# Introduction

## *Structure of this commentary*

The Tobit narrative is attested in both Hebrew and Aramaic (in the fragmentary transmission of the Qumran texts) as well as in three Greek ($G^{I}$, $G^{II}$ and $G^{III}$) and two Latin versions ("Vetus Latina" and "Vulgate"). Given the fragmentary character of the Qumran texts, a commentary that aims to do justice to the narrative as a whole has to begin with the Greek tradition. As the long form $G^{II}$, attested mainly by Sinaiticus, represents the oldest and almost complete version of the narrative and the sections missing there, 4:7–19b and 13:6c–10 can be relatively easily reconstructed with the aid of the short text $G^{I}$ and the Vetus Latina,[1] $G^{II}$ is the version that will be used as the starting point for the present commentary.[2] Unless otherwise indicated, references are thus to the long text $G^{II}$; the missing verses, 4:7–19b and 13:6c–10, have been reconstructed accordingly. Chapter and verse numbers follow the edition of the Septuagint by Robert Hanhart (1983).

The individual sections of the commentary are structured as follows: After a translation of the text according to $G^{II}$, notes on text and translation are given including brief references to the short text $G^{I}$ as well as to the Qumran tradition and the Vulgate, focusing on those variants relevant to the content of the story. The translations of the Qumran texts and of $G^{I}$, as well as of the Vulgate are my own. To keep the scope of this commentary within reasonable bounds, reference must be made to the following readily accessible publications for a detailed presentation of these texts and their relevant translations: A comprehensive presentation of all the Qumran texts with a philological focus is given by Joseph Fitzmyer[3] and Michaela Hallermayer[4]. Fitzmyer in his commentary (2003) presents parallel translations of both $G^{II}$ and $G^{I}$.[5] An English translation of the Vulgate version can be found in Skemp's work on that version.[6]

Further discussion of the text follows the IECOT series format and makes a clear differentiation between synchronic and diachronic ways of looking at the texts.[7] Under the heading "Synchronic analysis," the first main part of each commentary section looks mainly at what the text reveals directly about its structure, its narrative style, significant motifs, and its theological stance. Another main part then examines diachronic aspects of the text. Since a commentary on the narrative as a whole has to work with a translation, the transmission of the book allows for only limited literary-critical conclusions. Given this background, the present

1 See Weeks, Restoring; Weeks, Reconstructing.
2 Unless otherwise indicated, all verse references refer to $G^{II}$; the verses missing in Sinaiticus have been reconstructed.
3 Fitzmyer, Tobit (DJD); see also the author's commentary.
4 Hallermayer, Text. All readings of the Qumran Tobit tradition are based on this edition.
5 A list of the variants of $G^{III}$ can be found in Weeks, Third Greek Version.
6 Skemp, Vulgate (2000).
7 See the Editors' Preface.

work does not provide a detailed literary analysis in its commentary sections, but offers some basic information on this aspect and a "large-scale" model for the book's literary history, especially in the introduction. However, references to older biblical texts and the work's tradition-historical contexts are particularly informative for the diachronic structure of the tradition. Each chapter concludes with a synthesis giving a concise summary of the preceding discussion.

The most important insights on the development from long text $G^{II}$ to short text $G^{I}$, the Vulgate, and post-antiquity Jewish traditions are presented in the Introduction so as not to expand the scope of the commentary unduly. A continuous commentary on the Vulgate, as well as a detailed presentation of the post-antiquity texts and their textual developments must be left for later studies.

Thus, the focus of the commentary itself—in addition to a synchronic view—is on the book's tradition history. The introductory section, however, deals with important developments in the textual history with reference to matters of content besides the more customary "introductory questions".

Since the publication of the fragments from Qumran, interest in Tobit has grown steadily.[8] In order to keep this commentary within manageable bounds, it was not possible for me to engage in a detailed discussion and evaluation of all the numerous works on Tobit. I would like to take this opportunity to thank all my colleagues for their contributions, even though it was not always possible to discuss their work extensively.

