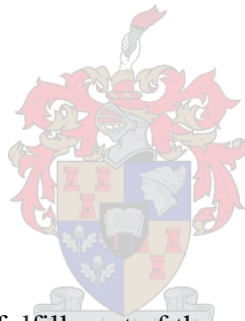


# Aspects of the Sabbath in the Late Second Temple Period



Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of  
MPhil in Biblical Interpretation  
at the  
University of Stellenbosch

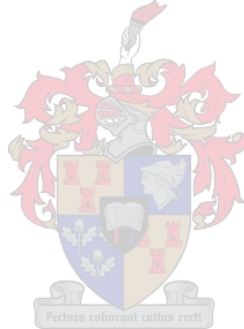
April 2006

**BY**

**ILYA LIZORKIN**  
14411652-2004

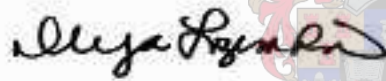
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To Rev. Ronald Weinbaum – father, brother, mentor and friend  
with much thanks to  
Chuck Augustine who labored tirelessly to ensure the readability of this thesis.



I, Ilya Lizorkin (14411652-2004), the undersigned hereby declare that the work contained in this thesis is my own original work and has not previously in its entirety or in part been submitted at any university for a degree.

Signature:



Ilya Lizorkin



Date: 2006-03-10

## *Abstract*

This thesis is a study of five books (*Jubilees*, 1 and 2 Maccabees, the *Damascus Document* and Josephus *Jewish Antiquities*) that represent the literature dealing with the issue of the Sabbath in significant ways, written between 200 B.C.E. and 100 C.E. In this study the author is determined to find the most prominent ways in which various Jews of the period treated the Sabbath, considering both its theological significance and actual practical application. The author seeks to apply the literary-critical method to the study of these books by identifying how the Sabbath pericopes fit into the larger structure of each book and contribute to the overall argument of each work. After dealing with introductory issues, such as terms, methods, historical settings and methodology, the author then works through the major Sabbath-related pericopes in each book followed by a concluding summary for each book. Then author moves from detailed individual conclusions to general summaries, seeking to deduce the “big picture” of the Judaisms represented in the five works that he researched.

Throughout the thesis the author is asking all of the texts the following questions: Was there a major Jewish view of the Sabbath or were the views varied within Judaisms? Was the Sabbath one of the most important issues facing the Jewish Community or was it rather a peripheral one? What was the place of Covenant with YHWH in the Sabbath thought of the day? What was the impact of the historical events of the period on the views of the Sabbath? Was the understanding(s) of the Sabbath legalistic or was there a depth of heartfelt spirituality accompanying Sabbath observance? Were the rules with regard to the Sabbath actually carried out or were they largely ignored? At the conclusion he attempts to answer these questions point by point based upon the data that he collected by studying the passages related to the Sabbath observance within the books mentioned above. This study is preliminary in nature, since it attempts to provide only some background information to the question: Did the Jewish Christians of the first century change the day of worship from Saturday to Sunday? If so, how did they do so while

managing to avoid any kind of major debate over the change? This question the author plans to pursue in his forthcoming research.

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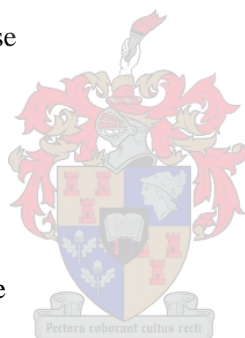
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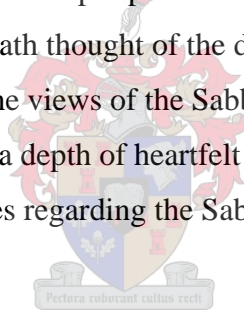


# CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 Research Problem

### 1.1.1 Subject

In this short study I will research the passages dealing with the Sabbath in five works representing the literature of the Late Second Temple Period. I will particularly concentrate on Judean sources: the book of *Jubilees*, *1 and 2 Maccabees*, the *Damascus Document* and the *Jewish Antiquities*. There are several questions that I am asking as I approach this intriguing topic: Was there a major Jewish view of the Sabbath or were the views varied within Judaisms? Was the Sabbath one of the most important issues facing the Jewish Community or was it rather a peripheral one? What was the place of the Covenant with YHWH in the Sabbath thought of the day? What was the impact of the historical events of the period on the views of the Sabbath? Was the understanding(s) of the Sabbath legalistic or was there a depth of heartfelt spirituality accompanying the Sabbath observance? Were the rules regarding the Sabbath actually carried out or largely ignored?<sup>1</sup>



### 1.1.2 Selected Works

A question may be legitimately raised by the reader with regards to the particular books that I chose to examine. Why would the author of this thesis be dealing with these particular texts and not with others? What are the reasons behind this seemingly random selection? The following points will set forth the rationale for my selections and describe in some detail the process of selection that took place.

First, in order to understand what the people in the Late Second Temple period (200 BC -135 CE) thought about the Sabbath, the materials studied should be dated

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<sup>1</sup> These questions correspond to the order of the conclusions of this research.

within the appropriate time frame. The first step of selection was to mark down what materials would be qualified by the consensus of scholars to belong to the period.

Second, all available texts of the appropriate time period were surveyed for terms that are related to the idea of the Sabbath Day in some way, shape or form. Since relatively few works actually deal with the Sabbath, the process of selection was fairly simple.

Third, selection of the books was made based on the degree to which the Sabbath was discussed. In other words, all the books that only mentioned the Sabbath in passing or simply cited the Bible without dealing with it in a substantial way were excluded.

Fourth, once all the selected texts were considered, in order to focus the study, I chose to concentrate on those texts that exhibited decisively Judean authorship.<sup>2</sup> In the end my selections present a variety of literature representing the Late Second Temple Period. These selections were later confirmed by Lutz Doering's work on the Sabbath,<sup>3</sup> where he selects virtually the same material, adding to it such Hellenistic sources like Philo, Elephantine papyri and the later Aramaic Ostraka, largely because the space allowed for his research encouraged him to "cast the net" more broadly.

## 1.2 Terms

### 1.2.1 Various Names

In the last 30 years, scholars have struggled to come up with the best way to describe the 300-400 years under consideration here. Various suggestions have been made and each has strong and weak points. Among them are Late Judaism,

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<sup>2</sup> Josephus, of course, wrote in Rome, but his formative years still put him well into the Judean camp.

<sup>3</sup> See Lutz Doering, *Schabbat: Sabbathalacha und-praxis im antiken Judentum und Urchristentum* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1999), VII-XVI.

Intertestamental Period,<sup>4</sup> Judaism in the Hellenistic and Roman Period, Judaism in the Time of Jesus, Second Temple Period, Ancient Judaism, Early Judaism, Late Second Temple Period and more recently Middle Judaism.<sup>5</sup>

None of these terms fits perfectly into the matrix of history. All of them have inherent strengths and weaknesses. Early Judaism signifies the fact that Judaism continued to develop through the next ten centuries. So it is that at the time of our interest, Judaism could well have been appropriately called “Early Judaism.” However, the weakness of this terminology lies in not recognizing that there was an even earlier Judaism.

Another option is “Intertestamental Period.” Positively, it has a very clear time delineation (between the Testaments), but it does carry the dangers of seeming narrow-mindedness and appearing to be biased or perhaps even intolerant towards most Jewish scholars, who do not believe that the new covenant has already been inaugurated. Another negative is that it seems to presuppose that the determining of the true meaning of the New Testament is the only legitimate purpose for studying the literature of the period; as if these texts do not “stand on their own” and do not deserve scholarly attention for their own sake.

I find the term “Middle Judaism”, which was recently introduced by Italian scholar Gabriele Boccaccini in his work *Middle Judaism: A Jewish Thought, 300 BCE to 200 CE*, intriguing and promising as it opens another chapter in the search for the most

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<sup>4</sup> The period from 200 BCE to 200 CE cannot be delineated and substantiated on philosophical or historical grounds; rather, this period is forced to be delineated by us in this way, given our literary sources that describe it. For example Josephus’ history before 200 BCE is episodic and inconsequential, whereas after this date, it is rich and reasonably coherent. Tannaitic literature picks up where Josephus leaves off (70-100 CE) and is codified in 200 CE (Shaye Cohen, “The Political and Social History of the Jews in Greco-Roman Antiquity: The State of the Question” in *Early Judaism and Its Modern Interpreters*, ed. Robert Kraft and George Nickelsburg [Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1986], 36).

<sup>5</sup> See Gabriele Boccaccini, *Middle Judaism: Jewish Thought, 300 B.C.E. to 200 C.E.* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991).

appropriate way to describe a period that fascinates so many in the scholarly community. In his book, he argues that “Middle Judaism” allows for “Judaism” both before and after. In other words, Middle Judaism in this argument solves the problems that existed in other definitions of the period, such as Early Judaism. It remains to be seen if this term will catch on and become a common term to refer to the period under consideration. However, because Boccaccini makes the controversial statement, which he persuasively argues in his book, that Christianity and Rabbinical Judaism are the two surviving Judaisms out of all the Judaisms that were present, it makes some scholars hesitant to use the term out of similar reasons that Christian and Jewish scholars are increasingly opting out of using the term “Intertestamental Period.”

### **1.2.2 Suggested Name**

“Second Temple Period” is a good term as well, because it states that the Judaism in view is the Judaism that existed while the Second Temple stood. The negative side to this option is that the term seems to indicate that it covers a far longer period of time than what is normally covered by scholars laboring in this area of study. However, the variation of this term “Late Second Temple Period” seems to me to be most appropriate. It deals with the inherent problem of the original version (“Second Temple Period”) by clarifying that not the whole period of the existence of second Temple is in view, but rather its later part. It, however, retains the benefit of describing the period in connection with the existing Temple operations. Hence, the title of my thesis: “Aspects of the Sabbath in the Late Second Temple Period.”

## **1.3 History of Research**

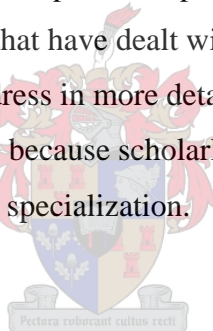
### **1.3.1 General History of Research**

As we embark upon a review of the history of research on this subject, one important distinction should be made. We need to look at the history of general research on the books under consideration separately from research on the subject of the Sabbath in these books. On the one hand, it is incorrect to say that the scholars working in the area of the Late Second Temple Period have overcommitted themselves and paid undue attention to the writings of their period. That is certainly not the case; much more

research remains to be done. On the other hand it would be unreasonable to deny that in the last several decades study of the Late Second Temple Period has attracted numerous researchers.

Most universities that have departments of theology or religion are actively engaged in ongoing research in this area. Many scholarly journals have sprung up in order to serve the community that is engaged in this type of research. According to Nickelsburg and Kraft, it was the historical fact of the Holocaust, among several other factors, that helped to foster the study of the Late Second Temple Period as many “NT scholars began to question early Christian portrayals of Judaism, as well as typically protestant interpretations of the texts and anti-Jewish presuppositions that sometimes underlie both the text and their interpretation.”<sup>6</sup> This field, however, is so wide that covering it well would be beyond the scope of this project. I will only be able to highlight the major scholars and major works that have dealt with these books. However, once that is accomplished, I will be able to address in more detail the history of research on the subject of the Sabbath in these books because scholarly interest in this particular subject is relatively limited, given its narrow specialization.

### 1.3.2 History of Sabbath research



The Sabbath in the Late Second Temple Period is a subject that has received fairly limited attention. However, several important works were published in recent decades. Chris Rowland has written a chapter in 1982 called “A Summary of Sabbath Observance in Judaism at the Beginning of the Christian Era.”<sup>7</sup> For the most part, the chapter

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<sup>6</sup> George Nickelsburg and Robert Kraft, “Introduction: The Modern Study of Early Judaism” in *Early Judaism and Its Modern Interpreters*, ed. Robert Kraft and George Nickelsburg (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1986), 4.

<sup>7</sup> *From Sabbath to Lord's Day: A Biblical, Historical, and Theological Investigation* that was edited by Donald Carson (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1982), 43-55. According to Weiss both Bacchiocchi in his *From Sabbath to Sunday: A Historical Investigation of the Rise of Sunday Observance in Early Church* and the authors of the *From the Sabbath to the Lord's Day: A Biblical, Historical, and Theological Investigation* agree that the main problem is that the Jews perverted the meaning of the Sabbath from God's original intention. Weiss sarcastically follows up “How these authors came to know God's original

concentrates on the *Damascus Document*, *Jubilees*, Philo's writings and some texts that Rowland calls a part of the Pharisaic-Rabbinic tradition. Sakae Kubo,<sup>8</sup> also in 1982, wrote an article called "The Sabbath in the Intertestamental Period." There he gives an overview of major sources providing a sketch of the various Jewish views during that period. He organizes his article around various themes such as "Sabbath observance in the situations of conflict" and "Theology of Sabbath." Heather McKay wrote an article in 1992 challenging a major assumption about the Sabbath in the time of Jesus. It was entitled "From Evidence to Edifice: Four Fallacies about the Sabbath."<sup>9</sup> Few years later in 1994 she tackled the connection between Sabbath and Synagogue in her work *Sabbath and Synagogue: The Question of Sabbath Worship in Ancient Judaism*.<sup>10</sup> Heather McKay

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intentions they, of course, do not reveal" (*A Day of Gladness: The Sabbath Among Jews and Christians in Antiquity* [Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2003], 6).

<sup>8</sup> Sakae Kubo in a volume edited by Kenneth Strand called *The Sabbath in Scriptures and History* (Washington, D.C. : Review and Herald Pub. Association, 1982).

<sup>9</sup> Heather McKay, "From Evidence to Edifice: Four Fallacies about the Sabbath" in *Text as Pretext: Essays in Honor of Robert Davidson*, ed. Robert Carroll [Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1992], 180-199. In spite of Heather McKay's critique, the words of E. P. Sanders represent the majority of scholarly opinion with regards to the synagogue activity: "The Practice of weekly gatherings might have begun among the people who were not physically, but spiritually cut off from the Temple – those who wanted more informal and easily accessible forms of public worship" (E. P. Sanders, *Judaism: Practice and Belief, 63 BCE -66 CE* [Philadelphia: Trinity Press International, 1992], 198). According to Weiss, after the destruction of the Temple the synagogue assumed a new role. He, also disagreeing with McKay, views the eighteen benedictions of the 1<sup>st</sup> century to be a reasonable tipping point when the synagogue would shift its emphasis from discussions of the Torah and other communal activities to worship and liturgy to make up for the activities of the Temple that was now no more (*Day of Gladness*, 25). In 2002 Pieter W. van der Horst published a chapter entitled "Was the synagogue a place of public worship before 70 A.D.?" in his *Japheth in the Tents of Shem: Studies on Jewish Hellenism in Antiquity* (Leuven: Peeters, 2002), 55-82. He sought, successfully so, to refute the earlier claims that were made by Heather McKay. According to Josephus, however, worship did take place in synagogues: "There are a people called Jews ... which the inhabitants call Jerusalem, and are accustomed to rest on every seventh day; on which times they make no use of their arms, nor meddle with husbandry, nor take care of any affairs of life, but spread out their hands in their holy places, and pray till the evening" (*Ag. Ap.* 1:209).

<sup>10</sup> Heather McKay, *Sabbath and Synagogue: The Question of Sabbath Worship in Ancient Judaism* (Leiden: Brill, 1994).

argues that today's common assumptions include at least four fallacies in regard to issues of the Sabbath: 1) the Sabbath was the cornerstone of Religious practice in Ancient Israel, 2) the Sabbath was a day of worship for the Jews in Old Testament times, 3) the Jews worshiped in the synagogues in New Testament times, 4) Jesus worshiped in synagogues. She seeks to show that during the Late Second Temple Period the Sabbath *became* the cornerstone of religious practice, but that it was certainly not so in biblical times. She establishes the New Moon as a Feast that was observed with greater intensity and was assigned a greater value than the Sabbath before the period mentioned above.<sup>11</sup>

One of the most important scholars who labors in this area is Lutz Doering, a German scholar who now teaches at the University of London. His earliest published work on the Sabbath is entitled "New Aspects from Qumran Sabbath Law from Cave 4 fragments."<sup>12</sup> The text of his dissertation at the University of Göttingen, was finally published in 1997 under the title "Sabbathalacha und-praxis im antiken Judentum: Von den Elephantine-Ostraka bis zu den frühannaitischen Traditionen."<sup>13</sup> Later the same year he published "The Concept of the Sabbath in the Book of *Jubilees*."<sup>14</sup> In 1998 Charlotte Hempel authored "The Laws of the *Damascus Document* and 4QMMT."<sup>15</sup> The same year Cana Werman published an article entitled "CD 11:17 Apart From Your Sabbaths."<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 121.

<sup>12</sup> Lutz Doering "New Aspects from Qumran Sabbath Law from Cave 4 fragments" in *Legal Texts and Legal Issues. Proceedings of the Second Meeting of the International Organization for Qumran Studies, Cambridge, 1995*, eds. M. J. Bernstein, F. García Martínéz and J. Kampen, STDJ 23 (Leiden: Brill, 1997).

<sup>13</sup> Lutz Döring, "Sabbathalacha und -praxis im antiken Judentum: Von den Elephantine-Ostraka bis zu den frühannaitischen Traditionen." PhD diss., Universität Göttingen, 1997.

<sup>14</sup> Lutz Doering, "The Concept of the Sabbath in the Book of *Jubilees*," in *Studies in the Book of Jubilees*, eds. Matthias Albani, Jörg Frey, and Armin Lange (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1997).

<sup>15</sup> Charlotte Hempel, "The Laws of the Damascus Document and 4QMMT" in *The Damascus Document A Centennial of Discovery. Proceedings of the Third International Symposium of the Orion Center for the Study of the Dead Sea Scrolls and Associated Literature, 1998*, eds. Joseph Baumgarten, Esther Chazon, Avital Pinnick (Leiden: Brill, 1999).



The work that is most significant to date was written by Lutz Doering and published in 1999. It is entitled *Schabbat: Sabbathalacha und-praxis im antiken Judentum und Urchristentum*. This work consists of eleven chapters. After the Introduction, in chapter two Doering discusses “Shabbat in the Jewish Military Colony in Elephantine.” In chapter three “Shabbat and Shabbat Regulation in the Book of *Jubilees*” are looked at in detail, followed by chapter four entitled “Shabbat Regulation in the Qumran Texts.” “Shabbat and Shabbat Regulations in the Jewish Diaspora during the Roman-Hellenistic Era” is discussed in chapter five, which is followed by a chapter on “Shabbat Practice According to the Aramaic Ostraka from Palestine.” In chapter seven, Doering picks up the subject of “Shabbat Practice and Commerce with Shabbat Regulations According to the New Testament.” In chapter eight we read about “Shabbat practice and Halakhah According to the Scrolls of Flavious Josephus.” After chapter nine, which deals with “Shabbat Regulation and Practice of the Pharisees, Sadducees and Early Tannaim,” we come upon the chapter which looks at “The Status of Warring on Shabbat in Jewish Antiquity.” He then concludes his book with “Determination of Ratio-Conclusions-Prognosis.”<sup>17</sup>

One other very important work came out in 2003 and is written by Herold Weiss called *A Day of Gladness: The Sabbath Among Jews and Christians in Antiquity*. The work is a collection of eight articles on the Sabbath covering various documents of the New Testament as well as the chapter that starts the book dealing with the Judaism of Jesus’ day. This work was later reviewed by Lutz Doering, who had mostly positive

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<sup>16</sup> Cana Werman, “CD 11:17 Apart From Your Sabbaths” in *The Damascus Document: A Centennial of Discovery. Proceedings of the Third International Symposium of the Orion Center for the Study of the Dead Sea Scrolls and Associated Literature, 1998*, eds. Joseph Baumgarten, Esther Chazon, Avital Pinnick (Leiden: Brill, 1999).

<sup>17</sup> See Doering, *Schabbat*, VII-XVI.



things to say about Weiss' volume.<sup>18</sup> He, however, concentrates his critique on what he considers to be the overblown assessment of the eschatological reading of the Early Judaism Sabbath by Weiss.

This survey demonstrates that the Sabbath in the Late Second Temple Period is a subject that has received fairly limited attention. Particularly missing in the literature is a comprehensive collection of pertinent passages from the various primary sources. One of the objectives of this thesis is to provide such a collection.

## 1.4 Impact of Hellenism

All Jewish literature of the period was written in some way in response to the Hellenism that impacted Jewish culture in the Diaspora and in Judea itself. According to Levine, Hellenization is usually understood as the process through which post-classical Greek civilization promoted itself and assimilated various peoples with an eye towards the unification of the known world into a single nation sharing a common culture based on a similar worldview.<sup>19</sup> The Jews were constantly developing their identity in reactive response to Hellenization, which was taking more and more ground all around them. Sometimes they opted for less traditionally Jewish lifestyles, sometimes for more determined loyalty to tradition, but whichever path they chose, it was always done either in acceptance of or in opposition to Hellenism on some level. According to Bilde, it is wrong to argue that in Judea the writings were not Hellenistic, in contrast to the Diaspora, since even in Judea Hellenism left its mark and was very much a force to be reckoned with.<sup>20</sup> Collins argues that one cannot draw a clear line between Hellenistic works and

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<sup>18</sup> "Review of Weiss, H., *A Day of Gladness: The Sabbath Among Jews and Christians in Antiquity* (Columbia, S.C., 2003)," *JR* 84 (2004): 490-491.

<sup>19</sup> See Lee Levine, *Judaism and Hellenism in Antiquity: Conflict or Confluence?* (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 1999), 16.

