

THE BOOK OF JUBILEES AND ITS CALENDAR—A REEXAMINATION*

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The calendar of the Book of Jubilees is based on a year of 364 days, which is important for three reasons: 1) It provides the basis for understanding one of the most important works written in the Jewish world in the Second Temple period; 2) According to the Dead Sea Scrolls, the members of the sect who lived at Qumran organized their lives in accordance with a calendar with a 364-day year; 3) The calendar of Jubilees has been linked with other calendars, and alluded to in the Book of 1 Enoch (chapters 72–82, known as the Book of the Heavenly Luminaries), which also count 364 days to a year.

Because of the significance of the calendar for our understanding of the lifestyle and beliefs of the Qumran sect, scholars have ascribed considerable importance to these calendars. In 1953 and 1957, a French scholar, A. Jaubert, published two studies of the calendar of Jubilees.¹ In view of the close relationship between the calendar of Jubilees and the calendrical fragments from Qumran, Jaubert's work is considered to be a major contribution to our understanding of the Qumran calendar as well.

—Jaubert claimed to have identified the underlying principles and methodology of the Jubilees calendar, as well as the ideological motives for the author's insistence on a calendar in which the year was exactly 364 days long. The time that has elapsed since the publication of her theories has not lessened their importance, and even today they are

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¹ A. Jaubert, "Le calendrier des Jubilés et de la secte de Qumran. Ses origines bibliques," *VT* 3 (1953) 250–64; *idem*, "Le calendrier des Jubilés et les jours liturgiques de la semaine," *VT* 7 (1957) 35–61. For an English translation of her work see *idem*, *The Date of the Last Supper* (Staten Island: Alba House, 1965).

considered basic for any scholar dealing with the calendars of Jubilees and of the Qumran sect.

Although Jaubert's reasoning was indeed brilliant and of primary importance for our understanding of Jubilees, I believe that some of the central arguments on which she based her study are fallacious, and that, consequently, the viability of her theory must be reexamined. I shall begin by presenting Jaubert's major arguments (which will be referred to hereafter as "the theory" or "the fixed calendar theory"). I shall then outline some of the objections that have been raised against Jaubert, and go on to analyze the theory itself. Finally, my own position will be presented.

I. The Elements of Jaubert's Theory

Jaubert's theory of the calendar of the Book of Jubilees is based primarily on six arguments:

1. The calendar of Jubilees may be regarded as a solar calendar, in which the year consists of 364 days (Jub. 6:29–32).
2. The days of the solar year are reckoned only from the creation of the sun, that is, from the fourth day of Creation (Jub. 2:8).
3. The number 364 is divisible by 7 without remainder: $364/7 = 52$. Hence the calendar of Jubilees is a "fixed" calendar, in which all the festivals and "set times" fall, year after year, on exactly the same day of the week as their very first occurrence. This point is considered one of the greatest achievements of the theory, since it enabled Jaubert, as she believed, to prove that in Jubilees the Festival of Weeks always falls on the first day of the week; hence, she concluded, the author of Jubilees must have interpreted the expression "the day after the Sabbath" (Lev. 23:11, 15) as meaning the first day of the week.
4. The author of Jubilees based his own calendar on that of 1 Enoch 72, which provided the basis for his own calendar, in particular, for the division of the year into four seasons. According to 1 Enoch 72, etc., the year is divided into four seasons, each comprising 91 days—two months of 30 days and one of 31. In other words, eight months of the year contain 30 days each, and four (the third, sixth, ninth and twelfth) contain 31.
5. In Jub. 5:23–32 the author retells the story of Noah and the flood. According to the plain meaning of the text, the year of the flood is