

TITLE : BOOK JUDITH
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Holiness Pope Shenouda III

His Grace Bishop Moussa

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Your Word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path. (Ps 119:105).

What a wonderful thing it is to obtain spiritual insight, enlightened thought and an accepting heart, and what better way to achieve this other than through the studying of the word of God, the Holy Bible, its depth and meanings to be kept in our hearts and minds and to be reflected in our behaviours, as stated in the Psalm

“Your word I have hidden in my heart, that I might not sin against you” (Ps 119:11)

The Lord Jesus thus blesses all those who listen, keep and hide the words of God applying it in their lives through the tenderness of their hearts, saying “Blessed are those who hear the words of God and Keep it” (LK 11:28). These words of God my beloved requires trained spiritual ears and enlightened hearts.

The book in your hands beloved reader is the fruit of the efforts and great hardship, which includes the non trivial tasks of studies and research, as well as tireless struggle and vigil leading to its production in a beautiful and honourable presentation, serving the great aim which is the discovery of the words of God, containing history, spiritual depth as well as factual stories.

The great effort invested in the study and research of this book is presented by the dedicated and honest servant the theological deacon Mr. Ehab Raef Wahib, who wished to pursue the path of producing for us a commentary concerning the second canonical books. As he has produced for us in the past the book of Tobia he now writes about the book of Judith.

May this book be the cause of salvation to many souls, and a source of knowledge of the Holy Bible, through the intercessions of our pure mother the Virgin Saint Mary, the patron of our church the prince of martyrs Saint George and thorough the prayers of the shepherd of shepherds and the father of fathers his holiness the blessed Pope Shinouda the third and his brother in the apostolic ministry his honourable grace dishop Mousa the dishop of youth affairs. May the loving Lord preserve their lives.

Amen.

Father Marcos k Tawfik

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WARNING

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The proceeds of this book will go towards the promotion of the activities of Bible study.

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First and foremost, I thank our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ for supporting me through publishing the interpretations of the books of Tobith and Judith. I thank the Lord for his guidance in commencing the series of writing about the deuterocanonical book especial when I felt that many do not have an idea about these books.

My thanks go to my dear wife Emane for her continuous support. I thank all those who, through their efforts contributed towards bringing this book to light, especially Aba Moussa, the Bishop for the youth for writing the introduction to this book, Father Marcus Khilla for his commentary, my very dear brother Wahib Raeif Wahib for the art work and the cover. My sincere book, especially Dr Mounir Agaiby, Chicago, America and the servants of St. Mary's church at Rawd-el-Farag and of St. George Sydney Australia.

And last, but not least, special thanks to Mrs Yvonne Tadros for her time and effort in translating this publication. Pray for her.

May the prayers of our Patron Saints the Virgin Mary, St. George and the prayers of His Holiness Pope Shenouda III and his partner in the Apostolic Mission be with us all.

Pray for the author,
Ehab R Wahib

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In the name of the father, the Son, the Holy Spirit One God, Amen

The events of the book of Judith are events which may take place in any generation and in any age. It is the story of a very wealthy and beautiful widow. However, despite all her wealth and beauty she rejected the idea of remarrying. She fasted and wore sackcloth the whole year except for the Sabbath and feast days. Her whole life was spent in fasting and prayers.

Is there any one who can lead Judith's life in this day and age?

When Judith sought the Lord during her ordeal, He stood by her. He gave her all what she asked and prayed for. The book speaks of her heroic acts. What she did was beyond the capabilities of the greatest of male heroes.

We shall now remove the dust from the book of Judith, which has long been semi forgotten by the Church and the Christian people. Readers of this book should relate its story to others to seek its blessing.

It is suggested that this book be incorporated in the syllabus of the youth, especially Sunday schools, or be discussed in the Ladies, Meeting, perhaps it may change the traditional view of widows, that they are weak and broken females. Judith will demonstrate that a widow can be strong and not sad and broken.

In this book, there will be an explanation of each personality within the book and also comparisons of versions occurring in this book and later in the Gospel, together with an attempt to explain the symbolic meanings so names and events surrounding this book.

At the end of this book, there will be few stories of other saintly widows mentioned in the Bible.

May the Grace of the Lord, Jesus Christ, the prayers of his Mother and our mother the Virgin Mary, and the intercession of St. George, the Patron Saint of this church be with us all.

Pray For me.

