

Appendix 2C, V

TOBIT¹

The apocryphal book of *Tobit* is an account of a family's existence in exile after an Assyrian deportation from the 'north.' The date(s) of its writing is/are unknown. (It perhaps is significant that with chapter four its narration changes from first to third person.) *Tobit's* theological embroidery and stated long lifespans are not greater, necessarily, than other, canonical scripture. The main criticisms relate to (a) its ordering of key events, the dates of which are subject to a number of uncertainties, and (b) its descriptions of Assyrian monarchs by singular versions of their proper names.

The Narrative provides citations at regular intervals and is followed by an explorative chronology. The spelling of obvious recognizable names is upgraded in the narrative, e.g. *Nephtali* to Naphtali, *Nineve* to Nineveh, and *Ecbatane* to Ecbatana.²

Narrative

[Naphtali...Asael-Gabael-Aduel-Ananiel+Debora-Tobiel -] *Tobias/Tobiah* I states that he was "but young" in Israel, when "all the ['north] tribes revolted...and the house of my father Naphtali sacrificed unto...Baal..." He and Anna,³ with their son, *Tobias/Tobiah* II, were led out of "Thisbe, at the right hand of that city properly called Naphtali...in Galilee," in a captivity of Assyrian King "Enemessar." *Tobiah* I first was taken to Nineveh, where he was the king's "purveyor." Business took him to Media; there he deposited 10 silver talents personally in trust with one Gabael, "brother of Gabrias," at Rages/Rhages/Ragau, a city about 150 miles northeast of Ecbatana.⁴

Tobit 1:1, 8, 9, 13, 14.

Tobiah I reports that when Sennacherib gained the Assyrian throne there were "troubles with his [Sennacherib's] estate" which prevented *Tobiah* from traveling from Nineveh to Media for an unstated period.⁵ Near the end of Sennacherib's rule, one "of the Ninevites" reported to authorities certain irregular activity on *Tobiah's* part, specifically, burying indigent dead brethren. *Tobiah* I, "understanding that [he] was sought for to be put to death," went into hiding;⁶ but "there passed not five and fifty days" of *Tobiah* I's retreat, when Sennacherib was assassinated.

"Sarchedonus" ascended Assyria's throne. *Tobiah* I's nephew, Achiacharus, the son of *Tobiah's* brother, Anael, was made cupbearer, keeper of the signet, and administrator of all of the king's "accounts...and affairs." Achiacharus had supported *Tobiah* during his

¹"Tobit," derived from *Tobijah/Tobiah*, appears used more frequently as a name in the 'north. *Tobijah/Tobiah* figured later in charged, heavily political conflicts during the reformation, which timeline is contained in volume three.

²Other recognizable names--primarily, *Azarias/Azariah*, *Ananias/Hananiah*, *Samaias/Shemaiah* and *Jonathas/Jonathan*--are of interest relative to issues of priesthood lines; refer to Appendices 3B, I and 3B, II, Attachments 4 and 6, under the respective names.

³"his [*Tobiah* II's] mother," who died after *Tobiah* I; *Tobit* 14:12.

⁴(a) Appendix 2C, VI ("Judith") -- King "Nabuchodonosor" made war with king Arphaxad in the great plain, which is the plain in the borders of *Ragau*. (b) Other uses of *Asael/Asahel*: (1) See (Zeruah -) *Asahel*, Appendix 2A, Attachment 1, "Jesse, Descendancy of;" (2) a Levite teacher under king Jehoshaphat; (3) a temple commissioner for king Hezekiah (*2 Chronicles* 31:13); and (d) father of a Jonathan who opposed the post-exilic direction to put away foreign wives (*Ezra* 10). (c) *Ananiel* not found elsewhere in this form; however, if the last consonant of was *h*, the name would fall within a wide range of variations *Anani* to *Hananiah*--see Appendix 3B.I, under each. (d) The only other Deborah of mention is the prophetess/judge, also of Naphtali (Appendix 1D, II). (e) Appendix 2A, *Ecbatana* (some five miles S of present-day Tehran).

⁵This would have been c. the Merodach's rebellion against Assyria and his claiming kingship of Babylon, and the coming to power in Media of Dioces; refer to Appendix 2D timeline.

⁶Verse 2:10 indicates this may have been in "Elymais"/Elam (Appendix 2A, *Elam*); Merodach had Elamite support.

retreat; and now, through his influence, Tobiah was freed to return home. Tobit was reunited with his wife and son at the time of "Pentecost" (a later name of the Festival of Harvest or Weeks).

Tobit 1:15, 20-22; 2:1.

At age 58 Tobiah I developed an eye affliction ("a whiteness" came into his eyes). His vision was severely impaired for eight years.

Tobiah I had relatives in Ecbatana--Edna and Raguel, cousin of Tobiah I's son (Tobiah II). Edna and Raguel had a daughter, Sara, an only child, who "belonged to [Tobiah II] by right of inheritance." Sara had been betrothed seven times, but in each instance the prospective groom had died before the marriage was consummated.

