

Introduction to the Apocrypha

Torah in Motion

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Class 3: Novellas: Judith, Greek Esther, 3 Maccabees, Joseph and Aseneth, Tobit

Timeline:

BCE:

587-586: Babylonians destroy the Jerusalem Temple; Babylonian Exile complete

539-538: Persia destroys the Babylonian Empire; allows Judeans to return

515: Building of the Second Temple is complete

334-333: Persian Period ends; Alexander the Great defeats Persia and the Hellenist Period begins

200: Judea has been mainly controlled by Ptolemies (Egyptian Greeks); it now comes under the control of Seleucids (Syrian Greeks)

175-164: Hasmonean Rebellion

103–76: Alexander Jannaeus rules Judea

76–67 BCE: Salome Alexandra reigns as Queen of Judea

63: Hasmonean period ends; Judea becomes a client kingdom of Rome

c.37–4: Herod reigns Judea

c. 20: Philo of Alexandria is born

CE:

6: Judea becomes fully incorporated into the Roman Empire

c.32: Jesus is crucified by the Romans

37: Josephus is born

28: Berenice, great-grand-daughter of Herod, is born

c. 30: Queen Helena of Adiabene converts to Judaism

38-41: Riots against the Jews in Alexandria, supported by Flaccus the governor and largely ignored by Gaius Caligula the emperor

c. 40: Philo writes *Embassy to Gaius*

c. 50: Helena dies

67-70: Jerusalem riots; Temple destroyed by Romans

c. 81: Berenice dies

135: Bar Kokhba revolt: Jews expelled from Jerusalem (which is renamed Aelia Capitolina); Rabbinic community moves to Yavneh and the Galilee

200: Mishnah edited and likely completed

500s (1st half): Babylonian Talmud edited and redacted (it will still be subject to small revisions over the next three centuries)

1. Judith¹

¹ Translations of Judith, Greek Esther, and Susanna are from NRSV. Translation of Joseph and Aseneth is from (Trans. C. Burchard, in James H. Charlesworth, ed., *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha Volume Two* [2nd ed; Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2011] 177–248).

1:1–12

It was the twelfth year of the reign of Nebuchadnezzar, who ruled over the Assyrians in the great city of Nineveh. In those days Arphaxad ruled over the Medes in Ecbatana. ²He built walls around Ecbatana with hewn stones three cubits thick and six cubits long; he made the walls seventy cubits high and fifty cubits wide. ³At its gates he raised towers one hundred cubits high and sixty cubits wide at the foundations. ⁴He made its gates seventy cubits high and forty cubits wide to allow his armies to march out in force and his infantry to form their ranks. ⁵Then King Nebuchadnezzar made war against King Arphaxad in the great plain that is on the borders of Ragau. ⁶There rallied to him all the people of the hill country and all those who lived along the Euphrates, the Tigris, and the Hydaspes, and, on the plain, Arioch, king of the Elymeans. Thus, many nations joined the forces of the Chaldeans.

Then Nebuchadnezzar, king of the Assyrians, sent messengers to all who lived in Persia and to all who lived in the west, those who lived in Cilicia and Damascus, Lebanon and Antilebanon, and all who lived along the sea coast, ⁸and those among the nations of Carmel and Gilead, and Upper Galilee and the great plain of Esdraelon, ⁹and all who were in Samaria and its towns, and beyond the Jordan as far as Jerusalem and Bethany and Chelous and Kadesh and the river of Egypt, and Tahpanhes and Raamses and the whole land of Goshen, ¹⁰even beyond Tanis and Memphis, and all who lived in Egypt as far as the borders of Ethiopia. ¹¹But all who lived in the whole region disregarded the summons of Nebuchadnezzar, king of the Assyrians, and refused to join him in the war; for they were not afraid of him, but regarded him as only one man. So they sent back his messengers empty-handed and in disgrace. Then Nebuchadnezzar became very angry with this whole region, and swore by his throne and kingdom that he would take revenge on the whole territory of Cilicia and Damascus and Syria, that he would kill with his sword also all the inhabitants of the land of Moab, and the people of Ammon, and all Judea, and everyone in Egypt, as far as the coasts of the two seas.

Judith 7–8:

The next day Holofernes ordered his whole army, and all the allies who had joined him, to break camp and move against Bethulia, and to seize the passes up into the hill country and make war on the Israelites. ²So all their warriors marched off that day; their fighting forces numbered one hundred and seventy thousand infantry and twelve thousand cavalry, not counting the baggage and the foot-soldiers handling it, a very great multitude. ³They encamped in the valley near Bethulia, beside the spring, and they spread out in breadth over Dothan as far as Balbaim and in length from Bethulia to Cyamon, which faces Esdraelon.

When the Israelites saw their vast numbers, they were greatly terrified and said to one another, “They will now strip clean the whole land; neither the high mountains nor the valleys nor the hills will bear their weight.” ⁵Yet they all seized their weapons, and when they had kindled fires on their towers, they remained on guard all that night. On the second day Holofernes led out all his cavalry in full view of the Israelites in Bethulia. ⁷He reconnoitered the approaches to their town, and visited the springs that supplied their water; he seized them and set guards of soldiers over them, and then returned to his army.

Then all the chieftains of the Edomites and all the leaders of the Moabites and the commanders of the coastland came to him and said, ⁹“Listen to what we have to say, my lord, and your army will suffer no losses. ¹⁰This people, the Israelites, do not rely on their spears but on the height of the mountains where they live, for it is not easy to reach the tops of their mountains. ¹¹Therefore, my lord, do not fight against them in regular formation, and not a man of your army will fall. ¹²Remain in your camp, and keep all the men in your forces with you; let your servants take possession of the spring of water that flows from the foot of the mountain, ¹³for this is where all the people of Bethulia get their water. So thirst will destroy them, and they will surrender their town. Meanwhile, we and our people will go up to the tops of the nearby mountains and camp there to keep watch to see that no one gets out of the town. ¹⁴They and their wives and children will waste away with famine, and before the sword reaches them they will be strewn about in the streets where they live. ¹⁵Thus you will pay them back with evil, because they rebelled and did not receive you peaceably.” These words pleased Holofernes and all his attendants, and he gave orders to do as they had said...

The Israelites then cried out to the Lord their God, for their courage failed, because all their enemies had surrounded them, and there was no way of escape from them. ²⁰The whole Assyrian army, their infantry,

chariots, and cavalry, surrounded them for thirty-four days, until all the water containers of every inhabitant of Bethulia were empty; ²¹their cisterns were going dry, and on no day did they have enough water to drink, for their drinking water was rationed. ²²Their children were listless, and the women and young men fainted from thirst and were collapsing in the streets of the town and in the gateways; they no longer had any strength.

Then all the people, the young men, the women, and the children, gathered around Uzziah and the rulers of the town and cried out with a loud voice, and said before all the elders, ²⁴Let God judge between you and us! You have done us a great injury in not making peace with the Assyrians. ²⁵For now we have no one to help us; God has sold us into their hands, to be strewn before them in thirst and exhaustion. ²⁶Now summon them and surrender the whole town as booty to the army of Holofernes and to all his forces. ²⁷For it would be better for us to be captured by them. We shall indeed become slaves, but our lives will be spared, and we shall not witness our little ones dying before our eyes, and our wives and children drawing their last breath. ²⁸We call to witness against you heaven and earth and our God, the Lord of our ancestors, who punishes us for our sins and the sins of our ancestors; do today the things that we have described!

Then great and general lamentation arose throughout the assembly, and they cried out to the Lord God with a loud voice. ³⁰But Uzziah said to them, 'Courage, my brothers and sisters! Let us hold out for five days more; by that time the Lord our God will turn his mercy to us again, for he will not forsake us utterly. ³¹But if these days pass by, and no help comes for us, I will do as you say.' Then he dismissed the people to their various posts, and they went up on the walls and towers of their town. The women and children he sent home. In the town they were in great misery.

...

