

Department of
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THE KINGDOM OF GOD IN THE JEWISH APOCRYPHAL LITERATURE: PT. 2

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(Continued from the January-March Number, 1952)

JUBILEES

The book of Jubilees may be roughly but not inaccurately described as a Jewish commentary on Genesis and Exodus 1-12. It has often been called the "Little Genesis," the term "little" referring not to its size but to the detail into which it enters. It consists of an interpretation of history from creation to Mount Sinai in the interests of later Judaism. This history is organized artificially into jubilees, periods of 49 years. Each jubilee consists of seven weeks of years, or 49 years. The formal setting of the book is that of an apocalypse or revelation, because it represents itself to be a revelation made to Moses on Mount Sinai of the entire course of human history from creation to the new creation (Jub. 1:4, 26). The book is sometimes called the Apocalypse of Moses. The author rewrites history to suit his own taste and to support the interests which he represents, omitting from the Old Testament record much that is offensive to his views, changing other items, and adding a great deal of traditional material.

Numerous quotations from the book are found in the church fathers from the second to the twelfth centuries, when it was apparently lost sight of. In the mid-nineteenth century, it was discovered by a Christian missionary in Abyssinia in an Ethiopic version. Four Ethiopic manuscripts are now known, and scholarship is greatly indebted to R. H. Charles for his work in the Ethiopic version.¹

¹Cf. R. H. Charles, *The Ethiopic Version of the Hebrew Book of Jubilees* (Oxford, 1895).

About one-fourth of the book has been recovered in a Latin version. Scholars agree that both the Ethiopic and the Latin versions were translated from a lost Greek version which appears in the quotations of the Greek fathers. The Greek was probably derived from the original Semitic form.

The date of the book has been vigorously debated, for there are no fixed data by which a certain time may be postulated. The most commonly accepted date is the second half of the second century B.C., the times of the Maccabees,² although scholars have dated it anywhere from the third or fourth centuries B.C. to the first century A.D.

The author is unknown, as is the case with most of these writings, but he seems to have shared Pharisaic views. He glorifies the Law and exalts especially the oral law. By this means he gives divine authority to observances in Judaism which were not contained in the written Law of the Old Testament, the oral law being esteemed a part of the revelation given to Moses on Mount Sinai. He emphasizes separation from the heathen, absolutely forbidding intermarriage and table fellowship, and vigorously affirms circumcision and Sabbath observance.

The legalistic interest provides the key to the eschatology of the book. The author anticipates the coming of the kingdom of God,³ but it is to be attained by the power intrinsic in the Law of God. Jubilees looks forward to the time when "My [God's] sanctuary has been built among them for all eternity. And the Lord will appear to the eyes of all, and all will know that I am the God of Israel and the Father of all the children of Jacob, and King on Mount Zion for all eternity. And Zion and Jerusalem will be holy. . . . the heavens and the earth shall be renewed and all their creation

²R. H. Charles, *The Book of Jubilees* (London, 1902), pp. lviii-lxvi; H. H. Rowley, *The Relevance of Apocalyptic* (2nd ed.; London, 1947), p. 60, and the excellent note on the date of jubilees, pp. 84-90.

³It is to be noted that in Jubilees, and in most of the apocalyptic literature, the phrase "kingdom of God" almost never appears. It is not of course the phrase that we are studying, but the concept which lies behind it; and the expectation of the time when God would fulfill His promises to His people and exalt them in His kingdom continually reappears.

according to the powers of the heaven, and according to all the creation of the earth, until the sanctuary of the Lord shall be made in Jerusalem on Mount Zion, and all the luminaries be renewed for healing and for peace and for blessing for all the elect of Israel, and that thus it may be from that day and unto all the days of the earth" (1:27, 29).⁴

Again, the author speaks of "Mount Zion [which] will be sanctified in the new creation for a sanctification of the earth; through it will the earth be sanctified from all [its] guilt and its uncleanness throughout the generations of the world" (4:26).

The most extended passage is in chapter 23. The author describes a time of deep trouble when evil is to dominate everything; after this there will ensue the kingdom. "For calamity followeth on calamity, and wound on wound, and tribulation on tribulation, and evil tidings on evil tidings, and illness on illness, and all evil judgments such as these, one with another, illness and overthrow, and snow and frost and ice, and fever, and chills, and torpor, and famine, and death, and sword, and captivity, and all kinds of calamities and pains. And all these will come on an evil generation which transgresseth on the earth: their works are uncleanness and fornication, and pollution and abominations" (23:13-14). "And they will strive one with another, the young with the old, and the old with the young, the poor with the rich, and the lowly with the great, and the beggar with the prince, on account of the law and the covenant; for they have forgotten commandment and covenant, and feasts, and months, and Sabbaths, and jubilees, and all judgments. And they will stand [with bows and] swords and war to turn them back into the way; but they will not return until much blood hath been shed on the earth, one by an-

