

Outside the Bible

Ancient Jewish Writings Related to Scripture

Edited by Louis H. Feldman, James L. Kugel, and Lawrence H. Schiffman



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Outside the Bible gives to the English-speaking world the sacred library of ancient Israel. For the first time in a Jewish context, the vast collection of the extra-biblical texts that comprise ancient Israel's excluded scriptures are available to scholar and general reader alike. From the Dead Sea Scrolls to the Septuagint, Apocrypha, Pseudepigrapha, Josephus, and Philo, this anthology brings together the texts that transformed Jews and Christians at the turn of the first millennium.

Outside the Bible looks at these extraordinary writings in a unique way: as they relate to each other and illuminate the Hebrew Bible itself. We discover that ancient Judaism began the process of commenting on and wrestling with its sacred scripture even before the canon of holy books was itself completed. We now know that we cannot fully understand what is in the Bible without also appreciating what was excluded from it; the view of the outside informs the view of the inside. Thanks to the wonders of archeological discovery and the diligence of modern scholars, the array of excluded Jewish scriptures of the Second Temple period of late antiquity have come into focus.

This collection of 154 original text translations, introductions, and detailed commentaries connect backward to the Hebrew Bible and biblical institutions, laterally to other writings from the Second Temple period and their historical setting, and forward to the religious legacy of Rabbinic Judaism and Early Christianity. In so doing, the anthology makes significant contributions to our knowledge and understanding of the Second Temple period, providing new insights into the history, literature, philosophy, and artistic achievements of Jewish and Christian cultures, out of which grew the Western humanistic tradition.

The 3-volume collection includes a general introduction and opening essays and new and revised translations, with introductions, detailed commentaries, suggestions for further reading and source notes that together place each text within its historical and cultural context, as well as a timeline, lists of books of the Bible and Second Temple literature, and a general subject index.

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Excerpts from *Jubilees*

JAMES L. KUGEL

The book of *Jubilees* is arguably the most important and influential of all the books written by Jews between the Bible and the Mishnah. It is a treasure-house of ancient biblical interpretation, composed by an unknown author who thought deeply about the Torah and Judaism. *Jubilees* was prized by the Dead Sea Scrolls community; parts of no fewer than fifteen manuscripts of this book were hidden by them in the caves at Qumran.¹ But its influence certainly went beyond this group. Although Rabbinic Judaism rejected *Jubilees*, in part because of some of its doctrines, many of its interpretive traditions are paralleled in the Talmud and various midrashic collections, as well as in the early poetry of the synagogue, suggesting possible influence. It also played an important role in early Christian communities, and it is thanks to them that the book has been preserved in its entirety to this day.

Jubilees is a retelling of much of the book of Genesis and the first part of the book of Exodus. It claims to have been communicated to Moses on Mount Sinai by God's chief angel, the "angel of the Presence." Moses had gone up the mountain to receive the Torah; before he could go down again, *Jubilees* relates, God ordered His angel to dictate another book to Moses, a dated history of events "according to the Torah and the Testimony" (see below). That other book was the book of *Jubilees* itself. Although it retells much of the material in Genesis and Exodus, its retelling is accompanied by all sorts of new information designed to answer questions about the biblical narrative: How did humanity continue to develop if Adam and Eve bore only sons? When did God decide that Israel was to be His special people? Where was Abraham when God first spoke to him? When and why was the tribe of Levi chosen for the priesthood in Israel? In addition to answering such questions, *Jubilees*'s author sought to communicate an overall message of hope and encouragement to the Jews of his day and to urge them to follow stricter standards of morality and religious observance.

