

**The Clear Truth
about
The Apocrypha**

But when they write down truthfully all my words in their languages, and do not change or diminish ought from my words but write them all down truthfully -all that I first testified concerning them. Then, I know another mystery, that books will be given to the righteous and the wise to become a cause of joy and uprightness and much wisdom. And to them shall the books be given, and they shall believe in them and rejoice over them, and then shall all the righteous who have learnt therefore all the paths of uprightness be

The term “Apocrypha” can be confusing at times, because it can be used in many different ways. For the purpose of this article, the term “Apocrypha” refers to the following collection of twelve books:

- 1 Esdras
- 2 Esdras (Chapters 3-14)¹
- Tobit
- Judith
- Wisdom of Solomon
- Wisdom of Ben Sira
- Baruch
- Letter of Jeremiah
- 1 Maccabees
- 2 Maccabees
- 3 Maccabees
- 4 Maccabees

These are books which are regarded as canon by some, but not all groups of Christians. I have not included in this list:

- Additions to Esther
- The Prayer of the Three Young Men
- Susana
- Bel and the Dragon
- Psalm 151
- The Prayer of Menassah

These are not actually books, but rather extracts from “long versions” of the books of Esther, Daniel and Psalms. Whether or not the “long”

¹ It is important to know that 2Esdras chapters 1-2 and 15-16 are late additions found only in the Latin and not in the Aramaic or other ancient versions.

versions of these books should be used is another, very important question, but not the question we are dealing with in this article.

We will also not discuss other books which are not part of these thirteen books, which have some claim to authority (such as 1 Enoch and the Book of Jasher).

The twelve books mentioned above were originally part of the Tanak (the so-called “Old Testament”) and were taken out of your Bible! In the following article I intend to prove beyond any doubt, that these twelve books were originally part of the Bible and have since been removed.

The word “Apocrypha” means literally “hidden” indicating that these books were being removed from their place in Scripture, and placed or “hidden” in an appendix in the back of the book.

THE ANCIENT CANONS

None of these thirteen books are to be found in the canon of the Masoretic Text. However, the Masoretic Text is a rather late compilation, being a product of the Masorites between the 7th and 11th centuries C.E..

However the much older canon of the Greek Septuagint text, the translation of which was begun by the third century B.C.E. and completed before 132 B.C.E., included all of these books with the exception of 2 Esdras.

Also the canon of Aramaic Peshitta Tanak which was translated from the Hebrew, probably in the second century C.E.. contains all of these books except for 1 Esdras.

The books are also to be found in the fifth century canon of the so-called Christian Palestinian Aramaic Version.

These books are also to be found in the canons of the Old Slavonic, Old Armenian, Old Georgian and Old Coptic and Old Ethiopic versions of the Tanak.

These books are also to be found in the canon of the Old Latin version of the Tanak, and all but 2nd and 3rd Maccabees (though in modern editions 1st and 2nd Esdras are moved to an appendix).

In short, the earliest canon to omit these thirteen books, is that of the Masoretic Text, which does not arise until the 7th to 11th centuries CE!

THE CHURCH FATHERS

One critic of the Apocrypha claimed: “The majority of the early church writers rejected these books as being inspired.”

This is absolutely false. Originally when writing this booklet, I intended to include quotations in which the pre-Nicean “Church Fathers” quote from the books of the Apocrypha as “Scripture”. I began gathering these quotes and soon realized that this task was well beyond the scope of this article. These “Church Fathers” do not just occasionally quote the books of the Apocrypha, they quote these books with as much consistency as the quote the other books of the Tanak. And in quoting these books they refer to them as “Scripture” and even “Divine Scripture.” Among these “Church Fathers” are Ignatius, Polycarp, Pseudo-Barnabas, Clement of Rome, Clement of Alexandria, Origen, Irenaeus, Eusebius, Cyprian and Tertullian. This clearly demonstrates that the earliest “Christians” used these books and regarded them as canon.

ANCIENT JEWISH USAGE

Some or all of these books were used by the Essene community at Qumran. Among the manuscripts of Biblical books found among the Dead Sea Scrolls are also included many manuscripts of books of the Apocrypha including Ben Sira, Tobit and the Letter of Jeremiah. These texts are all Hebrew and Aramaic except for one fragment of the Letter of Jeremiah in Greek. There is every reason to believe that the Qumran Community accepted these books as part of their canon.

Josephus in his historical works makes use of historical portions of the Apocrypha. He makes use of both 1st and 2nd Maccabees and follows 1 Esdras as his primary source over the books of Ezra and Nehemiah, including the account of the competition in 1 Esdras 3:1-5:6 which is not to be found in Ezra or Nehemiah.

