



# The Books between the Testaments: What Christians Should Know about the Apocrypha

## SESSION 1

*Why do some Bibles contain extra books? Why are they called different things by different religious groups? How do Protestants, Roman Catholics, and Eastern Orthodox differ in their understanding of the importance of these books?*

### Introduction

Have you ever noticed that some Bibles have the words “with Apocrypha” written on their spines? In the Revised Standard Version of the Holy Bible, these words refer to nineteen books or parts of books placed after Malachi and before the Gospel of Matthew. How did these books come to be placed in the middle of the Bible, and what value, if any, do they have? If you examine *The New American Bible* used by Roman Catholics, you will find that this Bible has no such middle section. Why? How then do these Christians regard these books, and do they read them? These are some of the questions that we will consider in the first session before turning in the second session to study Tobit, which is one of the books in the Apocrypha.

### What Do We Call These Writings?

Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox Christians call some of the books that Protestants find between the Old and New Testaments the deuterocanon, or second canon. That is, they were not part of the first canon, or the authoritative list of books that compose the Old and New Testaments. Their Bibles intersperse them throughout the Old Testament. This designation



The process of determining which books belong in the Bible has been long and faithful.

means that even though Protestants have usually called these books the Apocrypha and gather them together between the Old and New Testaments, Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox Christians regard them as Scripture but acknowledge them as Scripture that was written later than the other books. Since still other books are called the New Testament Apocrypha, the term Old Testament Apocrypha is often preferred.

The word *apocrypha*, which means “hidden,” has implied to many Christians that these writings are “secret,” even though these writings have been quite accessible, never secret. This derogatory connotation

of the word *apocrypha* leads us to look for a different term. The books then might best be called “the books in the middle of the Bible,” but not because Protestant Christians have placed them between the Old and New Testaments. These books place us in the middle of some very key issues, such as what constitutes Scriptures and which Scriptures have authority for us. Must the content of these books match church doctrine in order for them to count as Scripture? Must the books be written in Hebrew to have authority as Scripture? Does placing the books in a middle section give them less authority? Do church councils determine which Scriptures have authority, or do the people who read the Scriptures determine this?

Before we consider how these books came to be placed in the middle of some Bibles rather than remaining dispersed as in other Bibles, let us distinguish this group still further from three groups of books. As mentioned, the Old Testament Apocrypha refers to a completely different set of books than those found in the New Testament Apocrypha. The New Testament Apocrypha consists of over seventy books, only three of which were ever seriously considered part of the Christian canon (that is, the authoritative list of biblical books): the *Apocalypse of Peter*, the *Acts of Paul*, and the *Gospel of Hebrews*. The books in this group, which has no set number since others have been added upon discovery (for example, the *Gospel of Judas*), were written to elaborate either on Jesus’ life or on some aspect of the apostles’ lives and ministry. The Old Testament Apocrypha must also be distinguished from the Dead Sea Scrolls and the Old Testament Pseudepigrapha. The Dead Sea Scrolls were discovered in 1947 and therefore were never a part of the Christian canon, which has not changed for centuries. They are manuscripts written from the third century BCE to ca. 68 CE that provide us the texts used by a Jewish apocalyptic community who retreated to the Qumran desert. The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha refers to about sixty-five documents, written from ca. 300 BCE to ca. 200 CE, that include hymns, apocalypses, and legends about biblical characters such as Enoch, Moses, and Isaiah. Written about the same time as the books of the Old Testament Apocrypha, these books nonetheless were never included in official lists of Scripture.

How did the Old Testament Apocrypha come to be placed in the middle of some Bibles? We must discuss the formation of the Septuagint to find the answer.

## From Hebrew to Greek and Then to Latin

In the third century BCE, the Old Testament books began to be translated from Hebrew into Greek, so this translation, called the Septuagint, became the standard biblical text that Greek-speaking Jews used and the one quoted when the New Testament was written. Interspersed among the other books of the Old Testament, the Septuagint includes books later called apocryphal or deuterocanonical: 1 Esdras; Judith; Tobit; 1, 2, 3, and 4 Maccabees; Psalm 151; Odes; Wisdom of Solomon; Sirach; Baruch; Letter of Jeremiah; Susanna; and Bel and the Dragon. When the early Christian church leaders used the Septuagint, they did not view these writings differently than the rest. In fact, the early church councils at Hippo in 393 CE and at Carthage in 397 CE and 419 CE listed the books as Scripture.

