# *Chapter 4: Restructuring the Past: Remembering Genesis in the Book of Jubilees*

## 4.1 INTRODUCTION

### 4.1.1 Discovery and Publication

In 1844 Heinrich Ewald published a description of an Ethiopian manuscript which had been preserved in Classical Ethiopic (Geʕez) under the title **መጽሐፈ ኩፋሌ** [*masḥafa kufālē*].[1] Because the name followed the common convention using a work's first few (key) words as its title (in this case, **ዝንቱ፡ ነገረ፡ ኩፋሌ** [*zentu nabara kufālē*]), Ewald suggested that this manuscript may have been a copy of the work known from antiquity as both τά Ἰωβηλαϊα, "the Jubilee," and Λεπτὴ Γίνεσις, the "Little Genesis."[2] Although the work had been in continuous use within Ethiopian Christianity since antiquity, European scholarship only knew of the work through secondary references in a few classical sources.[3]

1. All translations are my own. Geʕez citations are from VanderKam's critical edition, *The Book of Jubilees,* 2 vols., CSCO 510-11; SA 87–88 (Leuven: Peeters, 1989).

2. Heinrich Ewald, "Ueber die Aethiopischen Handschriften zu Tübingen," *ZKM* 5 (1844): 164–201.

3. VanderKam offers a concise summary of the various late-antique citations and allusions in his commentary, most notably in the works of Epiphanius (*Panarion*, *Measures and Weights*) and Syncellus (*Chronography*). James C. VanderKam, *Jubilees: A Commentary,* 2 vols., Hermeneia (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2018), 1:10–14. See also Annette Yoshiko Reed, "Retelling Biblical Retellings: Epiphanius, the Pseudo-Clementines, and the Reception-History of Jubilees," in *Tradition, Transmission, and Transformation from Second Temple Literature through Judaism and Christianity in Late Antiquity,* ed. Menahem Kister et al., STDJ 113

The work was published and supplemented by additional manuscripts by August Dillmann in 1859[4] and R. H. Charles in 1895.[5] More recently, VanderKam's 1989 edition utilized twenty-seven copies of the text[6] and since its publication over twenty more copies have been cataloged and imaged.[7]

Save for the rediscovery of the text itself, the most significant find for the study of Jubilees was the discovery of several Hebrew fragments of the work among the Dead Sea Scrolls which attest to the work's antiquity and likely original language of composition. Although the Hebrew and Ethiopic versions are—to the degree that we can tell—very close to one another, the Ethiopic text appears to be a granddaughter translation of the Hebrew through a Greek daughter translation, though no such text has been found.[8] This fact was convincingly demonstrated by Dillmann who observed several Greek forms preserved as transliterations in the Ethiopic text.[9] By the end of the 19th century, partial copies of Jubilees had been uncovered

(Leiden: Brill, 2015), 304–21 and Anne Kreps, "From Jewish Apocrypha to Christian Tradition," *CH* 87.2 (2018): 345–70.

4. August Dillmann, *Maṣḥafa Kufālē sive Liber Jubilaeorum* (Keil: C.G.L. van Maak; London: Williiams & Norgate, 1859).

5. Robert Henry Charles, *Maṣḥafa Kufālē or the Ethiopic Version of the Hebrew Book of Jubilees* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1895).

6. VanderKam, *The Book of Jubilees,* 1:xiv–xvi.

7. Ted Erho, "New Ethiopic Witnesses to Some Old Testament Pseudepigrapha," *BSOAS* 76 (2013): 75–97. VanderKam helpfully lists the twenty-seven manuscripts he used for his critical edition in the introduction of his commentary where he also notes the additional manuscripts photographed since its publication. See VanderKam, *Jubilees,* 1:14–16.

8. See especially VanderKam's treatment of the textual history of Jubilees in *Textual and Historical Studies in the Book of Jubilees,* HSM 14 (Missoula, MT: Scholars Press, 1977), 1–18.

