

PURITY AND NATIONALISM IN  
SECOND TEMPLE LITERATURE:  
1–2 MACCABEES AND *JUBILEES*

JOSEPH HELLERMAN\*

In 167 BC, at the instigation of an influential faction of Jewish elites, the Syrian king, Antiochus IV, began a program of forced Hellenization which prohibited behaviors and altered institutions that were particularly defining for Jewish identity:

. . . the king sent letters by messengers to Jerusalem and the cities of Judah; he directed them to follow customs strange to the land, to forbid burnt offerings and sacrifices and drink offerings in the sanctuary, to profane sabbaths and feasts, to defile the sanctuary and the priests, to build altars and sacred precincts and shrines for idols, to sacrifice swine and unclean animals, and to leave their sons uncircumcised (1 Macc 1:44–48).<sup>1</sup>

The king also proscribed Jewish dietary laws, and the eating of unclean food became something of a litmus test for faithfulness to Antiochus's directives. Finally, imperial authorities destroyed copies of the Torah—the sacred source for Jewish religious practices—and determined possession of the law to be a capital offense.

Antiochus's goal was transparently socio-political: "that [his whole kingdom] should be one people, and that each should give up his customs" (1 Macc 1:41–42).<sup>2</sup> The king perceptively discerned that, in order to achieve his desired ends, he would have to abolish traditional Jewish distinctions between sacred and profane foods, times, and places. For the "customs" associated with these distinctions (along with male circumcision) had served to set apart Jewish inhabitants of the empire as the chosen people of Yahweh and thereby obstruct any attempt to render the Jews "one people" with their Greek overlords.<sup>3</sup>

\* Joseph Hellerman is professor of New Testament Language and Literature, Talbot School of Theology, 13800 Biola Avenue, La Mirada, CA 90639.

<sup>1</sup> Citations of 1–2 Maccabees are taken from Bruce M. Metzger, ed., *Oxford Annotated Apocrypha: RSV* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1965, 1977).

<sup>2</sup> Scholars have generally abandoned attempts to explain Antiochus's actions on religious grounds. As Lester Grabbe observes, "Antiochus was concerned with politics, and religious matters were only incidental to his principal goals, which were those of most politicians: money and power" (*Judaism from Cyrus to Hadrian. Volume One: The Persian and Greek Periods* [Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992] 256). See also Otto Mørkholm, *Antiochus IV of Syria* (Classica et Mediaevalia Dissertationes 8; Copenhagen: Gyldendalske Boghandel, 1966) 186.

<sup>3</sup> Note Stephen A. Cummins's recent summary: "In brief, what was at stake was the Jewish way of life; the repressive measures of the enemy, climaxing in the persecution and suffering under

The ensuing history is a familiar one, and there is little need to rehearse it here. Suffice it to say that a series of victories on the part of the Maccabees and their supporters ultimately garnered for Judeans both religious and political independence from their Syrian Greek oppressors. My intention here is to consider the effects of the crisis of 167–164 BC upon Jewish convictions regarding those symbols of socio-religious identity proscribed by Antiochus, as reflected in later literature.

Before the Maccabean crisis, a considerable contingent of Jewish elites had demonstrated a willingness to compromise their ethnic solidarity by openly adopting Greek customs and practices. The initiative which led to Antiochus's decree in fact originated among the Jews. A faction of the Hellenized Jewish nobility, led by a certain Menelaus, desired to reform Jewish religion and "make a covenant with the Gentiles" (1 Macc 1:11).<sup>4</sup> More than a few of Menelaus's contemporaries showed themselves willing to jettison socially defining purity practices and traditional temple worship in order to accommodate themselves to Greek *mores*.

Comparable attitudes and behaviors are conspicuously rare among Jews some two centuries later. Persons who abandon Jewish identity in favor of overt Hellenism, after the manner of Menelaus and his followers (Tiberius Julius Alexander, for example), stand out as exceptional among first-century Jews. Jewish writings of Palestinian provenance produced during and after the crisis exhibit, moreover, a rather strident texture where symbols of Jewish identity are concerned. Discussions about circumcision, the sanctity of the temple, and laws relating to food, festivals, and Sabbath abound in the literature. These practices, moreover, are often explicitly associated with Israel's "otherness," vis-à-vis the Gentiles, as the chosen people of God. The following essay surveys a portion of this literature in an effort to elucidate these Jewish attitudes toward purity during the post-Maccabean era.

Literature representing the perspectives of Jewish individuals and groups who lived in Palestine during the period in question includes the works of Josephus, the writings preserved at Qumran, early portions of the rabbinic corpus, as well as various texts from the OT Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha. For the present project, I have limited myself to an examination of three works: 1–2 Maccabees and *Jubilees*. For each document, I will highlight those passages that reflect authorial preoccupation with the following symbols of Jewish socio-political identity:

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Antiochus IV Epiphanes, were designed to replace Israel's central symbols—Temple, Torah, circumcision, and so forth—with various Hellenistic distinctives" (*Paul the Crucified Christ in Antioch* [SNTSMS 114; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001] 30).

<sup>4</sup> The thesis that argues that radical Hellenization had its beginnings in Jewish circles—and which views the imperial decree as a response to circumstances surrounding this initiative—has seen considerable refinement over the years. See Elias Bickerman, *The God of the Maccabees* (trans. H. R. Moehring [Leiden: Brill, 1979; orig. ed. 1937]); Victor Tcherikover, *Hellenistic Civilization and the Jews* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1961); Martin Hengel, *Judaism and Hellenism* (2 vols.; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1974); and Klaus Bringmann, *Hellenistische Reform und Religionsverfolgung in Judäa* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1983). Grabbe provides a helpful summary of the history of the debate (*Judaism from Cyrus to Hadrian* 1.248–56).

- the practice of male circumcision
- the distinction between sacred and profane places
- the distinction between sacred and profane times
- the distinction between sacred and profane foods

Each of the three distinctions mentioned above served, of course, to highlight an even more profound one, namely that between sacred and profane people—the distinction between Palestinian Jews and their Gentile oppressors.

#### I. 1 MACCABEES

First Maccabees, written in Judea toward the close of the second century BC, graphically portrays one writer's attitude toward the preservation of the Jewish way of life in the wake of the Maccabean crisis.<sup>5</sup> Concerns related to sacred space, sacred seasons, dietary laws, and circumcision all find expression in this important narrative of Hasmonean history.

1. *Circumcision.* Circumcision became a defining issue in the Maccabean conflict. Early in the narrative we read that Jewish Hellenizers “removed the marks of circumcision” (1:15), and we are informed that Antiochus proscribed the practice and “put to death the women who had their children circumcised, and their families and those who circumcised them” (1:48; 1:60–61). During the earliest stages of the revolt that followed, the patriarch Mattathias and his friends “forcibly circumcised all the uncircumcised boys that they found within the borders of Israel” (2:46).

2. *Sacred and profane places.* Concern for the temple as Israel's sacred space takes pride of place in 1 Maccabees, since the profanation of the temple constituted the low point in a series of actions which finally resulted in revolt on the part of more traditional Jews such as Mattathias and his family. “To forbid burnt offerings and sacrifices and drink offerings” and “to defile the sanctuary and the priests” were at the very heart of the king's Hellenizing agenda (1:45–46, 54).

Even before the “desolating sacrilege” of 167 BC, Antiochus and his emissaries had, in the eyes of the narrator, already profaned the temple on two separate occasions. Several years before the decree, the king “arrogantly entered the sanctuary” and confiscated temple furnishings and utensils (1:21–23). Later a large force led by the king's “chief collector of tribute” returned to Jerusalem, initiated a pogrom against the Jews in the city, and

<sup>5</sup> Bezalel Bar-Kochva dates 1 Maccabees to the reign of John Hyrcanus (135–104 BC) (*Judas Maccabaeus: The Jewish Struggle against the Seleucids* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989] 162–64). General consensus understands the narrative to be an official account of the years 175–135 BC, written from the Hasmonean point of view. We know that the work received wide circulation in Jewish Palestine, since Josephus draws on 1 Maccabees some two centuries later, as the primary source for his account of the Maccabean period (*Ant.* 12.237–13.229; see Shaye J. D. Cohen, *Josephus in Galilee and Rome: His Vita and Development as a Historian* [Leiden: Brill, 1979] 44–47; Isaiah M. Gafni, “Joseph and 1 Maccabees,” *Josephus, the Bible, and History* (ed. Louis H. Feldman and Gohei Hata; Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1989] 116–31).

