

# The Books of Enoch, Jubilees and Jasher: To Read or not to Read

Derick Coetzee

## INTRODUCTION

The Books of Enoch, Jubilees and Jasher are not included in the official 66-book Canon found in most Bibles. However, there are references in the Bible to these books, which has led ancient Jewish scholars to include Enoch and Jubilees in the Septuagint under the heading “for profitable reading”. These books, however, were always earmarked as “deuterocanonical”, or part of a “secondary canon”, and never as a part of the Word of God.

However, because these three books were alluded to in the Bible, scholars always listed them as interesting books to read. This led to the teachings contained in these books to influence people’s doctrines, especially so regarding the calendars. What follows is a brief discussion of each of these books in question, focussing on the content and provenance (original context and origin/nature of the oldest manuscripts) of each.

## BOOK OF ENOCH I

Enoch I, also known as the Hebrew Enoch, is a collection of books of the visions and dreams supposedly granted the Antediluvian (pre flood) Enoch, father of Methuselah. This is, however, a completely fictitious myth, using Enoch’s name as a pseudonym under which to write apocryphal prophesies, theological revelations or sectarian doctrines.

The first mention of this book came from Ethiopia, where it is extant in a nearly complete Ge’ez version and is used as a scholarly and theological source. In 1821, this Ge’ez version, then the only known manuscript of the Enoch Collection, was translated and published in English by Richard Lawrence. This started a frenzy in the study of apocryphal books and finding originals. Enoch’s original Aramaic and Hebrew version, though in fragments, was found in Cave Four at Qumran in 1948, which showed the accuracy of the Ethiopian version on analyses, as well as grounding the work in its Pre-Maccabean context, through textual analysis and carbon dating.

The complete book, or more correctly, “Enochic Collection”, is made up of six different “books”, originally different manuscripts. These books all use the name of Enoch as a pseudonym and are dated to different periods in history, and were written with different purposes.

### **The “Book of the Watchers” (Enoch 1–36)**

This is the first “book” in Enoch, and describes the events which took place when the “Sons of God” of Genesis 6:2 married the “daughters of men”. It also describes Enoch’s travel to heaven, giving detailed descriptions of everything, using language which is quite mystic and filled with Numerological symbolism. **Dated to the 4<sup>th</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> Centuries BC** by linguistic experts, it is one of the source documents for Jewish mysticism.

### **The “Book of Parables” (Enoch 37–71)**

The second book in Enoch, also known as the “Similitudes of Enoch”, contains much messianic and “Christian” motifs, shown to Enoch by God. This makes dating difficult, complicated by the fact that no fragments were found in the Qumran version of Enoch. However, the scholarly consensus is that it was written by Pharisees in the first century AD, as the material as much refutes Christianity as it supports it.

### **The “Astronomical Book” (Enoch 72–82)**

This part of Enoch is highly controversial and, as its name suggests, concerns astronomical observations and the movements of the stars, hence its other name; “Book of the Heavenly Luminaries”. It also contains the controversial “Enoch Calendar”, which is a completely unrealistic calendar.

This calendar, made up of 364 days, is divided into 4 equal “seasons” of 91 days each. Each “season” is composed of three equal months of 30 days, plus an extra day at the end of the third month to make up the 364 days required. The whole year was therefore composed of exactly 52 weeks, and every day occurred on the same date each year. Each year and each “season” always started on a Wednesday (which was the day on which the lights in the sky, the seasons, the days and the years were created as in Genesis 1:14-19). This fixed calendar has no use in real life, as it does not fit the natural cycles even closely, and after a few years one would be off completely, and “summer” would be “winter” in reality, and none of the biblical feasts would fall in the correct time frame. It is not known whether this calendar was used in general society or not, but many scholars have tried to formulate ways in which it could be reconciled to reality, to no avail. There is no indication in the text how the difference between the 364 day year and the 365 ¼ day real solar year was resolved to this end. It is therefore simply an ideological symbolic division of the year according to the narrative earlier in the “Watchers” book.

