



DEUTEROCANONICAL BOOKS

TOBIT

NUMBER OF CHAPTERS

14

TYPE

HISTORY



OVERVIEW

After the Assyrians conquer the Northern Kingdom of Israel in 722 BC, Tobit—along with his wife Anna and his son Tobias—are exiled from their home in Galilee and settle in the city of Nineveh. In Exile, Tobit's faith is tested, especially after he loses his sight after being struck by a bird. Tobit's lament is paralleled by Sarah's sadness after having lost seven husbands in succession at the hands of a demon. The angel, Raphael, intervenes and restores joy to both Tobit and Sarah by exorcising the demon and bringing Tobias and Sarah together in marriage. The book of Tobit is a historical book that demonstrates God's faithfulness in periods of exile and lament, encouraging God's people to praise Him and trust in His goodness even in times of trial.



WRITTEN
300-200 BC



TIME PERIOD COVERED
722-612 BC



AUTHOR
Tobit

1

MAIN
CHARACTERS
INTRODUCE

TOBIT 1-3

Tobit expresses anxiety over his own status as a righteous man in contrast to Israel's apostasy. During the period of captivity, Tobit goes blind after being struck in the face by bird droppings. Now dependent on others, Tobit turns to the Lord in prayer even as he wishes that God would end his life. Sarah also endures hardship in exile and prayers for her own death, in turn, God answers their prayers by sending Raphael, an angel, in disguise—that he might guide them back into God's light.

2

TOBIAS AND
RAPHAEL TRAVEL
TO ECBATANA

TOBIT 4-6

Tobit gives his son Tobias advice on family relationships, marriage, and money. Raphael arrives on the scene and Tobias catches a special fish which the angel uses as an object lesson to teach the young man about spiritual warfare.

3

THE MARRIAGE OF
SARAH AND
TOBIAS

TOBIT 6-9

Raphael prepares Tobias to meet Sarah. The two meet and quickly get married. They celebrate their marriage with a great feast and Raphael helps Tobit recover his lost money.

4

THE RETURN TO
NINEVEH

TOBIT 10-11

Tobit and Anna express worry about the welfare of their son. Tobias and Sarah leave Ecbatana and arrive in Nineveh. The Lord restores Tobit's sight and he welcomes his new daughter-in-law, Sarah.

5

RAPHAEL
REVEALS HIS
IDENTITY AND
TOBIT'S FINAL
PRAISES

TOBIT 12-14

Tobit offers Raphael a generous gift in thanksgiving. Raphael reveals himself as an angel. Tobit sees, now, how God's hand has been involved even in the midst of his troubles and afflictions, and he praises God. Tobit concludes with some final advice and the book ends with a summary of the remainder of the book's characters' lives and deaths.

JUDITH

NUMBER OF CHAPTERS

16

TYPE

HISTORY



OVERVIEW

The book of Judith is best recognized as a Jewish novella, a work of historical fiction. The author is unknown but the fictitious aspect is evident from the start when the two major kingdoms that threaten Israel are conflated as Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, is described as one who “ruled over the Assyrians” (1:1). While it is unknown if a figure such as Judith truly lived, she emerges as a heroine in the story who seeks God’s will, takes advantage of a foreign general’s lust for her, and overcomes him with the Lord’s aid. A female heroine was an unlikely choice within a context that celebrated male heroes. This demonstrates that anyone called by the Lord who remained faithful and sought His wisdom could inspire and lead the nation of Israel.



WRITTEN
175-78 BC



TIME PERIOD COVERED
593 BC–Unknown



AUTHOR
Unknown Jewish author

1 THE RISE OF BABYLON/ASSYRIA

JUDITH 1-7

The first part of the book describes how Nebuchadnezzar waged a war against the nations, including Israel. Holofernes is dispatched on a campaign to destroy the disobedient nations. Israel prays and fasts, seeking God’s deliverance, from Holofernes’ attack. Holofernes learns from Achior about Israel’s identity as God’s chosen people and in a fury expels Achior. Achior arrives in Bethulia, and addresses the people, warning them of Holofernes’ impending attack. Holofernes begins his siege on Bethulia and the Jewish people grow fearful while under attack.

