

THE  
BOOK  
OF  
JASHER:  
WITH  
TESTIMONIES AND NOTES,  
CRITICAL AND HISTORICAL, EXPLANATORY OF THE TEXT.  
TO WHICH IS PREFIXED,  
VARIOUS READINGS,  
AND  
A PRELIMINARY DISSERTATION,  
PROVING THE AUTHENTICITY OF THE WORK.

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Translated into ENGLISH from the HEBREW,  
BY FLACCUS ALBINUS ALCUINUS, OF BRITAIN,  
ABBOT OF CANTERBURY,

who went a Pilgrimage into the Holy Land, and Persia, where he discovered this volume, in the city of Gazna.

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"Is not this written in the Book of Jasher?" Joshua x. 13.

"Behold, it is written in the Book of Jasher." 2 Sam. i. 18.

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## ADVERTISEMENT.

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THE following translation of "The Book of Jasher," was discovered by a gentleman in a journey through the North of England, in 1721. It lay by him for several years, until, in 1750, there was a rumour of a new translation of the Bible, when he laid it before a noble Earl. On perusal, he highly approved of it, as a work of great sincerity, plainness, and truth. His lordship's opinion was, that it should have been placed in the Bible, before the Book of Joshua.

He further adds, "By a writing on the outside of the manuscript, it should seem that this translation was laid before our first reformers, because it says: 'I have read the Book of Jasher twice over; and I much approve of it, as a piece of great antiquity and curiosity; but I cannot assert, that it should be made a part of the Canon of Scripture. Signed, WICKLIFFE.'"

Since 1751, the manuscript has been preserved with great care, by a gentleman who lived to a very advanced age, and died some time since. On the event of his death, a friend to whom he had presented it, gave it to the present Editor, who, conceiving that so valuable a piece of antiquity should not be lost to men of literature, and biblical students, has committed it to the press, not doubting but that the attention of the learned will be attracted to so singular a volume.

The Editor cannot assert any thing from his own knowledge, beyond Alcuin's account, but *that* carries with it such an air of probability and truth, that he does not doubt its authenticity. Some account of this volume may be found in Alcuin's works, published in one volume, fol. in the year 1600, in Paris. He died in 804. Should any gentleman possess a transcript, or copy of it, the Editor will be greatly obliged by any communication made to him, through the medium of the Printer.



**PRELIMINARY DISSERTATION**  
**ON THE**  
**ANTIQUITY AND AUTHENTICITY**  
**OF**  
**THE BOOK OF JASHER.**

WHEN a work of this nature is brought before the public, it is highly expedient to adduce evidence of its authenticity, which must resolve itself into the external and historical, and then, the internal proofs of its originality.

As to the former of these, it is evident, that such a book existed in the days of Joshua, and that it also continued to be referred to in the time of the Royal Psalmist, David. It appears to have been preserved by the Judges, first, and afterward, by the kings of Judah, until the period of the Babylonish Captivity; after which event, it is not referred to, either by the Prophets, or by the Chronologists of the Jewish nation; a full proof that it was not brought back to Judea. It must then, of course, have been possessed by the kings of Persia, in which country it was found by Alcuin, who was the honour of our own country, and the great ornament of the Court of Charlemagne. This great prince, it appears, engaged his attendance on his person, and received instruction in the sciences from him. He also was present with him at the Council of Frankfort; and, as a reward of his distinguished merit, endowed him with three rich abbies. When he left his court and returned to England, he was further promoted to be Abbot of Canterbury. Alcuin founded the University of Paris, in 800.

The account of his pilgrimage to the Holy Land, and to Persia, is given by himself. His object in remaining at Gazna, for three years, was his obtaining this single piece of antiquity, which cost him in wedges of gold, at least £500, which, at this distance of time, would have amounted to four times that sum. He describes the roll on which it was written in large Hebrew characters of the earliest form, as being two feet nine inches wide, and nine feet in length, and, according to his relation, preserved in the original ark of gopher wood, adorned with Mosaic work, though in a state of decay, from the injuries of time.



Nothing can be produced to invalidate this authentic statement, and, consequently, it merits our credence. It could not be brought forward by him, to answer any end of a secular nature, as it appears he never made it public, beyond the circle of his friends, and when grown old, he left it, with his other manuscripts, to a friend, a priest in Yorkshire. Its preservation from one hand to another, for so many centuries, is easily accounted for, both from its intrinsic merit, and its extraordinary character.

