Framing a Composition: Pseudo-Philo and Romans in Comparison

TAVIS ASAPH BOHLINGER

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by

Tavis A. Bohlinger

Abstract

The present thesis is a comparative analysis of Pseudo-Philo's Liber Antiquitatum Biblicarum (LAB) and Paul's Letter to the Romans. The goal of this study is to juxtapose two ancient Jewish texts read within a proposed 'comparative compositional frame' (CCF). The CCF refers to a means of conceptualising the practice of comparative analysis in terms appropriate to the agency of both the interpreter and the texts. My goal is to determine where Pseudo-Philo and Paul agree and differ regarding God's word and the corresponding human response of faith, in order to sharpen our understanding of both LAB and Romans. This goal is pursued through: 1) a critique of recent metaphors for comparison in Pauline studies and a proposal for the CCF (introduction); 2) an exegetical analysis of key passages in both LAB and Romans pertaining to the topics of divine speech and human faith, a critical step in constructing a CCF (central chapters); and 3) a discussion of the similarities and differences between both texts within the formal comparison itself (conclusion). The four main chapters of this study are divided evenly between LAB and Romans, with two chapters examining, respectively, the motifs of God's word and human faith in LAB, followed by two chapters examining those same motifs in Romans 4 and 9–11. This thesis contributes to the study of both Paul and Pseudo-Philo by offering fresh exegetical and theological insight into both texts, and it also constitutes the first substantial side-by-side comparative study of these two ancient Jewish writings to the exclusion of other examples.

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Table of Contents

Abbreviations 6
Declaration 7
Statement of Copyright 8
Acknowledgments 9
Dedication 10

1. Introduction to the Study 11
    1.1. Introduction 11
    1.2. Comparison in the Study of Paul 14
    1.2.1. Intertextual Conversation: Watson/Hays 15
    1.2.2. A Hermeneutics of Friendship: Linebaugh/Barclay/Rowe 16
    1.2.3. The Comparative Compositional Frame 18
    1.3. Comparing Romans and LAB 21
    1.3.1. God's Word and Human Faith 22
    1.3.2. History of Comparison 26

PART I: PSEUDO-PHILO 29
2. The Word of God in LAB 30
    2.1. Introduction 30
    2.2. God's Word is the Source of Israel's Hope (LAB 12, 23) 34
    2.2.1. Moses and the Golden Calf (LAB 12; Exod 32–34) 34
    2.2.1.a. Blessing and Judgement Promised 36
    2.2.1.b. Israel's Planting 38
    2.2.1.c. Divine Wrath 43
    2.2.1.d. Summary 46
    2.2.2. Joshua and the Origin of Israel (LAB 23; Josh 24) 46
    2.2.2.a. Abraham's Origin and Isaiah's Rock (LAB 23.4) 48
    2.2.2.b. Divine Self-citation of the Promise 51
    2.2.2.c. The Witnesses and an Affirmation of Fidelity (LAB 23.7) 54
    2.2.2.d. Summary 57
    2.3. God's Word is the Instrument of Israel's Judgement (LAB 44–47) 57
    2.3.1. Micah (LAB 44) 58
    2.3.1.a. Micah's Speech 59
    2.3.1.b. The Divine Response 60
    2.3.2. Beel the Levite (LAB 45) 62
    2.3.2.a. Beel's Speech 63
    2.3.2.b. God's Response 65
    2.3.3. Phinehas and the People (LAB 46–47) 66
    2.3.3.a. Israel's Plan 66
    2.3.3.b. Disturbed Hearts 67
    2.3.3.c. Phinehas' Plea 68
    2.3.3.d. Oath, Fable, Revelation 70
    2.3.4. Summary 74
    2.4. Conclusion 75
3. Human Faith in LAB 78
    3.1. Introduction 78
    3.2. Abraham and the Fiery Furnace (LAB 6) 81
    3.2.1. External Threat (LAB 6.1-5) 82

3.2.2. Rational Solution (LAB 6.6-10) 83
3.2.3. Radical Trust (LAB 6.11) 84
3.2.4. Internal Threat (LAB 6.11-16) 87
3.2.5. Divine Vindication (LAB 17-18) 90
3.3. Amram and the Elders (LAB 9) 93
3.3.1. External Threat (LAB 9.1-2) 94
3.3.2. Rational Solution (LAB 9.2) 95
3.3.3. Irrational Faith (LAB 9.3-6) 96
3.3.3.a. Statement of Rebellion (LAB 9.4a) 96
3.3.3.b. God's Creative Speech (LAB 9.4b) 97
3.3.3.c. Autonomy and Imperative (LAB 9.5a) 98
3.3.3.d. Tamar's Example (LAB 9.5b) 98
3.3.3.e. Command and Justification (LAB 9.6) 100
3.3.4. Internal Threat (LAB 9.11-14) 100
3.3.5. Divine Vindication (LAB 9.15-16) 101
3.4. Hannah and her Sterile Womb (LAB 49-51) 102
3.4.1. External Threat (LAB 49.6-7) 103
3.4.2. Internal Opposition (LAB 50.1-3) 104
3.4.3. Human Petition (LAB 50.4-8) 106
3.4.4. Divine Vindication (LAB 51.1-7) 109
3.5. Conclusion 111

PART II: ROMANS 114
4. The Pattern of Promise in Romans 115
4.1. Introduction 115
4.2. Interpretations of Romans 4 116
4.3. A Reassessment of Structure and Boasting Terminology 120
4.3.1. Framing the Discourse of Romans 3.27–5.11 120
4.3.2. Boasting in Historical Interpretation 124
4.3.3. Boasting in the Present Study 126
4.4. Romans 3.27–5.11 and the Pattern of Promise 129
4.4.1. Boasting Put to Death (Rom 3.27–4.12) 129
4.4.1.a. The Eradication of Boasting (Rom 3.27-31) 130
4.4.1.b. Blessing the Ungodly (Rom 4.1-8) 132
4.4.1.c. Immovable Boundaries and the Promise-Seal (Rom 4.9-12) 137
4.4.2. The Transitory Interlude (Rom 4.13-25) 140
4.4.2.a. The Promise and Its Heirs (Rom 4.13-15) 140
4.4.2.b. Christ and the Validation of the Promise (Rom 4.16-17) 143
4.4.2.c. Hope at the Precipice (Rom 4.18-22) 147
4.4.2.d. The Lord and the Promise (Rom 4.23–25) 148
4.4.3. Boasting Reborn (Rom 5.1-11) 150
4.4.3.a. The Boast in Hope and Suffering (Rom 5.1-5) 151
4.4.3.b. The Promise and the Death of Christ (Rom 5.6-8) 153
4.4.3.c. The Pattern is Completed in Life (Rom 5.9-11) 153
4.5. Conclusion 156
4.5.1. Model Faith 157
4.5.2. Origin of the Story 158
4.5.3. Paul Within Judaism 159
5. God's Mercy and the Promise in Romans 162
5.1. Introduction 162
5.2. The Promise as Arbiter of Divine Mercy (9.6-13) 164
5.2.1. A Foundation Inscribed in God's Word (9.6-9) 164

5.2.1.a. The Pattern of Promise and Paul's 'Bioclectic' Logic 168
5.2.1.b. The Integration of Calling and Birth 171
5.2.2. God's Prior and Predilective Agency (9.10-13) 172
5.2.2.a. The Freedom to Call 173
5.2.2.b. Biological Predilection and Discriminatory Grace 175
5.3. The Resurrecting Mercy of God (11.17-32) 179
5.3.1. The Olive Tree Analogy (11.17-24) 180
5.3.1.a. The Root of Promise 180
5.3.1.b. The Governing Duality of Severity and Kindness 183
5.3.1.c. Dried Kindling to Living Children 186
5.3.2. 'All Israel' and the Agency of God (11.25-32) 188
5.3.2.a. Who is All Israel? (11.25-27) 189
5.3.2.b. The Irrevocable Gift of Love (11.28-29) 194
5.3.2.c. The Dismissal of Human Agency (11.30-32) 199
5.4. Conclusion 203
6. Conclusions 205
6.1. Introduction 205
6.2. Summary of Pseudo-Philo 205
6.3. Summary of Romans 207
6.4. Comparison of LAB and Romans 208
6.4.1. Divine Speech 209
6.4.2. Human Faith 212
6.5. The Value of CCF 215
6.6. Final Thoughts 216

Bibliography 218

Abbreviations

All abbreviations of ancient literature, academic journals, and monograph series follow the forms indicated in *The SBL Handbook of Style, Second Edition* (Atlanta, GA: SBL Press, 2014).

Declaration

This work has been submitted to the University of Durham in accordance with the regulations for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy. It is my own work, and none of it has been previously submitted to the University of Durham or in any other university for a degree.

Statement of Copyright

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To all the others.

Dedication

For Alexandra

1. Introduction to the Study

1.1 Introduction

This present thesis is in its essence a comparative analysis of Pseudo-Philo's *Liber Antiquitatum Biblicarum* (LAB) and Paul's Letter to the Romans. The goal of this study is to juxtapose two ancient Jewish texts read within a proposed 'comparative compositional frame'. This phrase, expressed hereafter in shorthand as 'CCF', refers to a means of conceptualising comparative analysis in terms appropriate to the agency of both the interpreter and the texts. My goal is to determine through a heuristic comparison where Pseudo-Philo and Paul agree and differ regarding God's word and the corresponding human response of faith, in order to sharpen our understanding of both LAB and Romans.[1] This goal is pursued through: 1) a critique of recent metaphors for comparison in Pauline studies and a proposal for the CCF (introduction); 2) an exegetical analysis of key passages in both LAB and Romans pertaining to the topics of divine speech and human faith, a critical step in constructing a CCF (central chapters); and 3) a discussion of the similarities and differences between both texts within the formal comparison itself (conclusion).

In recent years there has been a tremendous upsurge in the variety of methodologies employed in Pauline studies. These 'new' methods have been in almost every instance borrowed from other disciplines in the humanities, including sociology, anthropology, linguistics, feminist and gender/queer studies, economics, and political science. The same is true for comparative studies 'proper'. Indeed, the observation of both similarity and difference between two or more similar yet distinct objects is fundamental to human experience and necessary for legitimate academic inquiry.[2] Pauline scholars have often utilised comparisons to clarify the distinctive nature of the thought and praxis of the apostle's writings in contradistinction to their nearest counterparts, including the writings of Early Judaism, various rabbinic materials, and the Old Testament. In the study of Paul, however, these exercises have mostly proceeded without a serious consideration of the methodology of

[1] Philip Alexander, 'The Qumran *Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice* and the *Celestial Hierarcy* of Dionysius the Aeropagite: a Comparative Approach', *RQ* 22 (2006): 353: a 'heuristic' comparison 'is intended to sharpen our understanding of what each text is saying, whether in agreement or disagreement'.

[2] See Fitz John Porter Poole, 'Metaphors and Maps: Towards Comparison in the Anthropology of Religion', *JAAR* 54 (1986): 413: 'Any descriptive, interpretive, or explanatory endeavour involves relating phenomena to one another within a framework of categories extrinsic to the phenomena themselves'. See also Burton Mack, 'On Redescribing Christian Origins', *MTSR* 8 (1996): 257: 'Comparison is fundamental to the cognitive processes whereby we notice, classify, define, and think about things. We can't do much with an absolutely unique phenomenon, one that is incomparable, one for which we know of nothing similar in any respect whatsoever. And we don't find perfectly identical copies of a thing worthy of further observation. Comparison is always triggered by interest in something that is sort of like, but not identical with, something we already know about or at least have noticed before'.

and theoretical basis for comparison.[3] Jonathan Z. Smith lamented the problem in the field of Jewish studies three decades ago: 'In no literature on comparison that I am familiar with has there been any presentation of the rules for the production of comparisons; what few rules have been proposed pertain to their post facto evaluation'.[4] The best recent attempt to articulate the problems and promise of comparison in Pauline studies is John Barclay's essay comparing *4 Ezra* and Paul on their shared theme of divine mercy. Before the actual comparison of the texts, Barclay briefly discusses the history of comparative efforts in Pauline studies in terms of transition: from genealogy to comparison, fragments to wholes, and juxtaposition to dialogue.[5] Barclay argues that instead of using the Jewish texts as mere 'background' to Paul, they should be treated as equals, and our efforts at comparing should elucidate both the Pauline and Early Jewish literature. Troels Engberg-Pedersen has suggested that our task is to compare texts on equal terms, specifically, 'ideas as ideas'.[6] There is no intellectual or religious hierarchy between ideas, just similarity and difference that is observable and able to be articulated. Barclay and Engberg-Pederson are both speaking within the context of Pauline studies, and their voices have helped open the field to essential questions concerning the how and why of comparative work.

Still, the fundamental question underlying the entire exercise is this: what is a comparison, and how should one go about it? If comparing is a ubiquitous human practice,[7] then should it be intellectualised, or just accepted as normal and undefinable in terms of method?[8] According to Smith, 'A comparison is a disciplined exaggeration in the service of knowledge. It lifts out and strongly marks certain features within difference as being of possible intellectual significance, expressed in the rhetoric of their being "like" in some stipulated fashion. Comparison provides the means by which we "re-vision" phenomena as

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[3] This has not been the case in religious studies, where comparisons have gone from being the 'darling' of analytical approaches, to complete rejection, then to a resurgence in the 'New Comparativism' school. See William E. Paden, 'Elements of a New Comparativism', *MTSR* 8 (1996): 5-14; Kimberly C. Patton and Benjamin C. Ray, eds., *A Magic Still Dwells: Comparative Religion in the Postmodern Age*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000); Jeppe Sinding Jensen, 'Universals, General Terms and the Comparative Study of Religion', *NUMEN* 48 (2001): 239-66; Robert A. Segal, 'In Defense of the Comparative Method', *NUMEN* 48 (2001): 339-73; *Comparing Religions: Possibilities and Perils?*, ed. Thomas Athanasius Idinopulos, Brian C. Wilson, and James Constantine Hanges (Leiden: Brill, 2006); William E. Paden, *New Patterns for Comparative Religion: Passages to an Evolutionary Perspective* (London: Bloomsbury, 2016).

[4] Jonathan Z. Smith, 'In Comparison A Magic Dwells', in *Imagining Religion* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), 26.

[5] John M. G. Barclay, 'Constructing a Dialogue: *4 Ezra* and Paul on the Mercy of God', in *Anthropologie und Ethik im Frühjudentum und im Neuen Testament* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2014), 3-5.

[6] Troels Engberg-Pedersen, *Paul and the Stoics* (London: T&T Clark, 2000), 3. Also Alexander, 'Comparative Approach', 353.

[7] See Brendan Saler, 'Comparison: Some Suggestions for Improving the Inevitable', *NUMEN* 48 (2001): 268.

[8] Gopāla Śaraṇa, *The Methodology of Anthropological Comparisons: An Analysis of Comparative Methods in Social and Cultural Anthropology*, VFPA 53 (Tuscon: University of Arizona Press, 1975), vii, asks the question in the context of anthropology: are there simply *comparisons*, without comparative *methods*?

our data in order to solve our theoretical problems'.[9] Smith makes two critical points here. First, comparison is a 'disciplined exaggeration'. There is an element of control required in the exercise, it cannot just proceed without forethought, especially consideration of theoretical and methodological foundations. Second, comparison looks for more than just similarities: one must compare and *contrast*.[10] Discipline and contrast. These are the desiderata of a good comparison.

I might suggest, however, one additional desideratum for comparisons between Paul and his Early Jewish peers: *correspondence*, of which there are two categories, pragmatic and conceptual. Pragmatic correspondence refers to the various points of similarity between two texts outside of the conceptual, or thematic, correspondences found in the material itself. To give just two examples: from a conceptual standpoint both Romans and LAB discuss the theme of 'faith'; from a pragmatic standpoint both texts are written by Jewish authors in the first century CE. The identification of both pragmatic and conceptual correspondences is important to any comparison between Pauline or Early Jewish texts. The closer we can bring two texts together, the more conspicuous the differences between them, and Jewish texts from the Second Temple period are particularly close. Whilst we might compare Romans with an apple (an intellectual possibility, at least pragmatically),[11] a better option that maximises both pragmatic and conceptual correspondences is a *text* whose provenance and cultural background are as 'near' to Romans as possible.[12] Dissimilarities will stand in sharpest contrast the closer together two texts stand in terms of pragmatic and conceptual correspondences. More will be said regarding these correspondences, both pragmatic and conceptual, below in 1.3, including a discussion of the state of comparisons of Romans and LAB. Thus the goal of this thesis is to 'lift out and strongly mark' those features in the conceptual sphere (faith, God, promise et al.) made all the more conspicuous due to the pragmatic closeness of the two ancient Jewish texts.

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[9] Jonathan Z. Smith, *Drudgery Divine: On the Comparison of Early Christianities and the Religions of Late Antiquity* (Chicago: University Of Chicago Press, 1990), 52.

[10] A worthwhile comparison, according to Smith, 'A Magic Dwells', 35, requires 'the postulation of difference as the grounds of its being interesting'.

[11] The pragmatic correspondences between Romans and an apple, though perhaps strained, could include complexity (whether rhetorical or biological) and materiality (papyri and organic matter). Franz Boas, 'The Limitations of the Comparative Method of Anthropology', *Science* 4 (1896): 904, suggested a century ago 'that comparisons be restricted to those phenomena which have been proved to be effects of the same cause. . . . before extended comparisons are made, the comparability of the material must be proved'.

[12] Nearness, as I use the term, refers to the degree to which any given text, including its background and contents, is 'like' another text.

1.2 Comparison in the Study of Paul

Since at least Thackeray, the stated purpose of comparing Paul with other traditions (or texts with texts) was for the sake of understanding the 'relationship' between the apostle and his contemporaries,[13] whether Jewish[14] or Greco-Roman.[15] The preeminent example is E. P. Sanders' comparative study of Paul and Palestinian Judaism, which stimulated a multi-generational debate that continues today over his conclusions regarding 'covenantal nomism'. Apart from early critiques by Jacob Neusner[16] and Beverly Gaventa,[17] most scholars have not presented a direct challenge to Sanders' *methodology*. According to Neusner, whilst Sanders focused on 'the issues of election and covenant, obedience and disobedience, and the like', none of these 'necessarily define the generative problematic of any of the Judaisms' represented in the ancient literature.[18] Sanders fumbled at the start by not asking 'what is important and central in the system of Tannaitic-Rabbinic writings'.[19] Neusner offers the example of Mishnah to demonstrate how, since 1973, the discipline has moved from consideration of religious 'systems' to 'the character of the documents, one by one'.[20] Thus a systemic comparison of Mishnah (with, presumably, any other ancient Jewish text) necessitates 'an account of what Mishnah is about, of the system expressed by Mishnah and of the world view created and sustained therein'.[21]

The problem that Neusner identified in Sanders' approach to comparison was unfortunately not picked up in most later scholarship. Whilst Sanders' work generated a proliferation of comparative studies between Paul and other early Jewish writings (whether to confirm, deny, or modify his assessment of Paul),[22] many of these have given little attention

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[13] See Henry St. John Thackeray, *The Relation of St. Paul to Contemporary Jewish Thought* (London: MacMillan, 1900), 1.

[14] See E. P. Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism: A Comparison of Patterns of Religion* (Philadelphia: Augsburg Fortress, 1977), 9-11.

[15] See Abraham J. Malherbe, *Paul and the Popular Philosophers* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1989), 5.

[16] Jacob Neusner, 'Comparing Judaisms', *HR* 18 (1978): 177-91.

[17] Beverly Gaventa, 'Comparing Paul and Judaism: Rethinking Our Methods', *BTB* 10 (1980): 37-44.

[18] Neusner, 'Comparing Judaisms', 179. Writing just a few years later, Jacob Neusner, *Judaism: the Evidence of the Mishnah*, 2nd ed. (London: University of Chicago Press, 1981), 282, clarified his claim, at least according to Mishnah, concerning the central problematic of Judaism: 'The Mishnah's evidence presents a Judaism which at its foundations and through all its parts deals with a single fundamental question: What can man do? The evidence of Mishnah points to a Judaism which answers that question simply: Man, like God, makes the world work. . . . Man by his word and will initiates processes which force things to find their rightful place on one side or the other of the frontier, the definitive category of holiness. That is the substance of the Judaism of Mishnah'.

[19] Neusner, 'Comparing Judaisms', 180.

[20] Neusner, 'Comparing Judaisms', 181.

[21] Neusner, 'Comparing Judaisms', 181.

[22] See, for example, Joseph R. Dodson, *The 'Powers' of Personification: Rhetorical Purpose in the* Book of Wisdom *and the Letter to the Romans*, BZNW 161 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2008); Simon J. Gathercole, *Where Is Boasting?: Early Jewish Soteriology and Paul's Response in Romans 1–5* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002);

to the question of theory. Indeed, *what is* the theory, or metaphor, that should guide any comparative analysis between two Jewish authors of the first century? The following critical analysis of three prominent comparative approaches intends to illuminate the problem that Pauline scholars face: whose methodology, which metaphor?

1.2.1 Intertextual Conversation: Watson/Hays

In the introduction to the second edition of *Paul and the Hermeneutics of Faith* (2004),[23] Francis Watson praises Richard Hays for 'the transformative insights of contemporary literary theory'.[24] Hays built his seminal work on Paul's use of Scripture, *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul* (1989), on insights gained from literary theory, most importantly the concept of 'intertextuality'.[25] Hays is explicit that his analysis is not comparison 'proper', as if Paul were being juxtaposed with the LXX. Rather, the concept of intertextuality is dynamic; one author employs another's writings whilst creating a new thing. Comparison, on the other hand, is two authors who perhaps draw upon the same 'symbolic field' who are read alongside one another. The theoretical underpinnings of Hays' model is the concept of intertextuality as outlined by the poet and literary critic John Hollander in *The Figure of Echo*.[26] It should be noted that Hollander's approach was essentially poetic, not expository, so his method should be approached with caution when the texts under consideration are not poetry (i.e., Milton).[27] Although Watson describes his own project as a 'comparative study',[28] his theoretical foundation, based on Hays, is intertextual, not comparative. This is important to note because in both the first and second editions of *Hermeneutics*, Watson articulates a comparative approach marked by 'dialogue', in which three texts enter an 'open-ended conversation'[29]. He follows a consistent procedure, selecting two Jewish texts (one NT, one

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John M. G. Barclay, '"By the Grace of God I am what I am": Grace and Agency in Paul and Philo', in *Divine and Human Agency in Paul and his Cultural Environment*, ed. John M. G. Barclay and Simon J. Gathercole (London: T&T Clark, 2008); Jason Maston, *Divine and Human Agency in Second Temple Judaism and Paul: A Comparative Study*, WUNT 2/297 (Berlin: Mohr Siebeck, 2010); Bruce W. Longenecker, *Eschatology and the Covenant: Comparison of 4 Ezra and Romans 1–11*, JSNTSup 57 (Sheffield: Continuum, 1991); Dieter Zeller, *Charis bei Philon und Paulus* (Stuttgart: Verlag Katholisches Bibelwerk, 1990).

[23] Francis Watson, *Paul and the Hermeneutics of Faith* (London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2004).

[24] Watson, *Hermeneutics*, xxxvi.

[25] Richard B. Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), 14-15.

[26] John Hollander, *Figure of Echo: A Mode of Allusion in Milton and After* (Berkeley: California University Press, 1981).

[27] Hollander, *Figure of Echo*, ix: 'In these pages I consider a way of alluding that is inherently poetic, rather than expository'.

[28] Watson, *Hermeneutics*, 2.

[29] Francis Watson, *Paul and the Hermeneutics of Faith*, 2nd ed. (London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2015), xxxiv.

otherwise) that use the same Old Testament passage in their writings. He claims that his work 'is a comparative study in the early reception of Jewish scripture',[30] and also acknowledges his indebtedness to Hays for the 'conversation' metaphor upon which the analysis rests.[31]

At its core, Watson's use of a 'conversation' metaphor entails a conundrum of agency, which is the same problem we will see in the other examples below. He writes that 'the prophet [Isaiah] and the apostle [Paul] need one another precisely as partners in dialogue'.[32] He suggests that 'Paul needs Isaiah *to* compose' just as much as 'Isaiah needs Paul *to be* interpreted'.[33] But if this is so then the agency of each author, as Watson describes it, moves beyond conversation. Paul is active, Isaiah is passive. This is not dialogue, nor is it monologue; it is exposition.[34] So whilst his comparative project helpfully highlights the extent to which both Paul and early Jewish authors utilised the Hebrew scriptures, in terms of the metaphorical basis for comparison, Watson's approach may not offer the best model.

1.2.2 A Hermeneutics of Friendship: Linebaugh/Barclay/Rowe

The most recent general articulation of the comparative project is Kavin Rowe's *One True Life* (2016).[35] The work has been denigrated by some as being more of an *anti*-comparison of Christianity and Stoicism, since Rowe has much to say about the incommensurability of these diverse (religious) traditions.[36] However, whilst Rowe concludes that 'transformation is requisite to understanding a text from any particular tradition',[37] he arrives at a comparative method based on 'friendship'. Rowe's astute employment of MacIntyre and Williams to present a case *against* comparing traditions is followed by a proposed new comparative method he calls 'narrative juxtaposition'.[38] True 'face-to-face' engagement between traditions happens at the point of narrative, because 'narrative is the point of mutuality . . . and narrative is essentially human'.[39] Rowe suggests, as an alternative to incommensurable approaches (namely, those of Abraham Malherbe and Troels Engberg-Pederson), an approach defined by

[30] Watson, *Hermeneutics*, 2.
[31] Watson, *Hermeneutics*, 4n2.
[32] Watson, *Hermeneutics*, 20.
[33] Watson, *Hermeneutics*, 20 (emphasis mine).
[34] See Barclay, 'Constructing a Dialogue', 5.
[35] C. Kavin Rowe, *One True Life: The Argument of Rival Traditions* (London: Yale University Press, 2016).
[36] A thoroughgoing critique of Rowe's work is Troels Engberg-Pedersen, 'The Past Is a Foreign Country: On the Shape and Purposes of Comparison in New Testament Scholarship', in *The New Testament in Comparison*, ed. John M. G. Barclay and Benjamin G. White (London: T&T Clark, 2020).
[37] Rowe, *One True Life*, 183.
[38] Rowe, *One True Life*, 199.
[39] Rowe, *One True Life*, 200.

empathy, 'a patient conflict of traditions within the only way that is existentially available',[40] or 'disagreement that matters'.[41]

In a similar vein, Jonathan Linebaugh offers a philosophical argument for what he calls a 'hermeneutics of friendship', building on a quote from the Russian literary philosopher, Bakhtin: 'The text lives only by coming into contact with another text'.[42] In Linebaugh's method, the scholar engages in 'exegetical eavesdropping' on the texts under consideration, treating them as 'friends' in a relationship with the interpreter.[43] Whilst giving a nod to Smith[44] by acknowledging the agency of the scholar in any comparative work,[45] Linebaugh is reluctant to impose any sort of methodological rule upon the process of comparison. He approvingly mentions Hamann's disdain for 'methodological rules', which are '"a negative quality" that can reduce risk but can "never replace" the relationship'.[46] But the balance of agency that Linebaugh pursues seems untenable. For him, 'Author, text, and reader—these are the communication partners who engage in a hermeneutical conversation'.[47] Using Hamann's ideas concerning reading texts together, Linebaugh suggests a 'coupling' of texts that

> is underwritten by and ultimately hears "the testimony of Christ", the "divine word" that both interprets scripture and is the "master-key" that unlocks the books of nature and history. Hamann's hermeneutic is thus characterized by the relationship between the one and the any: the one word of Christ makes legible and can be read in any book, whether it be the book of scripture, nature, or history.[48]

This coupling, however, is not just between the texts, but also includes the interpreter. Linebaugh presents the relationship between interpreter and texts as 'face-to-face-to-face', as opposed to simple juxtapositions that operate 'side-by-side'.[49]

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[40] Rowe, *One True Life*, 204.

[41] Rowe, *One True Life*, 238.

[42] Jonathan A. Linebaugh, 'Relational Hermeneutics and Comparison as Conversation', in *The New Testament in Comparison*, ed. John M. G. Barclay and Benjamin G. White, LNTS (London: T&T Clark, 2020), 149. See also his earlier work placing methodological weight on Bakhtin, Jonathan A. Linebaugh, *God, Grace, and Righteousness in Wisdom of Solomon and Paul's Letter to the Romans: Texts in Conversation* (Leiden: Brill, 2013).

[43] Linebaugh, 'Relational Hermeneutics', 150.

[44] Linebaugh, 'Relational Hermeneutics', 149.

[45] Linebaugh, 'Relational Hermeneutics', 150-51: 'Comparison is a relationship not just between texts but also with the interpreter. Exegetical eavesdropping is thus necessarily engaged: the comparator listens to but also facilitates and participates in the conversation'.

[46] Linebaugh, 'Relational Hermeneutics', 149, citing Gwen Griffith Dickson, *Johann Georg Hamann's Relational Metacriticism* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1995), 128.

[47] Linebaugh, 'Relational Hermeneutics', 148.

[48] Linebaugh, 'Relational Hermeneutics', 149. We might press the question here of whether Linebaugh has not created a false dichotomy in the resultant options he presents for comparing texts. The alternative to Hamann's 'rhapsodic and relational' approach which 'couples' texts is 'comparison in which material is simply juxtaposed and analyzed by a personally uninvolved interpreter' (8-9).

[49] Linebaugh, 'Relational Hermeneutics', 149.

A final example is John Barclay's aforementioned study of *4 Ezra* and Paul. In the essay he offers a clear articulation of an approach to comparison that resonates with the 'conversation' examples above. Whilst I concur with Barclay's suggestions to move to comparisons and wholes,[50] the argument behind the third move, from juxtaposition to dialogue, is less convincing, again for reasons of agency. Barclay suggests that in juxtaposition, the texts speak in monologue; they 'aren't allowed to talk to one another'.[51] He then asks, 'Can we create a friendly dialogue between our texts in which they challenge and test each other, in which they require the other to respond to questions or criticisms, and in which the common *Sache*, the subject-matter under discussion, is genuinely illuminated through such conversation?'[52] This is an important question, but it gives rise to a further set of questions. How is 'friendship' being defined? By modern conceptions of friendship or ancient? How would ancient Jews have engaged in debate with one another, and even if we have a precise knowlege, is that how our comparison should proceed? Can ancient authors actually speak to one another, outside the constraints of our imaginings? Is our imagination of something that did not take place the best starting point for comparing Paul and Early Jewish texts?[53] Whilst Barclay rightly objects to the previous generations' methods of comparison, 'dialogue' may not be the best way forward, at least not as a metaphor to describe what we as scholars are actually doing with the ancient material, and how the texts are interacting with each other through our efforts. Given the state of the authors or these texts (they are long dead), the metaphor begs an impossibility. Whilst Rowe issues the call for a 'comparative scholarship . . . that refuses to live among the dead', the ancient authors cannot speak new words to each other. Whilst the metaphor of dialogue and the imagery of coupling are powerful for conceptualising ways to bring texts together, these approaches cannot provide a robust theoretical basis for ongoing comparative work in the study of Paul.

1.2.3 The Comparative Compositional Frame

My suggestion for a revised metaphor in comparative studies in Paul and Early Jewish literature is simple. Instead of conceptualising a comparison as a conversation, we think in terms of a composition (my previously mentioned comparative compositions frame, or CCF). The artist who determines to paint or photograph an image will determine the elements of his

[50] Note especially this point in Neusner, 'Comparing Judaisms', against Sanders.
[51] Barclay, 'Constructing a Dialogue', 5.
[52] Barclay, 'Constructing a Dialogue', 5.
[53] Imagination is the comparative *modus operandi* in John M. G. Barclay, *Paul and the Gift* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2015), 539: in order to grasp Paul's meaning in 9.30–10.21, 'we may imagine a dialogue between Paul and non-believing Jews'.

or her composition as an act of determination. Henri Cartier-Bresson describes the action of composing an image as 'putting one's head, one's eye, and one's heart on the same axis'.[54] This is no impersonal exercise. The artist, or scholar, is fully present and dictates the rules of engagement. The goal is 'to seize . . . the whole essence of some situation' within the four-sided frame of a composition.[55] One or more objects are brought into or included within one frame according to the creative agency of the artist. Thereafter, the final image is crafted through their artistic vision, whether through manipulating light sources, inserting or removing objects as required, or locating him- or herself in various locations to achieve different perspectives.[56] In like manner, the agency of the biblical scholar conducting a comparison of two texts intentionally places two texts into a comparative compositional framework, and continues to dictate the exercise from start to finish. Whilst the painter or photographer works with the physical media of canvas, paint, light, and glass, and the comparator uses the original texts, exegesis, and secondary sources, both endeavours require the same basic principles of selection, creativity, and craftsmanship. We as scholars place two texts into a comparative frame and analyze them. We are not listening, nor are we eavesdropping, and the texts are not friends.[57] We are reading, examining, probing, juxtaposing. By thinking in terms of a composition, rather than a dialogue, the agency remains with the scholar, not texts that are speaking to each other. The role of the scholar is to choose the texts, study them, determine the point(s) of comparison, make observations, and ideally to emerge with a refined understanding of both texts.

But once the texts are selected, how should one go about the actual work of comparing? Half a century ago, Edwin Ackerknecht suggested that the material determines the approach: 'Comparison has been made and will be made according either to form or according to function, quantitatively or qualitatively, morphologically or statistically . . . What approach is used will depend on the object and problem of the inquiry—and on the inquirer'.[58] We need to approach comparison sensitive both to the nature of the material at hand, and the issues that we are attempting to address in that same material. Smith proposed a practical approach whose principles are cross-disciplinary. Comparisons can be structured

[54] Henri Cartier-Bresson, *The Mind's Eye: Writings on Photography and Photographers* (London: Thames and Hudson, 2004), 16.

[55] Cartier-Bresson, *The Mind's Eye*, 16.

[56] Ibarionex Perello, *Making Photographs: Developing a Personal Visual Workflow* (San Rafael, CA: Rocky Nook, 2019), 10, speaks of the artist nurturing a 'growing sensitivity to disparate elements in a scene that could only be connected within the context of a . . . composition'.

[57] Dale B. Martin, *Sex and the Single Savior: Gender and Sexuality in Biblical Interpretation* (London: WJK, 2006), 5: 'Texts don't "say" anything: they must be read'.

[58] Edwin H. Ackerknecht, 'On the Comparative Method in Anthropology', in *Method and Perspective in Anthropology*, ed. Robert F. Spencer (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1954), 124.

according to four steps of inquiry, including 'description, comparison, redescription, and rectification'.[59] After the first step, that of identifying the texts to be compared, we provide a 'thick description'[60] that takes account of a given text's 'social, historical, and cultural' contexts.[61] The comparison 'proper' is where we 'notice, classify, define, and think about things' that are both similar and different between our chosen texts at their points of correspondence.[62] In redescription, new insights from our comparison further inform our understanding of each text, thus requiring richer descriptions of them both.[63] Last of all, rectification is where we create new terms, if necessary, to replace previous designations now proved inadequate. Smith's practical approach provides a useful paradigm that recognises the active role of the scholar at every step of the process. We as scholars select the texts, we describe them in our writings, we make determinations concerning what they are actually speaking about, we are the ones engaged in written dialogue with other scholars because we disagree about a text's driving problematic, or the meaning of certain words, or even the composition of the intended audience. So whilst the metaphor of listening is perhaps accurate when discussing our posture to the *individual* texts, this is true only at certain points in a comparison; what we 'listen' to is one text at a time, not two texts speaking to each other. We are the sovereign agent in the relationship. Smith describes our role in the following terms: 'Comparison . . . is an active, at times even playful, enterprise of deconstruction and reconstitution which, kaleidoscope-like, gives the scholar a shifting set of characteristics with which to negotiate the relations between his or her theoretical interests and data stipulated as exemplary'.[64] Put into practice, the biblical scholar assumes creative authority to reach with either hand for Romans and Pseudo-Philo, or Galatians and *Jubilees*, or Ephesians and Josephus, and to bring them into a compositional frame in order to structure a comparison where similarity and difference both inform and delight.

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[59] Jonathan Z. Smith, 'The "End" of Comparison: Redescription and Rectification', in *A Magic Still Dwells: Comparative Religion in the Postmodern Age*, ed. Kimberly C. Patton and Benjamin C. Ray (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2000), 239.

[60] The concept of a 'thick description' in modern study stems from Clifford Geertz, *Thick Description: Towards an Interpretative Theory of Culture*, vol. The Interpretation of Culture: Selected Essays (New York: Basic Books, 1973). See the recent use of the concept for the study of Paul in Michael Lakey, *The Ritual World of Paul the Apostle: Metaphysics, Community, and Symbol in 1 Corinthians 10–11* (London: T&T Clark, 2019).

[61] See the elaborations of Smith's method in Mack, 'Christian origins', 257.

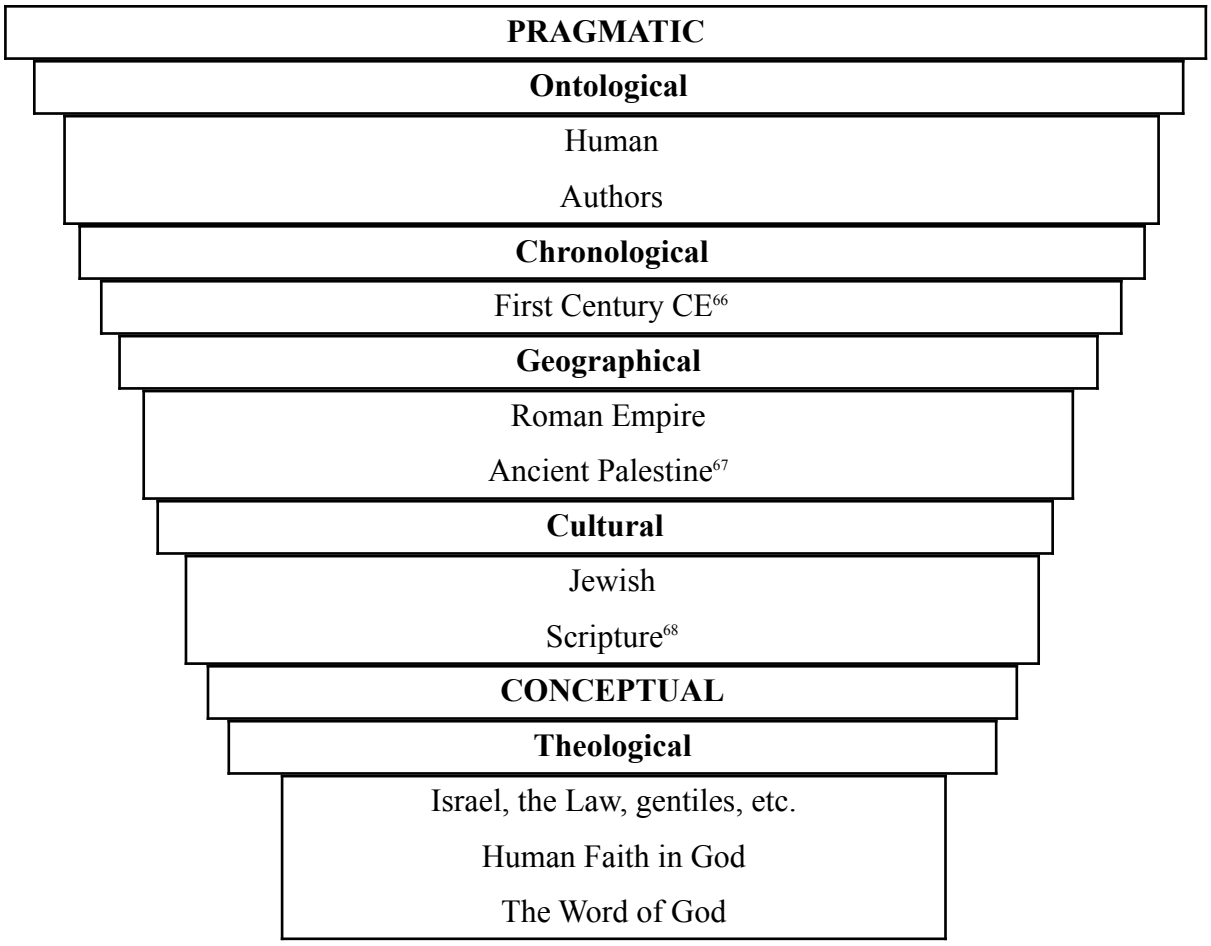
[62] Mack, 'Christian origins', 257.

[63] Smith, 'Redescription and Rectification', 239; cf. Mack, 'Christian origins', 258.

[64] Smith, *Drudgery*, 53.

1.3 Comparing Romans and LAB

I mentioned above the need to bring two texts as close together as possible through the identification of both pragmatic and conceptual correspondences in order to achieve greater clarity on their differences. The numerous links between our texts can be categorised from general to specific as follows:[65]



[65] These are some of the most important categories for the purposes of our study, as there are many more that might be considered, even down to the most minute detail (type of parchment used in composition, for example).

[66] If the historical location of an ancient Jewish text, either pre- or post-Bar Kokhba, determines to a great extent its message (or 'attitude'; see Neusner, 'Comparing Judaisms', 187-88), then the question of when Pseudo-Philo composed his text must be considered. Yet an unresolved debate over LAB concerns whether its composition occured before the Fall of Jerusalem in 70 CE or in response to it. Whilst the historical question is important, it can be circumvented in the present study by basing our comparison on the shared problematics of God's word and the human response of faith in both LAB and Romans. Even if there is a significant discrepancy in the dating and provenance of either Romans or LAB, the conceptual correspondences remain a robust point of comparison. On the dating of LAB, see Howard Jacobson, *A Commentary on Pseudo-Philo's Liber Antiquitatum Biblicarum: With Latin Text and English Translation* (Leiden: Brill, 1996), 199-210.

[67] Daniel J. Harrington, 'The Biblical Text of Pseudo-Philo's *Liber Antiquitatum Biblicarum*', *CBQ* 33 (1971): 1-17, has all but proved an original Palestinian Hebrew text type of the first century CE.

[68] Bruce N. Fisk, 'Paul Among the Storytellers: Reading Romans 11 in the Context of Rewritten Bible', in *Paul and Scripture: Extending the Conversation*, ed. Christopher D. Stanley (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2012), lists four subcategories of similarity in the use of Scripture between Paul and other examples of 'rewritten Bible', including oral tradition, biblical commentary, exegetical rules, and worldview.

This matrix points to the fact that Romans and LAB share numerous points of similarity upon which a fruitful comparison can be constructed on pragmatic terms. But the conceptual are just as compelling. Philip Alexander, for one, recognises the potential of comparing texts, that appear unrelated, at the point of a 'fundamental religious problem'.[69] Fisk has suggested, 'Although Paul's approach to Scripture tended to be charismatic and imaginative, he remained firmly grounded in prevailing Jewish theology, including its eschatological expectations, its assumptions about biblical and historical continuity, and its assurance of God's covenant faithfulness'.[70] Likewise, Paul's argument in Romans regarding faith 'not only was based on (1) the teachings of the Jewish (OT) scriptures, but also was founded on (2) the basic tenets of what is today called "early Judaism" and (3) the formative convictions of the earliest Jewish believers in Jesus'.[71] If LAB is 'a witness to the understanding of the Bible in the Palestinian synagogues prior to A.D. 70',[72] Romans is no less a witness to the view of Scripture in the early Christian churches. Both Romans and LAB are linked by a shared grounding in a Jewish worldview and the particular cultural tool of Scripture. Indeed, 'several LAB passages would need only minor adjustments before fitting smoothly into the argument of Romans'.[73] Both Paul and Pseudo-Philo are two Jewish authors who, through different literary, rhetorical, and hermeneutical engagement, seek to shape the thinking and behaviour of their readers as participants in a history initiated by God through a promise. Both texts share a preoccupation with the relationship between God and his people, a relationship articulated in terms of the human response of faith to God as he reveals himself in his words.

1.3.1 God's Word and Human Faith

These themes, faith and divine speech, can function for us within the CCF as the subjects we bring into the same frame for the purpose of juxtaposition. I am following Smith's suggestion that we intentionally compare 'at least two exempla . . . in terms of aspects and relations held

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[69] Alexander, 'Comparative Approach', 352.

[70] Fisk, 'Storytellers', 56. Although it should be noted that not all varieties of Judaism agreed on these matters. Thanks to Tyson Putthoff for insight at this point.

[71] Richard N. Longenecker, *The Epistle to the Romans: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, NIGTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2016), 384.

[72] Daniel J. Harrington, 'Pseudo-Philo: A New Translation and Introduction', in *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha and the New Testament: Expansions of the 'Old Testament' and Legends, Wisdom, and Philosophical Literature, Prayers, Psalms and Odes, Fragments of Lost Judeo-Hellenistic Works*, ed. James H. Charlesworth (London: Yale University Press, 1985), 302.

[73] Bruce Norman Fisk, *Do You Not Remember? Scripture, Story and Exegesis in the Rewritten Bible of Pseudo-Philo*, JJSPSS 37 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2001), 328–29.

to be significant, and with respect to some category, question, theory, or model of interest to us'.[74] For this present comparison, my chosen categories are God's word and human faith, which have long been recognised as dominant themes in both LAB and Romans.

Divine speech is the most pervasive element in Pseudo-Philo's re-narration of Israel's history, matched only by the repetition of narratives focused on human exemplars of radical faith in God. Pseudo-Philo 'shows a great love for altering and enlarging the speeches given in the Bible, and even for composing new speeches', especially from the mouth of God.[75] Murphy has observed that, 'Divine words, actions, decisions, intentions, motivation, predictions, and reactions unify the work. God is extremely active, reacting in word and deed to practically everything human characters say and do', and he is frequently the subject of verbs for speech.[76] A central proposition of the work is that 'God's words will never be in vain'.[77] Within the pervasive examples of divine speech in LAB[78] there is an entire 'subcategory of quotation that proves or disproves God's faithfulness to the divine promises'.[79] In 9.4, 'God spoke about Israel even before it existed'.[80] The spoken promise God made with Israel through Abraham is a central motif that underlies the entire work,[81] and it constitutes a critical point of comparison with Romans.

Faith in LAB is presented as the expected posture of the ideal Israelite. The episodes from Scripture that Pseudo-Philo re-narrates include heavily modified versions of the Abraham story (LAB 6, 18, 23), the fidelity of Phinehas (LAB 47–48), and the devotion of Deborah (LAB 30–33). But perhaps a clearer indication of the importance of faith for Pseudo-Philo is seen in his manipulation of minor biblical characters who are mentioned only by name in Scripture. Examples of this type of literary license include Kenaz and Seila, the former only once in the early chapters of Judges but considered the leader *par excellence* of the work (LAB 25–28; cf. Judg 3.9),[82] the latter unnamed in the Bible but heralded as a paragon of faith through a richly elaborated prayer composed by Pseudo-Philo (LAB 44;

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[74] Smith, 'Redescription and Rectification', 239.

[75] Leopold Cohn, 'An Apocryphal Work Ascribed to Philo of Alexandria', *JQR* 10 (1898): 277-332.

[76] Frederick J. Murphy, *Pseudo-Philo: Rewriting the Bible* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 224.

[77] Murphy, *Pseudo-Philo*, 225; cf. Cohn, 'An Apocryphal Work', 322.

[78] See Murphy, *Pseudo-Philo*, 21: 'God is really the principal character, and the narrative makes liberal use of God's words. The reader frequently hears God speak and even hears God's thoughts. One also hears God holding conversations with the people of Israel, with particular characters, and with angels and stars. God is the most reliable commentator on everything'.

[79] Murphy, *Pseudo-Philo*, 78.

[80] Harrington, 'Pseudo-Philo', 300.

[81] See Charles Perrot and Pierre-Maurice Bogaert, *Pseudo-Philon: Les antiquités bibliques II*, Sources Chrétiennes, vol. 230 (Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 1976), 43-47 (hereafter SC230).

[82] George W. E. Nickelsburg, 'Good and Bad Leaders in Pseudo-Philo's Liber Antiquitatum Biblicarum', in *Ideal Figures in Ancient Judaism: Profiles and Paradigms*, ed. George W. E. Nickelsburg and John J. Collins, SBLSCS 12 (Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1980), 53.

Judg 11.34-40). Jacobson comments that 'for LAB there is one central virtue, ideal and obligation . . . to have absolute and unyielding faith in God, and in God alone'.[83] Even a cursory reading of LAB leaves one with the impression that radical faith in God is expected of his people in every generation.

The centrality of faith to Romans has been recognised throughout the history of interpretation of the letter,[84] including some of the earliest citations of Romans up to the present day.[85] C. E. B. Cranfield, for example, writes that 'faith' is a central thesis of the entire letter, and that, compared to elsewhere in the New Testament, Paul's usage of πίστις 'stands out markedly' for its diversity and frequency. Dunn suggests that, 'Intertwined with the theme of "Jew first and also Greek" is the integrated thematic emphasis on the righteousness of God, on righteousness through faith, and on the faithfulness of God (1:17)'.[86] Indeed, it is generally accepted that Paul's argument begins with his thesis statement of 1.16-17, which includes the statement that 'the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith, as it is written, "The righteous shall live by faith"', and that this concise statement is then expanded in the 'heart' of the letter (3.21-26),[87] where faith is located 'in Jesus'. Faith (πίστις) is mentioned no less than 39 times in Romans, nearly 20% of all occurrences in the entire New Testament. The intensity of the debate over whether πίστις Χρίστου should be read as an objective or subjective genitive is just one indication of the importance of faith to Paul, and to Romans in particular.[88] In the narrative passages selected from Romans for the purpose of this present comparison (Romans 4 and 9–11), faith is an anchoring motif. In Romans 4, the faith of Abraham establishes the scriptural foundation for Paul's claims regarding faith in Christ

[83] Jacobson, *Commentary*, 245.

[84] The literature on Romans, even just the concept of 'faith', for instance, is too vast to include here. The best recent discussion of the centrality of 'faith' to Romans is Teresa Morgan, *Roman Faith and Christian Faith: Pistis and Fides in the Early Roman Empire and Early Churches* (Oxford: OUP, 2015), 282-302, who places weight on the opening thesis statement of Romans 1.16-17 as indicating the major themes of the letter, especially the phrase, 'faith to faith' (283).

[85] See Andrew F. Gregory, '1 Clement and the Writings that Later Formed the New Testament', in *The Reception of the New Testament in the Apostolic Fathers*, ed. C. M. Tuckett (Oxford: OUP, 2005), 150; D. A. Hagner, *The Use of the Old and New Testaments in Clement of Rome*, NovTSup 34 (Leiden: Brill, 1973), 23; L. L. Welborn, 'The Soteriology of Romans in Clement of Alexandria, *Stromateis* 2: Faith, Fear, and Assimilation to God', in *Early Patristic Readings of Romans*, ed. Kathy L. Gaca (London: T&T Clark, 2005), 72-80; D. H. Williams, 'Justification by Faith: a Patristic Doctrine', *JEH* 57 (2006): 649-67; Joshua W. Jipp, 'Ancient, Modern, and Future Interpretations of Romans 1:3–4: Reception History and Biblical Interpretation', *JTI* 3 (2009): 241-59; Cilliers Breytenbach, 'The Letter to the Romans as Paul's Legacy to Theology: Reception in Exposition', *STJ* 3 (2017): 269-97.

[86] James D. G. Dunn, *Romans 1–8*, WBC 38A (Waco, TX: Word, 1988).

[87] Thomas R. Schreiner, *Romans*, BECNT (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2018), 186.

[88] On the 'pistis Christou' debate in the context of Romans, see Stephen L. Young, 'Paul's Ethnic Discourse on "Faith": Christ's Faithfulness and Gentile Access to the Judean God in Romans 3:21–5:1', *HTR* 108 (2015): 30-51. See further Morna Hooker, 'Another Look at Πίστις Χριστοῦ', *SJT* 69 (2016): 46-62; Suzan J. M. Sierksma-Agteres, 'Imitation in Faith: Enacting Paul's Ambiguous Pistis Christou Formulations on a Greco-Roman Stage', *IJPT* 77 (2016): 119-53; Arland J. Hultgren, 'The PISTIS CHRISTOU Formulation in Paul', *NovT* 22 (1980): 248–63.

apart from the Law, and forms the bedrock for Paul's devaluation of circumcision as *the* criterion for inclusion in the Abrahamic promise.[89] In Romans 9–11, the motif of faith underlies Paul's argument as the point of congruence between Jewish and gentile believers in Christ, and the antithesis to salvation 'by works' (Rom 9.30-33; 10). Salvation for all comes through faith that hears the 'word of Christ' (10.17). And faith, or the lack thereof, determines one's position relative to the 'good' olive tree, either grafted in or broken off (11.19-23).

In regards to divine speech in Romans, the concept of 'promise' has been recognised as central to Paul's understanding of Israel's history, the Christ-event, and the phenomenon of the church.[90] This is very much the case in Romans 4, where the concept of 'promise' supports the weight of Paul's argument (4.3, 13-21).[91] The very reason for the discussion of Abraham is to support his claim that justification is by faith, not law, and that there is one God who justifies both Jews and gentiles by the same faith (3.27-30); Paul's faith upholds the law (3.31), that is, the voice of Scripture is maintained by this new understanding of salvation. The extended argument in Romans 9–11 hinges on Paul's claim in 9.6, 'It is not as though the word of God has failed'.[92] In 9.6-13, the theme of 'promise' is especially prominent, resurfacing in the conclusion to the argument with Paul's reference to the πατήρ (11.28) and κλῆσις (11.29). As will be argued below, the concept of 'promise' is central to Paul's understanding of God's relationship with his chosen people (and the gentiles), not only as it relates to Abraham, but also to Christ, the object of believers' faith who is described by Paul as the one 'confirming' that same promise (4.16).

Due to limitations of space, the following analysis will isolate passages within each text that best exhibit these conceptual correspondences in both texts. In the case of LAB, I have divided my analysis into two chapters, the first looking at the concept of God's word, the second considering human faith. Given the fact that LAB is entirely narrative, in both chapters I have isolated specific characters and their episodes as renarrated by Pseudo-Philo. My exegesis includes the accounts of Moses, Joshua, Micah, Abraham, Amram, and Hannah.

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[89] See, for example, Andrew Kimseng Tan, *The Rhetoric of Abraham's Faith in Romans 4* (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2018); Brevard S. Childs, 'Abraham's Faith in Galatians 3 and Romans 4', in *The Church's Guide for Reading Paul: The Canonical Shaping of the Pauline Corpus* (Cambridge: Grand Rapids, 2008); Benjamin Schliesser, *Abraham's Faith in Romans 4: Paul's Concept of Faith in Light of the History of Reception of Genesis 15:6*, WUNT 224 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2007).

[90] Note recently Todd D. Still, ed., *God and Israel: Providence and Purpose in Romans 9–11* (Waco: Baylor, 2017); Sarah Whittle, *Covenant Renewal and the Consecration of the Gentiles in Romans*, SNTS 161 (Cambridge: CUP, 2015); Matthew Thiessen, *Paul and the Gentile Problem* (Oxford: OUP, 2016).

[91] See especially W. D. Davies, 'Abraham and the Promise', in *The Gospel and the Land: Early Christianity and Jewish Territorial Doctrine* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974); Achin Behrens, 'Gen 15,6 und das Vorverständnis des Paulus', *ZAW* 109 (1997): 327-41.

[92] Note Michael Wolter, '"It Is Not as Though the Word of God Has Failed": God's Faithfulness and God's Free Sovereignty in Romans 9:6-29', in *God and Israel: Providence and Purpose in Romans 9–11*, ed. Todd D. Still (Waco: Baylor, 2017).

Since the author employs these figures as exemplary of the ideal relationship with God for collective Israel, they present the clearest window into the theology of the text. In the case of Romans, I have isolated the most narrative portions of the letter dealing with the history of Israel, in order to bring the comparison into greater conceptual correspondence. The best choices were Romans 4, due to Paul's recounting of the story of Abraham's (and Sarah's) interaction with God, and Romans 9–11, where Israel's past, present, and future history is outlined in terms of God's mercy to his people and to the gentiles. These texts are also centred on the relationship between God and his people, enabling a richer comparison in which both the similarities and (especially) differences between the two texts can be 'lifted and strongly marked'[93] with exceptional clarity.

1.3.2 History of Comparison

The present comparison of Romans and *Liber Antiquitatum Biblicarum* is justified for reasons beyond the pragmatic and conceptual correspondences discussed above. Given the correspondences in themes, provenance, et al., a further impetus is the lack of studies comparing these two texts. The possibility of comparing Paul with Pseudo-Philo was made possible with the publication of the seminal article by Leopold Cohn in 1898, 'An Apocryphal Work Ascribed to Philo of Alexandria', which is an elaborate introduction to a text long forgotten.[94] LAB had two years previously come to the attention of biblical scholars again after a few hundred years of neglect since the 1527 publication of the first critical edition of LAB by the German humanist, Richard Sichardus.[95] Yet scholarly literature on Pseudo-Philo is relatively limited compared to Romans.[96] This has partly to do with the history of the manuscripts, and the content of the text. LAB, originally composed in Hebrew and probably in or around ancient Palestine, was translated into Greek and then Latin.[97]

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[93] Paraphrasing Smith, *Drudgery*, 52.

[94] Cohn, 'An Apocryphal Work'.

[95] See the introduction to the critical edition of LAB in Guido Kisch, *Pseudo-Philo's* Liber Antiquitatum Biblicarum (Notre Dame: The University of Notre Dame, 1949), 3-5, for a history of the text's publication.

[96] Key secondary literature includes Cohn, 'An Apocryphal Work'; Kisch, *Pseudo-Philo*; Daniel J. Harrington, *Pseudo-Philon: Les antiquités bibliques I*, trans. Jacques Cazeaux, Sources Chrétiennes, vol. 229 (Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 1976) (hereafter SC229); SC230; Nickelsburg, 'Leaders'; Harrington, 'Pseudo-Philo'; Frederick J. Murphy, 'The Eternal Covenant in Pseudo-Philo', *JSP* 2 (1988): 43-57; Frederick J. Murphy, 'Retelling the Bible: Idolatry in Pseudo-Philo', *JBL* 107 (1988): 275-87; B. Halpern-Amaru, 'Portaits of Women in Pseudo-Philo's Biblical Antiquities', in *"Women Like This": New Perspectives on Jewish Women in the Greco-Roman World*, ed. A. J. Levine (Atlanta: SBL Press, 1991); Murphy, *Pseudo-Philo*; Eckart Reinmuth, *Pseudo-Philo und Lukas. Studien zum Liber Antiquitatum Biblicarum und seiner Bedeutung fur die Interprétation des lukanischen Doppelwerkes*, WUNT 1/74 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1994); Jacobson, *Commentary*; Christian Dietzfelbinger, 'Pseudo-Philo: Antiquitates Biblicae (Liber Antiquitatum Biblicarum)', in *Unterweisung in erzählender Form* (Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 1999); Fisk, *Pseudo-Philo*.

[97] Only the Latin texts remain, and of these we have only 18.

During the Reformation, the text was appended to a compilation of works by Philo of Alexandria, hence the name, Pseudo-Philo. The written text of LAB is a sort of confused Latin, in which Hebraisms are noticeable throughout, grammar is often convoluted and spelling errors persist. The content of the text is a renarration of Genesis–1 Samuel, somewhat reminiscent of other examples of Early Jewish 'rewritten Bible', including *Jubilees* and Josephus' *Jewish Antiquities*. There the similarity ends. Pseudo-Philo selects significant episodes in Israel's early history as pivotal moments of theological import through which to construct a plausible framework for the relationship between God and his people. The best evidence points to a date of composition sometime around the destruction of the Temple in 70 CE,[98] which indicates a time of political, social, and religious uncertainty for the Jewish people living in first-century Palestine. Pseudo-Philo, whoever he is and whenever he wrote, recasts Israel's story in a bid to bolster his beleaguered people with a history of hope in God's word.

The earliest known example of a scholarly comparison of Romans with LAB is Henry Thackeray's *The Relation of St. Paul to Contemporary Jewish Thought*.[99] Thackeray credits Cohn in his introduction for the reintroduction of LAB into the realm of scholarly inquiry. Thackeray's intent in *The Relation of St. Paul*, however, was the antithesis to what scholars such as J. Z. Smith have advocated for, namely, emphasising *differences*. In 1900, Thackery emphasised that, 'It is not . . . the points of difference from, but the points of contact with, contemporary Judaism with which we have to deal . . . to seek the germ and starting-point of some of the distinctive doctrines of his theology in the milieu of early Jewish thought'.[100] Thus the handful of small comparitive observations he makes concerning LAB highlight similar ideas that he finds in Paul.[101] The history of comparison of Paul and Pseudo-Philo is mostly void after Thackeray, as even Sanders overlooks LAB in *Paul and Palestinian Judaism* (1977). Frederick Murphy mentions Romans 6 in a footnote in his literary commentary on LAB (1993),[102] but Howard Jacobson does not mention Romans at all in his massive *Commentary* (1996). Bruce Fisk suggests the possibility of comparing Romans with LAB in the conclusion of his study of Pseudo-Philo's intertextual hermeneutics,[103] but does not pursue the matter further, outside of an essay on Paul's narrative practices, in which LAB is included amongst a list of other Jewish examples of 'rewritten Bible'.[104] The only sustained

[98] See footnote 65 above regarding the dating of LAB.
[99] Thackeray, *St. Paul*.
[100] Thackeray, *St. Paul*, 2.
[101] See Thackeray, *St. Paul*, 243-44.
[102] Murphy, *Pseudo-Philo*, 255.
[103] See Fisk, *Pseudo-Philo*, 328–29.
[104] Fisk, 'Storytellers'.

consideration of Pseudo-Philo and Romans since Thackeray is John Barclay's essay comparing Paul's mercy language in Romans 9–11 with Philo, Josepus, and LAB.[105] Barclay expands that earlier analysis five years later in *Paul and Gift*, which considers the entirety of both LAB and Romans, along with Galatians and other Second Temple texts.[106] Since Barclay's study there have been no substantial comparisons of both texts. The present study intends to contribute to previous efforts in the interpretation of both LAB and Romans, whilst raising the question of comparisons between Paul and Early Jewish literature.

[105] John M. G. Barclay, '"I will have mercy on whom I have mercy": The Golden Calf and Divine Mercy in Romans 9–11 and Second Temple Judaism', *EC* 1 (2010): 82-106.

[106] Barclay, *Paul and the Gift*.

PART 1: PSEUDO-PHILO

2. The Word of God in LAB

2.1 Introduction

The first two chapters of this thesis aim to present as robust a picture of Pseudo-Philo's theology as possible within the space constraints of a thesis. The focus of this present chapter is divine speech in LAB, for here we see the God of Pseudo-Philo most visibly.[1] Amongst early Jewish writings, LAB is remarkable for its numerous additions of speech, both human and divine. The entire narrative is built upon speeches and is best understood as an extended dialogue between God and his people. In the seminal article published a hundred years ago that introduced LAB to scholars for the first time since the Reformation,[2] Leonard Cohn wrote of Pseudo-Philo's 'great love for altering and enlarging the speeches given in the Bible, and even for composing new speeches'.[3] A century later, Frederick Murphy also noted that 'one of Pseudo-Philo's most characteristic alterations to the biblical stories is the addition of direct address in the form of speeches, prayers, and dialogue'.[4] As is typical of Pseudo-Philo, many details of the biblical accounts are omitted, whilst large sections of novel dialogue and soliloquy are added.[5] These fresh additions to the narrative, these new words from God and his people, articulate the theology of Pseudo-Philo. God's words in particular should receive much attention in any examination of this text.[6] Concerning the significance of divine speech, Murphy writes that 'God is really the principal character, and the narrative makes liberal use

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[1] Throughout this thesis, I refer to the author of *Liber Antiquitatum Biblicarum* as 'Pseudo-Philo' and the written work as 'LAB'. Translations from the Latin are typically from Daniel J. Harrington, 'Pseudo-Philo: A New Translation and Introduction', in *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha and the New Testament: Expansions of the 'Old Testament' and Legends, Wisdom, and Philosophical Literature, Prayers, Psalms and Odes, Fragments of Lost Judeo-Hellenistic Works*, ed. James H. Charlesworth (London: Yale University Press, 1985), 297-378, unless noted otherwise. Other translations include Daniel J. Harrington, *Pseudo-Philon: Les antiquités bibliques I*, trans. Jacques Cazeaux, Sources Chrétiennes, vol. 229 (Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 1976) (hereafter SC229); Howard Jacobson, *A Commentary on Pseudo-Philo's Liber Antiquitatum Biblicarum: With Latin Text and English Translation* (Leiden: Brill, 1996); Christian Dietzfelbinger, 'Pseudo-Philo: Antiquitates Biblicae (Liber Antiquitatum Biblicarum)', in *Unterweisung in erzählender Form* (Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 1999).

[2] See the history of manuscript transmission in Guido Kisch, *Pseudo-Philo's* Liber Antiquitatum Biblicarum (Notre Dame: The University of Notre Dame, 1949), 22-92.

[3] Leopold Cohn, 'An Apocryphal Work Ascribed to Philo of Alexandria', *JQR* 10 (1898): 279-80.

[4] Frederick J. Murphy, *Pseudo-Philo: Rewriting the Bible* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 235.

[5] See Cohn, 'An Apocryphal Work', 279. Both omissions and additions are important to note in LAB. However, I am convinced that the study of his additions yield more fruitful results, especially since most of these are in the form of speeches, and any conclusions reached in the study of omissions risk the charge of being arguments from silence. As interesting as the omissions are, the reasons for their exclusion are far more speculative, especially given the fact that Pseudo-Philo expected his audience to have a general familiarity with, if not a keen knowledge of, the details of the biblical narrative. See further Murphy, *Pseudo-Philo*, 20-22; George W. E. Nickelsburg, 'Good and Bad Leaders in Pseudo-Philo's Liber Antiquitatum Biblicarum', in *Ideal Figures in Ancient Judaism: Profiles and Paradigms*, ed. George W. E. Nickelsburg and John J. Collins, SBLSCS 12 (Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1980), 49-50.

[6] Indeed, Pseudo-Philo elevates God's role far above his portrayal in the canonical record; see especially Frederick J. Murphy, 'God in Pseudo-Philo', *JSJ* 19 (1986): 1-18.

of God's words. The reader frequently hears God speak and even hears God's thoughts'.[7] God's words are mostly new compared to the corresponding episodes in Scripture, and they include elaborations and reiterations; transplants and recontextualisations; echoes and even, sometimes, lies. Taken together, the divine speeches in LAB present God as Pseudo-Philo understands him and thereby provide the rationale for the complex history of Israel. One example we analyse below is Joshua's covenant with the people just prior to his death (LAB 23). The words he speaks to the gathered people of Israel are credited by Pseudo-Philo to God, and in them he reveals to Israel the depth of his engagement for and with his people in terms of covenant, sovereignty, and faithfulness. This is typical of God's speeches in LAB.

Additionally, human speeches in the narrative present a helpful outlook on the landscape of Pseudo-Philo's theology. Murphy notes the importance of speeches from preeminent characters in Israel's history, namely, the leaders of God's people:

> Words of characters other than God also figure largely and can be reliable. Moses, Joshua, Cenaz, and Deborah make speeches, pray, and converse with the people, and it is through seeing and hearing them that the readers understand the meaning of history and gain the proper attitudes toward life.[8]

Moses and Phinehas are two examples we will examine below. In the midst of crises, both leaders express definitive claims about the character and purpose of God in terms of the words he spoke beforehand. Notably, Murphy also mentions 'proper attitudes' in the citation above, marking a central concern of the author to express the nature of God's speech as a word that demands a response. As will become apparent in our study below, the human response of faith is the necessary complement to divine speech, and will be the topic of the next chapter.

My argument in this first chapter is that divine speech in LAB can be understood through two simple propositions:

1. God's word is the source of Israel's hope.

2. God's word is the instrument of Israel's judgement.

The relationship between what God says to his people and what actually happens to them is so intimate, that any statement *by* God in LAB is at the same time a claim *about* God; the God of Israel is revealed in his speech, both to Israel and to himself, inasmuch as what he says comes to pass. Likewise, human characters in LAB reveal essential aspects of God's

[7] Murphy, *Pseudo-Philo*, 21.
[8] Murphy, *Pseudo-Philo*, 21.

character, positively in their pleas for mercy, and negatively in their presumptions of blessing, as will be seen especially in our study of the Judges period of Pseudo-Philo's narrative.

