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Tobit, Tobiah, Angel Raphael and Their Messages to Modern Educators

“Holy Angel, my Guardian” is one of the first prayers that are given to the children of Christian families. In terms of child psychology, this is an extremely welcome and positive prayer as it complements and builds upon the fundamental and absolute great-trust (Höfer, Steiner 2004, 13), conveyed to them by their parents and which Erikson (1993) recognizes as a key tradition of growing up healthy. Children experience and express their faith and trust intrapersonally and interpersonally, indicating that there is an angel accompanying them on the God’s goodness, protecting them at every step of their lives. Positive connotation of a prayer communication on the one hand liberates a child from feelings of fear, while on the other hand – in cooperation with other quality educational factors – has a strong influence on the formation of a child’s positive self-image, as a child with the angel, which he or she accepted into his or her intimacy, feels stronger and more capable as without it.

According to Christian educative tradition, children feel there is no need to hide in front of the angels. They are comfortable trusting them and telling them everything what lies at their hearts. Angels never judge and never punish.¹ They always understand us and, by God’s goodness, protect us. Angels are always unconditionally on „our” side.

¹ In terms of the “punishment,” God is more “dangerous” than the angels in the tradition of Christian education. Known saying that in some contexts even falls within the scope of the so-called “six truths,” namely, that “God is a just judge who pays well and punishes severely,” by itself allows the abuse of God, which, in the child’s imagination, could become

We will discuss about the role of angels in life not in terms of theology, but in the educational and psychological sense. In this context, the angel service is carried out by all the people to whom we unconditionally trust and care for our lasting welfare.

It is interesting that Christian educational tradition rarely places parents among angels, although they are the first who are called and the most appropriate for caring for children in terms of their lasting prosperity. Perhaps the reason is that children sooner connect their parents with the “Holy Family,” as well as with the first images of God, while other educational entities usually remain less defined thus assuming the role of good angels more comfortably. Parents are, in relation to the “angels” in a different role, as they have more obligations to the children and thus more responsibilities, which by itself largely determines educational methods and principles. Parents – except in the case of adoption or foster care – cannot choose their child and cannot decide whether to raise them or not, but they are obliged to raise and educate them. As well as children cannot choose their parents. The intertwining of relationships between children and parents is therefore stronger and more intense than relationships symbolizing the role of the angels.

Children usually choose their “angels” themselves, or at least have a decisive impact on them. Already in the first images of children’s imagination, angels are usually beings who have decided to take care of children. Thus, with the prayer “Holy Angel” child concludes and regularly renews his or her commitment with the angel that he or she chose in the world of their religious communication, as well as angel decides to take care only for them.

By definition, in the Christian education the role of angels is carried out first by godparents, both baptismal as well as confirmation godparents. In the wider context, children in this role also recognize, for example, school teachers, catechists, sports coaches and trainers or educators. In fact, the “angels” are all those who guide us in the beauty and fullness of a meaningful life (Höfer 2005, 107).

The Book of Tobit speaks about the role of angels in extremely fortunate and picturesque form. Since its basic message refers to an adolescent growing up, it is understandable that in the Book of Tobit the closest character to the role of angels is given to the confirmation godfather. Particular individual

a “cynical cop” or children’s scarecrow. Thank God, such methods are no longer tolerated by modern education.

who works with young people can recognize himself in this role, while in the case of Tobit's son Tobiah, this is a youngster who is growing up and in accordance with his development looks for counterparts also outside the family.

The Book of Tobit is a gem of narrative art, where "the historical narrative elements are unobtrusively interwoven with deep religious core and stimulating educational tendency" (Sveto pismo 1997, 1234). Historical background of the eighth and seventh century BC (Assyrian slavery and the fall of the city of Nineveh) the writer uses only as a scenario, where he exposes the life drama of individuals. In the foreground are two families who live in exile and which are territorially several days walk away from each other, and which are very close in their soul, feeling and the same faith. Each has one child; the first one the only son, and the second the only daughter (Sveto pismo 1997, 1234–1235).

The whole concept of the book straight invites and challenges to educational interpreting. Although the parents of both families strive for good and noble education, the key role in the training for mature adult life belongs to non-family, angelic educator Raphael, which from the perspective of modern educational challenges, gives the book a special charm and attraction.

TOBIT BECOMES BLIND BUT STILL "SEES" THE FUTURE

Tobit originates from the tribe of Naphtali, and together with his wife Hana and son Tobiah they live in Assyrian bondage. His grandmother particularly took care for his religious upbringing, because he lost his father very soon (Tob 1:8–9), who is in the Old Testament tradition responsible for the religious dimension of life. As a slave he lived in Nineveh, where his honest life earned him the trust and he travelled throughout the country as a shopper for the royal family. On one occasion he left ten talents of silver in trust of his friend and relative Gabael in a city of Media (Tob 1:12–14). Tobit was a pious and brave man, and took good care of his son Tobiah with his wife Hana, despite the difficult conditions of life.

WHEN PARENTS GO BLIND...

In childhood, the son Tobiah was probably not causing any educational troubles. Even in difficult circumstances, he was keen and committed to

cooperate with his father. There were no signs of resistance or child grimacing observed. But the order before the Pentecostal eating clearly shows the child is growing up. Accordingly father trusted him more and more demanding tasks. Search for the poor means opening the front door and family frameworks and allowing socialization of the child – adolescent – in the wider society.

