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Study Questions for the *Ignatius Catholic Study Bible*

The Book of Tobit

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Study Questions

Tobit

Chapter 1

For understanding

- 1:6. As part of the remnant of northern Israelites in the time of the divided monarchy, what did Tobit continue to do? Allowing for some rhetorical exaggeration, what does Tobit's statement imply? What does the Torah require of adult males from all twelve tribes? What are the first fruits and the tithes?
- 1:9. What does the Semitic name Anna mean? What is endogamy? What was generally expected that Israelites were not to do among Gentiles? What was the accepted norm, and how did the Mosaic inheritance law go beyond it? In the lands of exile, what purpose did marrying within one's kinship group serve?
- Word Study: Acts of Charity (1:16).** What does the Greek word *eleēmosynē* mean? Of what is the term almost a one-word summary? Though it twice refers to the Lord's "mercy" toward humanity, to what does it most often refer? How is it a form of religious service tailored to life in exile? How does use of the word *eleēmosynē* in the Book of Sirach cohere with this theological outlook?
- 1:17. Although burial of the dead is not mandated in the Torah (except in Deut 21:22–23), why did Israelites practice it? What was being left unburied considered to be? In Catholic tradition, what kind of work is burying the dead regarded to be? What does St. Cyprian of Carthage have to say about such works?

For application

- 1:3. For whom does Tobit perform many acts of charity? According to Gal 6:10, to whom should Christians be especially careful to do good? Why especially to them?
- 1:6. Have you ever made a pilgrimage of any sort, whether locally or to another country? What prompted you to make the pilgrimage? What spiritual benefits did you derive from it?
- 1:7–8. How much of Tobit's income did he give away? What percentage of your income do you give away?
- 1:9. Why does the Catholic Church strongly recommend that Catholics marry within the Catholic faith? According to CCC 1633–37, what is required if a Catholic wishes to marry a baptized Christian from another tradition or someone who is not baptized ("disparity of cult")? Why do you think these requirements are necessary?

Chapter 2

For understanding

- 2:1. For what feast is *Pentecost* the Greek name, and as what is it known in Hebrew? When was it celebrated? By what may Tobit's desire to share his meal with a poor kinsman be inspired?
- 2:5. What is uncertain about Tobit's action of washing himself? Which motive is more probable? In the Torah, how long did the period of uncleanness from contact with the dead last, and what was one required to undergo? Why could Tobit not follow the letter of the Mosaic Law? What does he thus appear to be doing?
- 2:6. What does the quotation from Amos 8:10 pronounce on the Northern Kingdom of Israel, and why? How does Tobit see its fulfillment? Why does the passage probably come to mind? Despite his own fidelity, what does Tobit accept?
- 2:14. How is Anna greeted by Tobit? What does she seem to question? At this point in the story, what appears to have happened to his generosity? What does the spousal tension evident in Anna's retort recall about Job and his wife's reproach, and what is the difference between them and Tobit and Anna?

For application

- 2:2. Jesus recommends inviting the poor, maimed, lame, and blind to dinner rather than relatives or rich neighbors (Lk 14:12–14). How literally do you think he means that? Have you ever opened your home to other Christians or to those less fortunate than yourself?
- 2:7–8. What are the spiritual and corporal works of mercy (CCC 2447)? Which of these works have you had occasion to perform? Which is the hardest for you? Although civil laws regulate funerals and burials, how might the work of burying the dead still be something you could perform?
- 2:7. When would you consider an individual's religious devotion to be scrupulously excessive? What do you think Jesus' standard of judgment would be? How might a church community become divided by differing devotional practices?
- 2:13–14. How closely does the disagreement between Tobit and Anna match your own experience of home life? How are admissions of fault and the giving and receiving of forgiveness practiced in your home? What effects do these behaviors have on family relationships?