The Talmud quotes Ben Sira as “Scripture” three times (b.Hag. 13a; b.Yev. 63b; b.Ket.110b) six times in Midrash Rabbah (X:6; LXXIII:12; XCI:3; XXXIII:1; VII, 19; XII,11) and once in the Zohar (Raya Mehemna 42b).

The stories of the books of Tobit, Judith and the Maccabees also find themselves transcribed, usually in an abridged form, into the Midrashim.

USED IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

One critic of the Apocrypha wrote “These books existed before New Testament times, yet there is not one single quotation from the Apocrypha in the New Testament.”

This is at the very least misleading, and at the very most, false.

These books were clearly used by the earliest believers in Messiah. While they are never quoted outright in the “New Testament”, they are often strongly alluded to.

The following comparisons are all taken from the KJV version for consistency.

New Testament	Apocrypha
<p>“For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse: Because that, when they knew God, they</p>	<p>For by the greatness and beauty of the creatures proportionably the maker of them is seen. ... Howbeit neither are they to be pardoned. ...They kept neither lives nor marriages any longer undefiled: but either one slew another traitorously, or grieved him by</p>

glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, And changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and four-footed beasts, and creeping things. Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonor their own bodies between themselves: Who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. Amen. For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections: for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature: And likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another; men with men working that which is unseemly, and receiving in themselves that recompense of their error which was meet. And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient; Being filled with allunrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit,

adultery.... For the worshipping of idols not to be named is the beginning, the cause, and the end, of all evil.”
(Wis. 13:5, 8; 14:24,27)

<p>malignity; whisperers,” (Rom. 1:20-29)</p>	
<p>“Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus? Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honor, and another unto dishonor. What if God, willing to shew his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction: And that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, which he had afore prepared unto glory,” (Rom. 9:20-23)</p>	<p>“For who shall say, What hast thou done? Or who shall withstand thy judgment? Or who shall accuse thee for the nations that perish, whom thou made? Or who shall come to stand against thee, to be revenged for the unrighteous men?... For if thou didst punish the enemies of thy children, and the condemned to death, with such deliberation, giving them time and place, whereby they might be delivered from their malice:... For the potter, tempering soft earth, fashioneth every vessel with much labor for our service: yea, of the same clay he maketh both the vessels that serve for clean uses, and likewise also all such as serve to the contrary: but what is the use of either sort, the potter himself is the judge.” (Wis. 12:12, 20; 15:7)</p>
<p>“For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.... For we that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened: not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life.” (2Cor. 5:1, 4)</p>	<p>“For the corruptible body presseth down the soul, and the earthy tabernacle weigheth down the mind that museth upon many things.” (Wis. 9:15)</p>

<p>“Put on the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. Wherefore take unto you the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness; And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God:” Eph. 6:11-17</p>	<p>“He shall take to him his jealousy for complete armor, and make the creature his weapon for the revenge of his enemies. He shall put on righteousness as a breastplate, and true judgment instead of an helmet. He shall take holiness for an invincible shield. His severe wrath shall he sharpen for a sword, and the world shall fight with him against the unwise.” (Wis 5:17-20)</p> <p>“...he [Eleazar] conquered the besiegers with the shield of his devout reason. ... Therefore let us put on the full armor of self-control...” (4Macc. 7:4; 13:16 RSV)</p>
<p>“Which sometime were disobedient, when once the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls were saved by water.: The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ” (1Pt. 3:20-21)</p>	<p>“For like a most skilful pilot, the reason of our father Eleazar steered the ship of religion over the sea of the emotions, and though buffeted by the stormings of the tyrant and overwhelmed by the mighty waves of tortures, in no way did he turn the rudder of religion until he sailed into the haven of immortal victory.... Just as Noah’s ark, carrying the world in the universal flood, stoutly endured the waves, so you, O guardian of the law, overwhelmed from every side by the</p>

	<p>flood of your emotions and the violent winds, the torture of your sons, endured nobly and withstood the wintry storms that assail religion.” (4Macc. 7:1-3 15:31-32 RSV)</p>
<p>“Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath.” (James 1:19)</p>	<p>“Be swift to hear; and let thy life be sincere; and with patience give answer.” (Sir. 5:11)</p>
<p>“Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man.” (James 1:13)</p>	<p>“Say not thou, It is through the Lord that I fell away: for thou oughtest not to do the things that he hateth. Say not thou, He hath caused me to err: for he hath no need of the sinful man.” (Sir. 15:11-12)</p>
<p>“Behold, the hire of the laborers who have reaped down your fields, which is of you kept back by fraud, crieth: and the cries of them which have reaped are entered into the ears of the Lord of sabaoth.” (James 5:4)</p>	<p>“Let not the wages of any man, which hath wrought for thee, tarry with thee, but give him it out of hand: for if thou serve God, he will also repay thee: be circumspect my son, in all things thou doest, and be wise in all thy conversation.” (Tobit 4:14)</p>
<p>“And I saw the seven angels which stood before God; and to them were given seven trumpets.” (Rev. 8:2)</p>	<p>“I am Raphael, one of the seven holy angels, which present the prayers of the saints, and which go in and out before the glory of the Holy One.” (Tobit 12:15)</p>
<p>“And after these things I heard a great voice of much people in heaven, saying, Alleluia; Salvation, and glory, and honor,</p>	<p>“And the streets of Jerusalem shall be paved with beryl and carbuncle and stones of Ophir. And all her streets shall say,</p>