⁴Judith remained as a widow for three years and four months ⁵at home where she set up a tent for herself on the roof of her house. She put sackcloth around her waist and dressed in widow's clothing. ⁶She fasted all the days of her widowhood, except the day before the sabbath and the sabbath itself, the day before the new moon and the day of the new moon, and the festivals and days of rejoicing of the house of Israel. ⁷She was beautiful in appearance, and was very lovely to behold. Her husband Manasseh had left her gold and silver, men and women slaves, livestock, and fields; and she maintained this estate. ⁸No one spoke ill of her, for she feared God with great devotion. When Judith heard the harsh words spoken by the people against the ruler, because they were faint for lack of water, and when she heard all that Uzziah said to them, and how he promised them under oath to surrender the town to the Assyrians after five days, ¹⁰she sent her maid, who was in charge of all she possessed, to summon Uzziah and Chabris and Charmis, the elders of her town. ¹¹They came to her, and she said to them:

'Listen to me, rulers of the people of Bethulia! What you have said to the people today is not right; you have even sworn and pronounced this oath between God and you, promising to surrender the town to our enemies unless the Lord turns and helps us within so many days. ¹²Who are you to put God to the test today, and to set yourselves up in the place of God in human affairs? ¹³You are putting the Lord Almighty to the test, but you will never learn anything! ¹⁴You cannot plumb the depths of the human heart or understand the workings of the human mind; how do you expect to search out God, who made all these things, and find out his mind or comprehend his thought? No, my brothers, do not anger the Lord our God.

Judith 10

She called her maid and went down into the house where she lived on Sabbaths and on her festal days. ³She removed the sackcloth she had been wearing, took off her widow's garments, bathed her body with water, and anointed herself with precious ointment. She combed her hair, put on a tiara, and dressed herself in the festive attire that she used to wear while her husband Manasseh was living. ⁴She put sandals on her feet, and put on her anklets, bracelets, rings, ear-rings, and all her other jewelry. Thus she made herself very beautiful, to entice the eyes of all the men who might see her. ⁵She gave her maid a skin of wine and a flask of oil, and filled a bag with roasted grain, dried fig cakes, and fine bread; then she wrapped up all her dishes and gave them to her to carry.

Then they went out to the town gate of Bethulia and found Uzziah standing there with the elders of the town, Chabris and Charmis. ⁷When they saw her transformed in appearance and dressed differently, they were very greatly astounded at her beauty and said to her, ⁸'May the God of our ancestors grant you favour and fulfil your plans, so that the people of Israel may glory and Jerusalem may be exalted.' She bowed down to God. Then she said to them, 'Order the gate of the town to be opened for me so that I may go out and accomplish the things you have just said to me.' So they ordered the young men to open the gate for her, as she requested. ¹⁰When they had done this, Judith went out, accompanied by her maid. The men of the town watched her until she had gone down the mountain and passed through the valley, where they lost sight of her. As the women were going straight on through the valley, an Assyrian patrol met her ¹²and took her into custody. They asked her, 'To what people do you belong, and where are you coming from, and where are you going?' She replied, 'I am a daughter of the Hebrews, but I am fleeing from them, for they are about to be handed over to you to be devoured. ¹³I am on my way to see Holofernes the commander of your army, to give him a true report; I will show him a way by which he can go and capture all the hill country without losing one of his men, captured or slain.'

When the men heard her words, and observed her face—she was in their eyes marvelously beautiful—they said to her, ¹⁵'You have saved your life by hurrying down to see our lord. Go at once to his tent; some of us will escort you and hand you over to him. ¹⁶When you stand before him, have no fear in your heart, but tell him what you have just said, and he will treat you well.' They chose from their number a hundred men to accompany her and her maid, and they brought them to the tent of Holofernes. ¹⁸There was great excitement in the whole camp, for her arrival was reported from tent to tent. They came and gathered around her as she stood outside the tent of Holofernes, waiting until they told him about her. ¹⁹They marveled at her beauty and admired the Israelites, judging them by her. They said to one another, 'Who can despise these people, who have women like this among them? It is not wise to leave one of their men alive, for if we let them go they will be able to beguile the whole world!'

Then the guards of Holofernes and all his servants came out and led her into the tent. ²¹Holofernes was resting on his bed under a canopy that was woven with purple and gold, emeralds and other precious stones. ²²When they told him of her, he came to the front of the tent, with silver lamps carried before him. ²³When Judith came into the presence of Holofernes and his servants, they all marveled at the beauty of her face. She prostrated herself and did obeisance to him, but his slaves raised her up.

Judith 12-13:

[Holofernes] commanded [his officers] to bring her in where his silver dinnerware was kept, and ordered them to set a table for her with some of his own delicacies, and with some of his own wine to drink. ²But Judith said, 'I cannot partake of them, or it will be an offence; but I will have enough with the things I brought with me.' ³Holofernes said to her, 'If your supply runs out, where can we get you more of the same? For none of your people are here with us.' ⁴Judith replied, 'As surely as you live, my lord, your servant will not use up the supplies I have with me before the Lord carries out by my hand what he has determined.'

Then the servants of Holofernes brought her into the tent, and she slept until midnight. Towards the morning watch she got up ⁶and sent this message to Holofernes: 'Let my lord now give orders to allow your servant to go out and pray.' ⁷So Holofernes commanded his guards not to hinder her. She remained in the camp for three days. She went out each night to the valley of Bethulia, and bathed at the spring in the camp. ⁸After bathing, she prayed the Lord God of Israel to direct her way for the triumph of his people. ⁹Then she returned purified and stayed in the tent until she ate her food towards evening.

On the fourth day Holofernes held a banquet for his personal attendants only, and did not invite any of his officers. ¹¹He said to Bagoas, the eunuch who had charge of his personal affairs, 'Go and persuade the Hebrew woman who is in your care to join us and to eat and drink with us. ¹²For it would be a disgrace if we let such a woman go without having intercourse with her. If we do not seduce her, she will laugh at us.' So Bagoas left the presence of Holofernes, and approached her and said, 'Let this pretty girl not hesitate to come

to my lord to be honoured in his presence, and to enjoy drinking wine with us, and to become today like one of the Assyrian women who serve in the palace of Nebuchadnezzar.’¹⁴Judith replied, ‘Who am I to refuse my lord? Whatever pleases him I will do at once, and it will be a joy to me until the day of my death.’¹⁵So she proceeded to dress herself in all her woman’s finery. Her maid went ahead and spread for her on the ground before Holofernes the lambskins she had received from Bagoas for her daily use in reclining.

Then Judith came in and lay down. Holofernes’ heart was ravished with her and his passion was aroused, for he had been waiting for an opportunity to seduce her from the day he first saw her.¹⁷So Holofernes said to her, ‘Have a drink and be merry with us!’¹⁸Judith said, ‘I will gladly drink, my lord, because today is the greatest day in my whole life.’¹⁹Then she took what her maid had prepared and ate and drank before him.²⁰Holofernes was greatly pleased with her, and drank a great quantity of wine, much more than he had ever drunk in any one day since he was born.

When evening came, his slaves quickly withdrew. Bagoas closed the tent from outside and shut out the attendants from his master’s presence. They went to bed, for they all were weary because the banquet had lasted so long.²But Judith was left alone in the tent, with Holofernes stretched out on his bed, for he was dead drunk. Now Judith had told her maid to stand outside the bedchamber and to wait for her to come out, as she did on the other days; for she said she would be going out for her prayers. She had said the same thing to Bagoas.⁴So everyone went out, and no one, either small or great, was left in the bedchamber. Then Judith, standing beside his bed, said in her heart, ‘O Lord God of all might, look in this hour on the work of my hands for the exaltation of Jerusalem.’⁵Now indeed is the time to help your heritage and to carry out my design to destroy the enemies who have risen up against us.’

She went up to the bedpost near Holofernes’ head, and took down his sword that hung there.⁷She came close to his bed, took hold of the hair of his head, and said, ‘Give me strength today, O Lord God of Israel!’⁸Then she struck his neck twice with all her might, and cut off his head.⁹Next she rolled his body off the bed and pulled down the canopy from the posts. Soon afterwards she went out and gave Holofernes’ head to her maid,¹⁰who placed it in her food bag. Then the two of them went out together, as they were accustomed to do for prayer. They passed through the camp, circled around the valley, and went up the mountain to Bethulia, and came to its gates.¹¹From a distance Judith called out to the sentries at the gates, ‘Open, open the gate! God, our God, is with us, still showing his power in Israel and his strength against our enemies, as he has done today!’

When the people of her town heard her voice, they hurried down to the town gate and summoned the elders of the town.¹³They all ran together, both small and great, for it seemed unbelievable that she had returned. They opened the gate and welcomed them. Then they lit a fire to give light, and gathered around them.¹⁴Then she said to them with a loud voice, ‘Praise God, O praise him! Praise God, who has not withdrawn his mercy from the house of Israel, but has destroyed our enemies by my hand this very night!’Then she pulled the head out of the bag and showed it to them, and said, ‘See here, the head of Holofernes, the commander of the Assyrian army, and here is the canopy beneath which he lay in his drunken stupor. The Lord has struck him down by the hand of a woman.’¹⁶As the Lord lives, who has protected me on the way I went, I swear that it was my face that seduced him to his destruction, and that he committed no sin with me, to defile and shame me.’ All the people were greatly astonished. They bowed down and worshipped God, and said with one accord, ‘Blessed are you our God, who have this day humiliated the enemies of your people.’