Pope Damascus commissioned Jerome to translate the Old Testament into Latin in 382 CE. First using the Septuagint and then using manuscripts written in Hebrew, Jerome was occupied with this translation project, known as the Vulgate or the Latin Vulgate, for twenty years; even so, he did not complete a translation of the New Testament (so it was finished by others). Unlike most, he wanted to omit the apocryphal books because there were no Hebrew versions, and their contents, while providing models of faith, contributed nothing to doctrine. Pope Damascus and Augustine persuaded Jerome to translate them anyway. Because many Vulgate manuscripts included his preface and notes that make distinctions between canonical and edifying books, these apocryphal books continued to have an uncertain status.

## The Reformers

When the printing press was invented, the first book published by the Gutenberg Press was the Latin Vulgate (ca. 1456). This Bible is the one that many Christian churches were using, including Martin Luther’s. Luther did not value the apocryphal books much because they were not originally written in Hebrew and were not useful for doctrine, especially since certain passages, in his estimation, supported praying for the dead, salvation by good works, and purgatory. He placed them at the end of his German translation (1545). Because of the antagonism between the Catholic Church and the Reformed movement, the Catholics reacted to Luther’s assessment at the Council of Trent (1545–63) and affirmed these

books as canonical: Tobit, Judith, Wisdom of Solomon, Ecclesiasticus, Baruch, 1–2 Maccabees, and additions to Esther and Daniel. The books 1–2 Esdras and the Prayer of Manasseh in the Vulgate were rejected, but they were placed at the end of the Old Testament, affirming the middle of the Bible as the place where apocryphal books should usually be placed, if included at all.

The Swiss reformer and theologian John Calvin did not value these books at all: “Of their admitting all the books promiscuously into the Canon, I say nothing more than it is done against the consent of the primitive Church”<sup>1</sup> (“On the Fourth Session” in *Antidote to the Council of Trent*, 1547). That the King James Version (1611) included them in a separate section in the middle, as had the Thomas Matthew Bible (1537) and the 1599 edition of the Geneva Bible, indicates that the debate continued. In 1615, George Abbot, the archbishop of Canterbury and one of the translators of the King James Version, penalized the publishing of the Bible without the Apocrypha. Still, not all agreed. The 1646 Westminster Confession of Faith (1.3) affirmed John Calvin’s assessment that these books be denied as part of the canon.

Nevertheless, in the early nineteenth century, partly because the Edinburgh Bible Society deemed them as unworthy of attention, other Bible societies also decided not to endorse their publication. Up until World War II, the Lutheran areas of Germany included the books in their Bibles. After World War II (1939–45), the American Bible Society provided funding only if the apocryphal books were excluded. This lack of easy availability meant that many Protestant Christians for a considerable number of years had little knowledge of their contents. More recently, these books have been included in Protestant Bibles, some of which the American Bible Society offers on its Web site for purchase.

Having summarized the historical formation of this group of writings, let us now consider what books three groups of Christians include and then their contents in general.

## Variations in the Old Testament Apocrypha/Deuterocanon

A comparison of the Septuagint and Catholic and Protestant Bibles with the Old Testament Apocrypha and Eastern Orthodox Bibles shows us that the number and the order of the biblical books differ in each. Protestant Bibles that include the Apocrypha contain all the books

found in the Septuagint except Odes but also include the Prayer of Manasseh and 2 Esdras. Roman Catholic Bibles omit 1 Esdras, 3–4 Maccabees, Odes, and Psalm 151. Eastern Orthodox Bibles include all the books in the Septuagint but also include the Prayer of Manasseh.

## The Contents

When we turn to read the contents of these books, we need to ask what has been considered objectionable about them. Were they simply rejected because they had been written in Greek and not Hebrew? In some cases, it appears that this is the main reason. Or did their contents have objectionable theological themes? Verses such as 2 Maccabees 12:39–45, which refers to praying for the souls of the dead, and 2 Maccabees 15:12–16, which refers to the priest Onias and the prophet Jeremiah—both dead—as interceding to God on behalf of humans, would be examples that the Reformation leaders noted as supporting doctrines that they rejected: prayers of the living on behalf of the dead for their salvation and the intercession of dead saints on behalf of the living. The reformers objected to these practices because they believed that the fate of those who have died is decided by God and is beyond our abilities to influence and that God can be approached for our intercession directly. But are the practices mentioned in 2 Maccabees in the second century BCE as well as in the rest of these books really the same as those the Reformers were criticizing in their day? In addition, let us consider this question: Must Scriptures be discarded because certain rituals are no longer practiced or considered necessary by some people?