Significance

Apart from answering specific questions about the stories of Genesis and Exodus, the author of *Jubilees* had a definite ideological message he wished to communicate through his book. He lived in a time when, no doubt, many of his countrymen were despairing of Israel's future. It may well be, they reasoned, that at one point God adopted Israel as His own people, just as ancient Scrip-

ture related (Exod. 19:5–6). But that day was long gone. In the meantime, He had allowed the Northern Kingdom of Israel to fall to the Assyrians, never to rise again; the Southern Kingdom, Judah, had similarly fallen to the Babylonians, and much of its citizenry had been exiled to Babylon. Unlike the Northerners, the Judean exiles had subsequently been allowed to return to their homeland, but they were nonetheless a subject people, ruled over first by Persia, then Ptolemaic Egypt, then Seleucid Syria. Was this a fitting arrangement for a people allegedly chosen by the Lord of heaven and earth? Instead, it seemed a clear indication that God’s adoption of Israel as his own people, an act inaugurated with the great covenant at Mount Sinai, must no longer be in force. Israel had violated that covenant—first the Northerners, then the Southerners—and had therefore been rejected; the apparently unending years of foreign domination were a clear indication that Israel had fallen into God’s disfavor.

It was principally to combat such a negative reading of history that the original author of *Jubilees* wrote his book. He began by having Moses hear the “prediction” of all the evils that would lead to up to the Babylonian exile (*Jub.* 1:9–14). This was to be a terrible catastrophe, but it would ultimately be followed by Israel’s repentance and restoration (*Jub.* 1:15) as well as the explicit reversal of the Pentateuch’s own curses which were said to be Israel’s lot if it violated the Sinai covenant (*Jub.* 1:16). In other words, *Jubilees*’s author readily accepted that Israel had sinned and been punished—but this hardly spelled the end of its historic bond with its God. Israel was and always had been God’s own people.

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Source of Translation The translation, with minor alterations, is from O. S. Wintermute, “Jubilees [2nd century BC]: A New Translation and Introduction,” in *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, ed. James H. Charlesworth (New York: Doubleday, 1983–85), 2:35–142.

TRANSLATION

The Book of Division

This is *The Account of the Division of Days of the Law and the Testimony for Annual Observance according to their Weeks* [of years] *and their Jubilees throughout all the Years of the World* just as the LORD told it to Moses on Mount Sinai when he went up to receive the tablets of the Law and the commandment by the word of the LORD, as he said to him, “Come up to the top of the mountain.”

COMMENTARY

of the Divisions of Days This phrase (better: of the divisions of the times; Heb. *mahlekot ha-ittim*) in Jubilees means a chronological history, that is, a history in which important events are accompanied by the date of their occurrence in anno mundi (i.e., calculated from the time of the Creation).

of the Law and the Testimony That is, based on two sacred books, the Law (the Torah) and the (book of) Testimony (the *teudah*). These are the two sacred texts whose contents form the basis of this chronological history; see “Introduction” as well as below on verse 4.

for Annual Observance Better: “of the events of the years”; that is, it relates events dated by the years in which they took place.

their Weeks [of years] and their Jubilees throughout all the Years of the World¹⁷ “Their weeks” refers to the groupings of 7 years in which they took place and “their Jubilees” to groups of 49 years, significant units. “Throughout all the years of the world” is better rendered as “throughout all the days of yore.” To reword the title thus far: “This book is a chronological history, based on the Torah and the *teudah*, of certain events, dated by their years, as well as by their ‘weeks’ and their jubilees, throughout all the days of yore.” The earliest reference to the title of this book is found in the *Damascus Document* (col. 16:3–4) of the Dead Sea Scrolls community, where it appears in shorter form: “The Book of the Divisions of Times according to their Jubilees and in their ‘Weeks.’”

just as the Lord told it to Moses on Mount Sinai when he went up to receive the tablets of the Law and the commandment “Law” refers to “Torah.”¹⁸ The operating fiction of *Jubilees* is that God first gave Moses the Torah on Mount Sinai and then had the “angel of the Presence,” His chief angel, dictate the contents of *Jubilees* to Moses. For that reason, the phrase “when he went up to receive the [stone] tablets [of] the Law and the commandment” (taken from Exod. 24:1) is potentially significant; see below on 1:1.

by the word of the Lord This book was related to Moses on God’s orders.

