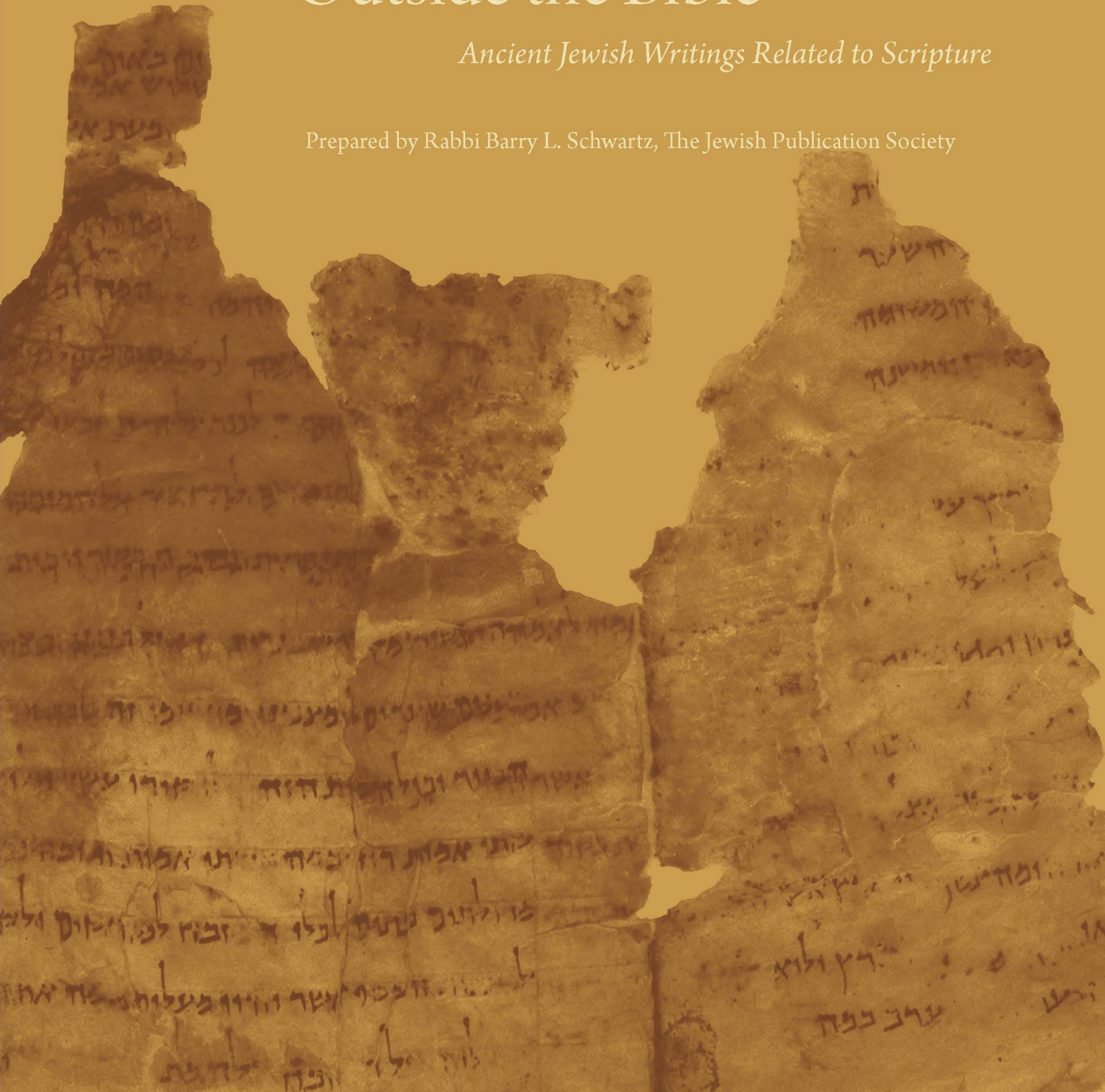


STUDY GUIDE FOR

Outside the Bible

Ancient Jewish Writings Related to Scripture

Prepared by Rabbi Barry L. Schwartz, The Jewish Publication Society



Introduction

The Hebrew Bible is only part of ancient Israel's writings. Another collection of Jewish works has survived from late- and post-biblical times, a great library that bears witness to the rich spiritual life of Jews of that period. This library consists of the most varied sorts of texts: apocalyptic visions and prophecies, folktales and legends, collections of wise sayings, laws and rules of conduct, commentaries on Scripture, ancient prayers, and much, much more.