Then Uzziah said to her, ‘O daughter, you are blessed by the Most High God above all other women on earth; and blessed be the Lord God, who created the heavens and the earth, who has guided you to cut off the head of the leader of our enemies.’¹⁹Your praise will never depart from the hearts of those who remember the power of God.²⁰May God grant this to be a perpetual honour to you, and may he reward you with blessings, because you risked your own life when our nation was brought low, and you averted our ruin, walking in the straight path before our God.’ And all the people said, ‘Amen. Amen.’

2. Greek Esther:

A, before 1.1; B, after 3.13; C and D, after 4.17; E, after 8.12; F, after 10.3.

Addition A

In the second year of the reign of Artaxerxes the Great, on the first day of Nisan, Mordecai son of Jair son of Shimei son of Kish, of the tribe of Benjamin, had a dream. ³He was a Jew living in the city of Susa, a great man, serving in the court of the king. ⁴He was one of the captives whom King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon had brought from Jerusalem with King Jeconiah of Judea. And this was his dream:⁵Noises and confusion, thunders and earthquake, tumult on the earth!⁶Then two great dragons came forward, both ready to fight, and they roared terribly. ⁷At their roaring every nation prepared for war, to fight against the righteous nation. ⁸It was a day of darkness and gloom, of tribulation and distress, affliction and great tumult on the earth! ⁹And the whole righteous nation was troubled; they feared the evils that threatened them, and were ready to perish. ¹⁰Then they cried out to God; and at their outcry, as though from a tiny spring, there came a great river, with abundant water; ¹¹light came, and the sun rose, and the lowly were exalted and devoured those held in honor. ¹²Mordecai saw in this dream what God had determined to do, and after he awoke he had it on his mind, seeking all day to understand it in every detail.

Addition B

This is a copy of the letter: “The Great King, Artaxerxes, writes the following to the governors of the hundred twenty-seven provinces from India to Ethiopia and to the officials under them: ²“Having become ruler of many nations and master of the whole world (not elated with presumption of authority but always acting reasonably and with kindness), I have determined to settle the lives of my subjects in lasting tranquility and, in order to make my kingdom peaceable and open to travel throughout all its extent, to restore the peace desired by all people. ³“When I asked my counselors how this might be accomplished, Haman—who excels among us in sound judgment, and is distinguished for his unchanging goodwill and steadfast fidelity, and has attained the second place in the kingdom— ⁴pointed out to us that among all the nations in the world there is scattered a certain hostile people, who have laws contrary to those of every nation and continually disregard the ordinances of kings, so that the unifying of the kingdom that we honorably intend cannot be brought about. ⁵We understand that this people, and it alone, stands constantly in opposition to every nation, perversely following a strange manner of life and laws, and is ill-disposed to our government, doing all the harm they can so that our kingdom may not attain stability. ⁶“Therefore we have decreed that those indicated to you in the letters written by Haman, who is in charge of affairs and is our second father, shall all—wives and children included—be utterly destroyed by the swords of their enemies, without pity or restraint, on the fourteenth day of the twelfth month, Adar, of this present year, ⁷so that those who have long been hostile and remain so may in a single day go down in violence to Hades, and leave our government completely secure and untroubled hereafter.”

Addition C

Then Queen Esther, seized with deadly anxiety, fled to the Lord.²She took off her splendid apparel and put on the garments of distress and mourning, and instead of costly perfumes she covered her head with ashes and dung, and she utterly humbled her body; every part that she loved to adorn she covered with her tangled hair. ³She prayed to the Lord God of Israel, and said: ‘O my Lord, you only are our king; help me, who am alone and have no helper but you, ⁴for my danger is in my hand. ⁵Ever since I was born I have heard in the tribe of my family that you, O Lord, took Israel out of all the nations, and our ancestors from among all their forebears, for an everlasting inheritance, and that you did for them all that you promised. ⁶And now we have sinned before you, and you have handed us over to our enemies ⁷because we glorified their gods. You are righteous, O Lord! ⁸And now they are not satisfied that we are in bitter slavery, but they have covenanted with their idols ⁹to abolish what your mouth has ordained, and to destroy your inheritance, to stop the mouths of those who praise you and to quench your altar and the glory of your house, ¹⁰to open the mouths of the nations for the praise of vain idols, and to magnify forever a mortal king... ¹⁵You have knowledge of all things, and you know that I hate the splendor of the wicked and abhor the bed of the uncircumcised and of

any alien. ¹⁶You know my necessity—that I abhor the sign of my proud position, which is upon my head on days when I appear in public. I abhor it like a filthy rag, and I do not wear it on the days when I am at leisure. ¹⁷And your servant has not eaten at Haman’s table, and I have not honoured the king’s feast or drunk the wine of libations. ¹⁸Your servant has had no joy since the day that I was brought here until now, except in you, O Lord God of Abraham. ¹⁹O God, whose might is over all, hear the voice of the despairing, and save us from the hands of evildoers. And save me from my fear!

Addition D

On the third day, when she ended her prayer, she took off the garments in which she had worshiped, and arrayed herself in splendid attire. ²Then, majestically adorned, after invoking the aid of the all-seeing God and Savior, she took two maids with her; ³on one she leaned gently for support, ⁴while the other followed, carrying her train. ⁵She was radiant with perfect beauty, and she looked happy, as if beloved, but her heart was frozen with fear. ⁶When she had gone through all the doors, she stood before the king. He was seated on his royal throne, clothed in the full array of his majesty, all covered with gold and precious stones. He was most terrifying. ⁷Lifting his face, flushed with splendor, he looked at her in fierce anger. The queen faltered, and turned pale and faint, and collapsed on the head of the maid who went in front of her. ⁸Then God changed the spirit of the king to gentleness, and in alarm he sprang from his throne and took her in his arms until she came to herself. He comforted her with soothing words, and said to her, ⁹“What is it, Esther? I am your husband. Take courage; ¹⁰You shall not die, for our law applies only to our subjects. Come near.” ¹¹Then he raised the golden scepter and touched her neck with it; ¹²he embraced her, and said, “Speak to me.” ¹³She said to him, “I saw you, my lord, like an angel of God, and my heart was shaken with fear at your glory.” ¹⁴For you are wonderful, my lord, and your countenance is full of grace.” ¹⁵And while she was speaking, she fainted and fell. ¹⁶Then the king was agitated, and all his servants tried to comfort her.

Addition E

The following is a copy of this letter: “The Great King, Artaxerxes, to the governors of the provinces from India to Ethiopia, one hundred twenty-seven provinces, and to those who are loyal to our government, greetings. ²“Many people, the more they are honored with the most generous kindness of their benefactors, the more proud do they become, ³and not only seek to injure our subjects, but in their inability to stand prosperity, they even undertake to scheme against their own benefactors. ⁴They not only take away thankfulness from others, but, carried away by the boasts of those who know nothing of goodness, they even assume that they will escape the evil-hating justice of God, who always sees everything. ⁵And often many of those who are set in places of authority have been made in part responsible for the shedding of innocent blood, and have been involved in irremediable calamities, by the persuasion of friends who have been entrusted with the administration of public affairs, ⁶when these persons by the false trickery of their evil natures beguile the sincere goodwill of their sovereigns. ⁷“What has been wickedly accomplished through the pestilent behavior of those who exercise authority unworthily can be seen, not so much from the more ancient records that we hand on, as from investigation of matters close at hand. ⁸In the future we will take care to render our kingdom quiet and peaceable for all, ⁹by changing our methods and always judging what comes before our eyes with more equitable consideration. . . ¹⁵“But we find that the Jews, who were consigned to annihilation by this thrice-cursed man, are not evildoers, but are governed by most righteous laws ¹⁶and are children of the living God, most high, most mighty, ¹⁷who has directed the kingdom both for us and for our ancestors in the most excellent order. . . ²⁴“Every city and country, without exception, that does not act accordingly shall be destroyed in wrath with spear and fire. It shall be made not only impassable for human beings, but also most hateful to wild animals and birds for all time.