The nineteen deuterocanonical or apocryphal writings found among Roman Catholic, Protestant, and Eastern Orthodox Bibles consist of tales, Wisdom literature, historical narratives, an apocalypse, a letter, and poems; they were written from ca. 200 BCE to 100 CE and provide us insight into the history and culture of the Jewish people. If it were not for these writings, we would know less about this period of history and the extent of the struggles of the Jewish people and their persecution. For example, 1 Maccabees tells us about the Maccabean Revolt and the Jews’ reclaiming the power to govern themselves. Second Maccabees provides a theological interpretation that explains that God was disciplining the Jews through Antiochus IV’s persecution of them. Third Maccabees deals with the Egyptian Jews’ struggles and persecution under Ptolemy IV Philopater. Fourth Maccabees tells about the martyrdom of Eleazar, the seven brothers, and their mother

<b>SEPTUAGINT</b> <b>(Books are interspersed)</b>	<b>ROMAN CATHOLIC BIBLES</b> <b>(Books are interspersed)</b>	<b>PROTESTANT BIBLES</b> <b>(Separate section)</b>	<b>EASTERN ORTHODOX BIBLES</b> <b>(Books are interspersed)</b>
1 Esdras, after 1 and 2 Chronicles Esther includes Additions to Esther Judith, after Esther Tobit, after Judith 1, 2, 3, and 4 Maccabees, after Tobit Odes with Prayer of Manasseh, after Psalms, which ends with Psalm 151 Wisdom of Solomon and Sirach/Ecclesiasticus, after Job Baruch, after Jeremiah Letter of Jeremiah, after Lamentations Susanna, before Daniel Prayer of Azariah and Song of the Three Jews is in Daniel Bel and the Dragon, after Daniel	Tobit, after Nehemiah Judith, after Tobit Esther includes Additions to Esther 1 and 2 Maccabees, after Esther Wisdom of Solomon and Sirach/Ecclesiasticus, after Song of Solomon Baruch and Letter of Jeremiah, after Lamentations Daniel includes Prayer of Azariah and Song of the Three Jews, Susanna, Bel and the Dragon	Tobit Judith Additions to Esther Wisdom of Solomon Sirach/Ecclesiasticus Baruch Letter of Jeremiah Prayer of Azariah and Song of the Three Jews Susanna Bel and the Dragon 1 and 2 Maccabees 1 Esdras Prayer of Manasseh Psalm 151 3 Maccabees 2 Esdras 4 Maccabees	1 Esdras, after 1, 2 Chronicles Esther includes Additions to Esther Judith, after Esther Tobit, after Judith 1, 2, 3, and 4 Maccabees, after Tobit Odes with Prayer of Manasseh, after Psalms, which ends with Psalm 151 Wisdom of Solomon and Sirach/Ecclesiasticus, after Job Baruch, after Jeremiah Letter of Jeremiah, after Lamentations Susanna, Bel and the Dragon, after Daniel

because they refused to eat defiling foods. In addition, 1 Esdras, with a parallel account of portions of 2 Chronicles and Nehemiah, tells about an earlier period of Jewish history: the rebuilding of the Jerusalem Temple and the resettlement of the Jews who returned there after the exile had ended. Second Esdras, in contrast, is an apocalypse that presents the author's struggles to affirm God's goodness and power in light of all the difficulties facing the people. Two books provide us additional collections of Wisdom literature, namely, the Wisdom of Solomon and Sirach. Five of these writings can be classified as tales, which have historical settings but aim to convey some teachings about living piously and courageously: Tobit,

Judith, Additions to the book of Esther, Susanna, and Bel and the Dragon. In the next session, we will take a closer look at the book of Tobit.

