

THE HEADING OF THE *BOOK OF THE WORDS OF
NOAH* ON A FRAGMENT OF THE GENESIS
APOCRYPHON: NEW LIGHT ON A “LOST” WORK¹

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This article is dedicated to the memory of Professor Jonas C. Greenfield

Using multi-spectral imaging techniques developed for remote sensing and planetary probes, a team of researchers from the Ancient Biblical Manuscript Center, the Jet Propulsion Laboratory, and West Semitic Research has succeeded in photographing and deciphering the words כחב מלי נוח on a blackened fragment of the Genesis Apocryphon. A glance at the photographs furnished by Gregory Bearman and Bruce Zuckerman to *The New York Times*² confirms their reading beyond any doubt.

The reading of the third word is a real *tour de force*, since it is largely covered by a fragment of parchment. The first two words were revealed by conventional infrared photography (albeit with a specialized narrow band filter),³ and indeed “they are clearly visible in the old photographs of the scroll,”⁴ which were also infrared. Nevertheless, the reading of those two words is also an achievement, since they were previously undeciphered.

The *Times* article gives the meaning of the three words as “he wrote (*katāb*) the words of Noah.” In this note, I shall argue that what we have, instead, is the heading of a book: “the Book of (*katāb*) the Words of Noah.” Headings and titles of the form (1) “the Words of N,” or (2) “the Book of the Words of N,” or (3) “a copy of the Book of the Words of N” are well-known in biblical and post-biblical literature.

Form (1) prevails in the early period. The biblical books of Amos (דברי עמוס), Jeremiah (דברי ירמיהו בןחלקיהו), Ecclesiastes (דברי קהלת)

¹ I am indebted to Professors David Berger, Sid Z. Leiman, Elisha Qimron, Michael Stone, James C. VanderKam, and Richard White for pointing out various errors in earlier drafts of this article. Only I am responsible for the ones that remain.

² Nov. 23, 1993, p. C1.

³ Personal communication from Bruce Zuckerman.

⁴ Personal communication from Elisha Qimron. See further below.

(בְּדָוִד), and Nehemiah (דְּבָרֵי נְחֵמְיָה בְּרַחֲמֵיהֶם) have headings of this form, as do most of the books cited in Kings and Chronicles: דְּבָרֵי שְׁמוּאֵל הַרֹאֵה, “the Words of Samuel the Seer,” דְּבָרֵי נָתָן הַנְּבִיא, “the Words of Nathan the Prophet,” דְּבָרֵי נֹדַח הַחֹזֶה, “the Words of Gad the Seer,” דְּבָרֵי שְׁמַעְיָה הַחֹזֶה וְעִדּוֹ הַנְּבִיא, “the Words of Shemaiah the Prophet and Iddo the Seer,” and דְּבָרֵי חֲזַי, “the Words of Hozai.” In the later period, Jub. 21:10 gives two titles of this form: *nagara ʿēnok*, “the Words of Enoch,” and *nagara nox*, “the Words of Noah.”

Form (2) is found once in the Bible (סֵפֶר דְּבָרֵי שְׁלֹמֹה, “the Book of the Words of Solomon,” cited in 1 Kgs 11:41), but it is more typical of post-biblical works like Tobit (βιβλος λόγων Τωβιθ, “the Book of the Words of Tobit”)⁵ and Testament of Job (βιβλος λόγων Ιωβ, “the Book of the Words of Job”).⁶ According to Fitzmyer, there is an example in the Genesis Apocryphon itself. In 1QapGn 19:25, he reads מְלִי חֲנֹךְ, “[the Book of] the Words of Enoch,”⁷ a reading which Beyer rejects⁸ but Greenfield accepts.⁹ Fitzmyer compares Luke 3:4, βιβλίω λόγων Ἰσαΐου, “the Book of the words of Isaiah” (Syriac כְּתָבָא דְּמַלְא דְּאַשְׁעִיא).¹⁰

Form (3) is found only in the post-biblical period. Six of the Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs (Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, Dan, Benjamin) begin with ἀντίγραφον λόγων, “a copy of the Words of.”¹¹ A similar heading is found in Visions of Amram (4QAmram^c, frg. 1, l. 1): פֶּרֶשְׁנֵן כְּתָב מְלִי חֲזוֹן עֲמֵרָם בֶּר קָהַת בֶּר לֵוִי, “a copy of the Book of the Words of the Visions of Amram, Son of Qahat, Son of Levi.”¹²

As noted above, Jub. 21:10 refers to a book called *nagara nox*, “the Words of Noah.”¹³ Some scholars have questioned whether

⁵ R. Hanhart, *Tobit* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1983) 59. I am indebted to an anonymous reviewer for this example.