At this point, however, we enter a nuanced debate on the central focus on LAB. On the one hand, most scholars emphasise the centrality of the *covenant* in LAB.[9] Cohn observes,

> In all the speeches the same idea recurs again and again: God has chosen the people of Israel and has made his covenant with them for ever; if the children of Israel depart from God's ways and forget his covenant, he delivers them for a time into the hands of their enemies; but God is ever mindful of his covenant with the patriarchs; he always delivers the Israelites through leaders of his choice, and he will never entirely abandon them.[10]

Likewise for Murphy, 'God's covenant with Israel is one of the central symbols of the *Biblical Antiquities*'.[11] Harrington concurs that 'the basis of Pseudo-Philo's view on God and humanity is the biblical notion of covenant'.[12] On the other hand, Jacobson proposes that the thematic centre of LAB is God's *central role* in history, i.e., as the sovereign deity in absolute control of everything; God's eternal fidelity to the covenant is a corollary, albeit significant, motif.[13] Whilst acknowledging that the covenant is important to Pseudo-Philo, and that God's sovereignty is essential to the theology of LAB, I wish to direct the emphasis in this chapter to the fact that divine speech in LAB comprehensively reveals God not simply *qua* God, that is, in terms which can be understood by human readers, but rather, divine speech reveals God as he is in relation to his people *for the purpose of instilling hope and encouraging obedience*. This is somewhat of a fine nuance, but in the literature on LAB to date it is a nuance that is lacking. For example, Murphy offers a substantial discussion of God as the central character and theme in LAB, where 'Nothing happens that is not foreknown and controlled by God',[14] and 'God is revealed by the divine words and actions'.[15] But this emphasis on divine initiative and fidelity is not explicitly connected to the experience of God's people in the present, that is, the audience of LAB.[16] Jacobson is clear that the purpose

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[9] See Charles Perrot and Pierre-Maurice Bogaert, *Pseudo-Philon: Les antiquités bibliques II*, Sources Chrétiennes, vol. 230 (Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 1976), 43-47 (hereafter SC230); Murphy, *Pseudo-Philo*, 244-46; Frederick J. Murphy, 'The Eternal Covenant in Pseudo-Philo', *JSP* 2 (1988): 43-57; John M. G. Barclay, *Paul and the Gift* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2015), 268-72.

[10] Cohn, 'An Apocryphal Work', 322.

[11] Murphy, *Pseudo-Philo*, 244. See also Murphy, 'God', 12: 'God's absolute faithfulness to his promises to the fathers is his primary motivation in Pseudo-Philo'.

[12] Harrington, 'Pseudo-Philo', 301.

[13] Jacobson, *Commentary*, 242.

[14] Murphy, *Pseudo-Philo*, 226.

[15] Murphy, *Pseudo-Philo*, 223.

[16] Jacobson, *Commentary*, 242 also points out this discrepancy in the work of Murphy, that despite a focus on God's central role, 'it misses the essential point of LAB's focus on God's role'. Although see Murphy, 'God' where he places greater emphasis on divine agency in the narrative.

of Pseudo-Philo's narrative was to assure the Jews of his day 'that in the face of their current despair and disaster, there was reason for hope and room for optimism'.[17] But he is less explicit about the *source* of that hope, writing in more general terms of God's role in history as an actor, not a speaker.[18] In essence, I am seeking to combine the best insights of Murphy and Jacobson in this chapter by coupling divine speech and divine action as concurrent elements in Pseudo-Philo's theology, whilst yet prioritising God's word as the locus of Israel's hope and obedience.

In what follows, I analyse a number of episodes in LAB where God speaks, or his words are spoken of, usually in terms not found in the Bible. Each of these rewritten accounts diverges in surprising ways from their biblical source, for reasons we will examine. I have broken up this analysis into two main sections. In the first, we analyse the golden calf incident and its aftermath at Mount Sinai (LAB 12; Exod 32–34) and Joshua's covenant with the people before his death (LAB 23; Josh 24). In the second, we look at Micah's idolatry, Beel's call to action, and Phinehas' plea in the period of the Judges (LAB 44–47; Judg 19–20). In the first section of this chapter, I argue that God's word is the source of Israel's hope, through a study of the golden calf narrative in LAB. The golden calf incident is important because it involves the most serious crisis of Israel's existence since leaving Egypt. Israel's greatest prophet, Moses, intercedes on behalf of Israel with a desperate plea to God based upon the words he has spoken and the things he has done. God's word is shown to have a self-revealing character demonstrated in the relationship between divine speech and divine action, both anticipated and realised, on behalf of Israel. Joshua's covenant with the people is remarkable for including a novel speech by God in which the foundational narrative of Israel's existence, the covenant with Abraham, is reiterated dramatically. God explains his direct involvement in establishing his people through choosing Abraham and striking a covenant with him. Significantly, God points to the presence of unique 'witnesses' to the event, which, we will see, heighten God's obligation to fulfil his words of promise. Through this account, God underscores his complete dependability, and effectively ensures the fulfilment of his promises. In the second section of this chapter, I argue that God's word in LAB is the instrument of Israel's judgment. This is demonstrated through an examination of the extended narrative of the people's idolatry in Judges. The tragic downfall of the people, catalysed by the false priesthood of Micah, contains a menagerie of speeches both human and divine. In the interplay between what God and his people say to each other and to themselves, a major problem is identified: the words of God are often at variance with those of his people.

[17] Jacobson, *Commentary*, 242.
[18] See Jacobson, *Commentary*, 241-45.

In other words, the things God's people say about him are not aligned with what he has revealed about himself in his own words. Thus God's correctives and rebukes (and lies) become the apparatus by which he punishes his people for their idolatry and ignorance. The case studies presented in the two main sections of this present chapter should offer us a robust view of God's character through a number of key speeches in LAB, in which God's word functions both as a locus of hope, and an instrument of judgement.

2.2 God's Word is the Source of Israel's Hope (LAB 12, 23)

In this first section we examine two episodes in LAB that encapsulate Pseudo-Philo's understanding of God as the source of Israel's hope. Nickelsburg rightly claims that the author 'preaches a message of hope, appealing to God's promises to Abraham and Israel's status—even now—as God's chosen people'.[19] Hope in LAB is especially defined in relation to divine speeches, both past and present. This is exemplified in two instances from the narrative in particular. These include the golden calf incident (LAB 12) and Joshua's covenant speech (LAB 23). In both accounts, God is defined with a clarity arguably surpassing that of other instances of divine speech in LAB. God interacts with his people, both individuals and the nation, through words of revelation that exhibit him as sovereign and faithful, unswervingly committed to his people for all time.

2.2.1 Moses and the Golden Calf (LAB 12; Exod 32–34)

The golden calf incident is a remarkable exposé of the nature of God in terms of hope for a number of reasons. First, Moses is arguably the most important human character in LAB.[20] As elsewhere in the Jewish corpus, Moses is a paradigmatic figure who illustrates the ideal relationship between God and his people.[21] The appeals Moses makes to God throughout the wilderness wanderings, as the spokesman for Israel, predicate marked demonstrations of divine mercy towards God's rebellious people, and thus markers of hope for Pseudo-Philo's readers. Second, the golden calf incident has long been recognised as a critical juncture in the history of God's dealings with his people. Israel's mass capitulation to idolatry, at the very

[19] Nickelsburg, 'Leaders', 63.

[20] The elaboration of Moses' birth and death supports this claim. For example, he is described as being born already circumcised (9.15), and he dies 'in glory' such that the angels in heaven refuse to sing on that day (19.16).

[21] On the person of Moses in early Jewish and Christian thought, see the collection of essays in both Henri Cazelles, Fridolin Stier, and Eleonore Beck, *Moses in Schrift und Überlieferung* (Düsseldorf: Patmos-Verlag, 1963); Christfried Böttrich, Beate Ego, and Friedmann Eissler, *Mose in Judentum, Christentum und Islam* (Göttingen: Vandenhoek & Ruprecht, 2010).

moment when God gives them his eternal Law thereby cementing his relationship with them as promised in the Abrahamic covenant, is both the grossest example of human rebellion and the outstanding demonstration of God's mercy in the OT.[22] This situation of crisis raises the stakes for Israel, so anything God says, or anything said concerning his word, will bear much weight in our understanding of the theology of LAB. Finally, in LAB 12 we see Moses pleading on behalf of Israel for the sake of God's own character and integrity due to what God has previously said regarding his people. Pseudo-Philo's embellishment of Moses' prayer exhibits clearly the relationship between God and his word, and thus Israel, as conceived by the author.

Prior to Moses's desperate plea on Mount Sinai, the people of Israel face difficult circumstances as they leave Egypt for the Promised Land. LAB 10 is the account of Moses' struggle to free the people from Egyptian oppression. This chapter includes a recollection of the various plagues and culminates in the crossing of the Red Sea. In LAB 11, Pseudo-Philo offers a dramatic version of the giving of the Law on Mount Sinai, where cosmological wonders abound, including earthquakes and angels. By the time the reader reaches LAB 12, the people of Israel have encountered a myriad of experiences in the wilderness preparing them to acknowledge the authority and providence of God (cf. 10.1, 5-7; 11.4-5, 14, 15; 12.1). But as in the Bible, the people go astray when leadership is absent. After Moses ascends the mountain, 'the heart of the people was corrupted' (12.2; cf. Exod 32.1). They persuade Aaron to build them a golden calf to worship, despite his attempts (in LAB) to dissuade them.

At this point, Pseudo-Philo adds an explanatory note concerning divine speech. The reason why the people did not listen to Aaron was 'so that the word spoken in the time when the people sinned by building the tower [of Babel] might be fulfilled,[23] when God said, "And now unless I stop them, everything that they will propose to do they will dare, and even worse"' (12.3). The people's wickedness is thus in fulfilment of God's word. Much of what God says in this passage is taken verbatim from Genesis 11.6, the Tower of Babel episode, except for the final adverb, *deterius* ('and even worse').[24] Pseudo-Philo extracts this language and transforms it into a prophecy *ex post facto* of the most serious and foundational act of

[22] On the significance of the golden calf incident to the Pentateuch as a whole, see John H. Sailhamer, *The Pentateuch as Narrative: A Biblical-Theological Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992), 310-12; John H. Sailhamer, *The Meaning of the Pentateuch: Revelation, Composition, and Interpretation* (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2009).

[23] *ut compleretur verbum quod dictum est in tempore quo peccavit populus edificans turrim*.

[24] Harrington, 'Pseudo-Philo', 320, turns the adverb into an adjective, obscuring the sense. Cazeaux's translation in SC229, 127 is better: 'ils iront toujours plus avant dans le mal pour accomplir n'importe quel dessien'.

rebellion in Israel's history, their gross idolatry with a golden calf simultaneous with God's gift of the illuminating 'Law of his eternal covenant' (cf. 11.5).[25] At the very moment God provides the terms of a viable and perpetual relationship between himself and his chosen people, they corporately choose to worship an idol. Although the language of Genesis 11:6 is universally applicable to human effort apart from God, Pseudo-Philo connects this passage directly to the golden calf episode, and thus grants it particular application to God's people. Israel's disobedience is not only foreseen by God; their idolatry fulfills God's prediction and thereby proves him faithful.[26]

2.2.1.a Blessing and Judgement Promised

As in Exodus, the Lord tells Moses to hurry down from the mountain because of the rebellious idolatry of the people. God asks Moses, 'Are the promises that I promised to your fathers, . . . "To your seed I will give the land" . . . at an end?' (12.4; cf. Gen 12.7). This is the only explicit reference to the Abrahamic covenant in this chapter.[27] In reaction to God's question, Moses runs down the mountain and sees the calf, shatters the now-textless stone tablets on the ground, and falls to the ground in terrible pain. He regains composure by reminding himself of the efficacy of God's words: 'Will bitterness win the day always, or will evil prevail forever? And now I will rise up and gird my loins, because even if they have sinned, what was declared to me above will not be in vain' (12.6).[28] Moses confronts despair over the fate of sinful Israel through confidence in the divine word spoken to him on the mountain.[29]

Moses' words are followed by a divine speech added by Pseudo-Philo. God first tells Moses, as in the Bible, 'Hurry away from here, because the people have been corrupted and have turned aside from my ways that I commanded them' (cf. Exod 32.7). But then he continues (12.4):

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[25] Murphy, *Pseudo-Philo*, 70: 'The iniquity of fashioning the golden calf surpasses that of the tower'.

[26] For statements in Scripture concerning the agency of God's word, see for example Gen 1.1–2.3; Pss 33.4-9; 104.30; 147.18; 148.5-6; Isa 40.7-8; 55.10-11.

[27] Although, as we will see later, there are possible allusions to the covenant in Moses' prayer of intercession.

[28] *quoniam si peccaverunt non in vano erunt que sursum enarrata sunt mihi*. In light of the context, we should understand the *que sursum enarrata* as a reference to the words spoken to Moses by God when he was on the mountain immediately beforehand, specifically the Law and promises concerning the glorious future of Israel (11.1-15; cf. Exod 32.15-20).

[29] The biblical narrative is replete with promises of blessing and remembrance from God to Israel: 'If you obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my treasured possession out of all the peoples. Indeed, the whole earth is mine, but you shall be for me a priestly kingdom and an holy nation' (Exod 19.4-6; cf. 20.6; 20.24; 22.31; 23.20; 23.25; 25.8; 29.45-46; 31.17).

> *Ecce enim necdum ingressus est in terram, et iam portans iudicium, et reliquerunt me, et ideo scio quia, si ingressi fuerint in terram ipsam, maiores iniquitates operabuntur. Et nunc quoque relinquam eos, et conversus iterum concordabor eis ut edificetur mihi domus in eis, que et ipsa iterum deponetur propter quod peccaturi sunt in me. Et erit mihi hominum genus tampquam stillicidium urcei, et tamquam sputum estimabitur.*
>
> For behold the people have not even entered the land yet and now even have the Law with them, and they have forsaken me. And indeed I know that if they had entered that land, even greater iniquities would have been done. And now I too will forsake them, and I will turn again and make peace with them so that a house may be built among them, a house that will be destroyed because they will sin against me. And the race of men will be to me like a drop from a pitcher and will be reckoned like spittle.

God condemns the people's disobedience, promises both to forsake and then to redeem them, and comments on the transient nature of humankind as a whole. The first part of the speech notes the irony that the people rebel at the very moment of the giving of the Law, even prior to their entrance into the land. God remarks that the people's sin would have been multiplied upon entering.[30] The irony is that these words become truth once the people do enter the land; God spares the people and allows them to enter, but in the end they confirm his prediction of 'greater iniquities' (see below, 1.2.2). The second part of the speech initially affirms God's move to reject his people before reversing course; he will 'forsake', and then 'turn again' (12.4). God threatens to cut the people off, but also promises to restore them.[31] God's overall purpose in this speech to Moses is to state his sovereign control over the fate of his people. He speaks in terms of both blessing and judgement, a cyclical series of events that includes forsaking, making peace, building, destruction. Yet all of these predictions are expressed subsequent to God's rhetorical question, 'Are the promises at an end?' The reader of this narrative would be compelled to answer, 'No!' They remain, even as God's people navigate the rolling swells of obedience and rebellion.[32] Their anchor, God's word of promise, holds fast.

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[30] Following both Jacobson, *Commentary*, 487-88 and Dietzfelbinger, 'Pseudo-Philo', 134, *contra* Harrington (see citation above). Barclay, *Paul and the Gift*, 274n20, notes that 'There seems to be an assumption that temptations to idolatry will be far greater once Israel is settled in the land', and this is exactly what happens, as demonstrated below.

[31] Perhaps to stress to his readers the dependability of God's word, even in misfortune and judgement, Pseudo-Philo alludes to the much later historical tragedy of the destruction of the Temple. On Moses' numerous reference to the Temple in his prayer, see Jacobson, *Commentary*, 500.

[32] Note especially Barclay, *Paul and the Gift*, 272: 'God's faithfulness to his word, the utter impossibility that God, who knows the future, would predict something that does not come true (cf. 18.4; 50.4), and the dismissal of the impious thought that God's "toil" should come to nothing, are all factors in our author's confidence that *despite Israel's disobedience* God will fulfil his covenant promises' (italics original).

2.2.1.b Israel's Planting

Pseudo-Philo elaborates on key moments in Exodus 32.11-13,[33] leading up to Moses' desperate plea for mercy in LAB 12.8-9. Herein is expressed Pseudo-Philo's understanding of the nature of Israel, their purpose and destiny; the nature of God, his being, his will, his glory and his power; the nature of the world, and how it figures into cosmology; and the nature of God's word, its power and permanence. These few verses, though a small section within LAB, constitute a focal point at which essential motifs of the narrative are expressed plainly. As a result, the modification of Moses' prayer by Pseudo-Philo constitutes one of the finest instances of theological expression in the entire narrative. Intertwined here are the various motifs of confession, repentance, idolatry, sin, rejection, covenant, promise, comfort, glory, and mercy. The elaborated elements in Pseudo-Philo's version of Moses' prayer include the irreplaceability of Israel and the efficacy of God's word (LAB 12.8-9):

> *Ecce nunc tu Deus, qui plantasti vineam hanc et dedisti radices eius in abyssum et sarmenta eius extendisiti usque ad sedem tuam altissimam, respice in isto tempore, quia vinea ista emisit fructum suum et non cognovit cultorem suum. Et modo, si irasceris in vineam tuam et eradices eam de abysso et arefacias sarmenta eius de sede tua altissima et eterna, non ultra iam veniet abyssus ut nutriat eam nec thronus tuus ut refrigeret vineam tuam illam quam incendisti. Tu es enim qui omne lumen es, et domum tuam ornasti lapidibus preciosis et auro; et aromatibus etiam spicis et lignis balsami et cinnamo et radicibus mirre et costi inspersisti domum tuam; et diversis escis et suavitate diversi potus saturasti eam. Si ergo non misertus fueris vinee tue, omnia Domine in vano facta sunt, et non habebis qui te glorificet. Nam etsi aliam vineam plantaveris, nec hec tibi credet, eo quod priorem dissipasti. Si enim relinquens reliqueris seculum, et quis faciet tibi quod locutus es tamquam Deus? Et nunc contineatur furor tuus a vinea; magis quod a te predictum est et quod dicendum est fiat, et non fiat in vanum labor tuus, nec in vilibus distrahatur hereditas tua.*
>
> Look, now, O God! You who planted this vine, consigned its roots in the abyss and spread out its branches even to your most high throne, have regard [for it] at this time, because that vine has dropped its fruit and has not considered the one who labours over it. Only now, if you are angry at your vine and you root it out of the abyss and you break down its shoots from your most high and eternal throne, no longer will the abyss come in order to nourish it nor your throne to cool that vine of yours which you incinerated. You are indeed the one who is all light, and you have adorned your abode with precious stones

[33] See John M. G. Barclay, '"I will have mercy on whom I have mercy": The Golden Calf and Divine Mercy in Romans 9–11 and Second Temple Judaism', *EC* 1 (2010): 93: 'Elements from Exod 32:11-14 echoed here are: that God has made promises he must keep; that God has laboured over Israel already; and that God's honour is at stake'. As Barclay notes, God recites from the covenant promises to Abraham just previously (12.4, *Semini vestro dabo terram hanc in qua habitatis*). This citation conflates not just Genesis 12.7 and 17.8, but also Exodus 32.13 and 33.1, passages that explicitly reference the Abrahamic covenant; see also Jacobson, *Commentary*, 488.

> and gold; and with sweet odours as well as spices and balsam wood and cinnamon and myrrh roots and aromatic plants you have sprinkled your abode; and you have sated it with diverse meats and various sweet wines. Consequently, if you fail to show mercy to your vine, everything, Lord, will have been done in vain, and you will have no one to glorify you. Because even if you plant another vine, they will not trust you since you destroyed the first one. If indeed you utterly abandon the world, who will do anything for you, even though you are God? So now, quench your wrath against your vine! Instead, bring about what you predicted and said beforehand, and do not let your labor be in vain, nor your inheritance be pulled apart as something worthless.

The opening appeal by Moses is directed to the central idea that God created Israel for a unique purpose with cosmological implications. Moses is not simply cautioning that the covenant will come to naught, thereby spelling disaster and dissolution for the people; rather, the possibility that the covenant might be revoked is a direct affront to God's own character and person.

The opening address of the prayer concerns the agency of God in the creation of Israel. God himself planted and established Israel. His people are corporately identified as a 'vine', a common metaphor for Israel throughout the scriptures meant to portray the intimate relationship between God and his people.[34] This imagery can at times be positive, portraying a sense of settled peace.[35] But most often the vine imagery is used in contexts of judgement where God is pictured as a landowner who labours intensely to prepare, nurture, and benefit from a vineyard which is ultimately unproductive and useless.[36]

One example with which to compare Moses' speech in LAB 12 is Psalm 80, as has been noted elsewhere.[37] The psalmist describes God's actions on behalf of his vine, Israel, bringing it out of Egypt and driving other nations from Canaan. This vine is prosperous, covering the mountains, sending its branches to the sea and extending its shoots to the Jordan river. The psalmist then asks God why he has destroyed its defenses allowing it to be ravished, before petitioning him to turn and again 'take regard for' his vine. Moses speaks in similar terms in his prayer in LAB, but whereas the psalmist makes his plea based upon the destructive actions of both God and Israel's enemies, Moses in LAB places all responsibility for Israel's troubles on God. Notably, he begs God not to do the things that the psalmist's enemies had already done. Whilst the people deserve judgement to the point of dissolution,

[34] See John Pairman Brown, 'The Mediterranean Vocabulary of the Vine', *VT* 19 (1969): 146-70; Walter Brueggemann, '"Vine and Fig Tree": A Case Study in Imagination and Criticism', *CBQ* 43 (1981): 188-204; Carey Ellen Walsh, *The Fruit of the Vine: Viticulture in Ancient Israel* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2000).

[35] Ezek 19.10; Job 24.6; Song 1.14; 2.15; Isa 3.14; 5.1-7; Jer 12.10 et al.

[36] For example, Isa 16.8-9; 32.9-13; Jer 5.14-17; 8.13; Hos 2.12; Nah 2.2; Hag 2.19.

[37] Jacobson, *Commentary*, 496.

Moses appeals to God's mercy as the link between the promises of God and the future flourishing of his people, and thus the maintenance of God's character.

Additionally, the vine metaphor is embellished in LAB beyond the psalm. The psalmist as well as the prophets speak in elevated terms of Israel through the vine imagery. Psalm 80 speaks of the shade that the vine casts upon the high mountains and tall cedars, whilst the prophets speaks of the best vines planted in ideal locations. Israel is presented therein as superior and special. Pseudo-Philo, however, elevates the vine metaphor, beyond uniqueness to *instrumentality*. The vine is bigger, rising above the mountains to God's heavenly, eternal throne (*sede tua altissima et eterna*), reaching further than the sea and river to the abyss.[38] The consequence of destroying this vine is cosmological disruption. The whole of creation, from the deep abyss that exists to nourish this vine, to God's heavenly throne that serves to cool it, is contingent upon the existence of Israel. Moses' subsequent plea follows this logic: if Israel is destroyed in contradiction to God's promises, no reason remains for anyone to acknowledge God *qua* God, even if he were to create another vine to serve him.

Another example closer to the language of LAB 12 than Psalm 80, is from Ezekiel 31.3-12.[39] The context of the Ezekiel passage is a decree of judgement against Pharaoh. The Lord compares Pharaoh's greatness with that of Assyria, a nation analogised as a mighty tree. Note the key points of correspondence:

[38] The 'abyss' (*abyssus*) is referenced to throughout LAB (3.5; 9.3; 11.5; 12.8; 15.5; 22.3; 23.10; 32.8, 17; 39.5). The term is often synonymous with the 'sea' in the Bible (Job 28.14; Pss 35.7; 42.7; 103.6; Ezek 31.4; Sir 16.18). See further Murphy, *Pseudo-Philo*, 66n42.

[39] SC230, 115, lists this passage along with others containing viticultural language, but there is no further treatment in the commentary.

Ezekiel 31.3-13	LAB 12.8
3 Consider Assyria, a cedar of Lebanon, with fair branches and forest shade, and of great height, its top among the clouds.	Behold now, you O God, who have planted this vine
4 The waters nourished it, the deep made it grow tall, making its rivers flow around the place it was planted, sending forth its streams to all the trees of the field.	and set its roots into the abyss
5 So it towered high above all the trees of the field; its boughs grew large and its branches long, from abundant water in its shoots.	and stretched out its shoots to your most high seat, look upon it in this time,
6 All the birds of the air made their nests in its boughs; under its branches all the animals of the field gave birth to their young; and in its shade all great nations lived.	
7 It was beautiful in its greatness, in the length of its branches; for its roots went down to abundant water.	
8 The cedars in the garden of God could not rival it, nor the fir trees equal its boughs; the plane trees were as nothing compared with its branches; no tree in the garden of God was like it in beauty.	
9 I made it beautiful with its mass of branches, the envy of all the trees of Eden that were in the garden of God.	
10 Therefore thus says the Lord GOD: Because it towered high and set its top among the clouds, and its heart was proud of its height,	because that vine has lost its fruit and has not recognized its cultivator.
11 I gave it into the hand of the prince of the nations; he has dealt with it as its wickedness deserves. I have cast it out.	And now, if you are angry at your vine
12 Foreigners from the most terrible of the nations have cut it down and left it. On the mountains and in all the valleys its branches have fallen, and its boughs lie broken in all the watercourses of the land; and all the peoples of the earth went away from its shade and left it.	and you uproot it from the abyss and dry up its shoots from your most high and eternal seat,
13 On its fallen trunk settle all the birds of the air, and among its boughs lodge all the wild animals.	the abyss will come no more to nourish it, nor will your throne come to cool that vine of yours that you have burned up.

Note the subtle transfer executed by Pseudo-Philo: Assyria in Ezekiel becomes Israel in LAB. The language of Ezekiel, though reflected in LAB, no longer merely describes a tree that grows taller than its neighbours and is nourished by the 'deep' (*abyssus*). The change of scale is rather remarkable: the mighty cedar of Ezekiel is replaced, paradoxically, by a vine whose branches reach into heaven and whose roots extend to the depths. Whilst on the one hand, this conveys that God's people are vastly superior to Assyria, historically one of Israel's most hated enemies,[40] on the other hand, this deeply implicates Israel for her sin. If Pseudo-Philo has drawn upon Ezekiel to compose Moses' prayer in Exodus, his swapping of Israel with Assyria directly incriminates God's people for their rank idolatry. Behind the positive image of Israel as God's chosen cosmos-supporting vine, whose greatness exceeds that of the Assyrian empire, is a dark picture of idolatry.

[40] Assyria is spoken of in Scripture both as an object of and instrument for judgement, and as a paradigm of self-destructive pride. Note in particular the sentiments of the prophets: Isa 10.5; Jer 50.17-18; Ezek 32.22; Hos 11.5; Zech 10.11 et al.

God cannot, however, abandon Israel, because her worth is derived from God himself. Herein lies Israel's hope. Moses speaks of God's dwelling place in illustrious terms, whose beauty is summed up in the fact that he himself is 'all light' (12.9).[41] This explains why, in Pseudo-Philo's logic, if Israel is destroyed then all God's work of creation will have been 'in vain' (12.9).[42] Moses praises God for the splendor of his house, he who is 'all light'. But if Israel is rejected, God's splendour will shine to no purpose. As Barclay observes, 'The climactic appeal is thus to the axiom that what God has said, and will say, must be fulfilled: his promises, like his labour, simply cannot come to nothing'.[43] The character of God is wrapped up with the certainty of his speech. This is the point of the following three conditional sentences: 'if you fail to show mercy . . . if you plant another vine . . . if indeed you utterly abandon the world' (12.9). The first posits that if God is merciless toward Israel then two tragedies will result: everything God has done ultimately will be worthless, and he will have no one to glorify him. This second point is reiterated in the subsequent conditional sentence: if God were to replace Israel by planting another vine (i.e., by choosing a different nation or starting again with Moses, cf. Exod 32.10), that new 'vine' will have no reason to trust him: Israel was destroyed in the face of God's promises. Whereas here the theme is trust in God, the third conditional clause completes the argument by stressing divine authority. If God forsakes the world,[44] then nobody will have any reason to submit to his authority. God's

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[41] *Tu es enim qui omne lumen es*. The theme of 'light' pervades the narrative of LAB, normally in reference to the Law (alternatively, divine revelation often comes to characters 'at night'). God, as the ultimate source of the Law, is the one who gives it its illuminating qualities. See further Murphy, *Pseudo-Philo*, 193.

[42] The phrase 'in vain' is found throughout LAB in contexts concerning the certainty of God's word coming to fulfillment. God condemns the people to wander in the wilderness after the spies' unfavourable report (15.5): 'Behold now the plan of action that has issued (*cogitatio que exivit*) from me will not be in vain (*in vano*)'; Balaam reiterates the vine metaphor to Balak to concede Israel's invincibility (18.11): 'if anyone says to himself that the Most Powerful has laboured in vain (*in vanum laboravit*) or has chosen (*elegit*) them to no purpose, behold now I see the salvation and liberation that will come upon them'; God restates the covenant through Joshua prior to his death, once again utilising the vine metaphor (23.13): 'I will restore you to your fathers and your fathers to you, and they will know through you that I have not chosen you in vain (*non in vanum elegi vos*)'; Cenaz laments the transgression of Israel along with Phinehas and the elders, wherein the vine and flock metaphors are used together (28.5): 'Will the Shepherd destroy his flock for any reason (*in vano*) except that it has sinned against him? And now he is the one who will spare us according to the abundance of his mercy, because he has toiled so much (*ipse plus laboravit*) among us'; Eli rebukes his rebellious sons, who are tarnishing the priesthood established by God's decree (52.2; cf. 17.1): 'Did the staff of Aaron spring up in vain (*in vanum*) or has the flower born of it come down to nothing (*in nihilum*)?' These examples demonstrate the relationship between God's declarations and their irrevocability of purpose, all for the benefit of his 'vine', Israel; his words are never spoken in vain. For extensive references and discussion, see Eckart Reinmuth, '"Nicht vergeblich" bei Paulus und Pseudo-Philo, Liber Antiquitatum Biblicarum', *NovT* 33 (1991): 108-21; see also the concordance entry in Murphy, *Pseudo-Philo*, 308.

[43] Barclay, 'Golden Calf', 94.

[44] The syntax at this point is informative on a few levels. First, Moses changes the referent of God's judgement from *vinee tue* to *seculum*. This can have two meanings. On the one hand, it could reflect the 'universalising' tendency in LAB, evident elsewhere in the narrative; on this point, see SC230, 216, and Murphy, *Pseudo-Philo*, 256. On the other hand, because the world hangs on Israel's existence, her demise would bring the rest of humanity down with her. These two options are not mutually exclusive. Second, the Latin has retained from the original Hebrew the prepositive intensive cognate infinitive absolute construction (hereafter PICIA), *relinquens reliqueris*. This syntactical feature is unusual Latin at any stage of its development except in

word, as an anchor of hope, will slip its moorings if the promises to Israel are revoked.

2.2.1.c Divine Wrath

The conclusion to Moses' prayer involves a plea for mercy rooted in the necessity of God's fidelity to the things he has said (12.9). The structure of the plea is organised into four requests, the first two positive ('let', using the present subjunctive in Latin), the final two negative ('do not let', *non . . . nec*). Moses begins with an imperative directed at God, that he withhold his anger against his rebellious people. The language is similar to Moses' first prayer in Exodus 32.12: 'Turn from your fierce wrath; change your mind and do not bring disaster on your people'. The second imperative demands that God be faithful to the words he spoke previously concerning Israel. The structure of the clause indicates a reference to the temporal boundaries of God's word. The adjective *predictum* can variously mean, 'preceding' or 'predicted', but in either case the temporal referent is one of precedence. The second half of the clause employs *dicendum* to indicate in similar terminology God's prior declaration of things yet to happen in the future. These statements provide a clue to Pseudo-Philo's understanding of God through the words of Moses. An even clearer picture emerges as we move to the third clause in the plea. At this point, a chiastic structure becomes apparent when the final clause of the plea is included (12.9):

A *Et nunc contineatur furor tuus a vinea*
B *magis quod a te predictum est et quod dicendum est fiat*
B^1 *et non fiat in vanum labor tuus*
A^1 *nec in vilibus distrahatur hereditas tua.*

A So now, quench your wrath against your vine!
B Instead, bring about what you predicted and said beforehand,
B^1 and do not let your labor be in vain,
A^1 nor let your inheritance be pulled apart as something worthless.

Whereas A and A^1 are parallel statements soliciting mercy for God's idolatrous people, B and B^1 constitute a direct appeal to divine speech. Moses asks God to consider his own character as a manifestation of his words spoken beforehand. The organisation is remarkable in that it summarises the message of the preceding prayer (12.8-9), whilst accentuating the overall

translations from a Hebrew *Vorlage* (i.e., the LXX). The use of a PICIA reflects a decision by Pseudo-Philo to add profound emphasis to Moses' manner of pleading. On this point, see for example Paul Jouon and T. Muraoka, *A Grammar of Biblical Hebrew*, 2nd ed., Subsidia Biblica, vol. 27 (Rome: Editrice Pontificio Intituto Biblico, 2006), §123d–q. No recent translation has adequately retained the sense in the target language, as in the Latin, and undoubtably in the Hebrew original and likely in the Greek, there is conveyed an ardent desperation in Moses' plea which is a fitting precursor to his closing request to God.

plea. Clause A is a firm appeal for God to restrain himself from divine *furor*. The word is normally translated here as 'anger'. Harrington's 'let your anger be restrained from your vine'[45] and Jacobson's 'let your anger be kept from your vine',[46] are softer than the context of the golden calf crisis demands. A better rendering might be 'quench your wrath!' as translated above.[47] The gravity of the situation is evident in God's declarations to Moses upon the revelation of the people's idolatry in Exodus 32.10: 'Now let me alone, so that my wrath may burn hot against them and I may consume them'.[48] The parallel clause in A^1 refers likewise to the people of Israel, but in this case it identifies them as God's inheritance or possession rather than his vine. Whilst Jacobson prefers 'portion' for *hereditas*, Harrington uses 'inheritance'. Jacobson's translation conveys a commercial transaction, 'let not your portion be sold cheaply', contrasting with Harrington's, 'do not let your inheritance be pulled apart in humiliation'.[49] In either case, Moses is stressing in synonymous language the worth of Israel based upon her previously established relationship with God. In the first clause, that relationship is due to God's act of planting (or 'choosing'; cf. LAB 28.4; Isa 5.2; Ps 80.8) Israel, his vine. The fourth clause employs the motif of inheritance to highlight the covenant-based relationship that exists between God and his people, a relationship that imparts worth and significance to Israel because of the value and worth of God himself.[50] Thus the opening and closing of the chiasm express both positive and negative courses of action that Moses pleads for God to either follow or avoid. The centre of the chiasm provides the unassailable rationale for God to do as Moses implores.

The interdependence of God's work (*labor*) with his word (*quod dicendum*) is the focus of the chiasm's centre. The link between B and B^1 is *fiat*, the present subjunctive form of *fio*, to 'be made' or 'be done'. Line B in the chiasm is the antithesis to line A, expressing Moses' plea that God, instead of destroying his vine, act according to his word. The doubling

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[45] Harrington, 'Pseudo-Philo', 321. The French translation in SC229, 131 is less satisfactory: 'que ta colère se calme et s'éloigne de (ta) vigne'.

[46] Jacobson, *Commentary*, 112.

[47] I take the subjunctive *contineatur* as a cohortative. I am grateful to R. M. Hurd for fruitful discussion on the Latin at this point.

[48] Note also the Vulgate's use of *furor* here in Exodus 32.10. Pseudo-Philo does not cite God's words from Exodus 32.10 in his retelling, but as with the rest of LAB, familiarity with the underlying biblical account is presumed.

[49] Jacobson, *Commentary*, 503-504 contradicts the other translators here. He recognises that *nec in vilibus distrahatur hereditas tua* can be reasonably translated according to the context, as in Harrington, 'Pseudo-Philo', 321 ('do not let your inheritance be pulled apart in humiliation'), or in SC229, 131 ('que ton héritage n'aille pas se dispersant dans l'humiliation'). But Jacobson understands the meaning differently: *in vilibus* means 'cheaply', and the verb *distraho* means 'to sell' in late Latin. He supports his translation, 'do not sell your inheritance cheaply', with biblical parallels (Ps 44.13. Isa 52.3). Murphy's is to be preferred simply due to the praxis of ancient viticulture, where vines were typically uprooted in cases of unfruitfulness, rather than sold off (which would be both odd and impractical). See further Walsh, *Viticulture*.

[50] God's worth is expressed by Moses earlier in the prayer whilst discoursing upon the beauty of heaven in terms of valuable commodities (12.9, see above 2.2.3).

of synonyms referring to God's prior speech adds emphasis to the plea, although there may be additional information conveyed in the nuanced differences between the lexemes (*predictum*, *dicendum*). An important issue to consider here is the referent of the *quod*; to what exactly is Moses referring? This question arose earlier in our discussion, where Moses was roused from his despair at the revealing of the golden calf by remembering 'what was declared to me above' (12.6). Here at the end of Moses' prayer, the likely referent is *all* of God's words, those he spoke beforehand to the patriarchs and his people as recorded in Torah.[51] LAB 12.6 concludes with an important sentiment replicated here at the end of Moses' prayer. Moses rises from the ground with the words, 'what was declared to me above will not be in vain'. Line B[1] continues this focus on vanity, stating, *et non fiat in vanum labor tuus*. The connection between God's word and his work is an important theme in LAB,[52] and vanity (*vanuum*) is found throughout the narrative in statements about what God is *not*.[53] Just previously in 12.9, Moses contrasts the Lord's mercy with vanity, warning God that if he lacks compassion for his vine, all things will have been done to no purpose, or *in vanum*.[54]

Two other instances support this claim of the connection between God's *labor* and his *verbum*, where the effectiveness of God's word is contrasted with its alternate. The first example involves the father of Moses, Amram, who stands against the order of Pharaoh to kill the newborn Hebrew babies. Amram rejects the counsel of the leaders of Israel, when they decree that the Israelites must refrain from procreating in order to avoid the murderous consequences of Pharaoh's order (LAB 9.1-2; Exod 1.8-22). Amram reminds the elders that 'God will not abide in his anger, nor will he forget his people forever, nor will he cast forth the race of Israel in vain upon the earth; nor did he establish a covenant with our fathers in vain; and even when we did not exist, God spoke about these matters' (LAB 9.4). In this short statement we find theological depth unmatched elsewhere in LAB except perhaps in Moses' prayer in chapter 12. Amram makes a similar appeal to the covenant in the face of God's anger; he stresses the irrevocability of God's promises upon which the existence of Israel was founded. God spoke of Israel when they 'did not yet exist'.[55] Whilst this statement

[51] Pseudo-Philo might be nudging his readers here to consider seriously that God makes good on everything he says, both threats and promises made to his covenant people.

[52] Murphy, *Pseudo-Philo*, 224: 'Divine words, actions, decisions, intentions, motivations, predictions, and reactions unify the work. God is extremely active, reacting in word and deed to practically everything human characters say and do'.

[53] One significant example is Balaam's speech to Balak, in which he states: 'if anyone says to himself that the Most Powerful has labored in vain or has chosen them to no purpose, behold now I see the salvation and liberation that will come upon them' (18.11).

[54] Barclay, 'Golden Calf', suggests that the focus of Moses' prayer is to a divine, active mercy as the source of Israel's hope: 'The means by which God ensures the continuation of Israel's history is his exercise of mercy. As in relation to the Calf, Moses often intercedes with God by appeal to this mercy'.

[55] *et cum adhuc non essemus de his tamen locutus est Deus.*

does not explicitly say that Israel was *created* through divine speech, the implication is that in God's speaking of 'his people', the 'race of Israel', the 'covenant' and the 'fathers' prior to their existence, their creation and propagation in the future was guaranteed; this is the source of their hope. In narrating these additional words in the mouth of Amram, as in the prayer of Moses, Pseudo-Philo constructs an image of divine speech as the conduit of hope for the very people constituted by the promises of God.[56]

2.2.1.d Summary

The preceding analysis of the interaction between God and Moses in LAB 12 suggests an integral relationship between divine speech and Israel's hope. The interrelation between God's words and his actions is communicated by Pseudo-Philo through fresh representations of speeches by God and Moses that bleed with hope as they draw upon the rich theological imagery of the Psalms and the Prophets. The words of God in this narrative portray his character in terminology rich with certitude. As Murphy has observed, 'God's words are never in vain, divine predictions always come true, and God's promises are always fulfilled. This is the rock-solid basis of everything that happens in the *Biblical Antiquities*'.[57] Furthermore, it is the foundation of Israel's hope as presented by Pseudo-Philo. In LAB 12, theological realities are expressed in an emotive prayer for mercy from Israel's greatest prophet in response to God's reiteration of his promises. Drawing upon Moses' biblical prayers in Exodus, the author crafts a new prayer consistent with a theological perspective that forefronts divine speech in a bid for unshakeable confidence in the God of Israel. Even though at the golden calf incident the people commit the gravest sin ever in their history, God remains their steadfast hope because of what he has said concerning them. God will, as Moses pleads, bring about what he has spoken concerning his vine.

2.2.2 Joshua and the Origin of Israel (LAB 23; Josh 24)

The second example that supports the claim that God's word is the source of Israel's hope in LAB is Joshua's covenant with the people of Israel just prior to his death, narrated in LAB 23. This story corresponds to the biblical account in Joshua 24. My argument in this present section is that the hope of Israel is bolstered by God's personal articulation of his choosing of

[56] Note Reinmuth, 'Nicht vergeblich', 114: 'Nur seine Barmherzigkeit aber kann angesichts der Sünde des Volkes die Identität seines Erwählungshandelns wahren und die Existenz Israels sichern'

[57] Murphy, 'Eternal Covenant', 246.

Abraham and making promises to him. Whilst in LAB 12, as we saw above, God appears to be mollified by the pleas of Moses, in LAB 23 God advocates for his own personal and unshakeable commitment to the future of Israel because of his words of promise. Pseudo-Philo's re-narration of the Abrahamic covenant is a keystone moment in LAB that is not replicated elsewhere in the Jewish corpus and thus invites a closer examination.

In LAB 23, Joshua is nearing the end of his life, and thus his leadership of God's people. The Israelites have entered the Promised Land under his command, but they soon will face residual enemies without a leader. Earlier in chapter 21, Joshua prays in a manner reflective of Moses' plea in LAB 12, in which he intercedes on behalf of the people after God warns him that they will fall into idolatry, just as he predicted to Moses beforehand (12.4). Now, at a critical moment in Israel's history since their departure from Egypt, the leadership is in question. Whereas Moses' authority was clearly passed to Joshua, the latter has no divinely named successor. As though in anticipation of this pending crisis situation, Joshua assembles the people in order to establish a covenant with them.[58] In Pseudo-Philo's version, the Lord visits Joshua 'in a dream vision' and tells Joshua what to say the next morning (23.3).[59] Thus Joshua's covenant is actually an extended example of divine speech; this is God's covenant with the people, and indeed, the language of 'covenant' holds the entire speech together.[60] The speech in both the Bible and LAB reviews in brief the history of Israel to this point, from the calling of Abraham from Ur to the establishment of the people in the land of promise. Of particular interest in LAB is the mention of God's covenant made with Abraham, where God commands the patriarch to cut various animals in two, whereupon he walks through them at night (Gen 15.1-21). Pseudo-Philo composes a new divine speech not found elsewhere in other examples of early Jewish literature. Below I discuss the implications of these new words within the context of a divine restating of the Abrahamic covenant in LAB.

The basic outline of the covenant in LAB 23 follows Joshua 24, as a recapitulation of key episodes from Israel's past interactions with God. God's speech retraces Israel's past, and forecasts their eternal future. This follows the general structure of the entire narrative of LAB, identified by Murphy as 'protology and eschatology', that involves 'repeated

[58] This chapter has been identified as one of the most theologically significant in the Hebrew Bible. Indeed, according to Jewish tradition that continues to the present day, Joshua's opening words to the people are recited at the commencement of the Haggadah (Josh 24.2-4). See, for example, Trent C. Butler, *Joshua 13–24*, 2nd ed., WBC 7B (Waco, TX: Word, 2014), 278: 'Joshua 24 completes the book by giving the theological definition of the people of God. Here we suddenly find highly loaded theological language, defining God and the God-man relationship. This makes the chapter one of the most important chapters in the OT for biblical theologians'.

[59] *Secundum sermones hos loquar ego huic populo*.

[60] SC230, 145: 'Dans LAB XXIII, le vocabulaire d'alliance est particulièrement important'.

references to the beginning and end of the world'.[61] We can refer to these temporal references in LAB 23 as 'origins' and 'endings', which bookend the prayer as follows:[62]

4-11	**Origins**: The Promise and Past Fulfillment
4	Abraham's Election
5-7	Covenant with Abraham
8-11	Past (partial) fulfillment of promises
12	Present (conditional) fulfillment of promises
13	**Endings**: Future (consummate) fulfillment of promises
14	Certification of God's words by Joshua

Although episodes from Abraham's life in Genesis are repeated elsewhere in the Jewish corpus,[63] Pseudo-Philo's recapitulation of Genesis 12–22 is remarkable for the claims it makes concerning God's sovereignty, and how the author exacerbates the dependability of God's word for his readers through the creative personification of key elements in the biblical narrative, namely, the slain animals and the night. Rather than examine the entire speech, I will direct our focus to the Abrahamic narrative in particular, the section titled 'Origins' in the structure outlined above. Notably, LAB expands the Abraham narrative far beyond the single verse in Joshua 24.3.[64] Each of the following three selections contain fresh words of God spoken to his people at this particular moment of crisis in 'an elaboration of the straightforward history' of Israel from Joshua 24.[65] Yet together, these constitute a declaration of the relationship of God's word to the origin and maintenance of his people.[66] Israel's hope, it will be shown, is in a God who speaks of what he has *done*, what he has *said*, and what he *will do*.

2.2.2.a Abraham's Origin and Isaiah's Rock (LAB 23.4)

> *Et surrexit Ihesus mane, et congregavit omnem populum, et dixit ad eos, 'Hec dicit Dominus, "Una petra erat, unde effodi patrem vestrum. Et genuit incisio petre illius duos viros, quorum nomina sunt Abraham et Nachor, et de dolatura loci illius nate sunt due mulieres, quarum nomina sunt Sara et Melcha, et habitaverunt in unum trans flumen. Et accepit Abraham Saram, et Nachor*

[61] Murphy, *Pseudo-Philo*, 18.
[62] See the alternative structure based upon the content of the speech in Murphy, *Pseudo-Philo*, 109.
[63] For example, Josephus, *Ant.*, 5.115–16.
[64] Jacobson, *Commentary*, 715.
[65] Jacobson, *Commentary*, 713.
[66] I cite the relevant sections of LAB at the beginning of each of the following three sections for the benefit of the reader without immediate access to the Latin text.

Melcham"'.

> And Joshua rose up in the morning and gathered all the people and said to them, 'The Lord says this: "There was one rock from which I quarried out your father. And the cutting of that rock bore two men whose names are Abraham and Nahor, and out of the chiseling of that place were born two women whose names are Sarah and Melcha, and they lived together across the river. And Abraham took Sarah as a wife, and Nahor took Melcha"'.

As has been observed, Pseudo-Philo articulates a picture of God here, as prior in all his activity on behalf of Israel, through the words of Isaiah. For example, Fisk demonstrates how Pseudo-Philo interweaves Isaiah 51.1–2 into LAB 23.4.[67] His observations, however, are limited to explaining the author's hermeneutical techniques to the exclusion of their theological import for the narrative. He admits, 'The image of God quarrying Abraham and Nahor from Terah seems odd. Pseudo-Philo's account preserves the biblical emphasis on the fraternity of Terah's two sons, . . . but it does so only by plundering the Deutero-Isaianic image with little regard for its original sense'.[68] Pseudo-Philo 'gives much greater attention to Abraham's election and exploits' than Joshua 24.[69] But it could also be argued that the greater emphasis of the author is *divine initiative* both in the electing of Abraham and of God's people. This is apparent in Pseudo-Philo's three-fold ratifications of promised blessing to Abraham and his *semen* (23.5, 7). Whilst Fisk's analysis is helpful in terms of Pseudo-Philo's hermeneutical practices, I would suggest that discussion of the author's theological emphasis on divine agency completes the conversation. Certainly, Fisk writes of the resonance between Joshua 24 and Isaiah 51, in that they both 'engage in historical reminiscence, refer to Abraham's family members, and exploit correlations between Abraham and the nation of Israel',[70] concluding that, 'The primary function of Isaiah 51 for Pseudo-Philo was to provide a pool of poetic terms and familiar biblical images so as to enrich Pseudo-Philo's embellished account of Joshua's final speech'.[71] This, however, begs the question: is Pseudo-Philo drawing on the prophetic material at this point simply to 'accommodate' his readers' understanding,[72] or to *affirm* aspects of God's character? In what follows, I argue that Pseudo-

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[67] Bruce Norman Fisk, *Do You Not Remember? Scripture, Story and Exegesis in the Rewritten Bible of Pseudo-Philo*, JSPSS 37 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2001), 297-8. Cf. M. R. James, *The Biblical Antiquities of Philo* (New York: Ktav, 1971), 141; Harrington, 'Pseudo-Philo', 332; Dietzfelbinger, 'Pseudo-Philo', 164. Jacobson, *Commentary*, 713, whilst recognising that the metaphor has been changed from the biblical meaning (Abraham is the rock), seems unsure what to make of it; he makes no mention of the changed subject of the verb to emphasise God's activity.

[68] Fisk, *Pseudo-Philo*, 297-8.

[69] Fisk, *Pseudo-Philo*, 298

[70] Fisk, *Pseudo-Philo*, 301.

[71] Fisk, *Pseudo-Philo*, 301.

[72] Fisk, *Pseudo-Philo*, 301, concludes that listeners 'who hear echoes of the exilic prophet's voice would be more inclined to give assent to Pseudo-Philo's expansion and revisions of the primary text, without necessarily

Philo's intent in employing Isaiah 51 in LAB 23 is to make an unequivocal statement concerning the divine election of Israel to bolster his people's hope in God.

In all three texts (Josh 24.1; LAB 23.4; Isa 51.1–2), the speaker is 'the Lord' (*Dominus*). The tie that binds Joshua, LAB, and Isaiah is the same Lord who communicates the origins of his people. LAB assimilates the man Joshua and the prophet Isaiah, both of whom speak the words of God. LAB has not, however, cited Isaiah verbatim. Compare the following:

LAB 23.4	Isaiah 51.1
The Lord says this: 'There was one rock from which I quarried out your father'.	Listen to me, you that pursue righteousness, you that seek the LORD. Look to the rock from which you were hewn, and to the quarry from which you were dug.

Pseudo-Philo makes two important changes here. He removes the present imperative (Heb, qal imperative; LXX, aorist imperative), and also changes the finite verb 'you look' (שׁמע; ἐμβλέπω) to the first personal singular, 'I quarried' (*effodio*). This emphasis on divine agency in the election of Abraham differs from other examples of early Jewish literature. Often in these other accounts, Abraham is depicted as a seeker of God from an early age who comes to faith through observing nature, as in *Apocalypse of Abraham*.[73] But no other early Jewish account matches Pseudo-Philo's explicit claim of divine initiative prior to any agency on the part of Abraham, except perhaps Paul (cf. Rom 4.17). Even the biblical account in Joshua is weaker. In LAB God adds to his initiative of 'quarrying out' the further action of 'rescuing' Abraham (23.5).[74] These two dramatic actions suggest stronger connotations of God's agency than 'taking' (Josh 24.3). The latter, in context, refers to the *movement* of the patriarch from one place to another by divine directive. The metaphorical language of 'taking' coupled with Abraham's moving 'from' and 'to' is *spatial*. Pseudo-Philo, however, speaks in terms of extracting granite from a pit, similar to the Targum's paraphrase of the Isaiah passage.[75]

noticing' the drastic changes to the familiar story. This claim, however, 1) limits the use of secondary scriptures (in this case Isaiah 51.1-2) to a literary shoehorn at the disposal of the author in his attempts to make his rewritten version more palatable; 2) seriously underestimates the close familiarity of the first-century audience with the primary text (read and/or heard); and 3) fails to consider the social impact of those secondary scriptures being used in a new, relatable context.

[73] Cf. Philo, *Abr*., 8.60. Louis Ginzberg, *Legends of the Jews*, 2nd ed. (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 2003), 170n16 includes a list of six additional examples.

[74] Jacobson, *Commentary*, 715 comments that LAB 'may have used the more vivid verb להוציל . . . as does *Gen. Rab.* 44.13 in its exegesis of the verse', rather than the biblical verb להוציא. Given the context, the author seems intent to heighten the priority of God's elective agency beyond the biblical account.

[75] John Goldingay and David Payne, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Isaiah 40–55*, ed. G. I. Davies and G. N. Stanton, International Critical Commentary (T&T Clark, 2006), 223.

Isaiah's stronger metaphor of quarrying, and the analogy of 'rescue', offers a rich impression of the sovereign directive of God in the creation of his people in *material* terms.[76] What is unmentioned in Joshua is made explicit in LAB through the voice of Isaiah. God's command in Isaiah 51, that Israel look back to their progenitors, Abraham and Sarah, is reflected in LAB 23 through a divine declaration of elective agency on behalf of the patriarchs, and thus God's people.

2.2.2.b Divine Self-citation of the Promise

The stress laid on God's active role in Israel's creation is intensified in verses 4-8 as God cites his own words of promise to Abraham. The most striking difference between Joshua 24 and LAB 23 is perhaps the addition of a significant amount of verbiage, including direct citations of God, by God:

[76] Claus Westermann, *Basic Forms of Prophetic Speech* (London: Lutterworth, 1967), 236, comments on the Isaiah passage that the author 'wishes to give Israel's descent from Abraham and Sarah the status of an act of creation, on a part [sic] with Deutero-Isaiah's description of the nation's election at the Exodus as creation'. LAB intensifies the theme of creation through the use of first-person singular verbs spoken by God (see table in section 2.3.2); God declares his creation of Israel in no uncertain terms through Joshua to the people.

Joshua 24.2-3	LAB 23.4-8
2 Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel: Long ago your ancestors—Terah and his sons Abraham and Nahor—lived beyond the Euphrates and served other gods. 3 Then I took your father Abraham from beyond the River and led him through all the land of Canaan and made his offspring many. I gave him Isaac . . .	4 . . . The LORD says this: 'There was one rock from which I quarried out (*effodi*) your father. And the cutting of that rock bore two men whose names are Abraham and Nahor, and out of the chiseling of that place were born two women whose names are Sarah and Melcha, and they lived together across the river. And Abraham took Sarah as a wife, and Nahor took Melcha. 5 And when all those inhabiting the land were being led astray after their own devices, Abraham believed in me and was not led astray with them. And I rescued him (*ego eum erui*) from the flame[77] and took him (*accepi eum*) and brought him (*superduxi eum*) over all the land of Canaan and said to him (*dixi ei*) in a vision, "To your seed I will give this land." And that man said to me, "Behold now you have given me a wife, and she is sterile. And how will I have offspring from that rock of mine that is closed up?" 6 And I said to him (*dixi ad eum*), "Bring me a three-year-old calf and a three-year-old she-goat and a three-year-old ram, and turtle-dove, and a dove." And he brought them as I commanded him. Now I sent upon him a deep sleep (*Ego autem inmisi*) and encompassed him (*circumdedi ei*) with fear and set before him the place of fire where the deeds of those doing wickedness against me will be expiated, and I showed him (*ostendi*) the torches of fire by which the just who have believed in me will be enlightened. 7 And I said to him (*dixi ad eum*), "These will be a witness between me and you, that I will give you (*dabo*) offspring from one who is closed up. And I will make you (*assimilabo*) like the dove, because you have taken for me a city that your sons will begin to build before me. Now the turtledove I liken to the prophets who will be born from you; and the ram I liken to the wise men who will be born from you, who will enlighten your sons; but I will liken the calf to the multitude of peoples, which are made many through you; the she-goat I liken to the women whose wombs I will open (*aperiam*) and they will give birth. And these prophecies and this night will be a witness between us, that I will not go against my words (*non transgrediar verba mea*)." 8 And I gave him Isaac (*dedi ei Isaac*). . .'

Immediately evident, apart from the difference in length, is the attention Pseudo-Philo gives to God's verbal engagement with Abraham. God cites himself three time in the entire speech of LAB 23.1-12, and all three of these are found here in the Abrahamic covenant narrative. The significance of Pseudo-Philo's added citations is due not only to the fact that they

[77] The reference to a 'flame' is consistent with other Jewish interpretations of Abraham's early history. The place-name 'Ur' in Hebrew can also be translated as 'fire'; see Ginzberg, *Legends*, 175-77. A fuller discussion of this episode, as narrated in LAB 6, is given in the following chapter of this thesis.

involve God citing himself, but also because of their content. Most commentators have recognised that Pseudo-Philo pulls these three citations from various parts of Genesis 12–15.[78] In the first two, Pseudo-Philo walks his readers through God's promises to Abraham in Genesis 12 and 15. After an initial reference to the call of God that brought him out of his homeland,[79] God cites the inaugural covenant-speech with Abraham: 'to your seed I will give this land'.[80] Abraham's later protest regarding the sterility of Sarah (cf. Gen 15.2-5) is met by God's response, restating the covenant speech in Genesis 15.9: 'Bring me a three-year-old calf and a three-year-old she-goat and a three-year-old ram, a turtledove, and a dove' (LAB 23.6).[81] But in the original account in Scripture, God does not address Abraham's protest with a demand for sacrifice. Rather, God shows him the stars of heaven as a sign of the multiplication of his *seed* (see Gen 15.1-6). Only thereafter, when Abraham questions God regarding his promise of the *land*, does God request animals for sacrifice (Gen 15.7-11). As will be demonstrated below, Pseudo-Philo circumvents the land promises in order to emphasize the *people* predetermined by God to originate from Sarah's sterile womb.[82] In LAB, God moves his hearers through the covenant speeches, from the inception of his covenant-based relationship with his people in the initial election and blessing of Abraham (Gen 12.7), to the subsequent covenant-ceremony with Abraham (Gen 15.1-21).

The expansion of Joshua 24.3 through direct citations of God by God, in the context of the Abrahamic covenant, is Pseudo-Philo's attempt to emphasize the importance of remembering God's words of promise regarding his people. This point is further stressed in the third self-citation in 23.7. The language is striking, not only for its originality, but also its location. In Genesis 15.12-16, God speaks to Abraham about future things, including the oppression of Israel (in Egypt) for 400 years: 'Know this for certain, that your offspring shall be aliens in a land that is not theirs, and shall be slaves there, and they shall be oppressed for four hundred years' (Gen 15.13). But Pseudo-Philo omits that speech, choosing to speak instead of Abraham's future offspring, represented by the various animals sacrificed at the covenant ceremony in Genesis 15. Abraham's question regarding the land in Genesis 15 and

[78] See for example, SC230, 145-47.

[79] Note the previous reference to God's covenant with Abraham at the beginning of verse 5, *eum erui de flamma*, where, as Jacobson, *Commentary*, 715, demonstrates, the verb אור is a play on the word for 'fire' and 'Ur', indicating the source of the phrase as Genesis 15.7.

[80] The phrase in both Gen 12.7 and 15.18 is identical in the Vulgate: *semini tuo dabo terram hanc*.

[81] *Accipe mihi vitulum trimum et capram triennam et arietem trimum, truturem et columbam.*

[82] Indeed, in LAB 23.5, Abraham refers to her womb as a 'rock'. The lexical connection with both 23.4 and Isaiah 51.1 is clear: 'There was one rock (*petra*) from which I quarried out your father. And the cutting of that rock (*petra*) bore two men whose names are Abraham and Nahor, and out of the chiseling of that place were born two women whose names are Sarah and Melcha'. As Goldingay and Payne, *Isaiah 40–55*, 223, comment regarding the quarry, or 'cavity', of Isaiah 51.1, 'the cavity is Sarah. The verb ḥîl means 'to be in pain' and the resultative polel thus suggests one born as a result of labour'.

God's subsequent response are remarkably different. LAB omits Genesis 15.4-8, the crucial section of the covenant episode in which God promises Abraham that his progeny will be numerous as the stars, at the same time removing the explicit land promise of 15.17-21.[83] Instead, God concludes the self-citation of his words to Abraham with a curious mention of 'witnesses' to the Abrahamic covenant ceremony, including the 'prophets' and the 'night'. To this final point we now turn.

2.2.2.c The Witnesses and an Affirmation of Fidelity (LAB 23.7)

This final section examines the conclusion to God's recounting of the covenant ceremony with Abraham in LAB 23 in terms of Israel's hope. Pseudo-Philo bookends his rewritten version of Genesis 15 with an unambiguous affirmation of divine fidelity to Israel. God reminds his people of his trustworthiness through a recitation of his assurance to Abraham in words unique to LAB (23.7):

> *Et ipsi prophete et nox hec erunt in testimonium inter nos, quoniam non transgrediar verba mea*.
>
> And these prophets and this night will be a witness between us, that I will not transgress my words.

These words are not found in either Genesis 15 or Joshua 24, nor any other example of early Jewish literature. In Genesis 15.17, the sun sets and darkness falls, when 'a smoking fire pot and a flaming torch passed between [the] pieces', and God 'made a covenant with Abram, saying, "To your descendants I give this land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the river Euphrates, the land of the Kenites, the Kenizzites, the Kadmonites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Rephaim, the Amorites, the Canaanites, the Girgashites, and the Jebusites"' (Gen 15.18-21). LAB omits these references to geographical boundaries and specific people groups, in favour of the prophets and the night, who are called upon to 'witness' to the dependability of God's promise.

The 'prophets' (*prophetae*) represent the people of God. Whilst in the Genesis account of the covenant, the stars are representative of the multiplicity of Abraham's heirs,[84] in LAB

[83] The land promised to Abraham is identified in 23.5 as *omnem terram Canaan*, but Pseudo-Philo omits the mention of geographical boundaries and people groups from Genesis 15.17-21. The mention of a 'city' in 23.7 may suggest the land promises altogether, but is probably best understood as a specific reference to Moriah, or Mount Zion, the future location of the Temple; see SC230, 146. According to B. Halpern-Amaru, 'Portaits of Women in Pseudo-Philo's Biblical Antiquities', in *"Women Like This": New Perspectives on Jewish Women in the Greco-Roman World*, ed. A. J. Levine (Atlanta: SBL Press, 1991), 93: the central emphasis in LAB is 'peoplehood, not Land'.

[84] Although see the earlier allusion to Genesis 15.5 at LAB 18.5: 'I spoke to Abraham in a vision, saying, "Your seed will be like the stars of the heaven", when I lifted him above the firmament and showed him the

the animals sacrificed to God represent the future people and prophets to be born as Abraham's seed.[85] The 'multitudes of people' (*multitudini populorum*, 23.7) include the various spokespersons who faithfully (and sometimes not) spoke to Israel as God's representatives. Perrot notes in particular the nuanced references here to Abraham and Moses, which further heightens the importance of these witnesses to the divine words of promise.[86] The representation of God's people in the sacrificed animals at the event of the Abrahamic promise indicates that his offspring have a role in LAB to affirm the dependability of God's word through their (future) existence.[87] The readers of LAB would be directed to consider the existence of Israel throughout her generations, up to and including themselves, as clear evidence of the certainty of God's promises to Abraham. Whatever personal or corporate crises Pseudo-Philo's readers faced at the time of the work's composition,[88] Israel as an entity yet existed and thus had every reason to hope in the future of God's promises as yet unfulfilled.

The 'night' (*nox*) represents the most significant time of day for the giving of divine revelation in LAB,[89] including personal communication with God.[90] He speaks to Joshua 'while the people were waiting that night' (23.3). God's greatest mysteries are revealed by night, and his most intimate dialogues with Israel's faithful leaders occur at night.[91] This phenomenon is frequent throughout the entire narrative, and reflected elsewhere including Qumran, where 'la nuit est un moment privilégié "pour scruter le droit et bénir Dieu en commun" (1QS 6.7-8)'.[92] For God to call upon the night as a 'witness' is to underscore the seriousness of the matter; when God wishes to reveal himself most fully in LAB, he speaks in 'la nuit'.[93] Thus the interaction between God and Abraham at the foundational event of Israel's conception is imbued with an exceptional degree of importance, because in LAB the words voiced by God during the night are considered to reveal more of his character than at

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arrangements of all the stars'.

[85] See Jacobson, *Commentary*, 717: 'in LAB all the animals refer to the whole or part of Israel'. See also the discussion of the animals in SC230, 146-47.

[86] SC230, 146-47.

[87] Jacobson, *Commentary*, 719, follows Harrington in translating *ipsi prophete* as 'these prophecies'; 'Harrington simply "mistranslates" . . . and thereby produces good sense and point'. But the text should probably stand as attested in the vast majority of witnesses (sans Δ alone).

[88] See Nickelsburg, 'Leaders' and Murphy, *Pseudo-Philo*, 223.

[89] SC230, 147: 'La nuit est le temps des révélations divines'.

[90] See Jacobson, *Commentary*, 981.

[91] After noting that 'Night is an important time for communications from God', Murphy, *Pseudo-Philo*, 108, lists other leaders including Samuel, Miriam, Balaam, and Joshua. But cf. also Abraham (6.7-9); Eluma (42.2); and David (60.1).

[92] SC230, 147. Cf. also LAB 9.10; 18.4.

[93] Contra Jacobson, *Commentary*, 719. See Roger Le Déaut, *La Nuit pascale. Essai sur la signification de la Pâque juive à partir du Targum d'Exode XII 42* (Rome: Institut biblique pontifical, 1963), 192-93 in connection with the mention of Isaac in LAB 23.8.

any other time.[94] Over and above this phenomenon in LAB, the night is imbued with an even greater role than that in 23.3, from an important time of divine revelation, to a personified 'witness' to the certainty of divine speech in 23.7. Indeed, at the end of the covenant speech, Joshua himself points to the night as the mark of certainty for all that God revealed to him: 'These are the words that the LORD spoke to me this night' (LAB 23.13). The special combination in LAB of material and temporal substantiations, the sacrificed animals and the night, weave through the tapestry of the Abrahamic covenant threads both strong to endure and bright to reveal. God speaks to Abraham during that critical time of divine revelation, the 'night', and sets forth his future people as 'witnesses' to the certainty of his promises to Abraham.

The final statement of God's speech includes his promise never to 'transgress' his words. This affirmation coheres with a consistent emphasis on the dependability of divine speech in the rest of the chapter (23.4-13). God's entire speech is divisible into three sections ending with affirmations of his character in relation to his election of Abraham. The first section of the larger speech (23.4-7) includes the narrative of Abraham, that ends with the divine promise to never transgress his words. The final two sections (23.8-11; 12-13) relate Israel's subsequent history as traced through God's acts of deliverance.[95] These two historical reminders function as the evidence of God's fidelity to his promise to Abraham restated in 23.5. At the end of the second section (LAB 23.8-11), which traces the history of Israel from the birth of Isaac to their entrance into Canaan (cf. Josh 24.4-10),[96] God says, 'I fulfilled my covenant that I promised to your fathers' (LAB 23.11). In the third and final section of the speech (23.12-13), after promising to bless the people if they are faithful to him, God says, 'I will restore you to your fathers and your fathers to you, and they will know through you that I have not chosen you in vain' (23.13).[97] Having thus reported all of God's words given to him the night before, Joshua certifies that his covenant speech was really 'the words that the LORD spoke to me this night' (23.13).[98] In the Bible, however, Joshua transitions immediately to exhort the people to put away their idols and 'serve the LORD' (Josh 24.14). The rewritten account of LAB stresses the certainty of divine speech by reinforcing the message that these words are God's own (23.13). The covenant of Joshua with the people is

[94] See the fuller treatment in Le Déaut, *La Nuit*, 188-94.

[95] The length of the text is too long to include here. I would refer the reader to *OTP* (English) or Jacobson's *Commentary* (Latin and English).

[96] LAB's insertion of the dramatic events at Mount Sinai in the giving of the Law is a notable change to the narrative of Joshua 24, in which no mention is made of these events.

[97] *Et reddam vos patribus vestris et patres vestros vobis, et scient ipsi per vos quoniam non in vanum elegi vos*.

[98] *Hec sunt verba que locutus est Dominus ad me nocte hac*.

contingent upon the earlier promises to Abraham, which culminated initially at the entrance to Canaan (23.11), and will climax ultimately in the future (23.13). Pseudo-Philo offers hope to his readers through a reminder of the source of their existence, past, present, and future: a divine word that will not be transgressed, and that God himself willingly restates in a public covenant ceremony before his gathered his people.