<p>and power, unto the Lord our God:...</p> <p>And the foundations of the wall of the city were garnished with all manner of precious stones. The first foundation was jasper; the second, sapphire; the third, a chalcedony; the fourth, an emerald;:</p> <p>The fifth, sardonyx; the sixth, sardius; the seventh, chrysolite; the eighth, beryl; the ninth, a topaz; the tenth, a chrysoprasus; the eleventh, a jacinth; the twelfth, an amethyst.: And the twelve gates were twelve pearls; every several gate was of one pearl: and the street of the city was pure gold, as it were transparent glass.”</p> <p>(Rev. 19:1; 21:19-21)</p>	<p>Alleluia; and they shall praise him, saying, Blessed be God, which hath extolled it for ever.”</p> <p>(Tobit 13:17-18)</p>
<p>6 And the angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, he hath reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day.</p> <p>7 Even as Sodom and Gomorrha, and the cities about them in like manner, giving themselves over to fornication, and going after strange flesh, are set forth <i>for an example</i>, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire.</p> <p>(Jude 1:6-7 KJV)</p> <p>4: For if God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell, and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be</p>	<p>This reference to the fallen angels event of Gen. 6 which brought the birth of “giants” wiped out by the flood immediately followed by a reference to the judgment of Sodom certainly alludes to:</p> <p>4 It was thou who didst destroy the former workers of unrighteousness, among whom were the giants, who trusted in their strength and hardihood, by covering them with a measureless flood.</p> <p>5 It was thou who didst make the Sodomites, those workers of exceeding iniquity, men notorious</p>

<p>reserved unto judgment; 5: And spared not the old world, but saved Noah the eighth person, a preacher of righteousness, bringing in the flood upon the world of the ungodly; 6: And turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrha into ashes condemned them with an overthrow, making <i>them an ensample unto those that after should live</i> ungodly; (2Peter 2:4-6 KJV)</p>	<p>for their vices, <i>an example to after generations</i>, when thou didst cover them with fire and brimstone. (3Macc. 2:4-5)</p> <p>(Notice also the common phrase “an example to after generations/those after”)</p>
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SETTING SOME THINGS STRAIGHT

There are many claims made by those who oppose the Apocrypha, which need to be addressed:

1. "the lack of any Hebrew originals"

This argument fails on three levels.

First of all it fails because we do have Hebrew originals for at least parts of several of the books of the Apocrypha including Tobit, Judith, Ben Sira and 1Maccabees. We also have Aramaic Peshitta versions of all but 1Esdras, and we have good reason to believe (based on comparing the Hebrew of the Tanak and Ben Sira with the Aramaic of the Peshitta) that most or all of these were translated directly from the Hebrew and very literally. (For those that do not know, Aramaic is very similar to Hebrew, so a literal Aramaic translation of a Hebrew original is almost as good as having the Hebrew itself).

Second of all, at the time Rabbinic Judaism rejected these books most of all of them still existed in Hebrew, and at the time Protestantism rejected them, more of them existed in Hebrew than exist now. This is circular thinking. The Hebrew originals have largely been lost (or in

some cases fallen into obscurity) because Protestantism and Rabbinic Judaism rejected them, and now they should be rejected because the Hebrew originals have been lost or fallen into obscurity.

A similar situation exists with certain books of the "New Testament". For example we can now establish beyond any real doubt that Revelation was originally written in Hebrew, but the original Hebrew is now lost and only Aramaic and Greek remain. Even for those of us who maintain Hebrew and Aramaic origins for the books of the NT, no good contenders for the original Hebrew or Aramaic of 2Kefa, 2 & 3 Yochanan and Jude are currently known. Would one also have us reject these books?

2. "and many of them contain theologically or factually problematic statements"

Again, those who reject all or part of the Bible make the same argument against the books that are in the canon. Antimissionaries make the same arguments against the NT. Certainly the canonical books contain statements which have been used by various groups as proof texts to "prove" various false doctrines. Moreover we are still trying to resolve just exactly what the original Hebrew and Aramaic of these books actually says.

