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REFLECTIONS ON EARLY JEWISH APOCALYPSES

REFLEKSJE NA TEMAT WCZESNYCH APOKALIPS ŻYDOWSKICH

STRESZCZENIE: W artykule autor przedstawia refleksje na temat współczesnych studiów nad apokaliptyką oraz analizuje pierwszy rozdział *Księgi Jubileuszów* jako przykład komponowania tekstu apokaliptycznego przez starożytnego autora. Szczególną uwagę zwraca na rozróżnienie terminologiczne pomiędzy apokalipsą, eschatologią apokaliptyczną oraz apokaliptyką. Podejmując kwestię początków powstania literatury apokaliptycznej, autor wskazuje na jej związek z literaturą prorocką i mądrościową o charakterze wróżbiarskim. Wymienia przy tym wiele podobieństw pomiędzy funkcją proroka i wróżbiarza, dochodząc do wniosku, że tradycję apokaliptyczną można wytłumaczyć jako rozwinięcie tematyki przynależącej do mądrości mantycznej (wróżbiarskiej) na obszary dużo szersze, łącznie z eschatologią. Na przykładzie analizy pierwszego rozdziału *Księgi Jubileuszów* autor wskazuje, że apokaliptyka powiązana jest z interpretacją wcześniejszych tekstów biblijnych. Poprzez analizę dwóch podstawowych wyrażeń: „tablice niebieskie” oraz „świadcstwo” zawartych na początku *Księgi Jubileuszów* autor pragnie ukazać sposób redakcji tekstu apokaliptycznego. Wysiada konkluzję, że wczesne apokalipsy żydowskie oparte są na tekstach biblijnych, które autorzy interpretowali tak, aby wydobyć z nich tajemnicze znaczenie. Próbowali oni odczytać Boże orędzie ukryte w tekstach biblijnych, aby przekazać je współczesnym im ludziom jako orędzie pocieszenia, umocnienia i nadziei.

SŁOWA-KLUCZE: apokaliptyka, *Księga Jubileuszów*, prorocstwo, objawienie
KEYWORDS: apocalypticism, *the Book of Jubilees*, prophecy, revelation

In this article I would like to offer some personal reflections on modern study of apocalypticism and to discuss the first chapter in the *Book of Jubilees* as an example in which we can see something of how an author put together an apocalyptic text. I also wish to highlight the importance of a special kind of scriptural interpretation in the apocalypses.

1. THE STUDY OF APOCALYPTICISM

The last generation or so has produced a flood of publications regarding all that is included under the broad term *apocalypticism*. The result has been that progress has been made in helping us understand its varied manifestations in Early Jewish and Christian texts.

1.1. DEFINITION OF TERMS

A helpful contribution has been a widely accepted set of definitions for key terms. In much recent scholarship it has become customary to distinguish between three of them: apocalypse, apocalyptic eschatology, and apocalypticism. As we all know, “apocalypse” now serves as the name for a literary category that can be defined, with John Collins, as a “genre of revelatory literature with a narrative framework, in which a revelation is mediated by an otherworldly being to a human recipient, disclosing a transcendent reality which is both temporal, insofar as it envisages eschatological salvation, and spatial insofar as it involves another, supernatural world”¹. Later he was to accept a supplement to his definition so that it also contains a statement about the purpose envisioned by the authors of apocalypses: an apocalypse “is intended to interpret present earthly circumstances in the light of the supernatural world and of the future, and to influence both the understanding and behavior of the audience by means of divine authority”².

A type of text whose relations with apocalypses are debated is prophecies. Apocalypses, by Collins’ definition, do not so much differ from prophecies in a formal sense as they do in the regular presence of a supernatural revealer (angels in Jewish texts; they occasionally appear in prophecies such as Zechariah 1–8) who mediates the divine message and in the more distant focus of their contents – whether on final salvation (and judgment) in a transformed or new world or on the otherwise invisible beyond. As Paul Hanson and others have explained, the apocalypses frequently express an “apocalyptic eschatology” in which the seer, who has lost hope of reforming the present world, comes to think of the saving acts of the deity “not as the

¹ *Introduction: Towards the Morphology of a Genre*, in: J. Collins (ed.), *Apocalypse. The Morphology of a Genre* (Semeia 14), Missoula [MT] 1979, p. 9.

² *Idem, Genre, Ideology and Social Movements in Jewish Apocalypticism*, in: J.J. Collins, J.H. Charlesworth (ed.), *Mysteries and Revelations: Apocalyptic Studies since the Uppsala Colloquium* (JSPSup 9), Sheffield 1991, p. 19. The statement comes from Adela Yarbro Collins, *Introduction: Early Christian Apocalypticism*, in: A. Yarbro Collins (ed.), *Early Christian Apocalypticism: Genre and Social Setting* (Semeia 36), Decatur [GA] 1986, p. 7.

fulfillment of promises within political structures and historical events [as in prophetic eschatology], but as deliverance out of the present order into a new transformed order”³. The cover term “apocalypticism” is now used to designate the ways of acting and thinking carried out by a group that understands itself as alienated from the dominant culture whose validity it denies. People who identify with such movements look forward to a new reality that is now invisible, as it lies behind the curtain separating that world from the one we see or the future from the present. Only the seers to whom revelation is given can pierce that barrier – and that only through divine intervention.

