

We hope you enjoy these sample pages. For ordering information, visit Liguori.org.

LIGUORI CATHOLIC BIBLE STUDY



Biblical Novellas

**TOBIT, JUDITH, ESTHER,
1 AND 2 MACCABEES**

WILLIAM A. ANDERSON, DMIN, PHD



Liguori
LIGUORI, MISSOURI

Imprimi Potest:

Harry Grile, CSsR, Provincial
Denver Province, The Redemptorists

Printed with Ecclesiastical Permission and Approved for Private or Instructional Use

Nihil Obstat: Rev. Msgr. Kevin Michael Quirk, JCD, JV

Censor Librorum

Imprimatur: + Michael J. Bransfield

Bishop of Wheeling-Charleston [West Virginia]

March 19, 2014

Published by Liguori Publications

Liguori, Missouri 63057

To order, visit Liguori.org or call 800-325-9521.

Copyright © 2014 William A. Anderson

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means—electronic, mechanical, photocopy, recording, or any other—except for brief quotations in printed reviews, without the prior written permission of Liguori Publications.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Anderson, William A., 1937-

Biblical novellas : Tobit, Judith, Esther, 1 and 2 Maccabees / William A. Anderson, DMin, PhD.
pages cm.—(Liguori Catholic Bible study)

1. Bible. Apocrypha. Tobit—Study and teaching. 2. Bible. Apocrypha. Judith—Study and teaching.
3. Bible. Esther—Study and teaching. 4. Bible. Apocrypha. Maccabees—Study and teaching. 5.
Catholic Church—Doctrines. I. Title.

BS1725.55.A53 2014

229'.20071—dc23

2014018794

p ISBN: 978-0-7648-2138-7

e ISBN: 978-0-7648-6986-0

Scripture texts in this work are taken from the *New American Bible*, revised edition © 2010, 1991, 1986, 1970 Confraternity of Christian Doctrine, Washington, D.C., and are used by permission of the copyright owner. All Rights Reserved. No part of the *New American Bible* may be reproduced in any form without permission in writing from the copyright owner.

Liguori Publications, a nonprofit corporation, is an apostolate of The Redemptorists. To learn more about The Redemptorists, visit Redemptorists.com.

Printed in the United States of America

18 17 16 15 14 / 5 4 3 2 1

First Edition



Contents

Dedication 5

Introduction to Liguori Catholic Bible Study 6

Lectio Divina (Sacred Reading) 8

How to Use This Bible-Study Companion 11

A Process for Sacred Reading 12

Group-Study Formats 13

Introduction: Biblical Novellas 17

Lesson 1 The Book of Tobit (I) 18

Group Study (Tobit 1—3) 19

Lesson 2 The Book of Tobit (II) 26

Part 1: Group Study (Tobit 4—6) 27

Part 2: Individual Study (Tobit 7—14) 34

Lesson 3 The Book of Judith 46

Part 1: Group Study (Judith 1—3) 47

Part 2: Individual Study (Judith 4—16) 51

NOTE: The length of each Bible section varies. Group leaders should combine sections as needed to fit the number of sessions in their program.

Lesson 4 The Book of Esther 66

Part 1: Group Study (Esther [A] 1—2) 67

Part 2: Individual Study (Esther 3—10 [F]) 72

Lesson 5 The Book of First Maccabees (I) 83

Part 1: Group Study (1 Maccabees 1—2:14) 84

Part 2: Individual Study (1 Maccabees 2:15—9:22) 88

Lesson 6 The Book of First Maccabees (II) 103

Part 1: Group Study (1 Maccabees 9:23—10:66) 104

Part 2: Individual Study (1 Maccabees 10:67—16) 109

Lesson 7 The Book of Second Maccabees 122

Part 1: Group Study (2 Maccabees 1—2) 123

Part 2: Individual Study (2 Maccabees 3—15) 126

About the Author 143



How to Use This Bible-Study Companion

THE BIBLE, along with the commentaries and reflections found in this study, will help participants become familiar with the Scripture texts and lead them to reflect more deeply on the texts' messages. At the end of this study, participants will have a firm grasp of the Biblical Novellas, becoming therefore more aware of the spiritual nourishment these books offer. This study is not only an intellectual adventure, it's also a spiritual one. The reflections lead participants into their own journey with the Scripture readings.

Context

When the authors wrote and edited the Biblical Novellas, they were presenting stories about men and women dedicated to the Lord and the Temple. To help readers learn about each passage in relation to those around it, each lesson begins with an overview that puts the Scripture passages into context.

NOTE: Scripture texts in this work are taken from the *New American Bible*, revised edition © 2010, 1991, 1986, 1970 Confraternity of Christian Doctrine, Washington, D.C., and are used by permission of the copyright owner. All Rights Reserved. No part of the *New American Bible* may be reproduced in any form without permission in writing from the copyright owner.

Part 1: Group Study

To give participants a comprehensive study of Biblical Novellas, this study is divided into seven lessons. Lesson 1 is group study only; Lessons 2 through 7 are divided into Part 1, group study, and Part 2, individual study. For example, Lesson 2 covers the Book of Tobit, chapters 4 through 14. The study group reads and discusses only chapters 4 through 6 (Part 1). Participants privately read and reflect on chapters 7 through 14 (Part 2).

Group study may or may not include *lectio divina*. With *lectio divina*, the group meets for ninety minutes using the first format on page 13. Without *lectio divina*, the group meets for one hour using the format at the bottom of page 13, and participants are urged to privately read the *lectio divina* section at the end of Part 1. It contains additional reflections on the Scripture passages studied during the group session that will take participants even further into the passages.

Part 2: Individual Study

The passages not covered in Part 1 are divided into shorter components, one to be studied each day. Participants who don't belong to a study group can use the lessons for private sacred reading. They may choose to reflect on one Scripture passage per day, making it possible for a clearer understanding of the Scripture passages used in their *lectio divina* (sacred reading).