While specialists have studied individual texts or subsections of this library, *Outside the Bible* seeks for the first time to bring together all of its major components into a single collection, gathering portions of the Dead Sea Scrolls, the Septuagint, the Apocrypha, the Pseudepigrapha, and the writings of Josephus and Philo of Alexandria.

The editors have brought together these diverse works in order to highlight what has often been neglected: their common Jewish background. For this reason the commentaries that accompany the texts devote special attention to their references to Hebrew Scripture and to issues of *halakhah* (Jewish law), their allusions to motifs and themes known from later Rabbinic writings in Talmud and Midrash, their evocation of recent or distant events in Jewish history, and their references to other texts in this collection.

The work of more than seventy contributing experts in a range of fields, *Outside the Bible* offers keen insights into the development of Rabbinic Judaism and early Christianity. At the same time, it sheds new light on the Bible as we know it, and the process of canonization of our sacred scriptures.

The Study Guide

The incredibly varied texts of the Second Temple period are often esoteric and intimidating, yet study of them can be greatly rewarding and enriching. Perhaps the most intriguing way to study some of these texts is to examine how they treat well-known figures of the Bible. That is the approach taken in this study guide. The reader is invited to become reacquainted with the biblical family you thought you knew in a fascinating new way.

This study guide consists of a semester-long, stand-alone course. With supplemental readings of the relevant sections of the Hebrew Bible, it can easily stretch into a year-long course of study. Using bits and pieces of the course is sure to enliven weekly Bible study, especially when Genesis and Exodus are under discussion.

Sections of the course can also enhance holiday celebrations: the chapter on Esther provides fitting preparation for Purim, the chapters on Judah Maccabee and Judith for Hanukkah, the chapters on Moses for Shavuot, and the chapters on Adam and Abraham for Rosh Hashanah.

This study guide utilizes some twenty-five carefully selected texts, totaling over 700 pages. Consider that *Outside the Bible* offers more than a hundred texts and is over 3,300 pages! Yet every genre of this vast corpus of ancient writings is represented, and students will be exposed to some of the essential works of Josephus, Philo, the Septuagint, the Apocrypha, the Pseudepigrapha, and the Dead Sea Scrolls. In every instance the introductory material and the commentary to the texts are crucial to their understanding. Among the highlights of this work:

The daring new chapter about life outside paradise in *Life of Adam of Eve*.

The astonishing “makeover” of Abraham in *Jubilees*.

The remarkable Greek Jewish novella *Joseph and Aseneth*.

The radical “Hellenization” of Moses and the patriarchs by Josephus and Philo.

The poignant dialogue of Mordecai and Esther in Additions to Esther.

The full story of the Maccabean Revolt from two perspectives, in *1 Maccabees and 2 Maccabees*.

The complex portraits of women in the book of Judith and in *The Story of Susanna and the Elders*.

Enjoy this journey of study and discovery, and tell us about your experience!

—Rabbi Barry L. Schwartz, The Jewish Publication Society

Syllabus

Session 1. An introduction to *Outside the Bible* (OTB)

Session 2. Adam in the Writings of Josephus; in *Jubilees*; and in *Life of Adam and Eve*

Session 3. Adam in the Writings of Philo

Session 4. Abraham in the Writings of Josephus

Session 5. Abraham in *Jubilees*

Session 6. Abraham in the Writings of Philo, in *Testament of Abraham*, and in *Apocalypse of Abraham*

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Session 18. The Qumran Community in the Dead Sea Scrolls

Session 1

An Introduction to *Outside the Bible* (OTB)

Goal: To outline the literature of the Second Temple period and examine the ideas of canonization, exclusion (*sefarim hitzoni'im*), and the process of scriptural commentary.