There is insufficient sociological information about the settings in which many apocalyptic writers operated; hence one ought not to make strong statements about their social contexts. Nevertheless a number of apocalyptic texts were, as nearly as we can tell, composed in times of persecution (real or perceived) and/or despair. Texts of this kind began to surface after the conquest of the Near East by Alexander the Great and during the Hellenistic and Roman empires. In those centuries native rule, wherever it still existed, ceased with little hope for reversal. In that sense apocalypses constitute a form of protest literature that condemns the reigning power to destruction and encourages the faithful with the hope of a new age. We should also recall that in those centuries writers in various places in the Near East composed apocalypses (e.g., Egypt); Jewish authors were not the only ones active in this endeavor.

Though we have had the good fortune of uncovering the Qumran scrolls – the library of an ancient apocalyptic community, it seems that the members of the group, though they preserved and used apocalypses, did not write their own. If, as nearly as we can tell, the group living at the site produced very few of its own apocalypses or none at all, should they and their ideological kin be called apocalyptic communities? An answer is that, while they did not compose apocalypses, they lived according to apocalyptic ideas such as the imminence of the end. Collins, who finds the apocalyptic designation for the group an appropriate one, devotes most of his book *Apocalypticism in the Dead Sea Scrolls* to a series of apocalyptic motifs in them. The themes he treats are creation and the origin of evil, the periods of history and the expectation of the end, messianic expectation, the eschatological war, resurrection and eternal life, and the heavenly world. As he sees the matter, the Qumran community did not need new apocalypses: their experience of present communion with the holy ones removed the occasion for apocalyptic descriptions of the heavenly world; and the revelations granted to the Teach-

³ P. Hanson, *Apocalypticism*, IDBSup, p. 30.

er of Righteousness and his successors are found indirectly in rule books and other texts such as the *pesharim*⁴.

1.2. ISSUES OF ORIGINS

What can we learn about the sources from which Early Jewish writers drew in composing their apocalypses or the ideas and practices that influenced them? Scholars had often noted a connection between prophecy and apocalyptic phenomena – a connection that can hardly be denied in that ancient writers of apocalypses often called their works prophecies or designated their apocalyptic seers as prophets. The Revelation of John terms itself a prophecy (1:3; 22:18–19), and several of the writings that circulated under the name of Ezra refer to him as a prophet (4 Ezra 1:1; the *Greek Apocalypse of Ezra* 1:3; and the *Questions of Ezra* 1:1). Moreover, Enoch prophesied according to Jude 14, as did the *Jewish Sibyl* (e.g. Book 1, line 2; 3, lines 3, 163, 298, 401, 491, 811–12 etc.). At least we may say that the authors wanted to present their characters as prophets and their words as prophecies. Then, too, there was a disagreement in ancient times about whether the book of Daniel should be classified among the prophets (as in the LXX and the Lives of the Prophets) or the Writings (as in the MT).

Prophecy has traditionally been defended as the central source from which apocalypticism arose or from which it drew its inspiration. The connection with prophecy takes different forms: there is a similarity between them in that both look to a decisive future that the prophet or seer through revelation already knows. There is also a connection in content, with the apocalyptic writers drawing upon prophetic material and themes. An example is the way in which the *Similitudes of Enoch* borrow from Suffering Servant passages in 2 Isaiah for their picture of the leader of the end time. Daniel 9 famously uses Jeremiah's prediction of 70 years, and the throne visions of the apocalyptists employ words and ideas from Isaiah 6, Ezekiel 1, Daniel 7, or 1 Kgs 22:19–23.

A modern contribution to the question of origins has been to demonstrate that we should not think prophecy was the exclusive model to which the apocalyptic writers turned. In the earliest Enoch apocalypses – the *Apocalypse of Weeks* and the *Animal Apocalypse* – the scriptural *storyline* is the basis. Both the narrative parts of the Pentateuch and the legal sections exercised influence as we can see in Daniel 9 where it is not only Jeremiah's 70-year prophecy that drives the section but also the words of Leviticus 26 regarding the punishment for Israel when it continuously violates the cove-

⁴ J.J. Collins, *Apocalypticism in the Dead Sea Scrolls* (The Literature of the Dead Sea Scrolls), London–New York 1997, pp. 152–153.

nant. The angel Gabriel explains to Daniel who is pondering Jeremiah's words about the 70 years that in fact "[s]eventy weeks are decreed for your people and your holy city ..." (9:24). The switch from 70 years to 70 weeks of years is not just a ploy to defend Jeremiah from error; it is also a reflection of Leviticus 26 which several times threatens that if Israel sins, suffers for it, but continues in its wicked ways God will punish them sevenfold (26:18,21,24,28). The angel tells Daniel that the punishment Jeremiah threatened had been increased seven times because of Israel's continuing sin. His prophecy was true and would come to fruition in due time; one had to understand it in its full scriptural context⁵.

