

List of Major Ancient Literature Primary Sources

The Dead Sea Scrolls – A gathering of works from the Essene Jewish sect hidden in caves at the first century settlement of Qumran during the Jewish Revolt of 66-70 CE. The scrolls include both OT texts as well as their own writings such as *The Manual of Discipline*, *The War of the Sons of Light and the Sons of Darkness*, and *The Litany of Angels* (like many .

The Septuagint – In the early 3rd century BCE, tradition says that “70 elders” translated the Hebrew Old Testament into the common language of Greek (more people spoke Greek than Hebrew, including Jews). This Greek version is called the Septuagint and was also used by many of the New Testament writers in their quotations of the Old Testament.

The Mishnah – The rabbis debated many issues of interpretation of the Old Testament. These discussions were gathered up in the 3rd and 4th c. CE into a group of writings called the Mishnah. Think of this as a legal document highlighting different ways of interpreting the OT.

The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha – This is a group of writings from the Intertestamental Period. There is a very wide variety of types of literature including Jewish apocalyptic, a special type of genre called a Testament, and others. “Pseudepigrapha” refers to a writing that is falsely attributed to another writer (such as Moses or Enoch). Of special note is the “novel” *Joseph and Aseneth* that serves as a religious education/apologetic work trying to redeem the legitimacy of the Patriarch Joseph in his marriage to the daughter of the Egyptian high priest Onias by detailing her conversion to the Hellenistic Judaism of the 1st c. BCE.

The Old Testament Apocrypha – These writings include several different types of genres from the Intertestamental Period. Most famous are the four books of Maccabees which tell the history of the Jewish Revolt against the Seleucids. Also included are other contemporary pieces of Jewish literature such as the *Wisdom of Ben Sirach* and several Greek additions to the book of Daniel.

Other Jewish Writers:

Philo Judaeus (25 BCE – 50 CE) – Based in Alexandria, Philo represents the highest level of educated Hellenistic Judaism, combining traditional Jewish thought with Platonic philosophy. Philo appeared before the Roman Emperor Claudius with an embassy of Jews from Alexandria

to appeal for reinstatement of the special rights for Jews put in place by Julius Caesar. Philo was a prolific writer who discussed everything from the Decalogue to the OT texts.

Titus Flavius Josephus *aka* Yosef ben Matiyahu (37 CE – 100 CE) – A Jewish writer who switched sides to the Romans during the First Jewish Revolt and became a writer under the patronage of Emperor Vespasian, Josephus is famous for his history of the war. He also worked to rehabilitate the view of Judaism in the Roman world with his *Against Apion* and *Jewish Antiquities*, which retells the OT stories with a modern Roman spin. Most scholars will compare his works against Luke-Acts to understand 1st century views of historiography.

Other Christian Literature Not Included in the New Testament Canon:

Didache, or The Lord's Teaching Through the Twelve Apostles to the Nations (late 1st century CE) – This brief document summarizes the teachings of the early church and practices common among the churches at the end of the first century CE. While it originally showed up in the early lists of canonical books, it did not make the final cut.

The Shepherd of Hermas (late 2nd century CE) – This work of literature was very popular in the Christian church in the 2nd and 3rd centuries CE. It contains five visions to a slave named Hermas, followed by a series of parables. Like the *Didache*, *Shepherd* originally made a strong showing for being included in the canon due to its wide usage by the early church but fell out of favor for canonical status.

First Epistle of Clement (93-96 CE) – A letter from the Bishop of Rome, Clement, to the church in Corinth. Considered genuine by scholars, this letter is lengthy for a writing of the period and includes specific instructions regarding the church's behavior in deposing some of their leaders. It alludes to many of Paul's New Testament letters as well as "the words of Jesus" and possibly Acts, appealing to their arguments but not calling them "Scripture."

Other Literature – An explosion of Christian literature began to be produced in the 2nd century CE. Many of these works are apocryphal, taking on the names of the Apostles in a bid for authority, such as *The Gospel of Thomas* and the *Acts of Paul and Thecla*. A large number of works were produced by gnostic Christians to spread their version of Christianity. Many of these works are collected in the *Nag Hammadi Library*, a group of gnostic papyrus works found in Egypt.