Its having been known to our first reformers, is evident from the testimony of that illustrious leader, Wickliffe. Its falling afterward into neglect, might have been caused from the very few learned men who lived in the following dark ages of Popish ignorance; when little was known, even by the priesthood, beyond their missals, litanies, and breviaries.

The manner of its being brought to light, about a century since, was quite accidental; but then being laid before a distinguished nobleman, who appears to have been high in office, on the most important occasion, that of a new translation of the sacred Scriptures, when he delivered his judgment of it, as a work of great sincerity, plainness, and truth, and whose opinion of it was, that the book of Jasher ought to have been printed in the Bible before the book of Joshua.

From that time, it appears to have been preserved only for its antiquity and curiosity, till it fell into the present Editor's possession, who, on perusing it, saw sufficient reason for its publication, especially as it supplies a chasm in the history of the Judges, from the death of Joshua, including the elders who outlived him, and judged Israel. These are Caleb, who judged Israel twelve years; Jasher, who succeeded him, and Othniel, who saved Israel from Chushan Rishathaim; and then the events are recorded in regular succession of the succeeding Judges.

One of the most remarkable circumstances is, that this book is not more frequently referred to, but that I account for on this principle, that it was not regarded as an inspired work, as the books of Moses were. It makes no claim of that nature, Jasher declaring that he received his information from Caleb, his father, and Hezron, his grandfather, and from Azuba, his mother. This applies to the events which occurred before his own times. He afterwards records facts, as they arose, and states them with the simplicity and force of truth. They



agree, in general, with the statements in the books of Moses, and where they differ, it appears that he relates one series of facts, which are not narrated by Moses, although likely to have occurred at the same time. But it is remarkable, that Jasher does not ascribe the causes which gave birth to the events narrated by him, nor does he introduce his commands with the authority of a lawgiver, or proclaim them, as Moses did, with "Thus saith the Lord."

As a book of record, it appears to have truth without mixture of error, for its peculiar object and design. His name, Jasher, or the Upright, seems to stamp all his words and actions, and his counsels and laws are dictated by love to his countrymen, zeal for the honour of God, and a regard to the welfare of his people and nation, and their posterity, for whom he prays with ardour and affection to the time of his death.

I come now to the internal evidence, which verifies the authenticity of this work, and proves it the very genuine production of JASHER. He begins with the creation of the world, and, in a manner similar to Moses, relates the first production of this system. There is a perfect accordance in his account of the formation of light, which he says, shone forth from the firmament and enlightened the abyss; and the abyss fled before the face of the light, and divided between the light and the darkness; so that the face of nature was formed a second time. Then he proceeds to relate the formation of the sun and moon, which he says appeared in the firmament, the one to rule the light, and the other to rule the darkness. His account of the creation of man is truly sublime, and determines a point of the highest importance, the immortality of the soul. The question has long been agitated as to the sense in which the image of God, in which man was made, consisted. Here is a testimony of infinite value in the solution of this point, and worthy of being recorded in every language under the face of the heavens. It answers all the learned arguments of Doctor Warburton, in his divine legation of Moses, proving the great doctrine of the immortality of the soul, and a future state of rewards and punishments, to have been the undoubted judgment of the first patriarchs. The grandeur of this passage exceeds all the strains of human description. "And when all these things were fulfilled, behold JEHOVAH appeared in Eden, and created man, and made him to be an image of his own eternity." This passage proves that the first ages were fully convinced that man is formed for eternity, capable of immortality, and ordained for a never-ending existence, and, consequently, an heir of everlasting happiness or misery.



This doctrine established, all the offices of religion, morality, and humanity flow from it. Man must be an accountable being, and ordained by his glorious Creator to live for ever.

It is to be observed, that the fall of man, the promise of the woman's seed, and the early predictions of a deliverer, are not mentioned by Jasher; nor does he at all allude to any of the predictions in the books of Moses, excepting those of his song, in which the future fates of the tribes are predicted. Shall we determine this to have arisen from his knowledge, that these subjects were designed to be revealed by the Hebrew lawgiver, or from his ignorance of them? It appears to me, that his book is simply a work of record, and not of revelation or prediction, and that the divine mysteries were appointed to be made known by one greater than JASHER, his master and teacher.