Chapter 3

For understanding

- 3:4. Of what is Tobit's prayer an acknowledgment? Though Tobit is a saintly man, how does he show himself not to be a sinless one? Consequently, what does he recognize about himself?
- 3:6. If Tobit is not the first righteous man to wish for death in Scripture, who else desired it? What is "the eternal abode"? Before the revelation of eternal life in Scripture, what was Sheol thought to be?
- 3:8. Who are the seven husbands of Sarah? What is Asmodeus? From what two languages is the name derived, and what is their meaning? Where else is Asmodeus mentioned?
- 3:17. What does the name Raphael in Hebrew mean? What does it announce here? What is Raphael's role in heaven, and where in the Old Testament is he mentioned by name? In Jewish tradition, what does Raphael do? In Christian tradition, who is often honored along with Raphael? According to St. Bede, what does Raphael's mission to Tobit and Sarah signify?

Study Questions: Tobit

For application

1. **3:4–5.** How do you feel about the moral deterioration of society? Do you pray about it? Do you, like Tobit, include yourself among the morally or spiritually disobedient? What is the spiritual value of doing so?
2. **3:7–9.** Have you ever been falsely accused over a situation beyond your control? How serious were the accusations? What did you do about them? Given what Jesus says about dealing with anger and revenge (e.g., Mt 5:21–24, 38–48), how might such accusations be handled?
3. **3:10.** The *Catechism* calls suicide a grave offense against love of self, of neighbor, and of God (CCC 2281–82). How does it violate each of these three relationships? Why should Christians pray for the soul of one who has killed himself?
4. **3:11.** In the midst of near despair, why does Sarah begin with a prayer of praise? How might imitating her approach to prayer help you when you pray about difficulties?

Chapter 4

For understanding

1. **4:1–21.** Of what is the farewell discourse following Tobit's prayer for death a synopsis? Why is it no coincidence that Tobit's instruction is largely concerned with the proper use of material wealth? What must the young Tobias understand? What is ironic about Tobit's vision? According to St. Augustine, what eyes was Tobit using?
2. **4:11.** What value is accorded to giving alms to the poor, and what is its effect?
3. **4:13.** To what is pride often the prelude? How can the word translated "shiftlessness" also be translated? What is the lesson here?
4. **4:17.** What does the literal translation "pour out your bread" suggest about the original text of Tobit? What parallel have scholars noticed? What is the purpose of the rite of placing bread on gravesites? What is a possible alternative that Tobit may be recommending?

For application

1. **4:6.** Does your experience match Tobit's words in this verse? Although Tobit is thinking of material prosperity, what other kinds of prosperity might result from obeying his injunction?
2. **4:7–11.** What is the difference between philanthropy and almsgiving? Why do you think Tobit regards almsgiving as protective? How do you practice almsgiving, and what limits if any do you place on it?
3. **4:12.** Read the note for this verse. How does Tobit's caution regarding immorality stand in opposition to today's prevailing culture? What personal and social benefits can result from steering clear of sexual immorality?
4. **4:16.** What would you consider to be your surplus income, and how would you calculate it? How much of it does Tobit think you should give away? What do you think of his advice?

Chapter 5

For understanding

1. **5:1–22.** What arrangements are made? Unbeknownst to father and son, who is the traveler hired to accompany Tobias? Why is the story entertaining?
2. **5:12.** What does the name Azarias mean in Hebrew, and what aim does it reveal? What is the cover story of posing as a near kinsman designed to gain? What does the name Ananias mean in Hebrew, and to what does it allude? How is the relative in question like Tobit?
3. **5:21.** What does Tobit accept on faith that the reader has already learned as a fact? What do Tobit's words echo? According to St. Bede, what do the two persons, the angel and the man, prefigure?

For application

1. **5:1–3.** If you were to be entrusted with an important family or business project that you had no idea how to accomplish, how would you decide what to do? What part would prayer play in your decision making?
2. **5:9–11.** How would you verify the honesty and reliability of someone you had just met? What sorts of questions would you ask? In an age of distrust like ours, what difference would it make if the person claimed to be a relative of yours?
3. **5:12.** Read the note for this verse. What is the importance of a person's name? What does your name mean, and why did your parents select that name for you? If you wanted to change your name, what would you select, and why?
4. **5:16.** Tobias' dog appears only here and in 11:4. Since ancient Israelites were generally contemptuous of dogs, what use might a dog have had in the home of an exiled Jewish family? What is the point of adding this detail to the Tobit story? To what uses do modern families put dogs?

