

# Antique Rug Studio

## Late 17th Century Flemish Biblical Tapestry

### Description

Tapestry, Flemish, Probably Brussels, depicting a scene from the Story of Tobias

Late 17th Century -7' 8" x 10' 4" - No weaver's on town mark.

Re-bordered in plain stripes; slightly reduced from larger piece.

Structure:

Warp: wool, beige, natural, Z-2-S, 11-12 warps/in

Pattern Wefts:

1. wool, Z-1
2. silk, golden-beige only, not original, several restoration campaigns.

Weft density: wool, 21-25 facing wefts (42-50 overall) /inch.

Subject: Tobias and the archangel Rafael.

The iconographic source is the Apocryphal Book of Tobit (O.T.). The

present panel displays vigorous, almost life size figures of Tobias, son of Tobit

and his escort Rafael in the guise of Azarias, and accompanied by his faithful dog.

Tobias and the Angel are in semi-classical garb, thus placing the action in an

ancient or mythical past. Further, Tobias is dressed as a hunter with spear and

bow, but lacks quiver and arrows. His dog is a hunting hound. The garments of

both protagonists are wind blown, thus indicating rapid forward movement.

The iconography of Tobias varies in Western art, but here he is a young man with a blonde

mustache, not the boy as is frequent in this tale. The angel is

androgynous (the pearl earring) and lacks any angelic attributes. The wings are

mimicked by the windblown drapery. They will only be revealed later. The figures pass through a

pure, wooded landscape with no buildings or people visible in the small views through the

forest. There is a variety of small flowering plants in the

lower foreground.

This panel comes from a set of at least four (or



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probably six) tapestries which may have included some of the following scenes:

1. The blinding of old Tobit, Tobias's father, from bird droppings in his eyes.
2. Tobias taking leave of his father in order to travel to Rhages to collect a debt before the old man's demise;
3. Tobias and the angel en route to Rhages – our panel;
4. Tobias at the bank of the Tigris river catching the giant fish which has attacked him. The Angel informs him that certain innards of the fish will be useful and in particular, that the intestines or gall bladder will cure his father's blindness;
5. Tobias applying the piscine entrails to his father's eyes;
6. The Archangel, after having revealed himself, taking leave of the house of Tobias after the cure;
7. Tobias meeting or betrothing Sara, she of many husbands;
8. Tobias and Sara in prayer.

Because of the Tobias-Sara connection, these tapestry sets were popular in Europe in the upper classes as marriage gifts from the 16th century onwards.

A six piece set, late 17th century of either Brussels or Dutch origin covered the walls of the Stadtholder of Friesland in his mansion in Leeuwarden.

Although the series was often a marriage present, there are a few sets surviving, Gobel (Wandteypichie, v.l) and Tapestry in the Baroque MMA 2008), do not

illustrate or mention specific Flemish Tobias story series or panels.

Condition: although slightly reduced and rebordered, this piece is not a fragment of a much larger panel. There is some rewefting in the wool areas and a few small reweaves. The silk has been partially replaced. The overall condition is good with strong colors across the entire palette, the reds and yellows have held up well.

The silk areas are discreet and not light or "hot" as is the case with many injudicious restorations.

In general, the tapestry is very attractive with large, lively figures and clear colors, it is

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extremely decorative in the best sense.

Stock ID:	#20440
General Rug Type:	European
Specific Rug Type:	Tapestry
Circa:	1700
Color:	Other
Origin:	Flemish
Width:	7' 8" ( 233.68 cm )
Length:	10' 4" ( 314.96 cm )