⁶ S.P. Brock, *Testamentum Iobi* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1967) 19.

⁷ J.A. Fitzmyer, *The Genesis Apocryphon of Qumran Cave I* (Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1971) 60. I am indebted to Richard White for this parallel.

⁸ K. Beyer, *Die aramäischen Texte von Toten Meer* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1984) 173.

⁹ Personal communication from J.C. Greenfield.

¹⁰ Fitzmyer, 118-19.

¹¹ M. de Jonge, *The Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs: A Critical Edition of the Greek Text* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1978) 14, 24, 51, 80, 102, 167.

¹² J.A. Fitzmyer and D.J. Harrington, *A Manual of Palestinian Aramaic Texts* (Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1978) 94.

¹³ In this passage, Abraham teaches Isaac the prohibition of eating blood and other laws pertaining to sacrifice which “I found written in the books (*masāhefta*)

such a work ever existed,¹⁴ but most accept the view of Dillmann, Ewald, Charles, and Martin that parts of this work survive, embedded in the books of Enoch and Jubilees.¹⁵ Some Qumran fragments have also been assigned to this work.¹⁶

Given the very close connections between Jubilees and the Genesis Apocryphon,¹⁷ it seems clear that we cannot divorce the phrase *כתב מלי נוח* in the latter from the phrase *nagara nox* in the former. Both the context of the Ethiopic phrase¹⁸ and the word *כתב* in the Aramaic phrase point to a book title or heading.

This interpretation of the phrase is strikingly confirmed by information about the original position of the fragment, provided to me by Elisha Qimron upon reading the first draft of this note. The original photographs of the scroll show that the fragment comes from col. V, near the beginning of line 29.¹⁹ Qimron notes that "between the word *כתב* and the right margin, there is room for one word (*פִּרְשָׁנוֹ*?)." ²⁰ He also notes that line 28 is blank, serving as a

of my ancestors: in the Words of Enoch and in the Words of Noah." Note the apposition, with the expected repetition of the preposition "in" (*westa*) in both halves of the compound appositive, possibly reflecting the repetition of *ב* in the Hebrew original (cf. the compound appositives in 1 Kgs 2:5, 9:10; cf. also Gen. Apoc. 2:4, 14, 12:17). The appositive relationship is altered to an additive one in the British Museum manuscript upon which Charles relied for his critical edition: "I found written in the *book* (*mashaḥfa*) of my ancestors *and* in the Words of Enoch and in the Words of Noah." VanderKam deletes the conjunction but he leaves "book" in the singular; J.C. VanderKam, *The Book of Jubilees: A Critical Text* (Louvain: Peeters, 1989) 116, ll. 4-5. The singular finds some support in the Athos Greek manuscript *e* of Test. Levi 18:2: "For so my father Abraham commanded me; for so he found it in the writing of the Book of Noah concerning the blood"; R.H. Charles, *The Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament in English* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1913) 2.365, l. 57. However, the plural, found in three manuscripts cited in VanderKam's apparatus, is supported by Jub. 12:27, which tells of Abraham's studying "the books (*maṣāḥḥefa*) of his ancestors."

¹⁴ See J.P. Lewis, *A Study of the Interpretation of Noah and the Flood in Jewish and Christian Literature* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1978) 10-15, including the sources cited on 11, n. 2.

¹⁵ See F. García Martínez, *Qumran and Apocalyptic: Studies on the Aramaic Texts from Qumran* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1992) 24-44, including the sources cited on 27. I am indebted to Lawrence H. Schiffman for this reference.