Chapter 6

For understanding

1. **6:1.** Where does the Tigris River flow? Of what geographical error do some insist that the author is guilty? Why is the allegation lacking force? What is perfectly plausible about their travel route?
2. **6:4.** For what rite are the fish's heart and liver to be used? What does the procedure involve, and what is its effect? For what was gall considered a medicinal remedy?
3. **6:10.** What does the name Raguel mean in Aramaic? What inheritance provision did Moses make for a daughter? While Sarah is Raguel's legal heir, what solution must be found for her? What other purpose of his mission does the angel reveal?
4. **6:16–17.** In the Vulgate's longer ending for chap. 6, what does Raphael enjoin the newlyweds to do? What is the lesson?

For application

1. **6:7.** In addition to prayer, what physical objects (sacramentals) might be used in delivering someone from demonic harassment? Since a demon is a spirit, what is it about such physical objects that would cause the demon to depart?
2. **6:10–12.** What are some of the advantages and disadvantages of arranging a marriage with someone you have never met? On what basis are marriages contracted in our culture? What are some of the advantages and disadvantages of this approach?
3. **6:13.** Read the note for this verse. Are there any stories of misfortune that have passed around your family? If so, how have they affected family relationships? At what point does intrafamily gossip become sinful?
4. **6:17.** Raphael reassures Tobias that Sarah was chosen from the beginning to be his wife and that he will save her from the demon. What part do you think destiny plays in the selection of one's marriage partner? How might destiny and free will interact here?

Chapter 7

For understanding

1. **7:1–18.** What does Tobias propose and arrange? How does the importance of kinship relations that underlies much of the book move into the foreground in this chapter?
2. **7:10.** What is Raguel's request that Tobias eat, drink, and be merry an attempt to do? What allusion to Isaiah do some detect? If Raguel meant to evoke this passage, what would it suggest?
3. **Word Study: Brother, Sister (7:12).** To what does modern Western culture tend to restrict these terms? How does Semitic culture apply them? How can this be seen in the Book of Tobit? How is the masculine *adelphos* used, and what does it embrace? What else can it also designate? How is the feminine *adelphē* applied? What can a "sister" be?
4. **7:14.** What is the marriage contract? How might the document here be considered a certificate of betrothal rather than of marriage?

For application

1. **7:9.** Read the note for this verse. In what ways might hospitality be described as a virtue? According to the *Catechism* (CCC 1971), from which of the theological virtues does it flow? Which of them animates it? How would you characterize your practice of hospitality within the Christian community?
2. **7:12.** What is the difference between treating one's spouse as an intimate friend and treating him or her as a brother or sister? Under normal circumstances, how might siblings of the opposite sex treat each other? How might such a relationship strengthen the "one flesh" bond between husband and wife?
3. **7:14.** In a Christian environment, what is the purpose of the period of engagement? What should be taking place between prospective spouses during that period? Why is sexual intimacy during engagement a grave offense against the dignity of marriage (CCC 2391)?

Chapter 8

For understanding

1. **8:3.** What is the name of the demon? Why would the demon flee to the lifeless expanse of desert beyond the fertile Nile Valley? What does it mean to bind a demon? In Jewish tradition, what power is Raphael known to exercise?
2. **8:5–6.** What type of prayer is the traditional form called a *berakhah*? What is the signature feature of such prayer?
3. **8:6.** What does the first marriage, as presented in Genesis, reveal? What is stressed here? How may Tobias be viewed as a more faithful Adam? What is *monogenism*, and what is the result of having a common origin? When Pope Pius XII affirmed the biblical doctrine of monogenism in 1950, what theory of human origins did he deny?

