**Moses in Jubilees**

Moses is a multifaceted character. The child of a nation under the yoke of a great king, Moses is raised in the palace of this very king, thereby annulling the king's wish to persecute him and other Hebrew children. Later, he becomes God’s elect who is sent to rebel against this (step) father and to free his own people. Performing miracles with his staff, producing signs and marvels, he leads his people out of Egypt, miraculously parting the Red Sea and leading them through. A shepherd who knows the ways of the desert, Moses guides his people there, taking care of their needs. Trying to protect them, he pleads with God and sacrifices himself for their sake. He is also an elevated figure who speaks with God face to face. Moses sees God on the mountain and encounters his essence; for this reason he is able to mediate between God and the people, to reveal the Torah, and to guide the people in the present and in the future. On his deathbed, he rebukes the people, envisioning their sins and transgressions. He is buried in an unknown place, with no heir. In this article, I will explore the presentation of this super human figure in the Book of Jubilees, and whether that book reveals any new insights on his character.

**Jubilees: Background**

The Book of Jubilees, a retelling and reworking of Genesis and the first part of Exodus, was composed at the end of the second century BCE. Fragments of fifteen manuscripts of the book were discovered in the Qumran caves.[[1]](#footnote-1) However the book was preserved in its entirety only in Geez; an incomplete version was also preserved in Latin.[[2]](#footnote-2) The book was written by one of members of the Qumran community and it shares the worldview, theology, and *halakha* of this isolated priestly group, which left Jerusalem due to a bitter dispute with the Pharisees.[[3]](#footnote-3) One of the distinguishing features of the Qumran community is their adoption of the 364 day solar calendar, which is also a central theme in Jubilees.

Their voluntary exile from Jerusalem forced these priests to empower their status as creators and transmitters of Halakha. The Judean priestly establishment had diligently studied scripture over the course of hundreds of years in order to draw out its legal principles, relying on their role in the Temple and on their status as the Judean ruling class to do so. But the priests at Qumran had no similar claim to authority, and no power granted by Temple service or government. Consequently, they had to provide their audience with a new divine or Heavenly mandate for their authority.[[4]](#footnote-4)

One kind of endorsement we find in the Qumran literature seems to be a reply to the Pharisaic mandate. The Pharisees claimed to possess an oral tradition, passed down over generations, that is described as the "second Torah" given on Mount Sinai. In response, the Qumran priests claim that a second **written** Torah was given at Sinai. This claim is found in Jubilees. No wonder, therefore, that the book opens with God's call to Moses to ascend the mountain to receive the two Torahs.

This polemic has significant consequences for our understanding of Jubilees. While in the Pentateuch events are related in logical sequence from creation onward, Jubilees begins at the end: with the Sinai event. Furthermore, from this point forward the author continues to the future, to the days in which Israel will sin, first by idolatry and then by abandoning the right calendar; to the exile from the land, then from God, and then to the days of salvation (1:1-16). Only later, in chapter 2, does the narrator return to the early days of creation. Not only is this an innovative poetic move, it also represents a shift in the perception of history: the freedom that the biblical narrator allows his characters – which might also be described as the Bible's un-deterministic approach – disappears in Jubilees.

Jubilees's deterministic worldview is also evident in the book’s contents. Genesis opens with the story of humanity as a whole and follows human history until the point when it fails. The text then turns to Abraham from whom, unpredictably and after internal family struggles, the chosen family and, consequently, the chosen nation emerges whom God rescues from Egypt. This awkward, chaotic saga is reflected in a series of covenants that God makes, first with Noah (Gen 9), then with Abraham (Gen 15, 17), and, finally, with the people of Israel on Mount Sinai.

In Jubilees we find a different plot. [[5]](#footnote-5) Chapter 2 of Jubilees teaches the reader that God already elected Israel from among the nations even before creation. The sign of creation, the Shabbath, was given to the angels in heaven but only to the people of Israel on earth. Though Noah's covenant is made with all of humanity, it is secondary to the covenant made with the chosen people, signified by circumcision and governed by the two Torahs. Note that, according to this approach, the Sinai event takes on a central role even as the story of Exodus is marginalized.

The deterministic approach to world history described here is one component of Jubilees's apocalyptic worldview. According to Jubilees, two heavenly camps have existed since creation. On one side there is the prince of Mastema who is responsible for humanity and rules the system of reward and punishment justly and impartialy; the angel Mastema controls humans' bodies and souls, and he is determined to cause them to sin so he can punish them severely. [[6]](#footnote-6)One the other side in the angelic realm are the Angels of Holiness and the Angels of the Presence. These two groups are the heavenly parallel to Israel on earth. They observe in heaven what Israel will be abide by on earth. The people of Israel, who are entitled to mercy and compassion, are an impediment in Mastema’s eyes. He keeps trying to cause them to sin, wishing to penalize them just as he punishes the rest of humanity.