9. Specifically: δρῦς, βάλανος, λίψ, σχῖνος, and φάραγξ. August Dillmann, "Das Buch der Jubiläen oder die kleine Genesis," *JBW* 3 (1850–1851): 1–96. Charles later added ἡλιου to the

in Latin translation which similarly appear to be daughter translations of the Greek text. Finally, although no manuscript evidence has been found, Jubilees scholars posit that a Syriac translation of Jubilees was made in antiquity based on what appeared to be a number of Syriac citations of Jubilees which lacked any apparent influence from Greek.[10] Despite all of these finds, however, the Ethiopic text remains the only tradition to preserve Jubilees in its entirety. Thus, in my treatment of Jubilees I will be relying primarily on the Ethiopic text and will be supplementing from the Hebrew where available.

### 4.1.2 Content and Character

The book of Jubilees offers a rewriting of the book of Genesis and the first part of Exodus (Gen 1–Exod 12). The work is presented as a revelation from Yahweh given to Moses atop Mt. Sinai, framed by a brief prologue and epilogue.[11] The prologue gives a short description of the work as an account concerned with the division of time into units of years, weeks, and jubilees:

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list. Robert Henry Charles, *The Book of Jubilees or the Little Genesis* (London: Adam & Charles Black, 1902), xxx.

10. See especially E. Tisserant, "Fragments syriaques du Livre des Jubilés," *RB* 30 (1921): 55–86, 206–32 and Charles, *Book of Jubilees,* xxix but also A. M. Ceriani, *Monumenta Sacra et Profana,* 2 vols. (Milan: Bibliotheca Ambrosiana, 1861–1863), 2:ix–x and Charles, *Maṣḥafa Kufālē,* x.

11. VanderKam, *Jubilees,* 1:17.

(Prologue) **ዝንቱ ፡ ነገረ ፡ ኩፋሌ ፡ መዋዕላተ ፡ ሕግ ፡ ወለስምዕ ፡ ለግብረ ፡ ዓመታት ፡ ለተሳብዖቶሙ ፡ ለኢዮቤልውሳቲሆሙ ፡ ውስተ ፡ ኩሉ ፡ ዓመታተ ፡ ዓለም ፡ በከመ ፡ ተናገሮ ፡ ለሙሴ ፡ በደብረ ፡ ሲና ፡ አመ ፡ ዐርገ ፡ ይንሣእ ፡ ጽላተ ፡ እብን ፡ ሕግ ፡ ወትእዛዝ ፡ በቃለ ፡ እግዚአብሔር ፡ በከመ ፡ ይቤሎ ፡ ይዕርግ ውስተ ፡ ርእሰ ፡ ደብር ።**

(Prologue) *zəntu nagara kufālē mawāʕəlāta [la-]ḥegg wa-la-səmʕ la-gəbra ʕāmatāt la-tasābəʕotomu la-ʔiyyobēləwəsātihomu wəsta kʷəllu ʕāmatāta ʕālam ba-kama tanāgaro la-Musē ba-dabra Sinā ʔama ʕarga yenšāʔ ṣəllāta ʔəbn—ḥəgg wa-təʔzāz—ba-qāla ʔagziʔabḥēr ba-kama yəbēlo yəʕrəg wəsta rəʔsa dabr.*

(Prologue) These are the words[12] of the division of the days for the law and for the testimony for the event[s] of the years; for their weeks, for their Jubilees in all the years of the world just as he spoke (them) to Moses on Mount Sinai when he went up to receive the tablets of stone—the law and the commandment—at the command of God, as he had said to him that he should ascend to the top of the mountain.

Following this prologue, the setting of the story is established as the during the "first year of the Israelites' exodus from Egypt, in the third month, on the sixteenth of the month" when Yahweh called Moses atop Mt. Sinai.