## About the Writer

*Emily Cheney is a Presbyterian minister in Georgia, a contributor to the forthcoming New Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible, and the author of She Can Read: Feminist Reading Strategies for Biblical Narrative.*

## Endnote

1. John Dillenberger, ed., *John Calvin: Selections from His Writings* (Missoula, MT: Scholars Press, 1975), 146–47.



# The Books between the Testaments: What Christians Should Know about the Apocrypha

## SESSION 2

*Why do some Bibles contain extra books? Why are they called different things by different religious groups? How do Protestants, Roman Catholics, and Eastern Orthodox differ in their understanding of the importance of these books?*

### Introduction

Several of the Old Testament apocryphal (deuterocanonical) books such as 1 and 2 Maccabees and 1 Esdras provide us with information about the historical events during the Maccabean Revolt and the rebuilding of the Temple. Quite a few are tales similar to Ruth, Esther, and Jonah, which provide us some understanding of cultural and religious practices of the period. One of these is the book of Tobit, which in spite of its differences from books in the Old Testament nevertheless has similarities. But first, what is Tobit about?

### Tobit: A Summary

The book begins with setting the story of Tobit's life during the reign of the Assyrian king Shalmaneser (727–722 BCE), although Tiglath-Pileser III (745–727) was actually the king who managed the deportation of the Jews from Naphtali. Even so, the religious themes of the book reflect those of the second century BCE, which is most likely the time period of the author, who lived in either Egypt, Mesopotamia, or Palestine. Tobit is presented as an upright man who faithfully traveled to Jerusalem for the festivals and presented the first fruits of his crops and his flocks and other required offerings before being deported from Galilee to Nineveh. In Nineveh he served as a merchant for Shalmaneser and on his many trips left bags of silver

in Media. During that time he gave food and clothing to the impoverished and provided proper burials to fellow Jews. When he realized that King Sennacherib had discovered his burial activity, which the king had forbidden, he fled, returning home to his wife and his son Tobias only when Esar-haddon replaced Sennacherib. Still faithful, since he could not pilgrimage to

Jerusalem for the Feast of Weeks (see Deut. 16:11–17), he attempted to share the feast with a poor Israelite as an alternative and so sent his son Tobias to make that invitation. When Tobias found a corpse and told his father, again Tobit provided the proper burial.

Domestic difficulties quickly developed after Tobit lost his eyesight. He became upset over his wife supporting them financially through her sewing. Then he remembered the bags of silver that he had left in Media and made plans for his son Tobias to retrieve them for him. The remainder of the tale involves the complications that Tobias and Azariah (the disguise for the angel Raphael) experienced as they retrieved the money



Tobit contains many themes found in other books of the Bible.

## Definitions

**apocalypse:** a literary genre that tells about realities hidden from the normal eye, usually through providing visions with elaborate symbolism that tell about the defeat of God's enemies and the victory of those people devoted to God.

**Antiochus IV Epiphanes:** Syrian monarch (176–163 BCE) whose persecution of the Jews led to the Maccabean Revolt.

**Apocrypha:** The word *apocrypha* means "hidden." This term refers to texts and books that have no authority for Jewish and Christian beliefs and practices but can be useful for reading about biblical customs and history. When capitalized, the word refers to the books found between the Old and New Testaments.

**canon:** the list of books that have authority for a community of faith in their beliefs and religious practices.

**Dead Sea Scrolls:** manuscripts discovered in 1947 that were written from the third century BCE to ca. 68 CE and provide us the texts used by members of a Jewish apocalyptic community who retreated to the Qumran desert.

**deuterocanonical books (deuterocanon):** As the word *deutero* ("second") suggests, those books and passages that Roman Catholic Christians accepted as Scripture at a date later than the rest.

**Old Testament Apocrypha:** same as Apocrypha.

**Old Testament Pseudepigrapha:** about sixty-five documents, written from ca. 300 BCE to ca. 200 CE, that include hymns, apocalypses, and legends about biblical characters such as Enoch, Moses, and Isaiah. Written about the same time as the books of the Old Testament Apocrypha, these books nonetheless were never included in official lists of Scripture.

**New Testament Apocrypha:** additional books written around the same time as those in the New Testament and shortly afterward but not included in the New Testament canon, often because of doctrinal reasons.

**Septuagint:** the Greek translation of the Hebrew Scriptures accomplished between the third and first centuries BCE.

**Vulgate or Latin Vulgate:** translation of the Scriptures into Latin that was begun by Jerome.

from Raguel and brought it home to Tobit. The journey is complicated by Tobias's betrothal in Ecbatana to Raguel and Edna's daughter Sarah, whose previous seven husbands had all died on their wedding night. Using the liver and heart of a fish that he had caught along the way, Tobias followed Azariah's instructions and repelled the demon on his wedding night. Sarah and Tobias continued to celebrate their marriage while Azariah traveled to Media to retrieve the bags of silver. After Azariah returned, he, Sarah, and Tobias journeyed home, where Tobias healed his father's blindness with the fish gall and celebrated his marriage to Sarah with his family.