The Author

CHAPTER ONE

GENERAL IDEA ABOUT THE BOOK OF JUDITH

*Author of the Book

*The Language in which the Book was written

*The time in which the Book was written

*Authenticity of the Book

*Order of the Book in the Bible

THE BOOK OF JUDITH

The author of the book is unknown. However, some attribute it to Joachim the Great Priest.

THE LANGUAGE IN WHICH THE BOOK WAS WRITTEN

The book was originally written in Hebrew. However, the Hebrew Version has been Lost. Its Greek version was part of the other books of the septuagint translation of the Old Testament which was translated by 72 of the Israelite elders, among whom was St. Simeon the elder. The septuagint translators were made of six of each of the twelve branches of the Israelites. This version of the translation has been adopted because it is easier to follow in terms of sentence structure and vocabulary. The book is made up of 16 chapters and 345 verses.

IN TIME IN WHICH THE BOOK WAS WRITTEN

This book became popular around the second century before Christ (200 B.C.) Other maintain the opinion that its events took place after the defeat of Senehereib, King of Assyria during the days of Hezekiah, King of Juda (2Chron.22)

THE POSITION OF THESE BOOK IN THE ORDER OF THE HOLY BIBLE

The books of Tobit Judith Esther are to be placed after the book of Ezra and Nehemiah as this is its historical order.

AUTHENTICITY OF THE BOOK :

The introduction to the book of Judith written by St. Irenaeus, who was a disciple of St. Gregory the Theologus, states that the first council of Nicea recognised the authenticity of this book and considered it one of the divinely inspired books. Also the Synod of Carthage in its 27th canon, recognised this book as one of the authentic book of the old testament (Torah).

In addition, the two Synods one of which was held at Constantinople and concluded at Jasher in 1642 and the second which was held in Jerusalem in 1672 acknowledged the book of Judith among the sacred inspired book (Holy Divine Books).

A decision to the same effect was issued in Trentan council recognising the Deuterocanonical Books on the basis that they were all included among the septuagint translation in which the old Testament was translated into Greek in 280 B.C. this council took place in Trent in 1456 A.D.

The book "Mashkaat Al-Toullab fi Hal Moushkilaat Al-Kitab" (The Students' grievance in respect of the solution to the Bible problem) published in 1929 p.166, states that many of the patriarch saints of the first, second, third and fourth eras together with others, referred to the book of Judith in their writings. examples of these were:

*St. Clement the Roman in his first epistle to the Corinthians Ch.55: "blessed Judith, when her city was besieged, asked of the elders permission to go forth into the camp of the strangers; and, exposing herself to danger, she went out for the love which she bore to her country and people then besieged; and the Lord delivered Holofernes into the hands of a woman"

*St. Clement of Alexandria in his book "The Educator" P.2 ch.7, p.4 ch.9)

*St. Origen, in his book "The Prater" ch.13, 29.

*Pope St. Athanasius in his second treatise against Arius 2:35 also. St. Irenaeus, St. Ambrose and many others quoted the book in their writings.

St. Ambrose in the Nicene and post Nicene Fathers :

SECOND SERIES VOLUME 10 On THE DUTIES OF THE CLERGY - BOOK NO 3 CHS 13

Judith, after enduring many danger for virtue's sake, gained

Very many and great benefits.

SEE! Judith presents herself to thee as worthy of admiration. She approaches Holofernes, a man feared by the people, and surrounded by the victorious troops of the Assyrians. At first she makes an impression on him by the grace of her form and the beauty of her countenance then she entraps him by the refinement of her speech. Her first triumph was that she returned from the tent of the enemy with her purity unspotted. Her second, that she gained a victory over a man, and put to flight the people by her counsel. The Persians were terrified at her daring. And so what is admired in the case of those two Pythagoreans deserves also in her case our admiration, for she trembled not at the danger of death, nor even at the danger her modesty was in, which is a matter of greater concern to good women. She feared not the blow of one scoundrel, nor even weapons of a whole army. She, a woman, stood between the lines of the combatants-right amidst victorious armsheedless of death. As one looks at her overwhelming danger, one would say she went out to die; as one looks at her faith, one says she went but out to fight. Judith then followed the call of virtue, and as she follows that, she wins great benefits. It was virtuous to prevent the people of the Lord from giving themselves up to the heathen; to prevent them from betraying their native rites and mysteries, or from yielding up their consecrated virgins, their venerable widows, and modest to barbarian impurity, or from ending the siege by a

surrender. It was virtuous for her to be willing to encounter danger on behalf of all, so as to deliver all from danger. How great must have been the power of her virtue, that she, a woman, should claim to give counsel on the chiefest matters and not leave it in the hands of the leaders of the people! How great, again, the power of her virtue to reckon for certain upon God to help her how great her grace to find his help "...it seemed needful to say something concerning widows... by the example of Judith is shown that courage is not wanting in widows: her preparation for her visit to Holofernes is dwelt upon, as also her chastity and her wisdom, her sobriety and moderation.

