

# Dr. David deSilva, Apocrypha: Witness Between the Testament, Session 3, A Closer Look 1 & 2 Maccabees, Judith Resources from NotebookLM

1) Abstract, 2) Audio podcast, 3) Briefing Document, 4) Study Guide, and 5) FAQs

## 1. Abstract of deSilva, Apocrypha, Session 3, 1 & 2 Maccabees, Judith, Biblicalelearning.org, BeL

Dr. deSilva's lecture examines the books of 1 and 2 Maccabees and Judith from the Apocrypha. The lecture explores how 2 Maccabees emphasizes a Deuteronomistic theology, interpreting historical events through the lens of covenant obedience and divine retribution. In contrast, 1 Maccabees focuses on legitimizing the Hasmonean dynasty, highlighting zeal for the law, and portraying the Maccabees as divinely chosen saviors. The lecture also analyzes Judith as historical fiction, which promotes theological truths and specific behaviors through a narrative of honor, deceit, and divine intervention. These books provide insight into Jewish identity, boundary markers, and the complexities of faith during the Second Temple period, including an early positive depiction of a Gentile conversion.

**2. 35 - minute Audio Podcast Created on the basis of Dr. deSilva, Apocrypha, Session 3 – Double click icon to play in Windows media player or go to the Biblicalelearning.org [BeL] Site and click the audio podcast link there (New Testament → NT Introduction → Apocrypha).**



**deSilva\_Apocrypha\_  
Session03.mp3**

### 3. Briefing Document: deSilva, Apocrypha, Session 3, 1 & 2 Maccabees, Judith

Okay, here's a briefing document summarizing the key themes and ideas from Dr. deSilva's lecture on 1 & 2 Maccabees and Judith, including relevant quotes:

#### Briefing Document: 1 & 2 Maccabees and Judith

##### I. 2 Maccabees: A Deuteronomistic Interpretation of History

- **Main Theme:** The author of 2 Maccabees interprets the events surrounding the Maccabean revolt through the lens of Deuteronomistic theology. This means viewing history as a cycle of obedience leading to blessings, disobedience leading to curses, and repentance leading to deliverance, as outlined in Deuteronomy (especially chapters 28-30).
- **Deuteronomistic Theology in Action:**
  - The author sees the initial harmony and divine protection of Jerusalem under the high priest Onias as a result of the people's strict observance of the law. "The holy city was living in harmony, and people observed the laws of God strictly because of Onias, the high priest who was devoted to God and hated evil."
  - Jason's constitutional reforms, replacing the Torah with a Greek constitution, led to a "dangerous situation" and punishment inflicted by those they sought to imitate (the Greeks). "To be ungodly in the face of the divine laws isn't a light matter, as the following events would reveal."
  - Antiochus IV's successful raid on the temple is attributed to the sins of the people: "Antiochus was really pleased with himself, not realizing that the Lord had become angry for a short time because of the sins of those who lived in the city. For this reason, he had shut his eyes to the holy temple." The author implies that divine protection was withdrawn due to the nation's transgressions.
  - However, the author promises a restoration, suggesting that repentance and renewed obedience will lead to God being reconciled to his people and the success of the Maccabean revolt would prove that. "But, the author promises that which the Almighty abandoned in his wrath would again be restored with all glory when the nation was reconciled to the great Lord, thus remembering that there would be a turn toward repentance and obedience."

