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Joseph and aseneth story

Asenath throws the Idols out of the Tower (Brussels 1490-1500) Joseph and Aseneth is a narrative that dates from between 200 BCE and 200 CE.[1] The first part of the story (chapters 1-21), an expansion of Genesis 41:45, describes the diffident relationship between Aseneth, the daughter of an Egyptian priest of Heliopolis and the Hebrew patriarch Joseph, the vision of Aseneth in which she is fed honeycomb by a heavenly being, her subsequent conversion to the God of Joseph, followed by romance, marriage, and the birth of Manasseh and Ephraim.[2] The second part (chapters 22-29) involves a plot by the Pharaoh's son, who recruits Dan and Gad to kill Joseph, only to be thwarted by Benjamin and Levi. The work was composed in Greek, attested by sixteen Greek manuscripts,[3] and other sources. The oldest existing manuscript is a Syriac translation, contained in British Library manuscript #17,202, an anthology that contains a variety of writings. The Syriac translation of Joseph and Aseneth was made around 550 CE by Moses of Ingila. The anthology was compiled around 570 CE by an individual whom scholars call "Pseudo-Zacharias Rhetor." Some have regarded it as a Jewish midrash or elaboration on the story in Genesis (Genesis 37-50). Others question this interpretation partly because of its provenance (early Syriac Christianity), language (Son of God, Bride of God), symbolism (Eucharistic) and covering letter which appear to indicate a Christian context. Gideon Bohak and others have drawn attention to the geographical location of the story (Heliopolis) and an important Jewish diaspora community centered on a Jewish temple in Leontopolis, located in the nome of Heliopolis during the Ptolemaic period, seeing this as the likely starting point.[4] History of the Syriaca, using British Library manuscript #17,202 from the British Museum. That institution purchased it on November 11, 1847, from an Egyptian merchant by the name of Auguste Pacho, a native of Alexandria. It had been housed for over 900 years. Around 932, the monastery's abbot, Moses the Nisibene, acquired over 250 manuscripts from Mesopotamia and Syria for the library. One of these is the manuscript we know as British Library #17,202. From the 10th century back to the 6th century we can pick up the trail. Manuscript #17,202 is an anthology, a collection of a number of important writings compiled by an anonymous Syriac author called by scholars Pseudo-Zacharias Rhetor. He labelled his anthology A Volume of Records of Events Which Have Happened in the World. He was likely a monk. This Syriac anthology dates from around 570. It contains the oldest existing version of Joseph and Aseneth. The compiler is called "Pseudo-Zacharias Rhetor" because one of the items found in his anthology is an important church history by the real Zacharias Rhetor. Pseudo-Zacharias Rhetor, whoever he was, did not compose these documents: he compiled them. In the case of Joseph and Aseneth he used the existing Syriac translation that had been made by Moses of Ingila. Two covering letters to Joseph and Aseneth are included in the compilation and they record how this Syriac translation came to be made. An anonymous Syriac individual, probably a monk, had been looking at manuscripts in Resh'aina (near the border of modern-day Turkey and Syria) in a library belonging to the line of bishops who had come from Aleppo. This individual came across what he termed "a small, very old book" written in Greek "Of Aseneth." The covering letter asks Moses of Ingila to translate it into Syriac, his Greek being rather rusty, and to tell him its "inner meaning". The second covering letter asks Moses of Ingila to translate it into Syriac, his Greek being rather rusty, and to tell him its "inner meaning". The second covering letter asks Moses of Ingila to translate it into Syriac, his Greek being rather rusty, and to tell him its "inner meaning". monk to be careful. As he is about to disclose its Christological meaning affirming Christianity, the text is cut off.