The bulk of the work (Jubilees 2:1–50:13) is dedicated to the recounting of Jewish history, following the basic narrative provided by Gen 1–Exod 12, with special concern for halakhic matters and the division of time according to a 364 day calendrical system.[13] The particulars of the revelation are mediated by the "angel of the presence" (Eth. **መልአከ ገጽ** [*mal'aka gaṣṣ*]) who dictates its contents to Moses, the fastidious scribe. The treatment of

12. Lit. "This is the word." I've chosen to follow VanderKam and others by rendering this construction in the plural based on the probable underlying Hebrew אלה הדברים. See VanderKam, *Jubilees,* 125

13. TODO: Reference

Moses as a scribe places him within a chain of tradition—along with Enoch and Noah—which emphasizes writing and written works as essential sources of tradition and revelation.[14] The work closes with a terse statement declaring "Here the account of the division of time is ended" (Jubilees 50:13; Eth. **ተፈጸመ ፡ በዝየ ፡ ነገር ፡ ዘኩፋሌ ፡ መዋዕል ።** [*tafaṣṣama ba-zeyya nagar za-kufālē mawāʕel*]).

#### 4.1.3 As RwB

#### 4.1.4 Thesis on Memory

## 4.2 RESTRUCTURING THE PAST

One of the most notable features of the Book of Jubilees is its preoccupation with the correct division of time—both with respect to a 364 day year as well as longer units encompassing multiple years. Although neither the 364-day year nor the larger 7 and 49 year units ("weeks" of years and "jubilees," respectively) are unique to the book of Jubilees, the proper division of time is into these units provides the central organizing principle for the book's rewriting of Gen 1–Exod 12.

The author of Jubilees makes it very clear that the proper division of time through a 364 day year is an essential practice for the correct observation of religious feasts and other holidays throughout the year. The pattern and significance of this 364 day cycle is explained to Moses after the Angel of the Presence retells the events of the Flood. The Angel explains the division of the year into four seasons, each beginning with a memorial day (Jubilees 6:23) and

14. TODO: Get refs and say something here/

consisting of thirteen-weeks. The system as a whole yields a fifty-two week year (Jubilees. 6:29) and is presented as "inscribed and ordained on the tablets of heaven" (6:31; Eth. **ተቁርፀ ፡ ወተሠርዐ ፡ ውስተ ፡ ጽላተ ፡ ሰማይ** [*taqʷarḍa wa-tašarʕa wəsta ṣəllāta samāy*].

The 364 day year is considered "complete" (Eth. [*TODO:*]) by the Angel such that proper observance maintains synchrony year-over-year. In other words, adding or subtracting days from this calendar renders a "floating" calendar vis-à-vis the absolute reference of the heavenly tablets.[15] By comparison, the Angel of the Presence warns against the use of a lunar calendar because the lunar year is too short. Jubilees 6:36–37 reads:

> (6:36) **ወይከውኑ ፡ እለ ፡ ያስተሐይጹ ፡ ወርኀ ፡ በሑያጼ ፡ ወርን ። ዕስመ ፡ ትማስን ፡ ይእቲ ፡ ጊዜያተ ፡ ወትቀድም ፡ እምዓመታት ፡ ለዓመት ፡ ዐሡረ ፡ ዕለተ ። (37) በእንተዝ ፡ ይመጽእ ፡ ዓመታተ ፡ ሎሙ ፡ እንዘ ፡ ያማስኑ ፡ ወይገብሩ ፡ ዕለተ ፡ ስምዕ ፡ ምንንተ ። ወዕለተ ፡ ርኵስተ ፡ በዓለ ፡ ወኵሉ ፡ ይደምር ፡ ወማዋዕላ ፡ ቅዱሳተ ፡ ርኩሰ ፡ ወዕለተ ፡ ርኵስተ ፡ ለዕለት ፡ ቅድስት ። ዕስመ ፡ ይስሕቱ ፡ አውራኀ ፡ ወሰንበታተ ወብዓላተ ፡ ወኢዩቤለ ።**
>
> (6:36) *wa-yekawwenu ʔella yāstaḥayyeṣu warḥa ba-ḥuyāṣē warḫ ʕesma temās(s)en yeʔeti gizēyāta wa-teqaddem ʔem-ʕāmatāt la-ʕāmat ʕašur ʕelata* (37) *ba-ʔenta-ze yemaṣeʔ ʕāmatāta lomu ʔenza yāmāsenu wa-yegabru ʕelata semʕ menent wa-ʕelata rekʷesta ba-ʕāla wa-kʷellu yedēmer wa-māwāʕelā qedusāta rekusā wa-ʕelata rekʷesta laʕlat qedust ʕesma yeseḥetu ʔawrāḫa wa-sanbatāta wa-beʕālāta wa-ʔiyobēla*
>
> (6:36) [36] VanderKam: There will be people who carefully observe the moon with lunar observations because it is corrupt (with respect to) the seasons and is early from year to year by ten days. (37) [37] Therefore years will come about for them when they will disturb (the year) and make a day of testimony something worthless and a profane day a festival. Everyone will join together the holy days with the profane and the profane day with the

