University of Groningen

Betsy Halpern Amaru, The Perspective from Mt. Sinai: The Book of Jubilees and Exodus, Journal of Ancient Judaism Supplements, 21; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2015.
van Ruiten, Jacques T.A.G.M.

Published in:
Journal for the Study of Judaism

DOI:
[10.1163/15700631-12324308](https://doi.org/10.1163/15700631-12324308)

IMPORTANT NOTE: You are advised to consult the publisher's version (publisher's PDF) if you wish to cite from it. Please check the document version below.

Document Version
Publisher's PDF, also known as Version of record

Publication date:
2017

[Link to publication in University of Groningen/UMCG research database](#)

Citation for published version (APA):

van Ruiten, J. T. A. G. M. (2017). Betsy Halpern Amaru, The Perspective from Mt. Sinai: The Book of Jubilees and Exodus, Journal of Ancient Judaism Supplements, 21; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2015. *Journal for the Study of Judaism*, 48(3), 450-454. <https://doi.org/10.1163/15700631-12324308>

Copyright

Other than for strictly personal use, it is not permitted to download or to forward/distribute the text or part of it without the consent of the author(s) and/or copyright holder(s), unless the work is under an open content license (like Creative Commons).

The publication may also be distributed here under the terms of Article 25fa of the Dutch Copyright Act, indicated by the "Taverne" license. More information can be found on the University of Groningen website: <https://www.rug.nl/library/open-access/self-archiving-pure/taverne-amendment>.

Take-down policy

If you believe that this document breaches copyright please contact us providing details, and we will remove access to the work immediately and investigate your claim.

Downloaded from the University of Groningen/UMCG research database (Pure): <http://www.rug.nl/research/portal>. For technical reasons the number of authors shown on this cover page is limited to 10 maximum.

Betsy Halpern-Amaru

The Perspective from Mt. Sinai: The Book of Jubilees and Exodus, Journal of Ancient Judaism Supplements, 21; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2015. Pp. 192. ISBN: 978-3-525-55095-3

In *The Perspective from Mt. Sinai*, Halpern-Amaru deals with the Exodus material in the book of Jubilees. Although Jubilees mainly consists of a rewriting of the biblical narrative of the book of Genesis, the book also deals with the book of Exodus. In ch. 1 ("Setting and Perspective:" 13-23), the author focuses on the interpretive uses of Exodus material in the construction of the setting. The book of Jubilees presents itself not merely as a rewriting and interpretation of the biblical words, but as a revelation which Moses received at Mount Sinai. In the prologue and the beginning of Jub. 1, the author combines texts from Exodus (Exod 19; 24; 34) to describe the scene for the revelation. Apart from dealing with this Exodus material, Halpern-Amaru sketches also the outlines of her book in this chapter.

In ch. 2 ("New Transitions and New Eras"; 25-47), which is a reworking of her "Burying the Fathers: Exegetical Strategies and Source Traditions in Jubilees 46,"¹ Halpern-Amaru analyzes the markers that record the transitions from patriarchal family to nationhood (Exod 1:1-7; Jub. 46:1-3), from freedom to enslavement (Exod 1:8-10; Jub. 46:5-13), and from enslaved to endangered nation (Exod 1:10-22; Jub. 46:14-47:1). Treating Genesis-Exodus as a continuous story, the angel narrator of Jubilees changes the markers that delineate the shifts between the eras, reorients perspective, and develops a chronology that supports a new periodization. Moreover, Jubilees stresses the patriarchal residence in Hebron, and it retains only the first stage of enslavement (building activities; failure of oppressive policy; Egyptian attitude towards the Israelites). According to Halpern-Amaru, Joseph's spiritual authority disappears in Jub 46, whereas Levi and his line are elevated. The possible influence of the war legend that appears in the introduction to Visions of Amram that survived in five copies at Qumran (4Q543-547), or traditions that are incorporated in them, is studied in detail. Halpern-Amaru shows that the author of Jubilees selectively adopted aspects of this war legend, and incorporated them within his own burial narratives.

Ch. 3 ("Moses: A Biography"; 49-63) examines the omissions, additions, and manipulations of scriptural material that construct a portrait of the young

1 B. Halpern-Amaru, "Burying the Fathers: Exegetical Strategies and Source Traditions in Jubilees 46," in *Reworking the Bible: Apocryphal and Related Texts at Qumran*, ed. E. G. Chazon, D. Dimant, and R. A. Clements, STDJ 58 (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 135-52.

