



FEED MY SHEEP

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Part 2: Is There a Genuine Book of Jasher?

In last month's issue of *Feed My Sheep* and we examined critically the 1829 version of the Book of Jasher. We concluded from a wealth of evidence, both historical and internal textual evidence, and especially by comparing it to the Bible, that it was a fraud and a fake. In this issue we will apply the same criteria of criticism to the 1840 version of the Book of Jasher.

Other books of Jasher

Before we focus on Jasher-1840, it should also be noted that over the centuries, a number of rabbinical compositions have appropriated the name of Jasher for their works. Jasher is, in fact, not the name of an individual—as the fraudulent 1829 Jasher would have us believe—but “Jasher” (alt. spelling: “Jashar;” Hebrew: *yasher*) simply means “righteous” or “upright.” Hence, there exists *Sefer Hayasher – The Book of the Righteous*, which is an ethical treatise, not an historical narrative at all. Likely composed in the 13th century, it was translated into English and edited by Seymour J. Cohen.¹

Its introduction mentions several other books of Jasher from the 12th, 13th and 14th centuries, and one from some time in the 3rd to 6th centuries. None of these claim to be the authentic Book of Jasher. Only two books claim to be the authentic Book of Jasher referred to in Joshua 10:13 and 2 Samuel 1:18—the 1829 Jasher and the 1840 Jasher.

The 1840 Jasher—three editions

The 1840 Jasher was published by Messrs. M. M. Noah and A. S. Gould in New York. It is the first English translation of this text of the Book of Jasher. (As noted in last month's FMS, the 1829 and 1840 versions bear little resemblance to each other.) We have in our possession three “printings” of the 1840 English version: two hardcopy and one digital version. A comparison of random passages among these three editions, shows them all to be identical in the text of the book itself, including chapter divisions and versification.

The only differences are the following: Long before our good friend, Bible archeologist, E. Raymond Capt and his Artisan Publishers, came out with a printing of the Book of Jasher in 1988,² we had long had in our possession an old, large, paperback edition of the 1840 Jasher. This particular printing gave no publishing information, not even a date of printing. However, it did contain a preface by Mr. Noah, a translator's preface, a translation of the Hebrew preface, the printer's preface, and certificates by four scholars attesting to the reliability of the translation from the Hebrew into English. It did not contain a table of contents.

Both the digital version and the Artisan Publishers edition omit Mr. Noah's preface, the translation of the Hebrew preface and the printer's

preface. However, both contain an extensive table of contents containing a synopsis of events for each chapter, which is a very helpful feature when trying to search the Book of Jasher for a specific incident. The electronic edition of the Book of Jasher declares itself to be

“A Reprint of
PHOTO LITHOGRAPHIC REPRINT
OF EXACT EDITION
PUBLISHED BY J.H. PARRY & COMPANY
SALT LAKE CITY: 1887”

We would suspect that the original hardcopy (book) edition published by J. H. Parry & Co. in Salt Lake City in 1887 was published by the Mormons.

Errors in Jasher-1840

In our critical analysis of Jasher-1829 we enumerated ten specific examples of outright, blatant and important contradictions to the story as told in the Bible. We could have produced more. In applying the same critical method to Jasher-1840, we are hard pressed to find such contradictions. In fact, the only one which we have discovered is that according to Jasher-1840, the age of Methuselah at his death was 960; whereas according to Genesis 5:27, he was 969. Many other ages are given for patriarchs in Jasher-1840 and to the best of our knowledge all are consistent with Genesis.

This single error is possibly a scribal error, or more likely due to the great difficulty experienced by the printer in 1613 as he converted the text from a handwritten Hebrew manuscript to a printing press Hebrew edition. The Printer's Preface declares his text of Jasher was “transcribed from a very old manuscript, the letters of which were defaced...”

We also uncovered an internal inconsistency in Jasher-1840. However, it does not necessarily contradict the Bible. To set the stage, Abram's father, Terah, was a trusted and chief adviser to King Nimrod of Babel (Babylon). A sign in the

stars caused Nimrod to seek to kill the infant Abram, an obvious foreshadowing of Herod attempting to kill the infant Jesus two millennia later. For his protection and training, Abram was sent off to live with Noah and Shem.

