Ancient Texts for New Testament Studies

A Guide to the Background Literature

CRAIG A. EVANS

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Preface

Ancient Texts for New Testament Studies is an introduction to the diverse bodies of literatures that are in various ways cognate to biblical literature, especially to the New Testament. It has been written to serve the needs of students who aspire to become New Testament interpreters. Although it has been prepared primarily for the student, veterans of academy and church will find it useful as well.

The last generation has witnessed the discovery and publication of a remarkable amount of ancient literature that in various ways is relevant to New Testament interpretation. Scholarly research has made it abundantly clear that much of this material proves to be exegetically helpful. But the sheer magnitude and diversity of this material have also proven to be intimidating to many students. Indeed, there are many teachers of biblical literature who are not sure exactly what makes up this literature, how it is relevant, and how it is to be accessed. The purpose of this book is to arrange these diverse literatures into a comprehensible and manageable format. Not only will the various components of these literatures be listed and briefly described, specific examples will be offered to illustrate how they contribute to New Testament exegesis. Brief bibliographies will also be included with each section. A selected number of the major primary and secondary works will be cited. An index to the titles and authors of these writings will make it possible for the non-specialist to find them quickly.

A word of thanks is due Matthew Walsh and Danny Zacharias for their assistance in the preparation of the indexes.

Because this book is a tool designed to encourage students to make better use of the various primary literatures that are cognate to the writings of the Bible, I think that it is entirely fitting that it should be dedicated to James A. Sanders, Emeritus Professor of Biblical Studies at Claremont School of Theology and retired president of the Ancient Biblical Manuscript Center for Preservation and Research. From him I have learned much about Scripture and the communities of faith that studied and transmitted it.

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Introduction

There are two principal difficulties that those who aspire to NT exegesis must face: learning the biblical languages and becoming familiar with the myriad of cognate literatures. The first difficulty is overcome through the study of Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek. But the second difficulty is not so easily dealt with. Because these cognate literatures are so diverse and involve numerous difficulties of their own, many students and even a surprising number of teachers and professors are acquainted with very few of them. Perhaps another factor is knowing that there are scholars who have made it their lives’ work to master certain of these literatures. It is understandable then that a beginning NT interpreter often hesitates to plunge into the Talmud or the Dead Sea Scrolls or some other body of writings.

Nevertheless, if one is to do competent NT exegesis, one must know something of these writings and of their relevance for the NT. Some of these writings are vital for understanding the NT, some much less so. But all are referred to by the major scholars. Thus, intelligent reading of the best of NT scholarship requires familiarity with these writings (just as it is necessary to know the biblical languages), if for no other reason.

An Overview of the Writings

1. The Old Testament Apocrypha. All of the writings of the OT Apocrypha (or deuterocanonical books, as some call them) predate the NT (with the exception of portions of 2 Esdras). Most of these writings were written one or two centuries before the NT era. Most, if not all, were known to early Christians and to the writers of the NT. The OT Apocrypha forms, then, an indispensable bridge linking the worlds of the OT and the NT.

2. The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha. Many of the writings of the OT Pseudepigrapha, which represent the most diverse collection considered in this book, predate the NT; some are contemporaneous, and some postdate the NT.
Many contain themes that are represented in the NT. In a few instances NT authors even quote pseudepigraphal writings.

3. The Dead Sea Scrolls. The Dead Sea Scrolls probably represent the most sensational twentieth-century archaeological and literary discovery in biblical studies. These writings, mostly in Hebrew, though some are in Aramaic and Greek, either predate the NT or are contemporaneous with the earliest NT writings (e.g., Paul’s letters and perhaps one or two of the Synoptic Gospels). The authors of these writings (i.e., those found near Qumran) were probably members of the group that Josephus called the Essenes. They lived throughout Palestine, not just in the Dead Sea area where the caves are located, in which the scrolls were discovered. The scrolls provide significant parallels to NT vocabulary and ideas.

4. Versions of the Old Testament. The Greek OT, called the Septuagint (LXX), is also central for researching the NT for the simple reason that more than one half of the NT’s quotations of the OT are from the Septuagint and not from the Hebrew. Three recensions of the Septuagint need to be mentioned. This chapter will also treat the Masoretic Text (MT), the Old Latin, the Vulgate, and the Peshitta. The Aramaic tradition is treated in a chapter of its own.

5. Philo and Josephus. Two of the most noteworthy non-Christian Jewish authors of the first century are Philo and Josephus. Philo, who was born during the reign of Herod the Great, wrote several volumes in which he interprets various passages, institutions, and characters of the OT (primarily the Torah) in an allegorical manner. His allegorical interpretation parallels NT interpretation in a few places. Josephus, who lived a generation later, was raised in Palestine and became a participant in the Jews’ bloody rebellion against Rome (66–70 C.E.). Friended by the Roman conquerors, he wrote several works that describe the Jewish conflict and the biblical history of the Jewish people. His writings provide excellent background for NT interpretation, especially for the Gospels.

6. The Targumim. The Targumim are Aramaic paraphrases of the Hebrew Bible. They originated in the synagogue, though how early is debated. Some targumic tradition can be traced to the first century and some of it is clearly relevant to certain NT passages.

7. Rabbinic Literature. The sayings and traditions of some of the Tannaic rabbis may be traced back to the first century and may clarify certain aspects and passages of the NT. Here will be considered the Mishnah, Tosefta, and the early midrashim. Although not from the early period, but containing some Tannaic material, the Babylonian and Palestinian Talmuds and some of the later midrashim will also be briefly discussed.