Addition F

And Mordecai said, “These things have come from God; ⁵ for I remember the dream that I had concerning these matters, and none of them has failed to be fulfilled. ⁶ There was the little spring that became a river, and there was light and sun and abundant water—the river is Esther, whom the king married and made queen. ⁷ The two dragons are Haman and myself. ⁸ The nations are those that gathered to destroy the name of the Jews. ⁹ And my nation, this is Israel, who cried out to God and was saved. The Lord has saved his people; the Lord has rescued us from all these evils; God has done great signs and wonders, wonders that have never happened among the nations... ¹² God remembered his people and vindicated his inheritance. ¹³ So they will observe these days in the month of Adar, on the fourteenth and fifteenth of that month, with an assembly and joy and gladness before God, from generation to generation forever among his people Israel.”

Colophon

In the fourth year of the reign of Ptolemy and Cleopatra, Dositheus, who said he was a priest and a Levite, and Ptolemy his son, brought in [to Egypt] the foregoing letter [*epistole*] concerning the Phourae [Purim], saying that it was authentic and that Lysimachus, son of Ptolemy, a resident of Jerusalem, had translated it.

3.3 Maccabees

3 Maccabees 1–3

When Philopator learned from those who returned that the regions that he had controlled had been seized by Antiochus, he gave orders to all his forces, both infantry and cavalry, took with him his sister Arsinoe⁴, and marched out to the region near Raphia, where the army of Antiochus was encamped. ²But a certain Theodotus, determined to carry out the plot he had devised, took with him the best of the Ptolemaic arms that had been previously issued to him, and crossed over by night to the tent of Ptolemy, intending single-handed to kill him and thereby end the war. ³But Dositheus, known as the son of Drimylus, a Jew by birth who later changed his religion and apostatized from the ancestral traditions, had led the king away and arranged that a certain insignificant man should sleep in the tent; and so it turned out that this man incurred the vengeance meant for the king. ⁴When a bitter fight resulted, and matters were turning out rather in favour of Antiochus, Arsinoe went to the troops with wailing and tears, her locks all dishevelled, and exhorted them to defend themselves and their children and wives bravely, promising to give them each two minas of gold if they won the battle.⁵And so it came about that the enemy was routed in the action, and many captives also were taken. ⁶Now that he had foiled the plot, Ptolemy decided to visit the neighbouring cities and encourage them. ⁷By doing this, and by endowing their sacred enclosures with gifts, he strengthened the morale of his subjects.

⁸ Since the Jews had sent some of their council and elders to greet him, to bring him gifts of welcome, and to congratulate him on what had happened, he was all the more eager to visit them as soon as possible.⁹After he had arrived in Jerusalem, he offered sacrifice to the supreme God and made thank-offerings and did what was fitting for the holy place. Then, upon entering the place and being impressed by its excellence and its beauty, ¹⁰he marvelled at the good order of the temple, and conceived a desire to enter the sanctuary. ¹¹When they said that this was not permitted, because not even members of their own nation were allowed to enter, not even all of the priests, but only the high priest who was pre-eminent over all—and he only once a year—the king was by no means persuaded. ¹²Even after the law had been read to him, he did not cease to maintain that he ought to enter, saying, ‘Even if those men are deprived of this honour, I ought not to be.’ ¹³And he inquired why, when he entered every other temple, no one there had stopped him. ¹⁴And someone answered thoughtlessly that it was wrong to take that as a portent. ¹⁵‘But since this has happened’, the king said, ‘why should not I at least enter, whether they wish it or not?’

16 Then the priests in all their vestments prostrated themselves and entreated the supreme God to aid in the present situation and to avert the violence of this evil design, and they filled the temple with cries and tears; 17 those who remained behind in the city were agitated and hurried out, supposing that something mysterious was occurring. 18 Young women who had been secluded in their chambers rushed out with their mothers, sprinkled their hair with dust, and filled the streets with groans and lamentations. 19 Those women who had recently been arrayed for marriage abandoned the bridal chambers prepared for wedded union, and, neglecting proper modesty, in a disorderly rush flocked together in the city. 20 Mothers and nurses abandoned even newborn children here and there, some in houses and some in the streets, and without a backward look they crowded together at the most high temple. 21 Various were the supplications of those gathered there because of what the king was profanely plotting. 22 In addition, the bolder of the citizens would not tolerate the completion of his plans or the fulfilment of his intended purpose. 23 They shouted to their compatriots to take arms and die courageously for the ancestral law, and created a considerable disturbance in the holy place; and being barely restrained by the old men and the elders, they resorted to the same posture of supplication as the others. 24 Meanwhile the crowd, as before, was engaged in prayer, 25 while the elders near the king tried in various ways to change his arrogant mind from the plan that he had conceived. 26 But he, in his arrogance, took heed of nothing, and began now to approach, determined to bring the aforesaid plan to a conclusion. 27 When those who were around him observed this, they turned, together with our people, to call upon him who has all power to defend them in the present trouble and not to overlook this unlawful and haughty deed. 28 The continuous, vehement, and concerted cry of the crowds resulted in an immense uproar; 29 for it seemed that not only the people but also the walls and the whole earth around echoed, because indeed all at that time preferred death to the profanation of the place.

Then the high priest Simon, facing the sanctuary, bending his knees and extending his hands with calm dignity, prayed as follows: 24 Lord, Lord, king of the heavens, and sovereign of all creation, holy among the holy ones, the only ruler, almighty, give attention to us who are suffering grievously from an impious and profane man, puffed up in his audacity and power. 3 For you, the creator of all things and the governor of all, are a just Ruler, and you judge those who have done anything in insolence and arrogance. 4 You destroyed those who in the past committed injustice, among whom were even giants who trusted in their strength and boldness, whom you destroyed by bringing on them a boundless flood. 5 You consumed with fire and sulphur the people of Sodom who acted arrogantly, who were notorious for their vices; and you made them an example to those who should come afterwards. 6 You made known your mighty power by inflicting many and varied punishments on the audacious Pharaoh who had enslaved your holy people Israel. 7 And when he pursued them with chariots and a mass of troops, you overwhelmed him in the depths of the sea, but carried through safely those who had put their confidence in you, the Ruler over the whole creation. 8 And when they had seen works of your hands, they praised you, the Almighty. 9 You, O King, when you had created the boundless and immeasurable earth, chose this city and sanctified this place for your name, though you have no need of anything; and when you had glorified it by your magnificent manifestation, you made it a firm foundation for the glory of your great and honoured name. 10 And because you love the house of Israel, you promised that if we should have reverses, and tribulation should overtake us, you would listen to our petition when we come to this place and pray. 11 And indeed you are faithful and true. 12 And because oftentimes when our fathers were oppressed you helped them in their humiliation, and rescued them from great evils, 13 see now, O holy King, that because of our many and great sins we are crushed with suffering, subjected to our enemies, and overtaken by helplessness. 14 In our downfall this audacious and profane man undertakes to violate the holy place on earth dedicated to your glorious name. 15 For your dwelling is the heaven of heavens, unapproachable by human beings. 16 But because you graciously bestowed your glory on your people Israel, you sanctified this place. 17 Do not punish us for the defilement committed by these men, or call us to account for this profanation, otherwise the transgressors will boast in their wrath and exult in the arrogance of their tongue, saying, 18 “We have trampled down the house of the sanctuary as the houses of the abominations are trampled down.” 19 Wipe away our sins and disperse our errors, and reveal your mercy at this hour. 20 Speedily let your mercies overtake us, and put praises in the mouth of those who are downcast and broken in spirit, and give us peace.’

21 Thereupon God, who oversees all things, the first Father of all, holy among the holy ones, having heard the lawful supplication, scourged him who had exalted himself in insolence and audacity. ²²He shook him on this side and that as a reed is shaken by the wind, so that he lay helpless on the ground and, besides being paralysed in his limbs, was unable even to speak, since he was smitten by a righteous judgement. ²³Then both friends and bodyguards, seeing the severe punishment that had overtaken him, and fearing that he would lose his life, quickly dragged him out, panic-stricken in their exceedingly great fear. ²⁴After a while he recovered, and though he had been punished, he by no means repented, but went away uttering bitter threats.