Moses compatible with the ideal leader typology developed in the personal histories of the antediluvian notables and the founding fathers of Israel. Halpern-Amaru points to the strategy of circumventing the troubling by omission in the treatment of the marriage of Moses's parents, which she puts in context with the marriage reports in the rewriting of the Genesis part of Jubilees.² One can find this strategy also with regard to Moses's stay at Midian and his marriage with Zipporah. Although reorienting assumptions about the influential forces in the hero's youth, up to the point of Moses's departure from Egypt, *Jubilees* presents his personal story along the lines recounted in Exod 2:1-15. Halpern-Amaru highlights the importance of the description of Miriam's activity protecting Moses from the birds in relation to other stories reflecting the danger-from-birds motif in Jubilees (e.g., Jub. 11:11-13, 18-22; 14:11-12) which might also be related to Mastema's agency. Moreover, the sympathetic portrait of Tarmuth, pharaoh's daughter, is in line with many other favorable depictions of Egyptian characters that appear in Jubilees reworking of Genesis. After Moses's departure, Jubilees moves into a summary mode which is a natural consequence of the recollection having arrived at events well within Moses's memory.

Ch. 4 ("Redemption Revealed"; 65-82) analyzes the transformation of the expansive Exodus account of plagues and the liberation from Egypt into a revelation of what Moses does not know from his own experience (the collaboration of heavenly forces in the implementation of the redemption promised to Abraham at the Covenant between the Pieces). The story of the past comes as a climax and the diachronic treatment of Exodus narrative end with the redemption from Egypt. Although the Jubilees treatment has the appearance of a summary, according to Halpern-Amaru, the angel's account is an exposition of the process of redemption that discloses the events behind the scenes of the scriptural narrative. In a careful structural analysis, she points to the existence of three units in Jub. 48:3-19: the episode of the plagues (v. 3-11), the deliverance of the Israelites and the drowning of the Egyptians at the Reed Sea (v. 12-17), and the Israelite plundering of the Egyptians (v. 18-19). All three units are built up in parallel constructions: an exposition containing an encounter between Mastema and the angel(s) of the presence; a brief account of the redemptive act; and a retrospect into the scriptural account that demonstrates how the heavenly forces contribute to the advancement of the redemptive act.

2 Cf. B. Halpern-Amaru, *The Empowerment of Women in the Book of Jubilees*, JSJSup 60 (Leiden: Brill, 1999).

In ch. 5 (“Pesah and Maṣṣot”; 83-98), Halpern-Amaru focuses on the account of the Pesah/Maṣṣot proto-festival initiated by Abraham after the Akedah (Jub. 18:18-19), and on the prescriptive recollections of the Israelite celebrations (Jub. 49:1-6, 22b-23). In Jub. 18, its assigned name and seven-day duration identify it as a patriarchal proto-Maṣṣot; but Isaac’s transformation into a firstborn distinguishes the first night, and associates it with Pesah. With regard to Jub. 49, Halpern-Amaru points to the convergence of biblical interpretation and polemic. The rewriting brings order and coherence to the chaotic mixture of law and narrative in Exod 12-13. At the same time, the context demonstrates the fulfillment of divine forecasts and supports the Jubilees conception of a glorious proud Israelite nation emerging from Egypt.

In ch. 6 (“The Pesah Statute”; 99-128), Halpern-Amaru gives attention to the Pesah statute as such (Jub. 49:7-22a). She shows how allusive exegesis fuels the development of a full blown Pesah statute that is revealed to Moses not in Egypt, but in the present time of the angel addressing him on Mt. Sinai. In Jubilees, the Pesah Statute is comprised of sixteen commands presented in five thematic units. Each unit addresses a particular facet of the commemoration (date; time of day; ritual; organization; celebration in the land). To a large extent, Jubilees is an interpretive reworking to the statute material, which in its context of Exod 12-13 is unclear or is some way contextually ambiguous. Halpern-Amaru treats the commands in their thematic contexts. Each of the five sections begins with a discussion of the theme developed within the unit, followed by an analysis of the exegesis operating within the individual commands. It is very helpful that a table summary of the allusion exegesis introduces the exegetical analysis in each section. As far as the content is concerned, the Jubilees Pesah Statute involves the following principles: The commemoration is on two dates (offering on the 14th; eating on the 15th); no change of the prescribed schedule is permitted; the festival ritual includes specific requirements for cooking and eating; only Israelite males twenty years of age and above are to participate in the commemoration, which is to be held at the central sanctuary (either at the tabernacle, or when it is built, at the temple); and annual commemoration protects the Israelites from the plague. Jubilees develops a structure that disengages the statute from the Egypt narrative context and associates it instead with legislation given to Moses at Mt. Sinai.

