The Reception of the Book of Exodus in the Book of Jubilees

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The Book of Jubilees has come to be known as “the Little Genesis” (ἡ λεπτὴ Γένεσις), so it is usually the first book of the Torah that comes to mind when scholars examine the reception of the Pentateuch in Jubilees. Nonetheless, the Book of Exodus plays an important role in Jubilees structurally, conceptually, materially, and linguistically.

1 The Narrative Setting of Jubilees As Reflective of the Book’s Exodus Reception

Jubilees is usually regarded as an example of “Rewritten Bible” or, less anachronistically speaking, “Rewritten Scripture.” Despite some recent debate about this label—and whether Jubilees neatly fits into it—this can still be taken to be a helpful category.1 However, it is insufficient to look merely for the development of any larger blocks of the Exodus narrative as rewritten in Jubilees. Such an approach has led some earlier scholars to the assertion that Jubilees rewriting the material from Genesis 1 (creation; cf. Jub. 1–2) to Exodus 12 (exodus and passover; cf. Jub. 48–49).2 This is of course true, but it is only part of the evidence.

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2 E.g., Eberhard Schwarz, Identität durch Abgrenzung: Abgrenzungsprozesse in Israel im vorchristlichen Jahrhundert und ihre traditionsgeschichtlichen Voraussetzungen. Zugleich ein Beitrag zur Erforschung des Jubiläenbuches (EHS 162; Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 1982), 17, and literature cited at 156 n. 1.
Importantly, the setting of Jubilees is at Mount Sinai, where the angel of presence dictates to Moses an account from the creation until the entry into the land of Israel, with a preview of a salvific future (cf. Jub. 50:5) comprising the establishment of the eschatological “Temple of the Lord” in Jerusalem (cf. Jub. 1:27, 29). The wording of Jub. 1:1–4 suggests that this setting of Jubilees is modeled after Exod 24:12–18.

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**Jub. 1:1–4**

1 During the first year of the Israelites’ exodus from Egypt, in the third month—on the sixteenth of the month—the Lord said to Moses: “Come up to me on the mountain. I will give you the two stone tablets of the law and the commandments which I have written so that you may teach them.”

2 So Moses went up the mountain of the Lord.

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**Exod 24:12–18**

12 The Lord said to Moses: “Come up to me on the mountain, and wait there; and I will give you the tablets of stone and the law and the commandment, which I have written to teach them.”

13 So Moses set out with his assistant Joshua, and Moses went up into the mountain of God. 14 To the elders he had said, “Wait here for us, until we come to you again; for Aaron and Hur are with you; whoever has a dispute may go to them.”

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4 The establishment of the text of, and English translations from, Jubilees follow (with slight variations) James C. VanderKam, The Book of Jubilees (2 vols.; CSCO 510/511, Scriptores Aethiopici 87/88; Leuven: Peeters, 1989). English translations of biblical texts follow, with adaptations, the NRSV.