyes to look at the appearance, teach the ancient masters, does not have that pure interior contemplation that is necessary in order to see what is profound. Not by chance, Pliny could write that “A profound meditation renders one blind since the visual capacity withdraws into the interior” [N.H. XI,54].

Further light can be gained by a comparison with the abundant Hellenistic literature in celebration of divine portents (aretalogies), found in great number at cultic centres throughout the Mediterranean basin. They are compositions which praise the miraculous healings worked by

51 LEBRUN – WÉNIN, *Des lois pour être humain*, 75-81, which retell the Book of Genesis.

52 TOLONI, *Echi omerici*, 30, who cites the legend of the etymology of Homer, interpreted and represented by some as “the one who does not see.”



the gods of the place, particularly those who were affected by blindness. Memorable at the height of the Hellenistic age is the healing of the philosopher Demetrius of Phaleron. Having obtained his sight again through the intervention of Serapides, he composed paeans in honour of the goddess that were still in fashion in the time of Diogenes Laertius (Illustrious Philosophers 5:76). No less well-known is the episode narrated by Diodorus Siculus who hymned Isis, acclaimed as *sōteira* by the Greeks and as *salutaris* by the Romans, who, with her drugs, procured the healing of “so many who were completely deprived of the use of their eyes or of some part of their body” who had had recourse to her (Historical Library 1, 25, 2-7). These aretalogies, spread by missionaries of the Oriental cults and by itinerant Cynic philosophers, must have created no little unease among the Jews of the Diaspora. In the face of the propagandist reports of numerous miracles of healing worked by the pagan divinities, those who were more exposed to this kind of thing could have undergone the temptation to abandon the God of the fathers who, above everything, seemed conspicuous by his absence. Hence the decided paraenetic intention of the Book which aims at celebrating the healing power and the mercy of the God of Israel in the face of those pagans who boasted of the benefits and miraculous interventions of their gods. We can, therefore, share the judgement that the Book of Tobit is “an effective propagandist manifesto for righteous conduct on the part of a pious Jew in a Diaspora context.”<sup>53</sup> Like an itinerant aretalogist celebrating and recounting the wonders of Isis, the author of the work has intended to leave to future generations an exemplary story (cf. 14:15), a writing that celebrates the honour and praise of YHWH, responding to a precise divine command, as is read in the text: “Write everything that has happened to you” (12:20).<sup>54</sup> In the background, there could be here, therefore, also a masked apologetic intention on the part of the author who, in full respect for the more orthodox tradition of Israel, accepted the task of confronting the bawling voices of a hostile world in the tumultuous Hellenistic agora. But in order to do this, if one does not want to be one’s own father, replicating the original sin, nostalgia for the father is not enough; one must encounter his face.<sup>55</sup>

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53 ZAPPELLA, L’immagine dell’elezione, 194-196.

54 Praise of the Lord is urged on several occasions by the divine messenger in his revelatory discourse (12:6-20); the extensive hymn of ch. 13 is described as “hymn of praise” (14:1); Tobit’s existence (and that of Tobias according to Codex Sinaiticus [N]) is absorbed in “praising the greatness of God” (14:2; cf. 14:15). Cf. PRIOTTO, Epilogo del Libro, 333-342.

55 FERRAROTTI, Padri, madri, figli, 13-26.

## 6. Towards the recovery of the father

The commentators agree in holding that Tobit's blindness has the value of a symbol. It is a narrative pretext to speak about the more miserable blindness of Israel in the face of the incomprehensible action of God. A people without guides becomes blind and does not know how to see and recognise the discreet signs of the divine intervention in its history, just as we read in the invectives of the prophets against the voluntary blindness of the leaders (Isa 42:19; 56:10). They need new eyes, eyes of the heart so that, after the bitter cure of the Exile, they may recover a purified sense of sight capable of seeing the becoming of things with the very eyes of God. The absence of the paternal function generates desire for the father because his absence, cancelling all fear of the law, also cancels the Law. The road which reaches from nostalgia to the recovery of paternity is not sudden, not immediate, and, in the story of Tobit, it is carried out by means of his son. We ought not, indeed, forget or undervalue the fact that in the book the interweaving of the different dramas hinges on the cure performed by Tobias.<sup>56</sup> Here one asks: is the son who heals his father only a decorative invention or does he conceal a secret to be probed? From whence comes this anomalous idea with its strong human and social implications? What theological value is hidden behind a singular event which finds no correspondence in the numerous biblical stories? Has our author perhaps found in the rich literary canvas of the Greek culture the decisive ideas for his own creative vein?

The parental function in ancient Greece, for artists, philosophers, playwrights and poets, has been the object of many questions and many reflections composing a texture of family relations that is really complex, rich in profiles and perspectives that at first sight are unimaginable. We are before a choral work of exceptional historical and, above all, human value which has forged the Greek and Mediterranean imagination and which even today continues to pervade our cultural history.<sup>57</sup> In the centre of this imposing collective iconography is the paternal figure, investigated with surprising accuracy and intellectual honesty by many authors at different times, painting a surprising sequence of both continuity and novelty in a process which goes from the Greek *paideia* to the Latin *humanitas*.<sup>58</sup> We have not space here to present a complete panorama of the

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56 ZAPPELLA, Tobit, 18-20; STANCARI, Il libro di Tobia, 64-66.

57 SNELL, The discovery of the mind, cf. chapters I, III, V e IX.

58 MARROU, Storia dell'educazione, 294; cf., also: FRASCA, Padri e figli, 135-160; the precise analysis of PANCERA, La paideia greca; and, finally, SEVESO, Paternità e vita familiare.

paternal figures produced by the secular Greek culture, but can only indicate some models and certain relevant tendencies which allow us to reconstruct that common and widespread sense of Mediterranean paternity inherited by Hellenism and probably known also to the author of Tobit.

The beginning of this quick survey commences with the classics attributed to Homer and recalls two contrasting paternal figures: that of Ulysses, image of the father who is lost and far away, and that of Hector, icon of the deepest and most human fatherhood. The first a cold and cunning hero, on his return from his voyage from the world of the dead makes himself known to Telemachus whom he had abandoned when he was small and defenceless; and, although establishing with his son a paternal relationship of intense emotion and complicity, in the end he allows himself to be grasped again by his wish for adventure, by his role as public man, sacrificing once again the family bond in order to become the negative archetype of the absent father.<sup>59</sup> The second stands out for his complete balance of ethical man and affectionate father, respectful both of his civil duty as a citizen and also at the same time of his role as tender parent. The scene of the warrior who, in order to make himself recognised by his terrified little son takes off his helmet "from his impressive head of hair" so as to allow the lad to recognise his human face as father beyond the formal aspect of the military chief is a touching one. The fatherly figure of Hector, tragic on account of his destiny and modern on account of his work-life balance, that is, his civic duty and his parental responsibility, will remain an ideal model that is unique and never surpassed.<sup>60</sup> In the succeeding cultural period, the role of fatherhood will be affirmed under the mark of a patriarchy that is more selfish and brutal. In the Aeschylean model, Agamemnon sacrifices Iphigenia in order to favour the success of his plans for power; but the father is not blamed by the poet who fears disorder of roles and confusion of identities more than anything else, as the continuation of the trilogy shows.<sup>61</sup>

With Sophocles, in the figure of Oedipus, there breaks out the tragic complexity of the father who struggles with the unresolved relationships between the genders and the generations. Oedipus is an unconscious parricide, destined to kill a father who in his turn had tried to eliminate his son just after his birth. The conflict between fathers and sons explodes in Sophocles without the possibility of reconciliation, being accompanied at the same time by the disappearance of the maternal role. A paternal func-

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59 CIANI, *Ritorno a Odisseo*, XIV-XVII.