2.2.2.d Summary

The differences between Joshua's covenant speech in the Bible and LAB are as remarkable as they are unique amongst other examples of early Jewish literature. In the biblical account, the covenant ceremony 'does not seem so much a pact enacted between the people and their God as a pact that the people make with themselves'.[99] In other words, the covenant in Joshua 24 is human-to-human. But in LAB 23, the Lord's three-fold recitation of his promises made to Abraham firmly places this speech within the context of a divine-human transaction. In Joshua 24, the people have 'agreed to be witnesses against themselves, . . . [and] now participate in a ritual that places them under obligation to their own confession'.[100] In LAB, God places himself under obligation by calling witnesses again himself. He must fulfill his words of promise, including those to Abraham, to the people at Shechem, and to the people of God today and tomorrow. The stone of witness in Joshua 24 is replaced by the 'night' and the 'prophets' who will come from Sarah's sterile womb. Therefore, as long as God's people exist, they continue to testify to God's faithfulness. And as long as God is faithful to his word, his people's existence is perpetuated. This is the source of Israel's hope.

2.3 God's Word is the Instrument of Israel's Judgement (LAB 44–47)

In this section, I argue that God's word in LAB is also a word of judgement, based on a fresh reading of LAB 44–47. In these four extended chapters, Pseudo-Philo exhibits a God who does not simply promise to bless, and *threaten* to judge. Rather, in LAB, retribution for sins has the same guarantee of fulfillment as reward for obedience. This is particularly evident in the period of the Judges. Pseudo-Philo dwells long on this dark period of his people's history, fashioning a major portion of his writing around the contours and flows of Israel's pattern of rebellion, judgement, repentance, and deliverance.[101] Chapters 44–47 escalate to a dramatic

[99] Daniel L. Hawk, *Joshua* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1989), 277.
[100] Hawk, *Joshua*, 277.
[101] See, for example, Robert G. Boling, *Judges: Introduction, Translation, and Commentary*, AYB 6A (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008), 73; Robert H. O'Connell, *The Rhetoric of the Book of Judges* (Leiden:

climax beginning with the idolatry of Micah, followed by the rape and murder of the Levite's concubine, and culminating in the defeat of Benjamin by Israel. This second half of the chapter will focus on the speeches of various characters in LAB 44–47. I intend to demonstrate that the author augments the original narrative of Judges in order to posit as sharp a dichotomy as possible between human words and divine speech. Three new characters are introduced, including Micah, Beel (the anonymous Levite in Judg 18), and Phinehas. Each of these leaders speaks about or to God in response to the deepening crisis, but their words elicit sharp rebukes from God. These divine responses sharpen the profile of God in LAB in terms of both faithfulness and judgement.

The narrative progression of both Judges and LAB turns at this point from a focus on the increasingly degenerate leadership of Israel, to individuals within the community who function as examples of the depths to which the people sink in Canaan due to idolatry. Their corruption, identified in the Bible and LAB as 'doing what was right in their own eyes' (LAB 44.1; cf. Judg 17.6; 21.25),[102] extends to individual Israelite households (Micah and his mother, Judg 17–18; LAB 44), the Levitical priesthood (Judg 19; LAB 45), an entire tribe, Benjamin (Judg 18; LAB 46), and the entire nation of Israel (Judg 20; LAB 47).[103] Within each category, a spokesperson represents various degrees of compromised leadership. Pseudo-Philo does not, however, let human speech go unanswered by God, as is often the case in the corresponding biblical narrative. In LAB, each instance of compromised human reasoning is addressed by God, indirectly and directly, whose voice is usually heard only by the audience. Thus Pseudo-Philo saturates the picture of Israel's God with darker colours of contrast in order to show the other side of divine speech.

2.3.1 Micah (LAB 44)

Pseudo-Philo's account of Judges 17–18 recalls the sins of Micah and his mother following the demise of Israel's last true judge, Samson (cf. LAB 43). Micah's thievery is omitted (Judg 17.2), and gold is added to the biblical record of 1,100 pieces of silver in a nuanced analogy

Brill, 1996).

[102] See further Deut 12.8; 1 Kgs 11.33, 38; 14.8; 15.5, 11; 22.43; 2 Kgs 10.30; 12.2; 14.3; 15.3, 34; 16.2; 18.3; 22.2; Jer 34.15.

[103] I have modified slightly the outline found in Daniel J. Block, *Judges, Ruth*, NAC (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1999), 473-569.

to the golden calf.[104] Dedila,[105] the mother of Micah, makes an explicit proposition to her son to build idols for the sake of monetary profit and self-promotion.[106] She says, 'whoever wishes to offer a sacrifice will give seven double pieces . . . and your title will be "priest", and you will be called "worshiper of the gods"' (LAB 44.2-3). Dedila thus grants to her son a title reserved only for the Levites at this point in Israel's history. Tellingly, the unnamed Levite in Judges 17.7-13, who assumes the role of a personal priest in the house of Micah, is never mentioned; Micah himself assumes that role in Pseudo-Philo's version through his mother's decree.

2.3.1.a Micah's Speech

Given Micah's elevated, though erroneously assumed, position in LAB, his reply to his mother's advice is remarkable (44.4):

> *Bene, mater, consiliate es mihi ut vivam. Et nunc erit nomen tuum plus quam meum, et in novissimis diebus omnia a te exquirentur.*
>
> You have advised me well, mother, on how to live. And now your name will be even greater than mine, and in the last days all kinds of things will be requested of you.

There are two elements of Micah's response that inform Pseudo-Philo's theology. First, Micah acknowledges the advice of his mother as *bene* ('good') and conducive for living a prosperous life. In affirming his mother's words, Micah condones a speech that encourages flagrant idolatry, paganism, and an illegitimate priesthood (44.2). Micah also approves of the advice to construct an altar in his home upon which sacrifices will be made (44.3),[107] consciously transgressing ordinances against idolatry in the Law and contradicting the actions

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[104] Jacobson, *Commentary*, 1003: 'The addition of gold . . . is to render Micah's act in some sense a repetition of the creating of the golden calf'. He indicates that the Talmud also implicates Micah with a major role in the production of the golden calf, though the chronology is awkward (see also *Tanhuma Ki Tisa* 19; *Sanh.* 103b). Further, there is a midrashic tradition in which the last of four engravings by Moses, including a human being, an eagle, a lion, and an ox, were stolen by a woman who later fashioned the golden calf. Another tradition has Micah finding the engraving and making the calf. Jacobson, *Commentary*, 1007, notes that 'LAB's treatment here may be another (and elaborate) expansion on this Midrash'. In the Bible, only 200 of the 1100 pieces of silver are used to construct an idol. In LAB, the amount is increased and gold is added to the mix.

[105] Her name is found only in LAB; see Murphy, *Pseudo-Philo*, 174. Jacobson, *Commentary*, 1003, suggests that she is actually Delilah, the woman who brought down Samson.

[106] Jacobson, *Commentary*, 1007, writes, 'That the people consult specific icons for specific requests reflects LAB's awareness of the pagan practice to identify individual gods with particular realms and to address pertinent prayer to the appropriate deity'. He includes the example of praying to Demeter for a good harvest (see Hesiod, *Works*, 465-6).

[107] *erit in domo tua ara, et columna edificata ex auro isto quod habes; comparabis tibi thus in incensum et oves in sacrificium*.

of earlier good judges such as Cenaz (see LAB 27) whilst replicating the deeds of wicked judges like Jair (cf. LAB 38).

Second, Micah prophesies about the future exalted status of his mother, Dedila. On the one hand, this involves predicting the greatness of her legacy: 'your name will be greater than mine' (44.5). On the other hand, Micah purloins language reserved only for God's predictions of the future: 'in the last days (*in novissimis diebus*) all things will be asked of you'. Micah here uses language typically reserved for God in LAB, when he speaks of future things, or by people speaking about God's future activity in fulfilment of the promises to Abraham (cf. LAB 13.10; 27.7; 28.1).[108] The link is strengthened by the earlier words of Dedila, *facies tibi nomen* ('you will make a name for yourself'), the same motivation as the builders at Babel (*faciemus nobis nomen*, LAB 6.1; cf. Gen 11.4) who persecuted Abraham and the other eleven men for refusing to inscribe their names on brick to be used in the building.[109] Thus in the space of a few verses in LAB 44, Pseudo-Philo interweaves references to two exceptional instances of idolatry from the past, including the tower of Babel and the golden calf incident, through the words of his human characters. Unlike the biblical account, however, God is not silent.

2.3.1.b The Divine Response

God responds to Micah's plan in one of his longest monologues in LAB (44.6-10). This speech is remarkable for the claims it makes regarding the people of Israel and the accusations it brings against them, as well as what it conveys about the certainty of God's relationship to his people. We can divide his response into three distinct sections:

1. Past Agreement (6-7a)
2. Present Idolatry (7b)
3. Future judgement (8-10)

The temporal divisions of this speech into past, present, and future correspond with the structure of key speeches elsewhere in LAB. These include God's words to Moses at the golden calf incident (12.4); Moses' subsequent prayer for mercy (12.8-9); God's covenant speech through Joshua (23.4-13); Deborah's rallying speech and later hymn of praise (30.5-7;

[108] Notably, the only other exception to this is in LAB 6.1, the retelling of the tower of Babel, when the people decide to build the tower, saying, 'Behold it will happen that we will be scattered every man from his brother and *in the last days* we will be lighting one another' (emphasis mine).

[109] According to SC230, 199, 'à l'instar des hommes de Babel'.

32.1-17); and God's speech to Samuel in response to the people's demand for a king (53.8-10). The correspondence between these accounts enables Pseudo-Philo to bring both past and future to bear upon his readers' present. There is a consistency in human and divine language that includes the scope of God's interaction with his people throughout their history, and in relation to his words of promise. Just as God and certain leaders in LAB predict judgement upon Israel for their sin, a judgement that actually occurs in accord with God's words, so the people of God in the present day can expect God to enact his words both of blessing and of judgement.

The first two divisions of the response, both past and present, convey a striking phenomenon wherein the author interweaves prophetic material into the prose of narrative texts. In LAB, the relationship between God and his people in moments of crisis is often addressed through the words of the Prophets. In LAB 44.6-9, the Prophets' voices are echoed *backwards* into the historically earlier Judges narrative (and, in the case of LAB's audience, forward to their present situation). In the previous section covering Joshua's covenant, we saw that God cites himself in an affirmation of the irrevocability of his promises of blessing. Here, in response to Micah, God's words originally spoken through Israel's prophets are re-vocalised within a similar context of judgement for idolatry. God is thereby sharply defined in LAB as a righteous judge of his people through his words of incrimination and judgment.

The first unit of the speech, Past Agreement, concerns Israel's agreement to obey God at his giving of the Law at Sinai. In this recollection of those events, Pseudo-Philo is explicit that God presented each of the ten stipulations of the Law to the people in turn, every time receiving a positive response from Israel. The pattern is consistently, 'I said . . . they agreed', through all ten of the commandments. Pseudo-Philo's meshing of the narratives of the Pentateuch with material from the Prophets is initially evident in his ordering of the commandments, which follows the sequence recited by the Lord against his people through Jeremiah (cf. Jer 7.9).[110] Pseudo-Philo sets up a situation in which the proper response to God's word is declared by the people beforehand: unqualified agreement. When God speaks at Sinai, he utters commands to be followed; disagreement is not an option, even for those of his people who did not utter the original words of agreement at the giving of the Law. The expectations of God for his people remain the same throughout their history, a point that will receive further treatment in the following chapter of this thesis on radical faith. Immediately following these words, in a remarkable rhetorical turn, the order of the stipulations in 44.6 is

[110] On LAB's blending of prophetic material with the historical books as a narrative technique with theological overtones, see Tavis A. Bohlinger, 'The "Prophetical Tenor" of Pseudo-Philo's *Liber Antiquitatum Biblicarum*', *CBQ* 81 (2019): 46-61.

replicated in 44.7, but now with divine accusations of the explicit transgression by the people of the very things that they agreed to uphold. God implicates his own people for their disobedience to the plain directives of the Law, beginning with (and thus predicated by) idolatry. The language of this passage has resonances with the golden calf incident and another key anti-idolatry passage, Isaiah 44.10-13,[111] of which LAB essentially offers a summary.[112] In both texts, a contrast is set up between God and lifeless idols made by human hands. Pseudo-Philo thus defines God as completely intolerant of idolatrous practices by his people through the reiteration of his *later* words spoken through Isaiah.

The divine monologue in response to Micah's declarations showcases Pseudo-Philo's theology from two angles. First, God is inextricably committed to the people with whom he made promises and gave commandments. This is clear through his recollection of their agreement to his ten-fold commandments at the giving of the Law. Even if they forgot, God remembers, both what he said and how his people responded. The relationship between God and his people is defined by his words even in the face of their sins against those commands. Second, the present idolatry of the people indicates the chasm that lies between them and their holy God. His recollection of their agreement in 44.6 sets up his condemnation of their wickedness in 44.7. God's people have disobeyed every stipulation he gave them, and therefore broken faith with their straightforward agreements. As is typical in LAB, God's speech here is a divine response to human failure, and yet, the fact of his continued communication with his people is an indication of his persistent dedication to them. This is the case even as their descent into sin progresses, as the next episode in LAB 45 demonstrates.

2.3.2 Beel the Levite (LAB 45)

If Micah's behaviour is the catalyst of Israel's march towards the cliff of impropriety, then the gang rape and butchering of the Levite's concubine in Judges is their stepping over the edge into merciless violence and debauchery. Trible comments on this passage in the biblical account:

> The betrayal, rape, torture, murder, and dismemberment of an unnamed

[111] On the comparison between God and lifeless idols in Isaiah, see D. Rudman, 'The Theology of Idol Fabrication in Second Isaiah', *OTE* 12 (1999): 114-21.

[112] 'For mortal men have made them, and the fire has served to melt them down. The skill of a man has produced them, and hands have manufactured them, and imagination has invented them' (LAB 44.7). 'The ironsmith fashions it and works it over the coals, shaping it with hammers, . . . The carpenter stretches a line, . . . he makes it in human form, with human beauty, to be set up in a shrine' (Isa 44.12-13). Note also the similar terminology in *Wisdom* 13.10-19, though the language is more forceful than in either Isaiah or LAB.

> woman is a story we want to forget but are commanded to speak. It depicts the horrors of male power, brutality, and triumphalism; of female helplessness, abuse, and annihilation. To hear this story is to inhabit a world of unrelenting terror that refuses to let us pass by on the other side.[113]

For Block, 'Israel's ethical conduct sinks to its lowest point in the Book of Judges, if not the entire Old Testament'.[114] This is 'the most horrible story of the Hebrew Bible'.[115] Pseudo-Philo's rewriting of this episode in Israel's history offers a window into his understanding of God's word in terms of judgement, for unlike the biblical account, God plays a significant role in the story as he responds to the Levite's claim of divine assistance for a personal crusade of vengeance.[116]

2.3.2.a Beel's Speech

The unnamed Levite in Judges speaks twice in the Bible, but only once in LAB in a sustained speech to the people of Israel. His speeches in the Bible are succinct and non-committal. His first speech is sent through the messengers who take the pieces of his concubine's body throughout the land of Israel. He asks, 'Has such a thing ever happened since the day that the Israelites came up from the land of Egypt until this day? Consider it, take counsel, and speak out' (Judg 19.30). The question of how to respond is left to the counsel of the people as a whole, if not to their leaders implicitly (see 20.2). The Levite's second speech is presented to the gathered people (20.1). The people ask how such an act happened, to which he responds (Judg 20.4-7):

> I came to Gibeah that belongs to Benjamin, I and my concubine, to spend the night. The lords of Gibeah rose up against me, and surrounded the house at

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[113] Phyllis Trible, *Texts of Terror: Literary-Feminist Readings of Biblical Narratives* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984), 65. Danna N. Fewell, 'Feminist Reading of the Hebrew Bible: Affirmation, Resistance, and Transformation', *JSOT* 39 (1987): 86, writes that 'Stories like the rape and dismemberment of the Levite's concubine in Judges 19 and the sacrifice of Jephthah's daughter in Judges 11 show the darkest side of patriarchy yet—the torture and murder of the most vulnerable and innocent for the sake of male honor and pompous religiosity'.

[114] Block, *Judges, Ruth*, 527.

[115] Cf. M. Bal, 'A Body of Writing: Judges 19', in *A Feminist Companion to Judges*, ed. A. Brenner (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993), 209.

[116] There are other key differences between the biblical account and LAB. For example, the location of the incident has changed from Gibeah to Nob. Cf. Hos 9.8-9; 109; see further Patrick M. Arnold, 'Hosea and the Sin of Gibeah', *CBQ* 51 (1989): 447–60; Patrick M. Arnold, *Gibeah: the Search for a Biblical City in History and Tradition* (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1990), 61-86. This may be Pseudo-Philo's attempt to explain the slaughter of the inhabitants of Nob by Doeg, at the behest of Saul (1 Sam 22.1-19). This manner of explanation through interweaving of texts is common in LAB, including the present passage. The concubine's fate was deserved, according to LAB, because of her earlier infidelity to her husband; she has committed adultery 'with the Amalekites, and on account of this the LORD God delivered her into the hands of sinners' (LAB 45.3). See Harrington, 'Pseudo-Philo', 359, on Pseudo-Philo's 'horror at intermarriage with gentiles' (cf. 9.5; 18.13-14; 21.1; 30.1; 44.7).

> night. They intended to kill me, and they raped my concubine until she died. Then I took my concubine and cut her into pieces, and sent her throughout the whole extent of Israel's territory; for they have committed a vile outrage in Israel. So now, you Israelites, all of you, give your advice and counsel here.

In both biblical speeches, the unnamed Levite places the burden of responsibility on the people. His manner of speech may betray a sense of abdication, but couched in this language is strong persuasion for the people to do something in response. His descriptions of the brutality and dismemberment of the woman are coarse and unapologetic. What the perpetrators have done is a 'vile outrage'; the honourable course of action, and what the Law requires, is retribution (cf. Judg 20.13).[117]

In a departure from the Bible, the Levite in LAB, here named 'Beel', voices a direct call for vengeance. He speaks only once, sending his message throughout Israel along with the pieces of his concubine's dismembered body (45.4):

> *Hec mihi facta sunt in Noba civitate, et surrexerunt super me habitantes in ea ut occiderent me, et accipientes concubinam meam incluso me illam occiderunt. Et si placet hoc ante conspectum vestrum ut taceatis, Dominus autem iudicat. Si autem volueritis vindiare, Dominus adiuvabit vos.*
>
> These things have been done to me in the city of Nob, and those dwelling there rose up against me to kill me, and they took my concubine while I was locked up and they killed her. And if being silent pleases you, nevertheless the LORD judges. But if you wish to take revenge, the LORD will help you.

This speech diverges from the Levite's biblical speeches in significant ways. Firstly, Beel claims that he was 'locked up' and they killed her. But this was not the case in the Bible, nor earlier in chapter 45 of LAB. If Pseudo-Philo is suggesting a lie here, this has implications for how we read the subsequent lie spoken by God (see 1.3.3 below). Second, Beel makes two specific assertions regarding the Lord which are not found in the biblical narrative. In the first, he warns the people that if they do nothing, the LORD will judge them for their silence. In the second, Beel assures the people that if they 'take revenge' (*vindico*), the LORD will grant them success. Incidentally, the same (wrong) assumption is made by three of the tribes at the Red Sea crossing (cf. LAB 10.2-6). They presume that God will help them if they take up arms to fight. In like manner, the Levite compels the Israelites to action; he promises blessing that is not his to grant based on a presumption that God will help the people in their quest for revenge.[118]

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[117] The Israelites were instructed in the Law to deal with sinful behaviour in their midst through various means: i.e., 'purge the evil from your midst' (cf. Deut 13.5; 17.7, 12; 19.13, 19; 21.9, 21; 22.21, 22, 24; 24.7; also Ezek 20.38; 22.15).

[118] Murphy, 'God', 13, considers that Beel's request is justified: 'He requests vengeance for what is indeed a

2.3.2.b God's Response

God's response to Beel's speech is frightening, a wrath-saturated decree of judgement that states in clear language the incommensurability of human and divine plans in LAB. Unlike the previous divine monologue in response to Micah's idolatry in chapter 44, the Lord speaks to a new character only identified as 'the adversary' (45.6):[119]

> *Vides quemadmodum conturbatus est populus insipiens in hora*[120] *in qua debuerant mori, cum versute gessit Michas, ut in istis seduceret populum in columba et aquila et in effigie hominum et vitulorum et leanis et draconis. Et ideo quia non sunt tunc zelati, propterea sit eorum consilium in vanum et conturbabitur cor eorum, ut tam peccatores consumant quam iniqua gerentes*.
>
> Did you see this foolish people disturbed in the hour in which they ought to have died, when Micah acted craftily so as to lead the people astray with the dove and the eagle and with the image of the men and the calves and the lion and the dragon? And so because they were not provoked to anger then, therefore let their plan be in vain; and their heart will be so disturbed that the sinners as well as those allowing the evil deeds will be destroyed.

God first asks the adversary whether he observed the flagrant idolatry of both Micah and the people, before he pronounces judgement. The people's silence at Micah's evil deeds is to be recompensed with the failure of their plans to bring justice for the slain concubine,[121] which is itself a gracious act considering that they deserved 'to have died' in God's eyes. Furthermore, the Lord decrees that 'their heart will be so disturbed' that both the perpetrators of the crime (i.e. the rapist-murderers) and the people will be ruined. In other words, because the people allow Micah to persist in his wickedness (silence) and are also led into idolatry by him (participation), they themselves are to be judged at the very moment they believe themselves to be the upholders of divine justice. Thus a deep rift is formed between the words of Beel and God. Beel is a Levite, part of the priestly order of Israel instituted by God at the moment of their zeal for him in distributing justice at the golden calf incident (cf. Exod 32.25-29). Therein lies the irony: at this present recapitulation of the idolatry at Sinai (note Micah's

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sin in the eyes of God, and expressed confidence that God will help the Tribes if they avenge his concubine'.

[119] *et dicit Dominus ad anteciminum*. According to Harrington, 'Pseudo-Philo', 360, 'The Latin *anteciminus* has been taken over from the Gk. *antikeimenos* (adversary)', corresponding to the Hebrew סתנ. The role of 'satan' as accuser or legal prosecutor before God is found in Job 1:6-12. See further the discussion in SC230, 203-204.

[120] Harrington, 'Pseudo-Philo', 360, emends *terra*, present in all mss, to *hora*, a change dictated by the temporal language later in the speech: *quia non sunt tunc zelati*. See SC230, 204: 'La mention de *tunc* . . . confirme la conjecture de James'. But see Jacobson, *Commentary*, 1038-39, who prefers emending to *tempore*, based upon the similar abbreviations for both words: *tpe* for *tempore*, *tra* for *terra*. He notes a reverse corruption, *tempore* to *terrae*, at Deut 31.29 (Vulgate).

[121] Note Jacobson, *Commentary*, 1039.

'gold'; 44.2), a Levite also stands and speaks for God. Yet he and the people were silent until this point regarding the blatant idolatry of Micah. Beel speaks from a place of ignorance, whilst thinking he speaks in accord with the will of God. Pseudo-Philo thereby communicates a message of divine-human discordance; God's ways are not the ways of his people. They cannot speak for God if unbidden, for they are often blind to the sins around them which make them incapable of discerning his will. The consequence of this abdication to wickedness, at the root of which is idolatry, is judgement. God says, 'I will cut away the root of my creation . . . because the house of Jacob has been infected in its wickedness and the impiety of Israel has been multiplied' (44.8). This discord between divine and human words, as we will see now, is played out in full in the final section of Pseudo-Philo's narration of Judges. All of God's previous words, to himself, to the adversary, and to the people, ultimately come to fruition with one surprising exception unique to Pseudo-Philo amongst every other voice from early Judaism: God leads his people astray in order to punish them. God lies.

2.3.3 Phinehas and the People (LAB 46–47)

The beginning of chapter 46 informs the reader that 'the people of Israel were disturbed' (46.1),[122] an addition by Pseudo-Philo to the text of Judges 20.1. Their initial shock at the rape and murder of Beel's concubine is immediately supplanted with ambition to avenge. They listen to Beel's advice and determine to 'search out the sin that has been committed in order that wickedness be taken away' from them (46.1; cf. Judg 20.12-13). In a notable departure from the biblical narrative, the people decide to inquire of God before taking further action: 'Let us ask the LORD first and learn if he will deliver our brothers into our hands; if not, let us desist' (46.1). In Judges, the people are already assembled for battle against Benjamin *before* they inquire of the Lord (Judg 20.8-11). In the following section we compare the words of Phinehas with God's response to him in the face of the pending crisis of a civil war.

2.3.3.a Israel's Plan

In placing the people's inquiry prior to military action, Pseudo-Philo makes their plan contingent upon God giving a favourable word. This is an important point to note, because the change in order sets up the climax of the Judges period in LAB. If God says 'go up and fight', they will go. If he says no, they will 'desist' (*pauso*, 46.1). If God is silent, his

[122] *conturbati sunt populi Israel*.

prediction of judgement, made before the adversary, fails; his word will be revealed as ineffective. God will have spoken in vain. Thus the weight of this passage is, as before, on divine speech, over against any inherent warnings against idolatry.[123] After the people plead for divine counsel, the Lord says, 'Go up, because I will deliver them into your hands' (46.1),[124] a verbatim citation from Judges 20.28. But then, Pseudo-Philo adds a curious comment: 'But he led them astray so that he might fulfill his words' (46.1).[125] Remarkably, the same terminology used by God to describe the evil of Micah is repeated in God's prediction of his own anticipated actions against his people (cf. 45.6). This is not, however, simply an eye-for-an-eye reciprocation of lies. God's deceit of his own people, as will be seen, is both the fulfillment of his words to them, and their very judgement.

2.3.3.b Disturbed Hearts

The word that God fulfils through deceit is the judgement his people warrant through both idolatry and negligence. God foretells this at the end of chapter 45.6. The people's 'heart will be so disturbed' that both the criminals and those who were silent 'will be destroyed'. This is exactly what occurs in Israel's first two defeats. Yet in order for this prediction to be fulfilled God must lie to his people.[126] This incident entails arguably the most radical theological statement by Pseudo-Philo regarding the character of God in relation to his word.

In the first battle against Benjamin, the people are badly defeated.[127] As a result, 'the heart of the people was very much disturbed, and they came mourning and weeping to Shiloh' (46.3). After the second defeat, 'the heart of the people grew very faint', and they cry out (46.4),

> *Numquid voluit Deus seducere populum suum? Aut numquid ita constituit propter id quod factum est malum, ut equaliter cadant tam innoxii quam hi qui faciunt iniqua?*
>
> Has God wished to lead his people astray? Or has he so established it on account of the evil that was done, that the innocent as well as those who do wicked deeds should fall together?

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[123] *Contra* Murphy, *Pseudo-Philo*, 179. Whilst certainly Pseudo-Philo communicates a strong aversion to idolatry here, the manner of narrative composition pursued by the author is meant to communicate the absolute dichotomy between human and divine words, more than the wickedness of worshipping idols.

[124] *Ascendite, quoniam tradam eos in manus vestras*.

[125] *Ipse autem seduxit eos, ut compleret verba sua*. Murphy, *Pseudo-Philo*, 226: 'God goes so far as to deceive the tribes so that the divine words can be fulfilled . . . nothing happens that is not foreknown and controlled by God'.

[126] As SC230, 205, states plainly, 'Dieu a commis une iniquité'.

[127] LAB increases the number of dead from 22,000 to 45,000 men (46.2; cf. Judg 20.21).

The people's plea begs for a negative answer: no, God has not led us astray *intentionally*. Although the people are partly right in recognising that they are being punished along with the rapist-murderers, they still consider themselves to be 'innocent'. God, however, has already implicated them as complicit with 'the evil deeds' in their midst (45.6). Their lack of perception combined with two unexpected defeats results in the foretold 'disturbance' (*conturbabitur cor eorum*) of God's response to Beel's speech in 45.6.[128] God's predicted judgement is thus completed when the people repent *en masse* 'before the ark of the covenant of the Lord' (46.4; Judg 20.26).[129] In both LAB and the Bible, the second defeat prompts a dramatic response; their inner turmoil is evident through external physical displays of emotional bewilderment. Without Pseudo-Philo's addition of a divine lie into the narrative of Judges, the response of the people would not have met the criteria of 'disturbance' predicated in 45.6. To clarify this point, it is worth noting that the biblical story shows the people weeping before the Lord *after* they have, on their own, 'taken courage' (ויתחק, ἐνίσχυσαν; Judg 20.22) subsequent to the first defeat. The second defeat prompts an immediate response of weeping and fasting and burnt offerings (Judg 20.26). But Pseudo-Philo dramatises the people's response, from external 'crying' to an internal view of the people's psychological 'dissolution'.[130] In LAB, the gathered Tribes are defeated by Benjamin twice as a result of accommodating and participating in Micah's idolatry (44.8).[131] LAB connects these passages in Judges explicitly in a way that the Bible does not. The idolatry of Micah, a recapitulation of the creation of the golden calf, ends in severe judgement for the entire nation. God is true to his word in LAB, both to bless and to curse, drawing upon deuteronomistic language and extending back to the covenant with Abraham. Yet the internal dissolution of his people does not necessarily mean the corporate disintegration of the nation, a point Pseudo-Philo makes in his subsequent response to Phinehas' plea for clarity.

2.3.3.c Phinehas' Plea

In LAB 47, the focus of the narrative turns to the interaction between Phinehas and God. At the end of chapter 46, Phinehas joins in the mass repentance of the people, then articulates an

[128] The doubled *numquid* expresses the degree of their perturbation; what follows is a visible outpouring of that emotional angst.

[129] *Et hec dicentes ceciderunt in conspectu arce testamenti Domini, et ruperunt vestimenta sua, et imposuerunt cinerem super capita sua*.

[130] Note the remarks by Jacobson, *Commentary*, 1043, on the previous use of this phrase in the biblical account of Israel's defeat at Ai (Josh 7.5).

[131] Murphy, 'God', 13, notes that the Bible does not give a reason for the Tribes' initial two defeats, a silence capitalised upon by Pseudo-Philo.

extended inquiry to the Lord (46.4–47.2). His plea can be divided into four components: interrogation, request, rationale, and repeated request. First, Phinehas charges the Lord indirectly with leading his people astray. Notice that he does not say, '*Why did you* deceive us', but '*What is* this deceit'. At the end of the plea, he asks why 'this wickedness' was brought against Israel, but this is a softer claim than directly accusing God of lying.[132] Second, Phinehas requests of the Lord that he grant him insight into the reason for their multiple defeats at the hands of the wicked Benjaminites. He hints at the possibility that there is sin amongst the people that has gone uncovered, similar to the people's earlier inquiry in 46.4. Certainly this appears logical: 1) if God had only shown the people their sin, they would have dealt with it; and 2) if the behaviour of the Benjaminites was wicked, then the Tribes should have been victorious against them.

Phinehas provides rationale for these assumptions as he continues his plea. He does this by recalling his personal zeal on God's behalf during Israel's time in the wilderness (47.1-2). The grounds of his argument is that, if God saw fit to save him from the murderous intentions of the entire nation of Israel, as a result of his zeal for God's cause (*zelus*, 47.1), then should not the inverse be true? In other words, if one man stood against the entire nation because of gross wickedness in their midst, and God rewarded him with life and the sinners with destruction, then should not these wicked Benjaminites die for their heinous sin, and the 'innocent' and zealous Tribes be successful? However, Phinehas reasons from the perspective of a faithful Israelite who thinks he understands the mind of God based upon God's past dealings with his people, both the faithful and the wicked. But as with Micah and Beel, Phinehas also speaks from ignorance of the character of God. The main difference between him and the other two is that Phinehas makes no presumptions about what God will or won't do. In this way, Pseudo-Philo protects one of the good leaders of Israel through questions deliberate yet reverent. But ultimately, Phinehas and the people fail to grasp the nature of divine speech. The hidden counsel of God spoken to Phinehas (and sometimes, like here, revealed only to the adversary and the readers) is where God is truly known, those things spoken in secret (or at night), only later revealed to his ignorant people. God's word will be fulfilled, even if unstated to his people, and even if the fulfillment of that word requires a lie to bring it about.

[132] It is remarkable that earlier in the narrative Phinehas defines a 'good' priest in the following terms: as one who 'guards the commandments of the LORD our God, especially since truth goes forth from his mouth and a shining light from his heart' (28.3). There may be a sense of exasperation in Phinehas' inquiry, since he, as prophet-priest (see 48.1-3) was likely the one delivering God's message to the people. The truth was expected from his mouth, since his words originated with God.

2.3.3.d Oath, Fable, Revelation

In this final section Pseudo-Philo is careful to show God as both faithful to his word and defined by it. God's response to Phinehas is one of the longest monologues in LAB. The speech can be divided into three main sections. The first section is the shortest, and entails an affirmation of the relationship God established with Israel from the beginning, a relationship founded upon God's sworn oath (47.3). The second section is a peculiar fable involving a lion who inhabits a forest full of other animals (47.4-6). The fable is intended to convey the wickedness of Israel in the events leading up to their defeat. The third and final section is God's elucidation of the fable, his incrimination of Israel's idolatry, and his admission of deceit (47.7-8).

The first section, in 47.3, narrates God's response to Phinehas' plea from 46.4–47.2. God's words to Phineas are remarkable for two reasons. First, when God says, *Per me iuravi* ('I myself have sworn', 47.3), this entails a near-verbatim citation of Genesis 22.16.[133] These are God's words of affirmation to Abraham after the (near) sacrifice of Isaac, the so-called 'Akedah'. Earlier in LAB, Balaam makes a similar request of God ('enlighten your servant', 18.4) and receives in reply a recollection of the Akedah (cf. 18.5).[134] The importance of this event to Israel's identity throughout its history is well known; here the Promise was 'fully' ratified as it was confirmed at the very moment of its destruction.[135] Indeed, at the time of Pseudo-Philo's composition of his narrative, many Jewish authors found in the Akedah an anchor point for their divergent rhetorical emphases; this phenomenon only intensified after the 1st century CE.[136] In LAB 47, God affirms his dependability to Phinehas through an echo of the divine vow formula spoken at the creation of his people through a promise (cf. 32.1-4). Second, LAB is careful to indicate that these words were spoken to Phinehas alone, and not

[133] The Vulgate of Genesis 22.16 has *per memet ipsum iuravi dicit Dominus*. Cf. the Hebrew (בי נשבעתי נאם יהוה) and Greek (κατ᾽ ἐμαυτοῦ ὤμοσα λέγει κύριος).

[134] Treatments of the sacrifice of Isaac in LAB are varied. Earlier work focussed on 18.5 and 32.2-4 for the purpose of discerning a link between Jewish and Christian developments of 'atonement theory'. See Philip R. Davies and Bruce D. Chilton, 'The Soteriological Significance of the Sacrifice of Isaac', *CBQ* 39 (1977): 45-75; C. T. R. Hayward, 'The Sacrifice of Isaac and Jewish Polemic Against Christianity', *CBQ* 52 (1990): 292-306; Bruce Norman Fisk, 'Offering Isaac Again and Again: Pseudo-Philo's Use of the Aqedah as Intertext', *CBQ* 62 (2000): 481-507. Recent work has preferred to understand the use of the Akedah within the narrative itself as a significant element in LAB's theological outlook. For a recent comprehensive analysis of the function of the three explicit Akedah references in LAB, see Tavis A. Bohlinger, 'The Akedah in Pseudo-Philo: A Paradigm of Divine-Human Reciprocity', *JSP* 25 (2016): 189-227.

[135] See especially Shalom Spiegel, *The Last Trial: On the Legends and Lore of the Command to Abraham to Offer Isaac as a Sacrifice: The Akedah*, trans. J. Goldin (New York: Behrman House, 1979).

[136] For rabbinic references, see Spiegel, *The Last Trial*, 40, 41n15, 67–72. Later Christian references occur at *1 Clem.* 31.3; *Mart. Pol.* 14.1; *Barn.* 7.3; *Tertullian, Adv. Jud.* 13.20–21; *Prax.* 21.4; Justin, *1 Apol.* 50.10; *Dial.* 40.1–3; 72.2–3; 114.2; Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 1.10; 23.1. On the pervasiveness of Akedah references in LAB, see Tavis A. Bohlinger, 'A Survey of Pseudo-Philo's Use of the Akedah', *HENOCH* 38 (2016): 15-31.

to the people (*dixit ad eum*, 47.3). This is significant, because it reveals a progression through chapters 44–47 in terms of both the recipients and the delivery of God's speeches. In chapter 44, God responds to Micah and his mother in monologue, his words unheard by either individual. In chapter 45, God directs his response 'to the adversary', not to Beel or the people. In chapter 46, God answers 'them', i.e. the people, but the context suggests that only Phinehas heard, and only thereafter did he deliver the message to the people (46.1; cf. 47.2).[137] This being the case, God's opening words to Phinehas in 47.3 signal the climax to the narrative thread begun in LAB 44. This is the first time God speaks directly to any character in the narrative since Cenaz,[138] the very first of the Judges after Joshua's death.[139] God's initial direct speech to Cenaz is predicated by his plea for divine 'enlightenment' (25.6). This suggests that when God's faithful leaders request revelation from him, he answers. When they act or ask presumptuously, as in the case of Beel, the end result is disaster.

The second section of God's response is an elaborate fable concerning a lion who rules a forest kingdom full of animals (47.4-6).[140] A creature from a different forest kills all the cubs of the lion's subjects, but the lion does nothing in response. But then a small animal from the lion's forest comes and eats up the cub of another 'wicked' animal. The lion is enraged, throws the entire forest into an uproar, and a great number of the animals are killed. At this point, a different cub from another forest arrives, rebukes and kills the wicked lion, and is established as the new ruler of the forest. Discerning the meaning of the parable and the relationship it has to Israel's circumstances is a challenge. As Perrot admits, 'La suite de la fable est plus difficile à saisir et semble échapper à la situation immédiate'.[141] The best approach is to rely upon Pseudo-Philo's own interpretation, which is given by God himself in the final section of LAB 47.

First of all, however, we should note how the parable begins. God has just confirmed to Phinehas his oath made with Abraham as the reason for his continuing relationship with his

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[137] The irony in this context is that the terms for the sacred oracular instruments of Israel, the Urim and Thummim, translate literally as 'the demonstration and the *truth*' (46.1). According to Harrington, 'Pseudo-Philo', 360, these Latin terms render 'the Gk. *dēlōsis kai alētheia* and the Heb. *'wrym wtmym*'. In the Bible, the Urim and Thummin were used by the high priest in high-profile decisions (cf. Num 27.21; 1 Sam 14.41).

[138] In the intervening narrative, God speaks through his 'messenger' (*misit angelum suum et dixit*), including to the people as a whole (30.2), Gideon (35.1-7), Jair (38.4) and the parents of Samson (42.3, 6-8), but never without an intermediary as with Cenaz (25.6; 26.1-4, 12-13) and Phinehas (47.3; cf. 48.1). This is significant because of the importance it grants these later leaders of Israel. This also reveals LAB's view of the period of the Judges as a time in Israel's history when the voice of God was one step removed from his people, and at times conspicuously absent. See Nickelsburg, 'Leaders', 53, on Cenaz's role as a leader of Israel '*par excellence*'.

[139] Upon Joshua's death, the Israelites also 'inquired of the Lord' before going into battle (46.1) so that any sin amongst them might be rooted out; in LAB, success depends upon purity. Thus the opening event of Judges is recapitulated inversely at its end (cf. 25.1-2).

[140] The text is extensive, and thus not cited here for practical reasons.

[141] SC230, 207.

people, and indeed, it is the reason why God answers Phinehas at all. Yet God's word is been called into question by the people (and Phinehas) due to his deceptive counsel to 'go up and fight'. Now God directs Phinehas to 'say to the people, "Stand and hear the word of the LORD". These words the LORD says' (47.3, 4). But the question immediately arises: how can the people trust anything that God says to them now after he just deceived them twice? Pseudo-Philo has already foreshadowed this speech clarifying God's actions in the previous instance in which he answered the people: 'If you wish, go up and fight . . . then it will be told to you (*et tunc vobis dicetur*) why you have fallen (*cecidistis*) before them' (46.3). The perfect tense of *cado* permits a level of temporal ambiguity by which LAB could be referring to *both* the first (past) and second (future) defeat. Whether or not this is the case, LAB gives God the priority *to define the future through divine speech in the present*. Whilst God is lying to his people about granting them military victory, he is also foretelling his future activity of revelation regarding their defeat. In other words, at one and the same time he is both judging his rebellious people and offering them hope through his words. These predictions become reality when Phinehas says to the people, 'Stand and hear the word of the Lord' (47.3),[142] and then begins, 'These words the Lord says' (47.4).[143] Although one might question how much can be divulged through the simple repetition of terms ('the word of the Lord . . . These words the Lord says'), we should recall from our study of LAB 23 (see 1.2.2 above) that a similar redundancy is employed by Pseudo-Philo elsewhere. At the beginning and ending of Joshua's covenant, we find a corresponding formula: 'The Lord says this . . . These are the words that the LORD spoke to me this night' (23.4, 13). Indeed, in our present context at the close of chapter 47, after the Tribes are finally victorious over Benjamin, Pseudo-Philo writes: 'in that time, the LORD repaid to Micah and his mother all *he had said*. And Micah was destroyed in the fire and his mother was rotting away, *just as the LORD had said* concerning them' (47.12, italics added). These are the closing words of the Judges period as narrated by Pseudo-Philo. The emphasis on God's word is a fitting capstone to this extended section from chapters 25–47 on the period of the Judges. Pseudo-Philo effectively removes any doubt that God's word is at the centre of the relationship between him and his people, both to bless and to judge.[144]

The final section of God's response is his public incrimination of the people for their sin of idolatry. The end of the speech includes an interpretation of the lion fable (47.7-8a) and a final warning (47.8b). God's interpretation of the fable is clear: the people were

[142] *State et audite verbum Domini*.
[143] *Hec dicit Dominus*.
[144] Note Murphy, *Pseudo-Philo*, 183.

'unprovoked' (*Et nullus zelavit*) by Micah's idolatry and 'led astray' by him (*sed omnes seducti estis*). God rebukes his people who were silent whilst their own children were being sacrificed to idols,[145] but were galvanised by the death of a woman (who, according to LAB, deserved to die for her sins regardless),[146] just as the animals in the forest were unmoved by the death of their cubs by an outsider, but enraged by the death of one cub by a near relation. Indeed, the people have actually gone against the will of God by defending the cause of an adulterous woman, when they should have been 'provoked' by the idolatry of Micah (cf. 44.7).[147]

In the second part of the speech, God delivers on his earlier promise to reveal the reason why his people suffered defeat (47.8):

> *Propterea fefelli vos et dixi: Tradam vobis illos. Et nunc disperdidi vos, qui tunc tacuerunt. Et sic vindicabo in omnes qui inique gesserunt.*
>
> Therefore I have deceived you and said, 'I will deliver them to you.' And now I have destroyed you, who were silent then. And so I will take my revenge on all who have acted wickedly.

This statement includes two fulfillments and one prediction by God. The first fulfillment is of God's public promise to tell the people why they suffered the first defeat (46.3). The second fulfillment is of God's earlier hidden promise to 'destroy' (*consumo*, 45.6) both the sinners and those who were silent. The third element is a promise to 'take revenge' (*vindico*) on those who 'acted wickedly' (*inique gesserunt*). This promise is fulfilled immediately thereafter when the Tribes are victorious in their third and final battle against Benjamin.[148] Not only does God fulfill his promise of judgement against Benjamin, but at the conclusion of the chapter he enacts the punishment of Micah and his mother, predicted earlier in the narrative (cf. 44.9). During that act of judgment, when they are being consumed by fire, Pseudo-Philo

[145] This ironical situation is alluded to in the parable of the lion, a character who ignored the destruction of 'the fruit of [the animals] wombs', but went into a rage over the destruction of 'the small cub of another wicked animal'. On the practice of child sacrifice in ancient Israel, see Armin Lange, '"They Burn Their Sons and Daughters. That Was No Command of Mine" (Jer 7:31): Child Sacrifice in the Hebrew Bible and in the Deuteronomistic Jeremiah Redaction', in *Human Sacrifice in Jewish and Christian Tradition*, NBS 112 (Leiden: Brill, 2018).

[146] Pseudo-Philo remarks that the woman had committed adultery, and thus deserved her punishment: 'they abused his concubine until she died, for she had strayed from her man at one time when she committed sin with the Amalekites, and on account of this the Lord God delivered her into the hands of sinners' (45.3).

[147] Frederick J. Murphy, 'Retelling the Bible: Idolatry in Pseudo-Philo', *JBL* 107 (1988): 279, writes concerning LAB, 'Idolatry is the root of all evil'. As he indicates, this outlook is reflected in the rabbis, as famously discussed by E. P. Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism: A Comparison of Patterns of Religion* (Philadelphia: Augsburg Fortress, 1977), 113, 134-35, 174.

[148] Pseudo-Philo exaggerates the Bible's 25,000 men killed to 85,000 men and women, with only 600 men surviving.

declares unapologetically that God is fulfilling his words exactly as stated (47.12): *que locutus est . . . locutus fuerat*.[149]

2.3.4 Summary

For Pseudo-Philo, the increasing idolatry of the people through the period of the Judges is so debased that God is justified in leading them astray through a lie in order to punish their sins. There is no other way to so disturb the people's heart than through shattering their convoluted paradigm of divine justice. Micah's gross disregard for the Law capitulates the people into a situation of such horrific sexual violence that the result is civil war. God's punishment of his people through defeat in battle, although initiated by a lie, accords with the deuteronomistic promises of blessing and cursing (cf. Deut 28.15-68). But in an unexpected twist, God shows himself to be true to his word even whilst speaking untruth. This is the extreme to which Pseudo-Philo is willing to go theologically to explain both the power and the prerogative of divine speech. The image of God that emerges from the darkroom of this episode in Israel's history is somewhat unstable. The sharp contrast that we might expect between the deceitful words of people and the unshakable truth of God is dulled in this presentation of a divine word of untruth. What has Pseudo-Philo sought to achieve here theologically that, in his view, his literary forebears were unable to convey? What is missing from the picture of God as presented in so many other early Jewish works, or even from Scripture, that demands a God who lies to fulfill his purposes? Was the situation of the Jewish people at the time of LAB's writing so hopeless, that Pseudo-Philo intended to turn accusations of deceit against God by his people into a message of hope in the ultimate fulfillment of his promises? Perhaps we are not far from the answer here. But however we may attempt to answer these questions, one thing is certain about the picture of God in LAB 44-47; the certainty of his word enables it to function as an instrument of judgement when untrue. The fact that this claim entails a theologically dangerous paradox apparently does not appear to concern Pseudo-Philo. His greater point is made through the irony, that God's word is not only a source of certain hope, but also a means of righteous judgement.

[149] *Et in illo tempore reddidit Dominus Miche et matri eius omnia que locutus est. Et erat Micha dissolutus igne, et mater eius marcescens, sicut locutus fuerat Dominus de eis*.

2.4 Conclusion

This chapter has taken as its central focus the word of God in LAB analysed through two central propositions: God's word is the source of Israel's hope, and his word is the instrument of Israel's judgement. I chose to emphasize divine speech as a conduit to grasping the theological basis of and rationale for Pseudo-Philo's reworking of the biblical narrative. God's character in LAB is most fully revealed in the things he says, and then in his corresponding actions to fulfil those words. I first argued that God's word is the source of Israel's hope through a study of the golden calf incident in LAB 12 and Joshua's covenant speech in LAB 23. The interaction between God and Moses reveals a divine commitment to the people of Israel that is rooted in the beginning and end of history. The cosmological significance of Israel to the plan and purpose of God offers his people a hope that transcends even their worst moments of failure and wickedness. If God remained faithful to his people in the face of their capitulation to idolatry at the creation and worship of the golden calf, then surely he will remain their steadfast hope until the end, just as promised. Indeed, God 'will go out of his way *not* to treat Israel according to its deserts'.[150] God's word establishes and sustains the people of God throughout their history, because his words and actions are forever rooted in the covenant with Abraham. Pseudo-Philo, reflecting Isaianic language, stresses the priority of God's choosing of both Abraham and Sarah in his divine act of 'quarrying' them out of the rock. God himself called as witnesses both the future people to be born from Sarah's womb and the 'night', that crucial time of divine revelation. God's covenant with Abraham is recapitulated in Joshua's covenant speech to confirm the divine origin of Israel through the word of God.

The second proposition I argued for is that God's word in LAB is the instrument of Israel's judgement. This was supported through an examination of the extended re-narration of the end of Judges in LAB 44–47. For Pseudo-Philo, the words of God spoken to his people are the most effective instrument of judgment possible, because his words are always true *even when he lies*. God lies as a means to fulfill the truth. Because of the expected certainty of divine speech, because of the fact that what God says is truth unmarred, the severest punishment feasible for God's *covenant* people involves a divine transgression of divine speech. When Murphy writes, 'The all-encompassing pattern of prediction and fulfillment implies that everything is under that direction of God and that God's word is to be trusted absolutely',[151] we can add, 'even when it is untrue'. The picture of God's character that

[150] Jacobson, *Commentary*, 245.
[151] Murphy, *Pseudo-Philo*, 24.

emerges from LAB 44–47 is remarkable for its complexity. One is invited to sit and ponder the mind of Pseudo-Philo and the condition of the Jewish people at the time of the work's composition. Can a God who lies be trusted? The answer in LAB is 'yes', because his words function as a means of punishment for the very fact of their dependability.

As I mentioned in the introduction to this chapter, these two propositions as argued present a challenge to positions that, on the one hand, stress the importance of divine speech to the narrative of LAB without calling sufficient attention to the intended function of this picture of God for the author's Jewish community, and on the other hand, emphasise God's role as history's prime mover for the sake of Israel's hope without clarifying the priority of divine speech to the working of God in history. Concerning the first position, Murphy (and Perrot) is clear that 'God is defined through divine-human interaction'.[152] But whilst LAB is certainly preoccupied with the history of Israel in relation to her God, it must be clarified that this is first and foremost a *history of speech*, that is, a history predicated upon the words of God to, for, and about his people. Concerning the second position, Jacobson is keen to stress the sovereignty of God in his people's history, but to the point of overlooking Pseudo-Philo's attention to divine speech as the impetus for that history and thus the locus of Israel's hope and judgment. The corrective I have sought to provide above can be understood as an attempt to integrate these two emphases. In LAB, God initiates and maintains his people's existence through what he says, and his speech determines his every action on their behalf. Pseudo-Philo directs the focus of his Jewish audience to God's speeches in their early history in order to explain the character of their God in terms of hope and judgment.

The analysis above is hardly exhaustive of the motif of divine speech in LAB. I hope, however, to have offered a substantial insight into one major aspect of the narrative: the character of God as exhibited by Pseudo-Philo. As argued, this can most clearly be seen in the novel words spoken by God himself, and those spoken about God from other characters in the narrative. Upon this first thematic foundation block of LAB we can now move to add a second, namely, the anticipated response of God's people to divine speech. Whilst in the course of this examination I have briefly touched upon human responses to divine speech, these have been of subsidiary concern in order to keep our focus on God and what he says or what is said about him. In the next chapter, my focus shifts to the human element, namely, faith. Pseudo-Philo presents the ideal response of God's people to his divine revelation through elevating key characters from Israel's history who exhibit radical trust in God. I examine three of these 'leaders' of Israel through a novel structural pattern of faith that is

[152] Murphy, *Pseudo-Philo*, 224.

consistently applied by the author throughout his narrative. At the conclusion to the next chapter, and coupled with the present, I hope to have constructed a robust figure of LAB to employ within our comparative compositional frame along with Romans.

3. Human Faith in LAB

3.1 Introduction

In this present chapter, I intend to complement the previous chapter by addressing the necessary contingent human response to divine speech. In LAB, trust in God is presented in an exceptional manner, through a narrative that weaves elaborate additions to the biblical text in order to showcase examples of radical faith in God. In fact, Pseudo-Philo is so intent on articulating the proper response of God's people to his spoken promises and decrees that he structures his stories according to a discernible pattern. In what follows, I demonstrate the presence of a 'faith paradigm', using three case studies in an attempt to articulate Pseudo-Philo's theology of faith. This human aspect of the author's theological perspective will be critical for our comparison with Paul's language of faith in the subsequent chapters on Romans. Whilst that comparison will await the conclusion to this thesis, the alert reader may at this point already note numerous points of contact, and disconnect, between the two authors.

Commentators have well observed the importance of faith to Pseudo-Philo's rewriting of Israel's early history.[1] Reasonable solutions to internal and external threats against the people of God, though well-intentioned, prove to be ultimately wrongheaded.[2] One example is the crisis at the Red Sea, in which the people of Israel find themselves trapped between an impassable body of water and Pharaoh's army (LAB 10.2-6; Exod 14.1-31).[3] The Tribes (named by Pseudo-Philo) are split between three options: surrender, suicide, or battle.[4] But Israel's existence in LAB, as we will see below, is always maintained by God alone and contrary to expectations. The truly faithful respond to this reality of divine sovereignty and

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[1] See especially George W. E. Nickelsburg, 'Good and Bad Leaders in Pseudo-Philo's Liber Antiquitatum Biblicarum', in *Ideal Figures in Ancient Judaism: Profiles and Paradigms*, ed. George W. E. Nickelsburg and John J. Collins, SBLSCS 12 (Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1980); Howard Jacobson, *A Commentary on Pseudo-Philo's Liber Antiquitatum Biblicarum: With Latin Text and English Translation* (Leiden: Brill, 1996), 245; Frederick J. Murphy, 'God in Pseudo-Philo', *JSJ* 19 (1986): 1-18.

[2] Frederick J. Murphy, *Pseudo-Philo: Rewriting the Bible* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 265: 'Pseudo-Philo presents a number of instances when Israelites with good intentions confront a crisis, take what seem to be reasonable steps based on good faith and trust in God, but that are wrong and not supported by God'. I counter this claim to 'good faith and trust in God' by focusing on Pseudo-Philo's apparent effort to juxtapose two possible types of faith, insufficient and radical.

[3] As in the previous chapter, all citations of LAB from this point will be referred to by number only, except when a distinction is required from the biblical text.

[4] In Exodus 14.11-12, the people only suggest that 'it would have been better for us to serve the Egyptians than to die in the wilderness', without any mention of different courses of action. For a prolonged discussion of the possible ancient haggadic origins of LAB's version, see Charles Perrot and Pierre-Maurice Bogaert, *Pseudo-Philon: Les antiquités bibliques II*, Sources Chrétiennes, vol. 230 (Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 1976), 108-109 (hereafter SC230).

fidelity by assuming a posture of faith against all odds. In the example of the Red Sea, the resolution to the crisis comes after Moses' plea and God's deliverance through the parting of the waters and the destruction of Pharaoh's army. This sort of interaction is typical in LAB, in which God's definitive action on behalf of his people is prefixed by a stance of *irrational* faith taken by a lone individual in the midst of a crisis.

My argument concerning human faith is stimulated in part by two scholars whose work has set the interpretive framework through which LAB is often understood. I intend to offer a corrective that builds on their best points yet provides a theological nuance I consider lacking. The first component of this framework is the so-called 'plan-form' proposed by Murphy.[5] In the plan form, there is a disconnect between the plans of God and of people. He lays out a basic structure: '(1) Humans plan something contrary to God's will; (2) an individual or group opposes the first plan and proposes a counterplan; (3) a dissenter arises who objects to the counterplan on the grounds that it does not conform to God's will; (4) God intervenes, bypassing the counterplan and proving the dissenter right'.[6] Notably, the framework rests on a conflict of *will*, of God on one side and of humans on the other.[7] Yet whilst Murphy's schema on the divine-human disconnect is helpful in recognising the presence of a pattern, my contention is that the pattern by which Pseudo-Philo constructs his narratives coheres with a framework of *trust*. LAB presents the numerous episodes constituting Israel's history according to a 'faith paradigm'.[8] Indeed, as will be suggested throughout, this paradigm serves as a didactic tool for his readers.

The faith paradigm in LAB is consistent and involves a few key elements. They can be articulated as follows: a threat looms against God's people; a sensible solution is offered; a lone individual dissents; that individual is persecuted; God vindicates the individual's faith through his personal intervention. The result is deliverance from the crisis, both for that individual of faith and for the people as a whole. In Pseudo-Philo's theological perspective of Israel, individual fidelity affects corporate well-being. The pattern does change slightly in some cases, where the author interjects a prayer by the faithful individual, as in Hannah's

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[5] Frederick J. Murphy, 'Divine Plan, Human Plan: A Structuring Theme in Pseudo-Philo', *JQR* 77 (1986): 5-14.

[6] Murphy, 'God', 5. See also Murphy, *Pseudo-Philo*, 42-43.

[7] Jacobson, *Commentary*, 245, claims that Murphy's article on 'plans' thoroughly discusses the theme of faith in LAB, but I can find little evidence of this in the actual article. The overwhelming emphasis in Murphy, 'Divine Plan, Human Plan' is the structural disparity between human and divine intentions, rather than, as Jacobson rightly says, 'absolute and unyielding faith in God, and in God alone'.

[8] At this point an objection might be raised that Pseudo-Philo is simply repeating unconsciously what is already found in the original canonical record of each episode. However, I have taken care to select two episodes, Abraham and Amram, that are completely new fabrications not found in the Bible, and one that is highly dramatised from its biblical source. If the pattern is consistent in these three accounts, then we have good reason to suggest that the author was intentional in his application in each case (and others besides).

story (see below),[9] but the basic structure holds true just as the central message stays consistent: God delivers his people when they trust him against all odds. Whilst surely the narrative exhibits a conflict between the will of God and the intentions of human characters, as Murphy suggests, the text points to an author thoroughly preoccupied with the human response to divine revelation in the face of crisis. To be fair, a consistent feature of Murphy's work is his literary-critical approach that is more focused on narrative features in LAB, and less on theological interpretation of the text. Unfortunately, this also means that the relevance of the stories to Pseudo-Philo's contemporary audience is sometimes obscured or left unstated, as is the case with the motif of faith.[10] If we are to ensure a fruitful comparison with Paul, the theological questions must be addressed. An important challenge to the plan form is this: if the author intends to stress the contrast between divine and humans plans, then why is God portrayed as mostly behind the scenes in each act, only to emerge in force in the climactic finale? In each of our case studies below, the conflict between various plans actually occurs on the human level; the ungodly characters act on arrogant presumption, the godly act on radical faith.

The second component of the dominant interpretive framework is Nickelsburg's study of good and bad leaders in LAB.[11] Yet his emphasis on characters of prominence, especially good leaders, fails to account for the *non*-leader figures in the narrative, whose faith in many ways exceeds that of the divinely appointed leaders of Israel. Whilst Nickelsburg is right to suggest that Pseudo-Philo emphasises Israel's need for faithful, God-fearing leaders, especially in the face of idolatry and foreign oppression,[12] his focus blurs the view of those important characters who rise to prominence simply for their stance of faith, without a divine commission or elevated social status. For Pseudo-Philo, radical faith is required of God's people at every level. Indeed, a corollary of my argument in this chapter is that the radical faith espoused by the author of LAB is intended to provide a principle of trust for the everyday Israelite of Pseudo-Philo's own day.

The three case studies below cover a range of personalities from Israel's foundational history. Abraham, Amram, and Hannah, and the crises they face individually, present vivid

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[9] Other notable examples of intercession preceding deliverance include Cenaz (27.7) and Phinehas (47.1-2).

[10] Murphy, *Pseudo-Philo*, 244-61, proposes that the major themes in LAB include covenant, moral causality, human and divine plans, idolatry, slaves and servants, protology and eschatology, women, Israel's inner harmony, messianism, and angelology. He ranks these in importance based upon the frequency of appearance of various Latin terms. Perhaps the relative lack of use of the term *fides* in LAB causes him, and others, to overlook the theme of faith, but as will be shown in this chapter, faith is exhibited through the narrative presentation even if the term itself is not present in every case. See further SC230, 39-65.

[11] Nickelsburg, 'Leaders'.

[12] Nickelsburg, 'Leaders', 63. This emphasis may be the reason why the narrative ends with the death of Saul, just before David takes the throne.

images of Pseudo-Philo's theology of human faith. In each episode, these characters stand against a variety of antagonists in a declaration of trust in God against all odds. Importantly, none of these three receive any official sanction as leaders of Israel. Their faith is put on display as the ideal for every member of God's people.[13] The narrative of Abraham at the fiery furnace in LAB 6 is notable partly due to the fact that this is our first introduction to the patriarch of Israel apart from a prophecy concerning him spoken by his great-great-great-grandmother, Melcha, earlier in LAB (4.11). Chapter 6 is critical to any study of faith in LAB due to the fact that Abraham is acting on an immovable trust in God prior to the expression of the covenant promises of Genesis 12–22. Next, the story of Amram is a superb example of Pseudo-Philo's narrative license with regard to characters only mentioned by name in the Bible. As if to explain the greatness of his son, Moses, Amram is set forth by Pseudo-Philo as an exceptional person of faith in the face of overwhelming majority opinion and mortal danger, who grasps hold of God's word that was spoken before Israel even existed. The author presents a radically different characterisation of Amram compared to other Jewish traditions, turning him from a misguided leader into a paragon of faith. Finally, Hannah is in some respects the most extraordinary of the three (and, indeed, of most examples of faithful Israelites in LAB). Her social status as a barren first wife in the context of ancient Israel is lamentable, but Pseudo-Philo raises the stakes of her ordeal of faith even higher through remarkable modifications of the biblical narrative. She, like Abraham and Amram, lacks a direct word from God upon which to anchor her faith. Hannah's example of trust in God thus breaches the strata of social hierarchy to provide Pseudo-Philo's readers with a clear model of faith to imitate, in a contemporary context where the apparent silence of God towards his people only exacerbated their anxiety for his deliverance and the fulfilment of his promises so long delayed.

3.2 Abraham and the Fiery Furnace (LAB 6)

In this first section I analyse the faith paradigm as it functions in Abraham's escape from the fiery furnace. This story is found elsewhere in the Jewish corpus, but connected to the Tower of Babel only in LAB.[14] The significance of Abraham for early Jewish writers cannot be

[13] I have intentionally avoided examining any of the prominent, faithful leaders of Israel in this chapter, including Moses, Joshua, Cenaz (who figures significantly in LAB), Phinehas, or David, because they are individually commissioned by God and engage in actual dialogue with him. But Pseudo-Philo often elaborates the biblical accounts of personalities who exhibit radical faith apart from any explicit word from God, for the sake of offering tangible exemplars of faith for his readers' benefit, characters who must trust God without talking to or hearing from him directly.

[14] Note SC230, 94-95.

overstated, and for Pseudo-Philo in particular, 'father Abraham embodies (literally) Israel's past history and present standing as God's covenant people'.[15] Of extant early Jewish literature, accounts of Abraham escaping a fiery furnace are commonplace, based upon the Hebrew translation of the place-name Ur as 'fire' (אור; cf. Gen 11.31).[16] These are often linked to the similar account of the three Hebrews in Daniel 3.[17] However, Pseudo-Philo alone combines this story with the building of the Tower of Babel, by linking the furnace to the bricks needed in the Tower's construction.[18]

3.2.1 External Threat (LAB 6.1-5)

When the people (*populus terre*) determine to build the Tower, they meet resistance from twelve men, including Abraham, who refuse to participate. The people take them forcefully before their leaders, including Nimrod,[19] where they are questioned for their refusal to write their names on bricks and contribute to the building project. In response, the twelve confess their adherence to God (6.4):

> *Non mittimus vobiscum lapides, nec coniungimur voluntati vestre. Unum Dominum novimus, et ipsum adoramus. Et si nos mittatis in ignem cum lapidibus vestris, non consentiemus vobis.*
>
> We are not casting in bricks, nor are we joining in your scheme. We know the one LORD, and him we worship. Even if you throw us into the fire with your bricks, we will not join you.

An external threat is realised in the leaders' anger (*irati*) and subsequent decree, 'As they have spoken, so do to them. And unless they take part with us in throwing in the bricks, you will have the fire devour them along with your bricks' (6.5).[20] Thus the first element in the

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[15] Bruce Norman Fisk, *Do You Not Remember? Scripture, Story and Exegesis in the Rewritten Bible of Pseudo-Philo*, JSPSS 37 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2001), 300. Cf. John M. G. Barclay, *Paul and the Gift* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2015), 273.

[16] For variations on Abraham's escape from a fiery furnace see Louis H. Feldman, 'Prolegomenon', in *The Biblical Antiquities of Philo* (New York: Ktav, 1971), lxxxix; SC230, 96-97. Geza Vermés, *Scripture and Tradition in Judaism: Haggadic Studies*, vol. 4 (Leiden: Brill, 1961), 85-90, articulates the purpose of the story for Pseudo-Philo's readers: 'The legend of the fiery furnace establishes a definite link between the brick kiln used for the baking of the materials needed in the construction of the Tower of Babel, the deliverance of Abraham by God (Gen xv and Is. xxix), and his flight abroad. Yet here as elsewhere, the midrash has also a doctrinal purpose, namely, the exaltation of the saving virtue of faith' (89). In the case of Jubilees and Josephus, however, the contrast is between Abraham and Haran, not Abraham versus Nimrod, Joktan, and the people, as in LAB.

[17] The links with Daniel 3 have been well-noted, although this is not unique to LAB; see, for example, Murphy, 'Divine Plan, Human Plan', 9; SC230, 96-97.

[18] Louis Ginzberg, *Legends of the Jews*, 2nd ed. (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 2003), 161n76.

[19] The negative view of Nimrod in LAB is consistent with the rest of Jewish literature. See Ginzberg, *Legends*, 177-78; SC230, 96; Murphy, *Pseudo-Philo*, 36-37.

[20] *Sicut locuti sunt, sic eis facite. Et nisi consenserint vobiscum mittere lapides, cosumetis eos igne cum lapidibus vestris*.

faith paradigm, an external threat: God's people, represented by the 12 men,[21] face wholesale destruction by outsiders who do not worship the one true God. The twelve do not 'walk in our ways' (6.4), the people say to their leaders. The decision of the twelve threatens the goal of the Tower project, which was intended to unify the people: 'let us make a name for ourselves; otherwise we shall be scattered abroad upon the face of the earth' (Gen 11.4). Pseudo-Philo adds to their primary motivation a desire to make 'a *glory* upon the earth' (6.1, italics added).[22] Pseudo-Philo here constructs a situation where the godless, who are the majority, hold a position of power from which to oppress and eliminate the godly, who are the (extreme) minority.[23] They constitute an external threat inasmuch as they oppose God and oppose his people. The godly express their faith in God through explicit phrases indicating their devotion: they 'know one Lord', which echoes the Shema of Deuteronomy 6.4 ('Hear O Israel: the LORD is our God, the LORD alone');[24] they 'worship' (*adoro*) this one God. The external threat of death at the hands of the ungodly, however, does not deter them from their fidelity.

3.2.2 Rational Solution (LAB 6.6-10)

The second element in the faith paradigm is a rational solution to the external threat. The solution seems legitimate because it is predicated upon a desire to uphold God's honour through hope in his deliverance. The solution offered is typically the only obvious option available. For the very reason that it makes sense and is achievable by human effort, in the logic of Pseudo-Philo, the rational solution is invalid. Irrational faith is legitimate faith.

Joktan offers a solution to the danger faced by the twelve. He is a powerful man, the 'chief of the leaders' (*primus princeps*), including Nimrod and Fenech.[25] Initially, he grants the twelve men a period of seven days in order to 'repent of their evil plans' (6.6).[26] But he then immediately pursues a secret strategy by which he might rescue his kinsmen, for

[21] Namely, the twelve Tribes of Israel; see Murphy, *Pseudo-Philo*, 43.

[22] Genesis 11.4 does not include the words, 'and a glory'. Pseudo-Philo thus heightens the wickedness of the people beyond the biblical narrative. Jacobson, *Commentary*, 354, suggests that the 'expansion is exegetical'.

[23] Note Murphy, 'Divine Plan, Human Plan', 9.

[24] Jacobson, *Commentary*, 358, links the terminology in LAB to instances in the Palestinian Targum at Deut 6:4 and the Testament of Naphtali, both concerning ritual blessings of sons that include warnings against idolatry.

[25] For a more positive analysis of Joktan than the highly negative portrayal in Murphy, 'Divine Plan, Human Plan', 7-10 and Murphy, *Pseudo-Philo*, 45, see Phillip Michael Sherman, *Babel's Tower Translated: Genesis 11 and Ancient Jewish Interpretation* (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 142-46, who considers him 'faithful but misguided' (144). Sherman's analysis is less convincing once the other possible biblical antecedents are analysed, including Daniel 6 and Jeremiah 37–38 (see below).

