



Protestant Omitted Canonical Books of the Old Testament

Introduction

For the Mighty Arrows reader, this issue Vol. 7 No. 1 will provide a place where the reader can go to read a narrative on the Protestant omitted canonical Holy Books. In 1611, when the King James Version of the Holy Bible was published it contained the Old Testament, Apocrypha, and New Testament Books (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/King_James_Version_of_the_Bible). These Books have historically appeared without omission in the Greek Version of the Old Testament, “Septuagint” which as Coptic Orthodox we have always adhered to.

Over time, re-printing of the King James version of the Holy Bible began to exclude the Apocrypha (a commonly used non-Orthodox term denoting the omitted canonical Books used to paraphrase references within this introduction only), and when the American Standard version of the Holy Bible emerged in 1901 it also did not contain the Apocrypha. In 1952, a Revised Standard Version of the Holy Bible was also printed that did not contain the Apocrypha. In 1973 a common Holy Bible which included the Apocrypha was printed at the request of Roman Catholics and Protestants.

The reprinting of the Apocrypha used the basic text, the Greek Septuagint, which the Coptic Orthodox Church has utilized consistently throughout church history. Therefore the Coptic Orthodox Church has not been found lacking or omitting these canonical books and so terms these books, “Protestant omitted canonical Holy Books,” or “omitted canonical Holy Books” correctly designating the Holy Books not Apocrypha or Deuterocanonical (because they are not second in importance).

According to Dr. Emile Maher Ishak (currently recognized as Rev. Fr. Shenouda Maher Ishak serving in Rochester, NY), past professor of Old Testament and

Theology in the Coptic Orthodox Theological College at Cairo (1997) and the author of, *The Inspiration of the Holy Scriptures*, states “History alone allows us to establish the fact that Jews and Christians have always believed in the inspiration of the Holy Books of the Bible. These Holy Books are held sacred and canonical, not because having been put together merely by human labor and afterwards approved by the Church’s authority, but because having been written by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, they have God as their author and as such, they have been handed down to the Church itself as an unerring guide to her.”

The omitted Canonical Books are held sacred by the Coptic Orthodox Church and include the Holy Books of Tobit, Judith, Additions to the Holy Book of Esther, Wisdom of Solomon, Ecclesiasticus or the Wisdom of Jesus son of Sirach, Baruch, The Letter of Jeremiah, Additions to the Holy Book of Daniel (The Prayer of Azariah and the Song of the Three Jews, Susanna, Bel and the Dragon), I and II Esdras, Psalm 151 following Psalm 150, and I, II, and III and IV Maccabees.

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| The following abbreviations are used in listing the “Protestant omitted canonical Holy Books”: | |
| Tob..... | Tobit |
| Jdt | Judith |
| Add Esth..... | Additions to Esther |
| Wis..... | Wisdom |
| Sir | Sirach |
| Bar | Baruch |
| I Esd | I Esdras |
| II Esd..... | II Esdras |
| Let Jer | Letter of Jeremiah |
| Song of Thr | Prayer of Azariah and Song of the Three Jews |
| Sus | Susanna |
| Bel..... | Bel and the Dragon |
| I Macc..... | I Maccabees |
| II Macc | II Maccabees |
| III Macc | III Maccabees |
| IV Macc..... | IV Maccabees |

Again, it should be commonly noted that the preferred Coptic Orthodox terminology denoting these Holy Books is “**Protestant omitted canonical Holy Books**” rather than Apocryphal or Deuterocanonical Books.

References:

Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America (1989), *The Apocrypha/Deuterocanonical Books of the Old Testament New Revised Standard Version*. Cambridge



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The Holy Book of Tobit

ΠΙΧΩΜ ΕΘΟΥΑΒ ΝΤΕ ΤΩΒΙΤ



“Tobias and the Angel,” represents God being nearer to us than we think. God is ready to assist us if we remain faithful to Him.

Written in Aramaic, the original Holy Book of Tobit was lost for centuries. The Greek translation, existing in three different recensions, is our primary source. In 1955, fragments of the Holy Book in Aramaic and in Hebrew were recovered from Cave IV at Qumran. These texts are in substantial agreement with the Greek recension that has served as the basis for the present translation. This Holy

Book tells the story of Tobit, son of Tobiel of the descendants of Asiel, of the tribe of Naphtali.