It is likely that wisdom elements also influenced the apocalyptic writers or provided models for them, although in a special form. Among those who rejected prophecy as the major influence on apocalyptic thought and literature was Gerhard von Rad. He not only saw wisdom as more important but he completely excluded a prophetic connection.

"In view of its keen interest in the last things and of the significance it attaches to visions and dreams, it might seem appropriate to understand apocalyptic literature as a child of prophecy. To my mind, however, this is completely out of the question [...] The decisive factor, as I see it, is the incompatibility between apocalyptic literature's view of history and that of the prophets. The prophetic message is specifically rooted in the saving history, that is to say, it is rooted in definite election traditions. But there is no way which leads from this to the apocalyptic view of history, no more than there is any which leads to the idea that the last things were determined in a far-off past"⁶.

Once he had rejected prophecy as the traditional source of apocalyptic literature, von Rad turned to Israel's sapiential traditions which, he thought, offered a more convincing background. Knowledge was, in his words, the "nerve-centre of apocalyptic literature," which was further characterized by the sorts of "figurative discourses" that were traditional in wisdom. And, of course, the great seers are wise men (Daniel, Enoch, and Ezra)⁷.

Von Rad's thesis aroused strongly negative reactions that centered on the lack of eschatology in the wisdom traditions⁸. In later editions of his *Theo-*

⁵ See, for example, M. Fishbane, *Biblical Interpretation in Ancient Israel*, Oxford 1985, pp. 487–489.

⁶ G. von Rad, *Old Testament Theology*, vol. 2: *The Theology of Israel's Prophetic Traditions*, Edinburgh 1965, p. 303.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 306. Von Rad discussed the divine determination of times in wisdom and apocalyptic literature in his *Wisdom in Israel*, London–Nashville–New York 1972, pp. 263–283.

⁸ P. von der Osten-Sacken, *Die Apokalyptik in ihrem Verhältnis zu Prophetie und Weisheit* (Theologische Existenz heute 157), Munich 1969, pp. 9–10. H.P. Müller summarizes some

logie des Alten Testaments, he attempted to cope with this objection by arguing that not all wisdom traditions continued into apocalyptic literature, “[...] sondern nur einige ihrer Sektoren, also vor allem die alte Traumdeutungswissenschaft und die Wissenschaft von den Orakeln und den ‘Zeichen’”⁹. This important concession H.P. Müller further refined by demonstrating that the type of wisdom that left its impact on apocalyptic thought was not the courtly-pedagogical but the mantic or divinatory kind. He focused his investigation on the figure of Daniel who was, of course, both a diviner and seer. Müller suggested that if one saw the roots of apocalyptic thinking in divination, then various features of the apocalyptic material that do not arise from classical prophecy can be explained (e.g., determinism, pseudonymity)¹⁰. Daniel is a parade example, but Enoch, too, embodies a number of mantic traits as he evolves into a seer¹¹.

One could object that the highly negative manner in which the Hebrew Bible treats divination eliminates it as a major influence on or model for apocalyptic writers who were careful interpreters of the sacred writings. Moreover, the predictions which mantic specialists usually made seem to have little in common with the eschatological visions of the seers. But there were officially acceptable types of divination in Israel. The *Urim* and *Thummim* and the ephod are well-known examples. The biblical opposition to certain mantic arts was based, it appears, less on qualms about divination itself than on the pagan milieu within which Israel’s neighbors and conquerors practiced it. The so-called Akkadian prophecies, with their mantic traits, share some central features with the Jewish apocalyptic works that include historical surveys – e.g. *vaticinia ex eventu* regarding the fate of nations and kings¹².

of the reactions in *Mantische Weisheit und Apokalyptik*, in: Congress Volume, Uppsala, 1971 (VTSup 22), Leiden 1972, pp. 268–270.

⁹ G. von Rad, *Theologie des Alten Testaments*, vol. 2: *Die Theologie der prophetischen Überlieferungen Israels* (Einführung in die evangelische Theologie 1), Munich 1968⁵, p. 331.

¹⁰ H.P. Müller, *Mantische Weisheit*, pp. 268–293 (where he listed another feature, viz. eschatological orientation [280–281]); cf. also his contribution to the article “הַחֵם” in TDOT 4, pp. 376–378 (four features are given on pp. 377–378). Müller’s essay, *Magisch-mantische Weisheit und die Gestalt Daniels*, UF 1 (1969), pp. 79–94, is also relevant in this context.

¹¹ See J.C. VanderKam, *Enoch and the Growth of an Apocalyptic Tradition* (CBQMS 16), Washington, DC 1984.