## *Introduction*

The book of Tobit tells the story of the pious and righteous Tobit, who, following the Assyrian conquest, has to live in the Diaspora. There, he is blinded through no fault of his own, and miraculously healed by divine help, mediated by an angel. This plot line is set parallel to the story of Sarah, who is also in dire straits: an evil demon has already killed seven men who wanted to marry her before the wedding, so that she is now exposed to shame and mockery. God sends the angel Raphael, appearing as a young man named Azariah. Raphael/Azariah instructs Tobias, Tobit's son, to use the heart, liver and gall of a fish to free Tobit and Sarah from their sufferings. Tobias and Sarah even become a romantic couple and can thus fulfill the commandment of endogamy, which, for the narrator, is an important part of the Mosaic Law. Ultimately, however, the return to the Holy Land and the magnificently built city of Jerusalem is expected. The individual fate of the protagonists serves as a paradigm for the nation's destiny and serves as an exemplar for its salvation.

8 See the relevant research overviews by Moore, Scholarly Issues (1989); Spencer, Recent Research (1999); Perrin, Almanac (2014).

## The Text's Transmission

Overview

The history of the text's transmission is complex. In addition to the Hebrew and Aramaic Qumran fragments, there are three different Greek text forms (the so-called short text $G^{I}$, the long text $G^{II}$, and a mixed form, $G^{III}$). Besides the Syrian, Sahidic, Ethiopic, and Armenian versions, there are also two Latin versions among the earlier translations: the Vetus Latina and Jerome's Vulgate. While the Vetus Latina displays considerable similarities to the long text $G^{II}$, Jerome's translation, though close to the Vetus Latina, has its own distinctive character. There are, furthermore, five later Hebrew versions of the text as well as an Aramaic one, which can be traced back to the Middle Ages. These are translations of Greek or Latin texts back into Hebrew resp. Aramaic, which freely reshape the tradition.[9]

Qumran

The Qumran discoveries showed clearly that the narrative was originally written in a Semitic language. In 1952, numerous individual fragments of the text in Aramaic and Hebrew were found in Cave 4. In total, fragments of four Aramaic-language scrolls are preserved (1–4) as well as a fragmentary manuscript in Hebrew (5):

1. 4QpapTob$^{a}$ ar (4Q196) is written on papyrus in late-Hasmonean script and dated to about 50 BCE. Here, twenty fragments of different lengths could be identified; thirty parts are unidentified.
2. 4QTob$^{b}$ ar (4Q197) is written on brown leather fragments. This copy was written in early-Herodian formal script and can be dated to the period between about 25 BCE and 25 CE. Five fragments of this copy have been identified; two remain unidentified.
3. 4QTob$^{c}$ ar (4Q198) consists of two fragments on thin tanned leather. The script can be classified as a late-Hasmonean or early-Herodian "book hand" with some semicursive elements and can be dated to around 50 BCE. The two fragments appear to contain parts of Tob 14; however, the second fragment is difficult to place with any certainty.
4. 4QTob$^{d}$ ar (4Q199) is represented by two single fragments on brown leather. The text is written in the Hasmonean script and can be dated to about 100 BCE. This is the oldest preserved text of Tobit.
5. 4QTob$^{e}$ hebr (4Q200), the only fragment in Hebrew, consists of nine individual fragments on leather. The script may be described as an early-Herodian formal hand, datable to between about 25 BCE and 25 CE. Altogether, eleven fragments are preserved; the identification of two fragments is uncertain.

9 A scholarly bibliography on the textual history of the book of Tobit can be included here only in the form of representative examples; on the whole topic, see the summary in Ego, art. Tobit. Aramaic (Ancient), as well as Ego, art. Tobit. Hebrew (Ancient).