Tobit was a righteous man who walked in the ways of truth all of his life. He performed many acts of charity for the people around him. He gave food to the hungry, and clothing to the naked. Tobit buried the bodies of the dead of his people who were thrown out behind the wall of Nineveh. One time someone told King Sennacherib that Tobit was doing these things, and the king ordered that he be put to death. Tobit ran away and hid from the king, and all his property was taken away. After a while the sons of Sennacherib killed their father, and appointed Ahikar, which is the son of Tobit’s brother Hanael, the cupbearer. Ahikar interceded for Tobit, and he returned to his family in Nineveh.

The Holy Book of Tobit is like one of the Lord Jesus Christ parables; there may be some historical basis for it but we do not know what it is. The Book of Tobit is a Wisdom Book because it offers instruction on how to live in relation to God and to one’s fellow men. Theological points to look for in the Holy Book are that God is nearer to us than we think and He is ready to assist us if we remain faithful to Him. Love for God must be shown in virtuous deeds and not just in words. We should think highly of burying the dead properly, remaining chaste before marriage, being faithful to one’s wife or husband, prayer, fasting and almsgiving.

Written by a Mighty Arrow
St. Mary, Houston TX

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The Holy Book of Judith

ΠΙΧΩΜ ΕΘΟΥΑΒ ΝΤΕ ΙΟΥΔΙΘ

Written by Sarah Farid
St. George, Tampa FL

Judith was a Protestant omitted canonical Holy Book that



now commonly adheres to the version of the Holy Bible generally following the Greek Septuagint, or most Orthodox or Roman Catholic versions that have throughout the ages been ascribed to. It is included among the so-called "Apocrypha" in the King James Version, and can not be found in the Hebrew Bible. The author of this Holy Book is unknown, and it is written in two parts.

Part One: (chapters 1-7)

King Nebuchadnezzar, who reigned over the Assyrians in the great city of Nineveh, sends General Holofernes to punish the western nations because the western nations wouldn't join him in a war against Media. So, he went, and every nation except the Israelites submitted. Achior, the leader of the Ammonites, told Holofernes that God will defend the Israelites as long as they remain faithful. But, Holofernes goes ahead and surrounds the Israelites in the ancient Palestinian town of Bethulia, near Jerusalem.

Part Two: (chapters 8-16)

The widow Judith volunteers to deliver the Israelites after rebuking them for losing faith in God when under siege. She goes to the Assyrian camp, pretending to inform them against her people. Holofernes is charmed, and invites her to a banquet in his tent. Holofernes becomes drunk at the banquet, and falls asleep. Judith gets a sword, beheads him, wraps his head in a bag, and takes it to her people. This makes it easy for the Israelites to attack the Assyrians, which now have no leader, and the Assyrians flee in panic. Then they celebrate the victory, and praise the Lord, and go to Jerusalem to offer thanksgiving.



Judith with Holofernes Head

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*Have you ever wished for just a
little more "wisdom"?*

Maybe you thought that having a higher IQ would make it easier to do better in exams or finish your homework a lot faster! Relying on intelligence may help you complete certain tasks faster or better. But if you want to be successful in your life as a whole- including the big picture "eternal life" then seek wisdom.

There was once a man that lived, just like any human who was born into this world (Wisdom chapter 7). Sure he was son of royalty so he received a little bit more attention than the rest of us. But what distinguished him was not the kingship, for many kings have come and gone.

What set him apart was his wisdom. I am sure by now my beloved reader you know who I am talking about. For his name is synonymous with wisdom. Yes, it's King Solomon. In fact there is a whole book in our Holy Bible called "Wisdom of Solomon". It's found in the Orthodox and Catholic Bible. ¹

In reading this awesome Book of the Holy Bible "Wisdom of Solomon" you will find that the profound aim of the Holy Spirit for this Holy Book is to build your soul spiritually and fortify her with Divine wisdom against the currents of evil and the vain lusts of the temporary world.