The words of **ALCUIN**, which are to be read before  
*The Book of Jasher.*

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I\* Alcuin, of Britain, was minded to travel into the Holy Land, and into the province of Persia, in search of holy things, and to see the wonders of the east. And I took unto me two companions, who learned with me, under able teachers and masters, all those languages which the people of the east speak; namely, Thomas of Malmsbury, and John of Huntingdon: and though we went as pilgrims, yet we took with us, silver, and gold, and riches. And when we came unto Bristol, we went into a ship bound for Rome, where we tarried six months, and learned more perfectly the old Persic language. Here the Pope blessed us, and said, Be of resolution, for the work ye have undertaken is of the Lord. From Rome we went to Naples, and tarried there three days, and from thence to Salerno, and from thence to Palermo. We went through Sicily, and took Melita in our way, where we abode six days. Hence we sailed for the Morea, visited Athens, Thessalonica, Constantinople, Philadelphia, Pergamus, Smyrna, Ephesus, Antioch, Coloss, Cappadocia, Alexandria, Damascus, Samaria, Bethel, and Jerusalem. Here we stayed six weeks, and the patriarch John received us kindly. And after having visited every part of the Holy Land, particularly Bethlehem, Hebron, Mount Sinai, and the like, we crossed an arm of the Persic Gulph at Bassora, and went in a boat to Bagdad, and from thence by land to Ardevil, and so to Casbin. Here we learnt from an Ascetic, that at the furthestmost part of Persia, in the city of Gazna, was a manuscript, wrote in Hebrew, of *The Book of Jasher*. He stimulated us to this undertaking, by observing, that *The Book of Jasher* was twice mentioned in the *Holy Bible*, and twice appealed to as a book of Testimony, and that it was extant before the writings which are now stiled, *The Books of Moses*. We immediately undertook the journey, going by the way of Ispahan, where we tarried three weeks; at length we arrived at Gazna. Here we laid aside the pilgrims' dress, and I hired a house, where we dwelt during our stay in this city, which was about three years.

I soon became acquainted with the keeper of the library which belongs to the community of this city, and enquired of him concerning *The Book of Jasher*, which the recluse at Casbin had told us of. He said, he had read of such a manuscript in the catalogue of the library, but had never seen it, though he had been custos for

\* Alcuin lived in the eighth century. See Biography of Alcuinus Flaccus.



forty-five years, but that it was locked up in a chest, and kept among the pieces of antiquities in a separate part of the library. As I lived nigh the custos, so I soon became familiar in his family; wherefore one day I took the opportunity to tell the custos, that I was very much obliged to him for the civilities he had shewn me, and particularly for the free access he had given me to the library; at the same time I made him a present of a wedge of gold, in value fifty pounds, which he readily accepted. The next time I went to the library, I begged the favour I might see *The Book of Jasher*. He then immediately turned to the catalogue, where it was written, *The Volume of Jasher*. He conducted me into a long room, where he shewed me the chest it was in. He now informed me, that the key was in the hands of the city-treasurer, and that, upon proper application, I might see the volume. The custos introduced me to the treasurer, and related to him the substance of my request. He smiled, and said, he was not then at leisure, but he would consider of it. The next morning I sent John of Huntingdon to the treasurer with a wedge of gold of the value of one hundred pounds, by way of a present. By John, he sent me word, that he would meet me at the library about the ninth hour.

The time being come, the treasurer, the custos, and I, met at the library, when the treasurer having unlocked the chest, shewed me the book, which he called, *The Volume of Jasher*. And then he locked the chest, and gave the key to the custos, telling him, that it was permitted that I might read in the volume, as often as I would, in the presence of the custos, and in the library.

*The Book of Jasher* is a great scroll, in width, two feet three inches, and in length about nine feet. It is written in large characters, and exceeding beautiful. The paper on which it is written is for thickness the eighth of an inch. To the touch it seemed as soft as velvet, and to the eye as white as snow.

The ark is of Mosaic work, finely and curiously wrought, but time and accidents have very much defaced the external ornaments of it.