⁴All quotations will be found in R. H. Charles, ed.: *The Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament* (Oxford, 1913), Vol. II *in loc.* Cf. also the very convenient manual edition edited by G. H. Box, *The Book of Jubilees* (London, 1917) in the series *Translations of Early Documents* published by S.P.C.K. There does not exist a manual edition of the books of the Pseudepigrapha, although it is greatly to be desired.

other. And those who have escaped will not return from their wickedness to the ways of righteousness, but they will all exalt themselves to deceit and wealth, that they may each take all that is his neighbor's, and they will name the great name, but not in truth and not in righteousness, and they will defile the holy of holies with their uncleanness and the corruption of their pollution. And a great punishment will befall the deeds of this generation from the Lord, and He will give them over to the sword and to judgment and to captivity, and to be plundered and devoured. And He will wake up against them the sinners of the Gentiles, who have neither mercy nor compassion, and who will respect the person of none, neither old nor young, nor any one, for they are more wicked and strong to do evil than all the children of men.

And they will use violence against Israel and transgression against Jacob,
And much blood will be shed upon the earth,
And there will be none to gather and none to bury.
In those days they will cry aloud,
And call and pray that they may be saved from the hand of the sinners, the Gentiles;
But none will be saved.
And the heads of the children will be white with grey hair,
And a child of three weeks will appear old like a man of one hundred years,
And their stature will be destroyed by tribulation and oppression.
And in those days the children will begin to study the laws,
And to seek the commandments,
And to return to the path of righteousness.
And the days will begin to grow many and increase among those children of men,
Till their days draw nigh to one thousand years,
And to a greater number of years than [before] was the number of the days.

And there will be no old man
 Nor one who is not satisfied with his days,
 For all will be [as] children and youths.
 And all their days they will complete and live in peace
 and in joy,
 And there will be no Satan nor any evil destroyer;
 For all their days will be days of blessing and healing,
 And at that time the Lord will heal His servants,
 And they will rise up and see great peace,
 And drive out their adversaries.
 And the righteous will see and be thankful,
 And rejoice with joy for ever and ever,
 And will see all their judgments and all their curses on
 their enemies.
 And their bones will rest in the earth,
 And their spirits will have much joy,
 And they will know that it is the Lord who executeth
 judgment,
 And showeth mercy to hundreds and thousands and to
 all that love Him" (23:19-31).

Jubilees, like many of the apocalypses, anticipates a period of deep trouble before the inauguration of the blessedness of the kingdom. This became a normal feature in Jewish eschatology and grows out of such Old Testament passages as Isaiah 26:17, Jeremiah 22:23, Daniel 12:1, Hosea 13:13, and Micah 4:9. In later rabbinic theology, these troubles came to be known as the "woes of the Messiah."⁵ If Jubilees was written in the mid-second century B.C., it is possible that the author is describing the evils of his own time and casting the description into an apocalyptic mold, as it was customary

⁵While this phrase, "woes of the Messiah" or the "Messianic woes" is commonly applied to such descriptions as this in Jubilees, the word "woes" applied to them seems to have been used first in our Gospels in Mark 13:8 and Matthew 24:8. Cf. for further description of these troubled times Emil Schürer, *Geschichte des jüdischen Volkes im Zeitalter Jesu Christi* (4 Aufl.; Leipzig, 1907), II, 609-610; English translation, *A History of the Jewish People in the Time of Jesus Christ* (E.T. of 2 ed.; New York: Scribner's, 1890), Vol. II, part ii, p. 154 ff.; Paul Volz, *Die Eschatologie der jüdischen Gemeinde* (2 Aufl. Tübingen, 1934), pp. 147 ff.

for apocalyptists to do. We cannot be certain that this is the case, but the parallelisms are indeed striking.⁶ In the times of the Maccabees, there were strong Hellenizing influences among the Jews which led many to forsake the observance of the Law and the practice of their religious customs in favor of Greek ways. This situation is depicted in I Maccabees 1 and II Maccabees 4. The most important element in the evil times to the author of Jubilees is the abandonment of the Law (23:19); this is the reason for the evil character of the times. It was this same apostasy which brought about the Maccabean rebellion.

These evil times are immediately to precede the coming of the kingdom. This kingdom in Jubilees will see God take His sanctuary in Jerusalem on Mount Zion (1:29) to dwell forever among His people, Israel (1:27-8). Mount Zion will be the means of purifying all the earth from all uncleanness forever (4:26), and the heavens and the earth and all things therein contained will be renewed. This expectation is based upon such prophecies as Isaiah 65:17, 66:22. The character of the kingdom is vividly pictured and is described largely in terms of physical well-being. The chief feature will be longevity; men will begin to live for a thousand years and to enjoy eternal youth. Evil will be purged, and the enemies of Israel will suffer the curses which the righteous have heaped upon them (23:30). It is clearly a kingdom *of Israel*; the Gentiles are their adversaries whom they curse and who will have no place in the kingdom, but are destined to destruction.