OBJECTION:

1 and 2 Macabees disagree on how Antiochus IV died. 1 Mac 6:8-16 says he became grief stricken and died of sorrow in his bed. 2 Mac 9 says God struck him with a disease in his bowels on the battlefield and he was hurled from his chariot, dieing painfully on the ground with worms coming out of his eyes and his flesh rotting as the army looked on. Obviously, both accounts cannot be true, but both accounts appear in the Catholic edition of "Scripture".

RESPONSE:

This reminds me of anti-missionary arguments that Matthew and Acts disagree on how Judas died. When the various manuscript versions are compared in Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek we find that the two accounts can be resolved. In fact the original Hebrew of 1Maccabees has many agreements with 2Maccabees on the death of Antiochus Epiphanies against the Greek version of 1Maccabees.

OBJECTION:

2 Macabees encourages us to pray for the dead, a common Catholic practice. This practice is justified by this passage...

"Judas urged the people to keep themselves free from all sin,...he took a collection from them individually, amounting to nearly two thousand drachmae, and sent it to Jerusalem to have a sacrifice for the sin offered, an altogether fine and noble action, in which he took full account of the resurrection. For if he had not expected the fallen to rise again, it would have been superfluous to pray for the dead, whereas if he had in view the splendid recompense reserved for those who make a pious end, the thought was holy and devout. This was why he had this atonement sacrifice offered for the dead, so that they might be released from their sin."
(2 Mac 12:42-45, The Jerusalem Bible)

This passage was used to support the Catholic idea of indulgences – that money can buy atonement for one's sins by someone other than the sinner even after he died!!!!

RESPONSE:

Just because a certain passage has been misused by some group does not mean the book should be rejected. If that were the case we would reject the canon based on its misuse by the Jehovah's Witnesses.

OBJECTION:

2 Mac 5:12-16 claims that Jeremiah prayed for Israel after he died, which provided the Catholic Church its basis for praying to Mary and other canonized "saints". In fact that essentially means that there were corruptions in the Catholic Church that did not come from paganism but from ancient writings written by Jewish men but rejected by the overwhelming majority of Jewish leaders.

RESPONSE:

Although Catholics have justified this doctrine from this passage this is only rationalizing of a doctrine they transferred from paganism. They pray to various "saints" as to pagan gods. This event was much more akin to that of the mount of transfiguration event in Matthew 17.

OBJECTION:

Sirach, found only in the Apocrypha, also promotes this concept by saying "almsgiving atones for sins." (Sirach 3:33) and Tobit also says "alms deliver from all sin, and from death, and will not suffer the soul to go into darkness." (Tobit 4:11).

I assume they refer to Sirach 3:29 which is 3:30 in some versions. The Hebrew may be understood as "Therefore the almsgiver shall be atoned for his sins" (no cause and effect indicated) and the Aramaic literally reads "Therefore the almsgiver forsakes his sins".

The KJV of Tobit 4:10-11 reads:

10: Because that alms do deliver from death, and suffereth not to come into darkness.

11: For alms is a good gift unto all that give it in the sight of the most High.

The Hebrew of Tobit 4:11 reads "... and alms do deliver from death; and everyone who occupies himself in almsgiving shall behold the face of Elohim, as it is written, "I will behold your face by almsgiving" (Ps. 17:15)

Likewise we read in Proverbs” “By mercy and truth iniquity is purged: and by the fear of YHWH men depart from evil.” (Prov. 16:6)... should we remove Proverbs from the canon?

OBJECTION:

Sirach 10:26 even says "Do not try to be smart when you do your work.". Why not? My career would be in ruins if I followed that advice.

RESPONSE:

The Aramaic says "Be not lazy when you do your work"

OBJECTION:

Judith 1:1 incorrectly claims that Nebuchadnezzar was king of Assyria when he was king of Babylon and claims that he reigned from Ninevah, contrary to the Scriptures which tell us he reigned from Babylon.. Keep in mind that it was the Assyrians that captured the Northern Kingdom of Israel/Ephraim and the Babylonians that captured the southern kingdom of Judah.

Another critic says:

They [The Apocrypha] abound in historical and geographical inaccuracies and anachronisms. [referring to the book of Judith]

RESPONSE:

This "problem" is just plain silliness. The proper names in the Book of Judith were encoded. The Book was written during the Maccabean rebellion and names were changed to protect Judith herself as well as anyone possessing a copy of the book. "Nebuchadnezzar" stood in place of "Antiochus Epiphanies" because both names have the same numerical value (gematria) in Hebrew. "Assyria" is used as code for the Seleucid Empire, and "Nineveh" is the codeword used for "Antioch". These facts are well recognized in the Midrashim which refer to this story with that decoding scheme.

HOW DID WE GET OUR CANON?

Now it is very unlikely that early Christians, after their split from Nazarene Judaism would have adopted any books from Rabbinic Jews. Thus any “Old Testament” books used as canon by the earliest Christians would have to have been inherited to them from their Nazarene forefathers.