[5] Jacob Blessing Ephraim and Manasseh (Rembrandt) A violet-winged white bee sitting on the face of Asenath in a contemporary painting hanging in the Abbey of Notre-Dame des Dombes 20th century interpretation history In 1918 E.W. Brooks published a translation and introduction to Joseph and Aseneth[6] in which he wrote the following: "that the book in its present shape is the work of a Christian writer will be at once recognized by any reader." Two English anthologies of Old Testament Apocrypha/Pseudepigrapha include translations of Joseph and Aseneth, all based on Greek manuscripts later than the oldest extant Syriac version. An introduction and translation by C. Burchard is included in James H. Charlesworth's The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha, volume 2.[7] Similarly H.F.D. Sparks includes a translation by D. Cook in his The Apocryphal Old Testament. [8] The inclusion of Joseph and Aseneth in these anthologies seem to suggest that the editors and translators were under the impression that the author was Jewish and that the work had something to do with Jewish apocryphal literature. This accords with Burchard's judgment in 1985. He writes: "Every competent scholar has since Batiffol has maintained that Joseph and Aseneth is Jewish, with perhaps some Christian interpolations; no one has put the book much after A.D. 200, and some have placed it as early as the second century B.C. As to the place of origin, the majority of scholars look to Egypt." A list of extant manuscripts and 20th century interpretation history can be found in the introductions to these two anthologies. Views as to origin include: written in Israel by an Orthodox Jew (Aptowitzer); in Alexandria Egypt composed by a member of the Therapeutae (K.G. Kuhn); and also in Egypt relating to the Jewish temple in the nome of Heliopolis (founded c. 170 BCE), in the same area as the geographical setting of the story (Bohak).[4] Cook endorsed the view of an earlier French scholar, Marc Philonenko, who thought that it was written by a Jewish author around 100 CE. Its purpose, he maintained was twofold: to present inter-faith marriages between Gentiles and Jews in a positive light, and, secondly, to persuade Jews as to the advantages of such unions. Cook thought that this view was "likely." All these authors contended that the author was Jewish and written around the dawn of the 1st century B.C. - Second Century A.D. The contention that the work is Jewish in origin, however, is no longer maintained in recent scholarship. Recent scholarship Recently some scholars have argued that the work is fundamentally Christian Book.[10] According to Angela Standhartinger, a covering letter by Moses of Ingila included with the manuscript explains the story "as an allegory of Christ's marriage to the Soul".[11] As a lost Gospel encoding the Ancient Text that Reveals Jesus' Marriage to Mary the Magdalene A 2014 book by Simcha Jacobovici and Barrie Wilson, The Lost Gospel: Decoding the Ancient Text that Reveals Jesus' Marriage to Mary the Magdalene,[12] argues for the marriage of Jesus to Mary Magdalene through a decoding of Joseph and Aseneth was already composed during Jesus' lifetime and precedes the canonical gospels. The Syriac manuscript, being the oldest manuscript, and its accompanying cover letters are given great weight; the authors commissioned multi-spectral photography to "see through" smudges and other marks on the manuscript to ascertain the original underlying text. The translation into English was by Tony Burke, translator of The Infancy Gospel of Thomas,[16] author of Secret Scriptures Revealed,[17] and editor of Fakes, Forgeries, and Fictions: Writing Ancient and Modern Christian Apocrypha.[18] Burke worked independently and was not informed of the overall project objectives.[19] Burke also prepared the first-ever English translation of the two covering letters in Syriac, which was more difficult than translating the main text, owing to damage to the manuscript. References ^ Charlesworth, James H., Old Testament Pseudepigrapha, vol2 ^ "Category: Joseph and Aseneth (text)". 4 Enoch: The Online Encyclopedia of Second Temple Judaism and Early Christian Origins. Gabriele Boccaccini, PhD. September 3, 2015. Retrieved April 10, 2020. ^ Chesnutt, Randall D. (5 November 2006). "Joseph and Aseneth: Food as an Identity Marker". In Levine, Amy-Jill; Allison Jr., Dale C.; Crossan, John Dominic (eds.). The Historical Jesus in Context. 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