The means of the inauguration of the kingdom is nothing more or less than the Law. Evil times were to come upon Israel because God's people had forsaken the Law and forgotten the commandment and covenant : but when the children begin to study the laws and to seek the commandments and to return to the path of righteousness, a gradual transformation ensues; and as the Law has its divine effect upon human life, the ideal of the theocracy becomes fully

⁶Cf. H. H. Rowley, *op. cit.*, pp. 89-90.

realized in Israel and through Israel in all the physical world. There is no mention of a Messiah or of any Messianic agency, other than the Law. It has the power resident within itself to bring about the kingdom. Charles does, to be sure, think that he detects the anticipation of a Messiah in 31:18-19:⁷

"And to Judah he [Isaac] said :
 May the Lord give thee strength and power
 To tread down all that hate thee;
 A prince shalt thou be, thou and one of thy sons, over
 the sons of Jacob ;
 May thy name and the name of thy sons go forth and
 traverse every land and region.
 Then will the Gentiles fear before thy face,
 And all the nations will quake.
 In thee shall be the help of Jacob,
 And in thee be found the salvation of Israel."

In this Rowley concurs.⁸ The two most exhaustive studies in Jewish eschatology⁹ make no mention of this verse, and we must conclude therefore that Volz and Bousset fail to recognize any messianic significance here. If this has messianic reference, it is a rather vaguely expressed hope.¹⁰ Probably the author here refers to the historical David rather than to the Messiah.

Even if the passage is messianic it must be admitted, as indeed Charles does,¹¹ that the Messiah has no role to play in the coming of the kingdom. We must conclude that, to the author of Jubilees, no Messiah was necessary to bring the kingdom. If Israel would obey the Law the kingdom would come.

The duration of the kingdom is clearly everlasting, and its scene is the earth. But Charles feels that the kingdom

⁷R. H. Charles, *The Book of Jubilees*, pp. lxxxvii, 188.

⁸H. H. Rowley, *op. cit.*, p. 62.

⁹Paul Volz, *op. cit.*; and Wilhelm Bousset, *Die Religion des Judentums im späthellenistischen Zeitalter* (3 Aufl. by Hugo Gressmann; Tübingen, 1926).

¹⁰Cf. G. H. Box, *The Book of Jubilees*, pp. xxvi, 160.

¹¹R. H. Charles, *loc. cit.*

must be temporary¹² because several references throughout the book anticipate a day of judgment,¹³ and there is no possible room for a judgment before the kingdom, which comes itself by a gradual transformation and not by sudden catastrophic events. This judgment must therefore come at the close of the kingdom; and this order of events leads to the conclusion that the kingdom is to be of temporal duration.

This reasoning is logically persuasive, but still not exegetically sound. The extended description of the kingdom in chapter 23 makes it clear that the Law is to transform both God's people and their environment into a state of blessedness which is, to last forever, and beyond which no greater blessings could be anticipated. The references to a day of judgment throughout the book may be accounted for by the fact that this was a common concept in the Old Testament which came, to permeate Jewish thought, so that it was an intrinsic part of the eschatological vocabulary. The author of Jubilees uses the words even though he has no logical place in his anticipation of the future where a day of judgment could actually take place.

One final eschatological feature remains to be noted. As the kingdom is inaugurated on the earth and as the Jews who will then be alive begin to experience the full effect of the Law, the author says that the righteous will behold this salvation and will rejoice when they see their enemies suffering the curses which apparently they had themselves heaped upon them. Jubilees then says, "And their bones will rest in the earth, and their spirits will have much joy" (12:31). This is an unusual note in Jewish eschatology, particularly in a book which reflects the Pharisaic viewpoint to the extent of Jubilees. Almost uniformly, the full blessings of God in the future life can be experienced only in a resurrected body. Sometimes this resurrection is portrayed in the crudest of physical terminology.¹⁴

¹²R. H. Charles, *op. cit.*, p. 150.

¹³4:19, 24; 5:10-16; 9:15; 10:8, 17, 22; 22:21; 23:11; 24:28; 36:10.

¹⁴Cf. II Maccabees 7:11-12, 14:46.