For application

1. **8:2–3.** Whether you are married or not, why might you consider a prayer of consecration over your bedroom? How would it contribute to the virtue of chastity for yourself and in spousal relationships?
2. **8:7.** How might Jesus' warning in Mt 5:28 against lustful looks apply to the sexual relationship of husband and wife? On the other hand, how does sexual intimacy within marriage contribute to the holiness of the partners?
3. **8:9–12.** According to the note for v. 9, Raguel is taking precautions by digging a grave. As a reader, how do you react to what he is doing? What is the point of comic relief in a story like this?
4. **8:16.** Has God ever dealt with you more mercifully than you expected? How have you thanked him for the mercy he has shown you?

Chapter 9

For understanding

1. **9:5.** What is the receipt that Tobias gives Gabael? Why is it important that the seals on the money bags are intact?
2. **9:6.** Given the distance between Ecbatana and Rages, how long would a journey there and back again take? Why does this create a chronological problem in Tobit? Since no indication is given that the journey involved a miracle, what is it reasonable to suppose?

For application

1. **9:2–4.** Since Tobias cannot leave Raguel's home to retrieve Tobit's fortune from Gabael, what does it say about Tobias' relationship to Azarias/Raphael that he commissions someone he has only recently met to retrieve it? Whom would you trust with such an assignment?

Chapter 10

For understanding

1. **10:1–12.** Where is anxiety mounting in these verses, and about what?
2. **10:10–12.** How does Raguel send off Tobias and Sarah? What other sendoff does the account resemble?
3. **10:12.** In this context, to whom does the word “brother” refer? For what is Edna’s farewell speech a plea? How are her words especially poignant?

For application

1. **10:1–6.** What sorts of things cause you to worry? What do you do to calm your fears and concerns? How might you apply to yourself Jesus’ and St. Paul’s injunctions not to be anxious (Mt 6:25–34; Phil 4:6)?
2. **10:12a.** If you are married, what is your relationship with your in-laws? Despite any tensions that may exist between you and them, how do you show honor to them?
3. **10:12b.** Read the note for this verse, particularly about Edna’s concern for her daughter’s treatment. According to St. Paul’s exhortation in Eph 5:21–32, how is the husband to treat his wife? What real-life models of that kind of treatment can you recall or have you met? If you have adult children, what have you taught them about how to treat their spouses?

Chapter 11

For understanding

1. **11:8.** How long has Tobit been living in darkness? What does Tobit’s personal experience of being healed of blindness anticipate? What did Isaiah prophesy about Zebulun and Naphtali? From which tribe is Tobit?
2. **11:10.** Why is the courtyard a significant detail in the story?
3. **11:14.** What does the instantaneous effect of the application of gall suggest? What does the idiom “the light of my eyes” mean? Why does the expression have a deeper meaning for Tobit? What does Tobit offer to the Lord?
4. **11:15.** Of whom is the word pair “afflicted . . . mercy” used in chap. 13? What does the storyteller thus imply? Specifically, of what does the suffering and healing experienced by Tobit stand as a sign? To what passage are Tobit’s words an allusion?

For application

1. **11:6.** Notice the words “your son” that Anna uses in this verse. Why does she not say “our son”? Given the tension between Tobit and herself in 10:4–7 and elsewhere, what do you think her attitude is toward her husband at this point? When couples quarrel, how might the language they use place emotional distance between each other?
2. **11:14–17.** Think of a significant favor that you believe God has done for you or your family. How did you give thanks for it? Did you keep your gratitude to yourself or tell others about the favor? Why make it known to others?
3. **11:18.** Given your ethnic background, how long should a wedding celebration ideally last? Why hold a celebration, regardless of whether it be long or short? Why is eternal life in heaven often compared to a wedding celebration?