[26] *si penituerint super consiliis suis pessimis*.

according to Pseudo-Philo, 'he was of their tribe and served God' (6.6).[27] Joktan is part of the godly line stemming from Shem (4.9-15; 5.6), and Abraham is the seventh generation from Joktan (cf. Gen 11.10-26). The link between Joktan and Abraham is important to note because, although Joktan shares the godly lineage of Abraham, his position of leadership puts him in a difficult situation due to Abraham's radical stance of faith.

Joktan's sympathies lead him to propose a solution to the threat contingent upon God's power and trustworthiness. He articulates an escape plan that involves various elements of trickery and deceit, but also a remarkable amount of his own personal intervention. The men will flee to the mountains under cover of darkness, supported by material assistance and military protection provided by Joktan (6.7-8). He then comforts the twelve men, saying, 'Be confident and do not fear, for you will not die. For the God in whom you trust is powerful, and therefore be steadfast in him because he will free you and save you' (6.9).[28] These words suggest a confidence in God's power to save. But when we recall the speech of Beel as examined in our previous chapter (see above, 2.4.2), it is apparent that Joktan misspeaks. In LAB 45, Beel's proposed course of action is to fight the Benjaminites, assuring the people that they will win because 'the LORD will help you' (*Dominus adiuvabit vos*, 45.4). These words are strikingly similar to Joktan's confident assertion that God 'will free you and will save you', and demonstrate a consistency in Pseudo-Philo's conception of the relationship between human intentions and speech in relation to God. Both men assume God's obligation to his people, and thus take for granted his help on their terms. The 'faith' of these characters is shown to be deficient due to a reliance upon human agency. Characters who should be exemplars of faith make statements that on the surface sound pious, but in reality are a covering for self-determination.[29] Such presumption contrasts with Abraham's radical stance of faith, to which we now turn.

3.2.3 Radical Trust (LAB 6.11)

After Joktan's confident statement in God's certain deliverance, he reveals his preparations to the twelve men, ensuring their safe escape. In response, all the men express their gratefulness except one, Abraham. His response of faith is the antithesis to Joktan's audacity (6.10-11):

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[27] *de tribu eorum erat et Deo serviebat*.

[28] *Confidentes estote et non timeatis, non enim moriemini. Fortis est enim Deus in quo confiditis; et ideo stabiles estote in ipso, quia liberabit et salvabit vos*.

[29] A related example is Jephthah, who makes a foolish vow to God in return for success in battle (LAB 39.10; cf. Judg 11.29-33).

> *Et responderunt ad eum undecim viri dicentes, 'Invenerunt gratiam servi tui ante oculos tuos, quia solvimur nos de manibus superborum horum'. Abram autem solus tacuit. Et dixit dux ad eum, 'Quare non respondes mihi Abram serve Dei?' Respondit Abram et dixit, 'Ecce ego fugio hodie in montana et, si evasero ignem, exient ede montibus fere bestie et comedent nos, aut esce nobis deficient et moriemur fame, et inveniemur fubientes ante populum terre, cadentes in peccatis nostris. Et nunc vivit in quo confido, quia non movebor de loco meo in quo posuerunt me. Et si fuerit aliquod peccatum meum ut consumens consumar, fiat voluntas Dei'.*
>
> And eleven of the men answered [Joktan] and said, 'Your servants have found favour in your eyes, because we are rescued from the hands of these arrogant men'. But Abram alone was silent. And the leader said to him, 'Why do you not answer me, Abram servant of God?' Abram answered and said, 'Behold, today I flee to the mountains. And if I escape the fire, wild beasts will come out of the mountains and devour us; or we will lack food and die of famine; and we will be found fleeing from the people of this land but falling in our sins. And now as he in whom I trust lives I will not be moved from the place where they have put me. If there be any sin of mine so flagrant that I should be burned up, let the will of God be done'.

Jacobson suggests that 'the rhetoric of the passage is based on two biblical texts'.[30] The series of conditional sentences following 'flee to the mountains' recalls the language of both Amos 5.18-19 ('[The day of the LORD] is darkness, not light; as if someone fled from a lion, and was met by a bear, or went into a house and rested a hand against the wall, and was bitten by a snake') and 1 Kings 19.17 ('Whoever escapes from the sword of Hazael, Jehu shall kill; and whoever escapes from the sword of Jehu, Elisha shall kill').[31] In the former, there is a corresponding sense of judgement, whilst the latter resonates with the theme of divine rescue of God's faithful ones (cf. also 1 Kgs 19.18).

There is an additional passage that further informs the scriptural backdrop to Abraham's response. Psalm 139 is a robust eulogy of God's sovereignty and omniscience, attributed to David. The psalmist acknowledges his complete ignorance compared to God's intimate and comprehensive knowledge of his ways and being, similar to Abraham's statements in LAB 6.10. The psalmist writes, 'Where can I go from your spirit? // Or where can I flee from your presence? (Ps 139.7). The closing stanzas of the Psalm reflect the final lines of Abraham's speech in LAB, 'If there be any sin of mine so flagrant that I should be burned up, let the will of God be done' (6.11; cf Ps 139.23-24): the psalmist asks God to direct his ways, to 'know' even his internal thoughts, whilst Pseudo-Philo's Abraham demonstrates complete deference to the will of God. This is the theme of the entire psalm:

[30] Jacobson, *Commentary*, 365.
[31] Jacobson, *Commentary*, 365.

absolute submission to the sovereignty of God, and it mirrors Abraham's attitude in LAB 6. Taken together, Amos 5.18-19, 1 Kings 19.17, and Psalm 139 offer a suitable backdrop for Abraham's speech. His attitude towards Joktan is not simply one of resistance to human oppression. Abraham exemplifies ideal obeisance to God: 'I will not be moved from this place'.[32]

Yet whilst the faith of Abraham is evident from his words and behaviour, what is less apparent is the *source* of that faith. Whilst not explicitly narrated in LAB, Abraham has in some way come to 'know' and 'trust' God prior to the crisis at the furnace, and he bases his faith upon that knowledge (cf. 6.4, 11). Although Pseudo-Philo does not say as much, Abraham may have known about the prophecy regarding his birth and life as predicted by Melcha (4.11),[33] who proclaims, 'From this one [Selug] there will be born in the fourth generation one who will set his dwelling on high and will be called perfect and blameless; and he will be the father of nations, and his covenant will not be broken, and his seed will be multiplied forever'.[34] If this prophecy is for Pseudo-Philo the source of the patriarch's faith, it affirms once again the weight our author places on the word of God, especially considering the predilection of other ancient Jewish authors to attribute Abraham's trust in God to the patriarch's own reflections on nature or otherwise.[35] We might safely speculate that, for Pseudo-Philo, the origin of Abraham's trust in God was the prophecy spoken to his great grandmother, itself a paraphrase of the promises of 'seed' and blessing in Genesis 12-22, which formed the basis for his counter-intuitive stance against Joktan at the furnace. Still, as with the other two character studies below, there is no indication that Abraham heard directly from God prior to the furnace episode. This point is important to keep in mind as we consider the author's intended utility of the narrative for his contemporary Jewish audience; true faith in God does not require hearing directly from him, as so many of the prominent leaders of Israel experienced.

Abraham's dependance on the Lord is a radical statement of faith in God. Pseudo-Philo sets out an initial crisis to which a viable solution is offered, but then, through the counterintuitive stance of the patriarch, constructs a scenario impossible to resolve. Abraham

[32] SC230, 96, suggests a reference to the Temple in this declaration.

[33] On the function of this prophecy in LAB, see Charles Perrot, 'Les récits d'enfance dans la Haggada', *RSR* 55 (1967): 91.

[34] *Ex isto nascetur in quarta generatione qui ponat habitationem super excelsa, et perfectus vocabitur et inmaculatus, et pater gentium erit, et non dissolvetur testamentum eius, et semen eius in seculum multiplicabitur.*

[35] See especially the numerous accounts recorded in Ginzberg, *Legends*, 170-171.

rejects the secure option available to him and the others, deliverance through a powerful and pious insider, for a non-violent posture of expectation in God's power to save.[36]

3.2.4 Internal Threat (LAB 6.11-16)

We arrive now at the fourth element in the faith paradigm, namely, the manifestation of an internal threat. As demonstrated above, the second element in the faith paradigm is an external threat that comes from outside of God's people. An internal threat, on the other hand, comes from within, as a negative response to one individual's irrational stance of faith. In the logic of Pseudo-Philo, this penultimate step in the paradigm is the necessary prerequisite to divine vindication. Abraham endures both verbal and physical persecution from Joktan due to his unwavering trust in God. (6.11):

> *Et dixit ad eum dux: Sanguis tuus super caput tuum sit, si nolueris proficisci cum istis. Si autem volueris liberaberis; nam si volueris remanere, secundum quod vis remane. Et accipientes eum, construxerunt caminum et incenderunt eum igni, et lapides concrematos igni miserunt in caminum. Et tunc Iectan dux liquefactus sensu accepit Abram et misit eum cum lateribus in caminum ignis.*
>
> And the leader said to him, 'May your blood be upon your own head if you are not willing to go forth with these men. Now if you are willing to do so, you will be freed; but if you wish to stay, stay as you wish'. And they took him and built a furnace and lit it. And they threw bricks burned with fire into the furnace. And then the leader Joktan with great emotion took Abram and threw him along with the bricks into the fiery furnace.

The mortal repercussions of Abraham's defiance demonstrate two things. First, Joktan's verbal response to Abraham's expression of trust in God reveals a self-sufficiency which amounts to a position of *non*-faith. He 'contrasts with the much less presumptuous Abraham, who truly leaves things up to God and so receives divine approval'.[37] Second, Joktan's action of casting Abraham into the furnace exposes his true allegiance. His previously expressed convictions regarding the saving power of God are a thin veil for self-reliance and the seduction of power. There is a reason he did not include himself in the earlier statement to the twelve concerning the 'God in whom *you* trust' (6.9, italics added). Joktan's presumption is the perfect foil for Abraham's radical faith.

The verbal threat against Abraham is in response to his confession of trust in God. A conflict of wills is immediately apparent. Whilst Abraham concludes his confession of faith

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[36] Daniel J. Harrington, *Pseudo-Philon: Les antiquités bibliques I*, trans. Jacques Cazeaux, Sources Chrétiennes, vol. 229 (Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 1976), 96 (hereafter SC229): 'La resistance d'Abraham est ouverte, mais non violente: Dieu seul sauve'.

[37] Frederick J. Murphy, 'The Martial Option in Pseudo-Philo', *CBQ* 57 (1995): 682.

with words of abdication to God's will (*fiat voluntas Dei*, 6.11), Joktan's response only addresses *Abraham's* will. This omission from Joktan's speech is striking for a few reasons. First, Abraham's words convey a 'fatalistic resignation' to the will of God which is found at the corresponding juncture in Daniel 3.16-18.[38] Just as the three Hebrews abandoned themselves to God's will entirely ('If our God whom we serve is able to deliver us . . . let him deliver us', Dan 3.17), Abraham similarly confesses that he 'will not be moved' because of his trust in the God who 'lives' (6.11). In fact, he emphasises the will of God in his speech, a point Joktan ignores. Second, Joktan's warning places complete responsibility on Abraham for his imminent death ('your blood be upon your head...'; 6.11).[39] In Joktan's rebuke, Pseudo-Philo forefronts *voluntary* faith in God through repeated attention to Abraham's decision: *si nolueris . . . si autem volueris . . . si volueris* (6.11).[40] Abraham is thus presented with an ultimatum to recognise Joktan's plan as his only means of salvation. In Joktan's mind, Abraham pursues a course of action that is self-reliant, misaligned with the will of God as articulated in his escape plan. The plan is legitimate, he believes, because it recognises God as a deliverer. But as Murphy notes, Joktan has actually reversed the order of things 'by putting such faith in his own plan by which he means to give God room for action' that he 'shows his trust in God to be inadequate'.[41] Joktan has faith that God will deliver, Abraham has faith that God will do as he pleases; the difference is small, the implications vast. Thus the internal threat is realised at the juncture of contradictory perceptions of God. The true 'believer' suffers for his or her faith simply because he or she is part of that minority who trust God past the point of rationality, and thereby subject themselves to the whims of leaders who profess faith in God but plan and act according to their own will.

The physical threat against Abraham presents itself after the eleven men successfully flee to the mountains. Joktan then throws Abraham into the fire, yet not without a great deal of inner turmoil; he is 'dissolved with feeling'.[42] In Murphy's view, 'Joktan represents the classic person in the middle, caught between those whose evil plans he must pretend to endorse and those whose loyalty to God he supports but cannot emulate publicly. He must choose between throwing Abraham into the fire or dropping his mask'.[43] Daniel 3 is often

[38] Jacobson, *Commentary*, 366.
[39] Cf. Joshua 2.19.
[40] Murphy, *Pseudo-Philo*, 47.
[41] Murphy, *Pseudo-Philo*, 47.
[42] Cf. Daniel J. Harrington, 'Pseudo-Philo: A New Translation and Introduction', in *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha and the New Testament: Expansions of the 'Old Testament' and Legends, Wisdom, and Philosophical Literature, Prayers, Psalms and Odes, Fragments of Lost Judeo-Hellenistic Works*, ed. James H. Charlesworth (London: Yale University Press, 1985), 312. The phrase is variously translated as 'with great emotion' (Jacobson); 'plus mort que vif' (Cazeaux); 'being amazed (lit. melted)' (James); 'im Herzen gerührt' (Riessler); and 'in seinem Sinn erweicht' (Dietzfelbinger).
[43] Murphy, *Pseudo-Philo*, 48.

cited as the biblical backdrop to this episode in LAB, and whilst that is certainly the case, both here and in other Jewish versions of the fiery furnace, I would like to propose that Daniel 6 is also required in order to fully comprehend the biblical and theological underpinnings of Pseudo-Philo's narration.

In Daniel 6, King Darius is pressured into signing a law that forbids prayer to anyone but himself. Those who disobey will be cast into a den of lions (Dan 6.6-9). When Daniel is observed praying to God, as his enemies devise, he is thrown to the lions. Three narrative correspondences with LAB 6 are noteworthy. First, Daniel's punishment is only enacted after Darius first tries everything to save him. Just as Joktan attempts to save Abraham and the eleven, Darius 'was determined to save Daniel, and until the sun went down he made every effort to rescue him' (6.14). We might wish to see Joktan in a more negative light,[44] but the text is not so straightforward.[45] Whilst Joktan is certainly the foil for Abraham's faith, he is also a member of Abraham's tribe from the godly line of Shem. Indeed, he is Abraham's great-great-great-grandfather. Second, Joktan's angst at having to throw Abraham into the fire reflects not the mad rage of Nebuchadnezzar (Dan 3.18) but the inner conflict of Darius (Dan 6.14). In fact, Jewish tradition acknowledges the Nimrod-Nebuchadnezzar connection, but Pseudo-Philo is unique in making anything at all of Joktan.[46] If Nimrod is equivalent to Nebuchadnezzar, Joktan is best understood as the counterpart to Darius. Third, Joktan and Darius speak to Abraham and Daniel with strikingly different parting words. Darius says, 'May your God, whom you faithfully serve, deliver you!' (Dan 6.16). Joktan, contrarily, abdicates responsibility (6.16). In the case of Darius, he does not presume that God will rescue Daniel, whilst still acknowledging the divine *capacity* to save. Joktan, however, makes no mention of God and places full responsibility on Abraham for his fate. In both cases, the very person with the power to deliver reaches a point where salvation lies outside his power, but their words in response reveal their true character. Thus, if I am correct in identifying Daniel 6 as an influence on the narrative, and in particular the composition of Joktan's character, then Pseudo-Philo has used Darius to create an even greater contrast in the paradigm of faith than seen with Daniel 3. Joktan is not just unlike Abraham in regard to his quality of faith in God to bring success; he is also unlike Darius in his response to

[44] Murphy, 'Divine Plan, Human Plan', 45: 'Although Joktan is chief of the leaders, he does not simply order them to release the resisters but resorts to subterfuge. He deceives the other leaders by calling the decision of the resisters "evil plans" and by not opposing the death sentence directly'.

[45] Sherman, *Babel's Tower*, 144.

[46] Other than in the recounting of genealogies, Joktan is not mentioned in the Bible (Gen 10.25-29; 1 Chr 1.19-23; cf. Josephus, *Ant*., 1.146-47), whilst his sons receive greater attention in later Eastern Orthodox Christian tradition and pre-Islamic literature; cf. *Kitab al-Magall*, *Cave of Treasures*, and *Conflict of Adam and Eve*.

disappointment: he accuses the faithful individual rather than deferring to the sovereignty of God.

3.2.5 Divine Vindication (LAB 17-18)

At the very moment Abraham is thrown into the furnace, God vindicates Abraham, and himself, in dramatic fashion. The earth is convulsed and the fire from the furnace consumes a vast number of people whilst leaving Abraham unscathed. In a narrative touch that outsteps the biblical story in Daniel 3, the fiery furnace collapses. The eleven men return safely from their mountain hideout and Abraham is commemorated with a weighty namesake (6.17-18):

> *Deus autem commovit terremotum grandem, etebulliens ignis de camino exilivit in flammas et scintillas flamme, et combussit omnes circumstantes in conspectu camini. Et fuerunt omnes qui concremati sunt in die illa LXXXIIIMD. Abrae autem non est nec modica facta lesura in concrematione ignis. Et surrexit Abram de camino, et concidit caminus ignis. Et salvatus est Abram, et abiit ad undecim viros qui erant absconsi in montanis, et renunciavit eis omnia que contigerant illi. Et descenderunt cum eo de montanis gaudentes in nomine Domini, et nemo eos obvians terruit die illa. Et cognominaverunt locum illum nomine Abrae et lingue Chaldeorum Deli, quod interpretatur Deus.*
>
> But God caused a great earthquake, and the fire gushing out of the furnace leaped forth in flames and sparks of fire. And all those standing around in view of the furnace were consumed. And all those burned in that day were 83,500. But there was not the least injury to Abram from the burning of the fire. And Abram came up out of the furnace, and the fiery furnace collapsed. And Abram was saved and went away to the eleven men who were hidden in the mountains, and he reported to them everything that had happened to him. And they came down with him from the mountains, rejoicing in the name of the Lord. And no one who met them frightened them that day. And they named that place by the name of Abram and in the language of the Chaldeans 'Deli', which means 'God'.

The fact that all eleven men plus Abraham are saved is paradigmatic for the perpetuation of Israel and her divinely orchestrated deliverance from powerful enemies. As noted elsewhere, the collapse of the furnace registers with other biblical stories including the fall of Jericho (Josh 6.1-20) and Samson's toppling of a large house (Judg 16.23-30),[47] indicating our author's theological concern that divine justice be enacted visibly on behalf of God's people who trust him without reservation. There is a striking resonance in the manner of Abraham's deliverance with Israel's Exodus from Egypt. Jacobson notes that, 'Both the theme and the phrasing are adopted by LAB from the account of the plagues in Exodus, wherein we are on

[47] See further Jacobson, *Commentary*, 371.

several occasions told that a particular plague attacked the Egyptians, but the Jews lived on totally free of its effects'.[48] Pseudo-Philo's theological concern is clear: the radically faithful are rescued by God's mercy through an act of divine vindication in the face of insurmountable odds.[49]

Before we conclude this section, I would like to suggest one further influence on Pseudo-Philo's version of Abraham and the fiery furnace that has not yet been mentioned by others, because of its potential to inform our understanding of faith in LAB. Jeremiah 37–38 is remarkable for its affinity with LAB 6 from a narrative, semantic and theological standpoint. Jeremiah's escape from the cistern (Jer 37.11–38.28) is a dramatic exhibition of faith in God that mirrors Abraham's escape from the fire in a number of ways. First, both Jeremiah and Abraham are individuals standing alone in the face of internal and external enemies. Abraham encounters both the wrath of the leaders and the people, and the verbal and physical opposition of Joktan. Jeremiah likewise is opposed by the leaders and people within Jerusalem, whilst a foreign enemy lies outside the gates. Second, there is a lexical correspondence in the mention of the 'Chaldeans'. They are normally associated with Babylon, and have a mixed history of interaction with the people of Israel. Ur, Abraham's place of origin, is associated with the Chaldeans (Gen 11.28, 31; 15.7; cf. Acts 7.4).[50] The Chaldeans are typically an agent of punishment against Israel (Job 1.17; Ezek 23.23; Hab 1.6),[51] but in Jeremiah 38 they are, paradoxically, a source of rescue and freedom: 'Those who stay in this city shall die by the sword, by famine, and by pestilence; but those who go out to the Chaldeans shall live' (Jer 38.2). Strikingly, Abraham is given the name 'God' in the language of the Chaldeans at the conclusion of the episode in LAB, showing them in a strangely positive light, as in Jeremiah.[52] Thirdly, Jeremiah and Abraham are first incarcerated in a leader's home (Zedekiah's and Joktan's respectively) for suspected disloyalty to the people's cause. Jeremiah's counsel to surrender is so controversial that he is thrown by his own people into a cistern to die (Jer 38.1-6). Then, in a striking parallel to both Joktan (LAB 6.11) and Darius (Dan 6.16, see above), the leader who is capable of securing the lone individual's salvation demurs. Zedekiah, the highly conflicted king torn between allegiance to

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[48] Jacobson, *Commentary*, 370. The key passages he mentions are Exodus 9.6, 26; 10.23; 11.7, although we might also add the institution of the Passover (Exod 12.13, 27, 41) and the crossing of the Red Sea (Exod 14.29).

[49] Cf. the Vulgate of Daniel 6.23: *Tunc vehementer rex gavisus est super eo, et Danielem præcepit educi de lacu: eductusque est Daniel de lacu, et nulla læsio inventa est in eo, quia credidit Deo suo*.

[50] The mention of the Chaldeans forms another link between LAB 6 and Daniel 6, as explored above. Darius, who pulled Daniel out of the lions' den, 'became king over the realm of the Chaldeans' (Dan 9.1).

[51] See, for example, 2 Kgs 25:4-13; 2 Chr 36:17; Jer 32:4-29; 37:5-14; 38:18–23.

[52] *Et cognominaverunt locum illum nomine Abrae et lingue Chaldeorum Deli, quod interpretatur Deus* (LAB 6.18). Ginzberg, *Legends*, 161n76, suggests that *quod interpretatur Deus* 'is very likely a haggadic interpretation of Ur'.

God and pleasing the people, wilts before Jeremiah's prosecutors: 'Here he is; he is in your hands; for the king is powerless against you' (Jer 38.5). Jeremiah is eventually rescued by Ebed-melech in terms similar to Abraham's deliverance: 'they drew Jeremiah up by the ropes and pulled him out of the cistern' (Jer 38.13).[53] Finally, divine judgment is manifested as 'fire' in both accounts. In LAB 6, the people are killed by fire which spews out from the furnace. In Jeremiah, the entire city is burned by fire in fulfillment of his prophecy to Zedekiah: 'if you do not surrender to the officials of the king of Babylon, then this city shall be handed over to the Chaldeans, and they shall burn it with fire' (Jer 38.17-18). The correspondences between the two accounts are enough that we might speculate that Pseudo-Philo structures his account under the influence of Jeremiah 38, as well as Daniel 3 and 6.

But why does Pseudo-Philo do this? I propose two reasons related to the motif of faith. First, the author draws upon Jeremiah 38 in order to bring the Abraham narrative closer to the Jewish people of his own day. There is an understandable degree of separation in the Daniel narratives, since the enemies of the three men and of Daniel are 'external', they are gentiles. The threats facing Jeremiah, however, were both Jewish *and* gentile, as is the case in LAB 6. The force of this connection is most powerfully felt in the context of vindication and judgement that capstones each of the narratives in Daniel, Jeremiah, and LAB; the faithful loner emerges unharmed whilst his adversaries are destroyed. Secondly, Pseudo-Philo associates Abraham with Jeremiah in order to grant prophetic authority to the patriarch.[54] Jeremiah speaks the words of God to his own people. God predicts future events through him that actually happen, including the fall of Jerusalem. Abraham's language is less direct, yet within his speech to Joktan we hear a similar note of prophetic judgement. When he says, 'If there be any sin of mine so flagrant that I should be burned up, let the will of God be done', Abraham forecasts the fate of his enemies, whose flagrant sin against God's faithful results in a fiery death.[55] The faithful respond to God's word with trust, the disobedient are judged. This is the dichotomy of human response to God's word as Pseudo-Philo understands the world.

Abraham's faith at the fiery furnace is the mold from which the radically faithful Israelite is cast, typically exemplified in God's prophets. God's vindictive action is concurrently a deliverance of the faithful few and a judgement of the sinful majority. Not

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[53] The language is analogous to Pseudo-Philo's statement, *et surrexit Abram de camino* (LAB 6.18), which is also reflected in the Vulgate's rendering of Jeremiah's rescue: *et extraxerunt Hieremiam funibus et eduxerunt eum de lacu* (Jer 38.13).

[54] For additional examples of this blending phenomenon, see Tavis A. Bohlinger, 'The "Prophetical Tenor" of Pseudo-Philo's *Liber Antiquitatum Biblicarum*', *CBQ* 81 (2019): 46-61.

[55] Murphy, *Pseudo-Philo*, 47: 'Abraham asserts that misfortune is not random but is punishment from God. Suffering and death are always God's judgement, so it is futile to try to escape them. The good are rewarded and sinners are punished both in this life and in the life to come'.

only are Pseudo-Philo's readers encouraged to imitate Abraham, but they are warned of the consequences of holding a faith that capitulates in the face of danger. At the same time, his readers are encouraged to believe that God will one day enact judgement on their enemies, even if at present he seems silent and inactive.

3.3 Amram and the Elders (LAB 9)

Our second case study considers the story of Amram in Egypt. Amram is the father of Moses, who stands against both Pharaoh and the elders of Israel in a remarkable exhibition of radical faith. The significance of chapter 9 for this study is twofold. First, as in LAB 6, most of the narrative material in this chapter is unique to Pseudo-Philo. The setting remains the same: a new ruler of Egypt emerges who 'did not know Joseph' (LAB 9.1; Exod 1.8), who fears the Israelites due to their exceptional numbers and strength.[56] But the hero of LAB's version is Amram, not the midwives as in the Bible. And yet 'Amram' (עמרם) in the Bible appears only as a name in two genealogies, in Exodus 6.20 and 1 Chronicles 6.3. The lack of any narrative in Scripture regarding Moses' father presents an opportunity for Pseudo-Philo to construct a character demonstrating radical faith in God.[57]

In Fisk's discussion of LAB's central themes, he notes the connection between the story of Abraham at the furnace (LAB 6) and the episode of Amram and the elders who face Pharaoh's decree to kill the male babies. He remarks on the importance of Abraham's faith as a model to follow, drawing on the Amram narrative:

> The faithful Jew . . . will follow the example of Abraham, who preferred to face death than to participate in false worship (6.11), and *will share the priorities of Israel's elders* who, when Pharaoh decreed to drown the Hebrew boys, worried less about the loss of their sons to death, than about the loss of their daughters to idolatry.[58]

LAB 9, however, actually implicates the elders' for priorities misaligned with the will of God. As the following analysis will show, the elders' weak faith functions as a foil for Amram's radical trust in God, which in its own way mirrors Abraham's. Indeed, the strongest connection between the Abraham and Amram episodes is Pseudo-Philo's employment of the same faith paradigm as a structuring device for stories meant to instruct. In the story of one

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[56] *Et factum est post recessum Ioseph, multiplicati sunt filii Israel et creverunt valde. Et surrexit rex alius in Egipto qui non noverat Ioseph, et dixit populo suo, 'Ecce populus iste multiplicatus est magis quam nos; venite consilium habeamus adversus eum ut non multiplicetur'.*

[57] See Jacobson, *Commentary*, 237, for a discussion of Pseudo-Philo's frequent construction of embellished narratives with characters who are only mentioned by name in the Bible.

[58] Fisk, *Pseudo-Philo*, 51, italics mine.

man's resistance to both external and internal threats, Pseudo-Philo offers his readers an exemplar for individual Jews who wish to contribute to the fulfilment of the Abrahamic promises, even if the leaders of the people are moving in a different direction.

3.3.1 External Threat (LAB 9.1-2)

In terms of narrative structure, chapter 9 begins much in the same way as Abraham's story in LAB 6. A leader, Pharaoh, proposes a plan that threatens the continued existence of God's people: 'Every son that is born to the Hebrews, throw into the river; but let their females live' (9.1). The threat is composed of two elements. First, the male children must be drowned in the river, but the females will be given to the Egyptians' slaves as wives. The intent, expressed by the Egyptians, is to breed a new generation of slaves who are no longer 'sons of Israel': 'Let us kill their males, and we will keep their females so that we may give them to our slaves as wives. And whoever is born from them will be a slave and will serve us' (9.1).[59] Pseudo-Philo immediately comments: *Et hoc est quod pessimum visum est coram Domino* (9.1). But an important distinction must be made here: to what does the *hoc* refer? Fisk follows Jacobson in connecting the *hoc* specifically to the enslavement of the females, and his choice is informed in part by his understanding of idolatry as a major theme in LAB.[60] But *hoc* may also refer to everything the Egyptians planned, *both* the killing of the male babies and the marrying off of the females, thus resulting in babies born into slavery. The context, I suggest, points to a 'contra-covenant' move by the Egyptians as the impetus for God's displeasure. In other words, the plan proposed by the Egyptians constitutes an existential threat to the people of God, thus threatening the fulfillment of God's promise to bless Abraham's *seed* forever, ultimately impinging on God's character. If the Hebrew males are killed off and the next generation of females are married off to gentiles, this will effectively eliminate the 'seed' of Abraham, thus invalidating God's word of promise.[61] A concern with the covenant seems more pressing in this context, especially since chapter 9 is an infancy narrative that follows the traditional Jewish pattern. These narratives tend to be less polemical against idolatry, and more insistent upon the history of God's redemptive work on behalf of

[59] *Masculos eorum interficiamus et feminas eorum servemus ut eas nostris demus servis in uxores; et erit qui natus fuerit ex eis servus et serviet nobis*. SC230, 102, comments that, 'Dans LAB, les filles constituent seulement une main-d'œvre à bon marché'.

[60] Cf. Jacobson, *Commentary*, 402.

[61] Note that God expresses the basic contours of the covenant as a brief soliloquy couched in the narrative of the Tower at LAB 7.4. Why Pseudo-Philo doesn't have God speak these words to Abraham (or anyone at all) is uncertain, although it is consistent with the lack of dialogue between God and the patriarch throughout LAB 6, and the author's common practice of giving God new speeches not found in the canonical record. As we saw above in 1.2.2, God does speak with Abraham at the covenant ceremony as retold in LAB 23.

his people in fulfilment of his word despite human attempts to thwart the divine purpose.[62] As will be shown below, the elders are clearly concerned about idolatry, whereas Amram says nothing about it; he is intent to uphold the covenant promises.

3.3.2 Rational Solution (LAB 9.2)

As in the Abraham narrative, a rational solution is proposed to address the external threat presented by the Egyptians. The elders of Israel contrive a plan that depends upon an understanding of Israel as 'lost' (9.2):

> *Ometoceam passa sunt viscera mulierum nostrarum, fructus noster inimicis nostris traditus est. Et nunc deficimus et constituamus nobis terminos ut non appropinquet mulieri sue vir, ne fructus ventris earum contaminetur et viscera nostra idolis serviant. Melius est enim sine filiis mori, donec sciamus quid faciat Deus.*
>
> The wombs of our wives have suffered miscarriage; our fruit is delivered to our enemies. And now we are lost, and let us set up rules for ourselves that a man should not approach his wife lest the fruit of their wombs be defiled and our offspring serve idols. For it is better to die without sons until we know what God may do.

The elders seem concerned that Israel's progeny will end up either dead or serving idols instead of God. In their logic, copulation should be outlawed in order to thwart the Egyptians' plan. The solution seems reasonable, and pious, but it is misdirected. Whilst the elders are disturbed by the possibility of being responsible for contributing future generations of idolaters, what is actually wicked in God's eyes is the plot to eliminate the Israelites as a people. The elders demonstrate their ignorance of the implications of Pharaoh's decree when they state that their 'offspring [will] serve idols' (9.2). If the threat to Israel is successful, there will be no more 'offspring' at all; Pharaoh's goal of miscegenation will dissolve the Israelite lineage within a generation. Such a threat has graver implications for the trustworthiness of God's word than any concerns about idolatry. Indeed, idolatry amongst the people of Israel is a given in LAB, as in Scripture, the abiding sin that the people fall into from the Golden Calf incident and thereafter. God saves his people from their sins again and again, but never lets them reach the point of extinction even through his judgment; the latter would threaten his very character as God (cf. 12.8). Furthermore, Pharaoh's concern is that the Israelites had 'multiplied and increased greatly' (9.1); LAB strategically omits the biblical

[62] On the infancy narratives in ancient Jewish literature, see Vermés, *Scripture*, 90-95.

references to their power.[63] Pharaoh in LAB says nothing about their *might*, but rather their *number*. He intends to eliminate the number of Israelites through (male) infanticide, and to increase his slave population through miscegenation.[64] The main problem is not conversion to idolatry, but genocide and slave trafficking. Together, these threats present a comprehensive strategy to hamper the fulfilment of God's promise, *semini eius benedicam* (LAB 7.4; cf. 4.11). Pseudo-Philo's dominant concern, argued in the previous chapter, is that God's word not be spoken 'in vain'.[65] When we take into account Pseudo-Philo's preoccupation with the perpetuation of Israel as a people, the solution offered by the elders is shortsighted. Whilst they seem well-intentioned in their desire to uphold the integrity of their race, their plan to stop procreating is actually *more* of a threat to the promise than Pharaoh's murderous decree.

3.3.3 Irrational Faith (LAB 9.3-6)

Amram appears in the narrative at this point without introduction. As the father of Moses he enjoys a significant role in contemporary Jewish literature.[66] Pseudo-Philo, however, transforms Amram from a paradigmatic zealot who leads Israel in *affirmation* of the elders' anti-procreation decree, to an exemplar of radical, even defiant, faith.[67] Amram's response includes five distinct movements that together present a picture of radical faith in God and his word.

3.3.3.a Statement of Rebellion (LAB 9.4a)

Amram's response to the elders parallels the reply of the twelve men in LAB 6, who defied the order to cast bricks into the fire. He is succinct and unapologetic; 'Now therefore I will not abide by what you decree, but I will go in and take my wife and produce sons so that we may be made many on the earth' (9.4).[68] Whilst the elders intend to protect the 'fruit' of their

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[63] The Israelites 'grew exceedingly strong' (Exod 1.7), and were 'more powerful' than the Egyptians (Exod 1.9-10).

[64] Jacobson, *Commentary*, 402, suggests that, for Pseudo-Philo, 'the murder of the boys was less criminal in God's eyes than their treatment of the girls', but this is not borne out by the author's concern with the threat to future generations of Israel. Both intents have equal capacity to destroy Israel's future as a people.

[65] See the discussion of this key phrase in Fisk, *Pseudo-Philo*, 48: LAB means to emphasise throughout that 'God's faithfulness will, in the end, be vindicated'.

[66] See Jacobson, *Commentary*, 403.

[67] SC230, 102. In later rabbinic tradition, Amram actually divorces his wife to uphold the elder's decision. For references, see Murphy, 'Divine Plan, Human Plan', 11n14. Pseudo-Philo's depiction of Amram compared to the later Talmudic versions is remarkable, not only in terms of his actions but also his status within the community. Ginzberg, *Legends*, 473, writes that 'Amram, who was the president of the Sanhedrin, decided that in the circumstances it was best for husbands to live altogether separate from their wives. He set the example. He divorced his wife, and all the men of Israel did likewise'.

[68] *Nunc ergo non permanebo in his que vos determinatis, sed ingrediens mulierem meam accipiam et faciam*

wives' wombs, both male and female children, Amram boldly states that he will produce 'sons' (*filios*). The reason for his defiance is that the people of God might be 'made many' (*amplificemur*). Amram is choosing precisely the opposite course of action proposed by the elders. The irony is that the elders' solution would indirectly destroy Israel as an ethnic people, a result perhaps not entirely desirous to Pharaoh (who wants the females as slave-breeders). But in any case it presents a serious obstacle to the fulfillment of God's promises. Amram rebels against abstinence and petitions for procreation.

3.3.3.b God's Creative Speech (LAB 9.4b)

The anchor of Amram's faith is God's word, a fact he states unapologetically. The rhetorical structure of this section is traceable through four negative statements followed by one positive affirmation of God's prophetic speech act:

> *Non enim permanebit Deus in ira sua, nec semper obliviscetur populi sui, neque genus Israel in vanum proiciet super terram; nec in vanum disposuit testamentum patribus nostris, et cum adhuc non essemus de his tamen locutus est Deus.*
>
> For God will not abide in his anger, nor will he forget his people forever, nor will he cast forth the race of Israel in vain upon the earth; nor did he establish a covenant with our fathers in vain; and even when we did not yet exist, God spoke about these matters.

Amram acknowledges the impermanence of God's anger, the permanence of his memory, and the uniqueness of Israel. These affirmations are rooted in a firm confidence in the effective priority of God's word. God's people were spoken into existence even before Abraham was born. This is one of the most striking statements in LAB regarding God's election of Israel.[69] The inviolability of God's covenant is linked directly to the effectiveness of his words. Amram's doubled use of the phrase *in vanum* forms an important link with other affirmations of the dependability of God's word in LAB, including the claims of Moses and Joshua (cf. 12.6; 23.13). Here as elsewhere Pseudo-Philo demonstrates the contingent nature of human faith upon divine speech.

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filios, ut amplificemur super terram.

[69] Note Leopold Cohn, 'An Apocryphal Work Ascribed to Philo of Alexandria', *JQR* 10 (1898): 322, on God's elective agency as a thread tying together divine speech in LAB. See also SC230, 43-47, on the same theme.

3.3.3.c Autonomy and Imperative (LAB 9.5a)

Amram's decision is his alone, yet he calls on Israel to follow his lead. The autonomy of his decision is marked both by an emphatic *ergo* and by the dual assertions, 'I will' and 'I will not'. The first is spoken against the elders, the second against Pharaoh: 'Now therefore I will go and take my wife, and I will not consent to the command of the king; and if it is right in your eyes, let us all act in this way' (9.5).[70] Amram's language indicates that he does not intend to be a maverick. Indeed, his counter-stance propels him into a public leadership role, a position he accedes to in the closing words of his speech, 'let us all act'. The subjunctive *faciamus* is a persuasive summons to the people of Israel that his decision to keep faith with God and to hold fast to his promises is a decision they all should make, no matter the danger. This action, of one individual directing an imperative to a group, is a major difference between Abraham and Amram, in that Abraham never attempts to convince the other eleven men to follow his lead. Notably, the setting of Amram's speech is before the gathered people, not just the elders (9.2).[71]

3.3.3.d Tamar's Example (LAB 9.5b)

Amram then points to the story of Tamar to encourage the people to follow his lead in defiance of Pharaoh and the elders (9.5):[72]

> *Erit enim cum concipient mulieres nostre, non agnoscentur tamquam in utero habentes, quousque compleantur menses tres, sicut et fecit mater nostra Thamar, quia non fuit consilium eius in fornicatione, sed nolens recedere de filiis Israel recogitans dixit, 'Melius est mihi socero meo commixta mori, quam gentibus commisceri'. Et abscondit fructum ventirs sui usque ad tercium mensem. Tunc enim agnita est. Et iens ut interficeretur, statuit hoc dicens, 'Cuius est hec virga et hic anulus et melotis, de eo concepi'. Et salvavit eam consilium eius de omni periculo.*
>
> For when our wives conceive, they will not be recognized as pregnant until three months have passed, as also our mother Tamar did. For her intent was not fornication, but being unwilling to separate from the sons of Israel she reflected and said, 'It is better for me to die for having intercourse with my

[70] *Nunc ergo iens accipiam mulierem meam, et non adquiescam preceptis regis; et si rectum est ante oculos vestros, ita faciamus omnes*.

[71] *tunc seniores populi congregaverunt populum*.

[72] The fullest recent treatment of this passage is by Donald C. Polaski, 'On Taming Tamar: Amram's Rhetoric and Women's Roles in Pseudo-Philo's *Liber Antiquitatum Biblicarum* 9', *JQR* 77 (1995): 99, who contributes to the issue of gender roles in LAB, but has less to say concerning Pseudo-Philo's theological distinctions.

> father-in-law than to have intercourse with gentiles'. And she hid the fruit of her womb until the third month. For then she was recognized. And on her way to be put to death, she made a declaration saying, 'He who owns this staff and this signet ring and the sheepskin, from him I have conceived'. And her intent saved her from all danger.

Amram's analogy reveals two theological emphases of the author worth examining. First, Tamar's decision to engage in sexual intercourse with her father-in-law, according to Amram (and thus Pseudo-Philo), is driven by a desire to remain within the sphere of 'Israel'. If she leaves the family circle, she will become an outsider and her children will thus not be *filii Israel*. Amram's message to his fellow Israelites is two-fold. On the one hand, if Pharaoh's decree is obeyed and successful, then the current generation's grandchildren will not be *filii Israel*, but gentiles (and slaves). On the other hand, if the elders' command is obeyed, then the people lack faith in God and subject themselves to 'danger' (*periculum*). Faith stays within the covenant people of God, even at extreme personal sacrifice.

Second, Amram refers twice to her 'intent' (*consilium*). Given the strong emphasis on God's covenant in verse 5, what seems to trouble Amram most is not idolatry nor the fornication with gentiles that will result from Pharaoh's decree, but rather the extinguishing of the promises.[73] The promise of progeny must be acted upon, otherwise God will have preserved Canaan from the destruction of the flood 'in vain' (7.4). This emphasis on progeny in chapter 9 is evident in the repetition of the phrase, *filii Israel* ('sons of Israel'). The phrase opens (9.1) and closes the episode (9.16), and is Pharaoh's actual target (9.1, 11) and the driving concern of Amram (9.3, 5).[74] Amram's progeny-saturated message to his fellow Israelites is that, in following the example of Tamar's faith, they will fulfil God's promises to Abraham and thereby be preserved from elimination due to a righteous motivation to perpetuate the *filii Israel*.

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[73] See Harrington, 'Pseudo-Philo', 301. Mark Adam Elliott, *The Survivors of Israel: A Reconsideration of the Theology of Pre-Christian Judaism* (Cambridge: Eerdmans, 2000), 205, cites this passage as a 'particularly extreme example of revulsion toward exogamy' in his discussion of separatist tendencies in post-exilic Israel. To state that Pseudo-Philo 'polemicizes that the reason Tamar planned to have sexual relations with her father-in-law was to avoid sexual contact with gentiles' (205n62) is right, but purity concerns are not all that is at stake. Amram, and Tamar, were intent on acting in accord with God's promises to bless Abraham's offspring, which was only possible by keeping the lineage intact. Note also the chapters in Pseudo-Philo devoted to genealogies meant to trace that lineage from the beginning of the history of Israel (LAB 1, 2, 4, 8). Whilst Elliott cites *Ant.* 11.308 as parallel in terms of motifs, Josephus' description of the elders, who blamed sins of intermarriage on the first exiles from Egypt, is arguably more explicit in the directness of its polemics against the practice. Perhaps the elders in LAB 9 shared similar concerns as those in Josephus, but as I have stressed, Amram's concern is with the dissolution of the promise through murder and exogamy, not simply exogamy alone.

[74] Various terms for Abraham's progeny populate the narrative: 'son', 'females' (2x), 'males' (9.1); 'fruit' (2x), 'offspring', 'sons' (9.2); 'sons' (2x), 'race' (2x, 9.3); 'fruit' (9.5, 6); 'he who will be born' (9.7); 'son', 'daughter' (9.9); 'he who will be born' (9.10); 'male children', 'child' (9.12); 'child' (9.13); 'sons', 'fruit of [the] womb' (9.14); 'boy', 'Hebrew children' (9.15); 'son', 'child' (9.16).

3.3.3.e Command and Justification (LAB 9.6)

The closing statement of Amram's speech repeats his summons to action on God's behalf, but this time with a direct command. He states 'we will not cast forth the fruit of our womb'. This bold claim is followed by a hypothetical question that evokes Abraham's deference to God's will at the fiery furnace (9.6):

> *Nunc ergo faciamus et nos sic, et erit cum completum fuerit tempus parturitionis, si potuerimus, non proiciemus fructum ventris nostri. Et quis sciet si pro hoc zelabitur Deus, ut liberet nos de humiliatione nostra?*
>
> Now therefore let us also do the same. And when the time of giving birth has been completed, we will not cast forth the fruit of our womb (if we are able). And who knows if God will be provoked on account of this so as to free us from our humiliation?

Whilst Abraham yields to the possibility of God's judgement in recompense for individual sin (6.11), Amram hopes for the possibility of God's deliverance in response to corporate faithfulness. Thus Amram entrenches himself as an exemplary leader of Israel who stands as their representative in the face of a serious external threat. As a result, the people follow his lead, continuing to procreate as before (9.9).[75]

3.3.4 Internal Threat (LAB 9.11-14)

The consistency of the faith paradigm is demonstrated next in the manifestation of an *internal threat*. Amram's situation differs somewhat from Abraham's in that the external threat intensifies in the time between his statement of trust in God and later vindication. Regarding the external threat, Pharaoh both increases the physical demands on the Israelites and sends out murder patrols to find newborn babies and drown them (9.11-12). In terms of the internal threat, Amram initially has the support of the people, who follow his lead and continue

[75] There are two important parallels in Scripture to Amram's concluding statement of hope in God. Jacobson, *Commentary*, 411, points out the 'certain echo, probably conscious' from the story of Esther. There, Mordecai consoles his cousin with the words, 'Who knows? Perhaps you have come to royal dignity for just such a time as this' (Est 4.14). The context is similar, since Israel is under threat of extinction. But the focus in the Bible is Esther's position of influence; God is not mentioned. There is another passage, however, that fits the context of LAB 9 better. In Isaiah 36–37, when Sennacherib threatens Jerusalem, he first sends his emissary Rabshakeh who mocks Israel's God (Isa 36.1-20). Hezekiah responds with lament before summoning Isaiah (Isa 37.1-4). In his summons, Hezekiah grounds his appeal on the possibility of God's deliverance: 'It may be that the LORD your God heard the words of the Rabshakeh, whom his master the king of Assyria has sent to mock the living God, and will rebuke the words that the LORD your God has heard' (Isa 37.4). This language mirrors that of Amram, who hopes that God is 'provoked' (*zelabitur*) into action on behalf of his people if they choose to be faithful. Although Hezekiah's hope is that God will respond in some way to the Assyrian's brashness, and Amram's hope is that the people's obedience will move God to action, in either case both characters' hope is in God alone.

bearing children. But as the situation worsens and God still has not acted, the people turn against Amram. The text indicates that male children are by this time being drowned in the river by the Egyptian chiefs (9.12). When Moses is born, his mother attempts to save him by setting him off into the river in a basket, following the earlier prophetic advice from her daughter, Miriam (9.10). At this point, the elders accost Amram (9.14),[76] interpreting the casting of his son into the river as indicative of the failure of his procreative plan. The internal threat is compounded when the elders assert their own words of prediction over Amram's words of faith. They state, 'Are not these our words that we spoke, "It is better for us to die without having sons than that the fruit of our womb be cast into the waters"?' (9.14). Amram, like Abraham before Joktan, is silent; he refuses to 'listen to those who were saying these words' (9.14).

3.3.5 Divine Vindication (LAB 9.15-16)

Despite internal opposition, Amram's stance of faith is rewarded magnificently. The birth of Moses and his rescue by Pharaoh's daughter is the capstone to the episode, resolving the story and confirming Amram's trust in the promises of God. Contrary to the decree of Pharaoh and the advice of the elders, Amram and Jochebed produce a male child.[77] Pharaoh's plan is intended to curtail procreation amongst his Hebrew slaves, with 'chiefs' in place to deal with accidental or rebellious pregnancies. But the elders' counter-plan would have terminated any and all pregnancies from the outset. The birth of Moses and his rescue from death confirms, in part, that Amram's stance of trust in God is right.[78] Pseudo-Philo writes, 'And the child was nursed and became glorious above all other men, and through him God freed the sons of Israel as he had said' (9.16).[79] Pseudo-Philo makes two important declarations in this closing statement. The first clause emphasises the significance of Moses compared to the rest of humanity. He is the quintessential man whose birth is a form of vindication for Amram's counter-intuitive stance of faith.[80] The second clause is coordinate to

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[76] *congregati omnes presbiteri altercabantur cum Amram*.

[77] *Iacobe autem concepit de Amram, et abscondit eum in utero suo per tres menses* (9.12). The Latin is somewhat muddled, leading commentators to wonder if, in LAB's rewriting, Moses was born prematurely in order to avoid detection by the Egyptian chiefs; see SC230, 106; Feldman, 'Prolegomenon', xciii; Harrington, 'Pseudo-Philo', 316; Murphy, *Pseudo-Philo*, 60. Elsewhere in the Jewish literary corpus, Moses is said to be born 3 months early to avoid detection by the Egyptians; see Ginzberg, *Legends*, 476.

[78] Pseudo-Philo does not, however, offer consolation regarding the other babies who died or were enslaved before and after the birth of Moses. The author seems less interested in these missing details of the story, preferring to focus on the origins of Moses as the fulfillment of the word of God (*sicut dixerat*, 9.16).

[79] *Et nutritus est infans, et gloriosus factus est super omnes homines, et liberavit per eum Deus filios Israel sicut dixerat*.

[80] See SC230, 107, on the motif of Moses' glory compared to the rest of humanity.

the first, and highlights divine agency.[81] On the one hand, the deliverance of Israel comes through Moses, yet the prime agent is God, who is the subject of the main verb, *liberavit . . . Deus*. This deliverance vindicates Amram's contrarian claim that is aligned with the promise of God to Abraham to bless his seed; he will procreate with his wife 'so that we may be made many on the earth' (9.4). The future deliverance through Moses also vindicates God in the upholding of the aforementioned covenant promises concerning Abraham's seed. In Israel's deliverance, God fulfils two promises: the first made earlier to Abraham (7.4) and the second prophesied through Gabriel to Miriam (9.10).[82] The significance of this affirmation of the certainty of God's word is clarified in the third and final subordinate clause, *sicut dixerat* ('just as he said', 9.16).[83] Thus the ultimate purpose of Amram's faith, demonstrated in the birth of Moses and the deliverance of the people through him, is to affirm the dependability of God's words of promise concerning his people. The expected response to God's word is faith that lies beyond reason.

3.4 Hannah and her Sterile Womb (LAB 49-51)

Hannah's story in LAB 50 is an exceptional example of true *fides* for more than just her stance of trust in God; her status and circumstances as a woman differentiate her from the male pillars of Israel.[84] She is a wife who lives daily under the stigma of being sterile and childless. Whilst Cenaz, at the other extreme, is a strong male leader appointed by God, a visionary, a prophet, a martial *tour de force*, and a powerful judge, Hannah is a wife subject to her husband's bidding and defenseless against the verbal abuse of his second wife, Peninnah. In LAB, Hannah is an exemplar of the ideal Israelite woman and typifies other faithful women in Israel's history, including Melcha (4.11; cf. *Jub* 11.1), Sarah (8.1-3), Miriam (9.10), Deborah (30–33), and Jael (31.3-9; 32.12). Perhaps the most remarkable aspect of her story is the lack of divine revelation to her prior to her vindication. Whilst the

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[81] The use of the coordinating conjunction *et* rather than the subordinating *quod* is important to note. The latter would be an explanation of why Moses became the most glorious of men. The former maintains a distinction between the two clauses which allows for Moses's greatness to be attributed to events beyond the Exodus.

[82] *Ecce quod nascetur de vobis in aquam proicietur, quomodo per eum aqua siccabitur. Et faciam per eum signa et salvabo populum meum, et ipse ducatum eius aget semper.*

[83] The particle *sicut* functions here as an adverbial modifier for the verb *libero* in the main clause; see further Charles E. Bennett, *Syntax of Early Latin*, vol. 2 (New York: George Olms Verlag, 1914), 113; B. L. Gildersleeve, *Gildersleeve's Latin Grammar*, 3rd ed. (New York: MacMillan, 1930), 390 (602.4).

[84] Women are given a substantial amount of attention by Pseudo-Philo compared to other examples of 'rewritten Bible'. See Peter W. van der Horst, 'Portraits of Biblical Women in Pseudo-Philo's Liber Antiquitatum Biblicarum', *JSP* 5 (1989): 29-46; SC230, 52-53; C. A. Brown, *No Longer Be Silent* (Louisville: WJK, 1992); Jacobson, *Commentary*, 251; Murphy, *Pseudo-Philo*, 258-59; Polaski, 'On Taming Tamar'; Cynthia Baker, 'Pseudo-Philo and the Transformation of Jephthah's Daughter', in *Anti-Covenant: Counter-Reading Women's Lives in the Hebrew Bible* (Sheffield: Almond Press, 1989), 195-210.

exceptional male leaders in LAB's narrative are often privy to visions or dialogues with God which ground their trust, Hannah receives none and is reliant, presumably, only upon her understanding of the certainty of God's words of promise to Israel heard secondhand.[85]

The background of Hannah's story is important to note. LAB 49 narrates the people's search for a new leader, since they are left leaderless at the end of chapter 48 at the death of Phinehas. Elkanah, Hannah's husband, is chosen to replace him (46.5), but he is unwilling to assume the role. Instead, the Lord identifies Elkanah's son as the leader by whom 'my name will come to be invoked upon you' (49.7). What will be made clear in the analysis below is that the people face both external and internal threats, and whilst they recognise their need for a leader, they know that they deserve nothing but judgement because of their sins of idolatry. They fail, however, to appeal to God's mercy in faith, an action Hannah undertakes of her own volition.

3.4.1 External Threat (LAB 49.6-7)

At the end of chapter 48 the people are said to be experiencing 'rest' (*repos*, 48.4).[86] But the lack of a leader compels the people to seek a replacement after a long period of increasingly tragic leadership under the judges (LAB 25–43).[87] After the death of Samson, the people enter the period of idolatry instigated by Micah that ends in civil war (LAB 44–47).[88] There is every indication that the people are under exceptional anxiety at the prospect of living in the land without a leader appointed by God. They voice their perturbation in extreme terms, that they wish for the termination of their race so that their children will not have to experience the same fear (49.6):

> *Quem adhuc postulabimus aut ad quem confugiemus, et ubi est locus pausationis et requietionis nostre? Si enim vere dispositiones quas diposuisti patribus nostris dicens, 'Semen vestrum amplificabo', et hoc scient, tunc profuerat nobis dicere, 'Abscido vesrum semen', quam negligas radicem*

[85] There is room here for an interesting study comparing male and female characters in LAB in regards to divine revelation/interaction.

[86] Thus the people's plea to God for 'rest' in 49.6 is remarkable, since Israel is said to be at *repos* at the end of chapter 48. The parallel *requietio* is also used in 3.8 (Noah's sacrifice effuses a 'restful' aroma) and 20.5 (referring to Moses's death as his 'rest'), but only in 49.6 does the term refer to Israel's state of affairs in relation to her enemies. Whether the rest desired is eschatological or current is uncertain, but the people are convinced that God-ordained leadership is the answer to their angst.

[87] See the discussion of this passage in Ginzberg, *Legends*, 890n17.

[88] Chapter 44 begins with a verbatim citation of Judges 17.6, *et in diebus illis non erat dux in Israel, sed faciebat unusquisque que placita erant ante conspectum eorum*. The lack of a 'king' (מלך) and the people's self-rule are repeated at the introduction to the final episode documenting Israel's fall (Judg 19.1) and at the closing statement of the book (Judg 21.25). Pseudo-Philo's inclusion of this statement suggests his intent to build his rewritten narrative on a similar framework of disobedience in order to highlight faith.

nostram.

> Whom will we ask for once more, or to whom will we flee, or where is the place of our relaxation and rest? For if the ordinances that you have established with our fathers are true, saying, 'I will multiply your seed', and they will experience this, then it would have been better to say to us, 'I am cutting off your seed', than to neglect our root.

God's response is both harsh and consoling (49.7).[89] Although Israel should be punished and abandoned by God (*redderem . . . nec intendere*), he instead promises to give them a leader, within a generation, who will perform two essential functions; he will both 'rule' (*principor*) and 'prophecy' (*propheto*). These roles were fulfilled previously in Israel by *two* individuals, a judge and the high priest,[90] but now Elkanah's future son is said to be both the pre-anointed leader chosen by God (as was Moses; cf. *Sir* 45.23-24) and the link to, if not the forebear of, a long period of divinely prophesied leadership of God's people. When the people ask which of Elkanah's current sons will rule, God responds, 'None of the sons of Peninnah can rule the people, but the one who is born from the sterile woman whom I have given to him as a wife will be a prophet before me' (49.8).[91] Even in this promise of blessing, however, there are two major hurdles. On the one hand, none of Elkanah's current progeny are fit to rule, and the people are desperate. On the other hand, this prophet-son does not yet exist. Worst of all, his mother is sterile.

3.4.2 Internal Opposition (LAB 50.1-3)

Chapter 50 transitions from the large-scale dialogue between God and his gathered people to a focused view of three individual Israelites enmeshed in a complicated love triangle. Hannah's sterility makes her an easy target for her 'rival' as in the Bible,[92] but Pseudo-Philo intensifies the abuse through repetition and heightened language. Peninnah is said numerous times to 'taunt' (*impropero*, 50.1, 2, 5) and 'insult' (*insulto*, 50.2) Hannah. In two separate

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[89] *Si redderem secundum mala vestra, oportuerat me nec intendere ad genus vestrum. Et quid faciam, quoniam veniet nomen meum ut invocetur in vos? Et nunc scitote quia Elchana super quem cecidit sors non potest principari in vobis, sed magis filius eius qui nascetur ex eo ipse principabiturin vobis, et prophetabit. Et ex hoc non deficiet ex vobis princeps plurimis annis.*

[90] The incumbent priest during the Judges period is Phinehas (see 28.1, 3, 4; 46.1, 4; 47.1, 3; 48.1). In LAB, as elsewhere in the deuterocanonical literature, he is a leading example of zeal for the moral purity of Israel (cf. *Sir* 45.23-24; 1 Macc 2.26; 4 Macc 18.12).

[91] *Nullus de filiis Fenenne poterit principari populo, sed natus de sterili quam dedi ei in uxorem ipse erit propheta in conspectu meo. Et diligam eum quemadmodum dilexi Isaac, et erit nomen eius in conpsectu meo semper.*

[92] Whether צרתה is a neutral term for a second wife or contains antagonistic undertones is uncertain, but a statement in *Sirach* suggests the latter: 'Do not consult with a woman about her rival or with a coward about war . . . pay no attention to any advice they give' (*Sir* 37.11). See further Werner Plautz, 'Monogamie und Polygamie im Alten Testament', *ZAW* 65 (1963): 9-13.

speeches she maligns her for being a 'dry tree' (*lignum siccum*, 50.1) whose fruitlessness negates her husband's love (50.2). The addition of these speeches is remarkable, for in the Bible no words of Peninnah's are ever recorded; she is just said to 'provoke her severely, to irritate' Hannah on their yearly pilgrimage to the house of the Lord (1 Sam 1.6-7). Hannah's suffering is also intensified by Pseudo-Philo. In the Bible, Hannah 'wept and would not eat' (1 Sam 1.7) in response to the provocations. In LAB, however, she is 'exceedingly depressed'[93] (*contristaretur valde*) from *daily* abuse. She receives this treatment despite her lifelong piety (50.2; cf. 50.4).[94] The Bible is not explicit about the frequency of the abuse. LAB takes advantage of that ambiguity to make it explicit that Hannah's trial is a daily fight for emotional and psychological survival in the face of an unrelenting opponent.

Yet Hannah faces a more sinister internal enemy. The attacks of Peninnah are directed at a woman who not only has no children presently; she cannot have children at all. Sterility was a 'grave misfortune' in ancient Israel,[95] a disgrace (sometimes indicative of divine judgement, Gen 20.17, 18) in the honour-shame cultures of both ancient Israel and first-century Palestine that brought with it terrible social stigmas.[96] Rachel laments, 'Give me children, or *I shall die*!' (Gen 30.1, italics mine). Hannah's sterility potentially relegates her to the status of a mistress whose function is pleasure, not childbearing,[97] even though she is the first in order of Elkanah's wives (cf. 1 Sam 1.2) and the one whom he actually 'loves' (50.2; cf. 1 Sam 1.5). Her barrenness makes her unable to fulfill the 'ordinances' (49.6) of the covenant promises concerning Abraham's 'seed' (49.6; cf. 7.4; 8.3).[98] Indeed, Hannah is the problem; Elkanah's 'seed' is fertile, evidenced by his ten sons with Peninnah. Hannah's situation is hopeless, such that her husband's consolations have no effect. The compounded

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[93] My translation. Harrington's 'saddened very much' doesn't quite capture the intensity of Hannah's suffering, especially when we consider the biblical terminology for her sorrow (*OTP*, 364). She was 'deeply distressed', and she weeps in her 'bitterness' (1 Sam 1.10), all consequences of years of emotional and verbal abuse in the face of a severe physiological disability.

[94] *esset timens Deum a iuventute sua*.

[95] Judith R. Baskin, 'Infertile Wife in Rabbinic Judaism', in *Jewish Women: A Comprehensive Historical Encyclopedia*, 1 March 2009, Jewish Women's Archive (viewed on January 21, 2016), http://jwa.org/encyclopedia/article/infertile-wife-in-rabbinic-judaism (this resource has yet to be published in physical book form).

[96] Cf. Gen 16.2; 29.32; 30.1–3, 13; 1 Sam 1.6, 7; 2.1-11; Job 3.7; Isa 4.1; Luke 1.25; Rom 4.19. Jacobson, *Commentary*, 1087, notes the Talmudic view that 'a childless person is as good as dead'. On the social stigma of sterility in ancient Israel, see further Judith R. Baskin, *Midrashic Women: Formations of the Feminine in Rabbinic Literature* (Hanover, NH: Brandeis University Press, 2002); Judith R. Baskin, 'Rabbinic Reflection on the Barren Wife', *HTR* 82 (1989): 1-14; Mary Callaway, *"Sing, O Barren One": A Study in Comparative Midrash* (Altanta: Scholars Press, 1986).

[97] '*Genesis Rabbah* 45:4 concludes by suggesting that the matriarchs were infertile so that their husbands could enjoy their wives' beauty unimpaired by the ravages of pregnancies and child bearing' (Baskin, 'Infertile Wife'). Some of the later rabbis saw a woman's infertility as an advantage, since she was freed from the troubles of childrearing.

[98] According to Baskin, 'Infertile Wife', infertility continued to present a challenge for later Rabbinic Judaism, although the focus shifted to the infertile man due to his incapacity to fulfill the biblical mandate, 'Be fertile and increase' (Gen 5.2).

threats Hannah faces, both external (Peninnah) and internal (her womb), serve as a microcosm of Israel's own situation, in which there remains no human recourse but to turn to God.

3.4.3 Human Petition (LAB 50.4-8)

After her husband's attempts to console her, Hannah turns to the Lord in prayer.[99] The content of Hannah's prayer in LAB differs in a few significant ways from the biblical version worth considering:

1 Samuel 1.11	LAB 50.4
O LORD of hosts, if only you will look on the misery of your servant, and remember me, and not forget your servant, but will give to your servant a male child, then I will set him before you as a nazirite until the day of his death. He shall drink neither wine nor intoxicants, and no razor shall touch his head.	Did you not, LORD, search out the heart of all generations before you formed the world? Now what womb is born opened or dies closed unless you wish it? And now let my prayer ascend before you today lest I go down from here empty, because you know my heart, how I have walked before you from the day of my youth.

Pseudo-Philo states in clear terms the foreknowledge and sovereignty of God. Fertility and infertility are determined by him alone. Hannah repeats this conviction in her dialogue with Eli when she says, 'God has shut up my womb' (50.7).[100] The biblical prayer is not so explicit, in which she asks God to 'give' her a male child (1 Sam 1.11). Also, Hannah affirms her righteousness, that she has 'walked before' God from her youth (50.4).[101] In the biblical prayer, Hannah makes no such claim, but rather promises to honour a number of self-imposed stipulations in reciprocation for God's gift of a child. Thus Pseudo-Philo reworks Hannah's conditional prayer of meek petition in the Bible into a robust theological statement of the sovereignty and omniscience of God, and the worthiness of a life lived for his honour.

Hannah's faith is further demonstrated through her inner dialogue, as articulated by Pseudo-Philo. She reveals why she does not voice her prayers audibly (50.5):

> *Ne forte non sim digna exaudiri, et erit ut plus me selans improperet mihi Fenenna sicut quotidie dicit, 'Ubi est Deus tuus in quo confidis?' Et ego scio, quia non que infiliis multiplicatur ditata est, queque minorata est eguit, sed que habundat in voluntate Dei ditata est. Nam qui scierint quod oravi, si cognoverint quod non exaudior in oratinoe mea, blasphemabunt. Et non soli*

[99] Baskin, 'Infertile Wife', cites *BT Yevamot* 64a, where it is said that the reason for infertility in the patriarchs and matriarchs was 'because the Holy One, blessed be He, longs to hear the prayer of the righteous'.

[100] *conclusit Deus metram meam*.

[101] *quomodo ambulavi in conspectu tuo ex die iuventutis mee*.

> *mihi erit testis in anima mea, quia ministre sunt orationum mearum lacrime mee.*
>
> Perhaps I am not worthy to be heard, and Peninnah will then be even more eager to taunt me as she does daily when she says, 'Where is your God in whom you trust?' And I know that neither she who has many sons is rich nor she who has few is poor, but whoever abounds in the will of God is rich. For who may know what I have prayed for? If they know that I am not heard in my prayer, they will blaspheme. And I will not have any witness except in my own soul, because my tears are the servant of my prayers.

This prayer reveals four aspects of Pseudo-Philo's understanding of faith. First, the people of God are divided into two groups. Hannah wishes to avoid the impious taunting and blasphemy of Peninnah, which exhibits the rift between the godly and ungodly. Peninnah's words are actually the 'traditional jibe of Israel's enemies . . . here brought down to the level of the pious individual'.[102] Secondly, Hannah affirms the benefit of righteous living, stating that true riches come not from numbers of children, but obedience to the will of God. The opening to this statement in which sons are mentioned reflects the cry of the Lord in Isaiah: 'Sing, O barren one who did not bear; burst into song and shout, you who have not been in labor! For the children of the desolate woman will be more than the children of her that is married, says the LORD' (Isa 54.1).[103] Hannah's disgrace is temporary, for the Lord can (and will) redeem her from her troubles because she 'abounds' in the will of the Lord, that is, she loves and obeys him.[104] Thirdly, Hannah demonstrates a concern to uphold God's honour. If her prayers are not answered, then the unrighteous will 'blaspheme' him. Finally, Hannah bookends her prayer with language drawn from Psalm 42, a prayer to God for deliverance from crisis: 'My tears have been my food day and night, while people say to me continually, "Where is your God?"' (Ps 42.3); 'As with a deadly wound in my body, my adversaries taunt me, while they say to me continually, "Where is your God?"' (Ps 42.10). As Hannah conscripts her soul (*anima*) as her only witness, the psalmist asks his soul (*anima*, Pss 41.1, 3,

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[102] Jacobson, *Commentary*, 1091.

[103] Her declaration, 'neither she who has many sons is rich nor she who has few is poor, but whoever abounds in the will of God is rich' (50.5), resonates with the statement in Jeremiah, 'let those who boast boast in this, that they understand and know me, that I am the LORD' (Jer 9.23-24), once more indicating a remarkably nuanced effort by Pseudo-Philo to incorporate biblical, prophetic material.

[104] Jacobson, *Commentary*, 1091, dislikes Harrington's translation, 'abounding in the will of God', and especially the 'obscure' choice by Perrot (SC229, 331), 'celle en qui l'amour de Dieu abonde'. He suggests that a better sense of the Latin is found in passages such as Deuteronomy 33.23 and Psalm 145.17, thus, 'a person to whom God is well-disposed'. But the context of Hannah's prayer points to the appropriateness of the French, for Hannah declares to God, 'you know my *heart*, how I have walked before you from the day of my youth' (50.5, italics mine). Thus a translation highlighting the pious individual's 'abundant love' *for* God (taking the genitive as objective) fits the combination of heart (presumably intentions) and obedience (walking in God's will) in the text. According to SC230, 214-15: 'L'amour de Dieu est plus important qu'une nombreuse progéniture. Sans faire l'éloge de la virginité ou de la stérilité, l'auteur tient cependant à souligner la prééminence de l'amour de Dieu'.