Moses Is Summoned to the Mountain

^{1:1}In the first year of the Exodus of the children of Israel from Egypt, in the third month on the sixteenth day of that month, the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, “Come up to Me on the mountain, and I shall give you two stone tablets of the Law and the commandment, which I have written, so that you may teach them.”

²And Moses went up to the mountain of the LORD. And the glory of the LORD dwelt upon Mount Sinai, and a cloud overshadowed it for six days. ³And he called to Moses on the seventh day from the midst of the cloud. And the appearance of the glory of the LORD was like fire burning on top of the mountain. ⁴And Moses was on the mountain forty days and forty nights.

Moses Is Instructed to Write a Book

And the LORD revealed to him both what (was) in the beginning and what will occur (in the future), the account of the division of all of the days of the Law and the testimony.

1:1. in the first year of the Exodus . . . in the third month on the sixteenth day The Ten Commandments had already been proclaimed on the preceding day, the 15th;¹⁹ now God calls to Moses alone to ascend the mountain to receive further instruction for 40 days and nights (Exod. 24:12–18).

Come up to Me on the mountain This is God’s summons to Moses in Exod. 24:12; the rest of this verse is cited in *Jubilees*’s next words: “and I shall give you two stone tablets of the Law [i.e., the Torah] and the commandment[s], which I have written, so that you may teach them.” As he did in the title sentence, the author again cites Exod. 24:12. But why this verse in particular? While other biblical verses speak of God giving the Ten Commandments to Moses (see Exod. 34:28; Deut. 4:13 and 10:4),²⁰ the fact that Exod. 24:12 mentions “the stone tablets, the torah, and the commandment” seems to state clearly that Moses was given many more commandments than those ten. In fact, this verse might be interpreted as implying that Moses received a body of commandments even beyond those contained in the Torah—such as the additional stipulations found in the book of *Jubilees* itself. Exod. 24:12 was used for a similar purpose, but still more expansively, in B. Ber. 5a: “The ‘tablets’ refers to the Ten Commandments, ‘the Torah’ to Scripture [i.e., to the Pentateuch as a whole], ‘and the commandments’ to the Mishnah, ‘which I wrote’ to the Prophets and the Writings, ‘to teach them’ to the *gemara* [i.e., oral teachings about the Mishnah, Torah, and other topics]—this verse [thus] teaches that all of these were given to Moses on Mount Sinai.”

1:2. for six days See Exod. 24:16.

1:4. And the Lord revealed to him both what [was] in the beginning That is, at the time of the Creation (“in the beginning” here alludes to the first words of Gen. 1:1). God had to *reveal* these things because no humans could know them on their own. And what will occur (in the future) which humans also cannot know.

the account of the division of all the days of the Law and the testimony In other words, the

⁵And he said, “Set your mind on every thing which I shall tell you on this mountain, and write it in a book so that their descendants might see that I have not abandoned them on account of all of the evil which they have done to instigate transgression of the covenant which I am establishing between me and you today on Mount Sinai for their descendants. ⁶And thus it will be, when all of these things happen to them, that they will know that I have been more righteous than they in all their judgments and deeds. And they will know that I have truly been with them.

Moses Is Told How the People Will Forsake the LORD in the Land of Promise

⁷“And you, write for yourself all of these words which I shall cause you to know today, for I know their rebelliousness and their stubbornness before I cause them to enter the

chronological history contained in this book, which includes the things narrated both in the Law (the Torah) and also in the testimony (the *Teudah*, the book of the *Warning*), with each incident being assigned its proper date in years, starting from the creation of the world.