2 THE LORD RAISES UP JUDITH TO RESCUE THE PEOPLE

JUDITH 8-16

Judith is introduced as a pious woman whose beauty is unmatched in all of Israel. She speaks up to chastise the leaders of Bethulia for their faithlessness. After praying, and seeking the Lord, Judith meets with Holofernes. She cleverly praises Holofernes, appealing to his ego. She gradually earns his favor before beheading the foreign military leader in his sleep. After discovering his body, the Assyrians fall into disorder and are defeated. The people of Israel celebrate and honor Judith. Achior is circumcised and converts to the faith of Israel.

BARUCH

NUMBER OF CHAPTERS

5

TYPE

HISTORY



OVERVIEW

Baruch examines Israel's past sins in the light of exile which, according to the book, was the just punishment following from the covenant curses that came upon God's people on account of their faithlessness. The book offers God's people a way forward in the light of a broken past: confess your sins and return to God. Baruch places a great deal of emphasis on prayer as a necessary habit to inculcate righteousness in the hearts of a repentant people.



WRITTEN

100-164 BC



TIME PERIOD COVERED

175-164 BC



AUTHOR

Baruch, Jeremiah's Scribe

1

**HISTORICAL
INTRODUCTION AND
A CONFESSION OF
SIN**

BARUCH 1-3

Baruch, Jeremiah's scribe, recounts Israel's history of faithlessness and interprets the exile of God's people in Babylon as the just punishment that Israel deserves for her sins. Speaking on behalf of God's people, Baruch confesses Israel's sins and turns to God for mercy, forgiveness, and restoration.

2

**POETIC WISDOM AND
CONSOLATION**

BARUCH 4-5

In a poem of wisdom, where the virtue is personified as a woman, we hear how true wisdom is elusive to mankind but found wholly in God. In the poem of consolation, we hear how it was never God's intention to destroy Israel but to punish her so that she might return to Him and be redressed in glory and righteousness.

THE WISDOM OF SOLOMON

NUMBER OF CHAPTERS

19

TYPE

POETRY



OVERVIEW

While the book is not written by Solomon—as even ancient believers recognized—the book of Solomon sought to apply Solomonic wisdom to Israel's entire history. Like Proverbs, also widely attributed to Solomon, the Book of Wisdom regularly contrasts polar opposites: good from evil, wisdom from foolishness, and especially justice from wickedness. The book places a great deal of emphasis on God's transcendence as the author of all creation. Honoring God's majesty, and our place relative to God's eternity, is the beginning of wisdom.



WRITTEN
ca. 20 BC



TIME PERIOD COVERED
N/A



AUTHOR
Most likely not Solomon, but an unnamed Hellenistic Jew living in Alexandria in the first century BC.

1

BOOK OF
ESCHATOLOGY

WISDOM 1-6

This section includes poetic exhortations to Israel's judges and kings, exhorting them to exhibit justice and wisdom. A lengthy section between the sections addressed to the judges and to the kings elaborates on the character of justice, contrasted against wickedness.

2

BOOK OF WISDOM

WISDOM 7-10

This section discusses, in poetic form, the birth, rise to power, and wisdom of Solomon. Then, the book proceeds to illustrate how God's wisdom has been exhibited throughout biblical history.

3

BOOK OF HISTORY

WISDOM 11-19

This section further develops the theme that God's wisdom is exhibited in biblical history. The focus in this section is on God's dealings with the Israelites and the Egyptians during the Exodus. This section details seven different illustrations, or contrasts, between God's wisdom and the foolishness of the Egyptians with respect to the different plagues that the Lord inflicted on Egypt.

ECCLESIASTICUS/SIRACH

NUMBER OF CHAPTERS

51

TYPE

POETRY



OVERVIEW

Ecclesiasticus, or Sirach, is an anthology or collection of short sections dealing with issues pertaining to Godly wisdom. It was widely referenced by early Christians and praised for its wisdom and practical advice on many topics. Sirach is also widely considered a valuable resource for understanding the world of second temple Judaism and the world in which Jesus lived.



WRITTEN
180 BC



TIME PERIOD COVERED
N/A



AUTHOR
Bin Stra

1

THE WAYS OF WISDOM

SIRACH 1-9

Wisdom is defined as the creation of God rather than the accumulation of human experience. The way of wisdom, therefore, is through the fear of God and by exhibiting godly virtues, especially self-control and obedience during times of testing and woe. Wisdom leads God's people to respect their parents, to exhibit humility, to help the poor, and to engage other members of society in honesty without deceit.

