

Research paper on the book of jubilees

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What is the Book of Jubilees?

The Book of Jubilees is an ancient religious text which is not part of the Bible but which is deemed to be an apocryphal text which actually covers most of the Ground of the Genesis book in the Bible. It does differ substantially from what we find in the authoritative text and tackles certain aspects rather differently. A typical example would be the incestuous relationship that one may find between the son of Adam and Eve, Cain and his wife which is not the case in the Bible but which makes for rather interesting reading.

Basically the Jubilees covers the same stories as those found in Genesis but creates additional detail and embellished stories with Moses addressed in the second person and it keeps on going right to the creation of Israel.

An interesting facet of the book is that each episode is recounted in periods of 49 years each, these are the 'Jubilee' periods which takes into account how much time passed from creation till the time when Moses received the Holy Scriptures on Mount Sinai which was a total of 2410 years if one had to deduct the 40 years which the Jews spent wandering in the desert before they entered the Promised Land of Ca'naan.

Another intriguing aspect of the book are the classes of angels which are subdivided into four. You find the angels of presence, the angels of sanctifications, the guardian angels who protect individuals and finally the angels which preside over nature. The character of Enoch is also important as he was the man who was initiated by the angels to write and this gave rise to several works on astronomy as well as the world's chronology. The Jubilee's author carries on the deuteron canonical position on demons and devils which is consistent with both the Old and New Testament.

Narration of the Creation episode

The Jubilees differs substantially from the Creation account which we find in The Genesis as here it describes a group of fallen angels who mate with mortal females creating a race of giants whose children were actually killed by the great flood. It also states that God allowed ten per cent of these spirits in an attempt to lead mankind astray after the conclusion of the flood.

Interesting the Jubilees also affirms that Hebrew is the language spoken in Heaven and this was actually the language spoken in the Garden of Eden by animals who eventually lost the power of speech when Adam and Eve were expelled from the place. It also affirms that after the Great Flood, the earth was divided into three parts, each for the sons of Noah and his respective sixteen grandsons.

The Jubilees also refers to the Messianic kingdom in some parts and this kingdom would eventually be formed on Earth. The book then describes that there would be a transformation of man who would live for a thousand years in a state of ethereal happiness and complete peace.

The Jubilee books were held in high regard by church historians who referred to them often as important sources for reference. However with the Orthodox transformation, these were abandoned and their teachings completely forgotten until the turn of the 20th century when they were again revived. Naturally enough there were other sources which competed for attention such as the Dead Sea Scrolls but these were discovered only early in the 20th century so the quest for knowledge died down considerably and the Bible was accepted as the main source for this period

Differences in the character of Noah from the Book of Genesis to the Jubilees

Noah is considerably different when portrayed in the Jubilees as compared to the Bible. First of all Noah becomes Enoch in the Jubilees and he is endowed with powers which enable him to write several texts about astronomy and other intrinsic subjects which reveal his talent as a philosopher and teacher. Noah is portrayed in the bible as quite a saintly man although in the Jubilees he is more of a philosopher and teacher. He also tackles the flood rather differently than what happens in the Bible and at certain levels he is also very much involved in attempting the redemption of man. He also has a different relationship with his sons.

In his book, 'The Twelve Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs'¹, RH Charles argues that Noah is one of those who foretold the coming of the Messiah. In this powerful statement he continues to espouse on the greatness of the Messiah.

The Dead Sea Scrolls also quote Noah's description of the Messiah in some detail:

“ On his hair a birthmark of reddish colour. And the shape of a lentil will be on his face, and small birthmarks on his thigh. And after two years he will know how to distinguish one thing from another in his heart. In his youth, he will be like ... a man who knows nothing until the time when he knows the three Books. And then he will acquire prudence and learn understanding ... wise seers come to him, to his knees. And with his father and his ancestors .. of brothers will hurt him. Counsel and prudence will be with him, an he will know the secrets of man. His wisdom will reach all the peoples, and he will

know the secrets of all the living. And all their designs against him will come to nothing, and his rule over the living will be great. His designs will succeed, for he is the Elect of God. His birth and the breath of his spirit ... and his designs shall be forever” 2

Here one can observe the ethereal description with which Noah describes the Messiah. In Genesis, Noah is mostly a practical man without much spirituality although he is considered to be holy. However the principal difference between Noah in Genesis and Noah in the Jubilees is that in the latter he is principally concerned with leading evil spirits away from man. In fact the Genesis book has a detailed biography of Noah which traverses from youth to old age. Although it is remarkably detailed, this never refers to healing and there is no other mention of prayers cited to expel evil spirits away or other laws which are related to blood apart from the banning of the drinking of blood³.