8. The New Testament Pseudepigrapha. The NT Pseudepigrapha (or Apocrypha) is made up of numerous pseudonymous gospels, books of acts, epistles, and apocalypses. Although most of this material is of no use for NT interpretation, there are some scholars who maintain that in a few instances (esp. in certain gospels) tradition has been preserved that may derive from the NT period and shed light on what is obscure in the NT itself.

9. Early Church Fathers. In addition to examining the so-called Apostolic Fathers (Ignatius, Polycarp, Clement of Rome, etc.) this chapter will survey some
of the church’s earliest exegetes and theologians, such as Origen, Clement of Alexandria, Tertullian, Cyprian, Eusebius, Jerome, and Augustine. Some of these writings may preserve traditions that derive from the NT period that could aid in exegesis.

10. Gnostic Writings. The Coptic Gnostic Codices from Nag Hammadi, Egypt, provide us with most of our gnostic primary materials. Many of these fourth-century Coptic writings are based on much earlier Greek writings that in some cases might date from the late first and early second centuries. Some scholars claim that they may even contain sayings of Jesus that are either authentic or at least more primitive than their counterparts in the Gospels of the NT. Some think that Johannine and Pauline Christology may owe its origin to ideas preserved in the gnostic writings. A few other gnostic writings will also be considered.

11. Other Writings. In the final chapter the Hermetic and Samaritan writings, among others, will be reviewed briefly. The former have been compared to Johannine theology, while the latter contain traditions that cohere with distinctive elements in Luke-Acts. A few of the most relevant pagan authors will be included. The chapter will conclude with a survey of the most important papyri, inscriptions, coins, and ostraca. Although the items in this category do not constitute literature as such, they do offer text, even if quite brief, that is very important for NT study. Papyri are the most obvious in their importance, for they provide us with our oldest samples of the writings of the Bible itself. The non-literary papyri provide us with a wealth of everyday correspondence, such as personal letters, contracts, memoranda, agenda, receipts, and the like. The papyri assist us in identifying and defining with greater precision and nuance the semantic range of the Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek vocabularies of the biblical literature. Inscriptions and coins provide us with important insight into a variety of public declarations (such as imperial propaganda), and the ostraca, like the personal papyri, provide examples of names, receipts, and such. Thus these materials lend important background color to everyday life in the NT period.

The Value

How is NT exegesis facilitated by studying these writings? These writings clarify the following areas of exegetical concern:

1. The meaning of words. In older commentaries the meaning of words is often defined by appeal to the classics (usually Greek, though sometimes Latin). It is not clear, however, how relevant these parallels are. (Is the way that Plato used a word in fourth-century B.C.E. Greece germane to the way the same word is used in the Gospel of Mark?) Perhaps in some cases, but parallels that are closer in time (first century B.C.E. to first century C.E.) and location (Palestine, eastern Mediterranean world) are more likely to be relevant. Appeal to the LXX, which contains the Apocrypha, is therefore quite appropriate. Although written mostly
in Hebrew, Qumran documents often can be helpful in determining the meaning of certain words in the NT. Some of the pseudepigrapha circulating in Palestine and the eastern Mediterranean can therefore be helpful in determining the meaning of words used in the NT. As an example, consider the word *episkopē* (“visitation”), which occurs a few times in the NT (Luke 19:44; 1 Pet 2:12; for the verb form, see Luke 1:68, 78; 7:16; Acts 15:14). The NT’s connotation of judgment, either for reward or for punishment, is clarified by OT usage (*episkopē* in the LXX, *peguddah* in the Hebrew; cf. Isa 10:3; Jer 8:12; 23:12; 50:27), not classical. Other words are not found in the Greek or Hebrew OT, but derive from the Targum (e.g., “Gehenna”; cf. Mark 9:47–48; Tg. Isa. 66:24) or from pseudepigraphal writings (e.g., “Tartarus”; cf. 2 Pet 2:4; L.A.B. 60:3).

2. Syntax. The grammar of the NT is Koine, not classical. It is also heavily influenced by the Semitic style of the LXX. This is seen by the NT’s frequent use of *egeneto de* or *kai egeneto* (“and it came to pass”). This expression comes right out of the LXX. To “set one’s face” and to go “before one’s face” (cf. Luke 9:51–53) are idioms that derive from the LXX and whose meanings are clarified by the Greek OT. Other grammatical expressions reflect the Aramaic language of Palestine (“in truth” [Luke 4:25; 1QapGen n° 2:5]; “he was seen,” meaning “he appeared” [Luke 24:34; 1QapGen n° 22:27]). Some of the NT’s syntax seems to reflect Hebrew (preposition *en* with the articular infinitive meaning “while doing” [Luke 1:21; 2:6; 5:1]).

3. The meaning of concepts. When Jesus tells his disciples that they have been given authority to “tread upon serpents *[ophis]* and scorpions” and that “the spirits are subject” to them (Luke 10:19–20), he may have alluded to Ps 91:13 (“You will tread upon lion and the adder, young lion and the serpent you will trample under foot”). Psalm 91 has nothing to do with Satan; but Jesus’ words do (cf. Luke 10:17–18). Would a reference to treading upon serpents have been understood in first-century Palestine as a reference to Satan and demons? Very much so. Consider this eschatological hope expressed in one of the *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs*: “And Beliar [i.e., Satan] shall be bound by him [i.e., an agent of salvation on whom the Spirit of God shall rest; Isa 11:2]. And he shall grant to his children the authority to trample on wicked spirits” (*T. Levi* 18:12; cf. *T. Sim. 6:6; T. Zeb. 9:8*). Since Satan is represented as a serpent (*ophis*) in Gen 3:1–15 and the righteous will trample serpents under foot it is not too difficult to see how the language of Psalm 91 could be adopted and applied to Satan and evil spirits as we find it in Luke 10 and *T. Levi* 18. The targumic tradition also links serpents and scorpions with Satan and evil spirits (and Gen 3:15, which speaks of the woman’s seed crushing the serpent’s head, is understood in a messianic sense in the Targumim).