¹⁶ J.T. Milik in *Qumran Cave I* (ed. D. Barthélemy and J.T. Milik; DJD 1; Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1955) 84-86, 152. See most recently D. Dimant, "Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha at Qumran," *DSD* 1 (1994) 154.

¹⁷ See below.

¹⁸ See n. 13, above.

¹⁹ See E. Tov, *The Dead Sea Scrolls on Microfiche* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1992) fiche no. 126, photograph no. X-86 4445. It shows the right side of col. V, mislabeled as IV.

²⁰ Personal communication.

section divider. In other words, the phrase כֹּתֵב מִלֵּי נֹחַ comes right at the beginning of a new section; it is the heading of what follows.

The first word of this heading, כֹּתֵב, "book," suggests that the author or compiler of the Genesis Apocryphon viewed the latter not as a book but as a collection of books. And, in fact, this may well be what Avigad and Yadin had in mind when they wrote: "The work is evidently a literary unit in style and structure, though for the reasons referred to above, it may perhaps be divisible into books—a Book of Lamech, a Book of Enoch, a Book of Noah, a Book of Abraham."²¹

Avigad and Yadin also saw that the blank line at 5:27 marks the end of the story of Noah's birth.²² However, they mistakenly assumed that what in this context they call פִּרְשָׁה נֹחַ²³ does not begin until 6:6.²⁴ As for the lines before 6:6, "what has thus far been decipherable does not identify the speaker who in line 2 says: וְקִשְׁטָא כּוֹל יְוִמֵי דְבִרְתָּ [‘all my days I have practiced truth’]."²⁵ It is now clear that that speaker is Noah.

If the basic interpretation offered above is correct, we may now be in a position to shed light on some of the controversies surrounding the Book of Noah. First of all, there are now fewer grounds to doubt the existence of the work. In the Genesis Apocryphon, "the Words of Noah" is not just a title inserted into the mouth of one of the patriarchs, as it is in Jubilees. It is the heading of a section which contains what the ancient witnesses say the Book/Words of Noah contains: a prohibition against eating blood (11:17).²⁶ That heading suggests that what we have in 1QapGen cols. 5-17 is either a copy of the "lost" Book of Noah itself, or else a summary of it²⁷ or excerpts from it. Nevertheless, one cannot completely exclude the possibility that the editor of the Genesis Apocryphon, inspired by the reference to "The Words of Noah" in Jubilees, created the work out of material taken from Enoch and Jubilees.²⁸

²¹ N. Avigad and Y. Yadin, *A Genesis Apocryphon* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1956) 38.

²² *Ibid.*, 19.

²³ *Ibid.*, כו.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 19.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 19.

²⁶ See n. 13, above.

²⁷ Cf. the view of García Martínez, below.

²⁸ Cf. the view of Fitzmyer, below.

This brings us to a second controversy, related to the first, concerning the relationship between the Noah material in Jubilees and that in the Genesis Apocryphon. Avigad and Yadin assumed that "the scroll may have served as a source for a number of stories told more concisely in [Enoch and Jubilees],"²⁹ while Fitzmyer claimed that "just the opposite seems to be more likely, i.e., that the work in this scroll depends on Enoch and Jubilees."³⁰ Recently, García Martínez has argued that neither of these views is correct. According to him, both Jubilees and the Genesis Apocryphon "depend on a common source, which is more reliably reproduced in 1QapGn than in Jub."³¹ In other words, "the text of the Genesis Apocryphon... contains a summary of the lost Book of Noah which is independent of Jubilees."³² The new evidence does not exclude any of these positions, but it does put Fitzmyer on the defensive, especially *vis-à-vis* García Martínez.

A third controversy concerns the content of the Book of Noah. Dillmann, Charles, and Martin assumed that it included the story of Noah's birth,³³ known in their time only from Enoch 106-107, and most scholars have accepted this view. I know of only one dissenter among those who accepted the existence of the work: Schmidt objected that Enoch 106-107 could not have come from the Book of Noah, because in those chapters Noah is not "introduced as the speaker"; instead, it is Enoch who "speaks throughout in the first person."³⁴

It is now clear that Schmidt was right. Headings of the form "Words of N" in the apocryphal books refer to words *by* N, not words *about* N,³⁵ and the Words of Noah is no exception. The

²⁹ Avigad and Yadin, 38.