- **The Problem of Martyrdom:** The lecture addresses the challenge posed by the suffering and death of Torah-observant Jews during the persecution. The author of 2 Maccabees reconciles this with Deuteronomistic theology by arguing:
- God punishes the nation as a whole, so individual obedience doesn't guarantee immunity from national calamities.
- The willingness of these Jews to stand by the covenant to the end against the fiercest of pains and torments would have a representative effect on the whole nation. "Namely, the fact that the obedient Jew was willing to be obedient to the point of death in this situation would be that which turned the tide for the whole nation."
- The martyrs' deaths had a representative effect, turning God's wrath toward mercy. "It was the act of covenant obedience that affected the turn that we read about in Deuteronomy 30. But in this case, it's the turn of the few that are able to bring back the covenant blessings for the many."
- The suffering is accepted as part of God's discipline, not destruction: "These punishments weren't for the destruction of our people but for their discipline."
- **Hope of Resurrection:** The author addresses the problem of how covenant obedience led to being torn apart by Antiochus and his soldiers, not the promised blessings. The answer is the hope of the resurrection. "When covenant loyalty does not lead to the promised blessings in this life, there is the hope that covenant loyalty will lead to the promised blessings in the life to come." 2 Maccabees provides an early witness to the hope of the resurrection. "So, in Second Maccabees, we have one of the first certain witnesses to the hope of the resurrection, an outgrowth of the conviction that the promises of God in Deuteronomy cannot fail in regard to the individual or to the nation as a whole."
- **Sin Offering for the Dead:** The author discusses the controversial passage in 2 Maccabees where Judas Maccabeus collects money for a sin offering for the fallen soldiers who had worn forbidden idols. "He was acting honorably and appropriately, thinking about the resurrection. If he hadn't been looking forward to the resurrection of the dead, then it would have been unnecessary and frivolous to pray for them."
- The author of 2 Maccabees interprets this as a sin offering on behalf of the dead, which later caused issues with the Protestant reformers.
- Historically, it's more likely that Judas' action was a sin offering for the *living* army.

- “Thus, he made an offering of reconciliation so that the dead would be forgiven of their sin. Now, of course, this is a problematic text later in the history of the Christian church because it seems to be a very strong text, supporting the practice of things that I can do to get someone else out of the judgment for his or her sins. Indeed, the editor, the abridger who produced Second Maccabees, does understand Judas's action this way.”

## II. 1 Maccabees: Zeal for the Law and Dynastic Legitimation

- **Main Theme:** 1 Maccabees also accepts Deuteronomy as a meaningful framework for understanding Jewish history, but it emphasizes *zeal* for the law, particularly violent action against apostates, and focuses on legitimizing the Hasmonean dynasty.
- **Violent Zeal:** The author celebrates the kind of zeal for the law shown by Mattathias and his sons. “The kind of zeal for the law that this author wants to celebrate is the zeal that was shown by Mattathias and his sons. The zeal for the law that had been shown by Phineas when he took his spear and ran through an Israelite and his Midianite concubine. The violent purging of the nation is another expression of zeal for the Torah that can't be neglected.”
- **Mattathias as a New Phineas/Moses:** Mattathias's actions in killing the villager offering sacrifice to a foreign god and the Greco-Syrian official are compared to Phineas's zeal and Moses's call after the golden calf incident. This is intended to legitimize the Hasmonean dynasty's rise to the high priesthood. “He burned with zeal for the law just as Phineas did against Zimri, son of Salu.” “Let everyone who is zealous for the law and supports the covenant come out with me.”
- **Judas's Dual Targets:** Judas targeted both the Gentile oppressor and the law-breaking Jew. “The target, one target, was the Gentile oppressor in the land. The other target was the Jew who broke the law. And by getting rid of both, he cleansed, he destroyed the ungodly out of the land and turned away wrath from Israel.”
- **Dynastic Legitimation:** Comparison to Phineas: The author draws a parallel between Mattathias's family and Phineas, who was granted an eternal covenant of priesthood due to his zeal.
- **Divine Selection:** The author suggests that God had specifically chosen the Maccabean family to be its agents of salvation. “They did not belong to the family of those men through whom deliverance was given to Israel. So, there's a claim

here that God had specifically selected this family to be its agents of salvation, its agents of deliverance for the nation."

- **National Gratitude:** Because of what the family gave to the nation, the nation made Simon their leader and high priest. "When the people heard these things, they said, how shall we thank Simon and his sons? For he and his brothers and the house of his father have stood firm."
- **Hanukkah:** Both 1st and 2nd Maccabees are interested in establishing a new festival in the Jewish calendar, Hanukkah.
- **Boundary Markers:** Both 1st and 2nd Maccabees also incidentally reflect the importance of certain identity or boundary markers for Jews, such as circumcision, dietary restrictions and Sabbath observance.