The evidence is overwhelming, these books were originally part of the Bible and have since been removed.

The Forgotten Maccabean Canonization

What does the festival of Channukah have to do with our canon of Scripture? Well in a way the celebration of Channukah is, in part, a celebration of the canonization of the Tanak. The Tanak was not canonized all at once by either Rabbinic Judaism or Christianity. It was canonized through time, in stages. The following are the stages of canonization as recorded in Scripture.

Canonization under Moses

The first stage of canonization was the canonization of the Torah by Moshe (Moses). Moshe wrote the five books of the Torah, which are collectively known as “The Torah” or “The Book of the Covenant” and delivered them to the Priests and to the Elders of Israel, as we read in the Torah:

9 And Moshe wrote this Torah, and delivered it unto the cohanim, the sons of Levi--that bore the ark of the covenant of YHWH--and unto all the elders of Yisra’el.
(Deut. 31:9 HRV)

The Torah remained the “canon” of Scripture for the Assembly of Israel for about 400 years during which time Israel worshiped YHWH in a portable Tabernacle.

Canonization under David and Solomon

At the time of David and Solomon there was a shift in the system of worship, so that under Solomon a Temple was built to replace the Tabernacle. By this time also the number of Cohenim (Priests) had multiplied so that through direction from Samuel (1Chron. 9:22) David subdivided the Cohenim and Levitical singers into twenty-four courses that took turns serving in the Temple (1Chron. 24-25). This meant that liturgical materials and other worship information would no longer just be passed from generation to generation, over the generations. As a matter of actual application this information would be transmitted from course to course as they took their turns serving from week to week. This created the need for written liturgy and written information as part of the Temple worship.

Certainly it was at this time that the majority of the Psalms were canonized. It was also at this time that the literary works of Solomon were canonized. We cannot be certain which other books may have received canonical status at this time.

Canonization under King Hezekiah and Isaiah

The next period of canonization was under King Hezekiah and is mentioned in the Talmud (b.Baba Batra 15a). At the beginning of his reign, the Kingdom of Judah faced invasion by Assyria. There was great concern that the Temple would be taken by Assyrians and the official copies of the canonical books stored there might be compromised. Moreover internal apostasy was resulting in idols to foreign gods being set up throughout Judah (2Chron. 31:1). Ahaz (Hezekiah's predecessor on the throne) had himself apostatized. He had given Temple ornaments to the King of

Assyria as a gift, shut up the doors to the Temple, and set up idols to false gods (2Chron. 28:21-25).

It was at this time that the “men of Hezekiah” canonized more of Solomon’s Proverbs (chapters 25-29).

1 These also are proverbs of Shlomo, which the men of Y’chizkiyah, king of Y’hudah copied out.
(Prov. 25:1 HRV)

Also Hezekiah composed new Psalms which were introduced to the Temple worship. As Isaiah writes:

19 The living, the living ... he shall praise You, as I do this day; the father to the children shall make known Your truth.
20 YHWH is ready to save me, therefore we will sing songs to the stringed instruments all the days of our life, in the House of YHWH.
(Is. 38:19-20 HRV)

At this time Hezekiah’s life had been extended by fifteen years, so these were probably the fifteen “Degree Psalms” or “Psalms of Ascension” (Psalms 120-134) which were read as the Cohenim ascended each of the fifteen steps to the alter.

Canonization under Josiah

Very similar to the canonization under Hezekiah was the canonization under Josiah. The days preceding the reign of Josiah had also been days of great apostasy. Josiah’s reign was preceded by those of Manasseh and Amon:

9 And M'nasheh, made Y'hudah and the inhabitants of Yerushalayim to err, so that they did evil more, than did the nations whom YHWH destroyed before the children of Yisra'el.

22 And he did that which was evil in the sight of YHWH, as did M'nasheh his father. And Amon sacrificed unto all the graven images which M'nasheh his father had made, and served them.

23 And he humbled not himself before YHWH, as M'nasheh his father had humbled himself: but this same Amon became guilty, more and more.

(2Chron. 33:9, 22-23 HRV)

The Temple had become an unused empty edifice.

8 Now in the eighteenth year of his reign, when he had purged the land, and the house, he sent Shafan the son of Atzalyah, and Ma'aseiyah the governor of the city, and Yoach the son of Yo'achaz the recorder, to repair the House of YHWH his Elohim.

9 And they came to Hilkiyah the cohen gadol, and delivered the money that was brought into the House of Elohim, which the L'vi'im, the keepers of the door, had gathered of the hand of M'nasheh and Efrayim, and of all the remnant of Yisra'el, and of all Y'hudah and Binyamin, and they returned to Yerushalayim.