60 ZOJA, *Il gesto di Ettore*, 86-102.

61 SEVESO, *Paternità e vita familiare*, 79-90.

tion which is uncontested and absolute, and which can become violent, incarnating an authoritarian ideal cut off from sentiments of affection, but destined for the darkest and deadliest incommunicability which the children pay for as a heavy and doleful inheritance.<sup>62</sup> The social crisis of the fifth century BCE had led to an unresolved conflict, not only between the generations, but also in the ordering of the traditional male and female roles. In the failed solution of the interweaving between bonds of blood and intergenerational links, in the stories of *Alcestis* and *Medea*, Euripides shows the egoistic inadequacy of fathers incapable of assuming their parental responsibilities or of sacrificing themselves for their children to whom they offer only claims and rights. An incapacity for relationship which becomes a deaf and irreconcilable incommunicability, as in the case of the despotic and violent Theseus, who, unjustly cursing his perfect son, condemns him to an atrocious death. Precisely the dialogue between Theseus and the dying Hippolytus, where the son, commiserating over the human weakness of his father succeeds in pardoning him, restoring to him for a moment a father's face long awaited and dreamed of, remains a precious document of the imagination of that period. In the tragedy of Euripides, it is the son who educates and saves his father from the blind folly of a weak and almost unconscious paternity, lived in the obsession of an unacknowledged competition.<sup>63</sup> In the works of Euripides and not only those, the theme of fatherhood, even if disfigured by incurable erosions and yet pervaded by shudders of nostalgia, remains a scarlet thread which joins disparate characters and situations from which arise the profound desire of regaining a deep and human image of the paternal function in the time of its evaporation.<sup>64</sup> A recovery that is necessary and paradoxical as appears in the comedies of Aristophanes which, in the days of Socrates, signal with disenchantment and sarcasm the contrast of values between old and new education, pointing the finger at fathers who are awkward and incapable of affective relationships and who see in their children only an expensive and useless burden.<sup>65</sup>

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62 Per the tragic course of the father in Sophocles, cf., in order, *Antigone*, *Oedipus Rex* and, finally, *Oedipus in Colonus*.

63 Hippolytus: "I absolve you from this crime" / Theseus: "You absolve me from shedding blood?" / Hippolytus: "Let the virgin archer be witness" / Theseus "Dearest, what nobility you display towards your father!" (EURIPIDES, *Ippolytus*, 1449-1452, from the Italian translation by Paduano, 648).

64 A Lacanian expression adopted critically by RECALCATI, *L'uomo senza inconscio*, 27-52, in particular, 35-44, who ponders on what remains of the ideal of the father in the period of the progressive weakening of the symbolic image of the Father-God as reflection of the decline of the Oedipal figure of the father/law.

65 ARISTOPHANES, *Clouds*, 12-16; *Id.*, *Wasps*, 290-312.

That recovery of paternity which appeared impracticable in the Athens of the fifth century after the political upheavals of the Peloponnesian War, is made concrete for the Greeks in a foreign land, among the 'barbarians'.<sup>66</sup> In one of his original literary creations, Xenophon holds up Cyrus the Great as an exemplary paradigm of new and satisfying family relationships. His *Cyropaedia* is not an historical work, nor a biography, but a romantic story of the Persian king whose type of family and social education it recounts and praises.<sup>67</sup> Its strong moral rather than historiographical intention allows it to alter freely the biographical data and the *paideia* practised by the Medes and Persians, reconstituting the scarcely admirable account of the greedy and cruel Astyages, grandfather of Cyrus, transmitted by Herodotus, into an idealised and happy family saga. The pedagogic model put forward by Xenophon is of clear Socratic derivation but in reality it is modelled on his strict Spartan customs, supported by a solid and enlightened monarchical vision, inspired by upright philosophic principles. Xenophon praises Persian education because, in his opinion, it gives the right importance to the family to which belongs the responsibility of educating the young to take care of the common good right from the earliest age. He extols the merits of a family education where the father, with patient skill, knows how to model the character of the boy, orienting him towards a communitarian and social awareness, quite distant from the mean-minded individualistic and autoreferential register of the decadent Greek education.<sup>68</sup> Precisely the centrality of the figure of the father, able to accompany the steps of his son while he is growing, emerges clearly in the course of the journey which Cambyses takes together with his son towards Media. Along the journey, he counsels his son with authority and wisdom on the behaviour to adopt in order to succeed in his adult responsibilities and in his future social duties. At the end of the journey, symbol of the conclusion of the education, Cyrus is now ready to assume the task for which he has been educated. Prudent in conceiving and carrying out plans and strategies, secure in commanding events and situations, he is able, in his turn, to exercise that paternal role which has

66 Cf. SEVESO, *Paternità e vita familiare*, 145 who cites EURIPIDES, *Andromache*, 173-180.

67 The *Cyropaedia*, described by the critics as "the first historical romance of the Western world", was written, as CICERO, observed, not "with the aim of historical reliability" (*non ad historiae fidem*), but to furnish a model example of good government (*sed ad effigiem iusti imperii*), (*Ad Quintum fratrem I*, 1, 23).

68 The idealised education of the childhood of Cyrus and the Utopian state dreamed of by Xenophon, have as their basis a curious mixture of Socratic philosophy and of Spartan discipline which portray a figure of the sovereign as shepherd-king (*Cyropaedia I*, 1 and VIII, 2, 14); cf. LUCCIONI, *Les idées politiques et sociales de Xénophon*.

now been brought back to a human relationship that is non-conflictual, something worthy of esteem and emulation.<sup>69</sup>

## 7. The Image of Fatherhood in Hellenism

For our research, the *Cyropaedia* is important for two reasons. First of all, because, on the propositional and projectual plane, it appears with a clear educational programme able, already at the beginning of the Hellenistic period, to identify the necessary characteristics for a way to recover fatherhood, joining the *gravitas* of the public man together with the *comitas* of the educated man to the perennial and universal ideals of *humanitas*, as Cicero, the thoughtful and enthusiastic devotee of 'Persian' pedagogy, will recall centuries later.<sup>70</sup> But there is more than this in the work of Xenophon; in it, one can grasp the irreversible movement of history: "for the first time, the profoundly Greek concept of the city state to which Plato and Aristotle still remain faithful appears to have been overtaken: the absolute and enlightened monarchy of Xenophon is a precursor of the Hellenistic state." And it is precisely this exact historico-cultural marking on the strong impact which the work had in the Near East area of the ancient Mediterranean which introduces the second reason for the interest of the *Cyropaedia*: in the historical fiction of the life of Cyrus, one can encounter themes, narratival elements and points of contact with the historico-religious romance of Tobit.

Omitting to take into consideration the possible correspondences in the literary genre of the two accounts which share, broadly, the typology of the romantic story, one can recall that the work of Xenophon, defined by a critic as "the first historical romance of the Western world," became a source of inspiration for a whole series of writings such as the books of Ruth, Judith and Esther.<sup>71</sup> One can suppose that these accounts, considered with Tobit as representatives of this literary genre, at once had the fascination of a flexible composite structure which allowed the author a notable autonomy in the transposition or the adaptation of historical

69 XENOPHON, *Cyropaedia*, I, II-III; a romantic reconstruction of the childhood of Cyrus, wholly different from the tragic memory handed down by HERODOTUS, *History*, I, 108-116.

