



# **The Apocrypha**

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- What are they?
- Apocrypha vs Deuterocanonical
- The Canons of the OT
- Status of the Books in Christianity
- Kinds of Literature in the Books
- The Books Within Judaism
- NT Uses of the Books
- Further Influence of the Books

# Agenda

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- The Apocryphal books are those works included in the Septuagint (the Greek translation of the Hebrew bible) (LXX) and the old Latin and Vulgate translations, *but are not included in the Hebrew text that forms the canon for Judaism*
  - Canon means a list of books considered to be authoritative as scripture by a particular religious community - also called Biblical Canon or Canon of Scripture
  - Term is used in both Judaism and Christianity
  - Developed through debate and agreement by the religious authorities of a faith faiths
  - Believers consider these canonical books to be inspired by God or to express the authoritative history of the relationship between God and His people
  - The Jewish Canon was closed in 90 AD
- All of them have been regarded as canonical by one or more Christian communities, *but not by all*
- See handout for a list

# What are they?

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- Means “hidden things”
  - In the past “hidden books” were ones that were restricted due to their content
  - Some early Christian writers used it to describe heretical works
- Neither of these meanings fits
- Use of this term for these books dates to Jerome in the 5<sup>th</sup> century
  - He used it to distinguish them from books of the Christian OT that are also found in the Jewish canon

# Apocrypha

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- Deuterocanonical and the term protocanonical is used in the RC church to describe the two groups of books in the OT
- Protocanonical – the books of the Hebrew Bible about which there was no debate re their canonical status
- Deuterocanon refers to the additional books whose canonical status was reaffirmed at a later date
- The distinction was first made by Sixtus of Sienna in 1566
  - He acknowledged the differences between the 2 groups but made it clear that the Roman Catholic accept both sets as fully canonical

# Deuterocanonical

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- Protestant churches use the term Apocrypha
  - Some see these books as being worthy of study but not as canonical
  - Others do not use them at all
- The RC church uses the term Deuterocanonical as it sees them as canonical
- Eastern Orthodox Churches recognize several other books as scripture in addition to the RC Deuterocanonical books – they use the term anagignoskomena (things that are read)

# Apocrypha vs Deuterocanonical

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- RC, Orthodox, and Protestant churches have different OT Canons
- In the late 4<sup>th</sup> century Jerome translated the Bible into Latin – this became known as the Vulgate, or Latin Vulgate
- For the OT Jerome used the Hebrew Canon and the apocrypha books – he included a preface discussing their distant status
- Over time copies of his translation did not include his preface
- In medieval times the Western books regarded the A. books as scripture without distinguishing between the 2 groups
- During the Reformation some Protestant churches declared the A. books were not scripture since they were not in the original Hebrew bible
- In 1546 the Council of Trent declared that the canon of the OT includes them
  - In a RC bible the books are found within the OT

# The Canons of the OT

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- The Eastern Orthodox Churches recognize several other books as scripture in addition to the RC Deuterocanonical books
  - Synod of Jerusalem (1672) – they use the term anagignoskomena (things that are read)
- Protestant Bibles have followed the Hebrew Canon and usually do not include the A. books
  - If they are included it is usually as a separate section between the OT and the NT
- The Anglican Communion includes the A. books in their bibles
  - Treated a source of wisdom and worthy of study, but not scripture
  - Readings are included in the Revised Common Lectionary

## **The Canons of the OT cont**

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- In the early church, early theologians quoted from both the OT and the A. without making any distinction between them
- Eastern church
  - In the 4<sup>th</sup> century they began to recognize a distinction between the books in the Hebrew canon and the A. books – but they still cited them all as scripture
  - Debated the matter and practice varied but at the Synod of Jerusalem in 1672 , certain A. books were designated as canonical
    - The synod was the Orthodox churches' reaction to the Protestant Reformation