25 When he arrived in Egypt, he increased in his deeds of malice, abetted by the previously mentioned drinking companions and comrades, who were strangers to everything just. ²⁶He was not content with his uncounted licentious deeds, but even continued with such audacity that he framed evil reports in the various localities; and many of his friends, intently observing the king's purpose, themselves also followed his will. ²⁷He proposed to inflict public disgrace on the Jewish community, and he set up a stone on the tower in the courtyard with this inscription: ²⁸None of those who do not sacrifice shall enter their sanctuaries, and all Jews shall be subjected to a registration involving poll tax and to the status of slaves. Those who object to this are to be taken by force and put to death; ²⁹those who are registered are also to be branded on their bodies by fire with the ivy-leaf symbol of Dionysus, and they shall also be reduced to their former limited status.' ³⁰In order that he might not appear to be an enemy of all, he inscribed below: 'But if any of them prefer to join those who have been initiated into the mysteries, they shall have equal citizenship with the Alexandrians.'

31 Now some, however, with an obvious abhorrence of the price to be exacted for maintaining the religion of their city, readily gave themselves up, since they expected to enhance their reputation by their future association with the king. ³²But the majority acted firmly with a courageous spirit and did not abandon their religion; and by paying money in exchange for life they confidently attempted to save themselves from the registration. ³³They remained resolutely hopeful of obtaining help, and they abhorred those who separated themselves from them, considering them to be enemies of the Jewish nation, and depriving them of companionship and mutual help.

When the impious king comprehended this situation, he became so infuriated that not only was he enraged against those Jews who lived in Alexandria, but was still more bitterly hostile towards those in the countryside; and he ordered that all should promptly be gathered into one place, and put to death by the most cruel means. ²While these matters were being arranged, a hostile rumour was circulated against the Jewish nation by some who conspired to do them ill, a pretext being given by a report that they hindered others from the observance of their customs. ³The Jews, however, continued to maintain goodwill and unswerving loyalty towards the dynasty; ⁴but because they worshipped God and conducted themselves by his law, they kept their separateness with respect to foods. For this reason they appeared hateful to some; ⁵but since they adorned their style of life with the good deeds of upright people, they were established in good repute with everyone. ⁶Nevertheless, those of other races paid no heed to their good service to their nation, which was common talk among all; ⁷instead they gossiped about the differences in worship and foods, alleging that these people were loyal neither to the king nor to his authorities, but were hostile and greatly opposed to his government. So they attached no ordinary reproach to them.

8 The Greeks in the city, though wronged in no way, when they saw an unexpected tumult around these people and the crowds that suddenly were forming, were not strong enough to help them, for they lived under tyranny. They did try to console them, being grieved at the situation, and expected that matters would change; ⁹for such a great community ought not to be left to its fate when it had committed no offence. ¹⁰And already some of their neighbours and friends and business associates had taken some of them aside privately and were pledging to protect them and to exert more earnest efforts for their assistance.

11 Then the king, boastful of his present good fortune, and not considering the might of the supreme God, but assuming that he would persevere constantly in his same purpose, wrote this letter against them:

12 'King Ptolemy Philopator to his generals and soldiers in Egypt and all its districts, greetings and good health: 'I myself and our government are faring well. ¹⁴When our expedition took place in Asia, as you yourselves know, it was brought to conclusion, according to plan, by the gods' deliberate alliance with us in battle, ¹⁵and we considered that we should not rule the nations inhabiting Coelesyria and Phoenicia by the power of the spear, but should cherish them with clemency and great benevolence, gladly treating them well. ¹⁶And when we had granted very great revenues to the temples in the cities, we came on to Jerusalem also, and went up to honour the temple of those wicked people, who never cease from their folly. ¹⁷They accepted our presence by word, but insincerely by deed, because when we proposed to enter their inner temple and honour it with magnificent and most beautiful offerings, ¹⁸they were carried away by their traditional arrogance, and excluded us from entering; but they were spared the exercise of our power because of the benevolence that we have towards all. ¹⁹By maintaining their manifest ill will towards us, they become the only people among all nations who hold their heads high in defiance of kings and their own benefactors, and are unwilling to regard any action as sincere.

20 'But we, when we arrived in Egypt victorious, accommodated ourselves to their folly and did as was proper, since we treat all nations with benevolence. ²¹Among other things, we made known to all our amnesty towards their compatriots here, both because of their alliance with us and the myriad affairs liberally entrusted to them from the beginning; and we ventured to make a change, by deciding both to deem them worthy of Alexandrian citizenship and to make them participants in our regular religious rites. ²²But in their innate malice they took this in a contrary spirit, and disdained what is good. Since they incline constantly to evil, ²³they not only spurn the priceless citizenship, but also both by speech and by silence they abominate those few among them who are sincerely disposed towards us; in every situation, in accordance with their infamous way of life, they secretly suspect that we may soon alter our policy. ²⁴Therefore, fully convinced by these indications that they are ill disposed towards us in every way, we have taken precautions so that, if a sudden disorder later arises against us, we shall not have these impious people behind our backs as traitors and barbarous enemies. ²⁵Therefore we have given orders that, as soon as this letter arrives, you are to send to us those who live among you, together with their wives and children, with insulting and harsh treatment, and bound securely with iron fetters, to suffer the sure and shameful death that befits enemies. ²⁶For when all of these have been punished, we are sure that for the remaining time the government will be established for ourselves in good order and in the best state. ²⁷But those who shelter any of the Jews, whether old people or children or even infants, will be tortured to death with the most hateful torments, together with their families. ²⁸Any who are willing to give information will receive the property of those who incur the punishment, and also two thousand drachmas from the royal treasury, and will be awarded their freedom. ²⁹Every place detected sheltering a Jew is to be made unapproachable and burned with fire, and shall become useless for all time to any mortal creature.' ³⁰The letter was written in the above form.

3 Maccabees 5–6

Then the king, completely inflexible, was filled with overpowering anger and wrath; so he summoned Hermon, keeper of the elephants,²and ordered him on the following day to drug all the elephants—five hundred in number—with large handfuls of frankincense and plenty of unmixed wine, and to drive them in, maddened by the lavish abundance of drink, so that the Jews might meet their doom. ³When he had given these orders he returned to his feasting, together with those of his Friends and of the army who were especially hostile towards the Jews.⁴And Hermon, keeper of the elephants, proceeded faithfully to carry out the orders. ⁵The servants in charge of the Jews went out in the evening and bound the hands of the wretched people and arranged for their continued custody through the night, convinced that the whole nation would experience its final destruction. ⁶For to the Gentiles it appeared that the Jews were left without any aid, ⁷because in their bonds they were forcibly confined on every side. But with tears and a voice hard to silence they all called upon the Almighty Lord and Ruler of all power, their merciful God and Father, praying ⁸that he avert with vengeance the evil plot against them and in a glorious manifestation rescue them

from the fate now prepared for them. ⁹So their entreaty ascended fervently to heaven. Hermon, however, when he had drugged the pitiless elephants until they had been filled with a great abundance of wine and satiated with frankincense, presented himself at the courtyard early in the morning to report to the king about these preparations. ¹¹But the Lord sent upon the king a portion of sleep, that beneficence that from the beginning, night and day, is bestowed by him who grants it to whomsoever he wishes.¹²And by the action of the Lord he was overcome by so pleasant and deep a sleep that he quite failed in his lawless purpose and was completely frustrated in his inflexible plan. ¹³Then the Jews, since they had escaped the appointed hour, praised their holy God and again implored him who is easily reconciled to show the might of his all-powerful hand to the arrogant Gentiles.

¹⁴ But now, since it was nearly the middle of the tenth hour, the person who was in charge of the invitations, seeing that the guests were assembled, approached the king and nudged him. ¹⁵And when he had with difficulty roused him, he pointed out that the hour of the banquet was already slipping by, and he gave him an account of the situation.¹⁶The king, after considering this, returned to his drinking, and ordered those present for the banquet to recline opposite him. ¹⁷When this was done he urged them to give themselves over to revelry and to make the present portion of the banquet joyful by celebrating all the more. ¹⁸After the party had been going on for some time, the king summoned Hermon and with sharp threats demanded to know why the Jews had been allowed to remain alive through the present day. ¹⁹But when he, with the corroboration of his Friends, pointed out that while it was still night he had carried out completely the order given him, ²⁰the king, possessed by a savagery worse than that of Phalaris, said that the Jews had benefited by today's sleep, 'but', he added, 'tomorrow without delay prepare the elephants in the same way for the destruction of the lawless Jews!'²¹When the king had spoken, all those present readily and joyfully with one accord gave their approval, and all went to their own homes. ²²But they did not so much employ the duration of the night in sleep as in devising all sorts of insults for those they thought to be doomed.

