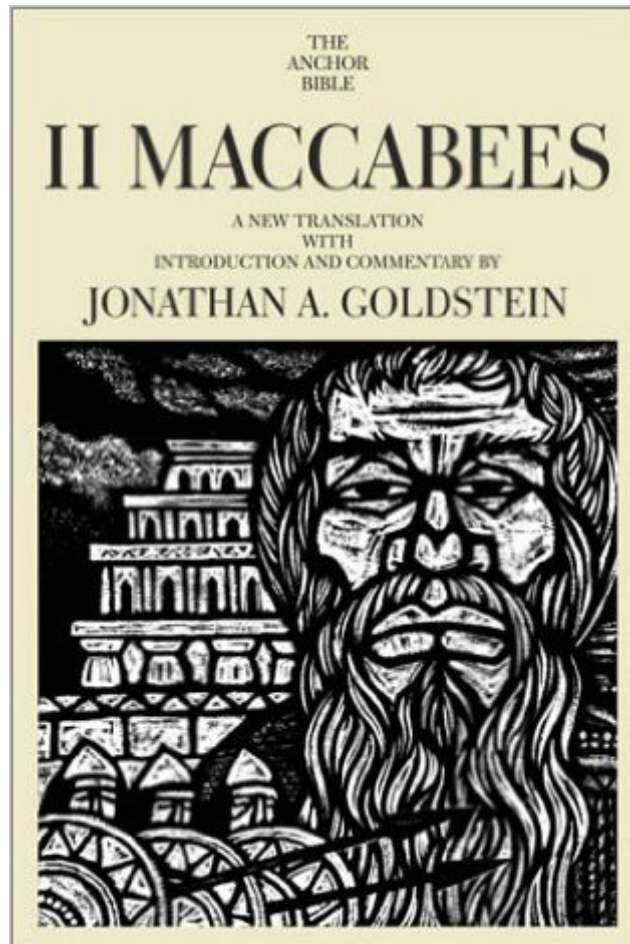


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II Maccabees (The Anchor Bible, Vol. 41A)



Synopsis

II Maccabees continues the chronicle of the "Time of the Troubles" (167-64 B.C.E.), begun in I Maccabees. It recounts the stories of conflict between militant Jews, led by Judas Maccabaeus, and their Hellenistic oppressors. Aside from the story of the struggle to control the temple and the holy city of Jerusalem, though, II Maccabees shares little in common with I Maccabees. The second volume of reflections of Jewry in the generation following the Maccabaeen revolt presents and evaluates the experience from its own unique perspective. How these events came to be written, who told the stories, and what reasons motivated such divergent yet parallel interpretations are the questions Jonathan A. Goldstein, translator and commentator on both Maccabaeen histories, addresses here. Goldstein utilizes the full array of scholarly tools to examine the critical issues raised by II Maccabees. By examining its language and style, its Hellenic yet Jewish flavor, its comparison and relationship to I Maccabees, its use of sacred writings (Torah and Prophets), its historical context, and the role of the miraculous, Goldstein thoroughly elucidates this powerful account of a pivotal period in Jewish history. As the commentary makes clear, II Maccabees focuses on certain themes: miracles as God's tools for shaping history; the holiness of the Jerusalem temple; the dynamic relationship between the Hasmonaean rulers and their pious opponents; praise of martyrdom; the doctrine of resurrection. An abridgment of Jason of Cyrene's work, II Maccabees advances its own theological perspective to its Greek-speaking audience, refuting the Hasmonaean partisan's view that pervades I Maccabees. Jonathan A. Goldstein, author of I Maccabees, is Professor of History and Classics at the University of Iowa. He earned bachelor's and master's degrees at Harvard, and a doctorate at Columbia University.

