

Name: Judith Cook

Document Title: Judith

Written Assignments #1-3

Instructions: Use this guide to help you analyze the assigned primary source document. Answer as many of the questions as you can, **using evidence from the document**. Write your answers to as many questions as possible, based on **what you see** and **what you may already know**.¹

First Impressions

1. What are your first impressions?

This document is a retelling of previous narratives of Genesis, the life of the Jews in Egypt and their exodus from bondage there. The entry into Canaan and the victories over the Perizzites, Jebusites and others of the land the covenant, promised to them.

2. What kind of document is it (letter, prayer, historical account, apocalypse, testament, narrative, etc.)? How do you know?

The book of Judith is a narrative that was excluded from the Hebrew Bible. The book relates events that may not necessarily be historically accurate. It is attributed to be of Greek origin.

Looking More Closely

1. Read through the document carefully. Make a list of any unusual words or phrases.
2. Is there a date on it? If so, what is it? If not, are there any other clues within the document that might indicate when it was written?

According to Helyer, the widely accepted date of the composition is 150 B.C. after the Maccabean revolt.

3. Is there a location indicated? What is it?

The events of the main character "Judith", of this document occur in Judea, specifically Bethulia (7:1-37).

4. Who wrote or created the document? How can you tell?
The unnamed author is believed to be a Palestinian Jew.

¹ Adapted and expanded from "Engaging Students with Primary Sources," Smithsonian *Natural Museum of American History*. <https://historyexplorer.si.edu/sites/default/files/PrimarySources.pdf> Accessed 12/21/2021.

5. For whom was the document written or created? How do you know?

The document written for the Jews to encourage their faith that God will deliver them if they remain faithful to their beliefs.

6. What is the purpose of the document? What made you think this?

The purpose of this document to rally the Jews to resist the Hellenization of their nation and to adhere to strictly to the Torah.

Thinking Further

1. What do you think the writer thought was the most important information to convey? Why?

God has acted on behalf of Israel before and will do so again if they will remain faithful and resist any and all foreign conquerors.

2. Does the document convey a certain tone?

The document conveys a tone of hope that they will prevail over their enemies.

3. Can you tell the point of view of the writer? Is it objective?

The writer is pro-Jewish, providing details of the

4. What does the writer believe about God? How can you tell?

The God of Israel is the champion of the weak and the oppressed. Israel's strength is in God not in their size. God will defend and intervene on behalf of the faithful.

5. What does the writer believe about "Jews"?

The writer belief that the Jews are justified in taking whatever actions are necessary to gain victory over their enemies no matter how violent the methods.

6. What about "non-Jews" or those ruling them? How can you tell?

The writer believes that they are deserving of whatever punishment is meted out to them for coming against God's chosen people.

7. What does the writer believe about Torah (the Law) and/or the Temple?

The writer believes that Torah is to be strictly adhered to.

8. What is the relationship between the writer and the audience? How can you tell?

9. Does the document remind you of any biblical event, character, or book of the Bible? What made you think of those events, characters, or biblical books?

The heroine Judith of this story brings to mind the accounts of Deborah the Judge, Jael in the Book of Judges and Queen Esther.

Summary Statement: How does this document give insight into the beliefs and concerns of Jews for the historical period being investigated? How does it add to what the textbooks say about the period?

The book of Judith while relaying disputable facts concerning the rulers the Israelites had to resist, whether it was Nebuchadnezzar or Antiochus IV, Holofernes or Nicanor, doesn't diminish the purpose of the message. The focus of this document moves from the stated conquerors to the protagonist. The widow Judith arises out of this narrative as a national hero. Judith demonstrates a Pharisaic demeanor in her fervent devotion to fasting and prayer going above what Torah requires. This narrative is unusual though not unique in having a female protagonist to dictate battle strategies rather than the predominate ruling male, Mattathias. Helyer, notes that using her "piety, beauty cunning and courage" she is able to affect the deliverance of the Israelites from the aggression of their enemies.