## Religious Practices: Festivals and Proper Burials

The summary has already referred to some of the religious practices that are central to the narrative in this book. In particular, Tobit was determined to faithfully observe the religious festivals. Ordinarily he had to take a portion of his crops and flocks to Jerusalem to observe the Feast of Weeks, but if he could not go to Jerusalem, he could still participate in part of the celebration (Deut. 16:17). He decided to invite a stranger to share the festival with him. He made an attempt to do the alternative since he was in exile, and in the process he was faced

once more with observing another religious practice: providing a proper burial.

Tobit conscientiously provided a proper burial to a Jew despite the negative consequences, for already because he had shown the same respect for the dead, he had had to live apart from his wife and son for a while. This act, except for its threat to his life, seems similar to the proper burial that the valiant men of Jabesh-gilead gave to Saul and his sons whom the Philistines had slain (1 Sam. 31:11–13). David later gave an even more proper burial for Saul and his son Jonathan by reburying their bones in Zela (2 Sam. 21:10–14). In Genesis 23, we read about Abraham’s purchase of the field in Machpelah to give his wife, Sarah, a proper burial.

## Almsgiving and Other Religious Practices

But what about the reference in Tobit 12:9 that suggests that salvation results from doing good works: “For almsgiving saves from death and purges away every sin”? Tobit 4:10–11 makes a similar claim: “For almsgiving delivers from death and keeps you from going into the Darkness. Indeed, almsgiving, for all who practice it, is an excellent offering in the presence of the Most High.” The principles in these statements can be found elsewhere. The principles of giving alms willingly, in proportion to one’s income, and to the needy within one’s own community are similar to those in Deuteronomy. For example, Tobit 4:16 speaks of such willingness: “Give some of your food to the hungry, and some of your clothing to the naked. Give all your surplus as alms, and do not let your eye begrudge your giving of alms.” Likewise, Deuteronomy 15:10 commands: “Give liberally and be ungrudging when you do so, for on this account the LORD your God will bless you in all your work and in all that you undertake.” Also, Tobit 4:8 affirms: “If you have many possessions, make your gift from them in proportion; if few, do not be afraid to give according to the little you have.” Likewise, Deuteronomy 16:17 affirms that the amount of the giving is determined according to that person’s means: “All shall give as they are able, according to the blessing of the LORD your God that he has given you.”

It is quite noticeable that in Tobit almsgiving primarily refers to people’s willingness to give to the poor—those



who are hungry, who need clothing, or who need to be buried—through charitable deeds and money. These deeds lead to salvation. But can we say that doing these charitable deeds is the same as attempting to attain salvation by works, a theological belief that the Reformers such as Martin Luther were concerned to remove? The book as a whole in no way affirms that Tobit’s standing before God is determined by his charitable deeds. He still suffers and has to live apart from his family for a while, still becomes blind, and still must lament to God. His blindness in no way results from his failure to do something or to make a monetary gift; his recovery in no way results from performing some righteous deed or providing a monetary gift. In Matthew 25:31–46, acts similar to Tobit’s, such as feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, visiting the lonely and imprisoned, welcoming the stranger, and caring for the sick, lead to entry into God’s kingdom; the deeds led to entry because they were done generously. Those who have not fed the hungry, clothed the naked, visited the lonely and the imprisoned, welcomed the stranger, and cared for the sick cannot enter God’s kingdom. Like this passage, the book of Tobit raises this question: Where does faith turn into action, and where does action stop expressing faith?

Tobit desired to practice his faith, not just in burying the dead but many times in this book. He wanted his son Tobias to do likewise. Before he sent Tobias to retrieve the bags of silver, he reminded him of religious practices that were important to him. He wanted Tobias to give him a proper burial (4:3), to honor his mother (4:3–4), to give alms (4:7), to marry within his own people (4:12–13), to avoid drunkenness and the withholding of wages (4:14–15), and to feed the hungry and clothe the naked (4:16–17). He also wanted Tobias to remember to include prayer to God as an important practice to observe (4:5).