### III. Judith: Historical Fiction and Theological Truths

- **Main Theme:** Judith is presented as historical fiction, designed to entertain and to demonstrate essential theological truths and promote certain patterns of behavior. "It wants to tell some story. It wants to provide a narrative demonstration, as it were, of some essential theological truths as well as promoting certain patterns of behavior. And it's a great story, so I'm going to take some time here and simply tell the story."
- **Honor Contests:** The story revolves around a series of honor contests. Nebuchadnezzar's honor is challenged by his western vassals, Holofernes launches a second honor contest, God versus God, and a third honor contest is launched, Holofernes' honor as a virile male versus Judith's honor as a chaste widow.
- **Deuteronomistic Theology:** Deuteronomy's theology is woven into the story. "So, we find here Deuteronomy, Deuteronomy's theology, beginning to be woven into this story. And Achior, an Ammonite, is the one who gives the first witness to it."
- **Judith's Character:** Judith is both conforms and challenges the ideal woman in the Greco-Roman and Jewish world. "Judith is an interesting character because she both challenges and reconfirms this ideal. On the one hand, she is chaste and this is very much in the forefront."
- **Ethics of Deceit:** The story raises questions about lying and deceit. "This is not merely a tale about the end justifying the means, but what it's showing us is that in the ancient world, deceit was actually an appropriate strategy to advance the

interests of or preserve the honor of oneself or one's primary reference group against the assault of outsiders on those interests or that honor."

- **Boundary Markers:** The story shows a picture of people intensely committed to observing the boundaries between Jews and Gentiles and practices that maintain clear us-and-them boundary. "The story of Judith also shows us a picture of people intensely committed to observing the boundaries between Jews and Gentiles, to observing those Torah-prescribed rules or practices that we might call keeping kosher, which also maintain a very clear us-and-them boundary."
- **Gentile Conversion:** The book gives a positive window into Gentile conversion in the Apocrypha, like Joseph and Asenath. "Judith actually gives us one of the few positive windows into Gentile conversion in all of the Apocrypha."
- **Context:** The story gives signs of having been composed after the Maccabean revolt.

## 4. Study Guide: deSilva, Apocrypha, Session 3, 1 & 2 Maccabees, Judith

### The Maccabees and Judith: A Study Guide

#### Quiz

Answer each question in 2-3 sentences.

1. What is the main theological framework used by the author of 2 Maccabees to interpret historical events?
2. According to 2 Maccabees, how did the actions of Torah-observant Jews during the persecutions affect the nation as a whole?
3. What is the significance of the hope of resurrection in 2 Maccabees?
4. How does the author of 2 Maccabees interpret Judas Maccabeus's actions regarding the fallen soldiers who wore idols?
5. What is the key difference in the portrayal of zeal for the law between 1 Maccabees and 2 Maccabees?
6. What does 1 Maccabees suggest about God's selection of the Hasmonean family?
7. According to 1 Maccabees, what is the proper response of the nation to the accomplishments of the Hasmonean family?
8. What was the historical context that made 1 Maccabees a welcome piece of dynastic propaganda?
9. What are some ways that the book of Judith seems to be inspired by biblical stories?
10. What are some ways that the story of Judith both challenges and reconfirms the ideal woman in the Greco-Roman and Jewish world of the Second Temple period?

#### Quiz Answer Key

1. The author of 2 Maccabees interprets historical events through a Deuteronomistic lens, emphasizing that obedience to the covenant brings blessings, while disobedience brings curses, and repentance leads to deliverance. This framework provides a theological explanation for the events surrounding the Maccabean revolt.