²³ Then, as soon as the cock had crowed in the early morning, Hermon, having equipped the animals, began to move them along in the great colonnade. ²⁴The crowds of the city had been assembled for this most pitiful spectacle and they were eagerly waiting for daybreak. ²⁵But the Jews, at their last gasp—since the time had run out—stretched their hands towards heaven and with most tearful supplication and mournful dirges implored the supreme God to help them again at once. ²⁶The rays of the sun were not yet shed abroad, and while the king was receiving his Friends, Hermon arrived and invited him to come out, indicating that what the king desired was ready for action. ²⁷But he, on receiving the report and being struck by the unusual invitation to come out—since he had been completely overcome by incomprehension—inquired what the matter was for which this had been so zealously completed for him.²⁸This was the act of God who rules over all things, for he had implanted in the king's mind a forgetfulness of the things he had previously devised.²⁹Then Hermon and all the king's Friends pointed out that the animals and the armed forces were ready, 'O king, according to your eager purpose.'³⁰But at these words he was filled with an overpowering wrath, because by the providence of God his whole mind had been deranged concerning these matters; and with a threatening look he said, ³¹'If your parents or children were present, I would have prepared them to be a rich feast for the savage animals instead of the Jews, who give me no ground for complaint and have exhibited to an extraordinary degree a full and firm loyalty to my ancestors. ³²In fact you would have been deprived of life instead of these, if it were not for an affection arising from our nurture in common and your usefulness.'³³So Hermon suffered an unexpected and dangerous threat, and his eyes wavered and his face fell.³⁴The king's Friends one by one sullenly slipped away and dismissed the assembled people to their own occupations. ³⁵Then the Jews, on hearing what the king had said, praised the manifest Lord God, King of kings, since this also was his aid that they had received.

³⁶ The king, however, reconvened the party in the same manner and urged the guests to return to their celebrating. ³⁷After summoning Hermon he said in a threatening tone, 'How many times, you poor wretch, must I give you orders about these things?' ³⁸Equip the elephants now once more for the destruction of the

Jews tomorrow!’³⁹But the officials who were at table with him, wondering at his instability of mind, remonstrated as follows: ⁴⁰‘O king, how long will you put us to the test, as though we are idiots, ordering now for a third time that they be destroyed, and again revoking your decree in the matter?’⁴¹As a result the city is in a tumult because of its expectation; it is crowded with masses of people, and also in constant danger of being plundered.’ At this the king, a Phalaris in everything and filled with madness, took no account of the changes of mind that had come about within him for the protection of the Jews, and he firmly swore an irrevocable oath that he would send them to death without delay, mangled by the knees and feet of the animals,⁴³and would also march against Judea and rapidly level it to the ground with fire and spear, and by burning to the ground the temple inaccessible to him would quickly render it for ever empty of those who offered sacrifices there.⁴⁴Then the Friends and officers departed with great joy, and they confidently posted the armed forces at the places in the city most favourable for keeping guard.

45 Now when the animals had been brought virtually to a state of madness, so to speak, by the very fragrant draughts of wine mixed with frankincense and had been equipped with frightful devices, the elephant-keeper⁴⁶entered at about dawn into the courtyard—the city now being filled with countless masses of people crowding their way into the hippodrome—and urged the king on to the matter at hand.⁴⁷So he, when he had filled his impious mind with a deep rage, rushed out in full force along with the animals, wishing to witness, with invulnerable heart and with his own eyes, the grievous and pitiful destruction of the aforementioned people.

48 When the Jews saw the dust raised by the elephants going out at the gate and by the following armed forces, as well as by the trampling of the crowd, and heard the loud and tumultuous noise,⁴⁹they thought that this was their last moment of life, the end of their most miserable suspense, and giving way to lamentation and groans they kissed each other, embracing relatives and falling into one another’s arms—parents and children, mothers and daughters, and others with babies at their breasts who were drawing their last milk.⁵⁰Not only this, but when they considered the help that they had received before from heaven, they prostrated themselves with one accord on the ground, removing the babies from their breasts,⁵¹and cried out in a very loud voice, imploring the Ruler over every power to manifest himself and be merciful to them, as they stood now at the gates of death.

Then a certain Eleazar, famous among the priests of the country, who had attained a ripe old age and throughout his life had been adorned with every virtue, directed the elders around him to stop calling upon the holy God, and he prayed as follows: ²King of great power, Almighty God Most High, governing all creation with mercy,³look upon the descendants of Abraham, O Father, upon the children of the sainted Jacob, a people of your consecrated portion who are perishing as foreigners in a foreign land.⁴Pharaoh with his abundance of chariots, the former ruler of this Egypt, exalted with lawless insolence and boastful tongue, you destroyed together with his arrogant army by drowning them in the sea, manifesting the light of your mercy on the nation of Israel.⁵Sennacherib exulting in his countless forces, oppressive king of the Assyrians, who had already gained control of the whole world by the spear and was lifted up against your holy city, speaking grievous words with boasting and insolence, you, O Lord, broke in pieces, showing your power to many nations.⁶The three companions in Babylon who had voluntarily surrendered their lives to the flames so as not to serve vain things, you rescued unharmed, even to a hair, moistening the fiery furnace with dew and turning the flame against all their enemies.⁷Daniel, who through envious slanders was thrown down into the ground to lions as food for wild animals, you brought up to the light unharmed.⁸And Jonah, wasting away in the belly of a huge, sea-born monster, you, Father, watched over and restored unharmed to all his family.⁹And now, you who hate insolence, all-merciful and protector of all, reveal yourself quickly to those of the nation of Israel—who are being outrageously treated by the abominable and lawless Gentiles.

10 ‘Even if our lives have become entangled in impieties in our exile, rescue us from the hand of the enemy, and destroy us, Lord, by whatever fate you choose.¹¹Let not the vain-minded praise their vanities at the destruction of your beloved people, saying, “Not even their god has rescued them.”¹²But you, O Eternal

One, who have all might and all power, watch over us now and have mercy on us who by the senseless insolence of the lawless are being deprived of life in the manner of traitors. ¹³And let the Gentiles cower today in fear of your invincible might, O honoured One, who have power to save the nation of Jacob. ¹⁴The whole throng of infants and their parents entreat you with tears. ¹⁵Let it be shown to all the Gentiles that you are with us, O Lord, and have not turned your face from us; but just as you have said, “Not even when they were in the land of their enemies did I neglect them”, so accomplish it, O Lord.’

¹⁶ Just as Eleazar was ending his prayer, the king arrived at the hippodrome with the animals and all the arrogance of his forces. ¹⁷And when the Jews observed this they raised great cries to heaven so that even the nearby valleys resounded with them and brought an uncontrollable terror upon the army. ¹⁸Then the most glorious, almighty, and true God revealed his holy face and opened the heavenly gates, from which two glorious angels of fearful aspect descended, visible to all but the Jews. ¹⁹They opposed the forces of the enemy and filled them with confusion and terror, binding them with immovable shackles. ²⁰Even the king began to shudder bodily, and he forgot his sullen insolence. ²¹The animals turned back upon the armed forces following them and began trampling and destroying them.

22 Then the king’s anger was turned to pity and tears because of the things that he had devised beforehand. ²³For when he heard the shouting and saw them all fallen headlong to destruction, he wept and angrily threatened his Friends, saying, ²⁴‘You are committing treason and surpassing tyrants in cruelty; and even me, your benefactor, you are now attempting to deprive of dominion and life by secretly devising acts of no advantage to the kingdom. ²⁵Who has driven from their homes those who faithfully kept our country’s fortresses, and foolishly gathered every one of them here? ²⁶Who is it that has so lawlessly encompassed with outrageous treatment those who from the beginning differed from all nations in their goodwill towards us and often have accepted willingly the worst of human dangers? ²⁷Loose and untie their unjust bonds! Send them back to their homes in peace, begging pardon for your former actions! ²⁸Release the children of the almighty and living God of heaven, who from the time of our ancestors until now has granted an unimpeded and notable stability to our government.’ ²⁹These then were the things he said; and the Jews, immediately released, praised their holy God and Saviour, since they now had escaped death.

³⁰ Then the king, when he had returned to the city, summoned the official in charge of the revenues and ordered him to provide to the Jews both wines and everything else needed for a festival of seven days, deciding that they should celebrate their rescue with all joyfulness in that same place in which they had expected to meet their destruction. ³¹Accordingly those disgracefully treated and near to death, or rather, who stood at its gates, arranged for a banquet of deliverance instead of a bitter and lamentable death, and full of joy they apportioned to celebrants the place that had been prepared for their destruction and burial. ³²They stopped their chanting of dirges and took up the song of their ancestors, praising God, their Saviour and worker of wonders. Putting an end to all mourning and wailing, they formed choruses as a sign of peaceful joy. ³³Likewise also the king, after convening a great banquet to celebrate these events, gave thanks to heaven unceasingly and lavishly for the unexpected rescue that he had experienced. ³⁴Those who had previously believed that the Jews would be destroyed and become food for birds, and had joyfully registered them, groaned as they themselves were overcome by disgrace, and their fire-breathing boldness was ignominiously quenched.