4. History. Some of the writings that will be considered in this book contribute to what we know about the intertestamental and NT periods. First and second Maccabees are invaluable sources for our knowledge of the Jewish revolt against Antiochus IV in 167 B.C.E. Josephus’s *Jewish War* and *Jewish Antiquities* reveal helpful information about Jewish politics and history at the turn of the era,
especially with reference to Herod the Great and his family, and the time of Jesus and his earliest followers.

5. **Historical, social, and religious context (i.e., Sitz im Leben).** Following the death of Herod the Great Palestine went through a period of political instability and upheaval. Josephus cynically remarks, "Anyone might make himself a king" (Ant. 17.10.8 §285). Josephus has no sympathy for Jewish nationalists and would-be-liberators, calling them "brigands" (lestēs). This is the very word that is used when Jesus is arrested and crucified (Mark 14:48; 15:27). In view of Josephus's description of these kingly claimants as lestai, some of whom may very well have thought of themselves as messiahs, it is possible that when lestēs is used of Jesus, it meant “insurrectionist.” Josephus also tells of false prophets who duded the people by promising signs of deliverance, sometimes urging them to withdraw to the desert. The language that he uses (Ant. 17.10.7 §§278–284; 20.8.6 §168; 20.8.10 §188; J.W. 2.13.5 §§261–263; 6.5.4 §315) parallels, at places quite closely, the warnings that we read in the Gospels (cf. Matt 24:26; Mark 13:21–22).

6. **Exegetical context.** Of major importance is the fact that the noncanonical writings quite often shed light on the interpretation of the OT passages quoted or alluded to in the NT. For example, parts of 2 Sam 7:12–16, the “Davidic covenant,” are quoted (Heb 1:5) or alluded to (Luke 1:32–33) in the NT as fulfilled in Jesus. Since Nathan’s oracle originally spoke of Solomon the son of David, one wonders if early Christian interpretation would have been understood or accepted. Qumran has made it clear, however, that this oracle was interpreted in an eschatological sense, at least in some circles. The eschatological deliverer will be God’s Son (4QFlor 1:11–12; 4Q246 1:6–9; 2:1–4) and he will be seated on the throne of David (4Q252 5), thus fulfilling the promise of 2 Samuel 7 in a way that Solomon and his descendants did not. As another example, the presentation of Jesus in the Prologue of the Fourth Gospel as the Logos (“word”) is illumined by Philo and possibly by the Targumim. Philo describes the Logos as “God’s first-born, the Word” (Confusion 28 §146), through whom God created the world (Cherubim 35 §127). The Targumim say that God created humanity through the Memra (“word”): “The Memra of the Lord created man in his own image” (Tg. Neof. Gen 1:27; cf. Tg. Isa. 45:12). The presence of “Word” as agent of creation in Genesis 1 is highly suggestive, since John 1 (“In the beginning . . .”) echoes the language of the creation account.

7. **Hermeneutical context (i.e., how Scripture could be interpreted, how it could be applied, adapted).** The literatures surveyed in this book help us understand how biblical literature was interpreted and what role it played in the life of the Jewish and Christian communities of faith. Qumran affords us with examples of pesher interpretation whereby various prophetic details of Scripture were applied to contemporary events and events felt to be imminent. Rabbinic writings provide us with numerous examples in midrashic interpretation whereby Scripture was searched in an effort to find answers to the questions relating to how God’s people should live and how they should understand their sacred tradition. Philo’s writings illustrate allegorical interpretation. Do the details of Scripture point to meanings beyond the obvious and literal? The Targumim and some of the pseud-
epigraphal writings show how the biblical story can be paraphrased, expanded, and enriched. But perhaps more importantly, these various literatures aid us in understanding what role Scripture played in the life of the believing community. All of this sheds light on how early Christians understood their own sacred tradition.

8. **Canonical context (i.e., what was regarded as Scripture and why).** The literatures surveyed in this book also help us understand what it meant to regard certain writings as authoritative. By what criteria were certain writings preserved and treated with reverence and respect not accorded to other writings? What was the understanding of the relationship between the OT and NT? In what sense is the NT part of the Bible? (And from a Christian point of view: In what sense is the OT part of the Bible?) In what sense did the “canonical” writings possess authority? What does the author of 2 Esdras mean when he says that whereas both the worthy and unworthy may read the twenty-four books (i.e., the OT), only the wise should be permitted to read the “seventy” books (i.e., the Apocrypha/Pseudepigrapha) that were written last (14:44–47; cf. 12:37–38)? The literatures surveyed in this book do not definitely answer these and related questions, but they provide much of the raw data that must be processed before we can begin to answer them responsibly.

**The Method**

How are these writings put to use in doing NT exegesis? This is the principal concern of the present book. Comparative study of these writings constitutes an important step in the exegetical process.

In order to understand a given passage one must reconstruct as much as possible the world of thought in which the NT writer lived. Since the NT frequently quotes the OT (hundreds of times) or alludes to it (thousands of times) and everywhere presupposes its language, concepts, and theology, exegesis should be particularly sensitive to its presence and careful to reconstruct the exegetical-theological context of which a given OT quotation or allusion may have been a part. A comparative approach is essential. How was the OT passage quoted or alluded to understood by early Christians and Jews? To answer this question the interpreter should examine every occurrence of the passage. This involves studying the ancient versions and cognate literatures, the very writings treated in this book.