Overview of the Qumran fragments 4Q196–200

| 4QpapTob[a] ar | | 4QTob[b] ar | | 4QTob[c] ar | | 4QTob[d] ar | | 4QTob[e] hebr | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 1:17 | | | | | | | | |
| 2 | 1:19–2:2 | | | | | | | | |
| 3 | 2:3 | | | | | | | | |
| 4 | 2:10–11 | | | | | | | | |
| 5 | 3:5 | 1 | 3:6–8 | | | | | 1 | 3:6 |
| 6 | 3:9–15 | | | | | | | 1 ii | 3:10–11 |
| 7 | 3:17 | | | | | | | | |
| 8 | 4:2 | | | | | | | | |
| 9 | 4:5 | | | | | | | 2 | 4:3–9 |
| 10 | 4:7 | | | | | | | | |
| 11 | 4:21–5:1 | 2 | 4:21–5:1 | | | | | 3 | 5:2 |
| 12 | 5:9 | 3 | 5:12–14 | | | | | | |
| 13 | 6:6–8 | 4 i | 5:19–6:12 | | | | | | |
| 14 i | 6:13–18 | 4 ii | 6:12–18 | | | | | | |
| 14 ii | 6:18–7:6 | 4 iii | 6:18–7:10 | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | 1 | 7:11 | | |
| 15 | 7:13 | | | | | | | | |
| | | 5 | 8:17–9:4 | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | | 4 | 10:7–9 |
| | | | | | | | | 5 | 11:10–14 |
| 16 | 12:1 | | | | | | | | |
| 17 i | 12:18–13:6 | | | | | | | 6 | 12:20–13:4 |
| 17 ii | 13:6–12 | | | | | | | 7 i | 13:13–14 |
| 18 | 13:12–14:3 | | | 1 | 14:2–6 | | | 7 ii | 13:18–14:2 |
| 19 | 14:7 | | | 2 | 14:10 (?) | 2 | 14:10 | 8 ? | |
| 20–49 ? | | 6–7 ? | | | | | | 9 | 3:3–4 |

Finally, there is a fragment of Schøyen Ms. 5234 for Tob 14:3–6.

The Qumran fragments have some characteristics typical of Qumran scribal practice. The Aramaic is classified as Middle Aramaic, similar to other non-biblical texts from Qumran, such as the Genesis Apocryphon or the Targum of Job, and datable to the period between the second century BCE and the beginning of the second century CE. The language of the Hebrew fragment, on the other hand, is an example of a late postexilic Hebrew.

A much-discussed problem since the discovery of these fragments is the question of which text form—the Aramaic or the Hebrew—is to be regarded as the original. A decision is complicated by the fact that although twenty percent of the Aramaic text

is preserved, only six percent of the Hebrew text is extant, with only a few overlaps between the two traditions, making a direct comparison of longer passages impossible. The general tendency in recent years has been to assume that the narrative was first written in Aramaic and then translated into Hebrew. An important argument favoring this understanding recognizes the narrative as part of a broader corpus of Aramaic texts from the Second Temple period containing numerous parallel motifs.[10] The translation of the text into Hebrew then lent the book greater authority.[11]

The Greek versions

The Greek versions of the story can be taken as a further stage of the textual history, namely in

- $G^{I}$—represented by Codex Vaticanus (fourth c.), Codex Alexandrinus (fifth c.), and Codex Venetus (eighth c.) and a number of minuscule manuscripts;
- $G^{II}$—represented by Codex Sinaiticus (fourth c.; missing 4:7–19b and 13:6i–10b) as well as minuscule 319 (3:6–6:16),
- $G^{III}$—represented by manuscripts 106 and 107 (limited to 6:9–12:22).[12]

Since the discovery of Codex Sinaiticus in the mid-nineteenth century, the question of the relationship between $G^{I}$ and $G^{II}$ has been one of the central topics in Tobit research. After much discussion,[13] in recent years the consensus has become increasingly established that $G^{II}$ is the older form of the text, which was revised in $G^{I}$. This is given that the Qumran texts essentially correspond to the form of the long text. The basic tendency of this linguistic revision shortened and smoothed the text, transforming the highly Semitizing language of $G^{II}$ into more fluid Greek. $G^{III}$, in turn, can be defined as a text form that is tertiary to $G^{I}$ and $G^{II}$, attributable basically to $G^{II}$, but which has also adopted elements of the text of $G^{I}$.[14] However, there are also cases where the Qumran tradition matches the tradition of $G^{I}$. This indicates that the texts of version $G^{II}$ we now possess do not represent the oldest Greek version but are already a later copy of an original that no longer exists, with small changes creeping in over the process of transmission. Whether this earlier Greek version had a Hebrew or an Aramaic *Vorlage* cannot be decided because of the limitations of the textual witness.[15]

Latin versions

The Greek texts in turn form the basis for the Latin versions.