Tobiah performs his duties very well thereby exceeding expectations of his father (Tob 2:1–7). Even his father is extremely self-sacrificing and wants to please his son in everything, irrespective of the hazards and risks. Everything for his child – that is his life motto – even though he occasionally feels how this attitude is strenuous and tiring.

When Tobit once takes time to rest at the courtyard door, the turd of sparrows that nested above him caught his eye (Tob 2:9–10). Otherwise perfectly natural act, yet it challenges us to look for deeper symbolism and “hidden” educational significance.² It is interesting that this particular “crap” closes father Tobit’s eyes and takes his look. Even more dramatically speaks the event if we recognize our child in the role of a sparrow – in this case son “Tobiah.” Namely, when children grow up, they are also changing, and parents may also befall such particular “Tobit’s” surprise. During the period of growing up, we can certainly experience specific child’s reaction making our head starting to swim and taking away our look. If the saying indicating that the eyes are “windows to the soul” (O’Connell 1998, 44) is true, parents in adolescence period of children certainly may slightly go “blind” because the teenager spreads his living space and we are no longer able of constant keeping our eyes on them. In addition, the natural dynamics of individualisation in the period of growing up is important particularly in the fact that children want to attain independence, thereby not allowing neither their parents to look them into their souls.

With the growing up of children parents thus waste having an overview of them, thereby increasingly leaving them to the eyes of “angels.” It is therefore important not to avoid these moments, but to make sure in a timely way

2 Think about what is most often first word that (more or less loud) many pronounce when they fail at something, simply hurt themselves or are otherwise surprised by some pain. Probably not “poop,” although in substance it has the same meaning. “Shit” in many languages, is most often the first and completely “natural swear” on surprising and not the most tragic pain.

that a child has sufficient amount of “angels” to choose from as they will be the ones the child could trust and depend on in the most dynamic and versatile challenging period of life.

Tobit started preparing his “farewell speech” at early age. Behind the ten talents, which he left in trust at a friend Gabael, we can recognize his teenage years. When he grew up and started his family, the paths that lead into the past, became dangerous and arduous, so he had not returned to friends of the past, but devoted entirely to taking care and providing for his family (Tob 1:14b-15; 5,3). Apparently he was aware of and enjoyed the fact that he spent his youth so qualitatively that its quality in the “old friends” preserved all the way to the next generation. Tobit’s adolescent friendly relations were fair and honest, that is why he is now carelessly sending his son Tobiah to try and discover this stored gift and get confidence from it when developing and creating his own decisions (Tob 4:20–21). With this particular scene, the Bible informs in a picturesque way on how we raise children or how we create conditions for their healthy growing up already with quality spending of their own youth. In talks with the generation of young parents they step into the secrets of their youth, recognizing the gift upon discovering virtuous messages, which they have already saved back than and intended it to them. Messages on quality, fair and ethical life of the parents from the times when they themselves were experiencing the teenage years, young people accept as a treasure, from which they derive courage and orientation for their life choices.

Before leaving home Tobit give his son one last life instructions, which in conjunction with the treasure, can be seen as a kind of testament. This means that the father is aware that Tobiah is no longer his “child,” but has become a boy growing up and becoming increasingly independent person (Tob 4:5–19).

...IT IS THE TURN OF THE ANGELS

Son Tobiah listens to his father incentive and eagerly, but feels quite uncertain and helpless after the will. Father’s gift to him seems attractive and worthy, but he is afraid of long-term and arduous journey that leads to the basic knowledge bestowed to him by his father. Moreover, he doubts his own abilities and is looking for further assurances that he will reach the gift he is seeking (Tob 5:1–2).

As regards entitlement to gift his father does not worry, as he is holding a certificate in his hands, which then still young friends Tobit and Gabael entrusted each other upon divorce (Tob 5:3). During his youth, his father hung out with honest friends and is not afraid of breach of trust. Tobit resolves his fear of travelling by recommending his son to seek a companion (Tob 5:3), which he on his journey identifies as angel Raphael and has all the characteristics of a modern confirmation sponsorship. Based on his father's instructions, a man should be "reliable" and Tobiah chooses him individually (Tob 5:4). From the tale follows that Tobiah found the best man who knows the ways and who feels quite homelike and firm in Tobiah's "future," moreover, they are also very close at heart as he comes from the "children of Israel". Even "angel" radiates joy of choice as he is just looking for a job. Depending on the abilities and experience, accompanying Tobiah is actually the best possible offer (Tob 5:6). Tobiah and "angel" are therefore glad of each other, which is also highly recommended when choosing a confirmation godfather or godmother.

When the son went to his father for consultation, the "godfather" prompts him as he would feel that it is not for Tobiah to delay too long with growing up and pursuing his life decisions (Tob 5:7). The son feels it is important to discuss his choice also with his father. Children, who have caring parents who respect their children, the latter tend to present their "angels" to them (Caissy 1994, 85), regardless of in which image or role they were chosen. They believe that the parents will respect them too, so they feel there is no need to hide their friends. Suitable to expectations, Tobit takes his son's communication seriously and wants to talk directly with the companion (Tob 8:10). Father is not interested in his skills, talents and gifts – this falls within the son's competence – but is more interested in his pedigree or his family roots. Both, father and son are interested in these roots, although the father is more persistent on this issue. The "angel" is initially surprised and even evades the question, thus the Bible even more strongly emphasizes the growth of awareness of the importance of the mission that he just accepts. At the same time Azariah as the companion presents himself, existentially connects his mission from the first moment with "angelic" service, so this dimension is much more important to him than the roots (Tob 5:10b-17).

