

Appendix 2C, VI

JUDITH

The apocryphal book of *Judith*, believed written a few hundred centuries after its events, reports an 'Assyrian' conquest of Elam, under one *Nabuchodonosor*, most likely near the end of the 7th century b.c./b.c.e. It describes his decision to proceed against the west, the methods used, and a saving intervention in Judah/Israel by a woman named Judith. *Judith* for the most part is advanced as a fictional piece, but it appears equally possible--embellishments aside--that an actual event is recounted, hindered by ancient generic terms and unique renditions of proper names. A summary of those items follows the narrative.

Narrative¹

"[T]he twelfth year of "*Nabuchodonosor*, who reigned in Nineve [was also] in the days of *Arphaxad*,² which reigned over...Medes in Ectabane." "[I]n those days king Nabuchodonosor made war with with king Arphaxad in the great plain, which is the plain in the borders of Ragau."³ Arphaxad was joined by "all they that dwelt in the hill country, and all that dwelt by Euphrates, and Tigris, and Hydaspes, and the plain of Arioch, the king of the *Elymaeans*, ...[who] assembled themselves to battle."

Nabuchodonosor, "king of the *Assyrians*," sent far and wide seeking military assistance, east into Persia and westward all the way to the Mediterranean coast--Damascus, the Libanus, Cilicia, the higher Galilee, Carmel, Samaria and all the way to Egypt and Ethiopia--but his solicitations were ignored. *Judith*, 1:1-11.

"In the seventeenth year [,however,] Nabuchodonosor forces prevailed and he "became lord of" Arphaxad's cities, including Ectabane, which he spoiled. He overtook Arphaxad in the mountains of Ragau, "smote him through with darts," and returned to Nineve where he and his "very great multitude of men of war" "of sundry nations" banqueted for 120 days. The following ("the eighteenth") year, following talk in Nabuchodonosor's household "that he should avenge himself on all the earth," he called a secret counsel of officers and nobles. It then was decreed that "all flesh that did not obey the commandment of his mouth" would be destroyed.

A force of 120,000 foot soldiers and a cavalry of 12,000 archers was commissioned against the west country under "chief captain *Holofernes*," who "called all the governors and captains, and the officers of the army of *Assur*,"⁵ and with whom went a "great number also of sundry countries." Holofernes' regiment was accompanied by large numbers of camels and asses for carriage, and sheep, oxen and goats for provisions. Nabuchodonosor's orders were, "Kill the rebellious; preserve the surrenderers for me." The army wasted and killed its way "over against Arabia, up Damascus' plains of wheat at harvest time, and across the Euphrates through Mesopotamia to Celicia [beyond the northern edges of Syria] and Japheth's borders."

Judith 2.

¹ *Judith* references apply to preceding paragraphs; *italics* in the quoted material are supplied.

² Refer to (a) Appendix 1A, fn. 19; (b) Appendix 1F, Chaldaeae/Chaldaeian and Ur.

³ Cf. Rages/Rhages/Ragau of *Tobit*, Appendix 2C, V, fn. 9 (one other near-reference is *Tobit*'s Tobiah I's relative, *Raguel*.)

⁴ Appendix 2A, Elam.

⁵ Appendix 1F, Asshur.

As the fear and dread of his approach reached the sea coast (Sidon and Tyre, and south to Ascalon), city rulers began to send out ambassadors of surrender, to the effect, 'use us, our homes, our goods and our people as you please.' Down the seacoast, Holofernes thus established garrisons "in the high cities and took out of them chosen men for aid." Yet, although he was received with "garlands, etc.," he nonetheless "cast down their frontiers, and cut down their groves.... [H]e came over against Esdraelon near unto Judea, over against the great strait of Judea. And he pitched between Geba and Scythopolis,⁶ and there he tarried...[to] gather together all the carriages of his army." *Judith 3.*

Holofernes tarried a full month between Scythopolis and Geba to assemble his carriages. Meanwhile, the children of Israel that dwelt in Judea heard all that Holofernes had done to the nations, were exceedingly afraid of him, and troubled for Jerusalem. "For they were newly returned from the captivity,⁷ and all the people of Judea were lately gathered together: and the vessels, altar and house sanctified after the profanation."

