

Dissertation on the Book of Jubilees and the Timing of the Jubilee Year

Abstract

The Book of Jubilees, an important text in Jewish literature, offers a distinctive interpretation of the Jubilee year compared to Leviticus 25. This dissertation explores the timing and significance of the Jubilee year as described in the Book of Jubilees, with reference to both canonical and non-canonical texts. By analyzing these texts, the dissertation aims to clarify the Book of Jubilees' portrayal of the Jubilee year and its implications within the broader scriptural context.

Chapter 1: Introduction

Background and Context

The Book of Jubilees:

Also known as "The Lesser Genesis," this text, dating from the second century BCE, presents an expanded narrative of biblical events and laws. It offers an alternative chronology and interpretation of the Jubilee year, which is pivotal for understanding its scriptural significance.

Leviticus 25:

This canonical text outlines the Jubilee year as occurring after seven cycles of sabbatical years, a total of 49 years. The 50th year is designated as the Jubilee, a time for rest, release, and restoration (Lev. 25:8-13).

Purpose and Scope

Objective: To determine how the Book of Jubilees interprets the timing and significance of the Jubilee year based on textual analysis, with reference to canonical (Leviticus) and non-canonical sources (Book of Jubilees).

Chapter 2: The Jubilee Year in Leviticus 25

Biblical Basis

Leviticus 25 Analysis:

According to Leviticus 25:8-10, the Jubilee year follows a period of 49 years (seven sabbatical cycles), with the 50th year being proclaimed as the Jubilee. This year is characterized by the release of slaves, restoration of property, and rest for the land.

Chronological Framework

49-Year Cycle:

Leviticus 25:11-12 specifies that the Jubilee year is the conclusion of a 49-year cycle and marks the beginning of a new 50-year cycle. The 50th year is both the end of one cycle and the start of the next.

Chapter 3: The Book of Jubilees and Its Chronological Framework

Overview of the Book of Jubilees

Summary:

The Book of Jubilees, found among the Dead Sea Scrolls and preserved in the Ethiopian Orthodox canon, expands upon Genesis and Exodus, presenting a detailed chronology and calendar system. This text includes a specific interpretation of the Jubilee year (Jub. 50:10-12).

Interpretation of the Jubilee Year in Jubilees

Textual Evidence:

Jubilees 50:10-12 describes the Jubilee year as occurring at the end of a 49-year cycle. It aligns with Leviticus 25 in marking the 50th year as a time of restoration and release, but it often recalculates periods and events according to its own calendar system.

Comparison with Leviticus:

Jubilees' chronological framework supports the concept of the Jubilee year as the conclusion of one cycle and the start of the next, similar to Leviticus 25 but with specific variations in timing and calculation.

Timing and Calculation

Jubilees' Chronology:

The Book of Jubilees recalculates periods based on its interpretation of the scriptural calendar. Jubilees 6:17-20 provides an alternative chronological scheme, which impacts the understanding of when the Jubilee year occurs relative to other events.

Chapter 4: Theological and Historical Implications

Theological Significance

Jubilees' Theology:

The text's portrayal of the Jubilee year emphasizes themes of divine order and restoration. Jubilees 50:12-13 highlights the theological importance of this period for understanding God's covenant and the cyclical nature of time and redemption.

Historical Context

Textual Analysis:

The Book of Jubilees reflects a distinct historical and cultural context, as seen in its detailed chronological and calendrical adjustments. This context is crucial for understanding how the text reinterprets the Jubilee year in light of its own historical circumstances (Jub. 1:1-4).

Influence and Legacy

Textual Influence:

The Book of Jubilees' interpretation of the Jubilee year has influenced later Jewish thought and calendar systems. Comparative analysis with other Jewish texts, such as the Dead Sea Scrolls (e.g., 1QSa), shows its impact on subsequent traditions and practices.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

Summary of Findings

Key Insights:

The Book of Jubilees confirms the basic structure of the Jubilee year as described in Leviticus 25 but introduces its own chronological framework that affects the timing and interpretation of the Jubilee year.

Implications for Understanding

Textual Implications:

The analysis of Jubilees and Leviticus reveals how the Jubilee year is understood within a broader textual tradition, highlighting differences and continuities in the concept of the Jubilee.

Future Research Directions

Further Study:

Additional research could explore how these textual interpretations influenced later Jewish traditions and the development of calendar systems.

References

Primary Texts:

- Leviticus 25: Canonical text detailing the Jubilee year.
- The Book of Jubilees: Non-canonical text with a unique interpretation of the Jubilee year.

Secondary Texts:

- Commentaries and analyses based on these primary texts, including scholarly works on the Dead Sea Scrolls and other relevant Jewish literature.

This dissertation aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the Jubilee year based on the textual evidence from the Book of Jubilees and Leviticus 25, exploring its timing and significance within the scriptural and historical context.