Irrespective of the objection of the Protestant churches to this book and other books collated after Ezra the priest, some Protestant churches, like the German church, recognise this book and regard it as one of the canonical books.

Some prominent writers and Protestant authors quoted this book, though they did not deny their rejection of it as a divinely inspired book. Examples of these are:

1. Rev Daoud Haddad of Jerusalem :

In the Bible Dictionary - published by the Misha'al Library, 1964, p. 1084, he defined the book of Judith as "A book considered by the Coptic and orthodox churches as one of the Deutrocanonical books, which are next in line to the Divine Revelation written in the canonical books"

2. Dr Simaan Kahloon :

In his book "Mourshid Al - Talibein ila al - Kitab al - Thamein" (Guide of the Students of the Precious book), Beirut, 1937, he states : "the subject of this book deals with the victory of the Jews over Holofernes (meaning great army leader) the invading Assyrian leader, through the help of a Jewish widow who was a wealthy, beautiful and very virtuous by the name of Judith. The writer and date of the book are not known. However, it depicts the style prevalent during the Maccabees era".

The authenticity of this book and its being canonical is confirmed as being divinely revealed in the similarities contained in some of its versions :

1. "For he has not tried us with fire, as he did them, to search their hearts, nor has he taken vengeance on us; but the Lord scourges those who are close to him in order to admonish them" (Jud.8:27)

This compares with 1 Cor. 10:9 "Neither should we become a trial to the Lord as some of them tried Him and were destroyed by serpents"

2. "Then Uzziah said to her, "O daughter, you are blessed by the most high God above all other women on earth" (Jud.13:18)

This is similar to Elizabeth's greeting upon the Virgin's visit, as recorded by St Luke: "Blessed are you among women and blessed is the fruit of your womb" (Lk.1:42)

Following research in the Nicene Fathers and Post Nicene fathers and ante Nicene fathers, it is found that some of these saints referred to the book of Judith in their writings.

St Jerome, for example, in second series volume 6 when talking about widows, referred to her :

- We read of a widow wasted with fasting and wearing the sombre garb of a mourner, whose outward squalor indicated not so much the regret which she felt for her dead husband as the temper in which she looked forward to the Bridegroom (Christ). I see her hand armed with the sword and stained with blood. I recognise the head of Holofernes which she had carried away from the camp of the enemy. Here a woman vanquishes men, and chastity beheads lust.
- Quickly changing her garb, she puts on once more in the hour of Victory her own mean dress finer than all the splendours of the world.

ST ATHANASIUS REFERS TO THE BOOK OF JUDITH

In his 50th letter he says: "But for greater exactness I add this also, writing of necessity; that there are other books besides these not included in the Canon, but appointed by the fathers to be read by those who newly join us, and who wish for instruction in the word of godliness. The Wisdom of Solomon, and the Wisdom of Sirach, and Esther and Judith and Tobit..."

ST CYRIL OF JERUSALEM :

Refers to the book of Judith among the books to be read in the Church i.e. it is acknowledged by the church - Read Footnote No. 3 in the Catechetical lectures p.26

It is noticed that those great forefathers referred to the book of Judith as an example in their sermons they recognised the book as one to be read in the church. Why does the Protestant Church reject it up to now? Why do we, who acknowledge this book, do not read it in our churches up to now?

1 "Judith," Microsoft Encarta 96 Encyclopedia.. they said about her:

Judith, fourth book of the old Testament Apocrypha in those versions of the Bible following the Greek Septuagint (generally Roman catholic and Orthodox versions). Judith is included with the Apocrypha in the King James Version; it does not appear in the Hebrew Bible. The work of an unknown author, the book falls into two roughly equal parts. In the first part (chapters 1-7), King Nebuchadnezzar, "who reigned over the Assyrians in the great city of Nineveh" (Judith 1:1), sends his general Holofernes to punish the western nation because they have refused to join him in a war against Media. Holofernes marches against them, and all except the Israelites submit. At this point in the narrative Achior, leader of the Ammonites, warns Holofernes that God will defend the Israelites so long as they remain faithful. Holofernes, however, disregarding the warning, surrounds the Israelites in the ancient Palestinian town of Bethulia, near Jerusalem.