In Chapter 7 we read about wisdom that "There is in her a spirit that is intelligent, holy, loving the good, all-powerful, overseeing all, and penetrating through all spirits". What is wisdom but the Holy Spirit of God!



Chapter 15 speaks to God's mercy: "But you, our God, are kind and true, patient, and ruling all things in mercy."

The Holy Book of "Wisdom of Solomon" consists of 19 chapters. The Holy Book is divided into 3 main parts:

1. Chapter 1 through 6:
Talks to us about the importance of seeking Heavenly Wisdom
2. Chapter 7 through 10:
Reveals to us Wisdom and Her attributes.
3. Chapter 11 through 19:
Gives us a glimpse of God's gentle and merciful wisdom as well as warning about Idolatry.

I invite you my beloved reader to experience for yourself living a life that is filled with the Heavenly Wisdom. You will find success following you everywhere you go. Joy will fill your heart. You will feel the continuous presence of our awesome God.

Where to start from?
In your morning prayers ask God to give you His Wisdom, you may also want to put a little piece of folded paper on the altar with this request.



Solomon, Prophet and King, Speaking to God's Mercy, "Buy You, our God, are kind and true, patient and ruling all things in mercy."

Obtain a personal version of the Orthodox or Catholic Holy Bible based upon the Greek Septuagint which will

include the Book of "The Wisdom of Solomon". And always remember our Lord said "seek and you will receive" May the Lord fill you with His Wisdom.

—A Mighty Arrows, St. Mary, Atlanta GA

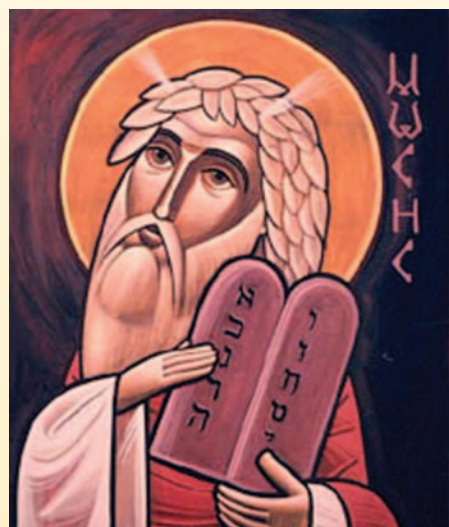
¹ You will not find it in the Protestant compilation of the Bible, when the Protestant split from the Catholic Church they excluded this book along with a few other books. However, our orthodox church firmly accepts the Wisdom of Solomon as part of the Holy Bible that is inspired from the Holy Spirit. Written

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Holy Book of Sirach

by Elizabeth Assad
St George, Tampa FL

The Holy Book of "The Wisdom of Jesus, the Son of Sirach" (or simply "Wisdom of Sirach") or perhaps more widely known as the Book of Ecclesiasticus is mostly made up of unconnect-



Moses with Ten Commandments. The wisdom in the Law of Moses state that the people perished for the lack of prudence.



ed sayings which bear on all kinds of topics.

The author of this blessed book is thought by many scholars to be a man by the name of Jesus Ben Sira, a **“man of Jerusalem”** (50:27). Ben Sira ran a Biblical studies school for young Jewish men and was believed to be a philosophical observer of life, as easily inferred from the nature of his written thought. Ben Sira himself speaks with a wider knowledge, only acquired by one who traveled a great deal.

The principal doctrines of Jesus, the son of Sirach were that just like all other inspired writers in the Old Testament, that God is One and eternal, also that there is no other God besides Him The Wisdom of Sirach deals with a variety of subjects such as the individual, the family, and the community in their relations with one another and with God. It addresses friendship, education, poverty and wealth, the law, religious worship, and many other matters which reflect the religious and social customs of the time. The basic theme of the author of the Holy Book of Ecclesiasticus is that of **“wisdom.”** This book is said to have split into two sections, in which both sections contain the theme of wisdom.

The first part of the book directly instills the fear of God and the fulfillment of His commands, wherein consist true wisdom. The second part of the book depicts the Divine wisdom and the practice of wisdom in various actions of everyday existence.