35 The Jews, as we have said before, arranged the aforementioned choral group and passed the time in feasting to the accompaniment of joyous thanksgiving and psalms. ³⁶And when they had ordained a public rite for these things in their whole community and for their descendants, they instituted the observance of the aforesaid days as a festival, not for drinking and gluttony, but because of the deliverance that had come to them through God. ³⁷Then they petitioned the king, asking for dismissal to their homes. ³⁸So their registration was carried out from the twenty-fifth of Pachon to the fourth of Epeiph, for forty days; and their destruction was set for the fifth to the seventh of Epeiph, the three days³⁹ on which the Lord of all most gloriously

revealed his mercy and rescued them all together and unharmed. ⁴⁰Then they feasted, being provided with everything by the king, until the fourteenth day, on which also they made the petition for their dismissal.

4. Joseph and Aseneth

Joseph and Aseneth 1:4–9

1:4-9: [Pentephres] had a daughter, a virgin of eighteen years, (she was) very tall and handsome and beautiful to look at beyond all virgins on the earth. And this (girl) had nothing similar to the virgins of the Egyptians, but she was in every respect similar to the daughters of the Hebrews; and she was as tall as Sarah and handsome as Rebecca and beautiful as Rachel. And the name of that virgin was Aseneth. And the fame of her beauty spread all over that land and to the ends of the inhabited (world). And all the sons of the noblemen and the sons of the satraps and the sons of all kings, all of them young and powerful, asked for her hand in marriage, and there was much wrangling among them over Aseneth.

Joseph and Aseneth 4:5–6:8

And Aseneth sat between her father and mother. And Pentephres, her father...said to her, “Joseph the Powerful One of God is coming to us today. And he is chief of the whole land of Egypt, and the king Pharaoh appointed him king of the whole land, and he is giving grain to the whole land, and saving it from the oncoming famine. And Joseph is a man who worships God, and self-controlled, and a virgin like you today, and Joseph is (also) a man powerful in wisdom and experience, and the spirit of God is upon him, and the grace of the Lord (is) with him. Come, my child, and I will hand you over to him for (his) wife, and you will be a bride to him, and he will be your bridegroom forever (and) ever.”

And when Aseneth heard these words from her father, plenty of red sweat poured over her face, and she became furious with great anger, and looked askance at her father with her eyes, and said, “Why does my lord and my father speak words such as these, to hand me over, like a captive, to a man (who is) an alien, and a fugitive, and (was) sold (as a slave)? Is he not the shepherd’s son from the land of Canaan, and he himself was caught in the act (when he was) sleeping with his mistress, and his master threw him into the prison of darkness, and Pharaoh brought him out of prison, because he interpreted his dream just like the older women of the Egyptians interpret (dreams)? No, but I will be married to the king’s firstborn son, because he is king of the whole land of Egypt. Hearing this, Pentephres was ashamed to speak further to his daughter Aseneth about Joseph, because she had answered him daringly and with boastfulness and anger.

And a young man of Pentephres’ servants rushed in and says, “Behold, Joseph is standing before the doors of our court.” And Aseneth fled from her father’s and mother’s presence, when she heard (them) speak these words about Joseph, and went up into the upper floor and entered her chamber and stood by the large window, the one looking east, in order to see Joseph entering her father’s house. And Pentephres and his wife and his whole family went out to meet Joseph. And the gates of the court looking east were opened and Joseph entered, standing on Pharaoh’s second chariot, and four horses, white as snow and with golden bridles, were harnessed (to it), and the entire chariot was manufactured from pure gold. And Joseph was dressed in an exquisite white tunic, and the robe which he had thrown around him was purple, made of linen interwoven with gold, and a golden crown (was) on his head, and around the crown were twelve chosen stones, and on top of the twelve stones were twelve golden rays. And a royal staff was in his left hand, and in his right hand he held outstretched an olive branch, and there was plenty of fruit on it, and in the fruits was a great wealth of oil. And Joseph entered the court, and the gates of the court were closed, and every man and woman, (if) strange, remained outside the court, because the guards of the gates drew tight and closed the doors, and all the strangers were closed out. And Pentephres and his wife and his whole family, except their daughter Aseneth, went and prostrated themselves face down to the ground before Joseph. And Joseph descended from his chariot and greeted them with his right (hand.)

And Aseneth saw Joseph on his chariot and was strongly cut (to the heart), and her soul was crushed, and her knees were paralyzed, and her entire body trembled, and she was filled with great fear. And she sighed and said in her heart, "...now be gracious on me, Lord, God of Joseph, because I have spoken wicked words against him in ignorance/ and now, let me father give me to Joseph for a maidservant and slave, and I will serve him forever (and) ever.

11:2-7: [Aseneth has fallen in love with Joseph and wants to convert:] Aseneth was tired and had become discouraged and her strength had gone. And he turned upward toward to the wall....she laid her head into her lap, clasping her fingers round her right knee, and her mouth was closed, and she (had) not opened it in the seven days and in the seven nights of her humiliation. And she said in her heart without opening her mouth....The Lord the God of the powerful Joseph, the Most High, hates all those who worship idols, because he is a jealous and terrible god toward all those who worship strange gods. Therefore he has come to hate me, too, because I worshipped dead and dumb idols..."

5. Tobit

Tobit 1:1-15:

This book tells the story of Tobit son of Tobiel son of Hananiel son of Aduel son of Gabael son of Raphael of the descendants of Asiel, of the tribe of Naphtali, ²who in the days of King Shalmaneser of the Assyrians was taken into captivity from Thisbe, which is to the south of Kedesh Naphtali in Upper Galilee, above Asher towards the west, and north of Phogor. I, Tobit, walked in the ways of truth and righteousness all the days of my life. I performed many acts of charity for my kindred and my people who had gone with me in exile to Nineveh in the land of the Assyrians.⁴When I was in my own country, in the land of Israel, while I was still a young man, the whole tribe of my ancestor Naphtali deserted the house of David and Jerusalem. This city had been chosen from among all the tribes of Israel, where all the tribes of Israel should offer sacrifice and where the temple, the dwelling of God, had been consecrated and established for all generations for ever.

⁵ All my kindred and our ancestral house of Naphtali sacrificed to the calf that King Jeroboam of Israel had erected in Dan and on all the mountains of Galilee. ⁶But I alone went often to Jerusalem for the festivals, as it is prescribed for all Israel by an everlasting decree. I would hurry off to Jerusalem with the first fruits of the crops and the firstlings of the flock, the tithes of the cattle, and the first shearings of the sheep. ⁷I would give these to the priests, the sons of Aaron, at the altar; likewise the tenth of the grain, wine, olive oil, pomegranates, figs, and the rest of the fruits to the sons of Levi who ministered at Jerusalem. Also, for six years I would save up a second tenth in money and go and distribute it in Jerusalem. ⁸A third tenth I would give to the orphans and widows and to the converts who had attached themselves to Israel. I would bring it and give it to them in the third year, and we would eat it according to the ordinance decreed concerning it in the law of Moses and according to the instructions of Deborah, the mother of my father Tobiel, for my father had died and left me an orphan. ⁹When I became a man I married a woman, a member of our own family, and by her I became the father of a son whom I named Tobias.

¹⁰ After I was carried away captive to Assyria and came as a captive to Nineveh, everyone of my kindred and my people ate the food of the Gentiles, ¹¹but I kept myself from eating the food of the Gentiles.¹²Because I was mindful of God with all my heart, ¹³the Most High gave me favour and good standing with Shalmaneser, and I used to buy everything he needed. ¹⁴Until his death I used to go into Media, and buy for him there. While in the country of Media I left bags of silver worth ten talents in trust with Gabael, the brother of Gabri. ¹⁵But when Shalmaneser died, and his son Sennacherib reigned in his place, the highways into Media became unsafe and I could no longer go there.