At age 50, Abram returns to his father's house and immediately destroys the idols, drawing the wrath of Nimrod as Nimrod learns Abram's identity. In another foreshadowing (this, of the incident in the Book of Daniel), Abram is cast alive into a fiery furnace. After three days, he is alive and well and moving about in the fire. Nimrod, awestruck, allows Abram to come out of the fire, whereupon he lavishes Abram with gold, silver and other wealth and allows 300 men along with some of his own servants to follow Abram out of the country. Nimrod's chief servant, Eliezer, was given to Abram as a special gift.

Then we read in Jasher 12:45: “And at the expiration of two years from Abram's going out of the fire, that is in the fifty-second year of his life, *behold* king Nimrod sat in Babel upon the throne, and the king fell asleep and dreamed that he was standing with his troops and hosts in a valley opposite the king's furnace.” ...

The story continues in Jasher 13:1: “And Terah took his son Abram and his grandson Lot, the son of Haran, and Sarai his daughter-in-law, the wife of his son Abram, and all the souls of his household and went with them from Ur Casdim to go to the land of Canaan. And when they came as far as the land of Haran they remained there, for it was exceedingly good land for pasture, and of sufficient extent for those who accompanied them.”

After spending three years in Haran, the Lord appears to Abram and tells him to pack up and move to the land of Canaan. Therefore, Abram should be about 55 years old at this time as he is leaving Haran. But we read in Jasher 13:5: “... and Abram was fifty years old when he went from Haran.”

Clearly, there is a contradiction within Jasher-1840 itself. Some readers will be alert to point out, however, that this does indeed appear to contradict the Bible. Consider the Genesis record:

Genesis 12: 4 So Abram departed, as the LORD had spoken unto him; and Lot went with him: and Abram was seventy and five years old when he departed out of Haran.

But the mystery is dispelled as we read on in Jasher. After living 15 years in Canaan, Abram and his retinue return to Haran to visit his parents and kindred. He remains there for five years teaching all of them the ways of Yahweh. Then, the Book of Jasher informs us, he departs Haran a second time to go to the land of Canaan.

Jasher 13:26: “And Abram went and returned to the land of Canaan, according to the word of the Lord. And Lot the son of his brother Haran went with him, and Abram was seventy-five years old when he went forth from Haran to return to the land of Canaan.”

Thus, it does not contradict the Bible after all, but is a perfect example of how the Book of Jasher amplifies and expands the story of the Bible. Jasher-1840 is as thrilling to read as Jasher-1829 is dull. The narrative of Noah’s confrontation with hundreds of thousands of soon-to-be-drowned contemporaries is riveting. Jasher also recounts (chapter 14) how a sage from Shinar named Rikayon came to be the first Pharaoh and how his name came to be the title of the Egyptian rulers for centuries after him.

Ancient Italian history in Jasher

Immediately following the chapter detailing the story of Sarai, Hagar and the birth of Ishmael, Jasher launches into some early European history, specifically, of what later came to be known as Italy. Jasher relates (chapter 17) the incident of the rape of the Sabine women. In this chapter we find the people and place names (with slightly different spellings) unmistakably identify ancient Italy by the following: the Tiber river, the Etrus-

cans, Tuscans, Tuscany, the Sabines. Elsewhere (Jasher 10:16), the children of Chittim (Kittim) are identified as “the Romim” But we were all taught that ancient Rome began about the 8th century B.C. with Romulus and Remus. Surely, this discrepancy with secular history is irreconcilable, is it not?