2

LIFE UNDER DIVINE CARE AND PROTECTION

SIRACH 10-18

Living life under God's care and within His grace takes shape in specific ways. It includes walking through life with humility, and having proper attitudes toward work, treating enemies charitably, treating all people equitably, and understanding that it isn't wrong but godly character that produces happiness.

3

THE VIRTUE OF PRUDENCE AND SELF-DISCIPLINE

SIRACH 19-23

Prudent living means spurning excessive luxury, refraining from gossip, channeling one's cleverness toward godly ends, taming the tongue, and resisting temptation to sin.

4

IN PRAISE OF WISDOM

SIRACH 24-25

Wisdom has cosmic significance. True wisdom is more than prudent behavior but is drawn from God's eternal principles. Wisdom, therefore, produces fruit. God's law manifests God's wisdom and provides a path that ensures that mankind can live wisely rather than foolishly.

5

PROPER SOCIAL BEHAVIOR

SIRACH 25-34:12

This section describes the qualities desirable in husbands and wives. It explores how profitable speech builds people up rather than tearing people down through gossip or insincerity. Quarrels should be avoided. One must be honest in his financial dealings with others. Children should be properly disciplined. Health is of greater value than wealth and should be pursued, because caring for oneself respects the gift of life given by God. Advice is given to masters and slaves. Dreams are discounted as worthless. God's law, rather than dreams and visions, is what should be sought in pursuit of God's wisdom.

ECCLESIASTICUS/SIRACH

NUMBER OF CHAPTERS

51

TYPE

POETRY



OVERVIEW

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WRITTEN
180 BC



TIME PERIOD COVERED
N/A



AUTHOR
Bin Sira

6 ON WORSHIP AND THE MERCIES OF GOD

SIRACH 34:12-36:17

Vain worship without proper devotion and piety is condemned. Further, one cannot turn to God's mercy without also turning away from sin. The best sacrifice one can give to God is obedience. God gives no preference to the wealthy but will have mercy on the poor and oppressed.

7 ON SOCIETY

SIRACH 36:18-42:14

A man should utilize discrimination and wisdom when choosing a wife. Women are given no say in the choice of husbands. One should exercise caution when heeding the advice of friends. Some are friends in name only but ultimately seek their own interests. Instead, one should choose God-fearing men as friends. Good teachers are those who practice the principles they teach. The dead should be properly mourned. Scholars and sages should be provided for, that they might devote themselves to wisdom for the betterment of society. This section addresses the reasons why feeling shame might be appropriate or inappropriate. Additional advice for disciplining daughters is given.

8 THE WONDERS OF CREATION

SIRACH 42:15-43:33

God is all-knowing and all-powerful. His majesty is evident in creation, through the wonders of the sky, the moon, and the stars. God is in charge of all things, including the weather. Creation should inspire wonder and awe for God's majesty.

9 REMEMBERING ISRAEL'S HEROES OF THE PAST AND EPILOGUE

SIRACH 44-51

Several heroes from Israel's past serve as godly examples for right and godly living. Some of these heroes include Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Moses, Aaron, Phinehas, Joshua, David, Solomon, Elijah, Elisha, Hezekiah, and Simon the High Priest. The book concludes with a psalm of thanksgiving and some concluding reasons to study and pursue godly wisdom.

1 MACCABEES

NUMBER OF CHAPTERS

16

TYPE

HISTORY



OVERVIEW

As a result of the conquests of Alexander the Great, a project known as Hellenization—the spread of Greek culture—was enacted throughout Alexander’s empire. As a result, a number of threats—including political leaders—rose up and threatened the Jewish people and their faith. At the time, God raised up the Maccabees as champions against those who were hostile to their faith and preserved the Jewish people in the light of foreign threats.



WRITTEN

before 63 BC



TIME PERIOD COVERED

332 BC-104 BC



AUTHOR

Unknown,
educated Jew

1 CONFLICTS OVER HELLENIZATION AND THE FALL OF JERUSALEM

1 MACCABEES 1

The author begins by sketching a history of the Hellenistic world from the time of Alexander the Great through Antiochus IV. The author is especially critical of the ways that several “renegades” or Jewish apostates compromised God’s law in order to seek the economic and political advantages of belonging to the larger Greek world. While Antiochus did not attempt religious coercion throughout his kingdom, he did issue decrees that forbade certain religious practices that conflicted with Greek beliefs.

