

## Books of the Septuagint Part 2

### Introduction:

As Israel was under the authority of Greece for several centuries, the Greek language became more and more common. The Septuagint represents the first major effort at translating a significant religious text from one language into another.

### The Books of Wisdom: Psalms to Wisdom of Sirach

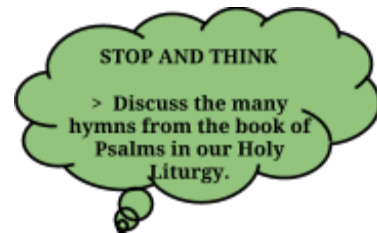
The third section of the Old Testament has seven books and is known as the books of Wisdom.



**Psalms:** Psalms according to the Septuagint is a collection of 151 soulful hymns said to be written by many different authors such as David, Moses, and the temple musicians. The Psalms 151 included in the Septuagint is written with David's own hand. It

concerns the slaying of the giant Goliath. Many of the magnificent hymns of Psalms are used in our Holy Liturgy. The Psalms are of many types, prophecies of the coming Messiah, prayers for the king, personal lamentations, songs of praise and hymns for special feasts.

The Purpose of the book of psalms is to foretell coming events, recall history, frame laws of life, reveal what must be done to obey God's word and are a treasury of good doctrine.



**Job:** The book of Job probes the depths of a man's unshakeable faith in the face of tragedy and innocent suffering. The author of this book is unknown. Job is a prosperous and righteous man who is tested by Satan only because God praises Job's righteousness. During the period of Satan's testing, Job faces terrible disasters that take away all his property, his beloved children and is afflicted with incurable sores. Though Job struggles to understand the situation he is in, he never questions or utters any ill words about God. Eventually with God's help, Job is cured of all his illness and is restored to his earlier existence. The character of Job can be equated to Christ who suffers unjustly and is rewarded for his Godliness.

**Proverbs:** Proverbs is a collection of moral and religious instruction taught to young people after their return to Israel from exile in Babylon. The book repeatedly speaks about wisdom and raises questions on human values, and moral conduct. The central theme of the book is that human wisdom is only achieved through our total submission to God's will. It can be considered as the forerunner to the Beatitudes of the New Testament. King Solomon is considered to be the main writer of this book.



**Ecclesiastes:** The book of Ecclesiastes, writes about a preacher who philosophically seeks to understand the meaning of human existence that a good man can find in this life. King Solomon is considered to have written this book. It is written in an autobiographical form and the writer suggests the reader to enjoy the simple things in life rather than running for riches for it is God who commands everything.

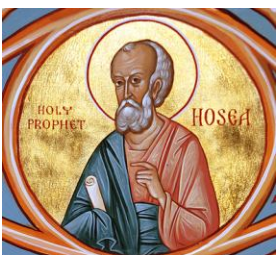
**Song of Songs:** Song of Songs is a collection of lyrical poems written by King Solomon in the language of human love. According to Jewish traditions, Solomon wrote the Song of Songs in his youth, Proverbs in his middle age and Ecclesiastes in his old age. This book speaks prophetically of God's love for His beloved Bride, His Church.

**Wisdom of Solomon:** The book Wisdom of Solomon is an Apocryphal book and was authored by an unknown Jewish believer of the larger Greek community of Alexandria, Egypt. The Wisdom of Solomon was written to offer edification to a Jewish community during times of political, military, and religious upheaval. Its aim was to encourage the Jews to be faithful to their covenant with God. It was also intended to attract pagans and apostate Jews back to Judaism. This book promises of rewards to the righteous such as immortality, praises, and wisdom and condemns the foolishness of idol worship. The first ten chapters are comparable to the teachings of Jesus.

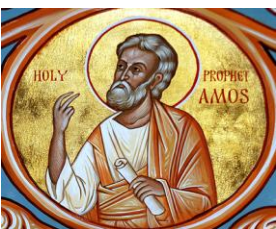
**Wisdom of Sirach:** Wisdom of Sirach also called "Ecclesiasticus" teaches young people on ethical and religious topics. It is an Apocryphal book and was written similar to Proverbs and emphasizes that all true wisdom comes from the Lord and wisdom is a gift from God to mankind. The author of this book is Jesus ben Sirach, who was a Jewish scribe and an instructor at a Jewish academy, probably in Jerusalem, where he taught religion and ethics. Jesus ben Sirach wrote down his lectures in a manuscript. That manuscript written in Hebrew got very little circulation until his grandson translated it into Greek. Then about three centuries later, a translation was made into Syriac from the Hebrew text.