Tobias had therefore chosen his "godfather" alone, but the godfather was confirmed by the father or the whole family. Since father knows the environment and the roots of "godfather's" family, he leaves the youth upbringing

of his son to godfather with a sense of responsibility, respect and deep confidence. This part of Tobit's and Tobiah's story involves repeated presence of over and over topical emphasis indicating that it is not the most important, when and where, but in particular, with whom young people hit the road of growing up and socialization.

From the educational point of view, the mentioning of payment, both by the father and the son, is also eloquent. Both of them are quite sovereign and independent in their promises, although the son also probably feels that the father intends to cover the financial costs. This particular "detail" seems to suggest the existence of genuine and sincere, respectful and trusting relationship between father and son. Interestingly, the angel fails to react on the mentioned payment, which is the most eloquent sign that he does not associate his angelic mission with money.

TOBIAH'S GROWING UP AND GAINING EXPERIENCE

Experience beyond the framework of family life and learning can be gained only by betaking these areas ourselves, or at least without direct parental support (Tob 6:1). Tobiah thus undertakes the adventure of growing up without parents, accompanied by an angel and a dog.³

After a day of their journey, Tobiah and his angel find a suitable place for staying overnight (Tob 6:1–3). It is interesting that the wording this time fails to designate Tobiah by name, but calls him "boy." It is not excluded that the Bible thus deliberately exposes his youth, and also in line with the symbolic power of the river, challenging the transition to the "other side," confronts Tobiah with new challenges of growing up. Full of youthful power and energy, which in reactions usually outpass adults and even "angels," Tobiah goes into the water in front of Raphael. Although the Bible apparently clearly argues that the "boy" only wanted "to wash his feet," in this action undoubtedly lies Tobiah's desire to explore new areas of life and knowledge, getting into a lot of danger thereby.

3 It is interesting how the Bible sensibly underscores the importance of creating a lasting trust between adolescent and an angel by sending on the way seemingly insignificant, but in educational and psychological sense, extremely important dog that symbolizes fidelity (Sveto pismo 1997, 1251).

Raphael, who is neither father nor mother, but an “angel,” in these dangerous circumstances acts significantly different from their parents, who probably, as a preventive measure, would not allow Tobiah to get in the water, thereby preventing gaining experience for him. Have a posture and reaction that parents cannot have, and yell to the boy: “Grab the fish! Beat the test! Face the problem and solve it!”

Angel knows the boy and knows his skills and abilities. He also knows that in his growing up period, he needs to learn to solve problems independently. Parents in principle are also aware of all that, but usually “love” their children too much to afford them so much pain. As the “angel,” who has developed a different attitude towards Tobiah than his parents, may accompany an adolescent in areas that are inaccessible to parents. Thus Raphael, as an angel, does not “offer” fish to Tobiah, but rather teaches him to fish; he does not solve his problems for him, but teaches him to solve his problems and life issues independently; he does not give him “connivance” and does not allow him to escape from the challenges and dangers, but encourages and teaches him how to “grab” the problem and overcome it. On the one hand, solving problems in cognitive terms is the highest quality of learning (Martinez 2000, 177), while Tobiah, in conjunction with the dimension of experiential learning, develops positive self-image, enhances self-esteem and prepares himself for independent life. Experiential learning on challenges we are faced with, contributes most to responsible autonomy (Caissy 1994, 43). The role of an angel is, therefore, not so much to “help,” but rather to motivate and encourage. Angel knows that running away from problems does not prepare us for independent life.

Fish also symbolizes our subconscious. In Tobit’s narrative it may represent the sum of the oppressed, unprocessed and unresolved childhood experiences (Corey 1995, 23). Such subconscious may, in crucial moments, when we are preparing for new challenges, swallow and destroy us if it frightens us and if we run away from it. However, if we accept, “break” and process it, we are able to learn a lot from it (Tob 6:4–5).

Boy’s confidence in the angel is so strong that he blindly believes in him. With no questions asked and with no search for explanations or arguments, he does everything the angel advises him or instructs him to do. Only after the “problem” is subdued and elaborated, when both of them are fed and reinvigorated, and travel on, only then the boy relaxes to such an extent to initiate a reflection of the experienced and successfully resolved test

(Tob 6:6–7). In accordance with the biblical tradition, the angel specifically and vividly explains the significance of symbols by systematically and meaningfully placing them in Tobit's life story (Tob 6:8–9), however, we can reasonably contextualize them with many challenges of modern life.

The heart symbolizes strong will and love for life, but also the joy of life and fullness of power. In combination with the "liver" that cleans the body, and symbolically the entire life, man is able to overcome and chase away "temptations" that threaten human life, especially the field of sustainable relations.

In the Old and Middle Ages, bile was used to treat eye diseases (Sveto pismo 1997, 1251). Tobiah probably seems to find angel's interpretation reasonable and highly desirable, as he has a blind father at home. The bile is certainly about the liquid, which can be very dangerous in the event of a spill. It is also beneficial because it helps in fat degradation that is substances that are difficult to digest. In terms of actualization, bile symbolizes the experience as a result of dangerous and painful learning.