To assess properly the function of the OT in the NT the following questions must be raised:

1. What OT text(s) is(are) being cited? Two or more passages may be conflated, and each may contribute insight.

2. Which text-type is being followed (Hebrew, Greek, Aramaic)? What are the respective meanings of these versions? (Each may have an interpretive tradition of its own.) How does the version that the NT has followed contribute to the meaning of the quotation?
(3) Is the OT quotation part of a wider tradition or theology in the OT? If it is, the quotation may be alluding to a context much wider than the specific passage from which it has been taken.

(4) How did various Jewish and Christian groups and interpreters understand the passage? This question is vital, for often the greatest help comes from comparing the function of the OT in these sources.

(5) In what ways does the NT citation agree or disagree with the interpretations found in the versions and other ancient exegeses? Has the Jesus/Christian tradition distinctively shaped the OT quotation and its interpretation, or does the NT exegesis reflect interpretation current in pre-Christian Judaism?

(6) How does the function of the quotation compare to the function of other quotations in the NT writing under consideration. Has a different text-type been used? Has the OT been followed more closely or less so?

(7) Finally, how does the quotation contribute to the argument of the NT passage in which it is found?

If these questions are carefully considered, one’s exegesis will be in large measure complete. Although the above steps have been applied to passages where the OT is present, either explicitly or implicitly, most of these steps are relevant for exegesis of any passage, for it is indeed a rare passage that alludes to or parallels no other. (For treatments concerned with other questions of exegesis consult the works listed in the bibliography below.)

In the chapters that follow the various literatures will be surveyed with the questions just considered kept in mind. In the final chapter a selection of passages from the NT will be studied and offered as examples of the benefits to be derived from addressing these questions and taking into account the various literatures of the biblical period.

**General Bibliography**

CHAPTER ONE

The Old Testament Apocrypha

Fifteen books make up the OT Apocrypha. Some editions of the Bible incorporate the Epistle of Jeremiah into Baruch as its sixth and final chapter. These editions, therefore, have fourteen books. Whereas Protestants do not regard the books of the Apocrypha as inspired or as canonical, the Roman Catholic, Greek Orthodox, Russian Orthodox, and Coptic Churches accept most of them. (For a listing of their respective canons of the Apocrypha, see appendix 1.)

The word “apocrypha” is a Greek word literally meaning “hidden away.” Why “hidden”? Over the centuries those who appreciated and approved of these books as authoritative thought of them as hidden from the uninitiated and simple. They were reserved for the wise and learned. On the other hand, those who viewed these books as spurious and as possessing no authority have understood them as hidden because of perceived heretical tendencies. It is probably for this reason that the word “apocrypha” has come to mean “false.” For example, when a story about a well-known person is suspected of being untrue we say that it is “apocryphal.”

Old Testament Apocrypha

| 1 Esdras | Susanna |
| 2 Esdras | Bel and the Dragon |
| Tobit | Prayer of Manasseh |
| Judith | 1 Maccabees |
| Additions to Esther | 2 Maccabees |
| Wisdom of Solomon | 3 Maccabees (see Old Testament Pseudepigrapha) |
| Ecclesiasticus (Sirach) | 4 Maccabees (see Old Testament Pseudepigrapha) |
| Baruch | Psalm 151 (see Old Testament Pseudepigrapha) |
| Epistle of Jeremiah | Prayer of Azariah and the Song of the Three Children |

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The Apocrypha (the word is actually plural—the singular is apocryphon—but people often think of it as singular) represent several types of writing. Some of the writings are historical (e.g., 1 Esdras, 1 and 2 Maccabees), some are romantic (e.g., Tobit, Judith, Susanna, Additions to Esther), some are didactic (e.g., Wisdom of Solomon, Ecclesiasticus), some are moralistic (e.g., Baruch, Epistle of Jeremiah, Bel and the Dragon), and some are devotional (e.g., Prayer of Azariah and the Song of the Three Young Men, Prayer of Manasseh). One is apocalyptic (2 Esdras).


Summaries

1 Esdras. First Esdras is not accepted as canonical by the Roman Catholic Church. (It was rejected by the Council of Trent, 8 April 1546.) The Roman Catholic Bible includes it in an appendix. (In the Vulgate it is called 3 Esdras.) It is, however, accepted by the Greek Orthodox and Russian Orthodox Churches. It is a historical writing based upon 2 Chr 35:1–36:23, Ezra, and Neh 7:38–8:12 (see the table below). However, the story of the three men in the court of Darius (3:1–5:6), which has no parallel in the OT, may represent the author’s chief concern (Metzger, IA 18), perhaps to encourage the renewal of God’s people (Harrington, InvA 153) and to highlight the qualities of Zerubbabel (deSilva, IAMCS 286–87). The book follows neither the MT nor the LXX. The unknown author apparently intended to emphasize the religious reforms of Josiah (1:1–24), Zerubbabel (5:47–6:34), and Ezra (8:1–9:55). It was written probably in the second century B.C.E. First Esdras relates to biblical literature as follows (Klein, 769):

| 1 Esdr 1:1–22 | = 2 Chr 35:1–19 |
| 1 Esdr 1:23–24 | = (no parallel) |
| 1 Esdr 1:25–58 | = 2 Chr 35:20–36:21 |
| 1 Esdr 2:1–5a | = 2 Chr 36:22–23/Ezra 1:1–3a |
| 1 Esdr 2:5b–15 | = Ezra 1:5b–11 |
| 1 Esdr 2:16–30 | = Ezra 4:7–24 |
| 1 Esdr 3:1–5:6 | = (no parallel) |
| 1 Esdr 5:7–73 | = Ezra 2:1–4:5 |
| 1 Esdr 6:1–9:36 | = Ezra 5:1–10:44 |
| 1 Esdr 9:37–55 | = Neh 7:73–8:13a |

