CHAPTER FOUR

THE CHRONOLOGICAL REDACTION OF THE BOOK OF JUBILEES

In addition to the legal redaction of the stories in Jubilees, which is expressed in the juxtaposition of legal passages to the rewritten stories, it is possible to identify a chronological redaction. Throughout this work, various events in Genesis and Exodus are dated in years from creation, using a triplet of numbers consisting of jubilee, week, and year. The legal editing and the chronological editing appear to be the handiwork of one and the same person. The legal and chronological are intertwined together already in the narrative framework (Jub. 1), in the expression “the divisions of the times of the law and of the te’udah (of the weeks and of the jubilees),” which occurs four times in the Prologue and ch. 1 (vv. 4, 26, 29) and again in the last verse of the book: “which he placed in my hands so that I could write for you the laws of each specific time in every division of its times” (50:13).

1 Jubilees also dates some events to the month and day of the month, and in a number of instances, there is significance to these dates. For example, the 15th day of the 3rd month (14:10; 15:1; 16:14; 28:15; 29:7); the 1st day of the 1st month (5:20; 6:25; 7:2; 13:3; 24:22; 27:19; 28:14); the 1st of the 4th month (3:32; 5:29; 6:26; 16:1; 28:24); the 17th day of the 2nd month (3:17; 5:23, 31).

2 Compare CD XVI, 1–4: “to return to the Torah of Moses, for in it everything is specified. And the explication of the times of Israel’s blindness from all these, it is specified in the Book of the Divisions of the Times according to their Jubilees and Weeks.” This passage apparently refers to Jubilees, which is also called “The Book of the Division of the Times according to their Jubilees and their Weeks.” In the heading of the book quoted in the Damascus Document, the legal component “law and te’udah” is absent. But the content of the passage—the proper understanding of the Law of Moses and its observance, and the periods wherein the Israelites were blind to the laws—implies the integration of law and chronology in the “Book of the Divisions of Times.” Even so, it is still unclear whether the book referred to in the Damascus Document is actually Jubilees (as we have it), because Jubilees does not refer to any period after the revelation at Sinai; see Kister 2001: 297, n. 44.

3 Ravid (2000) suggested that Jub. 50:6–13 is not a suitable ending of the book, and should be viewed as an appendix which was added secondarily. Doering (2002) dissented and argued that v. 13b is especially appropriate as a conclusion. Kister (oral communication) improved on Ravid’s suggestion and showed that the addition ended with v. 13a, and that v. 13b is indeed the original conclusion of the book. See the Introduction, pages 19–20.
The chronological framework of jubilees and weeks is common to other works of the Second Temple period that divide world history into eras of predetermined length. Underlying all of them is the idea of periodization: at the end of a pre-defined length of time, the world returns to its primordial state. *Jubilees* extends over a jubilee of jubilees, and this period ends with the fiftieth jubilee, during which the Exodus from enslavement in Egypt and the entry into the Promised Land takes place (50:4).4 VanderKam noted the direct connection between the events at the end of this period in history with the laws of Lev 25 that deal with the jubilee and the Sabbatical Year. The release from servitude in Egypt and the return to the ancestral, promised land implement in the national plane the law of the jubilee from Lev 25 (vv. 10, 13), which is incumbent on the individual.5

Beyond the conceptual significance of the chronological framework for *Jubilees*, one can also identify its influence on the literary form of the work. The biblical stories are often reordered to maintain chronological continuity from creation to the revelation at Sinai.6 In the previous chapters, I have tried to demonstrate that legal passages were joined by an editor to pre-existing, rewritten stories, and in this chapter I would like to suggest that the chronological framework was also superimposed upon extant rewritten stories. The editor who inserted the chronological data into *Jubilees* did not base his work directly on Genesis and Exodus, but on stories that had already been rewritten.

It is possible to demonstrate that the chronological framework was superimposed upon the already existing stories from instances in which the chronological framework contradicts chronological data that are embedded in the rewritten story itself, either in the details of the narrative or in the exegesis that underlies the rewriting. Dimant has

4 The term “jubilee” in *Jubilees* connotes in general 49 years (with the exception of 4:21, where six jubilees equal 300 years; see Dimant 1983: 21, n. 17; and above, pp. 16–17). In contrast, As. Mos. 1:2 dates the entry into the Promised Land to the year A.M. 2500, and this equates to 50 jubilees of 50 years each.
6 Glatt (1992: 132–138) deals with two instances of chronological displacement in *Jub. 34–41*: the story of the sale of Joseph (*Jub. 34*) is transposed to a point in time before the death of Isaac (36:18), and the story of Judah and Tamar is transposed to the period of the seven plentiful years in Egypt (*Jub. 41*). As Glatt notes, the chronological displacement of the sale of Joseph arises from chronological considerations of the biblical data (see below, p. 121, n. 49). However it is more difficult to explain the Judah-Tamar displacement based upon chronological considerations. Cf. Bernstein (1996) regarding the phenomenon of rearrangement in the *Genesis Apocryphon*. 