“even defiled the sanctuary.” The Maccabean historian laments in response, “[Jerusalem’s] sanctuary became desolate as a desert” (1:29, 37, 39).

Not until the “desolating sacrilege” of 167, however, does Jewish reaction to the desecration of the temple first find verbal expression among characters in the narrative itself. Here a lamentation is placed on the lips of Mattathias, which specifically highlights the horror of a defiled holy city and temple: “‘Alas! Why was I born to see this . . . the ruin of the holy city . . . the sanctuary given over to aliens? Her temple has become like a man without honor . . . our holy place, our beauty, and our glory have been laid waste; the Gentiles have profaned it. Why should we live any longer?’” (2:7–13). The expressions “our holy place, our beauty, and our glory,” along with the explicitly articulated distinction between Judeans (“our . . . our . . . our . . . [w]e”) and their Syrian Greek oppressors (“the Gentiles”), pointedly testify to the centrality of the temple as a symbol of Jewish identity.

The following chapter finds Judas and his troops encountering a large Syrian force sent to crush the revolt (3:43–45). Concern for sacred space again occurs in the same context as a self-conscious awareness of the distinction between “our people” (v. 43) and “the Gentiles” (v. 45). When the Judeans first hear of the approaching Greek army, they exhort one another, “‘Let us . . . fight for our people and the sanctuary’” (3:43). The narrator then intercedes with his own comments decrying the profanation of the temple: “The sanctuary was trampled down, and the sons of aliens held the citadel; it was a lodging place for the Gentiles” (3:45). What follows is a poignant description of concerns shared among Maccabean sympathizers for the status of temple worship: “They also brought the garments of the priesthood and the first fruits and the tithes . . . and they cried aloud to Heaven, saying, ‘What shall we do with these? Where shall we take them? Thy sanctuary is trampled down and profaned, and thy priests mourn in humiliation’” (3:49–51). The Syrians suffered defeat in this and several ensuing battles, and the temple mount, with the exception of the citadel, was finally in Maccabean hands. The first statement uttered by the victors in the narrative that follows reads, “‘Behold, our enemies are crushed; let us go up to cleanse the sanctuary and dedicate it’” (4:36). The balance of the chapter details the purification and rededication of the temple and the joyous celebration that followed (4:37–59). Our narrator summarizes: “There was very great gladness among the people, and the reproach of the Gentiles was removed” (v. 58).

The rest of 1 Maccabees also reflects authorial preoccupation with sacred space. Particularly informing is the fate of the Syrian general Nicanor, who threatens to burn down the temple unless Judas and his followers are delivered into his hands. The priests proceed to array themselves before the recently rededicated altar and temple, praying, “‘Thou didst choose this house to be called by thy name, and to be for thy people a house of prayer and supplication. Take vengeance on this man and on his army, and let them fall by the sword; remember their blasphemies, and let them live no longer’” (7:37–38). The prayer is answered in the affirmative; Nicanor is the first to die, and his army is massacred so that “not even one of them was left” (7:46).

The moral of the story of Nicanor’s demise—that Gentiles who attempt to defile Israel’s sacred space find themselves on the receiving end of divine

retribution—is a recurring one in the literature (see below, on Heliodorus, in 2 Maccabees 3). Even Jews who compromise their ancestral faith by profaning sacred space are not exempt. Sometime around 160 BC Alcimus, a Seleucid appointee to the high priesthood who was viewed with great suspicion by Maccabean sympathizers, also died as a direct result of an affront to the temple:

Alcimus gave orders to tear down the wall of the inner court of the sanctuary. He tore down the work of the prophets! But he only began to tear it down, for at that time Alcimus was stricken and his work was hindered; his mouth was stopped and he was paralyzed, so that he could no longer say a word or give commands concerning his house. And Alcimus died at that time in great agony (9:54–56).

The wall in question was the one separating the rest of the temple from the Court of the Gentiles.

The remaining texts in 1 Maccabees which underscore the importance of sacred space in the symbolic universe of the author narrate portions of the rule of Simon, “the great high priest and commander and leader of the Jews” (13:43). Immediately after his brother Jonathan is taken captive, but before Simon is formally installed as the nation’s leader, he proclaims to his people, “You yourselves know what great things I and my brothers and the house of my father have done for the laws and the sanctuary” (13:3).

In 1 Maccabees 14, Simon is extolled in a poetic text segment cited (or composed) by the narrator (14:4–15) and, again, on bronze tablets put “upon pillars on Mount Zion” (14:27) by the Jewish people. The poetic passage characteristically focuses upon national independence (*ethnos* is repeated in the text, vv. 4, 6) and crescendos to a final affirmation of Simon’s efforts on behalf of the temple: “He made the sanctuary glorious, and added to the vessels of the sanctuary” (v. 15).<sup>6</sup>

The proclamation of gratitude erected on a stele by the people (14:27–45), which follows the poetic passage in the narrative, also emphasizes Simon’s role in gaining Jewish independence and purging the temple of gentile impurity:

Simon . . . and his brothers, exposed themselves to danger and resisted the enemies of their nation, in order that their sanctuary and the law might be preserved; and they brought great glory to their nation. . . . And when their enemies decided to invade their country, and lay hands on their sanctuary, then Simon rose up and fought for his nation. . . . And in his days things prospered in his hands, so that the Gentiles were put out of the country, as were also the men in the city of David in Jerusalem, who had built themselves a citadel from which they used to sally forth and defile the environs of the sanctuary and do great damage to its purity (14:29, 31, 36).

Notice the connection here between removal of Gentile occupation, national glory, and the defense of Israel’s sacred space. For Simon and his contemporaries, to rise up and fight for one’s nation meant repulsing any who dared “lay hands on their sanctuary” (14:31).

<sup>6</sup> The first half of this citation—“He made the sanctuary glorious”—likely refers to Simon clearing out the last vestiges of Seleucid occupation from the citadel or, as our narrator expresses it in the immediately preceding context, “[Simon] removed uncleanness from it (the citadel)” (v. 7).

3. *Sacred and profane times.* Among Antiochus's directives was an order to "profane Sabbaths and feasts" and thereby eliminate these uniquely Jewish practices. Initially in the conflict, the Jews refused to fight on the Sabbath and "so profane the sabbath day" (2:34). A slaughter at the hands of the king's forces encouraged Maccabean leadership to reconsider their position. Given the importance of the Sabbath for Jewish identity, one can only imagine the extent of heart-wrenching debate and discussion that was finally summarized in the following text segment:

And each said to his neighbor: "If we do as our brethren have done and refuse to fight with the Gentiles for our lives and our ordinances, they will quickly destroy us from the earth." So they made this decision that day: "Let us fight against every man who comes to attack us on the sabbath day; let us not all die as our brethren died in their hiding places" (2:40–41).<sup>7</sup>

Antiochus's successors also recognized that Sabbath and festivals were key components of Jewish socio-religious self-consciousness. As the hegemony of the Seleucid dynasty crumbled under Roman pressure, pretenders to the throne began to compete with one another to solicit favors from the Jews. Among the concessions Demetrius I (c. 152 BC) offered "the nation of the Jews" (10:25) was the right to observe "all the feasts and sabbaths and new moons and appointed days" (10:34). Finally, 1 Maccabees even informs us of a new sacred time established to commemorate the rededication of the temple: the feast of Hanukkah (1 Macc 1:59).