Vetus Latina

The Vetus Latina, for which no critical edition is currently available, presupposes $G^{II}$ as a *Vorlage*[16] and therefore plays an important role in the reconstruction

10 On the Qumran fragments see the first edition of Fitzmyer, Tobit (DJD); Hallermayer, Text; Weeks/Gathercole/Stuckenbruck, Book of Tobit, 29–31; for the fragment from the Schøyen collection see Hallermayer/Elgvin, Schøyen Ms. 5234. For the history of research see Perrin, Almanac, 108–109; see also Ego, art. Tobit. Aramaic (Ancient); Ego, art. Tobit. Hebrew (Ancient).

11 Perrin, Scripturalization.

12 For a description of the Greek versions, see Hanhart, Tobit, 31–36; Hanhart, 22–72; also very helpful is Hallermayer, Text, 8–11, as well as Wagner, Tobit-Synopsis, xiii-xvi; see also Hauspie, Tobit; Schwartz, Remarques littéraires.

13 See also the overview in Weeks, Reconstructing, 1–4, as well as the references to earlier scholarship by Ego, Tobit (JSHRZ VI/1.2), 120–122; important studies include Nicklas, Vielfalt; Thomas, Greek Text, as well as Simpson, Chief Recensions.

14 On $G^{III}$, see Hanhart, Text und Textgeschichte, 44–45; see also Hallermayer, Text, 10, as well as Wagner, Tobit-Synopse, xiv–xvi; Weeks, Third Greek Version.

15 On the whole question see Hallermayer, Text, 179–182.

16 Hallermayer, Text, 11–12 (bibl.); Hanhart, Tobit, 12–14.

of $G^{II}$. Important old manuscripts include Codex Regius 3564, the Alcalà Bible and Codex Reginensis 7.[17]

Vulgate

A further Latin translation to be mentioned is the Vulgate of Jerome, from 404 CE. According to his own testimony, which he provides in the accompanying preamble, this translation came into being in a single day. An interpreter translated the text orally from Aramaic into Hebrew, which Jerome then translated into Latin. This account explains the periphrastic character of the text, which frequently displays major differences from both the Aramaic texts from Qumran and the Greek versions. However, as the Vulgate often shows considerable proximity to the Vetus Latina, it is clear that Jerome also used this as a *Vorlage* for his work.[18]

Other ancient translations

Besides the Greek and Latin translations there are also a number of old translations into Syriac, Coptic, Ethiopic, Armenian, Georgian, and Arabic. The Syriac version is a mixed text from all three Greek versions, in some cases from completely independent traditions.[19] $G^{I}$ plays an important role as a model for the other traditions, but other variants ($G^{III}$ and also $G^{II}$) were influential as well.[20]

Later Jewish traditions

Finally, there are several Hebrew versions as well as an Aramaic version of the narrative from medieval or even later times, namely "Hebraeus Münster" (1542; based on ms. Constantinople 1516), "Hebraeus Fagius" (1542; following ms. Constantinople 1519), "Hebraeus Londini" (ed. Gaster 1897; following the British Library ms., Add. 11639, thirteenth cent.); "Hebrew Gaster" (ed. Gaster 1897, following a lost fifteenth-century manuscript created by Gaster himself [Codex Or. Gaster 28]), and Otsar ha-Qodesh (printed Lemberg 1851, manuscript unknown) as well as an Aramaic version (ed. Neubauer 1878; following Bodleian Hebrew ms. 2339).[21] These texts, which do not represent direct continuations of the old Semitic-language tradition, but rather are free translations from Greek and Latin, display midrashic expansions as well as periphrastic abbreviations and omissions.[22]

---

17 Thus, the selection in Weeks/Gathercole/Stuckenbruck, Book of Tobit, 21–26; further evidence in Hanhart, Tobit, 11–14. An edition is currently being prepared by J.-M. Auvers (Leuven/Belgium); see Auwers, La tradition vieille latine.