2. According to 2 Maccabees, the willingness of Torah-observant Jews to remain faithful to the covenant, even to the point of death, had a representative effect on the whole nation. Their obedience was seen as turning the Lord's wrath back toward mercy, ultimately leading to deliverance for all of Israel.
3. In 2 Maccabees, the hope of resurrection is presented as a solution to the problem of God's justice when covenant obedience does not lead to blessings in this life. It provides the assurance that covenant loyalty will ultimately be rewarded in the life to come, ensuring that God's promises in Deuteronomy cannot fail.
4. The author of 2 Maccabees interprets Judas Maccabeus's sin offering for the dead soldiers as an action based on the belief in resurrection. The author believed that the offering was made so that the dead soldiers would be forgiven of their sin.
5. While both books acknowledge the importance of Torah observance, 1 Maccabees focuses on the violent zeal of figures like Mattathias and Phineas, who purged the nation of apostates. 2 Maccabees, on the other hand, emphasizes the faithful suffering and martyrdom of those who remained obedient to the Torah even unto death.
6. 1 Maccabees suggests that God had specifically selected the Hasmonean family to be the agents of salvation and deliverance for the nation. This is exemplified by the author noting that Joseph and Azariah failed because "They did not belong to the family of those men through whom deliverance was given to Israel."
7. According to 1 Maccabees, the proper response of the nation to the accomplishments of the Hasmonean family is gratitude, expressed by voting them into positions of ongoing leadership and rule. This gratitude acknowledges the family's sacrifices and their role in securing the nation's freedom.
8. By the time we get to the grandsons of Simon, the last brother of Judas, there are significant questions being raised by other people about the legitimacy of this dynasty. Developments like that would make a book like 1 Maccabees a welcome piece of dynastic propaganda.
9. The story of Judith seems to be inspired by stories such as Jael and Sisera, where the motif of an enemy of Israel being delivered into the hand of a woman is prominent. Judith's song of deliverance itself is reminiscent of Deborah's song of triumph, as well as the song of Moses.



10. Judith remains chaste even while using her feminine charms to seduce Holofernes, and she manages her dead husband's household and business. On the other hand, she summons the elders and gives the order to charge the enemy camp, but also very notably returns to a private role after her brief work as God's agent is done.

## Essay Questions

1. Compare and contrast the theological perspectives of 1 Maccabees and 2 Maccabees regarding the reasons for the Maccabean revolt and the means by which deliverance was achieved.
2. Analyze the role of Deuteronomy in shaping the narrative and theological interpretations found in 2 Maccabees and Judith. How does each text utilize Deuteronomistic theology to convey its message?
3. Discuss the ways in which the book of Judith both affirms and subverts traditional gender roles in the Second Temple period.
4. Examine the portrayal of Jewish identity and boundary markers (such as circumcision, dietary laws, and Sabbath observance) in 1 Maccabees, 2 Maccabees, and Judith. How do these texts emphasize the importance of maintaining distinctions between Jews and Gentiles?
5. Evaluate the ethical implications of Judith's use of deceit and deception. Does the text justify the use of lies for a greater good, or does it offer a more nuanced perspective on the relationship between truth, honor, and the defense of one's community?

## Glossary of Key Terms

- **Apocrypha:** Books or passages of the Old Testament that are included in the Septuagint and Vulgate but not in the Hebrew Bible.
- **Deuteronomistic Theology:** A theological perspective rooted in the book of Deuteronomy, emphasizing that obedience to God's covenant brings blessings, while disobedience brings curses.
- **Hasmonean Dynasty:** The ruling dynasty of Judea from 167 BCE to 37 BCE, established by the Maccabean family.
- **Hanukkah (Feast of Dedication):** An eight-day Jewish festival commemorating the rededication of the Second Temple in Jerusalem during the Maccabean revolt.
- **Martyrdom:** Suffering death for one's religious beliefs or cause.
- **Zeal for the Law:** Passionate and often violent defense of the Torah and Jewish religious practices.
- **Resurrection:** The belief that the dead will be raised to life, either in a physical or spiritual form.
- **Apostate:** A person who renounces or abandons their religious faith or principles.
- **Syncretism:** The blending of different religious or cultural beliefs and practices.
- **Septuagint:** The Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible.
- **Vulgate:** The Latin translation of the Bible.
- **Pseudepigrapha:** Writings falsely attributed to well-known figures of the past.
- **Kosher:** Conforming to Jewish dietary laws.
- **High Priest:** The chief religious official in Judaism.
- **Boundary Markers:** Practices or customs that serve to distinguish one group from another, such as circumcision, dietary laws, and Sabbath observance.

## 5. FAQs on deSilva, Apocrypha, Session 3, 1 & 2 Maccabees, Judith, Biblicalelearning.org (BeL)

### 2 Maccabees, 1 Maccabees, and Judith: An FAQ

#### **What is the central theological theme in 2 Maccabees, and how does the author use the Deuteronomistic perspective to interpret events?**

The central theological theme in 2 Maccabees revolves around the Deuteronomistic theology of history: obedience to God's law brings blessings, while disobedience brings curses. The author uses this framework to explain the events of the Maccabean period. For example, when the Jewish people were faithful, God protected the temple; when they strayed from the law, God allowed Antiochus IV to desecrate it. Even the martyrdoms are interpreted as disciplinary measures intended to correct and ultimately save the nation, emphasizing God's ultimate mercy and the possibility of restoration through repentance.