Tobit 6:10; 14:1; 3:7-8.

Tobiah I's wife took in work to support the family. After some time he decided to send their son to retrieve the silver in Media, for which deposit he possessed a written receipt. It was determined that Tobiah II best have a companion for the long journey; and Tobiah II found and introduced to his father a gentleman who initially called himself 'Raphael,' and who claimed to both know and once to have lodged with their kinsman, Gabael. When introduced, Tobiah I questioned 'Raphael' as to his tribe and family. 'Raphael' then confessed that his name actually was Azariah, and that he was "a son of Hananiah the great, and of thy [Tobiah's] brethren."

Tobiah I accepted that Azariah was both who he claimed to be and "of an honest and good stock." Tobiah I further remarked, "I know Hananiah and Jonathan, sons of that great Shemaiah...in that we went together to Jerusalem to worship..." Satisfied, Tobiah I gave Tobiah II the note for the silver and sent the two men on their way.

Tobit 2:11-12; 4:1-2, 5:2-12, 17.

One evening of the journey, while Azariah and Tobiah II were camped somewhere along the Tigris River, Azariah told Tobiah II to preserve the liver, heart and gall of a fish. Later, as they neared Rages, Azariah told Tobiah II that he was going to arrange for him to marry Sara, "because the right of inheritance doth rather appertain to thee than to any other...for she is appointed unto thee from the beginning [start]." "Moreover," Azariah added, "I suppose that she shall bear thee children." He reassured Tobiah II that a sacrificial smoke made of the fish heart and liver would arrest the evil spirit that had caused Sara's seven prior potential mates to meet premature death.

Tobit 6:1-4, 9-12, 16-17.

Edna and Raguel were overjoyed to see their Naphtaliim relatives. Upon seeing Sara, Tobiah II urged Azariah to "speak of those things of which thou didst talk in the way, and let this business be discharged." Agreement to the betrothal easily was reached, and Raguel wrote and sealed an instrument of covenants. Raguel gave thanks, that mercy had been granted "two that were the only children begotten [remaining?] of their fathers," and he produced a 14-day wedding feast. Tobiah II, concerned over the long passage of time and his waiting parents, gave Azariah the receipt to take to Gabael in the interim, to retrieve the silver. A servant and two camels were provided for the trip.⁷ The evening of Azariah's arrival at Rages, Gabael turned over "the bags, which were sealed up," and the next morning they set out together to return to the wedding festival. Back in Nineveh, Tobiah II's mother had all but given up hope that he still was alive.

Tobit 7; 8:17; 9; 10:4.

Raguel gave Tobiah II one-half of all his goods, servants and cattle as a bridepiece and blessed the newlyweds on their way. Azariah accompanied them, and as they neared home Azariah told Tobiah II a way in which his father's eye affliction might be cured. Tobiah II followed Azariah's instructions. As his father stumbled to the door to greet him, Tobiah II straked the preserved fish gall across his father's eyes, which caused them to smart. Tobiah I rubbed at his eyes; the whiteness pulled away, and his eyesight was restored after a loss of eight years.

⁷ The round-trip from Ecbatana to Rages if by camel would have taken between 7 and 10 days, depending upon how hard one rode.

“And Achiacharus, and Nasbas, his brother’s son, came,” and a second wedding feast of seven days was held. *Tobit* 10:10-11, 18-19; 11:11-13; 14:2.

When it came time for Azariah to take his leave, the Tobiahs gifted him with one-half of all the brideprice that had been received from Raguel. Azariah then took the Tobiahs aside and privately revealed that he was one of the “seven holy [ones]⁸ which present the prayers...and which go in and out before the glory of the Holy One.” Azariah reassured the overwhelmed Tobiahs not to fear, that all would go well, and that he was leaving to go “up” to him who had sent him; he directed, however, that they should “write all things done in a book.” *Tobit* 12:5; 15, 20.

Sara and Tobiah II had six sons. Tobiah I in his old age advised Tobiah II, “Go to Media, my son, for I surely believe those things which Jonah the prophet spake of Nineveh--that it shall be overthrown; and that for a time peace shall rather be in Media.” Tobiah I gave up the ghost at the reported age of 158. “And when Anna his [Tobiah II’s] mother was dead, he buried her with his father.”

Tobiah II took his family to “Ecbatana to Raguel his father in law, where he became old with honour, and he buried his father- and mother-in-law honourably, and he inherited their substance, and his father’s.” Tobiah II died “at Ecbatana in Media, being one hundred and seven and twenty years old. But before he died he heard of the destruction of Nineveh, which was taken by Nebuchodonosor[*Nabopolassar?*] and Assuerus[*Cyaxares I?*],⁹ and before his death he rejoiced over Nineveh.” *Tobit* 14:3-4; 11-15.

Tobit supplies no subsequent data on families or descendants of the six Sara + Tobiah II sons and any sisters they might have had.