A PROCESS FOR SACRED READING

Liguori Publications has designed this study to be user-friendly and manageable. However, group dynamics and leaders vary. We're not trying to keep the Holy Spirit from working in your midst, thus we suggest you decide beforehand which format works best for your group. If you have limited time, you could study the Bible as a group and save prayer and reflection for personal time.

However, if your group wishes to digest and feast on sacred Scripture through both prayer and study, we recommend you spend closer to ninety minutes each week by gathering to study and pray with Scripture. *Lectio divina*

(see page 8) is an ancient contemplative prayer form that moves readers from the head to the heart in meeting the Lord. We strongly suggest using this prayer form whether in individual or group study.

GROUP-STUDY FORMATS

1. Bible Study With *Lectio Divina*

About ninety minutes of group study

- ✠ Gathering and opening prayer (3–5 minutes)
- ✠ Read each Scripture passage aloud (5 minutes)
- ✠ Silently review the commentary and prepare to discuss it with the group (3–5 minutes)
- ✠ Discuss the Scripture passage along with the commentary and reflection (30 minutes)
- ✠ Read each Scripture passage aloud a second time, followed by quiet time for meditation and contemplation (5 minutes)
- ✠ Spend some time in prayer with the selected passage. Group participants will slowly read the Scripture passage a third time in silence, listening for the voice of God as they read (10–20 minutes)
- ✠ Shared reflection (10–15 minutes)
- ✠ Closing prayer (3–5 minutes)

To become acquainted with lectio divina, see page 8.

2. Bible Study

About one hour of group study

- ✠ Gathering and opening prayer (3–5 minutes)
- ✠ Read each Scripture passage aloud (5 minutes)
- ✠ Silently review the commentary and prepare to discuss it with the group (3–5 minutes)
- ✠ Discuss the Scripture passage along with the commentary and reflection (40 minutes)
- ✠ Closing prayer (3–5 minutes)

Notes to the Leader

- ✠ Bring a copy of the *New American Bible*, revised edition.
- ✠ Plan which sections will be covered each week of your Bible study.
- ✠ Read the material in advance of each session.
- ✠ Establish written ground rules. (Example: We won't keep you longer than ninety minutes; don't dominate the sharing by arguing or debating.)
- ✠ Meet in an appropriate and welcoming gathering space (church building, meeting room, house).
- ✠ Provide name tags and perhaps use a brief icebreaker for the first meeting; ask participants to introduce themselves.
- ✠ Mark the Scripture passage(s) that will be read during the session.
- ✠ Decide how you would like the Scripture to be read aloud (whether by one or multiple readers).
- ✠ Use a clock or watch.
- ✠ Provide extra Bibles (or copies of the Scripture passages) for participants who don't bring their Bible.
- ✠ Ask participants to read the introduction (page 16) before the first session.
- ✠ Tell participants which passages to study and urge them to read the passages and commentaries before the meeting.
- ✠ If you opt to use the *lectio divina* format, familiarize yourself with this prayer form ahead of time.

Notes to the Participants

- ✠ Bring a copy of the *New American Bible*, revised edition.
- ✠ Read the introduction (page 16) before the first session.
- ✠ Read the Scripture passages and commentaries before each session.
- ✠ Be prepared to share and listen respectfully. (This is not a time to debate beliefs or argue.)



LESSON 2

The Book of Tobit (II)

TOBIT 4—14

It is better to give alms than to store up gold, for almsgiving saves from death, and purges all sin (12:8–9).

Opening Prayer (SEE PAGE 15)

Context

Part 1: Tobit 4—6 Tobiah prepares to travel to Media to receive the money his father left with Gabael. He chooses Raphael as his guide, not knowing Raphael was an angel. Raphael plans to bring Tobiah to the home of Raguel, who has a daughter named Sarah. His intention is for Tobiah to marry Sarah.

Part 2: Tobit 7—14 Raphael helps Tobiah free Sarah from the grip of a demon and Tobiah marries her. When Tobiah returns home with his new wife, Raphael helps him cure Tobit's blindness. Raphael reveals his true identity. When Tobit is dying, he tells his son to flee from Nineveh after his death and the death of his mother. Tobiah does as his father commands, and Nineveh and Assyria fall into the hands of the king of Media.

PART 1: GROUP STUDY (TOBIT 4—6)

Read aloud Tobit 4—6.

4 Preparation for the Journey

Calling Tobiah to him, Tobit decides it was time to tell his son about the money he left with Gabael. He first instructs Tobiah with maxims similar to those found in Proverbs and Sirach. His first concern is a proper burial. Since Tobit showed such concern for the dead, it would be natural for him to be concerned about his own burial.

Tobit instructs Tobiah to honor his mother, never abandoning her and doing all that pleases her. These instructions were already contained in the Ten Commandments given to Moses, holding a place of honor immediately after the first three commandments concerning one's relationship with God (see Exodus 20:12). Tobit reminds Tobiah of the dangers encountered by his mother when he was in her womb. Many women in Tobit's era did not survive the birth of a child. Tobit instructed his son to bury his mother with him (Tobit) in the same grave.

Tobit instructs his son in living a righteous life. He must remain faithful to the Lord and to the commandments, avoiding the ways of the wicked. Although Tobit himself lived a righteous life and had to endure suffering, he tells Tobiah those who live righteously will prosper in all they do.

Tobit instructs Tobiah to give alms and not to neglect the poor. Otherwise, the Lord will not look on him favorably. Whether he has much or little, he should give alms out of the abundance or little he has. In doing this, he will be storing up a treasure for himself as a help on the day of hardship. Giving alms will deliver Tobiah from death and from entering into Darkness, meaning the place of the dead. Tobit is not saying Tobiah will not die, but he is saying Tobiah will live a long life if he gives alms because the Most High looks upon this as a praiseworthy deed.

Tobit warns Tobiah to guard himself against fornication, and even more so, not to marry a foreign woman, a woman not of his father's tribe. Although many of the Israelites married foreign women while in exile, marrying within the ancestral family was believed to be important in the eyes of God.