<sup>20</sup> See Per Bilde, "The Essenes in Philo and Josephus," in *Qumran Between the Old and New Testaments*, ed. Frederick Cryer and Thomas Thomson (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998), 33.

non-Hellenistic works.<sup>21</sup> Rather, one may speak of works more influenced by the canons of Hellenism or less influenced<sup>22</sup> by them, but never exclusively Judean or Hellenistic in nature. This correction suggested earlier by Martin Hengel in his monumental work *Judaism and Hellenism: Studies in their Encounter in Palestine during the Early Hellenistic Period*<sup>23</sup> was eventually accepted by a majority of scholars of the period. Even though Hengel's work cannot be summarized without simplifying his conclusions, it is helpful to indicate major points made in the work: 1) The Jews of Palestine, far from being isolated, were thoroughly caught up in the events of their time, particularly the rivalry between the Ptolemaic and Seleucid kingdoms. 2) Ptolemaic (and later Seleucid) administration reached to the lowest levels of Jewish society. Every village was supervised by the Greek administration and had its officials seeing that the various sorts of taxes were paid. 3) International trade was a feature of the Hellenistic world; indeed, trade with the Aegean had brought many Greek influences to the Phoenician and Palestinian coasts long before the time of Alexander. Palestine itself was an important crossroads in the trade between north and south and between Egypt and Arabia. 4) The language of trade and administration was Greek. 5) Greek education also had its influence on Jews and Jewish education. 6) Greek influence on Jewish literature is already documented as early as Alexander's conquest and can be illustrated from literature in Hebrew and Aramaic as well as those works composed directly in Greek.<sup>24</sup> Bowersock states correctly,

The problem of Greek culture abroad has conventionally been cast in terms of Hellenization, which seems to imply the deliberate or inevitable imposition of Greek ways over local ones. Hellenization in this sense could be thoroughgoing or superficial, and by late antiquity most of it seemed to fall into the latter category.

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<sup>21</sup> See John Collins, *Between Athens and Jerusalem: Jewish Identity in the Hellenistic Diaspora* (New York: Crossroads, 1986), 11.

<sup>22</sup> It stands to reason that the Jews in Judea were less Hellenized than the Jewish elite in the city of Rome itself.

<sup>23</sup> Martin Hengel, *Judaism and Hellenism: Studies in their Encounter in Palestine during the Early Hellenistic Period* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984).

<sup>24</sup> Lester Grabbe, "The Jews and Hellenization: Hengel and his critics," in P.R. Davies & John M. Halligan, *Second Temple Studies III: Studies in Politics, Class and Material Culture*, JSOTSup 340 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2002), 53-54.

Yet Hellenism, by contrast, survived: for one thing this was a concept ancients talked about, whereas Hellenization was not. Hellenism did not necessarily threaten local cultures, nor was it imperialistic ... Hellenism, which is a genuine Greek word for Greek culture (*hellenismos*), represented language, thought, mythology, and images that constituted an extraordinarily flexible medium of both cultural and religious expression. It was a medium not necessarily antithetical to local or to indigenous traditions. On the contrary, it provides a new and more eloquent way of giving voice to them.<sup>25</sup>

Hellenistic culture was not optional for the authors of these texts. It was the sea in which they swam and as such was an integral part of their identity. And yet the literature that they produced sets forth a complex (and at times conflicting) attitude towards the Gentile world and the dominant cultural force of Hellenism.<sup>26</sup> They struggled with being Jews and being part of an empire with its own national and political identity.

## 1.5 Historical Events

In order for us to be able to understand Hellenism in the Land of Israel it is important to have some key dates in mind.<sup>27</sup> Neusner's list of key events is as follows:

166 B.C. Revolt of Mattathias, founder of Maccabean dynasty

165-63 B.C. Maccabees rule Jewish Palestine

142 B.C. Simon Maccabees establishes independence

134-104 B.C. Reign of John Hyrcanus

104-76 B.C. Reign of Alexander Jannaeus, who fights Pharisees

76-67 B.C. Reign of Alexandra Salome, who favor Pharisees

63 B.C. Pompey takes Jerusalem for Rome, end of Maccabean reign

37 B.C.-4 A.D. Reign of Herod

ca. 30 B.C.-10 A.D. Shammai and Hillel

ca. 1 – 70 A.D. Houses of Shammai and Hillel

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<sup>25</sup> G. W. Bowersock, *Hellenism in Late Antiquity: Thomas Spencer Jerome Lectures* (Michigan: University of Michigan Press, 1990), 1 and 7.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 261.

<sup>27</sup> See Martin Jaffee, *Early Judaism* (Upper Saddle River: Prentice Hall, Inc, 1997), 35.

ca. 10-40 A.D. Gamaliel I

ca. 30-66 A.D. Simeon b. Gamaliel I

37 A.D. Josephus born

ca. 50-90 A.D. The Gospels written

66 A.D. Revolt against Rome

70 A.D. Jerusalem falls, the Temple destroyed by Romans

70 A.D. Yohanan b. Zakkai founds academy in Yavneh, with his disciples Eliezer b. Hyrcanus and Joshua b. Hananiah.

ca. 75 A.D. Josephus publishes the *Jewish War*

ca. 80 A.D. Gamaliel II heads academy at Yavneh, establishes his dynasty as patriarchal head of rabbinical government and achieves Roman recognition as head of Jewish community.

ca. 90-135 Aqiba dominates rabbinical movement

93 A.D. Josephus publishes *Jewish Antiquities*

ca. 100 Josephus writes the *Life*

ca. 125 End of Yavneh academy, fall of Gamaliel II

132-135 Bar Kokhba War

ca. 140 Simeon b. Gamaliel II, son of Gamaliel II, establishes academy reestablishes academy and patriarchal government at Usha

ca. 170-210 Dominance Simeon's son, Judah the Patriarch

ca. 200 Promulgation of Mishnah<sup>28</sup>

## 1.6 Methodology

Having a clear methodology is extremely important, since different methodologies pay attention to different aspects in the interpretation of texts. Nickelsburg and Kraft sum up their observations when they write, “In recent decades, students of the biblical and related materials have become especially self-conscious about the approaches they use in the literary, archeological, and historical aspects of their discipline.”<sup>29</sup> For this

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<sup>28</sup> Jacob Neusner, *From Politics to Piety: The Emergence of Pharisaic Judaism* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1973), xii-xiii.

<sup>29</sup> Nickelsburg and Kraft, “Modern Study of Early Judaism,” 6.

study I have chosen Literary Criticism as the interpretive methodology. This approach is best suited for my study since it will show how the Sabbath passages/teachings of each book fit in with the rest of the works considered and in this way provide a holistic analysis of their meaning. The objectives, techniques and results of literary criticism are both far reaching and diverse. Not all aspects of this method will find expression in this limited study. The form of literary criticism often used here bears some resemblances to the canonical criticism used by critics.

In this thesis I am dealing with the Sabbath. Naturally, I will tend to pay more attention to the Sabbath passages than to anything else in the five books I have selected. The Literary Critical method will restrain my temptation to engage in textual disfranchisement by constantly forcing me to consider the Sabbath passages as parts of the whole. A helpful example from another domain is trying to “understand a motorcycle”. If we were to take apart a new Harley Davidson motorcycle and carefully study each component, we could achieve an impressive knowledge of all of the separate parts. But unless we also understand how the parts work together in a complete working motorcycle, we will fail in our overall objective of understanding the motorcycle. In the same way, I will be trying to understand in detail some specific parts of each book, but I will do so in the larger context of the overall purpose of the work. In other words I will be treating these works as literature, not pure autonomous collections of data.

In order to employ literary criticism we need to identify the role of a given passage within the larger setting of the chapter, the larger arguments in the book and finally the book itself. The literary critic recognizes that passages within texts have unique meanings, however, only by understanding how the overall meaning is achieved by a combination of the literary components will the reader gain the desired insight into the text.

The actual application of the literary method will largely consist of asking the right kind of questions. These questions will force the researcher to properly analyze the topic of the Sabbath in the Late Second Temple Period. I intend to proceed, book by book, in applying the method I have chosen. Here are some examples of the kind of

questions that I could ask throughout my thesis: What does *Jubilees*' insistence on the 364 day calendar have to do with the major themes of the Book like the supremacy of the law, the tension between Jews and the Gentiles, and the importance of strict interpretation and obedience? What are the differences between 1 and 2 Maccabees with regards to style, structure, vocabulary and point of view? Was 2 Maccabees written in response to 1 Maccabees? If, yes, then what alternative understanding was it trying to achieve and how did the Sabbath passages help to prove its main point? If, no, then what was the aspect of 1 Maccabees that it was supporting/expanding? What is the relationship of the Sabbath pericopes and the admonition section of the Damascus Document? What was the stylistic and therefore authorial purpose in separating the two? Were the Sabbath laws of the Damascus Document making a point in opposition or in support of the Sabbath interpretations in *Jubilees* and Maccabees? Why does Josephus choose to group events thematically and not chronologically? Which words are repeated constantly to underscore the message of these texts and will surely stand out to the readers/hearers of those works? What was the overall purpose of the work and how does Josephus use his Sabbath-related documents to actually prove his point or at least try to do so?

My main application, therefore, of this method will consist of interpreting Sabbath passages in the context of the main themes of each work and therefore in the context of the book as a whole, especially in the context of its genre and authorial intent.

## **1.7 Outline of the process**

### **1.7.1 Outline**

My analysis of each of the works will use the following outline/structure, which will help place the Sabbath pericopes within the overall context of each work:

- i. Introduction
  - a. Contents
  - b. Structure

- c. Genre
- d. Date and Purpose
- e. Author
- ii. Major Themes
  - a. Theme #1
  - b. Theme #2
  - c. Theme #3
- iii. Major Sabbath Pericopes
  - a. Pericope #1
  - b. Pericope #2
  - c. Pericope #3
  - d. Etc.
- iv. Summary of the Sabbath Pericopes
  - a. Fact #1
  - b. Fact #2
  - c. Fact #3
  - d. Etc.



### 1.7.2 Introduction

First, each of the books fitting my criteria for this particular study will be reviewed with regards to the overall content. In order to see how the Sabbath pericopes fit in the overall plan of the author, I will set forth the likely structures according to which the writers composed their works. There will also be a short discussion of genre, since knowing which genre the author used allows an easier and more accurate interpretation of the texts in question. Knowing when the book was composed is of great significance as well, since the dating is directly connected with determining the purpose of the original as well as the editorial stages of the compositions.<sup>30</sup> Finally, I will consider the person of

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<sup>30</sup> Johann Cook comments, “One of the problems in contemporary textual studies (MT, LXX and Qumran) is the inability of scholars to determine exactly where a deviating reading originates. In short it remains problematic to distinguish between the Hebrew Text used by the translator and the work of the

the author/editor whenever that identity can be determined. The issues of authorship and dating are complex ones, but they are still worth pursuing, since our interpretive success will be enhanced tremendously by a successful resolution of these issues.

### **1.7.3 Major Themes**

In this section I will seek to identify and briefly present to the reader several major themes of each book. For example, the book of *Jubilees*, in my opinion, has three major themes that run throughout the whole composition: 1) the supremacy of God's Law, 2) Israel vs. the Gentiles and 3) strict obedience. Once the major themes are identified, briefly described and explained, the reader can with comparative ease proceed to looking at the Sabbath pericopes themselves. The section that discusses the major themes of each work can potentially be challenging or even dangerous, since any author can give in to the temptation of being highly selective. In other words, she or he can potentially be reading something into the text that is not really there. However, the dangers should never deter mature innovation and faithful analysis. If the interpreter is mindful about her or his own propensity to read something into the text, the damage can be lessened, or, at times, altogether avoided. The end product could be a more careful and responsible reading of the text. Hence, while recognizing this difficulty, it is perfectly appropriate to read the book as a whole and then to ask oneself several important questions. Are there themes or words that are constantly being repeated? What are the ideas that should have been laid aside in order to cover other things and yet the author(s) keep(s) coming back to them? What are the sections/events/theologies/persons that the author(s) of the text spent disproportionate amount of time addressing? In the end this study could be fruitful because knowing what the major themes of the book are can help to see more clearly how the Sabbath Pericopes fit in the larger purpose of the book as addressed to its original audience.

### **1.7.4 Major Sabbath Pericopes**

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translator" ("Review Article: Towards an Appropriate Textual Base for the Old Testament," *JNSL* 20/1 [1994]: 171-177).



As the title of this section indicates, it will be dedicated to identifying and exegeting major Sabbath-related passages within each work to a depth appropriate to this project. To qualify as a major passage dealing with the Sabbath, I have used the following criteria:

- 1) The passage must state or describe something with regards to the Sabbath that is not simply a retelling of things that are commonly known about Sabbath-keeping in the Biblical accounts.<sup>31</sup>
- 2) The passage must state or describe something with regards to the Sabbath on a substantial level.<sup>32</sup>
- 3) The passage must state or describe something with regards to the Sabbath that did not already appear in another passage selected as a Major Sabbath Pericope.

Once a passage has qualified for this study, I will then seek to help the reader by summarizing its background information and then highlighting the key part/s of the passage that in my judgment state its very essence. Most of the time I will be asking a simple question of fact: What does this pericope say about the Sabbath? In this way most of the statements will be fairly descriptive in nature. Only in the cases where there is an ambiguity of meaning and/or translation will I engage in a more detailed treatment. In the end of the section for each book, after I have finished treating all major Sabbath-related

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<sup>31</sup> For example, in *Ant.* 1:33 Josephus quotes Moses: “Accordingly Moses says, ‘That in just six days the world, and all that is therein, was made; and that the seventh day was a rest, and a release from the labor of such operations;’ - where it is that we celebrate a rest from our labors on that day, and call it the Sabbath; which word denotes rest in the Hebrew tongue.”

<sup>32</sup> Simply using the word “Sabbath” does not automatically guarantee this passage a place in our study. For example, in *Judith* 10:2 we read, “she got up from the floor, summoned her maid and went down into the rooms which she used on Sabbath days and festivals.” Even though the passage indicates that Judith owned a palace large enough for some rooms to be used only on the Sabbath, it does not constitute any new information, nor does it mean that this idea was necessarily practiced by anyone else other than nobility with means.

passages, I will summarize everything I was able to glean from those texts in simple statements of fact.

### **1.7.5 Conclusion**

In this last section, which will naturally be the shortest of all, I will succinctly state the results of my research and seek to analyze/systematize the data. So let us begin our journey into the world of the Sabbath-related literature of the Late Second Temple Period.



# CHAPTER 2: *JUBILEES*

## 2.1 Introduction

### 2.1.1 Contents

The book of *Jubilees* is a pseudepigraphon<sup>33</sup> known prior to Qumran from a complete Ethiopic and partial Greek, Latin and Syriac translations. *Jubilees* was composed entirely in Hebrew, then translated into Greek and from Greek into Ethiopic, in which language alone it is extant in its entirety.<sup>34</sup> It has for the first time surfaced in a large number of mostly small fragments in its Hebrew original in five Qumran caves. According to Lane, the work is a midrashic retelling of the story of Genesis (and the beginning of Exodus) in the form of a revelation conveyed by angels to Moses.<sup>35</sup> Nickelsburg points out that the Book of *Jubilees* is an extensive elaboration of Genesis 1 – Exodus 12.<sup>36</sup> VanderKam succinctly summarizes the general content of the book: “The revelation proves to be a heavily edited rehearsal of the material from Genesis 1 to Exodus 20, all of which is incased in chronology which divides time into units of 49 years (*Jubilees*), each of which consist of ‘seven weeks of years.’”<sup>37</sup> The object of the author was to defend Judaism against the disintegrating effects of Hellenism, and the various means by which he did this will be discussed below. According to Ferguson, the

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<sup>33</sup> There are several schools of thought with regards to what actually constitutes Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha. Namely, Protestants and Catholics have defined those names differently. Apocrypha, the books of similar age to those in the Canon, are called deuterocanonical by Catholic theologians. Pseudepigrapha are the collections of books of the late second temple period that are usually attributed to Biblical figures. These terms in many ways have outlived themselves and at times are more confusing than helpful.

<sup>34</sup> See Nickelsburg, *Jewish Literature*, 79.

<sup>35</sup> See Allen Lane, *The Complete Dead Sea Scrolls in English* (New York: Penguin Books, 1997), 507.

<sup>36</sup> See Nickelsburg, *Jewish Literature*, 73.

<sup>37</sup> James VanderKam, “Book of *Jubilees*,” in *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, Vol. 3 (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 1030.

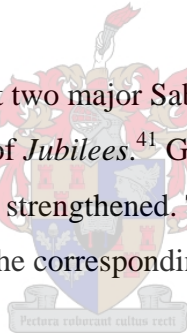
sins<sup>38</sup> most frequently and strongly opposed in the book of *Jubilees* are idolatry, fornication, and eating blood.<sup>39</sup>

### 2.1.2 Structure

According to Wintermute, the book of *Jubilees* can be outlined<sup>40</sup> as follows:

Chapter 1	Introduction
Chapters 2-4	Creation and Adam stories
Chapters 5-10	Noah stories
Chapters 11-23:8	Abraham stories
Chapters 23:9-32	Digression on Abraham's death
Chapters 24-45	Jacob and his family
Chapters 46-50	Moses stories

For Doering it is possible that two major Sabbath sections (2:17-33 and 50:6-13) form a frame around the main body of *Jubilees*.<sup>41</sup> Given the prominence of the Sabbath theme in this work, this possibility is strengthened. This frame is not a mere mechanical device, but rather it is supported by the corresponding biblical accounts (Gen. 1 and Ex. 12, 16).<sup>42</sup>



### 2.1.3 Genre

It is difficult to determine the precise genre of this work, since different parts of the book contain history, testament, apocalyptic, chronology and ritual law. This book is a pseudepigraphon, since it claims Mosaic authorship, in spite of the fact that it was written much later. When any author engaged in writing Pseudepigrapha first conceives

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<sup>38</sup> Interestingly enough, these were the three sins that the Jewish Christians gathered in Jerusalem warned against when writing to the Gentile converts about what they may or may not do (Acts 15:20, 29).

<sup>39</sup> See Everett Ferguson, *Backgrounds of Early Christianity* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), 451.

<sup>40</sup> See Orval Wintermute, "Jubilees: A New Translation and Introduction" *OTP*, Vol. 2 (New York: Doubleday, 1985), 35.

<sup>41</sup> Doering, "The Concept of the Sabbath in the Book of Jubilees", 179.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, 180.

of the idea that he must take the pen name of some authoritative biblical character, in order to confront the evils of his society by means of the precise application and proper interpretation of the Holy Writ something important happens. He or she, without suspecting, lets us into his own thought-world, letting us understand the current situation that in his view warranted him taking matters into his own hands and in some, be it a holy, manner, manipulating history to go in the “right” direction.

#### **2.1.4 Date and Purpose**

Dating is extremely important for this research. Much discussion has occurred among scholars seeking to determine the date of *Jubilees*' composition. Given the scope and the nature of this thesis, I will be simply relying on the opinions of major scholars who have spent a considerable amount of time studying the dating of the various works that I am now considering. To VanderKam it is clear that the book, which neither commands nor reflects separation from the remainder of the Jewish population but which manifests striking similarities with important teachings of the Scrolls, was written before the Qumran community was formed. According to VanderKam, for most scholars the exodus to Qumran transpired during the high priestly tenure of either Jonathan (152-142) or Simon (142-134).<sup>43</sup> He also carefully studied all the apparent allusions to Maccabean history and concluded that the latest events to which a reference can be found in *Jubilees* are Judas Maccabeus' wars in 161 BCE. If he is correct then the date of *Jubilees* must be set between 161-140 BCE.<sup>44</sup> For Nickelsburg 175 -100 BCE are the limits of the book's composition. He arrives at this conclusion by arguing that the matters addressed in *Jubilees* are directly connected with the Hellenistic Reform and that the book was known in Qumran. An earlier date of 168 BCE is being argued from the overabundance of references to the Gentiles in the work. The dates 162 and 152-140 BCE for Nickelsburg are not likely since the proposed connections with the Maccabean works are at best weak.<sup>45</sup>

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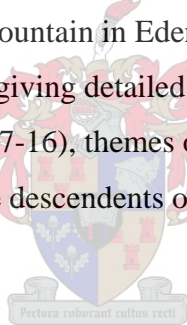
<sup>43</sup> See VanderKam, “*Jubilees*,” 1030.

<sup>44</sup> See Wintermute, “*Jubilees*,” 44.

<sup>45</sup> See Nickelsburg, *Jewish Literature*, 78-79.

### 2.1.5 Author

The implied author of *Jubilees* is none other than Moses. The real author is unknown. Several important details, however, can be deduced from the text itself. *Jubilees* is the work of a person who believed himself to be commissioned by Israel's god as he added to the open-ended canon of Jewish literature existing at the time and issued a prophetic call to the community of Israel to greater commitment to Israel's god through greater obedience to his Torah. The author was well-versed in Jewish religious literature; hence, the book presents itself almost as a compilation of quotations from various bodies of Jewish literature ranging from later canonical Tanach, to the various books of the OT Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha. It is also clear that the author was a priest. Many evidences of the author's priestly identity, according to VanderKam, are interspersed throughout the book: Sabbath inclusio (chaps. 2 and 50), the sacred calendar (4:17-18), the festivals celebrated by the patriarchs (6:17-22; 16:20-31, 18:18-19, 34:18-19, 49:1-22), Enoch burning incense on the mountain in Eden (4:25), Noah making atonement for the earth (6:1-4; cf.7:3-5), Abraham giving detailed instructions with regards to the sacrifice's procedures and wood (21:7-16), themes of purity and uncleanness (3:18-14; 6:37; 7:70-21; 11:17; 16:5-6) and the descendents of Isaac are "a nation of priests" (16:18).<sup>46</sup>



## 2.2 Major themes

### 2.2.1 Supremacy of the law

First, we see the supremacy of the law of Israel's god in the chronology of events in the book. As soon as the lengthy title of the book comes to an end, the book itself begins at Mount Sinai with the granting of the Decalogue to Israel and continuing through Moses and the Covenant Code. In contrast to the book of Genesis, which begins with Adam and the Fall, the book of *Jubilees* begins with Mount Sinai, Israel's election and the Law as a gracious invitation to the imitation of the one true god. In the chronology of *Jubilees*, long before Moses and the Law were given to Israel, Abraham and then Jacob after him celebrated the feasts of Israel's god (Weeks: 6:17-22; 15:1-2;

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<sup>46</sup> See VanderKam, "*Jubilees*," 1030.

44:1-4; cf. 22:1-6; Tabernacles: 16:20-31; 32:4-7, 27-29; Unleavened Bread: 18:18-19; 49:22-23; Atonement: 34:18-19; Passover: 49:1-22a).<sup>47</sup>

Secondly, we see the supremacy of the law of Israel's god in the actions attributed to Israel's father as well as other leading biblical characters. Abraham, for example, is shown here not only as faithful to the call to depart the city of idolatry. He also becomes a passionate reformer/cleanser of idol worship. Abraham's zeal for the law (that would only later be revealed to Israel) is obvious rhetorical/midrashic material that served to justify and ground the concerns of the priestly author (*Jub.* 12:12-14).