1:5. Set your mind on every thing Deut. 32:46.

and write it in a book In Exod. 34:27 Moses is also commanded to “write these commandments,” but here *Jubilees* adds “in a book,” perhaps to stress that only *books* (like *Jubilees* itself) can be relied on (as opposed to the oral traditions espoused by his halakhic opponents).

so that their descendants might see that I have not abandoned them Lev. 26:44; this is the author’s main purpose in writing *Jubilees*. He knew, of course, that long after the time of Moses the Babylonians had conquered Judah and that thereafter the Jews had remained a subject people until his own day. At the same time, he asserts, even in their sinfulness God has not abandoned them “on account of all of the evil which they have done” (in the sense of: *despite* all the evil). The point of *Jubilees* is that none of this came about because God had abandoned Israel, but because the people *had strayed from* the covenant, that is, because of all that the Israelites “have done to instigate transgression of the covenant.”²¹

1:6. I have been more righteous than they The Ethiopic text duplicates a Hebrew idiom (Gen. 38:26; Job 4:17; Ezek. 16:52) that means “I have been proven right,” sometimes in a courtroom setting, or more generally (as here), “I am right and they are wrong.” Such a divine courtroom may in fact be implied by the next words: “in all their judgments [better: in all their punishments, those meted out to Israel in the court of divine justice] and [all their] deeds.” *Jubilees* then goes on to explain: If Israel has suffered, this does not mean that I have abandoned them. Rather, “I have truly been with them” all the time—the connection between God and Israel began at Creation; continued throughout the patriarchal period, long before God had given Israel any laws at Mount Sinai; and continues to this day.

1:7. for I know their rebelliousness *Jubilees*’s author tried to write in as “biblical” a Hebrew as possible, often peppering his discourse with phrases cited from the Pentateuch and elsewhere; this tendency is particularly pronounced in the opening chapter of the book, as the author tries to establish for readers that it is really Moses who is writing. This verse is

land which I swore to their fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, saying, ‘I will give to your seed a land flowing with milk and honey.’⁸ And they will eat and be satisfied, and they will turn to strange gods, to those who cannot save them from any of their affliction. And this testimony will be heard as testimony against them,⁹ for they will forget all of my commandments, everything which I shall command them, and they will walk after the gentiles and after their defilement and shame. And they will serve their gods, and they will become a scandal for them and an affliction and a torment and a snare.¹⁰ And many will be destroyed and seized and will fall into the hand of the enemy because they have forsaken my ordinances and my commandments and the feasts of my covenant and my sabbaths and my sacred place, which I sanctified for myself among them, and my tabernacle and my sanctuary, which I sanctified for myself in the midst of the land so that I might set my name upon it and might dwell (there).¹¹ And they will make for themselves high

thus a patchwork of different biblical phrases: “rebelliousness and . . . stubbornness” appear together in Deut. 31:27; “to your seed” is used frequently in Genesis;²² and “to your seed” together with “a land flowing with milk and honey” are recurrent phrases in the Pentateuch; see especially Deut. 31:20.

When they will eat and be satisfied Deut. 31:20; the citation continues into the next verse (1:8) with the words: “they will turn to strange [better: foreign] gods,” likewise from Deut. 31:20.

1:8. And this testimony will be heard as testimony against them This verse is a (somewhat garbled) echo of Deut. 31:21; its apparent meaning is that *Jubilees* will later serve as a witness, testifying that the Israelites were duly warned in advance of what will happen. This is not merely a play on the word *teudah* and its root *he'id* (testify), but it also refers to a cardinal principle of post-exilic jurisprudence: no one is to be punished without prior warning. Therefore, the author specifies that the words of warning dictated to Moses here—words that are apparently based on what is written in the Torah and the book of the *teudah*—will always be around to demonstrate that the people of Israel were indeed forewarned.

1:9. for they will forget all of my commandments Despite the warning of Deut. 8:11. **and they will walk after the gentiles, and after their defilement and shame**²³ “Defilement” is better rendered as “their idols,” and “shame” as “their abominations” (Heb. *to'evot*, which is synonymous with “idols”). The people’s moral impurity is, according to *Jubilees*’s author, the reason for the Jews’ difficulties in his own time—despite God’s never having abandoned them. Moreover, they “will serve their gods”—the greatest of sins—and [this] will [be . . .] a snare,” apparently *mokesh*, the same word used in Exod. 23:33 and Deut. 7:16.