70 In Xenophon's representation of the enlightened sovereign, CICERO found an exemplary model for the man of the Roman State (*Tusculanes Disputationes* II, 26, 62).

71 Cf. MORRISON, *Senofonte*, 288; VEYNE, *I greci*, 22-23, 73-74 and 87-88; SHARROCK – ASH, *Fifty key Classical authors*, 103-109.

or geographical data. In the Hellenistic cultural context, the form of the romance assured the narration a freedom of style which freed the author from having to pay attention to the reliability of the narrational elements or their correspondence with the reality to which they were nonetheless referring. It is sufficient to think of the arbitrary inventions of Xenophon who tells of Hvakhshathra who had no historical existence, of an alleged conquest of Egypt which never happened, and of Cyrus who meets his death in an expedition against the Massagetai whom Xenophon has dying peacefully in his bed in the exemplary manner of Socrates, dispensing maxims and instructions.<sup>72</sup> By contrast with the author of Tobit, this appears much more sober and restrained in its alteration of time and places.

For the thematic affinities, one can consider the two most significant points of agreement: the *paideia* and the journey.

*The theme of education* is central in the Cyropaedia. The title already gives a clear idea of the content of the work: the first book, in fact, covers the education of the king, followed through in all its phases, from childhood to adolescence, from maturity to old age.<sup>73</sup> It is an activity that is predominantly paternal and serves to form the personality of a man to render him suitable to undertake the tasks with which life will present him. The precepts and prudent counsels transmitted by the royal father to his son summarise with extreme clarity the principles which lie behind the making of Persian man. The sovereign must show himself pious, wise and just, a virtuous man who embodies the ideal of the perfect prince, able to make himself respected in public and by the nobles, who knows how to make himself respected by his subjects and soldiers, to direct the economy, to protect his health and to take command of military expeditions with prudence and courage.<sup>74</sup> It is to be noted that, in his youth, Cyrus obtains a twofold paternal education, both on the part of his maternal grandfather, Astyages, as a sort of putative father from whom he receives a Medean education, and on that of his own father, Cambyses, who completes his educational course by integrating it with the tradition of the Persians.<sup>75</sup>

72 A reference to Cyrus the Elder in Oeconomicus IV, 16; for the death of Cyrus, cf. HERODOTUS, History, I, 205-208, taken up by POMPEIUS TROGUS, Historiae Philippicae I, 8.

73 For a comparison with the pedagogic world of the Hellenistic period, cf. MORETTI, La scuola, il ginnasio, 469-490.

74 In reality, Xenophon's Cyrus "is a barely disguised Greek politician, a composite figure who represents a compromise ideal between Xenophon and Agesilaus, the King of Sparta." CARTLEDGE, Utopia e critica della politica, 207-208.

75 For the role of adoptive father fulfilled by the grandfather Peleus in Euripides' Andromache and by Astiages in the Cyropaedia, cf. SEVESO, Paternità e vita familiare, 146 e 179.



In the Book of Tobit too, the educational function of the father, although temporarily deadened by blindness, plays a central role and occupies a considerable part of the account. We encounter it, first and foremost, as exemplary and dramatic testimony in the very conduct of the parent who, even in the most agonising trial, never forgets the precepts of his God and the teaching which he has received in his time. Subsequently, paternal education is found in a formula which summarises what has already been taught before the son is sent off on his journey to distant lands (4:3-21). It is found, again, in the hymnic form of the final canticle of Zion where the praise is intertwined with exhortations and moral admonitions, and, above all, as though in the manner of the dying Cyrus, in final instructions handed over to the son before the father's death (14:4-11). We should note that the mysterious companion on the journey, Azaraias, becomes almost a substitute father in Tobias' journey towards maturity, similar to the role performed by the ancient Astyages with regard to the young Cyrus. The angel too shows himself generous with his counsels and teaching which culminate in his self-revelation as Raphael, the heavenly messenger, ready to deliver salutary precepts of life (12:6-10).<sup>76</sup>

*The theme of the journey* is undoubtedly a famous *topos* throughout literature, and an eternal symbol of human restlessness directed towards the search for what is missing, for what is awaited, what is unknown. Exploration or return, pilgrimage or flight, it is not necessarily configured as a search for truth or happiness, as a way towards identity or towards one's own origin because, in reality – as René Girard would say – man does not know even what he desires.<sup>77</sup> Of these symbolic values and of other suggestive metaphors known in different cultural contexts, there is not a trace in the two books. There is not even a clear trace of the journey/separation commanded powerfully to “the father of Israel's faith,” Abraham: “Go from the house of your father,” an Abraham still regarded as son by the post-Exilic editor who links family sterility to the theme of the journey.<sup>78</sup> The journey of Cyrus and that of Tobias are imaginary journeys and serve as narrative pretexts to delineate, in an almost identical way, the theme of the delicate passage of the young man towards the autonomy of adulthood, accompanied and led by the parent. Approaching the borders between the two countries, as Cyrus is setting out to leave

76 BARKER, *The Archangel Raphael*, 118-128.

77 Without some kind of form of inductive exemplarity, man does not know what to desire: the object and the aim of his desire are indicated to him by a subject who performs the role of intermediary: GIRARD, *La violenza e il sacro*, 62-68.

78 BRUEGGEMANN, *Genesi*, 149-151.



his land for Media, Cambyses takes farewell of his son with words of exceptional ethical and human depth. Tobit too, realising that he is now at the end of his life, while he plans to send Tobias to the distant Rages in Media, takes farewell of his son with words laden with paternal wisdom. A common linguistic detail is found in the two farewell discourses. Cambyses and Tobit address themselves to their respective heirs using as a forceful point for their argument the expression “remember.”<sup>79</sup> A remembering which arises in the two fathers from family contexts that are quite different: a relationship that is exclusively masculine/paternal in the first, where the maternal element remains mute and in the shadows; a powerful biblical origin and dramatic complementary involvement of the maternal function in the second.<sup>80</sup> In the *Cyropaedia*, we read:

And do you remember, my son, how we thought one day together that it would be a worthy and noble work for a man to succeed in truly becoming a completely fulfilled human being, gaining all that he needed for himself and his family? (I, VI, 7).

And in the Book of Tobit we read:

On that day, Tobit remembered [...] My son, honour your mother [...] Remember, my son, that she faced many dangers for you while you were yet unborn. [...] Every day, my son, remember the Lord; do not sin or transgress his commandments. [...] remember Noah, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob our fathers of old [...] And now, my son, remember these commandments and do not let them be blotted out from your heart. (4:1, 4, 5, 12, 19).

However, the educational journey sketched out by these two fatherly pedagogues arises from quite different background cultures: the one, of a ‘secular’ type lived within masculine relations that are not conflictual; the other, of religious inspiration, woven from biblical fabric and set in the family circle; in both cases, the sense is that of an educational course handed over and preserved by the memory of the fathers which creates identity.<sup>81</sup> Finally, the positive and not humiliating role performed by the two fathers is common. It feeds their sons’ desire for growth and presses them towards independence as goal and end of the whole educational task. Cambyses wishes for the independence of Cyrus who is exhorted to

79 Imperative expressions which impose the obligation of memory (‘remember,’ ‘do not forget’: cf. Deut 8,11-14.17-19) recur 97x in the OT and are addressed to Israel, to sons, to the faithful, and also to God.