With the angel's assistance, Tobiah therefore, on this journey into the future, carries along with him a heart (will, joy and love for life), liver (regularly refining of life) and bile (experience).

RAPHAEL'S ANGEL LIFE ADVICE

Angel and Tobiah are traveling and talking. Conversations are becoming more life related and, in parallel with approaching the destination, increasingly important for Tobit's far-reaching decisions (Tob 6:10–13). Thus their conversation is also gaining dimensions of modern, so-called distant preparing for marriage.

Angel is closely monitoring his "brother" Tobiah and empathetically opening all fundamental questions. Before leaving, they did not draw up a detailed plan or schedule of their journey, which only confirms the symbolism of the narrative transforming the concrete background into the image of the life journey. From the narrative is possible to assume that the angel's proposal to spend the night at Raguel – father of the girl who wants to get married – surprised the boy a little. Without evading, angel Raphael also provides convincing arguments to him as to why he believes it is appropriate to make a stop at this particular man, while highlighting noble qualities of the daughter and father, but he promises that he alone will be sticking up for

organizing formal matters. Despite motivated and persuasive argumentation and justification in the first moment Tobiah remains fairly restrained. His first reactions suggest that he is familiar with the situation, but does not want to get too close to it.

Reasons for Tobiah's reticence and scepticism are eloquent enough, since he heard that Raguel's daughter Sarah already had seven husbands, all of whom had died (Tob 6:14–15). Even in the case of interpreting "dying" in terms of abandonment and separation from the bride, which would mean that they simply "died like men" for the bride, we still remain in the shocking conclusion that it is not possible to survive with this bride.

Angel Raphael is not surprised by Tobiah's doubts and fears and certainly does not consider them insurmountable. Given his successful overcoming dangers and difficulties that have kept attacking him on the current path, Raphael concludes that marriage with seven times unhappily married bride does not pose too risky behaviour for him (Tob 6:16).

Although angel's decision is contrary to logical expectations of parents, he does not neglect their educational function, but justifies his decision on it. First, he reminds Tobiah of all the advice and encouragement that he received from his father. Then he makes him become more down to the earth, releases him of fear and promises him all the necessary support. In doing so, however, symbols or recognitions, which he reached based on his own and independent overcoming of life obstacles, gain a key role (Tob 6:17–18). Without symbols, he will "die" as seven men before him already died in similar circumstances. In addition to using symbols (heart and liver), the angel also includes common prayer and request for God's help in developing and creating a permanent legal relationship.

Like in the first part, angel in this second part of incentives puts great emphasis on "therapeutic" release and relieving. At the beginning and at the end he emphasizes to him not to worry and not to be afraid (Tob 6:17–19).

When Tobiah is finally relieved and relaxed and when upon the angel's support his look into the future clears up, he loses in himself so far inhibitory feelings of unease and uncertainty. Feelings of love that were so far trapped in him of fear and which he always carried within himself, start waking up. Apparently, there was so intense, but at the same time relaxed and confidential communication in place between Tobiah and the angel, that the latter timely discovered Tobiah's hidden, but suppressed feelings of love for Sarah (Tob 6:18).

Adolescents communicate differently and also raise life issues differently with “angels” who are not family members in the strict sense. There is a different, but not less important confidence growing among them and “angels” as compared to that with family members, especially parents. Difference lies in the fact that young people come into communication with less fear and greater responsibility. “Angels” communicate on the same principle. They know that trust is not “reality,” but is something they must acquire through their own conduct and quality communication, which includes the responsibility to adolescent and unconditional commitment to him/her. Constant concern for the “dog” provides the adolescent and the “angel” with necessary security that goes beyond the fear of losing both such a relationship as well as against the abuse of intimacy, while allowing both of them a frank and confidential, as well as sufficiently transparent and distanced, unpossessive communication that is required for independent decision-making. The “angel” is thus, both in terms of his extra-familial role, able to afford expressing the views that parents cannot express; but even if they could, children would not accept them from their mouth, and, in particular, would not understand them. Thus, extra-familial, “angel-like” education in terms of significance in the period of youth growing up increasingly assumes the primacy over the family education and upbringing. A good family upbringing does not feel threatened thereby, but enhanced, because angelic upbringing is based – as we have seen in Raphael – also on the family upbringing and considers it directly. Family education represents the “roots” watered by angels so an adolescent can develop into an independent and responsible adult personality, capable of lasting relationships. Good angels are aware that awakening of particular positive experiences from the nuclear family is the most effective application of experiential learning that encourages a relaxed and constructive development of living space in the “new” family (Cohen 1998, 72).