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Customer Reviews

Well, how can I say this in a nice way? If I had seen a review on this commentary explaining it in detail, I would not have purchased it. Let me give my perspective, because I'm sure there are some buyers who might be interested in this type of commentary, but I am a pastor who is working on sermons for preaching in a local Church. I look for commentaries that avoid the endless speculations about who might have originally written what part of the text, and how it might have been modified by someone who might have existed a long time ago. This commentary never seems to leave that subject behind. The author seems endlessly enamored with textual criticism. So if you love TC, buy this commentary. If it seems irrelevant to you, don't get this one. Let me focus on the martyrdom of Eleazar in II Mac 6. At first I was really excited. I thought, "Wow-he gives a page of original translation of the martyrdom. Then he gives seven pages of notes!!" His translation is at times easy to understand, but at other times it is difficult to comprehend. One phrase was so unclear I had no idea what it meant. In contrast, my other translations of II Macc were able to help me grasp the meaning the first time through. So that wasn't good, but by the time I finished his notes on a section, I felt I discovered something that would be best for a research paper on redaction theories or something. On Eleazar's martyrdom, this author seems to have a strong grasp of Ancient Near Eastern background to the Old Testament, with speculative theories about Mardukist Martyrdom texts providing illumination to the Jewish martyrdom texts (I found that implausible). His breadth of interaction reaches in every direction, except into the N.T.

The late Jonathan Goldstein was a genius in many ways, though he didn't play by academic rules and to some extent has been ignored by academics. At least they affect to ignore him, but mine his notes privately, and will be doing so for some time to come. They ignored him because he didn't hobnob and incessantly quote others, and largely kept to himself in Iowa, I gather. First let's make sure we know what we are reading here: These two books (1 and 2 Macc; Anchor 41 and 41A) are for scholars and the scholarly public; it would be wonderful if more Christians and Jews knew the history of the first two centuries BC, a period which 'gave birth' to both religions, but Goldstein is not writing popular history or a popular commentary here. The books are full of daring and fascinating hypotheses concerning the details of the historical reality behind the narratives of 1st and 2nd

Maccabees, Josephus, Daniel 7-12, parts of Enoch and parts of the Testament of Moses. He dates the apocalypses of Daniel 7-12 from this time, with critical scholars of all types and against fundamentalists of many types. And he dates the relevant parts of Enoch and TestMoses from this time as well, though this is not universally held. He is not interested, as Martin Hengel or some other scholars were, in stating an overarching thesis about Hellenism and the Jews, though he shares some observations with Hengel. Goldstein, more thoroughly than anyone before or since, elucidated the relations of these texts to one another, and to Livy, Polybius, Diodorus, fragments found in the Church fathers, and many other sources. Many of his conclusions are unlikely, but he was still a genius.

Well, how can I say this in a nice way? If I had seen a review on this commentary explaining it in detail, I would not have purchased it. Let me give my perspective, because I'm sure there are some buyers who might be interested in this type of commentary, but I am a pastor who is working on sermons for preaching in a local Church. I look for commentaries that avoid the endless speculations about who might have originally written what part of the text, and how it might have been modified by someone who might have existed a long time ago. This commentary never seems to leave that subject behind. The author seems endlessly enamored with textual criticism. So if you love TC, buy this commentary. If it seems irrelevant to you, don't get this one. Let me focus on the martyrdom of Eleazar in II Mac 6. At first I was really excited. I thought, "Wow-he gives a page of original translation of the martyrdom. Then he gives seven pages of notes!!" His translation is at times easy to understand, but at other times it is difficult to comprehend. One phrase was so unclear I had no idea what it meant. In contrast, my other translations of II Macc were able to help me grasp the meaning the first time through. So that wasn't good, but by the time I finished his notes on a section, I felt I discovered something that would be best for a research paper on redaction theories or something. On Eleazar's martyrdom, this author seems to have a strong grasp of Ancient Near Eastern background to the Old Testament, with speculative theories about Mardukist Martyrdom texts providing illumination to the Jewish martyrdom texts (I found that implausible). His breadth of interaction reaches in every direction, except into the N.T.

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