80 For the relationship between Cyrus and his mother Mandane (I, III,1-18), cf. TATUM, Xenophon’s Imperial Fiction, 98-100.

81 For the role of the memory as foundation of the right father-son relationship according to God, cf. Exod 10:2; Deut 4:9; 7:20-24; Jos 4:21-24; Tob 4:4.12; Sir 7:27; 44:8-14.

practice not only all the tricks he has learned “but to invent new ones” (I, VI, 370). Tobit is no less committed to this ideal because he dreams for his son a future of peace and blessing, leaving him an inheritance that has long been forgotten which will make him live as a stranger to misery (4:20-21).

## 8. From Cyrus to Ben Sira

On the literary plane, the recovery of paternity is carried out in a foreign land. We recall this detail in order to draw attention to one particular fact. A Greek, an Athenian who searches for and finds among his cursed Persian enemies an exemplary figure of the father, far from any proof or verification, is carrying out an operation that is ideological and not historiographical. Not finding in his own country concrete solutions to check the decline of the image of fatherhood, and not finding admirable parental figures to put forward as examples, Xenophon, in the *Cyropaedia*, invents an idealised image of fatherhood which meets the *desiderata* of his society and the nostalgic feeling of the men of his time. His literary invention was supported by a sound ethical passion, combined with a strong and cohesive vision of society. The dissolution of the father was accompanied by the dissolution of the law and the break-up of society; on account of this, the recovery of the father, with whatever title and under whatever form it was brought about, always involved a recovery of the law, of order and of the social *stabilitas*. The revaluation of the paternal role implies the endurance and prestige of the institutions which, in their turn, if balanced and efficient, guarantee a vision and symmetrical exercise of paternity. A virtuous and circular dynamism which allows family relationships to be open to the social needs of the community and to recognise themselves in the institutions while the institutions mirror and guarantee the values and vitality of the family. This is the organic project of family and social relationships presented by Xenophon in his *Cyropaedia* according to Hellenistic historiographical parameters.<sup>82</sup>

The collapse of paternal symbolism did not concern only the decadence of the Greek family structure; it was an extensive cultural phenomenon which infected Mediterranean society, shaken by the aggressive and

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82 For the background to the works of Xenophon, cf. TATUM, *Xenophon's Imperial Fiction*; DUE, *The Cyropaedia Xenophon's*; GERA, *Xenophon's Cyropaedia*; WILMS, *Techné und Paideia*, 100-207; HIRSCH, *The Friendship*, 61-100; NADON, *Xenophon's Prince*.

conquering invasion of the anthropocentric culture of Hellenism. Did not Tobit's rather dishonourable condition of blindness signal the fragile condition of the Diaspora family, exposed to the vexations of oppressive central institutions and abandoned to their own devices, even by the God of their fathers. The anomalous doings of the young Tobias, pervaded with nostalgia and stretching out to the uncertain and risky recovery of a far-off paternal inheritance, makes known the role of protagonists which the new generations of exiles have to take on to assure themselves a future that is different and, in the end, blessed. It was up to the young men to take possession of what had been left them as an inheritance, undertaking that journey towards the independence of maturity which allowed the liberation of the woman's body from the demoniacal subjection of the powerful and the restoration of light to the dull eyes of the old parent. This, in summary, is the historico-anthropological framework which is handed down to us by the deuterocanonical little book, written in a region of the Jewish Diaspora where Aramaic was spoken in a period still distant from the warlike time of the Maccabees (III-II century BCE).<sup>83</sup>

A quite different social and familial scenario is introduced in the Book of Ben Sira, written in Jerusalem between 195 and 171 BCE. Only a few generations separate Sirach from the Book of Tobit, but during that time, the transition from nostalgia for to the recovery of the paternal figure was effected. In theocratic Judaea and Jerusalem of the Second Temple period, a fervent renewal of socio-religious institutions is discernible. The temple activity reaches a full liturgical regime, assuring a notable economic recovery; the sacerdotal office has gained in reputation and authority (50:1-24) and the father figures feel the effects of this regained institutional solidity, recovering the exercise of the masculine and fatherly function in every direction (3:16-27; 9:1-9; 23:22-26; 25:13-26:18; 36:21-27; 42:9-14).<sup>84</sup>

To be sure, the book does not lack criticisms of the religious officials for their ineptitude (7:4-7) and their intrigues (45:26); nor is it sparing of warnings to those fathers neglectful of the education of their sons (22:3-6) and their daughters (42:9-11) or of sharp reproofs to that part of the Jerusalem aristocracy which was lazy in observing the Law and oppressive with regard to the poor (36:9; 41:8-9). Ben Sira has in his sights the instruction of the youth of the affluent class (51:23), but he must have been animated by a polemical intention towards the powerful groups that were influential in Jerusalem, attracted by deceptive speculations (3:21-23), tempted by superficiality (42:1c-2), or, even, apostates who had

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83 MARINCOLA, *Authority and Tradition*, 63-116.

84 ALBERTZ, *Storia della religione*, 652-672.

abandoned the faith of the fathers (41:8-9).<sup>85</sup> However, as a whole, the book allows to sound through a refrain that is full of the educational responsibility of the father which, rather than simple recovery, seems to be modelled on a restoration of the ancient and imperious figure of the *pater familias*. In a celebrated pericope, the author advises the father how to manage his son (30:1-12), lauding a rigid education, more Spartan than Persian, where the parent is warned about the risks of an education that is too accommodating. The father has to realise that if a son is left to his own devices he becomes as obstinate as an untamed stallion; so he must not pet him, fondle him, joke with him or make light of his errors if he does not wish to pay the price later. Rather, he must correct him without letting him have freedom in his youth, weigh down his neck and kick his flanks while he is still young and, even, make frequent use of the rod if he wants to have joy of him in the long run. The author reveals himself inclined towards a pedagogical inflexibility and an excessive severity which is not encountered in the previous sapiential literature and even in the patriarchal system of education. This is parental severity, hardly mitigated by the exhortation to educate the son by taking charge of him in a consistent way so as to mould a character that will not repay him with insolence in the future.<sup>86</sup>

The transition from the official environment of Jerusalem to the cosmopolitan context of the Alexandrian Diaspora, which can be found in the different level of culturology between the Hebrew and Greek texts, explains, perhaps, the emphasis on pedagogic harshness. Paternal authority had to be defended in the face of the challenges and criticisms provoked by the aggressive *Umwelt* of the Hellenistic *koinè* breathing with the full lungs of the young generations.<sup>87</sup> In the Greek text more than the Hebrew one, we are faced with an image of fatherhood far from and almost opposed to that portrayed by the gentle parental figure of Tobit as he is at the end. It is he who, recognising his own incapacity to see the works of God and to discern the good that surrounds him, settles himself to wait for death. In accepting his fragility, he gains a humanity that is more authentic and merciful. He does not proclaim the impersonal primacy of the Law; he does not hide behind the scrupulous, semi-mechanical observance of what ought to be done; but in the end communicates

85 Cf. BELLIA, *An historico-anthropological*, 60-61.

86 For MIDDENDORP (*Die Stellung*, 34), Ben Sira wrote a "school book" following the Greek pedagogic model, particularly of the Stoics; for HENGEL (*Giudaismo ed ellenismo*, 131), the author is "a master of wisdom with an established scholastic structure open to the young," exposed to the danger of the allurements of Hellenistic civilisation.