The first chapter in the Holy Book of Sirach begins with praise of the Lord. Rejoicing, saying **“All wisdom cometh from the Lord and is with Him forever”** (1:1). Ben Sira then begins to explain the qualifications to obtain the Lord’s wisdom. He says that the root of wisdom is fear of the Lord and when this is attained one will receive long life.

Ben Sira then further explains what one shall do if he desires the wisdom of the Lord which is to follow His commands. As said in the Holy Book of Sirach 2:8, **“You who fear the LORD, trust him, and your reward will not be lost.”** This is one of the verses in Sirach in which summarize the first section of the Holy Book of Ecclesiasticus.

In the second part of the Wisdom of Sirach advice is given in all parts of one’s life. Advice is handed to the parents of children, to never close their eyes in a decision and to hold firm, advice is also given to friends and the rich and also the poor. In the Holy Book of Sirach, it says to be faithful to thy neighbor and you will never have to worry for your own part.

“Lend to your neighbor in his hour of need, and pay back your neighbor when a loan falls due; Keep your promise, be honest with him, and you will always come by what you need.” (Sirach 29: 2-3). In all of his advices and explanations of how one shall act in specific events, Ben Sira reminds the reader not to forget the Lord. Ben Sira continually brings the Lord’s name in between pauses to constantly remind the person that Lord is great and will repay the person in multitudes if they follow His commands.

In conclusion to the appraisal of the Wisdom of Sirach, Ben Sira carries on about the blessed followers of the Lord in which occupy seven of the last eight chapters in the Holy Book Wisdom of Sirach.

The last chapter is that of praise and thanksgiving. Just as we shall always end a chapter of our wisdom in prayer and thanksgiving in the Lord for the blessings He has handed us, this is exactly what Ben Sira does.

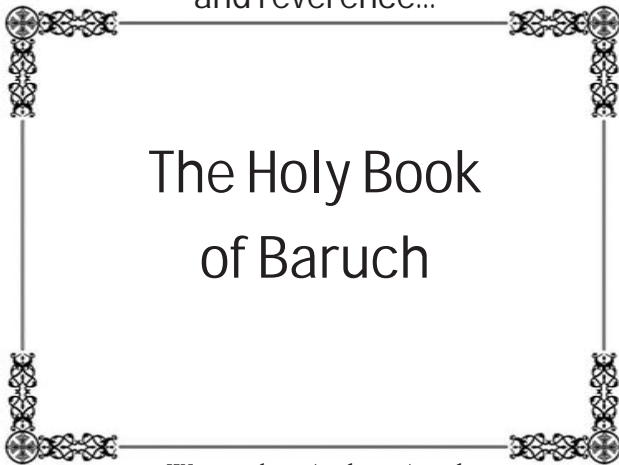
Jesus Ben Sira’s continuous praise of the Lord is truly exemplified in this last chapter and in his last words; Ben Sira once again selflessly gives advice to his brethren. He says **“Let your spirits rejoice in the mercy of God, and be not ashamed to give Him praise; Work at your tasks in due season, and in His own time God will give you your reward.”**(51:29-30).



The Alpha and Omega



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The Holy Book of Baruch

Written by: Andrew Assad
St. George, Tampa, FL

Baruch, the secretary of the Prophet Jeremiah, wrote in his Holy Book concerning the children of Jerusalem and how they did not heed the Word of the Lord.

In the first chapter, Baruch writes about the meeting in Babylon (verses 1-12) and the confession of guilt (verses 13-22). In verse thirteen the children of Jerusalem say, ***“Pray for us also to the LORD, our God; for we have sinned against the LORD, our God, and the wrath and anger of the LORD have not yet been withdrawn from us at the present day.”***

The Lord told the children of Jerusalem through many prophets to turn from their evil ways of worshipping idols, committing adultery, and committing evil sins and that he would forgive them their sins.

Therefore, when the Lord fulfilled His Word and set wrath and evil upon His children, they desperately wanted to turn from their evil ways. They saw their great city overrun by the neighboring nations and their families were separated.

In chapter two, Baruch writes about the Prayer of Deliverance (verses 1-26) and God’s promises recalled (verses 27-35). The children of Jerusalem prayed and fasted because the Lord had fulfilled His Word that the warning He uttered against them and then they feared the Lord.