6, 7, 12; 42.5 [Vulgate]) the repeated mantra, 'Why are you cast down, O my soul, and why are you disquieted within me?' The centre section of Psalm 42 then offers the solution to Hannah's desperation: 'Hope in God, for I shall again praise him, my help and my God' (Ps 42.5). Hannah's prayer, like the psalmist's, and akin to the declarations of Abraham and Amram, exhibits complete deference to the mercy and power of God to overcome external and internal threats which by all accounts are insurmountable.[105]

The subsequent interaction between Hannah and Eli the priest is changed markedly as Pseudo-Philo heightens the stakes of the biblical account. In 1 Samuel 1.12-18, Eli the priest observes her inaudible prayers and rebukes her for drunkenness. Hannah defends herself, to which Eli responds, 'Go in peace; The God of Israel grant the petition you have made to him' (1 Sam 1.17). In LAB, Hannah also defends herself against the charge of drunkenness, protesting instead that she is 'drunk with sorrow' (50.6), and acknowledging that 'God has shut up my womb' (50.7). She pleads that she might 'not go forth from this world without fruit' nor 'die without having my own image' (50.7). These words betray a personal anxiety on her part, which mentions nothing of the divine speech before the people, where it was decreed that a prophet would be born from her sterile womb (49.7, 8). Eli tells her that 'your prayer has been heard [by God]' (50.7), which is a remarkable transformation of his wishful blessing in the Bible into confident assurance in God.[106] He can say this because, as Pseudo-Philo reveals in the next verse, Eli heard the divine speech about Samuel; Hannah, however, is unaware of the prophecy, a point Pseudo-Philo makes explicit (50.8).[107] Thus Hannah's hope in her ability to bear children still rests upon an uniformed trust in God less privy to the information known by the rest of the people. As she says in her prayer, women are either born with a fecund womb or they go to their grave with one that is closed (50.4), and all of this is determined by God's will. If we did not know the rest of the story, and if Pseudo-Philo had not prepared his readers beforehand, this would be a lamentable situation indeed. But in Hannah's case, as with Sarai, Rebecca, Eluma,[108] and Rachel, God interrupts the trajectory of her woeful narrative with the gift of a son.

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[105] Baskin, 'Infertile Wife': 'The childless matriarchs provided an important model of the efficacy of prayer and they also became important metaphors for consolation and comfort'.

[106] The original Hebrew uses the jussive, which indicates a wish rather than a statement of fact: לכי לשלום ואלהי ישראל יתן את שלתך אשר שאלת מעמו. Cf. Num 6.24-26.

[107] *Noluit autem ei dicere Heli sacerdos, quia prenumeratus est ex ea propheta. Ipse enim audivit, cum dixit Dominus pro eo. Et venit Anna in domum suam, et mitificata est a dolore suo, nulli renuncians hoc quod orasset.*

[108] Eluma is the mother of Samson in LAB 42; Pseudo-Philo is the only Jewish author in antiquity to give her a name. See Harrington, 'Pseudo-Philo', 355; Murphy, *Pseudo-Philo*, 169; Jacobson, *Commentary*, 227.

3.4.4 Divine Vindication (LAB 51.1-7)

Pseudo-Philo brings about Hannah's vindication in a modified version of the biblical story through four distinct movements in the text. First, LAB relates the *divine ramifications* of Samuel's birth; it has the immediate effect of proving God's words true. Pseudo-Philo reveals that the origin of Samuel's name is due to God's prophetic activity; the interpretation of his name is '"mighty one", as God had named him when he prophesied about him' (51.1). Yet this information was not divulged when God spoke to the people (49.7-8). In the Bible, Hannah 'names him Samuel, for she said "I have asked him of the Lord"' (1 Sam 1.20). In LAB, God himself names the child before his mother conceives. This is another instance of God speaking about (very specific) things prior to their existence (cf. 9.4), in this case naming an unborn child whose mother is sterile. Through Samuel's birth, Hannah is justified for her irrational stance of faith in the God who seems so often silent to his people, and God is vindicated in his public choice of a sterile woman to bear the anticipated and divinely mandated leader of his people.

Second, Eli declares the *corporate significance* of the child's birth for Israel. When Hannah delivers Samuel to Eli, he explains to her that the child is more than an answer to her prayers alone (51.2).[109] Samuel is also the answer to the people's prayers, and a fulfillment of God's words that he had 'promised previously' (51.2).[110] At the conclusion to the episode, 'the people came down to Shiloh' and worshipped the Lord for 'the glory that God had brought about' through Hannah and Samuel (51.7). Thus the repercussions for his birth extend beyond the immediate family and to the entire nation; they anoint him before the Lord as their 'light' (51.7).

Thirdly, Hannah proclaims the *universal scope* of Samuel's birth.[111] The opening of her womb has repercussions that heighten the magnitude of God's vindication of Hannah beyond the miracle of birth from a sterile woman. Israel is certainly the focus of Eli's prophetic language in which he mentions 'breasts' and 'milk' as nourishment for the tribes (2x), indicating blessing, prosperity, and future glory for Israel.[112] But he also alludes to

[109] *Hoc est desiderium quod desideravi, et hec est petitio quam petivi*.

[110] *Non tu sola petisti, sed populus oravit pro hoc. Non est petitio tue solius, sed in tribus antea promissum erat*.

[111] On the 'universalist' tendencies in LAB, see SC230, 216, and Murphy, *Pseudo-Philo*, 256.

[112] Pseudo-Philo associates Hannah with 'mother Jerusalem' using the familiar language of Isaiah 66.10-13: 'that you may nurse and be satisfied from her consoling breast, that you may drink deeply with delight from her glorious bosom . . . you shall nurse and be carried on her arm'. Such a link indicates the high level of significance Hannah has for the author, as no other female character in LAB is spoken of in such terms. The effect on Pseudo-Philo's audience must have been profound as they considered her status and how God rewards her faith.

benefits that extend outside the scope of Israel when he declares the greater purpose of Hannah's vindication: 'And through this boy your womb has been justified so that you might provide advantage for the peoples and set up the milk of your breasts as a fountain for the twelve tribes' (50.2).[113] Eli's reference to the 'peoples' should be understood as indicating the gentiles. This is clear through the antynomic parallelism of *populus* with 'twelve tribes',[114] and the fact that the plural *populi* is used almost exclusively for non-Jews throughout LAB.[115] Thus the gentiles receive an unspecified 'advantage' from Samuel's birth, a point Hannah soon elaborates upon. This universalistic theme repeats throughout the hymn:

> *Venite in voce mea omnes gentes,*
> *et intendite allocutioni mee omnia regna*
> Come to my voice, all you nations,
> and pay attention to my speech, all you kingdoms (51.3)
>
> *et populus illuminabitur a verbis eius*
> *et gentibus ostendet terminos*
> and the people will be enlightened by his words,
> and he will show his statutes to the nations (51.3)
>
> *omnes homines invenient veritatem*
> all men will find the truth (51.4)

Furthermore, in the centre section of the hymn Hannah affirms God's attributes of mercy and judgement in dichotomous terms suggestive of the entire scope of humanity. People are divided, not into Jew and gentile, but into the wicked (*iniquus*) and the just (*iustior*) (51.5).[116] Samuel's birth has implications for all people, and expands the reach of her vindication along the full scope of humanity and towards the horizon of the future.[117] Beyond the short-term

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[113] *Et per hunc iustificata est metra tua, ut statuas proficiam populis, et lac mamillarum tuarum constituas in fontem duodecim tribuum*.

[114] Contra Harrington, 'Pseudo-Philo', 365, and Brown, *Silent*, 155, who both overlook the association of Eli's language with that of Hannah's immediately following. The use of antynomic pairs in Hebrew poetry, here reflected in LAB, strongly suggests that these 'peoples' are non-Israelites. On antynomic pairs, see Wilfred G. E. Watson, *Classical Hebrew Poetry: A Guide to Its Techniques*, 2nd ed., JSOTS 26 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1986), 131-32.

[115] The plural terms *populi* and *plebes* in all declensions are used only for humanity in general in LAB: *plebes alias* (20.4); *ceteris gentibus // omnibus plebibus* (30.4); *omnes homines. . . populi* (32.3); *Dominus elegit Israel singularem pre omnibus populis terre* (35.2); *ut statuas proficiam populis* (51.2); *ut pareret lumen populis . . . quosque fiat lumen genti huic* (51.6). The one exception I have found is 23.7 (*multitudini populorum qui multiplicatus est per te* [i.e., Abraham]), but this is immediately followed in the same passage by the non-Israelite use: *semen vestrum electum in medio populorum dicentium* (12), which may indicate a more universal aspect to the Abrahamic covenant in Pseudo-Philo's view. However, the genitive singular common phrase *populi huius* is the standard idiom used by Pseudo-Philo for Israel, and never the Gentiles: cf. 18.2 (spoken by Balaam, a Gentile enemy), 5, 12 (both spoken by God); 19.6, 7; 21.1; 22.2; 23.3; 24.4 (2x); 27.12; 28.4 (2x); 49.5 (2x); 63.3. The equivalent Hebrew phrase (לעם הזה) is prolific in Exodus, Numbers, Deuteronomy, Isaiah, and Jeremiah (320x). See the brief discussion in Bohlinger, 'Prophetical Tenor', 57.

[116] This division occurs three times in 51.5 in parallel statements of comparison.

[117] On the eschatology of Pseudo-Philo, see SC230, 53-57; Barclay, *Paul and the Gift*, 277-78.

benefits of Samuel's birth for both Hannah and God, there are long-term consequences for the entire world that reverberate from pre-history to the eschaton.

In the fourth and final movement of her vindication, Hannah's hymn prophesies of a future, anointed leader. She sings that 'these words will endure until they give the horn to his anointed one and power be present at the throne of his king' (51.6).[118] With these words of prophecy, Hannah joins an exclusive group of women in LAB that includes Melcha, who prophesies the birth of Abraham (4.11), and Miriam, who through an angelic vision prophecies the birth of Moses (9.10). The status of the two male patriarchs in the Jewish perspective is lofty, and through Hannah's prophecy Samuel joins their ranks,[119] inasmuch as he prepares the way for the coming anointed one who will rule Israel with 'power' (*potentia*, 51.6).[120] She also joins the company of Deborah, functioning as a leader in her own way (cf. 33.1-3). Irrational faith brings a sterile, accosted second wife to a place of renown, because Hannah responds to the word of God in deference to his will. She demonstrates the need for radical faith for all God's people even at the lowest level, not simply for the powerful, military leaders of Israel.[121] Her status within the social hierarchy of Israel is near-bottom. Yet her life of blameless piety and her prayer of complete submission to the sovereignty of God raise her to matriarch status, thus setting an example of faith for Pseudo-Philo's readers that even approaches the faith of Abraham.[122]

3.5 Conclusion

I began this chapter by signaling my intention to offer a nuanced correction to two presuppositions that have set the interpretive framework for LAB. I stated that Murphy's 'plan form' is a good starting point that needs refinement in order to press the theological

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[118] *Et hec sic manent, quosque dent cornu christo suo et aderit potentia thronis regis eius*.

[119] Note the end of her hymn: 'Asaph prophesied in the wilderness about your son, saying, "Moses and Aaron were among his priests, and Samuel was there among them"' (51.6). The prophecy is a direct citation of Psalm 99.6.

[120] Whether Pseudo-Philo is alluding to David or a later 'Messiah' is a matter of debate. Cf. other instances of *christus* in LAB 57.3; 59.2, 4. See further the discussion in SC230, 57-59; Murphy, *Pseudo-Philo*, 260-61; Fisk, *Pseudo-Philo*, 305; Jacobson, *Commentary*, 250; James H. Charlesworth, *The Concept of the Messiah in the Pseudepigrapha* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1979), 216-18; Matthew V. Novenson, *The Grammar of Messianism: An Ancient Jewish Political Idiom and Its Users* (Oxford: OUP, 2017). I have argued for the presence of messianic overtones in LAB at a 'Son of God' conference in St Andrews in June of 2016; that essay is pending publication.

[121] See Murphy, 'Martial Option'. Nickelsburg, 'Leaders', 64, stresses 'the militant character of Pseudo-Philo's protagonists'.

[122] Such is the conclusion of van der Horst, 'Portraits', 45: 'the portraits of a number of biblical women in LAB are of such a nature as to point in the direction of an author who was concerned, among other things, to ascribe to women a greater and much more important role in Israel's history than they were accorded in the Bible, *sc*. as great and as important a role as the patriarchs and Moses had played'.

questions that generated Pseudo-Philo's composition in the first place. I also stated that Nickelsburg's focus on good (and bad) leaders tells only half the story of LAB, because non-prominent figures play a highly significant role in conveying the author's appeal to radical faith as a defining (if often lacking) characteristic of God's people. The contrast between divine plans and human plans is evident in LAB, but the 'plan form' does not fully account for the ubiquitous feature in every episode, that being a lone individual's radical faith in God against all odds. Ironically, one major weakness of the plan form is the fact that it can be applied both to instances of faith and to the worst examples of disobedience by God's people, including Micah.[123] The faith-paradigm I have proposed above, in order to address the shortcomings of both the plan form and the stress on prominent figures, offers a helpful analytical tool for unearthing the rich theological thinking behind Pseudo-Philo's emendations of the biblical text. In the case studies we examined, the individuals of faith stood firm in their trust of God in the midst of a crisis.[124] The faith paradigm forms a narrative-theological structure upon which to construct the account of Abraham against the fiery furnace, Amram against the elders, and Hannah against her sterile womb. Perhaps indicative of the limitations of both the plan form and the strong emphasis on good leaders, both Murphy and Nickelsburg discuss Abraham and Amram, but overlook Hannah. Her story does not fit the 'plan form' framework, and she is left out of a list of heroes that includes other females such as Deborah and Seila.[125] Murphy, reflecting the concerns of Nickelsburg, suggests that, 'The *most pressing need* of the author's time seems to be leaders who can both clearly discern God's will and move decisively to implement it'.[126] Our study above has demonstrated, on the contrary, that *good leadership is never enough*. Indeed, God-fearing leaders often come short of full reliance upon God. Of the four examples Murphy uses to demonstrate in the plan form (Abraham, Amram, Moses, Micah), only one is a divinely sanctioned leader of Israel. The three characters of faith I have examined in this chapter concede wholly to God's will being done, based upon the limited knowledge they have of who he is through what *they have heard* he has said. Legitimate faith in LAB is a response of obedience to the word of God and deference to his will against all odds.

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[123] Murphy, 'Divine Plan, Human Plan', 12-13, includes Micah's idolatry as one of his four examples of the plan form.

[124] Nickelsburg, 'Leaders', 62, is correct to suggest that, for our author, 'trust in God is always trust put into action, and often that action places the actor in mortal danger'.

[125] I also do not understand how Murphy's last example, the Micah narrative, coheres with the 'plan form'. There are a number of concessions he must make to force the passage into a framework that appears to resist it. I would instead refer the reader to the previous chapter of this thesis, where I treat the same extended passage (44–47) as an escalating conflict between human and divine speech-acts, which may better account for both the narrative structure and the theological concerns of Pseudo-Philo.

[126] Murphy, 'Divine Plan, Human Plan', 14 (italics mine); also Nickelsburg, 'Leaders', 63.

At this point, the relationship between radical faith and divine speech should be coming into focus. The basis of Pseudo-Philo's theological framework is defined first and foremost by his perception of the effectiveness of God's spoken words. Built upon that bedrock is the second major component in LAB's theological outlook. Legitimate trust in God is a radical response to divine revelation: faith believes God's promises in the face of the impossible. Pseudo-Philo tells his readers that the immediate threats presented by fiery death, national enslavement, foreign armies, or a sterile womb must all be seen within a larger frame of reference. God will be faithful to do as he has said. The only acceptable response to crises is a faith that leaps the borders of rationality. The ramifications for obedience are far reaching: personal and corporate deliverance through direct intervention by God. Every individual Israelite is encouraged to respond to God's promises with simple, unquestioning trust, whether one is an infertile and abused wife (Hannah), an insignificant slave (Amram), or a prisoner unjustly sentenced to death (Abraham). To Jewish readers in first-century Palestine, this would have been a challenging message in the face of difficult questions. Where is God when our mother Jerusalem is falling? Where are the promises of God when our Jewish men are being crucified? Where is God when the daughters of Abraham are being abused? In the divine silence, the Jews of first-century Palestine ask, 'Where is our God?' Pseudo-Philo responds, 'God has spoken; where is your faith?'

The first two chapters of this thesis have set forth a basic outline of Pseudo-Philo's primary theological underpinnings, divine speech and human faith. Whilst more can be said about Pseudo-Philo, and further examples given of divine speech and human faith, we must transition at this point to look at Paul. Although my approach to Romans will differ somewhat due to variations in genre, characters, and motifs, the motivation that drove the study of LAB persists in our analysis of Romans: to craft from the text a representation substantive enough to be placed into a compositional framework of comparison. With our two-part study of LAB completed, we now turn to Paul's letter to the Romans.

PART 2: ROMANS

4. The Pattern of Promise in Romans

4.1 Introduction

My approach to Romans in the following chapters differs from the previous two on LAB, but should be understood throughout as intentionally structured for the sake of comparison with the latter. The difference in approach is due in part to the mismatch of genre, rewritten bible and ancient epistle, but more than that, unearthing the rich theological meaning within both texts requires careful consideration of the best entry point for each. In the case of LAB, we first examined God's word according to two propositions, demonstrated through three select episodes from the larger narrative. We then considered the role of human faith in God, exhibiting the presence of a 'faith paradigm' through three distinct character studies. In the case of Romans, I have elected to focus on two extended passages that should offer the best possible material for our final comparison of both texts.[1] Of course, LAB is mostly narrative prose, interspersed frequently with poetic verse, whilst Romans is appropriately categorised as an occasional letter.[2] Within the text of Romans, however, we find two examples of narrative, albeit of a different sort than LAB. In them, Paul directs the ears of his readers to hear anew stories from Scripture, first to Abraham's interaction with God (Romans 4), and then from Abraham to Moses, through the Prophets to present day Israel, and finally to the Israel of God's future (Romans 9–11). Our goal is to understand what Paul intends to express about the divine-human relationship through the use of scriptural narrative in these sections of the letter, with an eye to the motifs of God's word and human faith.

If our previous two chapters considered God's word and human faith independently, the present chapters on Romans consider both themes together within the matrix of a discernible Pauline dialectic, a 'pattern of promise'. The concept of promise encapsulates the relationship between God and his people in terms of the divine word and the fitting human response as two concepts integral to one another. Fundamental to this present chapter is a close reading of the Greek text of Romans 4 within the bounds of 3.27–5.11, a passage outlined by Paul's discussion of boasting. The question that dictates this investigation is as

[1] My approach below is exegetical, proceeding through the text of both passages in Romans. I have intentionally refrained from extensive cross referencing to other letters attributed to Paul in order to uphold the dictum laid out in the introduction concerning best practices in comparison: we are comparing the whole text of LAB with the whole text of Romans, as self-contained entities of extended thought, not constructing a 'theology of Paul' from from the Pauline corpus.

[2] This is not to say that Romans is not also a 'compendium' (of sorts) of Paul's theology; the two are not mutually exclusive. A good recent summary of historical views concerning the character of Romans is found in Richard N. Longenecker, *The Epistle to the Romans: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, NIGTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2016), 1-3.

follows: why does Paul speak in contradictory terms regarding 'boasting' in 3.27–5.11? The answer to that question requires grasping the function of the Abraham narrative in chapter 4, as well as, crucially, the extension of the discussion into the first half of chapter 5. My argument is that Paul structures his account of Abraham according to the aforementioned 'pattern of promise', in which the patriarch functions as programmatic of the operation of God in his agency of justification: God's word is responded to in faith. In other words, Paul's understanding of how God engages ungodly humanity follows a 'logic of reversal', in which ungodly human agents trust the divine word and are transformed into their opposite, i.e., the righteous.[3] I pursue that argument by presenting: 1) a survey of interpretations of Romans 4; 2) a preliminary evaluation of structure and key terms; 3) an exegetical analysis of Romans 3.27–5.11; and 4) an assessment of prior interpretations and a concluding summary concerning the word of God and human faith in this selection from Romans. Throughout this analysis of Paul's epistle, the reader is encouraged to keep in mind the relevance of Pseudo-Philo's narrative for his readers, especially in terms of future expectations that influence present behaviour. In other words, both Romans and LAB stress to their respective audiences the relationship of present faith to the future fulfilment of God's word.

4.2 Interpretations of Romans 4

The reading proposed herein views Abraham as the programmatic recipient of God's grace via his word, the promise, realised in a gift that engenders the promised heirs who will inherit the cosmos. This understanding of Abraham differs from the two main interpretive options on Romans 4, in which Abraham is either the exemplar of Christian faith, or the progenitor of God's family in Christ.[4] These two options correspond to the dominant interpretive streams currently on offer in Pauline studies, the so-called Lutheran and New Perspective readings. There have also been recent attempts at constructing integrative readings, as well as a recent and growing trend to view Abraham's fatherhood in a bio-pneumatological sense, the so-

[3] My phrase 'logic of reversal' resonates with similar expressions in, for example, Richard B. Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), 120 and John M. G. Barclay, *Paul and the Gift* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2015), 496, although my attribution of such a dialectic to Paul differs in that I explicitly locate its source in the promise to Abraham, as the analysis below demonstrates.

[4] For a summary of views, see Benjamin Schliesser, *Abraham's Faith in Romans 4: Paul's Concept of Faith in Light of the History of Reception of Genesis 15:6*, WUNT 224 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2007).

called 'radical new perspective'.[5] We will look at each of these briefly, with an assessment following in the conclusion to this chapter.

The interpretive framework with the longest history views Abraham's faith as paradigmatic. The 'model of faith' or 'prototype' view can be traced back through the Reformers[6] to the Church Fathers,[7] and to the New Testament.[8] The most prominent proponents of the paradigmatic view include Ernst Käsemann and C. E. B. Cranfield.[9] Abraham is viewed as the model of faith *par excellence* whose unwavering trust in God (as articulated by Paul) sets the standard by which Christian faith is measured.[10] As Abraham believed in God despite the deadness of Sarah's womb and his old age, so Christians believe in the God who raised Jesus from the dead in the face of their own sin and suffering.[11]

Against the model faith view, N. T. Wright[12] and Richard Hays[13] have presented the strongest case in recent years for a different perspective. Both scholars view the account of Abraham through an interpretive paradigm heavily dependent upon a perceived narrative arc tracing the outworking of God's plans in history; if Christ is the culmination of a grand narrative, then Abraham is the origin of the story.[14] Paul's reference to Abraham in Romans 4

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[5] Also known as the 'Radical New Perspective'. For examples of the major voices in this interpretive stream, see Pamela Eisenbaum, 'A Remedy for Having Been Born of Woman: Jesus, Gentiles, and Genealogy in Romans', *JBL* 123 (2004): 671-702; Lloyd Gaston, *Paul and the Torah* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2006); Caroline Johnson Hodge, *If Sons, Then Heirs: A Study of Kinship and Ethnicity in the Letters of Paul* (Oxford: OUP, 2007); Matthew Thiessen, *Paul and the Gentile Problem* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016); Stanley K. Stowers, *A Rereading of Romans: Justice, Jews, and Gentiles* (London: Yale University Press, 1997).

[6] See especially David C. Steinmetz, 'Calvin and Abraham: The Interpretation of Romans 4 in the Sixteenth Century', *Church History* 57 (1988): 443-55.

[7] Cf. *1 Clem.* 10.6; 50.6; Tertullian, *Against Marcion*, 3.24; 5.20.7; Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.*, 1.4.10-15; Origen, *Homilies on Genesis* 9; Origen, *Commentary on Romans* 4.2.3; Ambrose, *Abr* 1.1.20; Augustine, *Conf.* 10.2.2.

[8] Cf. James 2.20-24; Hebrews 11.8-22. This is commensurable with the Jewish view of Abraham as an *exemplum* of faith in God.

[9] Ernst Käsemann, 'The Righteousness of God in Paul', in *New Testament Questions of Today* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1969), 79-101; Ernst Käsemann, *Commentary on Romans* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980); C. E. B. Cranfield, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, ICC (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1975). A good recent example is Longenecker, *Romans*, 476: 'The primary and most obvious rhetorical convention used by Paul in 4:1–24 is *paradeigma*'.

[10] Käsemann, 'The Righteousness of God in Paul', 89, is representative: 'Abraham . . . is the prototype of the justification of the ungodly, and, as the Gentile Christians prove, is thus also the father of justified ungodly'. See also, for example, Edward Adams, 'Abraham's Faith and Gentile Disobedience: Textual Links between Romans 1 and 4', *JSNT* 65 (1997): 47–66 (esp. 65-66); Douglas J. Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996); Thomas R. Schreiner, *Romans*, BECNT (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 1998); Heinrich Schlier, *Der Römerbrief* (Freiburg: Herder, 1977), 121-22; Michael Wolter, *Der Brief an die Römer (Teilband 1: Röm 1-8)*, EKK VI (Göttingen: Vandenhoek & Ruprecht, 2014), 277; James D. G. Dunn, *Romans 1–8*, WBC 38A (Waco, TX: Word, 1988), 226.

[11] As Wesley Hill, *Paul and the Trinity: Persons, Relations, and the Pauline Letters* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2015), 54, has noted, Paul imports the concept of resurrection into a Genesis narrative that concerns the patriarchs' inability to conceive, not their 'deadness'.

[12] N. T. Wright, *Paul and the Faithfulness of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2013), 774–1042 (hereafter *PFG*); N. T. Wright, 'Paul and the Patriarch: The Role of Abraham in Romans 4', *JSNT* 35 (2013): 207-41.

[13] Richard B. Hays, '"Have we found Abraham to be our Forefather According to the Flesh?" A Reconsideration of Rom 4:1', *NovT* 27 (1985): 76-98.

[14] See for example, Wright, *PFG*, 886.

is intended to demonstrate to the Romans that they all, Jew and gentile alike, belong to God's family, now open to anybody regardless of ethnic distinctions or 'boundary markers'.[15] In Christ, there is neither Jew nor gentile, only one reconstituted family of God, 'the covenant family of Abraham'.[16] Thus Paul's frequent references to Abraham in terms of patrilineage (προπάτωρ/πατήρ, 4.1, 11, 12, 16-18) are not merely rhetorical devices but statements of fact; all believers are truly the (spiritual) 'seed' of Abraham (4.16). Fundamentally, Romans 4 concerns 'the way by which election is redefined'.[17] Finally, this view requires reading the figure of Abraham in Romans through the characterisation of the patriarch in Galatians, which presents further problems.[18] This is not to suggest that the different accounts cannot be reconciled, but rather to say that the particular circumstances in Rome were not necessarily catalysed by Paul's earlier castigation of the false teachers in Galatia.

A newer perspective has gained prominence in recent years by attempting to offer a corrective to the apparently anti-Judaic implications of traditional and NPP readings of Paul.[19] According to the 'Paul within Judaism' (PWJ) school, Paul's non-Jewish audience in Rome has a problem, namely, how to enter the family of God as 'heirs' without a biological connection to Abraham. Gentiles require 'an infusion of Christ's pneuma', yet this process is not simply spiritual; *pneuma* is, in the Stoic sense, actual 'stuff', the transfer of which constitutes a form of 'gene therapy'.[20] 'Paul makes it clear that it is not faith as such that makes one a son of Abraham; rather, faith brings the *pneuma*. Since those who are out of faith receive the *pneuma* of Abraham's seed, Christ, they too become Abraham's seed. The reception of the *pneuma* thus provides gentiles with a new genealogy so that they become truly descended from Abraham'.[21] The purpose of the Christ-event, contrary to traditional readings, is 'to replace Torah as the means by which non-Jews could become incorporated into Abraham's *sperma*'.[22] The pressing question for interpreters sympathetic to PWJ is whether or not this interpretive framework can sufficiently account for Paul's dialectic in Romans. Stanley Stowers argues forcefully for a gentile-only audience who need to understand their relationship to Judaism, the Law, and Israel's God.[23] In direct opposition to

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[15] N. T. Wright, 'Romans', in *Acts, Romans, 1 Corinthians*, NIB (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2002), 495.
[16] Wright, 'Romans', 487. Cf. Wright, *PFG*, 1003: Romans 4 'is about *Abraham's family*'.
[17] Wright, *PFG*, 1006.
[18] This is the premise of the argument in Wright, 'Romans 4'.
[19] See, for example, Eisenbaum, 'Remedy', 671-77; Terence L. Donaldson, '"Gentile Christianity" as a Category in the Study of Christian Origins', *HTR* 106 (2013): 433-58; and especially the introduction to Hodge, *Heirs*, 3-18.
[20] Thiessen, *Problem*, 15.
[21] Thiessen, *Problem*, 105.
[22] Terence L. Donaldson, 'Paul within Judaism: A Critical Evaluation from a "New Perspective" Perspective', in *Paul Within Judaism: Restoring the First-century Context to the Apostle*, ed. Mark D. Nanos and Magnus Zetterholm (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2015), 299n39.
[23] Stowers, *Rereading*, 36.

traditional readings of the letter, he writes that an interpreter 'grossly distorts any reading possible in Paul's time by construing the issue as a religion of a [sic] grace versus a religion of good works'.[24] Discussing Romans 4, Stowers writes that faith is 'the primary generative act that ensured Abraham's paternity, making him father of Jews and gentiles'. This suggestion aligns Stowers closer to the 'origin of the story' readings, yet his view of Abraham's faith as a 'primary generative act' threatens to displace the way Paul speaks of the relationship between divine and human agency. Stowers does gain ground on the issue of Abraham's role, however, in his transference of the term 'model' off of Abraham's faith and onto 'how God brings to pass his promises'.[25] Paul's overriding concern in Romans is multi-familial kinship, or how the gentiles might 'get into a family relationship so that they can stand righteous before God'.[26]

To bridge the gap between the 'model faith' and 'origin of the story' views, a number of 'integrative' readings have emerged. Francis Watson understands Abraham in Romans 4 as 'a model of the faith evoked by the divine promise',[27] who stands as a 'focal point of unity'[28] for Jews and gentiles. The patriarch in Paul's hands becomes 'a figurehead for a mixed community of Jewish and Gentile Christians'.[29] John Barclay has recently offered a reading utilising an original interpretive paradigm entailing six 'perfections' of grace, including superabundance, singularity, priority, incongruity, efficacy, and non-circularity.[30] Paul understands God's grace-gift in Christ as incongruous with human standards of worth, which means that the people of God have from their inception been marked by a peculiar 'trait'; all believers, Jewish and gentile, are 'created by the grace and the calling of God, who has never paid regard to human criteria of capacity or worth'.[31] For Barclay there is no need to force a choice between the 'origin' and 'model' views, since all of Abraham's offspring were created by God's grace to be 'bearers of the promise'.[32] The strength of Barclay's view is two-fold. First, he integrates the theological and sociological concerns that Paul is addressing by forefronting 'divine action wholly at odds with worth'.[33] Secondly, Barclay highlights the 'trajectory of promise' that runs from Abraham to believers, a trajectory that does not run

[24] Stowers, *Rereading*, 242-43.
[25] Stowers, *Rereading*, 227.
[26] Stowers, *Rereading*, 227.
[27] Francis Watson, *Paul, Judaism, and the Gentiles: Beyond the New Perspective*, Rev. ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007), 261 (hereafter *PJG*).
[28] Watson, *Beyond*, 265.
[29] Watson, *Beyond*, 267.
[30] Barclay, *Paul and the Gift*, 70-75.
[31] Barclay, *Paul and the Gift*, 481.
[32] Barclay, *Paul and the Gift*, 482.
[33] Barclay, *Paul and the Gift*, 485.

through ‘law’ but through ‘faith’. Barclay’s contribution, along with Watson et al., has opened the door to fresh ways of thinking about the place of Abraham in Romans.

The differences between the interpretive frameworks presented above amount to disagreements concerning the purpose of the letter, the intended audience, Paul’s theological and sociological priorities, and the definitions of key terms and classifications of various motifs in Romans 4. Given the irreconcilability of these divergent readings, and in an effort to provide a means of fruitfully analysing these views and gaining clarity on Paul’s logic, I suggest a new approach. I will argue below that Romans 4 is nestled within a slightly larger logical framework than normally understood, one bounded at both ends by the question of boasting and substantiated within by the pattern of promise. The premise of my argument is that God’s word follows a pattern of contradiction, a logic of reversal based in the promise-event itself and reflected in the Christ-event. This claim must be demonstrated in that section of Romans where Paul mentions the initial giving of the promise and its corollary event, i.e., Christ, in order to plumb the depths of Paul’s dialectic in Romans concerning promise (God’s word) and human faith (trust) and thereby construct a suitable composite for use in our comparison with LAB.

4.3 A Reassessment of Structure and Boasting Terminology

The reframing exercise in this section attempts to reset the boundaries of Paul’s argument in Romans 4 and to provide clarification on Paul’s use of ‘boasting’ terminology in the letter. Romans 3.27–5.11, I argue, is one coherent line of reasoning bounded by the question of (and responses to) boasting and centred on the theme of faith. In order to account for this expansion of the normal scope of interpretation, it is necessary to examine Paul’s use of καυχ- language, since this terminology fills a number of important roles. ‘Boasting’ as a motif and term is most prevalent in the Pauline literature in this section of Romans, both delimiting the passage at both ends (3.27; 5.11) and marking key pivots in the argument itself (3.27; 4.2; 5.2).

4.3.1 Framing the Discourse of Romans 3.27–5.11

The logical structure of Paul’s thinking has been debated at four points in 3.27–5.11. Commentators have sought to understand where one argument ends and another begins, whilst simultaneously recognising the interconnectedness of the overall argument.[34] In what

[34] The integrity of Romans is not a matter of serious contemporary debate, although some outlier studies

follows, a case will be made on lexical and thematic grounds for the presence of an expanded thought-unit running from 3.27 through to 5.11.

First, there are numerous links between 3.27-31 and both the preceding and subsequent sections. The transition from the expanded thesis statement of 3.21-26 into 3.27-31 is marked syntactically by οὖν and thematically by a discussion of the relationship between νόμος and πίστις.[35] But likewise, chapter 4 follows immediately from and integrally to 3.31, indicated again by οὖν and the presence of a rhetorical question.[36] Paul resumes his diatribe-style of argumentation in 2.1–3.20 with a series of questions that continue through 4.2.[37] The thesis statement of 3.21-26 marks a significant turning point in the argument. Paul's resumption of his diatribal manner in 3.27 is markedly different from 1.18–3.20. His responses to the question he himself poses are expressed in the plural: 'we consider' (λογιζόμεθα) a person justified by faith, not works (3.28); 'we establish' (ἱστάνομεν) the law, we do not abolish it (3.31).[38] It is significant that the plural form in 3.27-31 continues into chapter 4 (ἐροῦμεν, 4.1), and thereafter into 5.1-11.[39] Regardless of whether Paul is engaging an interlocutor here or not, the questions posed in 3.27 follow directly from 3.21-26, just as the question of 4.1 links immediately to 3.27-31.[40] The second question of 3.27 functions as a (partial) conclusion to Paul's claim in vv. 21-26,[41] but the complete answer is given in the substantial discussion of boasting in 4.1–5.11, indicated by Paul's remarks concerning boasting in 4.2; 5.2-5, 11: 'Paul aligns Abraham with the rejection of boasting in 3:27'.[42]

The links between 3.27-31 and chapters 4 and 5 are further evidenced by the proliferation of themes that are raised in the former and fully addressed in the latter. The term 'boasting' is itself a series of anchor points linking 3.27 to 4.2, to 5.2-5 and then to 5.11.[43] The juxtaposition between law and faith as presented by Paul in 3.27-31 demands an answer from

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argue for a piecemeal construction of the whole from various bits and pieces of Paul's other writings, including more recently Neil Elliott, *The Rhetoric of Romans: Argumentative Constraint and Strategy and Paul's Dialogue with Judaism* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2007) and the earlier work by Walter Schmithals, *Der Römerbrief: Ein Kommentar* (Gütersloh: Gütersloh Verlagshaus Gerd Mohn, 1988).

[35] Richard W. Thompson, 'Paul's Double Critique of Jewish Boasting: A Study of Rom 3.27 in Its Context', *Bib* 67 (1986): 321: 'Οὖν suggests that an interpreter must take the whole argument of 2,17 up to 3.26 into account when deciphering Rom 3,27'. See also Longenecker, *Romans*, 442.

[36] Joseph A. Fitzmyer, S. J., *Romans: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, AYB 33 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008), 369.

[37] Stowers, *Rereading*, 164-67.

[38] Wolter, *Römer 1-8*, 273.

[39] Cranfield, *Romans 1–8*, 257.

[40] Otto Michel, *Der Brief an die Römer* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1963), 147; Changwon Song, *Reading Romans as Diatribe*, ed. G. Johannes Botterweck, trans. David E. Green, SBL 59 (New York: Peter Lang, 2004), 96–97.

[41] Cranfield, *Romans 1–8*, 219.

[42] Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 373.

[43] Note Käsemann, *Romans*, 106.

Scripture, which he gives in chapter 4.[44] 4.1-24 also expounds upon the themes of 'righteousness' and 'faith' that were the subject of the series of questions and answers in 3.27-31.[45] Whilst Paul earlier affirmed the coherency of his claims regarding justification with 'the law and the prophets' (3.21), he must now demonstrate in chapter 4 'that what he has affirmed in 3:21-31, and especially in vv 27-31, is bolstered by the OT itself'.[46] 5.1 itself 'recalls all that had been said in 1.16–4.25'.[47] The essential themes of justification and grace are further elaborated upon in 5.2-5, supported by the statements in 5.6-8, and then recalled once more in 5.9-11.[48] In 5.1 and 5.9, Paul sums up the development of his theme of 'righteousness' from 3.21–4.25.[49] The significant links between 5.1-11 and the preceding chapters also include 'boasting' (2.3, 11, 17; 3.27; 5.2-3, 11), the 'love of God' (3.23-26; 5.5), and the formulaic phrase, διὰ τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ (4.24; 5.1, 11).[50]

Secondly, there is disagreement on whether the rhetorical question in 3.31 (νόμον οὖν καταργοῦμεν διὰ τῆς πίστεως;) concludes the section running from 3.27,[51] or functions as the opening to chapter 4.[52] A choice is unnecessary, however, since 3.31 can perform both functions.[53] From a syntactical standpoint, the sentence follows a similar construction as elsewhere in Romans, which begin with a rhetorical question following on from a previous discussion (οὖν), and preceding a negation (ἀλλὰ) and subsequent affirmation that functions to drive the argument forward.[54] To suggest that 3.31 concludes the section places too much weight on the οὖν opening both 3.31 and 4.1.[55] From a thematic and lexical standpoint, the numerous links between 3.21-31 and 4.1-25 (we will discuss 5.1-11 below)[56] militate against discriminating between a concluding or introducing function for 3.31. Both options introduce

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[44] John Murray, *The Epistle to the Romans*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1968), 127.
[45] Longenecker, *Romans*, 475.
[46] Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 369.
[47] Longenecker, *Romans*, 551-52.
[48] Longenecker, *Romans*, 552.
[49] Dunn, *Romans 1–8*, 242.
[50] Ulrich Wilckens, *Der Brief an die Römer (Röm 1–5)*, EKK VI/1 (Zürich: Benziger Verlag, 1978), 286-87.
[51] C. K. Barrett, *A Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, 2nd ed. (London: A. & C. Black, 1991), 84; Cranfield, *Romans 1–8*, 223; Dunn, *Romans 1–8*, 190; Robert Jewett, *Romans: A Commentary*, Hermeneia (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 2006), 302; W. Sanday and Arthur C. Headlam, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle of the Romans*, 3rd ed., ICC (New York: C. Scribner & Sons, 1897), 96.
[52] Paul J. Achtemeier, *Romans* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1985), 77; Heinrich August Wilhelm Meyer, *Critical and Exegetical Handbook to the Epistle to the Romans: Vol 2*, trans. John C. Moore and Edwin Johnson (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1874), 1:185-86; Karl Barth, *The Epistle to the Romans*, trans. Edwyn C. Hoskyns (London: OUP, 1933), 115.
[53] Peter Stuhlmacher, *Paul's Letter to the Romans: A Commentary*, trans. Scott J. Hafemann (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1994), 67-68, agrees that 3.31 'concludes' the argument to this point, but also sees Paul continuing his altercation of 3.27-31 in chapter 4. See also Schliesser, *Abraham's Faith*, 309n668.
[54] Cf. Romans 3.27; 4.10; 7.7; 9.30-33.
[55] Cranfield, *Romans 1–8*, 223.
[56] See especially Günter Klein, 'Römer 4 und die Idee der Heilsgeschichte', *Evangelische Theologie* 23 (1963): 150, and the tables in Thomas H. Tobin, 'What Shall We Say that Abraham Found? The Controversy behind Romans 4', *HTR* 88 (1995): 442n12; Wolter, *Römer 1-8*, 277.

an unnatural break in the argument that renders the verse 'incomprehensible'.[57] 3.31 is a natural transition from Paul's claim of the oneness of God and his contrast between faith and law to the conclusive evidence from the scriptures (i.e., Abraham) in support of that claim.[58]

Thirdly, Nils Dahl's work on Romans 5 has had an outsized influence on later commentators.[59] Romans 5.1, he argues, marks 'the most important line of division' in the first chapters of the epistle, based upon a number of thematic and lexical parallels adduced from Romans 8. Following Dahl, many commentators posit a break in Paul's argument at 5.1, treating chapters 1–4 and 5–8 as distinct units.[60] Others, however, see in chapter 5 a conclusion to what came before, with a logical break at either 5.11[61] or 5.21.[62] Leenhardt highlights the contrast in language, from weighty dogmatics to pastoral succour, wherein Paul stresses the benefits of justification in terms of hope.[63] Cranfield, whilst opting for a break at 5.1, lists numerous important links between 5.1-11 and chapters 1–4, mostly centred on δικ- and καυχ- terminology, but he also includes the motifs of God's ὀργή (1.18; 2.5, 8; 3.5; 4.15; 5.9) and Christ's αἷμα (3.25; 5.9), the latter mentioned nowhere else in the rest of Romans.[64] Wilckens notes a further link with ἐλπ- language (4.18; 5.2), which, whilst present also in 8.20-25,[65] enjoys a stronger congruity in chapters 4 and 5 due to the human acts of boasting and believing.[66] For Dunn, the links to earlier chapters of Romans are 'too many and deliberate' for 5.1-11 to be anything other than conclusive.[67] Gathercole also points out that the analogues between chapters 4 and 5 are considerably stronger. To posit strong divisions in the argument sits contrary to the seamless argumentative flow exhibited by Paul.[68] Notably,

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[57] Käsemann, *Romans*, 104.

[58] Schliesser, *Abraham's Faith*, 310.

[59] N. A. Dahl, 'Two Notes on Romans 5', *ST* 5 (1951): 37-48; Nils A. Dahl, 'The Future of Israel', in *Studies in Paul: Theology for the Early Christian Movement* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1977), 88-90. However, Dahl is anticipated by, amongst others, Pelagius, *Commentary on St Paul's Epistle to the Romans*, trans. Theodore de Bruyn (Oxford: Clarendon, 1993), 89. See the critique of Dahl's position by Simon J. Gathercole, *Where Is Boasting?: Early Jewish Soteriology and Paul's Response in Romans 1–5* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 252-55.

[60] Cranfield, *Romans 1–8*, 252-4; Michel, *Römer*, 129; Moo, *Romans*, 291; Anders Nygren, *Commentary on Romans*, trans. Carl C. Rasmussen (London: SCM Press, 1952) 188; Philippe Rolland, '"Il est notre justice, notre vie, notre salut". L'ordonnance des themes majeurs de l'Epître aux Romains', *Bib* 56 (1975): 394-404.

[61] Philip Melanchthon, *Commentary on Romans*, trans. Fred Kramer (St. Louis: Concordia, 1992), 131-32: 'Now there follows . . . a new book'. Cf. Franz-J. Leenhardt, *L'épitre de saint Paul aux Romains* (Paris: Delachaux & Niestlé, 1957), 77; Ferdinand Hahn, 'Das Gesetzverständnis im Römer- und Galaterbrief', *ZNW* 67 (1976): 43.

[62] Dunn, *Romans 1–8*, 242-44; Wilckens, *Römer 1–5*, 286-87; Michael Wolter, *Rechtfertigung und zukünftiges Heil: Untersuchungen zu Röm 5,1-11* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1978), 214-16.

[63] Leenhardt, *Romains*, 77; cf. Luther's description in *LW* 25:43n1.

[64] Cranfield, *Romans 1–8*, 253.

[65] Dahl, 'Romans 5', 42.

[66] Wilckens, *Römer 1–5*, 290-91. He also notes here the link to 4.2, a point that will feature prominently in our exegesis below.

[67] Dunn, *Romans 1–8*, 242.

[68] Gathercole, *Boasting*, 254.

Dahl himself concedes that 5.1-11 'is still closely linked to chapters 1–4 and brings the argument there to a preliminary conclusion'.[69] Thus, the transition from chapter 4 to 5 is more overlap than sharp division,[70] where certain themes are carried forward and elevated whilst others recede before resurfacing later.[71]

Finally, from the standpoint of discourse analysis, the transition from Paul's apparent recitation of early Christian confessional material (4.25) to the consequences of God's justification (5.1) is consequential. This is evident in the use of an inferential οὖν at 5.1.[72] Runge suggests that 'the circumstantial participial clause of Rom 5:1 reiterates the conclusion reached in the preceding context. The particle οὖν constrains what follows to be understood as building closely upon what precedes, yet as a distinct new development in the argument'.[73] The transition from 4.25 to 5.1 is a swinging gate rather than a line of demarcation. The permeable boundaries of 3.27–5.11 are delimited by the question and answers concerning boasting.

4.3.2 Boasting in Historical Interpretation

The history of interpretation of boasting in Paul can be traced back to the very earliest readers of his letters.[74] But the Reformation-era perspectives of Luther and Calvin, which took their cue from Augustine and others,[75] marked a turning point that carried sway through to Bultmann.[76] Luther comments on Romans 3.27, 'The Law of works of necessity puffs up and

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[69] Dahl, 'Paul', 89-90.

[70] Gathercole, *Boasting*, 254.

[71] Paul's concept of 'hope' is one good example, lexically and conceptually evident in chapters 4 and 5 (4.18; 5.2, 4, 5), again in 8.20, 24, and finally in 12.12 and 15.4, 13.

[72] Whilst including chapter 5 in the discussion of 3.21-4.25 is 'rejected as due to a false juxtaposition of justification and sanctification' (Käsemann, *Romans*, 91), Stephen Westerholm, 'Righteous, Cosmic and Microcosmic', in *Apocalyptic Paul: Cosmos and Anthropos in Romans 5–8*, ed. Beverly Roberts Gaventa (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2013) highlights Paul's use of οὖν in 5.1 as signifying a 'progression of thought', where the faith still under discussion is 'determined by the controlling example of Abraham' (5).

[73] Steven E. Runge, *Discourse Grammar of the Greek New Testament* (Peabody, MS: Hendrickson, 2010), 44.

[74] The Fathers' view of boasting is mixed, sometimes contrasted with humility, other times condemned in the context of Jewish particularity, and elsewhere expressed in connection with Christ. Cf. 1 Clem. 2, 13, 34, 38; Diogn. 4; Pol. *Phil.* 11; Ign. *Eph.* 10, 11, 18; Ign. *Magn.* 8; Ign. *Trall.* 4; Ign. *Phld.* 6; Ign. *Pol.* 5; Justin *1 Apol.* 15; *2 Apol.* 3, 13; *Dial*. 25, 101, 141; also Irenaeus *Haer.* 1–4.

[75] For Augustine's concept of boasting as human pride, see *City of God*, V.13–18; *Confessions* V.iii; VII.xxi; *de Natura et Gratia* 33, as cited in Gathercole, *Boasting*, 2. In a significant contrast, however, Augustine considers *positive* connotations for boasting in Romans 3.27. Paul may intend here 'the laudable boasting, which is in the Lord; and that it is excluded, not in the sense that it is driven off so as to pass away, but that it is clearly manifested so as to stand out prominently. Whence certain artificers in silver are called "*exclusores*". In this sense it occurs also in that passage in the Psalms: "That they may be excluded, who have been proved with silver" (Ps 68.30)—that is, that they may stand out in prominence, who have been tried by the word of God. For in another passage it is said: "The words of the Lord are pure words, as silver which is tried in the fire" (Ps 12.6)' (Augustine, *A Treatise on the Spirit and the Letter*, 10.17 [*NPNF* 1:90]).

[76] For a comprehensive history of interpretation of boasting in Paul, see Gathercole, *Boasting*, 2-10.

increases vainglory, for he who regards himself as just by fulfilling the Law, doubtlessly has something of which he might arrogantly boast'.[77] At least in his early work, boasting is excluded by the gospel because it is the outward expression of humanity's most basic sin, namely, pride. Bultmann, taking his cue from Luther, has influenced modern interpreters since the publication of *Theologie des Neuen Testaments* in 1958, and, for English-speaking scholarship, his article on καυχάομαι in *TDNT*.[78] For Bultmann, boasting is the outward expression of a 'sündig-eigenmächtige Haltung'[79] that characterises all humanity:[80] 'For Paul καυχᾶσθαι discloses the basic attitude of the Jew to be one of self-confidence which seeks glory before God and which relies upon itself'.[81] Jews boast in God and Torah, Greeks boast in wisdom (1 Cor 1:19-31).[82]

Against Bultmann, Lambrecht and Thompson argue that boasting in and of itself is ethically neutral in Paul's first-century context.[83] Furthermore, they argue that Paul expresses two distinct 'exclusions'. The first is against Jewish boasting 'in the context of transgressions' of the Law;[84] in other words, boasting isn't sinful *per se*, but breaking God's law and continuing to boast in God is hypocrisy. The second exclusion is due to the revelation of God's righteousness in Christ. Jews no longer have grounds to boast in the law *and* God, since the law as a means to righteousness has been replaced by faith.[85] Thus, the ethics of boasting is neutral, determined by the source and/or object of the boast, rather than being inherently supercilious.[86]

Whilst studies of boasting in Romans are slim, two recent works have made contributions.[87] Thurén's study of rhetoric in Paul includes a chapter on 'Law and Boasting'.[88] His analysis mirrors Bultmann: 'Boasting should of course not occur, if we are dependent on "grace", for it implies that we cannot depend on our own merits. This was, according to Paul,

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[77] Martin Luther, *Commentary on Romans* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 1976), 79.

[78] Rudolf Bultmann, *Theologie des Neuen Testaments* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1958); Rudolf Bultmann, 'καυχάομαι', in *TDNT* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1969), 646-54.

[79] Bultmann, *Theologie*, 242.

[80] Moo, *Romans*, 5.

[81] Bultmann, *TDNT*, 3:646.

[82] Bultmann, *Theologie*, 244.

[83] Jan Lambrecht, 'Why is Boasting Excluded? A Note on Rom 3,27 and 4,2', *ETL* 61 (1985): 365-68; Thompson, 'Boasting' 520-531; Wright, 'Romans', 516.

[84] Thompson, 'Boasting', 525.

[85] Thompson, 'Boasting', 527-28.

[86] For Lambrecht, 'Boasting', 366, boasting does not 'by itself point to a morally perverse "Selbstruhm"' (against Michel, *Römer*, 155).

[87] Studies on boasting in Paul's letters have mostly focussed on 1 and 2 Corinthians, to the exclusion of Romans. See for example Stephen H. Travis, 'Paul's Boasting in 2 Corinthians 10–12', *SE* 6 (1973): 527–32; Scott Hafemann, '"Self-Commendation" and Apostolic Legitimacy in 2 Corinthians: A Pauline Dialectic?', *NTS* 36 (1990): 66-88; Jennifer A Glancy, 'Boasting of Beatings (2 Corinthians 11:23-25)', *JBL* 123 (2004): 99–135.

[88] Lauri Thurén, *Derhetorizing Paul: A Dynamic Perspective on Pauline Theology and the Law*, WUNT 124 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2000), 165-78.

the case with Abraham'.[89] In effect, grace and boasting are 'alternatives' to each other and therefore mutually exclusive.[90] Ultimately, Paul's issue with the law is its potential to exacerbate human boasting.[91] Even boasting in the Lord, whilst condoned by Paul, is 'inadvisable' due to the proximity of human boasting to pride.[92] Unfortunately, Thurén does not interact with the positive mentions of boasting in Romans 5.1-11.

Gathercole's recent treatment of boasting in Romans is the most comprehensive and sophisticated study to date.[93] He offers a balanced critique of the New Perspective on Paul through an analysis of the theme of 'boasting' in the soteriology of early Judaism compared with Paul. Boasting is discussed as a concept rather than limited to any specific term(s) in Paul or early Jewish literature. Paul's use of boasting terminology in Romans demonstrates that, for the apostle, boasting itself carries no moral weight on either side, good or bad, but is qualified by the object of the boast. The Jewish boast is excluded, not due to the general moral depravity of human arrogance (as in Bultmann), but simply because the boast is in Torah, not Christ.[94]

4.3.3 Boasting in the Present Study

There are four points concerning 'boasting' in Romans that inform the rest of this study. First, we must be cognisant of the influence that translations of certain German works have had on subsequent English-speaking scholarship. When Bultmann speaks of 'boasting', he uses a very specific German compound word, 'Selbstruhm', which is a combination of the pronoun 'selbst' ('self') and the noun Ruhm (variously translated as 'fame', 'glory', 'boast', 'renown').[95] The prefixed pronoun lends to this word a nuance that aligns with Bultmann's existentialist interpretive framework, where *self*-reliance is the antithesis to dependence on God.[96] Likewise, in the English translation of Käsemann's commentary on Romans,[97] Geoffrey Bromiley chose to employ the term 'boasting' for 'Selbstruhm' throughout the

[89] Thurén, *Derhetorizing*, 170.
[90] Thurén, *Derhetorizing*, 170: 'Faith is a better option' (171).
[91] Thurén, *Derhetorizing*, 178.
[92] Thurén, *Derhetorizing*, 177n179.
[93] Gathercole, *Boasting*.
[94] Gathercole, *Boasting*, 261.
[95] Although Bultmann is anticipated in his use of 'Selbstruhm' at Romans 3.27 by Otto Kuß, *Die Briefe an die Römer, Korinther, und Galater: übersetzt und erklärt von Otto Kuß* (Regensburg: Verlag Friedrich Pustet, 1940), 43, the former had a vastly larger influence, at least on English-speaking scholarship.
[96] Rudolf Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament*, trans. K. Grobel (Waco: Baylor University Press, 2007), 241-50. On Bultmann's view of Judaism as the consummate expression of the universal human sin of 'rebellious pride', see Jouette M. Bassler, 'Grace: Probing the Limits', *Int* 57 (2003): 6-7.
[97] Ernst Käsemann, *An die Römer* (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1974).

sections on Romans 3–4,[98] although a finer nuance may suggest 'self-praise' or 'self-applause'.[99] Other instances of boasting language, such as in 4.2, are referred to in terms of Abraham's 'Anspruch auf Ruhm', his 'claim to fame'.[100] Both Bultmann and Käsemann are cited by English-language scholars in sections of Romans dealing with boasting, carrying forward this negative sense of the term.[101] What should give scholars pause, however, is the lack of distinction in English translations between 'boasting in oneself' or 'self-glorying' and boasting in a general sense, namely, having confidence in or taking pride in something without the negative ethical weight of 'arrogance' or 'pride', which should only apply if context demands it. This short analysis raises the point that a finer nuance is needed in order to distinguish between various uses of καυχ- terminology in Romans. The challenge in Romans 3.27–5.11 is how to convey Paul's use of the same terms in contexts both highly pejorative and laudatory. English-speaking scholars are in need of an alternative, neutral verb that avoids using an entire phrase, such as 'to express unwavering confidence'. Whilst related verbs might be employed, such as 'to rejoice' or 'to glory', I have chosen to retain the translation, 'to boast', with the understanding that the term itself should be read without the inherent negative connotations it often carries in English, with deference given to context in each case of the appearance of καυκώμεθα et al. in the Greek.

Secondly, we must consider terms for boasting in light of the evidence within Romans itself.[102] Of the 10 instances of καυχ- terms in the letter, consider the following:

1. Boasting is always qualified by a prepositional phrase that is either expressed (Rom 2.17, 23; 4.2; 5.2, 3, 11; 15.17), or implied (Rom 3.27; 11.18 [2x]).
2. Boasting is found in its substantive form only three times; the remaining seven are verbal forms. In the substantive, boasting is used with a definite article and referred to in a spatial or locative sense (cf. 3.27, see below), or as something to possess (4.2; 15.17).
3. Half of the verbal forms include a plural referent, which is in every case the believers in Rome. This is significant, both because of the context in which Paul

[98] Käsemann, however, only employs 'Selbstruhm(s)' when commenting on 3.27; see Käsemann, *An die Römer*, 96, 97, 99. I have not yet analysed his usage outside of *Römer*.

[99] H. C. G. Moule, *The Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Romans* (Cambridge: CUP, 1891), 98.

[100] Käsemann, *An die Römer*, 99.

[101] For example, Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 362; Thomas R. Schreiner, *Romans*, BECNT (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2018), 178; Jewett, *Romans*, 395-96. For examples in German commentaries, see Michel, *Römer*, 110: 'so entfällt jede Möglichkeit des Rühmens'; Adolf Schlatter, *Gottes Gerechtigkeit: ein Kommentar zum Römerbrief* (Stuttgart: Calwer Verlag, 1935), 150.

[102] For surveys of boasting in Paul, see Thurén, *Derhetorizing*, 165-78, and Josef Zmijewski, *Der Stil der paulinischen "Narrenrede": Analyse der Sprachgestalung in 2 Kor 11, 1-20, 10 als Beitrag zur Methodik von Stiluntersuchungen*, BBB 52 (Cologne: Peter Hanstein, 1978), 276-79.

expresses these verbs and for what purposes, and because it attests to the significance of boasting as a sociological phenomenon for the community of believers.

4. There are three single-referent verbs for boasting, two directed at the 'Jew' in chapter 2 (17, 23), and one a first-person singular in which Paul expresses his 'boast' in Christ (15.17).

From this short survey, we can state the following: boasting is something possessed and/or expressed by human agents; it is often a communal possession or corporate activity, although singular uses are attested (the Jew [σύ], Abraham, and Paul himself). Also, of particular interest from the above list is Paul's use of κατακαυχάομαι (Rom 11.18). The κατα- prefix can indicate a denigratory sense to the word,[103] such as boasting of one's elevated position in a detrimental manner against others.[104] In the context of Romans 11, Paul is rejecting the gentile believers' perceived advantage over Jewish believers. Given that the κατα- prefix in 11.18 most likely indicates a morally deficient posture of superiority,[105] this calls into question whether the *non*-prefixed terms carry the same meaning *per se*.[106]

Thirdly, we can trace the provenance of Paul's language of boasting to the Greek Psalter. Apart from a brief mention in Bultmann,[107] the significance of the Psalter for Paul's boasting language has been overlooked.[108] In numerous instances in the psalms, boasting and salvation are correlated, since boasting is the expected attitude and response to God's agency of deliverance on behalf of his people.[109] Paul's phraseology in Romans, particularly at 5.2 (καυχώμεθα ἐπ' ἐλπίδι τῆς δόξης τοῦ θεοῦ) and 5.11 (καυχώμενοι ἐν τῷ θεῷ), resonates with statements throughout the Psalter (LXX). Boasting, for the psalmists, is the expected response from those in loving relationship with God, the alternative being enmity

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[103] See *LSJ op. cit.*: 'against, in a hostile sense'. Also Cranfield, *Romans 1–8*, 567, 'to triumph over'.

[104] Note *BDAG op cit.*, where the term recalls the gloating 'of a gladiator over his defeated foe'. As a comparison, James uses κατακαυχάομαι to identify and condemn a particular kind of boasting associated with lying, arrogance, and jealousy (cf. Jas 3.14; 4.16; cf. 2.13).

[105] Cf. Bultmann, *TDNT*, 3:653; C. E. B. Cranfield, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, ICC (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1979), 328; Jewett, *Romans*, 685; Moo, *Romans*, 703.

[106] Thurén, *Derhetorizing*, 176, suggests that in Romans 11.17-24 'boasting *per se* has distinct negative connotations'.

[107] Bultmann, *TDNT*, 3:646-47.

[108] Early interpreters, however, readily employed Paul's mention of boasting 'in the Lord' as interpretive leverage for positive views of boasting in the Psalter. See, for example, Augustine, *Expositions on the Book of Psalms*, Psalm 74 (*NPNF* 8:342-50); Theodoret of Cyrus, *Commentary on the Psalms 1–72*, ed. Thomas P. Halton, trans. Robert C. Hill, The Fathers of the Church, vol. 101 (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2000), 71 (on Psalm 5.8); Theodoret of Cyrus, *Commentary on the Psalms: Psalms 73–150*, ed. Thomas P. Halton, trans. Robert C. Hill, The Fathers of the Church, vol. 102 (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2001), 172 (on Psalm 105.2). Cf. also Jerome, *Homily 11 on Psalm 77 (78)*.

[109] Helmer Ringgren, 'הלל', *TDOT*, 3:409-410. See also J. Henk Potgieter, 'The Profile of the Rich Antagonist and the Pious Protagonist in Psalm 52', *HTS* 69 (2013): 4-5.

(καυχήσονται ἐν σοὶ πάντες οἱ ἀγαπῶντες τὸ ὄνομά σου, Ps 5.12; cf. Rom 5.10). Paul's citation of Psalm 31.1 (LXX) at Romans 4.7-8 is remarkable considering the conclusion of the psalm: εὐφράνθητε ἐπὶ κύριον καὶ ἀγαλλιᾶσθε, δίκαιοι, καὶ καυχᾶσθε, πάντες οἱ εὐθεῖς τῇ καρδίᾳ (31.11). Here, the exhortation to boast (καυχάομαι) is paralleled with a command to praise (εὐφραίνω), specifically in the context of divine salvation. For the psalmists, boasting is the imperative, laudatory expression of confidence that belongs only to the righteous.

Finally, we must consider the conceptual links that boasting shares with hope. If believers are exhorted by Paul to boast 'in hope' (5.2), then boasting has a substantial future component. As other scholars have recently stressed, the Jewish boast in 2.17 and 23 is thoroughly eschatological.[110] Hope is the bridge between the present reality of God's electing power and the future reality for which God's people eagerly hope. The new revelation of God in Christ (1.16-17; 3.21-26) modifies dramatically without eradicating the *divine* locus of Jewish hope.[111] As the rest of this chapter will show, what was accomplished in the Christ-event, and what has changed concerning the source and object of boasting, has effected the momentum and scope of the promise to Abraham along a trajectory not yet traversed, towards a horizon not yet reached, due to stipulations voiced at its inception.

4.4 Romans 3.27–5.11 and the Pattern of Promise

In the following exegetical analysis of Romans 3.27–5.11, God's word to Abraham is fronted as central to Paul's understanding of faith, hope, and the new revelation of God in Jesus Christ. My focal point is the pattern of contradiction that characterises both the word of God and its outworking in human history. As stated above, I am arguing that a pattern of promise forms the logical basis for Paul's discussion of boasting. The question (3.27) and answers (3.27; 4.2; 5.2, 3, 11) regarding boasting constitute the rhetorical pillars for the framework in which Paul's version of the Abraham narrative is situated.

4.4.1 Boasting Put to Death (Rom 3.27–4.12)

In 3.27–4.12, Abraham is brought in as scriptural testimony to the fact that no human being can boast before God. Jews and gentiles thus stand equidistant from hearing God's decree of 'justified'. This passage constitutes the first of three steps in Paul's logical progression in

[110] Cf., for example, Wilckens, *Römer 1–5*, 244-45; Stuhlmacher, *Romans*, 48, 66; Gathercole, *Boasting*, 163.

[111] Dunn, *Romans 1–8*, 261.

3.27–5.11. As the pattern of promise runs from death-to-life, this section concerns the death of boasting.

4.4.1.a The Eradication of Boasting (Rom 3.27-31)

Following on immediately from 3.21-26, Paul interjects the appurtenant question, Ποῦ οὖν ἡ καύχησις; Paul, himself a Jew,[112] has deflated the airtight logic of Jewish soteriological confidence with his discussion ending in 3.20. Remove the law, and confidence in God's future deliverance of his people dissipates. Per the logic of grace, soon to be expressed in terms of stark incongruity (given to the 'ungodly', 4.5; 5.6) and according to the pattern of promise, the resolution lies in contradiction.

But there is disagreement over whether Paul means to exclude all boasting in 3.27 in a general sense,[113] or whether his specific target is the Jewish 'boasting' mentioned in 2.17, 23.[114] We might, for a number of reasons, limit Paul's exclusion of boasting to the dual boasting of the Jews in *both* God and νόμος. First, the definite article can function here anaphorically,[115] pointing back to the Jewish boasting of 2.17 and 23.[116] Secondly, raising the question takes up the discussion in 2.17, 23, a connection made through the repetition of θεός and νόμος in 3.27-31.[117] The structure of this short section is built upon these two motifs as a response to the very specific category of boasting in 2.17, 23,[118] where it is condemned as 'perverse' and dishonouring to God.[119] Finally, the postpositive οὖν indicates that the question of 3.27, and therefore καύχησις, is not separate, but situated in the larger discussion. Yet even if we do understand Paul here as targeting the Jewish boast specifically, for the Jewish apostle to discredit the law as the source of salvation is equivalent to excluding any confidence in eschatological vindication from God whatsoever. What other source could bring *any* confidence, if not the God who made promises of future blessing and secured them through the giving of that law? Thus, the same logic of reversal that undergirds Paul's argument at the

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[112] See the comments on Paul's Jewishness by James D. G. Dunn, 'Some Ecumenical Reflections on Romans 4', in *Aksum Thyateira*, ed. G. D. Dragas (London: Thyateira House, 1985), 423; cf. Eisenbaum, 'Remedy', 675.

[113] The classic articulation is by Käsemann, who understands Paul's target as 'the religious person' in a universal sense (Käsemann, *Romans*, 102).

[114] See, for example, Wolter, *Römer 1-8*, 267. Cf. Jewett, *Romans*, 296 for the possible Greco-Roman influence on Paul's understanding of boasting.

[115] See Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics: An Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 217-20, who provides an illustration of another instance in Romans 6:4: συνετάφημεν οὖν αὐτῷ διὰ τοῦ βαπτίσματος. Cf. also Romans 4.9.

[116] See the argument in Longenecker, *Romans*, 443. Early commentators concur, i.e., Chrysostom and Theodoret: τὸ ὑψηλὸν τῶν Ἰουδαίων φρόνημα.

[117] Wolter, *Römer 1-8*, 267.

[118] Wolter, *Römer 1-8*, 267.

[119] Longenecker, *Romans*, 443.

macro level in 1.16–3.26 continues to function at a micro level in 3.27-31. With one word (ἐκκλείω), Paul casts boasting aside.[120] The 'law of works' (namely, Torah)[121] is displaced and retains no power to foster eschatological confidence, as it is now rendered illegitimate.[122] That power belongs only to νόμος πίστεως. Divine vindication through the atoning work of Christ (3.25) is only effected 'by faith', ἔργον νόμου playing no role in the affair (3.28).[123] Furthermore, God is the same for both Jews and non-Jews in the context of his agency of vindication, because this vindication comes not by ἔργον νόμου, but through πίστις which is available to all (3.29-30).[124] Indeed, 'God is one' (cf. Deut 6.4)[125] who vindicates those physically marked as promise-bearers (περιτομή) and those unmarked (ἀκροβυστία).[126] Paul earlier reflects Jeremiah in his claim that the only mark of inclusion in the promises which carries currency any longer is internal and unseen (2.28-29; cf. Jer 4.4). These statements taken together support Paul's radical claim that boasting, or eschatological confidence in God, is now an impossibility.[127] The law, that pillar of God's immutable fidelity to his people to which their faith and hope are directed (even if only partially, cf. 2.27, 23), is toppled by the new revelation of righteousness in Christ. And yet, the question remains: how can God be faithful to himself and to his people if he bankrupts the works of the law, thus negating the divinely instituted distinction between the Jewish people and everyone else?

In a masterful rhetorical play, Paul refrains from dropping the other shoe at this point. Instead, he presses the anxiety deeper by asking another question: 'Do we destroy the law through this understanding of faith?' (3.31).[128] Paul both anticipates and compounds his readers' uncertainty, exacerbated by the exclusion of boasting. If confidence in God and his word previously came through one's relationship to νόμος, and that confidence has been

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[120] This metaphorical gloss is attested in contemporary usage, including Josephus and Herodotus. See *LSJ op. cit.*

[121] *Pace* Dunn, *Romans 1–8*, 186-87. For a helpful discussion of interpretive options, see Moo, *Romans*, 247-50.

[122] Wilckens, *Römer 1–5*.