10 And they delivered it into the hand of the workmen, that had the oversight of the House of YHWH, and the workmen that wrought in the House of YHWH gave it to mend and repair the house:

11 Even to the carpenters and to the builders gave they it, to buy hewn stone, and timber for couplings, and to make beams for the houses, which the kings of Y'hudah had destroyed.
(2Chron. 34:8-11 HRV)

King Josiah ushered in an era of restoration:

25 And like unto him was there no king before him, that turned to YHWH with all his heart, and with all his soul, and with all his might, according to all the Torah of Moshe; neither after him arose there any like him.
(2Kn. 23:25 HRV)

3 For in the eighth year of his reign, while he was yet young, he began to seek after the Elohim of David his father. And in the twelfth year, he began to purge Y'hudah and Yerushalayim from the high places, and the Asherim, and the graven images, and the molten images.
(2Chron. 34:3 HRV)

In the process of restoring the Temple, the original copy of the Torah was discovered:

14 And when they brought out the money that was brought into the House of YHWH, Hilkiyah the cohen, found the Book of the Torah of YHWH given by Moshe.

15 And Hilkiyah answered and said to Shafan the scribe, I have found the Book of the Torah in the House of YHWH. And Hilkiyah delivered the book to Shafan.

16 And Shafan carried the book to the king, and moreover brought back word unto the king, saying, All that was committed to your servants ... they do it.
17 And they have poured out the money that was found in the House of YHWH, and have delivered it into the hand of the overseers, and into the hand of the workmen.
18 And Shafan the scribe, told the king, saying, Hilkiyah the cohen has delivered me a book. And Shafan read therein before the king.
19 And it came to pass, when the king had heard the words of the Torah, that he rent his clothes.
(2Chron. 34:14-19 HRV)

This began a Scripture restoration and a re-establishment of Scripture canon.

Canonization under Ezra and Nehemiah:

Next we come to the period of canonization under Ezra and Nehemiah. This canonization involved a complete editing and redacting of the Tanak. It was at this editing that some editorial comments may have been added. For example the parenthetical comment in Deut. 34:5-6 which seems to have been added for a later audience:

5 So Moshe, the servant of YHWH, died there in the land of Mo'av, according to the word of YHWH.
6 And he was buried in the valley in the land of Mo'av, over against Beit-peor: and no man knows of his sepulcher unto this day.

10 And there has not arisen a prophet since in
Yisra'el, like unto Moshe, whom YHWH knew face
to face,
(Deut. 34:5-6, 10 HRV)

The phrases “and no man knows of his sepulcher unto this day” and “there has not arisen since” are much later additions, probably editorial comments by Ezra.

This editing, redacting and canonization is described in 2Edsras. First Ezra prayed for inspiration to restore the Scriptures:

19: Then answered I before thee, and said,

20: Behold, Lord, I will go, as thou hast commanded me, and reprove the people which are present: but they that shall be born afterward, who shall admonish them? thus the world is set in darkness, and they that dwell therein are without light.

21: For thy law is burnt, therefore no man knoweth the things that are done of thee, or the work that shall begin.

22: But if I have found grace before thee, send the Holy Spirit into me, and I shall write all that hath been done in the world since the beginning, which were written in thy law, that men may find thy path, and that they which will live in the latter days may live.

23: And he answered me, saying, Go thy way, gather the people together, and say unto them, that they seek thee not for forty days.

24: But look thou prepare thee many box trees, and take with thee Sarea, Dabria, Selemia, Ecanus, and Asiel, these five which are ready to write swiftly;

25: And come hither, and I shall light a candle of understanding in thine heart, which shall not be put out, till the things be performed which thou shalt begin to write.

26: And when thou hast done, some things shalt thou publish, and some things shalt thou shew secretly to the wise: to morrow this hour shalt thou begin to write.

(2Esdras 14:19-26)

Then he edited and redacted the Scriptures:

27: Then went I forth, as he commanded, and gathered all the people together, and said,

28: Hear these words, O Israel.

29: Our fathers at the beginning were strangers in Egypt, from whence they were delivered:

30: And received the law of life, which they kept not, which ye also have transgressed after them.

31: Then was the land, even the land of Sion, parted among you by lot: but your fathers, and ye yourselves, have done unrighteousness, and have not kept the ways which the Highest commanded you.

32: And forasmuch as he is a righteous judge, he took from you in time the thing that he had given you.

33: And now are ye here, and your brethren among you.

34: Therefore if so be that ye will subdue your own understanding, and reform your hearts, ye shall be kept alive and after death ye shall obtain mercy.

35: For after death shall the judgment come, when we shall live again: and then shall the names of the righteous be manifest, and the works of the ungodly shall be declared.

36: Let no man therefore come unto me now, nor seek after me these forty days.

37: So I took the five men, as he commanded me, and we went into the field, and remained there.