TOBIAH IS BECOMING A MAN

When, after thorough discussions, Tobiah is freed from his fears and released, he wishes to approach the family, where his love Sarah lives, as soon as possible (Tob 7:1). Her parents welcome them kindly, attend them and are delighted with their visit. They are particularly happy and touched after

recognizing Tobit's son in Tobiah, with whom the family was very connected in the past and shared a relationship with them, in which everyone cared a lot for each other (Tob 7:1b-8).⁴

Nice and warm welcome, full of emotional energy, which was supported by a feeling that soul mates have met, promotes good climate for agreement on a possible marriage (Tob 7:9).⁵ Conversations with angel have strengthened Tobiah's confidence and from this perspective Raphael probably finished his work. Tobiah does not want to be intrusive, but gives his angel a clear signal that he is prepared to take further steps. Despite the great love, he takes into account the traditions, which in his times demanded that talks about marriage issues are opened by parents. In this case, they are represented by the angel and Tobiah for the first time addresses him as "his brother," using thereby his "human" name Azariah. In this way, he probably wants to highlight the acquired self-confidence, because he speaks with the authority of an angel in a "brother to brother" way, while their communication radiates a high degree of mutual trust, friendly relaxation and homeliness. Tobiah's "hint" to the angel to initiate a conversation about marriage, reflects a great deal of their outgoing communication.

Sarah's father Raguel has a daughter who has been unhappily married seven times. It is therefore understandable that he is even more impatient than enamoured Tobiah, because he is becoming increasingly concerned that she will remain unmarried. After the unfortunate attempts of living together Sarah also despaired over the future and at one point even tried committing suicide. Only the love for her father and prayer motivated her in overcoming depression with God's help (Tob 3:7–15).

4 In accordance with the proverbial logic that "the apple does not fall far from the apple tree" Old Testament tradition regularly builds new relationships on the basis of historical experience of family and tribal traditions. Much stronger than today the Old Testament tradition emphasizes the connection of two family traditions that connect with the wedding and pass over into the creation of a new "tree." So it is understandable that in preparing for a life together, parents with their personal characteristic qualities play an important role. Similarly as in talks with Tobiah, in which the angel stressed the nobility of Sarah's father, now her father exposes the nobility of Tobiah's father.

5 According to the Old Testament tradition, Tobiah's and Sarah's wedding lasts for several days and by its structure partially falls further in preparation for the permanent cohabitation of husband and wife.

THE HUMAN FIRST

Raguel is so delighted by Tobiah's hint that he forgets about the well-established habits, "skips" the angel, and immediately offers his daughter to him, which is – depending on the circumstances described – quite understandable (Tob 7:10–11). After a somewhat uncontrolled entry into the conversation, Raguel finally stops and does not withhold his daughter's failed past. After all, Tobiah knows her and the father did not tell him anything he had not known already. More than his father's conveying of painful truth about the daughter, Tobiah is surprised by his tendency to "revelry," namely he begins his offer and ends it with an emphasis on the words "eat and drink" (Tob 7:11). Previous grooms apparently accepted this offer uncritically. They rejoiced, they ate and drank and were in a good mood, and therefore entered into a permanent relationship unprepared and failed to survive it. The father and the grooms seemed to think that "food and drink" are more important and valuable than a human being, the bride. These men themselves prepared their own deaths by such superficial treading into the marital relationship.

Tobiah does not agree to the father's haste and carelessness and stands up to him, confidently and firmly, saying: "I will neither eat nor drink anything until you settle the things that pertain to me" (Tob 7:12).

From the perspective of education for relationships this seems to be one of the key phrases of the entire book of Tobit, because with him Tobiah establishes a hierarchy of values, which is particularly necessary in permanent relationships. In previous cases, the grooms apparently mostly ate and drank, rejoiced, and, by the way, got married. Since they failed to settle the "affairs," they realized soon after marrying that the conditions for joint married life are intolerable and kept "dying" or leaving, one after another. Marriage, which occurred "by the way," offered enough space only for the current revelry and temporary enjoyment, but not for permanent life together.

Preparation for marriage, which includes long-term and in-depth conversations with the "angel," allows Tobiah providing quick and correct answers. His reactions are not learned, but intelligent in the truest sense of the word, as they are resourceful and creative, fast and accurate (Gardner 1993, 61). Before "eating and drinking," he first seeks to settle the "matters." This means that he will discuss the habitat and the sovereignty of

the new family with the father. According to Sarah's previous personal history, he is aware that these steps must be done before marriage and insists in this regard. The current "premature" grooms have kept dying one after another, and he fails to accept their fate. He does not want to come to the house as a "second child," but as a grown man who will have his own children with Sarah. Therefore, he wants to settle the relationships before "joy," which will serve as the basis for living together in the future. A clear division of competences and mutual relations is a prerequisite for a coherent common life.

Raguel understands the language of Tobiah and instantly realizes what this is about. He is ready to settle the "matters" without hesitation, perhaps even better than Tobiah expected (Tob 7:12b-14). Before "eating and drinking" comes the daughter, who he delivers both formally and actually. By handing over, she ceases to be his daughter, which is evident from the own-initiative permission to take her "to her father." In addition, he writes a document on his own initiative and hands him a certificate that Sarah, in terms of the primary relationship, ceased to be his "child" and became the wife of Tobiah.⁶ Only after then, when everyone knew and also agreed that Sarah and Tobiah ceased to be primarily a daughter and son, but have in the minds of all those who participated in this process, transformed in a wife and husband, they were able to start "eating and drinking."

TOBIAH ON THE WEDDING NIGHT

Bible significantly remarks how father Raguel instructs his wife to take their daughter in "other" bedroom this time (Tob 7:15-17). This change clearly expresses that the father and mother are aware of a new and this time different beginning of a joint life of the newlyweds. As a husband and wife, they are aware of the importance of relaxation for joint life. Therefore, the choice of the new bedroom, which does not evoke any negative or painful memories in the daughter and so does not force her to repeat the mistakes, seems like a good decision. The parents thus indicate that they are aware of a new beginning, and convey their hopes and positive feelings also to their daughter.