18 So Skemp, Vulgate, 368; for the Vulgate see also Gamberoni, Auslegung, 74–75; Hanhart, Tobit, 14–15. For further information on Jerome's translation, see Gallagher, Why did Jerome Translate Tobit and Judith?

19 On the Syriac tradition, see Fitzmyer, 14–15; Hanhart, Tobit, 17; Lebram, Peschitta; Bukovec, Woher stammt Tobit 13. Bukovec discusses Lebram's thesis that the Syriac version of Tob 13 with its special tradition is the *Vorlage* for the other versions of the chapter. Based on a comparative analysis, he concludes that this chapter is a "derivative translation," which generally shortens and harmonizes an earlier text, now unknown.

20 On these versions see Hanhart, Tobit, 18–20; on the general topic see also the corresponding articles in "Textual History of the Hebrew Bible," which set out the relationships.

21 See the composition of the material in the 2004 edition of Weeks/Gathercole/Stuckenbruck, Book of Tobit, 2–333 (text); 336–413 (notes); ibid. 30–46 also gives a short overview of the individual versions; see also Ego, art. Tobit. Hebrew (Medieval); Ego, art. Tobit. Aramaic (Medieval) (with a detailed review of the history of research), as well as Skemp, Medieval Hebrew (H5).

22 For the main points, see the discussion in the section "Text-Historical Aspects"; a comprehensive presentation and discussion of the material awaits a separate research project.

# *Synchronic Aspects of the Tobit Narrative*

## The Narrative's Arrangement and Structure

As long text $G^{II}$ presents the oldest and most complete version of the narrative available to us, it will form the basis for the present commentary. The story can be divided into book title, exposition, main section, and epilogue:

**1:1–2 The Book's Title: Tobit's Background and Exile**

**1:3–3:17 Exposition: Tobit's and Sarah's Suffering, Their Prayers and the Sending of the Angel**

1:3–3:6 Pious Tobit's way of life, his despair, and his prayer
- 1:3 Tobit's motto: Truth, righteousness, and mercy
- 1:4–9 Tobit's Torah-faithful life in his homeland
- 1:10–2:1a Tobit's acts of mercy in exile and his persecution
- 2:1b–10 The burial of a compatriot and Tobit's blindness
- 2:11–14 The dispute with Anna and the mockery of Tobit
- 3:1–6 Tobit's despair and prayer

3:7–15 Sarah's suffering and prayer
- 3:7–10 Sarah's fate: Afflicted by the demon and mocked by one of her maids
- 3:11–15 Sarah's despair and prayer

3:16–17 Prayers are answered and the angel Raphael is sent

**4:1–14:1a Main section: The Journey with the Angel and the Healings**

4:1–21 Planning of the journey and Tobit's teaching
- 4:1–2 Tobit remembers the silver left with Gabael in Media
- 4:3–21 Tobit's life lessons

5:1–6:1 Search for a travel companion, arrangements, and farewell
- 5:1–17a Search for a travel companion and arrangements for the journey
- 5:17b–6:1 Farewell and Anna's pain

6:2–18 From Nineveh to Ecbatana: A significant fish catch and preparation for the meeting with Sarah
- 6:2–9 On the Tigris: A significant catch
- 6:10–18 The conversation about the meeting with Sarah: Marriage and casting-out of the demon

7:1–17 The welcome by Sarah's family in Ecbatana and the marriage preparations
- 7:1–9a Arrival and welcome by Sarah's family
- 7:9b–17 Preparations for an extraordinary marriage

8:1–21 The casting-out of the demon and a happy wedding
8:1–18 The wedding night with the casting-out of the demon
8:19–21 The betrothal banquet

9:1–6 Raphael fetches the silver from Gabael in Rages

10:1–13 The journey home is approaching
10:1–7a In Nineveh: Tobit's and Anna's concern for their son
10:7b–13 In Ecbatana: Tobias and Sarah's farewell

11:1–18 The return home: The healing of Tobit and the arrival of Sarah
11:1–15 Tobias's reunion with his parents and the healing of Tobit
11:16–18 Sarah's reception and the wedding celebration