2 Esdras. Second Esdras is not accepted by the Roman Catholic Church either, although it is included in a form of the Latin Vulgate with 1 Esdras. It is, however, accepted by the Russian Orthodox Church. In the Vulgate it is 4 Esdras. (Part of 2 Esdras is also known as 4 Ezra and is sometimes included in the OT Pseudepigrapha. On the confusing Esdras-Ezra nomenclature, see the tables below.) Second Esdras does not resume the historical narrative of 1 Esdras, as one might suppose, but is called “2 Esdras” because of the opening verse: “The second book of the prophet Ezra...” The book is an apocalypse consisting largely of seven revelations (3:1–5:20; 5:21–6:34; 6:35–9:25; 9:38–10:59; 11:1–12:51; 13:1–58; 14:1–48) which are primarily concerned with moral themes. Apparently, at least three authors are responsible for 2 Esdras. The original author was probably a first-century Palestinian Jew who, writing in Aramaic or Hebrew, produced chapters 3–14 (the original 4 Ezra). It was subsequently translated into Greek. A second-century Christian added a Greek introduction (chs. 1–2, also called 5 Ezra). Finally, a third-century Christian added the last two chapters (15–16, also called 6 Ezra) in Greek. The Semitic original is lost, and only a fragment of the Greek has survived (15:57–59). The purpose of the original author was to show that God is just, despite the evil of the Rome of his day and the calamities that had befallen Jerusalem (Metzger, IA 30).

### Table of Esdras Nomenclature

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<thead>
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<th>Hebrew Bible</th>
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<td>Ezra</td>
<td>1 Esdras</td>
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### Table of Ezra Nomenclature

| 1 Ezra | Ezra-Nehemiah of the Hebrew Bible |
| 2 Ezra | 4 Esdras (Vulgate) = 2 Esdras (English Apocrypha) chaps. 1–2 |
| 3 Ezra | 1 Esdras (Septuagint) = 3 Esdras (Vulgate) = 1 Esdras (English Apocrypha) |
| 4 Ezra | 4 Esdras (Vulgate) = 2 Esdras (English Apocrypha) chaps. 3–14 |
| 5 Ezra | 4 Esdras (Vulgate) = 2 Esdras (English Apocrypha) chaps. 15–16 |

(adapted from H. W. Attridge, “Historiography,” JWSTP, 158)
Tobit. Tobit is accepted by the Roman Catholic, Greek Orthodox, and Russian Orthodox Churches. The book of Tobit is a romance (deSilva, IAMCS 70; Harrington, InvA 11) relating a moralistic story of the adventures of Tobit and his son Tobias in Nineveh shortly after the exile of the northern kingdom (2 Kgs 17:1–6). It was originally written in Aramaic or Hebrew—as attested by the Dead Sea Scrolls (i.e., 4Q196–200; cf. Fitzmyer)—sometime in the second century B.C.E. by an unknown author. Subsequently it was translated into Greek. Tobit emphasizes piety (such as attending to the burial of the dead) in the face of paganism. Tobit’s prophecy of the rebuilding of the temple (14:5–7) has received attention in recent scholarship concerned with the place of the temple in first-century eschatological expectations.

Text: R. HANHART, Tobit (Septuaginta 8/5; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1983).

*Judith.* Judith is accepted by the Roman Catholic, Greek Orthodox, and Russian Orthodox Churches. Notwithstanding several serious anachronisms and historical blunders, the book tells a heroic tale of the beautiful Judith whose courage and faith in God saved her village from destruction at the hands of one of Nebuchadnezzar’s generals. In many ways the book stands in the tradition of the heroes in Judges (see 4:4–22). Originally a second-century B.C.E. Hebrew composition, probably reflecting the tensions and fears of the Maccabean struggle (Metzger, *IA* 43; though see the cautions in deSilva, *IAMCS* 93–95), the work survives in Greek, Latin, Syriac, and several later Hebrew recensions. Nothing is known of the author.


**Additions to Esther.** Six additions to Esther, comprising 107 verses, have been accepted by the Roman Catholic, Greek Orthodox, and Russian Orthodox Churches. When translating the Hebrew, Jerome collected these additions, which are found
only in the Greek version (the LXX), and placed them at the end of the original
Hebrew Esther as 10:4–16:24 (which is followed by the Rheims and Douay edi-
tion), thus confusing the chronological sequence. The order of the LXX, which
contains the translation of the original Hebrew, as well as the Greek additions, is
as follows: (1) Addition 1 (11:2–12:6); (2) Hebrew 1:1–3:13; (3) Addition 2
(13:1–7); (4) Hebrew 3:14–4:17; (5) Addition 3 (13:8–14:19); (6) Hebrew 5:1–2
(= Addition 4 [15:1–2]); (7) Addition 4 (15:1–16); (8) Hebrew 5:3–8:12; (9) Ad-
dition 5 (16:1–24); (10) Hebrew 8:13–10:3; (11) Addition 6 (10:4–11:1). Esther
may have been translated into Greek by “Lysimachus the son of Ptolemy” (11:1),
who claims that the entire document—additions and all—is genuine. The pur-
pose of the additions is to introduce God and religion into a book which origi-
nally did not once mention the name of God.