2 MATTATHIAS AND PASSIVE RESISTANCE

1 MACCABEES 2

Antiochus’ religious decree forbade offerings and sacrifices, the observance of sabbath festivals, and the practice of circumcision. A Jewish priest, Mattathias, encouraged the Jewish people to engage in passive resistance and civil disobedience, honoring the commands of God above the decrees of men.

3 THE LEADERSHIP OF JUDAS MACCABEUS

1 MACCABEES 3-9:22

After the death of Mattathias, the author introduces Judas Maccabeus in terms reminiscent of Israel’s earlier heroes, i.e., “like a lion.” He leads a number of military campaigns to free the Jewish people from foreign control. He cleanses the temple and rededicates the altar to the Lord. After the death of Antiochus and the rise of the Seleucids, Judas Maccabeus forges an alliance with Rome against the Seleucids.

4 THE LEADERSHIP OF JONATHAN

1 MACCABEES 9:23-12

Jonathan, Judas’ youngest brother, assumes leadership after Judas’ death. He expands his older brother’s prior efforts, attacking the citadel, and thwarting foreign leaders who would seek to subjugate the Jewish people.

5 THE LEADERSHIP OF SIMON

1 MACCABEES 13-16

After Jonathan was captured by Trypo, Simon—the oldest of the three Maccabean brothers—assumes leadership over the Jewish armies. He regains independence for Judea and engages in further diplomacy with Rome and Sparta.

2 MACCABEES

NUMBER OF CHAPTERS

15

TYPE

HISTORY



OVERVIEW

The Book of 2 Maccabees is not a continuation of 1 Maccabees. Rather, it offers a parallel account of the events reported in 1 Maccabees 1-7. The book recounts a time when the Jewish people were greatly divided over the future course of their nation as a people of God. Many believed that it was to their advantage to embrace certain aspects of Greek culture and belief while other Jews believed such compromise equaled apostasy. It was also a time when God raised up great leaders to guide His people during such a difficult period and to overcome foreign threats and enemies.



WRITTEN

before 63 BC



TIME PERIOD COVERED

175-161 BC



AUTHOR

Jason of Cyrene

1

LETTERS AND PROLOGUE

This section includes a number of letters. First a letter from the Jews in Egypt to the Jews in Jerusalem urges more faithfulness in their practices and worship. A letter to Aristobulus from the Jews in Judea, purportedly written by Judas Maccabeus, explores how God brings justice to those who act in violation of God's precepts. We hear in this section that 2 Maccabees is meant to be a prologue to a longer five-volume history on the times of the Maccabees—a work no longer extant.

2

GOD'S PROTECTION OF THE TEMPLE

There are a number of internal conflicts in the priesthood, particularly between Simon and Onias. Much of the disputes are concerned with temple funds are used and whether some of the temple funds should be transferred to the Seleucid king's treasury. Simon claims that the royal budgets, earmarked for sacrifices, are being accumulated rather than used for their designated purpose.

3

ACCUSATIONS OF APOSTASY

Simon slanders Onias. The tension grows and Jason intervenes, instituting a pro-Hellenization plan for Jerusalem. But three years later, Menelaus outbids Jason for the office of priest and takes his place. Menelaus has Onias executed. The high priest, according to the narrative, became the greatest enemy to his own countrymen.

4

GOD'S RESPONSE AND PUNISHMENT

Antiochus IV desecrates the temple, dedicating it to Zeus. The Book of 2 Maccabees interprets these events, including the suppression of Judaism, as a form of punishment and a call to repentance. The day would come, however, when the enemy too would become accountable to God. Eleazer is martyred when he refuses to eat meat that had been sacrificed to idols. A mother and her seven brothers are also martyred after refusing to eat pork.

5

GOD'S DELIVERANCE

The rest of the book shows how through Judas Maccabeus, with an army of 6,000 men, God defeated the enemies of God's people, including an army of 20,000 men led by Nicanor. Judas Maccabeus and his men clean the temple and rededicate it to the Lord. Many more battles are fought by Judas and his army. The foreign kings could not prevail against Judas Maccabeus and his army because the Lord was with them.

2 MACCABEES 1-2

2 MACCABEES 3

2 MACCABEES 4

2 MACCABEES 5-7

2 MACCABEES 8-15