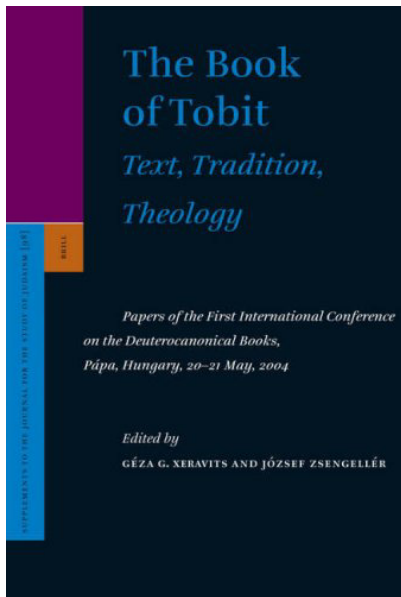


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The Book of Tobit: Text, Tradition, Theology: Papers of the First International Conference on the Deuterocanonical Books, Pápa, Hungary, 20–21 May, 2004

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Micah Kiel

Princeton Theological Seminary
Princeton, New Jersey

This book is a collection of papers from the first international conference on the Deuterocanonical books, held in May 2004 in Hungary. The collection holds together a variety of approaches, topics, and problems important for the study of Tobit.

The book begins and ends with essays discussing the text of Tobit. Jean-Marie Auwers explores the Old Latin versions of Tobit. Auwers establishes the complexity of the OL, examining the “direct tradition” (e.g., Reginensis) and Tobit citations in “indirect tradition” (e.g., Cyprien of Carthage). The OL reads the long Greek recension closely (e.g., the OL adds a reference to a third tithe in Tob 1:7–8 in order to harmonize it with Deut 14:28–29). Auwers offers *une conclusion pratique*. Most modern translations are based on Sinaiticus but, at the point of its two lacunae, fill the gaps with GI. Auwers claims that the OL should be consulted here as well. It is possible that *le type de texte* is more important than *la langue dans laquelle il est conservé* (17).

Loren Stuckenbruck’s essay finishes the volume with attention to the textual history of Tobit by providing a translation of the “Fagius” Hebrew text. Stuckenbruck places the text in the broader context of the textual history of Tobit, noting that it often corresponds to the longer text. Whatever its links to that tradition, however, the Fagius text tells the story

in a “biblicising sort of Hebrew” (191). Stuckenbruck’s translation is clear and accurate and calls attention to parts of the Fagius text that do not have parallel in other versions by placing them in italics.

A second group of essays in the volume may loosely be grouped together by their desire to place Tobit in the context of the many traditions and texts with which it interacts. John Collins offers a lucid account of the “Judaism of the Book of Tobit.” By way of the role of exile, the law of Moses, and a comparison with Ben Sira, Collins claims that the book is a sampling of “popular Judaism” of its day (39). It does incorporate many traditions from the history of Israel, but most of them are rather unpointed; Tobit, for Collins, is a “popular story and not an ideological one” (40).

Beate Ego, in an essay discussing Tobit and the Diaspora, emphasizes that the text should be read in a “spatial perspective” (41). The chaotic Diaspora causes Tobit’s misfortune, while the types of wisdom Tobit espouses (called “practical ordinances”) establish and confirm identity. To have his ideas hold true in Tobit, Ego must assume that the Diaspora is always negative, which is not necessarily the case within Tobit. The disposition of a specific regime determines Tobit’s fortune, not the Diaspora per se. József Zsengellér’s essay on “Topography as Theology” provides an interesting companion to Ego’s. Zsengellér shows a lack of topographical accuracy—according to the conventions of modern cartography—and claims that the goal was theological, not topographical. His analysis concludes that the framing chapters portray a “deuteronomical theological influence” focused on Jerusalem (182). He ends his essay with several maps, two of which show the spatial arrangement of the central chapters (2–12) and that of the “edited” version (i.e., including chs. 1, 13–14).

Ida Frölich contextualizes Tobit by placing its themes against the “background” of the Dead Sea Scrolls. Frölich compares Sarah’s affliction to problematic relationships between a watcher and a human in the Genesis Apocryphon. Frölich also shows similarities between Tob 13 and ideas about a new Jerusalem in Qumran Aramaic texts such as 1Q32, 2Q24, and 4Q554–555. Such comparisons lead to the conclusion that Tobit is a “typical piece of Judaeo-Aramaic literature” from the second century B.C.E. Frölich makes a problematic claim that Ben Sira “has influenced Tobit” (68). Although the two texts may be roughly contemporaneous and have some similarities, proving influence of one on the other is difficult. Finally, Frölich engages in a lengthy discussion of the work of Ben Wacholder and his analysis of Judeo-Aramaic literature. This work is never cited, however, even though Frölich quotes directly from his work (68).