87 Cf. BELLIA, *Historical and Anthropological*, 99-101.

with God in prayer. With trustful abandonment, he seeks his death from God. The thought of the end awakes in Tobit the memory of his past and with it also of his son. Accepting his own state of humiliation, he finds again his lost energy as a father and decides to bet on the enterprise of the young Tobias. At the same time, as well as the paternal relationship, he rediscovers a tender relationship with his wife, now called his sister, consoling her in her separation from her son (5:21-22).

There is nothing of all this in the iron lines of discipline advocated by Ben Sira. The painful ambiguity of every restoration is to confuse the new with error, deceiving oneself that one can annul the development of man and events by locking it in the cage of the past. The patriarchal restoration of the paternal role favoured in the pages of Sirach takes his stance on the short-sighted conviction that it is the father, alone or principally, who forbids, prohibits and condemns, believing that the function of the law coincides with and exhausts that of the father. Before the precept comes the agreement, before the Law, the covenant and before everything, God with his mercy. In the pedagogy of Ben Sira, however, one does not even perceive the God who is "merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness" (Exod 34:6) who is revealed in the gift of the Law. There emerge rather the rigidity and limits of a pious and aristocratic man who is too bound up with the priestly circle on whose behalf he defends their legitimacy and their vocation to ritual sanctity (cf. 45:6-22 and 50:1-21). His pedagogical harshness, therefore, manifests the anthropological truth of that regressive metamorphosis announced by Qoheleth (3:18-21) and declared by the worshipper, something from which even Ben Sira cannot escape: man in his good estate cannot understand the works of God (Ps 49:13.21).<sup>88</sup>

Into this theological vision of a defensive nature there is inserted the long sequence in praise of the ancestors, in which he exalts the action of the wisdom of God in the history of Israel, lauding the famous men linked to the biblical tradition and to the most important events in the history of the people of God (44:1-50:29). A focused encomium and one that is partisan when, beside the venerable icon of Aaron and the famous High Priest Simon, there emerges the fiery figure of Elijah.<sup>89</sup> The prophet

88 On the biblical binome Law/father, a comparison is useful with the structuralist thesis of LACAN, *Introduzione ai Nomi-del-Padre*, 46-53 and the parallel reading of AGAMBEN, *Homo sacer*, 20-35.

89 The perpetuity of the two covenants, royal and priestly, known already to the prophetic tradition (Jer 33:17-22 and Zech 6:9-14), was preparing, in the pre-Maccabean climate of fervent expectation, the two-headed Messianic hope of Jubilees 31 and, subsequently, of the Qumranic texts; cf. PUECH, *Ben Sira and Qumran*, 107-109.

is admired for his deeds narrated in the Book of Kings but chiefly for his fiery words which closed and opened heaven, causing flames of fire to fall upon the wicked (cf. 1 Kgs 18:38; 2 Kgs 1:10-12), this being the indisputable sign of the authority conferred on him by God as the sign of his prophetic activity. It is symptomatic that, in this sequence, the habitual pedagogic preoccupation of Ben Sira is present as he is always alert to seize on the punitive intervention of God.<sup>90</sup> In the prophet Elijah, he sees the one who has been “designated to reprove the times to come / to calm the wrath of God before it breaks out in fury / to turn the heart of the father to the son” (48:10). Naturally, the theological wealth of Sirach cannot be reduced to the sole event of paternity; however, what interests here is to indicate that the course of the public recovery of the parental function does not necessarily involve a regained and satisfying personal relationship with the father. The theological aura constructed around the illustrious paternal figures of the past certain cannot hide the weak and foolish fatherhood of the one who, fortifying himself with prohibitions, feels himself supported by the amorphous observance of the Law rather than by the revelation of the face of God. The one who like Moses has the tables of the Law in his hand can only look on God as he passes, since his shoulders are laden with boundless mercy and not his face (Exod 33:19-23 and 34:4-8).

## 9. Conclusion

Two concluding reflections. It was not our aim to investigate and affirm a probable literary dependence between the Book of Tobit and the *Cyropaedia*, but only to point out how with Xenophon, the way of recovering paternity, after a time of tormenting nostalgia had, in the shadow of Hellenism, come to an ideal shared form. In a time of rapid change, the Athenian writer succeeded in creating an archetype of paternal relationship, anchored in the common values of all and universally recognisable; a model which remained for many centuries in the cultural imagination as a secure point of reference of the ancient Mediterranean sensibility.

The Jewish world of that time was naturally a sharer, and not only a spectator, in this *Zeitgeist*, creating literary forms both derived and orig-

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90 The prophet Elijah was seen as the precursor of Messianic times, “designated to reproach the future times /to calm the wrath before it breaks out, / to turn the heart of the father to the son” (48:10); cf. POIRIER, *The Endtime Return*, 282-286.

inal as is clear from the Book of Tobit and the other Deutero-Canonical texts. The true question, one that is still open, is not that of finding new sources of inspiration for the biblical texts in the exuberant literary productions of Hellenistic literature, but of understanding if the hagiographers had a real knowledge of these works. Or, perhaps, more realistically, it is important to know and explain what type of cultural influence the Hellenistic literature did in fact exercise on the biblical production of that period. The way to establish a concrete connection between Greek culture and the biblical world is not, however, only an exegetical or literary one; an anthropological approach is also necessary. First of all, there is a contact, a confrontation between two true ways of being human, suffering and incomplete, which prescind from programmatic intentions and doctrinal schemes. A human contiguity which causes the meeting and dialogue between common experiences, widespread worries and desires, obscure movements of the soul. The psychological analysis developed by the tragedians illuminates the agitations of the human heart, unveiling segments of family relationships which arouse the natural interest of the biblical authors just as of everybody else. Before they operate on the ideological level, these influences act on the pre-logical and pre-systematic plane; they work on the factual level of living together, of the closeness which stimulates new knowledge and inevitable reactions that are not necessarily hostile and conflictual. Moreover, Israel in its DNA bears the impress of many peoples and diverse cultures, showing itself in the end to be capable of transforming and assimilating the discontinuity of the other, of the different, of the foreigner, in the continuity of its own faith. It is useless, therefore to get bogged down in searching, in the linguistic assonances and conceptual analogies, improbable origins and sources of inspiration for the Scriptures of Israel. The obsession with sources, as Momigliano called it, of certain exegesis and certain biblical historiography should henceforth appear in all its arid vacuity.

Looking at the road leading from Tobit to Ben Sira, Sirach has reached the exercise of a parental function that has been regained. The old Tobit, accepting his death before God, finds the strength of a residual paternal energy and remembers and decides. It is only in that moment that he remembers wealth that is forgotten and distant, never acknowledged, and he decides to separate his son from himself, cutting the umbilical cord that binds him to his mother to entrust him with the journey of his life. What is inherited must be regained if one wishes really to possess it, as Goethe reminds us. To the exiles of the Eastern Diaspora, the anonymous author wanted to prophesy through a language *à la page* a return laden with goods and, above all, a spousal union with the partner prepared by

God. But there is an ultimate symbolic value to weigh up: the unusual happening of the son who heals his father. Only in the Euripidean Hippolytus are we told of a son who frees his father from his folly; the dying wise son pardons and liberates Theseus from the curse of his blood. In the Book of Tobit, the picture is not gloomy and the tone is reconciliatory: the curse of the father is only apparent and his cure is announced in advance. However, there remains, like a goad, the sense of a paternal relationship that has been inverted where it is the son who brings salvation to his father and not *vice versa*. What is a tormenting paradox in Euripides, is, for the hagiographer, a secret of light which is open to a future permeated with messianic expectation. The meaning of a text can surpass the original significance intended by the author and open itself as a prophecy for the reader. Perhaps Luke was thinking precisely of the Jewish novella of Tobit when he describes the scene of the old Simeon who, taking Mary's child into his arms, declares that his eyes "have seen" the salvation and the light which is revealed to the Gentiles, seeking from God permission to depart (Lk 2:29-32). The Apostle too speaks of a blindness, of a veil spread over the heart which only the Son can remove (2 Cor 3:14-16).