In the second part of the book (chapters 8-12), the pious and beautiful widow Judith (Hebrew, "Jewess") volunteers to deliver the Israelites after rebuking them for losing faith in God when under siege. She goes to the Assyrian camp, pretending to be an informer against her people, and charms Holofernes, who invites her to a banquet in his tent. At the banquet, Holofernes becomes drunk and falls asleep. Judith seizes a sword, beheads him, wraps the severed head in a bag, and returns with it to her people. The jubilant Israelites then attack the leaderless Assyrians, who flee in panic. Judith leads the people in a song of celebration and praise, and then all go to Jerusalem to offer thanksgiving.

Most modern scholars recognize that Judith is a historical romance written for didactic purposes. The author appears to have deliberately ignored historical fact in order to focus attention exclusively on the religious message.

Nebuchadnezzar II, for example, was king of Babylon, but he was never styled "king of Assyria," nor did he have his capital at the Assyrian capital Nineveh, which was destroyed in 612 BC by his father, Nabopolassar. Indeed, any participation by the historical Nebuchadnezzar in the story of Judith is a chronological impossibility: Nebuchadnezzar died in 562 BC, while the action of Judith is said to take place after the end of the Babylonian Captivity in 538 (4:3;5:19). The geography of Judith is similarly open to question. The itinerary of Holofernes and his army (2:21-28) is geographically impossible, and the site of Bethulia - the town around which the action revolves - resists identification, despite the presence of topographical details in the text that should fix its location with precision.

Judith betrays affinities with Ezekiel and Joel, as well as with Daniel and other apocalyptic writings. Both the apocalyptic element in the book and certain details of the narrative suggest that it dates from the period of the Maccabees.

Nebuchadnezzar, for example, is said to have wanted "to destroy all local gods so that the nations should worship Nebuchadnezzar alone and people of every language and nationality should hail him as a god" (3:8). Yet it was the Seleucids, not the Assyrians or Babylonians, whose kings first insisted on divine honors. In that case, "Nebuchadnezzar" might represent Antiochus IV, while "Holofernes" may stand for his general Nicanor, "Assyrians" for the Seleucid Syrians, and "Nineveh" for Antiochus's capital Antioch. This interpretation is supported by the existence of a Hebrew Midrash that tells the story of Judith in an abbreviated form, explicitly assigning it to the period of Seleucid oppression.

CHAPTER TWO

- A) Outstanding Figures in the Book of Judith
- B) The Sections of the Book of Judith

At the outset, if we identify the characters of each figure in this book and the surrounding circumstances, it will be easy to follow and understand the events. The figures will be listed in order of appearance:

1. King Arphaxad : (Jud.1:1)

Nothing much is known about him, except that he was one of the kings of Medes and that he was popular among the Jews because he built forts around their towns to protect them against the enemies.

2. Nebuchadnezzar :

King of Assyria (Jud.1:5, 14:18). A Babylonian name meaning “Nebu the shield of the borders”. He was son Nebuplazzar and his successor on the throne of the city of Babylon and the Babylonian empire which was located between the two rivers and Syria. His father founded the New Babylonian state in 625 B.C.

He paved the way to the Assyrian Empire. Thirteen years later, Nineveh fell when it was surrounded by Nebuplazzar, King of Babylon, and Xerxes, King of Medes. Pharaohnechoh, King of Egypt, attacked Palestine to protect his interests in Southern Syria (2Kgs.23:29, 2Chon.35:20). He fought the King of Judea in Megedu 608 B.C. and Killed him in the battle. Nechoh did not stop at capturing Palestine, he returned to Egypt to prepare a new army to reach the Euphrates to block the passage for the Babylonians and capture the dominion of the Assyrians. Nebuplazzar sent Nebuchadnezzar to confront Nechoh.

Nebuchadnezzar became famous when his military tactics resulted in overcmng Pharaohnechoh, his army and his Syrian supporters when thousands of them were killed.

In the battle of Chaldis - 605 B.C. (2Kgs 24:7, Jer.46:2) Nebuchadnezzar captured all what was left behind by Nechoh in Syria and Palestine. He went to Jerusalem and captured some of its inhabitants, among them were Daniel and his companions (Da.1:1-4). As soon as he heard the news of his father’s seath, he returned to Babylon and proclaimed himself his father’s successor in 605 B.C.