In verses 9-10 the children of Jerusalem say, ***“And the Lord kept watch over the evils, and brought them home to us; for the Lord is just in all the works he commanded us to do, but we did not heed his voice, or follow the***

precepts if the Lord which he set before us.”

The children of Jerusalem prayed, fasted, and wept much because the Lord fulfilled His word. Though, the Lord heard their prayers.

Through His prophets the Lord said in verses 34-35, ***“And I will bring them back to the land which with my oath I promised to their fathers, to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob and they shall rule it. I will make them increase; they shall not diminish. And I will establish for them, as an eternal covenant, which I will be their God, and they shall be my people; and I will not again remove my people Israel from the land I gave them.”***

In chapter 3, Baruch writes about the Wisdom in the Law of Moses. The Wisdom in the Law of Moses states that the people perished for the lack of prudence and the perished because of the actions.

This same chapter also says to find prudence, strength, and understanding for when they are found you may also find peace. Chapter 4 talks about the City of Jerusalem and how she weeps for her captive children.

In this chapter we see in verses 5-8 that the children of Jerusalem were sold to the nation because they angered God; for they were handed over to their foes. They made sacrifices to demons and to idols, provoking their God, the Eternal God that nourished them.

Although they provoked the Lord, Jerusalem says that peace and salvation can be found if you turn to the Lord in verses 21-23, ***“Fear not, my children; call upon God, who will deliver you from oppression at the enemy hands. I have trusted in the Eternal God for your welfare, and joy has come to me from the Holy One because of the mercy that will swiftly reach you from your Eternal Savior.”***

Chapter 5 discusses Jerusalem shedding its misery and mourning for the Lord will show all the earth its splendor; and Jerusalem will be named by God forever the peace of justice, the glory of God’s worship.

Finally, chapter 6 is the Letter of Jeremiah against idolatry. In this chapter Jeremiah tells his people not to fear. Although they are taken captive in a foreign land he will come to that land and take them in peace. He told them hold to your beliefs and not to worship the idols of that land, for those idols are not the true God. The priests of that land are ungodly for they do not hold to the custom of the Lord and deceive their own people and rob them of their riches, for they know that none of them can rise up



against them.

Jeremiah tells his children to hold to their beliefs for those idols can not heal people and their priests steal from their own people to live a lavish life. May the Lord teach us through this Holy Book that we should always heed His Word. Also through times of troubles and tribulations that it is only through His name that we should offer prayer and fasting to as well as repentance and confession, for He is the only one that can save and help us in everything and Glory be to God forever, Amen.

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“Against Idol Worship”

A Might Arrow
St. Mary, Roswell, GA

These seventy-three verses purport to be a letter composed by Jeremiah for those about to be taken into exile from Judah to Babylonia in 597 BC by Nebuchadnezzar's forces. It was undoubtedly inspired by Jeremiah's letter (Jer 29.1-23) to those taken hostage in 597, a decade before the final defeat of Judah and the destruction of Jerusalem.

The Letter of Jeremiah is an impassioned sermon against idol worship and polytheism based on Jer 10, and particularly Jer 10.11: **“The gods who did not make the heavens and the earth shall perish from the earth and from under the heavens.”** The Letter is also influenced, however, by other Biblical polemics against idol worship (Ps 115.4-8; 135.15-18; Isa 40.18.20; 41.6-7; 44.9-20; 46.1-7; etc.). The body of the letter is composed of a series of ten warnings to Jews, who might be attracted to idol worship, to recognize and be wary of idolatry. Each part ends on a common refrain, with variations, insisting that idols are not gods nor

to be confused with the one, true God (vv. 16, 23, 29, 40, 44, 52, 56, 65, 69, 72).

Although all surviving manuscripts of the letter are in Greek, including one fragment from Cave 7 at Qumran, the Letter was probably composed originally in Hebrew or Aramaic. Most scholars date the Letter to the Hellenistic period. The reference in v. 3 to an exile lasting seven generations has been taken as a clue to the date of composition of the letter (317 BC), but the reference to seven generations is probably symbolic. The allusion to the Letter in 2 Macc 2.1-3 would indicate a date no later than the second century BC.