After this I had free access to *The Book of Jasher*. The first thing which commanded my attention was a little scroll, intituled, *The story of the Volume of Jasher*. This informed me, that Jasher was born in Goshen, in the land of Egypt, that he was the son of the mighty Caleb, who was general of the Hebrews, whilst Moses was with Jethro in Midian; that on the embassy to Pharaoh, Jasher was appointed virger to Moses and Aaron, to bear the rod before them; that as he always accompanied Moses, Jasher must have the greatest opportunities, of knowing the facts he hath recorded; that from his great attachment to truth and uprightness, he early received his name, יָשָׁר; that it was a common saying in Israel of him, *Behold the upright man*; that Jasher wrote the volume which bears his name; that the ark was made in his life-time; that he put the volume therein with his own hands; that Jazer, the eldest son of Jasher, kept it during his life; that the princes of Judah successively were custoes thereof; that the ark and book in the last Babylonish Captivity was taken from the Jews, and so fell into the hands of the Persian monarchs; and that the city of Gazna had been the place of its residence for some hundred years.



This excited in me a great desire of reading the volume itself. The work was divided into thirty-seven parts or portions. One of these portions I read at this time, and so two every day until I had read the whole through. The custos then informed me, that there were in the two side boxes of the chest, certain notes or remarks, which some of the ancients had made on several passages contained in *The Book of Jasher*. These also I read.

I had now conceived a great desire of returning to England, with a transcript of *The Book of Jasher*, and of the Notes. Hereupon, I and my companions petitioned the commonalty of the city, that we might have the liberty of taking a transcript thereof. Here we were opposed by the treasurer, and our petition was rejected. Some months after this, it came into my mind, that we would petition to have leave to make an English translation of the said Book and Notes. Accordingly, one morning, having drawn up the petition, I sent John of Huntingdon with it, and a wedge of gold to the treasurer, with a letter desiring his opinion of it. After some days, I received for answer, that he had considered of my request, and would shortly relate the affair to the recorder of the city, and take his opinion thereon. Upon this, I despatched Thomas of Malmsbury with a wedge of gold, as a present to the recorder, together with a copy of the petition I had sent the treasurer. A few days after this, I received directions from the recorder, to attend the next court, and then our petition was granted. The order of court ran thus: "We grant unto Alcuin, and his two assistants, full liberty and power of translating out of the original Hebrew, *The Volume of Jasher*, with the Notes appertaining thereto, now contained in a chest in the public library of Gazna, into English, and into no other language whatever. And we likewise order, that the said English translation be made in the library, and in the presence of the custos at such times of the day as shall be most convenient to the said custos."

We soon began the translation in this manner: The manuscript was laid on a table, round which the custos and we sat. The custos opened the volume, and we read the first part or portion, and were permitted to set it down in the original; from whence we made each a translation, and then the custos burnt the part we had so transcribed. And this was the manner in which we proceeded, but the custos would not suffer us to carry home any of our papers.

In fine, after the labour of near a year and six months, we completed the translation of the Book and Notes, to which translation this is prefixed. The treasurer and custos burnt all other papers wrote by either of us, and took from us the translation we had made.

In this dilemma we remained for some time, till, by a proper application, and by petitioning the court a second time, after having been solemnly sworn, that we had taken no other copy, nor were possessed of any other papers, besides that translation of *The Volume of Jasher*, then before the court, the translation was delivered to us, with a charge, that we should not let any person take a copy thereof in any place we passed through in our return to England; which we solemnly promised; and then we were dismissed, with proper credentials for our return through Persia.



We now re-assumed the pilgrims' dress, and after a stay of almost three years, left Gazna, and came to Ispahan, from thence to Casbin, and so back to Rome. Here we stayed some time, and I had an audience of the Pope, when I related to his Holiness, that I had seen *The Book of Jasher*, spoken of in *Joshua*, and in the *Second Book of Samuel*. The holy father, who was now ninety-five years of age, turned to the places I referred to, and then cried out, *I have lived to the days of forgetfulness.*

After a short stay at Rome, we sailed for England, and landed at Bristol, after we had been absent seven years.



## VARIOUS READINGS.

Chap. i. ver. 1. IN the head of time.  
 6. the one that did rule the light, the other that did rule whilst it was dark.  
 19. and who made the harp and the organ.  
 20. in his time men began, &c.

Chap. ii. ver. 2. and who ventured to travel, &c.  
 12. and why should we abolish the customs, &c.

Chap. iii. ver. 2. have deviated from their paths.  
 10. were at variance.  
 13. shall inherit after me.  
 20. Out of thee shall come forth a great nation.  
 26. a great dearth of grain in that land.  
 27. was advanced in Egypt.