¹² For discussions of these texts, one can consult W. Lambert, *The Background of Jewish Apocalyptic*. The Ethel M. Wood Lecture delivered before the University of London on 22 February 1977, London, 1978, pp. 9–17; H. Ringgren, *Akkadian Apocalypses*, in: D. Hellholm (ed.), *Apocalypticism in the Mediterranean World and the Near East*, Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1989², pp. 379–386 and J.C. VanderKam, *Enoch and the Growth of an Apocalyptic Tradition*, pp. 62–69.

One of the benefits of this line of analysis has been to see that two phenomena that look different to us may not have been so sharply distinguished in antiquity. Religious specialists who acted in some formally similar ways and contexts produced prophecies and mantic wisdom. It will be useful to note some of the general similarities between the crafts of the diviner and the prophet – and, by extension, of the apocalypticist.

1. Both were possible only because the deity or deities chose to reveal themselves, it was believed, to certain select individuals. The media adopted for these divine disclosures often differed (the word of the Lord is stressed in biblical prophecy, while Mesopotamian diviners, for example, characteristically examined sheep livers, etc., for omens), but both appealed to revelation (in some cases the medium was the same; see no. 4 below).

2. Both by their very nature dealt with the future and with learning its course in advance – and assumed this was possible. Prophets may generally have spoken within a covenantal framework and have addressed their oracles to their contemporaries, but the blessings and curses that rewarded obedience and punished disobedience pointed toward the future – perhaps one that would arrive soon. The deuteronomist certainly understood prophecy in this sense when he wrote that the criterion for a true prophecy was whether the word came to pass (Deut. 18:21–22; note that the passage on the Moses-like prophet [18:15–22] directly follows the section about divining and diviners in 18:9–14). The diviner would read omens of many kinds and make predictions based on the patterns and traits that he saw. Both prophets and diviners at times made prognostications for individuals and at other times for larger groups or entire nations.

3. Both *late* prophecy and divination concerned themselves with deciphering messages that were encoded in ominous media. Cracking codes in which revelatory messages were concealed was at the heart of what the mantic sage did, while late prophecy in Israel also involved decoding although the medium in question seems to have been the text of earlier prophetic books. Scholars who have studied the phenomenon of late biblical prophecy have observed that it was strongly interpretative in nature. As Joseph Blenkinsopp has put the matter:

“Increasing reference to former prophets, occasional laments for the absence of prophetic guidance and, not least, the well attested practice of adapting earlier prophetic sayings to new situations – e.g., in Zech. 1–8 – are symptomatic of this new situation. With the availability of prophetic material in writing, the emphasis was less on direct inspired utterance and more on the inspired interpretation of past prophecy”¹³.

David L. Petersen has reached similar conclusions from his analysis of Second and Third Isaiah; Jer. 23:33–40; Zech. 13:2–6; Joel 3.1–5; and Mala-

¹³ J. Blenkinsopp, *A History of Prophecy in Israel*, Philadelphia 1983, p. 256; cf. 239.

chi¹⁴. In the later prophetic corpus it appears, then, that prophecy has shifted toward studied exegesis. The same feature is found in the apocalyptic texts. Appealing once again to Daniel 9, the passage tells how the seer via the angel deciphered the meaning of Jeremiah's 70 years of exile and based predictions on it¹⁵.

4. Prophets and diviners at times resorted to the same media for their revelations. Dreams or night visions are the principal example. As is well known, oneiromancy was a popular divinatory field in many cultures, including that of Israel where Joseph and Daniel were the most famous experts. Dreams were generally thought to be a means for divine communication (Job 33:14–18), but they apparently had a special connection with prophecy. This fact emerges clearly from Num 12:6: “And he said, ‘Hear my words: If there is a prophet among you, I the Lord make myself known to him in a vision, I speak with him in a dream’”. Jeremiah makes a number of references to prophetic dreams but always in a negative sense (23:23–32; cf. 27:9; 29:8–9). Deuteronomy 13:1–6 juxtaposes the prophet and the dreamer, while Zech 13:4a declares that “on that day every prophet will be ashamed of his vision when he prophesies; [...]”. The night visions of Zechariah in form most nearly resemble the literary accounts of apocalyptic dreams or visions. Moreover, the interpreted visions of Amos and other analogous ones in the prophetic books exhibit mantic traits¹⁶.

5. Both prophets and diviners brought divine messages to bear on political and military issues. It is well known that the prophets did so (e.g., Isaiah 7), but Mesopotamian diviners also advised on matters of war and state¹⁷.

The prophetic literature in the Bible at times reflects the close association between prophecy and divination. Micah offers the earliest evidence for this usage. In the third chapter the prophet delivers a divine indictment of his fellow prophets (הנביאים) [3:5]: “Therefore it shall be night to you, without vision, and darkness to you, without divination (מקסם [3:6])”. In the following lines prophets, seers, and diviners (הקסמים) figure in a poetic sequence, but 3:11 illustrates the point under consideration with the greatest clarity:

¹⁴ D.L. Petersen, *Late Israelite Prophecy: Studies in Deutero-Prophetic Literature and in Chronicles* (SBLMS 23), Missoula [MT] 1977, pp. 14–15, 21, 25–27, 28, 37–38, 45.