# Status of the Books in Christianity

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- In the Western church the A books were seen as canonical for centuries
  - Several synods declared them to be scripture, or canonical
    - Hippo 393, Carthage 397 and 419
  - A 6<sup>th</sup> century document called the Decretum Gelasianum contained lists of books to be read as scripture and it included many A. books
- Some theologians disagreed over time
  - Jerome thought that books not in the Hebrew canon should be designated as apocryphal – a minority of theologians agreed with him
- In the late 1400s John Wycliffe produced the first English version of the bible
  - They included the A. books but in a prologue to the OT a distinction between the books of the Hebrew canon and others which are “set among apocrypha, that is, without the authority of belief”
- Luther and other Protestant reformers did not see the A. books as canon and over time most Protestant churches dropped them from their bibles
  - All King James Bibles published before 1666 included the Apocrypha
- Council of Trent 1546 declared the disputed books to be canonical

# Status cont.

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- Church of England
  - Agreed the A. books were not to be used for establishing doctrine
  - A milder view prevailed re the debate around the A. – they are not considered scripture / canon and are not used for establishing doctrine, but are worthy of study
  - The BCP from 1549 has contained lessons from the A. in the lectionary
- Episcopal Church - Article Six of the Thirty-nine Articles: “In the name of Holy Scripture we do understand those canonical Books of the Old and New Testament, of whose authority there was never any doubt in the Church... And the other Books (as Hierome [St. Jerome] saith) the Church doth read for example of life and instruction of manners; but yet doth it not apply them to establish any doctrine...”

# Status cont.

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- Several literary genres in the A. books
  - Histories
    - Esdras, 1 Maccabees, 2 Maccabees
  - Historical fiction
    - Judith, Tobit, 3 Maccabees
  - Wisdom
    - Wisdom of Solomon, Ecclesiasticus (Wisdom of Jesus Son of Sirach or Sirach)
  - Devotional writings
    - Prayer of Manasseh
  - Letters
    - Letter of Jeremiah
  - An apocalypse
    - 2 Esdras

# Kinds of Literature in the Books

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- All of them are Jewish in origin
- Not clear that they were collected by any particular community of Jews
- No evidence they were regarded as central to the Jewish community
- Some found in the Dead Sea Scrolls but it is not clear as to whether they were considered canonical or not
- rabbinic literature often quotes from them
- A Jewish canon emerged only gradually in Judaism
  - During the time the A books were written, the Torah, the Prophets, and the Psalms were considered authoritative
  - Canon closed in 90 AD
- Jews became reacquainted with some of the A books from Christian sources during the Middle Ages
  - Translated into Hebrew in the early 16<sup>th</sup> century

# The Books Within Judaism

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- No NT books quote directly from any A. book
- Some NT writers allude to A. books
  - Wisdom of Solomon and Romans (Romans 1:20-20 and Wisdom 13:5-8 and 14:24-27)
  - Letter of James and Sirach (James 1:19 and Sirach 5:11, James 1:13 and Sirach 15:11-12)

# NT Uses of the Books

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- The A. books have influenced homilies, mediations, liturgical forms
- Provided subjects for poets, dramatists, composers, artists
- Some common expressions
  - A good name endures forever – Sirach 41:13
  - You can't touch pitch without being defiled – Sirach 13:1
  - Great is Truth, and mighty above all things – 1 Esdras 4:41

## **Further Influence of the Books**

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- New Oxford Annotated Apocrypha, NRSV. 4<sup>th</sup> edition.  
ISBN 978-0-19-528961-9
- Wikipedia

# Source

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- Named for its main character
  - Greek form of Tobi – meaning “my good”
  - Possibly an abbreviation for Tobiah “Yahweh is my good” or Tobiel “God is my good”
- Author unknown
- Fragments found in the Dead Sea Scrolls
- Dates to the 3<sup>rd</sup> or 2<sup>nd</sup> century BCE
- Place of origin is unknown
  - Possibly the eastern Diaspora, Egypt, and Israel
- It offered to a Diaspora community guidelines on how to preserve their identity

# Tobit

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- Names for its heroine
- Probably composed in Hebrew near the end of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BCE after the Maccabean Revolt
- Historical fiction
- In Judaism she was seen as a heroine who protected her people
- In Christian tradition, she has presented various virtues such as chastity

# Judith

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