15. TODO: citation for floating calendar

> holy day, for they will err regarding the months, the sabbaths; the festivals, and the jubilee.

The contrast drawn to the lunar calendar combined with the fact that a 364 day calendar more closely approximates the actual period of Earth's orbit around the sun (approx. 365.24 days) led most early interpreters of Jubilees to call the 364 day calendar a "solar" calendar.[16] Because some of the early Israelite festivals were tied to the agricultural year (for example, *Shavuot* was celebrated after the wheat harvest, see Exod 34:22), a solar calendar would indeed keep the calendar from drifting backward every year. Because the lunar (synodic) month[17] averages approximately 29.5 days, a lunar year (twelve synodic months) lasts approximately 354 days. Without any intercalation the calendar would drift back 11.24 days per year (a so-called "revolving year"). Within a matter of only two-or-three years, the correlation between agricultural activity and cultic practice would break down.[18]

Recent treatments of the 364-day calendar, however, have eschewed the "solar" label in most cases.[19] The rationale for doing so is two-fold: first, although a 364-day year is *close* to the

16. TODO: Get Charles, maybe?

17. The synodic month is derived from the length of time it takes the moon to process through its full cycle and is distinct from the period of the moon's *orbit*.

18. The major advantage of the lunar system is the ability for anybody to make reasonably accurate observations about when months begin and end. By contrast, the solar year requires a more subtle and long-term set of measurements. Most cultures which utilize a lunar calendar account for the discrepancy through the intercalation of an additional month every few years to bring the solar and lunar calendars into alignment. Most "lunar" calendars, therefore, are really lunisolar calendars, though exceptions (such as the Islamic calendar) do exist. See Uwe Glessmer, "Calendars in the Qumran Scrolls," in *The Dead Sea Scrolls after Fifty Years: A Comprehensive Assesment,* ed. Peter W. Flint and James C. VanderKam, 2 vols. (Leiden: Brill, 1999), 213–78; Wayne Horowitz, "The 360 and 364 Day Year in Ancient Mesopotamia," *JANES* 24 (1996): 35–44.

19. Glessmer, "Calendars in the Qumran Scrolls," 231Jonathan Ben-Dov, "The 364-day Year

actual period of Earth's orbit around the sun, the 1.24 day discrepancy is large enough that after fifty years, the calendar would have floated backward a full two-months.[20] In other words, although a 1.24 day drift may not be noticeable from one year to the next, the difference is significant *enough* to be noticeable within the average lifespan of an individual and would certainly conflict with agriculturally contingent festivals.[21] Second, while the Angel of the Presence expresses concern with the "corruption" of the yearly cycle, the rationale for the 364-day year is not explicitly connected to the solar year. In other words, when the Angel of the Presence decries the deficiencies of the lunar year, it does so with respect to the 364-day year and *not* with respect to the solar year. Instead, the problem with a 354-day (lunar) year, according to the Angel of the presence is that the holidays, months, sabbaths, festivals, and jubilees will fall on the wrong days *according to the 364-day calendar*. This rationale is, essentially, circular. The 364-day year is an absolute measure of a "year" according to the book of Jubilees—it is inscribed on the "heavenly tablets" as such—and is not contingent or defined with reference to the sun or the moon. Instead, the author of Jubilees seems more concerned with the proper and even division of *seasons* (defined as three months) and *weeks* (a so-called