He reminds Tobiah his family comes from a line of prophets, namely Noah, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob who married within their own kindred and who were blessed with children whose posterity would inherit the Promised Land. Tobiah is to love his kindred and not to act arrogantly by refusing to take a wife from among them. Choosing a wife outside their kindred would appear to snub their kindred's women. Such arrogance would lead to ruin and instability. The one who marries outside one's kindred would find himself rejected by his relatives and in an unstable relationship with a foreign woman.

Tobit offers a list of concise instructions for living righteously. Since idleness leads to poverty and famine, Tobiah should guard against being idle. He should not withhold overnight the wages of those who worked for him. If he serves God, he will receive a great reward. He must be wise in all he does and says. He must not do to another what he himself hates. He must not drink wine to the point of being drunk and becoming known as a drunkard.

Care for the poor and needy was an important part of the Lord's message for the Israelites. Tobit instructs Tobiah to give some of his food to the hungry and clothing to the naked, even to the point of giving over whatever he has left. He tells Tobiah to pour out his wine on the grave of the righteous, not the wicked. This means a person should provide for the family of a faithful deceased person.

Tobit urges Tobiah to seek counsel from every wise person and not to treat it lightly. He should always praise the Lord and beg the Lord for guidance and help so all his endeavors and plans may prosper. Because the Israelites have faith in the one true Lord, they possess wise counsel from the Lord, something other nations do not have. Whomever the Lord wishes to raise up or cast down rises or falls as the Lord wishes. Tobit ends his instructions, exhorting Tobiah to never abandon these commands.

Tobit informs Tobiah about the money he deposited with Gabael, saying not to fear, even though they themselves live in poverty. He says Tobiah will possess great wealth as long as he fears the Lord, avoids sin, and does what is right before the Lord.

5 The Angel Raphael

Tobiah obediently tells his father he will do all his father commands. Since he does not know Gabael and Gabael does not know him, Tobiah asks what sign he can give to Gabael so Gabael will trust him with the money. He adds he does not know the way to Media.

Tobit states Gabael gave him his bond and he gave Gabael his. A bond was a document which was cut in two, with each party keeping a half. Tobit put one part with the money he left in Gabael's keeping. That was twenty years ago. Tobit advises Tobiah to find a trustworthy person to make the journey with him, and when they return, he will pay his companion's wages. He urges Tobiah to bring back the money while Tobit is still alive.

Tobiah goes out and sees the angel Raphael standing before him, although he does not know Raphael is an angel of the Lord. In many folklore stories, angels often appear in the story without informing people they are in the presence of an angel. When Tobiah asks Raphael where he came from, Raphael answers he is an Israelite, one of Tobiah's kindred who came there to work. Tobiah asks if he knows the way to Media, and Raphael replies he knows the place well and has traveled all the routes many times. He adds he used to stay with their kinsman, Gabael. Raphael says it is a good two days' journey from Ecbatana to Rages. In reality, it is about 180 miles between the two cities, and it would ordinarily take more than two days.

After relating to Raphael he will pay his wages, Tobiah goes to his father and informs him about finding a fellow Israelite who will travel with him to Media. Tobit instructs him to summon the man so he may inquire about his family and tribe and discern whether he is trustworthy enough as a traveling companion for his son. Tobiah brings Raphael into the house, and Raphael greets Tobit with the words, "Joyful greetings to you." This allows Tobit to declare he has no joy left since he is blind, like the dead who no longer see the light. This passage allows the author to remind the reader of Tobit's blindness. Tobit declares he can hear voices but not see the speakers. Raphael tells him to be courageous, God's healing is near.

Tobit tells Raphael he will pay his wages if he will go to Media with his son. Raphael agrees to go with Tobiah, reiterating he knows all the routes

since he has traveled to Media many times before. He states he has crossed the plains of Ecbatana and knows the mountains in which Rages is situated. In reality, Ecbatana is in mountains which are higher than the mountains in which Rages is situated. This adds to the inconsistencies found in the narrative.

Tobit asks Raphael about his family and tribe. The angel feigns surprise, asking why Tobit wants to know his tribe as long as he is a hired hand ready to travel. Tobit pushes for an answer to his question and Raphael replies, "I am Azariah, son of the great Hananiah, one of your own kindred" (5:13). The name "Azariah" means "God has helped," and Hananiah means "God has shown mercy." Tobit welcomes him and begs him not to be angry with him for wanting to know the truth about his family.

Tobit agrees Raphael is indeed a kinsman from a good and noble family. Tobit says, "I knew Hananiah and Nathan, the two sons of the great Shem-eliah" (5:14). Nathan means "God has given," and Shem-eliah means "God has heard." Tobit says he used to go to Jerusalem with them, where they would worship together. The text proves Tobit was not the only Israelite of the northern kingdom who dared to go to Jerusalem for major feasts. Tobit tells Raphael he comes from good lineage, and welcomes him.

Tobit promises to give him a drachma as his wages, which is equivalent to seventeen cents a day, a normal day's wage, and he will pay the expenses for him and his son. He promises to add a bonus. Raphael agrees to go with Tobiah, telling Tobit not to fear. He states the way is safe and they will return in good health. Tobit blesses Raphael and bids his son to prepare for the journey and leave with his kinsman. He prays God will protect them and keep them safe on their journey and on their way back. Still unaware Raphael is an angel, he prays the Lord's angel will accompany them for their safety.

Tobiah kisses his father and mother and leaves. Anna, his mother, asked Tobit why he sent his son away. She urges him to forgo his money in exchange for their child, adding the Lord provided them with enough. Tobit reassures her she will see their son return in good health. Believing a good angel will journey with him, he states the journey will be successful and he will return in good health. This assurance ended her weeping.

6 Tobiah's Journey to Media

The author speaks of a dog, apparently belonging to the family, following Tobiah and the angel. This mention of a domestic animal in the story is unique and a homey addition. On the first night, they camp beside the Tigris River. The Tigris is actually west of Nineveh and would most likely not have been the route one would take to Media. This misdirection is another inconsistency found in the story.