⁶ In this context, it is not irrelevant that the paper for the marriage contract was brought by the mother, as both parents need to make their "expropriation" step (Tob 7:12b-14).

The fact that the wedding is better prepared this time and that compared to the past, this is a far more serious matter, is revealed by the typical mother “wedding crying.” The mother feels and experiences the pain and loss of reputation, because after marrying the daughter will no longer be “hers,” as she was before. Previous marriages were apparently not worth mentioning and did not provoke any crying. Tobiah set the whole thing seriously, so the farewell is serious and definite, and thus more painful. The mother’s “wedding” crying is usually a cry of joy and a deep desire for her daughter to flourish in a happy marital relationship. Mother’s encouragement of her daughter upon treading into marital status radiates not only her desire, but the belief that daughter’s decision was correct and will make her happy.

According to the habits then, the bride and the groom are accompanied to the bedroom. Tobiah constantly carries along his own symbols, memories, knowledge and experience. According to Raphael’s advice he first remembers about the liver and heart, two symbols that are most vital for the common life (Tob 8:1–3). Liver reminds him of a decision to keep his life purified on an ongoing and regular basis. The heart reminds him of the immense and inexhaustible love for life.

In the presentation of liver and heart is thus symbolized the hidden Tobiah’s initiative, under which, they, as a bride and groom, agree and conclude at the very beginning of the common path to solve the problems and conflicts promptly and thoroughly. Their decision is complemented by a heart that is to say with a lot of love and a deep consciousness that the power of their love allows them to dispel any danger that could threaten their shared journey. According to these two conclusions, the evil spirit, which has so far managed to destroy seven desires for a common life, flees. The evil spirit was expelled to the upper part of Egypt, far enough not to be able to return. There, the angel Rafael, who has not turned up since the beginning of joint life, chains him and ties him up finally.

The mission of the angels – from godfathers to all other comparable roles – is extremely subtle and sensitive. They do not interfere, moralise nor spoil the mood in places where they are not needed, but rather move away into the background in time. But there they keep being active and committed to the people entrusted to them, but in a different way. That is how Raphael carried out his direct mission regarding the preparation for the development of Tobiah’s lasting marital relationship until marriage. From here on, his

role lies in accompanying the events and supporting the prayer, through the fact that he changes the events that he accompanied and supported in prayer, namely, throughout the entire life. Definitive control of the evil spirit undoubtedly represents a prayer, even when the evil spirit is far away and seemingly harmless.

The ritual of presenting symbols of liver and heart probably means that particularly Tobiah, who with the help of the angel is better prepared for marriage, is deeply aware that gifts and related abilities come from God. Thus, by presentation upon aromatic incense, they sincerely thank God for them, but also seek further help and support. The presenting religious communication is regularly associated with thanksgiving and request.

The next step before the legal presentation to one another is a prayer, in which Tobiah – in line with previous investments in joint life – is more active than the bride Sarah (Tob 8:4–9). In addition to thanks and request, which is some kind of continuation of religious communication at the symbolic level of presentation, Tobiah in verbal prayer consciously highlights and emphasizes the importance of their mutual relations as an equal relationship between husband and wife. In accordance with the patriarchal tradition that has some impact on the biblical text, he indeed calls her “assistant,” but at the same time stresses that she is “like him” and, as such, she is „his sister” he is not marrying because of “fornication” or exploitation, but rather from the “truth” or pure love. Tobiah therefore in his religious communication, which in the biblical tradition in psychological terms is the highest form of communication, knowingly and with repeated emphasizing raises his wife to the level of the person he appreciates respects and loves comprehensively. The sooner he expresses his marital love for her in full, also physical form, he expresses it with all other ways and actually makes her understand that she, as a bride and wife, is worthy of his love.⁷ In the process of preparing for marital presentation in love, Tobiah raises her self-esteem, changing her negative self-image in a positive one, and thereby invalidates her feelings of inferiority and incompetence, and replaces them with the ability of self-esteem and priceless love to herself as a person (Cloud, Townsend 2001, 151).

⁷ Given the fact that according to the tradition, a man is sexually more active in establishing relations and that the woman’s nature is usually more reserved (Caissy 1994, 50), the Tobiah’s handling in this Biblical narrative is particularly eloquent.

In their joint “Amen! Amen!” (Tob 8:8), we sense deep respect for each other. They gaze their look towards God and thus, as adults, transcend their love. Only then Sarah becomes able to love.

The entire Tobiah’s “foreplay” is therefore focused into raising Sarah’s self-image. In the moment, when both of them feel, and in particularly unanimously express that they are worthy of each other, then they are also able to love.

LOVE IS STRONGER THAN DEATH

Seven husbands have already died to Sarah on their wedding night, says the Bible. Sarah’s father is apparently prepared for Tobiah to also die and is in a hurry to dig “grave” for him (Tob 8:10–11).