Readings

A. The Introduction (pp. xv–xviii) and Table of Contents

B. Background on OTB Sources

1. The Septuagint (pp. 1–6)
2. The Apocrypha (pp. 7–10, 272–80)
3. The writings of Philo (pp. 11–17)
4. The writings of Josephus (pp. 18–23)
5. The Dead Sea Scrolls (pp. 24–30)

C. *Letter of Aristeas* (pp. 2711–26, 2765–68)

Questions for Discussion

What are the three identified purposes of these extra-biblical texts?

What is the approach of OTB to presenting these texts?

What does the legend of the Septuagint's origin say about the Jewish community?

What is the justification for the translation of the Torah into Greek?

Session 2

Adam in the Writings of Josephus, in *Jubilees*, and in *Life of Adam and Eve*

Goal: To understand how Josephus, *Jubilees*, and other commentators from the Second Temple period interpret and expand the story of Adam, Eve, and creation.

Readings

- A. Josephus, *Jewish Antiquities*:
1. “Preface” (pp. 1137–41).
 2. “Creation to the Flood” (pp. 1142–51)
- B. *Jubilees*
1. “Creation Story” (pp. 289–94)
 2. “Adam to Abraham” (pp. 295–334)
- C. *Life of Adam and Eve* (pp. 1331–58)

Questions for Discussion

What does Josephus’s account omit, and why?

Why is Josephus reluctant to quote God?

What does this account say about Josephus as a historian and theologian?

What does the author of *Jubilees* add to the story of creation and why?

Why does the author write about the death of Cain?

Is *Jubilees* a *midrash* (commentary) on the Bible or an alternative scripture?

How does Adam’s account and Eve’s account in *Life of Adam and Eve* change the Bible?

What is the significance of the story of life outside the Garden of Eden, and of Adam’s death?

Session 3

Adam in the Writings of Philo

Goal: To learn how and why Philo pioneers an allegorical interpretation of Scripture.

Readings

A. Philo, *Questions and Answers on Genesis* (pp. 807–56)

B. Philo, *On the Creation of the World* (pp. 882–901)

C. Philo, *Allegorical Interpretations 1.31–62* (pp. 902–15)

Questions for Discussion

What are Philo’s most interesting questions . . . and answers?

How does Philo understand the phrase “in God’s image?”

How does Philo understand the Tree of Life?

What are Philo’s views of women and sexuality?

Why does Philo insist on an allegorical understanding of Scripture?

Session 4

Abraham in the Writings of Josephus

Goal: To learn how Josephus expands on the biblical text to bolster the portrait of Abraham.

Readings

A. Josephus, *Antiquities*, “Abraham” (pp. 1151–62)

Questions for Discussion

How does Josephus portray Abraham?

What is Abraham’s contribution to the world and how does it reflect the unique contribution of Judaism?

Why does Abraham need proof of God?

Session 5

Abraham in *Jubilees*

Goal: To understand how *Jubilees* expands on the biblical text to bolster the portrait of Abraham.

Readings

A. *Jubilees*, “Abraham” (pp. 335–75)

Questions for Discussion

Does *Jubilees* present Abraham as unique in the same way as Josephus does?

What does each author do in presenting the *Akedah* story?

What is Abraham’s special connection with his grandson, Jacob?

Session 6

Abraham in the Writings of Philo, in *Testament of Abraham*, and in *Apocalypse of Abraham*

Goal: To learn how Philo and Hellenistic Jewish writers expand on the biblical text to embody Greek ideals but also evolving Jewish mystical views.

Readings

A. Philo, “On the Life of Abraham” (pp. 916–19, 942–50)

B. *Testament of Abraham* (pp. 1671–96)

C. *Apocalypse of Abraham* (pp. 1453–81)

Questions for Discussion

In Philo’s account, how does Abraham embody Greek virtues?