**Moses the Bringers of two Torahs**

Returning to our main question, what happens to the character of Moses in this new framework? As mentioned above, according to Jubilees Moses brought down two Torahs from Mount Sinai.[[7]](#footnote-7)

1) *The Torah and the Commandment* (the title given by Jubilees’s author to the Pentateuch) that God engraved on two stone tablets, making it possible for Moses to carry it down the mountain. In the Pentateuch, Moses gradually reveals the words of the law, first at the foot of Mount Sinai, then in the wilderness, and finally before crossing the Jordan. The phrases “and God spoke with Moses saying” as well as “and God told Moses thus” are common throughout this section of the Pentateuch. In Jubilees, in contrast, there is no room for such details. The role of Moses as a (first) Torah bringer is technical. The Torah, written in heaven was, indeed, brought by him to earth, but he does not reveal it to the people.

2) *The Torah and the 'Teudah'* is copied down by Moses during his stay on Mount Sinai, and he must carry it down, too. This aim of this second book is to elucidate and explain the first Torah, *The Torah and the Commandment*, to the people; in other words, it is meant to explain the *halakhot*. No wonder, then, that when the book summarizes halakhic matters the angel who dictates the book to Moses commands him to transmit the information to the people of Israel (30:21, 33:19, etc.). Moses not only copies the second Torah but is also expected, after descending from the Mount, to inform the people of its contents and to reveal to them its halakhic details. Thus what is not mentioned in Jubilees regarding the first book of Torah is found regarding the second book of Torah: Israel has becomes aware that Moses hands over and presents to them halakhot.

The role of Moses as a transmitter of the second Torah is also found in a treatise called *The Words of Moses* (=DM, 1Q22). [[8]](#footnote-8) Upon entering the Promised Land, in the fortieth year in the eleventh month (I.1, Qimron Edition p. 104) Moses is called to ascend (mount Nevo?) with Elazar son of Aaron and “[the heads of the pat]riarchs of the Lev[i]tes and all the [priests]” (l. 3) “and command the children of Israe[l] the [w]ords of the To[r]a that [I] have commanded[ you ]on Mount S[i]nai to command [the people] in the[ir] ears, everything thorou[ghly, so] that I may be[ found more in the ]rig[h]t than them” (1:3-5).

We learn what these "words of the Torah" are indirectly. In the following lines of DM (ll. 8-9),[[9]](#footnote-9) Moses hears that Israel will sin by following the wrong calendar: “And they will f[orget statute, and appointed time, and mo]nth, and Sabbath, [and jubilee,] and covenant [and all the commandments], what I [am] commanding you today [to d]o them” (=Jub 1:14).

Consequently, the people will be punished for their deeds. “And [wh]en all the curs[es] will come upon th[e]m and reach them un[til] they perish and until they are des[troy]ed, then they will know [that] a just judgment has been pa[ssed] on them” (ll. 10-11). The expression “they will know [that] a just judgment has been pa[ssed] on them” must be understood as referring to the words of the Torah given on Mount Nevo. For that reason we must assume that the Torah given there contained a warning regarding the calendar. [[10]](#footnote-10) We can conclude that Moses's instruction on Mount Nevo comprises a Torah similar to Jubilees, if not the book of Jubilees itself.

In DM, the written Torahs are thus given to the nation successively: the first during the wandering in the desert, and the second before entering the Promised Land. Moses is responsible for the revelation of both. At the same time, in DM as well as in Jubilees, Moses's role is limited in both cases. The first and the second Torahs are composed by God. Human beings can only transmit them to their addressees and elucidate them.

The gap between human beings and God is also evident in another sense. In Jubilees chapter 1 God does talk to Moses on Mount Sinai. However the main discourse is conducted between Moses and the Angel of the Presence who dictates the *Torah and 'Teuda'* to Moses. Jubilees turns Moses from a super-human figure who speaks with God face to face to an apocalyptic sage who speaks with an angel, receiving the halakha from him. In other words, Moses is cast as a halakhic seer.

