A NOTE ON ISAAC AS FIRST-BORN IN JUBILEES AND ONLY SON IN 4Q225

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The Book of Jubilees and 4Q225 (4QPseudo-Jubilees) each develop a connection between the Aqedah and the exodus. Jubilees creates that nexus through an intertextual design that depicts the Aqedah as a foreshadowing of the exodus. 4Q225, on the other hand, adopts a linear structure that employs Genesis 15 as a mediating text between the two deliverance narratives. Scholars have given considerable attention to the motifs that advance the relationship between the Aqedah and the exodus in each text. The intent of this note is to examine a feature that has not been explored in that scholarship, specifically, the designation of Isaac as a first-born son in Jubilees and as an only son in 4Q225.


2 VanderKam comments on the bakwraka in his textual notes (The Book of Jubilees: A Critical Text [Louvain: Peeters, 1989] 2.106–07 notes on 18:11, 15), but neither there nor elsewhere does he address its significance. Van Ruiten includes the reading “your
The biblical Aqedah narrative identifies Isaac by his relationship to Abraham on three occasions—when God issues the initial directive (Gen. 22:2), when the angel restrains Abraham (Gen. 22:12), and, again at the end of the account, when God renews the covenant (Gen. 22:16). MT Genesis 22 reads “your only one” (˚dyjy) in each passage; the LXX, OL, EthGen reading in Gen. 22:2, 12, 16 is consistently “your beloved one” (the equivalent of the Hebrew ˚dydy). All three passages appear in the Jubilees account, but in none of them is Isaac described as “your only son.” God refers to Isaac as “your beloved one” (fequraka) in His command to Abraham (Jub. 18:2); the restraining angel calls Isaac bakwraka (the Geæez equivalent of ˚rwkb) (Jub. 18:11); and God repeats the first-born designation, bakwraka, in the renewal of covenant promises (Jub. 18:15) at the close of the narrative. Only the first of the three passages (God’s command to Abraham) appears in 4Q225 and there (2 i 11), Isaac is referred to as “your only one” (˚dyjy). The terms that the authors of Jubilees and of 4Q225 employ in their designations of Isaac are terms of consequence. They provide insight into the internal workings of each inter-

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3 The Samaritan and Syriac readings are equivalent to those in the MT.
4 Many English translations render the Hebrew ˚dydy as “your beloved one.” That translation may assume that the reading in LXX (the Greek equivalent of ˚dydy) is the correct one (e.g., E.A. Speiser, Genesis [AB 1; Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1964], 163, note on Gen 22:2) or understand “your only one” in the Aqedah context as “construed as a term of value” (N. Sarna, The JPS Torah Commentary: Genesis [JPS: Philadelphia, 1989], 151, note on Gen 22:2).
5 A form of fequraka is attested in all the Ethiopic manuscripts (VanderKam, The Book of Jubilees, 1.102, note to Jub. 18:2).
6 All of the Ethiopic manuscripts used in VanderKam’s critical edition attest bakraka or some form thereof for Jub. 18:11.
7 Duplicating a phrase that appears in the initial command (Gen 22:2; Jub. 18:2), God refers to Isaac as “your first-born son whom you love” (Jub. 18:15).
8 The Hebrew text of the passages is no longer extant. All but three of the Ethiopic manuscripts attest bakraka for Jub. 18:15. One of the variants omits the word (ms 9); the other two (mss 12 and 38) read a form of fequraka (The Book of Jubilees, 1.104, notes to Jub. 18:11, 15). On the relative textual value of the Ethiopic manuscripts, see The Book of Jubilees, 2.xxiv–xxxi. The Latin version reads primogenito (˚ypw) in Jub. 18:11 and unigenito (˚dyjy) in Jub. 18:15. Commenting on bakraka in Jub. 18:15, VanderKam notes that “since the Ethiopic is unique, it is perhaps more likely to be original” (The Book of Jubilees, 2.108).
9 Only the first four letters (˚dyj) are visible.