The peoples of the region rallied. They sent for support to many places, including Bethoron, Jericho, the coasts and villages of Samaria and the valley of Salem, "and possessed themselves beforehand of all the tops of the high mountains, and fortified the villages that were in them, and laid up victuals for the provision of war; for their fields were of late reaped."

"Also, *Jocim* the high priest, which was in those days in Jerusalem," wrote to them that dwelt in "*Bethulia*" and Betomestham, which is over against *Esdraelon* toward the open country," charging them to hold the passages and the entrance straits of Judea. *Judith 4.*

Word of the defensive preparations reached Holofernes. He "called all the princes of Moab, and the captains of Ammon, and all the governors of the sea coast ("ye sons of Chanaan")," and questioned them concerning the nature, number and strengths of the "people...that dwelleth in the hill country. "Achior, captain of all the sons of Ammon and Ephraim hirelings," gave a recitation of their accomplishments and reasoned a plea against hasty judgment. The others of Holofernes' chief men, those of the seaside and Moab, pressed to go forth. *Judith 5.*

Holofernes took Achior soundly to task for negative "prophecy" and prophesied his own success, after which he commanded that Achior be delivered over to the foe. At the fountains that were "under Bethulia," when slingers from the city emerged to accost the company, Achior was bound and left there. "[T]he Israelites...from the city...brought him into Bethulia, and presented him to the governors of the city"--(Micha-) Ozias of Simeon, (Gothoniel-) Chabris, and (Melchiel-) Charmis,¹⁰ who called an assembly to hear the report of Achior, who related all that had been said between him and Holofernes. *Judith 6.*

The next two days Holofernes moved camp, spread in length from Bethulia unto

⁶ Appendix 2A, Beth-sheah/shan and Geba, etc.

⁷ Possibly referring possibly to the relatively brief "Egyptian" captivity following Necho's defeat of Josiah?

⁸ No concrete identification (but reminiscent of Bethel, which is identified with ruins located about 12 miles N of Jerusalem).

⁹ [A]t times the designation 'Valley of Jezreel' is also used today to include the low plain W of Jezreel or the Plain of Esdraelon (the Greek form of the Hebrew Jezreel)." *Aid* page 936.

¹⁰ The most unrecognizable names are not explored; for others, see Appendix 3B, I, Hoshaiah, Malchiah, etc., and Micah, etc.

"Cyamon, which is over against Esdraelon." Holofernes was counseled by "all the chief of the children of Esau, and all the governors of the people of Moab, and the captains of the sea coast." They proposed that forcing thirst and famine of the encircled Bethulites was a better course of action than attack. Holofernes agreed; so "the camp of the children of Ammon...with 5,000 Assyrians...pitched in the valley, and took the waters," while "the children of Esau went up" and camped in other surrounding areas, "and the rest of the army of the Assyrians camped in the plain." Encompassed by the enemy, inside Bethulia's walls the cisterns gradually emptied and the people, greatly weakened, eventually begged Ozias to give up. Ozias asked them to endure five more days, after which, absent merciful intervention, the city would be surrendered. *Judith 7.*

Judith, the daughter of (Israel-Salasadai-Samael-Nathanael-Eliab-Eliu-Acitho-Raphaim- Gedeon-Ananias-Elcia-Oziel-Joseph-Ox-) Merari,"¹¹ had been left a wealthy widow by her husband, Manasses. Judith was sent for and presided over a council of Ozias, Chabris and Charmis. She urged against surrender. She had a plan, details of which she would not divulge; but she assured the men that the city would be saved. *Judith 8.*

Judith arrayed herself with her best finery, ornaments and ointments; and she and her maid were let out the city gate. They went down the mountain and through the valley to the first Assyrian watch, where Judith requested an audience with Holofernes. She allowed that she had "fled" from the coming certain destruction and had come to show Holofernes a way "of winning all the hill country without losing the body or life of one of his men." Judith's beauty stood her in good stead. She was brought before Holofernes, who was resting "upon his bed under a canopy, which was woven with purple, and gold, and emeralds, and precious stones."

Judith 9 and 10, including her supplicating prayers, in which she mentions her forefather, "Simeon" (9:2).

Judith regaled Holofernes with deceits--that she had fled because the senate in Jerusalem was not in agreement with Bethulia's comportment; and that "licence" from the senate soon would arrive commanding Bethulia deliver itself to Holofernes. Judith assured Holofernes that she, herself, would lead him into Jerusalem.