Text: R. HANHART, Esther (2 ed.; Septuaginta 8/3; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht,
1983). Survey: D. A. DESILVA, IAMCS 110–26; D. J. HARRINGTON, InvA 44–54; J. JARICK,
“Daniel, Esther, and Jeremiah, Additions to,” DNTB 250–52; O. KAISER, OTApo 45–48;
B. M. METZGER, IA 55–63; G. W. E. NICKELSBURG, “The Bible Rewritten and Expanded,”
SJTWF 135–58, 155; W. O. E. OESTERLEY, IBA 183–95; J. C. VANDERKAM, An Introduction to Early Judaism

Wisdom of Solomon. The Wisdom of Solomon is accepted by the Roman Catholic,
Greek Orthodox, and Russian Orthodox Churches. It is a pseudepigraphon that
claims to have been written by Israel’s celebrated monarch (see 7:1–14; 8:17–9:18;
compare 1 Kgs 3:6–9; 2 Chr 1:8–10). This book is part of the late wisdom tradition
and is comparable to Sirach (see below) and parts of Proverbs. It was origi-
nally written in Greek and probably derives from Alexandria of the first century
B.C.E. It warns the wicked, praises wisdom, provides examples of God’s mighty
acts in history, and ridicules idolatry. It also exhorts the Jewish people to remain
faithful to its religious heritage, eschewing the enticements of paganism. At some
points there are close parallels to Paul’s thought. Bruce Metzger (IA 163) remarks
that “there can be little doubt that the Apostle had at one time made a close study of
the book of Wisdom.

Text: J. ZIEGLER, Sapientia Salomonis (2d ed.; Septuaginta 12/1; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck

Ecclesiasticus. Commonly called (Jesus ben) Sira, or the Wisdom of Jesus the son of Sirach, though in the Latin tradition it is known as Ecclesiasticus (i.e., the “church book”). Sirach is accepted by the Roman Catholic, Greek Orthodox, and Russian Orthodox Churches. The original document was written in Hebrew by Joshua ben Sira (ca. 180 B.C.E.) and was later introduced and translated into Greek by his grandson around 132 B.C.E. Only fragments of the Hebrew text remain, most of which date from the Middle Ages, though fragments have been recovered from the region of the Dead Sea (see Yadin). These include 2QSir (or 2Q18), which preserves portions of chapters 1 and 6; MasSir, which preserves portions of chapters 39–44; and 11QpS4, which preserves a portion of the poem in chapter 51. Sirach is probably intended to be two volumes, consisting of chapters 1–23 and 24–51, with each volume beginning with an encomium on wisdom (see 1:1–10; 24:1–34). In many respects the book resembles Proverbs. It is, as
Bruce Metzger has remarked, “the first specimen of that form of Judaism which subsequently developed into the rabbinical schools of the Pharisees and the Sadducees” (OAA 128). The nature of theodicy in Sirach remains a topic of debate (see deSilva, IAMCS 187–92). Sirach 24 is of special interest for the interpretation of John 1:1–18.

**Baruch.** Baruch, or 1 Baruch, purports to be the work of Baruch, friend and secretary of the prophet Jeremiah (see Jer 32:12; 36:4). Originally a Hebrew writing, it has survived in Greek, Latin, Syriac, and other languages of the Mediterranean. It appears to have at least two parts, the first consisting of prose (1:1–3:8), the second poetry (3:9–5:9). The purpose of the first part is to bring an awareness of sin and the need for repentance, while the purpose of the second part is to offer praise to wisdom and comfort to an oppressed Jerusalem. The two parts were probably brought together about 100 B.C.E.


**Epistle of Jeremiah.** The Epistle of Jeremiah (or Jeremy) appears as chapter 6 of Baruch in the LXX, which is followed by the Vulgate (and the Rheims and Douay version). The letter is accepted by the Roman Catholic, Greek Orthodox, and Russian Orthodox Churches. The document purports to be a letter from the prophet Jeremiah, exhorting the Jewish exiles to eschew idolatry. The apocryphal letter may have been inspired by Jer 10:11, an Aramaic verse that reads: “The gods who did not make the heavens and the earth shall perish from the earth and from under the heavens” (Oesterley, *IBA* 269; Metzger, *IA* 96). But this is disputed (deSilva, *IAMCS* 218 n. 6). Several OT passages have been drawn upon (Isa 40:18–20; 41:6–7; Jer 10:3–9, 14; Ps 115:4–8). The letter was probably originally written in Greek, perhaps as early as 300 B.C.E. A small Greek portion (vv. 43–44) has been found at Qumran (i.e., 7QpapEpJer gr).
Prayer of Azariah and the Song of the Three Children. The Prayer of Azariah and the Song of the Three Children is an addition inserted between Dan 3:23 and 3:24. It is accepted by the Roman Catholic, Greek Orthodox, and Russian Orthodox Churches. There are several additions to Daniel, the three major ones being the Prayer of Azariah and the Song of the Three Children (or Young Men), Susanna, and Bel and the Dragon. These additions were probably composed in Greek, although Aramaic is possible. In the case of the addition under consideration, the original language of composition may have been Hebrew. The Prayer of Azariah and the Song of the Three Children itself probably represents a combination of two additions. The Prayer of Azariah is uttered by one of the young men in the furnace (i.e., Abednego; cf. Dan 1:7). It confesses Israel’s sin and petitions God that Israel’s enemies be put to shame. It is followed by a song of praise and exhortation to praise. It owes much of its inspiration to Ps 148:1–2, 7–12 (Metzger, IA 103).