Comparative Chronology

Of the names *Tobit* employs for Assyrian kings, *Enemessar* seems to fit Shalmaneser V. Per established scholarship, the next Assyrian king after Shalmaneser V was Sargon II. Instead, *Tobit* next refers to Sennacherib and then refers to Sennacherib’s successor-son as *Sarchedonus*, instead of Esar-haddon as accepted. Yet *Tobit*’s description of “Sarchedonus” does appear to fit Esar-haddon, who did succeed Sennacherib after “two of [Sennacherib’s other] sons killed him and...fled into the mountains of Ararath”¹⁰--as *Tobit* says also of *Sarchedonus*. (Further, Sargon’s sonship remains in question.¹¹)

The chronological exploration below has been drawn against the global timeline.¹² As will be noted, Tobiah I could not both have lived 158 years and died “before the fall of Nineveh.” The projected death date of (744 - 158 =) 586 b.c. coincides, however, with the ultimate sacking of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar’s forces. Also coincidentally, Tobiah II’s

⁸ The word *ones* has been substituted, here, for the text word, *angels*, in consideration of nuances of translation--see Appendix 4D, “Some Terms of Interest,” “messenger” v. “angel.”

⁹ Concerning the foregoing name versions: (a) the “Nabuchodonosor” of *Judith* also is equatable with *Nabopolassar*--see Appendix 2C, VI, “Judith,” *Summary Note* (2); (b) *Assuerus* closely resembles *Esther*’s use of “Ahasuerus,” involved in another confusion relative to names of monarchs in the descendancy of Media + Persia [Anshan]--refer to Appendix 3A, V, B.

¹⁰ *Tobit* 1:21--corroborated by an Esar-haddon inscription (*Aid*, p. 528). Part of this confusion may have stemmed from a similar competition between two of Esar-haddon’s sons after he died, which resulted in a division of power--Ashurbanipal over Assyria and Shamash-shum-ukin in Babylon. (There exists, also, the possibility touched on in other sections of this work: that sonship when patriarchally listed necessarily does not reveal males’ maternal relationships. ‘Sarchedonus’ has been taken by one school to denote Ashurbanipal, based on the Greek *Sardanapallos* [*Aid*, p. 142]--but Ashurbanipal was Esar-haddon’s son, Sennacherib’s *grandson*.)

¹¹ The “diversity of opinion clearly derives from the fragmentary nature of the historical sources and their apparent inconsistency,” and “the manner in which Sargon came to the throne and as to his lineage or parentage.” *Aid*, p. 1449.

¹² Appendix 2D, “Calendar Year Comparison Timeline.”

stated age at death meets another notable date--Nebuchadnezzar's seizure of Jerusalem in 598/597 b.c.

| <u>Events as Given</u> | <u>Suggested Date or Avg. Global Date</u> | <u>Suggested or Stated Age at the time of the event.</u> | |
|---|---|--|----------------------|
| | | <u>Tobiah I Age</u> | <u>Tobiah II Age</u> |
| | <i>b.c.</i> | <i>b.c.</i> | <i>b.c.</i> |
| Date of Tobiah I birth. (Tiglath-Pileser III ruler of Assyria.) | 746 | | |
| Shalmaneser V (<i>Enemessar?</i>) began sieges of Samaria region | 725 | | |
| Date of Tobiah II birth | 724 | 22 | |
| Deportation of Tobiah family. Tobit I purveyor of <i>Enemessar</i> . | ? ¹³ | ? | ? |
| Samaria fell. "[S]argon is often credited with having completed the conquest...begun by Shalmaneser V." ¹⁴ | 722 | | |
| Sargon II ruled Assyria; deportations. Tobit I defied Assyrian law and buried dead brethren. | 721 | | |
| Sennacherib reign began. Tobiah I forced into hiding. | 705/4 | 41/42 | 19/20 |
| Coinciding this chronology with stated age, Tobiah I contracted his eye disease: | 688 | 57/58 | |
| Sennacherib assassinated. | 681 | | |
| Esar-haddon (<i>Sarchedonus?</i>) began reign. Tobiah I's nephew became Assyrian administrator; Tobiah freed from hiding. (Tobiah II's journey with <i>Raphael/Azarias/Azariah</i> to <i>Rages/Rhages/Ragau</i> , etc.) | 681/680 | | |
| Tobiah II's return to Nineveh; Tobiah I's sight restored "eight years" from onset of disease. | 680 | 66 | |
| Death of Tobiah I "before" fall of Nineveh--this date and age estimate are derivable under one school of dating. ¹⁵ | 638 | 108 | |
| Nineveh fell to alliance of Nabopolassar and Media's Cyaxares I, 'standard' date: | 612 ¹⁶ | | |
| Death of Tobiah II --"after" fall of Nineveh. | 597 | 127 | |

¹³ Assyrian deportations from the north through Samaria culminated c. 722/721 b.c., but how many and when they were made are unknown--some as early as Tiglath-Pileser III and the time of northern king Pekah.

¹⁴ *Aid*, p. 1449.

¹⁵ See next footnote.

¹⁶ 632 b.c., also found advanced as the year of Nineveh's fall, reflects the range of dating differences relative to this era.