In the Pentateuchal version of Exodus, "the first Torah" that Moses receives on Mount Sinai is the terms of the covenant that God made with Israel (34:12). As mentioned, in Jubilees the terms are contained in the two Torahs brought by Moses, and the covenant was planned before creation and symbolized by circumcision. At the same time, in Jubilees Moses has to reestablish another covenant, the Noahide covenant deserted by humankind. Israel must declare their commitment to it again after generations of waywardness. On thefifteenth day of the third month (two months after leaving Egypt) Israel makes an oath to keep the strict blood prohibitions that are part of the priestly halakha. [[11]](#footnote-11) Moses sprinkles blood on them as a sign (Exodus 24: 4-8; Jub 6).

Jubilees’s author then places Moses in a clearly sectarian context.[[12]](#footnote-12) Moses establishes the textual mandate for the men of the priestly halakha/ Torah and its priestly interpretation. Moses also arranges a series of covenants that ensure that only those who adhere to priestly halakha will survive the End of Days.

But Moses is not alone in founding this sectarian ideology. Both DM and Jubilees assume that a group exists whose role is to explain the two Torahs Moses received, and to lead the people in light of them. As we saw, DM includes references to Elazar the son of Aaron, the Levites, and the priests. Elsewhere, we also find a reference to Joshua the son of Nun (1:12; cf. l. \*). Moses himself mentions ומש]א[כם]וטרחכם “and your burden [and your lo]a[d” (2:7), which in Exodus and Deuteronomy are given as explanation for transferring authority from Moses to the heads of the people.

Not surprisingly, in Jubilees, too, religious authority is given to the sons of Levi (ch. 31) who later become the priests (31:14-15):[[13]](#footnote-13)

May the Lord give you and your descendants extremely great honor; may he make you and your descendants (alone) out of all humanity approach him to serve in his Temple like the angels of the presence and like the holy ones. The descendants of your sons will be like them in honor, greatness, and holiness. May he make them great throughout all the ages. They will be princes, judges, and leaders of all the descendants of Jacob’s sons. They will declare the word of the Lord justly and will justly judge all his verdicts. They will tell my ways to Jacob and my paths to Israel.

Moses, the revealer of the Torahs, is outshone by the splendor and glory attributed to the priests.

**Moses in the Apocalyptic Context**

The heavenly halakha revealed by Moses to the people is only one aspect of Moses involvement in the apocalyptic world. In Jubilees, Moses is also privy to the mysteries of the future. As mentioned in passing above, in chapter 1 Moses hears that Israel will transgresses in the far future and will be punished. The following passage contains Moses's reaction when he hears about the people's abandonment of the second Torah, *the Torah and 'Teuda',* and their inevitable punishment (1:19-21):

Lord my God, do not allow your people and your heritage to go along in the error of their minds, and do not deliver them into the hands of the nations with the result that they rule over them and they make them sin against you. May your mercy, Lord, be lifted over your people. Create for them a just spirit. May the spirit of Belial not rule over them so as to bring charges against them before you and to trap them away from every proper path so that they may be destroyed from your presence. They are your people and your heritage whom you have rescued from Egyptian control by your great power. Create for them a pure heart and a holy spirit. May they not be trapped in their sins from now to eternity.

Moses's words are molded after his petition following the episode of the golden calf. Yet, the underlying worldview is deterministic. Moses is not pleading for forgiveness in the present, but rather for future mercy. The text expresses a worldview according to which God controls and governs history.

There are also other apocalyptic components in Moses's words and in God’s reply (1:22-23):

Then the Lord said to Moses: “I know their contrary nature, their way of thinking, and their stubbornness. They will not listen until they acknowledge their sins and the sins of their ancestors. After this they will return to me in a fully upright manner and with all (their) hearts and all (their) souls. I will cut away the foreskins of their minds and the foreskins of their descendants’ minds. I will create a holy spirit for them and will purify them in order that they may not turn away from me from that time forever.

This dialogue includes the phrases ‘spirit of Belial’, ‘holy spirit’ and ‘pure heart.' ‘Spirit of Belial’ refers to Mastema and his companions, the evil spirits. As mentioned above, Mastema is the angel appointed, at creation, as the leader of human spirits. He cannot tolerate the elevated status of the people of Israel and therefore intimidates them. Moses, who knows that Israel will be sent to exile and scattered among the nations, asks for protection from gentiles and their princes. The nations will instigate Israel to sin (v. 19: “with the result that they rule over them and they make them sin against you”) and Israel’s sins will enable Mastema to control them, to intensify their sins, and to punish them harshly (“to trap them away from every proper path so that they may be destroyed from your presence”). At the End of Days, when the soul and heart will turn into ‘holy spirit,’ Mastema will no longer be able to tempt them.