### Books of Prophecy: Hosea - Daniel

The last section of the Old Testament consists of eighteen books and is called the books of Prophecy. The books listed here are in the order as seen in the Septuagint.



**Hosea:** Prophet Hosea describes God's own redeeming love for His chosen people even when they ignore His Laws. Prophet Hosea emphasized on the importance of steadfast love of God instead of empty sacrifices. The name Hosea means "salvation" or "deliverance" and prophet Hosea is called prophet of 'love'.



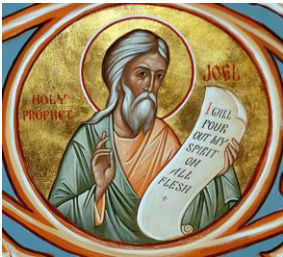
**Amos:** Prophet Amos was a shepherd called by God to declare God's wrath on Israel for its grave social injustice, immorality and its shallow and meaningless piety. He was the first Hebrew prophet to have a biblical book named after him. The name Amos means "burdened" or "burden bearer".



**Micah:** Prophet Micah speaks of peace reigning over all who do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with God and judgement against the kingdom's of Jerusalem and Samaria because of their lawlessness. He also prophesied the Incarnation, Christ's birth at Bethlehem, and His suffering.

**INTERESTING FACT**  
The Holy Bible was written under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit by over 40 different authors from all walks of life, shepherds, farmers, tent-makers, physicians, fishermen, priests, philosophers, prophets and kings. Despite these differences in occupation and the span of years it took to write, the Holy Bible is an extremely cohesive and unified book.

The name Micah means "who is like the Lord".



**Joel:** Prophet Joel is called "Prophet of Pentecost," since his prophecy of the outpouring of the Spirit (Joel 2:28) is quoted by Peter (Acts 2:16) as being fulfilled in the day of Pentecost. He foretells the outpouring of Holy Spirit, the Third Person in the Trinity, upon all mankind as in the day of Pentecost. Joel is a common Jewish name, meaning "YAHWEH is GOD".



**Obadiah:** The book of Obadiah has only 21 verses and is the shortest of the prophetic books in our Holy Bible. Prophet Obadiah describes the destruction of Edom for invading and plundering Jerusalem at least four times and the restoration of Israel thereafter. The name Obadiah means "servant of the Lord".

**Jonah:** The main theme of the book of "Jonah" is universality of God's love and mercy. It extends both to Jews and gentiles alike. Prophet Jonah unwillingly accepts God's command to preach His mercy and forgiveness to the people of a foreign nation, Nineveh, through prayers, repentance and fasting which is practiced even today in our syrian orthodox tradition, as the 'Nineveh Lent'. The name Jonah means "a dove".



**Nahum:** Prophet "Nahum" prophesied the defeat of the powerful Assyrian enemy due to their wicked lives. The name Nahum means "consolation" and his name "is in a sense symbolical of the message of the book, which was intended to *comfort* and *console* the oppressed and afflicted people of Judah.

**Habakkuk:** The Prophet "Habakkuk" agonizes about the atrocities and oppressions that was rampant by the leaders of God's people in Judah. He prophesied the fall of Judah by the Babylonians. Prophet Habakkuk is said to be the prophet who visits Daniel in the Lion's den. He also prophesies about the coming of Our Lord Jesus Christ and salvation through Him.

**Zephaniah:** The Scripture states Prophet 'Zephaniah' of royal heritage. He taught the message of comfort and peace to those who wait patiently for the Lord and serve Him in Judah. His name means 'God has hidden' .

**STOP AND THINK**  
> The Israelites during their exile in Babylonia, adopted many of their local traditions and customs like idol worship. Reflecting on the Israelite's actions, relate it to how we try to fit in a group?

**Haggai:** Prophet *'Haggai'* is the first of the post exile prophets and urges the people of Israel to rebuild the destroyed temple in order to revive their religion. He also taught the people about the rewards of obedience to God. His name means 'festal'.

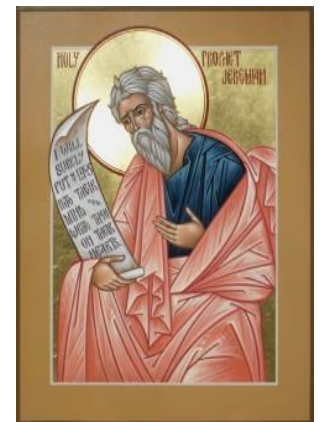
**Zechariah:** Prophet Zechariah is second of the post exile prophets and he prophesied Christ's humble coming, His rejection and betrayal for only thirty pieces of silver, His crucifixion, His priesthood, His heritage and His coming in glory to establish peace. He also encouraged the people to have close ties with God to prevent further judgement. Zechariah means 'He whom God remembers'.