In addition to this rather strange calendar, the book contains detailed, albeit steeped in mystic symbolism, descriptions of the movement of the stars, heavenly bodies and astronomical mechanics, supposedly taught to Enoch by Uriel, an angel that took him on a tour of the universe.

The *terminus ante quem* (“date before”; i.e. earliest date) for this interesting book is given by the Qumran Aramaic fragments found in four pieces, and dated to **the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BC**.

### **The “Dream Visions” (Enoch 83–90)**

The fifth book in Enoch has an angel showing Enoch the complete history of Israel, divided into ten “weeks” right up to the Maccabean Revolt (165/163BC). After this survey of history, also filled with numerical symbolism, the angel prophesies that those who harm the “Righteous” (Israel), will be judged by God, and finally destroyed. Because the “history” part ends with the Maccabean Revolt, it places the composition within the Maccabean period, or just before the revolt actually took place. During this time the Hellenistic “successor kingdoms” oppressed most of the Middle East, and many such apocalyptic prophesies characterize this period's literature in all affected cultures. This book should therefore be seen in this apocalyptic, hope bringing light.

### The “Epistle of Enoch” (Enoch 91–108)

Lastly, the collection of Enoch ends with the Epistle, a lengthy discussion on the fall of Satan and the Angels, their Aramaic names, what they did and who they became. This falls squarely in the mystical category and is classified as a part of Jewish myths. The Epistle was also found in Aramaic, and linguistic and dating tests place it within the Maccabean period as well.

The “Book of Enoch”, Enoch I, is therefore a collection of apocryphal prophecies, theological treatises and Jewish myths, written in the name of Enoch to give it credence. **None of the books predate the 3<sup>rd</sup> century BC, and as such, fall into the “silent period” prophesied in the Bible between the building of the Second Temple (c. 450BC) and the coming of the Messiah (c.8-6 BC).**

The fact that there is only one quotation in the New Testament, and this by Jude (verses 6-14) should be seen in the light of what it is: Jude used a commonly known story or idea to illustrate a point. The Enochic Collection captured the general ideological and mystic/mythic leanings of the time, and thus when Jude quotes from it, he is merely referencing a known work or common social ideology, much like modern authors reference the Star Wars anthology or quotes from famous people. These reflect modern ideas and social feelings, just as Enoch reflected the common ideology of the time. A study by Henry Hayman in 1898 showed this clearly by drawing parallels between the New Testament text and ideas in Enoch. However, it is clear from this comparison that both are set in the same cultural context, and thus share the same general ideologies. It should be noted however, that where these ideologies become teachings or instructions beyond the general cultural metaphor of righteousness versus evil, the New Testament text has teachings that are more in line with the Old Testament than with Enoch’s more apocalyptic approach.

What is also clear is that the few times that the Church Fathers such as Tertullian, Justin Martyr and Athenagoras (all from the late 1<sup>st</sup> to 2<sup>nd</sup> Century AD) quotes “Enoch”, their quotes differ significantly from the text in Enoch we have today, including some quotes about the angels and their rule of the underworld. It is clear then that the Enoch Collection, being written and collected in scraps and pieces, is a fickle and changeable collection of ideologies. Hayman aptly sums this up: *“but the conclusions pointed at are that the book, having no place in the canon, had no standard text; but that, being very popular, it was tampered with to suit popular caprice without scruple; also that the original Hebrew was, for the latter reason, more than once translated into Greek by various hands; and, lastly, that the redactor of the final Greek text, the source of the Ethiopic version, sometimes combined one or more of these.”* (page 38, The Book of Enoch in Reference to the New Testament and Early Christian Antiquity, see below in bibliography)

Another book, the so called “Second Enoch”, also known as the Slavonic Enoch, is known only from Slavic and Greek translations and manuscripts, though a possible Hebrew or Aramaic version existed in the first century AD, before the fall of the Third (Herod’s) Temple in +-72AD. This version is slightly different from the first book of Enoch and is even more mystical, though not in contention as canonical, as it was written so late and therefore does not form a part of the Old Testament, nor any Christian writings, it should rather be viewed as an early Judaist writing. Both books, however, were not considered to be in any way canonical in the Church, except by Gnostic and Manichaean Church Fathers of the later centuries, and the Ethiopian Church.