Tobit 2–4:

Then during the reign of Esar-haddon I returned home, and my wife Anna and my son Tobias were restored to me. At our festival of Pentecost, which is the sacred festival of weeks, a good dinner was prepared for me and I reclined to eat. ²When the table was set for me and an abundance of food placed before me, I said to my son Tobias, ‘Go, my child, and bring whatever poor person you may find of our people among the exiles in Nineveh, who is wholeheartedly mindful of God, and he shall eat together with me. I will wait for you, until you come back.’³So Tobias went to look for some poor person of our people. When he had returned he said, ‘Father!’ And I replied, ‘Here I am, my child.’ Then he went on to say, ‘Look, father, one of our own people has been murdered and thrown into the market-place, and now he lies there strangled.’ ⁴Then I sprang up, left the dinner before even tasting it, and removed the body from the square and laid it in one of the rooms until sunset when I might bury it. ⁵When I returned, I washed myself and ate my food in sorrow.⁶Then I remembered the prophecy of Amos, how he said against Bethel, ‘Your festivals shall be turned into mourning, and all your songs into lamentation.’ And I wept.

⁷ When the sun had set, I went and dug a grave and buried him. ⁸And my neighbours laughed and said, ‘Is he still not afraid? He has already been hunted down to be put to death for doing this, and he ran away; yet here he is again burying the dead!’ ⁹That same night I washed myself and went into my courtyard and slept by the wall of the courtyard; and my face was uncovered because of the heat. ¹⁰I did not know that there were sparrows on the wall; their fresh droppings fell into my eyes and produced white films. I went to physicians to be healed, but the more they treated me with ointments the more my vision was obscured by the white films, until I became completely blind. For four years I remained unable to see. All my kindred were sorry for me, and Ahikar took care of me for two years before he went to Elymais.

¹¹ At that time, also, my wife Anna earned money at women’s work.¹²She used to send what she made to the owners and they would pay wages to her. One day, the seventh of Dystrus, when she cut off a piece she had woven and sent it to the owners, they paid her full wages and also gave her a kid for a meal. ¹³When she returned to me, the kid began to bleat. So I called her and said, ‘Where did you get this kid? It is surely not stolen, is it? Return it to the owners; for we have no right to eat anything stolen.’ ¹⁴But she said to me, ‘It was given to me as a gift in addition to my wages.’ But I did not believe her, and told her to return it to the owners. I became flushed with anger against her over this. Then she replied to me, ‘Where are your acts of charity? Where are your righteous deeds? These things are known about you!’

³Then with much grief and anguish of heart I wept, and with groaning began to pray:

² ‘You are righteous, O Lord,
and all your deeds are just;

all your ways are mercy and truth;
you judge the world.

³ And now, O Lord, remember me
and look favourably upon me.

Do not punish me for my sins
and for my unwitting offences
and those that my ancestors committed before you.

They sinned against you,

⁴ and disobeyed your commandments.

So you gave us over to plunder, exile, and death,
to become the talk, the byword, and an object of reproach,
among all the nations among whom you have dispersed us.

⁵ And now your many judgements are true
in exacting penalty from me for my sins.

For we have not kept your commandments
and have not walked in accordance with truth before you.
⁶ So now deal with me as you will;
command my spirit to be taken from me,
so that I may be released from the face of the earth and become dust.
For it is better for me to die than to live,
because I have had to listen to undeserved insults,
and great is the sorrow within me.
Command, O Lord, that I be released from this distress;
release me to go to the eternal home,
and do not, O Lord, turn your face away from me.
For it is better for me to die
than to see so much distress in my life
and to listen to insults.⁷

⁷ On the same day, at Ecbatana in Media, it also happened that Sarah, the daughter of Raguel, was reproached by one of her father's maids.⁸For she had been married to seven husbands, and the wicked demon Asmodeus had killed each of them before they had been with her as is customary for wives. So the maid said to her, 'You are the one who kills your husbands! See, you have already been married to seven husbands and have not borne the name of a single one of them. ⁹Why do you beat us? Because your husbands are dead? Go with them! May we never see a son or daughter of yours!'

¹⁰ On that day she was grieved in spirit and wept. When she had gone up to her father's upper room, she intended to hang herself. But she thought it over and said, 'Never shall they reproach my father, saying to him, "You had only one beloved daughter but she hanged herself because of her distress." And I shall bring my father in his old age down in sorrow to Hades. It is better for me not to hang myself, but to pray the Lord that I may die and not listen to these reproaches any more.'¹¹At that same time, with hands outstretched towards the window, she prayed and said,

'Blessed are you, merciful God!
Blessed is your name for ever;
let all your works praise you for ever.
¹² And now, Lord, I turn my face to you,
and raise my eyes towards you.
¹³ Command that I be released from the earth
and not listen to such reproaches any more.
¹⁴ You know, O Master, that I am innocent
of any defilement with a man,
¹⁵ and that I have not disgraced my name
or the name of my father in the land of my exile.
I am my father's only child;
he has no other child to be his heir;
and he has no close relative or other kindred
for whom I should keep myself as wife.
Already seven husbands of mine have died.
Why should I still live?
But if it is not pleasing to you, O Lord, to take my life,
hear me in my disgrace.'

¹⁶ At that very moment, the prayers of both of them were heard in the glorious presence of God. ¹⁷So Raphael was sent to heal both of them: Tobit, by removing the white films from his eyes, so that he might see God's light with his eyes; and Sarah daughter of Raguel, by giving her in marriage to Tobias son of Tobit, and

by setting her free from the wicked demon Asmodeus. For Tobias was entitled to have her before all others who had desired to marry her. At the same time that Tobit returned from the courtyard into his house, Sarah daughter of Raguel came down from her upper room.

⁴That same day Tobit remembered the money that he had left in trust with Gabael at Rages in Media, ²and he said to himself, 'Now I have asked for death. Why do I not call my son Tobias and explain to him about the money before I die?' ³Then he called his son Tobias, and when he came to him he said, 'My son, when I die, give me a proper burial. Honour your mother and do not abandon her all the days of her life. Do whatever pleases her, and do not grieve her in anything. ⁴Remember her, my son, because she faced many dangers for you while you were in her womb. And when she dies, bury her beside me in the same grave.

⁵ 'Revere the Lord all your days, my son, and refuse to sin or to transgress his commandments. Live uprightly all the days of your life, and do not walk in the ways of wrongdoing; ⁶for those who act in accordance with truth will prosper in all their activities. To all those who practise righteousness ⁷give alms from your possessions, and do not let your eye begrudge the gift when you make it. Do not turn your face away from anyone who is poor, and the face of God will not be turned away from you. ⁸If you have many possessions, make your gift from them in proportion; if few, do not be afraid to give according to the little you have. ⁹So you will be laying up a good treasure for yourself against the day of necessity. ¹⁰For almsgiving delivers from death and keeps you from going into the Darkness. ¹¹Indeed, almsgiving, for all who practise it, is an excellent offering in the presence of the Most High.

¹² 'Beware, my son, of every kind of fornication. First of all, marry a woman from among the descendants of your ancestors; do not marry a foreign woman, who is not of your father's tribe; for we are the descendants of the prophets. Remember, my son, that Noah, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, our ancestors of old, all took wives from among their kindred. They were blessed in their children, and their posterity will inherit the land. ¹³So now, my son, love your kindred, and in your heart do not disdain your kindred, the sons and daughters of your people, by refusing to take a wife for yourself from among them. For in pride there is ruin and great confusion. And in idleness there is loss and dire poverty, because idleness is the mother of famine.

¹⁴ 'Do not keep over until the next day the wages of those who work for you, but pay them at once. If you serve God you will receive payment. Watch yourself, my son, in everything you do, and discipline yourself in all your conduct. ¹⁵And what you hate, do not do to anyone. Do not drink wine to excess or let drunkenness go with you on your way. ¹⁶Give some of your food to the hungry, and some of your clothing to the naked. Give all your surplus as alms, and do not let your eye begrudge your giving of alms. ¹⁷Place your bread on the grave of the righteous, but give none to sinners. ¹⁸Seek advice from every wise person and do not despise any useful counsel. ¹⁹At all times bless the Lord God, and ask him that your ways may be made straight and that all your paths and plans may prosper. For none of the nations has understanding, but the Lord himself will give them good counsel; but if he chooses otherwise, he casts down to deepest Hades. So now, my child, remember these commandments, and do not let them be erased from your heart.

²⁰ 'And now, my son, let me explain to you that I left ten talents of silver in trust with Gabael son of Gabrias, at Rages in Media. ²¹Do not be afraid, my son, because we have become poor. You have great wealth if you fear God and flee from every sin and do what is good in the sight of the Lord your God.'