12:1–22 Raphael's farewell: Remuneration, admonitions, and self-revelation
12:1–5 The remuneration of the traveling companion
12:6–22 Raphael's farewell speech and his revelation

13:1–14:1a Tobit's song of praise for God's mercy and the New Jerusalem
13:1–8 Praise for God's mercy among the nations
13:9–14:1a Rejoicing in the New Jerusalem

**14:1b–15 The Epilogue: Tobit's Legacy and Fulfilled Life**
14:1b–11 Tobit's farewell speech, death, and burial
14:12–15 Up to the death of Tobias: The end of the exile is near!

In its main section, the narrative displays a concentric structure:

Superscription 1:1–2 Book of the story of ...; Tobit's genealogy
Exposition 1:3–3:17 Tobit's and Sarah's distress and God's plan of salvation
A 4:1–21 Tobit's life lessons for Tobias as a farewell speech before his journey to retrieve the money from Gabael
B 5:1–6:1 Search for a traveling companion, payment agreements, and farewell
C 6:2–8:17 On the way from Nineveh to Ecbatana, catch of fish, expulsion of the demon and the betrothal banquet with Sarah
D 9:1–6 Raphael retrieves the money from Gabael
C' 10:1–11:19 Conversations about the return, return journey from Ecbatana to Nineveh, healing of Tobit, and wedding celebration
B' 12:1–22 The remuneration offer for the traveling companion and the angel's self-introduction
A' 13:1–14:1a Tobit's song of praise
Epilogue 14:1b–15 Fulfillment of life and legacy[23]

## Genre(s)

The story can be described as a strongly didactic narrative in a novelistic form.[24] In the central section, Tob 2–12, it displays numerous folkloric and humorous elements;[25] its framing by Tob 1, 13, and 14, however, makes the tone much more serious. The artistic interweaving of narrative threads and the romantic motif of bringing two lovers together is reminiscent of the genre of the Hellenistic novel. Unlike the classical examples of this genre, however, the narrative is very reserved in terms of the representation of sexuality. The theme of the bringing lovers together also differs: as a characteristic feature of the Hellenistic novel, the lovers separate before reuniting after surviving many adventures and dangers.[26]

This complex narrative in turn contains other literary forms that are built into the narrative: The first of these is Tobit's testament (4:3–19), which consists of a collection of wise admonitions and maxims, as well as—and in a quite similar vein—the angel's revelatory speech (12:6–20). Tobit's words shortly before his death (14:3–11) are similarly testament-like, although here, in addition to the wise admonitions to works of mercy (with the reference to Ahiqar as a kind of exemplar) (14:8–11), there is an eschatological perspective (14:4–7).

Prayers and hymns of thanksgiving (3:2–6, 11–15; 8:5–8, 15–17; 13:1–18; see on "significant motifs" below) appear as a separate genre, being integrated into the

---

23 This structure represents a further development of that proposed by Engel. Engel, Buch Tobit, 352–354, places 7:9b–10:13 in the center, as section "D" under the heading "The Wedding Celebration in Ecbatana." The main section consists of A "Tobit's dispatch plan and teaching / Tobit's testament for Tobias" (4:1–21), B "Search for a traveling companion, agreements, and farewell" (5:1–6:1), C "The journey from Nineveh to Ecbatana" (6:2–7:9a), C' "The journey home from Ecbatana to Nineveh" (11:1–19), B' "Offer of remuneration to the traveling companion and his self-presentation" (12:1–22), and A' "Tobit's song of praise" (13:1–18).

24 So Engel, Buch Tobit, 359; Wills, Jewish Novel, 92; see also Davies, Didactic Stories; for an overview of research, see Deselaers, Buch Tobit, 261–279, where the various proposals on the book's genre (e.g., midrash, didactic narrative, legend, fairy tale, novella, novel) are presented and discussed; see also Müller, Die weisheitliche Lehrerzählung, 77–98; Fitzmyer, 34, speaks of "small literature".