When Tobiah goes to wash his feet in the Tigris, a large fish leaps up and tries to swallow his foot. Tobias shouts out, and Raphael calls to him to seize and hold the fish, which he did. The angel instructs Tobiah to cut the fish open and take its gall, heart, and liver with him. The ancients used the gall, heart, and liver of a fish for medicinal purposes. Tobiah then roasts and eats other parts of the fish, salting the remainder for the journey. There is no mention of Raphael eating the fish.

As they neared Media, Tobiah asks Raphael about using the heart, liver, and gall of the fish as medicine. Raphael explains burning the fish's heart and liver would produce smoke to drive an evil spirit away from a man or woman who is afflicted by a demon. The demon would never return. If a person applies the gall to the eyes of one who has white scales and blows into the eyes, the blind person's sight will return.

As they neared Ecbatana, Raphael reveals his real purpose for traveling with Tobiah. He declares that night they will stay at the house of Raguel, who has an only child, a beautiful daughter named Sarah. Since Tobiah is her closest relative, he has first right to marry her. He will also have the right to inherit her father's estate. According to Israelite law, a woman without brothers must marry within the clan of her ancestral tribe. In doing this, the one she marries has a right to her father's estate, thus keeping the estate from passing on to another Israelite tribe (see Numbers 36:6–9).

Raphael praises Sarah, saying she is the daughter of a good man and is wise, courageous, and beautiful. He intends to speak to Raguel that night so Tobiah can take Sarah as his bride. Since Raguel knows Tobiah has first right to marry his daughter, Raguel cannot refuse. Raphael declares Tobiah will take her back with him to his house. Tobiah, who had no say in the mat-

ter up to this point, tells Raphael he heard seven husbands of Sarah died on their wedding night when they approached her. He heard a demon, who was in love with Sarah, caused these deaths. Since the death of the only son of his parents would bring them to their death in sorrow over his loss, Tobiah reveals his fear of the demon.

Raphael reminds Tobiah his father commanded him to marry a woman from his own ancestral tribe. Assuring Tobiah Sarah would be given to him that night as his wife, he urges Tobiah to have no fear. To ward off the demon, Raphael instructs Tobiah to place the fish's liver and heart on the embers intended for incense, and when the demon smells the odor, it will flee and never again approach her. Before Tobiah has intercourse with Sarah, both must first pray to the Lord for mercy and protection. Raphael again tells Tobiah not to fear, since Sarah was set apart for him before the creation of the world. He assumes they will have children who will become like brothers to him. When Tobiah heard all this, he loved her deeply and set his heart on marrying her.

Review Questions

1. List some of the good deeds Tobit tells Tobiah to practice that are echoed in the life of Jesus.
2. Why did God send Raphael to Tobit and Tobiah?
3. How does Raphael help Tobiah?

Closing Prayer (SEE PAGE 15)

Pray the closing prayer now or after *lectio divina*.

Lectio Divina (SEE PAGE 8)

Relax your body and maintain a posture of prayer (back straight, eyes shut, feet flat on the floor). This exercise can take as long as you want, but in the context of this Bible study, 10 to 20 minutes should be sufficient.

The meditations that follow are provided only to help group participants use this prayer form, but note that *lectio* is intended to bring one to a place of prayerful contemplation where the Word of God speaks to the hearer from his or her heart. (See page 8 for further instruction.)

Preparation for the Journey (4)

When people prepare for a journey, they usually have their itinerary planned, clothes packed, finances secure, and all the necessary tasks taken care of before leaving. Tobit is not just preparing Tobiah for a trip to Gabael, but for his life journey. He instructs Tobiah how to live a life faithful to the Lord and one that helps others. When we make trips, we very often have roundtrip plans. There is no roundtrip in life. Tobit is giving Tobiah foundation plans, not a roundtrip ticket to life.

✠ *What can I learn from this passage?*

The Angel Raphael (5)

When Tobiah is about to make his trip, the Lord sends an angel as his companion. In our daily life, the Lord sends people who are really angels in our life. They are ordinary people who encourage, support, and sometimes cajole us into becoming a good person. Many of us are angels for others on their journey without us realizing it. God still sends angels, and they are the good people in our life who have a positive influence on our development.

✠ *What can I learn from this passage?*

Tobiah's Journey to Media (6)

The author states the Lord chose Sarah as Tobiah's wife before the world existed. The text makes it sound as though the Lord is directing everything in our life, leaving no room for free will. How much God intervenes directly in our life is a mystery, but theologians tell us God guides us but never forces us to act in a particular manner. When we pray, God inspires us, protects us, gives us courage and opportunities, and responds to our needs, but the final choice of accepting or rejecting God's grace is up to us.

✠ *What can I learn from this passage?*

PART 2: INDIVIDUAL STUDY (TOBIT 7—14)

Day 1: Marriage and Healing of Sarah (7—9)

When they arrived at Ecbatana, Tobiah addresses Raphael as Azariah and bids him to take him straight to the house of Raguel. When they arrived at the house of Raguel, they greet him first and he returns the greeting, welcoming them in peace and bringing them into his house. All these are gestures of hospitality.

Raguel exclaims to his wife, Edna, how this young man resembles Tobit, whom he identifies as the son of his uncle. When Edna asks where they have come from, they respond they are descendants of Naphtali who are now captives of Nineveh. She asks if they know their kinsman, Tobit. They answer they know him well. Tobiah tells her Tobit is alive and well and is his father. Upon hearing this, Raguel leaps up, kisses him, and weeps. He blesses Tobiah and declares he is the son of a good and noble father. Although Raguel seems surprised at the presence of Tobit's son, he already knows about Tobit's blindness and declares it to be such a misfortune. Raguel, Edna, and their daughter Sarah begin to weep.