Nebuchadnezzar did not stop at conquering Jerusalem and taking some of its citizens as captives but he ordered his men to take some other groups among the residents and moving them to Babylon from Jerusalem, Phoenecia and Egypt.

He continued his reign over Judea and collected taxes for a period of three years. The king of Judea at the time was Jehoiakim (2Kgs 14:1). In 602 B.C., when Nebuchadnezzar was occupied with wars in other regions of his kingdom, he was distracted from Palestine because of the distance between it and Babylon; Jehoiadim took this opportunity and rebelled. However, Nebuchadnezzar gad overcome his enemies within a short time and returned to Palestine with a sweeping army. Ge occupied Jerusalem, put an end to the rebellion, arrested Jehoiakim and later released him. He replaced him by another king, Jehoiachin (2Ch.36:6). However, Jehoiachin again rebelled. Nebuchadnezzar came for the third time, occupied the city, and took its citizens captives to Babylon. He entered the house of the Lord and plundered it (2Kgs.24:12-16)

He then crowned Metenieh as king and changed his name to zedekieh, who was loyal to Nebuchadnezzar for about eight years. However, in the ninth year he sought independence after learning that the Egyptians were approaching his Kingdom. He was hopeful that the Egyptians would back him against the Babylonians (Jer. 37:5). Nebuchadnezzar did not give him this opportunity. After he besieged Jerusalem, he occupied it for the fourth time. He slew the sons of Zedekiah before his eyes and put out the tyes of Zedekiah, and bound him with fettersw of brass and his people carried him to Babylon (2Kgs.25:7). Nebuchadnezzar burned the altar of the Lord and took thousands of the inhabitants as captives (2Chr.36:5-21, Jer.39:52). Jeremiah, who prophesied what happened, was well looked after by nebuchadnezzas (Jr.39:11-14).

Nebuchadnezzar then besieged Tyre and other Phoenician coastal cities and was ruthless with their citizens (Ez.39:18). In the year 582 B.C. He renewed his attacks upon central Syria, the Ammonites, the Moabites (Jer.52:30), then he invaded Egypt in 567 B.C. (Ez.39:19).

During the final days of his life, Nebuchadnezzar had other conquests, the details of which are not known to us. It was his policy to move the people of his Kingdom from one city to the other to ensure their loyalty and to utilise their abilities in his development projects. He treated the citizens of Jerusalem in the same way which enabled him to build palaces, cities, fortresses and many altars. The ruins prove the extent of the civilisation under his reign. To it is attributed the hanging gardens and the irrigation channels. Daniel called him “King of Kings” (Dan.2:37)

The first four chapters of the book of Daniel tell us some the events about Nebuchadnezzar. One of these being his insanity, in fact, Nebuchadnezzar became insane and one of the symptoms being that he thought he was an animal. He imagined himself an ox, he went to graze in pastures (Dan. 4).

Following his illness, he died after he had reigned for 43years. His death took place in the year 562

B.C. his life story is contained in the books of Kings, chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, Jeremiah and Daniel. The monuments and ruins still exist in Babylon it is not possible to accommodate all of them in this books.

Nebuchadnezzar built two sieges around Babylon. He built two altars for the goddess Ashtar, other temples and a temple with steps in the shape of a pyramid. He also built the Hanging Gardens of Babylon and the Tower of Babel which were considered among the seven wonders of the world. He also erected irrigation channels in Babylon (Dan. 4:30).

From the above it will be noted how ruthless, powerful and tyrannic he was. For this reason, all the countries feared him and looked at him as a god. They surrendered themselves to him like slaves. Some are of the view that this king was "Aserhedon". He was called in the book Nebuchadnezzar king of Assyria by way of title. For example, pharaoh was a title for all the kings of Egypt. Thus, Nebuchadnezzar could be a title for all the Kings of Babylon and Assyria, because the same name was given to Senehereib.

3. HOLOFERNES, ARMY LEADER OF ASSYRIA

He was Nebuchadnezzar's army leader. He won many conquests and was killed by the hands of a Jewish woman, the great Judith.

4. JOAKIM THE HIGH PRIEST OF THE LORD : (Jud. 4: 5,11 15:9,10)

Jewish name meaning "he who is being established by God". His plan was to guard all the entries through which the Assyrians could sneak to the country. He exhorted the people to pray and fast (Jud.4:5-7, 11-12).