38: And the next day, behold, a voice called me, saying, Esdras, open thy mouth, and drink that I give thee to drink.

39: Then opened I my mouth, and, behold, he reached me a full cup, which was full as it were with water, but the colour of it was like fire.

40: And I took it, and drank: and when I had drunk of it, my heart uttered understanding, and wisdom grew in my breast, for my spirit strengthened my memory:

41: And my mouth was opened, and shut no more.

42: The Highest gave understanding unto the five men, and they wrote the wonderful visions of the night that were told, which they knew not: and they sat forty days, and they wrote in the day, and at night they ate bread.

43: As for me. I spake in the day, and I held not my tongue by night.

44: In forty days they wrote ninety and four books.

45: And it came to pass, when the forty days were filled, that the Highest spake, saying, The first that thou hast written publish openly, that the worthy and unworthy may read it:

46: But keep the seventy last, that thou mayest deliver them only to such as be wise among the people:

47: For in them is the spring of understanding, the fountain of wisdom, and the stream of knowledge.

48: And I did so.

(2Esdras 14:27-48)

Notice that this canon is described as consisting of twenty-four books. Many of the books we know of in the Tanak were originally parts of single books (like 1st and 2nd Samuel) and many books were collected into a group often thought of as a single “book”. There is great debate over how the books were anciently reckoned to reach a canon of 24 books (or as some other sources prescribe, 22 books) but the following is a proposal:

1. The Torah (the Book of the Covenant)
2. Joshua
3. Judges
4. The Book of Kingdoms (Samuel and Kings)
5. Isaiah
6. Jeremiah
7. Ezekiel
8. The Minor Prophets
10. Psalms
11. Proverbs
12. Wisdom of Solomon
13. Job
14. Song of Songs
15. Ruth
16. Lamentations
17. Esther
18. Daniel
19. 2Esdras
20. Tobit
22. Baruch
23. Letter of Jeremiah
24. Ezra/Nehemiah/Chronicles (including 1stEsdras)

The Book of Enoch would have likely been one of the seventy “secret” books and the other six books of the Apocrypha were canonized later. The number seventy connected to the “secret books” is interesting, because 70 is the gematria of the Hebrew word SOD (meaning “hidden, secret, mystical”).

Nehemiah followed up on this, gathering these books into an official “library” (the word “Bible” literally refers to a library):

13 The same things are reported in the records and in the memoirs of Nehemiah, and also that he founded a library and collected the books about the kings and prophets, and the writings of David, the letters of the kings about votive offerings.
(2Macc. 2:13 RSV)

Canonization under Judas Maccabee

The final canonization of the Tanak took place under Judas Maccabee and the Gerusia (Assembly of Elders in his day) his successors. This is a “lost” period of canonization forgotten by many who list the canonization under Ezra and Nehemiah is “final”.

The time leading up to this canonization was also a time of great apostasy, as we read in 1st Maccabees:

11: In those days went there out of Israel wicked men, who persuaded many, saying, Let us go and make a covenant with the heathen that are round about us: for since we departed from them we have had much sorrow.

12: So this device pleased them well.

13: Then certain of the people were so forward herein, that they went to the king, who gave them licence to do after the ordinances of the heathen:

14: Whereupon they built a place of exercise at Jerusalem according to the customs of the heathen:

15: And made themselves uncircumcised, and forsook the holy covenant, and joined themselves to the heathen, and were sold to do mischief.

(1Macc. 1:11-15 KJV)

At this time the High Priesthood was purchased by Jason who drove the apostasy forward, as we read in 2nd Maccabees:

7: But after the death of Seleucus, when Antiochus, called Epiphanes, took the kingdom, Jason the brother of Onias laboured underhand to be high priest,

8: Promising unto the king by intercession three hundred and threescore talents of silver, and of another revenue eighty talents:

9: Beside this, he promised to assign an hundred and fifty more, if he might have licence to set him up a place for exercise, and for the training up of youth in the fashions of the heathen, and to write them of Jerusalem by the name of Antiochians.

10: Which when the king had granted, and he had gotten into his hand the rule he forthwith brought his own nation to Greekish fashion.

11: And the royal privileges granted of special favour to the Jews by the means of John the father of Eupolemus, who went ambassador to Rome for amity and aid, he took away; and putting down the governments which were according to the law, he brought up new customs against the law:

12: For he built gladly a place of exercise under the tower itself, and brought the chief young men under his subjection, and made them wear a hat.

13: Now such was the height of Greek fashions, and increase of heathenish manners, through the exceeding profaneness of Jason, that ungodly wretch, and no high priest;

(2Macc. 4:1-22 KJV).