Like Abraham, who greeted three visitors who were angels and prepared a meal for them (see Genesis 18:1–8), Raguel slaughters a ram from the flock for his unexpected guests. After they washed, bathed, and reclined to eat and drink, Tobiah tells Raphael to ask Raguel to give him his kinswoman Sarah in marriage. Raguel overhears Tobiah and urges him to eat and drink, for he has the right to Sarah and Raguel could not refuse it. Raguel admits he previously gave her to seven husbands who were kinsmen and all died on the night they approached her. Raguel tells Tobiah to eat and drink, but Tobiah said he would not eat or drink anything until they settled the matter.

Raguel had to agree to the marriage, as commanded “by the Book of Moses” (7:11), declaring it was already decided in heaven. He said Tobiah and Sarah were now considered a brother and sister, a common expression used for spouses, and he prays the Lord would prosper them both. Raguel calls his daughter and gives her to Tobiah, telling Tobiah to take her as his wife according to the Law of Moses and to bring her safely to his father. Calling to

Edna for writing material, he composes a marriage contract, giving Sarah to Tobiah as his wife in accord with the Law of Moses. He places his seal on it.

Afterward, they eat and drink. Raguel tells his wife to prepare the other bedroom for Sarah. After Edna makes the bed in the room, she brings Sarah there, and weeping, told Sarah to have courage. Although the tears could be tears of joy, they appear to be tears for Tobiah, who will meet with tragedy that night and bring sorrow to Sarah. Sarah's mother prays the Lord will grant her joy and not grief.

In chapter 8, Sarah's parents lead Tobiah to the bedroom. Following Raphael's directions, Tobiah puts the fish's liver and heart on the embers intended for incense. The odor of the fish repulses the demon and it flees to the upper regions of Egypt, a symbolic retreat to the wilderness where demons were said to dwell. Raphael pursues the demon and binds it hand and foot so it cannot return. Raphael returns at once.

When Sarah's parents leave Tobiah and Sarah, Tobiah bids Sarah to pray with him to beg the Lord for mercy and protection. He begins his prayer by praising God as the God of their ancestors and imploring the heavens and all creation to bless the Lord forever. Recalling the story of human creation from the Book of Genesis, he recalls the Lord made Adam and his wife Eve to be his helper and support, and from these two the human race came. In his prayer, he declares the Lord, who saw it was not good for the man to be alone, made a helper to be like himself (see Genesis 2:21–24). Tobiah proclaims he does not take Sarah as his wife out of lust, but with faithfulness. He prays for the Lord to send down mercy on him and her, granting that they will grow old together and be blessed with many children. Together they said, "Amen, amen!" and went to bed for the night.

An amusing interlude takes place as Raguel, fearing Tobiah would die and he (Raguel) would be the laughingstock among the people, digs a grave with the help of his servants. When he finishes, he tells his wife to send one of her maids to see if Tobiah is still alive. If he died, he wants to bury him without anyone knowing about it. The maid finds Tobiah and Sarah sleeping together. The family and servants then praise the Lord for making them happy. Raguel prays, saying what he feared did not happen. He sends his servants out to fill in the grave before anyone knows about it.

Raguel tells Edna to bake many loaves of bread, and he brings two steers and four rams and orders his servants to slaughter them and prepare for the feast. He tells Tobiah he must stay with them for fourteen days, eating and drinking with them for bringing joy to his daughter's afflicted spirit. The usual period of wedding celebrations was seven days, but Tobiah's survival makes everyone doubly happy. Tobiah's family will later celebrate the wedding feast for the usual seven days.

When Raguel sends Tobiah on his journey home, he promises to give him half of what he has and tells him the other half will be his when he and his wife die. With the bond of marriage comes a family bond with Tobiah and the family of Sarah. Raguel declares he is Tobiah's father and Edna is his mother, now and forever.

In chapter 9, Tobiah sends Raphael (Azariah), four servants, and two camels to Gabael to give him the bond, receive the money, and bring him along to the wedding celebration. He knows his father will be conscious of his time away, and if he delays even a single day, it would cause his father great grief. Raphael, with the four servants and two camels, goes to Gabael's house, stays with him, gives him the bond, and informs him about the invitation to the wedding celebration. Gabael counts out the moneybags with the seals, packs them on the camels, and early the next morning travels to the wedding celebration.

Upon entering Raguel's house, they find Tobiah reclining at table. He leaps up and greets Gabael who weeps and blesses him, addressing him as a good and noble child, a son of a righteous and charitable man. He prays the Lord will bless Tobiah, his wife Sarah, and her parents. He praises God for allowing him to witness the very image of Tobit in his son, Tobiah.

Lectio Divina

Spend 8 to 10 minutes in silent contemplation of the following passage:

Tobiah's prayer on his wedding night is often used as a first reading at weddings. Unfortunately, the Sacramentary for weddings leaves out a very important part of the prayer. It occurs at the end of the prayer when the author writes, "They said together, 'Amen, amen!'"

Although it is not in the Sacramentary, many add this vital ending to show both are one in praying together. Spouses who pray together often find themselves blessed by God.

✠ *What can I learn from this passage?*

Day 2: The Healing of Tobit (10—11)

The scene shifts back to the anxious parents of Tobiah, who fear for the life of their son when he did not appear as expected. Tobit, although apprehensive, is a bit more optimistic than his wife. He wonders if Tobiah has been detained or if Gabael has died and there is no one to give him the money. Believing Tobiah has died, Tobit's wife weeps and wails over her son. Tobit tries to comfort his wife, telling her not to worry, saying Tobiah is safe and is probably detained in taking care of some business. He believes the kinsman traveling with Tobiah is trustworthy. Anna becomes angry with Tobit, telling him to be still and not try to deceive her into thinking Tobiah is alive. Each day, she would rush out to watch the road taken by her son. She ate nothing. After sunset, she would return home and wail and weep throughout the night, never sleeping.

In the meanwhile, the fourteen days of celebration for the marriage ended, and Tobiah begs Raguel to send him home since his parents must believe they will never see him again. Raguel begs Tobiah to remain with him, saying he would send messengers to his father to give him news about Tobiah. Tobiah insists he be sent back to his father.