Chap. v. ver. 8. that opened the womb.

Chap. vi. ver. 7. neither will we bow down to Pharaoh one day more.  
 9. for he had been gone out of the land, &c.  
 17. seemed as strangers to Moses.  
 22. behold our deliverance is in him.

Chap. vii. ver. 8. I never before heard of the sayings of your fathers.

Chap. viii. ver. 13. that I am a messenger to you.  
 19. had left off to be so.

Chap. ix. ver. 16. And the people were sorely vexed.

Chap. x. ver. 8. The Jacobites עַמִּי are not able to fly from us.

Chap. x. ver. 11. wherefore hast thou thus deceitfully undertaken to lead us out of Egypt.  
 12. unto the enemies of circumcision.  
 29. between two straits.

Chap. xi. ver. 3. And the sun and the moon gave their light whilst these things were done.

Chap. xii. ver. 18. Seeing ye will not be able to find food for them in the desert.  
 21. and when we shall depart from hence we know not.

Chap. xiv. v. 2. whom Moses had caused to return.  
 3. and they pitched their tents at the foot of mount Horeb.  
 5. this, my daughter Zipporah, thou hast taken to be thy wife.  
 26. and his name shall stink.  
 32. shall find useful.

Chap. xvi. ver. 4. even according to the plan Jethro had laid down.

Chap. xvii. v. 2. wise men to hear and speak for you.  
 20. his spirit was moved within him.

Chap. xviii. v. 7. But Aaron stood aghast.

Chap. xxi. ver. 2. Is not good for the commonweal of Israel.  
 3. Labour, industry, and pains-taking, will they be alien to.

5. Are not all the tribes of Israel sanctified?



## VARIOUS READINGS.

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| <p>Chap. xxi. v. 7. the words of evil you now speak.</p> <p>10. Depart from Korah, and those that are with him.</p> <p>14. and they fled every one to his dwelling.</p>  | <p>Chap. xxxii. v. 4. Cut off the flesh of thy foreskin, then shalt thou beget a son.</p> <p>7. Take sharp knives.</p> <p>10. after he cometh out of the womb.</p>       |
| <p>Chap. xxii. v. 4. were familiar with the sons of Israel.</p>  | <p>Chap. xxxiii. v. 8. and let them ask of them the reason for their so doing.</p>   |
| <p>Chap. xxiii. v. 24. the thoughts of the evil one against this people.</p>   | <p>9. and behold they were well pleasing to the eye.</p>   |
| <p>Chap. xxiv. v. 4. to bring a description of the land.</p> <p>6. their dwellings shall you number.</p> <p>12. Caleb hath the truth in him.</p>   | <p>11. Wherefore have ye built this tabernacle and this altar? Surely to defy Joshua and the elders of Israel.</p> <p>17. turned away the anger of Phinebas, &amp;c.</p> |
| <p>Chap. xxvi. v. 17. That Judah may be many in number.</p>  | <p>Chap. xxxiv. v. 7. were too strong for them.</p>  |
| <p>Chap. xxvii. v. 12. in whom dwelt discernment.</p> <p>14. Be not angry, O King.</p> <p>15. Whom thou dost not worship, is on their side.</p> <p>20. It is the advice of one who has discovered our nakedness.</p> | <p>10. Who can command the Reubenites, the Gadites, and all the people of Israel, to go up to the war.</p>   |
| <p>Chap. xxviii. v. 10. And the bridge.</p> <p>19. and it became separated to holy uses.</p> <p>25. put an end to the designs of Achan.</p>  | <p>Chap. xxxv. v. 2. Who shall be judge in Israel?</p> <p>18. then should we be able to drive out the nations.</p>   |
| <p>Chap. xxix. v. 2. let no man escape alive.</p>  | <p>Chap. xxxvi. v. 5. It seemeth well unto me, that ye gather yourselves together at Bethel, that I, and the elders of Israel, may make an agreement with you.</p>       |
| <p>Chap. xxx. v. 11. Sun, rest thou on Gibeon, and shine thou, moon, on the valley of Ajalon.</p>  | <p>Chap. xxxvii. v. 16. And there was a great want of grain in Canaan.</p> <p>17. seated Joseph on his right hand.</p>   |