Stefan Beyerle discusses the possible belief in an afterlife in Tobit and “late wisdom literature” (71). Tobit’s plea to be released to his everlasting home (3:6) is analyzed in

light of certain texts in Israel's Scriptures (e.g., Isa 33:14; Qoh 12:5). The phrase is then further compared to Jubilees, Diodorus, and the eighth- or ninth-century Deir 'Alla inscription. This is followed by an analysis of eschatology in the text of Tobit itself. Beyerle finds two "streams" in Tobit—one founded in the wisdom tradition and the *Tun-Ergehen-Zusammenhang*, the other using eschatological hope—that are strictly separated in the plot. In the end, both streams are connected. The wisdom story can be reread in the "horizon" of eschatology, and vague references to the future take on a new significance in light of that perspective.

Friedrich Reiterer finds points of contact (*Berührungspunkte*) between Tobit and Ben Sira on the topic of prophecy and the prophetic faculty (*Prophet und Prophetie*). Reiterer begins by noting many similarities between Tobit and Ben Sira, and although prophecy does not frequently appear in Tobit, it can still be important for the author. Reiterer then examines Tob 2:6; 4:12; 14:4, 5, 8; Sir 24:33; 36:21. His analysis yields several conclusions: the writings of the prophets are just as binding (*verbindlich*) as those of the Pentateuch; the word of a prophet surely comes true (*trifft sicher ein*); the word of a prophet is a sure cipher that can help interpret the present; and the one who analyzes the word of a prophet has the ability to draw a conclusion about the future. Tobit and Ben Sira have similar convictions about prophecy, but Tobit's are expressed in a familial setting, while Ben Sira's are more public.

Several essays in this volume take a more thematic and theological approach to Tobit, although the previous essays are not uninterested in theology. János Bolyki examines the ethical task of burial by examining precedents in the Hebrew Bible and Greek tragedy. These examples show that burial is a matter of obedience and honor and plays a "theological-ethical role" as a good work that is rewarded (99). Tobias Nicklas uses what he calls a "synoptic approach" to marriage in Tobit. His goal is to determine whether there are "differing theological or literary emphases in the different text types" (140). He suggests that GII is more interested in Jewish kinship (especially the language of brothers and sisters) than GI. Thomas Hieke also explores marriage—specifically the role of endogamy—by comparing the precedent set in Genesis and Ezra-Nehemiah. He claims that Sarah alludes to the fate of Zelophehad's daughters in Num 27 and 36. For Hieke, an emphasis on endogamy shows how Asmodeus is the "personification of all the powers that distract from the Torah" (112). He ultimately concludes that Tobias and Sarah "match perfectly well" and are "destined for each other" (112) because their union is endogamous. Hieke notes that Sarah's seven previous husbands in GII are described with the phrase τῶν ἀδελφῶν ἡμῶν (7:11). This phrase is omitted in GI. If endogamy did not save the first seven husbands in GII, one wonders how Hieke can claim that endogamy produces a different, happy fate for Tobias and Sarah.

Naomi S. Jacobs provides an assessment of a neglected topic in Tobit studies: the role of food and eating. She points out how food illuminates character, themes, and symbolic ideas throughout the narrative. For instance, Tobias's refusal to eat until his marriage is arranged not only echoes Gen 24:33, but it also develops his character in a new way. She also describes the lavish nature of Tobit's *Shavuot* meal and the control over his appetite to leave it uneaten. Tobit leaps from his meal, narrated with the word ἀναπηδάω, used elsewhere in Tobit to refer to greeting relatives (7:6; 9:6; 10:7) or to describe the activity of a mettlesome fish (6:3), which shows Tobit's alacrity for abandoning his meal and helping one of his kin.

The work of these essays delineates two important areas of future research into Tobit. First, not all agree on textual matters. John Collins asserts that chapters 13–14 were not original to the story, which contradicts Ida Frölich's statement that today's "consensus" is to reject "claims of multiple authorship and theories of various text-forms" (58). Disagreements in this realm raise questions about how scholars are to assess Tobit's theology if they may not be reading the same text. Second, Tobit will continue to be an important test case for those interested in how Jewish texts of the Second Temple period interacted with previous and contemporaneous Jewish texts and traditions. Comparisons with Ben Sira and texts from Qumran and work examining the use of Israel's scriptures will continue to shed light on how Tobit's myriad traditions and theological influences cohere into an entertaining, theologically relevant tale.