Moses then begs God to bring about this eschatological transformation in his own days: “Create for them a pure heart and a holy spirit.” God refuses: Israel must sin and be punished. Only a small group is fated to return to God with all their hearts and with all their souls. It is this group that will be deemed worthy of undergoing the transformation: “I will create a holy spirit for them and will purify them in order that they may not turn away from me from that time forever” (1:23).

But that is not all. In Jubilees, Moses not only listens to and understands the apocalyptic worldview. He is also an integral part of it. Jubilees’s narrator portrays the Exodus as a struggle between Mastema and the Angels of the Presence. Both sides engage in the battle and cause damage through their earthly proxies: Moses (and Aaron) on one side and the the sorcerers on the other.

The first confrontation between Mastema and Moses seems to take place at Moses's birth. The birds who threaten Moses as he lies in the basket, floating on the Nile, and which his sister must shoo away, are depicted elsewhere as Mastema’s envoys (Jubilees ch. 11; 14).[[14]](#footnote-14) It is not far-fetched to conclude that Jubilees’s author wants the reader to see Mastema in the current episode as well.

The second confrontation occurs when Moses returns from Midian. As he is dictating the Law to Moses, the Angel of the Presence reminds him (48:2-4):

You know… what the prince of Mastema wanted to do to you while you were returning to Egypt—on the way at the shady fir tree. Did he not wish with all his strength to kill you and to save the Egyptians from your power because he saw that you were sent to carry out punishment and revenge on the Egyptians? I rescued you from his power.

The summary offered by the angel serves as an interpretation for a very difficult passage in Exodus 4:

(24) At a night encampment on the way, the Lord encountered him and sought to kill him. (25) So Zippora took a flint and cut off her son’s foreskin and touched his legs with it’ saying “you are truly a bridegroom of blood to me”. And when He let him alone she added: “A bridegroom of blood because of the circumcision”.

The phrase “the Lord encountered him” is interpreted in Jubilees as referring to the Angel of the Presence, whose words “I rescued you from his power” inform us that he was there. On the other hand, the hidden subject of “and sought to kill [him]” is the prince of Mastema, and the enclitic pronoun refers to Moses. The reference to the rite of circumcision indicates to the author that Mastema was present. From the point of view of Jubilees's author, those who are circumcised are protected from Mastema influence (15:32). If circumcision saved Moses’s son, we must infer that the one who ‘sought to kill’ him is Mastema. The author thus reads two parallel stories of confrontation in one biblical passage: an effort to harm Moses’s son (who was saved because his mother circumcised him), as well as an effort to harm Moses himself (who was saved by the Angel of the Presence). The author states clearly that Mastema seeks Moses's death in order to protect the Egyptians: “to save the Egyptians from your power because he saw that you were sent to carry out punishment and revenge on the Egyptians” (48:3).

This remark leads us to the third confrontation, between Moses and the Angel of the Presence, and Mastema and the sorcerers. It takes place in Pharaoh's court. Here Jubilees offers an interpretative rewriting of the biblical story in order to minimize Moses's ability to produce miracles. In the biblical version, signs and marvels are in abundance. Yet, it remains unclear what is a sign and what is a marvel, who makes them and for what purpose. While standing near the burning bush, Moses is instructed to produce three signs: to transform his rod into snake (4:2-4), to make his hand “encrusted with snowy scales” (4:6), and to turn water into blood (4:8-9). At first, the signs are meant to persuade the People of Israel (4:5). Later, however, God commands Moses to produce them for Pharaoh as well (4:21). Moses then performs the signs in front of the people (4:30). For Pharaoh he performs a different sign: The rod becomes a serpent (7:10).

The ten plagues, also referred to as signs and marvels, now begin (7:3; 10:1). But the chapters that describe them lack coherence:[[15]](#footnote-15) sometimes Moses is sent to warn Pharaoh (7:15-18; 8 16-19; 9:1-4, etc.), sometimes the rod is used, either by Moses or Aaron (7:19; 8:1; 8:12), sometimes God himself acts (8:20), and sometimes Moses and Aaron cause the plague by obeying God’s command (9:8-10).