Holofernes was well pleased with both Judith's beauty and wit. She was allowed to remain discreetly in camp. Over the next three days she established a pattern, whereby Holofernes allowed her to be undisturbed when she went out in the morning for prayer and in the evening to bathe in a fountain by the camp. On the fourth day Holofernes made a feast "to his own servants only, and called none of the officers," and he sent "Bagoas the eunuch" to obtain Judith's presence, which she in full attire did present. Soft skins were laid on the ground for Judith over against Holofernes, who took great delight all the evening and drank "much more wine than he had drunk at any time in one day since he was born."

Judith 11 and 12.

When evening came the servants were dismissed and Bagoas shut the tent from without. Judith was left alone with Holofernes who, "filled with wine," eventually passed out on his bed. She took Holofernes' fauchion from a pillar of the bed, took hold of his hair, and "smote" him twice upon the neck with all her might, severing his head. As his body tumbled she pulled down the canopy from the pillars, wrapped the head in it, and placed it in the food

¹¹ Of the more recognizable names or versions: (a) *Nathanael*--one other, Bartholomew/Nathanael, Appendix 4C at fn. 3; (b) *Eliab*, Appendix 1A, Attachment 1, and Appendix 3B, I; (c) *Rephaiah/m*, Appendix 3B, I; (d) *Hananiah/(Ananias)*, Appendix 3B, II, Attachment 4; (e) (Levi-*Merari*-) Mahli and Mushi [*apse*], Appendix 1C, sub-part III; (f) *Joseph/Josiphiah*, Appendix 3B, I; *Joseph*, Appendix 3B, II, Attachments 4 and 6 and Appendix 4C.

bag held by her maid, who, according to plan, was waiting outside. They then (as observers were accustomed to seeing) walked out together, as if to pray. This time, however, Judith and her maid secretly exited the camp. They compassed the valley and went up Bethulia's mountain, to the city gate.

"Open; open now the gate!" Judith cried. The men of the city hastily did so; a call went forth for the elders. The people too, small and great, all ran together, and a fire was made for light. Then Judith took Holofernes' head out of the bag. "Behold the head of Holofernes, the chief captain of the army of Assur! And behold the canopy, wherein he did lie in his drunkenness."
Judith 13.

Judith commanded, "Hear me now, my brethren, take this head and hang it upon the highest place of your walls," and instructed them further that in the morning they should emerge from the city in battle dress. As soon as morning arose all the men took their weapons and went forth by bands unto the straits of the mountain. When the "Assyrians saw them, they sent to their leaders, which came to their captains and tribunes, and to every one of their rulers, [who] came to Holofernes' tent.... Then went in Bagoas, and knocked at the door of the tent; for he thought that Holofernes had slept with Judith." Bagoas discovered Holofernes' headless body. An immediate search for Judith was in vain.

The army's captains were at a complete loss, and "fear and trembling" set upon their astonished troops, who quickly became disorganized, with soldiers fleeing in every direction "into every way of the plain, and of the hill country." In the interim, Ozias and the others had sent runners from Bethulia to all surrounding areas, with news of Holofernes' death and orders that "the children of Israel" be prepared to ambush the enemies when they appeared. The Holofernes troops were chased, with great slaughter, until they were past the borders of Damascus.

The "residue, that dwelt at Bethulia, fell upon the camp of Assur, and spoiled them ["30 days"] and were greatly enriched. And the children of Israel that returned from the slaughter had that which remained; and the villages and the cities, that were in the mountains and in the plain, got many spoils...." Joacim the high priest and the "ancients of the children of Israel that dwelt in Jerusalem" came to salute Judith. Judith received Holofernes' "tent, and all his plate, and beds, and vessels, and all his stuff...." All the women ran together to see and dance for her, and she distributed branches to them. They put garlands of olive on her and her maid, and Judith led the parade, while "all the men of Israel followed in their armor with garlands, and songs in their mouths." Judith loaded all the goods she had received onto her mule carts, for dedication as gifts to the temple; and she remained with the people in Jerusalem, where feasting continued for three months.

Afterward, Judith returned to Bethulia, where she "remained in her own possession...waxed old in her husband's house, being an hundred and five years old...she died in Bethulia; and they buried her in the cave of her husband Manasses."
Judith 15-16.

