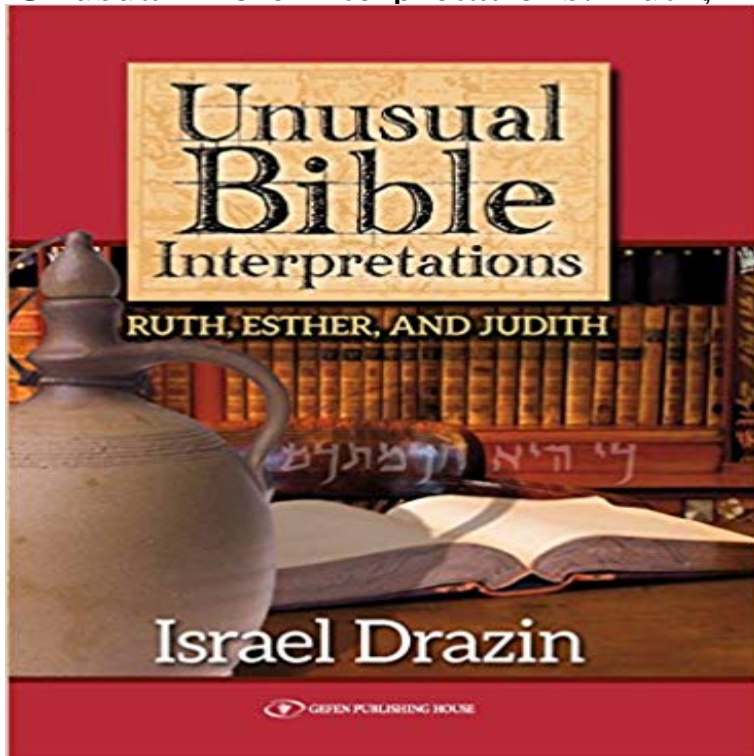


Unusual Bible Interpretations: Ruth, Esther, Judith



This fourth volume of the Unusual Bible Interpretations series explores the biblical books Ruth and Esther and the apocryphal book Judith, which Jews and Protestants did not include in the Bible. Similar to Joshua and Judges, neither Ruth nor Esther shows any familiarity with the laws in the Five Books of Moses. Remarkably, Judith contains more religious expressions than either Ruth or Esther. Why, then, did the rabbis exclude it from the Bible? After a detailed analysis of the story, this book offers an answer to this age-old question. The volume contains a plethora of unexpected and thought-provoking facts, such as: Although many rabbis suggest that Ruth converted to Judaism, the story stresses repeatedly even at the end that Ruth is a Moabite. No mention is made that she converted. Indeed, the practice of conversion most likely did not exist prior to 125 BCE. Mordecai is the hero of Purim. It is he, not Esther, whom the book praises in its conclusion. According to II Maccabees 15:36, Adar 14 was called the Day of Mordecai. Both Esthers and Mordecais names, although considered Jewish names today, are Persian names most likely based on the idols Ishtar and Marduk. In the book of Judith, the Judeans prayerfully wait for God to save them from the Assyrian siege. In contrast, Judith devises a plan to kill the general and save her people.

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