### 2.2.2 Israel vs. Gentiles

In *Jubilees* the author combined a notion of election with a fierce particularism. The author sets Israel over against the Gentiles in three ways:

First, the book presents a clear justification of Israel's taking the Land of Canaan on the basis of the Canaanites' earlier conquest of this land from Shem's portion (*Jub.* 10:27-34). In the mind of the writer there was no doubt that it was the Canaanites who took the Land of Israel many generations ago from its rightful owners, not vice versa. Possession of the Land by Israel was a divine mandate to reclaim that which was stolen by Gentiles from them in the days of old.

Second, there is a clear warning that if Israel does not keep the covenant with YHWH, then surely Israel will "forget the feasts of the covenant and walk according to the feasts of the Gentiles after their error and after their ignorance" (*Jub.* 6:35).<sup>48</sup> In the mind of our author, it was never an issue of keeping the covenant or not keeping it. It was always, and only, an issue of keeping the right covenant and worshiping the right god through the right feasts on the right days. Israel has her God and the Gentiles have theirs.

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<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, 1031.

<sup>48</sup> All *Jubilees* quotations unless otherwise noted are taken from *The Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament* by R.H. Charles (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1913).

Israel has her feasts as the Gentiles have their own. It is not simply a struggle to get Jews to celebrate the feasts vs. them remaining simply non-practicing. The author realizes that a human being is not physically or psychologically able to lead a cultureless life. He or she will adopt some culture and lead his or her life in that very context. If a Jew does not have Jewish “fruits,” he or she will soon find out that her connection to her Jewish “roots” may have been severely damaged all along.

Thirdly, the ideological agenda of validating Israel’s national identity is evident. Hebrew is described as the language of heaven and the original language of creation. The Hebrew language itself is viewed as divine, and hence like God’s creation. It is seen as a sign of the divine origin of the language that 22 is both the number of letters in the Hebrew alphabet and the number of major figures from Adam until Jacob (*Jub.* 12:25-27).

### **2.2.3 Strict obedience**

First, we see this distinctive feature of the book of *Jubilees* in the author’s insistence on doing extra and going further to obey the law of Israel’s god. Examples include the death penalty for breaking the Sabbath (while the *Damascus Document* advocated only a seven year reforming sentence), as well as “no war” policy, at the time when many accepted defensive fighting on the Sabbath as norm.

Second, we see strict obedience in the author’s emphasis on the 364 day calendar. For the author it was clear: the Creator had from all eternity ordained and sealed only one calendar by which Israel – his people – should measure their life’s journey. Israel had to have 364 days in a year, not only because of YHWH’s commandment, but also because of the divine origin of such a calendar.

The author displays a full commitment to the supremacy of the Sabbath over all other feasts that were given to Israel by her god. While the feasts are important in and of themselves, they should not be mixed and overlapped with the weekly Sabbaths. There was a direct correlation between heavenly calendar days and those that were lived out on



the earth by his people; hence, deviating from the right calendar on earth goes against Israel's harmony with the heavenly reality.

Third, strict obedience, according to Wintermute, points to the eschatological nature of the community consciousness. The matter of vital importance about which the author of *Jubilees* wished to instruct his contemporaries was the necessity of strictly obeying the Law. The writer anticipated an age of increasing blessings in his own time, which will result from renewed loyalty to the Law.<sup>49</sup> In the context of this approaching eschatological reality and the current great privilege of Israel's election, strict obedience to the Law appears to be far more logical than it would have been without these crucial contextual points.

## 2.3 Major Sabbath Pericopes

### 2.3.1 *Jub. 2:17-36*

This passage can be divided into several sections for the purpose of study. First, the heavenly origins of Sabbath-keeping are affirmed in 2:17-19a, where heaven's Sabbath-keeping is discussed. YHWH and the angels of his presence are engaged in the on-going practice of Sabbath observance. The angels affirm to Israel, "He hath bidden us to keep the Sabbath with Him in heaven and on earth." The doctrine of the Supremacy of the Law, as manifest in the heavenly keeping of the Sabbath finds its application in this passage as in many others.

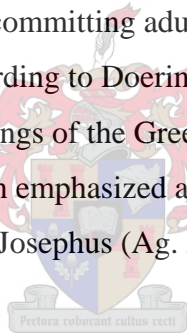
Second, Israel is established as elect among the nations in 2:19b-21a. The election and separateness of Israel from all other nations of the Earth seems to be a recurring theme in the Late Second Temple literature and especially here in the Book of *Jubilees*. The Creator is quoted here: "Behold, I will separate unto Myself a people from among all the peoples, and these shall keep the Sabbath day." Covenant election is the very basis of anything that is written or inferred in any way in this book. Our author was purposely drawing parallels between Israel and the Sabbath. YHWH has blessed and sanctified both

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<sup>49</sup> See Wintermute, "*Jubilees*," 38.

Israel and the Sabbath; therefore, keeping the Sabbath is a means by which Israel's holiness is marked.

Third, in 2:21b-22a the Sabbath is presented as a covenant sign, harkening back to 2:17. It is in the context of this covenant election that we realize that the Sabbath is a very special commandment. It is both a commandment and a sign of the special, covenantal relationship between Israel and her god: "Thus He created therein a sign in accordance with which they should keep the Sabbath." Strict adherence to this commandment equals passionate commitment to the god who issued it. This we will see later in more detail. The authors spare no effort in establishing the covenant relationship of Israel with their god as the emphasis in this work. In other Jewish writings, the idea that the Sabbath was something "personal" only between YHWH and Israel is even clearer. Perhaps the most radical idea that exemplifies this type of exclusivism is the idea that Gentiles who would keep the Sabbath would actually be committing adultery by doing so, because Israel alone is the bride of YHWH.<sup>50</sup> According to Doering, "in this exclusivism the book of *Jubilees* differs greatly with the writings of the Greek-speaking Jewish Diaspora where inclusivism and commonality is often emphasized as argued by Aristobulus (Fragment 5), Philo (Opif. 89-128; Mos. 2:21) and Josephus (Ag. Ap. 2:282)."<sup>51</sup>



Fourth, a hint for the future doctrine of the heavenly origin of the Hebrew language is given in 2:22b-23. This comes up in other portions of the book of *Jubilees*, establishing Israel's connection with the divine origins (creation and covenant) connecting generations of the faithful as well as the types of creation made by YHWH with the 22 letters of the Hebrew language: "There (were) two and twenty heads of mankind from Adam to Jacob, and two and twenty kinds of work were made until the seventh day."

Fifth, severe punishment is emphasized for breaking the Sabbath. From the standpoint of our author, nothing short of full subscription to the Torah standards of

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<sup>50</sup> See Doering, "The Concept of the Sabbath," 190.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

Israel's god would insure YHWH's allegiance to Israel. This strictness, of course, needs to be seen in the context of the great privilege, great election and great sign given to Israel. So, the disregard of such great things should receive an appropriate disciplinary action: "Whoever does any work thereon shall die, and that he who defiles it shall surely die."

Sixth, in 2:28-29a it is clear that breaking this commandment is a heart related problem. As we read about the Sabbath in our time, when the Christian Sabbath-keeping practice has been virtually abrogated, it is easy for us to dismiss the passionate desire to obey the Sabbath in full measure as resulting from legalistic Jewish tendencies. However, it is important to see that our author saw breaking of the Sabbath as only a surface issue revealing the real problem, which hid in the unbelieving heart of the covenant-breaker. Sabbath-keeping was to be performed not in dry legalistic obedience but as the holy duty of the redeemed heart: "They should keep Sabbath thereon, and that they should not forsake it in the error of their hearts."

Seventh, uncompromising fulfillment of the commandment is demanded in 2:29b-30a. The book of *Jubilees* knows nothing about constructing Erub for the more convenient keeping of the Sabbath, a practice that had developed by the time of the composition of the Targums.<sup>52</sup> So it is that we see in this book an uncompromising call to full obedience to the ordinances of Israel's god, especially the ordinances of the Sabbath: "Not to bring in or take out thereon through their gates any burden, which they had not prepared for themselves on the sixth day in their dwellings."

Eighth, in 2:30-36 we are given a succinct summary of the chapter, citing the ancient and heavenly origins of the commandment, and emphasizing Israel's covenantal privilege that ought to be passed on to future generations of YHWH's elect people: "We kept Sabbath in the heavens before it was made known to any flesh to keep Sabbath thereon on the earth. And the Creator of all things blessed it, but he did not sanctify all

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<sup>52</sup> *Erub* is a special structure that is jointly owned and is shared by several families that live near by, which allows for getting food in and out of the house in a way that does not technically break the letter of the Sabbath commandment.

peoples and nations to keep Sabbath thereon, but Israel alone ... This law and testimony was given to the children of Israel as a law for ever unto their generations.” What is the reason behind the call to strict obedience to the law of Israel’s god? It is because the heavenly community is committed to do the same and have done so long before Israel was commanded to join the company.

### **2.3.2 Jub. 6:30-38**

In this second pericope, once again I will divide the text according to the logical breaks for the purposes of organizing the material.

First, heavenly origin is established in 6:30b-31: “Thus it is engraven and ordained on the heavenly tablets. And there is no neglecting (this commandment) for a single year or from year to year.” Just as the validity of Moses’ tabernacle is established by its original that is in heaven (Heb. 8:5), so this 364 day earthly calendar is to be observed because of its heavenly origins. Once again the idea of the supremacy of the law is set forth and validated in this section.

Second, the number of days in the full year is set forth in 6:32-33a. Wintermute is once again helpful here: “The author believed that there was a theological value inherent in certain special times. Unlike modern man, he did not limit himself to the quantitative measuring or counting of days from an arbitrary starting point. For him, the days are also to be divided on a qualitative scale with respect to their sanctity. Some days were sacred and others profane.”<sup>53</sup> None of the feasts ever fell on the Sabbaths: “That they observe the years according to this reckoning - three hundred and sixty-four days, and (these) will constitute a complete year, and they will not disturb its time from its days and from its feasts.” No Sabbath, as the greatest of all feasts of Israel, ought to be overshadowed by other holiday activities that Israel’s god decreed. Strict obedience to the Law simply meant that all the commandments were to be obeyed. To celebrate Sabbath and the Feasts on the same day was to attempt “to kill two birds with one stone.” This was completely unacceptable in view of the nature of the Law and the history of the Covenant people.

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<sup>53</sup> Wintermute, “*Jubilees*,” 38.

Three, the costly consequences of following the wrong counting of days is set forth in 6:33-38: “They will disturb all their seasons and the years will be dislodged from this (order) ... all the children of Israel ... will forget the new moons, and seasons, and Sabbaths.” Forgetting the holy days of YHWH is equal to walking “according to the feasts of the Gentiles after their error and after their ignorance.”

### **2.3.3 Jub. 50:8-13**

The third and last major pericope reemphasizes Israel’s god’s covenant election. But it does not simply restate this fact but goes on to set forth what exactly constitutes the breaking of the Sabbath.

First, in this last pericope under consideration, in 50:8-10a our author describes some of the work that is forbidden on the Sabbath, including a prohibition of sexual relations on the Sabbath, speaking about business and drawing water.<sup>54</sup> “Whoever desecrates that day, whoever lies with (his) wife, or whoever says he will do something on it, that he will set out on a journey thereon in regard to any buying or selling: and whoever draws water thereon which he had not prepared for himself on the sixth day.” The Law cannot be supreme in the life of a human being if on the Sabbath common things are done. All days are YHWH’s, but the Sabbath has a special seal of approval. This is the day for self-discipline, for developing trust in God’s provision, for once-a-week confession that Israel’s god is the Lord of this particular covenant-keeper.

Second, he states the reason for the immense importance assigned to keeping the Sabbath in 50:10a: “For great is the honor which YHWH has given to Israel that they should eat and drink and be satisfied on this festival day.” Once again the electoral privilege given to Israel by her God is evoked. It is an honor that was not offered to any other people on the face of the earth. The Sabbath is so holy that only heavenly work is allowed. It cannot be contaminated with the good things of this world, but may only be filled with the good things of the world to come.

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<sup>54</sup> This is another link with the *Damascus Document*.

Third, the heavenly work (worship) which is allowed is briefly discussed in 50:10b-12a, “Rest thereon from all labor which belongs to the labor of the children of men save burning frankincense and bringing oblations and sacrifices before YHWH ... This work alone shall be done on the Sabbath-days in the sanctuary of YHWH your God.” It is not work that is actually forbidden on the Sabbath, but labor. The word for “worship” can after all be translated as work. In this sense it is a work of another kind.

Fourth, more types of work that are forbidden are listed in 50:12b-13a. The author states that, “... every man who does any work thereon, or goes on a journey, or tills (his) farm, whether in his house or any other place, and whoever lights a fire, or rides on any beast, or travels by ship on the sea, and whoever strikes or kills anything, or slaughters a beast or a bird, or whoever catches an animal or a bird or a fish, or whoever fasts or makes war on the Sabbaths ...” can not be a part of the covenant-keeping community that the author of Jubilees envisioned. As we will see later, the Maccabean wars will form a special challenge to the various Jewish communities of the time. All of them would be coping with the issues in different ways. Some would alter their Sabbath practice radically, some would do so moderately and some like this group would stay with the traditional interpretation and be a witness among the people in an age of compromise.

Fifth, the summary-conclusion follows in 50:13b with a stern reminder of the penalty of Sabbath breaking, the electoral responsibility of the children of Israel to the land of YHWH, a recollection of the Sabbath’s heavenly origin, and the correct numbering/division of time: “The man who does any of these things on the Sabbath shall die, so that the children of Israel shall observe the Sabbaths according to the commandments regarding the Sabbaths of the land, as it is written in the tablets, which He gave into my hands that I should write out for thee the laws of the seasons, and the seasons according to the division of their days. Herewith is completed the account of the division of the days.” Keeping the right festival on the right day was a core, rather than a peripheral issue in the minds of at least some representatives of the Jewish community of the Late Second Temple Period. The penalty for Sabbath-breaking was death, signifying once again the supremacy of the Law in general and the nature of the covenant sign belonging to it in particular. When “stealing” (Lev. 6:2-7) and even “rape/premarital sex”

(Deut. 22:28-29) are punishable with correctional deeds, but Sabbath-breaking with the ultimate penalty (death), one is forced to acknowledge the disproportionate significance of this commandment compared to many others and hence to consider what it represents to the people of Israel.

## 2.4 Summary

First, the Sabbath's heavenly origin is affirmed not only in the sense that God issued the command, but also because Sabbath-keeping is at the heart of heavenly life itself (2:17-19; 6:30b-31).

Second, the Sabbath comes as a covenant sign. God chose Israel out of all the nations and commanded her to keep the Sabbath. Israel and the Sabbath are forever bound up together for YHWH has sanctified them both (2:19-22).

Third, capital punishment was to be administered to anyone who has violated the Sabbath or in any way profaned it (2:26; 50:13b).

Fourth, Sabbath-keeping was not primarily outward and superficial in character, but an inner duty of the heart (2:28-29).

Fifth, the Sabbath was to be obeyed without any inventions of man, fully and without any compromise or avoidance (2:29-30).

Sixth, the weekly Sabbath was greater than any of the feasts of Israel. No Sabbath, as the greatest of all feasts of Israel, ought to be overshadowed by other holiday activities that Israel's god also decreed. The feasts could not supersede the Sabbath. The only means to accomplish this is to order life according to the heavenly 364 day calendar (6:32-33).

Seventh, sexual relationship, contemplating/talking about any business activity or even drawing water was forbidden on the Sabbath (50:8-10). The prohibition list also includes taking a journey, farming, creating fire, riding on any kind of animal, striking or killing anything, catching a living thing, fasting or making war (50:12b-13a).

Eighth, Sabbath-keeping was to be characterized by joy and satisfaction (50:10a).

Ninth, only Temple worship takes precedent over observance of the Sabbath commandment (50:10b-12a).





# CHAPTER 3: 1 MACCABEES

## 3.1 Introduction

### 3.1.1 Contents

The book tells a story. The story starts with the ascension of Antiochus IV Epiphanes (175 BCE) and ends with the death of Simon (134 BCE). According to Ferguson, the author gives a straightforward, if patriotic, account of the careers of the three Hasmonean brothers – Judas, Jonathan and Simon. His main goal is to show national achievement.<sup>55</sup> This is a pro-Hasmonean work, where Judas and his brothers are center-stage. This is clearly seen in 5:62 where we are told that some people failed because “they did not belong to the family of those men through whom deliverance was given to Israel.”<sup>56</sup>

There is a tension that is felt throughout the work. The book is characterized by the profound sense of “fighting for YHWH’s cause and under his protection” (5:33, 54, 56-60; 6:5-16; 7:40-42). When Jonathan wrote to some of his allies he argued, “We were unwilling to trouble you or our other allies and friends during these wars, since we have the support of Heaven to help us” (12:14-15). The trickery of the wicked Alcimus, who was appointed the high priest, is described as scriptural fulfillment: “They believed him, but he arrested sixty of them and put them to death on one day, fulfilling the words of scripture: ‘They have scattered the bodies of your faithful, and shed their blood all round Jerusalem, leaving no one to bury them!’” (7:16-17). However, even with all this confidence and holy rhetoric there was a sad acknowledgement that the heroes rose up and fought without the express guidance and direction of the prophetic office (1 Macc 4:40, 9:27; 14:41).<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> See Ferguson, *Backgrounds*, 447.

<sup>56</sup> All citations here and throughout, unless otherwise noted, are taken from RSV Bible (San Francisco: Arion Press, 2000).

<sup>57</sup> There are clear parallels between 1 Maccabees and the books of Ezra and Nehemiah, which deal with God’s care for his people in the period of their domination by the Persian Empire (see Howard Clark

### 3.1.2 Structure

The First Book of Maccabees covers the following:

- Chapter 1      Antiochus IV Epiphanes and the desecration of the Temple (175-167 BCE).
- Chapter 2      Mattathias initiates the resistance (166 BCE).
- Chapters 3-8    The struggle under Judas, who liberates the Temple but eventually perishes as a result of renewed efforts by Demetrius I to install Alcimus, one of the Hellenizers, as high priest (166-160 BCE).
- Chapters 9-12   Jonathan takes up the fight, driving the Syrians from the country, becoming high priest (150 B.C.E), taking various sides in the politics of the empire and finally perishing as a captive (160-143 B.C.E).
- Chapters 13-16   Simon follows Jonathan, becoming both ethnarch and high priest as a result of the acclamation of the Jewish people, securing virtual independence from the Syrians, and finally falling to an assassin's sword to be succeeded by John Hyrcanus, his son (143-134 BCE).

### 3.1.3 Genre

There are many books where the genre is not readily apparent or is mixed with other genres. This is certainly not the case here. The work is clearly historical narrative. The author quotes what appear to be real documents, treaties and letters that the Maccabean leadership and the leaders of foreign nations and empires used in their correspondence with each other. Bickerman points out, "the original I Maccabees must have been a work along the lines of the book of Judges or of the books of Samuel, since it

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Kee, *The Cambridge Annotated Study Apocrypha: New Revised Standard Version* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994], xxiv).

used biblical historiography as its model.”<sup>58</sup> Of course, that does not mean that everything in it is necessarily historically accurate, or that it describes only those things that have taken place without any subjective add-ons, but rather that the author was describing what happened and how it happened from his point of view.

### 3.1.4 Date and purpose

The book was not written until some time after the beginning of the reign of John Hyrcanus (135-105 BCE), because it documents his accession and administration. The latest possible date is generally admitted to be prior to 63 BCE, the year of the occupation of Jerusalem by Pompey; but, there is some difficulty in fixing the exact date. Whether it can be placed as early as the reign of Hyrcanus depends on the meaning of the concluding verse: “Behold these [the Acts of Hyrcanus] are written in the book of the days of his priesthood, from the time that he was made high priest after his father.” According to Bechtel, there are those who understand this verse to indicate that Hyrcanus was then still alive, and this seems to be the more natural meaning. Others, however, take it to imply that Hyrcanus was already dead. In this latter supposition, the composition of the work must have followed closely upon his death. This is clear because not only does the vivid character of the narrative suggest a period shortly after the events, but the absence of even the slightest allusion to events later than the death of Hyrcanus, and, in particular, to the conduct of his two successors, which aroused popular hatred against the Maccabees, makes a much later date improbable. The date would, therefore, in any case, be within the last years of the Second Century BCE.<sup>59</sup>

### 3.1.5 Author

It is unclear who the author/s of this work is/are. Names have indeed been mentioned, but on groundless conjecture. That he was a native of Palestine is evident from the language in which he wrote, and from the thorough knowledge of the geography

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<sup>58</sup> Elias Bickerman, *The God of Maccabees: Studies on the Meaning and Origin of the Maccabean Revolt*, trans. Horst R. Moehring (Leiden: Brill, 1979), 95.

<sup>59</sup> See Francis Bechtel, “1 Maccabees” in *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, Vol. 9 (New York: The Encyclopedia Press, 1913), 496.

of Palestine that he possessed. Although he rarely expresses his own sentiments, the spirit pervading his work is a proof that he was deeply religious, zealous for the Law and thoroughly in sympathy with the Maccabean movement and its leaders.<sup>60</sup> According to Rappaport the book embodies firsthand knowledge either from the author's own experience or from eyewitnesses. The descriptions seem real, vivid, detailed and concrete (6:43-46). It is also clear that the author had access to some important documents (11:30-31),<sup>61</sup> which speak to his status in society either as a wealthy man, a community leader or someone especially commissioned by the Hasmonean royal court to write this book in support of the dynasty.

## 3.2 Major themes

### 3.2.1 Military achievement

According to Bickerman, in this work "God's wrath" (1:64; 2:49) is not calmed through repentance and prayer, as in Daniel, nor through the blood of martyrs, as in 2 Maccabees. Instead, we hear of the military achievement of Judas: "He passed through the towns of Judea; he destroyed the godless there. He turned wrath away from Israel" (1 Macc. 3:8).<sup>62</sup> According to this book it was the uncompromising, and yet shrewd, actions of the Maccabees that led Lycias to finally suggest to his advisors that they reconsider their treatment of the Jews: "Let us grant them permission to follow their own customs as before, since it is our abolition of these customs that has provoked them into acting like this" (6:59). The Jews were no longer in shame. Instead they "were covered in glory, in the eyes of the king and of everyone else in his kingdom" (11:50-51).