## BOOK OF JUBILEES

The oldest manuscripts of Jubilees are in Hebrew and found in Qumran between 1947 and 1956. Before this, the only extant copies of this book were in Ethiopian Ge'ez, and dated to the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries, AD, though its antiquity was evident. The fifteen Hebrew scrolls found at Qumran have been dated to +- 100BC, using handwriting analysis and ink dating (spectrometry, carbon dating and pigment testing). This, coupled with the fact that it draws heavily from Enoch, which is dated from 200BC, shows that Jubilees was originally composed during the same period as Enoch, and both these books may actually represent a part of the popular/scholarly opinion and leaning during the time. At Qumran this seems to have been the case, as the many scrolls of Jubilees found there shows. However, the exact origin of the ideas in Jubilees may come from the Jewish Talmudic writers just before or during the Maccabean Revolt (c. 167-164BC), where a surrealistic, philosophical outlook on the scriptures was the norm, as opposed to a more literal interpretation later on. This is borne out by the way in which Jubilees twists the biblical narrative to fit Maccabean history, such as explaining how the patriarchs used the same tactics and strategies as the Maccabees did during their wars.

The Book of Jubilees is predominantly a book describing the Calendar-Cycle of a solar-schematic calendar based on Enoch's "Astronomical Book". It retells the story of Genesis and the Exodus, up to Moses receiving the law, fitting the story into 49-year Jubilee cycles, with all major events occurring in a "Jubilee" year. This is then followed by various prophecies about the future of Israel, which, as it is written in hindsight, are mostly accurate. It is also heavily influenced by Enoch's different books, most notably the "Astronomical" and "Dreams" books. It is therefore a theological summary of Enoch's books, or at least a summary of the same ideas.

Some parts are also a sort of commentary on the Canonical story, as it adds the author's own theories about Hebrew being the Original language and taught by God to Abraham, and concerning the Messianic kingdom of God, where a new earth is formed not by God, as the Bible (Ezekiel) says, but by the changing ethics of humans worldwide. The setting of the whole book is God speaking to Moses on the Mountain during his 40-days and nights there.

The Calendar in the Book of Jubilees, which is at the heart of the contention to make the book canonical, is a semi-solar "schematic" calendar of 364 days, truncated to 360 in the monthly cycle. Each month had 30 days, and twelve months formed the year of 360 days, to which was added 4 to bring it as close to the real 365 and  $\frac{1}{4}$  days solar year, as the Enochic calendar does. Indeed, these two calendars are exactly the same in day-count, formulation and workings. Jubilees only grounds its calendar in statements such as "*And may he make thy sons many during thy life, and may they arise to the number of the months of the year...*" (Jubilees xxv:16), thus showing the number of months to be twelve, And "*28. And on this account he ordained them as festivals for a memorial unto himself for ever, and thus are they ordained. 29. And they placed them on the heavenly tables, each had thirteen sabbaths; from one to another passed their memorial, from the first to the second, and from the second to the third, and from the third to the fourth. 30. And all the days of this commandment will be two and fifty sabbaths of days, and all the years will be complete.....32. command thou the children of Israel that they observe the years according to this reckoning-three hundred and sixty-four days, and (these) will constitute a complete year, and they shall not disturb the exact dates of the days and of the festivals*" (Jubilees xvi:28-30;32) . Furthermore, the Jubilee and Enoch Calendars exhibit strong Solar characteristics, most notably the 364-day cycle (364, which is divisible by 7, is the nearest such number number to the solar cycle of 365  $\frac{1}{4}$ ), Jubilees going so far as to claim "*the sun to be a great sign on the earth for days and for sabbaths and for months*

*and for feasts and for years and for sabbaths of years and for jubilees and for all seasons of the years."* (Jubilees ii:9)

These calendars are, however, completely superficial. They exhibit **the same characteristics as the truly solar Schematic Calendar in use in Egypt from the 3<sup>rd</sup> Millennium BC**, which also used a 12 times 30 day month calendar, adding five days to bring the year's days closer to the 365 ¼ day solar cycle which governs the seasons. Every four years, a sixth day was added to make up the real number of solar days. This calendar is the basis of our own calendar today, and is useful as it does not rely on the lunar or strictly solar cycles to determine dates, and is therefore a dependable and mathematically correct calendar to use for business and other planned secular matters that cannot wait for the sighting of the moon or measurements of the sun. The books of Enoch and Jubilees therefore seem to use a business calendar to force the dates and times of the Biblical lunar-based feasts onto set days. This is something that no other culture has ever tried doing, as it simply does not work.