5. ACHIOR:

Was the leader of all the Ammonites (Jud.5:5, 25) he was brave, truthful and had no fear of Holofernes. Towards the end of his life, he left the army of Holofernes and when he went and saw the wonders the Lord had done to the Israelite army, he abandoned the gentile Laws, believed in God, was circumcised and, together with his family, joined the people of Israel (Jud. 14:6)

6. UZZIAH SON OF MICAH HEAD OF THE ISRAELITES (Jud. 6:14, 13:23)

Hebrew name meaning "Yahweh is strength". He was a prince at that time. He was weak, he shed tears at a time when the people would not have witnessed the weakness of their leader, so that they would not be even weaker. He addressed his people affectionately "have courage, my brothers and sisters!" (Jud. 7:29). It is always commendable when a leader wins his people. However it was a gain on God's account, as he imposed a limit of five days as a waiting period for God's mercy, as if God would respond to threats, or mankind determine what course their creator should take (Jud. 7:23-24). Also God had forsaken him as a result of his shaky faith "But if these days pass by, and no help comes for us, I will do as you say (Jud. 7:31) i.e. the people would surrender in the absence of God's mercy.

7. CHARMI (ETHENIEL) :

Charmi, a Jewish name meaning "vine-dresser". At that time he was a prince of the Israelites.

8. JUDITH :

(the widow) – A Hebrew word meaning Jewess. In the Holy Bible the name "Judith" occurred more than once one of the wives of Esau son of Isaac son of Abraham, was called Judith. She was the daughter of Peiri the Hittite and she was a cause of bitterness to Isaac and Rebecca (Gen. 26:34-35, 36:2).

However, Judith, the focus of this book was a Jewish heroine known for her virtue and her zeal for her people. Through the help of the Lord her intelligence and her wisdom she saved her people from the vengeance of the enemy.

She was the widow of Manasseh, who died of a sun stroke during the barley harvest (Jud. 8:2-3). She remained a widow for three years and six months before the Lord used her for the salvation of her people (Jud. 8:41, 9:3). After the salvation of her people and until she died at the age of 105 years, she remained in the house of her only husband and never gave herself to a man (Jud. 16:28).

Although she was a very beautiful woman, yet she was chaste (Jud. 8:7, 10:18). When she risked her life to save her people from the hands of the Assyrian army, she adorned herself with beautiful garments and jewellery when she left to go to the army. It was not out of lust she did this but out of righteousness for this reason the Lord added so much to her beauty that she dazzled whoever looked at her (Jud. 10:4). Because of her chastity the Lord protected her body and his hand supported her she was not profaned by any Gentile (Jud. 13:5, 15:11).

Virtue and courage were combined in her (Jud. 16:26). When she saw the sufferings of her people she first risked her life (Jud. 13:25, 16:9-21). Then in wisdom and humility she rebuked Chabris and Charmis the two dignified elderly among the people for what she heard about Uzziah's proposed

surrender after five days following the siege over water (Jud. 8:9-27). Her courage was not a rash reaction but was a result of a very clever plan which she did not disclose to anyone (Jud. 8:31-32). When the time came she entered the tent of her people's enemy with a courage, by nature not present in women she cut her enemy's head after holding him by his hair with his own dagger not once but twice she rolled his body from his bed to the ground she kept his head to show to her people to announce their salvation (Jud. 10:16-17). She could have delivered the rest of the work to the men and the leaders but she explained the rest of the plan to people humbly calling them "Brothers and sisters". She was a wise woman her words came of a true heart and all her dispositions were right (Jud. 8:28, 11:18,19). She spoke words of wisdom and because the words of wise people were heard in quietness at her time of victory she did not begin speaking except when all was quiet (Jud. 13:16,17). Because of her wisdom she was humble both in word and in deeds with her friends and her enemies she sought the prayers of her elders before she carried her plan (Jud. 8:31,13). She fell to her knees on the ground when she met the leader of her enemy's armies (Jud. 10:20). At her victory she attributed all the glory to god.

Although she lived in a secluded room in which she locked herself with her maids (Jud. 8:5) in her husband's house she was widely known among all the people (Jud. 8:8, 16:25). During the festivals she appeared in great glory (Jud. 16:27). She had a vast wealth many maids and servants and properties with herds of cattle (Jud. 8:7). All this was not only because she was of the tribe of Reuben or because of Merari (her father) (Jud. 8:1), but because she was with a genuine internal relationship with the Lord as she devoted herself greatly to the Lord (Jud. 8:8), so much so that the elders of her kin called her "holy" (Jud. 8:29), she believed in God's support to her and to her people (Jud. 13:13,27) she put sackcloth around her waist wore widow's clothing and fasted all the days of her life except for the days of festivals (Jud. 8:6, 9:1, 10:2). During the hard times she fasted until sunset (Jud. 12:9). In preparing her food she kept God's commandments as was customary under the old Testament. Her maid prepared her the food and she would not eat of the gentile Assyrian Leader's food.

