A TWENTY-EIGHT-DAY MONTH TRADITION IN
THE BOOK OF JUBILEES

In a recent reassessment of Annie Jaubert’s hypothesis regarding
the 364-day calendar which is mentioned explicitly in the Book of
Jubilees at vi 32, James C. VanderKam has challenged one of
Jaubert’s central arguments, that “The 364-day calendar serves to
highlight three liturgical days of the week: Sunday, Wednesday and
Friday” 1), VanderKam follows J. Baumgarten 2) who had previously
noticed that with regard to Jaubert’s suggestion of the importance
of the three liturgical days, Jubilees does not date events by days of
the week, but rather by days of the months. The liturgical days that
are central to Jaubert’s hypothesis about the 364-day calendar are
nowhere mentioned in Jubilees (VanderKam, p. 401). Since Jaubert’s
theory concerning the presence of these liturgical days in Jubilees can
adequately be challenged and since these days are directly linked to
her suggestion concerning the length of a month in Jubilees 3), this
supposed monthly structure of a series of 30, 30 and 31 days making
up one quarter of the year, is in need of reconsideration.

While the 30, 30, 31-day month structure is clear in 1 Enoch lxxii
8 ff., this is not the case in Jubilees where the length of a month is
never explicitly mentioned 4). This distinction between Jubilees and
1 Enoch might seem trivial, but internally their respective calendars
differ on another significant point. In Jubilees a year is 364 days
exactly (vi 32 ff.) while in 1 Enoch a year is 360 + 4 days (lxxii 4-6).
Without entering into the discussion of which calendar is prior, it
seems justified to deal specifically with the Jubilees calendrical
material to determine the length of a month within Jubilees
itself.

In 1891 the suggestion was made by A. Epstein 5) that a twenty-
eight-day month was possible in Jubilees. He suggested that two

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calendars were operating within the book, one which used a calendar of twelve months consisting of thirty days and a second calendar of thirteen months with twenty-eight days in each month. He argued that the Feast of Weeks in Jubilees was dependent upon a month of twenty-eight days. Elsewhere in the book there is explicit evidence for a twelve-month year and so he was forced to conclude that there were two calendars operating within the book (p. 11).

R. H. Charles made a token reference to this two calendar theory in his 1913 edition of Jubilees 9), but this theory has generally been ignored 7). After the discovery of the Qumran fragments of Jubilees and the possible parallels between the calendars of Jubilees and Qumran, the relationship between them was seen to be so close that it was unlikely that Epstein’s theory would ever be reconsidered. Since the theory of Jaubert has been called into question by VanderKam, and since Jaubert herself rejected Epstein’s suggestion, a fresh look at Epstein’s theory is desirable.

The Fifty Days between ‘Omer and Pentecost

In her book, La date de la Cène, the only point at which Jaubert argues with Epstein is his acceptance of the “day following the Sabbath” of Lev. xxiii 15 as the first day of the week or Sunday (p. 22, n. 3; E.tr., pp. 23, 148, n. 14). Epstein took this day (mim-mohorat hašabbār) as 1/22. In a calendar of twenty-eight days, counting fifty days from 1/22 brings one to III/15, the day expected for the Feast of Weeks.

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Jaubert agrees with Epstein that III/15 is a Sunday (pp. 20-22; E.tr., pp. 22-3). In her proposed monthly system of 30, 30 and 31 days, counting backwards from III/15 led to I/26 as the Omer day. If I/26 was an Omer day, it was also a Sunday, and the first month had to begin on a Wednesday. In her interpretation I/25 was the first Sabbath after the week of Unleavened, which ran from Wednesday, I/15 to Tuesday, I/21. The Omer waving occurred the day after the Sabbath after the Week of the Unleavened.