¹⁵ See D.S. Russell, *The Method and Message of Jewish Apocalyptic* (OTL), Philadelphia 1964, pp. 195–198.

¹⁶ Cf. S. Niditch, *The Symbolic Vision in Biblical Tradition* (HSM 30), Chico [CA] 1980, pp. 33–34, 49, 71, 96, 133–134, 174–175, 184–185, 243–248.

¹⁷ The Mari “prophetic” (?) texts are relevant comparisons, and they have often been discussed. See, for example, W.L. Moran, *New Evidence from Mari on the History of Prophecy*, Bib 50 (1969), p. 15–56; and the brief comments in K. Koch, *The Prophets*, vol. 1: *The Assyrian Period*, Philadelphia 1983, 9–12 (he considers the Mari evidence under the rubric “Inductive and Intuitive Divination in Antiquity and its Connection with Monotheism and Monanthropology in Israel”).

Its heads give judgment for a bribe,
 its priests teach for hire,
 its prophets divine for money (הנביאים בכסף יקסמו) [...]

The simple fact that what a prophet – even a “false” one – does can be expressed by the common word for *divining* shows that for the writer the two were intimately related. Similar associations figure in Jeremiah (14:14; 27:9–10; 29:8–9) and Ezekiel (13:1–9, 17–23; 22:28).

So, apocalyptic thought could be viewed as an expansion of mantic wisdom’s traditional fields into wider realms, including eschatology. Two biblical sages – Joseph and Daniel – predicted on the basis of dreams, and the latter was also a seer. Thus, a more convincing form of the wisdom thesis holds that it was not so much the more familiar biblical types of wisdom (Proverbs, Job, Ecclesiastes etc.) that influenced the apocalyptic writers but the mantic or divinatory sort. Indeed Daniel and Enoch, the two earliest figures of the Jewish apocalyptic traditions, are presented as diviners or assigned some mantic traits. Both received their predictive revelations through such media as dreams. Daniel was skilled in dream interpretation, and Enoch was the Jewish counterpart of the Mesopotamian Enmeduranki, who was the mythical founder of a guild of diviners. Of course, much could be said on the topic of Enoch and the many associations between traditions about him and Mesopotamian literature and science.

I have spoken at length about connections between divination, prophecy, and apocalypticism, not because I think prophets and apocalyptic writers read divinatory manuals or modeled themselves on diviners; rather, we should be aware that prophets and apocalypticists belong in a larger category of religious specialists and should not be so sharply distinguished from their fellow specialists. And, with later prophecy, apocalypticism is decidedly interpretive as an apocalyptic section such as Jubilees 1 shows.

2. AN EXAMPLE: JUBILEES 1

Jubilees 1 is a Jewish apocalyptic text that allows one to observe how the writer operated with sources and how significant interpretation was for him.

It is debatable whether Jubilees should be classed as an apocalypse, though the book as a whole has many of the traits of one. The largest part of Jubilees is, of course, a look back at the sacred history from creation to Sinai. Yet, the writer is concerned about the future and with conveying otherwise inaccessible material from a celestial source.

Jubilees 1 and 23 – the most sustained statements about the future – are the parts of the book that look most like apocalyptic texts. I will deal with Jubilees 1 which tells us how the author understood his book and what purpose it was to serve; it also exemplifies how a writer laid narrative, legal, and prophetic passages under contribution in fashioning an apocalypse. We should look at the setting in which he placed the book and at some terms that help us to understand his procedure and purpose: *heavenly tablets* and *testimony*.

2.1. THE SETTING

Since Genesis-Exodus and the other works now in the Hebrew Bible existed at the time he composed Jubilees, the writer had to justify the existence of his book that significantly overlaps with them and demonstrate why others should pay attention to it. He lets the reader know that he is familiar with the earlier compositions even as he supplements and clarifies them.

1. Jubilees embodies a divine communication to Moses on Mt. Sinai. In the Prologue, after describing the contents of the book, the writer adds: “[...] as he related (them) to Moses on Mt. Sinai when he went up to receive the stone tablets – the law and the commandments – by the command of the Lord as he had told him that he should come up to the summit of the mountain”. Several phrases in the quoted words come from Exod 24:12 (in the form in which the author knew it): “the stone tablets – the law and the commandments” and that he should “come up to (the summit of) the mountain” are citations from the verse. These hints are developed in Jub 1:1–4a which stand in close relation with Exod 24:12–13,15–18. Thus, the Prologue and the first four verses of the book identify Exodus 24 as the narrative basis for the revelation of Jubilees¹⁸. The date that the writer assigns to the revelation – the third month, the sixteenth day (1:1) – also requires that the setting be Moses’ first stay on the mountain.