Jubilees’s author, who adheres overall to the basic assumption that the biblical description of events is only partial, interprets the text as if the plagues followed a fixed structure. Aided by this reading, he creates a neat and coherent picture. In Jubilees, each plague involves a combination of three steps: two performed by Moses and one performed by God. Moses was sent to produce instructive signs and marvels before Pharaoh (48:4, 6) and also to warn Pharaoh (48: 6, 7). The plagues themselves, though, were performed by God (48: 5, 8):

(4) You performed the signs and miracles which you were sent to perform in Egypt against the pharaoh, all his house, his servants, and his nation. (5) The Lord effected a great revenge against them on account of Israel. He struck them and killed them with blood, frogs, gnats, dog flies, bad sores which break out in blisters; (and he struck) their cattle with death; and with hailstones—with these he annihilated everything that was growing for them; with locusts which ate whatever was left for them from the hail; with darkness; (and with the death of) their first-born of men and cattle. The Lord took revenge on all their gods and burned them up. (6) Everything was sent through you, before it was done, so that you should do (it). You were speaking with the king of Egypt and in front of all his servants and his people. (7) Everything happened by your word. Ten great and severe punishments came to the land of Egypt so that you perform revenge for Israel. (8) The Lord did everything for the sake of Israel and in accord with his covenant which he made with Abraham to take revenge on them just as they were enslaving them with force.

Mastema, for his part, aims as always to defeat Moses and to empower the sorcerers. God, not surprisingly, help the Angels of the Presence, Moses, and Aaron (48:9-11):

The prince of Mastema would stand up against you and wish to make you fall into Pharaoh’s power. He would help the Egyptian magicians and they would oppose (you) and perform in front of you. We permitted them to do evil things, but we would not allow healings to be performed by them. When the Lord struck them with bad sores, they were unable to oppose (you) because we deprived them of (their ability) to perform a single sign.

The final confrontation takes place on the shore of the Red Sea. There, however, Moses has no role (48:15-19):

On the fourteenth day, the fifteenth, the sixteenth, the seventeenth, and the eighteenth the prince of Mastema was bound and locked up behind the Israelites so that he could not accuse them. On the nineteenth day we released them so that they could help the Egyptians and pursue the Israelites. He stiffened their resolve and made them stubborn. They were made stubborn by the Lord our God so that he could strike the Egyptians and throw them into the sea.

We can conclude that the Jubilees narrative sees Moses’s role in the Exodus as messenger, not as a leader or savior. The shift in his role is the outcome of his inability to confront Mastema. Hence the transfer of his original function to the Angel(s) of the Presence.

Yet, one important task nonetheless remains for Moses. He teaches Israel the halakhic details of the Passover sacrifice. Whoever brings the yearly sacrifice, according to the required schedule and in the correct place, receives protection against Mastema. Whoever does not bring the sacrifice, or does not perform the rite according to the rules, falls under Mastema’s influence. Moses must warn the people of Israel to offer the Passover sacrifice in the final third of the fourteenth day of the first month, to finish eating it by the first third of the following night, and for only men to eat it in the Temple court. [[16]](#footnote-16) Moses is thereby presented as the savior from a ritual perspective, rather than from an historical one.

The diminishing of Moses's historical role fits the fact that Jubilees does not mention his leadership during the people's wanderings in the desert. Jubilees rushes from the Exodus to the revelation at Mount Sinai, and from there to the entry to the Promised Land. The barriers in the desert and the peoples' revolts are not mentioned. The people do not confront Moses, and Moses does not disobey God’s instructions. Even the twelve spies are not discussed. According to Jubilees, the forty years of wandering are part of a plan established before creation (50:2): “On Mt. Sinai I told you about the sabbaths of the land and the years of jubilees in the sabbaths of the years, and its year I told you, **until the time when you enter the land** which you will possess”.

**The Hellenistic Context**

In this section I would like to point to a few features of Jubilees's portrayal of Moses that are rooted in the book's composition in the Hellenistic period.

First of all, as I have demonstrated in earlier publications, the universal approach of the Hellenistic world pushed the author of Jubilees to preach the virtues of separation and isolation. This approach effects Moses's story in several ways.

In the Pentateuch, Moses’s appearance in the story comes as a surpise. The hero at the end of Genesis is Joseph, but Moses is from the tribe of Levi. In Jubilees, Joseph is not the hero, and Levi is the chosen son already in Egypt in Joseph's time.

[[17]](#footnote-17)Focusing on Moses is a natural move - Moses is a son of a high rank family. Consequently, Moses should be brought up and be educated inside the boundary of his own family. To this end, the author rewrites Exodus chapter 2. According to Jubilees, as in the biblical account in Exodus, Moses’s sister watches him during the day as he lies in the basket. The Jubilean version, however, adds the mother's presence; she nurses him at night. This arrangement lasts for a week, after which Pharaoh’s daughter finds him. She gives him back to his parents until Moses’s weaning. They then “brought you to Pharaoh’s daughter and you became her child. Your father Amram taught you (the art of) writing. After you had completed three weeks [= 21 years], he brought you into the royal court.” The unspecified “They brought you” (instead of “She brought him” cf. Exodus 2:10) enables Jubilees to include Moses's father Amram in the future prophet's upbringing.