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at Qumran and in the Pseudepigrapha," in *Calendars and Years II: Astronomy and Time in the Ancient and Medieval World,* ed. John Steele (Oxford: Oxbow, 2011), 69–105; Helen R. Jacobus, "Calendars," in *T & T Clark Companion to the Dead Sea Scrolls,* ed. Greorge J. Brooke and Charlotte Hempel (London: T & T Clark, 2018), 435–48.

20. Specifically, 62 days. This would be the equivalent of celebrating the new year near Halloween.

21. Ben Zion Wacholder and Sholom Wacholder, "Patterns of Biblical Dates and Qumran 's Calendar: The Fallacy of Jaubert's Hypothesis," *HUCA* 66 (1995): 1–40. This assumes, of course, that the various festivals continued to be connected to the agricultural cycle and not a purely utopian construct as Wacholder and Wacholder suggest.

heptadic structure) without the need for intercalation.[22]

According to most reconstructions of Jubilees's 364-day calendar, the year was divided into four seasons consisting of exactly thirteen weeks (91 days). Each season was also divided into three months, though, because 91 does not divide evenly by 30, the third month in each season was counted as 31 days. Thus, each season was composed of two months of 30 days and one month of 31 days. Because these seasons' lengths divide evenly by seven, every season began on the same day of the week and followed an identical structure.[23] Thus, the "memorial" days prescribed in Jubilees 6:23 would always fall on the same day of the week. In the same way, because the whole year also divides evenly by seven, every day of the year (in every year) implicitly referred to a particular day of the week.[24]

Although the mechanics of this calendar are reasonably well understood, its purpose and antiquity remain matters of debate and the seminal work of Annie Jaubert (building on Barthélemy) during the mid-20th century remains the *Ausganspunkt* for most discussions of the topic.[25] Her thesis took as its point of departure Barthélemy's theory that the Jewish 364-day

22. Jonathan Ben-Dov and Stéphane Saulnier, "Qumran Calendars: A Survey of Scholarship 1980–2007," *CurBR* 7.1 (2008): 124–68.

23. In other words, every season began on the same day of the week, and the "nth" day of any given season was the same day of the week as the nth day of any other season.

24. Thus, if a person were born on a Tuesday, every subsequent birthday would also fall on a Tuesday. Likewise, there would be no need to buy a new calendar every year, since every year is the same "shape." See esp. Annie Jaubert, "Le calendrier des Jubilés et de la secte de Qumrân: Ses origines bibliques," *VT* 3 (3 1953): 250–64.

25. See especially ibid., 250–64; idem, "Le calendrier des Jubilés et les jour liturgiques de la semaine," *VT* 7 (1 1957): 35–61; idem, *La date de la Cène: calendrier biblique et liturgie chrétienne* (Paris: Gabalda, 1957). The final work was translated into English as *The Date of the Last Supper,* trans. Isaac Rafferty (Staten Island, NY: Alba House, 1965); trans. of *La date de la Cène: calendrier biblique et liturgie chrétienne* (Paris: Gabalda, 1957).

year began on Wednesday, the day that the sun and moon were created, according to the Priestly creation account in Genesis 1:14–19.[26] To prove this idea, she began by noting that the book of Jubilees specifically prohibits beginning a journey on the sabbath (50:8, 12) and infers that, therefore, the various travel narratives in Jubilees ought to obey this rule, e.g, when Abram travelled, he would not have done so on the Sabbath according to Jubilees. She worked backwards through the descriptions of such journeys in Jubilees to confirm that, indeed, the only possible situation where the patriarchs would not have traveled on the sabbath, as described in Jubilees demands that the first day of the year be a Wednesday.[27] Jaubert further hypothesized that the 364-day calendar utilized by the author of Jubilees was, in fact, quite ancient and reflected the same views of the latest Priestly strata of the Hexateuch by applying the same method to the Hexateuch and yielding an identical result.[28] Thus, according to Jaubert, the 364-day calendar was the calendar of Second Temple Judaism and it was not until later—at the time of Ben Sira—that the lunar modifications known from the Rabbinic period were instituted.[29]