[123] 'Das Gesetz gilt eben nicht den Gottlosen, provoziert, weil es nicht wirklich die Alleinwirksamkeit Gottes zum Heil voraussetzt, die Möglichkeit des Selbstruhms, versteckt sogar noch in dessen Kehrbild, nämlich der Verzweiflung' (Käsemann, *An die Römer*, 97). Note especially the influence of Bultmann's 'Selbstruhm' in Käsemann's comment.

[124] See the exemplary study of the 'oneness' of God in Dahl, 'Paul', 189, where he comments, 'just as with respect to sin, there is no distinction with respect to salvation'.

[125] Christopher R. Bruno, *"God Is One": The Function of Eis ho Theos as a Ground for Gentile Inclusion in the Pauline Epistles*, LNTS 497 (London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2013), has recently argued for an eschatological dimension to Paul's citation, which blends Deut 6.4 and Zech 14.9.

[126] Joel Marcus, 'The Circumcision and the Uncircumcision in Rome', *NTS* 35 (1989): 67-81, has suggested a contemporary function for the terms 'circumcision' and 'uncircumcision' as epithets used to distinguish between Jews and non-Jews.

[127] Barth, *Romans*, 109.

[128] One particularly strong indication that Paul is not finished answering the question of boasting in 3.27 is the question of 3.31 which 'indicates a false conclusion' to what Paul has claimed thus far in this short section. See Cranfield, *Romans 1–8*, 224.

tossed out, does it not then follow that the law itself has joined boasting in being excluded, indeed 'abolished' (καταργέω; 3.31)?[129] The questions raised are similar to the divine lie in LAB 47.8: what does this say about God's word; can it be trusted further; what is the future of God's people? This question regarding the law is the catalyst for the discussion of Abraham that follows. Since the specific Jewish boast in *both* God and Torah is illegitimate, i.e., if νόμος is eviscerated in order to effect eschatological vindication, this entails nothing less than the departure of hope. But a central message Paul drives at is this: the return of hope accompanies the resurrection of Christ (5.2), through whom a legitimate eschatological confidence in God is found (and expressed; 5.11).[130] And yet, the fidelity of God to his word remains uncertain. That God is faithful to his word in a general sense of fidelity and trustworthiness is clear in 3.21-26; God has now revealed his righteousness through the atoning death of Jesus for humanity's sins and proved himself δίκαιος (cf. 3.4, 26). That God has been faithful to his word in a specific sense, that is, to his covenant promise with Abraham is in doubt, and must now be corroborated through both the narrative of Abraham (4.1-22) and an elaboration of the Christ-event (4.23–5.11). Romans 3.27-31 is thus the first step in the progression of the pattern of promise: law-based confidence in God is negated by the very grace-gift of God to all without distinction. Eschatological confidence in God, that is, 'boasting', is put to death.

4.4.1.b Blessing the Ungodly (Rom 4.1-8)

The critical question in Romans 4.1 sets up the rest of Paul's argument through 4.22: 'what shall we say that Abraham, our forefather, found according to the flesh?'[131] Abraham, the paragon of fidelity to God in the Jewish worldview,[132] is set forth by Paul in completely antithetical terms from that of his contemporaries.[133] In this section, I will argue that Paul cites

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[129] This question anticipates the later query, 'Has the word of God failed?' (9.6). Both questions concern the revelation of God in its manifestations prior to the revelation of his δικαιοσύνη in Christ (1.17; 3.21-26), evident in Paul's association of the law with the prophets in 3.21, and the earlier reference to the prophets in 1.2. Paul's gospel, being 'pre-promised' (προεπαγγέλλω, 1.2), upholds νόμος, that divine contract between and delineating of the people of God, and the authoritative witness to the word-event of the promise and its subsequent history (Rom 9–11; see the following chapter below). See Jürgen Moltmann, *Theologie der Hoffnung: Untersuchungen zu Begründung und zu den Konsequenzen einer christlichen Eschatologie* (München: Chr. Kaiser, 1964), 134-39, for a discussion of Paul's concept of a 'history of promise' (Verheißungsgeschichte) beginning with Abraham.

[130] On the role of the resurrection in Paul's thinking here, see Daniel J. Kirk, *Unlocking Romans: Resurrection and the Justification of God* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008).

[131] The debate over how to translate 4.1 is summarised in Schliesser, *Abraham's Faith*, 321-27, where he proposes an alternative punctuation. See also Cranfield, *Romans 1–8*, 227; Brendan Byrne, *Romans*, Sacra Pagina 6 (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1996), 148.

[132] On the significance of Abraham for early Judaism, see Stuhlmacher, *Romans*, 70-71, and the previous chapter of this thesis at 3.2.

[133] Cf. for example Sir. 44.19-20; Jub. 19.8-9; CD 3.2-4; 1 Macc 2.52; LAB 6.11.

and interprets Genesis 15.6 as the first in a number of steps meant to resolve the question of boasting.

The first indication that a logic of reversal underlies 4.1-8 is Paul's delegation of a *programmatic* role to Abraham. This is evident in the way that Paul sets up the opening question and subsequent conditional in 4.1-2.[134] Whilst some argue whether 'faith' or 'fatherhood' constitute the *scopos* of the chapter,[135] there is good reason to see 'boasting', carried forward from 3.27,[136] as the underlying framework. The aim for Paul here is a clarification of boasting, given the new revelation of God in Christ (3.21-26).[137] Faith and fatherhood must be viewed as capillaries to the heartbeat of divine justification, which is, ultimately, the source of boasting. Otherwise, the divine impetus forefronted by Paul here and throughout Romans is forced into a subordinate role to anthropological concerns. So whilst some interpreters highlight Abraham's role as a model of faith in contrast to an antithetical model of justification by works, and others highlight the patriarch's paternity and pneumatic genealogy, Paul's focus seems to be the agency of God. Such is evident in the rest of the passage, where, in the midst of numerous participial clauses extolling the virtue of 'trusting' over 'working', the finite verb λογίζομαι frames the whole section, if not the entire chapter:[138]

ἐλογίσθη αὐτῷ εἰς δικαιοσύνην (4.3)
οὐ **λογίζεται** κατὰ χάριν ἀλλὰ κατὰ ὀφείλημα (4.4)
λογίζεται ἡ πίστις αὐτοῦ εἰς δικαιοσύνην (4.5)
ὁ θεὸς **λογίζεται** δικαιοσύνην χωρὶς ἔργων (4.6)
μὴ **λογίσηται** κύριος ἁμαρτίαν (4.8)
ἐλογίσθη τῷ Ἀβραὰμ ἡ πίστις εἰς δικαιοσύνην (4.9)
ἐλογίσθη . . . ἐν ἀκροβυστίᾳ (4.10)
εἰς τὸ **λογισθῆναι** (4.11)
ἐλογίσθη αὐτῷ εἰς δικαιοσύνην (4.22)

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[134] Although Hays, 'Reconsideration', has argued strongly for an alternative reading of Romans 4.1, his argument is weakened by an over-reliance on terms foreign to the Greek texts (i.e., 'only') and a disconnect from the following verses, amongst other problems. Note Schliesser, *Abraham's Faith*, 323-25.

[135] Schliesser, *Abraham's Faith*, 321.

[136] Cranfield, *Romans 1–8*, 224.

[137] Paul writes that Abraham has no boast πρὸς θεόν (4.2), but this may not necessarily exclude Paul holding out the possibility of Abraham actually having a boast 'before God' on different terms, namely, boasting (or confidence) in the fact of God's justification. Melanchthon, *Romans*, 124 (as cited in Wilckens, *Römer 1–5*, 262), attributes the insertion of 'coram Deo' in 4.2 to Paul's desire to stress the negation of any human work, even those outside of the works of the law, including 'bona opera', 'virtutes', 'timorem Dei, dilectionem, patientiam, termperantiam et similes'. All that is left to Abraham in the face of the divine reversal of his status from ungodly to righteous is a 'boast' in the justifying agency of God, which mirrors the status of believers on the other side of the Christ event (cf. 5.2).

[138] Wilckens, *Römer 1–5*, 262.

ἐλογίσθη αὐτῷ (4.23)

οἷς μέλλει **λογίζεσθαι** (4.24)

God is the agent of this action of 'reckoning' unto justification.[139] This theme, the justification wrought by God through Christ (3.24), has dominated the discussion since 3.21. But a contradiction is evident: boasting, or confidence in God's eschatological deliverance, is excluded by Paul both in the general context of justification by faith (3.27-31) and now at the very point where divine justification first enters human history according to the scriptures (cf. Gen 15.6).[140] Indeed; *where is boasting*?

Additionally, Paul posits a contrast between grace (χάρις) and obligation (ὀφείλημα). The 'reward' (μισθός, cf. Gen 15.1), rightly due anyone who 'works', cannot be reckoned according to χάρις; the logic of grace functions in terms not just of *in*-congruity but of impossibility.[141] As Schliesser comments, 'The impossibility of works is joined by the impossibility, from a human perspective, of the realisation of the promise's content given to Abraham'.[142] Righteousness comes to the ungodly, the undeserving, not the righteous or worthy (4.5).[143] Abraham is thus shown to be significant only in his complete insignificance, since 'God's judgment does not state what is, but constitute[s] what is not and would never be' (cf. 4.17).[144] In the formula of divine gift giving, 'not doing' trumps 'doing' (4.5).[145] If there was any residual hope that eschatological confidence was not *fully* excluded by Paul, such optimism is snuffed out. If Abraham has no boast, none have it.

The second indication that a pattern of promise undergirds Paul's argument in 4.1-8 is his use of Scripture. His citation of Genesis 15.6 attributes justification to the agency of God, whilst it concurrently elevates the *word* of God.[146] According to Genesis 15, Abraham's faith was in the divine utterance, not an unspecific sense of 'god' (cf. Gen 15.5).[147] But Paul looks

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[139] See especially the contrast between 'descriptive' and 'creative' as pertaining to God's declaration of righteousness to Abraham in Schliesser, *Abraham's Faith*, 336.

[140] There is no use of δικαιοσύνη in the LXX of Genesis prior to 15.6, although other δικ- terminology is found in the accounts of Cain and Noah (4.15, 24; 6.9–7.1).

[141] Barclay, *Paul and the Gift*, 485.

[142] Schliesser, *Abraham's Faith*, 339.

[143] Cf. Wilckens, *Römer 1–5*, 262.

[144] Schliesser, *Abraham's Faith*, 336.

[145] This is not to say that no reciprocation is expected *after* the gift is given. See Barclay, *Paul and the Gift*, 74-75.

[146] Ernst Käsemann, 'The Faith of Abraham in Romans 4', in *Perspectives on Paul* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1971), 81: Abraham 'represents the promise'.

[147] Some early Jewish authors attribute 'trust' to Abraham prior to the events described in Genesis 15.6, including Josephus, *Ant.*, 1.154-155; *Jub* 11-12. In their rewritings, Abraham conceives of God as trustworthy based on his creation and a general sense of divine virtue. Teresa Morgan, *Roman Faith and Christian Faith: Pistis and Fides in the Early Roman Empire and Early Churches* (Oxford: OUP, 2015), 8, in her recent extensive analysis of *pistis* in ancient Greco-Roman, Jewish, and Christian usage, argues that 'Faith or faithfulness is not the key concept in Judaism of any period that it is in Christianity'.

beyond Genesis to draw upon the rich cultural resource of the Psalter in Rom 4.7-8. Paul's selection of Psalm 32 (31 LXX) is remarkable in that he deliberately chooses a psalm that seems to contradict the preface to the entire Psalter.[148] Psalm 1.1 opens, 'Μακάριος ἀνήρ, ὃς οὐκ ἐπορεύθη ἐν βουλῇ ἀσεβῶν'. Throughout the rest of the psalm, the 'ungodly' (ἀσεβής) are contrasted with the 'righteous' (δίκαιος), the former characterised by their uprootedness (Ps 1.4) and absence from among God's δίκαιοι (Ps 1.5-6). In Romans 4.7-8, the blessing of the righteous is said to be a result of divine reckoning, not human agency. Paul appeals to the authoritative words of David concerning the true source of blessing: God's justification, apart from works (4.6).[149] In other words, Paul finds in Psalm 31 the reversal of Psalm 1. Humanity is splintered into the righteous and the ungodly, both characterised in terms of behaviour and relationship to God. Such a radical reversal of the preface to the Psalter is demonstrated by Paul to be woven into the warp and woof of Scripture, even a Psalm that was prayed on a daily basis by Jews and Christians alike.[150] Righteousness and ungodliness depend wholly on God's priority of justification that originates in his words to Abraham.[151] Divine justification is characterised by the '*misfit* between Abraham and the righteousness accredited to him by God'.[152] Abraham is thus programmatic of the expedient of God's blessing, namely, the forgiveness of the sins of the ungodly (4.6; cf. 3.21-26).

Notably, Paul prefaces these statements of contradiction in the beginning of his letter, when he irreducibly links gospel and promise. The *pre*-promised εὐαγγέλιον is a proclamation specifically concerning Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν (1.4). Through Christ, grace has come as an unexpected gift (1.5). This χάρις is the forgiveness of sins (3.21-26), which is the same blessing that David extols (4.5-8).[153] Indeed, the initial encounter between God and Abraham concerned at its most basic level a relationship defined by 'blessing':[154]

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[148] On the role of Psalms 1 and 2 as the preface to the entire Psalter, see Jamie A. Grant, *The King As Exemplar: The Function of Deuteronomy's Kingship Law in the Shaping of the Book of Psalms* (Atlanta: SBL, 2004); Michael LeFebvre, 'Torah-Meditation and the Psalms: The Invitation of Psalm 1', in *Interpreting the Psalms*, ed. Philip S. Johnston and David G. Firth (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2006), 213-25; Robert Cole, *Psalms 1-2: Gateway to the Psalter* (Sheffield: Sheffield, 2013); Susan Gillingham, *A Journey of Two Psalms: The Reception of Psalms 1 and 2 in Jewish and Christian Tradition* (Oxford: OUP, 2013). This view was widespread in the patristic period; see especially Basil, *Hom.* 10.3, from whom Ambrose borrowed extensively. My thanks to Dr. Susan B. Griffith at Oxford University for directing me to the patristic evidence at this point.

[149] On the authority and authorship of David for Paul's use in Romans, see Matthew Scott, *The Hermeneutics of Christological Psalmody in Paul: An Intertextual Enquiry*, SNTS 158 (Cambridge: CUP, 2014), 33-47.

[150] See especially Bruce K. Waltke and James M. Houston, *The Psalms as Christian Worship: An Historical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010), 19-36; Jeremy Penner, *Patterns of Daily Prayer in Second Temple Period Judaism*, STDJ 104 (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 43-54.

[151] Cranfield, *Romans 1–8*, 231.

[152] Barclay, *Paul and the Gift*, 486 (italics original).

[153] Note Wright, 'Romans', 493: 'nothing in the psalm, or in Paul's quotation from or comment on it, implies that David had been able to claim forgiveness on any grounds whatever. It was free and undeserved'.

[154] The adjectives εὐλογητός (Gen 12.3; cf Gen 22.17) and μακάριος (Pss 1; 31; Rom 4.6-8) differ in lemma but are within the same semantic domain.

> I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you (εὐλογήσω), and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing (εὐλογητός). I will bless (εὐλογήσω) those who bless (τοὺς εὐλογοῦντάς) you, and the one who curses you I will curse; and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed (ἐνευλογηθήσονται). (Gen 12.2-3)

Paul understands the 'blessing' promised to Abraham, and all humanity, as being achievable only in the context of the Christ-event according to the pattern set by the God's uttered word, a point he clarifies later in the chapter (4.15-17; see below). Paul's mention of David and the citation of Psalm 32 in 4.6-8 solidifies the connection of the gospel with the promise: the 'blessing' of Abraham (cf. Gen 12.2-3; 14.19-20) is thereby conjoined with the 'blessing' of forgiven sinners.[155] The citation of Psalm 32, on the one hand, reaffirms the theme of 3.21-26, that God has revealed his righteousness in the atoning death of Christ, thus opening the way for reconciliation.[156] On the other hand, Psalm 32 fuses the divine expedient of forgiveness with the promise of blessing made to Abraham. That blessing, which Paul elsewhere refers to as the gospel preached before Christ (Gal 3.8), cannot come to fruition without the forgiveness of sins. Paul will press this last point further later in our passage, when explicit mention is made of both the promise and the heirs of Abraham, in relation to the sacrificial death of Christ.

Although faith eradicates boasting (3.28), faith also is the point of access to God's blessing of forgiveness. Whilst there is a hint of reason for eschatological confidence due to God's initiative in forgiving sins (3.25), the *explicit* rejoinder to Paul's threefold rhetorical inquiry, including the disappearance of boasting, the abolishment of the law, and the 'discovery' of Abraham, remains unstated. Confidence in God, or trust in his capacity to make good on his word to Abraham, requires further nuance than that given in 3.21-26. But hints at a resolution have surfaced in terms of faith, promise, and divine justification. Before Paul can move on to a clearer statement of these motifs and thus resolve the apparent contradiction, he must engage the sociological ramifications of his thesis for the mixed congregation of Jews and gentiles in Rome. If the fulfilment of God's word is partially dependent upon the blessing of forgiveness, now available in Christ to both Jew and gentile alike (3.29-30), what of the exclusive seal of inclusion within the scope of God's promise mandated by Scripture, namely, circumcision?[157]

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[155] Jewett, *Romans*, 315.
[156] Wolter, *Römer 1-8*, 287.
[157] Gen 17.1-14; Exod 4.24-26; 12.48; Lev 12.1-3; cf. Acts 7.8.

4.4.1.c Immovable Boundaries and the Promise-Seal (Rom 4.9-12)

In Romans 4.9, Paul expands on the line of reasoning begun in 4.1-8 with a final set of questions related to boasting. Notably, the remaining subsections of his argument through 5.11 are delimited by declarations, instead of the rhetorical questions so structurally critical to this point. The connection of 4.9 with 4.6-8 is marked by the anaphoric definite article ὁ, an inferential οὖν, and the leading μακαρισμός (4.9).[158] Yet the topic of discussion is now changed to a specific inquiry into the *application* of divine blessing stated in ethno-theological terms.[159] The logic of reversal underlying this section is evident in his answers to questions regarding the 'blessing' and the timing of Abraham's justification. Paul answers the question of 'who' is blessed by answering the 'when' of the justification of Abraham in order to address the 'how' of justification for the ungodly.[160]

The 'who' question of 4.9 (the circumcised or not) invites a rejoinder that is answered in the 'when' question of 4.10 (*while Abraham was* circumcised or not). Paul asks whether the blessing of forgiveness, synonymous with the divine act of justification (4.6), is only for Jews (περιτομή) and not also gentiles (ἀκροβυστία). He buttresses the radical claim of 3.30, that both Jews and gentiles are justified equally by faith, through the witness of the scriptures concerning Abraham.[161] Πίστις is the predicate to divine λογίζομαι, itself predicated upon the ἐπαγγελία of God (4.13; see below). But these statements of stark contradiction, including 3.30; 4.4-6, and now 4.9, stand unmoored. The needed support comes in 4.10 with the *chronology* of Abraham's trust in God and justification of him.[162] Abraham heard the promise, trusted that divine word as 'true', and was deemed righteous, οὐκ ἐν περιτομῇ ἀλλ' ἐν ἀκροβυστίᾳ (4.10).[163] This in itself is no radical statement, as other Jewish authors would concur with the biblical timeline.[164] What is remarkable, however, is how Paul enlists the chronology of Abraham to reset the parameters of boasting in God for the believers in Rome.

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[158] Cf. Jewett, *Romans*, 317.

[159] Cranfield, *Romans 1–8*, 235: 'Paul now appeals back to Gen 15.6 as serving to interpret Ps 32.1f'.

[160] In 4.9-12, according to Kirk, *Romans*, 66, 'Paul lays the groundwork for providing a preliminary answer to the question of the way in which Abraham is the forefather of believers'.

[161] Cf. Dunn, *Romans 1–8*, 208.

[162] For Paul's sequence of events in relation to Genesis 15 and 17, see Cranfield, *Romans 1–8*, 235; Wilckens, *Römer 1–5*, 264.

[163] Cf. Schliesser, *Abraham's Faith*, 357: Abraham's role in Paul's argument 'shifts from being a theme and means of a proof to being a historical subject'.

[164] Wilckens, *Römer 1–5*, 264. Whether Abraham 'merited' justification prior to his circumcision is another issue. For perspectives on the chronology of Abraham's interaction with God in Second Temple literature, see Samuel Sandmel, *Philo's Place in Judaism: A Study of the Conceptions of Abraham in Jewish Literature* (New York: Ktav, 1971).

Whereas Paul's discussion so far has concerned the *scope* of divine blessing and the *manner* of Abraham's justification, he pivots at this point to explain the *purpose* of Abraham's circumcision. In the first half of 4.11, Paul introduces the implied 'why' question concerning the value of circumcision in light of its bankruptcy in the economy of divine justification (cf. 2.25-29): the fact of Abraham's circumcision stands, so what was it for? As Paul explains in the second half of 4.11, the 'seal' was received in order to (εἰς τὸ εἶναι αὐτὸν, 4.11) mark Abraham as the 'father' of *both* groups, Jew and gentile alike.[165] Indeed, he is father of 'all' those who believe (cf. 4.16).[166] This purpose was accomplished specifically δι' ἀκροβυστίας.[167] Contrary to interpretations of the patriarch's role in which he figures prominently as a model of faith, spiritual father, or biological progenitor, Abraham loses any such significance in Paul's dialectic.[168] Whilst earlier the patriarch is stripped of the claim to boast (4.2) and exhibited as the archetypal 'ungodly' person (ἀσεβής, 4.5), in 4.9-11 Abraham is portrayed as a thoroughly passive agent in the transaction of justification.[169] Abraham cannot boast in works, in his circumcision, or even the 'extraordinary family' promised to him,[170] because, as Paul states, God is the giver of both his universal paternity and the 'seal' of righteousness.[171] Torah effectively loses its place as 'a *sine qua non* of faith and righteousness'.[172] The categories of Jew and gentile are thereby subsumed under the single designation of 'recipient' due to the inclusive directive of divine gift-giving.[173] God gives blessing, forgiveness, justification (even the seal of that act; cf. Gen 17.1-14), and before all of these, his word as promise. The singular element that effectively fuses together the theologically bifurcated contingents of humanity is πίστις (πατέρα πάντων **τῶν πιστευόντων** . . . τοῖς στοιχοῦσιν τοῖς ἴχνεσιν **τῆς** ἐν ἀκροβυστίᾳ **πίστεως**), specifically, trust that rests on God's word alone.[174] All that remains to ungodly human agents, before the God who gives the

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[165] I take 4.11 to refer to uncircumcised believers, and both clauses of 4.12 to refer to circumcised believers; see L. L. Sechrest, *A Former Jew: Paul and the Dialectics of Race* (London: Continuum, 2009), 120-23; Byrne, *Romans*, 150-51.

[166] 'Paul's faith-formula πᾶς ὁ πιστεύων *always* includes Jews and gentiles and stresses the equality of both in God's plan of salvation' (Schliesser, *Abraham's Faith*, 363n1029).

[167] Cf. Wilckens, *Römer 1–5*, 265n844.

[168] Barth, *Romans*, 127: 'Is not the blessing pronounced upon him in the non-particularity of his humanness and createdness?'

[169] Note in particular the third-person verbs used in 4.9-12, where God is the subject of the passive verb (ἐλογίσθη, 4.9, 10) and the implied agent of the action (ἔλαβεν, 4.11).

[170] Wright, *PFG*, 1004.

[171] Wright, 'Romans', 495: 'Paul is not, then, using Abraham primarily as an example, but as the basis of his argument about who God is and who God's people are'.

[172] R. W. L. Moberly, 'Abraham's Righteousness (Genesis xv 6)', in *Studies in the Pentateuch*, ed. J. A. Emerton, VTSup 41 (Leiden: Brill, 1990), 129, as cited in Schliesser, *Abraham's Faith*, 359. Although cf. Rom 4.20; 5.20; Gal 3.19-22.

[173] Note Käsemann, *An die Römer*, 109: 'Faktisch wird dem Judentum sowohl Abraham wie die Beschneidung entrissen'.

[174] Cf. Schliesser, *Abraham's Faith*, 341: Paul's understanding of πίστις is a trust in God 'that awaits everything from God and knows about the impossibility of one's own contribution and the impossibility of the

gift of righteousness in the face of human worthlessness, is response. Boasting is thus excluded by Paul both in declaration (3.27) and exposition (4.1-12).

Circumcision, therefore, is no longer the watershed of humanity.[175] This 'boundary marker' loses its capacity to delineate meta-categories within the human race. But instead of being eliminated,[176] circumcision is granted a greater purpose; it 'makes known the relationship which has come about',[177] for all of humanity and firstly to Abraham, with no other reason given than God's divine prerogative (4.5). The purpose of Abraham's circumcision *after* his justification was to mark him out as justified through faith in God's word, *so that* those later circumcised and (or only) trusting God's word could likewise access blessing.[178] Πίστις, for the first believer and every one subsequent, is trust in the word of God. In a striking reversal of other portrayals of the revered patriarch, the seal of circumcision places Abraham at the *bottom* of the funnel of humanity, down from the apex of human reason, virtue, and obedience.[179] He is passive agent, one 'acted upon', 'given to', 'reckoned as' and 'blessed by' God. Such a move by Paul cannot stand 'by logic nor by exegesis alone: it resides in the Christ-generated discovery that, from the beginning, the Abrahamic blessing was blind to every token of differential worth'.[180] Paradoxically, Abraham's insignificance in Paul's logic of reversal is the very thing that grants the patriarch a particular significance found nowhere else in early Jewish literature, namely, a purpose infused by χαρίς both in God's giving of the promise and in confirming that divine word in Jesus Christ (cf. 4.13, 16).[181] Circumcision in Paul's hands becomes, ironically, a point of unity, inasmuch as it attests to the fidelity of God to his word, to Abraham, and to all. The impetus to trust is increased even as the relevance of circumcision is diminished.

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contents of the promise'.

[175] Günter Klein, 'Heil und Geschichte nach Römer IV', *NTS* 13 (1966): 44 notes the 'sachliche Indifferenz' between the two categories. This is not to say, however, that no distinction remains between Jew and gentile in Paul's mind, as will be shown in the next chapter.

[176] As Dunn, *Romans 1–8*, 232 notes, 'Paul does not disparage circumcision here'.

[177] Barth, *Romans*, 130.

[178] The καί opening 4.12 is epexegetical: Abraham 'was intended to become the father of all believers in uncircumcision, and thus he is the father of "circumcision," because belonging to the new covenant of faith implies having true circumcision, having Abraham as father' (Schliesser, *Abraham's Faith*, 364).

[179] Dunn, *Romans 1–8*, 211, notes that Paul presses 'the logic of Abraham's antitype'. Cf. the comments by Ambrosiaster, *CSEL* 81.1:135, 135.

[180] Barclay, *Paul and the Gift*, 487.

[181] Against the proposal in Wright, 'Romans', 494, that righteousness really means 'covenant membership', Barclay, *Paul and the Gift*, 487, suggests that the inverse is just as valid, where 'covenant' refers to the promise of God and its 'anthropological correlate', the righteousness that comes through faith.

4.4.2 The Transitory Interlude (Rom 4.13-25)

Paul next explicates the foundation of the believer's new life in Christ, the latter soon to be expounded in 5.1-11. In 4.13-25, Paul capitalises further on the figure of Abraham he has fashioned according to the logic of reversal. Paul seems compelled to drive the anchor of the Roman believers' faith far deeper than a shared ancestor; he explains their shared claim to and hope in the word of God. Romans 4.13-25 effectively constitutes the critical interlude between the two ontological extremes (death and life) that Paul must explicate to root his readers firmly in the hope that is theirs together as Jewish and gentile believers. As we saw above, Paul addresses the scope, manner, and purpose of the promise-event in terms of trust, blessing, and circumcision, and yet the contents of the promise have not yet been stated. If, as I am arguing, Paul's logic in 3.27–5.11 adheres to the template set by God's word to Abraham, namely, from death to life, then everything up to 4.13 since 3.27 has been an articulation of 'death': the death of boasting, the death of the works of the law, the death of circumcision, and the death of Abraham as a figurehead of blamelessness. In the first step of the pattern, the human capacity for confidence in the faithfulness of God due to anything intrinsic to humanity was depleted wholesale. This was accomplished by Paul through a incessant barrage of contrasts, between righteous and ungodly, works and trust, grace and reward, circumcision and uncircumcision, blessing and sin in 3.27–4.12. He now brings God's word to the foreground through another sharp contrast, between heirs and non-heirs.

4.4.2.a The Promise and Its Heirs (Rom 4.13-15)

Paul now moves to demonstrate that the faith of believers remains always within the long shadow cast by the promise-event.[182] 4.13 marks the turning point between Paul's foregoing discussion of blessing and circumcision, and his subsequent Christological exposition of inheritance and hope.[183] He writes, οὐ γὰρ διὰ νόμου ἡ ἐπαγγελία τῷ Ἀβραὰμ ἢ τῷ σπέρματι αὐτοῦ, τὸ κληρονόμον αὐτὸν εἶναι κόσμου, ἀλλὰ διὰ δικαιοσύνης πίστεως. This verse presents a number of interpretive challenges that must be addressed. First, 4.13 occupies a strategic position. Paul continues his argument concerning the death of boasting through the

[182] For Käsemann, 'Romans 4', 83, faith is defined as 'acceptance of the divine address', which in Abraham's case was the promise of 15.5, and for believers is the revelation of God's fidelity to the promise, namely, Christ Jesus. This point will be fleshed out further below.

[183] The opening γάρ in 4.13 marks 'the introduction of a further consideration in support of what has been said by way of proof that Abraham is no exception to the statement in 3.27 that boasting has been ruled out' (Cranfield, *Romans 1–8*, 240). See also Moo, *Romans*, 273.

story of Abraham, but now looks forward to the future rather than back to the past event or its present consequences. This is evident in his use of terms such as promise, inheritance, and heirs, all of which are inherently future-focused. The mention of κόσμος suggests an enlarged bequest for the κληρονόμος beyond just the physical 'land' or 'progeny' mentioned in Genesis 12–22.[184] There is rather, as Adams has argued, an eschatological horizon visible in Paul's use of κόσμος that is all-encompassing.[185] This claim is bolstered by Paul's fuller discussion in Romans 8.18-25, where sonship and inheritance are prominent in a context of waiting for final deliverance.[186]

Secondly, it is significant that the term 'promise' is in the nominative: it is the subject of Paul's statement, however we define ἐπαγγελία.[187] The term is used consistently by Paul throughout Romans in contexts where God's word to Abraham is under consideration.[188] Also important is the location of Paul's reference to the promise in 4.13, because this is the first instance of the term in Romans (not including the related προεπαγγέλλω in 1.2). Within a few verses (4.13-25), terms for 'promise' appear five times, indicating the significance of the motif for Paul in a section that lays the groundwork for the new life of believers in Christ.

Thirdly, we must clarify what exactly Paul is referring to when he mentions the promise. Is the sense restricted, referring only to the divine words as uttered in Genesis 15.6? This fits naturally with the preceding discussion from 4.3. But the mention of the κόσμος, whether or not we take it as meaning 'land' or 'world' (or even 'universe'), links this verse to Genesis 12.7; 17.8 et al. Alternatively, is Paul's discussion limited to the utterance (the act of speaking), the giving (the event), or the content (what was promised)? Forman, following Dunn, maintains the synonymity of ἐπαγγελία and κληρονομία:[189] the inheritance *is* the promise.[190] Cranfield suggests that 'Judaism came to interpret the promise to Abraham as a much more comprehensive promise'.[191] Thus, for Paul, the promise represents 'the ultimate restoration to Abraham and his spiritual seed of man's inheritance . . . which was lost through

[184] Cranfield, *Romans 1–8*, 239.

[185] See Edward Adams, *Constructing the World: A Study in Paul's Cosmological Language* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2000), 167-68.

[186] Cf. Kirk, *Romans*, 67.

[187] See Schniewind/Friedrich, 'ἐπαγγελία', *TDNT*, 2:582: the phrase 'ἐπαγγελία θεοῦ . . . is so fixed that θεοῦ can be left out and ἐπαγγελία alone mentioned, for it always implies the promise of God. By way of Judaism ἐπαγγελία has become a specific term for the word of divine revelation in salvation history. It is a word which expresses not merely the promise but also the fulfilment of what is promised'.

[188] There is some uncertainty about Paul's referent when used in the plural ('the promises', 9.4; 15.8). A good assumption is that the Abrahamic promise is in view, much in the same way that the Hebrew Bible refers to 'the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob'. The many promises are simply an extension of the original promise (and its sealing) in Genesis 15.

[189] Mark Forman, *The Politics of Inheritance in Romans*, SNTS 148 (Cambridge: CUP, 2011), 59n2.

[190] Cf. Dunn, *Romans 1–8*, 215; Byrne, *Romans*, 215.

[191] Cranfield, *Romans 1–8*, 239.

sin'.[192] The sense is perhaps best understood as comprehensive and enlarged; Paul amplifies the referent for the contents of the promise in terms of both the land and the seed: all the world, and all of humanity.[193]

Fourthly, Romans 4.13 is often read as a reiteration of Paul's earlier statements on justification by faith: 'For the promise that he would inherit the world did not come to Abraham or to his descendants through the law but through the righteousness of faith'.[194] The contrast between works (of the law) and faith is made the central point. The superiority of faith is seen in the fact that it is the medium of God's word of promise. But supplying a past tense verb here, as many translations and commentators do, engenders a confusing and potentially misleading statement on its timing. The promise is said *to have come* through the righteousness of faith, not through law. But this translation reverses the order of the account in Genesis 15–17.[195] Implicit in 4.2 (and explicit in Gen 15.6) is the fact that the divine word preceded Abraham's faith, followed by God's declaration of justification. The problem with the typical translation and thus interpretation of 4.13 is that the relationship between faith and the God's word threatens to be misconstrued.[196]

We must look anew at 4.13 grammatically and contextually if we are to read it coherently with Paul's logic as articulated to this point. First, Paul has just clarified that the law came after the promise in 4.10, thus the law is subordinate in terms of chronological priority.[197] Secondly, the mention of the promise in 4.13 grants to the sentence a future-orientation in lexical terms; a promise always implies something yet to be accomplished, and Paul says nothing here about its fulfilment.[198] This eschatological perspective is further attested with the mention of 'heirs' (κληρονόμος). Heirs are those awaiting an inheritance. The anticipation of God's future action on behalf of those he calls heirs is expanded in Romans 8, with Paul giving no hint that this situation has been resolved.[199] Taking these factors into consideration, the confusion over 4.13 is partly due to a lack of clarity on what aspects of the promise Paul is referring to. But he actually tells us in the verse itself when he

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[192] Cranfield, *Romans 1–8*, 240. See however Sam K. Williams, 'The "Righteousness of God" in Romans', *JBL* 99 (1980): 279, who argues for a more specific sense of just the contents of the promise.

[193] Schliesser, *Abraham's Faith*, 366-69.

[194] All major English translations concur with this sense.

[195] Wolter, *Römer 1-8*, 297, suggests that Paul is simply highlighting the antithesis between 'law' and 'promise' without regards to chronological order. The antithesis is certainly there, but that does not require Paul to ignore the temporal question.

[196] Cf. Kirk, *Romans*, 68.

[197] Paul of course has more to say about the law later in Romans, but his point here is that the promise stands before the law in every way, chronologically and otherwise. For , the law is 'so closely bound up with sin and wrath that it is unthinkable that it should be the basis of the promise'.

[198] Note that τέλος is only used of the law in Romans, not the promise (cf. 10.4).

[199] Indeed, the intensity of his language suggests that this suffering is the present experience of the Roman believers in 5.3.

mentions the 'cosmos'; Paul has in view the *contents* of the promise.[200] This does not completely rule out the utterance, agency, or agent of God's word, but the weight of the emphasis for Paul in 4.13 is the *what* of the promise. For these reasons, I suggest we supply a future tense verb in 4.13: 'For the (content of the) promise (to Abraham and to his seed, that he will be heir of the cosmos) *will not come* through law, but *will come* through justification by faith'. To express it another way, the fulfilment of God's word to Abraham and his heirs will come through the heirs' faith in Jesus (3.21-26), who as yet await the manifestation of their hope.

Finally, Abraham's role in the promise-event is simply that he is the first addressee of God's word of promise.[201] Paul's reimagining exercise entails a fundamental paradox, as mentioned above: the significance of Israel's foremost patriarch rests in his insignificance. Believers are heirs birthed by God's word, marked by trust not law, sealed by faith not circumcision (4.14).[202] Without a word of life to animate its womb, the Law is revealed as sterile, unable to propagate progeny according to the promise (4.14-15); it 'cannot provide the glorious future envisaged in the promise'.[203] The consummation of God's word to Abraham must come through the generation of heirs to the promise ἐκ πίστεως.[204] The relevance to Paul's audience is immediate, as they are identified at the beginning of the epistle as those whose faith is publicly advertised around 'the whole world' (1.8).

4.4.2.b Christ and the Validation of the Promise (Rom 4.16-17)

In 4.16 and following, Paul continues to resolve the question of boasting without an explicit reference to 'boasting' terminology.[205] The Christological thread of Paul's argument, backgrounded since 3.26, emerges discreetly into the foreground through a nuanced reference to the Christ-event: ἵνα κατὰ χάριν (4.16).[206] In verses 16-17, numerous capillaries of Paul's *theocentric* perspective, including faith, grace, promise, seed, the Jewish people, Abraham, believers, Scripture, gentiles, resurrection, new creation, and the word of God converge into a

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[200] Wolter, *Römer 1-8*, 295.

[201] Francis Watson, *Paul and the Hermeneutics of Faith*, 2nd ed. (London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2015), 200 (hereafter *PHF*).

[202] Law and circumcision are relegated by Paul to the status of 'secondary' principles (Hodge, *Heirs*, 88).

[203] Barclay, *Paul and the Gift*, 488. Cf. Matthew Black, *Romans*, NCB (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1973), 77.

[204] See Cranfield, *Romans 1–8*, 242.

[205] Although some have argued that Abraham's 'giving glory to God' (4.20, see below) is a form of boasting, such readings depend upon a view of καυχ- terms within a broader semantic field, to include the concept of 'rejoicing', that is sometimes lacking contextual nuance. This is reflected in the translation choice of many English versions of Romans, where 'boasting' in chapters 3 and 4 becomes 'rejoicing' in chapter 5, despite the same Greek term used in all instances.

[206] This purpose clause hearkens back to 3.24 ('justified freely by his grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus'), and functions as shorthand for the Christ-event. Cf. Schliesser, *Abraham's Faith*, 373.

remarkable assertion of divine purpose: Διὰ τοῦτο ἐκ πίστεως, ἵνα κατὰ χάριν, εἰς τὸ εἶναι βεβαίαν τὴν ἐπαγγελίαν παντὶ τῷ σπέρματι. The import of these verses as they relate to Paul's logic of reversal is evident at four points in the text.

First, Paul states the reason why the heirs of the promise can only come through faith (ἐκ πίστεως). If they come through the law (4.15), then the logic of grace falls apart. If the expanded thesis statement of 3.21-26 is to effectively counter the misunderstanding that the reward of righteousness follows works (4.5), then the logic of reversal must continue to stimulate every impulse of divine agency. That eliminates any human contribution but response. The gifts of blessing and heirship are not given according to human initiative but its alternative, undeserved grace. Paul's shorthand for the Christ-event, ἵνα κατὰ χάριν,[207] clarifies that the power of the law, the purpose of which was to illuminate sin (3.20; 5.20), has come to an end for believers due to the blessing of forgiveness realised in Christ (3.20; 10.4). For Paul, universal, ethnically inclusive heirship is a result of God's word and it is the incentive for hope, whereas the law concludes in a cul-de-sac of despair (cf. 4.16). Even faith as a human response does not function as the catalyst for justification;[208] the inheritance must be commensurate with God's incongruous gift of Christ, through whom the contents of God's word *as promise* are both secured and galvanised (4.16).

Secondly, the Christ-event is referred to by Paul as making the promise βεβαία. Contrary to claims that Paul has in mind the fulfilment of the Abrahamic promise,[209] the apostle means to indicate that through Christ the promise has been *validated*,[210] made secure for its eventual consummation,[211] and thereby *galvanised* to accomplish its original purpose.[212] The limitations of God's word pre-Christ were demonstrated in Paul's earlier discourse (1.18–3.20). The law's incapacity to reveal the righteousness of God (3.20) means that humanity was stuck on a trajectory actually leading to the dissolution of God's word (κατήργηται ἡ ἐπαγγελία, 4.14). Thus, 'Βεβαία (V.16c) markiert demnach die Antithese zu

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[207] Cf. Jewett, *Romans*, 329: with this clause, 'Paul reinterprets the Abraham story in the light of salvation through grace as experienced by believers in Christ'.

[208] Stowers, *Rereading*, 241-44, reverses Paul's order: God's grace is a 'response to human faithfulness'.

[209] Cf. Jewett, *Romans*, 328-29; Wilckens, *Römer 1–5*, 271; Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 385.

[210] On the various glosses for βέβαιος in English interpretation, see Schreiner, *Romans*, 231 ('the promise is 'secured or 'confirmed'); Longenecker, *Romans*, 513 ('guaranteed'); Jewett, *Romans*, 328n66 ('fulfilled'). The concept of 'validation' is also suggested by Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 385.

[211] This concurs with Jewett, *Romans*, 330 and Dunn, *Romans 1–8*, 216, who follow Gustav Adolf Deissmann, *Bible Studies* (Edinburgh: T. &. T. Clark, 1901), 104-109: the terms indicates a 'legal guaranteed security'.

[212] According to Schlier, 'βέβαιος', *TDNT*, 1:602, the term is used in Romans 4.16 'in the sense that *it is valid and will be fulfilled*. In general, βέβαιος maintains its original character in the NT, i.e., that a thing is firm in the sense of being solidly grounded, though it acquires the note of validity in connection with certain substantives' (italics mine). See also Schlier, *Römerbrief*, 131 and Moltmann, *Hoffnung*, 139: 'Die zuvor verheißene Verheißung wird nicht heilsgeschichtlich gedeutet, sie wird auch nicht als okkasioneller Anlaß zu einem neuen Glaubensentwurf genommen, sondern sie wird in Kraft gesetzt'.

καταργεῖσθαι (V. 14b)'.[213] Indeed, the Christ-event is best understood in terms of both validation *and* galvanisation of the promise: the opposite of καταργέω must be ἐνεργέω. God's exhibition of grace in the Christ-event is more than just an example of God's ability to bring life from death. The event itself, rooted *in the promise* to Abraham, has attendant repercussions that set the trajectory of humanity along the path demarcated by tangible, if unseen, hope (8.24-25). God's act in Christ secured the eventual consummation of his word by establishing the context and means for the forgiveness of sins and the proliferation of the people of God as people *of faith*. Without this direct divine intervention, according to Paul, the contents of God's word remain unfulfilled and its agency stagnant, caught in the grip of the law through which no heirs to the promise can come (4.13); death bears no children.

In the progression of Paul's logic to this point, 4.16 is a weighty benchmark[214] that prefaces his comprehensive claim at the end of the epistle: Χριστὸν διάκονον γεγενῆσθαι περιτομῆς ὑπὲρ ἀληθείας θεοῦ, εἰς τὸ βεβαιῶσαι τὰς ἐπαγγελίας τῶν πατέρων (15.8). There, Paul also defines the function of the Christ-event in terms of the promise to Abraham, recalling the motif of 'truth' (ὑπὲρ ἀληθείας θεοῦ) and relating it directly to God's word. That definitive statement, however, is predicated by Paul's earlier claim here in 4.16: the Christ-event is that which secures the contents of the promise for its future fulfilment.[215] So much is evident in the connection between the themes expressed so far in chapter 4: the blessing of Abraham concerns the forgiveness of sins, given to those whose trust in God's word marks them out as heirs of that same promise. They are the 'all' of whom Abraham is 'father', or 'normative exemplar' of divine saving agency of which faith is a corollary.[216] God has secured his promise to Abraham for all humanity without ethnic distinction through a singular demonstration of grace.[217]

Thirdly, Paul brings together Jews and gentiles under the same rubric of faith, grace, and promise. Previous to 4.13, Paul discussed the equality of Jew and gentile in terms of universal sin and divine judgment, whilst maintaining a distinction of priority ('to the Jew first') which is later transposed into chapter 11. But here, for the first time in Romans, these two disparate groups are explicitly referred to in the collective, παντὶ τῷ σπέρματι (4.16). The bifurcation of Jew and gentile persists from 1.16 through to Paul's definitive statement of *theologically* ethnic equality in 4.16. The refrain at the end of 4.16, that Abraham 'is the father of us all', whether a statement of physical and/or spiritual paternity, functions primarily

[213] Wolter, *Römer 1-8*, 300.
[214] Cf. Cranfield, *Romans 1–8*, 242.
[215] Cf. Käsemann, *An die Römer*, 114, who draws here on Moltmann, *Hoffnung*, 132-33.
[216] Watson, *Hermeneutics*, 198.
[217] Schliesser, *Abraham's Faith*, 373: 'the promise remains in full power and does not fall apart'.

to root Jewish and gentile believers together in the promise-securing Christ-event. The focus here is not so much Abraham as it is the ungodliness of all believers, marking the patriarch and his seed as equally dependent upon divine grace. Thus, the significance of Abraham's 'fatherhood' is directly correlated to his trust in the *giver* of the promise. The same is true concerning the adopted status of every believer, Jew and gentile, birthed anew by the Spirit (5.5; 8.14). The ultimate 'father' is God himself (8.15). God is *the* progenitor who has birthed a people for himself, not ἐξ Ἀβραάμ, nor ἐκ νόμου, but according to a divine act of grace in validating God's word on a universal scale.[218] This is the meaning of ἐκ πίστεως.

Finally, Paul bolsters his claims in verse 16 by plunging his readers ever deeper into the seeming contradiction of grace in verse 17. Paul writes that Abraham believed in the God τοῦ ζῳοποιοῦντος τοὺς νεκροὺς καὶ καλοῦντος τὰ μὴ ὄντα ὡς ὄντα. Here we arrive at the bedrock of Paul's logic in our passage, if not the entirety of Romans. The pattern of promise is the *modus operandi* of the God who creates from *nothing*,[219] whose agency transforms that which has died into *a living being*.[220] He is the God through whose 'miraculous power, ungodliness, death, nothingness become justification, life, creation'.[221] This is the logic of reversal. If the contradiction implicit in Paul's dialectic is to make sense at all, namely, that the *unworthy* receive God's gift of justification, it can only do so within a framework whose foundation is the God of the impossible. And the impossibilities that Abraham faced (a sterile wife and his own decrepit body, 4.19) were surmountable only by God's word (4.17) who 'calls' things that are not in order to bring them into being.[222] Any other sort of intervention, human or otherwise, excludes grace and banishes hope, inasmuch as the promise's imperative, as a divine word, for God himself to act is removed. Moving forward, Paul will harness the rhetorical power of 4.17 when resurfacing his motif of death-to-life in reference to the resurrection of Jesus and the future salvation of believers. The Jewish and gentile contingents in the Roman church have been fused together into one contingent: 'believers'. Boasting, left unmentioned since 4.2, will soon rise from the grave, but Paul must first solder the crucial link between Abraham and believers beyond trust and into the realm of hope. If believers' faith is contingent upon God's past words, both as utterance (the promise-event) and manifestation (the Christ-event), hope sits restless in the uncertain domain of unfulfilled

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[218] Cf. Schliesser, *Abraham's Faith*, 373.

[219] Cf. Philo *Rer. Div. Her.* 36; *Spec. Leg.* 4.187; 2 Macc 7:28; *2 Apoc. Bar.* 21:4; 48:8.

[220] See Dunn, *Romans 1–8*, 217-18; Jewett, *Romans*, 334, for the cultural backdrop of Paul's language of *creatio ex nihilo*.

[221] Schliesser, *Abraham's Faith*, 377.

[222] Taking ὡς as indicating purpose, as in Wilckens, *Römer 1–5*, 275; cf. Dunn, *Romans 1–8*, 217. Moo, *Romans*, 282, appeals to the immediate context to reject a reference to God's creative power in general, but he has overlooked the implicit references throughout the chapter where God's agency of regeneration through decree and calling are at work, including making Abraham from ungodly to righteous.

promise. This future dimension brings home the relevance of Paul's message to his readers, just as Pseudo-Philo's to his; present faith is dependent upon the future fulfilment of God's word.

4.4.2.c Hope at the Precipice (Rom 4.18-22)

Romans 4.18 is the first appearance of ἐλπ- terminology in Romans. Paul writes concerning Abraham that 'against hope, he believed in hope' (4.18). From this point on, both in terminology and as a theme, hope dominates the landscape of Romans.[223] Here in 4.18-22, we will consider two aspects of how hope *in the promise* supports Paul's transitory statements on the way to the revitalisation of boasting.[224]

First, as in LAB, hope is intimately correlated with faith and God's word.[225] Abraham 'hoped against hope'; he maintained an expectation of fulfilment on the part of God in the face of human impossibility.[226] Abraham's situation was beyond desperate; there was no possibility from a human standpoint of the promise being fulfilled as stated (4.19). Abraham's trust in God, however, was more than a general sense of confidence in God as a sovereign, divine being who creates as he wills.[227] The patriarch was met by an explicit word upon which he staked his claim to blessing: God's word as promise in all its facets (εἰς δὲ τὴν ἐπαγγελίαν τοῦ θεοῦ, 4.20), including the utterance itself (as God's audible voice), the contents (what was actually promised), and the giver (God as promise-maker). Abraham, rather than wilting at the impossibility of what was promised, ἐνεδυναμώθη τῇ πίστει (4.20), which foreshadows Paul's later statements on hope (5.3-4; 8.18-30). Just as grace functions in the absence of worth, and the promise functions in the privation of possibility, so faith operates in the absence of hope (or, as suggested in the chapter on faith in LAB, 'against all odds'). Such contradictions find coherence only when considered in the light of Paul's claims in 4.17, that God ever manoeuvres from death-to-life. The only explanation Paul gives is in 4.16, later restated in 11.6: if God did not work according to this logic of reversal, 'grace would not be grace'.

Secondly, the promise is given priority in Paul's logic. The statements of 4.20 and 21 follow a possible chiastic structure, in which Abraham's giving glory to God is central:

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[223] Cf. Romans 5.2, 4, 5; 8.18-30; 12.12; 15.4-13.

[224] Moo, *Romans*, 282: in 4.18-21, Paul's 'attention is still on the promise'.

[225] It is remarkable that Wright, *PFG*, 1007, addresses 4.18-25 with only a short paragraph in his massive two-volume *magnum opus*, considering it an 'exposition' that lies outside of the 'main argument' of 4.1-17.

[226] Cf. Cranfield, *Romans 1–8*, 378.

[227] See Wright, 'Romans', 499: 'Abraham's faith was not just a general religious belief. . . . It was a trust in specific promises'.

20 A εἰς δὲ τὴν ἐπαγγελίαν τοῦ θεοῦ

B οὐ διεκρίθη τῇ ἀπιστίᾳ ἀλλ᾽ ἐνεδυναμώθη τῇ πίστει,

C δοὺς δόξαν τῷ θεῷ

21 B[1] καὶ πληροφορηθεὶς

A[1] ὅτι ὃ ἐπήγγελται δυνατός ἐστιν καὶ ποιῆσαι

The thrust of these verses is that God's word is the object of Abraham's trust and God is the agent of his faith.[228] Yet his belief is more than, as Wolter suggests, 'dass Gott seine Verheißung gegen allen Augenschein darum zu erfüllen in der Lage ist, weil er Gott ist'.[229] Rather, his faith is a recognition of the promise as the palpable manifestation of God in his word: God *qua* promise.[230] In 4.20, the relationship between God and his promise is identified through the use of the genitive: τὴν ἐπαγγελίαν τοῦ θεοῦ. Paul does not say 'the promise made by God', or the more nuanced, 'the words that God spoke'. Paul conjoins God and the promise both intimately and comprehensively, such that the genitive may be read as possessive (the promise belongs to God), subjective (God made the promise), or ablative (God is the source of the promise). A comprehensive sense is supported by the parallel statement in 4.21, where Paul refers to the promise in terms of *source* ('he who promised'), *subject* ('he is able to do'), and implied *content* ('that which he promised'). Such a dense presentation of God's word reveals a logical substructure that coheres around the priority and initiative of divine agency.[231] God's word serves not only as the ground for Abraham's hope against hope and empowerment in faith, but also forms the bedrock of believers' faith in God, hope in future salvation, and boast in the glory of God.

4.4.2.d The Lord and the Promise (Rom 4.23–25)

In Romans 4.23-25, Paul delivers his final statements in the transitory interlude between the death of boasting in 3.27-4.12 and its resurrection in chapter 5. Before Paul arrives at the conclusive answer to the question of boasting, however, he lays one final paving stone in his argument to complete the thematic pathway he has constructed to this point. This final step

[228] Cf. Moo, *Romans*, 283.

[229] Wolter, *Römer 1-8*, 308.

[230] Jonathan A. Linebaugh, 'Righteousness Revealed: The Death of Christ as the Definition of the Righteousness of God in Romans 3:21–26', in *Paul and the Apocalyptic Imagination*, ed. Ben C. Blackwell, John K. Goodrich, and Jason Maston (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2016), 234, comments on 4.21: 'Faith's focus is not the believing human; it is the "God" who is "able to do *as he promises*"' (italics mine).

[231] Cf. Schliesser, *Abraham's Faith*, 387: 'Paul's concept of faith is essentially shaped by its orientation to the almighty God, whose promise calls for, creates, and at the same time sustains faith'.

coheres the past experience of Abraham with the present existence of believers through the agency of God. To form this link, Paul first claims that the scriptural testimony concerning Abraham also concerns the believers in Rome (4.23). He then roots that claim in God's word (4.24) and his definitive act of grace on their behalf (4.25). God dictates the pattern, Jesus embodies its reality.

In 4.24, God is identified as the agent of resurrection and the object of trust. Paul writes that God 'raised Jesus our Lord from the dead' (ἐγείραντα Ἰησοῦν τὸν κύριον ἡμῶν ἐκ νεκρῶν). When this statement is both correlated with the claim in 4.16 that God's act of grace in Christ was the validation of the promise, and connected with the opening affirmation that the good news of Jesus' birth and resurrection were 'pre-promised' (1.2-4), the dynamic nature of God's word to Abraham is put fully on display. If for Paul the death and resurrection of Christ is the ultimate paradigm-shifting event in the history of God's interaction with humankind, then the promise to Abraham is none other than *the* word-event that has defined the history of humanity thereafter. This perspective suggests that the Christ-event is rooted in a history predicated by God's utterance to Abraham and dictated by its contents. The pattern this history follows was previously demonstrated by Paul in his short narrative of the Abraham story, where deadness gives way to life and blessing (4.18-19). In like manner, believers find themselves caught up in a history of divine intervention via grace that follows a trajectory running from death to life, from ungodly to justified. This movement, both on the micro scale of Abraham and the macro scale of all believers after him (οἷς μέλλει λογίζεσθαι, τοῖς πιστεύουσιν, 4.24) is embodied in the person of Jesus Christ, a point Paul expresses in 4.25. And, as we will see in chapter 5, the trajectory of God's word moves also from present hope to future glory, demonstrating the comprehensive nature of the pattern for Paul's logic.

In Romans 4.25, Paul delivers his clearest articulation of the death-to-life motif since the beginning of the letter. He resurfaces the death and resurrection of Christ, a topic prefaced in 1.3-4, forefronted in 3.21-26, and alluded to in shorthand in 4.16. In correspondence with 3.21-26, the Christ-event is an act of God, both the 'handing over' and 'raising' of Jesus (4.25). Abraham's *programmatic* function for Paul is here clarified with the mention of Jesus' death and resurrection: in Abraham, the impossible is overcome by God's word, which during his life brought him a 'seed', the child of promise, Isaac;[232] in Christ, who is the validation of that promise (4.16), that same obstacle, death, is outmanoeuvred decisively through the

[232] See Schliesser, *Abraham's Faith*, 342, on the disjuncture between the offering of Isaac and the death of Christ.

divine intervention of grace (cf. 1.4).[233] God's mercy-laden gift of forgiveness, the 'blessing' of 4.6-8, is the concrete foundation into which Paul's readers, Jew and gentile alike, are anchored (cf. 5.2). Grace has engendered a new possibility for human existence *coram Deo*: 'peace' with God (5.1). Thus the promise, galvanised through the Christ-event, gives birth to 'heirs' through a reversal of death in two ways. In the first, explicated in 4.13-17, the 'death' of non-existence (as heirs) is addressed by 'birth' through faith: a new life from non-life, from ungodly to justified. In the second, the death of extinguished existence on a cross is overcome through resurrection: a resurrected life from a lifeless body. Both instances cohere around the motif of newness. Believers' new life as heirs involves an ontological metamorphosis such that they are not who they were before.[234] Birth from the death of ungodliness by the Spirit anticipates a future resurrection at the demise of death (cf. 6.4-5). This is Paul's logic of reversal in sum, the relevance of which for the Romans believers must have been significant. Every category of identification that divided the congregation was dissolved in the light of Paul's description of the transformative power of God's grace, and this divine gift, as Paul next explains, is the reason for boasting's revival.

4.4.3 Boasting Reborn (Rom 5.1-11)

Paul has to this point brought his readers through two stages of the death-to-life paradigm. He began with the death of boasting, demonstrating through the story of Abraham how boasting in the context of works is invalid (4.1-8). Even circumcision, as a standard of worth that preempted the law, was crushed in the vice of Paul's interpretive framework (4.9-12). The transitory interlude laid a foundation for the rebirth of boasting through the power of divine grace (4.13-17). Abraham's hoping against hope was set forth as the scriptural witness to the power of the promise (as content, utterance, and agent) to engender faith unto justification (4.18-22), accessible not only to the patriarch but also to all believers of any age due to the initiative of God in the death and resurrection of Christ (4.23-25; cf. 3.21-26). Like Shakespeare's Thaisa emerging from her watery coffin, boasting is reborn as Paul now turns from the promise in the past to the promise of the future, of which the Romans believers are participants inasmuch as they are recipients of the grace of God in Christ.

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[233] On the New Testament references to the resurrection as God's act, see Larry W. Hurtado, *God in New Testament Theology* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2010), 55-57.

[234] Paul elaborates on this point later in 5.9-10; 6.3-11; 8.9-11.

4.4.3.a The Boast in Hope and Suffering (Rom 5.1-5)

The results of God's actions in Christ are the answer to the question of boasting in 3.27. The achievement of the Christ-event, which will soon receive a fuller exposition (5.6–8.39), is described here in 5.1-5 not as the consummation of God's word in terms of its *contents* but as the perpetuation of his word in terms of its *agency*. Believers enjoy a status of 'peace' with God achieved by his own initiative in the Christ-event (5.1). Believers are now said to 'have' peace πρὸς τὸν θεὸν, the exact place where Abraham is said *not* to have a boast in works (4.2). The fruit of the divine vindication engendered by the promise is a status of peace with God, of whom the ungodly are *enemies* (5.6, 10). The source of this peace is specific: διὰ τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ (5.1). Paul employs other terms in 5.1-11 to holistically describe this new status before God, including 'love' (5.5, 8) and 'reconciliation' (5.10, 11). Therefore, believers are enjoined to 'boast', first ἐπ' ἐλπίδι τῆς δόξης τοῦ θεοῦ (5.2), then ἐν ταῖς θλίψεσιν, and finally ἐν τῷ θεῷ διὰ τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ (5.11). Boasting is effectively 'resurrected'[235] as the believers' boast. As with faith, boasting is a response to the divine initiative of χάρις. This resurrection of boasting sparks the answer to the question posed in 3.27 and running through to the middle of chapter 5. Paul's response is now ready at hand: boasting is reborn through the womb of divine grace.[236]

Paul writes in 5.2-3 that the boast enjoyed by believers is both 'in hope of the glory of God' and 'in suffering'. These dual aspects of the believers' boast[237] mark a significant departure from the Jewish boasting of 2.23 in two respects.[238] First, νόμος is supplanted by ἐλπίς and θλῖψις. Hope is the first named object of the believers' boast, because, as in the case of Abraham, hope in God is hope in the impossible (4.17). Indeed, humanity is 'bereft of every ground of *boasting* except hope'.[239] Also, in a striking reversal of the Jewish boast, the circumstance of the believers' boast is not in the tangible (Law) but in the haphazard (suffering); the clearly delineated precepts of the law give way to the indiscriminate realities of physical, emotional, and spiritual hardship.[240] Suffering, however, serves a distinct purpose:

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[235] See the title of chapter 8 in Gathercole, *Boasting*, 252.

[236] The theme is repeated in other early Christian writers (cf. Heb 3.6).

[237] Aptly identified as the 'christliche "Rühmen"' in Wilckens, *Römer 1–5*, 290.

[238] Abraham's boast, according to Wright, is different than the Jewish boasting of 2.17. It concerns Abraham boasting that he himself is 'the one through whom God's answer to Adam's problem had been provided' (Wright, *PFG*, 1003). The corresponding footnote clarifies that the boast is not about moral uprightness, but salvific capacity: 'I can be the one through whom God rescues the world' (note 658). This doesn't solve, however, either the ethical issue of Abraham boasting in himself rather than in God and his salvation, supported by 3.27 and 5.2-3, nor the exegetical evidence of 4.2 in which the boasting is directly linked to the fact of divine justification.

[239] Barth, *Romans*, 108 (italics original).

[240] See Wayne A. Meeks, *The First Urban Christians: The Social World of the Apostle Paul* (New Haven:

it catalyses 'hope in glory' (5.2).[241] This counterintuitive reality of suffering whilst at peace with God (5.1) is a crucial link between the Roman believers and Abraham. The patriarch's hope was in a God defined by life from death, existence from non-existence (4.17). Abraham's experience is fully commensurate with the present-day hope of Paul's audience: as Abraham was given a divine promise and thereafter endured a life of sojourn, delay and testing (4.18-21; Gen 15–25), so too believers, birthed anew by the promise-made-valid (4.16), endure a life marked by suffering whilst awaiting final deliverance (cf. 8.18). And yet this suffering engenders patience, character, and hope (5.3-4). Indeed, Christ's own glory came through suffering, and in this believers participate (8.17). Paul is quick, however, to point out the paradoxical, counter-cultural nature of the believers' hope, addressing the issue of shame directly (5.5). The believers' hope of God's glory, though increased through suffering, does not put them to shame (οὐ καταισχύνει). These words of consolation recall the apostle's bold proclamation in 1.16; οὐ ἐπαισχύνομαι τὸ εὐαγγέλιον. There, shame is enervated by the *power* of God; here, shame is dismissed by the *love* of God. As was the case with 'blessing' in 4.6-7, Paul appears to be reflecting a common theme from the Psalter. God's help is the panacea to shame, his anticipated deliverance is the reason for confidence in the midst of distress and the human opposition that often provokes it (cf. esp. Ps 71.1-2).[242] Believers must also view their suffering through the same radical paradox; their life is a study in contrast.

Boasting thus emerges from the landscape laid waste by Paul's assault begun in 3.27. Yet at this point, the concept appears as merely a sapling without the upper expanse and deep root structure of a mature oak. Indeed, with the claim that the believers' boast is also in their suffering, the concept of boasting is in danger of withering from the outset. Paul must bolster the Roman believers' negative perception of boasting he himself brought about earlier, if it is both to endure the strain of opposition and to meld the disjunctures in the Roman congregation. In order to accomplish both ends, he turns his focus to Christological matters. Previously, Paul used God's engagement with Abraham as the centre point of his arguments concerning the death of boasting and the foundation for its resurrection. In Romans 5.6-8 he turns to God's actions in Christ as the focal point of his claims regarding the rebirth of boasting.

Yale University Press, 2003), 181, and Moltmann, *Hoffnung*, 17: 'Christus ist der Hoffnung nicht nur Trost im Leiden, sondern auch der Protest der Verheißung Gottes gegen das Leiden.'

[241] See Wilckens, *Römer 1–5*, 290.

[242] See especially the discussion by Sylvia C. Keesmaat, 'The Psalms in Romans and Galatians', in *The Psalms in the New Testament*, ed. Steve Moyise and Maarten J. J. Menken (London: T&T Clark, 2004), 139-62.

4.4.3.b The Promise and the Death of Christ (Rom 5.6-8)

Paul exploits the death-to-life paradigm through two rhetorical flourishes in 5.6-8 and 5.9-11 that both explain the 'love of God' in 5.5 and expound the Christological statement of 4.25. In the first instance (5.6-8), God's love is expressed in terms of beneficence and sacrifice. In congruence with the contents of his word, God both handed over and raised his Son in order to secure and perpetuate the movement of the promise towards its consummation.[243] In the face of the problem of universal sin, made explicit in 1.18–3.20, the only hope for the ungodly and the only boast before God (cf. 15.17) is in the death and resurrection of Christ (5.8; cf. 3.21-26).[244] Paul's 'climactic sequence of 5:6-10 (weak, ungodly, sinners, enemies) answers the reverse sequence of 1:19-32'.[245] The mutuality of agency between God and Christ is seen in 5.8, where God's love is realised through Christ's sacrifice. Christ died on behalf of the 'ungodly' (ἀσεβής), a key identifier linking believers directly to Abraham (cf. 4.5). Believers are Abraham's posterity, not only as heirs through the re-birth of faith, but principally as partners in death. The Roman believers are here identified collectively as 'ungodly' (5.7) and 'sinners' (5.8), not bifurcated as Jew and gentile. The 'good news' is that, together, their weakness and sin have been overcome by the incongruous gift of blessing from God in the Christ-event.[246]

The pattern of promise dictates that the achievement of Christ in his death, the forgiveness of sins, is matched by the achievement of his resurrection, the birth of heirs to the promise. In fact, going forward from the Christ-event, 'identifying [the] God of Abraham is now dependent upon that act of resurrection'.[247] And yet, as Paul will now explain in the final verses of our passage, the full materialisation of the *contents* of the promise sits beyond the horizon as a perpetually dawning sun. If the Jewish boast is in works, completed to fulfil the Law, the believers' boast is in hope for the completion of the promise. Such a boast requires a future-orientation that Paul now articulates.

4.4.3.c The Pattern is Completed in Life (Rom 5.9-11)

In the second death-to-life articulation, here introduced by οὖν (5.9), the apostle employs two arguments from the lesser to the greater in order to emphasise the distinction between present

[243] See Moo, *Romans*, 272.
[244] Cf. *Diogn.* 9.4.
[245] Dunn, *Romans 1–8*, 242.
[246] See Gathercole, *Boasting*, 243.
[247] Hill, *Trinity*, 60.

hope and future reality.[248] Paul buttresses the shared hope he intends the Romans believers to embody in three ways. First, he turns to a series of striking metaphors including blood and wrath (5.9, 10), and the death/life disjuncture that has pervaded this passage since 3.27. The structure of 5.9-10 is built upon the phrase, 'how much more'; the constant refrain is that believers 'will be saved'.[249] The present reality of the believers' new condition before God is identified in terms of δίκαιος, the meaning of which is clarified in 5.10: 'being justified' (δικαιωθέντες) is synonymous with 'being reconciled' (καταλλαγέντες). Previously Paul identified his readers using terms such as 'justified', 'blessed', 'heirs', and 'seed'. With the introduction of 'reconciliation', Paul reiterates the claim of 5.1: 'being justified' equals peace with God, and that divinely-gifted peace is the essential corollary of the death of Christ (5.9-10). Remarkably, this death, which produces righteousness and peace, is again held out of reach for all human agents. God still maintains the prerogative even in the striking of peace with his enemies. They do not offer themselves in reparation; God offers his Son (1.4). Through the death of Christ (cf. 1.3), new life is given to God's adversaries effecting a radical transformation. In the logic of grace, enemies become 'heirs' (4.13-15). The latter title is less a 'badge of membership' than resurrection from the dead.[250] The achievement of the Christ-event in the human sphere is an ontological and pneumatological event of *creatio ex nihilo*, which anticipates the release from bondage and renewal of the entire cosmos (4.13; 8.21). Christ unleashes God's word to a scope and power previously unseen.

Secondly, in 5.10 Paul clarifies the link between believers and Abraham without mentioning the patriarch's name. Both parties *live by hope*. Paul reminds the Roman believers that they *have been* reconciled to God, and this happened whilst they were yet his enemies. If that is so, then it follows that they also *will be* delivered through the life of Christ, that is, through his resurrection (cf. 6.4-5). Believers are portrayed throughout 5.1-11 as weak and antagonistic to God apart from Christ. They like Abraham were ungodly. But, as the recipients of a magnificent transference, they are now loved by God (5.5, 7), adopted 'children' (8.15), whose destiny is to be 'saved' (σῴζω; cf. 8.24) through the resurrection life of the Son. Hope is thus intrinsic to trust in the God of the promise, who has validated his

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[248] Cf. Cranfield, *Romans 1–8*, 362.

