

“Lost Books” of the Bible

Part One: Apocrypha

Fourteen books, including additions to Daniel and Esther, appear in the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Hebrew Scriptures, that do not appear in either the Protestant or Jewish versions of the Bible. These books were called “Apocrypha” or “Hidden” by Jerome, who translated them into Latin in the 4th century and created what is known as the Vulgate. These are books that originated in the Jewish community but were originally in Greek or Aramaic, not Hebrew. They were rejected by the Rabbis as scripture in the early 2nd century and later, during the Reformation, the Protestants followed their example. While some Protestants consider these books to have religious value but do not consider them scripture, but the Roman Catholics and Greek Orthodox churches given them equal authority to the Old and New Testament. The Russian Orthodox give them a secondary status as scripture, but not of equal authority. In addition to the books listed below the Orthodox churches include 3 and 4 Maccabees and Psalm 151.

1 Maccabees: Details the revolt by Jewish revolutionaries against the Greeks. Includes the story of Hanukkah, during which the Temple is cleansed after being violated by the Greeks.

2 Maccabees: A revision of the events of 1 Maccabees, supposedly a condensation of a five-volume work. Unlike the previous book this one focuses on exaggerated numbers, miracles, and supernatural manifestations. It emphasizes the courage and nobility of Jewish martyrs.

Additions to Daniel: These expand the story of Daniel and include the Prayer of Azariah and Song of the Three Holy Children: Daniel 3:24–90 inserted between verses 23 and 24 (v. 24 becomes v. 91) in the Protestant canon, incorporated within the Fiery Furnace episode; Susanna and the Elders: before Daniel 1:1, a prologue in early Greek manuscripts; chapter 13 in the Vulgate; Bel and the Dragon: after Daniel 12:13 in Greek, an epilogue; chapter 14 in the Vulgate.

Tobit: This book tells the story of Tobit, a righteous Israelite of the tribe of Naphtali, living in Nineveh after Sargon II had deported the northern tribes of Israel to Assyria. It includes a story in which a disguised angel, Raphael, guides Tobit’s son to use fish guts to expel a demon named Asmodeus who was sent to kill him by his father-in-law on his wedding night.

Judith: A historical romance set in an earlier era, like Tobit, Ruth and Esther. The story revolves around Judith, a daring and beautiful widow, who is upset with her Jewish countrymen for not trusting God to deliver them from their foreign conquerors. She goes with her loyal maid to the camp of the enemy general, Holofernes, with whom she slowly ingratiates herself, promising him information on the Israelites. Gaining his trust, she is allowed access to his tent one night as he lies in a drunken stupor. She decapitates him, then takes his head back to her fearful countrymen. The Assyrians, having lost their leader, disperse, and Israel is saved. Though she is courted by many, Judith remains unmarried for the rest of her life.

Additions to Esther: An inserted prayer proclaiming Esther’s faithfulness to God. God is not mentioned in the canonical version of Esther.

Baruch: Named after Baruch ben Neriah, Jeremiah's scribe, its purported author. It contains reflections on the theology and history of Israel, discussions of wisdom, and addresses to residents of Jerusalem and the Diaspora.

Letter of Jeremiah: Included as a closing chapter to Jeremiah, this letter purports to have been written by Jeremiah to the Jews who were about to be carried away as captives to Babylon by Nebuchadnezzar.

Ecclesiasticus (The Wisdom of Sirach): A work of ethical teachings, much like Proverbs, from approximately 200 to 175 BCE written by the Jewish scribe Shimon ben Yeshua ben Eliezer ben Sira of Jerusalem, on the inspiration of his father Joshua son of Sirach, sometimes called Jesus son of Sirach or Yeshua ben Eliezer ben Sira. It is the longest collection of ancient wisdom to survive to modern times.

Wisdom of Solomon: A Jewish work composed in Alexandria (Egypt) around the 1st century, with the aim of bolstering the faith of the Jewish community in a hostile Greco-Roman world. The book is addressed to the rulers of the earth, urging them to love righteousness and seek wisdom; the wicked think that all is chance and that they should enjoy each day, but they are deluded. In the second section Solomon (not explicitly named, but strongly implied) tells of his search for wisdom, identified as a woman: the search is a model for kings and rulers, "for God loves nothing so much as the person who dwells with Wisdom." In the final part God tells how he has provided for the Israelites at the Exodus

2 Esdras(2 Ezra): More than one book put together. The first two chapters talk about how God has rejected the Jews in favor of Christians. The bulk of the rest of the book is older and contains seven visions in apocalyptic style that speak of judgment and the afterlife. The final two chapters may be a Christian addition from the 3rd century and deal with Judgement Day in which God destroys the wicked with numerous terrors.