Similarly, Jubilees preserves the report that the mother nurses Moses. This detail, however, is, again, only one piece of a broader picture. According to Jubilees, Moses spent three weeks in his **father**’s house, and learned there to read and write. Only then does he leave his home. We can conclude from this that in Jubilees Moses is not truly a foreign prince. He was and remains a member of his family and of his people. Pharaoh’s court, its culture and its language, have no influence on him.

Jubilees's phrase “[you] saw the Egyptian beating your companion who was one of the Israelites” (47:\*) fits this denial of Moses's foreign origins. “One of the Israelites” replaces Exodus's “a Hebrew, one of his kinsmen.” The Bible uses the epithet “Hebrew” when the narrator wishes to present an outsider's point of view. The Exodus narrator's choice of “Hebrew” indicates to the reader that Moses perceives his kinsmen as foreigners, a perception that Jubilees intends to change.

Similarly, the author prefers not to pass over the biblical verse stating that Moses was named by Pharaoh’s daughter (Exodus 2:10). Jubilees’s author, who is careful to show that his biblical heroes do not know foreign languages, pretends that Moses is a Hebrew name. Interestingly, the Vision of Amram has no difficulties with foreign names. There, Moses has a Hebrew name in addition to the Egyptian name given him by Pharaoh's daughter. [[18]](#footnote-18)

Nevertheless, Greek thought, in particular verses of Hesiod’ *Works and Days*, is found in Jubilees chapter 23. During his sojourn on the mountain, described in this chapter, Moses learns that humankind will sin and, as a result, the human lifespan will decrease from one thousand years, as in the earliest generations, to 120 in Moses’s days, to seventy or eighty in the author's own time. As was noted by Kugel, chapter 23 alludes to Psalm 90, the first verse of which identifies Moses as the speaker. [[19]](#footnote-19)

(4) “For in your sight a thousand years are like yesterday that has past, like a watch of the night”;

(7) “So we are consumed by your anger, terror-struck by your fury”;

(10) “The span of our life is seventy years or, given the strength, eighty years but the best\most of them are trouble and sorrow.”

Jubilees chapter 23 provides a context for Psalm 90: as before, Moses's words there are only one piece of a larger revelation that was given to Moses at Sinai. Moses has a deterministic perception of human fate due to the information he received on Mount Sinai.

The influence of the Hellenistic context also emerges in the portrait of Moses’s father, Amram. Jubilees notes that Amram traveled to Canaan to lay Jacob’s sons to rest. Amram chooses to stay in Canaan (46:10), returning to Egypt only after a period of time.

Jubilees’s author, who does not supply any justification for why Amram remains, echoes a similar episode in the *Vision of Amram*. Jubilees borrows from the earlier composition in order to allude to hostile literature composed during the three centuries before the Common Era.[[20]](#footnote-20) This hostile literature reported that in the remote past a strange group invaded Egypt and harassed the local population and their gods. Eventually the local people and their king were able to push the foreigners out. They, in turn, had no choice but to settle in Jerusalem. However, when an aggressive group of locals, comprised of lepers and impure people, appeared on the stage in Egypt and harassed the population, the invaders returned to Egypt, joining the lepers and the impure. After a long period of torment, the foreigners and the lepers, led at this point by Moses, were exiled.

Jubilees's author does not want to reinforce this hostile account. However, unable to ignore it, he echoes it by mentioning Amram's stay in Canaan. In this formulation of this story, a group of strangers arrived in Egypt (Jacob's family), left Egypt (to bury Jacob's sons), stayed in Canaan (Amram and his people), and then returned to Egypt to join the group who would bring plagues upon the local population. Both groups then leave Egypt together under Moses's leadership. This reworking represents an additional effort by Jubilees's author to bring Moses closer to his generation and to a new and more complex world.

**One more note**

We can conclude from the above that Moses's character changes in the book of Jubilees. In Jubilees's portrayal, Moses is not the son of an enslaved nation and is not raised in the palace of the great king. Indeed he has the courage, for the sake of his own people, to act against Pharaoh and against his sorcerers. The heart of this confrontation, however, is not in Pharoah's palace but in heaven, between Matema and the Angel(s) of the Presence. The signs and marvels are only small-scale warnings.

Furthermore, in Jubilees, Moses is not a shepherd, and his leadership of the people in the desert is not presented as a challenge overcome. Jubilees's Moses speaks with an angel, and not face to face with God. Moses does have a central role in establishing the foundation for a sectarian Judaism by transmitting two Torahs to the people. Despite the importance of this act, however, he remains inferior to the priests who act in the present.