Bodily, *physical* resurrection is a normal doctrine in Palestinian Jewish literature. In some areas, the influences of Hellenistic thought are detected, especially in books which are thought to have originated in Alexandria. The Wisdom of Solomon teaches the doctrine of the preexistence of the soul and its immortality¹⁵; and IV Maccabees envisages a blessed immortality with no bodily resurrection.¹⁶ Jubilees, however, does not elsewhere manifest the influences of Hellenistic thought, and it is difficult therefore to attribute this concept of a happy immortality to Greek influences. Jubilees expressly denies a resurrection for the "righteous," but affirms a state of blessedness for their spirits after death. In a similar vein, the wicked pass into condemnation in Sheol at death.

"And there will not be left any man that eateth blood.
Or that sheddeth the blood of man on earth,
Nor will there be left to him any seed or descendants
living under heaven;
For into Sheol will they go,
And into the place of condemnation will they descend.
And into the darkness of the deep will they all be re-
moved by a violent death" (7:29).

"And as for all the worshippers of idols and the profane
There will be no hope for them in the land of the living;
And there will be no remembrance of them on earth;
For they will descend into Sheol,
And into the place of condemnation will they go"
(22:22).

It is quite true that, in other places, Jubilees speaks of death as the "eternal sleep"¹⁷ with no mention of life after death for them. Volz concludes therefore that the "righteous" in 23:30 cannot be the Old Testament saints, and they clearly are not to be identified with those who enter the kingdom and who live a thousand years and who then, presumably,

¹⁵Wisdom of Solomon 8:20, 2:22-3:4.

¹⁶IV Maccabees 5:36, 16:13, 18:23.

¹⁷Cf. 36:1, 18; 23:1, 45:15.

die; for this blessing of the "righteous" is experienced at the beginning of the kingdom, not at its close. Volz feels compelled to conclude that the "righteous" must be martyrs who have been put to death by their enemies, whose tortured bones now find rest in the earth but whose spirits are led into blessedness.¹⁸

This seems like forced exegesis. It is easier to assume that the author is a man who ordinarily speaks in the Old Testament terminology of death¹⁹ and the day of judgment, but who at this point mixes in his own expectations of the future, to the confusion of any distinct eschatological system or order of events. We shall see in later articles that the doctrine of the intermediate state experienced considerable amplification in these Jewish writings.²⁰ In Jubilees, the intermediate state becomes the place of final blessing for both the righteous and the wicked.²¹ However it is to be explained, the picture of a state of blessedness without a resurrection of the body is clear.

In conclusion, it should be re-emphasized that the author is primarily interested in the Law. He is not concerned with eschatology as such; he is concerned with the relation of God's people to God's Law. When they forsake it, evil increases; but when they obey it, righteousness prevails to the extent that the very world itself is transformed. When the Law can achieve this, any other messianic agency or personage to inaugurate the kingdom is unnecessary. The author does not make it his purpose to answer various questions which might be asked about the resurrection and the future life. Indeed he seems to be rather confused in his own think-

¹⁸Paul Volz, *op. cit.*, p. 29.

¹⁹Cf. Ecclesiastes 12:5, Jeremiah 51:39, 57

²⁰Cf. especially Enoch 22, where the intermediate state is portrayed as a place both of punishment and blessing. This portion of Enoch is usually dated 168-100 B.C.

²¹Cf. Psalms of Solomon 3:13, 14; 14:6; 15:11-15 and Enoch 53, 54, 67, where Sheol appears to be the place of permanent punishment of the wicked.

ing. That the Law can bring God's people on earth into kingdom blessings of a perfect life is enough for him. In this fact, even the dead saints rejoice.

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(To be continued in the July-September Number, 1952)

"The New Testament very frequently quotes, and much more frequently contains, incidental allusions to the Old. The Pentateuch, the prophetic books, the Psalms and other parts of the sacred volume of the Hebrews were continually on the minds of the writers, and flowed out in all their sayings and writings as if welling up from the depths of their innermost religious consciousness. But in all these quotations and allusions we look in vain for a reference to any of the Apocryphal books. Though there are many places where incidents of the Apocryphal writings would afford illustrations exceedingly apt and beautiful, yet no such illustrations are ever found. If the writers of the New Testament were acquainted with any of these books (and it is scarcely possible to doubt that they had seen some of them), most carefully must they have abstained from alluding to them in their canonical writings. They sanctioned the whole Hebrew canon as it existed in their time, but they sanctioned none of the Apocryphal books; for they never quote them, and these books never formed a part of the Hebrew canon. We speak of the ancient Apocryphal books which are printed in the Vulgate Bible, and not of the more recent ones such as the Book of Enoch, the Ascension of Moses, etc. These, it is true, sometimes borrow from the New Testament (cf. 2 Tim. 3:8, Jude 9, 14); but the New Testament never from them, since it is itself more ancient than they are, or at least more ancient than the probably interpolated passages on which the stress is laid."—*Bibliotheca Sacra*, April, 1854

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Thanks to Amy Gentile for help with proofing.