THE OTHER BIBLE

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The Book of Jubilees

(Jewish Pseudepigrapha)

The Book of Jubilees is an extensive retelling of Genesis and Exodus in which the author's emphasis on Halakhah (the teachings and ordinances of biblical law) suggests both opposition to the Hellenizing spirit in Israel and an affinity with the Qumran community, the so-called Essenes of the Dead Sea Scrolls. The emphasis on halakhic commentary is seen in references to "commandments written down on heavenly tablets."

In this "Little Genesis"—an alternate title to a book longer than Genesis as well as any book of the pseudepigrapha—God secretly reveals to Moses on Mount Sinai the history of the Jews from the creation of the world to the passage through the Red Sea. God's agent is the "angel of the presence," who orders Moses to write down God's exact words. Events in the book follow a solar calendar, and dates and numbers are specific and emphatic. For example, the regulations governing the uncleanness of a woman after the birth of a son or daughter specify the number of days of the mother's separation from the sanctuary, and God gives this information to Adam directly on his arrival in Eden from the land of his creation. The emphasis on the prohibition of nakedness, on Adam and Eve's shame and God's gift of clothing to them, all reflect an attempt to protect Israel from the Greek gymnasion and ephebeion, which were popular in Jerusalem and even among its Maccabean rulers. A notable richness in the book is its angelology—angels of the winds and of the waters—which is referred to in Matthew, Acts, and Revelation. In the final section (not given here), the righteous live a mythical existence and enjoy a prediluvian longevity of a thousand years or more. Their souls will enjoy immortality.

The date of composition is uncertain, but most scholars indicate the middle of the second century B.C. Jubilees was written in Hebrew, then translated into Greek, and from Greek into Ethiopic. The complete text
exists in Ethiopic today, edited by R. H. Charles. Fragments of a Latin
translation are also extant.¹

Notes

¹ George W. E. Nickelsburg announces in Jewish Literature between the Bible
by Orval S. Wintermute in Nickelsburg's forthcoming The Pseudepigrapha of the
Old Testament (Garden City, New York: Doubleday).

THE CREATION OF THE WORLD

On the first day¹ he created the tall heavens and the earth and waters and all the
spirits who served him: the angels of the presence, the angels of sanctification, the
angels of the spirit of fire, the angels of the spirit of the winds, of the clouds, of
darkness, of snow, hail, and hoarfrost, the angels of the voices of thunder and
lightning, the angels of the spirits of cold and heat, of winter, spring, autumn, and
summer, and of all spirits of his creatures in Heaven and on the earth. He created
the abysses and darkness, twilight and night, and light, dawn, and day, and he
prepared them in the knowledge of his heart. Thereupon we saw his works, and
praised him.

He created seven great works on the first day. On the second day he created the
firmament in the midst of the waters, and on that day the waters were divided,
half of them going above, half below, the firmament hanging over the face of the
entire earth. This was God's only work on the second day. On the third day he
commanded the waters to roll off the face of the earth, to gather in one place,
and for dry land to appear. The waters did as he commanded and rolled off the
face of the earth, and in a single place the dry land appeared. On that day he
created all the seas according to their separate gathering places, all rivers, wa-
ters in the mountains and along the earth, the lakes and dew, seed which is
sown, and all sprouting things, fruit trees, trees of the forest, and the Garden
of Eden. In Eden he formed every manner of plant. These were his great works
on the third day.

And on the fourth day he created the sun and moon and stars, and placed
them in the firmament of heaven to give light on earth, to rule over day and
night, to separate light from darkness. And God appointed the sun to be a great
sign on the earth for days and for sabbaths and for months, for feasts, years,
sabbaths of years, for jubilees, and every season of the years. The sun divided
light from darkness so that all things may prosper which shoot and grow in
the earth. These three things he made on the fourth day.

And on the fifth day he created great sea monsters in the depths of the waters
—these were the first things of flesh created by his hands—the fish and
everything that moves in the waters, and everything that flies—all the birds. The
sun rose above them to enrich all his creations—plants shooting on the earth,
trees, and flesh. These three things he created on the fifth day.

And on the sixth day he created all the animals of the earth, cattle, and all mov-
ing things. And after all this he created man, a man and woman, and he gave
him dominion over all on the earth, in the seas, in the air, over beasts and cattle
gave him dominion. And these four species he created on the sixth day.
There were altogether twenty-two kinds.

*Chapter 2. All selections in this chapter are modern revisions of R. H. Charles, The
He finished his work on the sixth day—in Heaven and earth, in the waters and abysses, in light and darkness. And he gave us a great sign, the Sabbath: that we should work six days but on the Sabbath, the seventh day, we should keep from all work.