Why would the writer situate his book during Moses’ first extended sojourn on the mountain? After all, the tablets God gave him then were the ones he would break in Exod 32:19 – tablets replaced by Moses himself before his second 40-day stint on Mt. Sinai. By situating Moses on Mt. Sinai during the first 40-day stay, he is drawing a clear distinction between his book and whatever was written on the stone tablets. Jubilees presents the two stone tablets as Exodus 24 and related passages do: they were written by God for Moses. And, according to Exod 34:28, which mentions that the second set duplicated the first, those tablets contained “the words of the cov-

¹⁸ For the details, see J.T.A.G.M. van Ruiten, *The Rewriting of Exodus 24:12–18 in Jubilees 1:1–4*, BN 79 (1995), pp. 25–29.

enant, the ten commandments". The revelation contained in Jubilees was not inscribed on the stone tablets; it came from the heavenly tablets. By situating Moses on Sinai during the first stay, the writer was clearly distinguishing Jubilees from the stone tablets, whether the first or second set. As a result, his book was the only revelation that survived from Moses' initial stay on the mountain.

2. The second crucial aspect of the setting is the revelatory chain through which the contents of Jubilees came to Moses. The situation made explicit in Jubilees 1 is that God, who was responsible for the heavenly tablets in the first place, gives them with their inscribed message to the Angel of the Presence. That angel then dictates to Moses from the text on the tablets. The facts that God is the ultimate authority behind the heavenly tablets and the author of what is contained in them emerge from the instructions and statements in 1:26–29 (and 2:1). In 1:26, after the discussion between the Lord and Moses about Israel's future, the deity orders him: "Now you write all these words which I tell you on this mountain: what is first and what is last and what is to come during all the divisions of time which are in the law and which are in the testimony and in the weeks of their jubilees until eternity – until the time when I descend and live with them throughout all the ages of eternity". God is the one supplying the message – "all these words which I tell you on this mountain" – and their contents sound much like the other general descriptions of Jubilees elsewhere in the Prologue and ch. 1 (see vv. 4,27–29).

But God does not directly reveal the message to Moses as he does with the two stone tablets. Rather, he chooses the medium of an Angel of the Presence who reads to Moses from the heavenly tablets on which God had placed the message. Jubilees 1:27 contains that next step: "Then he [God] said to an angel of the presence: 'Dictate to Moses (starting) from the beginning of the creation until the time when my temple is built among them throughout the ages of eternity'"¹⁹. Jubilees 1:29 recounts that the angel did as he was told (with another general and longer summary of what the tablets contain). He took the tablets, read from them to Moses, and Moses wrote down what the angel read and told him (see 2:1). The remainder of the book is Moses' written record of what the angel dictated to him from the heavenly tablets along with a few editorial comments by the angel when he reaches central points in the account. Those asides he directs to Moses.

¹⁹ Some experts have found in the varied statements about who does the revealing to Moses signs of redactional activity – conclusion that seems a misunderstanding to me. See J.C. VanderKam, *Recent Scholarship on the Book of Jubilees*, "Currents in Biblical Research" 2008 vol. 6, n. 3, pp. 410–416.

2.2. THE COMPONENTS OF THE REVELATION

In attempting to unravel the presentation by the author, it is helpful to keep in mind that in a sense he incorporates the Law of Moses into his own composition, while at the same time maintaining the distinction between the Torah of Moses and the *Book of Jubilees*. When he wishes to refer to the Law of Moses, he calls it the law or the first law. There are two other terms in the writer's vocabulary that arise in this connection and that require explanation: heavenly tablets and testimony²⁰.

1. Heavenly Tablets: In Jubilees the term is the most comprehensive of the three in that it contains the other two – the law and the testimony (the tablets include both and probably more). The Book of Jubilees makes ample use of the tablets in presenting the author's understanding of the way in which God governs his world and his covenantal partners, Israel and their ancestors. The writer mentions the heavenly tablets twenty-eight times. He also resorts to the simpler expression "the tablets" in five instances (1:29; 3:31; 32:21–22; 50:13).

The following summarizes the contents of the heavenly tablets.

a. General: According to Jub 1:29, the tablets contain "the divisions of the years from the time the law and testimony were created – for the weeks of their jubilees, year by year in their full number, and their jubilees [from the time of the creation until] the time of the new creation [...]". It sounds as if the tablets include the chronology of all time, as divided into their units of seven and multiples of seven. The first words of the Prologue, which appear to refer to the same material, add that the events that transpire in those chronological units are also included. The tablets, therefore, contain a comprehensive account of sacred history, from the first to the second creation and properly ordered into years, weeks of years, and jubilee periods²¹. See also 50:13.

b. Specific: Most of the statements about the heavenly tablets offer narrower descriptions, delineating different types of information found on the tablets.

²⁰ For another study of the three terms, see M. Himmelfarb, *Torah, Testimony, and Heavenly Tablets: The Claim to Authority in the 'Book of Jubilees'*, in: B.G. Wright (ed.), *A Multifarious Heritage: Studies on Early Judaism and Christianity in Honor of Robert A. Kraft* (Scholars Press Homage Series 24), Atlanta 1999, pp. 19–29.