25 See Wills, Jewish Novel, 73–76, 91–92. Older literature often referred to the proximity to the motif of the "Grateful Dead"; see detailed discussion in Deselaers, Buch Tobit, 268–270, 280–292 (bibl.). Blenkinsopp, Biographical Patterns, 38, was the first to try to apply the classification of the folk tale as developed by Russian formalist Vladimir Propp (1895–1970), to Tobit; see critically Milne, Folktales and Fairy Tales, 46–52; Soll, Tobit and Folklore Studies, 39–53. See also Lindbeck, Brides Who Challenge Death. For further discussion of folklore elements in Tobit see Harari, art. Tobit, 524–525. For the reception of the narrative in medieval Jewish folk literature, see also Lindbeck, Brides Who Challenge Death.

26 For links to the Hellenistic novel, see Wills, Jewish Novel, 79; ibid., 76–83, 91–92; further Bautch, Responses to Hegemony, 158–160; Johnson, Historical Fictions, 9–55, is critical of this thesis. For general discussion of the genre of Hellenistic novel, see Wills, Jewish Novellas in a Greek and Roman Age. A detailed discussion of the topic is in preparation in the study by Usener, LXX und ihre Vernetzung. I would like to thank the author warmly for making the unpublished manuscript of his work available to me during this commentary's preparation.

plot and characterizing the protagonists. The hymn thanksgiving (13:1–18), which in turn consists of two parts (diaspora and Jerusalem), has special significance because of its extent and its prominent position at the end of the narrative.

## Narrative Style

The style of episodic storytelling, consisting mainly of shorter dialogues, dominates most of the story. This style often blends narrated time with narrative time, quickly drawing readers into the action. In addition, the narrative also contains longer speech units (3:1–6; 4:3–21; 12:6–20; 13:1b–18; 14:3–11).[27] The framing sections of Tob 1:3–22 and 14:1–15 have a more summary character in that they present a broad overview of Tobit's life. The change of narrator is striking. After the title (1:1–2), the book begins with the elderly Tobit's narrating in first person (from 1:3) and then, as the material requires, changes into the third person with the story of Sarah (3:7). This perspective is maintained until the end of the book. Some have thought they might explain this change in terms of literary criticism (see the diachronic analysis, below); however, the change of narrator is not a feature in common literary-critical models. Moreover, other early Jewish narratives (such as Ezra, Neh, GenAp) also feature a change of narrator.[28]

From Tob 3:7 onwards, a narrator speaks who has a clear knowledge advantage over his characters, but the characters' voices can often be heard through the episodic narrative style. They are unaware of the metaphysical background to the events, so as a whole the story displays an ironic component—especially when the text speaks of Tobias's being accompanied by a "good angel" (cf. 5:22). The central narrative of Tob 2–12 in particular contains such ironic moments, which include the episode of the grave digging during the wedding night (8:9–10).[29]

The narrative evinces a special kind of tension, which has been called "anticipatory suspense." In contrast to the "suspense of uncertainty," in which the outcome of the events still seems open, from Tob 3:16–17 on, with the news of the dispatching of the angel, it is clear that the story will end with the healing of Tobit and Sarah. Also as yet undecided, however, is how all this will happen—and this again, of course, creates suspense—and the interlinking of the threads of Tobit's and Sarah's stories is an important aspect of the narrator's art.[30]

---

27 A detailed narratological analysis that differentiates between the framework speeches and the narrative parts and also illuminates their mutual reference, is offered by Rautenberg, Verlässlichkeit des Wortes. For a narratological approach to the story, see di Pede, Lecture narrative. For the role of the narrator, see also Nowell, Narrator.

28 On this see Miller, Genesis Apocryphon; Novick, Liturgy and First Person Narratives.

29 For irony as a narrative device, see McCracken, Narration and Comedy, 410–415, which highlights the comic features of the book. However, one sometimes has the impression that he gives this element too much prominence, for example, when he tries to see the emphasis on family structures as a comic element; Cousland, Comedy, 536–553, and Schellenberg, Suspense, 314 also criticize McCracken for this. See further Nowell, Irony.

30 For more on this see Schellenberg, Suspense, 317; Macatangay, Apocalypticism, 208, lacks nuance in stating that the book contains no suspense.