All three brothers are shown as successful in their political and military endeavors; however, none of the others comes close to the political and military success and savvy of Simon, the last of the three brothers: "When the King's Friend,<sup>63</sup> Athenobius, reached

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<sup>60</sup> Ibid.

<sup>61</sup> See Uriel Rappaport, "Maccabean Revolt" in *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, Vol. 4, ed. David Noel Freedman (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 433.

<sup>62</sup> See Bickerman, *God of Maccabees*, 20.

<sup>63</sup> This is an official title of imperial benevolence and proven loyalty.

Jerusalem and saw Simon's magnificence, his cabinet of gold and silver plate and the state he kept, he was dumbfounded" (15:32). The rise of the Roman Empire improved Jewish fortunes even further under his leadership: "King Demetrius has heard that the Romans call the Jews their friends, allies and brothers, and that they have given an honorable reception to Simon's ambassadors, and, furthermore, that the Jews and priests are happy that Simon should, pending the advent of a genuine prophet, be their ethnarch and high priest for life" (14:38-40).<sup>64</sup> The success of Simon's leadership reaches its height when the author of this book describes his reign in terms of the near-messianic fulfillment (Jer. 33:9) of biblical prophecy: "He (Simon) established peace in the land, and Israel knew great joy" (14:11; 9:72).

### 3.2.2 Israel vs. Gentiles

In this book the covenant-keepers within Israel battle the Gentile forces and their Jewish sympathizers,<sup>65</sup> who are enemies of theirs and consequently of their covenant god: "Judas had raised a mixed force of believers and seasoned fighters" (3:13) against Seron of Syria, who "therefore launched another expedition, with a strong army of unbelievers to support him" (3:15). Israel is the nation that is in covenant with the right god. The rest of the people of the earth are Gentiles - the nations outside of that right covenant relationship. Not only are the Gentiles people outside of the covenant with YHWH, they are also the blasphemers, not passive in their ignorance, but persistently active in their hate towards the Holy City. The devastation of the Temple is primarily described in terms of the Gentiles trespassing its borders: "The sanctuary was trodden under foot, men of an alien race held the Citadel, which had become lodging for Gentiles" (3:45). Gentiles are essentially idol worshipers (3:48). Gentiles ally for the purpose of destroying God's people (3:50-52; 58-59). Gentiles are the ones whose attacks the Jews were to expect

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<sup>64</sup> King of Syria 162-150 BCE; Demetrius appointed Alcimus high priest of the Jews.

<sup>65</sup> As always, revolts are supported more by the lower class and are opposed by the high, economically stable, class. It is generally true simply because the poor have nothing to lose in comparison to the stock that the rich have in peace and the stability of society. They are, of course, often willing to uphold that peace at the expense of purity and national independence.

many more times in the future (4:60). The moral wrongs of the Israelites are compared to the moral wrongs of the Gentiles to put the Israelites to shame (7:21-23).

It is interesting that chapters 1-7 refer to the non-Jews as Gentiles (*ethnos*) 34 times, but when the negative political climate has changed to the positive in chapters 8-16, the word Gentile is used only twice (12:53; 13:41-42). Chapter 8 starts with a Roman takeover and the beginning of a new era, which initially displays a positive attitude towards the Jews. As we consider this drop in frequency from thirty four to just two, we should present a reasonable explanation/s. Without assuming too much and jumping to far reaching conclusions with relatively little data, it is safe to conclude that the word nations (*ethnos*) as opposed to people (*laos*) was used more often when the circumstantial relationships with non-Jewish nations were generally negative.<sup>66</sup> If I am correct in my suggestion, then the word Gentile in this work would not be applicable to non-Jews in general, but rather be used to describe a hostile non-Jew in particular.

### 3.2.3 Zeal for YHWH's Covenant

Zeal is certainly one of the most important themes of this great work. It was their zeal that caused the Maccabees to rise up against the Gentile rulers. The author describes it as follows: “So the men of the forces encamped, and he fought against the city all that day and all the night, and the city was delivered into his hands. He destroyed every male by the edge of the sword, and razed and plundered the city. Then he passed through the city over the slain” (5:50-51). The zeal that is described in this book is so strong that one reading it from the social location of the twenty first century could be rather surprised at the brutality and glorified violence. Those “R”-rated actions move Maccabees from the realm of a cute children’s story into the arena of armed struggle. The Maccabees look a lot more like a Jewish Taliban, which sought to bring the standards of God’s Law to bear upon the life of every member of the society under their control or a Hebrew Al-Qaeda that will fight until the forces of the infidels are driven away from their shrines and are put in their rightful place under the foot of true righteousness.

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<sup>66</sup> Other contributing factors to this change in the use of the word may include: 1) different authorship and 2) different date of completion.

### 3.3 Major Sabbath Pericopes

There are two major Sabbath-related pericopes in 1 Maccabees (1:1-42; 2:1-70).

#### 3.3.1 1 Macc. 1:1-42

In this pericope, the interactions relating to the Sabbath are intertwined with the socio-political events of the time, so to treat Sabbath-related material in isolation would be a mistake. The Sabbath should be seen in this book in the context of the Gentile offensive against God's people.

First, the brief story of the victorious conquests of Alexander the Great is recorded in 1:1-8. His reign is described by our author as follows: "So he advanced to the ends of the earth, plundering nation after nation; the earth grew silent before him, and his ambitious heart swelled with pride." The association of Gentiles with arrogance and pride is characteristic of the literature of this period. This short narrative ends with Alexander's death.

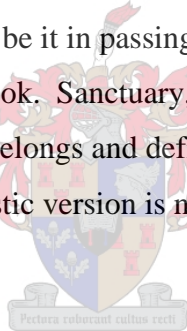
Second, the progression from the three Gentile generals to the ultimate enemy of the Jewish people during the time of which the book speaks, is described in 1:9-10: "From these there grew a wicked offshoot, Antiochus Epiphanes son of King Antiochus; once a hostage in Rome, he became king."

Third, the apostasy of the Jews who sided with Hellenizers is described in 1:11-15: "'Come,' they said, 'let us ally ourselves with the Gentiles.'" The apostasy took place with the express permission of the king: "A number of the people eagerly approached the king, who authorized them to practice the Gentiles' observances." The apostate Jews are as much under the judgment of God as the Gentiles whom they are assisting in the attempted Gentilization of their own nation. The theme of Israel vs. the Gentiles will come up again and again through all the treatment of the Sabbath by our author. For him Gentiles and their Jewish supporters are the enemies of God described in military terms as quoted above.



Fourth, the story of the conquest of Egypt and Judea by Antiochus Epiphanes is covered in 1:16-24. His actions towards Jerusalem's Temple made him the ultimate enemy: "Insolently breaking into the sanctuary, he removed the golden altar and the lamp-stand for the light with all its fittings ... having shed much blood and uttered words of extreme arrogance."

Fifth, the incredible devastation that Antiochus wrought on Judea is described at length in 1:25-40: "Rulers and elders groaned ... the bride sat grief-stricken on her marriage-bed." The cosmic significance of the humiliation of the house of Jacob is affirmed: "The earth quaked because of its inhabitants and the whole House of Jacob was clothed with shame." Judea's religious cult was laid in ruins: "Her sanctuary became as forsaken as a desert, her feasts were turned into mourning, her Sabbaths into a mockery, her honor into reproach. Her dishonor now fully matched her former glory, her greatness was turned into grief." This passage, be it in passing, points out the enormous significance of the Sabbath in this book. Sanctuary, feasts, honor and Sabbath are grouped together as something that belongs and defines the people of Israel. According to our author the Sabbath in its Hellenistic version is not simply trespassed, but rather turned into mockery.



Sixth, the religio-political unification proclamation was issued by the wicked conqueror and is recorded in 1:41-64: "All were to become a single people, each nation renouncing its particular customs. All the Gentiles conformed to the king's decree, and many Israelites chose to accept his religion, sacrificing to idols and profaning the Sabbath." Here again Sabbath-breaking is not a peripheral issue, but rather it is coupled with the worst sin that Israel could possibly commit – the sin of idol worship.

In the case of Judea, the proclamation aimed at the very core of the religious observance of the Jews "banning burnt offerings, sacrifices and libations from the sanctuary, profaning Sabbaths and feasts, defiling the sanctuary and everything holy, building altars, shrines and temples for idols, sacrificing pigs and unclean beasts, leaving their sons uncircumcised, and prostituting themselves to all kinds of impurity and

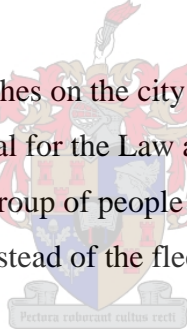


abomination, so that they should forget the Law and revoke all observance of it.” The graphic and fairly detailed description evokes in the mind of the reader the passion and commitment that the author and the editorial community had while creating this document. This was a charged environment where calmness and Victorian kindness would not do the trick. The edict was not empty words: “Anyone not obeying the king’s command was to be put to death.”

### 3.3.2 1 Macc. 2:27-44

As Mattathias son of John laments about the condition of God’s people and Jerusalem (2:1-14), a personal invitation is given to him to lead his people in obedience to the decree of the pagan king (2:15-18). He responds courageously as a devoted servant of YHWH (2:19-22) by refusing the offer, demonstrating his spiritual roots as a true son of biblical Phinehas (2:23-26). Our Sabbath passage comes on the heels of these events.

In vv. 27-30 Mattathias preaches on the city streets “shouting at the top of his voice, ‘Let everyone who has any zeal for the Law and takes his stand on the covenant come out and follow me.’” A large group of people partially responded to his call. They left the city, but went to the desert instead of the fleeing to the hills (vv. 28-30).



A quick and forceful response awaited those who left for the hiding places in the desert as is described in vv. 31-33. Goldstein puts it well when he writes: “The author sharply contrasts the Hasmoneans’ David-like realism with the foolish faith of the martyrs in their interpretation of prophecy. The Hasmoneans flee, unimpeded by property, to the ragged but watered mountains, there to fight successfully. The martyrs flee, encumbered by their flocks, down to the desert, seeking a miracle, only to perish.”<sup>67</sup> The Acra based detachment stationed itself and prepared to launch a full attack on the approaching Sabbath Day. The identifying of the hideouts was an “inside job,” which once again points to the “in-house” Jewish civil struggle. As we will see later, this was indeed a defining moment in the history of Jewish Sabbath-practice.

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<sup>67</sup> Jonathan Goldstein, *I Maccabees: A New Translation and Commentary*, AB 41 (Garden City: DoubleDay and Co., 1977), 235.

A brief description of failed negotiations and the following massacre is located in vv. 33-38. The people's refusal to surrender and worship in obedience to the King's orders is set forth in v. 34: "We refuse to come out, and we will not obey the king's orders and profane the Sabbath day." Dancey argues that Philip did not choose the Sabbath day for his expedition because the Jews would not defend themselves on the Sabbath day, but because keeping of the Sabbath was in itself a violation of the decree (1:45). So to the Jews simply coming out of the cave would constitute the breaking of the Sabbath (Ex. 16:29). The military significance of the day of the week was initially subordinate in the minds of both sides.<sup>68</sup> A well-calculated attack was launched (v. 35). No opposition was offered in any way (v. 36): "They only said, 'Let us all die innocent; let heaven and earth bear witness that you are massacring us with no pretence of justice.'" About one thousand men, women and children were massacred that day (v. 38). Zeal for YHWH's covenant is clearly one of the major thematic emphases of the book. This zeal, whether right or wrong, was responsible for this event that some considered a foolish stubbornness and unnecessary loss of life and others an act of heroism and martyrdom. When Jesus discusses the issues of Sabbath-keeping with the Pharisees in the New Testament he does not do so in a religio-political vacuum, but rather much of his thinking is steeped in the previous hermeneutical battles like this one and others to come.

The response of Mattathias' group of insurgents is recorded in vv. 39-41. It was characterized by mourning (v. 39) and the realization that their current Sabbath-keeping hermeneutic was not sufficient (v. 40). They reasoned, "If we all do as our brothers have done, and refuse to fight the Gentiles for our lives and institutions, they will only destroy us the sooner from the earth." After a long deliberation that is skipped in the text they came to the following conclusion: "If anyone attacks us on the Sabbath day, whoever he may be, we shall resist him; we must not all be killed, as our brothers were in the hiding places" (v. 41). It is clear that from this time on this view gained more and more adherents, but it is also clear that it had its own share of critics who ranged from moderate to radical in their opposition to this new interpretation. As was mentioned in

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<sup>68</sup> See J. C. Dancey, *A Commentary on I Maccabees* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1954), 86.

the discussion in the book of *Jubilees*, the community was taking a stand in favor of waging defensive war on the Sabbath. In contrast, as we will see later, in the *Damascus Document* the Sabbath was clearly valued more than human life, as shown by the limitations the *Damascus Document* placed on the permissible means for saving life on the Sabbath.

The success of the Mattathian-led insurgency is covered in vv. 42-44. Their troops multiply in number (vv. 42-43). Their angry attack, however, is directed towards the Jews who supported Jerusalem's Hellenization. After organizing into a fighting force they struck down "the sinners in their anger, and the renegades in their fury, and those who escaped them fled to the Gentiles for safety" (v. 44). Mattathias took control of everything in Jerusalem, other than the Acra – the Citadel of the Gentiles and renegade Jews.

### 3.4 Summary

First, Sabbath-keeping was one of the major badges of identity of the faithful remnant of Israel during this crisis. In no way was the Sabbath a peripheral sign of belonging to the Chosen Nation; rather, it was one of the major signs of the holy covenant with Israel's god. Sabbath-keeping and refusing to worship idols are said to be of equal importance in determining who was unfaithful to the covenant with Israel's god (1:43).

Second, Sabbath-keeping required a new hermeneutic. It found its true-to-life interpretation in the decision<sup>69</sup> about defensive fighting reached by the Jewish insurgents (2:17). This Hasmonean propagandist exposes what he views as the errors, the folly, and even the baseness and sinfulness of pious Jews who differed with the Hasmoneans on whether it was permitted to resist the pagan king

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<sup>69</sup> This decision was so far-reaching that in the history of the modern state of Israel this new hermeneutic was applied time and time again. Indeed without this way of thinking Israel would have ceased to exist long time ago.

(1 Macc. 2:7-8) and to wage defensive warfare on the Sabbath (1 Macc. 2:29-41).<sup>70</sup> This view, however, was a view that did not enjoy the full, unquestioned support of all the Jewish communities of the Late Second Temple Period, but nevertheless emerged as victorious in Israel's continual interpretive struggle.



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<sup>70</sup> See Jonathan Goldstein, *II Maccabees: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, AB 41A (Garden City: Doubleday & Company, 1983), 17.

# CHAPTER 4: 2 MACCABEES

## 4.1 Introduction

### 4.1.1 Contents

2 Maccabees resembles 1 Maccabees because the book covers much of the same historical ground, but at closer reading enormous differences emerge. 1 Maccabees can be characterized as sober, straightforward and historical. The Book of 2 Maccabees, on the other hand, is exaggerated, often fantastic material characterized by chronological disorder. Nickelsburg argues that 2 Maccabees and 1 Maccabees can basically be described as one story with different meanings. The authors of both works come to the writing with different goals in mind, supporting different political structures and presenting different heroes and different villains.<sup>71</sup> According to Kee, the emphasis in 1 Maccabees is on the perseverance and power of the Jewish nationalists, while 2 Maccabees focuses on their true piety (as compared with the false religion of the Gentiles), which evokes God's presence as displayed in his covenantal, special care for Israel.<sup>72</sup> One gets a picture of the author of 2 Maccabees disagreeing with the author of 1 Maccabees and only then deciding to provide a new version of "what really happened there." According to Goldstein the authors of 1 and 2 Maccabees were bitter opponents, presenting entirely different accounts.<sup>73</sup> The issue of observed differences between 2 Maccabees and 1 Maccabees is valid, but establishing the precise reasons is a complicated matter. Does 2 Maccabees have more than one author? What is the role of Jason of Cyrene? Is there evidence that the author/s of 2 Maccabees had read 1 Maccabees? If there were two authors, who is responsible for the miraculous parts? Is it Jason (who might have written even before 1 Maccabees was completed) or the later redactor? In what other ways do the purposes and agendas of the two works differ and could other factors account for those differences?

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<sup>71</sup> See G. W. E. Nickelsburg, "1 and 2 Maccabees - Same Story, Different Meaning," *CTM* 42 (1971): 524-525.

<sup>72</sup> See Kee, *Cambridge Annotated Study Apocrypha*, xxvii.

<sup>73</sup> See Goldstein, *I Maccabees*, 4.

2 Maccabees is a far more detailed work that covers a shorter period of time. Theological reflections are far more common and explicit here than in its “predecessor.” The author writes seeking to provide the theology of covenantal judgment: “Now, I urge anyone who may read this book not to be dismayed at these calamities, but to reflect that such visitations are intended not to destroy our race but to discipline it” (6:12). Just like the first book, this work is a powerful tool in the pro-Hasmonean campaign of gaining and strengthening support for the new monarchy.

#### 4.1.2 Structure

The Second Book of Maccabees covers the following:

Chapter 1-2 Letters to the Jews in Egypt (2 Macc. 1:1-2:18).

Chapter 2 Author’s Preface (2 Macc. 2:19-32).

Chapter 3 Heliodorus’ Attempt To Profane the Temple (2 Macc. 3:1-40).

Chapter 4-7 Profanation and Persecution (2 Macc. 4:1-7:42).

Chapter 8-10 Victories of Judas and Purification of the Temple (2 Macc. 8:1-10:8).

Chapter 10-15 Renewed Persecution (2 Macc. 10:9-15:36).

Chapter 15 Epilogue (2 Macc. 15:37-39).

#### 4.1.3 Genre

According to Bickerman, this work belongs to a certain genre of Greek historiography, the pathetic historiography of the Hellenistic age.<sup>74</sup> According to Tcherikover, this type of history writing deliberately attempted to impress the reader by

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<sup>74</sup> See Bickerman, *God of Maccabees*, 95.

describing atrocities and crimes on the one hand, and acts of bravery and lofty traits of character on the other, and was not afraid to introduce the gods, with all the miracles and wonders involved in their appearance, into the course of history.<sup>75</sup>

#### **4.1.4 Date and Purpose**

Since the letter at the beginning of the book predates the rest of the book and is dated to the year 188 of the Seleucid Era or about 125 BCE, the composition of the book is no earlier than this time. The book also presupposes Jewish independence, which did not become a reality until the reign of John Hyrcanus (135-104 BCE). On the other hand, the Romans are referred to favorably throughout the book, suggesting it was written before they were seen as the enemy, which was the view after the Roman conquest of Jerusalem in 63 BCE. Grabbe argues that there seems to be no reason not to assign the date to a time near 125 BCE, or approximately the same time as 1 Maccabees.<sup>76</sup> There seems to be a short enough time between the publication of 1 Maccabees and this work to posit an author with an emotional urge to write something to set the record straight, to show that 1 Maccabees is but a colorless presentation of what Israel's god did for his people during this dark period. According to Tcherikover the rift between John Hyrcanus and the Pharisees may, therefore, be seen as the reason for the writing of 2 Maccabees. The years 124-110 BCE, therefore, are the most appropriate years for the book's composition.<sup>77</sup>

#### **4.1.5 Author**

The author of the original text is clearly Jason of Cyrene as stated in the text (2:23), but the main editor who was responsible for the abridged and updated version is unknown. According to Hengel, the name itself (Jason of Cyrene) indicates that he was not a Judean but either came from the Jewish Diaspora in Cyrenaica or at least spent a

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<sup>75</sup> See Victor Tcherikover, *Hellenistic Civilization and the Jews* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1999), 385-387.

<sup>76</sup> See Lester Grabbe, "I and II Maccabees" in *The Dictionary of New Testament Background* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 660.

<sup>77</sup> See Tcherikover, *Hellenistic Civilization*, 383.

good part of his life there. His work, which is profoundly influenced by the spirit of Hellenistic historiography, also presupposes that its author has received a thorough training in rhetoric, which he is most likely to have obtained in one of the academic centers of the time in Alexandria.<sup>78</sup> The author neither directly nor indirectly claims supernatural inspiration for this work. He is not like the author of *Jubilees* who believed that his writing is YHWH's words to Israel. The author/s of 2 Maccabees take/s full responsibility for the book by giving the following disclaimer: "If it is well composed and to the point, that is just what I wanted; if it is worthless and mediocre, that is all I could manage" (15:38-39; 2:25-32). The original author of the unabridged version had access to copies of the documents that were used in correspondence between the Jewish communities of Judea and the Diaspora.

## 4.2 Major themes

### 4.2.1 Unity

At least two letters were sent to Egypt from Jerusalem urging the observance of Chanukah. The earlier letter must have gone unheeded since the second was necessary. It is not surprising that Egyptian Judaism hesitated to celebrate the revolt. At least Onias IV and his followers were estranged from Jerusalem and "its illegitimate priesthood." According to Collins, the letters that were sent to Diaspora Jews are attempting to overcome this estrangement.<sup>79</sup> A history, which in effect separated the temple and the story of the revolt from the Hasmonean priests-kings could avoid party dissensions and enable the Jews of the Diaspora to affirm both the Temple and the independent Jewish state without acknowledging the authority of the Hasmoneans.<sup>80</sup>

### 4.2.2 Covenant

The persecution directed against the faithful Jews should not be viewed as an attempt to get rid of the Jewish faith as such, rather it was an attempt by fellow Jews to

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<sup>78</sup> See Martin Hengel, *Judaism and Hellenism: Studies in their Encounter in Palestine during the Early Hellenistic Period* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984), 95.