4. *Sacred and profane foods.* Antiochus's decree, as related in 1 Maccabees, does not explicitly proscribe dietary laws. A more general command is found: "[The Jews] were to make themselves abominable by everything unclean and profane, so that they should forget the law and change all the ordinances" (1:48b–49). That this portion of the decree related directly, however, to food injunctions in the Torah becomes patently clear when the author summarizes the response to Antiochus's program of forced Hellenization on the part of the faithful a few verses later: "But many in Israel stood firm and were resolved in their hearts not to eat unclean food. They chose to die rather than to be defiled by food or to profane the holy covenant; and they did die. And very great wrath came upon Israel" (1:62–64). For our narrator, to "profane the holy covenant" consists, preeminently, of eating food that was forbidden in the Torah and, therefore, defiling in the eyes of Yahweh.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>7</sup> Preoccupation with Sabbath was, of course, characteristic of our period. The idea, for example, that the people of Yahweh should not fight on the Sabbath never appears in OT stories of warfare in the days of the judges and pre-exilic kings. The subject became a vexing one, however, during the Second Temple period, as evidenced by the Maccabean literature and the writings of Josephus (*J.W.* 1.145–47; 1.157–60; 2.517; *Ant.* 13.252; 14.237; E. P. Sanders, "The Dead Sea Sect and Other Jews," *The Dead Sea Scrolls in their Historical Context* [ed. Timothy H. Lim; Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 2000] 17). The most reasonable explanation of this change is the increasing role Sabbath-keeping played in the Second Temple period as a socially defining behavior.

<sup>8</sup> The conjunction "or" in the expression "to be defiled by food or to profane the holy covenant," in the above translation of 1:63, is unfortunate. The Greek conjunction, *kai*, is seldom, if ever, used

## II. 2 MACCABEES

Second Maccabees is an abbreviated version of an extended narrative by Jason of Cyrene. The author (often referred to as an “epitomizer”) writes in a manner more overtly theological than is the case with 1 Maccabees and provides more detail about the events leading up to the suppression of Jewish religion and about the resistance and martyrdoms which followed.<sup>9</sup>

1. *Circumcision.* Although the epitomizer who penned 2 Maccabees does not specifically describe the prohibition of circumcision as a part of Antiochus’s decree, he provides more details than 1 Maccabees regarding the fate of those who refused to obey the edict: “For example, two women were brought in for having circumcised their children. These women they publicly paraded about the city, with their babies hung at their breasts, then hurled them down headlong from the wall” (6:10).

2. *Sacred and profane places.* Second Maccabees focuses repeatedly on the importance of Israel’s sacred space. We first encounter these concerns in correspondence relayed by the author in the opening chapters, where the epitomizer cites two letters allegedly written to Jews in Alexandria in order to encourage them to celebrate Hanukkah like their compatriots in Palestine. A portion of the second letter draws, by way of analogy, upon a festal celebration at the time of Nehemiah. At one point in this feast, those gathered offer a prayer which closely connects the concept of a holy people with that of a holy place: “Gather together our scattered people, set free those who are slaves among the Gentiles, look upon those who are rejected and despised, and let the Gentiles know that thou art our God. Afflict those who oppress and are insolent with pride. Plant thy people in thy holy place, as Moses said” (1:27–29). As we shall see below, this association of a “people” with a “holy place,” that is, the connection between Jewish social identity and sacred space, is a recurring theme in 2 Maccabees.

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in a disjunctive sense, and it is probably best to take it here as explicative: “to be defiled by food and so profane the holy covenant.”

<sup>9</sup> Grabbe, *Judaism from Cyrus to Hadrian* 1.224. No attempt will be made to sort out the confused chronology of 2 Maccabees. I am concerned here with the ideological orientation of the author, not the historical reliability of the details of his narrative. For the latter, see the classic commentaries by F.-M. Abel (*Les livres des Maccabées* [Paris: Gabalda, 1949]) and Jonathan A. Goldstein (*II Maccabees* [AB 41a; Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1983]), as well as the important monograph by Robert Doran (*Temple Propoganda: The Purpose and Character of 2 Maccabees* [CBQMS 12; Washington, D.C.: Catholic Biblical Association of America, 1981]). As Jan Willem Van Henten remarks of the author of 2 Maccabees, “He did not focus on an accurate reproduction of the events, but on the significance of these crucial events of the past for contemporary Jewish politics, religion, morality and self-understanding” (*The Maccabean Martyrs as Saviours of the Jewish People* [JSJSup 57; Leiden: Brill, 1997] 25). The pronounced ideological flavor of 2 Maccabees renders the document all the more valuable for the present study, which seeks to elucidate the *Zeitgeist* of the post-Maccabean era. Van Henten dates 2 Maccabees during the reign of John Hyrcanus (135/134–104 BC) and asserts that, despite the fact that the document was originally written in Greek, “It is obvious that 2 Maccabees is of Judean origin” (ibid. 50–51).

After the two letters, the author introduces the abridgement of Jason of Cyrene's work which is to follow (2:19–32). In his brief summary of what he will proceed to narrate in some detail, our epitomizer gives pride of place to circumstances surrounding the temple. His list of events (an "epitome of an epitome") begins as follows: "The story of Judas Maccabeus and his brothers, and the purification of the great temple, and the dedication of the altar . . ." (2:19).

True to his stated intentions, our author focuses upon the temple throughout the body of the narrative proper (3:1–15:36), which begins with the delightful tale of an aborted attempt to desecrate the temple on the part of the Syrian representative Heliodorus. Sent by Seleucus IV to confiscate money from the temple treasury, Heliodorus first encountered the pious high priest, Onias, who desperately attempted to dissuade him, citing "the holiness of the place" and "the sanctity and inviolability of the temple which is honored throughout the whole world" (3:12). Onias's pleas had no effect, however, so the distressed populace then "hurried out of their houses in crowds to make a general supplication because the holy place was about to be brought into contempt" (3:18).

When he arrives at the treasury, Heliodorus is immediately struck near-dead by divine agents and only revives in response to the prayers of Onias. The sacred nature of the temple complex—and the special place the temple occupied in the symbolic world of the author—come to colorful expression in Heliodorus's report to Seleucus upon his return to Antioch. When asked by the king what sort of person he should send on another mission to Jerusalem, Heliodorus replies,

If you have any enemy or plotter against your government, send him there, for you will get him back thoroughly scourged, if he escapes at all, for there certainly is about the place some power of God. For he who has his dwelling in heaven watches over that place himself and brings it aid, and he strikes and destroys those who come to do it injury (3:38–39).<sup>10</sup>

<sup>10</sup> This theology of sacred space is challenged, of course, in events which follow, when Antiochus IV lays "profane hands" on money in the treasury and escapes unscathed. The narrator is aware of the need to explain such an anomaly:

Antiochus was elated in spirit, and did not perceive that the Lord was angered for a little while because of the sins of those who dwelt in the city, and that therefore he was disregarding the holy place. But if it had not happened that they were involved in many sins, this man would have been scourged and turned back from his rash act as soon as he came forward, just as Heliodorus was, whom Seleucus the king sent to inspect the treasury (5:17–18).

The dynamic reverses yet again in the ensuing narrative, where we find the king smitten with "an incurable and unseen blow" because he had intended to "make Jerusalem a cemetery of Jews" (9:4–5). Similarly, near the end of 2 Maccabees Nicanor dies in battle because "he stretched out his right hand toward the sanctuary" and threatened to "level this precinct of God to the ground" (14:33). In 15:32, Judas publicly displays Nicanor's severed head in the temple court, along with "that profane man's arm, which had been boastfully stretched out against the holy house of the Almighty."

These changes in God's response to offenses against his temple find their explanation in the theology of the author, who directly associates divine intervention on behalf of the Jews with the faithful keeping of the laws proscribed by Antiochus (see below).