ADAM, EVE, AND PARADISE*

During six days of the second week, according to God’s word, he brought Adam all beasts, cattle, all birds and things creeping on the earth and moving in the water. Beasts were on day one, cattle on day two, birds on day three, all that creeps on the earth on day four, all that moves in the water on day five. And Adam named them. As he called them so was their name. And during these five days Adam saw that each species had male and female, but he was alone. He had no helpmate. The Lord said to us: “It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make him a helpmate.” Our God caused a deep sleep to fall on him, and while he slept God took one of his ribs as a woman. This was the origin of woman. And he built up the flesh on it. He constructed woman. And he woke Adam from his sleep, and on this sixth day he brought her to the rising Adam, and Adam knew her and said, “She is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh. She will be called my wife because she was taken from her husband.” So man and wife will be one, so a man will leave his father and mother and cleave to his wife, and they will be one flesh.

Adam was created in the first week, and his wife, his rib, in the second week. God showed her to him, and so the commandment was given for a male to keep in his defilement for seven days and for a female twice seven days.

After Adam had completed forty days in the land where he was created, he was brought into the Garden of Eden to till and to keep it. His wife was brought in on the eightieth day. For that reason the commandment is written on the heavenly tablets in regard to the mother: “She who bears a male shall remain in her uncleanness seven days, and thirty-three days in the blood of purification. She shall not touch any hallowed things, nor enter in the sanctuary until the days for the male or female child are accomplished.” This is law and testimony written down for Israel.

In the first week of the first jubilee, Adam and his wife were in the Garden of Eden for seven years tilling and reaping. He was given work and instructed how to farm correctly. He tilled the Garden and was naked, but he did not know it, and was not ashamed. He protected the Garden from birds and beasts and cattle, and gathered fruit and food, which he stored for himself and his wife. After exactly seven years, in the seventeenth day of the second month, the serpent came and said to the woman, “Did God command you not to eat of any tree in the Garden?” She said, “God told us to eat fruit from all trees in the Garden, except for the fruit of the tree in the middle of the Garden. God said to us: ‘You must not eat from it, nor touch it, or you will die.’”

And the serpent said to the woman, “You will surely not die. For God knows that on the day you eat of that tree your eyes will be opened. You will be like gods and know good from evil.” And the woman looked at the tree, which was pleasant to her eye, and its fruit good for food, and she picked a fruit and ate. She covered her shame with a fig leaf and gave Adam what she had taken from the tree. He ate, and his eyes were opened and he saw that he was naked. He took fig leaves, sewed them together, made an apron for himself, and covered his shame.

Then God cursed the serpent and was

*Chapter 3.
forever angry with it. He was angry with
the woman, for she had listened to the
serpent and had eaten. He said to her: “I
will greatly multiply your sorrows and
your pains. In sorrow you will bring
forth children. You will return to your
husband, who will rule over you.” To
Adam he said: “Because you listened to
your wife’s voice and ate from the tree I
commanded you not to touch, let the
ground be cursed under you. Thorns and
thistles will grow in it, and you will eat
your bread in the sweat of your face until
you return to the earth from which you
were taken. You are earth and to earth
you will return.” He made them coats
out of skins, clothed them, and sent
them out of the Garden of Eden.

On the day Adam left the Garden, he
made an offering of sweet-smelling
frankincense, galbanum, and stacte, and
spices of the morning. And on that day
was closed the mouth of all beasts, of
cattle, birds, whatever walks and crawls,
so that they could not speak. They had
all spoken to each other with one lip and
one tongue. He sent out of the Garden
all flesh that was there, and all flesh was
scattered according to its kinds in the
places created for them. He gave only
Adam the means of covering his shame,
not any of the beasts and cattle. And so
those who know the judgment of law
prescribed on the heavenly tablets know
to cover their shame. They should not
uncover themselves as the Gentiles do.2

On the new moon of the fourth month
Adam and his wife left the Garden of
Eden and dwelled in the land of Elda, in
the land of their creation. Adam called
his wife Eve. They had no son till the
first jubilee, and after this he knew her.
Now he farmed the land as he had been
instructed to in the Garden of Eden.

Notes

1. The Book of Jubilees is presented as a se-
cret revelation given to Moses by God’s angels
on Mount Sinai. The first line of chapter 2,
 omitted in the above text, introduces the re-
telling of the Genesis creation: “And the angel
of the presence spoke to Moses according to
the word of the Lord, saying: ‘Write the com-
plete history of the creation, how in six days
the Lord God finished all his works and all
that he created, and kept Sabbath on the sev-
enth day and hallowed it for all ages, and ap-
pointed it as a sign for all his works.’”

2. This passage suggests opposition to
stripping by Greeks (as well as Jews) for ath-
etic games. In a larger sense it suggests oppo-
sition to Hellenizing Jews and Hellenization in
Palestine.