

The **Book of Sirach**, also known as Ecclesiasticus, is part of the Wisdom Literature of the Greek Septuagint and the Latin Vulgate Bible. [Don't confuse it with a book called Ecclesiastes, also named Qoheleth] While originally written in Hebrew, the Book was known only through its Greek translation, known as Σιράχ [in Greek]. It was translated at Alexandria in Egypt, into Greek by the author's grandson for the Jews living in there in Egypt who no longer spoke Hebrew.

[important because the Rabbis thought it was originally written in Greek & in Egypt.]

The Book was not included in the Hebrew Masoretic Text as part of the Hebrew Canon of the Old Testament because they thought it was: A) first written in Greek and B) not in Palestine. How did that happen? Following a revolt by Jewish Zealots, the Romans conquered Jerusalem in 70 AD. They leveled the Temple of Herod [except for the Wall which remains today]. They scattered the Jewish leaders throughout the empire [which actually helped the spread of Xtianity!] But since the Jews no longer had the Temple for making animal sacrifices, the SYNAGOGUE [syn =together & goge =gather] became a place where Jews would gather to STUDY SCRIPTURE. This became the way for Jews now to practice their religion, to maintain their traditions, and to worship God. Problem is, as I mentioned before, there was no ONE book "marked" Old Testament. There were in fact many holy writings read, known, and respected. Which were really authentic and inspired? So in 90 AD Palestinian Rabbis gathered in Jamnia in Israel and came up with some rules. One rule was: It had to have been written in HEBREW, and 2nd written IN ISRAEL. [FYI: Sirach was not the only respected book rejected. The Book of Enoch, the Revelation of Abraham, Life of Moses and others not accepted as Scripture by anyone, not by Jewish scholars nor by Christians today.]

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What about the word *Apocrypha*?

The OT Apocrypha books, the ones not accepted by Luther and other Protestants, are ALL found in the OLDEST manuscripts: \*\*Sinaiticus, Vaticanus, Alexandrinus, and Beza and are included in the Catholic, most Eastern Christian, Assyrian and Coptic Bibles. They were in the Gutenberg Bible, as they were in Jerome's Vulgate, and the first King James Version. They are:

- Tobit
- Judith
- 1 Maccabees
- 2 Maccabees
- Wisdom [of Solomon]
- [Wisdom of] Sirach (Ecclesiasticus)
- Baruch including the Letter of Jeremiah
  - parts of Esther
  - additions to Daniel

And Surprise!! These have all been found today in Hebrew versions; MOST of them were also quoted in other OT books—and by the Evangelists in the NT books. So they were well known.

[2QSir means cave #2 Sirach/ 11QPs<sup>a</sup> means cave 11, papyrus fragment on I side.]

About Sirach, we need to know: most of the Hebrew text of Sirach has been uncovered 1) in the Cairo Geniza, 2) at Masada, and 3) in three Dead Sea Scrolls at \*Qumran. 2QSir designates Sirach from Cave 2 at Qumran, 11QPs<sup>a</sup> designates a scroll from Cave 11, which contained the canticle from Sirach Chapter 51:13-30, but which was found in the Psalms scroll! As with all ancient texts discovered in the Dead Sea Scrolls, Hebrew Scripture was in consonantal text only. A manuscript with six chapters of Sirach was found at Masada. Survivors following the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD had carried it with them as they fled to Masada, a fortress on a mountain plateau built by Herod near the Dead Sea. [I was there.]

[The important thing about \*Qumran is that Xtianity is not just all made-up superstition. This is to show the scientific and archaeological basis of the questions about OT books.]

All, except ESTHER, have been found at Qumran itself. So this proves that they were all written BEFORE 100 AD, another of the requirements. But, I add, there are also references to books quoted then and found at Qumran, which are accepted today by no one as inspired. What books were to be considered INSPIRED, and so fit for formal use in ceremonies, took time to establish. Who decided that? Ans: The CHURCH. Eventually the CHURCH decided to use those books which were more or less universally accepted. With the NT there is no difference of inspired books TODAY. Everyone accepts the same books. But that was NOT established or clear right at the beginning. It took time, about 250 years.

\*Qumran is an archaeological site near the Dead Sea where some Jewish Zealots retreated during a revolt against the Romans. You can Google Qumran for more info. When it was discovered all the skeptics said, as they always do: Oh, this will destroy Xtianity! Wrong. It did just the opposite. It re-enforced the foundation of Xtianity's founding.

The OT is a different story from the NT. So the Question is Why? Why do some books of the OT count but others don't? At least as inspired by Protestants and for Jews? The Jews at Jamnia set some criteria. BUT some that they thought fit the criteria, we now know don't; and some, like Sirach, we now know do fit the criteria.

Having said all that, why doesn't everyone think they are 'inspired'?

First reason: When Luther came along, he thought: Well here is the Byzantine Codex. Byzantium is Constantinople; They speak Greek, so it must be the best source. These books were not in the Byzantine Codex, so Luther thought they didn't belong. He was wrong. He didn't know about Sinaiticus, for example, which has them all.

The Byzantine Codex dates from the 12th Century, so it picked up some mistakes as it was copied. [Remember 'Books' had to be copied by hand.] It did not include the books rejected by the Jews. It did not conform with the oldest \*\*Codices mentioned above: Sinaiticus, Vaticanus, Alexandrinus, and Beza. They were ALL written and collected before 500 AD. And Sinaiticus, the oldest and most complete MS (manuscript), wasn't discovered until 1859 by a German Tischendorf. So NOW we know more than Luther, Calvin; more than everyone really.

Second reason they were rejected is that many of these books presented continuity, contact and connection between living and dead of the family and Jewish People. They said, as well, that PRAYING for the DEAD was a good idea. This contradicted the way some Reformers interpreted SS. For example: We have the story of the Maccabees which said A good and wholesome thought is prayer for the dead. This was a clear reason, but not the only one. The Maccabees' story is read in November, the month with All Saints and All Souls Days.