And Antiochus Epiphanies profaned the Temple, not just shutting it down, but polluting it and making it into a temple for false gods. And banned the Torah, seeking to destroy every copy, and forbidding ownership of a copy of the Torah on pain of death:

54 Now the fifteenth day of the month Kislev, in the hundred forty and fifth year, they set up the abomination of desolation upon the altar, and builded idol altars throughout the cities of Juda on every side;
55: And burnt incense at the doors of their houses, and in the streets.

56: And when they had rent in pieces the books of the law which they found, they burnt them with fire.

57: And whosoever was found with any the book of the testament, or if any committed to the law, the king's commandment was, that they should put him to death.

(1Macc 1:54 KJV)

1: Not long after this the king sent an old man of Athens to compel the Jews to depart from the laws of their fathers, and not to live after the laws of God:

2: And to pollute also the temple in Jerusalem, and to call it the temple of Jupiter Olympius; and that in Garizim, of Jupiter the Defender of strangers, as they did desire that dwelt in the place.

3: The coming in of this mischief was sore and grievous to the people:

4: For the temple was filled with riot and revelling by the Gentiles, who dallied with harlots, and had to do with women within the circuit of the holy places, and besides that brought in things that were not lawful.

5: The altar also was filled with profane things, which the law forbiddeth.

6: Neither was it lawful for a man to keep sabbath days or ancient fasts, or to profess himself at all to be a Jew.

(2Macc. 6:1-6 KJV)

Judas Maccabee and his men defeated Antiochus Epiphanies and rededicated the Temple:

1: Now Maccabeus and his company, the Lord guiding them, recovered the temple and the city:

2: But the altars which the heathen had built in the open street, and also the chapels, they pulled down.

3: And having cleansed the temple they made another altar, and striking stones they took fire out of them, and offered a sacrifice after two years, and set forth incense, and lights, and shewbread.

4: When that was done, they fell flat down, and besought the Lord that they might come no more into such troubles; but if they sinned any more against him, that he himself would chasten them with mercy, and that they might not be delivered unto the blasphemous and barbarous nations.

(2Macc. 10:1-4 KJV)

The Talmud records the event this way:

For when the Greeks entered the Temple, they defiled all the oils in it, and when the Hasmonian dynasty prevailed against and defeated them, they [the Maccabees] searched and found only one cruse of oil which possessed the seal of the High Priest, but which contained sufficient oil for only one day's lighting; yet

a miracle occurred there and they lit [the lamp] for eight days.
(b.Shabbat 21b)

At this time, just Judas Maccabee and his men underwent a time of restoration and Temple dedication very much like those of the previous periods of canonization. In fact the preface of 2nd Maccabees includes a letter from the Gerusia (Assembly of Elders) to the Jews in Alexandria Egypt:

13 The same things are reported in the records and in the memoirs of Nehemiah, and also that he founded a library and collected the books about the kings and prophets, and the writings of David, the letters of the kings about votive offerings.

14 In the same way Judas also collected all the books that had been lost on account of the war which had come upon us, and are in our possession.

15 So if you have need of them, send people to get them for you.

(2Macc. 2:13-15 RSV)

The context of this letter indicates that 2nd Maccabees is being sent to the Jews in Alexandria as part of this Maccabean Canon. It was during this period of canonization that books which were written after the time of Ezra would have been first canonized. These includes books like:

Ben Sira – Written about the time of Alexander the Great.

1st Maccabees (which was not finished until the reign of John Hyrcanus)

2nd Maccabees (lifetime of Judas)

3rd Maccabees (around 217 BCE – probably provided by the Alexandrian Jews as part of the exchange of books implied in the letter above)

4th Maccabees (lifetime of Judas)

Book of Judith (lifetime of Judas)

It was also probably during this editing, redacting and canonization that final touches were added to the book of Nehemiah in which the names and genealogies of priestly families are given which reach all the way to the time of Alexander the Great (Neh. 12:11, 22; see Josephus Antiquities 11:7:2).

Why did the Gerusia wrap up their canonization with the beginning of the reign of John Hyrcanus? Possibly because he was the first Hasmonian ruler that was not one of the original sons of Mattithias. But most likely it was because he began as a Pharisee but apostatized to Sadduceeism (Josephus; Ant. 13:10:5-6). At this time the Gerusia probably split into the political Sanhedrin headed by the High Priest and dominated by Sadducees (this is the one that convicted Yeshua) and the Pharisaic Sanhedrin which was headed by such men as Hillel and his decedents who were not Priests at all.

The Maccabean canon was later rejected by Rabbinic Judaism, possibly out of a disapproval of the later Hasmonian dynasty. For this same reason Channukah was almost unmentioned in the Mishna, and only briefly discussed in the Talmud, in which the shift is away from the military victory itself, and toward the miracle of the oil. The Books of the Maccabees were removed from the canon, and

in fact a move was made to restore the pre-Maccabean canon of Ezra in its place.