Jaubert's thesis has been challenged and modified over the past several decades, but the publication of a number of important calendrical texts from Qumran have—at least

26. Dominique Barthélemy, "Notes en marge de publications récentes sur les manuscrits de Qumrân," *RB* 59 (2 1952): 187–218; Jaubert, "Le calendrier des Jubilés et de la secte de Qumrân," 250; idem, *Date of the Last Supper*, 24–25.

27. idem, "Le calendrier des Jubilés et de la secte de Qumrân," 252–54; idem, *Date of the Last Supper*, 25–27.

28. idem, "Le calendrier des Jubilés et de la secte de Qumrân," 258; idem, *Date of the Last Supper*, 33.

29. idem, "Le calendrier des Jubilés et de la secte de Qumrân," 254–58, 262–64; idem, *Date of the Last Supper*, 47–51.

partially—served to support the broad strokes of her thesis that the 364 day calendar was in broad use during the late Second Temple period (though the more specific claims remain controversial).[30] What seems apparent from the more recently discovered evidence from Qumran is that the system of keeping time during the Second Temple period was not a monolith. And while the book of Jubilees clearly participates in a tradition which privileged the 364-day year, the particulars of the Jubilees calendar and its theological and ideological underpinnings do not necessarily align with other advocates for the 364-day year (such as the Astronomical Book and the other calendrical texts from Qumran).[31] Thus, although the Astronomical Book (1 Enoch 72–82), the Aramaic Levi Document (), the Temple Scroll (), MMT (), and other calendrical () and liturgical () texts from Qumran all utilize a 364-day calendar,

30. Early reactions to her thesis were mixed. In particular, she was critiqued by Baumgarten ("Hlwḥ šl spr hywblym whmqr?," *Tarbiz* 32 (1962): 317–28 translated into English as "The Calendar of the Book of Jubilees and the Bible," in *Studies In Qumran Law*, ed. Joseph M. Baumgarten, vol. 24, SJLA (Leiden: Brill, 1977), 101–14; trans. of "Hlwḥ šl spr hywblym whmqr?," *Tarbiz* 32 (1962): 317–28) and more recently by Wacholder & Wacholder ("Patterns of Biblical Dates," 1–40) and Ravid ("The Book of Jubilees and Its Calendar: A Reexamination," *DSD* 10 (3 2003): 371–94). Her thesis was adopted and slightly modified by Morgenstern (who made the first month of the quarter 31 days, rather than the last month; "The Calendar of the Book of Jubilees, Its Origin and Its Character," *VT* 5 (1 1955): 34–76), at least partially supported by VanderKam ("The Origin, Character, and Early History of the 364-Day Calendar: A Reassesment of Jaubert's Hypothesis," *CBQ* 41 (1979): 390–411) and still retains broad support generally, if at times (seemingly) by virtue of its ubiquity. See Ben-Dov and Saulnier, "Qumran Calendars," 142.

31. See ibid., 159. Although the calendar of Jubilees is distinct from other 364 day calendars inferred from the Qumran texts, many of the more general observations about their function apply to all such calendars and are frequently discussed together. The early discussions of Barthélemy and Jaubert mostly focused on Jubilees, as most of the Qumran scrolls had either not been discovered or not published at the time of writing. See Barthélemy, "Notes en marge," 187–218 and Jaubert, "Le calendrier des Jubilés et les jour liturgiques de la semaine," 35–61.

they do not all seem to agree on *why* they follow it.[32]

32. For a concise summary of the calendrical issues in these texts, see **vanderkam1999**; Glessmer, "Calendars in the Qumran Scrolls," 233–68; Ben-Dov and Saulnier, "Qumran Calendars," 127–35; and Jacobus, "Calendars," 435–48.

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