

A reading from the Book of Tobit

Raphael and Tobiah entered the house of Raguel and greeted him. Raguel sprang up and kissed Tobiah, shedding tears of joy. But when he heard that Tobit had lost his eyesight, he was grieved and wept aloud. He said to Tobiah:

“My child, God bless you! You are the son of a noble and good father. But what a terrible misfortune that such a righteous and charitable man should be afflicted with blindness!”

He continued to weep in the arms of his kinsman Tobiah. His wife Edna also wept for Tobit; and even their daughter Sarah began to weep.

Afterward, Raguel slaughtered a ram from the flock and gave them a cordial reception. When they had bathed and reclined to eat, Tobiah said to Raphael,

“Brother Azariah, ask Raguel to let me marry my kinswoman Sarah.”

Raguel overheard the words; so he said to the boy:

“Eat and drink and be merry tonight, for no man is more entitled to marry my daughter Sarah than you, brother. Besides, not even I have the right to give her to anyone but you, because you are my closest relative. But I will explain the situation to you very frankly. I have given her in marriage to seven men, all of whom were kinsmen of ours, and all died on the very night they approached her. But now, son, eat and drink. I am sure the Lord will look after you both.”

Tobiah answered, “I will eat or drink nothing until you set aside what belongs to me.”

Raguel said to him: “I will do it. She is yours according to the decree of the Book of Moses. Your marriage to her has been decided in heaven! Take your kinswoman from now on you are her love, and she is your beloved. She is yours today and ever after. And tonight, son, may the Lord of heaven prosper you both. May he grant you mercy and peace.”

Then Raguel called his daughter Sarah, and she came to him. He took her by the hand and gave her to Tobiah with the words:

“Take her according to the law. According to the decree written in the Book of Moses she is your wife. Take her and bring her back safely to your father. And may the God of heaven grant both of you peace and prosperity.”

He then called her mother and told her to bring a scroll, so that he might draw up a marriage contract stating that he gave Sarah to Tobiah as his wife according to the decree of the Mosaic law. Her mother brought the scroll, and he drew up the contract, to which they affixed their seal.

Afterward they began to eat and drink.

**The Word of the Lord.** *R. Thanks be to God*

### **Commentary**

There are some fantastically incredible stories in the Scriptures. This one ought to be toward the top. Though fiction, the book of Tobit portrays the ordinary life of an Israelite family. It offers stories of life, death, food, family, and God. A main theme is the nature of human suffering. Some suffering comes from demonic forces. Other suffering can be initiated by God as a corrective measure so the selfish and righteous see God’s justice. Tobit is blind. Perhaps this is a metaphor for him to trust in the wife that God’s angel (Raphael / Azariah) will choose for his son Tobiah. Sarah suffers from having lost seven husbands before consummating her marriage to any of them (3:8). If past events are any indication, then Sarah’s new husband will be dead. Such does not happen. Like the previous scripture option from Genesis 24, their happy marriage and newfound life is a biblical way of revealing that marriage is a participation in God’s divine plan. The imposed suffering on the two did in fact lead them more closely to God’s will.

This passage does not fit the conventional storyline for marriage most couples imagine. Yet it has a unique inner beauty and inspiration. Look closely. The passage contains heartfelt prayers: “I am sure the Lord will look after you both” (vs. 11); “Your marriage to her has been decided in heaven” (vs. 11); “And may the God of heaven grant both of you peace and prosperity” (vs. 12). The couple overcame major obstacles. Couples in today’s society face great difficulties as well, and many bring their own suffering. Passages from this text appear in the final blessing for marriage. Couples may find this passage helps them to trust in God’s divine providence regardless of hardships they face.