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

In his article, "A twenty-eight-day month tradition in the Book of Jubilees", VT 31 (1981), pp. 83-7, John T. Rook formulated an interesting argument in support of A. Epstein's theory that in some cases the author of the Book of Jubilees operated with a calendrical system which consisted of 13 28-day months (13 × 28 = 364). Epstein had held that the author used two calendars: a civil year containing eight months of 30 days each and four of 31 days (= 364 days) and an ecclesiastical year composed of 13 28-day months. In more recent times Annie Jaubert has maintained that in the single calendar of Jubilees each quarter of the year has three months of 30, 30 and 31 days respectively. Rook, however, now asserts that, since the present writer and others have adequately challenged Jaubert's hypothesis that Jubilees' calendar served to highlight three liturgical days, and since her views about these days are "directly linked to her suggestion concerning the length of a month in Jubilees" (p. 83), her proposals about the duration of months in Jubilees should be re-examined. Rook does not believe that he has demonstrated Epstein's thesis but only that "the groundwork has been laid for a reconsideration of his proposal" (p. 86). If his thesis should be correct, it would have noteworthy consequences because, as he remarks, it would provide counter-evidence to the widely accepted belief that the 364-day calendars of 1 Enoch, Jubilees, and the Qumran literature are identical (pp. 86-7).

There can be no doubt that in his clearest pronouncements on the subject the writer of Jubilees advocated a 12-month calendar (cf. xxv 16 where the number of the sons of Jacob equals the number of months in a year) of 364 days (vi 32). This year he divides into quarters each of which consists of 13 weeks (vi 29). In no passage does the author specify the precise length of a month, but his comment regarding the flood waters—"the water prevailed on the face of the earth five months—one hundred and fifty days" (v 27)—obviously presupposes months of 30 days, not 28. Hence, since the writer never deals explicitly with a 28-day month, this type of system, if it were indeed present in the book, would have a curious status as perhaps an unconsciously borrowed tradition that conflicts with the book's other, clear statements about the divinely revealed calendar.
Rook bases his argument on the chronological indications in Jubilees' story about the times of purification that Adam and Eve were required to undergo before angels conducted them into the garden of Eden (iii 8-14) and in its account of the serpent's approach to the woman (iii 17). Adam, who was created on I/6, was led into the garden, one learns, only after a purificatory period of 40 days (iii 9). Then, according to iii 17, "after the completion of seven years, which he had completed there, seven years exactly, and in the second month, on the seventeenth day (of the month), the serpent came ..." From these data Rook reasons that "since II/17 would not be counted twice in a calendrical calculation, Adam entered the Garden exactly seven years before which must be II/18. This day, II/18 must be taken as Adam's first day of cleanliness after serving his forty days of impurity. We now know two very significant factors: Adam was created unclean on I/6 and he is clean and enters the Garden on II/18. The forty days of impurity run from I/6 to II/17 inclusive" (pp. 85-6). As these dates are obtainable only on the assumption that month I had 28 days, these passages demonstrate the presence of a 28-day-month tradition in Jubilees at this point (p. 86).

The delicate issue in calculations of this kind is determining exactly where to begin and end the count. Rook believes that he has found "a piece of internal evidence that is unambiguous" (p. 85), but a more natural interpretation of iii 17 is that Adam's days of purification had been completed before II/17 (the day on which the serpent tempted Eve seven years later) not on it (note "after the completion of seven years, which he had completed there ...'). In other words, the 40 days ended no later than II/16. If they began on I/6, the day of Adam's creation—which means that the first of the 40 days would have been completed at some point on I/7—then the numbers fit perfectly with Jaubert's hypothesis that the first month had 30 days. As this reading of the evidence is both natural and in harmony with the only explicit data found elsewhere in Jubilees regarding the lengths of months, it is obviously the preferred one.

To date no one has adduced convincing evidence for a 28-day month in Jubilees; its 364-day calendar is composed of 12 months as are those of 1 Enoch and the Qumran literature. It is true that the calendars found in these documents were recorded, elaborated, and defended under different historical circumstances that dictated in each case which features of the one system were to be stressed