As the author proceeds to describe Antiochus's decree and the revolt of the Maccabees, events relating to the temple continue to occupy a prominent place in the narrative, and they are repeatedly and explicitly tied to issues of national identity. For example, the king's decree, as related in 2 Maccabees, compels the Jews "to pollute the temple in Jerusalem and call it the temple of Olympian Zeus" (6:2). The close association of this command with the phrase "forsaking the laws of their fathers" in the verse immediately preceding (6:1) shows that the elimination of Jewish distinctives is directly in view in the prohibition of traditional temple worship. The same connection is made in a challenge offered by Judas to his soldiers, as they prepare to encounter Nicanor and his armies two chapters later. We read that Judas

exhorted them not to be frightened by the enemy and not to fear the great multitude of Gentiles who were wickedly coming against them, but to fight nobly, keeping before their eyes the lawless outrage which the Gentiles had committed against the holy place, and the torture of the derided city, and besides, the overthrow of their ancestral way of life (8:16–17).

2 Maccabees 11:24–25 also combines concern for sacred space with Israel's socio-religious identity. Antiochus V writes to his general Lysius after Judas had defeated the Syrian general and his armies. The king instructs Lysias as follows:

We have heard that the Jews do not consent to our father's change to Greek customs but prefer their own way of living and ask that their own customs be allowed them. Accordingly, since we choose that this nation also be free from disturbance, our decision is that their temple be restored to them and that they live according to the customs of their ancestors (11:24–25).

The restoration of the temple is inextricably bound up with restoring the Jewish way of life—life, that is, "according to the customs of their ancestors" (11:25). This explains why, some chapters earlier in the narrative, Judas and his followers desperately "besought the Lord . . . to have pity on the temple . . . and to have mercy on the city" (8:2–3).

A final illustration of the prominence of the temple occurs near the end of 2 Maccabees, when the author relates the response to Judas' army after Judas exhorted them to battle:

Encouraged by the words of Judas, so noble and so effective in arousing valor and awaking manliness in the souls of the young, they determined not to carry on a campaign but to attack bravely, and to decide the matter, by fighting hand to hand with all courage because the city and the sanctuary and the temple were in danger. Their concern for their wives and children, and also for brethren and relatives, lay upon them less heavily; their greatest and first fear was for the consecrated sanctuary (15:17–18).

3. *Sacred and profane times.* The epitomizer who produced 2 Maccabees (c. 1st c. BC) was well aware of the socially defining function of sacred times for Second Temple Judeans. As is now recognized, the author's desire to establish the annual festival of Hanukkah (as it is now called) throughout the Jewish diaspora constitutes the single unifying element of an otherwise

*mixtum compositum* consisting of two quoted letters (1:1–2:18), comments by the author (2:19–32; 15:37–39), along with an excerpt from a history by Jason of Cyrene (3:1–15:36).<sup>11</sup>

Sabbath-keeping appears early in the narrative. Shortly before the king's decree, Antiochus sent Appolonius to Jerusalem, who "waited until the holy sabbath day" to carry out his orders to massacre a number of resident Jews (5:25–26). Like the author of 1 Maccabees, our epitomizer includes in Antiochus's program of Hellenization the proscription of Sabbath-keeping and the festal calendar (6:6). Here we are given more detail, however, about those who resisted the king's decree. Certain Jews "assembled in caves" to secretly observe the Sabbath. Upon discovery they "were all burned together, because their piety kept them from defending themselves, in view of their regard for that holy day" (6:11).

A later passage finds the victorious Jews pursuing the fleeing remnants of the Syrian army. The pursuit ends prematurely, however, as the day wanes. The author explains:

For it was the day of the sabbath, and for that reason they did not continue their pursuit. And when they had collected the arms of the enemy and stripped them of their spoils, they kept the sabbath, giving great praise and thanks to the Lord, who had preserved them for that day and allotted it to them as the beginning of mercy (8:26–27).

Several chapters later we encounter another passage in which Judas and his army cease fighting on the Sabbath (12:38). Here, as in 8:26–27 above, the Jews, now on the offensive, did not need to defend themselves on the Sabbath.

A final Sabbath text in 2 Maccabees finds Nicanor attempting to encourage a contingent of Jews "who were compelled to follow him" to fight against Judas on the seventh day. The enslaved Jewish mercenaries plea with Nicanor to "show respect for the day which he who sees all things has honored and hallowed above other days." Nicanor proceeds to insist, but the Jews stand their ground, and reply with a declaration that forms a fitting summary to our survey of sacred times in 2 Maccabees: "It is the living Lord himself, the Sovereign in heaven, who ordered us to observe the seventh day" (15:1–5).

4. *Sacred and profane foods.* Faithfulness to OT food laws constitutes the defining act of piety for the author of 2 Maccabees. Early in the narrative Judas and his friends flee Jerusalem, for the first time, in the face of the attack of Appolonius. We are told that Judas ". . . got away to the wilderness, and kept himself and his companions alive in the mountains as wild animals do; they continued to live on what grew wild, so that they might not share in the defilement" (5:27). Shortly thereafter, Antiochus issues his decree, and our epitomizer relates the lengthy stories of the torture and martyrdoms of the aged Eleazar and a mother and her seven sons, who suffer the extreme penalty solely because they refused to eat pork (6:18–7:42). This text segment has rightly been identified as central to the epitomizer's ideological

<sup>11</sup> Thomas Fischer, "Maccabees, Books of," *ABD* 4.442.

agenda. Later, in 4 Maccabees, the narrative was reworked and elevated to “the crown of biblical martyrology.”<sup>12</sup> The stories are familiar and need not be repeated here, but their importance must not be underestimated. Traditions such as these, which situate sacred food at the very center of Jewish socio-religious identity, found wide reception and distribution throughout Jewish Palestine and the diaspora, and generated a cultural script that must inform our understanding of early Christian controversies relating to Jewish dietary laws and table fellowship.<sup>13</sup>

A final passage explicitly correlates sacred food with Jewish identity. I mentioned above, in the discussion of sacred space in 2 Maccabees, a letter that Antiochus V wrote to Lysius after Judas had defeated the Syrian contingent and won religious freedom for his nation (11:24–25). The connection noted in that discussion between sacred space and Jewish national identity also applies to sacred food, as the ensuing context demonstrates. After our epitomizer finishes relating the king’s letter to Lysias, he cites a second letter, this one addressed to the Jews themselves. Here, the newly permitted liberties, described only in general terms in the former letter, find specific expression in dietary practices, as Antiochus promises the Jews freedom “to enjoy their own food and laws, just as formerly” (11:31).

Our overview of 2 Maccabees would be incomplete without some observations about the ideological orientation of the author. More than a generation ago, Bruce Metzger asserted that the purpose of Jason (from whose work our author draws) was “to interpret history theologically.”<sup>14</sup> Thomas Fischer has more recently cited the “direct insights” 2 Maccabees gives us into “the contemporary Judean understanding of history.”<sup>15</sup> For our purposes, it is important to discern an ideology—both tacitly assumed and explicitly articulated throughout the narrative of 2 Maccabees—which connects the preservation of Jewish socio-religious distinctives to national independence in the face of Gentile occupation.

Responsibility for the initial sufferings and oppression of the Jews at the hand of Antiochus is, for example, laid at the feet of Jason and his Jewish friends who placed “the highest value upon Greek forms of prestige” and imitated Greek “ways of living” (4:13–17). Correspondingly, the Maccabean victories that follow find explanation in a piety that willingly accepts martyrdom in order to faithfully obey the very laws proscribed by Antiochus.

<sup>12</sup> The quotation is from *ibid.*

<sup>13</sup> Van Henten’s important work on the martyrs in 2 and 4 Maccabees should be consulted in this regard. The martyrdoms have undergone considerable adaptations prior to appearing in the form in which we have them in 2 Maccabees. Van Henten observes, “This implies that the texts deal with issues of self-definition and Jewish identity in both the religious-cultural and the political spheres” (*The Maccabean Martyrs as Saviours of the Jewish People* 6). Van Henten finds a distinctly political element in 2 Maccabees 7, for example, where the brothers refer to the Jewish laws as “the laws of our ancestors” (7:2, 37). He concludes, “Thus, the laws of God are at the same time presented as the laws of a specific people. Apparently the Greek phrase *οἱ πατέροι νόμοι* is part of a semantic field of terms referring to the Jewish people” (*ibid.* 13–14).