Raguel hands over to Tobiah his wife, Sarah, and half of his property: male and female slaves, oxen and sheep, donkeys and camels, clothing, money, and household goods. Embracing Tobiah, he bids him farewell and a safe journey. He prays the Lord of heaven will grant prosperity to him and his wife and prays to see Tobiah's children before he dies. He tells Sarah to honor her father-in-law and mother-in-law, because they are now as much related as the parents who gave her birth. Wishing his daughter peace, he tells her he wants to hear a good report about her as long as he lives.

Edna, addressing Tobiah, prays the Lord will bring him back safely. She, like her husband, hopes to live long enough to see grandchildren. She entrusts

her daughter to Tobiah, telling him never to cause her grief. She reminds Tobiah she is now his mother and Sarah is his sister, and she prays they will all prosper. She kisses them both and sets them safely on their trip.

Tobiah leaves filled with joy and blessing the Lord of heaven and earth for making his journey so successful. Blessing Raguel and Edna, he professes he has been commanded by the Lord to honor them all the days of his life.

In chapter 11, as the travelers near a town named Kaserin, opposite Nineveh, Raphael urges Tobiah to rush on ahead of his wife to prepare the house. As Raphael and Tobiah rush ahead, Raphael tells Tobiah to take the gall in his hand. The faithful dog ran along behind them.

When Anna, who was watching the road, saw Tobiah coming, she shouted to Tobit to tell him his son and the man who traveled with him were coming. Before Tobiah came to his father, Raphael instructed him to apply the gall to his father's eyes, promising the medicine will shrink the white scales which will then peel off his eyes so Tobit will again see the light of day.

Anna runs out to Tobiah first and embraces him, weeping and saying now that she has seen her son, she is ready to die. Tobit stumbles through the courtyard gate to Tobiah who, with the fish gall in his hand, blows into Tobit's eyes. Holding his father firmly and telling him to have courage, he applies the medicine to his father's eyes, causing them to sting. Using both hands, he peels the white scales from the corners of Tobit's eyes. Tobit cries out weeping because he could see his son, the light of his eyes.

Tobit praises the Lord and all the Lord's holy angels. He notes God once afflicted him and God now has mercy on him. He proclaims he can now see his son, Tobiah. Tobiah tells his father about his successful journey and the return of the money and informs him he married Raguel's daughter who is soon to arrive, being near the gates of Nineveh.

At the news, Tobit goes out to greet his daughter-in-law. When the people of Nineveh see him walking so briskly with no one leading him by the hand, they are amazed. Tobit proclaims to all of them the Lord had shown mercy and opened his eyes. When Tobit meets Sarah, he blesses and welcomes her as a daughter. He blesses God, Sarah's father and mother, Tobiah, and Sarah and welcomes her into her home.

All the Jews in Nineveh rejoice. The legendary Ahiqar and his nephew Nadin, also rejoice with Tobit. In the story of Tobit, the author writes as though the betrayal of Ahiqar had not yet happened. Everyone celebrated Tobiah's wedding for seven days, and he received many gifts.

Lectio Divina

Spend 8 to 10 minutes in silent contemplation of the following passage:

Tobit and Anna felt great anxiety when Tobiah did not arrive as expected. The passage reminds us of our human condition. Faith does not remove the anxiety many people feel when a relative or friend is sick, or someone is missing, or we experience some physical pain or distress. Mary, the mother of Jesus, said to Jesus when he was lost as a twelve-year-old for three days in Jerusalem, "Your father and I have been looking for you with great anxiety" (Luke 2:48). When people of faith experience anxiety, they resort to prayer.

✠ *What can I learn from this passage?*

Day 3: Raphael Reveals His Identity (12)

When the wedding celebration ended, Tobit instructs Tobiah to pay the promised wages and bonus to the man who traveled with him. Tobiah asks how much he should pay, suggesting it would be well to give Raphael half the wealth he brought back with him. Since he brought Tobiah safely home and healed Sarah and Tobit, Tobiah believes this would be a bonus Raphael certainly deserves. The amount Tobiah proposes would be half of the money from Gabael and half of the wealth he received from Raguel. Tobit, who already showed himself to be a generous person, immediately agrees. Tobiah then offers Raphael half of the wealth from their trip as his wages.

Speaking to Tobiah and Tobit privately, Raphael directs them to bless and thank the Lord in song before everyone for the good things the Lord has done for them. He stresses his message by repeating it a second time, telling them to proclaim with honor all the deeds of God and not to weaken in continually offering thanks to God.

Raphael adds a short list of wisdom sayings to his message. Aware Tobit

once served a king and learned many secrets of the royal court, Raphael declares a king's secret should remain a secret, but people must reveal the works of God with due honor. He tells them if they perform good works, evil will not conquer them. Prayer with fasting is good. Almsgiving with righteousness is better than wealth with wickedness and better than storing up gold. Almsgiving saves people from spiritual death and purges all sins. The almsgiver will enjoy a full life. Those who sin and perform evil deeds are their own worst enemies.

Raphael informs Tobit and Tobiah he will now reveal the whole truth to them. He repeats his wise saying about keeping a king's secret and declaring the works of God with due honor. He will now declare the works of God. He tells Tobit and Tobiah he presented their prayer and the prayer of Sarah before the Glory of God, and he likewise presented Tobit's good deed of burying the dead before God. When Tobit promptly left his dinner to bury a dead man, the Lord sent Raphael to test Tobit. The test refers to Tobit's blindness. Raphael adds the Lord also sent him to heal Tobit and Sarah. He finally reveals he is Raphael, one of the seven angels who serve before the Glory of the Lord. The names of two other angels are found in the Book of Daniel, namely Gabriel (Daniel 8:16) and Michael (Daniel 10:13). Some commentators consider the number seven in this passage to be a symbolic number representing perfection.