All this would not come except of a woman of prayer who prated in silence her lips moved but she would not be heard (Jud. 13:6,7,9). She knelt prostrated before the Lord (Jud. 10:1). She prayed during the hours that preceded the morning (Jud. 12:5,7). Although she was filled with the spirit of prayer she sought and believed in the prayers of the holy people on her behalf (Jud. 8:31,33, 9:10, 12:5,8).

In her foreign Land she sought permission for prayer (Jud. 12:6).for this reason the elders sought the blessings of her prayers (Jud. 8:29).

This book has three examples of her prayers :

First prayer : During the ordeal she prayed in her room (Jud. 9:2-19).

Second prayer : inside her enemy's tent, before she began carrying on her.

Third prayer : inside her own city among God's people following her victory (Jud. 16:2-21).

SECTIONS OF THE BOOK

1. Nebuchadnezzar defeats Arphaxad, King of Medes (Jud. 1)
2. Nebuchadnezzar sends Holofernes to punish the Jews in Palestine who did not send armies and to force them to worship Nebuchadnezzar (Jud. 2:3)
3. Holofernes besieges the Jews in Bethulia (Jud. 4-7)
4. A young virtuous woman, Judith, assured the Jews that God would save their city (Jud. 8,9)
5. She seduced Holofernes through her trick and decapitated him when he was drunken – asleep (Jud. 10:1-13)
6. Rescue of the Jews (Jud. 13:11-15)
7. She offered thanks to God (Jud. 16:10-17)
8. She lived happily ever after (Jud. 16:18-25)

CHAPTER THREE
REFLECTIONS ON THE BOOK OF JUDITH

CHAPTER ONE ARROGANC

The events of the book of Judith took place during the imprisonment of king Menesseh in Bablon during the reign of his son the king of Judea (639-609 B.C.).

The book begins by a simple introduction about king Arphaxad who was loved by the Jews. The book states that he ruled over many nations and built a capital or rather headquarters in Ecbatana this is the same town mentioned in the book of Tobit as being the town from which Tobias took his wife Sarah (see second objection in the first book of this series "Interpretation of the book of Tobit"). When Arphaxad completed the building of Ecbatana it was a great city he thought that by building this fortified city and with the protection of his mighty army he would be safe.

"it was the twelfth year of the reign of Nebuchadnezzar who ruled over the Assyrians in the great city of Nineveh in those days Arphaxad ruled over the Medes in Ecbatana he built walls around Ecbatana with hewn stones three cubits thick and six cubits long he made the walls seventy cubits high and fifty cubits wide at its gates he raised towers one hundred cubits high and sixty cubits wide at the foundations he made its gates seventy cubits high and forty cubits wide to allow his armies march out in force and his infantry to form their ranks". (Judith 1:1-4).

When one becomes arrogant the person forgets God and relies on one's strength only the divine Grace forsakes the person it is like God's voice speaking "I supported you until you became great and now you think that with your won power and strength and the might of your army you will protect yourself well then I shall forsake you to your power and the might of your army" what happened when Grace abandoned him???

He was defeated the city was plundered nothing helped him not his power not the might of Ecbatana not the strong stones of the fortified walls nor his wealth had he put his trust in the Lord he would stand by him as he stood by Gideon.

Then the Lord said to Gideon "by the three hundred men how lapped I will save you and deliver the Midianites into your hand let all the other people go every man to his place". (Judges 7:7).

How is this O Lord 300 men before all the armies of the Medianites who were spread like locusts and whose caravans were beyond count??

"for they would come up with their livestock and their tents coming in as numerous as locusts both they and their camels were without number and they would enter the land to destroy it" (Judges 6:5).

However because the hand of the Lord was with Gideon and the Israelites they defeated the whole of the Medianite army.

The same took place when the Lord stood by the Israelites during the time of Elisha when the Lord made the Aramites hear the sounds of chariots and a great army they fled and the Lord saved the Israelites from famine and the army.

"for the Lord had caused the army of the Syrians to hear the noise of chariots and the noise of horses the noise of a great army so they said to one another look the king of Israel has hired against us the kings of the Hittites and the kings of Egyptians to attack us "therefore they arose and fled at twilight and left the camp intact their tents their horses and their donkeys and they fled for their lives"

Also when the Lord sent his angel and killed the Assyrian army 185,000 and saved the Israelites during the time of Hezekiah and Isaiah (2kg.19:35).