It also seems that the author of the Jubilees had some knowledge of the Genesis book and made some sort of use of it. However the narration of events and most of the material in the Jubilees is completely different from Genesis and also does not include laws on the slaughtering of animals as found in parts of the Aramaic laws.

The Jubilees does contain some laws on the slaughter of animals but unlike the Aramaic, it does not mention the Book of Noah as its primary source for these laws. Additionally there are various remedies in the Jubilees on the various and complex diseases caused by evil spirits. At this stage, Noah could also be considered to be some sort of doctor and magician which is considerably different from the image portrayed in Genesis⁴.

Comparison of texts:

One can compare various passages of the texts both in Genesis as well as in the Jubilees. For example the story of the planting of the vineyard is related in a different chapter in Genesis but in the Jubilees it comes at the start of Chapter 7. There are also several variations in the story where for example, Noah's sons drink with him alone without other members of the family but in Genesis, all the other members of the family come to an altar and drink, in stark contrast to the Jubilees version.

There are various differences in the narrations which are explained by Kister and others⁵ on this point largely in relation to Hebrew customs. According to Kister, fourth year fruit is brought to the temple while the other fruit is then given to the priests who are only allowed to eat it after the fifth year. In the Jubilees, Noah's sons are portrayed as priests so they have a sort of privilege to this fruit, something which is not found in Genesis.

The differences between rabbi's expectations of the text as well as that which is found in the Jubilees is rather striking. One can argue that the author of the Jubilees attempted to insert certain casual references into the story to suit his purposes although he had to take into account what was written in Genesis due to the popularity of that book at the time. However the differences are more than substantial and lead us to question which actually is the right book for this particular story.

Text comparisons:

This is the part found in Genesis;

“ and I began with - all my sons - to work the land and I planted a large vineyard at Mt. Lubar and by the fourth year it produced wine for me;

And when the first festival came, on the first day of the first festival of the [seventh?] month ... I opened this vessel and I began to drink from it on the first day of the fifth year.

On this day I called my sons and grandsons and all our wives and their daughters and we gathered together and we went [to the place of the altar?]

... and I blessed the Lord of Heaven, the Most High God, the Great Holy One who delivered us from destruction... they drank and ... I poured on ... and the wine”

Compares this with the same story in the Jubilees:

Noah planted a vine at the mountain (whose name was Lubar, one of the mountains of Ararat) on which the ark had come to rest

It produced fruit in the fourth year. He guarded its fruit and picked it that year during the seventh month. He made wine from it, put it in a container, and kept it until the fifth year - until the first day at the beginning of the first month.

He joyfully celebrated the day of this festival. He made a burnt offering for the Lord - one young bull, one ram, seven sheep each a year old, and one kid - to make atonement through it for himself and for his sons. First he prepared the kid. He put some of its blood on the meat (that was on) the altar which he had made. He offered all the fat on the altar where he made the burnt offering along with the bull, the ram, and the sheep.... Afterwards he sprinkled wine in the fire that had been on the altar before hand ... and

offered a pleasant fragrance that was pleasing before the Lord his God. He was very happy, and he and his sons happily drank some of this wine.

The differences on the way wine and Noah's sons are treated are strikingly obvious¹above⁶.

Differences after the ark and in sacrifice

Other interesting differences may be found in the manner in which Noah leaves the Ark after the flood. There is some sort of redemption in Genesis which however is not the case in the Jubilees and the manner in which the burnt offerings are made after the flood are characteristically different, largely in the manner in which blood is treated. In fact while the Genesis mentions blood, the Jubilees actually omits to mention it altogether, something which, continues to reinforce the previous arguments on blood which had been made by other authors and commentators⁷.

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