Susanna. Susanna is accepted by the Roman Catholic, Greek Orthodox, and Russian Orthodox Churches. In the LXX and Vulgate Susanna is chapter 13 of Daniel. In other versions, however, Susanna appears as an introduction to chapter 1 (per-
haps because in v. 45 Daniel is referred to as a “young lad” and according to v. 64 it was “from that day onward” that Daniel enjoyed a great reputation. Susanna is the story of a beautiful woman who is pursued by two lustful elders. When wrongly accused, she is defended by the wise Daniel. The lesson of Susanna is that virtue and faith will ultimately be vindicated. It is likely that the story was originally composed in Greek, as is especially seen in the Greek word-plays in verses 54–59 (Metzger, IA 110–11).


Bel and the Dragon. Bel and the Dragon is accepted by the Roman Catholic, Greek Orthodox, and Russian Orthodox Churches. This addition is made up of two stories designed to demonstrate the foolishness of idolatry and the dishonesty of the heathen priesthood. Like the other additions to Daniel, these stories teach that God’s people will persevere if they have faith. It may have been inspired by biblical traditions that speak of God’s slaying Leviathan (Metzger, IA 120). In the LXX, Bel and the Dragon is added to Daniel 12, while in the Vulgate it makes up chapter 14.

**Prayer of Manasseh.** The Prayer of Manasseh is accepted by the Greek Orthodox Church. Inspired by 2 Chr 33:11–13, this document purports to be King Manasseh’s prayer of repentance after being exiled. Moreover, the reference to two works that contain Manasseh’s prayer (2 Chr 33:18–20), which are lost, may very well have prompted our unknown writer to compose this piece (Metzger, IA 124–25). According to R. Hvalvik, the prayer consists of (1) invocation (v. 1), (2) ascription of praise to God (vv. 2–7), (3) confession of sin (vv. 8–10), (4) petition for forgiveness (vv. 11–15a), and (5) doxology (v. 15b). See further comments in chapter 2.


**1 Maccabees.** First Maccabees is accepted by the Roman Catholic, Greek Orthodox, and Russian Orthodox Churches. The book tells of the events surrounding the Jewish uprising against Antiochus IV Epiphanes. First Maccabees describes the courage of Mattathias the priest and his sons, especially Judas Maccabeus, after whom the book and the period of time are named. The book is probably an apology for the Hasmonean dynasty which, not too many years after Israel had regained its independence, had fallen into disfavor among many of the strictest observers of Judaism. Originally written in Hebrew, probably sometime late in the second century B.C.E. (though some scholars place chs. 14–16 after 70 C.E.), the history of 1 Maccabees is for the most part trustworthy (though at times it is at variance with 2 Maccabees—and it is not always certain which account is to be preferred). Unlike 2 Maccabees, 1 Maccabees contains no miraculous accounts. Solomon Zeitlin thinks that the book which the *Yosippon* (see ch. 5) refers to as...
Sepher Bet Hasmanaim (“The Book of the House of the Hasmoneans”) is the Hebrew 1 Maccabees.


2 Maccabees. Second Maccabees is accepted by the Roman Catholic, Greek Orthodox, and Russian Orthodox Churches. The book is not a sequel to 1 Maccabees; rather it covers approximately the same events and period of time (=1 Macc 1:10–7:50). According to 2:23–28, 2 Maccabees is an abridgment of a five-volume work by one “Jason of Cyrene.” This larger history is now lost. Most suspect that 2 Maccabees is historically less trustworthy. Its purpose is to enhance the theological dimensions of the Jerusalem temple and the Jewish struggle for independence. See also its seventh chapter for a defense of the resurrection. Second Maccabees was probably written originally in Greek in the first century B.C.E.


**Themes**

The writings that make up the OT Apocrypha contribute much to NT background. There are several political and theological themes that may be reviewed briefly.

*God.* Second Maccabees 7:28 may be the first to teach that God created the universe out of nothing. In Sir 43:27 God is called “the All.” God is called “Father” (Tob 13:4), “Judge” (Sir 17:15–24), and “King” (Jdt 9:12; 2 Macc 7:9). Wisdom 11:22–12:2 teaches that God’s love is universal. God is all-knowing and all-powerful (Sir 42:15–25).

*Piety and Martyrdom.* In 1 Esdr 4:13–47 the pious wisdom of Zerubbabel is cited as an important factor in reminding the Persian king Darius of his vow to have Jerusalem and the temple rebuilt. The wickedness of God’s people is cited in 2 Esdras as the major cause of Israel’s misfortunes. The book of Tobit revolves around the piety of Tobit and his son Tobias. Tobit tithed, kept the dietary laws, gave food and clothing to the poor, and greatest of all, buried the dead. (According to Sir 3:30; 7:10, almsgiving atones for sin.) The book of Judith tells the story of a beautiful woman who risked her life, but kept herself from being dishonored by Holofernes. In 9:1 she humbles herself and prays. In Add Esth 14:1–19 Queen Esther humbles herself (v. 2) and prays fervently to God. In Bar 1:5–14 the penitent weep, fast, pray, and send money to Jerusalem to reestablish worship in Jerusalem. The Prayer of Azariah and the Song of the Three Young Men greatly enhances the theme of piety found in Daniel. In Susanna the piety of Susanna and the wisdom of the young man Daniel are vindicated. The Prayer of Manasseh is a classic in pious penitence. Perhaps the greatest example of piety in the face of persecution occurs in 2 Maccabees 7 where a mother and her seven sons are put to death for refusing to eat pork (v. 1; cf. 4 Macc 8–17; b. Git. 57b; Lam. Rab. 1:16 §50).