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# The Emotional Relationship of the Married Couple Hannah and Tobit

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## 1. Introduction

The fictional background story<sup>1</sup> of the Book of Tobit is accessible to us only via the medium of texts. Accordingly we must be alert to the fact that a time span of over 2000 years, but also a cultural-linguistic distance separates us from the descriptions and we, therefore, are denied immediate access to the emotions of the fictional characters within the book.

In addition, it should also be noted that our current understanding of emotions is somewhat different and can, therefore, not simply be imposed upon ancient texts without further reflection. Within historical psychology there are various theories, which claim that, throughout the ages, human beings and, therefore, also their feelings are ever constant: “Die Annahme universaler anthropologischer Konstanten ist weit verbreitet.”<sup>2</sup> On the other hand, since the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, there have been other positions within the interdisciplinary debate, which claim that the “Veränderung der Grundstruktur des Menschen ... bis in die Anthropologie hinein ... bis in die *conditio humana* hinein”<sup>3</sup> is a fact. According to this view every person can observe an emotional development, at best a maturing, within himself or herself. I would, in this case, like to take an intermediate position: the expression of emotions is dependent on one’s present culture and, therefore, subject to change. The feelings themselves, however, are through the millennia and throughout various cultures, similar; for example in the case of a great calamity or great joy.

Since this article deals with the emotional relationship between the married couple Hannah and Tobit<sup>4</sup>, only the passages within the text that

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1 Cf. MOORE, Tobit, 9f.; NICKLAS, Tobit, 2.6; ENGEL, Buch, 283: “fiktive Diaspora-Erzählung mit jüdisch-jerusalemischer Orientierung”; GERTZ, Tobitbuch, 554: “Die zahlreichen historischen und geographischen Ungenauigkeiten ...”

2 VON GEMÜNDEN, Affekt, 14.

3 VON GEMÜNDEN, Affekt, 14; cf. there also the discussion with bibliographical notes about the different positions (13-16).

4 The names of the couple are programmatic: Tobit/Tobiyahu means “YH(WH) is good” (cf. the analogous root *tw* in Tobiel, Tobias) and Hannah means “grace, charm, favor” (*ḥn*); cf. DI LELLA, Prayers, 96-97, who mentions that the Book of Tobit contains “twelve theophoric proper names; these hint at a summary of the plot.”

deal with the two biblical characters, or where a mutual reference exists, will be examined (Tob 1:1, 9, 20; 2:1-2a, 11; 3:1, 6; 4:3-4, 12-13; 5:18-23[6:1]; 10:1-7; 11:5-6, 9-10; 14:9, 12). The two oldest Greek traditions will be cited when relevant: G<sup>I</sup> (Short version – Codices Vaticanus and Alexandrinus), as well as G<sup>II</sup> (Long version – Codex Sinaiticus),<sup>5</sup> which, presumably, is the more original tradition.<sup>6</sup>

## 2. Marriage in the Book of Tobit

First of all, Tobit's attitude, or rather the author's attitude concerning a good marriage<sup>7</sup> should be noted. In Tob 1:9, the book's protagonist<sup>8</sup> already reports that he, upon reaching adulthood (γίνομαι ἄνθρωπος) took "a woman of our own lineage" (NAB; γυναῖκα ἐκ τοῦ σπέρματος τῆς πατριᾶς ἡμῶν) and, from her, begot the son, Tobias. G<sup>I</sup> mentions the wife by name in 1:9, G<sup>II</sup>, however, does not mention her until 1:20, when Tobit is threatened due to a complaint against him. He *fears* (φοβέω; v. 19)<sup>9</sup> for his life, flees and therefore loses all his possessions *to the king* (G<sup>II</sup>). Only his wife Hannah and his son Tobias are left. However, after 40 symbolic days there is a turn in events due to the murder of the king and Tobit returns to his house. Thus his wife *Hannah* (G<sup>II</sup>) and his son are restored to him. One could conclude that only after Tobit separates himself from his wife due to material hardship, the matter of her name – Hannah, the hoped for and ultimately occurring 'grace' (from the new king, ultimately from God;<sup>10</sup> cf. χάρις Tob 1:13; 7:17;<sup>11</sup> 12:8)<sup>12</sup> – becomes important, indeed, becomes

5 It is beyond the G<sup>III</sup> of the 14<sup>th</sup> century as well as the Hebrew and Aramaic fragments (4Q196-200) from Qumran on which see HALLERMAYER, Text.

6 Cf. EGO, Buch, 875-876; MACATANGAY, Wisdom, 14-16, with a short summary of this topic.

7 Cf. to consider the recent comprehensive work of MILLER, Marriage in the Book of Tobit.

8 Tobit's genealogy in G<sup>I</sup> has six and in G<sup>II</sup> eight elements down to his ancestor Naphtali.

9 Cf. Gen 12:12-13; 20:11 (Abraham) and 26:7 (φοβέω; Isaac), where the patriarchs betray their wives out of fearing for their lives.

10 Noticeable are the different names of God during the allocation of grace: G<sup>I/II</sup> ὁ ὑψιστος (Tob 1:13); G<sup>I</sup> ὁ κύριος τοῦ οὐρανοῦ καὶ τῆς γῆς / G<sup>II</sup> ὁ κύριος τοῦ οὐρανοῦ (7:17); G<sup>I</sup> τοῦ θεοῦ ἡμῶν / G<sup>II</sup> τοῦ θεοῦ (12:8).

11 G<sup>II</sup> here uses deviating χαρά. In contrast NOWELL, Book, 109: "... 'grace,' seems an ironic name for this sharp-tongued woman, ..."; also 237.

12 Hannah's name traces back to the Hebrew word חַנָּה (all in all 70 references), which is translated by the LXX 61x with χάρις; see also 4Q169 3, 7; 4Q223-224 6, 7.27; 4Q364 7, 4; 4Q368 1, 6-7; 4Q504 11, 18; 4Q506 2, 3; 4Q509 98, 1.



reality. In G<sup>I</sup>, Hannah is already mentioned by name prior to the promise of grace (χάριν καὶ μορφήν) from the Most High in 1:9, after which Tobit, in the eyes of the king, is rehabilitated. The joy over Tobit's return to his family is connected with the cultic Feast of Weeks (Shavuot) on the 50<sup>th</sup> day (ἐν τῇ πεντηκοστῇ τῇ ἑορτῇ ἡμῶν ἣ ἐστὶν ἀγία ἐπεὶ ἔβδομάδων; Tob 2:1). This underlines Tobit's law-abiding character, which seems hyperbolic<sup>13</sup> if not hypocritical<sup>14</sup> (cf. Tob 1:5-13; 2:2-9; 3:13).