If we think about how we usually complain of our spouse and how “generously” we sometimes share the negative labels on young people who we do not know at all, then this insidious digging of the grave will become more understandable, maybe even suspiciously familiar. Boring and empty life of own marriages as well as general and superficial criticizing of young people are methods of insidious killing and digging graves, which – in this case for daughter Sarah – destroys a positive self-image, undercuts self-esteem and violently destroys the sense of self-worth and effectiveness especially in the field of love and the creation of permanent relations. The mechanism of insidious digging of graves is often supported by placing excessive demands and excessive expectations on the part of parents. Excessive expectations always threaten self-esteem, particularly during adolescence, when young people need it the most (Caissy 1994, 44–45). After the defeats, Sarah will increasingly keep withdrawing and losing a sense of her own value. Parents of Raguél’s character will sarcastically keep comforting her, but that will only keep further locking her down in her depression and self-pity. They are all doing this for “love,” but their love is unfortunately too big or too possessive and makes more harm than good to children.

The Bible highlights the attachment of the daughter to the father, who is presented as an honest, God affectionate and caring husband and father. The fact that he had already been digging a grave for Tobiah, however, remains. In this context, it is even more highlighted how these cruel actions and relentless killer attitudes can sneak up in every family. No one is immune

to the evil spirits who murder grooms and brides or brides and grooms, respectively.⁸

When the grave is ready, father organizes checking to verify if the groom is still alive. In order for Tobiah to survive, he does not believe. He is interested only in the time of death, as he seeks to settle the matter in due time, until it can be hidden. If the news is disseminated, then he may also be subject to unpleasant questions (Tob 8:11b-14).

Depending on the nature and concentration of the Biblical narratives we can assume that upon the first return of the girl there was no special joy in the family. Perhaps they thought that this is a bit more stubborn boy who just does not give up, so they should just wait a little. But at every checking the girl and others note that Tobiah by no means wants to die, but lives. Before him, seven of them died “normally,” but the eighth is still alive.

“In the morning” no one will of course admit they were digging his grave behind his back. Quite the opposite, everyone will be delighted that he survived – at first, perhaps slightly hesitantly and even non-genuinely, and then more and more sincerely, since parents as well as other “mourners” will realize how precious, delightful and heart-warming the ability for marriage and family life of their children really is.

Tobiah was therefore strong enough to handle all the reproaches and criticisms and nothing has “murdered” him nor pulled him away from Sarah. Their bond was strong enough to ignore and handle all the malicious imputations caused to them by the environment behind their back.

A milder scenario is also possible. Perhaps parents were hoping for Tobiah to survive because they were afraid that Sarah will fail again, probably also because of the fault of their own, which they are more and better aware of this time. They are still unable to resist digging up the grave, but are willing to cover the grave up faster than in the past. The Bible namely convincingly expresses that the current “relationship killers” are able to change and to

8 The “murderers” of husbands and wives, of course, are not only parents and potential mothers-in-law and fathers-in-law. Different environment can also disable an individual to develop lasting relationships and many other activities since negative criticism, throwing pejorative labels etc. in today’s “dog-eat-dog” society is present almost everywhere. Even Jesus might have in mind various forms of negative labelling, humiliating and demonizing and treacherous killing and digging grave, when he is speaking of some individuals who do not get married because people have “emasculated” them (Mt 19:12).

look forward to the successes of their children sincerely, genuinely and dedicatedly (Tob 8:15–18).

In her earlier attempts, Sarah probably entered in a relationship with either a feeling that her husband is not worthy of her, or that she is not worthy of him, because she has neither accepted herself and was even “unworthy” to herself. In both cases, the relationship “died” even before it started. Therefore, Tobiah devotes so much attention to her personal growth and strengthening of her self-confidence and self-esteem. He gradually keeps making her understand that she is worthy of his love just the way she is, without changing and adapting, and in particular, without playing games and without pretence. In the moment when she becomes aware of this emotionally, she is also able to love. With Tobiah at her side, she is for the first time in her life able of accepting herself and to love as a woman. Thus, she is for the first time able to experience herself, which at the same time qualifies her for a relaxed, dedicated and responsible marital love. In the moment, therefore, when we realize that we are worthy of love, we also are able to love ourselves and others. That is when all the chains of failures and restraints of prohibition fall off.

Our parents are not able to give this consciousness to us to its fullest extent, nor are we able to obtain it ourselves. We must not forget that Tobiah was not prepared for marital life directly by his parents despite the ideal family upbringing, but by angel Raphael who was not a member of the family. This is also a sign that this is an area that cannot be processed only within the family. Even such a good family needs “angels” who accompany adolescents where parents cannot “see” them. In many cases it is also not good if they “watch” them too closely. As regards the preparation for lasting relationships, it is more important for the parents to find good angels together with their children than taking responsibility for the upbringing of their children alone.

Tobiah and Sarah’s love story ensures that love is stronger than demonizing and truly stronger than death, if we build it with God, and consider the principles of “heart and liver”. Then we are in fact stronger than gravediggers and even stronger than evil spirits.

TOBIAH AND SARAH – HUSBAND AND WIFE

After successfully spent wedding night, when Tobiah and Sarah finally feel they belong to each other, the bride’s parents are intensively preparing

the wedding. Indeed, Tobiah is only now truly willing to “eat and drink” (Tob 8:19–21).

The wedding of Tobiah and Sarah is something special as it does not last only one week, as usually last the Old Testament Israel weddings (Sveto pismo 1997, 1253), but fourteen days.