The Letter has different placements in various manuscripts and versions of the Holy Bible. It stands as a discrete work between Lamentations and Ezekiel in two major Greek Septuagint manuscripts (fourth-century Vaticanus and fifth-century Alexandrius), in the Milan Syriac Hexapla, and in Arabic. In other Greek and Syriac manuscripts, and in the Latin version, it appears as the sixth chapter of Baruch. Since it is, however, clearly independent of Baruch, the New Revised Standard Version treats it as a separate book. This pseudepigraphical work was written for a Jewish audience, perhaps in Palestine. It is not included in either the Jewish or Protestant canons, but is included among the Holy Books of the Roman Catholic and Orthodox churches.

The body of the letter is divided into 12 parts. It begins by introducing this letter from Jeremiah to those who were to be taken as exiles to Babylon by the King of Babylon, Nebuchadnezzar, because of their sins. They are told that they will remain exiled in Babylon for up to 7 generations, or 280 years, after which God will bring them away in peace. And during this time they will encounter **“gods made of silver and gold and wood”** (4) in which they must resist in their heart and know that they are false. **“For my angel is with you, and he is watching over your lives”** (7).

The Letter goes on to **condemn the worship and creation of idols**. They're described as dolls decorated with gold, silver, and purple robes yet **“cannot save themselves from rust and corrosion”** (12). They hold scepters and daggers but cannot judge or defend. **“From this it is evident that they are not gods; so do not fear them”** (16). The **helplessness of the idols** is portrayed when they are locked up in temples to protect them from thievery and their images are blackened by the smoke of the temple.

The people are then reminded that the **idols are unable to feel or move**. **“It will not shine unless someone whips off the tarnish”** (24) and **“if it is tipped over, it cannot**



straighten itself” (27). Reassurance is offered at the end of the section again; “*since you know by these things that they are not gods, do not fear them*” (29).

Idols cannot repay good or evil, or help worshipers. Their followers serve them meals and sit in their temples with torn clothes, yet they do not respond. “*They cannot save anyone from death or rescue the weak from the strong. They cannot restore sight to the blind; they cannot rescue one who is in distress*” (36-37). A result to those who make and serve these gods will be one of shame.

Chaldeans, those who worship these idols, bring *dishonor to their idols*. They’re humiliated when they bring the mute idols to heal those who cannot speak or pray as if stones are able to understand. These *idols are but the work of human hands*. They are made as the worshiper wishes his god to be. Often times the god does not live as long as the man that created it! The *impotence of the idols* is evident in their lack of power. They cannot control nature, judge the wicked, or flee from their temples when a fire breaks.

The Letter final explains that the *idols are helpless, useless, and not to be compared with celestial phenomena*. “*So it is better to be a king who shows his courage, or a household utensil that serves its owner’s need, than to be these false gods; better even the door of a house that protects its contents, than these false gods; better also a wooden pillar in a palace, than these false gods*” (59). When the One True God commands the sun, the moon, and the stars they obey. He commands when and where the lightning strikes and flashes; where the wind blows and the fire consumes...these gods shall never compare to the One who has power over the world. The wild animals are better than these idols, for they can at least flee when they are in danger.

The Letter concludes *comparing the false idols to scarecrows, thorn bushes, and corpses*. They guard nothing, provide nothing, and will be thrown out in darkness.

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This prayer and song is included in the Holy Book of Daniel and resumes the remainder of the story of the three Jewish youth thrown into the fiery furnace by King Nebuchadnezzar. In the Greek text (Septuagint) Abednego retains his original name, Azariah. Praying for deliverance Azariah summons forth an Angel of the Lord, “*the Angel of the Lord came down into the furnace to be with Azariah and his companions...*” (Prayer of Azariah 26) The angel extinguishes the flames of the furnace and the three Holy Youth sing praise to God.

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This story is included in the Holy Book of Daniel and centers on a beautiful married woman. Two elders told Susanna that unless she commits adultery with them they would publicly tell others that she had done so with a young man. “...The two elders, full of their wicked plot to have Susanna put to death.” (Susanna 28)



She refused and the deceitful elders did what they threatened to do. Susanna was sentenced to death for committing adultery with a fictitious young man. She prayed to God for help and Daniel presented himself asking each elder to identify the type of tree under which the deed took place. Answers differed and the elders were sentenced to death.