**Malachi:** Prophet Malachi prophesied the birth of a forerunner, like the ancient prophet Elijah to appear before the birth of Messiah. This prophecy was about John the Baptist who came as the forerunner to the Messiah Jesus Christ. The name Malachi means "angel" or "messenger".

**Isaiah:** Prophet Isaiah writes about his visions wherein the coming of Messiah is described in great detail. He even writes about the virgin birth by our "Theotokos"(Title of the Virgin Mary), Christ's intense suffering with His Resurrection from the dead and His second coming. Isaiah means the salvation of God and he lived in Judah. Due to the many prophecies he made of the coming of the Messiah, the book of Isaiah is also referred to as the fifth gospel.

**Jeremiah:** Prophet Jeremiah foretells the capture of Jews by the Babylonians and destruction of the temple in Jerusalem. He also prophesied the "new covenant" between God and mankind to be fulfilled through the Messiah of Israel. The name Jeremiah means "the one whom God appoints or exalts". The book of Jeremiah has come down to us in two different versions: the Greek version or the Septuagint, and the Hebrew version, known as the Masoretic Text. There are significant differences between the two in terms of wording, structure and length.



**Baruch:** Baruch was the secretary of prophet Jeremiah and a reader in the temple. The book of Baruch, an Apocryphal book was compiled sometime after the exile of the Israelites. He writes about a Jewish community that repents after its capture by the Babylonians. After Jerusalem was sacked and the leaders of Judah were deported, the Jews established communities in territory occupied by Babylon. In this new situation of exile, the Jewish community, now without the temple and a political home, established connections with other Jews across Babylon. But Baruch coming from Egypt to a community, calling on them to soften their hearts and return in obedience to the Lord. They do so and send an offering to the Jews who remain near Jerusalem. This book is best read as a story of the relationship between God and His people.

**The Lamentations of Jeremiah:** This book authored by prophet Jeremiah was written

after the destruction of Jerusalem. It is his personal testimonial and sadness over the devastation of Jerusalem and the temple. He is called the 'weeping prophet because he expressed great grief and sadness at the unrepentant and stubborn nature of his people. Although, in his great distress he appeals for mercy in prayer to God.

**The Epistle of Jeremiah:** This epistle written by prophet Jeremiah is an Apocryphal book and was a forewarning by him to the Jewish community in exile to beware of their religious practice of idol worship.

**Ezekiel:** In this book, prophet Ezekiel prophesies very accurately about God's direction of events to take place in heaven and earth. God calls prophet Ezekiel more number of times than any other prophet to involve himself personally in declaring His divine word. Ezekiel means "God strengthens" and was from a priestly family.

**Daniel:** The book of Daniel writes about the experiences of Daniel and his friends in captivity. Daniel and his friends were taken hostage from Jerusalem to Babylon by King Nebuchadnezzar. With divine intervention Daniel had a gift to interpret dreams and thus was given a high position in the King's royal court. Some of the great miracles mentioned in the Bible can be read in the book of Daniel, such as the fiery furnace, the handwriting on the wall, and Daniel in the lion's den. Daniel means "God is my Judge" and the book reinstates the blessings of God granted to those who stay away from idol worship and pray to the One God. The Septuagint version of Daniel contains three apocryphal additions not found in the Masoretic Text: (1) The Prayer of Azarias and the Hymn of the Three Young Men, (2) Susanna, and (3) Bel and the Dragon.

### **Summary:**

The seven books of Wisdom proclaim that happiness is possible only through faith and obedience to the one true God. The relevance of biblical prophecy is not only the information revealed to the audience about the circumstances being faced in their time or in a time to come, but also what the message reveals about the nature of God. Prophecy in the Bible is part of God's self-revelation, by which we come to know God through what he has done in the past and what He plans to do in the future. The forty nine God inspired Old Testament books divided into four sections, books of law, books of history, books of wisdom and the books of prophecy, all of which serve as an introduction to John the Baptist's preparation of the world for the coming of the Messiah, who is Isaiah's Suffering Servant, Zechariah's Prince of Peace and the Good Shepherd who lays down His life for the flock.

### **CHECKPOINT:**

- 1) Explain the Books of Prophecy and Books of Wisdom.
- 2) What is Apocalyptic literature? Give examples.
- 3) Who were the main authors of the Septuagint?

### **CHALLENGE:**

- 1) Compare Apocryphal writings and Apocalyptic literature from the Holy Scriptures.