<sup>14</sup> *Oxford Annotated Apocrypha* 263.

<sup>15</sup> Fischer, “Maccabees, Books of,” *ABD* 4.445.

Scholars have identified a Deuteronomistic scheme of sin and divine retribution in 2 Maccabees. According to this outline, the faithfulness of Eleazar, the woman, and her seven sons constitute the crucial turning point of the narrative:

1. Blessing: Jerusalem during the priesthood of Onias III (3:1–40)
2. Sin: Hellenization of Jerusalem under Jason and Menelaus (4:1–5:10)
3. Punishment: Reprisals of Antiochus IV (5:11–6:17)
4. Turning point: Deaths of the martyrs and prayers of the people (6:18–8:4)
5. Judgment and salvation: The victories of Judas (8:5–15:36)<sup>16</sup>

Even foreigners must ultimately acknowledge this connection between Jewish national independence and faithfulness to the laws relating to sacred foods, times, and space. Upon his return from a devastating defeat at the hands of Judas, Nicanor returned to Antioch and “proclaimed that the Jews had a Defender, and that *therefore* the Jews were invulnerable, *because* they followed the laws ordained by him” (8:36; my italics). The author of 1 Maccabees had written, “Pay back the Gentiles in full, and heed what the law commands” (2:68). For the epitomizer of 2 Maccabees, accomplishing the latter guarantees the success of the former.

The importance of Maccabean history and traditions for understanding the symbolic world of Jesus and the early Christians cannot be overestimated. Stephen Cummins recently surveyed the correspondence and continuity between Maccabean events and theology, on the one hand, and first-century Jewish nationalistic aspirations, on the other. The results confirm the ongoing influence of this remarkable period in later Second Temple history. Cummins (a) discerns a Maccabean element in early Pharisaism; (b) finds distinctly Maccabean echoes in portrayals of the Caligula episode and the Jewish response; and (c) traces the theme of Maccabean martyrdom in first-century Jewish texts and traditions. He concludes that “the Maccabean period—not least the pivotal role of its martyr figures—was current as an inspirational living tradition readily at hand to a first-century Jew.”<sup>17</sup>

### III. JUBILEES

*Jubilees* is a haggadic expansion of portions of Genesis and the initial chapters of Exodus, purporting to contain information revealed by an angel to Moses on Sinai (Exod 24:18). The discovery of fragments at Qumran, along with the comparison of the contents of the work with Qumran beliefs and practices, point to a pre-100 BC date of composition. More narrowly, *Jubilees*

<sup>16</sup> Fischer, *ABD* 4.445, who cites Doran (*Temple Propaganda* 93–94, 110); and George W. E. Nickelsburg (*Jewish Literature Between the Bible and the Mishnah* [Philadelphia: Fortress, 1981] 118). Van Henten suggests that before Judas can be assured of victory, the relationship between the Lord and his people, which had been ruptured by the defections of the Hellenizing party, had to be restored. The faithful activities of Eleazar and the mother and her seven sons—who refuse to eat pork and suffer martyrdom as a result—“fulfill the prerequisite need for restoring the bond” (*The Maccabean Martyrs as Saviours of the Jewish People* 27).

<sup>17</sup> Stephen Cummins, *Paul and the Crucified Christ in Antioch* 54, see 54–90.

appears to have been penned sometime before the establishment of the Qumran community (c. 140 BC). For despite many similarities to Qumran ideology, the work reflects no discernable break with the broader body of Judaism as a whole. *Jubilees* may be reasonably viewed, then, as representative of the perspectives of a community of Hasidim or Essenes, prior to the formal withdrawal of some members of the group to establish an isolated sect at Qumran.<sup>18</sup> A date between 170–140 BC has recently been suggested.<sup>19</sup>

A mid-second century BC date for *Jubilees* situates the book in a setting characterized by increasing preoccupation with the symbols and practices

<sup>18</sup> O. S. Wintermute, “Jubilees,” *OTP* 2.44. Fragments of at least fourteen copies have been discovered at Qumran (Caves 1, 2, 3, 4, and 11), rendering *Jubilees* “one of the most popular works to have emerged from the eleven Qumran scroll caves” (Charlotte Hempel, “The Place of the *Book of Jubilees* at Qumran and Beyond,” in *The Dead Sea Scrolls in their Historical Context* [ed. Timothy H. Lim; Edinburgh, T & T Clark, 2000] 188). *Jubilees* has also been identified as “one of the most authoritative or ‘biblical’ texts at Qumran” (James C. VanderKam, “The Jubilees Fragments from Qumran Cave 4,” *The Madrid Qumran Congress* [ed. J. Trebolle Barrera and L. Vegas Montaner; Leiden: Brill, 1992] 648).

On the non-sectarian nature of *Jubilees*, see Michael A. Knibb (*Jubilees and the Origins of the Qumran Community, An Inaugural Lecture* [London: King’s College, 1989] 16–17). It is increasingly recognized that the library contains less sectarian than non-sectarian material, as evidenced in a recent attempt to classify the non-biblical materials from Qumran (Devorah Dimant, “The Qumran Manuscripts: Contents and Significance,” in *Time to Prepare the Way in the Wilderness. Papers on the Qumran Scrolls by Fellows of the Institute for Advanced Studies of the Hebrew University, Jerusalem, 1989–90* [ed. D. Dimant and L. H. Schiffman; Leiden: Brill, 1995] 23–58).

Affirming the identification of *Jubilees* as non-sectarian is the general absence of preoccupation with purity at table. The topic of purity and eating surfaces often in identifiably sectarian works from Qumran (1QS 6:2–5; 4Q514), and the community’s meal practices continue to be cited as distinctive among their contemporaries (E. P. Sanders, “The Dead Sea Sect and Other Jews” 20–28). Except for a brief admonition in the Abrahamic narrative (*Jub* 22:16), the author of *Jubilees* seems little concerned with purity at table, perhaps an indication that the work pre-dates the establishment of the community at Qumran with its intensified convictions along these lines.

The degree to which *Jubilees* sheds light upon Judaism outside Qumran remains a vexing question. The identification of the work as non-sectarian suggests that the concerns of the author go beyond the boundaries of Qumran. Related here is the broader issue of identifying halakhic practices—and related sociological concerns—common to the great majority of Second Temple Jews. Earlier trends toward atomization (i.e. the identification of a variety of Judaisms, along with the assignment of texts to one group or another) are now balanced by a greater appreciation of a shared set of Jewish beliefs and practices (see E. P. Sanders, *Judaism: Practice and Belief, 63 BCE–66 CE* [London: SCM; Philadelphia: Trinity, 1992]). At any rate, concerns with distinctions surrounding sacred and profane places, times, and foods were hardly unique to *Jubilees* or, for that matter, Qumran, as the rest of my survey indicates.