Summary Notes:¹²

(1) An early rebel in 'Assyria' (during Hezekiah's days) was Merodach/Berodach-baladan, a *Chaldaean*,¹³ who revolted against Assyria with Elamite backing c. 703 b.c./b.c.e.

¹²Dates and quotations are as given in Appendix 2D.

¹³Refer to Appendix 1F, *Chaldaea, etc.*, but particularly, *Ur*, in the same appendix, concerning questions in defining this term.

and claimed himself king of Babylon.¹⁴

(2) “Nabuchodonosor” most commonly has been taken to mean “Nebuchadnezzar.” “Nabuchodonosor,” however, equally could be equated with Nebuchadnezzar’s father, *Nabopolassar*, or generically with the ‘Nabu’ dynasty in general. (Nabopolassar’s revolt in ‘Assyria’ and commencement of his dynasty is calendared c. 626 b.c.).

(a) Media/Cyaxares I and ‘Babylon’/Nabopolassar united in Nabopolassar’s “14th year,” prior to the taking of Nineveh.

(3) If “Nabuchodonosor” was Nabopolassar (or that dynasty), and “Arphaxad” referred to “Chaldaeae” in Armenia, the “17th year” in which Nabu forces prevailed over “Arphaxad” would have been c. 609 b.c. It was around that time that crown-prince Nebuchadnezzar was commanding his father’s troops in the field.

(4) A few years later, king Jehoiakim rebelled. The biblical texts relate that the Nebuchadnezzar force that conquered the rebellion also included (as in *Judith*) troops drawn from “Aram, Moab and sons of Ammon.”¹⁵

(5) “*Bagoas* is the Greek form of a Persian name [word] meaning ‘given by God,’ and was often used for eunuchs, so that the phrase [in *Judith*], ‘Bagoas the eunuch,’ was almost a cliché.”¹⁶ (*Bagoi/Bagos* occurs later in time to name an individual who could not be the “Bagoas” of *Judith*.)

(6) *Holofernes*, reportedly is found some 250 years later, as the name of a general of Persian king Artaxerxes III’s Egyptian expedition, which has made it seem “reasonable, then, to suppose that the writer of *Judith* had telescoped [the] Egyptian campaign of Artaxerxes...and made Holofernes...the leader of the Assyrian hosts.”¹⁷ The possibility of an earlier man with the same name, however, was is not found ruled out.

(7) “Joacim, the high priest that in Jerusalem.”

This reference in *Judith* has been another cause for assertions that the book is a fanciful creation, because *Joacim* in that form as an individual primarily only is known as a high priest, named in both *Josephus* and *Baruch*, in the time of repatriations (c. 454 b.c.).¹⁸ There are, however, several forms of the name, frequently used interchangeably.¹⁹

There exist considerable differences, also, between the biblical and *Josephus* chief/high priest lineage lists. The term “high” priest does not denote necessarily “chief,” while there is no period data related to ongoing recognition, in Jerusalem or elsewhere, of *divisional* “high” priests.²⁰

¹⁴ A later *Merodach*--Amel/Awil-Marduk/Merodach--ruled briefly in ‘Babylon’ c. the estimated time of (Nabopolassar -) Nebuchadnezzar’s death.

¹⁵ Appendix 2C, IV, narrative following fn.146.

¹⁶ Appendix 3B, II, Attachment 4, *Bagoi, etc.*

¹⁷ *Asimov*, v. 2, pp. 28-29.

¹⁸ (Appendix 3A, IV, “Explorative Timeline, etc.”) There is no data on this later *Joacim*’s life after his service. He, however, may have returned to the Babylon exilic community, where is encountered one *Joacim*, a most-honored elder, judge and husband of Susanna, daughter of “Chelcias,” who certain parties sought to disgrace but was vindicated by “Daniel”--see Appendix 3B, I, *Susanna, History of.*

¹⁹ Refer to Appendix 3B, II, Attachment 4, v. *Joacim*, and other sites cross-referenced there.

²⁰ See King David’s Divisions, Appendix 3B, II, sub-part II, A(1), in which were *Jakim* and *Jachin*. Refer also to comparisons in Appendix 3B, II, Attachment 1 (perhaps notable is that *Josephus* shows “Elcias” as ‘grandfather’ of the exiled Josekek, while *Judith*’s lineage includes “Elcia.”)