*Salvation History.* A frequent theme is that of Israel’s obduracy (1 Esdr 1:47–52; 2 Esdr 3:20–22; 4:30; Tob 1:5; Jdt 5:17–21; Bar 1:15–2:10; Add Esth
14:6–7; PrAzar 4–7, 14; Sus 52–53; Pr Man 9–10, 12) and return from the exile (1 Esdr 2:1–15; Bar 5:1–9).

Zionism. Much of 2 Esdras is concerned with the fate of “Zion” (i.e., Jerusalem). In 13:29–50 the Messiah is seen standing on the top of Mount Zion (v. 35), with Zion now sitting in judgment upon the nations (vv. 36–38). In Tob 14:5b the aged Tobit prophesies that Jerusalem and the temple, having been destroyed, will be rebuilt “in splendor.” Sirach recounts the recent glories of the temple (Sir 49:11–13; 50:1–21). Baruch 1:10–14 is concerned with the reestablishment of worship in Jerusalem.

Defense of Hasmonean dynasty. First Maccabees probably affords the best examples (14:25–15:9; 16:1–3; 2 Macc 15:7–24; see also Sir 50:1–24 [praise of Simon]).

Messiah. The Messiah is kept by the Most High until the last days (2 Esdr 12:32; 13:26; 14:9). He will judge the wicked and rescue God’s remnant (12:33–35). He is described in terms of Dan 7:13 (cf. Mark 14:62). The Messiah will set up a kingdom that will last 400 years (2 Esdr 7:26–30), after which time he and all people will die. After seven days of silence there will be a general resurrection and judgment (7:31–44). Elsewhere hope is expressed that a prophet will arise (1 Macc 4:46; 9:27; 14:41). This hope is probably based on Deut 18:15–18.

Resurrection. According to 2 Macc 7:9: “The King of the universe will raise us up to an everlasting renewal of life, because we have died for his laws” (see vv. 11, 14, 23, 29). Also, in 2 Macc 12:44 we read: “. . . those who had fallen would rise again. . . .” (see also 14:46). Also, in 2 Esdr 7:32: “And the earth shall give up those who are asleep in it, and the dust those who dwell silently in it; and the chambers shall give up the souls which have been committed to them.” Wisdom 3:1–9 teaches immortality, if not resurrection (see also 6:17–20).

Eschatology. “Signs of the End” include terror, unrighteousness, the sun shining at night, the moon during the day, blood dripping from wood, talking stones, and falling stars (2 Esdr 5:1–13; see also 6:21–24; 15:12–27). The End will involve salvation for the righteous and judgment for the wicked (2 Esdr 5:56–6:6, 25–28; 7:26–44; 8:63–9:13). Intercession of the Saints. According to 2 Macc 15:11–16, dead saints intercede for the living. (Onias the high priest and Jeremiah the prophet intercede for Judas.) Furthermore, according to 12:43–45, the living may pray and offer sacrifices for the dead (does this relate to 1 Cor 15:29?).

The Canon of Scripture. In Sir 39:1 the OT is referred to as “law” and “prophecies.” In 2 Esdr 14:44 “ninety-four” books are mentioned. The reference is to the “twenty-four books” of the OT (v. 45) and, most likely, the seventy of the Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha. Both the seventy and the twenty-four are restored miraculously by Ezra and five others (vv. 37–48), a legend that parallels the translation of the LXX (Let. Aris. §307b). Whereas the twenty-four are to be read by all, the seventy are to be read only by the wise (2 Esdr 14:45–46). There are at least fifty-one apocryphal writings among the scrolls and fragments of Qumran (M. J. McNamara, Palestinian Judaism and the New Testament [GNS 4; Wilmington, Del.: Glazier, 1983], 121–24). More than sixty writings are found in
The OT itself refers to books which are now lost: Book of the Wars of Yahweh (Num 21:14), Book of Jasher (Josh 10:13; 2 Sam 1:18), Book of the Acts of Solomon (1 Kgs 11:41), Book of the Annals of the Kings of Israel (1 Kgs 14:19; 2 Chr 33:18), Book of the Annals of the Kings of Judah (1 Kgs 14:29; 15:7), Annals of Samuel the Seer and Annals of Gad the Seer (1 Chr 29:29), Words of Nathan the Prophet (2 Chr 9:29), Prophecy of Ahijah the Shilonite (2 Chr 9:29), Annals of Shemaiah the Prophet and of Iddo the Seer (2 Chr 12:15), Annals of Jehu son of Hanani (2 Chr 20:34), an untitled writing of Isaiah (2 Chr 26:22), Annals of Hozai (2 Chr 33:18), a lament for Josiah by Jeremiah (2 Chr 35:25). First Maccabees 16:24 refers to the Annals of John Hyrcanus. Various lost writings are mentioned in the Pseudepigrapha (T. Job 40:14 ["Omissions"]; 41:6 ["Omissions of Eliphas"]; 49:3 ["Hymns of Kasia"]; 50:3 ["The Prayers of Amaltheia’s Horn"]). In Hist. eccl. 6.13.6 Eusebius refers to several “disputed books” (antilegomena): Sirach and Wisdom of Solomon (of the OT Apocrypha), Hebrews and Jude (of the NT), and Barnabas and Clement (of the Apostolic Fathers).

General Bibliography

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