He who relies on his own toil and effort is a loser the Lord requires us to seek help and we ourselves shall see the outcome.

Once there was a monk who was constantly under temptation he got tired of his battles at the moment he sought the Lord his battles ended then he told the Lord "you watched me while I suffered why didn't you come to my help" and the Lord answered "but you did not ask" he who does not seek the Lord will be left to one's own devices but whoever seeks the Lord will not be abandoned.

There is another example of arrogance and the reliance on the self the book of Daniel (4:28-33) tells us.

"All this came upon King Nebuchadnezzar at the end of the twelve month he was walking about the royal palace of Babylon.

The king spoke saying "is not this great Babylon that I have built for a royal dwelling by my mighty power and for the honour of my majesty?"

While the word was still in the king's mouth a voice fell from heaven king Nebuchadnezzar to you it is spoken the Kingdom has departed from you.

And they shall drive you from men and your dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field they shall make you eat like oxen and seven times shall pass over you until you know the Most High rules in the Kingdom of men and gives it to whomever he chooses.

That very hour the word was fulfilled concerning Nebuchadnezzar he was driven from men and ate grass like oxen his body was wet with the dew of heaven till his hair had grown like eagles feathers and his nails like birds claws.

This is God's punishment to the arrogant (Ps.119:21, Is. 13: 11, Ja.4:6).

For this reason beware of arrogance Arrogance and God's support do not combine.

What happened to Nebuchadnezzar when he repented and recognized God's presence and acknowledged that ultimately god is the king of creation everyone and everything is subject to his will ?? the Lord lifted the temptation of him but left him with a reminder his nails so that each time he sees them he recalls God's greatness and might.

"And at the end of the time I Nebuchadnezzar lifted my eyes to heaven and my understanding returned to me and I blessed the Most High and praised and honoured him who lives for ever for his dominion is an everlasting dominion and his Kingdom is from generation to generation.

All the inhabitant of the earth are reputed as nothing he does according to his will in the army of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth no one can restrain his hand or say to him "what have you done?"

At the same time my reason returned to me and for the glory of my Kingdom my honour and splendour returned to me my councillor and nobles restored to me I restored to my Kingdom and excellent majesty was added to me.

Now I Nebuchadnezzar praise and extol and honour King of heaven all of whose works are truth and his ways justice.

And those who walk in pride he is able to abase" (Dan. 4:34-37).

There is another example of arrogance : someone who thought of himself as God let us see what happened to him.

"So on a set day Herod arrayed in royal apparel sat on his throne and gave an oration to them.

And his people kept shouting the voice of god and not of a man.

Then immediately an angel of the Lord struck him because he did not give glory to god and he was eaten by worms and died (Acts 12:21-23).

Instantaneous punishment it was a sin to which God gave no time for repentance he alleged deity he died immediately my the Lord cast arrogance away from us and grant us humility (Ja. 4:6).

Curiously Nebuchadnezzar was the one who defeated Arphaxad however he did not learn the lesson that every king is likely to reign and rule and is also likely to be defeated.

It is regrettable that the human nature gives the feeling that one is immortal some people who are in authority think that the seat of power is eternal they do not realize that come a day when God takes away the throne and the scepter.

An example is the incident of St. Sidhom Bishay with the Magistrae and the Governor who asked him to reject his religion and turn to Islam or the alternative would be the shed and their properties confiscated.

Then King Nebuchnezzar made war against King Arphaxad in the great plain that is on the border of Ragar" (Jud. 1:5).

Where was Arphxad power and the might of his army and Ecbatana? "

There rallied to him all the people of the hill country and all those who lived along the Euphrates the Tigris and the Hydaspes and on the plain Arioch King of the Elymeans thus many nation joined the force of the Chaldeans" (Judith 1:6)

The Euphrate was the separating border between East and west and between Egypt and Assyria and Babylon each of these two powers sought to invade the land between the valley of Egypt and the Euphrates to impose its sovereignty on the whole region.

Arioch King of the Elymeans his name meant "Servant of the god Moon".

Then Nebuchnezzar King of the Assyrians sent messengers to all who lived in persia and to all who lived in the west those who lived in Cilicia and Damascus Lebanon and Antilebanon and all who lived along the seacoast and those among the nation of Carmel and Gilead and Upper Galilee and the great plain of Esdraelon (Judith 1:7-8).