[249] Paul Ricoeur, 'Freedom in the Light of Hope', in *The Conflict of Interpretations: Essays in Hermeneutics* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1974), 164, comments on the 'how much more' of Romans 5 in which Paul's 'logic of surplus and excess is as much the folly of the Cross as it is the wisdom of the Resurrection. This wisdom is expressed in an economy of superabundance, which we must decipher in daily life, in work and in leisure, in politics and in universal history. To be free is to sense and to know that one belongs to this economy, to be "at home" in this economy. The "in spite of," which holds us ready for disappointment, is only the reverse, the dark side, of the joyous "how much more" by which freedom feels itself, knows itself, wills to conspire with the aspiration of the whole of creation for redemption'.

[250] Against Wright, *PFG*, 889.

word to Abraham through a demonstration of grace that upends human evaluations of worth.[251]

Finally, Paul defines for his readers the two-fold significance of God's divine intervention on their behalf (δικαιωθέντες; 5.1, 9). In the present, 'being justified' means the cessation of hostility between God and believers. The 'wrath' of God revealed against all ungodly humanity (1.18) is extinguished for believers. They cease to exist as ἀσεβεῖς, now heirs. Being 'justified' entails the deliverance of believers from divine wrath (ἀπὸ τῆς ὀργῆς, 5.9) and, as Paul writes later, emancipation from subjugation into the freedom of glory (8.18-25). The glue that binds together both the present and future aspects of divine vindication is hope in God. Such a hope, as expounded by Paul, has roots plunged deep into the fertile soil of God's grace, which has galvanised the promise not only through the death of Jesus ('blessing' the nations though the shedding of his blood), but also and especially through his resurrection (the creation of heirs from the resurrected corpses of his enemies). This blood-nourished hope (ἐν τῷ αἵματι αὐτοῦ, 5.9) is the nucleus of the believers' unshakeable confidence in God's word; boasting is the result of the death and resurrection of Christ and the giving of the Holy Spirit (5.5). Therefore, the pattern of promise is shown to operate from two extremes: life *before* death and life *after* death. Life was *brought* to Abraham (or more accurately, to Sarah's sterile womb) to engender the 'child of promise', Isaac. Life was *returned* to Christ after his death, just as life is *given* to the dead to engender heirs to the promise. *Ex nihilo* thus refers to believers' prior life as ungodly, sinful enemies of God. As Paul writes later, believers participate in both the death and resurrection of Christ (Rom 6.3-4; cf. Gal 2.19-20) whilst waiting in a state of 'permanent incongruity' for the event of glorification to come.[252] In the meantime, they boast in hope, in suffering (that produces more hope), and, ultimately, in the God who makes certain his impossible word. As in LAB, the word of God stands as the ultimate source of refuge for his people in the midst of crises.

The closing statement of 5.11 is Paul's capstone declaration of the believers' boast expressed in terms of the divine-human relationship. Paul here concludes his answer to the question implicit in 3.27: 'If the Jewish boast is excluded, then wherein lies any confidence for our future vindication by God?' Paul joins in with his Jewish and gentile believers (note the first-person plural as before; cf. 5.2, 3) when he proclaims, καυχώμενοι ἐν τῷ θεῷ διὰ τοῦ

[251] Abraham's programmatic function for Paul has at this point been completed, at least until his brief reappearance later in Romans. Cf. 9.7; 11.1; and the implicit mentions in 9.5; 15.7.

[252] John M. G. Barclay, 'Under Grace: The Christ-gift and the Construction of a Christian *Habitus*', in *Apocalyptic Paul: Cosmos and Anthropos in Romans 5–8*, ed. Beverly Roberts Gaventa (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2013), 65. Cf. Rom 5.3; 8.17, 21, 30; cf. 1 Cor 15.20-22.

κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ (5.11).[253] The believers' imperative (and privilege) to boast is rooted in the reality of divine reconciliation of the ungodly. Their new status of 'reconciled' has been accomplished according to the promise through grace (4.16), through Christ *as Lord* (4.24; 5.1). Paul thus concludes his answer to the question of boasting, by affirming the achievement of the one 'pre-promised' by the prophets (1.2-4). As with all else that believers are said to receive, including grace, blessing, justification, and salvation, reconciliation also is the prerogative of divine agency. The logic of reversal prescribes that the final note in this stanza of Romans rings true the bells of peace.

4.5 Conclusion

Paul's logic of grace in Romans 3.27–5.11 follows a pattern established by God's promise to Abraham and the patriarch's accompanying response in faith to that word. These dual aspects of the divine-human intercourse constitute the foundation of any theological discussion of Romans, and certainly LAB. I have referred often to the promise to Abraham throughout this chapter, because the concept of 'promise' seems to encapsulate Paul's understanding of the efficacy, agency, and sovereignty of God's word. I have argued that this 'pattern of promise' is the framework through which Paul both reads the Abraham story and interprets the situation of all humankind (1.18–3.20). In accord with this pattern that moves from death to life, God impels humanity on a trajectory from non-existence to *being*, from death to new life. Paul articulates God's engagement with humanity through the death-to-life paradigm underlying his interaction with Abraham, in which God spoke his word and Abraham responded in faith. That foundational story is programmatic of how God acts in accord with his word on behalf of his enemies. The result is a demonstration of the priority of divine speech and a brilliant exhibition of both the hope that is its necessary corollary and the true source of the believers' boast. We are now in a position to evaluate the three main interpretative approaches to Romans 4.[254]

[253] Bultmann, *TDNT*, 3:650, concedes that in 5.11 Paul speaks of a legitimate boast, but maintains that 'self-confidence (Selbstruhm) is radically excluded from καυχᾶσθαι ἐν τῷ θεῷ'.

[254] For an excellent critique of the major interpreters of Romans 4 from the standpoint of Luther's and Calvin's insights on grace and faith, see Stephen J. Chester, *Reading Paul with the Reformers: Reconciling Old and New Perspectives* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2017), 400-22.

4.5.1 Model Faith

The model faith view is partly correct to see Abraham as an exemplar of faith, but there are a number of problems worth considering. First, there is the issue of correspondence concerning the *object* of belief. Whilst believers are said to trust in the God 'who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead' (4.24), Abraham's trust in God was linked to the spoken promise, and not simply a general belief in God (Gen 15.5-6).[255] Even if the latter were true, Abraham's trust in God still differs from Paul's audience in that he was not privy to the subsequent revelation of God's righteousness, namely Christ.[256] The temporal markers Paul employs (νῦν) to describe God's act of revealing his righteousness means that Abraham could not have had the same degree of familiarity with God's gospel as contemporary believers.[257] This is why he says it was 'pre-promised' (1.2). Abraham and believers cannot have the 'same' faith without defining πίστις in a specific way that may not suit the context of Romans 4, nor align with the logic of Paul's argument. 3.21-26 was not part of Abraham's experience, but 4.16 was, inasmuch as Christ is understood as the embodiment of the divine word.

Similarly, the exemplary faith approach makes too much of Abraham's 'faith' in an individualistic sense and as the antithesis to 'works'.[258] Many interpreters who follow the model faith view draw parallels with contemporary Jewish views of Abraham,[259] in which the patriarch's faith is presented as a form of *exemplum*.[260] The emphasis is on the person of Abraham, who prefigures Christian faith at its best. But the connection breaks down when we consider that Paul's Abraham is not the blameless figure of Jewish tradition who kept the Siniatic law 400 years before the Exodus.[261] Paul, rather, is forthright about Abraham's 'ungodliness' and uncircumcised state (4.5, 7, 8, 10; cf. 5.6). Paul changes the focus of his

[255] This belief in God *qua* God figures in the accounts of Philo, Josephus, and Jubilees, in particular. See also Irenaeus, *Haer.* 4.5.3; *1 Clement* 12.7-8 (my thanks to Jacob Cerone for alerting me to the Patristic references).

[256] Even if Christ was revealed to Abraham in some way by God, the patriarch still lived prior to the Incarnation, so the Christ-event would have been more conceptual than a reality.

[257] Against Hill, *Trinity*, 61: 'God *was* for Abraham the God who would raise Jesus'. It might be better to say that God was for Abraham the God who could raise offspring from nothing, because of the power inherent in the promise and the promise-giver (4.21).

[258] See Beverly Roberts Gaventa, *When in Romans: An Invitation to Linger with the Gospel according to Paul* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2016), 60.

[259] Note the recent discussion in Jon D. Levenson, *Inheriting Abraham: The Legacy of the Patriarch in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012), 139-172, and the book-length analysis in R. W. L. Moberly, *The Bible, Theology, and Faith: A Study of Abraham and Jesus* (Cambridge: CUP, 2000). For specific Jewish examples, see Louis Ginzberg, *Legends of the Jews*, 2nd ed. (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 2003), 165-250.

[260] For example, Moo, *Romans*, 243, 257; Thomas H. Tobin, *Paul's Rhetoric in Its Contexts: The Argument of Romans* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2005), 125, 143-44; Stuhlmacher, *Romans*, 68, 70.

[261] Cf. Sir 44.19-21.

culturally inherited interpretive lens, blurring the view of the patriarch whilst sharpening the image of God.

4.5.2 Origin of the Story

The 'origin of the story' model raises its own set of difficult questions. First, are we completely justified in reading Romans (at the very least chapter 4) through the lens of Galatians? Certainly, Paul employs Abraham at strategic points in Galatians (3.6-18, 29; 4.22), and certain themes are replicated in Romans (faith, circumcision, justification, promise). Wright, for one, sees the letter to the Romans as Paul's attempt at mollifying his caustic and divisive language in Galatians.[262] Paul attempts in Romans to bring Jewish Christians back into the fold, whom he ostracised earlier in his overzealous attempt to protect his gospel (Gal 1.6-9). But even if this is true it can only be part of the picture, since Paul's means of unifying the Jewish and gentile believers in Rome is meant to accomplish more than reparation for Jews, even if just for the sake of gaining support for his intended trip to Spain (15.24).[263] Against this view, Paul puts Jews and gentiles together on equally uncertain footing through the first three chapters of Romans, in order to root them together in utter dependence on the God whose word is hope.

Secondly, the narrative arc proposed by Wright in particular climaxes prematurely. Wright's discussion of Romans, including chapter 4, is replete with the language of 'fulfilment,' 'climax,' and 'completion' as descriptive of the Christ-event in relation to the Abrahamic covenant.[264] But in Romans, the fulfilment of the God's word lies in the unseen and delayed future.[265] It is confusing why Wright nearly ignores 4.18-25 in his *magnum opus*, but this may partly have to do with the emphasis on the promise. Paul's discussion does not fit the mould of Wright's covenantal framework. Romans throughout betrays a conspicuous sense of anxiety and expressed anticipation of things yet to come. The analysis above demonstrates that Christ's achievements in his death and resurrection effected the *continuation* of the promise through validation, not the *completion* of it; indeed, the latter language is reserved for the law (10.4).

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[262] See especially N. T. Wright, 'Romans and the Theology of Paul', in *Pauline Theology, Volume III*, ed. David M. Hay and E. Elizabeth Johnson (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1995).

[263] See Karl Paul Donfried, *The Romans Debate: Revised and Expanded Edition* (Peabody, MS: Hendrickson, 2005), on the numerous ways of understanding the purpose of Romans.

[264] See Wright, *PFG*, 995-1007.

[265] See Kevin P. Conway, *The Promises of God: The Background of Paul's Exclusive Use of "epangelia" for the Divine Pledge* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2014), 193.

Finally, a troubling aspect of Wright's proposal is his extreme reticence to identify Abraham as included in Paul's category of the 'ungodly' (ἀσεβής; 4.5; 5.6).[266] For Wright, Paul isn't concerned to show that Abraham needed forgiveness of sins; the real point of the promise was to guarantee to Abraham that 'gentile sinners' would be part of his family.[267] This move by Wright may simply be due to the fact that he discounts the role of Abraham in Romans 4 relative to God's,[268] so the real question, in his mind, is not whether Abraham was 'ungodly'. But if Paul excludes Abraham from the scope of the ungodly in 3.27–5.11, then the logical framework of this passage falls apart.[269] Therefore, although the 'origin of the story' model has been helpful for calling attention to previously understated sociological issues in the Roman church, the questions it raises demands another perspective.

4.5.3 Paul Within Judaism

Despite the novelty of PWJ in identifying Stoic ideas in Paul's thinking in Romans, there is one major fault-line in the schema. Abraham's significance for the program of God is magnified beyond the evidence of the text when interpreters must speak of the patriarch in 'material' terms. PWJ stands or falls on four premises: the Stoic concept of *krasis*;[270] physical, genealogical descent from Abraham;[271] a material *pneuma* ('stuff');[272] and the irreconcilable dichotomy of spirit/flesh.[273] But the Pauline soteriological schema, in which God stakes first claim on the territory of *creatio*, is flipped if 'genealogical descent from Abraham results in divine descent'.[274] When Hodge, for example, states that 'kinship based on lineage is the vehicle for God's promises', she wrestles freedom from divine agency and grants it to human procreation.[275] PWJ overlooks the fact that the content of the promise is not *pneuma*,[276] but 'blessing', a pronouncement by God of 'forgiven'.[277] which means that the good news of Romans is meant to rectify the Jewish problem just as much as the gentile one, namely, sin.

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[266] Wright, *PFG*, 1004.
[267] Wright, 'Romans', 497.
[268] As he writes in Wright, 'Romans', 495, 'Paul is not . . . using Abraham primarily as an example, but as the basis of his argument about who God is and who God's people are'. My argument above differs from Wright by focusing on how God operates, namely, according to a logic of reversal.
[269] See Jan Lambrecht, 'Romans 4: A Critique of N.T. Wright', *JSNT* 36 (2013): 192.
[270] Thiessen, *Problem*, 112-14.
[271] Thiessen, *Problem*, 155.
[272] Thiessen, *Problem*, 112, 116, 153, 159.
[273] Thiessen, *Problem*, 68, 115, 153.
[274] Thiessen, *Problem*, 155.
[275] Hodge, *Heirs*, 87.
[276] Cf. Thiessen, *Problem*, 159.
[277] Black, *Romans*, 76.

Also, PWJ makes too much of physical genealogy as the medium through which God's word operates. Perhaps unconsciously, PWJ stresses the exact point the false teachers in Galatia stressed: something *physical* must happen in order for gentiles to come under the umbrella of the promise to Abraham and thus become his *spiritual* heirs. Circumcision was their means to rectify the status of gentiles who stood outside the scope of God's promise. The real 'gentile problem', however, is not the fact that gentiles are unrelated genealogically to Abraham.[278] The problem, as Paul articulates in Romans 1.18-32, is that gentiles are 'ungodly'. The solution is the same as for the Jews, and indeed Abraham himself; forgiveness of sins through the paradigm-shifting Christ-event. In sum, PWJ's misalignment with Paul's dialectic in the epistle removes it as a viable interpretive framework for Romans 4.

The figure of Abraham in Romans 4 is crafted in Paul's hands differently than by his contemporaries because the patriarch is being used to support an argument concerning the divine impetus to operate according to a paradigm of reversal, a move from death to life. Abraham is less a model of faith whose example should be followed in the here and now, or a spiritual forefather who stands at the head of a long line of spiritual heirs, than a beacon of hope in the realities only possible in God. Yes, as we saw in LAB, the 'word' of God is determinative of all history, certified in the promise to Abraham, validated and galvanised 'in Christ', yet anticipating that pending consummation when 'we shall be saved' (5.9-10). Paul's argument thus contains great potential to function as a true *address* to his readers (as is the case in LAB), in that the future dimension of their present hope in God compels them to radical faith in his capacity to bring about the future fulfilment of that word of promise, now confirmed in Christ. The profound theology of Romans is every bit as relevant to its readers as LAB's is to its own. Abraham's programmatic role as 'father' is to point to the God of promise in whose hands believers are carried from this present life of suffering into future glory, when God himself will conclude the history of his word, indeed, the history of promise, in a dramatic act of salvation of both Jews and gentiles together (see next chapter on Romans 11). The power of the Christ-event, a divine act that gives birth to viable offspring of the promise and fills them with a paradoxical hope that increases through suffering, has set a new course, scope, manner, and means for that same word spoken to Abraham. In the present, believers are enjoined to participate as co-heirs in a new realm of existence whose Lord is Christ. But although this dramatic validation and galvanisation of God's word and concurrent impoverishment of the Law has resurrected the privilege of boasting in God, a critical

[278] Thiessen, *Problem*, 114.

question remains: what of Israel, the physical offspring of Abraham? Was God's word ever only to the 'spiritual' seed of Abraham, or do the physical heirs still have a place in the outworking of the history of promise? To this question we now turn.

5. God's Mercy and the Promise in Romans

5.1 Introduction

The last chapter argued that Paul's thinking in Romans 4 follows a pattern underlying God's work in Christ that is sourced from the Abrahamic promise. Turning to Romans 9–11, Paul answers the question of God's faithfulness to his word in a quasi-narrative of Israel's entire history.[1] The importance of this present chapter as it relates to the earlier chapters on Pseudo-Philo is in the exegesis of an extended passage in Romans where divine mercy triumphs in the face of Israel's sin due to God's fidelity to his word. Whereas the previous chapter on Romans 4 considered both the word of God and human faith together as integral to a holistic understanding of Paul's theology of grace, this present chapter focuses on God's mercy to Israel as a past, present, and future reality engendered by his word, a topic also of great interest to Pseudo-Philo.[2] In what follows, I consider the movements of God in Romans 9–11 in terms of a 'contingent mercy'.[3] This phrase signifies that God's mercy is 'free' only as it follows from his words of promise to Abraham *and* corresponds to the ungodly status of humanity.[4] This understanding aligns with other scholars' emphasis on the unconditional nature of God's mercy according to Paul, including Linebaugh's stress on *creatio e contrario*.[5] My thesis contributes to these efforts by presenting a case for the logical coherence of Romans 9–11 as a theologically robust exhibition of divine mercy congruous with human ungodliness and according to the Abrahamic promise. For Paul, God is the variegated divine agent of wrath and love, subjugation and rescue, hardening and softening, crushing and pleading, despair and anticipation who acts in line with a pattern inscribed in his

[1] On the narrative dynamics in these passages, see Jonathan A. Linebaugh, *God, Grace, and Righteousness in Wisdom of Solomon and Paul's Letter to the Romans: Texts in Conversation* (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 153. For Paul's turn from 'grace' to 'mercy' terminology in Romans 9–11, see Cilliers Breytenbach, *Grace, Reconciliation, Concord: the Death of Christ in Graeco-Roman Metaphors* (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 213, 219.

[2] On the significance of 'mercy' language in Romans 9–11, see especially Cilliers Breytenbach, '"Charis" and "eleos" in Paul's Letter to the Romans', in *The Letter to the Romans*, ed. Udo Schnelle (Leuven: Peeters, 2009), 253-58.

[3] I am intentionally using the term 'contingent' in a paradoxical manner with 'mercy', in order to stress the fact that God's mercy is only ever given to those who are the least deserving, according to human standards of worth, to receive divine favour and blessing. The contingency of divine mercy is a statement on the counter-intuitive nature of grace as presented by Paul in Romans.

[4] Note C. K. Barrett, *A Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, 2nd ed. (London: A. & C. Black, 1991), 169, in which he writes that Israel 'is created not by blood and soil, but by the promise of God, and therefore exists within the limits of God's freedom'.

[5] See Jonathan A. Linebaugh, 'Not the End: The History and Hope of the Unfailing Word in Romans 9–11', in *God and Israel: Providence and Purpose in Romans 9–11*, ed. Todd D. Still (Waco: Baylor, 2017), 163.

original and originating word to Abraham.[6] God's effective word of promise sketches the rest of human history in shades of revolution, rebirth, catastrophe, and hope.

Concerning structure, my argument takes 9.6 and 11.32 as the bookends of Paul's argument. In 9.6, Paul writes that 'it is not as though the word of God had failed' (9.6). The statement itself implies the question, 'has God's word fallen?',[7] which Paul addresses throughout these three chapters.[8] The question is prompted by Paul's lament of 9.1-5, where he wishes himself 'cut off' from Christ so his Jewish kin might be saved. He sets out to demonstrate that God has been faithful to his word all along, even whilst Israel has consistently flouted the commandments and rejected the God who chose them as his people. The capstone of Paul's argument is the concluding statement that 'God has imprisoned all in disobedience in order that he might be merciful to all' (11.32). Here is expressed the order of God's dealings with humanity, the pattern by which God conducts himself in the affairs of the world.[9] Mercy pursues the disobedient. The pattern of promise explored in Romans 4 continues to hold sway over the affairs of God in human history. The promise is made to Abraham the ungodly, just as mercy is given to 'all' those enslaved by sin.

My argument will be conducted in two parts. Part one, on Romans 9.6-13, lays the foundation for a framework in which God's freedom to be merciful is constrained by his words of promise to Abraham.[10] Part two, on Romans 11.17-32, argues that God's mercy is contingent upon the ungodliness of humanity, and that whilst this condition is brought about by God himself, he is also the agent of resurrection according to his word. The combination of these two theses completes the conceptual framework of God's contingent mercy and, coupled with the thesis of the previous chapter on Romans 4 concerning God's word and human faith, sets the stage for a final comparison with Pseudo-Philo in the conclusion.

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[6] Against Erich Dinkler, 'The Historical and the Eschatological Israel in Romans Chapters 9–11: A Contribution to the Problem of Pre-Destination and Individual Responsibility', *JoR* 36 (1956): 109-27, this 'hope' is more than personal for Paul; it is humanity's hope.

[7] Philip F. Esler, *Conflict and Identity in Romans: The Social Setting of Paul's Letter* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2003), 307.

[8] James D. G. Dunn, *Romans 9–16*, WBC 38B (Waco, TX: Word, 1988), 518, 539.

[9] See Linebaugh, 'End', 144.

[10] Whilst not ignoring the import of Exodus 33.19 for 9–11, my focus will be on the promise to Abraham as informing the deeper logic of the passage. On the relationship between Exodus 33 and Romans 9–11, see Susan Eastman, 'Israel and Divine Mercy in Galatians and Romans', in *Between Gospel and Election: Explorations in the Interpretation of Romans 9–11*, ed. Florian Wilk and J. Ross Wagner, WUNT 257 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010), 156-60; John M. G. Barclay, '"I will have mercy on whom I have mercy": The Golden Calf and Divine Mercy in Romans 9–11 and Second Temple Judaism', *EC* 1 (2010): 84-88.

5.2 The Promise as Arbiter of Divine Mercy (9.6-13)

Paul claims that God's agency of calling, or election, is both *predicated upon* the promise to Abraham and *prior to* human agency and existence.[11] This dual claim is supported first by a discussion of the relationship of God's word to his election in 9.6-9, and then through consideration of the relationship between divine and human agency in 9.10-13.[12] In Romans 9.6-13, Paul seeks to demonstrate through specific examples from Israel's first generations that God has limited himself through the promise to a course of action in human history traceable along a paradoxical trajectory marked by the calling of the ungodly.[13] His election accords with the promise.

5.2.1 A Foundation Inscribed in God's Word (9.6-9)

The continuing validity and non-fulfilment of the promise roots the framework of 9.6-9.[14] There is, however, a persistent view of the Christ-event as a radical disjuncture between what came before (Israel) and the present manifestation of the Spirit-filled church. Kuula, for example, writes that

> the covenant that God made with his people is no longer in force in any salvific sense. In other words, when God sent Christ as the savior of the Jew and the gentiles, at the same time he cancelled the covenant and all the other salvific blessings that he had given to Israel. Christ is of the Israelites according to the flesh, but this has not in fact resulted in any blessing for them.[15]

The reason that Paul can assert the unfailing nature of God's word is 'because he never promised anything to the historical Israel. His promises apply to those whom he freely chooses'.[16] Here Kuula draws on Räisänen to suggest that God's freedom to choose trumps everything else, even the constraints self-imposed in the promise (i.e., 'I will . . .').[17] Thus

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[11] These verses 'establish the promise as made apart from human actions' (Eastman, 'Divine Mercy', 157).

[12] According to John Murray, *The Epistle to the Romans*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1968), 66, 9.6-13 contains the 'principle of election'.

[13] Note H. C. G. Moule, *The Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Romans* (Cambridge: CUP, 1891), 169. My argument corresponds at points with the 'destabling dialectic' argued for in Linebaugh, *Conversation*.

[14] Nils A. Dahl, 'The Future of Israel', in *Studies in Paul: Theology for the Early Christian Movement* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1977), 143.

[15] Kari Kuula, *The Law, the Covenant and God's Plan, Volume 2: Paul's Treatment of the Law and Israel in Romans* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2003), 303.

[16] Kuula, *The Law*, 306.

[17] Cf. Kuula, *The Law*, 304; Francis Watson, *Paul, Judaism, and the Gentiles: Beyond the New Perspective*, Rev. ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007), 162-64 (hereafter *PJG*); Michael Cranford, 'Election and Ethnicity: Paul's View of Israel in Romans 9.1-13', *JSNT* 50 (1993): 31-40; James D. G. Dunn, *The Theology of Paul the Apostle* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 510, 514.

there is a contradiction between 9.6-7 and everything that follows, rendering Paul's argument an illogical and desperate bid for Israel's hope in face of a bleak reality. Against that reading, Paul claims that the promise, God's word, remains valid.[18] Paul's logic of reversal continues to undergird his argument throughout these passages, as he drives towards a conclusion that is simultaneously preposterous and spectacular, the salvation of 'all' (11.32).[19] But he must first lay the groundwork in the word that 'performs what it promises'.[20] This section constitutes a critical point of comparison between Pseudo-Philo and Paul in their mutual emphasis on the significance of God's spoken words of promise concerning the present and future of his people.

First, a note on structure. The individual parts of Paul's argument in 9.6-9 are understood when read together. The initial statement concerning God's word (Οὐχ οἷον δὲ ὅτι ἐκπέπτωκεν ὁ λόγος τοῦ θεοῦ, 9.6a) is followed by three explanatory clauses. In the schema below, the conjunctions are in bold:

6b	οὐ	**γὰρ**	πάντες οἱ ἐξ Ἰσραὴλ οὗτοι Ἰσραήλ·
7	οὐδ'	**ὅτι**	εἰσὶν σπέρμα Ἀβραὰμ πάντες τέκνα,
			ἀλλ'· Ἐν Ἰσαὰκ κληθήσεταί σοι σπέρμα.
8		**τοῦτ' ἔστιν**, οὐ τὰ τέκνα τῆς σαρκὸς ταῦτα τέκνα τοῦ θεοῦ	
			ἀλλὰ τὰ τέκνα τῆς ἐπαγγελίας λογίζεται εἰς σπέρμα.
9	ἐπαγγελίας	**γὰρ**	ὁ λόγος οὗτος·
			Κατὰ τὸν καιρὸν τοῦτον ἐλεύσομαι καὶ ἔσται τῇ Σάρρᾳ υἱός

Paul's initial γὰρ is meant to provoke, as much as it is intended to explain how God's word has remained true in the face of Israel's failure. But the claim must be expounded, lest his readers be confused. So he follows up with an explanatory clause (ὅτι, 7a), that includes a citation of Scripture, but which requires further nuance (τοῦτ' ἔστιν, 7b). Finally, Paul offers a second γάρ clause that includes a scriptural citation, which caps his argument to this point before he offers a second example from the patriarchs in 9.10-13 (see. 5.2.2. below). We turn now to consider each of the verses individually.

[18] *Pace* Kuula, *The Law*, 325.

[19] J. Ross Wagner, *Heralds of the Good News: Isaiah and Paul "In Concert" in the Letter to the Romans*, NovTSup 101 (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 86: 'hermeneutics of reversal'; cf. J. Ross Wagner, '"Not from the Jews Only, But Also from the Gentiles": Mercy to the Nations in Romans 9–11', in *Between Gospel and Election: Explorations in the Interpretation of Romans 9–11*, ed. Florian Wilk and J. Ross Wagner, WUNT 257 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010), 422; John M. G. Barclay, *Paul and the Gift* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2015), 526.

[20] Linebaugh, 'End', 145.

In 9.6, God's mode of operation is expressed as a verbal agency that links the divine actions in this passage and throughout Romans 9–11 back to the Abrahamic promise. The λόγος that 'has not fallen' is defined by Paul in terms of God (θεός: 9.6, 9, 11, 12, 13) and promise (ἐπαγγελία, 9.8, 9), and this λόγος is related to God's calling (κλῆσις, 9.7, 12).[21] These terms formulate a conceptual cluster that points to the agency of God as initiated by and mediated through divine speech. But what exactly does Paul intend by his claim that 'not all Israel is Israel'? Many interpreters ancient and modern have read this statement as a rejection of biological Israel as a valid category within the economy of salvation.[22] Thus Israel 'is not a biological but a theological category'.[23] But such a dichotomy does not cohere with Paul's statements in this passage concerning the integration of human procreation with divine election, nor his later claims regarding the future hope of Israel, especially 11.26-32 (see 5.3.2 below).[24] Whilst 9.6b has been read as either restrictive[25] or expansive,[26] Tobin suggests a 'proverbial' (or hyperbolic) sense to the phrase, as in 'not all Israelites are the real thing'.[27] This has the advantage of preserving the rhetorical impact of the statement without granting it the interpretive governance that belongs to 9.6a. Also, Paul does not replicate this statement later in Romans 9–11, and indeed states otherwise in his claims regarding Israel's reintegration (11.24) and salvation (11.26). The essential thrust of 9.6 concerning the integrity of God's word to Israel is further strengthened as Paul moves through the narrative of the first generation of the promise.

In 9.7, Paul writes, οὐδ' ὅτι εἰσὶν σπέρμα Ἀβραὰμ πάντες τέκνα, ἀλλ'· Ἐν Ἰσαὰκ κληθήσεταί σοι σπέρμα. The key to understanding what Paul means by an 'Israel that is not Israel' is the term 'calling'. Paul writes in 9.7a that οὐδ' ὅτι εἰσὶν σπέρμα Ἀβραὰμ πάντες τέκνα, and then immediately explains why: ἀλλ ἐν Ἰσαὰκ κληθήσεταί σοι σπέρμα (9.7b). Whilst the children of Abraham are determined by the physical act of procreation (children of the flesh),[28] the seed of Abraham are determined through God's calling them into being

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[21] According to Brendan Byrne, *Romans*, Sacra Pagina 6 (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1996), 293, the word in 9.6 equates to 'the promises'; cf. Joseph A. Fitzmyer, S. J., *Romans: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, AYB 33 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008), 559. An alternative position is articulated by Colin G. Kruse, *Paul's Letter to the Romans*, PNTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2012), 375.

[22] The term 'ethnic Israel' in this chapter

[23] Beverly Roberts Gaventa, *When in Romans: An Invitation to Linger with the Gospel according to Paul* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2016), 259.

[24] Indeed, there is no indication in Romans that Paul denies any significance to biological birth as essential to being a member of 'Israel'. See Esler, *Conflict*, 279.

[25] See C. E. B. Cranfield, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, ICC (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1979), 472-73; Byrne, *Romans*, 293; Ulrich Wilckens, *Der Brief an die Römer (Röm 6-11)*, EKK VI/2 (Zürich: Benziger Verlag, 1980), 191-92;

[26] See Dunn, *Romans 9–16*, 539-40.

[27] Thomas H. Tobin, *Paul's Rhetoric in Its Contexts: The Argument of Romans* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2005), 327.

[28] As was the case for Ishmael and Abraham's other children, all of whom he 'sent away' from Isaac (cf.

(children of the promise).[29] Paul intends to show from the first patriarchal narrative that God dictated a framework of action for himself from the moment of his utterance to Abraham concerning future blessing.[30] His agency of election, however, is constrained by the promise.[31] Paul can claim in agreement with the prophets that a distinction exists *within the people of God*, because God's word indicated as such in the promise itself.[32] But to state that '"Israel" is not and never has been defined by birth but only by God's creation' misses Paul's emphasis both on the dual agencies involved in Israel's election (God's word and human procreation) and on the restrictive function of the promise on God's capacity to choose.[33] The main point of 9.6-7 is not to reject biology as a factor in God's distribution of mercy, but to establish the divine 'elective pattern' that operates consistently within Israel from the patriarchs to Paul's own day.[34]

In 9.8, Paul implies that God will not (and cannot) contravene the bounds he has placed upon himself in speaking his word. When he writes, οὐ τὰ τέκνα τῆς σαρκὸς ταῦτα τέκνα τοῦ θεοῦ ἀλλὰ τὰ τέκνα τῆς ἐπαγγελίας λογίζεται εἰς σπέρμα (9.8), interpreters often posit a sharp either/or distinction between divine election and human biology. Wright, for example, claims that 'what counts is grace, *not race*'.[35] Moo likewise suggests that 'race does not force God's hand'.[36] But Paul actually emphasises the role played by the physical progenitors of Israel, namely Abraham, Isaac, and especially Sarah. Indeed, she bore the son of promise (9.9) through whom the children of God (9.8) would be called (9.7). Paul's language indicates both a divine and biological component to election.[37] Additionally, divine reasoning (λογίζομαι, 9.8) accords with the pattern set by the promise-event. In Romans 4, Paul claimed that Abraham's trust in the promise of God is programmatic of divine agency

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Gen 25.1-6).

[29] On calling in Paul, see Stephen J. Chester, *Conversion at Corinth: Perspectives on Conversion in Paul's Theology and the Corinthian Church* (London: T&T Clark, 2003), 59–112.

[30] This is not to discount the interactions between God and other figures in Pentateuchal history prior to Abraham, such as Noah, Enoch, and Adam. But that is exactly the point; they are prior to the patriarch, and thus fall outside the category of 'Israel', even if God spoke to these individuals and made promises of another sort to them. Since Paul does not discuss them in this context, neither must we, although the question remains an interesting one.

[31] Susan Eastman, 'Israel and the Mercy of God: A Re-reading of Galatians 6.16 and Romans 9–11', *NTS* 56 (2010): 377n34.

[32] Michael Wolter, '"It Is Not as Though the Word of God Has Failed": God's Faithfulness and God's Free Sovereignty in Romans 9:6-29', in *God and Israel: Providence and Purpose in Romans 9–11*, ed. Todd D. Still (Waco: Baylor, 2017), 36; cf. Wagner, *Heralds*, 51.

[33] Beverly Roberts Gaventa, 'On the Calling-Into-Being of Israel: Romans 9:6-29', in *Between Gospel and Election: Explorations in the Interpretation of Romans 9–11*, ed. Florian Wilk and J. Ross Wagner, WUNT 257 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010), 259.

[34] Byrne, *Romans*, 291.

[35] N. T. Wright, *The Climax of the Covenant: Christ and the Law in Pauline Theology* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1993), 238 (emphasis mine).

[36] Douglas J. Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 577.

[37] Eastman, 'Divine Mercy', 163-64, argues persuasively that the term 'Israel' 'remains tied to empirical Jews throughout Romans'.

throughout human history thereafter.[38] The seed of Abraham are constituted by divine reckoning, by which also Abraham was justified. Paul uses the same operative verb, λογίζομαι, here in 9.8.[39] As Abraham believed and was 'regarded as righteous' (ἐλογίσθη αὐτῷ εἰς δικαιοσύνην, 4.3), the children of promise are 'regarded as seed' (λογίζεται εἰς σπέρμα, 9.8).[40]

In 9.9, Paul cites God's words to Sarah, where the verbal contents of the promise include a personal commitment to a future act of engendering offspring: κατὰ τὸν καιρὸν τοῦτον ἐλεύσομαι καὶ ἔσται τῇ Σάρρᾳ υἱός (9.9; cf. Gen 18.10, 14). Read along with 9.7, 'the divine utterances enact a division' between Abraham's children and the child of promise.[41] Paul's message is that, despite the apparent contradiction in Israel's rejection of Christ (who is the confirmation of the promise, 4.16),[42] God remains faithful to Israel because *his word dictates he cannot do otherwise*. The word of promise expresses God's will to act according to a pattern that moves human agents from death to life (4.17),[43] and, in Israel's case specifically, according to a logic that operates via divine calling-into-being through physical birth in the line of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. God's agency of calling, i.e., his election of Isaac and not the other children of Abraham, accords with the words of the promise and is itself the reason for the present distinction within Israel. Having briefly sketched the terrain of the passage through analysis of its individual sections, we will take a step back to conceptualise Paul's thinking in 9.6-9 through the concept of a 'bioclectic logic', and then consider his integration of calling and birth.

5.2.1.a The Pattern of Promise and Paul's 'Bioclectic' Logic

Paul's task in 9.6-9 is to establish the dependability of God's word concerning Israel.[44] This is evident in his opening claim in 9.6 that God's word has not failed (Οὐχ οἷον δὲ ὅτι ἐκπέπτωκεν ὁ λόγος τοῦ θεοῦ), which follows immediately after his lament for his Jewish kin (9.1-5). Paul must then demonstrate that God's promise concerning the 'seed' of Abraham remains intact for Israel in the face of overwhelming rejection of the gospel by contemporary Jews and the inclusion of gentiles into the church. He opens with apparent hyperbole: οὐ γὰρ

[38] See Barclay, *Paul and the Gift*, 532, on the 'programmatic promise'.

[39] Moo, *Romans*, 577.

[40] On λογίζομαι, see further Christian Müller, *Gottes Gerechtigkeit und Gottes Volk: Eine Untersuchung zu Römer 9–11*, FRLANT 86 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1964), 90-91.

[41] Watson, *Beyond*, 310.

[42] J. Christiaan Beker, *Paul the Apostle* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2000), 345.

[43] In the eloquence of Richard B. Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), 77, 'belief is in death to life'.

[44] Tobin, *Rhetoric*, 326.

πάντες οἱ ἐξ Ἰσραὴλ οὗτοι Ἰσραήλ (9.6b). Yet Paul's logic at this point is obscure, and 9.6b seems to contradict the claim of 9.6a concerning the inviolability of God's word. A solution to the problem is to read Romans 9.6-9 in reverse to capture Paul's meaning. Such an approach is suggested by the order in which he cites from Genesis; Paul ends the passage with a citation of Genesis 18, which is preceded by a citation from Genesis 21, which is preceded by his claim regarding Israel. When read in reverse, Paul's logic is somewhat clarified:

v. 9 The word of **promise** is thus: 'At this time I will come back, and Sarah will have a son' (Gen 18.10, 14)

v. 8 The children of the **promise** are reckoned as **seed**; the children of the flesh are not 'children of God'

v. 7 'Your **seed** will be called through Isaac'; all the children are not **seed** of Abraham

v. 6 All the ones from Israel are not Israel.

In verse 9, God's 'return' is coordinate with the birth of a son to Sarah. The word of promise expresses the priority of God's verbal agency and the subordinate yet requisite agency of Sarah in the creation of the son of promise, Isaac. Sarah bears a son according to God's word of promise, which is precisely what Paul states in verse 8 concerning the children of promise. On the one hand, the 'seed' are derivative of promise. On the other hand, the children born *only* of normal processes (i.e., Ishmael) are not considered 'God's children'. That is because, as verse 7 states, the 'seed' are only 'called' through Isaac and not through any of Abraham's other children. Therefore, Paul can claim that not all Israel is Israel. The essential point is that there is a distinction within the people of Israel.[45] The distinction is further clarified when we place Paul's categories side-by-side:[46]

Meta	*Micro*
all those of Israel	Israel
all the children	seed of Abraham

[45] Cranfield, *Romans 9–12*, 473.

[46] John Piper, *The Justification of God: An Exegetical and Theological Study of Romans 9:1-23*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 1993), 67, constructs a schema of 9.6b-8 using positive and negative identifiers. I have ordered the dualities as meta or micro to preserve the integrity of Israel as a valid concept in Paul's understanding. Paul has not said anything explicit concerning the rejection of the 'negative' categories, whether 'children of the flesh' or 'all the children'; they are simply identified as 'nots', whether of the promise, seed et al. Terminology of rejection is used in 9.10-13 and thereafter, suggesting that Paul's purpose in 9.6-9 is rather to exhibit God's electing agency at Israel's inception.

children of the flesh	children of the promise

Paul's point in marking out these distinctions is to emphasise that God's elective purposes do not contravene his word, but are actually in accord with the promise to Abraham. The actions of God in the first generation of the children of promise, i.e., calling the 'seed' into being (cf. 4.16), set the pattern for the subsequent history of his people, whilst simultaneously formatting the blueprint for gentile salvation, i.e., *creatio ex nihilo*. God elects within the bounds of the promise. Paul's discussion in 9.6-9 is meant to demonstrate that a principle of divine election according to promise is the explanation for the present state of affairs of both Jews and gentiles.[47]

One way in which we might describe Paul's thinking here is in terms of a 'bioclectic logic' that acknowledges the apostle's refusal to disassociate biological Israel from God's word of promise.[48] As an alternative to views dismissive of biological factors, the existence of Israel through the agency of God might instead be expressed in terms of a verbal ontology. God calls the seed through Isaac, and he promises Sarah will conceive. Thus, God's children of promise are born through human physical procreation *and* divine verbal agency. This 'bioclectic logic' offers a corrective to the view that 'true' Israel exists '*only* through promise and call', in which ethnicity is downplayed or ignored.[49] The distinction within Israel as Paul sees it is due to the timing of God's actualising call; it follows on the heels of promise. This was the case in Romans 4, as we saw earlier, where the realisation of the promise required an act of *creatio ex nihilo*: Abraham believed that God could call into existence that which was not (4.17). This suggests that the divine act of 'calling' is an extension of the promise, yet not entirely synonymous with it. Such is evident in at least two claims by Paul: first, the calling of the gentiles that occurred long after the giving of the promise (1.7; 8.28-30; 9.24), and second, the fact that the promises yet belong to Israel (9.4), even if not all have been called ἐξ Ἰουδαίων (9.24). Paul's earlier language in Romans 2 is also suggestive of the distinction within the Jewish people, there spoken of in terms of 'visible' and 'hidden' (2.28-29). At this point in his argument, however, Paul only intends to explain how the distinction came about in terms of election.

[47] Piper, *Justification*, 66.

[48] 'Bioclectic' is a compound word composed of the Greek roots *bio*- and *cle*-, and is my attempt to refer to the mutuality of human physiology and divine calling according to Paul.

[49] Gaventa, *Invitation*, 260 (emphasis mine). See also E. Elizabeth Johnson, *The Function of Apocalyptic and Wisdom Traditions in Romans 9–11*, SBLDS 109 (Atlanta: SBL, 1989), 139.

5.2.1.b The Integration of Calling and Birth

In this section I press the preceding claim for a bioclectic logic undergirding Paul's thinking through an analysis of his integration of two key concepts in 9.6-9: calling and birth. The promise-event and the contents of the promise form the framework of 9.6-9. The 'word of God' to which Paul refers in his opening statement of 9.6 is defined as the 'word of promise' in 9.9.[50] The term 'seed' modified by the name Abraham in 9.7 links this section not only to the Genesis promise-narratives,[51] but also to Romans 4.13-19, where the possibility of seed to Abraham, and thus heirs to and fulfilment of the promise, was an act of *creatio ex nihilo*. Paul's term λογίζομαι in 9.8 makes explicit reference to the divine agency of creating something from nothing, and, most importantly, that this creative agency is done *in accord with the words of the promise itself*.[52] This suggests that God does not have a 'right to arbitrariness', but is free only to choose as he has himself dictated in what he has said before.[53] The link to God's creative power inherent in divine reckoning (λογίζομαι) is clarified when read in light of Romans 4. Abraham is said *not* to have engaged in a self-defeating mode of human consideration of circumstances as they appear (dead and weak, 4.19), but instead looked to the promise of God as capable of engendering life from Sarah's sterile womb (4.20-21). The same pattern operates here in 9.6-9. Indeed, 9.9 is a preliminary answer to the inferred question of 9.6, 'Has God's word failed?' (9.6), responded to with a definitive 'no' by God himself: 'I myself will create the child of promise because my word makes it so'.[54] The promise only functions initially through biological means, namely, procreation. Therefore, it is incorrect to attribute to Paul's argument a spiritual emphasis to the exclusion of biological descent.[55] The contents of the promise specified that through the biological phenomenon of birth (in the line of Abraham) blessing would come to the nations. The argument isn't, 'not flesh, but spirit', but 'flesh called according to promise'.

Finally, Paul's bioclectic logic requires mention of Sarah's involvement (9.9). Genesis 18 contains the fundamental equation by which the promise operates. God's creative call (4.17) *and* Sarah's physical womb (4.19) conjointly bring Isaac into existence (9.9) even

[50] Wilckens, *Römer 6–11*, 193.

[51] For example, Gen 12.7; 13.15; 15.3; 16.10; 17.7; 21.12; 22.17; 24.7.

[52] Cf. Barclay, 'Golden Calf", 107, who rightly stresses mercy, but without an explicit connection to promise.

[53] Wolter, 'Faithfulness and Sovereignty', 41.

[54] My paraphrase.

[55] David R. Wallace, *Election of the Lesser Son: Paul's Lament-midrash in Romans 9-11* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2014), 62-67, for example, employs an either/or dichotomy in his work on Romans 9–11. Whilst he rightly stresses the importance of 'promise' in 9.6-9, he also claims that 'God's faithfulness in his calling of the son, Isaac, was not according to natural descent but according to the "promise," a spiritual emphasis' (67).

though the priority remains with God. The collaboration of divine and human constituents evinces further the thinking undergirding Paul's case for Israel's hope in God's word. Just as Abraham and Sarah awaited the realisation of the child of promise, Isaac, the divine call remains 'creative'[56] so long as the promise stands unfulfilled and incomplete (9.24-26), even if that call has not yet effected the divine purpose across the whole of Israel (9.27-29).[57] Whilst biological Israel is birthed from the sterile womb through promise (unlike the nations), they are only resurrected from the grave through calling (like the nations). This Pauline dialectic constitutes a critical point of departure from the logic of Pseudo-Philo concerning God's word (see 2.3 above), namely, that the determining factor for the righteous elements within the people of Israel has to do with the divine electing purpose over and above individual rejection of idolatry.

5.2.2 God's Prior and Predilective Agency (9.10-13)

My second argument from 9.6-13 is that Paul's view of God's agency on behalf of Israel is both prior and predilective. Paul develops his argument from 9.6-9, plunging the roots of mercy deeper by following the patriarchal narrative one generation further in 9.10-13.[58] In this section, I aim to counter a common claim regarding the limits of God's freedom. It has been argued that Paul does not speak of divine freedom as 'arbitrary', that is, where God does whatever he wants. As Cranfield comments, Paul speaks instead of a 'freedom to be merciful'.[59] Linebaugh suggests that God's grace has 'no identifiable correspondence . . . only inexplicable freedom',[60] or as Barclay suggests, 'The only factor in God's mercy is God's mercy itself'.[61] In what follows I argue instead that, for Paul, God's calling is not absolutely free but concordant with the elective purposes of his word, prior to both human existence and moral agency.[62] As Amram expresses in Pseudo-Philo's rendition of the Exodus (LAB 9.3-4), God's word is the preface to Israel's being.

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[56] Barclay, 'Golden Calf', 105.

[57] Wagner, *Heralds*, 94, views the solution of Romans 11 as 'already germane in 9.27-29'.

[58] The connection is evident in Paul's use of οὐ μόνον δέ, a transition frequently employed by the apostle; note *BDF*, 379.

[59] Cranfield, *Romans 9–12*, 472. He suggests further that 9.10-18 'as a whole indeed bears witness to the freedom of God's mercy, but the freedom to which it bears witness is the freedom of His mercy—and no other freedom'. Cranfield attributes his view to the influence of Barth, specifically in *CD* II.2. But it seems that Cranfield has put too much weight on Barth's statements highlighting the merciful orientation of God's freedom, whilst Barth maintains an interest in God's complementary freedom to judge, also a keystone of Paul's argument in 9–11. See, for example, Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, vol. II.2 (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1957), 13: 'The Yes cannot be heard unless the No is also heard'.

[60] Linebaugh, *Conversation*, 189.

[61] Barclay, *Paul and the Gift*, 532.

[62] Francis Watson, *Paul and the Hermeneutics of Faith*, 2nd ed. (London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2015), 206 (hereafter *PHF*), rightly notes that the interplay between divine and human agency is in focus here.

Two points from the text of 9.10-13 concerning the timing of divine calling and the predilective character of God's election demonstrate the contingency of divine mercy upon God's word.[63] The context of 9.10-13 is a concise retelling of the birth of Isaac's children, Esau and Jacob. Rebekah is said to have conceived the twins through one sexual act (ἐξ ἑνὸς κοίτην ἔχουσα) with Isaac. Isaac is thus coupled with Abraham as a figurehead of divine mercy. Yet the main actor in this passage is not any of the four human characters mentioned. They provide the backdrop for a focused view of the calling agency of God. The central action of 9.10-13 is not 'having', 'birthing', or 'doing' (9.10-11) but speaking: ἐρρέθη αὐτῇ ('it was said to her', 9.12).[64] The rest of this section will consider a resolution to the fundamental tension within this passage, between the divine prerogative to choose a particular course of action for human agents, and the constraints placed upon that choice by God's own words.

5.2.2.a The Freedom to Call

Paul views the divine verbal encounter with Rebekah as creative and not merely descriptive of her expected twins. Paul ends the previous section with the citation of a divine promise, κατὰ τὸν καιρὸν τοῦτον ἐλεύσομαι καὶ ἔσται τῇ Σάρρᾳ υἱός (9.9). His penultimate conclusion in 9.12 is again a statement of promise to a matriarch of Israel concerning children yet unborn: ὁ μείζων δουλεύσει τῷ ἐλάσσονι (9.12). Apart from the structural similarities (leaving aside the final citation from Malachi), there are a number of important narrative and thematic links that parallel the twins' birth with Isaac's. In the first place, God answers Rebekah in her moment of doubt with an affirmation of the integrity of the promise (Gen 25.21-23), just as he restates his promise to Sarah when she laughs at the prospect of bearing children in her old age (Gen 18.10-14). Rebekah, for her part, wishes to die rather than give birth to the twins (Gen 25.22), presumably because of the intense physical pain caused by the fighting foetuses. But her despair may also be due to the prospect of bearing children whose mutual hostility will both negate the word first expressed to Abraham and reiterated to her husband Isaac (Gen 24.2-8), and invalidate the blessings pronounced upon her and her offspring to ensure numerous offspring (Gen 24.60). Thus the two birth stories are linked by parallel expressions of doubt in God's promise.

[63] See Barclay, *Paul and the Gift*, 528.

[64] The only other finite verb in the passage (μένω, 10.11) is couched within a purpose clause that is subordinate to the main clause, of which εἶπον is the finite verb.

Second, the doubt expressed by the patriarchs' wives was potentially disastrous for the continuation of the promise, but it was understandable: both women were infecund. This constitutes the second point of congruence between the episodes, namely, that both Sarah and Rebekah gave birth from sterile wombs. Remarkably, according to the pattern of promise the matriarchs bore children *because* they were sterile. Rebekah's ability to conceive is dependent upon divine intervention, as is Sarah's.[65] Both women are described as 'sterile' (στεῖρα, עקר, Gen 11.30; 25.21). Death predominates in every instance of sexual copulation on the part of the patriarchs. Life from the wombs of Sarah and Rebekah was possible only through supernatural intervention, a divine act of *creatio ex nihilo* to commence a history of promise.

Thirdly, both women gave birth to children who were the cause of familial division, which itself was due to divine decree. This division links the matriarchs and thus Paul's accounts. Sarah gave birth to Isaac, the child of promise 'in whom [Abraham's] seed would be called' (Rom 9.7; Gen 21.12), but this was preceded by the birth of Ishmael. Abraham's procreative 'seed' was effective to generate offspring (with another woman than Sarah, Gen 25.1-2), but God made it clear that Ishmael was not the child of promise (Gen 17.15-22; 18.9-14). Rebekah's experience is similar in that two children are born to Isaac, one chosen and the other rejected. Included in the short narrative preceding the twins' birth (Gen 25.19-28) is a divine speech to Rebekah concerning the struggle within her womb:

> Two nations are in your womb,
> and two peoples born of you shall be divided (διαστέλλω);
> the one shall be stronger (ὑπερέχω) than the other,
> the elder shall serve (δουλεύω) the younger. (Gen 25.23)

God's words to Rebekah go from macro to micro: the twins are two nations; they will be divided (presumably by God himself); one will be stronger; and one will submit to the other in a paradoxical hierarchy. Paul subsequently intensifies the divine decree in terms of predestination with his citation from Malachi: τὸν Ἰακὼβ ἠγάπησα, τὸν δὲ Ἠσαῦ ἐμίσησα (Rom 9.13; Mal 1.2).[66] Yet perhaps the most significant aspect of Paul's inclusion of the

[65] The fact that God's intervention in human affairs is in view is clear from Paul's modification and amalgamation of divine speech, both from Genesis (9.9) and Malachi (9.13), and then from Exodus (9.15, 17). He places the emphasis on God's activity on behalf of his word of promise through the use of first-person verbs, placing them at the end of each section (ἐλεύσομαι, ἀγαπάω, μισέω). See further Hans Hübner, *Gottes Ich und Israel: zum Schriftgebrauch des Paulus in Römer 9–11* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1984), 24-31.

[66] Wilckens, *Römer 6–11*, 195-96.

Rebekah citation is the fact that God himself decrees these things to be the future state of affairs for two children born of the same womb opened in accord with the promise. Both Esau and Jacob emerged from sterile wombs made fecund by God's intervention *and* the viable seed of Isaac, the original child of promise.

But this raises an interesting question: why does Paul focus on the women? Perhaps because the existence of the children of promise was due to a combination of divine calling and human procreation. The impossibility of their birth was overcome through God's calling them forth to be conceived in dead wombs (*creatio ex nihilo*); their actual emergence into the world as viable human beings was then due to their mothers' necessary maternal involvement (physiological birth).[67] Paul thus resolves the question of how gentiles can be children of God without dissolving the promise to the biological offspring of Abraham: the creative agency of God in opening the matriarchs' sterile wombs is paradigmatic for the way in which the spiritual rebirth of both Jews and gentiles after the Christ-event takes place. If God can create children from sterility through his word, he can surely bring life from death. The main point, regardless of whether Paul is talking in individual or corporate terms, is that the possibility of salvation rests in a divine, creative word; *creatio ex nihilo* is God's singular prerogative simultaneously constrained and set loose by his promise.[68]

5.2.2.b Biological Predilection and Discriminatory Grace

There are three more points to be made concerning 9.10-13 before we move to chapter 11. The first is that Paul continues to grant a place for biology in the algorithm of salvation. This is contrary to the interpretations of some who prefer to exclude the 'natural' for the sake of forefronting a total lack of human agency in salvation, thus supporting the claimed division between spiritual and biological Israel. Moo, for example, stresses the lack of human factors in the determination of God's choice.[69] Paul's main concern, in his view, is to eliminate any taint of human contribution in the matter of divine election, whether that contribution stems from one's birth mother (as in 9.9), order of birth (9.12; cf. Gen 25.23), moral agency or capacity, behaviour or deeds. God cannot be placed under human compulsion. Yet Paul

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[67] Commentators frequently employ antithetical terminology to emphasise God's role: '*not* by natural generation *but* by God's supernatural intervention' (Moo, *Romans*, 578, emphasis added). But Paul's understanding of the relationship between divine and human agency seems to sustain a more tenuous balance, despite his own use of antitheses ('flesh' and 'promise', 9.8; 'works' and 'calling', 9.12). His stress on the role of the matriarchs would seem to indicate the importance of the 'natural' component, which for him in no way impedes upon God's sovereignty but functions within and through it.

[68] Martin Luther, *Commentary on Romans* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 1976), 138-39: 'mercy is not free but indebted to promise'. Cf. Byrne, *Romans*, 292.

[69] Moo, *Romans*, 578.

argues for an elective pattern that respects the relationship God established in the promise to Abraham.[70] As Wagner writes, 'the language of election has to do with an intimate relationship'.[71] So whilst God's choice is 'not based on anything they had done',[72] it is based on who they were conceived by, *because the promise dictated as much*. God intervened in such a manner both *only* for this particular people and *completely* for all in the execution of his divine plan mandated in the promise to Abraham. This is why Paul's argument, which addresses the question of God's fidelity to his word, moves from Abraham through the first two generations of the history of promise, following a line traced by the direct and creative agency of God in accord with his words. And, interestingly, Paul is happy to include further verbal expressions of the divine will that are temporally posterior to and yet fundamentally contingent upon the words to Abraham that set this all in motion.[73] In other words, the original words of promise to Abraham begot further words of promise concerning the blessing and progeny of Abraham.

Second, Paul views God's grace as discriminatory. According to 9.11, Isaac and the twins were chosen before they were born or had done good or bad: μήπω γὰρ γεννηθέντων μηδὲ πραξάντων τι ἀγαθὸν ἢ φαῦλον. They were elected (or rejected) before they had left the once-sterile wombs of their mother and before they had exercised any sort of moral agency, whether in ignorance or complicity. Paul does not go into detail concerning whether the twins were chosen before or after conception. He is simply interested in asserting a division within the people of Israel. Paul does not specify whether this division is between flesh and spirit, works or faith; it is an ontological chasm laid bare by divine election. The purpose clause couched in the middle of Paul's elongated sentence highlights this point: ἵνα ἡ κατ' ἐκλογὴν πρόθεσις τοῦ θεοῦ μένῃ (9.11). The discrimination inherent in God's choosing does not mean his word 'falls' (ἐκπίπτω, 9.6); on the contrary, his purpose 'stands' (μένω) via election. His designs for the world are perpetuated[74] through his divine prerogative to choose (and thus reject), evident from the very beginning of a history commenced through God's word to one man among many. God's purpose is tied directly to his intent to bless the world through Abraham.[75] The persistence and eventual fulfilment of God's purpose expressed in the

[70] Apart from the obvious genealogical relationship between Abraham and Isaac, there is a further possible link evident in Paul's use of both σπέρμα and κοίτη. Whilst κοίτη often refers to the marriage bed or sexual intercourse, it was also understood idiomatically as 'semen' (BDAG, *op. cit.*). If this is Paul's intended sense of the term, then he is forging an association between the two patriarchal narratives based upon the biological necessity in conception for viable male semen, yet subordinate to divine intervention in the case of sterility.

[71] Wagner, *Heralds*, 66.

[72] Moo, *Romans*, 582.

[73] Cf. Romans 9.6, 13.

[74] Cf. Danker, *op cit*: 'of continuing in a state or condition'.

[75] See, for example, Brian Abasciano, *Paul's Use of the Old Testament in Romans 9.10-18: An Intertextual and Theological Exegesis* (London: T&T Clark, 2011), 49; Byrne, *Romans*, 294; James R. Edwards, *Romans*,

promise is a matter of divine predilection exercised through the creative, engendering agency of calling and promise. So much is clear, and uncontested, by Paul's Jewish contemporaries. What is not congruent with his peers is that this *discriminatory* grace operates even within the chosen people, Israel, and *not* according to works, good or bad. By proving from Israel's foundational birth stories that divine election between children of the flesh and children of the promise continues to operate beyond the miraculous birth of Isaac and into the next generation, Paul lays a foundation upon which to construct his radical assertion concerning the scope of divine calling: ἐκάλεσεν ἡμᾶς οὐ μόνον ἐξ Ἰουδαίων ἀλλὰ καὶ ἐξ ἐθνῶν (9.24). This prefaces his following provocative claim concerning the inclusion of gentiles and the rejection of Jews (9.30-31).[76] The salvation of 'all' depends upon this relationship, which Paul will articulate in chapter 11. For now it is enough to remove any criterion of selection outside of the purpose and promise of God.[77]

Finally, concerning the mode of divine elective grace, God's purpose is functionally exclusive (9.11). His freedom to be merciful does not equal mercy without exception.[78] What appears as divine caprice is actually the functioning of divine election. Built into the promise itself is exclusivity, in that God's blessing of Abraham and his seed naturally implies non-blessing for others (9.13; 11.22), even if the eventual scope of blessing is cosmological (4.13) and perhaps universal (11.32).[79] The flip side of choice is rejection,[80] and this is the reality that gives rise to Paul's argument in the first place; the current situation of Israel as an apparent contradiction of God's word (9.6; 11.1, 7). As he has experienced in his own missionary efforts, the gentiles are receiving God's mercy, whilst Israel continues to reject the selfsame God who chose them (9.30-31). But upon what grounds can this paradoxical grace make sense to anybody but the apostle? Paul must be attune to the contradiction, for he constructs the foundation of his counterintuitive understanding of grace on two specific citations of

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NIBCNT (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1992), 233; Paul J. Achtemeier, *Romans* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1985), 157.

[76] Note Wagner, *Heralds*, 108, on the links between the remnant, Isaiah 10, and the Abrahamic promise in 9.24.

[77] Even Paul's later recollection of the story of Elijah supports his emphasis on the priority of divine agency in Israel's affairs (Rom 11.2-6). God himself sets aside (καταλείπω) the seven thousand men who do not bend the knee to Baal, and although it may be inferred that they were chosen due to their refusal to participate in idolatry (but note the absence of a subordinating conjunction to indicate causality), the syntax might actually indicate that divine agency itself led these men to act as they did: God set these men apart 'for himself' (ἐμαυτῶ; see BDAG *op cit*). Indeed, the context suggests that, according to Paul, these men, just like the present 'remnant', were chosen according to divine mercy and not their act of fidelity: κατ' ἐκλογὴν χάριτος (11.5). This is the only use of χάρις in these chapters, which continues to signal 'the trademark Pauline perfection, of *incongruous* favor or gift' (Barclay, *Paul and the Gift*, 545). Finally, the men were not responsible for God's mercy towards them, since Paul concludes the account with an unapologetic declaration of grace uncompelled by human 'works': εἰ δὲ χάριτι, οὐκέτι ἐξ ἔργων, ἐπεὶ ἡ χάρις οὐκέτι γίνεται χάρις (11.6).

[78] Cranfield, *Romans 9–12*, 472.

[79] Byrne, *Romans*, 353.

[80] Linebaugh, 'End', 153: 'God's choice creates a difference'.

divine speech. If anything, Paul is anticipating the response to his first example of Isaac and Ishmael (the latter unmentioned) in 9.6-9: certainly God chose Isaac because he was from good stock; his mother was Sarah, not the servant woman, Hagar, and this corresponds to the promise. In the case of Rebekah, however, such a rejoinder falters. Both her children were from the same womb, born at the same time, and from the same man. So even if a reasonable explanation could be raised for God's choice in the first example, none exists for the rejection in the second. Paul does not, however, simply rely upon the progression of the Genesis narrative to make his point. That is, he doesn't retell the events with personal commentary highlighting human faith. Instead, Paul highlights divine speech. He first cites God's words to Rebekah before the birth of her twins: ὁ μείζων δουλεύσει τῷ ἐλάσσονι (Gen 25.23). We commented briefly on this quote above, how in the original narrative there is a progression from general to specific. Paul cites the fourth and last step in the progression, the divine decree of rejection in the case of Esau, and promotion for Jacob. In Genesis, God's words precede the birth simply as a matter of record: Rebekah is barren, Isaac prays for her, she conceives, the children struggle, she inquires of the LORD, he replies, she gives birth to twins (Gen 25.20-26). Paul capitalises on a small gap in the story to claim that God made a choice between the twins whilst they were struggling within the womb, and thus prior to any moral, physical, or even natal distinction (9.11). So far, then, the apostle's point is that God's choice has nothing to do with moral criteria. But Paul continues with a second citation, again divine speech, which squeezes tighter the vice of discriminatory grace. He cites God's words of comfort to national Israel from Malachi: τὸν Ἰακὼβ ἠγάπησα, τὸν δὲ Ἠσαῦ ἐμίσησα (Mal 1.2; Rom 9.13). In contrast with the previous citation from Genesis, there is no indication in the context of Malachi that God's decision to love Jacob and hate Esau occurred during their time in the womb. But Paul makes an implicit logical connection through the subordinating conjunction καθώς, rooting the two instances of divine speech, and corresponding divine agency, together in the bedrock of Scripture (γράφω). God did not just foresee their works (both were morally culpable; cf. Gen 25.29-34; 27.1-38); their fates were determined by a predilective divine decree.[81]

At this point in his argument, Paul has defended God's faithfulness to his word through an argument that weighs heavily on the divine prerogative to choose from within the genealogical line of promise (Israel). Thus the 'precondition' of election is God's word.[82] The pattern inscribed by the word of promise dictates that God give his mercy congruous with the

[81] Cf. Augustine on this point: 'the election by which he does not find but makes elect' (*Ep.* 194); cf. Moo, *Romans*, 584.

[82] *Pace* Wolter, 'Faithfulness and Sovereignty', 36.

abject state of sin into which humanity has fallen. As we will see, Paul's articulation of this self-imposed divine obligation to be merciful to the ungodly contrasts with Pseudo-Philo's understanding of divine mercy as directed to the faithful who are being oppressed. This fundamental difference will be further articulated in the conclusion. At this point, however, we move to the second section of this chapter to discuss Paul's understanding of God's agency of subjugation and its concomitant resurrection, and how these dual components are key to understanding the second major component of discriminatory grace.

5.3 The Resurrecting Mercy of God (11.17-32)

Paul enters a new phase in his argument in Romans 11 in which the mercy of God to Israel features prominently. If Romans 9 and 10 concerned, respectively, the supernatural origin of Israel through the promise and calling of God and the persistent disobedience of Israel in the face of God's entreaties to them in the gospel, Romans 11 resolves the tension and locates Israel firmly within the scope of God's merciful embrace.[83] The key to understanding this chapter is Paul's frequent reference to the divine purpose, expressed often and unmistakably through the use of ἵνα at key moments in his discourse (11.11, 19, 25, 31, 32).[84] Whilst the focus on divine grace persists as a unifying thread connecting these passages with the rest of the letter,[85] what has often been overlooked is the integration Paul maintains between God's grace and his word of promise. If the argument that was opened in 9.6 with a statement implicitly questioning the fidelity of God to his word is to be resolved to the satisfaction of the apostle and his readers, that selfsame word must figure in the conclusion to his argument overall. Whilst the references are variously implicit and explicit, the promise remains an anchor point for the apostle's development of his argument to its surprising climax in 11.32. Ultimately, God's fidelity to Israel is contingent upon their disobedience, just as his compulsion to show mercy to the gentiles is obligated by their ungodliness. This is the framework set by the promise, both in its contents and in the event itself (4.2-5). My emphasis on this point stands contrary to recent articulations of God's otherness in Paul, where human worthiness, whether positive or negative, is disregarded in the divine economy of salvation.[86]

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[83] See Wagner, *Heralds*, 43-44, for the anchoring function of Romans 9–10 for chapter 11.

[84] Ernst Käsemann, *Commentary on Romans* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980), 304.

[85] See especially the introduction to Romans 11 in Barclay, *Paul and the Gift*, 544.

[86] For example, John M. G. Barclay, 'Grace within and beyond Reason: Philo and Paul in Dialogue', in *Paul, Grace, and Freedom: Essays in Honour of John K. Riches*, ed. Paul Middleton, Angus Paddison, and Karen J. Wenell (London: T&T Clark, 2009), 18: 'any explanatory correspondence between the divine promise/ mercy and the worth of its recipients would fatally damage the absolute otherness of divine initiative'.

I have divided my analysis of Romans 11 into two sections, including the olive tree analogy in 11.17-24 and the capstone statements of divine mercy in 11.25-32 in order to demonstrate the following: God's word to Abraham constrains him to a course of action in which the fulfilment of that word depends upon a universal subjugation of the world into sin for the purpose of fulfilling his promised blessing to Abraham's progeny (Israel) and the nations. In short, if all are to be rebirthed as children of promise, then all must first be dead in sin. Thus it will be shown that God's regrafting and mercying of Israel accords with the pattern of death to life by which grace operates.[87]

5.3.1 The Olive Tree Analogy (11.17-24)

The first half of Romans 11 includes Paul's exposition of 1 Samuel 12 (11.2-7) and a withering critique of Israel's blindness to the gospel (11.8-14).[88] But the critical turn comes in verse 15,[89] where Paul signals the possibility of Israel's reconciliation: εἰ γὰρ ἡ ἀποβολὴ αὐτῶν καταλλαγὴ κόσμου, τίς ἡ πρόσλημψις εἰ μὴ ζωὴ ἐκ νεκρῶν. 'Life from the dead' recalls the identification of God in 4.17, the same marker of divine agency which sustained Abraham's hope. In 11.15, Paul prepares his specifically *gentile* readers (11.13) for a striking performance in which God, Israel, and the gentiles all play a part. Paul employs the vivid metaphor of an olive tree to convey God's capacity to redeem his people.[90] This is so because such *re*-creative agency is God's *modus operandi* according to his word.