<sup>79</sup> See Collins, *Between Athens and Jerusalem*, 79.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*, 78.



civilize/modernize/hellenize it. Their goal was a noble one - to reform Judaism by eliminating the barbaric separatism, which they claimed had been introduced only late, and returning to the original forms of worship, free of any distortion.<sup>81</sup> According to Bickerman, it is a mistake to view the conflict as the conflict of Jews with Gentiles; rather, it was a conflict of Jews with other Jews. In other words, the Maccabean movement was, above all, a civil war, a religious struggle between reformers and the orthodox.<sup>82</sup> According to Collins, we should not be surprised, however, that a work that supports the Maccabean revolt was written in Greek, following Hellenistic conventions and style. The Maccabees were not xenophobic as can be seen from their delegations to Rome and Sparta.<sup>83</sup>

### 4.2.3 Temple

The Temple is among the most important themes of this work, since this is a work by a Jewish author who is passionate for God and His people, Israel. The Temple functioned in the Hebrew Bible as YHWH's embassy to humanity, stationed in the theological capitol of the Ancient World – Jerusalem, from the point of view of the Hebrew Scriptures (Is. 2:3). In 2 Maccabees this theme is extremely important. In fact, 12 chapters out of 15 have at least one verse each mentioning the Temple in some connection. The feast of cleansing of the Temple is established (1:18). The temple in Jerusalem is called great (2:19) and famous throughout the world (2:22). It was honored by non-Jewish royalty (3:2). The Lord defends his dwelling (3:30). It is the most holy Temple in the whole world (5:15). The Temple was to lose its Judean particularity by being renamed the Temple of Olympian Zeus (6:2).<sup>84</sup> It was the Temple that was at the

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<sup>81</sup> See Bickerman, *God of Maccabees*, 87.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, 90.

<sup>83</sup> See Collins, *Between Athens and Jerusalem*, 77.

<sup>84</sup> Bickerman argues that, when the people of Acra took over the sanctuary on Mount Mariah and they worshiped “Zeus Olympios,” this “Zeus” was no more a Hellenistic god than the “Jupiter” of Heliopolis was a Roman one. It merely meant that the Hellenized city, following the Hellenistic principle of respecting the local divinities, worshiped under the Greek name of “Zeus” the heaven-god of Jerusalem at his traditional site. This conclusion is confirmed by a negative, but nevertheless a very important, fact that the cult of Zion remained without an image even after the desecration of the sanctuary (Bickerman,

center of the Judean-Hellenistic conflict (8:2). Temple observance was at the heart of what it meant to be an Israelite (11:25). Desecration of the Temple for the Jews was a national disaster (13:10). The Temple was originally set up according to the will of YHWH (14:35).

#### 4.2.4 Israel's Piety

Yet another distinguishing quality of 2 Maccabees is its insistence that the Maccabean family (Judas and the brothers) were deeply pious people whose lives were characterized by reliance on God's promises, which was expressed in constant and fervent prayer (12:36; 13:12; 15:26-27). According to Goldstein, Jason never spoke of Mattathias' decision to permit defensive warfare on the Sabbath as in 1 Macc. 2:41; to him it was surely sinful as 2 Macc. 8:26-28 and 12:38-39 indicate. It is hard to believe that Judas completely avoided the decision which was so vital for his father and his brothers, but stricter Sabbath observance on his part may account for some of his ability to rally the pious.<sup>85</sup> "Judas, otherwise known as Maccabeus ... called on YHWH to have regard for the people oppressed on all sides, to take pity on the Temple profaned by the godless" (8:1-2).<sup>86</sup> On another occasion Judas "called on YHWH to show himself their ally and leader in battle" (12:36).<sup>87</sup> To summarize: the leaders of the rebellion were steeped in prayer while carrying out their holy insurgency (15:21).<sup>88</sup> Nickelsburg adds

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*God of Maccabees*, 68-69). When we read therefore that the Temple in Jerusalem was named after "Zeus Olympios," we ought not think that a new lord, a Greek god, was seen as its new Owner, who now dominated Zion, but rather that the old owner of the sanctuary, the "anonymous Jewish god," was listed in the Greek files of the new policy under the entry "Zeus Olympios." During the Hellenistic period the word for "Olympios" was synonymous to "Heaven." If that was so then the "Zeus Olympios" was a new label for the same old divinity, known in Hebrew Scriptures as "the God of Heaven" (Gen. 24:3, 7; Jos. 2:11; Ezra 1:2; Ps. 136:26; Dan. 2:18; Jon. 1:9; Rev. 11:13 and 16:11) (Ibid.).

<sup>85</sup> See Goldstein, *II Maccabees*, 495.

<sup>86</sup> All citations here and throughout, unless otherwise noted, are taken from RSV Bible (San Francisco: Arion Press, 2000).

<sup>87</sup> This was accompanied by "chanting of the battle cry and hymns ... in his ancestral tongue" (12:37).

<sup>88</sup> After the success of that revolt, if one did not choose to drop out of political life and to withdraw to the wilderness, as the Qumranians did, one of two courses could be followed with regards to

that in his view, in 2 Maccabees the Hasmonean House receives relatively little attention. Judas is indeed a hero, but Mattathias is overlooked and the brothers have a subsidiary role.<sup>89</sup>

The work goes on to describe the many among the people, who exhibited the spirit of Maccabean heroism. The theme of Israel's piety, as displayed in a courageous life and even more courageous death, became a major characteristic of 2 Maccabees. There are several instances when those occurrences are described. For example, an old saint, Eleazar, a teacher of the Law, refused to eat pork or even pretend that he did so, in order to save his own life. His refusal cost him his life, but inspired those who followed him (6:18-31). One of the most brutal tortures that is described in the book is the martyrdom story of seven brothers and their mother who despite terrible tortures remained faithful to the Torah through their unwavering faith in the future resurrection of the dead (7:1-8:1). Razis, one of the elders of Jerusalem, was highly esteemed for his deeds of kindness and was totally devoted to Judaism, and fully opposed to Hellenization. Nicanor, a Gentile commander in charge of Hellenized Jewish troops serving the Empire, sent for Razis to be arrested. He resisted his arrest and fought to the last drop of blood (14:37-46). Several passages (2 Macc. 12:42-43; 14:37-46) exemplify this firm commitment to the belief in the resurrection of the dead: "When he neared his end he cried, 'Ours is the better choice, to meet death at men's hands, yet relying on God's promise that we shall be raised up by him; whereas for you there can be no resurrection to new life'" (7:14).

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the law. The traditional code might be expanded to meet new circumstances and could be reinterpreted in accord with new beliefs; or, these experiences could be left outside of its authority and new ideas left unrecognized. Those who accepted the first policy became the Pharisees, and those who adopted the second became the Sadducees (Ferguson, *Backgrounds*, 514).

<sup>89</sup> See Nickelsburg, "1 and 2 Maccabees," 515-626 (esp. 524). In this respect 2 Maccabees is in sharp contrast to 1 Maccabees.

#### 4.2.5 Interventions of YHWH

One of the major themes that make this book so different from 1 Maccabees is the amount and the intensity of various epiphanies – divine visible manifestations usually connected with warfare and confrontation/intervention. This example shows Israel’s god rising to the defense of his dwelling, which is about to be robbed of its treasure: “Before their eyes appeared a horse richly caparisoned and carrying a fearsome rider. Rearing violently, it struck at Heliodorus with its forefeet. The rider was seen to be accoutered entirely in gold” (3:25). Two beings that appear to be angelic and are on a regular basis appearing in various biblical and extra-biblical materials, appear in this story as well: “Two other young men of outstanding strength and radiant beauty, magnificently appareled, appeared to him at the same time and, taking their stand on each side of him, flogged him unremittingly, inflicting stroke after stroke” (3:26). The author in many ways is retelling the old story of Israel’s god coming to confirm the authority of Moses against accusations and doubts of his divine ordination to the task before him (Num.16:22). In this view YHWH once again shows that he stands by his leaders and the institutions that he sets up. He is El Gibor (Is. 9:6; Josh. 5:13-15) who is ready to fight and more than capable of defending his Imperial Embassy.

#### 4.3 Major Sabbath Pericopes

There are three major Sabbath-related pericopes in 2 Maccabees (6:1-6; 8:26-28; 15:1-4).

##### 4.3.1 2 Macc. 6:1-6

The first major Sabbath pericope is found in 6:1-6. First, in vv. 1-2 the author speaks of Gerontes who by the King’s decree was engaged in full-fledged Gentilization of the people of Israel. He did so by forcing “the Jews to violate their ancestral customs and live no longer by the laws of God; and to profane the Temple in Jerusalem and dedicate it to Olympian Zeus.” Ancestral customs were so intermingled with the laws of God that it was not possible to separate the two. The Jewish culture, in the mind of the pious Jews of the day, was God’s culture, not simply their invention, and it was incompatible with the other cultures of the peoples of the world. As we saw earlier, the

changes in the Temple should be understood as Hellenization, rather than replacement of the deities. But in the mind of our author, renaming the God of Israel in a Greek way was an abomination that could not be tolerated.

Second, vv. 3-5 cover in more detail how the Temple and the Altar were profaned: “The Temple was filled with reviling and debauchery by the Gentiles, who took their pleasure with prostitutes and had intercourse with women in the sacred precincts, introducing other indecencies besides. The altar of sacrifice was loaded with victims proscribed by the Law as profane.” For our author, renaming/Hellenization was an act of radical rebellion, an outright attack that sought to desecrate everything that was holy, everything that spoke of Israel’s special covenant calling and the holiness of the god who chose her to be his own possession.

Third, keeping the Sabbath and observing the traditional feasts are equated with being a Jew in v. 6: “No one might either keep the Sabbath or observe the traditional feasts, or so much as admit to being a Jew.” This is yet another, perhaps even more forceful passage, which allows us to see that keeping the Sabbath and being a Jew are closely related. A person, in the mind of the author, cannot be a Jew and not be defined by the uncompromising act of the Sabbath-keeping. It is not clear, however, why the author here says that one cannot even admit being a Jew. Goldstein suggests that “Jews went on practicing Judaism in secret, but for a practicing Jew to admit he was Jewish was suicidal.”<sup>90</sup>

#### **4.3.2 2 Macc. 8:26-28**

These verses show the absolute commitment on the side of the Maccabees to keep the Sabbath in spite of accepting a new doctrine that allowed defensive fighting on the Sabbath. They describe it as follows: “It was the eve of the Sabbath,<sup>91</sup> and for that reason

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<sup>90</sup> Goldstein, *II Maccabees*, 276.

<sup>91</sup> Our author’s point may well be that despite Jonathan’s fight and river crossing on the Sabbath, the punishment promised in Deut. 28:7, 25 falls not upon Jonathan but upon Bacchides. God approves

they did not prolong their pursuit. They collected the enemy's weapons and stripped them of their spoils, and because of the Sabbath even more heartily blessed and praised YHWH ... when the Sabbath was over, they distributed some of the booty among the victims of the persecution and the widows and orphans; the rest they divided among themselves and their children." According to Goldstein, for the Jews, the battle had begun as a defensive struggle. If not annihilated, the enemy force would surely return. So, to pursue them could still be viewed as an act of defensive warfare. Hasmonean teaching permitted defensive warfare on the Sabbath and the scriptural teaching condemned sparing such an enemy (1 Kings 20:29-42). To avoid portraying Judas as a less than decisive military leader, the writer also insists that he later, when the Sabbath was not involved, had his army slaughter the enemy in exemplary fashion (v. 30).<sup>92</sup> Jason's efforts to show that Judas observed the Sabbath rigorously (2 Macc. 8:25-28; 12:38; 15:1-5) are at least as massive as the effort of the author of 1 Maccabees to justify Mattathias' decision to permit warfare on the Sabbath (1 Macc. 2:39-41; 9:43-49).<sup>93</sup>

#### **4.3.3 2 Macc. 15:1-4**

This is a particularly interesting passage since it juxtaposes the authority of the Heavenly Sovereign YHWH – Israel's god – with the seeming authority of earthly false gods who are represented by powerful Gentile rulers, such as General Nicanor, in the context of the Sabbath observance. Nicanor, the Syrian General, had many among his troops from Judea who themselves were not Hasmonean supporters, yet they were zealous for the Torah. They said to Nicanor, "Do not massacre them in such a savage, barbarous way. Respect the day on which the All-seeing has conferred a special holiness." Our author is not at all polite when he describes Nicanor in v. 3 as "...the triple-dyed scoundrel." He, in a prideful and arrogant manner challenged their Judean troops, "If there were in heaven a sovereign who had ordered the keeping of the Sabbath day." Once they replied in the affirmative, confessing their god and his covenant Sabbath,

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Jonathan. Since Deut. 28:7 and 25 speak of fleeing in seven directions, it may not be accidental that our author names seven places in v. 50 as towns fortified by Bacchides (See Goldstein, *I Maccabees*, 386).

<sup>92</sup> See Goldstein, *II Maccabees*, 338.

<sup>93</sup> See Goldstein, *I Maccabees*, 87.

the evil general responded, “And I, as sovereign on earth, order you to take up arms and do the king's business.”

The question of Sabbath obedience is the issue of their master’s identity. If the God of Israel is the Master than the Sabbath must be obeyed. If the master is someone else, than the Sabbath will be broken. Mosaic Law is not simply a code of “do’s and don’ts”; rather, it is a life that identifies people with their heavenly master who will not share his authority in heaven or on earth with anyone else. Nor will the people that belong to him obey anyone else other than their Covenant god who comes in so many miraculous ways to defend his glory, his people and his Temple.

## 4.4 Summary

First, these passages make clear that the Sabbath was one of the main badges of Jewish identity, so much so that keeping the Sabbath was part and parcel of being a Jew (6:1-6). The Sabbath was not simply an important part of the Jewish cultural and religious heritage. Alongside circumcision, the Sabbath was the sign marking the Jews as separated from the rest of the peoples of the world.<sup>94</sup>

Second, interpreting the law to allow defensive fighting on the Sabbath is not a sign of the liberalism of the Maccabees (2 Macc. 8:26-28). As a sign of YHWH’s blessing, decisive victories were testified to, that place the seal of approval upon the people and their actions.

Third, keeping or not keeping the Sabbath was a sign of identification with one of the competing masters who claimed authority/sovereignty, namely YHWH or the Gentile rulers who seemed, at least for the time being, to be the gods of the earth (2 Macc. 15:1-4). So, it is that once again the theme of the Covenant surfaces in our discussion of the Sabbath, since the Covenant is the very core of Sabbath observance, without it the Sabbath is empty of its meaning (Ex. 31:15-17).

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<sup>94</sup> These laws functioned similarly, but were not signatory in character.



# CHAPTER 5: *DAMASCUS DOCUMENT*

## 5.1 Introduction

### 5.1.1 Contents

The discovery of the now famous Dead Sea Scrolls significantly advanced our understanding of the Late Second Temple Period. Scholars learned many things from these manuscripts, and some noticeable paradigm shifts had to take place. According to Vermes, in spite of the fact that the task of reconstructing the overall picture is very difficult, due to the absence in the documents, singularly or together, of any systematic exposition of the sect's constitution and laws,<sup>95</sup> previously unknown insights of enormous importance nevertheless emerge. First, scholars came to the long overdue realization that for centuries they were wrong about the nature of Judaism at the time between 200 BCE to 100 CE. There was not one, but a whole gamut of various Judaisms present. Secondly, it became clear that the Scrolls set modern Christianity on a path to rediscover not only its Jewish roots, but its Jewishness as a whole. The Dead Sea Scrolls reveal ideas once considered unique to Christianity. According to Charlesworth, the DSS discovery proves that Early Christianity was for many years one of the groups within Judaism. These beliefs were once held, studied and revered by Jews who lived in an erudite and deeply religious community that eked out an existence on the western shores of the Dead Sea, waiting for the fulfillment of God's promises.<sup>96</sup>

The paradigm shift is still taking place and has not yet come full circle. After centuries of separation and even a history of anti-Semitism, the largely Gentile Church is slowly coming to peace with the conclusions of many of its scholars in recent years. The

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<sup>95</sup> See Geza Vermes, *An Introduction to the Complete Dead Sea Scrolls* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1999), 94. According to Vermes, the Qumran Community organized their movement around Israel's organizational structure. This new Israel was made up from priests (sons of Zadok) and laity grouped into twelve tribes after the model of biblical Israel (1QM 2:1-3 – DSSE 125) (Geza Vermes, *The Dead Sea Scrolls: Qumran in Perspective* [Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1981], 88).

<sup>96</sup> See James Charlesworth, *Dead Sea Scrolls: Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek Texts with English Translations*, Vol. 2 (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1995), 3.



old way of thinking is slowly being replaced with the new one. In the traditional way of thinking, the debate that takes place in the New Testament is the debate between Christians and Jews. Jesus Christ and his disciples are set against the Jews, that is, against Judaism's legal religious representatives - priests, rabbis and scribes.

In the New Paradigm, Rabbi Jesus argues Jewish issues with other Jews who represent various types of Judaism of the day. He argues with Sadducees, with Hillel Pharisees, and with Shammai Pharisees. He indirectly argues with Essenes and Samaritan Jews, while carrying out much of his ministry among the Jews that were known under the often derogatory classification of the "people of the land." The more carefully Jesus is looked at, the more Jewish his person, actions and teachings become.

Once again we must emphasize that the study of the Late Second Temple literature should not be viewed as valuable only as background information for the New Testament; however, at the same time, it is impossible to understate the impact that its discoveries are making in reshaping/refocusing/clarifying the commonly held views in the field of New Testament studies.

One of the most interesting and intriguing findings among the materials that were discovered in what appears to be an inter-Jewish library, preserved by the Qumran Community is the *Damascus Document*. It is also known as the Cairo Document, since it was discovered fifty years prior to its discovery in Qumran in the ruins of an ancient synagogue in Cairo.<sup>97</sup> This Document sheds a disproportionately great amount of light on the nature of this New Covenant Community, in comparison to many other DSS findings. It deals with the community's identity, the laws and rules of everyday life of its members as well as with the nature of their movement of protest against the religious unfaithfulness that was taking place in Jerusalem. Issues that are important for any serious study of this work include: 1) the origins of the Community, 2) the identity of the Teacher of Righteousness, and 3) the identity of Damascus. Dealing with these issues at any length, of course, is beyond the scope of this research project, since it sets out to give

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<sup>97</sup> See F. García Martínéz and Julio Treballe Barrera, *The People of the Dead Sea Scrolls: Their Writings, Beliefs and Practices*, tr. Wilfred G. E. Watson (Leiden: Brill, 1993), 52.

a general idea about the book with a concentration on the study of the doctrine and practice of the Sabbath.

### 5.1.2 Structure

According to Martínéz and Barrera, the work is divided into two parts: 1) the exhortation and 2) the body of laws. Many documents in the Ancient Near East follow this structure. The biblical counterpart of this book is Deuteronomy, which has a similar structure. The exhortation includes several accounts of the origins of the movement, each starting with a survey of some or all of biblical history. The exhortation speaks as a preacher (guardian of the community) who is speaking to the sons of the covenant and encouraging them to stay faithful, telling them that fidelity is rewarded, and that apostasy is punished. The second part of the CD is legal in character and is divided into five sections: 1) Entry into the covenant (XV, 1-XVI, 16), 2) Internal code of conduct (IX, 1-X, 10a), 3) Ritual (X, 10b-XII, 18), 4) Organization (XII, 19-XIV 19), 5) Penal code (XIV, 20-22).<sup>98</sup>

### 5.1.3 Genre

The *Damascus Document* is a constitutional, halakhic document that sets forth the norms for the covenant community. Both halves of the work are heavily dependent on the Scriptures. In the first half, prophetic oracles are interpreted as predictions of events relating to the life of the Community. Nickelsburg argues that the second half presents this community's special interpretation of the Torah.<sup>99</sup> According to Vermes, the first part (exhortation) is of a well-known *genre* in both Jewish and Christian Writings (e.g. Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs, 4 Maccabees – Hebrews, 1 Peter). The Statutes, on the other hand, with their systematic grouping of laws, prefigure Mishnah, the Tosefta and the Talmud.<sup>100</sup>

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<sup>98</sup> Ibid.

<sup>99</sup> See Nickelsburg, *Jewish Literature*, 124.

<sup>100</sup> See Vermes, *Introduction*, 36.

#### 5.1.4 Date and Purpose

Bruce writes that “the book is written in Biblical Hebrew, free from Aramaisms. The style is marked throughout by linguistic usages from the Bible; it also contains later idioms most of which are known from the Mishnah. It includes homilies in the spirit of the ancient Midrashim and material paralleled in such apocryphal and pseudepigraphic writings as the Book of *Jubilees* and the *Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs*.”<sup>101</sup>

The first part of the *Damascus Document* includes a very important historical reference. It mentions a period of 390 years (I, 5-6), which seems to be reckoned from the destruction of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar in 587 BCE. This puts the Qumran community at the beginning of the second century BCE. On the other hand in I, 10 the arrival of the Teacher of Righteousness appears 20 years later after the “root of the plant.” This is a symbolic way to refer to 175 - 152 BCE, when there was a break in the legitimate priestly line and the Maccabean leadership took power with the nomination of Jonathan the Maccabean as the high priest.<sup>102</sup>

Many similarities have been noted between the book of *Jubilees* and the *Damascus Document*, and without doubt the similarities are real. According to Hempel, CD XVI, 2b-4a rather abruptly introduces the famous explicit reference to the Book of *Jubilees*. The book is referred to as “the book of the divisions of the times into the *Jubilees* and weeks,”<sup>103</sup> a title which is remarkably similar to a phrase used in the prologue of the *Jubilees* itself, as has often been pointed out.<sup>104</sup> However, in spite of all the similarities, it is clear that there are many significant philosophical and

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<sup>101</sup> See F.F. Bruce and M.H. Shulewitz, “Book of Covenant of Damascus” in *Encyclopedia Judaica*, Vol. 5 (Jerusalem: Keter Publishing House, 1971), 1246-1250.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid.

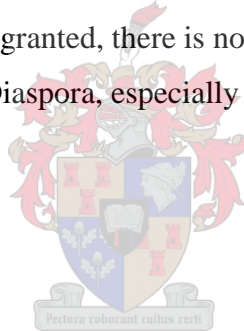
<sup>103</sup> All citations here and throughout, unless otherwise noted, are taken from *The Dead Sea Scrolls: Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek Texts with English Translations*, Volume 2, *Damascus Document, War Scroll and Related Documents*, ed. James Charlesworth (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1995).

<sup>104</sup> See Charlotte Hempel, *The Laws of the Damascus Document: Sources, Tradition and Redaction* (Leiden: Brill, 1998), 86.

methodological differences between the two works. What can be safely assumed is that *Jubilees* was known and read in the community. Hence the dating of the *Damascus Document* is later than 161-140 BCE, which is the most likely time of composition of the Book of *Jubilees*. Paleographic analysis suggests a date between 100 and 75 BCE for the composition of the whole.