²¹ Himmelfarb properly emphasizes the importance of chronology (and festivals) but does so in connection with the Jubilees' use of the word *testimony* (*Torah, Testimony, and the Heavenly Tablets*, pp. 21–25): "Thus if *Jubilees* presents itself as testimony, it is claiming to be not a book of law, but a book about time, the course of history and the deeds of humanity that make up history as well as the cyclical passage of time, the calendar" (23). This is true, since the testimony derives from the heavenly tablets (see below).

- Individual Laws²²: In ten instances the angel tell Moses that specific laws are entered in the heavenly tablets: the law of the parturient (3:10); covering one's nakedness (3:31 "the tablets"); not beating one's companion (4:5); being killed or wounded with the instrument with which one has killed or wounded (4:32); circumcising on the eighth day (15:25); giving the older daughter in marriage before the younger one (28:6); executing with stones the one who brings about defilement through exogamy (30:9); giving the second tithe (32:10); setting aside animal tithes for the priest annually (32:15); prohibiting sexual relations of a son with his father's wife (33:10).

- Calendar and Festivals: In seven passages the angel notes that aspects of the annual calendar or the sacred festivals find a place on the heavenly tablets: celebrating the festival of Weeks one day in the third month each year to renew the covenant (6:17); the four 13-week seasons marked off by four days commemorating events in the flood period (6:28–31); following the correct annual calendar so that the sacred festivals are celebrated at the proper times (6:35); celebrating the festival of Tabernacles correctly (16:28–29); properly celebrating the festival of Unleavened Bread (18:19); adding an eighth day to the festival of Tabernacles (32:28); properly observing the Passover (49:8). This is perhaps also the place to mention 50:13 which speaks of Sabbaths of the land.

- Information about Individuals and Groups, their Names, Character, and Destinies: Several of the angel's references to the heavenly tablets are to the destinies or judgment of large groups of people: the judgment of all (5:13); the annihilation of Lot's descendants (16:9); the fate of Israel in the future (23:32); the judgment of the Philistines (24:8); and Israel's destiny of being recorded as friends or enemies depending on their obedience or disobedience to the covenant (30:22). In other cases, information having to do with individuals is said to be inscribed there: Isaac's name (16:3); Abraham as God's friend (19:9); Levi as blessed and just, and as God's friend (30:19–20); and the futures of Levi and Judah as blessed by Isaac (31:32).

2. Testimony: The second concept to be investigated is *testimony*. It appears eighteen times in the book and is a central topic for the writer. Several earlier students of Jubilees suggested that the Hebrew word behind the Ethiopic translation *sem'* was עֵדוּת²³. The Qumran fragments show that the noun was actually תְּעוּדָה. The word תְּעוּדָה is usually related to the root עוּד which in the Hiphil means "bear witness, testify; cause to witness" and also "warn,

²² Himmelfarb identifies as a possible innovation of the author the idea of "the heavenly tablets as a source of law" (*Torah, Testimony, and Heavenly Tablets*, p. 25).

²³ Dillmann made the suggestion and was, naturally, followed by others. See his *Lexicon Linguae Aethiopicae*, repr. Osnabrück 1970 [original 1865], p. 338. Passages such as Exod 31:18; 32:15; 34:29 (the tablets of testimony) could be taken as support for this choice.

admonish, exhort” (DCH 6.287–288). It appears three times in the Hebrew Bible – Isa 8:16,20; Ruth 4:7 (“[...] this was the manner of attesting in Israel [...]”). The Isaiah references, with similar passages in the book, appear to have been a significant base for the author of Jubilees. The Lord commands Isaiah: “Bind up the testimony, seal the teaching among my disciples. I will wait for the Lord, who is hiding his face from the house of Jacob, and I will hope in him” (8:16–17). The prophet’s message is to be taken out of the public sphere, after it was rejected, and confined to the limited circle of his disciples while the divine anger lasts. In that way it will be available in written form through that time (with limited circulation) and in the future.

This is the situation that Jub 1:4–8 presupposes. In these verses the Lord reveals his message to Moses and orders him to write it down so that the words may function as a witness in the future when the people stray from the Lord’s way. The second use of the two terms – in Isa 8:20 – seems to have been less central for the writer of Jubilees, although he presents the terms in the order found in v. 20 (they are reversed in v. 16).

The two words do not figure together there, but Isa 30:8 is another significant scriptural source for the author²⁴.

Go now, write it before them on a tablet,
and inscribe it in a book,
so that it may be for the time to come
as a witness forever.

The passage again contains a command for the prophet to write and the writing is to be done on a tablet (לִיטָה, as at Sinai). The purpose for placing the message in writing is so that the recorded words will serve as a witness in the future. The reference to the future is clear enough in Isa 30:8, and the people’s failure to heed the divine Torah is noted in v. 9.

As for the contents of the testimony, various types can be distinguished:

a. Many of the passages indicate that the testimony embraces information about both the chronological system that undergirds Jubilees’ retelling of scriptural history and the calendar that arranges the sacred festivals – fundamental themes in the book.