Chapter 12

For understanding

1. **12:1–5.** What counsel does Tobit follow? How do he and his son show themselves generous beyond the strict requirements of justice?
2. **12:8.** What are the pillars of Jewish piety in the final centuries of the OT period? When did Jesus endorse this triad of religious practices, and what warning did he, like Raphael, add? According to St. Leo the Great, how are these three things supremely related to religious observance?
3. **12:12.** For what is the Greek word *mnēmosynon* used? What value is prayer thus accorded? Who bring the prayers of the saints before God?
4. **12:15.** Where in the Bible are the seven holy angels mentioned, and where is the tradition assumed? According to St. John of Damascus, what are the angels prompt in doing; where do they appear; and what are their functions?

For application

1. **12:1–5.** What constitutes a just, fair, or appropriate wage? How might an employer determine a just wage for an employee? According to the *Catechism* (CCC 2434), why is agreement between employer and employee not enough to justify morally the amount received in a wage?
2. **12:6–10.** What does the expression “preaching to the choir” mean? Why, at this point in the story, does Raphael speak about thanksgiving and almsgiving to characters who have a reputation for practicing it? To whom might his exhortation really be addressed?
3. **12:12.** Read the note for this verse. How does prayer operate as a *reminder* before God? Since God knows everything and forgets nothing, what does a reminder accomplish, and for whom?
4. **12:15.** According to the *Catechism* (CCC 329–36), what is the role of angels? For Christians, what is the appropriate attitude toward them? Why are some angels given the title of Saint, even though they are not human?

Chapter 13

For understanding

1. **13:1–18.** What is the twofold focus of Tobit’s hymn of praise and thanksgiving? Throughout the hymn, for what is the Lord praised? To what two books of Scripture does the hymn allude?
2. **13:9.** What does Tobit, prophesying in the seventh century B.C., foresee? For what do some take this as evidence, and what response can one make to this conclusion?
3. **13:11.** What vision of messianic times does Tobit see? What gifts will the non-Jewish peoples bring to Jerusalem?

4. **13:16–18.** What activity points to a glorified Jerusalem, and what does it outshine? In the Book of Revelation, what city shines in this way?

For application

1. **13:5.** When you suffer affliction in this life for wrongs done, what is the proper attitude to take as a Christian? By contrast, when you suffer affliction for doing right, what attitude should you adopt (cf. 1 Pet 4:12–19)?
2. **13:10.** Tobit writes to exiles, encouraging them to give thanks and praise to the Lord. When you are undergoing suffering of any sort, what benefit comes to you for giving God thanks and praise? How does a thankful attitude alleviate suffering?
3. **13:14.** What blessing comes to you from rejoicing over another's good fortune or from grieving over another's sufferings? How does this contribute to the building up of the Body of Christ (as in 1 Cor 12:25–27)?

Chapter 14

For understanding

1. **14:3–11.** Like other testaments in the Bible and related Jewish literature, with what is the elderly Tobit's speech on his deathbed filled? In particular, like Moses, what does the elderly Tobit foresee?
2. **14:4.** Where is Media? Although Jonah is the name that appears in the short text of Tobit, in the long text, as whom is this prophet identified, and why is it more likely the correct reading? When was Nineveh overthrown, and by whom? Who are the brethren to whom Tobit refers? In which book of Scripture is the description of Canaan as "the good land" often used?
3. **14:6–7.** What does Tobit urge his son to do? To what do these two ways of speaking refer in the Book of Deuteronomy?
4. **14:10.** Who is Nadab? In the *Story of Ahikar*, what did Nadab do to Ahikar, and how were the tables turned in the end? Why was Ahikar saved?

For application

1. **14:6–7.** Read the note for these verses. What does "fear of the Lord" mean to you? In what ways is this a virtue, and how does it fulfill the New Covenant?
2. **14:10.** What concern or involvement have you had in your parents' burial plans or in the execution of those plans? What planning have you done for your own? How can planning your own funeral in advance become an act of charity to the rest of the family?
3. **14:13.** What is the purpose of a funeral? How does the deceased benefit from it? How do those who attend a funeral benefit from it? In the Christian dispensation, what expressions of hope should be evident at a funeral?