In light of the above, it is intresting to compare the elevated status ascribed to Moses in another Qumranic text [[21]](#footnote-21)discussed by Van-Hanten in a 2003 paper. The gap between Jubilees and DM and the other texts is evident when studying 4Q377.

In this text, Moses is called a “pious man” when he raises his voice, apparently in prayer (2 i 8, Qimron edition, p. 142). Elsewhere (2 ii 2, Q.E. p. 143) “the statutes of Moses” are mentioned. Elibachar (Aaron) warns the people to keep “all of God commandments through the mouth of Moses his chosen, and to follow God the Lord of our fathers who commanded us from Mount Sinai.” As noted by Feldman, the author of 4Q377 here reworks the biblical Sinai event and gives it a new interpretation. God first wanted to speak with Israel face to face (l. 6) but the people “were seized with trembling before the glory of God and because of the wondrous sounds, [. . .] and they stood at a distance” (ll. 8-10). Moses had to bring God’s words to the people: “and Moses, the man of God, is with God in the cloud. And the cloud covered him” (ll. 11-12).

Following this passage the author praises Moses: “because [he is an angel] when he was sanctified, and as an angel he spoke from his mouth. For who is a fle[sh ]like Mose[s], a man of pious acts. And he creates [deeds] that were not created {to}from eternity and forever [ ] (ll. 11-12)

This list includes attributes that the Bible ascribes to Levi or to the Levites, as well as statements about Moses.

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| --- | --- |
| they may understand the statutes of Moses (l. 2)  through the mouth of Moses, His anointed one,  Moses, the man of God  because [he is an angel] when he was sanctified, and as an angel  He spoke from his mouth.  For who is a flesh like M[oses],  a man of pious acts.  And he creates [deeds] that were not created {to}from eternity and forever [ ] (ll. 11-12) | “These are the statutes, the rules and the instruction that the Lord established through Moses on mount Sinai, between himself and the people of Israel” (Lev 26:46)  “Proper rulings were in his mouth” (Malachi 2:6); “And men seek rulings from his mouth” (Malachi 2:7)  “And this is the blessing with which Moses, the man of God, bade the people of Israel before he died”.  For he is an angel of the Lord of Hosts (Malachi 2:7)  “Proper rulings were in his mouth” (Malachi 2:6); “And men seek rulings from his mouth” (Malachi 2:7)  Now Moses was a very humble man, more so than any other man on earth (Num 12:3)  Let your Thummim and Urim be with your pious one (Deut 33:8) |

I would like to suggest that 4Q377 was written as a reaction to the portriat of Moses found in Judeo-Hellenistic literature. Note that the term “the statutes of Moses” fits the way Moses was perceived by this subgroup of Second Temple Judaism. Just as every nation has a law-giver of its own and laws of its own, Moses is viewed as the law-giver of Israel.[[22]](#footnote-22) At the same time, however, the passage quoted here is intended to undermine this Jewish-Hellenistic stand. Note the repeated emphasis on the fact that Moses's words are the words of God, and not the prophet's own creation. Indeed Moses has a status of his own: he was sanctified by God to be his messenger, and thus the phrase “who is a flesh like M[oses].” But the text makes clear that it is God who “spoke through his mouth,” “through the mouth of Moses, his anointed one.”

Moreover, it seems that the placing of the phrase ‘man of God’ near the report that Moses approached God in the cloud was purposeful. We find the title ‘man of God’ in the verse as an introduction to Moses’s blessing to the twelve tribes before his death (31:1). This blessing is presented as Moses's own words. In our text ‘man of God’ is meant to emphasize that Moses is repeating God’s words.

Furthermore, the presentation of Moses as the one who created things “that were not created {to}from eternity and forever,” is a reference to Moses's role in the ten plagues, but the vague phrasing and the avoidance of the words ‘signs’, ‘marvels,’ and plagues opens the door for a reading of Moses's role as that of a magician, a motif that developed gradually in the Judeo-Hellenistic world.[[23]](#footnote-23)

**Appendix**

The inclusion of the heavenly sphere in the Exodus story and the shift of focus from Moses to the Angel of the Presence helps us to understand Jubilees’s decision to silence an earlier tradition about a confrontation between Moses and the sorcerers. The reason for removing this story is that it did not refer to supernatural forces, and gave the sorcerers too much power. As we find in Jubilees (47:2-3):

“The pharaoh, the king of Egypt, had given orders regarding them that they were to throw their sons — every male who was born — into the river. They continued throwing (them in) for seven months until the time when you were born. Your mother hid you for three months. Then they told about her.”

