

Hermetic Masonry in the Gnostic Tradition – Notes 3 III

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The Story of Tobias (or the Summary of the Book of Tobit)

This is the story of a righteous Israelite of the Tribe of Naphtali named Tobit and his son who live in Ninevah (after the deportation of the northern tribes of Israel to Assyria). Tobit was originally raised by his paternal grandmother Deborah and remained loyal to the worship of God at the temple in Jerusalem, instead of joining in the cult of the golden calves.

Tobit was very diligent in attempting to provide proper burials for fallen Israelites who had been slain by Sennacherib, the King of Assyria who's name means "*Senn* (the god of the moon) has increased the brothers". For this the king seized all his property and exiled him. After Sennacherib's death, Tobit was allowed to return to Nineveh, and one night (while he slept) he was blinded by bird droppings that fell into his eyes (which God permitted as a test of patience, like that of Job). Eventually his marriage became strained, and ultimately, he prayed for death.

Meanwhile, in faraway Media, a young woman named Sara had also prayed for death, because she had lost seven husbands to the demon of lust (Asmodeus, 'the worst of demons') who had abducted and killed every man she married on their wedding night, before the marriage could be consummated.

Hearing the prayers of Tobit and Sara, God sends the angel Raphael (Regent of the Planet Mercury and Angel of Medicine, disguised as a human) in order to heal Tobit and to free Sara from the demon. Tobit's son, Tobias (or Tobiah), is given instructions about proper living and then sent to collect "ten talents of silver" that Tobit had lent to someone in Media when Tobias was a child. Raphael presents himself as "a child of Israel" named "Azariah" or "Azarias", and offers to aid and protect Tobias on his journey.

Under the guidance of Raphael, Tobias makes the journey to Media (accompanied by his dog). Along the way, while washing his feet in the river Tigris, he was attacked by a fish that tried to swallow his foot. By order of Raphael (aka Azariah) he captured the fish, and then removed the heart, liver and gall bladder in order to make medicines.

Upon arriving in Media, Raphael tells Tobias of the beautiful Sara, whom Tobias has the right to marry. He instructs Tobias to burn the fish's liver to drive away the demon when he tries to attack (on the wedding night). The two are married, and the fumes of the burning liver drives the demon away to upper Egypt, where Raphael follows it and binds it.

Meanwhile, Sara's father has been digging a grave to secretly bury Tobias (who he assumed would be dead). Surprised to find his son-in-law alive and well, he orders a double-length wedding feast and has the grave filled. Since he could not leave because of the feast, Tobias sends Raphael to recover his father's silver and invite the family to the wedding.

After the feast, Tobias and Sara return to Ninevah. There, Raphael tells the youth to use the fish's gall to cure his father's blindness. Raphael then reveals his true identity and returns to heaven. Tobit sings a hymn of praise and tells his son to leave Ninevah before God destroys it (according to prophecy). Tobit dies at 102 (42 years after regaining his sight). After burying his father and mother, Tobias returns to Media with his family.

Kabbalistic Symbolism in the Old Testament and in the Book of Tobit

According to Eliphas Levi:

Observe how different kabbalistic calculations are all from the same family, and that Moses (in developing the creative laws of the septenary) is not telling a story, but revealing an eternal arcanum. The first six days of *Genesis* are also the beginning of the intelligent understanding whereby the Chaos disentangles itself according to the progression of numbers.

The first seven chapters of *Genesis* contain the highest mysteries of initiation, the *Prophecy of Ezekiel*, the *Book of Tobit* and the *Book of the Revelations* are books of Kabbalah so complete and so perfect that all others books could be lost, but one could still preserve the complete science with the help of nothing but these books. It is true that in order to comprehend them one must have also comprehended the *Sepher Yetzirah* and the *Zohar*, the key to which is hidden in the hieroglyphs of Enoch.

The mystery of the heart and of the liver of the fish (from the *Book of Tobit*) is explained by understanding that religion seems to condemn the heart with the violent passions that trouble it and which are represented by the liver. "*Libido saeviet circa jecur ulcerosum*" ¹ says Horace. The heart and the liver of the fish of Tobias represent love and anger. The liver must be burned and offered as a sacrifice, but the heart (henceforth without bile and without violent greed) must be reserved, and no more is spoken of it, because it has become an eternal and mysterious power. This substitution of the liver for the heart is the ordeal of the offering of the heart, it must be entire and one must not know what becomes of it. This heart, lost in God, is one of the great mysteries of the redemption of the soul.

Tobit lost his sight at 56: 5 is the number of the priest [ה], and 6 is that of man [ו]: added together they give 11, that of force/strength (as well as fortitude, courage and persuasion). 11 is also the middle of the twenty two letters, and corresponds to the letter Kaf [כ], the hieroglyphic sign of which is a woman overwhelming a lion. Israel has, then, been blinded by its own force/strength, which has turned into hardness and led it to despise the living humanity in order to bury its own dead and mummify the precepts of Moses, which have been rendered useless by vain traditions. The demon chained in upper Egypt is the blind force/strength made subservient to legitimate authority, it is the restoration of the sacerdotal art and of the royal art indicated by the traditions of Moses.



The *Book of Tobit* is the prophetic history of the redemption and of its perfect accomplishment. It explains this with the following symbolism: when the old Tobit or ancient Israel (which has become blind through the effects of the swallow's excrement, that is to say by contact with foreign and wandering superstitions) will be touched by the gall (meaning it will reap the fruit of its bitterness and its sufferings) by opening its eyes to the truth, and this truth (which it will find not lower down, but higher up on the ladder of tradition) is found by finally recovering the true Kabbalah of the sons of Jacob, then it alone will cause the scandal of a God-man to stop and return rationality to the 'madness (or folly) of the cross' of Christianity². Then Christianity (represented by the young Tobias) will return towards its Father (guided by Raphael, whose name signifies "the medicine of God" and who's planet is Mercury) and will bring its spouse back to it (the truth triumphant over the seven errors) like Sara escaped from the desires of those seven husbands unworthy of her love.

¹ Latin meaning "Lust rages around your liver, filling it with ulcers."

² Review Notes #24 of Tarot & Kabbalah in the Gnostic Tradition (on the letter Shin ך) for an explanation of this phrase.