## BOOK OF JASHER (YASHIR)

The book of Jasher is perhaps the most disputed of the three books. The book is referred to in two definite places in the Old Testament, namely Joshua 10:13: *"And the sun stood still, and the moon stopped, till the people took vengeance upon their enemies. Is this not written in the Book of Jasher? So the sun stood still in the midst of the heavens, and did not hasten to go down for about a whole day."* and 1 Samuel 1:18: *"and he commanded them to teach the sons of Judah the Song of the Bow; behold, it is written in the Book of Jasher:"* These are the only times that the book is named in the whole Bible. In the new testament 2 Timothy 3:8 supposedly quotes from the Book of Jasher without mentioning it: *"But as Jannes and Jambres opposed Moses, so do these also oppose the truth: men of corrupt minds, reprobate concerning the faith;"*, as the 1840 Version (see below) of Jasher 79:27: *"And when they had gone Pharaoh sent for Balaam the magician and to Jannes and Jambres his sons, and to all the magicians and conjurors and counsellors which belonged to the king, and they all came and sat before the king."*

The Book of Jasher is therefore a book of records that was known by the author(s) of Joshua and 2 Samuel. However, beyond this, we have no ancient manuscripts that can be studied, dated or translated, only two very dubious and different translations claiming to be the lost Book of Jasher, translated from two different Hebrew manuscripts.

The first, known as the 1751 Version, was published in that year by Jacob Ilive, a printer and Rationalist (early humanists). It claims to be *"translated into English by Flaccus Albinus Alcuinus, of Britain, Abbot of Canterbury, who went on a pilgrimage into the Holy Land and Persia, where he discovered this volume in the city of Gazna"* as the title page claims. The original, of course, stayed in Gazna, and was conveniently lost.

However, Flaccus Albinus Alcuinus lived in the 8<sup>th</sup> century AD, 800 years before the Renaissance English (English of Shakespeare and the King James Bible) used in the publication, which claims to be the original which the abbot wrote in the 8<sup>th</sup> century AD. This is, of course, completely impossible, and immediately alerted scholars that they were dealing with a possible fraud. Further proof of this was that the famous reformation theologian John Wycliffe (1330-1384 AD) allegedly endorsed it, signing his name as "Wickliffe", the only known instance where it was spelled as such, the norm being "Wycliff" or "Wyclif". This edition was discredited and seemingly forgotten until a New Age-metaphysics research order called the "Ancient Mystical Order of the Rosae Crucis" (also the "one universal Rosicrucian Order") reprinted it in 1934. Since then, only this order and New Age Gnostics have even bothered with it, as it is filled with anti religious views, such as that Adam and Eve did not sin, God did not Create the Universe but was formed on the same day as Humans by natural evolutionary processes and Noah only invented shipping. Jacob Ilive was sentenced to three years imprisonment for committing fraud and for heresy, after writing the book, and several accompanying pamphlets.

The second, more authentic, Book of Jasher actually has a Hebrew Text, called *Sefer haYashar Midrash*. This *midrash* (Jewish commentary on the biblical text to enlighten and broaden the Biblical Narrative) was first printed in Naples in 1552, and has a traceable history from there. Before that it was claimed that its original source book came from Jerusalem in AD 70, where a Roman officer named Sidrus allegedly discovered a Hebrew scholar hiding in a hidden library which he was supposed to destroy as part of Jerusalem. This he didn't do and he reportedly took the scholar and all the books safely back to his estates in Hispalis (modern-day Seville). The manuscript was then transferred or sold to the Jewish college in Cordova sometime during the Islamic Period (8<sup>th</sup> Century – 1492AD) of Spain's

history. The manuscript somehow ended up in Naples where it was first copied and printed in 1552, then to Venice, where it was printed in 1625, still in Hebrew.

