TWO "SCIENTIFIC" FICTIONS:  THE SO-CALLED BOOK OF NOAH AND THE ALLEGED QUOTATION OF JUBILEES IN CD 16:3-4

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Critical research of ancient Jewish texts has seen in the last century amazing factual confirmation of conclusions arrived at by literary analysis. But at times the reverse occurs. Ingenious theories linger on in spite of new facts that undermine their plausibility. Below I attempt to demonstrate the shaky foundation upon which two such "scientific" fictions are built: the theory about the so-called Book of Noah, and the claim that the Damascus Document 16:3-4 cites the Book of Jubilees 1:1.

Such theories were introduced into the critical inquiry of ancient Jewish texts that were conducted during the nineteenth century. They acquired particular authority when the major results achieved by this inquiry were strikingly born out by the Dead Sea Scrolls, discovered in the middle of the twentieth century. The most dramatic confirmation came with regard to the Ethiopic Book of Enoch, dubbed as I Enoch, and the Book of Jubilees. Both works are incorporated into the canonical scriptures of the Ethiopic Church, and in their Ethiopic versions became known to the scholarly world at the end of the eighteenth century.1 Following their publication and translation into European languages, they became an object of scholarly analysis throughout the nineteenth century. The insights gained in this process were summarized and popularized by R. H. Charles in his influential commentaries on the two books.2 The main conclusions, which received general support and made a lasting impression on later scholarship, were as follows: the two works are Jewish, they were originally written in Aramaic and/or Hebrew, and they were to be dated to the Second Temple period.3 Nearly forty years after the publication of

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3 Charles, The Book of Enoch, lxi–lvi; lvii–lxx; idem, The Book of Jubilees,
Charles’s monumental collection *The Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament* the Dead Sea Scrolls confirmed these conclusions to the letter. Fragments of Aramaic copies of *1 Enoch* and Hebrew copies of *Jubilees* were unearthed among the remains of the Jewish library of the Qumran community, all dated to the second and first centuries BCE. Yet the corroboration of the foremost early insights lent false authority to other assumptions related to various details of these books. The theories about the *Book of Noah*, and the alleged citation of *Jubilees* in the *Damascus Document* are cases in point. They are still upheld and occasionally even generate new theories. Yet the field has gone through radical changes since Charles’s days. The student of ancient Jewish literature has now at his disposal a wealth of new material and a growing body of fresh insights into the nature of this literature. These new factors call for a re-evaluation of old theories in order to clear away obsolete assumptions and make room for fresh ones, more in accord with the new data at hand. It is with this perspective that I wish to take up the examination of the theory about the *Book of Noah*, and to challenge the identification of *Damascus Document* 16:3-4 as a citation of the prologue to *Jubilees*.

THE SO-CALLED BOOK OF NOAH

The theory about a lost *Book of Noah* underwent two distinct phases of development: the first before the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls, the second after it. Since the scrolls brought new elements into the discussion, it is helpful to survey each phase separately.

1. The theory about a lost Book of Noah before the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls.

From its inception the study of *1 Enoch* made clear that the text preserved in the Ethiopic version was, in fact, a collection of distinct literary compositions, each displaying individual style and themes. Al-

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