# Religious Practices: Prayer and Responses to Angels

Through its numerous prayers to God, the book of Tobit itself emphasizes how essential the practice of prayer is. Of all his kindred, Tobit prays the most and is the most concerned about observing the practice of prayer. When his wife, Anna, attacked his virtue and motivation for his charitable deeds, Tobit was so grief stricken that he prayed that God would allow him to die (3:1–6). Before sending Tobias off to retrieve the silver, Tobit instructed him to pray (4:5). Tobit blessed God when his sight was restored (11:14–15). Others pray too. Tobias's future wife, Sarah, prayed that God would allow her to die (3:11–15). Tobias prayed for God to deliver Sarah and him from the demon that had killed Sarah's previous husbands and threatened his life. Raguel, Sarah's father, praised God that his son-in-law had survived the threat of the demon (8:15–17).

It is essential to recognize that in all these situations Tobit, Tobias, Sarah, and Raguel directed their prayers to God. The angel Raphael (disguised as Azariah), who does not reveal himself until 12:6–22, refused to allow Tobit and Tobias to worship him and instead directed their praise to God: “Bless God forevermore. As for me, when I was with you, I was not acting on my own will, but by the will of God. Bless him each and every day; sing his praises” (12:17–18). The book of Tobit does refer to the angel Raphael as interceding to God on behalf of Tobit, Tobias, and Sarah whenever they prayed (12:12–15), but Tobit, Tobias, and Sarah never themselves prayed in any other way but directly to God. The book of Tobit then does not have to be read as promoting that humans use angels as intermediaries to pray to God.

Furthermore, while it is true that the angel Raphael has a sustained role in the book of Tobit that is quite unlike those of the angels in any other biblical books, these other angels do have similar roles, although sometimes these angels refer to God's presence. For instance, an angel appeared to Hagar to instruct her to return to Sarai and promised her many descendants (Gen. 16:7–12), although later the angel is revealed as God (Gen. 16:13). Genesis 18:22 and 19:1 indicate that two of the men who had spoken to Abraham about the birth of a son are angels who next saved Lot and his family (Gen. 18:1–19:24). Jacob also encountered angels of God (Gen. 32:1). Some of the angels in these verses, therefore, are encounters with God, and

some are intermediaries like Raphael. More such mixed examples can be provided. In Numbers 22:22–35, an angel, not God (Num. 22:31), appeared to Balaam's donkey and then to Balaam. In Judges 13:2–24, the angel who appeared to Manoah's wife and then to her and her husband is God, not an intermediary (Judg. 13:22–23). Zechariah tells about an angel to whom God spoke (Zech. 1:13). In Luke 1:11–20 and Luke 1:26–38, the angel Gabriel announced to Elizabeth and then to Mary that each would give birth to a son. To the shepherds, Jesus' birth is announced by a group of angels (Luke 2:9–15). At Jesus' tomb an angel appeared to the guards and the women (Matt 28:2–7). Two men in white, most likely angels, appeared to the women in Jesus' tomb, according to Luke 24:4–7. These references indicate that the traditions are mixed about whether angels are manifestations of God or separate heavenly beings. Regardless of these mixed traditions, all of the angels who are intermediaries direct praise toward God, not themselves, just as we find in the book of Tobit.

## Conclusion

Without a doubt, the book of Tobit stands apart from any book in the Old Testament because of the major role that the angel Raphael plays in its narrative. His advice is integral for Tobias's success in catching the fish, finding his wife, dispelling the demon, and returning home with Sarah. Even so, he never rivals God in any way. In fact, he explicitly tells Tobit and Tobias to get up and honor God instead when they fall to the ground upon hearing who he truly is. In Tobit's deathbed speech, the narrative of the book of Tobit returns to the beginning themes of praising God and faithfully serving God through giving alms, that is, doing charitable acts.

Almsgiving, proper burial, prayer, observance of festivals, and hospitality are important religious activities in this book and are displayed through the man Tobit but also through the other characters. This book leads us to reflect on the relations between faith and practice and between prayer and service. Where does one end and the other begin? And to whom do we express what our faith means?

## About the Writer

*Emily Cheney is a Presbyterian minister in Georgia, a contributor to the forthcoming New Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible, and the author of She Can Read: Feminist Reading Strategies for Biblical Narrative.*