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# TOBIT

## AT-A-GLANCE



**BOOK #1**

of the Seven Deuterocanonical Books



**AUTHOR: UNKNOWN**



**WRITTEN: AROUND 450 BC**

**Covering the time period of 722-700 BC**

**WHERE THIS BOOK IS FOUND IN THE CATHOLIC OLD TESTAMENT:**  
Between Nehemiah and Esther

### IMPORTANT FACTS:

1. The Book of Tobit is also known as the Book of Tobias.
2. The story introduces the Angel Raphael by name. Raphael is not in the Protestant Bible, but if his name often sounds vaguely familiar to Protestants, it is from this book and story. This book has been given renewed attention after five copies were found among the Dead Sea Scrolls in the 1940s.
3. Because the author is unknown, it is not known whether the story is true or was written as a sort of novel.

## Summary of the Book:

The story begins with the father of Tobit (whose name also was Tobit) having been exiled to Nineveh around 720 BC. The Assyrians invaded the northern kingdom of Israel in 722 BC and exiled the people to several other countries. The father Tobit had gone blind. In extreme poverty, both father and son continued to serve others and God. The father sent the son to Media to try to recover a debt from an old friend. If the friend could be found and agreed to pay, the family would have money for food.

Tobit Jr. is accompanied by the angel Raphael, whom he thinks is simply a handsome and kind Ninevite. The angel sees him through many trials on the road, including the taking of a wife whose seven groomsmen had been killed by a demonic force. Raphael shows Tobias how to use fish entrails (guts) to drive away the dark forces, and upon their successful return to Nineveh, how to use them to cure his father's ailing vision.

The book is great for teaching people how to behave while under stress. Tobit's example, similar to Job's, shows that God comes to the rescue and rewards those who love him and continue serving to share his love, even when trials come our way.

# JUDITH

## AT-A-GLANCE



**BOOK #2**

of the Seven Deuterocanonical Books



**AUTHOR: UNKNOWN**



**WRITTEN: UNKNOWN**

**Covering the time period of around 500 BC**

**WHERE THIS BOOK IS FOUND IN THE CATHOLIC OLD TESTAMENT:**  
**Between Nehemiah and Esther, following Tobit**

### IMPORTANT FACTS:

There has been great debate over whether the story of Judith is truth or fiction.

Most Catholics believe the story is true because it was included in the Septuagint, which is the Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible that Jesus and his friends read.

Early Church fathers quoted the Book of Judith in their writings.

## Summary of the Book:

The book of Judith opens with some war history that is either fictional or poorly translated. In this story, King Nebuchadnezzar is king of Assyria rather than king of Babylon, as he is in our Old Testament. He defeats many kingdoms. He destroyed countries, their shrines and their gods, insisting they worship him as a god.

God's people surrounding Jerusalem were terrified. They had just returned from a 70-year exile to Babylon and were struggling to exist as a nation. Israel's leadership ordered people to fast and pray in the temple.

A warrior named Achior told the Assyrian army of the history of the Jews. He suggested they don't invade the Jews if they are innocent, because their God would seek revenge. Achior was ousted, having infuriated the military leaders, who placed him where the army thought Israel would kill him. But the Jews were grateful for his story and continued to pray.

The widow Judith enters the story after Nebuchadnezzar's army had cut off the people's water supply and they were collapsing in the streets. She begged the elders to continue to worship God and suggested that this was a test. She also asked to be released from the town to do something to the enemy she would not speak about. They agreed.

She executed a plan to deceive the Assyrian army commander, Holofernes, into thinking he could seduce her. When he drank so much that he passed out, she stabbed him twice, beheaded him, and sneaked his head out of the camp in a food satchel.

She returned to Judah with the head and told the army to attack the Assyrians. The Israelites drove the enemy back and defeated them. Judith lived long and was remembered fondly.

# WISDOM

## AT-A-GLANCE



### BOOK #3

of the Seven Deuterocanonical Books



### AUTHOR: UNKNOWN

Probably a member of the Jewish community at Alexandria, which is in Egypt



### WRITTEN: UNKNOWN

the last edit was thought to have been around 50 BC

## Covering the time period of Around 500 BC

**WHERE THIS BOOK IS FOUND IN THE CATHOLIC OLD TESTAMENT:**  
Wisdom is one of two deuterocanonical books that fall between Song of Songs and the Major Prophet Isaiah.

### IMPORTANT FACTS:

This book refers to wisdom always as “she.”

The book reads like Proverbs for the first 10 chapters, then the audience shifts from kings of other nations to the Jewish people.

In the early years of the church, it was thought that Solomon wrote this book. However, that was eventually disproven.