1:10. many will be destroyed and seized and will fall into the hand of the enemy That is, the Babylonians. This is as specific as *Jubilees*’s author ever gets with regard to later history; cf. chapter 23 below.

the feasts of my covenant This nonbiblical phrase may be alluding to the covenants God established with Israel’s ancestors and which—according to *Jubilees*—were the basis for such later festivals as Weeks and Booths.

places and groves and carved idols. And each of them will worship his own (idol) so as to go astray. And they will sacrifice their children to the demons and to every work of the error of their heart.

The Murder of Prophets, the Captivity, and the Loss of the Cult

¹²“And I shall send to them witnesses so that I might witness to them, but they will not hear. And they will even kill the witnesses. And they will persecute those who search out the Law, and they will neglect everything and begin to do evil in my sight. ¹³And I shall hide my face from them, and I shall give them over to the power of the nations to be captive, and for plunder, and to be devoured. And I shall remove them from the midst of the land, and I shall scatter them among the nations. ¹⁴And they will forget all of my laws and all of my commandments and all of my judgments, and they will err concerning new moons, sabbaths, festivals, jubilees, and ordinances.

Repentance and Restoration

¹⁵“And afterward they will turn to me from among the nations with all their heart and with all their soul and with all their might. And I shall gather them from the midst of all the nations. And they will seek me so that I might be found by them.

When they seek me with all their heart and with all their soul, I shall reveal to them an

1:11. high places and groves “Groves” refers to “sacred groves.” These are stereotypical sins mentioned in Scripture (Deut. 16:21; 23:25); it seems unlikely that these were a real problem in *Jubilees*’ day. The same is true of child sacrifice “to the demons,” a practice (mentioned in Deut. 32:7) which had likely ceased in Israel long before the time of *Jubilees*.

1:12. I shall send to them witnesses . . . so that I might witness to them Better: “I shall send to them prophets . . . so that I might warn them”; Heb. *he’id* means both to testify at a trial and to warn. Deuteronomy and later biblical books, along with *Jubilees*, use this verb to describe the prophet’s function of warning the people;²⁴ “but they will not hear” (cf. 2 Chron. 24:19); and “they will even kill” the prophets (cf. Neh. 9:26).

1:13. I shall hide my face from them That is, ignore their pleas: Deut. 31:17, 18.

1:14. And they will forget all of my laws As a consequence they “will err concerning new moons, sabbaths, festivals, jubilees, and ordinances.” That is, they will not use the proper calendar endorsed by *Jubilees*, but will start the months at the appearance of the new moon; this will cause them to celebrate festivals on the wrong day, and miscalculate the start of jubilee year and the larger unit of time it represents. Even the Sabbath will be desecrated because, although it is independent of the calendrical system, using the wrong calendar will ultimately cause festivals to fall on the Sabbath when they should not, leading to its desecration.

1:15. And afterward, they will turn to me Better: “return to me,” from the Babylonian exile—the punishment imposed because of the aforementioned violations.²⁵

abundance of peace in righteousness. ¹⁶And with all my heart and with all my soul I shall transplant them as a righteous plant. And they will be a blessing and not a curse. And they will be the head and not the tail. ¹⁷And I shall build my sanctuary in their midst, and I shall dwell with them. And I shall be their God and they will be my people truly and rightly. ¹⁸And I shall not forsake them, and I shall not be alienated from them because I am the LORD their God.”

Moses's Prayer of Intercession

¹⁹And Moses fell upon his face, and he prayed and said, “O Lord, my God, do not abandon your people and your inheritance to walk in the error of their heart. And do not deliver them into the hand of their enemy, the gentiles, lest they rule over them and cause them to sin against you.

²⁰“O Lord, let your mercy be lifted up upon your people, and create for them an upright spirit. And do not let the spirit of Beliar rule over them to accuse them before you and ensnare them from every path of righteousness so that they might be destroyed from before your face. ²¹But they are your people and your inheritance, whom you saved by your great might from the hand of the Egyptians. Create a pure heart and a holy spirit for them. And do not let them be ensnared by their sin henceforth and forever.”

