



The Book of Jubilees; or The Little Genesis

Anonymous, R. H. Charles

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An excerpt from beginning of the INTRODUCTION:

§ 1. Short Account of the Book

The Book of Jubilees was written in Hebrew by a Pharisee between the year of the accession of Hyrcanus to the high-priesthood in 135 and his breach with the Pharisees some years before his death in 105 B. C. It is the most advanced pre-Christian representative of the midrashic tendency, which had already been at work in the Old Testament Chronicles. As the Chronicler had rewritten the history of Israel and Judah from the basis of the *Priests' Code*, so our author reedited from the Pharisaic standpoint of his time the history of events from the creation to the publication, or, according to the author's view, the republication, of the law on Sinai. In the course of re-editing he incorporated a large body of traditional lore, which the midrashic process had put at his disposal, and also not a few fresh legal enactments, that the exigencies of the past had called forth. His work constitutes an enlarged Targum on Genesis and Exodus, in which difficulties in the biblical narrative are solved, gaps supplied, dogmatically offensive elements removed, and the genuine spirit of later Judaism infused into the primitive history of the world. His object was to defend Judaism against the attacks of the Hellenistic spirit that had been in the ascendant one generation earlier and was still powerful, and to prove that the law was of everlasting validity. From our author's contentions and his embittered attacks on the paganisers and apostates, we may infer that Hellenism had urged that the levitical ordinances of the law were only of transitory significance, that they had not been observed by the founders of the nation, and that the time had now come for them to be swept away, and for Israel to take its place in the brotherhood of the nations. Our author regarded all such views as fatal to the very existence of Jewish religion and nationality. But it is not as such that he assailed them, but on the ground of their falsehood. The law, he teaches, is of everlasting validity. Though revealed in time it was superior to time. Before it had been made known in sundry portions to the fathers it had been kept in heaven by the angels, and to its observance henceforward there was no limit in time or in eternity.

Writing in the palmiest days of the Maccabean dominion, he looked for the immediate advent of the Messianic kingdom. This kingdom was to be ruled over by a Messiah sprung, not from Levi—that is, from the Maccabean family, as some of his contemporaries expected—but from Judah. This kingdom would be gradually realised on earth, and the transformation of physical nature would go hand in hand with the ethical transformation of man till there was a new heaven and a new earth. Thus, finally, all sin and pain would disappear and men would live to the age of 1000 years in happiness and peace, and after death enjoy a blessed immortality in the spirit world.

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Everett Dean:

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Mark Whitten:

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Ralph Pettie:

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