<sup>19</sup> Careful attention to allusions to Maccabean victories in the text has led Wintermute to suggest c. 161 BC as a latest date for the work (*OTP* 2.44). Some are not convinced, citing the absence of any mention of Antiochus’s decree as indicating a pre-167 date (Jonathan Goldstein, “The Date of the Book of Jubilees,” in *Proceedings of the American Academy for Jewish Research* Vol. 50 [Philadelphia: American Academy for Jewish Research, 1983] 63–86; and Nickelsburg, *Jewish Literature Between the Bible and the Mishnah* 73–80). Concerns on the part of the author of *Jubilees* for the preservation of Jewish identity, however, clearly assume a historical setting in which Judaism was on the defensive against Hellenistic ideas and practices. One can reasonably assume strong reservations on the part of a proto-Essene group of Judean Hasidim to encroaching Hellenism some years before Antiochus’s decree, and a post-167 date for the work is not necessary for the present argument. James C. VanderKam’s 170–140 BC dating for *Jubilees* can be adopted as a cautious but reasonable conclusion (“Jubilees, Book of,” *ABD* 3.1030).

that constitute the focus of the present study. As O. Wintermute has asserted, “Obedience to the Law is the central message of *Jubilees*.”<sup>20</sup> The legal piety in view here centers around circumcision, sacred times, and sacred foods. Familiar to most scholars is the author’s preoccupation with calendrical matters and the importance of Sabbath-keeping. Particularly notable is the considerable effort the author expends to anachronistically retroject the practices of Sabbath, circumcision, and ceremonial purity back into the earliest chapters of Genesis. Indeed, as we shall see below, even the angels were circumcised when God created them, and they have been celebrating the Sabbath ever since.

1. *Circumcision.* *Jubilees* 15 narrates the establishment of the covenant of circumcision with Abraham. Much of the text follows Genesis 17. The narrative concludes, however, with an excursus on the importance of circumcision, along with a prediction of future apostasy regarding the rite, each of which finds no parallel in Genesis.<sup>21</sup> The elaboration upon the centrality of circumcision for Israel’s identity deserves extended citation. The first portion reads as follows:

This law is for all the eternal generations and . . . there is no passing a single day beyond eight days because it is an eternal ordinance ordained and written in the heavenly tablets. And anyone who is born whose own flesh is not circumcised on the eighth day is not from the sons of the covenant which the Lord made for Abraham since (he is) from the children of destruction. And there is therefore no sign upon him so that he might belong to the Lord. . . . Because the nature of all of the angels of the presence and all of the angels of sanctification was thus from the day of their creation. And in the presence of the angels of the presence and the angels of sanctification he sanctified Israel so that they might be with him and with his holy angels (15:25–27).<sup>22</sup>

The angels themselves were circumcised from creation. It is only appropriate, then, for Israel to be circumcised, so that they, too, might be with God and his holy angels.<sup>23</sup> The angelic messenger continues:

<sup>20</sup> Wintermute, “*Jubilees*,” *OTP* 2.40.

<sup>21</sup> Much insight into the ideological agenda of the author can be gained by comparing *Jubilees* with source material in Genesis. Monographs that have made substantial contributions in this regard include those of J. T. A. G. M. van Ruiten (*Primaeval History Interpreted: The Rewriting of Genesis I–II in the Book of Jubilees* [Leiden: Brill, 2000]); and John C. Endres (*Biblical Interpretation in the Book of Jubilees* [CBQMS 18; Washington, D.C.: Catholic Biblical Association of America, 1987]).

<sup>22</sup> For *Jubilees*, I cite Wintermute’s translation throughout (*OTP* 2.52–142).

<sup>23</sup> The pronounced emphasis in the citation upon “the eighth day” is characteristic of our author, who will draw upon it again to explain the choice of Isaac over Ishmael to inherit the promise. With Gen 21:4, we learn in a later chapter of *Jubilees* that “Abraham circumcised his son (Isaac) on the eighth day” (16:14a). Our author then adds an observation that goes beyond the OT account: “[Isaac] was the first one circumcised according to the covenant which was ordained forever” (16:14b). This, along with the elaboration on the importance of eighth-day circumcision in 15:25–27, explains why Isaac, not Ishmael, inherits the blessing—Isaac was eight days old when he was circumcised; Ishmael was circumcised at thirteen years of age (Gen 17:25).

And you command the sons of Israel and let them keep this sign of the covenant for their generations for an eternal ordinance. And they will not be uprooted from the land because the commandment was ordained for the covenant so that they might keep it forever for all of the children of Israel. For the Lord did not draw Ishmael and his sons and his brothers and Esau near himself, and he did not elect them because they are the sons of Abraham, for he knew them. But he chose Israel that they might be a people for himself. And he sanctified them and gathered them from all the sons of man because (there are) many nations and many people, and they all belong to him, but over all of them he caused spirits to rule so that they might lead them astray from following him. But over Israel he did not cause any angel or spirit to rule because he alone is their ruler (15:28–32).

For the author of *Jubilees*, the covenant of circumcision has a profoundly sociological (even geographical) significance. The rite is inextricably connected to Israel's election as God's people and to their hope of remaining in the land of promise.

The section concludes with a prediction of future apostasy from circumcision, again, unparalleled in Genesis. The sociological dimension ("made themselves like the gentiles to be removed and be uprooted from the land," v. 34, below) should be noted:

And now I shall announce to you that the sons of Israel will deny this ordinance and they will not circumcise their sons according to all of this law because some of the flesh of their circumcision they will leave in the circumcision of their sons. And all of the sons of Beliar will leave their sons without circumcising just as they were born. And great wrath from the Lord will be upon the sons of Israel because they have left his covenant and have turned aside from his words. And they have provoked and blasphemed inasmuch as they have not done the ordinance of this law because they have made themselves like the gentiles to be removed and be uprooted from the land (15:33–34).

2. *Sacred and profane places.* *Jubilees* begins with a passage predicting that Israel will one day forsake the Lord, after they have settled in the land of promise. In harmony with OT parallels, the apostasy and ensuing judgment leads to repentance and restoration (1:7–18). The author quotes God as saying that his people will "forget all of my commandments . . . and they will walk after the gentiles and after the defilement of their shame" (1:9). The speaker (God) then elaborates upon this general prediction with the specific acts of apostasy here in view. Practices relating to sacred space and sacred seasons stand decidedly at the forefront of the narrator's mind:

And they will serve their gods . . . and many will be destroyed . . . because they have forsaken my ordinances and my commandments and the feasts of my covenant and my sabbaths and my sacred place, which I sanctified for myself among them, and my tabernacle and my sanctuary, which I sanctified for myself in the midst of the land . . . they will err concerning new moons, sabbaths, festivals, jubilees, and ordinances (1:9b–10, 14).

The idolatry described in the above passage—a passage which sets the tone for *Jubilees*, since it occurs at the beginning of the book—relates exclusively

to issues of sacred space, sacred seasons, and Jewish identity. Noticeably absent are any predictions that Israel will transgress Torah statutes dealing, for example, with the exercise of mercy and justice in the sphere of interpersonal relationships.<sup>24</sup>

Sacred space later receives striking emphasis in a narrative unique to *Jubilees*, in which legal injunctions relating to purification after childbirth (Lev 12:2–5) are retrojected back into the account of Adam and Eve in Genesis 2. Laws of purification in Leviticus assert that a woman may not “come into the sanctuary, until the days of her purification are completed” (12:4). The problem for the author of *Jubilees* is that the Torah account of the creation of Adam and Eve precedes by generations the establishment of Israel with a localized sacred tabernacle. Our narrator overcomes this difficulty by identifying the garden of Eden as God’s sacred space during the pre-Sinaitic period—Eden is now “the sanctuary.” Eve’s introduction to the garden by God’s angelic assistants is described as follows:

And when she finished those eighty days, we brought her into the garden of Eden because it is more holy than any land. And every tree which is planted in it is holy. Therefore the ordinances of these days were ordained for anyone who bears a male or female that she might not touch anything holy and she might not enter the sanctuary until these days are completed for a male or female (3:12–14).

In the next chapter Eden will be identified as one of four holy places: “For the Lord has four (sacred) places upon the earth: the garden of Eden [see earlier] and the mountain of the East and this mountain which you are upon today, Mount Sinai, and Mount Zion, which will be sanctified in the new creation for the sanctification of all the earth” (4:26).<sup>25</sup> Later, when Noah divides the land between his sons, Shem, Ham, and Japheth, the idea of Eden as a sacred locale surfaces again in the narrative: “And [Noah] knew that the garden of Eden was the holy of holies and the dwelling of the Lord. And Mount Sinai (was) in the midst of the desert and Mount Zion (was) in the midst of the navel of the earth. The three of these places were created as holy places, one facing the other” (8:19).<sup>26</sup>

We can pause here to appreciate the creativity of our author in view of his historical agenda and sociological convictions. The Genesis account contains no explicit ideology of sacred versus profane space. The raw materials for such a project are present, however, in the identification of Eden as a dis-

<sup>24</sup> Concerns for interpersonal righteousness do, however, surface elsewhere in the work (7:20–39; 20:2–11; 21:1–25; 36:1–17).