1:16. righteous plant For this phrase, see 1 *En.* 10:16; 93:5, 10. Israel as a “plant” is a common enough image in the Bible.²⁶

they will be a blessing and not a curse. And they will be the head and not the tail “They” refers to “Israel.” This is a conscious evocation of the Torah’s curses that will befall Israel if it does not keep its part of the covenant: the enemy invader “will become the head and you will be the tail” (Deut. 28:44). This will indeed happen, God tells Moses here, but once Israel returns, physically and spiritually, He will restore Israel to its rightful place, “the Lord will make you the head and not the tail” (Deut. 28:13).

1:19. Moses fell upon his face Because he was distressed at this prediction of disaster. He is particularly disturbed at the thought that “the gentiles” will rule over Israel (in the author’s own time, the Greeks and their Hellenized followers), since they will further lead Israel astray.

1:20. And do not let the spirit of Beliar A wicked angel, sometimes identified with Satan. Wicked angels were, for the author of *Jubilees* along with other Jews of this period, a constant source of danger; they could infiltrate people’s minds, leading them astray or even driving them mad.

SAMPLE NOTES

1. It is also cited in the *Damascus Document* (col. 16:3–4), and it was used extensively by the authors of the *ALD* and the *Genesis Apocryphon*.
2. The translation, with minor alterations, is from O. S. Wintermute, “Jubilees [2nd century BC]: A New Translation and Introduction,” in *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, ed. James H. Charlesworth (New York: Doubleday, 1983–85), 2:35–142.
3. This phrase, if understood as “all the days of the world,” cannot be referring to the book of *Jubilees*, whose history stops with events in the book of Exodus. Rather, the Hebrew original (apparently *shenot olam*) ought to be compared to Ps. 77:6: “My thoughts turn to days of old, to years long past [*shenot olamim*],” or Deut. 32:7, “Remember days of old [*yemot olam*], consider the years of ages past.”
4. VanderKam’s edition of the Eth text reads “as he related to Moses,” and this is apparently a superior reading. But even “he related” is not quite right, since this is actually the third-person singular “impersonal”: see E. Kautzsch and A. E. Cowley, *Gesenius’ Hebrew Grammar* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1910), 144.2 (p. 459) and should thus be translated as a passive verb, “it was related.” The title thus far has not mentioned any personal “he” who could be the subject of this clause, neither God nor the angel of the Presence.
5. This is the date of the Festival of First Fruits, and, quite apart from that, the 15th of any month is a *significant day*; see below on 17:15–16, 18:17–19.
6. This led to the claim of certain “heretics” that Moses received only these Ten Commandments from God. See on this J. Kugel, *Traditions of the Bible* (hereafter: *Traditions*) (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998), 638–40, 677–79.
7. The Ethiopic text has the causative form, “to lead astray” (rendered here as “to instigate transgression of the covenant”), but this is apparently an error; see VdK, 2n.
8. Gen. 12:7, 15:18, 24:7, 26:4, etc.
9. This reconstruction is presented by Eibert Tigchelaar, “A Cave 4 Fragment of Divrei Mosheh (4QDM) and the Text of 1Q22 1:7–10 and Jubilees 1:9, 14,” *DSD* 12 (2005): 302–11.
10. See Japhet, *Ideology of Book of Chronicles*, 183–91.
11. On the text of 1:16: VdK, 4n. Here is another pastiche of biblical verses: Deut. 6:5, 30:3; 2 Chron. 15:2; Jer. 29:13; Ps. 119:165; Isa. 61:3; Jer. 33:15; Deut. 30:1, 28:13; Gen. 17:8; Lev. 26:44; Exod. 29:46.
12. E.g., Hosea. 10:1; Ps. 80:9; Isa. 5:7, 60:21, 61:3; Jer. 23:5, 33:15; also 1 *En.* 10:3, 84:6; and *Jub.* 16:26, 21:24, 36:6.

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