How is Abraham uniquely Jewish yet a universal model at the same time?

What do we learn about the afterlife in the *Testament of Abraham*?

How and why does Abraham resist death?

Why would the commentator describe the portrait of Abraham as “irreverent” at times?

In what way can the *Apocalypse of Abraham* be considered an early mystical text?

Session 7

Jacob in the Writings of Josephus, in *Jubilees*, and in *Testament of Joseph*

Goal: To learn how various episodes in the life of Jacob and his family are recast by Hellenistic Jewish writers.

Readings

- A. Josephus, *Antiquities*, “Joseph” (pp. 1163–68)
- B. Josephus, *Antiquities*, “Dinah” (pp. 1169–73)
- C. *Jubilees*, “Rebecca” (pp. 382–388, 415–17)
- D. *Jubilees*, “Esau” (pp. 420–24)
- E. *Testament of Joseph* (pp. 1816–24)
- F. *Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs* (pp. 1697–1705)

Questions for Discussion

How is Joseph “Hellenized” by Josephus?

Why would Josephus include the unsavory story of Dinah?

Why does *Jubilees* focus so intently on Rebecca?

How does *Jubilees* revise the accepted understanding of the reconciliation of Jacob and Esau?

How do the *Testaments* comment on Joseph’s moral character?

Session 8

Joseph in *Joseph and Aseneth*

Goal: To observe how a remarkable Greek Jewish novel expands on the biblical story of Joseph.

Readings

A. *Joseph and Aseneth* (pp. 2525–89)

Questions for Discussion

What is the intent of the author in developing the character of Aseneth?

How and why does Joseph triumph over all the intrigue in Egypt?

In what ways does this novel reflect the circumstances of the Jewish community in Alexandria?

Session 9

Moses in the Writings of Josephus

Goal: To explore several additions Josephus made to the life of Moses.

Readings

- A. Josephus, *Antiquities*, “Moses and the Ethiopian Campaign” (pp. 1174–78)
- B. “Moses and the Spies” (pp. 1179–86)
- C. “Death of Moses” (pp. 1197–1201)

Questions for Discussion

Why does Josephus “invent” an elaborate military story about Moses?

What is different about Josephus’s account of the spies?

What is Josephus trying to say in his account of Moses’s death?

Session 10

Moses in the Writings of Philo

Goal: To understand why Philo wrote a biography of Moses.

Readings

A. Philo, *On the Life of Moses* (pp. 959–88)

Questions for Discussion

How does Philo “Hellenize” Moses?

In what ways does Moses remain uniquely Jewish?

Why does Philo write a full biography of Moses?

Session 11

Esther in Additions to Esther

Goal: To appreciate the additions to the biblical story of Esther that are found in the Septuagint.

Readings

A. Additions to Esther

1. Mordecai's Dream (pp. 97–101)
2. King's Decree (pp. 101–2)
3. Mordecai and Esther's Prayer (pp. 102–4)
4. Esther's Approach (p.106)
5. King's Royal Letter (pp. 107–8)
6. Mordecai's Epilogue (pp. 109–10)

Questions for Discussion

What problems in the Biblical text are addressed by *Additions*?

What theological differences are noticeable in the account?

Why would the authors of the Septuagint include these additions as scripture?

Session 12

Judah Maccabee in 1 Maccabees

Goal: To appreciate the history of the Maccabean revolt and Judah's central role.

Readings

A. 1 Maccabees

1. From the revolt to the dedication of the Temple (pp. 2769–85)
2. From post-dedication to the death of Judah (pp. 2785–2800)

Questions for Discussion

What kind of history is the author writing?

Why is 1Maccabees not included in the Hebrew Bible?

What do we learn about the origins of Hanukkah?

Session 13

Judah Maccabee in 2 Maccabees

Goal: To appreciate the varied perspectives presented in the Books of Maccabees.

Readings

A. 2 Maccabees (pp. 2832–87)

Questions for Discussion

How does this text in 2 Maccabees differ from that found in 1 Maccabees?