Mr. M. M. Noah sheds some interesting light on this matter in his Preface (emphasis ours):

“There are, nevertheless, some events which are recorded in Jasher, which may create surprise, particularly a detail of the rape of the Sabines, which, at the first glance, I was disposed to consider as an interpolation; but a little reflection satisfied me that it was an event placed in proper chronological order. Pizron, in his *Revolution of Empires, or Antiquities of Nations*, says, (page 164,) ‘It is therefore likely from what I have said, that several of the Titans, in the reign of Uranus, or, at least, in that of Saturn, staying and fixing themselves in that part of Italy which is adjacent to the Tiber and the Appenines, were afterward called Umbrians. If such were the case, as it seems it was, the settlement of the Titans in Italy was made about the time of the calling of Abraham, that is, when he left Chaldea, to go and dwell in the land of Canaan.’ Page 175, ‘Now, if all this came to pass, it must have happened about the time to Deucalion reigned in Greece, or some years after the deluge that happened under that prince.’ If as Pizron says, the separation of the Sabines from the Umbrians took place 1500 years before Christ, it will not be far distant from the time at which Jasher places the rape of the Sabine women, in the 91st year of the life of Abraham.”

Titans, centaurs and the second coming

The mention of the Titans, Uranus and Saturn brings up another point. We have long suspected that the ancient Greek, Egyptian and Chaldean mythologies had some basis in fact. Now here we find the historian Pizron speaking matter-of-factly of these “gods” as actual historical personages. Even the monsters of Greek mythology (satyrs, centaurs, mermaids, mermen; i.e., half-

human, half-goat, half-bull, half-horse, half-fish creatures) could have resulted from genetic manipulation by the ancients.

Jesus told us in Luke 17 that conditions on the earth at the time of His second coming would be as it was in the days of Noah and Lot. Many Christians recognize the pervasive, open and unashamed practice of homosexuality as one of those signs marking His soon return. Widespread adultery is seen as another sign. But there is another sign of the times which we would not recognize as linking the days of Noah to our day were it not for the Book of Jasher. It is the great “progress” made in the science of cloning and genetic manipulation.

A sheep and a cow have been cloned. Pig genes and mice genes are being introduced into grain and vegetable products. Of these “achievements” we have been informed by the media. We wonder how much greater “progress” has been achieved but about which we are not told. I suspect much. Have they reached the stage where they are cloning humans? Have they been able to manipulate and mix the genes of humans and animals to produce the monsters of Greek mythology and Walt Disney’s “Fantasia?”

According to Jasher 4:18, our ancestors at the time of Noah were tinkering with the genetic code also. It describes how the sons of men “taught the mixture of animals of one species with the other...” Did they also create genetic hybrids, possibly the satyrs, centaurs, minotaurs, etc. of “mythology?”

Verdict on the 1840 Book of Jasher

While the 1840 Book of Jasher is an exciting and gripping account of events from Adam through Joshua, is it the authentic version referenced in the Bible? From the translation of the Hebrew Preface we learn that this text of Jasher was found by a Roman officer serving under Titus in the siege of Jerusalem of 70 A.D.

Sidrus, the Roman officer, broke through a

wall in a large house and discovered an old Jewish man hidden in a secret room reading amidst his treasure of scrolls of the Law, the Prophets and the Writings (collectively, our Old Testament), with Jasher among them. The two became friends, and after a time, finally settled in Seville, Spain, where the manuscript remained until it ultimately came into the possession of the Jew who fled Spain and subsequently printed it in Hebrew in Venice in 1613.

We feel certain in saying the 1829-Jasher is a fraud. We cannot say the same about the 1840-Jasher. We would appreciate hearing from any readers who find anywhere that Jasher-1840 directly contradicts the Bible. Meanwhile, we agree with the closing remarks of Mr. Noah in his Preface to Jasher-1840:

“Without giving it to the world as a work of Divine inspiration, or assuming the responsibility to say that it was not an inspired work, I have no hesitation in pronouncing it a work of great antiquity and interest, and a work that is entitled, even regarding it as a literary curiosity, to a great circulation among those who take pleasure in studying the Scriptures.”

ENDNOTES

1. www.jasher.com/Realjash
2. This is the edition we make available to our readers. Order B-127, *The Book of Jasher*, \$14 ppd. Artisan Publishers is now a subsidiary of Hoffman Printing Co. of Muskogee, Oklahoma.

Feed My Sheep is a part of the teaching ministry of James W. Bruggeman and is sent out freely upon request. The tithes and gifts of those who are fed by it make it possible for us to continue in ministry. Gifts may be sent to P.O. Box 6388, Asheville, NC 28816.