There is no support for this story, and to quote a Venetian Rabbi, Leon Modena at the time of its printing: "*Behold, it [the Zohar] is like Sefer ha-Yashar, which they printed (without my knowledge and without the knowledge of the sages here in Venice, about twenty years ago). Although I removed the fantasies and falsehoods from it, [eg,] that it is the Sefer ha-Yashar mentioned in Scripture, there are still those who claim that it was discovered during the time of the destruction [of the temple]. But who can stop those who imagine in their minds whatever they wish.*" (Ari Nohem, before 1648) Modena was a scholar who proved the Zohar (basis of the Kabbalah Teachings) as a fraudulent fiction of the human imagination and not fit for spiritual scholarship, including this particular manuscript in that discussion. In addition to this, modern scholars, such as Joseph Dan (Professor of Kabbalah at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem), have analysed the language of the printed piece, and found that it fits the Hebrew of Naples at that time. As early as 1840 the Hebrew was recognised as being "*composed in the purest Rabbinical Hebrew, with a large intermixture of the Biblical idiom*" (Samuel H. Turner, General Theological Seminary)

This 1625 Hebrew version was translated by Moses Samuel and published in 1840 under Mordecai Manuel Noah's publication firm and name, and it is this manuscript that is known as "the Book of Jasher" today. In actual fact, the real book of Jasher mentioned in the bible has never been found, and the 1840 version has been proven now to be a commentary and *Midrash* written in Europe in the late 15<sup>th</sup> Century containing Jewish popular tales which enrich the Bible, whilst being historically unprovable or incorrect. This is further borne out by the fact that European locations are given in there contemporary names, such as *Franza, Lombardi* and *Italia* (Jasher Chapter 10) which was definitely not the ancient names of these places.

The real Jasher remains lost, and if found will have to stand up to rigorous testing and proving in the wake of these two frauds. The last mention of the real Jasher is in Josephus where he says it is in a library in Jerusalem, kept safe with other similar manuscripts, c. 135AD. In fact, it is this story that the printers used to "authenticate" the 1840 version.

## CONCLUSION

In conclusion, it is clear that the Books of Enoch, Jubilees and Jasher are not Canonical in any sense. Enoch and Jubilees were the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Century BC products of an oppressed nation, and later sectarian societies, such as those at Qumran. They do not endorse the Biblical narrative, nor do they add anything of value. At most, they are *Midrashim* that were developed within the philosophical mind-set of the Hasmonean Dynasty (167-47BC), at least, they are heretical works that can only lead astray, as knowing the names, doings and histories of the Angels (Enoch), or reading the edited Genesis account with fully annotated dates (as in Jubilees) cannot help to understand the message of the 66 Canonical books of the Bible, which do not contain even a smidgen of a reference to such studies of angels or dates. Even the calendars developed in the first two books are completely unrealistic and devoid of any real spiritual meaning beyond the books. Jasher is a relatively modern book, and also proved, by Jewish scholars, to be fraudulent in spiritual matters. These books are therefore not for the spiritual upliftment, or biblical study, of any serious biblical scholar, and should be avoided at all costs.



## BIBLIOGRAPHY & READING LIST

The following list may be consulted as additional material, and though being the sources for this article, they offer specialist themes and discussions if read separately.