### 5.1.5 Author

The implied author of the *Damascus Document* is the Teacher of Righteousness. The real author (s) are unknown. But it is likely that his followers, probably the co-founders of this new covenant community, heavily edited whatever original text may have been produced by him or perhaps, even authored the entire composition. There are, as is often the case with ancient writings, multiple layers of editing present in this work. According to Davies, although a Judean setting for the composition of the Admonition section has been hitherto taken for granted, there is nothing specifically to contradict the view that it was composed in the Diaspora, especially since some of the Laws seem to presuppose that setting.<sup>105</sup>



## 5.2 Major themes

### 5.2.1 Covenant

Everything within the *Damascus Document* is permeated by the idea of Covenant. The initial call is issued, “Now hearken to me, all who enter the covenant” (CD A II, 2). Its history goes back to Abraham: “And he (Abraham) transmitted (his way) to Isaac and Jacob; and they observed (them) and were registered as lovers of God and parties of (his) covenant forever” (CD A III, 3-4). When people were critical of the leadership, “They opened their mouth against the statues of God’s covenant” (CD A V, 12). The mercy of God towards those who are living in repentance and faith is described in terms of covenant mercy: “God recalled the covenant with the first ones, and he raised from Aaron men of discernment and from Israel wise men; and he allowed them to hear” (CD A VI,

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<sup>105</sup> See P.R. Davies, *The Damascus Document: An Interpretation of the Damascus Document*, JSOTSup 25 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1983), 203.

2-3). Granting the land to later generations of the Israelites was a direct result of the covenant oath that Israel's god took with regards to it, not in any way contingent on the strengths of Israel's armies and the perseverance of its people: "As for what Moses said, "Not by your righteousness and your uprightness of heart do you come to dispossess these nations, but rather from his love for your fathers and his keeping of the oath" (CD A VIII, 14-15; CD A VIII, 16-19). The language of covenant transition from the beginning to the present abounds: "The first ones who entered the covenant became guilty through it; and they were given up to the sword, having departed from God's covenant ... but out of those who held fast to God's ordinances, who remained of them, God established his covenant with Israel forever" (CD A III, 10-13; CD A IV, 1-7).

### 5.2.2 Remnant

One of the major themes of the CD is the old biblical idea of the "remnant." In CD A I, 5-7 we read that the remnant is based not on the righteousness belonging to them, but on the covenant memory of Israel's god: "For because of their treason that they forsook Him, He hid His face from Israel and from His sanctuary and delivered them unto the sword. But when He remembered the covenant of the forefathers He left a remnant."<sup>106</sup> This covenant community believed that YHWH had renewed His covenant with them. They were the hope of tomorrow, the seed of faith that remained faithful to the very words of their covenant god. In CD A II, 17b-19 we read: "... in all of them He raised for Himself men called by name, in order to leave a remnant to the earth and to fill the face of the world with their children." In protest against the unholy practices that permeated the priestly community in Jerusalem, this new covenant community withdrew their holy presence from Jerusalem and Judea and left for Damascus where a large Jewish community was also residing. If there was a physical relocation (that is if Damascus is not a symbol, but a real place), then it is difficult to conclude the exact purpose for that action. Several possibilities arise: 1) It was an act of protest/witness against the ungodliness in Jerusalem, 2) The community saw a need to reestablish holy practices and

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<sup>106</sup> In this section (Remnant) both translations are taken from Solomon Schechter's *Fragments of a Zadokite Work: Documents of Jewish Sectaries*, Vol. 1 (Cambridge: University Press, 1910).

to set up an alternative place/s for worship, 3) The community was no longer accepted by the wider Jewish community as a legitimate expression of Judaism.

### 5.2.3 Strict observance

It is clear that the members of this new covenant community felt that there was a significant liberalization occurring among others. The covenanters seem to have critiqued the lack of full obedience or the “pick and choose” attitude of the Jewish religious establishment. It was a group united not by theological distinctives as such, but by the level of subscription and implementation. They were responding by calling themselves and others “to do according to the precise meaning of the Torah” (CD A IV, 7-10) and “to offer up the holy things in accordance to their detailed requirements” (CD A VI, 19-21). Therefore, attaining a membership status was not easy: “Whoever joins his congregation, let him examine him with regards to his work and his intelligence, his strength and might, and his wealth ... let no one of the sons of the camp dare to bring a man into the congregation except by the word of the examiner of the camp” (CD A XIII, 11-13).

### 5.2.4 Gentiles

The evil custom of informing the authorities of some violation or legal code irregularity to settle a personal score was common. Hence the brothers of the new covenant spelled out the rules of engagement: “Any man who destroys a man among men by the statutes of the Gentiles is to be put to death” (CD A IX, 1). The *Damascus Document* forbids traveling in such a way that one’s business pursuits would take them by the Gentile towns where they may be tempted in various ways to compromise the requirements of the Torah as well as to be in close proximity to Gentiles. It states succinctly: “Let no man rest in a place near Gentiles on the Sabbath” (CD A XI, 14-15). For this reasons Falashas, whose Sabbath code is the strictest of all (*Jubilees* and *Te’ezaza Sanbat* are obeyed in detail) never had merchants as part of their permanent community as the rest of Jewish communities had. According to Borgen, the Sabbath is the time of intimacy only between God and Israel, Gentiles who observe it are interfering with Israel’s exclusive privilege. The Cairo *Damascus Document* (CD XI, 14b-15a)

presents a similar view, however this view was not universally accepted among the Jews.<sup>107</sup>

### 5.2.5 Judgment

Judgment is a just retribution for violating the covenant. Judgment in the *Damascus Document* is treated much more in the context of the apostate Israel. Emotionally charged descriptions are employed, such as “surrendering to the avenging sword of the covenant’s vengeance” (CD A I, 17) and “the anger of God was kindled against their congregation so as to lay waste their entire multitude and (make) their works as impurity before him” (CD A I, 21-II, 1). Judgment is the direct result of their own disobedience “for they had done their own will and had not kept the ordinances of their Maker, until his wrath was kindled against them” (CD A II, 21).<sup>108</sup> Final judgment on the apostate Israel and the Gentile enemies will be consummated at the coming of the Messiah of Aaron and Israel: “Those who remain will be handed to the sword when the Messiah of Aaron and Israel comes” (CD B XIX, 10-11).

## 5.3 Major Sabbath Pericopes

### 5.3.1 Sabbath needs extra measures (X, 14-17a)

According to Doering, the Laws of the Sabbath in CD provide some of the closest parallels between Qumran exegesis and the Oral Law of the Rabbis.<sup>109</sup> Baumgarten states that the Sabbath Rules found in CD (as well as in *Jubilees*) were not limited by the Torah injunctions, but also embraced the “shvot” category of legal “fences” designed to enhance the sanctity of the Sabbath (*m. ’Abot* 1:1).<sup>110</sup> However it is important to note that

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<sup>107</sup> See Peder Borgen, “Aristobulus and Philo” in *Philo, John and Paul: New Perspectives on Judaism and Early Christianity*, BJS 131 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1987), 7-19, and N. Walter, *Der Toraausleger Aristobulus*, TU 86 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1964), 166-171.

<sup>108</sup> See also CD A V, 16; VIII, 1-3 and 16-19; CD B XIX, 17; CD B XX, 8.

<sup>109</sup> Doering, “New Aspects from Qumran Sabbath Law from Cave 4 fragments”, 251-274.

<sup>110</sup> See Baumgarten, “The Laws of the Damascus Document: Between the Bible and Mishnah” in *The Damascus Document A Centennial of Discovery. Proceedings of the Third International Symposium of the Orion Center for the Study of the Dead Sea Scrolls and Associated Literature, 1998*, eds. Joseph Baumgarten, Esther Chazon, Avital Pinnick (Leiden: Brill, 1999), 23.



CD XVI, 2 affirms that in “it (the Law of Moses) everything is specified.” Leviticus 17-22 apparently is the foundational catalogue of transgressions around which all prohibitions are organized, which makes a strong case for the Pentateuch roots of Qumran law.<sup>111</sup> The general principle, according to Bickerman, of taking extra measures<sup>112</sup> to guard against Sabbath-breaking is laid down here in the delineation of when exactly on the sixth day work is to stop: “No man shall do work on the sixth day from the time in which the globe of the sun is removed from the gate in its fullness.”<sup>113</sup> Zeitlin explains the problem with the calendar change as follows:

“[The] Sabbath day does not depend on any calendar. It occurs every seventh day regardless of the lunar or lunar-solar calendars. The answer is that in a solar calendar the day begins with the dawn and lasts until the following dawn; hence, the Sabbath would begin in the morning and last till the following dawn. But in a lunar calendar, the day begins with the preceding evening, i.e. at sunset or when the stars become visible, and lasts until the following evening. The contention of the author of the book of *Jubilees* ... is now understandable. Saturday evening is still Sabbath, but the Sabbath would be over for those who follow the lunar calendar. On the other hand, Friday evening would not yet be Sabbath according to the solar calendar, while to those who followed the lunar calendar it would already be Sabbath.”<sup>114</sup>

Baumgarten, however, argues that according to the CD X, 14-17, the Qumran sect had followed the normal Jewish practice of reckoning the day from sundown to sundown.<sup>115</sup> *Jubilees* 49:1 also support this reckoning.<sup>116</sup> VanderKam and Talmon think that the main reason why the covenanters left Jerusalem was that after the Maccabees gained control

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<sup>111</sup> See Baumgarten, 25.

<sup>112</sup> The cessation of work when the entire diameter of the sun is still above the horizon is closely comparable to the rabbinical practice of adding to the Sabbath. See L. Ginsberg’s comments *ad locum* (see Charlesworth, *Dead Sea Scrolls*, 47).

<sup>113</sup> Bickerman, *God of Maccabees*, 47.

<sup>114</sup> Solomon Zeitlin, *Zadokite Fragments: Facsimile of the Manuscripts in the Cairo Genizah Collection in the Possession of the University Library, Cambridge, England* (Philadelphia: The Dropsie College for Hebrew and Cognate Learning, 1952), 17.

<sup>115</sup> See Joseph Baumgarten, *Studies in Qumran Law* (Leiden: Brill, 1977), 124.

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid.*, 126.



they did not come back to the lunar calendar, which in their view perverted Temple and Israel's worship as a whole.<sup>117</sup>

### **5.3.2 Sabbath-keeping in speech (X, 17b-19)**

The mind and tongue must be trained to abide by the Sabbath laws just like the rest of the body. A series of prohibitions relating to it are displayed here: "And on the day of the Sabbath no man shall utter a word of folly. And surely none shall demand any debt of his neighbor. None shall judge on matters of property, and gain. None shall speak on matters of work and labor to be done on the following morning." The covenant-keeping practiced by the Qumran community is to be thorough, whole hearted and encompassing not only deeds, but also thoughts and words.

### **5.3.3 Sabbath-keeping in walking (X, 20-21)**

One cannot wander too far. The 1000 cubits was the border limit around the cities of refuge, the ground of which was given as a permanent loan to the Levites (Num. 35:4-5): "No man shall walk in the field to do the work of his affairs on the day of the Sabbath. None shall walk outside his city more than a thousand cubits." Walking far presupposes either business involvement or investment of physical strength. None of these were compatible with the Sabbath-keeping practices of the Qumran community.

### **5.3.4 Sabbath-keeping in eating and drinking (X, 22-XI, 1)**

Even such life sustaining activities like eating and drinking are regulated by the Sabbath laws. Human being as creation and a Jew as a covenant partner must be governed by the Torah in all spheres of life: "No man shall eat on the day of the Sabbath but of that, which is prepared or perishing in the field. None shall eat or drink but from that which was in the camp. But if he was on the way and went down to wash he may

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<sup>117</sup> See Shemaryahu Talmon, "The Calendar of the Covenant in Judean Desert" in *The World of Qumran From Within* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1989), 148; and James VanderKam, "II Maccabees 6, 7a and Calendrical Change in Jerusalem," *JSJ* 12 (1981): 54.

drink where he stands, but he shall not draw into any vessel.”<sup>118</sup> This last formulation is similar to the one with regards to the saving of human life in XI, 16-17a as we will see later. There also one can engage in the act of saving but only with bare hands, not with anything man-made.

### 5.3.5 Sabbath-keeping in Gentile association (XI, 2-5a)

Not only is it unethical to use a non-Israelite’s lack of knowledge and true faith for the sake of personal righteousness: “No man shall send the son of the stranger to do his affairs on the day of the Sabbath,” it is also clear that the holiness of a covenanter will be compromised if contact with Gentile is present: “No man shall put on garments that are filthy or were brought by a Gentile unless they were washed in water or rubbed off with frankincense.” It is in this context that the prohibition “No man shall mingle of his own will on the Sabbath” is issued. Hempel states that whatever the exact scenario envisaged here, it is clear that these laws warn of danger of defilement through various types of contact with the Gentiles.<sup>119</sup> This passage in particular is intriguing, since it is one of the many texts that show that anti-Semitism is not a one sided feeling and conviction, anti-Gentilism was present as well. What strikes the reader in the twenty first century is the level of disdain that the covenant people (the Jews) often had towards Gentiles. It is not enough to simply say that this anti-Gentilism was theological, just as theological anti-Semitism is still anti-Semitism.

### 5.3.6 Sabbath-keeping in animal rearing (XI, 5b-7a)

There is a difference in translation here. According to Martínéz, the distance one may walk an animal on the Sabbath equals the distance biblically allowed for the human Sabbath perimeter – 1000 cubits.<sup>120</sup> However, Vermes’ as well as Wise, Abegg and

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<sup>118</sup> The requirement that the food for the Sabbath be prepared also found in *Jub. 2:29*, is based on the rule for the manna in *Ex. 16:5*. Drawing water is also prohibited in *Jub. 2:29* and *50:8* (see Charlesworth, *Dead Sea Scrolls*, 47).

<sup>119</sup> Hempel, “The Laws of the Damascus Document and 4QMMT”, 80.

<sup>120</sup> F. García Martínéz, *Dead Sea Scrolls Translated: The Qumran Texts in English* (Leiden: Brill, 1994), 42.

Cook's translation<sup>121</sup> expand the Sabbath distance, if walking after the animal to 2000 cubits: "No man shall walk more than two thousand cubits after a beast to pasture it outside his town."<sup>122</sup> Especially on the Sabbath, violence against the animal is forbidden: "None shall lift his hand to beat it with his fist." Not even force against an unruly animal can be used on the Sabbath: "If it be stubborn he shall not remove it out of his house." The Scriptures afford the right for Sabbath rest to animals as well as humans. In a sense, a human is being called to come back to Eden, when he was the manager of all creation including the inhabitants of the animal kingdom (Ex. 20:10). His job was to protect and direct the animals. Striking animals is a post-Fall activity, which needs to be broken by the circle of the weekly Sabbath.

### **5.3.7 Sabbath-keeping in carrying things (XI, 7b-11a)**

There is no sign of making rules to avoid the commandments as in later arrangements, rather the same principle of guarding the Sabbath is applied: "No man shall carry anything from the house to the outside or from the outside into the house and if he be in the gate he shall not carry out anything of it or bring in anything into it. None shall open the cover of a vessel that is pasted on the Sabbath. No man shall carry on him spices to go out and come in on the Sabbath. None shall move in the house on the day of the Sabbath rock or earth." According to Doering, here the writer/s is/are almost certainly relying on Jeremiah 17:22a: "Do not bring a load out of your houses or do any work on the Sabbath, but keep the Sabbath day holy ..."<sup>123</sup> This issue is actually more important than appears at first glance. Later on when we will discuss the issue of saving human life, this debate about what can and cannot be carried would become foundational and decisive.

### **5.3.8 Sabbath-keeping at birth of animal or human (XI, 11b-14a)**

The Sabbath laws apply to animal and human life alike, albeit in different ways: "No nurse shall bear the suckling child to go out and to come in on the Sabbath ... No

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<sup>121</sup> Michael Wise, Martin Abegg, Edward Cook, *The Dead Sea Scrolls: A New Translation* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco Publishing House, 1999), 68.

<sup>122</sup> Geza Vermes, *The Dead Sea Scrolls in English* (Sheffield: Academic Press, 1995), 109.

<sup>123</sup> See Doering, "New Aspects of Qumran Sabbath Law," 258.

man shall deliver an animal on the day of the Sabbath.” Members of the New Covenant community were not allowed to assist their animals in birth on the Sabbath. This was done not out of lack of concern for the animal’s well-being (cruelty to animals), but out of concern for working to increase one’s own wealth on the Sabbath day. One example of what made this Jewish movement different from the far more liberal Pharisees (Matt. 12:1-12) was the following prohibition: “If it falls into a pit or ditch, he shall not raise it on the Sabbath.” It maybe interesting to note that contrary to the popular opinion Jesus’ point in arguing with Pharisees over healing on the Sabbath was not to call them to repentance from legalism and bad hermeneutical methods, but rather to apply their already developed hermeneutical methods all the way. The sin of Pharisees often seems to be the sin of theological and halakhic inconsistency.

### **5.3.9 Sabbath-keeping in business and commerce (XI, 14b-15)**

The Promised Land is the land of covenant promise characterized chiefly by the fullness of life (Ex. 3:8; Deut. 1:22-25; Is. 53:8). Being outside of the Covenant is similar to death itself. Any contact with death is defiling, hence “No man shall rest in a place near to the Gentiles on the day of the Sabbath.” However, an important clarification is given as to the reason for the prohibition: “No man shall profane the Sabbath for the sake of wealth and gain.”<sup>124</sup> Gentiles had no regard for the Sabbath. Doing business in a Gentile neighborhood or region can be detrimental for the covenant fidelity of a true Israelite.

### **5.3.10 Sabbath-keeping in saving human life (XI, 16-17a)**

This is, perhaps, the most fascinating passage in the entire work and over the years, it has sparked the most controversy over its interpretation. Due to textual

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<sup>124</sup> Chaim Rabin comments, “The severity of the Sabbath laws in CDC has been commented upon, and has been taken as evidence for Essene origin. In fact, the rulings in *Te’ezaza Sanbat* and *Jubilees* are much more rigid; the same applies to the Samaritan Sabbath. Compared with these, CDC is lenient: while it adds nothing new, it closely approaches rabbinical halakhah. In particular, it actually polemicizes against the imposition of the death penalty for Sabbath-breaking (XII:4-6), which is biblical (Num.XV:35), and emphatically enjoined by *Jubilees* and T.S., and is admitted by M.San.7.4,8; B.T. Yeb.47a. On the whole, the rules in CDC lie in a direct line of development from the earlier, severe practice to that of the Rabbis.” (*Qumran Studies* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1957], 86).

difficulties, the various translations are radically different. The modern reader is at first left in doubt whether the Qumran community was valuing human life above the Sabbath or vice versa. Until Lutz Doering's research there were only three major views: 1) Life-saving is prohibited with utensils on the Sabbath, 2) Life-saving is permitted with utensils on the Sabbath, 3) The laws of the Sabbath are overruled in order to save a human life (*piqquah nefesh*) as Schiffman argued. However, Doering in his research came up with another possible view, which is strongly supported by 4Q265 a CD fragment from cave 4 of the DSS. In this view the Qumran community sought to balance the saving of life with the Sabbath regulations. Hence it was as much pro-life as pro-Sabbath.

4Q265 7i 6-7 reads, "But if it is a man who has fallen into the water on the Sabbath day, his garment should be thrown to him to lift him out with it. No-one should carry a vessel (...) Sabbath."<sup>125</sup> Baumgarten thinks that 4Q265 6 confirms that the ban on using an implement/instrument, but permits one to cast a garment to a drowning man; the latter was permissible because, as an article of attire, it was prepared for use on the Sabbath.<sup>126</sup> This fragment most likely represents a later development of the Qumranic view, however, it still stops short of saving life at any cost and retains rather severe limitations. It is likely that only the upper garment is in view (*baged*) here as to avoid nudity. Thus it becomes clear that 4Q265 7 i 6-7 – tries to harmonize life-saving and the prohibition of carrying. Doering defines the Qumranic position when he writes, "Life-saving 'below' the breach of the ban on carrying is allowed and (at least in 4Q265) encouraged."<sup>127</sup> This passage shows that the Jewish community was engaged in thinking and discussion about preservation of human life way before the Maccabean struggle had began. The question was not whether a Jew could work on the Sabbath, but rather what work, was permitted for a Jew to do on this sacred day. However, Murphy-O'Connor rightfully warns, the fact that much of the cave 4 material has not been either published or translated the conclusion of these and other scholars has to be at best provisional.<sup>128</sup>

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<sup>125</sup> See F. García Martínéz, *Dead Sea Scrolls Translated*, 72.

<sup>126</sup> See Joseph Baumgarten, *The Laws of Damascus Document*, 23.

<sup>127</sup> Doering, "New Aspects of Qumran Sabbath Law," 264-267.

<sup>128</sup> See Murphy-O'Connor, "The Judean Desert," 316-322.

### 5.3.11 Sabbath-keeping in worship (XI, 17b-18a)

There is a polemic against some of the wrong interpretations and hence practices of the current stewards of the Jerusalem Temple: “No man shall bring anything on the altar on the Sabbath, save the burnt-offering of the Sabbath, for so it is written, ‘Save your Sabbaths.’” Although the biblical quotation given here is not precise, it is clear that the author of CD refers to the verses from Lev. 23:37-39. The passage is found in the middle of the section that deals with Succoth. There were two interpretations with regards to this passage. First, that the phrase “Save your Sabbaths/apart from your Sabbaths” refers to the sacrifices required on the Sabbath, and second, that the phrase under consideration refers to the Sabbath itself. The author of CD chooses the second interpretation. He declares that one must not offer festival sacrifices, including the sacrifices of intermediary festival days on the Sabbath Day. According to CD, the Sabbath is counted as one of the days of festivals; if the Sabbath was to be added to the count of the festival, the number of days in which the festival sacrifices are offered will be reduced by one.<sup>129</sup> Werman argues that CD is at odds with the Pharisaic approach here. According to *Sifra Emor* 102:2: “Where do we learn that the Musaf sacrifices (additional sacrifices for the Sabbath) are to be offered (first) with the sacrifices intended for the holiday? We learn from the phrase ‘Apart from the Sabbaths of the Lord.’” The School of Hillel is more agreeable to the CD interpretation; however, in *Sifra Emor* 102:3 we read: “The School of Hillel says one might think that a man can celebrate on the Sabbath, but we learn however, you celebrate on *yom tov* but only on the intermediary festival days and not on the Sabbath.”<sup>130</sup>

## 5.4 Summary

First, by the time the *Damascus Document* was being written it was clear that the Biblical Sabbath commandments alone were not specific enough and were in need of clarification (X, 14-17a).