## 2.1 Tobit's 'Understanding' of Marriage (Tob 4:12-13)

Let's turn now to Tobit's view of marriage<sup>15</sup> in verses 12-13 of chapter 4:<sup>16</sup> the father sends his son on a journey to Rages in Media, in order to settle the family's financial business. More precisely, through Tobias he most likely wishes to retrieve his fortune of 10 silver talents (Tob 1:14; 4:20),<sup>17</sup> which he had deposited with Gabael, in order to relieve Hannah of her responsibility of having to take care of the family, to eliminate the family's poverty, and to restore his honor as the bread-winner. Instructing his son (Tob 4:1-21), Tobit says the following: A young man should beware of committing πορνεία<sup>18</sup> and, in any case, enter into an endogamous marriage<sup>19</sup> (v. 12: ἀπὸ τοῦ σπέρματος τῶν πατέρων σου ... ἐκ τῆς φυλῆς

13 Cf. GROSS, Tobit, 16.

14 McCracken, Narration, 405: "... old Tobit, the egonarrator who is ... sometimes a flawed moralist, as when he wrongly accuses his wife Anna of stealing a goat"; COLLINS, Judaism, 29, observes: "... Tobit is portrayed as almost obsessive in his observance of the Mosaic law."

15 Cf. NICKLAS, Marriage, 141-144, 150-154, who in comparison of G<sup>I</sup> and G<sup>II</sup> understands the bonds of kinship and the kind of endogamy drawn more closely in G<sup>II</sup>.

16 Only in G<sup>I</sup> preserved.

17 One talent of silver represents 41 kg of the precious metal. Today 41 kg of silver would be estimated to have the cash value of randomised circa 35.000 Euros. The value at the time of writing the Book of Tobit around 200 BCE was far higher.

18 See GAMBERONI, Gesetz, 230, who notes that: "*Endogamie* nach den Kindespflichten und der Wohltätigkeit" signifies/represents "*eine ethische Rolle unter dem Oberbegriff der πορνεία*"; FITZMYER, Tobit, 172, translates with "*illicit sex ... i.e. sexual intercourse between unmarried persons, such as 'prostitution,' 'harlotry' ... But it was used at times in antiquity to mean various sorts of unlawful sexual intercourse.*"

19 Cf. the summary by NICKLAS, Tobit, 2.4. (5) of HIEKE, Endogamy, who notes rightly: "Eine deutliche Parallele zum wohl in hellenistischer Epoche verfassten Buch Esra-Nechemia ist die bei Tobit ins Extreme gesteigerte Tendenz zur Vermeidung von Mischehen. Endogamie bezieht sich hier nicht nur auf das eigene Volk, sondern – vor allem im Text von G<sup>II</sup> [sic! Tob 4:12-13 only survives in G<sup>I</sup>; cf. 1:9; 6:16, 18 G<sup>II</sup> in G<sup>I/II</sup>] – auf die eigene engere Sippe, die nächste Verwandtschaft." See now the detailed discussion by MILLER, Marriage, 53-82. HIEKE, Endogamy, sees a sevenfolded argument in Tob 4:12-

τοῦ πατρός σου ... ἐκ τῶν ἀδελφῶν αὐτῶν), that is, he must choose a wife from his father's tribe. With this he follows the same guidelines that existed during the time of their ancestors.<sup>20</sup> Tobit quotes historical reasons for God's promise, namely the fact that his family is descended from the prophets<sup>21</sup> and that the ancestors, Noah,<sup>22</sup> Abraham,<sup>23</sup> Isaac, and Jacob also all chose wives out of their own lineage. As a result of this choice of women, ancestors were blessed with children (εὐλογήθησαν ἐν τοῖς τέκνοις αὐτῶν; cf. Gen 12:2; 13:16; 15:5); and were rewarded with God's promised land (κληρονομήσει γῆν; cf. Gen 12:1; 13:15; 15:18-21). In the event that Tobias, out of arrogance (Tob 4:13: μὴ ὑπερηφανεύου τῇ καρδίᾳ σου ... ἐν τῇ ὑπερηφανίᾳ) might go against his father's instructions, the consequences of this would be corruption, conflict, wickedness, poverty, deprivation, even hunger (ἀπώλεια καὶ ἀκαταστασία πολλή καὶ ἐν τῇ ἀχρειότητι ἐλάττωσις καὶ ἔνδεια μεγάλη ἢ γὰρ ἀχρειότης μήτηρ<sup>24</sup> ἐστὶν τοῦ λιμοῦ).

One has to ask what Tobit means by the word πορνεία. Superficially,

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13: v. 12: five arguments with two requirements and three bans; v. 13: two arguments with per one requirement and one ban.

- 20 It was quite accepted to marry within one's own family, as Gen 24:4 (תָּהָיָה / φυλή); 28:2 (תָּהָיָה בְּבֵית אָבִי / εἰς τὸν οἶκον Βαθουλή τοῦ πατρός τῆς μητρός σου) and 29:19 show, esp. in a levirate marriage (Gen 38; Deut 25:5; Ruth 3:12-13); cf. also the law of inheritance for women in Num 36:6 (בְּיָמֵינוּ / ἐκ τοῦ δήμου τοῦ πατρός αὐτῶν), 10-12 (בְּיָמֵינוּ / ἐκ τοῦ δήμου τοῦ Μανασσὴ υἱῶν Ἰωσηφ); 1 Chr 23:22 (בְּיָמֵינוּ / υἱοὶ Κις ἀδελφοὶ αὐτῶν). Especially priests and high priests were directed toward more severe rules (Lev 21:7, 13-15; v. 14: וְהַכֹּהֵן / παρθένον ἐκ τοῦ γένους αὐτοῦ; v. 15: כֹּהֵן / λαός). Incestuous relationships were – partly by death penalty – forbidden (Lev 18:6-18; 20:11-17, 19-21; Deut 23:1; 27:20, 22-23). This attitude to mixed marriages is exemplified by Gen 28:1-2<sup>LXX</sup> (οὐ λήμψῃ γυναῖκα ἐκ τῶν θυγατέρων Χανααν); Exod 34:15-16<sup>LXX</sup> (ἐκπορνέω); Deut 7:3<sup>LXX</sup> (λατρεύσει θεοῖς ἑτέροις); 1 Kgs 11:1-8<sup>LXX</sup> (v. 4: ἐκκλίνω; v. 8: ποινηρός; v. 9: ἐξέκλινεν καρδίαν αὐτοῦ ἀπὸ κυρίου θεοῦ Ἰσραήλ); Ezra 9:1-4, 12<sup>LXX</sup> (ἐκκλίνω); Neh 10:31; 13:23-31<sup>LXX</sup> (ἀσυνθετέω); cf. Mal 2:11.
- 21 Cf. FITZMYER, Tobit, 173: "The patriarchs are called prophets. 'Prophet' ... is being used in the OT sense of 'God's mouthpiece,' i.e. someone who speaks forth in the name of God (having nothing to do with foretelling)." Compare Exod 4:13-16; Ps 105:15; REITERER, Prophet, 155-161, who thinks, that this may concern a "geistige oder um eine biologisch-physiologische Abstammung" (157).
- 22 Within the Bible Noah's wife is not mentioned, but within apocryphal tradition she is Enoch's granddaughter, who is Noah's great-grandfather (cf. Gen 5:21-29), in Jub. 4:33 she is "Amzera, Tochter Rakeels, Tochter seiner Schwester" (BERGER, Unterweisung, 348-349); cf. also Jub. 8:18.
- 23 Cf. Gen 20:7.
- 24 It is interesting that the author combined this phrase with 'mother': Arrogance (ὑπερηφανία) and worthlessness/weakness (ἀχρειότης, hapax legomenon) are in the view of the author the reasons for all evil, therefore "weakness is the mother of poverty." Possibly the expression here resonates a demotion of women (cf. Sir 25:24), which may be caused through the Hellenistic background of both books; cf. only the difference of description concerning genders with γυνή and ἄνθρωπος in Greek literature (for