³⁰ Fitzmyer, 16.

³¹ García Martínez, 40.

³² García Martínez, 40.

³³ García Martínez, 27.

³⁴ N. Schmidt, "The Apocalypse of Noah and the Parables of Enoch," *Oriental Studies Published in Commemoration of the Fortieth Anniversary of Paul Haupt* (ed. C. Adler and A. Ember; Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1926) 114. 1Q19 (DJD 1.85), which contains a few words from the same story, probably has Enoch as the first person narrator, as well, while the Genesis Apocryphon has Lamech telling this story. Other fragments of the "Book of Noah" identified by Charles do have Noah as the first-person narrator: Enoch 60 (if Charles' emendation in 60:1 is correct) and 65-69. For the first-person narrative in the best texts of 65:1-3, see M. Black, *The Book of Enoch or 1 Enoch* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1985) 239.

³⁵ This formulation is borrowed from F.J. Andersen and D.N. Freedman, *Amos* (The Anchor Bible, New York: Doubleday, 1989) 184.

heading of the work comes right between 5:26 אָנָה לַמֶּךְ, “I, Lamech,” and 6:6 אָנָה נוֹחַ, “I, Noah.” The story of Noah’s birth belongs to Lamech’s memoir, what Avigad and Yadin refer to as “a Book of Lamech.”³⁶

The elimination of the story of Noah’s birth from The Words of Noah suggests new ways of viewing the book. The words “all my days I have practiced truth” in 6:2, now at the beginning of the book, give the impression that Noah is speaking at the end of his life, and they have parallels in some of the testaments. Thus, in Test. Joseph 1:3, we read: “I have seen in my life envy and death, and I did not go astray in the truth of the Lord.”³⁷ Similarly, Test. Dan 1:3 has: “I have experienced in my heart and in my whole life that truth with just dealing is good and well-pleasing to God.”³⁸

There may be another parallel between the Testament of Dan and the Words of Noah in their opening lines. The traces at the bottom of the fragment shown in the *Times*, in the line below “the Book of the Words of Noah,” can be read as מְלִי, “my words.”³⁹ Test. Dan begins: “A copy of the Words of Dan... ‘listen to my words, sons of Dan.’”⁴⁰

Nevertheless, the Words of Noah cannot be viewed as Noah’s testament. The third-person references to Noah’s sons in col. 12 (l. 13 “I and all my sons”; l. 16 “I invited my sons”) and elsewhere⁴¹ make it impossible to claim that Noah is addressing them, in true testament style, throughout the book.

³⁶ See above. The use of the indefinite article in that reference seems intended to leave open the question of the relationship of the Genesis Apocryphon’s Lamech memoir to what the “List of Sixty Books” calls “The Book of Lamech.” Avigad and Yadin may have wished to distance themselves as much as possible from J.C. Trever’s view, published in “Identification of the Aramaic Fourth Scroll from ‘Ain Feshkha,” *BASOR* 115 (1949) 9 before the Genesis Apocryphon was unrolled, that the entire scroll “must be the Apocryphal Book of Lamech, mentioned once in a Greek list of apocryphal books.” See also M.E. Stone, “Lamech, Book of,” *Encyclopaedia Judaica* 10.1367.

³⁷ H.W. Hollander and M. de Jonge, *The Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs: A Commentary* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1985) 365.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 276.

³⁹ Cf. the handout entitled, “Multi-Spectral Digital Imaging of Dead Sea Scrolls and Other Ancient Documents,” distributed by G. Bearman, B. Zuckerman, K. Zuckerman, and J. Chiu at the 1993 AAR/SBL Annual Meeting in Washington D.C.: “The second line is only partially preserved but contains traces of a *lamed* followed by the head of a *waw* or (more likely) a *yod*.” The trace of ink before the *lamed* is in precisely the right position for the vertical stroke at the top of a *mem*.

⁴⁰ Hollander and de Jonge, 276.

⁴¹ Qimron informs me that there are many third-person references to the sons in the unpublished fragments of cols. 5-17 and no second-person references.