Although in the will, Sarah’s parents remain “father and mother,” Ra-guel significantly remarks that by marrying each other they became “property” of younger generation. In terms of love, Tobiah otherwise became his son, but in terms of belonging and the associated authority is the other way around: the father belongs to the son. From this perspective he is giving full authority and all the competences to the young generation, which is utmost important for a healthy and brave start of a young family.

Tobiah’s father Tobit, already in his farewell speech presented his money, which he kept as will at his friend Gabael. Even other educational instructions and guides are aimed at establishing permanent marital relationships, which means that the father not only allows, but assumes that his son will become independent, get married and start a family (Tob 4:12).

Thanks to the angel, Tobiah reaches a greater gift than he expected. The original gift becomes almost irrelevant and this precisely reflects the symbolic message that the father – by insisting on his son’s leaving home – saw a long-term decision. The journey he takes to get his father’s gift from a young age leads him to the discovery of his father’s youthful ties and acquaintances, skills and noble qualities, which encourage him to be capable of performing such actions alone along the angel’s support. The role of an angel is sometimes more, sometimes less superior. By entering into marriage, he withdraws into the background, and more or less carries out Tobiah’s orders. Angel thus leaves the management position to Tobiah while he continues being willing and ready to help him when needed. Thus, he empathically finally “ties up the evil demon in Egypt,” and at the beginning of wedding following the order of Tobiah, the angel as his servant leaves to get the promised money to his father’s friend Gabael (Tob 9:1–6). Father’s will is thereby far beyond the “ten talents of silver,” since the son is now happily married and full of optimism and can build his marriage and family life on a sound basis.

SON TOBIAH HEALS FATHER TOBIT

The Bible reports relatively little about Sarah's parents. Angel Rafael presents in particular the father as an honest and pious man (Tob 6:11–13). Given the Sarah's feelings we can conclude at least partially that the parents probably suffered from possessive attitudes towards children. It was probably very difficult for the parents to renounce Sarah and kept a close eye on her and under their own control for a long time, which constrained her in non-family socialization, making contacts and developing lasting relationships.

"The disease" of Tobiah's parents, especially the father, is described more eloquently and concretely. His parents are placed in a better light though, however, their malaise is also more visible. Father's blindness does not stop at the loss of his vision, but causes additional problems when he "loses" his son. He does not only lose his son out of his sight, but soon after even his wife, as he becomes overly sceptical, distrustful and doubtful, suspicious even towards her (Tob 10:1–7b). All this raises a further conflict between them and their communication is increasingly imbued with mutual reproaches. Sarah has been expressing her dissatisfaction from the beginning and was very difficult for her to reconcile with her son leaving home. In fact, she probably reconciled with that fact only partly, since she practically almost sado-masochistically expected in advance that he will not come back in time. This way it would be easier for her to emphasize the eligibility of her doubts and hesitations, while skilfully transforming expressing concerns and pain into reproaches made to her husband and his "naivety" (Tob 10:7c).

"The crap" closing the father's view, therefore causes multiple diseases and conflicts that are increasingly proliferating, forcing both husband and wife to avoid mutual communication and to close down into themselves and their own world. Luckily, the Bible indicates redemptive role of prayer that allows a man to remain a communicative creature even in conflict (Tob 3:1). A man with a positive self-image may pray easily as he is actively looking for a solution and resorts to God with greater optimism, but Tobit and Sarah testify that in the toughest and "desperate" situation prayer is the only communication that calms a man and raises him again and revives him to life. The therapeutic dimension of religious communication is also in the fact that in conflict situations God tends to bear the outbursts of despair and even aggressive insults more easily than a man. In particular, he knows how to wait and does not object to our outbursts (Dangl 2013, 18).

At the same time, he teaches how to wait for meetings that re-open our eyes and allow a new sight for us.

Following the wedding celebration, Tobiah and his wife travelled to his home accompanied by the angel and the dog (Tob 10:14). When he comes close to his home, he uses the bile and smears his father's eyes and heals him (Tob 11:1–13). It is, as we know, a symbol that represents the experience that can also be reached through risking and pain, upon independent overcoming challenges and threats. Thus, we have become independent and able to form and develop lasting relationships. When we touch previously worried and “blind” parents with this healthy consciousness, we heal them and they are now once again capable of looking towards the future in a relaxed way.

So when Tobiah, who has actually caused concern and “crap” that took his father's look, returns as healthy, independent and self-confident husband, therefore, when the father sees a happy young family next to his child, the touch with this heart-warming reality removes his freckles of worries caused by adolescent growing up. His sight is clarified again (Tob 11:16). When parents feel that their children are happy and have a quiet life, they relax, and despite their age come to life with new, sometimes after some years of crisis even, an incredible optimism and courage. They look forward to a new life of their grandchildren, while upon their own successful married life they process and resolve many events that have kept them apart during these worrying years.

If not sooner, than the parents upon the “autumn” reflection recognize the roles of many angels and together with their children become aware that their work cannot be repaid, as discovered by Tobit and Tobiah (Tob 12:1. 6. 11. 15). Raphael is revealed as an angel at the very end, namely, to the father and the son, therefore to the older and the younger generation. He identifies himself as a look into the future that yearns for gratitude and thanksgiving, as well as a look into the future, where we recognize a challenge for own mission.

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