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<sup>129</sup> See Werman, “CD 11:17 Apart From Your Sabbaths”, 202-203.

<sup>130</sup> Ibid.

Second, the obedience desired was not just superficial and external, but rather heartfelt and personal, not overlooking issues of social justice in the process and seeking to implement full obedience to the Torah (X, 17b-19).

Third, the Sabbath was not a matter of outward performance, but rather a duty of the heart (XI, 2-3). This is an important point that disproves the common claim that pre-Christian Judaism had superficial, necessarily legalistic interpretations of the Holy Scriptures.

Fourth, the practices designed to get around God's prohibitions should be avoided (XI, 7b-11a). It is highly likely that Erub was already either implemented by some or perhaps was in some early stage of its invention.<sup>131</sup>

Fifth, Sabbath obedience is more valued than the life of any living being other than man (XI, 16-17a). This is a very interesting observation, given Jesus' debates with some Pharisees with regard to healing on the Sabbath.

Sixth, Sabbath keeping is more important than worship (XI, 17b-18a). This judgment is consistent with one of the Sabbath teachings in the book of *Jubilees*, where we see that the feasts of YHWH do not take precedence over the weekly Sabbath.

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<sup>131</sup> A storage place of joint ownership designed to avoid breaking of the command at the same time allowing use of things that would otherwise be inaccessible given the Sabbath prohibitions.



# CHAPTER 6: *JEWISH ANTIQUITIES*

## 6.1 Introduction

### 6.1.1 Contents

The four great works of this Jewish commander turned historian are indebted for their survival to the Christian Church that valued them highly and esteemed them often times as the most important works of the ancients next to the Holy Scriptures themselves. The works of Josephus are valuable, since they are some of the main representatives of the Jewish Hellenistic witnesses of the first century. According to Bilde, it is only fairly recently that the Christian Church began to overlook these writings, partly because of the scholarly criticism that was leveled against Josephus which questioned his objectivity, accuracy and motives, and partly because the attention of biblical scholars was shifted to other witnesses discovered more recently, notably the Dead Sea Scrolls.<sup>132</sup>

*Jewish Antiquities*, authored by Josephus, is the 20 book *Magnum Opus* of his life. Josephus promised to follow it up by another work. More than likely, this “part two” was either never written or never finished since four other works by Josephus are among the best-attested materials of the period. Upon reception of his freedom from captivity, Josephus became an elite member of Roman society. That is when he came face to face with Anti-Semitism. It appeared to him that nothing but the Roman ignorance of the history and religion of Israel was responsible. Erroneously thinking that if only the Gentiles knew and understood the light that permeated Judaism they would certainly forsake their capricious behavior and cease their hostility toward the Jews, Josephus drew a clear and simple conclusion: he had to teach the non-Jews a lesson in Jewish history to show them the error of their ways. The title of his book, *Jewish Antiquities* (*Antiquitates Judaicae*) was apparently chosen on the analogy of *Roman Antiquities* (*Antiquitates Romanae*)<sup>133</sup> by Dionysius of Halicarnassus who lived during the reign of the emperor Augustus; but, it also hints at the chief aim that Josephus set himself in this work: to

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<sup>132</sup> See Per Bilde, *Flavius Josephus between Jerusalem and Rome: His Life, His Works and Their Importance* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1988), 32.

<sup>133</sup> The *Antiquitates Judaicae* just like the *Antiquitates Romanae* consisted of 20 books.



prove the antiquity of Jews and to dispel the slander that the Jewish nation was not an ancient one.<sup>134</sup> According to Feldman, the work presupposes an audience living in a non-Judean setting, specifically Rome in the nineties, and also an audience that is sufficiently interested in Judean culture to endure the length of the *Jewish Antiquities*. In addition Feldman says “that Josephus also hoped for a secondary world-wide readership, in perpetuity (*Ant.* 1.5), is not disputed. In the end, he got his wish.”<sup>135</sup>

### 6.1.2 Structure

Josephus, in his apologetic fervor, seeks to organize all of what he perceived to belong to the antiquity of the Jews into a systemic presentation that would appeal to his audience of open-minded Roman intellectuals. According to Feldman, Josephus felt that Moses left his writings in disarray, just as he had received them from God, so Josephus rearranged them following the thematic school of a number of Hellenistic historians. According to Feldman, he did so by juxtaposing those items that belonged together on the basis of subject, regardless of chronology and sources, and removing theological difficulties and contradictions inherent in the narrative.<sup>136</sup> According to Mendels, the writings of the Greeks about the East were the primary motivation for ethnic authors to explain their own culture to the Greek World.<sup>137</sup> On the other hand, Collins and Tcherikover both argue that so called Hellenistic Jewish literature was less missionary-apologetic and more reclaiming-apologetic. Their logic is as follows: if the Jews who are reading these apologetic defenses would see their strength they would have a harder time abandoning the Faith themselves. So the apologetic goal of these writings includes reclaiming the Jewish population as well as reaching out to the Greeks themselves.<sup>138</sup>

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<sup>134</sup> See Abraham Schalit, “*Josephus Flavius*” in *Encyclopedia Judaica*, Vol. 10 (Jerusalem: Keter Publishing House, 1972), 258.

<sup>135</sup> Louis Feldman, *Flavius Josephus: Judean Antiquities 1-4. Translation and Commentary* (Leiden: Brill, 2004), xxxiv-xxxv.

<sup>136</sup> See Louis Feldman, “Josephus” in *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, Vol. 3, ed. David Noel (Doubleday: New York, 1992), 987.

<sup>137</sup> See Doron Mendels, “‘Creative History’ in Hellenistic Near East in the Third and Second Centuries BCE: The Jewish Case,” *JSP* 2 (1988): 13-20.

<sup>138</sup> See Collins, *Between Athens and Jerusalem*, 26.

The whole work is divided up, fairly arbitrarily, into books covering the periods of time between what the author perceives as the key events of Jewish history:

Preface to the Antiquities of the Jews

- Book I - From Creation to the Death of Isaac
- Book II - From the Death of Isaac to the Exodus out of Egypt
- Book III - From the Exodus out of Egypt to the Rejection of that Generation
- Book IV - From the Rejection of that Generation to the Death of Moses
- Book V - From the Death of Moses to the Death of Eli
- Book VI - From the Death of Eli to the Death of Saul
- Book VII - From the Death of Saul to the Death of David
- Book VIII - From the Death of David to the Death of Ahab
- Book IX - From the Death of Ahab to the Captivity of the Ten Tribes
- Book X - From the Captivity of the Ten Tribes to the First Year of Cyrus
- Book XI - From the First Year of Cyrus to the Death of Alexander the Great
- Book XII - From the Death of Alexander the Great to the Death of Judas Maccabeus
- Book XIII - From the Death of Judas Maccabeus to the Death of Queen Alexandra
- Book XIV - From the Death of Queen Alexandra to the Death of Antigonus
- Book XV - From the Death of Antigonus to the Finishing of the Temple by Herod
- Book XVI - From the Finishing of the Temple by Herod to the Death of Alexander and Aristobulus
- Book XVII - From the Death of Alexander and Aristobulus to the Banishment of Archelaus
- Book XVIII - From the Banishment of Archelaus to the Departure of the Jews from Babylon
- Book XIX - From the Departure of the Jews from Babylon to Fadus the Roman Procurator
- Book XX - From Fadus the Procurator to Florus

Another appropriate way to divide up the work is proposed by Bilde. According to him Books 1-10 belong together and describe the events of the First Temple, and Books 11-20 belong together and describe the events of the Second Temple. Other than the Temple being the dividing line, there are other factors that argue for this division. The source that Josephus is using for Books 1-10 is the “law and prophets” and for 11-20 less esteemed sources known as “writings/scriptures.” A third reason for this division, according to Bilde, is the Babylonian Exile, which seems to be the watershed event,<sup>139</sup> a historical milestone of enormous importance in Jewish history according to Josephus.<sup>140</sup>

### 6.1.3 Genre and Purpose

*Jewish Antiquities*, as was already mentioned, is an apologetic work that seems to have a double goal: 1) to convince the Greek population of the Roman Empire that the Jews are an ancient/noble people and therefore deserve the Romans’ respect and admiration, 2) to help the Roman Jews themselves to retain their own faith in the times of Roman conquest and destruction of the capitol of Judaism. According to Feldman, Josephus argued his case with the non-Jewish Romans by exalting the achievements of Jewish heroes and deemphasizing the role of divine intervention. Examples of this are numerous from Abraham’s address to Isaac (*Ant.* 1:228-231) to Maccabean righteousness being the reason for victory (12:290) and not the benevolence of Israel’s god as in 1 Macc. 3:19.<sup>141</sup> Attridge agrees that Josephus’ theology is “very much an apologetic one, which reworks Jewish tradition in categories derived from and comprehensible to a Greco-Roman world.”<sup>142</sup> Varneda simply states that Josephus wrote “pragmatic history ... formed above all by the events of political value.”<sup>143</sup> For this reason Josephus modeled his work after other Roman historical writings. According to Mason, as anti-Jewish sentiments fueled by the war, were rising, Josephus invited the Greek reader “to

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<sup>139</sup> Interestingly enough, for the author of the Gospel of Mathew this was also true (Matt. 1:1-17).

<sup>140</sup> See Bilde, *Josephus: Between Jerusalem and Rome*, 89-90.

<sup>141</sup> See Louis Feldman, *Studies in Hellenistic Judaism* (Leiden: Brill, 1996), 159.

<sup>142</sup> Harold W. Attridge, *The Interpretation of Biblical History in the Antiquitates Judaicae of Flavius Josephus* (Missoula: Scholars Press, 1976), 17.

<sup>143</sup> Pere Villalba I Varneda, *The Historical Method of Flavius Josephus* (Leiden: Brill, 1986), XIV.

judge on the basis of his narrative whether the Jewish lawgiver did not impart a worthy conception of God.”<sup>144</sup> He also, thinks that we should place ourselves in “the shoes” of Roman Jews as they watched the articles from the Jerusalem Temple carried into Rome as a triumphant procession moved through the streets celebrating the conquest of their own homeland and spiritual center of all the Jews. Day in and day out the Jews of Rome would then be reminded of the defeat by the inscriptions on the coins commemorating the war and Rome’s victory over the Jews. It is “unsurprising if some Roman Jews who felt most integrated in the Roman society reacted to this trauma by rejecting Judaism in order to be accepted as proper Romans.”<sup>145</sup> So, it is under these conditions that Josephus writes his *Antiquities* hoping to establish Judaism as acceptable to the Roman’s religion/philosophy as well as to reestablish this same idea for the Jews of Rome who were being lost to Judaism though assimilation.

#### 6.1.4 Date

As seen in 20:267, *Jewish Antiquities* was completed and published in 93-94 CE. Josephus writes, “with which accounts I shall put an end to these Antiquities, which are contained in twenty books, and sixty thousand verses.” And, if God permit me, I will briefly run over this war again, with what befell us therein to this very day, which is the thirteenth year of the reign of Caesar Domitian, and the fifty-sixth of my own life.” Bilde argues that since Domitian became Emperor in 81 CE, and since Josephus was born in 37 CE, we may conclude that the years 93-94 CE are the years of the book’s composition.<sup>146</sup> Feldman gives a slightly earlier dating. According to him Josephus authored *Jewish Antiquities* about a decade after the Jewish War.<sup>147</sup> To be more precise the *Jewish Wars Against the Romans* was, to judge from internal evidence, composed after 75 CE and

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<sup>144</sup> Steve Mason, “Josephus, Daniel and Flavian House” in *Josephus and the History of the Greco-Roman Period*, eds. Fausto Parente and Joseph Sievers (Leiden: Brill, 1994), 167.

<sup>145</sup> *Ibid.*, 332.

<sup>146</sup> See Bilde, *Josephus: Between Jerusalem and Rome*, 104.

<sup>147</sup> See Feldman, “Josephus,” 985.

probably between 79 CE and 81 CE.<sup>148</sup> Mason, agreeing with Bilde, dates the work a little later than Feldman during the last years of Domitian's reign (93 CE).<sup>149</sup>

### 6.1.5 Author

Josephus Flavius (c. 37 - after 100 CE) was a Jewish historian and one of the chief representatives of Jewish-Hellenistic literature. Since there is very little outside of the works of Josephus that provides valuable information about Josephus himself, caution is in order. Bilde argues for a generally positive outlook towards this controversial figure, but even he warns that certain tests ought to be applied to what Josephus wrote in order to arrive at a desired level of reliability. The three tests he suggested are: 1) internal consistency, 2) general historical plausibility, 3) the holism factor (coherence with other aspects of the material).<sup>150</sup> Many other scholars do not share Bilde's optimism about Josephus.

According to Josephus's own account he was born in Jerusalem into an aristocratic priestly family related to the Hasmonean dynasty (*Life* 8-9). Josephus presents himself as an apocalyptic prophet (*War* 3:350-54) who receives divine guidance through nightly dreams and by his priestly ability to interpret the sacred scriptures.<sup>151</sup> His historiographic work is intimately connected to his priestly and prophetic duties.<sup>152</sup> He was very knowledgeable in matters of the Torah and Halakhah (*Life* 10 -12). At 26 he was entrusted with a very important mission, to go to Rome and plead for the release of priests seized and delivered to Rome by the procurator Felix (*Life* 17). In 66 CE Josephus was appointed the commander in Galilee, which was one of the most important assignments during this stage of the war. At one time he also served as the envoy of the Sanhedrin. The position of the Sanhedrin's envoy was a difficult one, since the local

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<sup>148</sup> See Feldman, *Flavius Josephus*, 623.

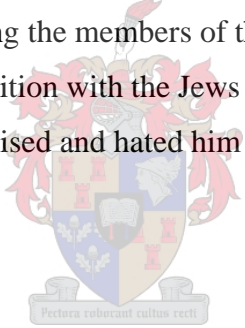
<sup>149</sup> See Steve Mason, "Josephus: Value for New Testament Study" in *The Dictionary of New Testament Background* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 597.

<sup>150</sup> See Bilde, *Josephus: Between Jerusalem and Rome*, 27.

<sup>151</sup> See Per Bilde, "Josephus and Jewish Apocalypticism" in *Understanding Josephus: Seven Perspectives*, ed. Steve Mason (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1988), 46.

<sup>152</sup> *Ibid.*, 48.

Galilean leaders were not happy about submitting to the man who had been appointed over them by the central authority in Jerusalem. When the city fell, Josephus fled with 40 men to a cave. There each man resolved to slay his neighbor rather than be taken captive by the enemy. Josephus artfully cast the lots, deceitfully managing to be one of the last two men left alive and then persuaded his companion to go out with him and surrender to the Romans. Josephus relates that when he appeared before Vespasian he foretold the greatness in store for the Roman commander, who spared his life, only binding him in chains. Josephus was held prisoner in the Roman camp for the duration of Vespasian's campaign until the news was received of Nero's death (68 CE). Vespasian undoubtedly learned of Josephus' share in the propaganda on his behalf and, bearing it in mind, awaited coming events. When Vespasian was chosen to be Emperor, Josephus left to settle in Rome where he was granted Roman citizenship and a pension by the new emperor, who allowed him to live in his palace. He never again saw his native land. Although generally a favorite among the members of the courts of Vespasian and Titus during their lifetime, Josephus' position with the Jews was wretched in the extreme. Both inside and outside Rome, they despised and hated him for his past and tried to harm him at every turn.<sup>153</sup>



## 6.2 Major Themes

### 6.2.1 Ancient Origins

As Josephus went about fulfilling his goal of presenting the Jewish people as rooted in antiquity, he was making sure that he took every opportunity to tell the readers how ancient the events were that shaped/determined the history/identity of the Jewish people. For example, Josephus spoke of the topography of the Biblical Lands related to Israel in comparison to the Ancient cities that the Romans were aware of and held in high esteem. Speaking of Abraham, he wrote, "He himself dwelt in Hebron, which is a city

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<sup>153</sup> See Schalit, "Josephus Flavius," 251.

seven years more ancient than Tunis of Egypt” (*Ant.* 1:170).<sup>154</sup> According to Josephus, David sent out vessels of ancient workmanship made of gold, silver and brass (7:108), the honor that belonged to the Holy Temple was ancient (9:262), the way of life of the Israelites was characterized by their ancient practices (9:264), the books of the Jews were ancient books (10:218), even the favors granted to the Jews by the ruling Gentile powers were ancient (12:124), the Jerusalem temple itself was ancient (13:77) and liberty was an ancient privilege of the Jews (17:267). These are but a few examples that show how Josephus was portraying to the Roman readership a solid case that the Jews are indeed an ancient people who can be trusted, accepted and honored.

### 6.2.2 Law

Josephus sets out to show that Israel’s constitution (Torah) is a judicial/civil model for the rest of the world. It is more ancient than any others, philosophically purer and universally more effective in its punishment of vice and reward of virtue, than the codes of other nations (*Ag. Ap.* 2:280-285). According to Collins, Josephus’ apologetic was far more complex than those of earlier Jewish historians, particularly because it included a philosophical component. He was able to produce a successful fusion of competitive historiography with a philosophical approach to the Law.<sup>155</sup> This work of Josephus engages directly, therefore, a long-standing Greek and Roman debate about the best kind of constitution: monarchy, aristocracy or democracy. From the beginning to the end, *Jewish Antiquities* demonstrates, according to Mason, the efficacy of these laws: the peril of those who violate them and the reward of those who follow them.<sup>156</sup>

### 6.2.3 Honor

One of the most important themes of this work is honor. More than 600 times, words like honor, honorable and honorably are used in *Jewish Antiquities*. Josephus had

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<sup>154</sup> All citations here and throughout, unless otherwise noted, are taken from *Josephus: The Complete Works*, tr. William Whiston (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1998).

<sup>155</sup> See Collins, *Between Athens and Jerusalem*, 62.

<sup>156</sup> See Mason, “Josephus,” 598.



rightly exegeted the culture around him and now was contextualizing his messages to the Roman intellectual citizenry (both Gentile and Jewish).<sup>157</sup> Here are some examples of the importance of the concept of honor in *Jewish Antiquities*: 1) nations receive their names in honor of the sons of Noah, whose father is a key character in the Hebrew Bible (1:122). 2) Joseph - one of the forefathers of the Hebrew people was held in great honor (2:39). 3) Seven sisters mentioned by Josephus were daughters of a priest who was “thought worthy by the people of the country of great honor” (2:258). 4) Parents ought to be honored (3:92). 5) Aaron is deemed worthy of honor (3:188, 190). 6) God had determined to bestow that honor on one of the tribes (4:19). 7) Korah desired honor (4:32). 8) The honor of priesthood was confirmed on Aaron three times and retained by him (4:66). 9) King Saul sought honor from Samuel’s presence, when sacrificing (6:154), 10). It was very important for the people to be buried with honor (7:40) and 11) to have victory on the battlefield that is characterized by honor (7:160). Josephus sought to show that the Jews are a people rooted in honor and are seeking honor just like a true citizen of Rome.

#### 6.2.4 Gentiles

Once again, given Josephus’ reasons for writing this work, it is to be expected that the theme of the Gentiles will be spearheading his effort even as he tells the story of Israel. Here are some examples of how Josephus goes about fulfilling this task: 1) The roots of all nations that are known in the Graeco-Roman world are to be found in the list of the ancient nations described in the Hebrew Bible (1:121-123), 2) The biblical characters Isaac and Ishmael are both to be the fathers of many nations (1:191-193), 3) The justification for the war against the Amalekites was the self-defense action of the Hebrews for “the Amalekites ... were the most warlike of the nations” (3:40-42; 3:43; 7:74-75), 4) Gentile nations were also committed to the customs of their forefathers. Just like the Jews, many Gentiles opposed “assimilation” (16:35). All of these examples support the overall goal of Josephus to explain Judaism and the Jewish people to the

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<sup>157</sup> Another possibility is that Josephus was romanized to such a degree, that the vocabulary used was rather sub-conscious and does not amount to any kind of effort on the part of Josephus that can be classified as contextualization.



Gentiles who were puzzled by their life and history as well as to encourage the Jews in Rome to remain faithful to the faith of their forefathers.

## **6.3 Major Sabbath Pericopes**

Altogether, there are six major passages that deal with the Sabbath. Let us look at each one of them separately.

### **6.3.1 Ant. 11:346-347**

It is a well known fact that the Jews of Judea and the Jews that were also called Samaritans were at enmity with one another for many years. Both regarded themselves as the true heirs of the religion of Abraham. One of the goals was to determine whether or not the Sabbath rules were actually obeyed in the sense that this obedience was enforced as the law of the land. Josephus describes the ongoing relationship of distrust between the Jews of Judea and Samaritans. He plainly tells his readers that violations of the Sabbath were considered punishable crimes in Judea. “If anyone were accused ... of having eaten things common or of having broken the Sabbath, or of any other crime of the like nature” he or she would flee from Judea to Samaria for refuge. From this passage we can clearly deduce that: 1) Sabbath laws were actually obeyed and the penalty for breaking them was enforced and that 2) the Sabbath penal system was either not enforced in Samaritan territory or Samaritans simply had different regulations for Sabbath-keeping. The relationships with the Samaritans were complex and emotionally charged. This animosity was sustained by both sides. Both considered themselves the representatives of true Judaism and both harbored much bitterness against the other over unfortunate and painful past experiences.

### **6.3.2 Ant. 12:3-5**

The Emperors of old were the “sovereigns” of their vassal nations, the protectors of all subjects who humbly served them and submitted to their rule through keeping the terms of the suzerain-vassal treaties they agreed to. It was not uncommon for a rebellion to be raised right under the watchful eye of the Emperor’s government. Usually the Emperor would engage in all types of persuasion, before applying force to the rebellious

people. When all diplomatic options were exhausted the Emperor would send his troops to conquer the rebels and bring them once again into submission to him. Destruction of cities, capture of leadership and ultimately exile/dispossession of the land would be the result of such disciplinary actions from the Emperor. But obviously not all rulers had the best intentions in mind, many of them were exploitive lords who cared not at all for the welfare of the people who served them, so their dealings with the nations who rebelled would be vindictive, cruel and utterly destructive.

