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'And I saw that the delicacies were manyâ™™: A Commentary on Food and Eating in the Book of Tobit

Jacobs, Naomi S. (2007)
*'And I saw that the
delicacies were manyâ™™:
A Commentary on Food
and Eating in the Book of
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Durham University.



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Abstract

The role of food Ñ^ its
consumption in
literature is well
recognised in a number
of fields, but is just

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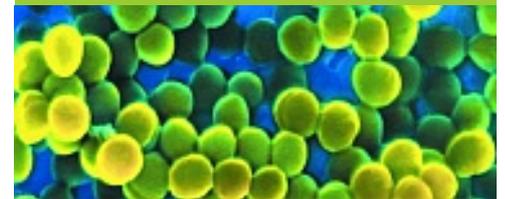
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beginning to play a role in the study of ancient Jewish and Christian writings. Although the Book of Tobit contains some three dozen references to food and drink, there has until now been no full-length study of the phenomenon. Most of the time, when food is mentioned in Tobit, it is in connection with the dietary laws, an area along with a few other topics such as fasting, Passover, and commensality that are the primary focus of scholarship of food in Judaism. This dissertation reveals that the role of food in the Book Tobit is much deeper and more complex. Ubiquitous and highly varied, food is essential to the telling of the story. This includes not only its three major meals/celebrations, but a whole range of activities including food preparation, the gift of food to others, and a variety of ways in which food is not consumed. Unlike well-known themes such as endogamy, burial of the dead, and almsgiving that are the mainstays of

commentary work on Tobit, food's varied appearance allows it to play a supporting role of the major themes of the unit in which it appears. It is crucial to illustrating Tobit's righteous behaviour in the opening chapter, for instance, just as much as it is critical to evoking the dark, liminal backdrop for Tobiah's combat with a hungry large fish in chapter 6. In addition to illuminating how food is integral to the story, this study raises broader questions about the composition of Tobit in general as well as the role of food in ancient narrative.

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the delicacies

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