Tobit and Tobiah respond in the customary manner before a heavenly visitation by prostrating in fear. Raphael gives the customary response in such circumstances, telling them not to fear and offering a greeting of peace. He again bids them to bless God. The call to praise God will be repeated by Raphael as though it is a refrain in the midst of his message. Acknowledging he was not acting on his own but by God's will, Raphael again tells them to praise and thank God. Since the people of ancient times did not believe angels had to eat or drink, Raphael decides to tell them his act of eating and drinking during the trip was a vision. He announces he will soon ascend and directs them to write down all that happened to them as he ascends out of sight. Since the ancients believed God lived above the firmament, any form of disappearance would appear to be an ascension.

Tobit and Tobiah kept singing praises and offering thanks for all God did for them in the presence of the angel of the Lord.

Lectio Divina

Spend 8 to 10 minutes in silent contemplation of the following passage:

When we pray the Lord's Prayer, we name God and say, "hallowed (holy) be your name." In our prayer in honor of Mary, we pray, "Hail Mary, full of grace." Both prayers begin as prayers of praise. For Raphael, Tobit, and Tobiah, prayers of praise are esteemed as a high form of prayer. Whenever we pray, we begin by offering prayers of praise as the ancients did.

✠ *What can I learn from this passage?*

Day 4: Tobit's Song of Praise (13)

The author pens a hymn of praise. Although the story in the Book of Tobit takes place in Nineveh during the period of an Assyrian exile of the people of the northern kingdom of Israel, the author is writing from the vantage point of a second-century Jerusalem, which means he already knows the history and difficulties the Israelites experienced from the Assyrian exile to his present day. The hymn has two divisions. The first division (verses 1–8) is a song of praise that reflects many of the themes found in the psalms and speaks of God's mercy and sings praise to the Lord. The second division (verses 9–18) is addressed to Jerusalem and recalls the prophets who foretold a new and ideal Jerusalem.

Tobit begins by singing a song of joy and praise for the Lord. He will repeat his joy and praise for the Lord throughout his prayer. He blesses the Lord, whose kingship will last forever. The Israelites considered the Lord to be the true king of Israel. From his own experiences, he can say the Lord afflicts people and shows mercy. The Lord casts people down to Hades and brings them back from the great abyss. He is not speaking of death but a dark, physical, and emotional experience such as he had with his blindness.

Tobit proclaims nothing can be snatched from the hand of God. Since he is praying in exile, he urges the Israelites to offer praise to the greatness of God in the midst of the nations because the Lord is their God and Father forever. Following a basic theme of the prophets and the psalms, Tobit notes the Lord afflicts the people when they sin, but the Lord also relents and treats them

mercifully when they repent. Urging the people to consider all the Lord has done for them and to offer thanks, he bids them to bless and exalt the Lord, the King of the ages.

Tobit declares he can still thank the Lord in his captivity and proclaim the power and majesty of God to the sinful nation of his exile. Urging the people to do what is right before God who may pardon them, he exalts God, the King of heaven and rejoices in the Lord all the days of his life. He invites everyone to join him in singing praise to God in Jerusalem.

At the mention of the name “Jerusalem,” the song turns its attention to the holy city. Tobit speaks of Jerusalem as though he is speaking of a person. He predicts the Lord will afflict Jerusalem, the holy city, for her sinful works but will show pity for the children of the righteous. He urges Jerusalem to offer thanks to the Lord with righteousness and praise the King of the ages so that her tabernacle (the Temple) may be rebuilt in her with joy. The author of the Book of Tobit, speaking as though he is living before the return of the Israelites from exile, already knows the Temple has been built.

Tobit prays the Lord will bring joy to all who are captives in the city and cherish for generations to come all within her who are distressed. Jerusalem will be a beacon of light for many nations, leading them from faraway lands to her holy name. The nations will bear gifts for the King of heaven, and generation after generation will offer joyful worship in her, making her name great forever and ever.

Tobit curses those who despise, scorn, hate, abuse, or destroy the city. He curses those who tear down its walls and tower and set fires to her homes. He calls for a blessing on those who respect Jerusalem. Tobit calls upon the city to rejoice over the children of the righteous who will be gathered together and will bless the Lord of the ages. He praises those who love her, rejoice in her peace, and grieve over her afflictions. They will rejoice over Jerusalem and witness her joy forever. Jerusalem will be rebuilt as the Lord’s house forever. Tobit will rejoice if a remnant of his offspring survives to witness the glory of Jerusalem and offer thanks to the King of heaven.

Tobit pictures the ideal Jerusalem. Its gates will be sapphire and emerald, its walls will be made of precious stones, its towers built with gold, its battlements with purest gold, and its streets paved with rubies and stones of Ophir.

Tobit pictures the city itself rejoicing. Her gates shall sing hymns of joy and all houses will cry out, “Hallelujah.” He again offers an eternal blessing to the Lord. In Jerusalem, the blessed will bless the holy name forever and ever.

Lectio Divina

Spend 8 to 10 minutes in silent contemplation of the following passage:

The Israelites of the Old Testament believed the Lord caused everything that happened in life. If they were suffering, then God was angry and caused them to suffer, not to destroy them, but for the sake of repentance. In the New Testament era, people realize good and bad things happen in one's life, not because God directly wills it, but as a natural flow of life. Believers, however, pray for healing, knowing the Lord can and will help.

✱ *What can I learn from this passage?*

Day 5: Epilogue (14)

Although the author of the Book of Tobit writes in this chapter as though he is predicting the future, he is writing from a period in history where these events already transpired. In apocalyptic writings, an author who has lived or is living through specific historical events writes as though he is living before the events take place, which makes him appear to be predicting the future. In this chapter, the author is using the same technique. He will speak of events taking place from the Assyrian conquest of the northern kingdom to the era after the Israelites' exile in Babylon. He is writing during the second century, when the Temple was restored and many of the people had returned from exile.