In ch. 7 (“The Sabbath and Its Law”; 129-47), Halpern-Amaru illustrates that the manipulation of textual time supports a hermeneutical expansion of the basic Sabbath commandment in Exod 20:8-10 that is split in the angelic presentation, with one part in a Genesis based context and the other in an

Exodus based one. Apart from this created connection between Exodus law and Genesis narrative, she points to interpretive deployment of scriptural formulation of Sabbath law, and exegetical elaboration that goes beyond the perimeters of Torah legislation. She deals with the narrative expansion of the account of the institution of the Sabbath at the time of creation (Gen 2:1-3; Jub. 2:1, 17-25), with the interpretive extension of the biblical command to sanctify the Sabbath (Jub. 2:26-33), and of the prohibition against doing any work on the seventh day in the Decalogue (Jub. 50:6-13). Within each text, the exegesis relates to one or more facets of Exodus Sabbath legislation (primarily Exod 16:5, 23; 31:13-17; 35:2), at times through explicit citation or allusion, at times through creative adaptation of theme or motif. Each of the presentations of Sabbath law in Jubilees is concerned with both the sanctity of the day and the issue of work. The deployment of selective allusions to these passages within Jubilees displays a systematic pattern of exegesis and demonstrates continuity between the presentations of Sabbath law in Jub. 2 and 50.

Finally, ch. 8 ("Closures"; 149-60) focuses on the treatments of post-Egypt material (Exod 15:22-19:1) that is contextually and/or temporally rearranged to contexts that reorient significance and alter meaning. The chapter is structured around the theme of endings and explores the meetings of endings and beginnings within the retrospect that constitutes the body of the book of Jubilees. According to Halpern-Amaru, Jubilees displays a medley of three different types of closure. First, there is a thematic closure of the book. The central theme in the angel's narrative is God's unique relationship with Israel, the revelation and transmission of heavenly secrets, the making of covenants, and the fulfillment of divine promises, culminating in the redemption from Egypt. Exodus narratives subsequent to this account of the redemption are reduced, omitted, reoriented, and reinterpreted within new contexts. Secondly, there is a present time closure. The narrator brings the retrospect from the creation onwards up to the immediate present-time setting of the narration. The setting established in the opening frame of Jubilees (Moses recording the words being dictated by the angels of the presence on Mt. Sinai) remains the same throughout the angel's narration. Finally, Halpern-Amaru points to a circular closure of the book. The retrospective narration comes back to the point at which it began. One set of Sabbath laws comes at the beginning of the narration. A second one comes at its closure. Both sets of laws are addressed to Moses on Mt. Sinai in the present time. The splitting of the event is a literary strategy, one that places the date-focused spoken by the angel within a legislative envelope that acknowledges no passage of time.

In general, the book is well written, although a concluding summary at the end of each chapter would have helped the reader. With regard to methodology, Halpern-Amaru herself calls her approach “a literary one that focuses on the intersection of structure and content” (20) in contrast to other approaches of this material, like source criticism (Ravid; Segal; Kugel) and comparative textual analysis (Van Ruiten). The detailed literary structural exegesis stimulates further study of Jubilees. However, in many places she cannot escape the comparative approach, since the interpretive stance of the book of Jubilees is only recognizable against the background of Genesis and Exodus. Her attitude towards the source critical approach is somewhat unclear. She approaches Jubilees as unitary text (21), but at the same time she does not want to challenge the redactional approach per se. She acknowledges critical scholarship and wants to offer an alternative perspective. Her explicit interaction with redactional critical scholarship, however, is scarce and limited to a few footnotes. The book is well edited, although I happen to come across a few typos in names (e.g., Micahel instead of Michael on 163; Odel for Odil on 129 and 167) and foreign titles (e.g., Wissenchaft for Wissenschaft on 128 and 161; la Judaïsme instead of le Judaïsme on 164; Gesechichitwerk for Geschichtswerk on 100 and 169). These minor remarks, however, should not detract from the value of the book. The focus on the Exodus material in the book of Jubilees adds an important chapter to the reception history of the book of Exodus.

Jacques T. A. G. M. van Ruiten

Rijksuniversiteit Groningen, Groningen, The Netherlands

j.t.a.g.m.van.ruiten@rug.nl