#### **How does 2 Maccabees explain the suffering of righteous Jews during the persecution under Antiochus IV, and what hope does it offer?**

2 Maccabees acknowledges the suffering of righteous Jews by explaining that God sometimes punishes the nation collectively for its sins, meaning individuals, regardless of their personal righteousness, can suffer the consequences of national disobedience. However, the text also introduces the concept of vicarious suffering, suggesting that the faithfulness and willingness of the martyrs to endure torture and death for the sake of the covenant can turn God's wrath back toward mercy. Furthermore, 2 Maccabees offers the hope of resurrection for those who remain loyal to the covenant, suggesting that the blessings promised for obedience may not always be realized in this life but will be in the life to come.

#### **What is the significance of Judas Maccabeus's actions regarding the fallen soldiers who wore idols, and how does the author of 2 Maccabees interpret these actions?**

After a defeat, Judas Maccabeus discovered that some fallen soldiers had been wearing sacred charms and idols, which violated Jewish law. Judas and his men prayed for the sin to be wiped out and took up a collection to provide for a sin offering in Jerusalem. The author of 2 Maccabees interprets this as an offering of reconciliation for the dead so that their sins would be forgiven, suggesting a belief in the efficacy of prayers and offerings for the deceased. This passage has been historically controversial due to its implications for practices related to intercession for the dead. However, it is more likely that Judas

himself was making a sin offering for the army as a whole so they would experience victory in battle.

**How does the author of 1 Maccabees differ from the author of 2 Maccabees in his emphasis on zeal for the law?**

While both authors believe in the importance of Torah observance, 1 Maccabees emphasizes a different kind of zeal for the law than 2 Maccabees. Instead of focusing on the passive obedience and willingness to endure martyrdom, the author of 1 Maccabees celebrates the violent zeal demonstrated by Mattathias and his sons, who actively purged the nation of apostates and Gentile oppressors. This zeal is connected to the tradition of violent acts in the wilderness narrative, such as Phineas's actions against the Israelite and his Midianite concubine.

**What are some of the ways the author of 1 Maccabees attempts to legitimize the Hasmonean dynasty?**

The author of 1 Maccabees employs several strategies to legitimize the Hasmonean dynasty. First, he draws parallels between Mattathias's actions and those of Phineas, suggesting that their violent zeal for the law warrants a covenant of everlasting priesthood for their descendants. Second, the author argues that God specifically chose the Hasmonean family to deliver Israel. Third, he highlights the immense sacrifices the family made on behalf of the nation, arguing that the people owe them leadership as a debt of gratitude.

**What is the book of Judith about, and what is its primary purpose?**

The Book of Judith tells the story of a Jewish widow who saves her city, Bethulia, from the Assyrian general Holofernes through deception and violence. The book is likely a work of historical fiction that aims to entertain while also demonstrating essential theological truths and promoting certain patterns of behavior. It emphasizes God's protection of Israel, the importance of remaining faithful to the covenant, and the valor of those who defend their faith.

**What moral and ethical issues does the Book of Judith raise, particularly concerning the use of deceit?**

The Book of Judith raises questions about the ethics of deceit, as Judith repeatedly lies to Holofernes and his soldiers to achieve her goals. However, the text suggests that deceit can be a justifiable strategy when defending the interests or honor of one's group against external threats. Truth is presented as a gift owed to insiders but not necessarily to outsiders or enemies who might use it against the giver.

**How does the Book of Judith portray the relationship between Jews and Gentiles, and what is the significance of Achior's conversion?**

The Book of Judith emphasizes the importance of maintaining boundaries between Jews and Gentiles, as demonstrated by Judith's strict adherence to kosher laws and sexual purity while in the Assyrian camp. However, the book also provides a rare positive depiction of Gentile conversion through the character of Achior, an Ammonite who recognizes the covenant relationship between God and Israel and ultimately joins the Jewish people, accepting circumcision as a sign of his new identity.