Here in this passage Josephus describes the horrible distress that the founder of the Egyptian Ptolemaic dynasty inflicted on Judea and other parts of the Middle East. Josephus tells the story from the side of those who suffered at his hand. “The cities were sufferers, and lost a great many of their inhabitants in these times of distress, insomuch that all Syria, by the means of Ptolemy, the son of Lagus, underwent the reverse of that name of Savior, which he then had.” Ptolemy conquered Jerusalem by deceit, entering it on the Sabbath, apparently peacefully, as many times before: “He came into the city on a Sabbath day, as if he would offer sacrifices. He, without any trouble, gained the city, while the Jews did not oppose him, for they did not suspect him to be their enemy” (*J.W.* 1:145-148). It is likely that in the past, generals including Ptolemy sacrificed to the God of Israel together with their regiments, which would explain why the Jews did not suspect the General of treachery when he was approaching the city with a military force. Alongside of the betrayal of trust we see here that the Sabbath was so consistently observed that Jerusalem’s enemies could pre-plan their treacherous attacks: “He gained it thus, because they were free from suspicion of him, and because on that day they were at rest and quietness” (*J.W.* 2:517-518). According to Johns, the fact that Ptolemy employed subterfuge by pretending to come to Jerusalem to offer sacrifice points to the fact that this was not the first time that foreign armies attacked the Holy City on the Sabbath day. He accepts Parker and Dubberstein’s conclusions and argues that March 16, 597 BC, which fell on the Sabbath, was the very day in which Nebuchadnezzar chose to launch his final

assault on the city of Jerusalem.<sup>158</sup> Later when Nebuchadnezzar had to come back to Jerusalem to finish up the job against rebellious Zedekiah, he made his attempt at recapturing Jerusalem on January 15, 588 BC, which also fell on the Sabbath.<sup>159</sup>

### **6.3.3 Ant. 12:272-277**

This is a very interesting passage because it shows the way Josephus tried to portray the Jews in a positive light without portraying Gentile powers in a negative light. This is a very difficult thing to do, but Josephus succeeds in his task. He first tells the reader that after pursuing the rebellious Jews to the desert they did not resort to violence before first spending time trying to resolve the conflict through persuasion: “When they had overtaken them, they in the first place endeavored to persuade them to repent, and to choose what was most for their advantage, and not put them to the necessity of using them according to the law of war; but when they would not comply with their persuasions, but continued to be of a different mind, they fought against them on the Sabbath day.” Josephus then portrays the misinformed, but nevertheless honorable, Jews in a positive light as well.

First, he sets them forth as fearless heroes: “They burnt them as they were in the caves, without resistance, and without so much as plugging up the entrances of the caves.” Second, he sets them forth as honorable people who are more concerned with the honor of the Sabbath than with their own: “They refused to defend themselves on that day, because they were not willing to break in upon the honor they owed the Sabbath, even in such distresses ... for our Law requires that we rest upon that day.” Third, Josephus portrays the Jews as reasonable people who are able to reinterpret their traditions in the light of the current situation and apply it appropriately, just as Gentiles would: “Those who escaped joined themselves to Mattathias, and appointed him to be

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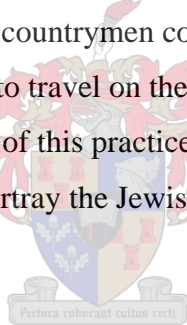
<sup>158</sup> For discussion on the accuracy of the Babylonian dates see R. A. Parker and W. H. Dubberstein, *Babylonian Chronology: 626 B.C. – A.D. 75* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1942), 25.

<sup>159</sup> See Alger Johns, “The Military strategy of the Sabbath attacks on the Jews,” *VT* 13 (1963): 484.

their ruler, who taught them to fight, even on the Sabbath day; and told them, that unless they would do so, they would become their own enemies ... this speech persuaded them. And this rule continues among us to this day, that if there be a necessity, we may fight on Sabbath days.” In short we see in this passage that according to Josephus, Jewish people are characterized by honor and common sense/reason in contrast to the false accusations of others.

#### **6.3.4 Ant. 14:226-228**

In this passage Josephus brings to the reader’s attention the exemption of the Jews from the military draft of the Roman army. The main reason was the impossibility of keeping the Sabbath and fully and at all times complying with the orders of their superiors. Alexander, the son of Theodorus, the ambassador of Hyrcanus, the son of Alexander, the high priest and governor of the Jews appeared before the Roman authorities in order “to show that his countrymen could not go into their armies, because they are not allowed to bear arms or to travel on the Sabbath days.” Josephus here seeks to provide reasonable justification<sup>160</sup> of this practice, which sounded rather strange to a Roman ear, in order to once again portray the Jewish people as honorable, trustworthy and reasonable.



First, this shows us that the Gentile rulers recognized the Sabbath in times of peace and the right of the Jews to the Sabbath was generally respected. Second, we see that during the Sabbath ceremony, people assembled together for the purpose of prayer, study and the collection of funds. We see this in the text of the official permit given to the Jews that Josephus quotes: “I do therefore grant them a freedom from going into the army, as the former governors have done, and permit them to use the customs of their forefathers, in assembling together for sacred and religious purposes, as their law requires, and for collecting oblations necessary for sacrifices.”

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<sup>160</sup> There are thousands of ultra-orthodox Jews in Israel who receive government subsidies and refuse to serve in the army mainly because they do not always agree with the decisions of their secular government in the current state of Israel. Many modern Israelis despise ultra-orthodox Jews for the same or similar reasons that Romans despised the Jews in their own time.

### 6.3.5 *Ant.* 14:264

The Roman authorities were consistent in applying their principles of religious freedom (sometimes from an ideological and sometimes from a pragmatic standpoint). Of course all of the religious freedom was set in the context of religious unity with only a few exceptions. Certain laws were needed to guarantee the free exercise of the Jewish Religion by the Jews as part of those exceptions. Given the bloody way the Jews resisted those who tried to modernize the Jewish faith in order to fit it with the rest of the Imperial Religion, this exception was to be expected: “Decreed by the senate and people, that in this affair that concerned the Romans, no one of them (the Jews) should be hindered from keeping the Sabbath day, nor be fined for so doing; but that they may be allowed to do all things according to their own laws.” The Jews that held official positions in the Roman world presented a nuisance to many Romans who simply did not understand why Jews would refuse to fulfill their civil functions on this particular day, which was not recognized in the Roman World as a special day. The observance of the Sabbath and the various festivals was an integral part of the Jewish community, hence the special edict. The reason for this special confirmation was the fact that the Jews refused to appear on Sabbaths at official offices on business that also concerned Greeks. Tcherikover argues that the latter were not always considerate about this refusal on the part of the Jews;<sup>161</sup> hence, there was a need for separate documentary emphasis of the right to celebrate the Sabbath, and thus we find it in the document of Augustus.<sup>162</sup> We also read in the documents that the Romans gave special recognition to the sanctity of the Sabbath and granted the Jews permission to celebrate it according to the commandments of Judaism, which forced the Greek cities, on Roman demand, to acknowledge this Jewish privilege. The wisdom of Sabbath-keeping was recognized by many in the Roman World. According to Josephus, “There is not any city of the Greeks, nor any of the barbarians, nor any nation whatever, where our custom of resting on the seventh day has not come ...” (*Ag. Ap.* 2:282). For Josephus the truly pious observed the Sabbath, while others demonstrated their impiety by breaking it. Weiss states that: “Josephus considers the Sabbath a barometer of piety and describes Sabbath observance as if it were a label

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<sup>161</sup> Cf. *Ant.* 16:27.

<sup>162</sup> See Tcherikover, *Hellenistic Civilization*, 307.

with which to tag people ... in other words Josephus does not consider the Jew who fights on the Sabbath a good Jew.”<sup>163</sup> Various scholars, however, interpret the Sabbath reports in Josephus differently. Radin dismisses Josephus’s reports as reports that do not pass the test of history.<sup>164</sup> Johns, on the other hand, gives full credence to some of Josephus’ reports.<sup>165</sup> Hoenig argues that the discrepancy ought to be viewed in the context of the ongoing development of the Halakah.<sup>166</sup> Goldenberg explains that there was no universal policy. According to him the Jews acted differently on this issue in different times and in different places.<sup>167</sup>

### **6.3.6 Ant. 16:42-44**

Throughout the history of the Jews living among the Gentiles there were always those who loved and respected the Jews and those who hated and despised them. The field of study that deals with the history of anti-Semitism is fascinating and broad. Some of today’s anti-Semitic attitudes are based on completely different sets of “reasons”, but others depend on the same reasoning as was used many centuries ago. Josephus, in this highly apologetic passage, goes explicitly on the defensive: “There are none of our customs which are inhuman, but all tending to piety, and devoted to the preservation of justice.” He asserted these facts over against the many accusations that were hurled at the Jews by Anti-Semites. Sabbath, in the mind of Josephus, and, most likely, in reflection of common view, was a key component of betterment of Jewish and Gentile society. He states that the Sabbath day is set aside for an important practical reason. According to Josephus, in the long run it brings good to the society where Jews live. He states, “The seventh day we set apart from labor; it is dedicated to the learning of our customs and

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<sup>163</sup> Weiss, *Day of Gladness*, 78-79.

<sup>164</sup> See Max Radin, *The Jews Among the Greeks and Romans* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1915), 179-81.

<sup>165</sup> See Johns, “Military Strategy,” 482-86.

<sup>166</sup> See Sidney Hoenig, *The Great Sanhedrin: A Study of Origin, Development, Composition, and Function, of the Bet ha-Gadol during the Second Jewish Commonwealth* (Philadelphia: Dropsie Collage for Hebrew and Cognate Learning, 1953), 93-98.

<sup>167</sup> See Robert Goldenberg, “The Jewish Sabbath in the Roman World up to the Time of Constantine the Great,” *ANRW* 19.1:420.

laws. We think it proper to reflect on them, as well as on any [good] thing else, in order to avoid sin.” The very reason for Sabbath-keeping is set forth here as moral and not liturgical/covenantal. In this way Josephus hoped to communicate to his Gentile audience that the Sabbath precept is of universal value, and not particular to Israel.

## 6.4 Summary

First, Sabbath-breaking was considered to be a crime in Judea (11:346-347). This shows that the Sabbath observance was enforced and was a matter of hot dispute between the Jews of Judea and those who claimed to be true Jews in Samaria.

Second, the Sabbath was heavily exploited by the treacherous actions of Gentile commanders seeking to gain control over Jewish towns (12:3-5). There are multiple references to the multiple commanders who resorted to this tactic. The fact that Jewish towns were wide open to this impending doom is consistent with other statements of the establishment of civil laws protecting Jewish Sabbath-keeping activity. City elders trusted the Roman rulers until it became obvious that their trust was unfounded.

Third, Sabbath-keeping was perceived as rendering honor to the Sabbath (12:272-277). According to Josephus the radical Sabbath-keeping persuasions of the martyrs were due to the deep sense of honor that characterized the Sabbath.

Fourth, the right of the Jews to observe the Sabbath was so highly respected that laws were passed to allow the Jews not to be drafted into the army (14:226-228). Committing troops and finances to the military exploits of the Empire by the servant colony/vassal nation was one of its chief responsibilities. Thus it was no small privilege for the Jews to enjoy the protection of Rome without sacrificing their sons to the collateral damage of imperial wars.

Fifth, the Sabbath was viewed as a day of “moral recharging.” The main duty of the Sabbath was to dwell upon the Holy Scriptures and other teachings, so that the

person/community contemplating those would be encouraged and trained to avoid all manner of sin (16:42-44).





# CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSIONS

## 7.1 Questions

There were several questions that I was asking of the texts examined above, as noted in the Introduction to this thesis: Was there a major Jewish view of the Sabbath or were the views varied within Judaisms? Was the Sabbath one of the most important issues facing the Jewish Community or was it rather a peripheral one? What was the place of Covenant with YHWH in the Sabbath thought of the day? What was the impact of the historical events of the period on the views of the Sabbath? Was the understanding(s) of the Sabbath legalistic or was there a depth of heartfelt spirituality accompanying Sabbath observance? Were the rules with regard to the Sabbath actually carried out or were they largely ignored? I asked these questions because I viewed this research project as preparatory. The larger question that I will be raising in my future research has to do with the alleged replacement of the Jewish Sabbath by the Christian Sabbath in the minds of the early Jewish Christian Community. Did the Jewish Christians change the day of worship from Saturday to Sunday? If so, how did they do so while managing to avoid any kind of major debate over the change, since those believers were very much rooted in Jewish communal life? From examining these particular representatives (*Jubilees*, 1 and 2 *Maccabees*, *Damascus Document* and *Jewish Antiquities*) some preliminary conclusions can be drawn.

## 7.2 Answers

First, the writings studied have exhibited a variety of views of the Sabbath. This conclusion supports the findings of researchers like Boccaccini,<sup>168</sup> who argues that there were many Judaisms. In spite of the fact that the Sabbath was unquestionably at the very heart of Israel's faith and practice, its interpretation was certainly not monolithic. The differences between various Jewish groups examined in this thesis seem to fall into two categories: 1) the origins and meaning of the Sabbath and 2) the actual practice of the

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<sup>168</sup> See Boccaccini, *Middle Judaism*, 18-21. The work of Boccaccini is the most recent scholarly study to make this point.

Sabbath. For example, in *Jubilees*, the Sabbath has heavenly origins (*Jub.*2:17-36) and its theological/spiritual value is greater than that of the feasts (*Jub.*6:32-33a), and obedience to the Sabbath commandment is enforced by capital punishment (*Jub.*2:24-29). In 1 and 2 Maccabees, however, it is mainly a badge of Jewish identity (1 Macc. 1:43; 2 Macc. 6:1-6). The violation of the Sabbath in order to save life is justified (1 Macc. 2:7-8; 2:29-41). A merciful act on the Sabbath is not considered to be a compromise in these books. In contrast with Maccabean picture, in the *Damascus Document* animals that have fallen into a ditch are not to be rescued on the Sabbath (XI, 11b-14a), while only partial help can be given to a human (XI, 16-17a). Josephus *Jewish Antiquities* speaks of the Sabbath as a civil obligation that should be recognized by everyone in the general society for their own good (*Ant.*16:42-44). Sabbath is a time for moral recharging and the bettering of life. Its honor is great (*Ant.*12:272-277), but throughout history it was often diminished by Israel and the Gentiles alike (*Ant.*12:3-5). The differences in these various takes/positions/views on the Sabbath often depended on many factors such as authorship and historical events surrounding its composition.

All these views flourished in Jewish minds of the time, and those who held them sometimes even contradicted each other and challenged one another's interpretations, but they always kept the Sabbath at the center. So it seems that, hypothetically, the contemporary Jewish Christians could have accepted *some changes in how*<sup>169</sup> the Sabbath was to be observed without much visible debate, in particular given the radical nature of the messianic arrival, but it is almost certainly a mistake to think that the Sabbath could be altogether abrogated or simply exchanged for another day without any debate.

Second, it is also clear that by the time denoted by us as the Late Second Temple Period, the Sabbath had become one of the major badges of Jewish religio-national identity in the minds of the Judean Jews and the Gentiles that were in touch with the Jews, especially in the Diaspora. For example, when the Gentiles thought of the Jews, they often thought of their Sabbath-keeping practice (*Ant.*14:226-228; 12:3-5). Not to be

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<sup>169</sup> In the future research I plan to investigate possible criteria/pattern for the changes and their acceptability within the Jewish community.

able to keep the Sabbath was tantamount to ceasing to be Jewish altogether (2 Macc. 6:1-6). Once again in anticipation of my future study, this conclusion is of particular importance. The often-embarrassing silence of the New Testament with regards to the change from Saturday to Sunday becomes even more noticeable. If the sharp change was really propagated by the early Jewish Christian community, it surely would have produced heated debates, but we know nothing about debates of this kind from early Jewish Christian writings or any writings that come from the Late Second Temple Period. If the Sabbath was a marginal issue (as is the case today in most Christian communities) than the change from Saturday to Sunday could have been accepted without major debate. But since the Sabbath was one of the main badges of identity for the Jews, it would be impossible to introduce such a sharp divergence without some time of debate/persuasion as was the case for example with baptism and circumcision.

Third, nearly all of the Sabbath passages had to do with one of three major themes: 1) YHWH's Covenant with Israel, 2) Jews vs. Gentiles, 3) the Supremacy of YHWH's Law. For example in *Jubilees*, the Sabbath is an exclusive covenant sign for Israel (*Jub.*2:19-22), Sabbath-keeping is also a norm in the heavenly/superior worship cycle (*Jub.*2:17-19; 6:30b-31), while Sabbath-breaking is a punishable crime (*Jub.*2:26; 50:13b). In 1 Maccabees, Sabbath keeping is a sign of being a Jew in covenant with YHWH (1 Macc. 1:43). In 2 Maccabees, keeping the Sabbath was a sign of belonging to the heavenly Emperor (2 Macc. 15:1-4) as well as being a Jew (2 Macc. 6:1-6). In the *Damascus Document* the whole context of Sabbath obedience is the covenant that Israel's god made with the Damascus community (XV, 1-XVI, 16), and the strictness of obedience that derived from the supremacy of YHWH's law permeates the document (X, 17b-19; XI, 16-17a; XI 17b-18a). In *Jewish Antiquities*, the honor that the Jews rendered to the Sabbath was due to the covenant with God (12:272-277). Sabbath-breaking was considered to be a punishable and enforceable crime in Judea (*Ant.*11:346-347). Sabbath restrictions were often used by the Gentile enemy against Israel in military campaigns (*Ant.*12:3-5), but eventually Sabbath observance was acknowledged by some Gentile rulers as a civil right (14:226-228). This particular conclusion shows that life in general for the Jewish community consisted in self definition as the people in covenant with the

true god, struggling to live in compliance with the covenant stipulations that were enjoined upon them by their covenant Lord. That is to say that the idea of the covenant and its covenant signs were at the very core of Jewish life in the Late Second Temple Period; hence, the Sabbath, as one of the covenant signs was also considered as something that was central and not peripheral to the life of the Jews in Judea or the Diaspora, which further proves the point that the sharp switch from Saturday to Sunday would have been impossible in the early Jewish Christian community without major debate.<sup>170</sup>

Fourth, the halakhic discussion about the Sabbath was always conditioned by the historical events that took place at the time and those events in turn informed the decisions of Jewish participants in those events. Just like the horrible events of the recent Jewish Holocaust in Europe made Christian theologians rethink popular theological rhetoric and even some common theological assumptions, so it is that the Maccabean Revolt, alongside of other political events of the time, caused reinterpretation of Sabbath-keeping practices among the Jews as we see in 1 Macc. 2:7-8; 2:17; 2:29-41 as well as 2 Macc. 8:26-28. These passages show that the Sabbath Laws in the mind of Jewish communities were dynamic in nature. In spite of the fact that there was a built-in traditional resistance to change, many Jews of the time were willing to reconsider, to debate and to argue how various situations would help them interpret the Sabbath Laws appropriately, even if in the end representatives of some particular groups would not agree to any change at all. This conclusion is not suggesting that the idea of Sabbath-keeping was “loose” in nature, but rather “dynamic or living” as God’s Ancient people sought to faithfully apply the Sabbath commandment to current life situation in the absence of clear prophetic direction from above.

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<sup>170</sup> A question could be raised: “If Sabbath was so central to the Jewish life and practice of the time, why there are not a lot more works that come from that same period that deal with the Sabbath?” The answer to that may have to do with the *centrality* of the Sabbath being assumed/presupposed instead of being debated or challenged.

Fifth, various Jewish commitments to the Sabbath were matters of the heart and of the community's collective relationship with its covenant Lord. Those commitments were not necessarily legalistic in nature, but concerned themselves primarily with heartfelt fidelity to the Covenant with YHWH. For example, in *Jubilees* Sabbath-keeping is a duty of the heart (*Jub.* 2:28-29) and was to be characterized by joy and satisfaction (50:10a). In the *Damascus Document*, Sabbath-keeping was to be heartfelt and personal (CD X, 17b-19) it was also, just as in *Jubilees*, a duty of the heart (CD.XI, 2-3), hence commitment to Israel's god was expressed in the uncompromising nature of Sabbath obedience (CD XI, 7b-11a; XI, 16-17). In Josephus, Sabbath-keeping was done in the context of heartfelt honoring of the covenant Lord and his covenant sign (*Ant.* 12:272-277), and Sabbath-keeping was instituted to insure the moral and emotional wellbeing of the people (*Ant.* 16:42-44). One of the anti-Jewish accusations over the centuries has been that Judaism was superficial in all forms and that a new, better religion - Christianity - came to fill the vacuum left by the lack of a personal relationship with God and the lack of heartfelt devotion to YHWH. The "new religion" would, in contrast to Judaism, inspire true passion and commitment. This research supports the conclusions of many modern scholars, encouraged by the recent findings of the documents of the Late Second Temple Period, that those accusations were generally false. Judaisms were full of true passion of personal commitment to YHWH as evidenced by various expressions of the Sabbath observance, the rigid, passionate and robotic obedience should rather be viewed as acceptance of the rule or something like a "collateral damage" for any people group engaged in any kind of religious devotion.

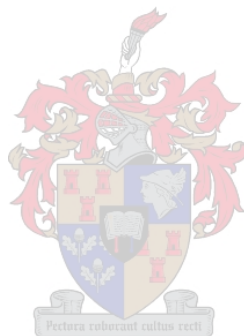
Sixth, the Judean Jewish sources<sup>171</sup> that I examined suggest that the Sabbath was observed and enforced in Judea (*Ant.* 11:346-347). However, from my research it is not clear to what degree it was observed in various times, various places and under various political settings. There seems to be no reason, for example, to suppose that all Jews since the Maccabean revolt agreed on the validity of fighting in self-defense on the Sabbath or

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<sup>171</sup> It could be argued that Josephus is not a Judaeian source, because it was written for Romans in Rome, but I think that the case can still be made that his formative years and hence his worldview and thinking were Judean at the core.

that they had largely remained obedient to the older way of thinking.<sup>172</sup> In the books I have examined there is simply not enough data to conclude anything specific and comprehensive. However, what is clear is that Sabbath violations were crimes the punishment for which could sometimes only be escaped by relocating from Judea to Samaria (*Ant.* 11:346-347).

These conclusions are only provisional, because this study is a part of the larger research that I hope to undertake in the years to come. At the time of the conclusion of the entire project, these conclusions will need to be updated and adjusted once the rest of the data have been analyzed.



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<sup>172</sup> See Weiss, *Day of Gladness*, 85.

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