The epilogue tells us Tobit died at 112 and was buried with honor in Nineveh. A long life was a sign of God's favor. When Tobit was fifty-eight years old, he lost his sight, and after he was healed, he lived a life of prosperity. Throughout his life, he was generous in giving alms. He continued to fear the Lord and often thanked the Lord, spoken of in the text as the “divine Majesty.”

On his deathbed, Tobit commands Tobiah to take his seven sons and the rest of his family and flee into Media. He claims he believes the words of

Nahum and the prophets about the destruction of Nineveh. Nahum was a minor prophet who wrote in the seventh century before Christ. All will take place as the prophets declared. Tobit tells Tobiah he will find greater safety in Media than in Assyria or Babylon. Babylon was destroyed many years after the destruction of Assyria, but the author of Tobit seems to put them in close proximity to each other.

Tobit predicts his kindred and all who dwell in Israel will be scattered and taken into exile. The land of Israel, including Samaria (the northern kingdom) and Jerusalem will then become a wilderness. He predicts the house of God (the Temple) will become desolate and be burned, but God will show mercy and bring the people back to the land of Israel. The house of God will be rebuilt, but it will not be like the first Temple until the appointed times. After the exile, all of the Israelites will return from captivity and will rebuild Jerusalem and the Temple, as the prophets foretold. All the nations will cast away their idols and reverence God in truth.

Tobit declares all nations will praise the Lord of Israel, and all the Israelites faithful to the Lord will be gathered together and come to Jerusalem and dwell in security in the land of Abraham. Those who love God sincerely will rejoice, and those who sin will disappear completely from the land.

Tobit commands Tobiah and his children to serve God sincerely and live a life faithful to the Lord, instructing their children to do what is just, give alms, remain faithful to the Lord, and bless the Lord at all times. He again reminds Tobiah to leave Nineveh, saying the day he buries his mother he should immediately leave the city. Tobiah is aware of the immense wickedness and treachery in the city, where the people sin without shame.

Tobit seeks to instill the rewards of almsgiving into Tobiah and his seven sons. Referring to the story of Ahiqar and Nadin (found in the first chapter of this book), the author of the Book of Tobit recalls how Nadin betrayed his uncle Ahiqar after Ahiqar reared him. Ahiqar had to flee and hide in a cave. Nadin's crime brought him into everlasting darkness (death), and Ahiqar came out of his cave into the light, no longer a fugitive. Tobit states it was Ahiqar's almsgiving that saved him from death. Tobit urges his children to witness the rewards of almsgiving and the punishment of the wicked.

Tobit died and was buried with honor. When Tobiah's mother died, Tobiah buried her next to his father and then departed with his wife and children for Ecbatana in Media with his father-in-law, Raguel. He cared for his father-in-law and mother-in-law until they died and buried them in Ecbatana. He inherited the estates of Raguel and Tobit. Tobiah died a highly respected man at 117. Before he died, he witnessed the destruction of Nineveh by the king of Media and praised God for all the Lord did against the Ninevites and the Assyrians.

Lectio Divina

Spend 8 to 10 minutes in silent contemplation of the following passage:

The Book of Tobit ends well, continuing to stress the value of almsgiving. Jesus said, "But when you give alms, do not let your left hand know what your right is doing, so that your almsgiving may be secret. And your Father who sees in secret will repay you" (Matthew 6:3–4). God blesses those who share their gifts with others, but donors should never brag about their generosity or they will lose merit before God. Tobit was highly rewarded because he readily gave alms to those in need.

✠ *What can I learn from this passage?*

Review Questions

1. What were the dangers Tobiah faced in marrying Sarah, and how were they overcome?
2. How was Tobit's blindness healed?
3. What did Raphael do for Tobiah?
4. How did Tobit know the future so well?



About the Author

William A. Anderson, DMin, PhD, is a presbyter of the diocese of Wheeling-Charleston, West Virginia. A director of retreats and parish missions, professor, catechist, spiritual director, and a former pastor, he has written extensively on pastoral, spiritual, and religious subjects. Father Anderson earned his doctor of ministry degree from St. Mary's Seminary & University in Baltimore and his doctorate in sacred theology from Duquesne University in Pittsburgh.



Liguori Catholic Bible Study Series

Introduction to the Bible: *Overview, Historical Context, and Cultural Perspectives* • 821196

OLD TESTAMENT

Pentateuch I: *Creation and Covenant* (Genesis and Exodus) • 821318

Pentateuch II: *Shaping the Israelite Community*
(Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy) • 821325

Historical Books I: *Joshua, Judges, Ruth, 1 and 2 Samuel* • 821332

Historical Books II: *1 and 2 Kings, 1 and 2 Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah* • 821349

Biblical Novellas: *Tobit, Judith, Esther, 1 and 2 Maccabees* • 821387

Wisdom Books: *Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs, Wisdom, Sirach (Ben Sira)* • 821394

Prophets I: *Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations, Baruch* • 821356

Prophets II: *Ezekiel and Daniel* • 821363

Prophets III: *Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi* • 821370

NEW TESTAMENT

The Gospel of Matthew: *Proclaiming the Ministry of Jesus* • 821202

The Gospel of Mark: *Revealing the Mystery of Jesus* • 821219

The Gospel of Luke: *Salvation for All Humanity* • 821226

The Gospel of John: *The Word Became Flesh* • 821233

The Acts of the Apostles: *Good News for All People* • 821240

Letters to the Romans and Galatians: *Reconciling the Old and New Covenants* • 821257

Letters to the Corinthians: *Gifts of the Holy Spirit* • 821264

Paul's Early and Prison Letters: *1 and 2 Thessalonians, Philippians, Colossians, Ephesians, Philemon* • 821271

Pastoral Letters and The Letter to the Hebrews: *1 and 2 Timothy, Titus, Hebrews* • 821288

Universal Letters: *James, 1 and 2 Peter, 1, 2, and 3 John, Jude* • 821295

The Book of Revelation: *Hope in the Midst of Persecution* • 821301

To order, visit your local bookstore, call 800-325-9521, or visit us at liguori.org.