one could assume that Tobit is speaking of adultery, or impure, inappropriate behavior, for example that, of which the widow, Tamar was accused in Gen 38:24 because of her pregnancy (ἐκπορνεύω; ἐν γαστρὶ ἔχει ἐκ πορνείας). Sir 23:23 also warns against adultery,<sup>25</sup> which goes against the law of the Most High (νόμῳ ὑψίστου).<sup>26</sup> According to the account of that sage, the woman leaves her husband in order to conceive a child by another. Sir 26:9 considers coquetry, or prostitution, combined with alcohol consumption (v. 8) to be πορνεία. The only other related text within the book, Tob 8:7, seems also to be in line with this interpretation, when on his wedding night Tobias asserts in a prayer, “And now, Lord [only G<sup>I</sup>], I take this sister of mine not because of πορνεία, but out of fidelity/loyalty (ἀλήθεια).”<sup>27</sup>

Yet all other 44 instances<sup>28</sup> of πορνεία, as well as 41 occurrences<sup>29</sup> of ἐκπορνεύω in the LXX, speak another language. They deal with the issues of apostasy, or idolatry.

In this respect it seems fully justified that Tobit, in his instructions to Tobias – that is, in his prohibition of πορνεία – should feel the need to insist upon an endogamous marriage, in order to prevent apostasy, or idolatry; issues which can be a real danger in mixed marriages.

*All in all*, Tobit’s behavior as a grown man corresponds with the instructions, which he passes on to his son, Tobias: Marrying a woman from one’s own family brings forth God’s blessings, which come in the form of many children, material wealth, harmonious coexistence, and the (re-

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example DEMONSTHENES, Rhod. lib. 15:23; ISOCRATES, Nic. 3:36; De Pace 8:113; PAUSANIAS, Descr. 1:2).

25 Cf. Exod 20:14, 17; Deut 5:18, 21.

26 Cf. the “law of Moses” in Tob G<sup>I</sup> 6:13; 7:13; G<sup>II</sup> 1:8; 7:13-14. See GAMBERONI, Gesetz, 227-242; COLLINS, Judaism, 31-34.

27 Tobias’ “fidelity” is related to his father’s instructions (cf. Tob 4:13), not to enter a mixed (exogamies) marriage, but a endogamous relationship. Cf. MENGE, Großwörterbuch, 34: “... Wahrheit ... Richtigkeit ... Wahrhaftigkeit, Aufrichtigkeit, Treue ... wahrer Sachverhalt, Zuverlässigkeit.” SCHÜNGEL-STRAUMANN, Tobit, 101-102, catches this meaning very well, when she writes: “... im Sinne einer verlässlichen Grundordnung ... die Zuverlässigkeit einer Person, die Verlässlichkeit in einer Beziehung oder Bindung.”

28 Cf. Num 14:33; 2 Kgs 9:22; Wis 14:12; Sir 41:17; Hos 1:2 (2x); 2:4, 6; 4:11, 12; 5:4; 6:10; Mic 1:7 (2x); Nah 3:4 (2x); Isa 47:10; 57:9; Jer 2:20; 3:2, 9; 13:27; Ezek 16:15, 22, 25, 33, 34, 36, 41; 23:7, 8 (2x), 11 (2x), 14, 17-19, 27, 29 (2x), 35; 43:7, 9. Sir 41:17 maybe allows both interpretations, whereat obscene behavior/adultery or a lapse of faith should not be done in the parents’ presence.

29 Cf. Exod 34:15-16; Lev 17:7; 19:29; 20:5-6; 21:9; Num 15:39; 25:1; Deut 31:16; Jdg 2:17; 8:27, 33; 2 Chr 21:11, 13; Sir 46:11; Hos 1:2; 2:7; 4:12-13, 18; 5:3; Jer 3:1; Ezek 6:9; 16:16-17, 20, 26, 28, 30, 33; 20:30; 23:3, 5, 30, 43 (italics mark the context of mixed marriage). Only two evidences are related to uncontrolled sexuality, which is to be punished by burning or stoning: Gen 38:24; Deut 22:21.

newed) attainment of God's promised land (for the exiled diaspora Jews). Endogamous marriage serves to dissociate one from foreign influences, in order to preserve the loyalty to one's faith and, therefore, one's own social and cultic identity. According to this account, emotional states are suggested only indirectly in the context of advice about the evidence of arrogance (ὕπερηφανία) found in Tob 4:13. Tobit and Hannah have only *one* son<sup>30</sup> and due to Tobit's law-observance, which is contrary to the norms of the state of Nineveh, they experience fear (1:19 φοβέω) of ruin, conflict, impoverishment, loss, as well as hunger, in their own family. Perhaps Tobit's strict law-observance is also a type of arrogance/pride.

## 2.2 Tobias' Argument on Marriage (Tob 8:6-7)

After Sarah has been given to Tobias by his father-in-law to be his wife, and after the marriage contract has been prepared and sealed and a meal has been shared, the mother, Edna, leads her daughter into the bridal chamber. Edna must now console her sorely afflicted daughter, who, because of the loss of her previous husbands, is now crying, whereupon her mother gives her words of encouragement (Tob 7:1-7). Tobias follows Sarah into the prepared room and proceeds according to Azariah's/Raphael's instructions on casting out the demon.

After that follows the summon to join prayer, in order to call for God's mercy (and salvation according to G<sup>II</sup>) for the couple (8:4 G<sup>I</sup>: ἵνα ἡμᾶς ἐλεήσει ὁ κύριος; G<sup>II</sup>: δεηθῶμεν τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν ὅπως ποιήσῃ ἐφ' ἡμᾶς ἔλεος καὶ σωτηρίαν). However, Tobias speaks alone and praises the Lord. In v. 6 he refers to the creation of Adam and Eve. The woman was given to the man for assistance and support (G<sup>I</sup>: ἔδωκας αὐτῷ βοηθὸν Εὐαν στήριγμα τὴν γυναῖκα αὐτοῦ; G<sup>II</sup>: ἐποίησας αὐτῷ βοηθὸν στήριγμα Εὐαν τὴν γυναῖκα αὐτοῦ). Thereafter Tobias explains this by citing, almost verbatim, from Gen 2:18: "It is not good that the man should be alone; let us make for him a help suitable to him" (Brenton; οὐ καλὸν εἶναι τὸν ἄνθρωπον μόνον, ποιήσωμεν αὐτῷ βοηθὸν κατ' αὐτόν). Only the prepositional term at the end is, through ὅμοιον αὐτῷ, slightly changed.

Tobias feels very much connected to Sarah; indeed, his soul/his heart is very much attached to her (Tob 6:19 G<sup>I</sup>: ἡ ψυχὴ αὐτοῦ ἐκολλήθη αὐτῇ

30 Cf. in contrary Azariah's/Raphael's assertion to Tobias and Sarah in 6:18 of more children (G<sup>I</sup>: ὑπολαμβάνω ὅτι σοὶ ἔσται ἐξ αὐτῆς παιδίᾱ; G<sup>II</sup>: ὑπολαμβάνω ὅτι ἔσονται σοὶ ἐξ αὐτῆς παιδίᾱ).