## Summary of the Book:

The text divides into two main sections. The first part includes Chapters 1-10 and covers the theme of wisdom in many ways. The first section is written from the perspective of a king writing to other kings and teaches that ungodly living stands in contrast with wisdom.

Here is a sample:

7:6 For all men have one entrance into life, and the like going out.

7:7 Wherefore I prayed, and understanding was given me: I called upon God, and the spirit of wisdom came to me.

7:8 I preferred her before scepters and thrones, and esteemed riches nothing in comparison of her.

The second section, encompassing Chapters 11 through 19, is more historic and takes a different point of view from a king talking to other kings. The tone is more general and takes up the theme of the rescue of the righteous. Here is a sample, wherein the author is talking about the Hebrew people of the Exodus with Moses:

11:2 They went through the wilderness that was not inhabited, and pitched tents in places where there lay no way.

11:3 They stood against their enemies, and were avenged of their adversaries.

11:4 When they were thirsty, they called upon thee, and water was given them out of the flinty rock, and their thirst was quenched out of the hard stone.

# THE WISDOM OF BEN SIRA

## AT-A-GLANCE



**BOOK #4**

of the Seven Deuterocanonical Books



**AUTHOR: BEN SIRACH**



**WRITTEN: 180-175 BC**

**Covering the time period: The author was speaking to his contemporaries in Jerusalem around 200-180 BC**

### WHERE THIS BOOK IS FOUND IN THE CATHOLIC OLD TESTAMENT:

One of two deuterocanonical books that fall between Song of Songs and Isaiah.

### IMPORTANT FACTS:

The work was written by a sage or wise man in Jerusalem by the name of Ben Sira or Sirach. (The many spellings of names occur because people spell the names phonetically in their own languages. Sira has several spellings.)

The surname "Ecclesiasticus" comes from the Latin term "Libre Ecclesiasticus," which means "Church Book." It was used often by early church fathers to teach morals and wisdom.

Rather than addressing the very tense political climate and persecutions of his time, Ben Sira focuses on writing about the timeless value of wisdom. This made the book universal and for all times.

Ben Sirach addressed most of his words to the youth of his day. It is likely that many of them were being drawn to the Greek way of life, similar to today's youth being drawn to materialism. It encourages them to remain true to the God who has led them for thousands of years and not to get stars in their eyes.

He doesn't want young people to be successful just by the world's standards. He also wants them to be successful by God's standards. Acquiring wealth apart from doing God's will is worthless.

## Summary of the Book:

The contents of the Wisdom of Ben Sira are not easily divided into separate parts. Chapters 1-43 deal largely with moral instruction. They sound a bit like Proverbs, only with more poetic sentencing. 44:1-50:24 contain a eulogy of the heroes of Israel, in the spirit of the writer of Hebrews who wrote about faith in Chapter 11. In the end, the author expresses his gratitude to God (51:1-12), and invites the unschooled to acquire true wisdom (51:13-30)

Here are some samples:

The bread of charity is life itself for the needy; he who withholds it is a man of blood. 34:21

If one man prays and another curses, whose voice will the Lord hear? 34:24

A man's conscience can tell him his situation better than seven watchmen in a lofty tower. 37:14

# BARUCH

## AT-A-GLANCE



**BOOK #5**

of the Seven Deuterocanonical Books



**AUTHOR: BARUCH**

the secretary and faithful friend of the prophet Jeremiah



**WRITTEN: AROUND 582 BC**

**Covering the time period: 586-582 BC**

**WHERE THIS BOOK IS FOUND IN THE CATHOLIC OLD TESTAMENT:**

**This book is found between the Lamentations of Jeremiah and the Book of Ezekiel.**

### IMPORTANT FACTS:

Baruch was the secretary of the Old Testament major prophet Jeremiah.

The original Hebrew text has been lost, and the oldest copies are Greek.

The book was written while the people of Judah were in exile in Babylon. It speaks to them about the reasons for God's anger, but more so about his love and plans to restore their country.

The fourth part, called "The Letter of Jeremiah," actually names the 70 years as the length of the exile, using a term loosely translated, "70 generations." [6:2]

## Summary of the Book:

The work attempts to explain the trauma of the Great Exile in terms of cycles of Israel's sins: punishment, repentance, and return. It is divided into four sections:

1. Letter to Jerusalem (1:1 to 3:8)—In this letter, Baruch offers a confession that applies to all the exiled citizens of the southern kingdom of Judah. It is likely that by hearing it and saying it aloud, the people were able to conceive collectively of the weight of their sins.
2. Praise of wisdom (3:9 to 4:4)—Baruch starts by saying how much the people have lost by not seeking wisdom and then goes into a praise of those who change their ways to seek it.
3. A series of addresses meant to console the people, including Baruch addressing the exiles in Babylon; Jerusalem addresses its neighboring countries and then addresses the people in exile, and finally Baruch addresses those who remain in Jerusalem;
4. Letter of Jeremiah (6:1-72), supposedly from the great prophet. The chapter is a fantastic encouragement of why the people should not worship other gods. Here is a sample:

*Being unable to walk, they have to be carried on men's shoulders, which shows how futile they are. It is humiliating for their worshippers, too, who have to stand them up again if they fall over.*

*Once they have been stood up, they cannot move on their own; if they tilt askew, they cannot right themselves; offerings made to them might as well be made to the dead.*

*Whatever is sacrificed to them, the priests re-sell and pocket the profit; while their wives salt down part of it, but give nothing to the poor or to the helpless. As to the sacrifices themselves, why, women during their periods and women in childbed are not afraid to touch them!*

# I MACCABEES

## AT-A-GLANCE



**BOOK #6**

of the Seven Deuterocanonical Books



**AUTHOR: MOST LIKELY A  
PALESTINIAN JEW**



**WRITTEN: AROUND 100 BC**

**Covering the time period: 167 BC through 142 BC**

**WHERE THIS BOOK IS FOUND IN THE CATHOLIC OLD TESTAMENT:  
1 and 2 Maccabees fall between the books of Esther and Job.**

### IMPORTANT FACTS:

Both 1 and 2 Maccabees cover the Jewish revolt of more than 20 years starting 167 BC. The revolt was led by the Maccabee father, Mattathias, and his five sons and eventually a grandson. They were revolting against persecution from the Seleucid kings, which included killing mothers who circumcised their sons and killing Jews who refused to eat pork.

1 and 2 Maccabees do not run chronologically like 1 and 2 Kings or 1 and 2 Chronicles. 1 Maccabees mainly covers the revolt, whereas 2 Maccabees gives much more detail to the horrible situations that inspired it.  
The books were written by different people.

1 Maccabees is a record of battles that reads similar to the Book of Joshua. However, there is one important difference. Joshua opens with the voice of God, and that voice resonates throughout the events recorded. 1 Maccabees, read without 2 Maccabees, could leave one wondering if God had inspired the actions of the people at all. However, 2 Maccabees, written by a man who was likely a Pharisee, makes up for 1 Maccabees in its theme of God's presence throughout.

## Summary of the Book:

The book gives an overview of the history behind the revolt. Then, several sections cover the battles of the Maccabean father and his warrior sons Judas, Jonathan, and Simon, each one taking up the cause after the previous was martyred.

Students would enjoy this work if they enjoy Bible history, Greek and Roman history, or war history. A good check would be to see if they love the Book of Joshua. If so, they would get the same thrill out of the first of the Maccabees.

# II MACCABEES

## AT-A-GLANCE



**BOOK #7**

of the Seven Deuterocanonical Books



**AUTHOR: AN ALEXANDRIAN  
JEWISH PHARISE**

(Alexandria is in Greece)



**WRITTEN: BETWEEN 123 & 100 BC**

and may in fact have been written  
before 1 Maccabees

**Covering the time period: 180-161 BC**

**WHERE THIS BOOK IS FOUND IN THE CATHOLIC OLD TESTAMENT:  
1 and 2 Maccabees fall between the books of Esther and Job.**

### IMPORTANT FACTS:

This book was written in Greek.

Unlike 1 Maccabees, 2 Maccabees shows the hand of God in all of the Maccabean Revolt.

There was at one time a 3 Maccabees. All three books were included in the Septuagint, the Greek Bible read by Jesus and his followers.

The Catholic Church has based its doctrines of both purgatory and masses for the dead on some of the text of 2 Maccabees. Protestants don't believe in either concept.

## Summary of the Book:

The book opens with the horrific martyrdom of a woman and her seven sons who refused to eat pork while on display in some sort of pagan court. A scribe name Eleazar had likewise been killed by unspeakable violence for the same reason. The book uses these and other horrific tales to illustrate what faithful Jews were willing to go through to defend their faith. It was meant to serve as an example for suffering Jews in all eras.

The stories in the book are so graphic that none will be included here as they would be traumatizing to young children. However, older students who are ready to see the price people are willing to pay to not compromise their faith are encouraged to look them up online.

Here is a sample of some of the hopefulness and encouragement to keep the faith:

*Now, I urge anyone who may read this book not to be dismayed at these calamities, but to reflect that such visitations are intended not to destroy our race but to discipline it.*

*Indeed, when evil-doers are not left for long to their own devices but incur swift retribution, it is a sign of great benevolence. In the case of other nations, the Master waits patiently for them to attain the full measure of their sins before he punishes them, but with us he has decided to deal differently, rather than have to punish us later, when our sins come to full measure.*

*And so he never entirely withdraws his mercy from us; he may discipline us by some disaster, but he does not desert his own people.*