In what ways does this difference reflect a diaspora perspective?

Why does Hanukkah remain a significant Jewish holiday for each author?

Session 14

Judith in the Book of Judith

Goal: To introduce the story of Judith.

Readings

A. Judith (pp. 2590–30)

Questions for Discussion

What is the primary point of the tale Of Judith?

What parallels does the tale of Judith have with the story of Yael and Sisera (see *Judges 5:24–31*)?

Why is Judith linked with Hanukkah?

Why was the story of Judith excluded from the Hebrew Bible?

Why does Judith's tale resurface in medieval Rabbinic tradition?

Session 15

Susanna in *The Story of Susanna and the Elders*

Goal: To introduce the story of Susanna

Readings

A. *The Story of Susanna and the Elders* (pp. 123–28)

Questions for Discussion

What kind of heroine does Susanna represent?

Does Susanna resemble other biblical heroines?

What connection does the story have to do with the Book of Daniel?

Why was the story of Susanna excluded from the Hebrew Bible?

Session 16

Tobit in the Book of Tobit

Goal: To introduce the story of Tobit.

Readings

A. Tobit (pp. 2631–2661)

Questions for Discussion

What kind of hero is Tobit?

Does Tobit resemble any other biblical characters, especially within a diaspora setting?

What is the purpose of the story of Tobit?

Why was the story of Tobit excluded from the Hebrew Bible?

Session 17

The Pharisees, Sadducees, and Essenes in the Writings of Josephus and the Writings of Philo

Goal: To examine Josephus's description of the three groups of the Second Temple period and Philo's observations on a Jewish ascetic sect.

Readings

A. Josephus, *Excursus on Jewish Groups* (pp. 2888–97)

B. Philo, *On the Contemplative Life* (pp. 2481–2500)

Questions for Discussion

How do these three religious groups differ?

To what degree do these groups represent the common people?

Does Philo's "Therapeutae" resemble the Essenes?

Why do the Pharisees succeed?

Session 18

The Qumran Community in the Dead Sea Scrolls

Goal: To gain an initial understanding of the Qumran community that wrote the Dead Sea Scrolls.

Readings

A. Dead Sea Scrolls, *Rule of the Community* (pp. 2923–27, 2940–52)

Questions for Discussion

What are the basic rules of the Qumran community?

What kind of community and Judaism is being described here?

Does this square with any of the groups described by Josephus?

Does the Qumran community help in understanding the emergence of Rabbinic Judaism and Christianity?

Study Guide Materials: Readings

- pp. xv–xviii *Outside the Bible* General Introduction
- pp. 1–30 *Outside the Bible* Introduction to Sources
- pp. 97–110 Additions to Esther
- pp. 123–128 *The Story of Susanna and the Elders*
- pp. 289–388, 415–424 *Jubilees*
- pp. 807–856 *Questions and Answers on Genesis* (Philo)
- pp. 882–901 *On the Creation of the World* (Philo)
- pp. 902–915 *Allegorical Interpretation 1.31–62* (Philo)
- pp. 916–919, 942–950 *On the Life of Abraham* (Philo)
- pp. 959–988 *On the Life of Moses* (Philo)
- pp. 1137–1201 *Jewish Antiquities* (Josephus)
- pp. 1331–1358 *Life of Adam and Eve*
- pp. 1453–1481 *Apocalypse of Abraham*
- pp. 1671–1696 *Testament of Abraham*
- pp. 1697–1705 *Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs*
- pp. 1816–1832 *Testament of Joseph*
- pp. 2481–2500 *On the Contemplative Life* (Philo)
- pp. 2525–2589 *Joseph and Aseneth*
- pp. 2590–2630 *Judith*
- pp. 2631–2661 *Tobit*
- pp. 2711–2726, 2765–2768 *The Letter of Aristeas*
- pp. 2769–2800 *1 Maccabees*
- pp. 2832–2887 *2 Maccabees*
- pp. 2888–2897 *Jewish War: Excursus on Jewish Groups* (Josephus)