<sup>25</sup> Eden, Sinai, and Zion will be familiar to most readers. The “mountain of the East” represents the mountain on which Enoch offers incense to the Lord in the preceding narrative (4:24–25). On all this see now J. T. A. G. M. van Ruiten, “Eden and the Temple. The Rewriting of Genesis 2:4–3:24 in the Book of *Jubilees*,” in *Paradise Interpreted* (Leiden: Brill, 1999) 63–94.

<sup>26</sup> The idea of Jerusalem as “the navel of the earth” is first attested in *Jubilees* and is likely intended as polemical in view of Greek geography, which identified Delphi as “the *omphalos* of the world” (P. S. Alexander, “Jerusalem as the Omphalos of the World: On the History of a Geographical Concept,” *Judaism* 46 [1997] 147–58).

tinctive geographical locale (Gen 2:8–14), in the ensuing expulsion of Adam and Eve from the garden (3:23–24), and in the table of the nations outlined in Genesis 10. The author of *Jubilees* has adapted this raw material and creatively (and anachronistically) reworked the Genesis account to include the important symbolic dichotomy of sacred versus profane space, which is so characteristic of both levitical and, especially, post-Maccabean sensibilities.

*Jubilees* 8–10, which chronicles the post-deluge dividing of the land, specifically reflects a concern to legitimize Israel's claim to Canaan. A tactic now familiar to the reader—moving later realities into earlier times—is again adopted by the author, who moves the description of the boundaries of the land, first encountered in Genesis 15, back into chapter 10, before the Bible has made reference to any Canaanite in the land. James VanderKam summarizes the author's purpose:

Shem, the ancestor of the Israelites, is the favorite of his father and the overwhelming winner in the cartographic sweepstakes. . . . Not only is he holy; his inheritance encompasses the most sacred spots on earth, including the "holy of holies." Shem's patrimony was twice reduced: once through the generosity of several of his sons (the Madai case) and once through thievery (the Canaan affair). . . . It is evident that the writer has decided to make the table of nations address, among other concerns, primarily the problem of who really owned Canaan.<sup>27</sup>

Interestingly enough, the author's "ideological attempt to put the nations in their places" confines the Greeks to their islands, assigning them no land in Asia Minor or farther east. Greek occupation of Palestine, a historical reality at the time *Jubilees* was written, provides the most satisfying explanation of this polemic.<sup>28</sup>

3. *Sacred and profane times.* Of all the Jewish symbols discussed in the present work, concern to distinguish between sacred and profane times singularly drives the ideology of *Jubilees*. The earliest Hebrew description of the work reads as follows: "The book of the divisions of the times according to their jubilees and their weeks." Wintermute elaborates:

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

<sup>27</sup> James C. VanderKam, "Putting Them in Their Place: Geography as an Evaluative Tool," in *Pursuing the Text: Studies in Honor of Ben Zion Wacholder on the Occasion of his Seventieth Birthday* (ed. J. C. Reeves and J. Kampen; JSOTSup 184 [Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1994]) 46–69. The settlement of the lands of the earth by Noah's sons and their descendants receives extensive elaboration at the hands of our author. This material includes a Noachic curse upon anyone who violates boundaries and seizes another's land (9:14–15), along with the unlawful seizure of a portion of Shem's land by Ham's son, Canaan (10:29–34). The latter story was included in *Jubilees*, as Wintermute aptly notes, "in order to prove that any contemporary claim to [the promised land] was illegitimate" (*OTP* 2.37). Sacred space was apparently a markedly pressing issue characterizing the historical circumstances which led to the writing of *Jubilees*.

<sup>28</sup> The quote is from VanderKam, "Putting Them in Their Place."

days were also to be divided on a *qualitative* scale with respect to their sanctity. Some days were sacred and others profane.<sup>29</sup>

Alongside Wintermute's "theological value" it is appropriate to identify a sociological value as well. That our author viewed sacred times as inseparable from Israel's identity as the chosen people of Yahweh vis-à-vis the Gentiles is evident in his treatment of Sabbath early in the narrative.

As he does with circumcision and purification after childbirth, the author of *Jubilees* anachronistically writes Sabbath-keeping back into the creation account of Genesis 1.<sup>30</sup> The result is a striking excursus upon the centrality of Sabbath for the people of God. The discussion begins with the institution of the Sabbath among the angels:

And he gave us [the angels] a great sign, the sabbath day, so that we might work six days and observe a sabbath from all work on the seventh day. And he told us—all of the angels of the presence and all of the angels of sanctification, these two great kinds—that we might keep the sabbath with him in heaven and on earth (2:17–18).

The discussion continues with the importance of Sabbath as a social identity marker:

And he said to us, "Behold I shall separate for myself a people from among all the nations. And they will also keep the sabbath. And I will sanctify them for myself, and I will bless them. Just as I have sanctified and shall sanctify the sabbath day for myself thus shall I bless them. And they will be my people and

<sup>29</sup> Wintermute, *OTP* 2.38 (author's italics).

<sup>30</sup> This kind of anachronism, whereby the distinction between Israel and the Gentiles is read back into pre-Sinaitic stories in Genesis, abounds in *Jubilees*. In his rewrite of the Adam and Eve narrative (Genesis 3), for example, the author interjects the following commentary on the origin of clothing (Gen 3:21): "Therefore it is commanded in the heavenly tablets to all who will know the judgment of the Law that they should cover their shame and they should not be uncovered as the gentiles are uncovered" (*Jub* 3:31). There are, of course, no Jews or Gentiles in the Genesis 3 narrative.

Most have understood *Jubilees'* emphasis upon Sabbath, festivals, and circumcision as a response to the inroads of Hellenization. The author's fondness for pushing the dates of these practices (as well as Israel's election) back into the creation account has, however, elicited a more nuanced explanation. Some time ago, E. Bickerman, M. Hengel and J. Goldstein postulated a theology among certain Jerusalem elites which understood Sinaitic law—legislating distinctive practices for Israel and separation from the seven nations native to the promised land—as a later innovation. The "covenant with the Gentiles," referred to in 1 Macc 1:11, would then reflect the desire of this party to reform Judaism by going back to a time long ago in biblical history when Jew and Gentile were not separated as the law required (Bickerman, *The God of the Maccabees* 83–88; Jonathan Goldstein, *1 Maccabees* [AB 41; Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1976] 199–200; Martin Hengel, *Judaism and Hellenism: Studies in their Encounter in Palestine during the Early Hellenistic Period* [2 vols.; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1974] 1.299–301).

James VanderKam suggests that the author of *Jubilees* directly challenges this primitivist theology by purposefully retrojecting Israel's election, Sabbath law, and other Jewish distinctives back into the Genesis 1 creation account: "Rituals such as sabbath celebration, circumcision, sacrifices, and festivals . . . had been practiced from the beginning. In other words, true religion was detailed and separatist and had always been so. Sabbath-keeping and Israel's election *out of* the nations dated from the time of creation" (James VanderKam, "Genesis 1 in Jubilees 2," reprinted in *From Revelation to Canon: Studies in the Hebrew Bible and Second Temple Literature* [Leiden: Brill, 1994/2000] 521, author's italics).

I will be their God. And I have chosen the seed of Jacob from among all that I have seen. And I have recorded him as my firstborn son, and have sanctified him for myself forever and ever. And I will make known to them the sabbath day so that they might observe therein a sabbath from all work" (2:19–20).