The phrase “they continued throwing (them in) for seven months” alludes to the tradition that Moses was born prematurely, in the seventh month, and for that reason his mother was able to keep him in the house for three months (a detail found in Exodus 2:4). [[24]](#footnote-24)

However the account in Jubilees also lacks a few important components that were apparently part of the earlier tradition. Jubilees does not mention that the drowning of newborns to the Nile began when Jochebed became pregnant. Nor does it state that the period of hiding the newborn baby ended because Moses reached a certain age; instead, the text claims that it was because of anonymous reporting (“then they told about her”). The reader is left with the impression that seven months is an arbitrary period (of typological duration) that ended when Moses was born, but not when he was conceived. Framing the story this way, the author denies the earlier tradition according which the sorcerers sent the newborns to their death in the Nile because they predicted the birth of a savior (Josephus, Antiquities 2. 215-216). In Jubilees there is no connection between the decree to drown the newborns and Jochebed's pregnancy.[[25]](#footnote-25)

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1. Qimron, Jubilees’ Fragments, pp. 223-242. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Qimron, Jubilees’ Fragments, pp. 223-242. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. For an evaluation of the book’s time and origin see: C. Werman, *The Book of Jubilees*, pp. 44-68 [Hebrew]. On the dispute between the priests and the Pharisees see: Werman: “The Price of Mediation”, pp. 377-409. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. C. Werman, “Oral Torah vs. Written Torah(s)”, pp. 175-197; Shemesh and Werman, “Halakha at Qumran”, pp. 104-129

   [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Werman, “Two Creations.” [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Werman, “Two Creations.” [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Werman, “The Torah and Teudah”, pp. 473-492 [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. First publication: Milik, “Dires de Moïse”; Carmignac, “Dires de Moïse”; Tigchelaar, “A Cave 4 Fragment of Divre Mosheh.” The reconstruction offered here is by Qimron, “Dibre Moshe”. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. I am following here Tigchelaar’s reconstruction. See idem, “A Cave 4 Fragment of Divre Mosheh.” [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. Feldman’s verdict (p. 231) that “it identifies “the instructions that the Lord had given”

    that are mentioned in the biblical verse as those that were revealed at Sinai” are not precise enough. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. Werman, “The Flood Story.” [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. Texts known by the name Pseudo-Moses also portray the prophet and lawgiver in a sectarian context. There, God informs Moses that in the far future Israel, upon returning from the Babylonian exile, will transgress in the seventh Jubilee by departing from the correct calendar. Israel will be punished for seven years and their temple will be defiled. Not having learned their lesson, at the end of another seven years the people will return to their sins and will continue to follow the wrong calendar. They will also go transgress regarding intermarriage, robbery, and the defilement of the temple. See: Werman, “Epochs and End Time.” [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. Translations from Jubilees follow Vanderkam’s edition with changes. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. Amaru, “Protection from the Birds,” pp. 66. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. For detailed survey of the difficulties in the Exodus chapters, see: Loewenstamm, *The Evolution of the Exodus Tradition,* 56-69*.*  [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. Werman, “The Passover Sacrifice”; Werman, “Narrative.” [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. Amaru, “Burying the Fathers.” [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. Duke, “Moses’ Hebrew Name”, pp. 34-48. The name in the Fragment is מלאכיה. Kister assumes that originally it was מלכיה or מלכיאל (Kister, “Ancient Material”, p. 85). [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. Kugel, “The Jubilees Apocalypse.” [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. Werman, “The Book of Jubilees”, 135-174. [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. van Henten, “Moses as Heavenly Messenger.” [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. Schwartz, “Special People,” p. 55. [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. ‘Moses the magician’ appears in Artapanus (For the text see Holladay, *Fragments,* pp. 219-225). See also Pompeius Trogus who lauds Joseph: “magicas ibi artes sollerti ingenio percepisset cum”, 2.8. For the text see Stern, p. 337. [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. Kister, “Ancient Material”, p. 90 [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
25. Thus, Jubilees’ author knows two traditions and refutes both. Firstly, that Moses was born prematurely, and secondly, that the drowning of babies begins when Moses was conceived in his mother's womb – at which point the sorcerers learn about the savior's impending birth – and ends when Moses is born. Both Cohen (Moses, p. 30 n. 2) and Kister (“Ancient Material”, pp. 89-91) note the appearance of both these rejected traditions in later writings. The earliest appearance is in Midrash Mekhilta D’Rabbi Shimon b.Yochai (Epstein-Melamed edition, p. 6). [↑](#footnote-ref-25)