As for the chronological system, there are several places where one learns that the testimony incorporates the events of all time, past, present, and future. The Prologue indicates as much by specifying “the divisions of the times of the law and of the testimony, of the events of the years, of the weeks of their jubilees throughout all the years of eternity [...]”. Or, 1:4, after

²⁴ For the verses in Isaiah 8 and 30 in connection with testimony in Jubilees, see H. Najman, *The Symbolic Significance of Writing in Ancient Judaism*, in: H. Najman, J.H. Newman (ed.), *The Idea of Biblical Interpretation: Essays in Honor of James L. Kugel* (JSJS 83), Leiden 2004, pp. 149–152.

mentioning that the Lord showed Moses what had happened and would take place, says that he “related to him the divisions of the times – of the law and of the testimony”. Similar language figures in 1:26 and 29 where the period covered stretches from the first to the second or new creation. The coverage in the testimony appears to be extraordinarily comprehensive.

The festival calendar is likewise associated with the term *testimony*. The point becomes clear in ch. 6, where one finds the most extended statement about the subject of the holidays and the year. In 6:23 the angel tells Moses: “On the first of the first month, the first of the fourth month, the first of the seventh month, and the first of the tenth month are memorial days and days of the seasons. They are written down and ordained at the four divisions of the year as an eternal testimony”. The four memorial days that mark off the seasons are recorded and ordained and apparently serve the purpose of offering testimony. The year of 364 days is said to be associated with the testimony: if the Israelites adhere strictly to this calendar, the year and hence the festivals will take place at the proper times – then “everything will happen in harmony with their testimony”. Here testimony seems to be the legislation for how the year is arranged and how the festivals have stipulated times – the only times when they may be celebrated. In fact, a festival day is, according to 6:37, a day of testimony, that is, a day designated for that holiday.

b. Testimony is also associated with individual laws. The section regarding the Sabbath has two references to testimony. In 2:24, following legislation for the seventh day and the parallel between Jacob and the Sabbath, the angel reports: “It was granted to these that for all times they should be the blessed and holy ones of the testimony and of the first law, as it was sanctified and blessed on the seventh day”. It appears that “these” points to the Sabbath and Jacob, both of which are blessed and holy. The association between Sabbath law and testimony is made even more explicit in 2:33: “This law and testimony were given to the Israelites as an eternal law throughout their history”.

c. As the meaning of the term entails, the testimony functions to give evidence and to warn. The point comes to expression at a very early juncture in the book when God himself, having predicted Israel’s apostasy, says to Moses: “Now you write this entire message which I am telling you today, because I know their defiance and their stubbornness (even) before I bring them into the land which I promised by oath to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob: ‘To your posterity I will give the land which flows with milk and honey’. When they eat and are full, 1:8 they will turn to foreign gods – to ones which will not save them from any of their afflictions. Then the testimony is to correspond with this testimony”. This is the passage that echoes the situation in Isaiah 8 (see above), while its wording is dependent on Deut 31:19 (see also Deut 31:26; Josh 24:27; 2 Kgs 17:15). The message that Moses

writes will be able to convict Israel in the future when they fall away from the covenant.

Testimony refers to the data on the heavenly tablets that include legal information (among which are chronological and calendrical facts) and the actions and traits of people. It is a comprehensive record and can serve to convict or praise individuals, depending on what is recorded regarding each one. The contents of the testimony are recorded on heavenly tablets and this information (perhaps not all of it) the angel of the presence dictates to Moses. The testimony is different from the law that God gave to Moses on other tablets, the two tablets of stone. It has much to do with the law and overlaps significantly with it, but it is not the same. It is law plus the real meaning of the law and its implications. Jubilees itself is the testimony, and it corresponds in function with the song mentioned in Deuteronomy 31.

To introduce his message the author describes the components of the revelations God gave to Moses at Sinai – the testimony (= Jubilees) and the law (= the Pentateuch). He draws heavily upon Deuteronomy and Isaiah 8 (and uses many other scriptural passages) to present his book as proof of Israel's apostasy from the covenant and of the Lord's faithfulness to the agreement. If one looks carefully at the text of Jubilees 1, it is evident that he also used and interpreted other passages from the former and latter prophets and from the writings (e.g., Psalm 51). Moses received the revelation of Jubilees from a heavenly source that allowed him to interpret the scriptures correctly so that he could address a message of instruction and warning to his target audience in their present circumstances. The basic traits of apocalypses are present in Jubilees 1.

Early Jewish apocalyptic writers had older, authoritative scriptures before them and worked very hard to understand their mysterious deeper meanings. In this way they operated in a manner analogous to a diviner confronted with the difficult task of deriving meaning from the symbols in a dream, the patterns of the stars, or the marks on the liver of a sheep. Both types of specialists attempted to derive from different media a message that came to them in encoded forms. That is what Daniel was doing with Jeremiah's 70 years in ch. 9 and that is what the author of Jubilees was doing with Deuteronomy and Isaiah 8 in ch. 1. All exerted themselves to decipher the divine messages locked in the media before them to proclaim the divine message for their time.