The conclusion which follows underscores both the celestial observation of the Sabbath on the part of the angelic host and the special application of this sacred day to the nation of Israel:

On this day we kept the sabbath in heaven before it was made known to any human to keep the sabbath thereon upon the earth. The Creator of all blessed it, but he did not sanctify any people or nations to keep the sabbath thereon with the sole exception of Israel. He granted to them alone that they might eat and drink and keep the sabbath thereon upon the earth. And the Creator of all, who created this day for a blessing and sanctification and glory, blessed it more than all days (2:30–32).

It is hardly surprising that James VanderKam summarizes his careful study of *Jubilees* 2 with the assertion that "the writer envelops the creation in words about the sabbath."<sup>31</sup> Indeed, one could argue that the theme of Sabbath-keeping forms an *inclusio* for *Jubilees* as a whole, since this emphasis upon Sabbath early in the narrative finds an echo in an extensive Sabbath exhortation which serves as the conclusion to the book (50:1–13).<sup>32</sup>

Our author's preoccupation with sacred seasons finds vivid expression in his adamant insistence upon a solar, as opposed to a lunar, calendar. Only Sabbaths and feasts celebrated according to the former are legitimate. A key passage dealing with the 364-day calendar occurs in *Jubilees* 6. I will refrain from discussing the various technicalities associated with competing calendars in early Judaism.<sup>33</sup> More important for our purposes are the author's general admonitions to his readers to observe these sacred seasons (6:32–35) and his corresponding regrets that some will continue to insist upon a lunar calendar:

And there will be those who will examine the moon diligently because it will corrupt the (appointed) times and it will advance from year to year ten days. Therefore, the years will come to them as they corrupt and make a day of testimony a reproach and a profane day a festival, and they will mix up everything, a holy day (as) profaned and a profane (one) for a holy day, because they will set awry the months and sabbaths and feasts and jubilees (6:36–37).

<sup>31</sup> VanderKam, "Genesis 1 in *Jubilees* 2" 505.

<sup>32</sup> Other sacred times familiar from Sinaitic law appear in the author's account of creation. In the Genesis account, the sun and moon are intended simply "to separate the day from the night" and "for signs and for seasons and for days and years" (1:14). The author of *Jubilees* feels the need to be more specific: "And the Lord set the sun as a great sign upon the earth for days, sabbaths, months, feast (days), years, sabbaths of years, jubilees, and for all of the (appointed) times of the years" (2:9).

<sup>33</sup> See the works of James C. VanderKam and the references cited there ("The Origin, Character, and Early History of the 364-Day Calendar: A Reassessment of Jaubert's Hypotheses," *CBQ* 41 [1979] 390–411; "2 Maccabees and Calendrical Change in Jerusalem," *JSJ* 12 [1981] 52–74). See also Roger T. Beckwith, "The *Temple Scroll* and its Calendars. Their Character and Purpose," *RevQum* 69 (1997) 3–19.

The fear that the disobedient will “mix up everything” aptly summarizes the concerns of persons like the author of *Jubilees*, for whom distinctions between sacred and profane space, times, and food constituted non-negotiable symbols of social identity. In the present connection, “everything” clearly includes not only the distinction between sacred and profane seasons but, more importantly, the social distinction symbolized by the proper observation of these festivals—the distinction between Jew and Gentile. For in the immediately preceding context, our author pointedly warns his readers that to ignore the 364-day calendar is “to forget the feasts of the covenant and walk in the feasts of the gentiles” (6:35).

4. *Sacred and profane foods.* Given the above survey, a general absence of expressed concern for Jewish dietary practices in *Jubilees* is rather surprising. One passage, however, unequivocally articulates the author’s convictions along these lines, and the text can serve as a summary statement for the thrust of *Jubilees* as a whole. In the context, Abraham exhorts his grandson Jacob as follows: “Separate yourself from the gentiles, and do not eat with them, and do not perform deeds like theirs. And do not become associates of theirs. Because their deeds are defiled, and all of their ways are contaminated, and despicable, and abominable” (22:16). The prohibition against table fellowship with the Gentiles assumes, of course, as its background Jewish dietary laws. The text reflects concerns that are contemporary to the author and quite irrelevant to the patriarchal narratives of Genesis.<sup>34</sup>

As we have seen, our author’s preoccupation with the various symbols of Jewish identity has a marked sociological component—the identification and preservation of Jews, versus Gentiles, as the people of Yahweh. This distinction between sacred and profane people finds most overt expression in the prohibitions of intermarriage in *Jubilees*. At two places in his rewrite of Genesis, our author significantly expands the OT narrative in order to interject extended warnings about intermarriage with Gentiles.<sup>35</sup>

Genesis 27:45–28:2, for example, portrays Rebekah and Isaac arranging to send Jacob to find a wife from among their own extended patrilineal kinship group. These few verses in Genesis are cited, almost verbatim, in *Jubilees* (27:8–9). Earlier in the text, however, we encounter an extended dialogue about the evils of intermarriage with the Canaanites, between Rebekah and Jacob, which finds no parallel in Genesis (25:1–10). In response to his mother’s exhortation, Jacob assures Rebekah that he has not

<sup>34</sup> O. Wintermute, *OTP* 2.98, n. “d.”

<sup>35</sup> On the prohibition of intermarriage and its relationship to the expansion of narratives about women in *Jubilees*, see Betsy Halpern-Amaru, *The Empowerment of Women in the Book of Jubilees* (Leiden: Brill, 1999). Halpern-Amaru argues that prohibitions of intermarriage reflect “an apprehension that is more concerned with being the assimilator than with becoming assimilated” and suggests that our author disallowed conversion to Judaism in any form: “only descent from a woman who carries the appropriate genealogical credentials” qualifies one to be identified as a member of the chosen people (159, 155).

even “been thinking about taking . . . a wife from the daughters of Canaan” (25:4).

The Genesis 34 story of Dinah and the Shechemites also provided the author of *Jubilees* with an opportunity to warn against intermarriage. Here is an excerpt from an extended warning passage (30:7–17) which, again, is not found in Genesis:

And you, Moses, command the children of Israel and exhort them not to give any of their daughters to the gentiles and not to take for their sons any of the daughters of the gentiles because that is contemptible before the Lord. Therefore I have written for you in the words of the law all of the deeds of the Shechemites which they did against Dinah and how the sons of Jacob spoke, saying, “We will not give our daughter to a man who is uncircumcised because that is a reproach to us.” And it is a reproach to Israel, to those who give and those who take any of the daughters of the gentile nations because it is a defilement and it is contemptible to Israel. And Israel will not be cleansed from this defilement if there is in it a woman from the daughters of the gentiles or one who has given any of his daughters to a man who is from any of the gentiles (30:11–14).

#### IV. CONCLUSION

There can be little doubt that the authors of 1–2 Maccabees and *Jubilees* were greatly concerned with the preservation of Torah-based distinctions between sacred and profane seasons, places, and foods, along with the defining practice of male circumcision. It must be acknowledged, moreover, that the behaviors associated with these concerns reflect more than just the personal religious piety of the individuals who engaged in them. As is now widely recognized, religion in Second Temple Judaism was not a stand-alone institution; nor was it solely a private affair. Rather, religion, as understood and practiced by Jesus and his contemporaries, was a collective enterprise deeply embedded in the overarching institutions of politics and kinship. The texts surveyed above make this patently clear, for our authors draw implicit and explicit connections between Jewish purity practices, on the one hand, and the election and preservation of national Israel as the people of Yahweh, on the other.

If the views revealed in 1–2 Maccabees and *Jubilees* prove at all representative, we can be assured of the presence of a vibrant cultural script in first-century Palestine, according to which Judeans would have interpreted early Christianity’s challenges to circumcision, Sabbath, temple, and the food laws as profound challenges to the dominant conviction that the national identity of the people of God must be preserved at any and all costs in the face of Gentile oppression and defilement.<sup>36</sup>

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