When finishing this meal the dragon burst. “...*The King has become a Jew; He has destroyed Bel, and killed the dragon...*” (*Bel and the Dragon 28*) It was at this specific point in time that the Babylonians insisted Daniel be handed to them by the king and they promptly threw Daniel into the lion’s den.

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Bel and
the Dragon
ΒΗΛ ΝΕΜ ΠΙΔΡΑΚΩΝ

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Additions
to Esther

Concluding the Holy Book of Daniel, the Prophet Daniel proves that Bel, the god of the Babylonians was not a “living” god who could eat and drink by scattering ashes on the temple floor and the next day showing King Cyrus the footprints of the priests who had entered through a hidden passage and eaten the food left for Bel.

Includes additional passages related to the visions and prayers of Esther and Mordecai proclaiming God’s active role in the Jew’s deliverance.

Daniel also destroyed the “great dragon” worshiped by the Babylonians by feeding it cakes of fat, tar, and hair.

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Esdras (Ezra)
1 & 2
ΕΣΔΡΑΣ Α ΝΕΜ Β



Daniel and the Lion's Den

Esdras 1 draws its background from the Holy Book of Ezra. A debate is found within this writing which occurred among Persian guardsmen as to what was the most powerful force upon the earth. Among the answers were wine, the king, women, and truth. Truth was decided upon.



Esdras 2 is unrelated to Esdras 1 and writings include life after death and the suffering of the righteous, “The righteous therefore can endure difficult circumstances.” (2 Esdras 7:18)

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Victorious Battles, Resurrection of the Dead, and Sainthood

The name Maccabee means “hammer” and is attributed to Judas, the third son of the priest Mattathias in the Books of Maccabees. Judas was the first leader of the revolt against the Seleucid kings who were adamantly trying to Hellenize the Jews in Jerusalem. The battles began when Antiochus IV removed money and precious goods from the temple stirring the faithful Jews to attempt to remove the Hellenizers who would in turn try to conquer the Jews. While the name Maccabees was first applied to Judas, traditionally the name has also been applied to Judas’ brothers, his supporters and other Jewish leaders of that time period.

I Maccabees was written about 100 B.C. in the Hebrew language and while the author is unknown, he was most likely a Palestinian Jew very learned in the traditions and writings of Judaism. His aim in writing was to reveal how God had saved his people Israel through the family of Mattathias and his three sons, Judas, Jonathan and Simon and also through his grandson, John Hyrcanus. He also expresses the doctrine of Israel’s loyalty to God and their worship exclusively of Him and their obedience to His commandments. He goes on to condemn, not the Seleucid kings trying to wipe out Judaism, but most of



Maccabees desecrates the Temple

all the lawless Jews who were adversaries of Judas and his brothers.

Written in Greek, II Maccabees is not a sequel to I Maccabees and differs in many other respects. I Maccabees covers the time period from the reign of Antiochus IV (175 B.C.) until the accession of John Hyrcanus I (134 B.C.) While II Maccabees covers Jewish history from the time of the high priest Onias III and King Seleucus IV (180 B.C.) until the defeat of Nicanor’s army (161 B.C.).

II Maccabees begins with two letters that were sent by the Jews in Jerusalem to Jews in Egypt. They mention the observance of the feast commemorating the purification of the temple. The purpose of the writer is to give theological interpretation of the historical events during this period. There is less emphasis on the actual feats of Judas Maccabeus and more emphasis on the evidence of God’s aid in the miraculous victories. II Maccabees also mentions the doctrines on the resurrection of the dead in the last days and also the intercession of saints in Heaven for people living on earth.

III Maccabees is not related to the first two Maccabees. Its’ writings tell of the Egyptian king Ptolemy IV’s attempt to kill all the Jews in his country during the 3rd Century. The king ordered the Jews to be gathered together. Once together the king had hundreds of elephants which were to trample them to their death. Two angels of the Lord intervened and rescued the Jews. The frightened king repented and became a protector of the Jews.

IV Maccabees is not related to the first three books. It speaks primarily on the power of reason to rule passion. ✱