- Beckwith, R.T. 1996. *Calendar and chronology, Jewish and Christian*. Leiden: Brill
- Boccaccini, G. 2002. *The Origins of Enochic Judaism*, Turin: Zamorani
- Charles, R.H. 1893 *A New Translation of the Book of Jubilees. Part I*. *The Jewish Quarterly Review*, Vol. 6, No. 1 (Oct., 1893), pp. 184-217
- Charles, R.H. 1894 *A New Translation of the Book of Jubilees. Part II*. *The Jewish Quarterly Review*, Vol. 6, No. 4 (Jul., 1894), pp. 710-745
- Dimant, D. 1983 *The Biography of Enoch and the Books of Enoch*. *Vetus Testamentum*, Vol. 33, Fasc. 1 (Jan., 1983), pp. 14-29
- Encyclopædia Britannica. *Encyclopaedia Britannica Ultimate Reference Suite*. Chicago: Encyclopædia Britannica, 2010.
- Finkelstein, L. 1929 *The Book of Jubilees and the Rabbinic Halaka*. *The Harvard Theological Review*, Vol. 16, No. 1 (Jan., 1923), pp. 39-61
- Goldstein, J.A. 1983 *The Date of the Book of Jubilees*. *Proceedings of the American Academy for Jewish Research*, Vol. 50 (1983), pp. 63-86
- Greenfield, J.C. & Stone, M.E. 1979 *The Books of Enoch and the Traditions of Enoch*. *Numen*, Vol. 26, Fasc. 1 (Jun., 1979), pp. 89-103
- Hayman, H. 1898 *The Book of Enoch in Reference to the New Testament and Early Christian Antiquity*. *The Biblical World*, Vol. 12, No. 1 (Jul., 1898), pp. 37-46
- Jackson, David R. 2004. *Enochic Judaism: three defining paradigm exemplars*. New York: Bloomsbury Publishing, Continuum
- Kaplan, C. 1934 *Versions and Readings in the Book of Enoch*. *The American Journal of Semitic Languages and Literatures*, Vol. 50, No. 3 (Apr., 1934), pp. 171-177
- Lawlor, H.J. 1904 *THE BOOK OF ENOCH IN THE EGYPTIAN CHURCH*. *Hermathena*, Vol. 13, No. 30 (1904), pp. 178-183
- Martinez, F.G.; Tigchelaar, E.J.C., eds. 1997. *The Dead Sea Scrolls: Study Edition*. Brill/Eerdmans.
- Morgenstern, J. 1989 *The Calendar of the Book of Jubilees, Its Origin and Its Character*. *Vetus Testamentum*, Vol. 5, Fasc. 1 (Jan., 1955), pp. 34-76
- Nielsburg, G.W. 2005. *Jewish Literature between the Bible and the Mishnah*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Minneapolis: Fortress Press.
- Ravid, L. 2003 *The Book of Jubilees and Its Calendar: A Reexamination*. *Dead Sea Discoveries*, Vol. 10, No. 3 (2003), pp. 371-394
- Van Winden, J.C.M. 1987 *Review of The Book of Enoch or Enoch I*. *Vigiliae Christianae*, Vol. 41, No. 1 (Mar., 1987), pp. 98-99

VanderKam, J.C. 1982 *A Twenty-Eight-Day Month Tradition in the Book of Jubilees?* *Vetus Testamentum*, Vol. 32, Fasc. 4 (Oct., 1982), pp. 504-506

VanderKam, J.C. 1995. *Prophecy and Apocalypics in the Ancient Near East 2083-2094* in Sasson, J.M. (ed.) *Civilizations of the Ancient Near East Vol. III (CANE) vol. I-IV* New York: Charles Scribner's Sons

VanderKam, J.C. 2006 *The Scriptural Setting of the Book of Jubilees*. *Dead Sea Discoveries*, Vol. 13, No. 1 (2006), pp. 61-72

**Websites (accessed on 23/02/2014)**

[www.biblefellowshipunion.co.uk/Jasher](http://www.biblefellowshipunion.co.uk/Jasher)

[www.christianfaith.com](http://www.christianfaith.com)

[www.newadvent.com/Enoch, Book of](http://www.newadvent.com/Enoch, Book of)

[www.newadvent.com/jubilees, Book of](http://www.newadvent.com/jubilees, Book of)

[www.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jasher](http://www.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jasher)

[www.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sefer\\_haYashar\\_Midrash](http://www.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sefer_haYashar_Midrash)

[www.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zohar](http://www.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zohar)

**All Scripture quotations taken from the Voice in the Wilderness English Translation**