5.3.1.a The Root of Promise

Whilst the identification of the branches in Paul's analogy is obvious (he categorises them alternatively as either Jews or gentiles),[91] the identification of the 'root' is not so clear (ἡ ῥίζα,

[87] Barclay, *Paul and the Gift*, 554.

[88] For a survey of views on the structure of Romans 11, see Dan G. Johnson, 'The Structure and Meaning of Romans 11', *CBQ* 46 (1984): 91-103.

[89] On the function of v. 16 as a transition in Paul's argument see Moo, *Romans*, 697.

[90] For a recent survey of views on the olive tree metaphor, see Philip F. Esler, 'Ancient Oleiculture and Ethnic Differentiation: The Meaning of the Olive-Tree Image in Romans 11', *JSNT* 26 (2003): 103-24. See further A. G. Baxter and J. A. Ziesler, 'Paul and Arboriculture: Romans 11.17-24', *JSNT* 24 (1985): 24-32. For instances of plant metaphors in Pseudo-Philo, cf. LAB 12.6-20; 18.10-11; 23.12; 28.4; 30.4; 39.7; other Jewish examples include *4 Ezra* 5.21; 9.21; 1QH^{a} VI.15.

[91] On Paul's questionable arboriculture at this point, see John Ziesler, *Paul's Letter to the Romans* (London: SCM Press, 1989), 279; Baxter and Ziesler, 'Arboriculture', 24-32; Esler, 'Oleiculture'.

11.17).[92] The term has been variously interpreted as Abraham,[93] the patriarchs,[94] Israel,[95] or Christ,[96] with the majority of scholars preferring the patriarchs due to their mention in other Jewish texts,[97] and Paul's reference to them in 11.28.[98] Barclay, however, suggests that Paul's concern is not the *what*, but *how* the patriarchs were Israel's origin. Thus ἡ ῥίζα represents 'the unconditioned favor of God on which Israel's existence depends'.[99] In other words, the 'root' is grace. This interpretation accords better with Paul's thought in Romans, to be sure, but there is a sense of abstraction that should be refined. In other words, is God's grace, or mercy, simply an attribute, or does it have a specific source, a clear intended object? I would suggest here that we amalgamate God's mercy with his word;[100] mercy is not an abstract concept for Paul but is linked to specific actions stemming from particular words spoken by God.[101] We might modify Barclay's statement to reflect the specific source of divine mercy: the root is the promise of God, that original and generative expression of the unconditioned favour of God on which Israel's existence, and the world's hope, depends. The immediate benefit of this nuanced definition allows the 'fatness' (πιότης, 11.17) to stand for divine grace, which is exactly what the gentiles share in as incorporated participants in the promised blessing. As Barclay writes, 'Connection to the root represents participation in the generative mercy of God'. Indeed, the utterances of God to Abraham in Genesis foretell the grafting of the gentiles into the foundation of God's mercy, his word is the source of all of Abraham's offspring (9.8).[102] Per the metaphor, gentiles are not simply 'affiliated' with Israel, but legitimate family members with a new spiritual DNA, the promised Spirit of God (5.5; 8.23). To ask the question in reverse: what 'roots' God's mercy to Israel? Paul is clear that God's mercy to Israel has a tangible source; Israel is and always has been special (even if she is no

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[92] Whilst the textual basis for ἡ ῥίζα is uncertain, a number of important texts support the reading. See Cranfield, *Romans 9–12*, 567; Bruce M. Metzger, *A Textual Commentary On The Greek New Testament*, 2nd ed. (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2002), 526; Wilckens, *Römer 6–11*, 247; Ziesler, *Romans*, 280.

[93] Esler, *Conflict*, 299.

[94] For example, Cranfield, *Romans 9–12*, 567; Ziesler, *Romans*, 278; Moo, *Romans*, 698, 704: the root stands for 'the soil of Jewish patriarchs and promises', and later, 'the patriarchs as recipients and transmitters of the promises of God'.

[95] Barrett, *Romans*, 201. Cf. Käsemann, *Romans*, 308, who identifies the root as 'eschatological Israel'.

[96] Henry Leopold Ellison, *The Mystery of Israel: An Exposition of Romans 9–11* (Milton Keynes: Paternoster Press, 1966), 86-87.

[97] Cf. Philo, *Heir* 279; *Jub*. 21.24; *1 Enoch* 93.5.

[98] As in Watson, *Beyond*, 342.

[99] Barclay, *Paul and the Gift*, 550. However, he later identifies the root as 'the creative call that "raises the dead and calls into existence the things that do not exist" (4.17)' (552).

[100] Note Nikolaus Walter, 'Zur Interpretation von Römer 9–11', *ZTK* 81 (1984): 178-86, where promise and election constitute the root of Israel.

[101] See Niebuhr, *Heidenapostel aus Israel: die jüdische Identität des Paulus nach ihrer Darstellung in seinen Brief*, WUNT 62 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1992), 152n71.

[102] Cranfield, *Romans 9–12*, 565, although identifying the root with the patriarchs, notes that Paul is confirming 'God is faithful to His own promise'.

longer unique),[103] evidenced by specific divinely-granted 'gifts' (9.5; 11.29). Concerning the other interpretive options, the root cannot be the 'fathers', since they are dead, and physical descent from them is not the confirmation of salvation (cf. 2.25-29; 9.6-29). The root also cannot be Christ, at least not in his incarnation, because Israel must have been rooted to something before the Christ-event. The pre-existent Christ might qualify, but there is nothing in the immediate context to suggest this was Paul's meaning. The promise to Abraham makes sense of Paul's argument since 9.6, as it is the specific source of divine grace to Israel and the nations. Throughout 9–11, Paul is answering a very specific charge: 'has the word of God failed?', which implies, 'has God's mercy to Israel ended?'[104] The root is perhaps best understood as the promise of God to Abraham, that foundational creative word of God that brought Israel into being as the children of promise, and which compels God to continue reaching his hands out to his disobedient progeny (10.21). And not only that, but the contents of the promise included the nations within its scope from the beginning.[105]

Furthermore, the question of 'who bears whom' sheds light on how ἡ ῥίζα stands for God's promise. Paul reminds his gentile readers that οὐ σὺ τὴν ῥίζαν βαστάζεις ἀλλ᾽ ἡ ῥίζα σέ (11.18). In arboriculture, the idea of branches supporting and sustaining the root of a tree is nonsensical.[106] So Paul's manipulation of the metaphor to make a point against gentile arrogance is as fitting as it is paradoxical; branches receive their sustenance from the roots of the tree, just as their capacity to remain living branches depends on the structural support (and 'fatness') provided by the roots. Swaggering over their newly-acquired position would be to view themselves inhabiting the exact opposite position that is theirs by divine initiative. Thus the strength of the flipped metaphor is lessened if the root stands for divine mercy, in an abstract sense of the term, because something tangible (human beings) is being set against something abstract (mercy). If, however, we maintain a specific sense of divine mercy, as that tangible expression of paradoxical grace throughout the history of God's word to Abraham,

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[103] Barclay, *Paul and the Gift*, 553; Byrne, *Romans*, 352.

[104] A worthy riposte would be to question how the gentiles could be warned against falling away from the root, being broken off due to persistent unbelief (11.22b). How could someone be detached from the promise, and thus from divine mercy? Whether or not Paul thought this, the situation raised by the warning is cyclical: since the only recipients of divine mercy are the ungodly, if a gentile believer were to fall into unbelief, they would be back to their former state and bedfellows with unbelieving Jews, and thus meet the criterion for receiving mercy once again. Paul, of course, doesn't articulate that line of thinking, because his purpose is to warn believing gentiles from arrogance against Jews by reminding them of the tenuous nature of their new existence; it is entirely a matter of divine mercy and hardening (11.22a), not human willing (9.16). Note O. Hofius, 'Das Evangelium und Israel: Erwängungen zu Römer 9–11', in *Paulusstudien* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1989), 182.

[105] Thus it is incorrect to view the inclusion of gentiles as a 'remarkable detour' for the promise, as suggested by P. H. R. van Houwelingen, 'The Redemptive-Historical Dynamics of the Salvation of "All Israel" (Rom. 11:26a)', *CTJ* 46 (2011): 303.

[106] Note Ziesler, *Romans*, 280: 'any feasible arboriculture has been left behind'.

then Paul's imagery entails a striking reversal of verbal agency. The gentile 'boasting', most likely a reference to audible expressions of superiority,[107] is exclusive, pretentious, and antagonistic,[108] whereas the word of promise expressed by God is inclusive (4.13), its call irrevocable (11.28), and its effect transformative: it turns enemies into beloved children (5.10; 8.14-17).[109]

Finally, identification of the root as the promise avoids the charge of arbitrariness. God declares his love for his people in the scriptures not as an abstract concept, but as a tangible reality both in its source (the promise) and its outcome (physical and spiritual deliverance).[110] If the root is simply God's mercy as a quality of his nature the paradox of grace persists, but upon what *basis* is this mercy actually given? Paul is, after all, speaking about something fundamental to the outworking of God's purpose (9.11). If God's mercy is unconstrained, what is to turn God from instances of severity and drive him back to demonstrations of mercy? With the root as promise, the pattern of reversal that characterises God's actions in human history is inextricably tied to God's fidelity to his word.[111] Furthermore, the root as promise signals the point of congruence between Jews and gentiles. The root is what bears them up, nourishes them, and is the one constant in the midst of God's breaking off and grafting in. God's word is his people's freedom and hope.

5.3.1.b The Governing Duality of Severity and Kindness

As Paul proceeds through his analogy, he arrives at a definitive statement concerning the duality of divine agency. When he writes, ἴδε οὖν χρηστότητα καὶ ἀποτομίαν θεοῦ ἐπὶ μὲν τοὺς πεσόντας ἀποτομία, ἐπὶ δὲ σὲ χρηστότης θεοῦ (11.22), Paul means to show that God manifests himself in 'a dialectic of rejection and election'.[112] That such a duality is intrinsic to God is prefaced by earlier statements in Romans concerning the 'wrath' of God (1.18; 2.5-8; 3.5; 4.15; 5.9) and his predisposition to judgment (2.16), which are unapologetic counterweights to affirmations of God's grace and love (1.7; 5.5). But it must be noted that Paul is here, again, not speaking in abstractions. God has been 'kind' and 'severe' in the outworking of his plan because these attributes of his agency were intrinsic to the promise to

[107] See BDAG, *op. cit*.
[108] Cf. Rudolf Bultmann, 'καυχάομαι', in *TDNT* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1969), 3:653: the term indicates 'comparative superiority'.
[109] Note Dieter Zeller, *Juden und Heiden in der Mission des Paulus: Studien zum Römerbrief* (Stuttgart: Katholisches Bibelwerk, 1976), 243-44.
[110] See Exod 2.24; Lev 26.42; Deut 29.13.
[111] Cranfield, *Romans 9–12*, 566.
[112] Hays, *Echoes*, 74.

Abraham. We will not, however, find direct mention of this divine duality, both hardening and showing mercy, in the *content*s of the promise; rather, it frames the *event*. This 'pattern of reversal' from wrath to mercy, as the track upon which God's purpose runs, marks the moment of God's justification of Abraham. The patriarch was an unremarkable, ungodly pagan (Gen 11.31–12.3; Josh 24.2) met in mercy by the holy God whose wrath is set against the ungodly (1.18). Paul earlier encapsulates the irony of the event in terms of incongruity (4.5), as we saw in the previous chapter. The paradoxical transformation of the ungodly to righteous and enemies to saints *through speech* accords with the God who transposes the dead to living via calling. Thus in the promise-event the algorithm is written for the operation of God's word in human history thereafter. It is remarkable that Paul's paradigm, which presents Jews under severity and gentiles within God's kindness, matches the history of the gospel proclamation in his day. Paul's statement, ἐπὶ μὲν τοὺς πεσόντας ἀποτομία, ἐπὶ δὲ σὲ χρηστότης θεοῦ (11.22), is thus a historical comment.[113] But at this point the pattern has not resolved. That is to say, whilst the gentiles will continue to be extended the hand of mercy until the consummation of the promise (11.25; 15.9-12), the Jews will not remain forever an obstinate majority. In Paul's forecast, God has compelled himself not only to a *stance* of mercy towards his people (a position he maintains perennially, 10.21), but to direct *intervention* on their behalf. God can *re*-graft the fallen branches back into the root from whence they came (11.24). But his present severity towards Israel is the necessary precursor to a final demonstration of his righteousness, their salvation. Against the claims that God's freedom is only to mercy, divine freedom is a complex spectrum covering the full extent of divine agency, from the tragedy of exclusion to the euphoria of justification.[114] If anyone should raise the protest that God's freedom cannot cross the line between succour and severity, Paul insists otherwise: in order to implement his mercy God delivered his own Son to a bloody death on a cross (Rom 5.6-11) for the purpose of bringing mercy to bear on the ungodly. Thus the cross corresponds to the pattern inscribed into Israel's (and the gentiles') history, and vice versa, inasmuch as the promise-event sets the framework for both.[115]

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[113] Moo, *Romans*, 707, is thus incorrect to state that unbelieving Jews were never a part of the good olive tree. The metaphor doesn't actually state this, and such a position doesn't accord with Moo's own perspective that the root is the patriarchs. Unbelieving Jews are still, according to Paul, 'beloved' due to the patriarchs (11.28).

[114] This theme is prominent in the Church Fathers, who often cite Romans 11.22 in support of God's duality in both forgiving and judging. Note especially Tertullian, who titles one section in *On Modesty* as, 'God Just as Well as Merciful; Accordingly, Mercy Must Not Be Indiscriminate.'

[115] Despite some conceptual overlap, this model differs from the cruciform or 'missional' hermeneutic proposed in Michael J. Gorman, *Cruciformity: Paul's Narrative Spirituality of the Cross* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001), 17; Michael J. Gorman, *Becoming the Gospel: Paul, Participation, and Mission* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2015), where all of history corresponds to the pattern of the cross. In what I am proposing, Paul understands the death to life paradigm corresponding to the event of the promise; Israel's history pre-Christ, the Christ-event, and the final ingathering of Jews and gentiles follows and confirms that fundamental

Paul's purpose in claiming divine duality is more than conceptual, however. Lest we miss the point, he is affirming through the contrast that Israel continues to be a completely viable entity in the purpose of God, indeed, *his* people (τὸν λαὸν αὐτοῦ, 11.1). 'Israel'[116] does not function simply as an argumentative foil stemming from Paul's exuberance over the phenomenon of gentile salvation. Paul describes his kin as 'those who have fallen' (τοὺς πεσόντας, 11.22).[117] He insists on a pattern of reversal that casts Israel into a salvific role for the nations, and themselves, due to their *disobedience*.[118] In Paul's mind, God's severity towards Israel is the *contra*-logical outworking of his word in history. In order for the gentiles to know and experience mercy (that is, to stand within the scope of the promise), Israel must be broken off from the root to die. And yet, even though Paul articulates a gentile believer's contradiction to his admonition against boasting, that Jews were broken off in order that gentiles might be grafted in (11.19), the apostle attributes Israel's tragedy of disassociation to 'unbelief' (11.20). Therefore, the root of divine promise has no numerical limitations; it can (and will) support both the fulness of the gentiles and all Israel (11.25-26), who mutually experience justification as the gift of God *whilst in a state of ungodliness*. The reason for Israel's apparent rejection is, as Paul states later, both for the sake of gentile salvation (11.30) and for the sake of Israel's own salvation (10.19; 11.31). Thus the hope of Israel is not mere speculation, but confirmed in the actions of God that are consistent with his word, from Abraham to Paul's own day.

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pattern.

[116] The term Ἰσραήλ does not appear in the olive tree analogy, but this does not necessarily indicate that Paul only has *individual* Jewish unbelievers in mind and not the corporate ethnic entity known by that name. That Israel in a national sense is still in view is clear from the context, with the term Ἰσραήλ bookending 11.13-24, thus demonstrating the coherence of his thought around the question of Israel's current and future status (against Watson, *Beyond*, 322). Indeed, Paul's rhetorical turn to address the gentile believers amongst his readers should be read as a momentary digression from the main argument begun in chapter 9 concerning the hope of Israel, serving to reinforce that point through the mention of its sociological implications within the believing community.

[117] This depends on how the temporal aspect of the aorist is understood. Either sense, whether a prior falling or an ongoing stumbling, is justified in this context since Paul's point is that this thing that has happened to Israel persists.

[118] Moo, *Romans*, 709, overlooks the functional necessity of God's duality of agency when he writes that 'the church, not Israel, is now the locus of God's work in the world'. By highlighting the importance of the new Spirit-filled community that has begun with the Christ-event, he downplays the fact that Israel is just as much a part of the current plan as they were before Christ, just with a different function. Their disobedience, as Paul claims elsewhere, is the impetus for gentile salvation, just as gentile salvation is the cause for Jewish jealousy (that leads some Jews in the present age to salvation, 10.20; 11.14). Paul's heart breaks for his people even as he acknowledges that God is working through them to complete his plans for the world.

5.3.1.c Dried Kindling to Living Children

If God's present comportment towards Israel is marked by 'severity' and 'breaking off', and if such behaviour is fully justified in the light of Israel's response to the revealed righteousness of God in the Christ-event (the gospel), then upon what basis can Paul claim that God has not rejected his people (μὴ ἀπώσατο ὁ θεὸς τὸν λαὸν αὐτοῦ; μὴ γένοιτο, 11.1)? Paul's answer, to which he has been driving since at least 9.6, is riveted to the God of promise. As we saw in the previous chapter on Romans 4, the reason for Abraham's lack of despair ('unbelief') in the face of 'death' was his confidence in God's power to *do* according to the word of promise (4.20-21).[119] Paul once again employs δυνατός in a strategic location, at the end of his olive tree analogy and within a radical claim concluding a complex articulation of the divine 'power' to overcome the impossible (cf. 1.16). Israel, like dry kindling grafted back into a tree once theirs, can be brought to life again.[120] This paradox is a rearticulation of Paul's earlier statement concerning the 'acceptance' (πρόσλημψις) of Israel as ζωὴ ἐκ νεκρῶν (11.15).[121] Wright, however, in identifying the phrase 'life from the dead' as merely a metaphor, dulls the impact of a striking reference to what most commentators interpret as the eschatological resurrection of the dead.[122] When Paul writes, δυνατὸς γάρ ἐστιν ὁ θεὸς πάλιν ἐγκεντρίσαι αὐτούς (11.23), he intends to locate the hope of Israel in God as the agent of their *resurrection*.[123] The link between the promise and the regrafting of the Jews is implicit in δυνατός. God can bring gentiles in for the first time, and also bring Jews back in, because he brings forth children of promise through the justification of the ungodly.[124] This is the pattern of divine agency as dictated in the promise itself.[125]

Turning to human agency, unbelief is articulated earlier by Paul as a lack of confidence in God's ability to fulfil his word (4.20). When the Jews cease to persist in their

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[119] Also Cranfield, *Romans 9–12*, 570.

[120] Against (famously) C. H. Dodd, *The Epistle of Paul to the Romans*, MNTC (London: Harper and Brothers, 1932), 180 ('Paul had the limitations of a town-bred man'), the fact that Paul reverses the order of normal practice indicates his keen familiarity with the process: 'Paul has allowed the theological process he is illustrating to affect the terms of his metaphor' (Moo, *Romans*, 703). Just as the expected course of salvation history has been upended by God to align with the parameters of the promise, so too the normal practice of grafting.

[121] See for example Cranfield, *Romans 9–12*, 562. Käsemann, *Romans*, 307, understands the earlier reference as signalling the parousia.

[122] N. T. Wright, 'Romans', in *Acts, Romans, 1 Corinthians*, NIB (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2002), 683; cf. Moo, *Romans*, 694-96.

[123] The attempt by Mark D. Nanos, 'Romans 11 and Christian-Jewish Relations: Exegetical Options for Revisiting the Translation and Interpretation of this Central Text', *CTR* 9 (2012): 3–21, to retranslate the harshest terms in Paul's language (i.e., enemies, broken off, fallen) blunts the edge of the apostle's argument unnecessarily.

[124] See Wagner, 'Mercy', 425-26.

[125] Cf. Murray, *Romans*, 89.

unbelief (11.23), they will be grafted in just as the gentiles were, via promise. If 'wild' branches can be ingrafted, then certainly (πόσῳ μᾶλλον, 11.24) the 'natural' can course with 'fatness' again. Concerning the gentiles, Barclay writes that their salvation 'is anomalous, the miraculous extension of a promise whose origin and home is Israel itself (11.17-24)'.[126] We are thus remiss to think that Israel has been removed from the bounds of the promise, as if the gentiles replaced them.[127] When Paul writes that the divine hands of rescue have been extended to Israel throughout her history, there is no indication that the father has stopped looking to the horizon for his wayward sons and daughters (10.21).[128] Furthermore, Paul's metaphorical description of Israel as 'holy' branches is never rescinded.[129] This must be kept in mind as the metaphor progresses to its counterintuitive climax: the regrafting of those 'holy' branches into their natural tree.[130]

Remarkably, the same is not said of gentiles. Any specialness they now possess, apart from mention in the promise to Abraham ('the nations'), stems from the Christ-event. Christ, as we saw in the previous chapter, effectively freed the promise to a new breadth although the trajectory remained the same; whilst in Paul's eyes the functional scope of blessing expanded to include the ἔθνη, the horizon has been the same from the first utterance of the promise to Abraham. And, as the second half of this present chapter will show, the horizon of divine grace is vast. Moo writes that 'gentiles who come to Christ become part of that community of salvation founded on God's promises to the patriarchs'.[131] For Käsemann, 'grace is understood as a power which overcomes unbelief and brings to faith. Miracle is therefore the presupposition of faith. God as creator is δυνατός. This is the basis of all hope' (4.17).[132] Notice that in Käsemann's definition δυνατός is not activity but ontology. If he is right, then divine power is God acting to make good on his promise through the resurrection of Israel. By containing within himself the potential for Jewish resurrection,[133] he *can be* faithful to his word (9.6). That, at the very least, sets the impossible within a context of possibility, namely, Israel's hope for life from the dead. If the distance between Abraham and the stars is bridged by the power of God's promise, how much easier is the distance from the ground up to the trunk of the olive tree surmounted through the power of God's word of justification? Thus Paul relates the *what* of Israel's hope. The *how* is less clear, the outworking of which Paul

[126] Barclay, *Paul and the Gift*, 548.
[127] Byrne, *Romans*, 344.
[128] See Jan Lambrecht, 'The Caesura Between Romans 9.30-3 and 10.1-4', *NTS* 45 (1999): 141-47.
[129] See Moo, *Romans*, 698.
[130] Note Esler, *Conflict*, 305.
[131] Moo, *Romans*, 709.
[132] Käsemann, *Romans*, 311.
[133] Cf. Byrne, *Romans*, 343.

himself admits is a 'mystery' (11.25). But as the final stage in the apostle's argument makes clear, a divine impetus of *creatio e contrario* resolves the impossible.

5.3.2 'All Israel' and the Agency of God (11.25-32)

Whilst Romans 9–11 is thought to address the so-called 'problem of Israel',[134] or rather, the 'plight of Israel',[135] the chapters climax with an affirmation of mercy for both Jews and gentiles.[136] The scope of Paul's examination into the inner workings of divine mercy on behalf of Israel enlarges to include the whole world; God's word proscribed as much. My argument in this final section is that the divine compulsion to mercy has set the trajectory of human history along a course of disobedience via the counterintuitive agency of divine subjugation. Paul's theologically dangerous statements in these closing passages threaten to implicate God for injustice, amplified as Paul's claims progress to a concluding avowal of mercy upon all.

The structure of 11.25-32 demonstrates the coherence of Paul's finale concerning the mercy of God.[137] This is no desperate grasping for hope at the end of an argument grown increasingly incoherent.[138] The opening words, οὐ γὰρ θέλω ὑμᾶς ἀγνοεῖν (11.25), indicate the significance for Paul of what he is about to express to his gentile readers in particular.[139] The 'ὅτι signals that the "mystery" is not an abstract concept of God's plan of salvation, but the specific event of Israel's wholesale salvation yet to occur'.[140] The confluence of key citations from Isaiah and Jeremiah show that Paul is immersed in the scriptural witness to Israel's history (11.26-27). The complex structuring of his capstone claims regarding the relationship between gentile and Jewish disobedience and mercy in 11.28-32 indicate that Paul believes the resolution to the question concerning God's faithfulness to his word (9.6), and thus to Israel (9.1-5), rests in a pattern of divine hardening and softening where human agency is defined by response to the incommutable call of God in faith (11.15; 15.16).[141] Paul insists that Israel remains God's possession, inasmuch as they are the instrument he chooses to bring blessing to the nations, and back again to Israel herself: indeed, 'both the beginning and the

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[134] Käsemann, *Romans*, 256.

[135] Douglas Moo, 'The Theology of Romans 9-11: A Response to Elizabeth Johnson', in *Pauline Theology, Volume 3, Romans*, ed. David M. Hay and E. Elizabeth Johnson (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1995), 245.

[136] Florian Wilk, 'Rahmen und Aufbau von Römer 9–11', in *Between Gospel and Election: Explorations in the Interpretation of Romans 9–11*, ed. Florian Wilk and J. Ross Wagner, WUNT 257 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010), 239.

[137] I follow here Käsemann, *Romans*, 312, who locates the concluding thesis in vv. 25-26a, with vv. 26b-27 establishing the scriptural proof, and vv. 28-32 confirming Paul's thesis by linking it to justification by faith.

[138] See for example Frank Thielman, 'Unexpected Mercy: Echoes of a Biblical Motif in Romans 9–11', *SJT* 47 (1994): 169.

[139] Cranfield, *Romans 9–12*, 573. Cf. Rom 1.13; 1 Cor 10.1; 12.1; 2 Cor 1.8; 1 Thess 4.13.

[140] Käsemann, *Romans*, 312.

[141] See Barclay, 'Golden Calf', 109, on the duality of 'threat' and 'promise' in Romans 9–11.

end of the drama of salvation are determined by the destiny of Israel'.[142] The three issues that addressed below include the scope of 'all Israel', the irrevocability of divine love, and the propriety of divine subjugation.

5.3.2.a Who is All Israel? (11.25-27)

Paul builds his argument in stages through 11.11-24, drawing his readers further into an increasingly complex and comprehensive claim regarding the mercy of God to disobedient Israel. One means by which to trace this development is through Paul's repeated mention of the 'fulness' of Israel (πλήρωμα, 11.12, 24) and equivalent statements (τίς ἡ πρόσλημψις εἰ μὴ ζωὴ ἐκ νεκρῶν, 11.15), in conjunction with a favourite rhetorical device of the apostle, *a minore ad maius* (πόσῳ μᾶλλον, 11.12, 24). When Paul eventually declares that 'all Israel' will be saved (11.26), he continues the momentum of the preceding 'how much more' statements whilst dramatically increasing the capital he has invested so far in an argument meant to prove the fidelity of God to his word. The culmination of this escalation comes in 11.32, with a declaration of God's mercy upon 'all' humanity, but this is predicated by the apostle's affirmation of a 'mystery',[143] namely, a future for 'all Israel' that drips with mercy and is contingent upon the salvation of an unspecified 'fulness' of the gentile nations (11.25-26). Thus God's faithfulness to his word of promise will be fully revealed in the salvation of 'all Israel'.[144] What Paul previously couched within the form of a question is now an unambiguous statement of fact.

The identity of 'all Israel' is a critical issue.[145] If the phrase only references Jewish Christians,[146] then it fails to cohere with the conclusion of the immediately preceding olive tree analogy, where dead branches can be restored. Wright incorrectly suggests that the phrase includes both Jewish and gentile believers, based upon the mention of gentiles in the immediate context.[147] Cranfield thinks that the most likely interpretation is 'the whole nation

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[142] Käsemann, *Romans*, 307.

[143] Johannes Munck, *Christ and Israel: An Interpretation of Romans 9–11* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1967), 131; Wilckens, *Römer 6–11*, 253.

[144] Note Beker, *Paul the Apostle*, 330, on Paul's 'unique stance' here relative to contemporary authors.

[145] For a recent analysis of patristic contributions to 'replacement' theology, see Jason A. Staples, 'What Do the Gentiles Have to Do with "All Israel"? A Fresh Look at Romans 11:25-27', *JBL* 130 (2011): 371-90; cf. Dahl, 'Paul', 146; Moule, *Romans*, 207.

[146] This has been strongly argued by Ben L. Merkle, 'Romans 11 and the Future of Ethnic Israel', *JETS* 43 (2000): 709-21.

[147] See for example N. T. Wright, 'Romans 9–11 and the "New Perspective"', in *Between Gospel and Election: Explorations in the Interpretation of Romans 9–11*, ed. Florian Wilk and J. Ross Wagner, WUNT 257 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010), 50-51. For critique of Wright's position, see Wagner, *Heralds*, 279n194; Watson, *Beyond*, 317n29; J. Brian Tucker, *Reading Romans after Supercessionism* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2018), 184-90.

Israel as a whole, but not necessarily including every individual member'.[148] Whilst he initially suggests and then rejects an alternative view, that 'the whole nation Israel, including every individual member' will be saved, he raises no argument against it. The passages he selects to support the more limited understanding, however, could just as easily be used to support a universal interpretation (11.12, 15, 23, 24).[149] In a recent article, Philip du Toit makes a sharp distinction between two contingents of Israel pre-Christ, 'inner-elect' and 'outer-elect'.[150] But if 'all Israel' does not include every individual member, the implications are far-reaching both for the extent and operation of God's word, and for the meaning and potential of human faith. Concerning the latter, Paul is in danger of contradicting a statement made just previously in his olive tree analogy, that the broken branches will be reinstated *if* they reverse their current position of disbelief (11.23). This would indicate a certain degree of human agency. Disbelieving Jews turn to God, and consequently he responds with reinstatement. God is under no compulsion to save his people, in this view, except that they take the initiative and simply believe the gospel. But Paul claims elsewhere that Israel's past, present, and future status before God is entirely at his disposal. Their 'belief' is sandwiched between dense articulations of divine precedence. When Paul writes that the riches which have come to the world and to the nations are paradoxically due to the sins and failure of Israel, he prefaces an affirmation of the incalculable measure of God's mercy: πόσῳ μᾶλλον τὸ πλήρωμα αὐτῶν (11.12). He also restates the terms of the promise between God and Abraham antithetically. Included in the contents of the promise are blessing to the 'nations' (ἔθνη) and inheritance of the 'land' (κόσμος), both of which are said to flourish through Israel's disobedience. When Paul writes that Israel's fulness will be 'life from the dead', he in essence claims that Israel has flatlined (11.15). She cannot resuscitate herself, as a corpse cannot bring itself to breathe; God's intervention is an actual resurrection (cf. 4.17). When Paul writes that the Jewish unbelievers will be grafted in again once they believe (11.23-24), the conveyance of these dead branches from the rubbish heap back into the living tree is an action of the divine transposer alone. When Paul writes that 'in this way'[151] all Israel 'will be saved' (σωθήσεται, 11.26), he exhibits the same confidence in future divine deliverance expressed earlier in Romans (5.9, 10; 9.27; 10.9, 13).[152] Remarkably, in all these prior

[148] Cranfield, *Romans 9–12*, 576-77.

[149] Cranfield, *Romans 9–12*, 577 et al. cite *Sanhedrin* 10: 'All Israel have a share in the world to come'. Pseudo-Philo does not seem to agree, a point that will be discussed in the concluding chapter.

[150] Philip la Grange du Toit, 'The Salvation of "All Israel" in Romans 11:25–27 as the Salvation of Inner-Elect, Historical Israel in Christ', *Neotestamentica* 49 (2016): 417-52.

[151] Beker, *Paul the Apostle*, 334, suggests that καὶ οὑτώς indicates the manner of salvation, that is, according to the pattern established by Paul since 9.6. The 'mystery' concerns 'the manner and method of salvation history'.

[152] See du Toit, 'The Salvation of "All Israel" in Romans 11:25–27 as the Salvation of Inner-Elect,

occurrences Paul employs the future passive or equivalents of σώζω to indicate the anticipated agency of God on behalf of those previously dead, his enemies, those apparently outside the scope of mercy. If we take Paul's statements from the end of chapter 8 as a guide, unbelievers are met by the call of God and transformed, whilst the realisation of that calling awaits manifestation (ἐκάλεσεν . . . ἐδικαίωσεν . . . ἐδόξασεν, 8.28). Israel's position is the same. When Paul cites from the prophets to support his claim that all Israel will be saved, he selects passages that hang the full weight of salvation on God (11.26-27). The 'deliverer' who comes from Zion, surely Christ at the parousia,[153] will 'banish ungodliness' from the Jewish people, and God himself will remove the sins of his people.[154] There is, significantly, nothing said about the people's actions predicating or even accompanying this direct intervention of God. Indeed, the subsequent verses chisel deeper an impression of Israel as 'ungodly'. It is this reality, their individual and corporate ungodliness, that fits them for mercy. Not only that, but they are said to be 'known beforehand' (προγινώσκω, 8.29; 11.12) by God, marking a striking point of congruence between unbelievers and believers. This pre-knowledge of God is spoken of in terms of soteriology, not epistemology. Those *pre*-known by God are also *pre*-destined to transformation, heirship, justification, and glorification (8.29-30). The sentiment is similar to that of Amram as portrayed by Pseudo-Philo, who counsels his kinsmen that God spoke of their existence before they actually came into being (LAB 9).[155] But going a step beyond Pseudo-Philo, in Romans divine pre-knowledge anticipates a *re*-birth. Comprehension of the salvation of 'all' Israel is possible only within the conceptual sphere of rebirth and resurrection. The composite citation in 11.26-27 is Paul's strongest assertion yet in Romans that God's deliverance of Israel will happen on his terms and by his direct intervention, mirroring his agency in engendering children from sterile wombs and bringing gentiles 'dead' in their sins and outside the covenant to life through the gift of Christ; this is the sense of καὶ οὕτως.[156] If gentiles, who were doubly removed from hope, could be ingrafted through the mercy of God, how much more Israel? At the end of this tracing exercise through Paul's arguments on both sides of Israel's 'unbelief' (11.23) we are left with the following

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Historical Israel in Christ', who argues from Paul's use of the logical future tense of σώζω that it 'possible that the salvation of "all Israel" intricately stands in *both* (1) a *comparative* relationship with καθὼς γέγραπται . . ., which constitutes the *manner* in which salvation is effected, and (2) in a *conditional* relationship with ἄχρις οὗ τὸ πλήρωμα τῶν ἐθνῶν εἰσέλθῃ, which constitutes the *condition* for salvation'.

[153] Esler, *Conflict*, 306.

[154] Dunn, *Romans 9–16*, 683.

[155] See 2.3.3 above.

[156] For an outline of various interpretive options of this important phrase, see Richard H. Bell, *The Irrevocable Call of God: An Inquiry into Paul's Theology of Israel* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2005), 259-60. On its use by classical writers, see Peter W. van der Horst, '"Only Then Will All Israel Be Saved": A Short Note on the Meaning of *kai houtōs* in Romans 11:26', *JBL* 119 (2000): 521-25.

conclusion: the hope of Israel lies in God's prior and predilective agency to bring life from the dead through his word of justification.

A related question concerns the identification of the 'fulness' of the gentiles. This question is significant because its answer helps to clarify the extent of 'all' Israel. Although τὸ πλήρωμα (11.25) could mean 'the Gentile world as a whole',[157] Paul remarkably employs the same term for the ingathering of the gentiles as he does for the eventual reconciliation of the Jews. He refers to the 'fulness' (πλήρωμα) of Israel in 11.12 in parallel to the key terms the 'world' (κόσμος) and the 'nations' (ἔθνη). The word κόσμος appears again in 11.15 after Paul has just described his own efforts to save 'some' of his people by provoking them to envy (11.14). We should not, however, think that Paul intends 'some' here to indicate that only a limited number of Jews will be saved, as in the minority 'remnant' (9.27). That may or may not be the case, but Paul means to convey here that his own personal efforts will only be so effective in the larger picture. Indeed, in describing the 'breaking off' of Israel he again refers to 'some' of the branches. So we should not speculate too much whether τινες indicates a large or small number of people; it is perhaps Paul's effort at intentional ambiguity in the face of a divine plan that cannot be ascertained as anything other than a 'mystery' (11.25). Paul appears to use the terms 'fulness' and 'all' interchangeably to reference Israel's restitution. Likewise, his application of πλήρωμα in 11.25 works interchangeably with that highly significant term describing the extent of salvation inclusive of both Jews and gentiles: κόσμος. He relates the πλοῦτος κόσμου to the πλοῦτος ἐθνῶν in 11.12, and the reconciliation of the κόσμος with the reinstating of Israel. For Paul, the κόσμος is the domain of divine fulfilment of the promise, the inheritance of Abraham (4.13), the entire scope of humanity (3.19). He employed κόσμος earlier in a discussion of the concurrent universal disobedience of humanity and comprehensive judgment of God (3.19). Paul here rearticulates the relationship as its inverse in 11.25-26 in a statement that leans toward universal salvation.

Finally, the way in which Paul discusses the future of 'all Israel' bridges the divide between two common interpretative frameworks for these passages: salvation historical and apocalyptic. Whilst Paul's claim entails a positive affirmation of the hope of Israel, the core idea is a radical restructuring of the standard paradigm of salvation in Jewish soteriology. In the Hebrew scriptures,[158] the nations are gathered to Zion to participate in collective membership with Israel at the eschaton.[159] There is no eradication of ethnic differences at this event, in which Israel maintains prime position as the chosen people of God.[160] In a complete

[157] Cranfield, *Romans 9–12*, 576.
[158] Isa 49.22; 60.3; Jer 16.19 et al.
[159] See Cranfield, *Romans 9–12*, 577-78, on the strong inferences to the eschaton in 11.26-27.
[160] Esler, *Conflict*, 307.

reversal, Paul's model moves the gentiles forward, entering the holy city ahead of Israel, even though the gospel is 'to the Jew first' (1.16; 2.9, 10).[161] And yet, whilst Paul reverses the paradigm, he maintains the foundation into which it is bolted: the 'fathers', namely, the promise (11.28-29, see below). Indeed, the extraordinary salvation of Israel expressed in the citations from Isaiah and Jeremiah recollects the earlier articulation of Abraham's justification by God in Romans 4.5-8.[162] Paul writes that the 'ungodliness' of Israel will be removed (ἀποστρέψει ἀσεβείας ἀπὸ Ἰακώβ, cf. Isa 59.20), referencing a divine action of transformative power in which sins are not simply overlooked. This is the 'climactic moment' in Romans 9–11,[163] in which Paul's language conveys an ontological reconstruction in harmony with Abraham's experience when he was transposed from ungodly to righteous (4.1-5). This is justification of the ungodly scaled up from individual to universal.[164]

The second half of the conflated citation in 11.27 mirrors Paul's construction in 4.5-8, where his claim concerning justification of the ungodly is followed by divine affirmations of forgiveness in the first person. The threefold affirmations in 4.7-8 of forgiveness in a *general* sense (μακάριοι ὧν . . . μακάριος ἀνὴρ) are replaced by a single statement that articulates Israel's *specific* hope in terms of forgiveness (ἀφέλωμαι τὰς ἁμαρτίας αὐτῶν, 11.27). God has not modified the pattern instituted at the promise-event; forgiveness is still his final word.[165] The barrier of human ungodliness is met by a catastrophic divine infringement that rips sinful human beings up by the roots and thrusts them branches-down into the rich soil of divine promise. Paul's citations demonstrate that God's discriminatory grace to the ungodly is apocalyptic in operation whilst originating perpetually from the event of promise.[166] If the apostle is correct, the concurrent[167] 'fulness' of the gentiles and the salvation of 'all Israel' will be the fullest manifestation of divine elective grace after the Christ-event.[168] This will be the

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[161] These statements surely reflect both Paul's praxis in missionary activity and his theological convictions concerning God's election of Israel from among the nations through the promise to Abraham. See Wagner, *Heralds*, 25; cf. Ziesler, *Romans*, 284: 'This is a theological complement to the historical perception of the success of the Gentile mission in comparison with the mission to Israel'.

[162] Barclay, *Paul and the Gift*, 555.

[163] Wagner, *Heralds*, 350-51.

[164] I use the term universal here against the majority of scholars who suggest a limited understanding of 'fulness' and 'all' throughout Romans 11. There is no reason within these passages to restrict either the operation or the scope of divine *creatio ex nihilo* for either the gentiles or the Jews. Such an interpretive move may relocate Paul's emphasis in this passage, from the power of God to bring life out of death to human efforts at evangelism. For a representative example, see Ben L. Merkle, 'Romans 11 and the Future of Ethnic Israel', *JETS* 43 (2000): 709-21.

[165] Käsemann, *Romans*, 314.

[166] Käsemann, *Romans*, 305: 'In virtue of the promise given to it Judaism is an eschatological entity as πᾶς Ἰσραήλ, and it remains so even in judgment and against its own will. Its full conversion is undoubtedly expected, but it is bound up with the fact that salvation has come first to the gentiles. The train of thought is fully apocalyptic'. See also Maier, *Israel*, 122.

[167] According to Cranfield, *Romans 9–12*, 575, 'the entry of the gentiles will be the event which will mark the end of Israel's hardening'.

[168] Cf. Barth, *CD II.2*, 300.

consummation of the promise, the realisation of the promised 'blessing'.[169] If anyone insists that the Christ-event be apocalyptic, that is, as God's mercy invading a world at war with sin, then the events of 11.25-26 are *super*-apocalyptic. As they relate to the promise, Paul understands the Christ-event in terms of *potential*, the 'mystery' in terms of *actuality*. In other words, whilst the death and resurrection of Christ did not immediately effect universal salvation for all humanity, the future salvation event will realise all that remains left to be done. With this claim concerning 'all Israel', Paul has answered the question of God's faithfulness to his word (9.6), but there is more to say. In the final section of Romans 9–11, Paul explains why God can, and indeed must, conclude history in a definitive stroke of mercy.

5.3.2.b The Irrevocable Gift of Love (11.28-29)

In this penultimate section, I argue that Paul's finely balanced statements in 11.28-29 demarcate Israel from the gentiles in a manner consistent with mercy to 'all'. We have only to recall Paul's exclamations on behalf of his kin that opened these chapters to see how he has brought his entire argument back around; Israel is special because of God's word.

Paul writes in 11.28 that Israel is both an 'enemy' and 'beloved' of God, due to the gospel and election respectively: κατὰ μὲν τὸ εὐαγγέλιον ἐχθροὶ δι' ὑμᾶς, κατὰ δὲ τὴν ἐκλογὴν ἀγαπητοὶ διὰ τοὺς πατέρας (11.28). Although the apostle employs the term ἐχθροί elsewhere,[170] his use here recalls 5.10, where God's enemies are reconciled in the death of Christ. In both contexts, Paul articulates the movement of people from a sphere of hostility to the realm of grace through the transformative power of the gospel (εὐαγγέλιον; cf. 5.6-11). Even if the sense of ἐχθρός is passive (Israel is 'hated' by God),[171] the fact of their 'beloved' status remains due to the gifts and promises to the fathers (see below; cf. 9.4, 5).[172] Ἐχθρός, then, functions as a temporary designation just as with the gentiles,[173] inasmuch as the context aligns with Paul's articulation of the adversary-reversing power of the Christ-event. Regarding the second term, ἀγαπητός, it is remarkable that Paul reserves the term 'beloved' in the rest of Romans for his believing Roman audience, including his intimate acquaintances

[169] See the discussion in Cranfield, *Romans 9–12*, 574-75.
[170] Cf. Romans 5.10; 11.28; 12.20; 1 Corinthians 15.25, 26; Galatians 4.16; Philippians 3.18; Colossians 1.21; 2 Thessalonians 3.15.
[171] See Käsemann, *Romans*, 315; Murray, *Romans*, 100; Otto Michel, *Der Brief an die Römer* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1963), 282-83.
[172] Ziesler, *Romans*, 287.
[173] Note Cranfield, *Romans 9–12*, 580.

in Rome who worked alongside him.[174] The saints in Rome are ἀγαπητοί θεοῦ (1.7), and he refers to them both corporately and individually (12.9; 16.5, 8, 9, 12). Whilst Israel currently occupies the refugee camp sitting between 'beloved' and 'hated',[175] the walls dissolve in Paul's radically apocalyptic 'mystery' (11.25-26). Israel's stumbling into the category of 'enemy' suits them for the redemption of discriminatory grace. If they were not ontologically disobedient (ἀπειθής), they would not 'merit' the grace that seeks out the ungodly (cf. 4.5; 5.6-10).

Despite these glimmers of hope, Paul's claims concerning Israel draw a soteriological line in the sand between them and the gentiles. Within scholarship on Romans there has been a tendency to take an either/or position on the relationship of God's grace to Israel, as mentioned above. For example, Ziesler writes that 'from 9.6, being the people of God has been a matter of grace and not one of being racially in Israel', and 'racial descent from Abraham is not the condition for being God's people'.[176] This can lead to the conclusion that Paul's thinking is 'illogical',[177] because he can't have it both ways.[178] Grace, as the argument goes, cannot be a matter of both biology and spirit, or else God is unjust. The tension has been addressed in various ways, including the concept of a *Sonderweg*, or two distinct ways of salvation for Jews and gentiles.[179] This view as commonly expressed is untenable in the light of passages such as 9.1-5; 11.14. Paul's gospel cannot be so simply expressed as 'Christ for gentiles, Torah for Jews'. If grace is directed towards the ungodly, Torah loses its capacity as *the* instrument of justification; it assumes its proper role as the catalyst for sin, creating the context for justification. And yet, the tension between biology and unconditional grace remains, especially considering Paul's seemingly oxymoronical construction in 11.28:

κατὰ	μὲν	τὸ εὐαγγέλιον	ἐχθροὶ	δι'	ὑμᾶς
κατὰ	δὲ	τὴν ἐκλογὴν	ἀγαπητοὶ	διὰ	τοὺς πατέρας

[174] The usage of ἀγαπητός is consistent, albeit less frequent, than in Paul's other letters, especially 1 Corinthians where the term is expressed with notable affection (τέκνα μου ἀγαπητά, etc.); cf. 1 Cor 4.14, 17; 10.14; 15.58; 2 Cor 7.1; 12.19; Phil 2.12; 4.1; 1 Thess 2.8; Phm 1.1, 16.

[175] Note Käsemann, *Romans*, 315, on the dual status of Israel in the present age.

[176] Ziesler, *Romans*, 286.

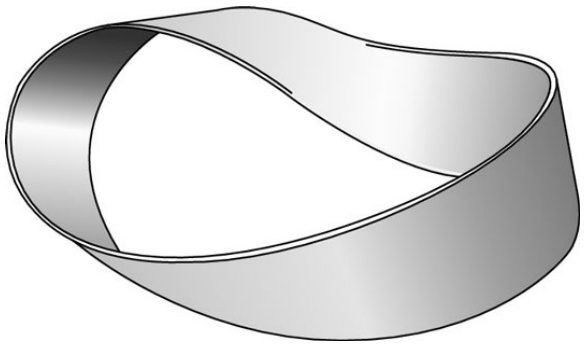
[177] Ziesler, *Romans*, 287.

[178] Wagner, *Heralds*, 299, helpfully calls this a 'divine logic of "mystery"'.

[179] The *Sonderweg* or 'double-track' view of Krister Stendahl, 'The Apostle Paul and the Introspective Conscience of the West', *HTR* 56 (1963): 4, has been mostly rejected by scholars, except for a recent resurgence amongst proponents of the 'Paul Within Judaism' school (Hodge, Gaston, Thiessen). See especially chapter 15 of John G. Gager, *The Origins of Anti-Semitism: Attitudes Towards Judaism in Pagan and Christian Antiquity* (Oxford: OUP, 1985), 247-64, who argues strongly that Israel's salvation is still found in Torah. For critique of the above, see John K. Goodrich, 'Until the Fullness of the Gentiles Comes In: A Critical Review of Recent Scholarship on the Salvation of "All Israel" (Romans 11:26)', *JSPL* 6 (2016): 5-32; Kruse, *Romans*, 453-56.

The μέν . . . δέ construction implies that Israel currently inhabits these ontological categories simultaneously, both 'enemies' and 'beloved'. The parallel structure of Paul's statements in 11.28-29, however, may suggest that there actually are two different ways in which Jews and gentiles are saved, not in terms of the *means* (that is, the way in which they are brought from death to life, i.e., incongruous grace), but in terms of *ontology*. The difference has nothing to do with any external factor such as Torah or 'boundary markers', but the divinely instituted biological distinction between Jews and gentiles writ large in Paul's renarration of Israel's foundational history in 9.6-13.[180] And because the source of this distinction is God, so too the medium of salvation: God's creative mercy.

In order to conceptualise this relationship between the disparate groups of humanity, we can look to the mathematical phenomenon known as the Möbius strip or loop.[181] Whilst a rectangular strip has two distinct sides, once given a half twist and joined at the ends the result is a surface with only one side and no boundary:



Möbius may be the closest we can come to modelling how two ontologically distinct planes of existence, Jew and gentile, can resolve in the one God. The two oppugnant sides of human ethnic history, following different courses of acceptance and rejection, are transposed by the justifying word of God onto a singular surface of grace. Whilst God has confined all to disobedience, and all will be shown mercy, currently the majority of Jews move in the opposite direction of believing gentiles; the former are yet ἐχθροί. However, this movement *away* returns to mercy; they are yet ἀγαπητοί. What is clear in Romans 9–11 is that the majority of Israel is being treated differently in the present age than the gentiles, and vice

[180] See Esler, *Conflict*, 307. Notably, the categories of Jew and gentile are never rejected in Romans, nor amalgamated (cf. Gal 3.28).

[181] Discovery of the Möbius strip is credited to two German mathematicians in 1858, August Ferdinand Möbius and Johann Benedict Listing, although there is topological evidence from ancient Rome that suggests earlier familiarisation with the structure. See further Udo Hertrich-Jeromin, *Introduction to Möbius Differential Geometry* (Cambridge: CUP, 2003). On the ancient evidence, see Julyan H. E. Cartwright and Diego L. González, 'Möbius Strips before Möbius: Topological Hints in Ancient Representations', *The Mathematical Intelligencer* 38 (2016): 69-76, and Lorraine L. Larison, 'The Möbius Band in Roman Mosaics', *American Scientist* 61 (1973): 544-47.

versa. Whilst unbelieving Jews are said to remain in God's love due to the promise (τοὺς πατέρας),[182] this statement does not exclude the gentiles from having a stake in the promise as well; theirs is just mediated through the promise-confirming gospel of Christ (4.16). Whilst unbelieving Jews are still persistently reached for by the arms of God (10.21), he inversely and intentionally drives them to jealousy through the inclusion of gentiles in the blessings of the promise *now* (10.20; 11.14), not only at the eschaton. Möbius helps us to understand the paradoxical operation of divine grace by situating God's ethno-theologically divided people, Jewish and gentile, enemies or children, dead or alive, on a singular plane of mercy.[183]

Still, we face the pressing question inherent in 11.28 concerning the 'how' of Israel's paradoxical status as God's beloved enemy. In Romans 1–5, Paul is unambiguous regarding the hope of the gentiles: they are either dead or resurrected, ungodly or heirs, enemies or the redeemed. Nowhere in Romans, however, does the apostle speak of *gentiles* in terms of the paradox of 11.28. Human existence for Paul is a binary encapsulated in the phrase, ἐν Χριστῷ; the alternative is non-existence. Whatever 'being' exists prior to God's justification, it dwells on the dark side of promise. And this is exactly what makes Israel special for Paul, the gift of the irrevocable word.[184] Although it is not immediately apparent that Paul is speaking of the promise when he writes, ἀμεταμέλητα γὰρ τὰ χαρίσματα καὶ ἡ κλῆσις τοῦ θεοῦ (11.29), there are a number of reasons this interpretation best fits the text. First, the γάρ indicates that this statement is explanatory of Paul's statement in 11.28, particularly of the second subordinate clause, διὰ τοὺς πατέρας. Cranfield takes 'beloved for the sake of the fathers' to indicate that God is faithful to Israel because he cannot be unfaithful to his own love. But this explanation falters as it appeals to an abstract sense of God's character, the same issue discussed earlier when referring to God's freedom as unconstrained.[185] God has the 'freedom to make promises',[186] and is subsequently beholden to them. Paul uses διὰ τοὺς πατέρας idiomatically as a reference to the promise to Abraham (cf. 11.16, 17).[187] This view is bolstered when we consider the wider context of Deuteronomy 7.7 in which God's love is coupled with his promise: 'It was because the LORD loved you and *kept the oath that he swore to your ancestors*' (Deut 7.8, emphasis mine). God's love for Israel is inextricable from his promise to the fathers.

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[182] Leon Morris, *The Epistle to the Romans*, PNTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988), 423.

[183] Cf. Barclay, 'Golden Calf', 108; Dunn, *Romans 9–16*, 681.

[184] J. Ross Wagner, '"Enemies" Yet "Beloved" Still: Election and the Love of God in Romans 9–11', in *God and Israel: Providence and Purpose in Romans 9–11*, ed. Todd D. Still (Waco: Baylor, 2017), 102. On the implications of the term 'irrevocable', see Robert Jewett, *Romans: A Commentary*, Hermeneia (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 2006), 708-9; Kruse, *Romans*, 446.

[185] Or 'unquestionable', as in Linebaugh, *Conversation*, 181.

[186] Wagner, 'Enemies', 106.

[187] So Käsemann, *Romans*, 315; Morris, *Romans*, 423.

Additionally, Paul's choice of ἀμεταμέλητα to describe the benefits enjoyed by Israel is noteworthy for a few reasons. First, the term's placement is significant: ἀμεταμέλητα fronts Paul's penultimate statement of divine mercy for maximum effect.[188] The reference to κλῆσις ties this statement to Paul's opening discussion of 'calling' in 9.6-13. Calling is the operation of divine agency filling out the claims within the promise. Second, the semantics of the term ἀμεταμέλητα signal the importance of the promise to Paul's framework. The term has the sense of 'unchangeability', 'unrepentance', and 'irrevocability'.[189] Commentators disagree, however, in their identification of exactly *what* is unchangeable, both concerning the 'gifts'[190] and 'calling', as well as the identify of God himself. For Sanday and Headlam, the term speaks of 'the unchangeable nature of God'.[191] But in saying that God is in any way incapable of reversing a decision, or that he never 'revokes the acts of grace which he performs',[192] divine freedom is limited. Commentators have attempted to explain the apparently negative implications for God's character in abstract terms. Barrett writes, 'If (to put the matter in a paradox) God's freedom is limited at all, it is limited only in the fact of his being God—the gracious God who delights in mercy, and whose wrath . . . exists to serve the ends of his mercy.'[193] But Paul has not structured his argument in 9–11 on the basis of God's character alone, articulating the benevolence and grace of God philosophically with the backing of Scripture. The anchor of his argument is set in 9.6. From this point hangs the claim in 11.29 that God's calling and gifts, and thus his love for Israel, are irrevocable. Paul writes, Ἰακὼβ ἠγάπησα (9.13), and with 11.28 we've come full circle. Because this special love is attributed to the promise (τοὺς πατέρας, 11.28), God's word is the reality that remains unchanged and thus unable to be *re*-called.

Regarding the term 'calling' in 11.28, Cranfield comments that ἡ κλῆσις indicates Israel's 'special commission, function, task, service'.[194] This however fatally constricts the theological scope that Paul propounds in chapters 9–11. The term is better understood as that creative calling into being which Paul has articulated throughout his letter (4.17; 9.6-13), and incontrovertibly in 9.24-26 through the citation of Hosea 2.1 (LXX), 25. Cranfield's view effectively reduces the creative agency of calling, by which God's word brings into existence

[188] Cranfield, *Romans 9–12*, 582.
[189] Note BDAG and LSJ, *op. cit*.
[190] Barrett, *Romans*, 208, defines χάρισμα according to Paul's use in 5.16: the 'free gift' of redemption in Christ, missing the link to 9.4-5.
[191] W. Sanday and Arthur C. Headlam, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle of the Romans*, 3rd ed., ICC (New York: C. Scribner & Sons, 1897), 337-38.
[192] Barrett, *Romans*, 208.
[193] Barrett, *Romans*, 208.
[194] Cranfield, *Romans 9–12*, 580n3.

a people from nothing, into an assignment for Israel to fulfil on his behalf.[195] The first view speaks of God accomplishing the impossible, the second is failure on a national scale. This is not to say that Paul cares little for the actions of Israel and how those figure into the divine plan, as Romans 10 demonstrates. For in the conclusion to his entire argument, Paul makes it clear that in Israel's insubordination lies their salvation.

5.3.2.c The Dismissal of Human Agency (11.30-32)

Paul's discourse to this point has focused on divine agency. He has said little about human agency since 11.17, apart from admonitions to his gentile readers to refrain from arrogant boasting. In 11.23, Paul makes a decisive switch between verbs of action referring to human beings, to God's activity: ἐὰν μὴ **ἐπιμένωσιν** (human) τῇ ἀπιστίᾳ, **ἐγκεντρισθήσονται** (divine). Thereafter, God's actions are traceable in 11.17-29 as variably merciful and harsh (ἐνεκεντρίσθης, ἐγκεντρισθήσονται, σωθήσεται ... ἀποστρέψει ... ἀφέλωμαι ...ἠλεήθητε ... ἐλεηθῶσιν ... συνέκλεισεν ... ἐλεήσῃ). But sandwiched between this cascade of divine agency and the concluding affirmation of divine sovereignty in 11.32, Paul draws a remarkable blueprint of human expedience and divine beneficence:

> ὥσπερ γὰρ ὑμεῖς ποτε ἠπειθήσατε τῷ θεῷ,
> νῦν δὲ **ἠλεήθητε** τῇ τούτων ἀπειθείᾳ,
> οὕτως καὶ οὗτοι νῦν ἠπείθησαν τῷ **ὑμετέρῳ** ἐλέει,
> ἵνα καὶ αὐτοὶ [νῦν][196] **ἐλεηθῶσιν**

Two points demand elaboration here. First, in opening with ὥσπερ γάρ the apostle is effectively explaining the paradox of Israel's exceptionalism *through the example of the gentiles*. Paul has just asserted the irrevocability of God's gifts and calling in 11.29. To explain Jewish exceptionalism through God's mercy to ungodly gentiles should be understood as a radical move by a Jewish author of the Second Temple period.[197] But Paul has already set a precedent for his claims in the olive tree analogy, which illuminates the power

[195] What should also be noted is that Paul's arrangement of the terms 'gifts' and 'calling' matches the ordering of his argument as it moves from as discussion of Israel's gifts in 9.4-5 to an articulation of their calling in 9.6-13. Thus Paul is being consistent with his prioritisation of the word of God voiced from the beginning.

[196] See Metzger, *Textual Commentary*, 465.

[197] See Markus Bockmuehl, *Revelation and Mystery in Ancient Judaism and Pauline Christianity* (Cambridge: CUP, 1987), 173-77.

of God to re-integrate his ethnic people back into blessing.[198] Here in 11.30-31, however, the emphasis on agency is finely balanced between human disobedience and divine mercy, with both categories of humanity taking turns at the helm of ungodliness before being plunged into the sea of mercy.[199]

Second, Paul uses temporal markers liberally to demarcate the distinct operation of mercy between the two categories of humanity: Jew and gentile. There is a discernible interweaving of the strands of humanity by the fingers of God at work in human history after the Christ-event that, at least for Paul, makes sense of the contemporaneous ingathering of the gentiles and the tragic state of persistently disobedient Israel. Paul further expresses the paradoxical outworking of divine mercy when he writes that the mercy to be shown to Israel is actually a result of their disobedience during the period of mercy to the gentiles (11.31).[200] Taking a temporal sense here stands contrary to typical interpretations, where the datives are translated as causal rather than temporal (or datives of space). The causal interpretation relies partly on Paul's earlier statements for interpretive leverage, in which, on the one hand, the acceptance of gentiles by God leads Israel to jealousy (10.19), and, on the other hand, Paul pursues his ministry to gentiles in order to drive his fellow Jews to jealousy (11.13-14). Paul does not, however, explicitly state that God's extension of mercy to the gentiles is the cause of Jewish salvation.[201] Actually, Jewish *envy* is increased because of the gentiles' calling. Furthermore, to identify gentile salvation as the impetus of Jewish 'mercying' is to confuse the different contexts of Paul's statements. In 11.14, Paul speaks of his personal missionary

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[198] Also Byrne, *Romans*, 343.

[199] Klaus Haacker, *The Theology of Paul's Letter to the Romans* (Cambridge: CUP, 2003), 95.

[200] This verse is notoriously difficult to translate, but the punctuation of the NA28 should be followed in this instance. Although many English versions tuck the prepositional phrase τῷ ὑμετέρῳ ἐλέει behind the ἵνα clause (note the NRSV, NIV, ESV), this distorts the Greek unnecessarily. The solution to the problem lies in our identification of the dative, of which a few options present themselves: 1) dative of location; 2) dative of cause; 3) dative of place (or sphere); 4) dative of time. Given the location of the phrase preceding the purpose clause, in a context contrasting different responses to the gospel using frequent temporal markers (ἄχρι, ποτέ, νῦν), the parallel statement in 11.30 (νῦν δὲ ἠλεήθητε τῇ τούτων ἀπειθείᾳ), and correspondence with the pattern of reversal demonstrated thus far, the preferred option is a dative of place—what Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics: An Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 154-56, calls a 'dative of sphere'—indicating the temporal location of the action.

The dative of place likewise offers a better understanding of 11.30. Paul writes, ὥσπερ γὰρ ὑμεῖς ποτε ἠπειθήσατε τῷ θεῷ, νῦν δὲ ἠλεήθητε τῇ τούτων ἀπειθείᾳ, bunching a high concentration of temporal markers together in a dense antithetical statement of God's mercy to the gentiles. Given these markers, we better understand Paul's meaning if we translate τῇ τούτων ἀπειθείᾳ as '*during* their disobedience'. Israel has been described since at least 10.21 as 'disobedient' (ἀπειθέω) and 'hardened' (πώρωσις, 11.25), and Paul has made it clear that the current phase of human history post-Christ-event is one in which gentiles are gathered in and Israel stubbornly refuses the gospel. Perhaps the most convincing evidence against a dative of cause, however, is the fact that Paul nowhere else claims that the gentiles are being shown mercy *because* of Israel's disobedience. The cause of mercy is located elsewhere by the apostle, namely, the promise-confirming Christ-event (15.8-9).

[201] See the nuanced comment in Simon J. Gathercole, 'Locating Christ and Israel in Romans 9–11', in *God and Israel: Providence and Purpose in Romans 9–11*, ed. Todd D. Still (Waco: Baylor, 2017), 135: 'Israel's salvation is the result of the Gentile mission'.

experience in which some Jews believed, whilst 11.30-31 discusses events from the metaperspective, following on from his articulation of an apocalyptic mystery on a global scale. The former is 'micro-missional', the latter 'macro-eschatological'. Also, the overwhelming emphasis on God's agency is a stark contrast to Paul's emphasis on his personal efforts in 11.14-15.[202] Finally, the 'how much more' statements work against a causal understanding of the datives in 11.30-31. Paul intends these contrasts to widen the ontological chasm between believing gentiles and unbelieving Jews (and gentiles) *ad infinitum*. This is why he speaks in terms of death and life (11.15). Indeed, such is the epilogue of the olive tree analogy: the abortion of the promised children is reversed by the God of resurrection (11.24). Also, if the datives are taken as causal the resultant interpretation contradicts Paul's discussion of human culpability for sin. The persistent refrain of this present chapter has been the contingency of divine mercy upon human ungodliness. Mercy, however, is never said by Paul to be granted to one group or individual *due to the sins of others*. This actually flips the paradigm of redemption, in which the sins of humanity are the reason for the death of Christ (4.25; 5.6-8). Sin, as an ontological reality, is the impetus for divine intervention to the very people (individual or corporate) who are transgressing God's law (Torah or otherwise, cf. 2.14, 23). Mercy to the gentiles should not, therefore, be understood as the cause of Jewish disobedience, but as the sequela of *gentile* ungodliness. As Paul writes, ὥσπερ γὰρ ὑμεῖς ποτε ἠπειθήσατε τῷ θεῷ, νῦν δὲ ἠλεήθητε (11.31). The attendant prepositional phrase, τῇ τούτων ἀπειθείᾳ, should be understood in the same sense as its parallel in 11.31 (τῷ ὑμετέρῳ ἐλέει). This is a statement on the interplay between the current modes of being of believing gentiles and disbelieving Israel in the time preceding the consummation of history (11.25-26). For these reasons the typical translation, '*because* of the mercy shown to you',[203] which locates the reason for the gentile's 'mercying' in the disobedience of Israel and, vice versa, Israel's being 'mercied' in the mercy shown to gentiles, is incorrect. Paul's chiasm is an explanation of *how* Israel can exist as both beloved and enemy simultaneously, not of the reasons *why* both gentiles and Jews are eventually shown mercy. That point is made in terms of divine agency alone (11.32). Paul finds the answer in a fresh salvation-historical trajectory engendered by the apocalyptic event of Christ, yet rooted in the word of God.

[202] Note Hübner, *Gottes Ich*, 111-13.

[203] NRSV, NIV, ESV, NASU, for example (emphasis mine). The KJV retains the ambiguity: 'through your mercy'.

Paul concludes with a comment on the dual agency of God. He writes, συνέκλεισεν[204] γὰρ ὁ θεὸς τοὺς πάντας εἰς ἀπείθειαν (11.32). The verse both offers the explanation of 9.30-31 and concludes the argument of Romans 9–11; its significance cannot be overstated.[205] For Käsemann, 11.32 is the definitive statement of God's agency; herein, the 'fundamental divine law of all history is incontestably proclaimed'.[206] Barclay's observation at this point that 'disobedience is no ultimate block' to God's mercy is correct as it stands, but Paul does not seem, in the end, to be pitting God against a wall of human disobedience. There is a more theologically dangerous idea expressed in συνέκλεισεν ὁ θεός (11.32). Rather than *finding* a solution to the problem of sin, God is portrayed as *intending* sin and disobedience ('unbelief' and 'ungodliness') in order to increase the magnitude of his grace (5.20): 'God *himself* has rendered them insensible'.[207] God's mercy is not simply given without regard to human worth, but intentionally directed to the outright rebellious whom *he has made rebellious*. The inference of 11.32 is theologically preposterous: God places human beings on the periphery of a slippery funnel of debauchery (cf. 1.18-32), then exasperated by the introduction of divine law (2.14; 5.20),[208] in order that his grace might be manifest as mercy to the ungodly. Paul's scriptures taught him that mercy requires disobedience; mercy is more than divine rescue of the righteous from externally imposed injustices or foreign oppression. The milieu of disobedience, as the glass dome under which humanity is born, suffers, and dies, has been implemented (5.12-14), intensified (3.20; 5.20), and maintained (8.18-27) by God himself. Therefore, for Cranfield to say that, 'mysterious though God's ways are and dark and indeed forbidding though they may sometimes now seem to us to be, the end of them is mercy, mercy pure and uncompromised',[209] dulls Paul's acute dichotomy. Even Barrett's astute comment that 'the end of the road is God's mercy' refrains from implicating God for the deplorable human condition.[210] Paul's rationale seems starkly unapologetic: God breaks off every branch to *fit* every branch for the intervention of his mercy.

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[204] The term frequently occurs in the LXX and a few times in the NT, including Luke 5.6 and Gal 3.22, 23. It refers to the act of enclosing something in such a way that it cannot escape, such as a fish in a net or a criminal in a prison cell. Note Cranfield's eloquent definition: 'it should be understood as referring to God's providential ordering, which, by allowing men to exercise their freedom and also by that judicial hardening to which such passages as 11.7b point, brings it about that men are imprisoned in such a way that they have no possibility of escape except as God's mercy releases them' (Cranfield, *Romans 9–12*, 587). See also the discussion in *TDNT*, 1098, in which the term presents a 'teleology of history', where all of humankind is entrapped in the confines of Scripture (and the Law) for the purpose of eventual divine release.

[205] Cranfield, *Romans 9–12*, 586.

[206] Käsemann, *Romans*, 316.

[207] Wagner, *Heralds*, 358.

[208] See Moule, *Romans*, 209.

[209] Cranfield, *Romans 9–12*, 587.

[210] Barrett, *Romans*, 208.

Yet Paul balances the scandal of his claim with the affirmation that divine subjugation has a purpose (ἵνα τοὺς πάντας ἐλεήσῃ, 11.32). Although God has shackled the whole of humanity, this was no capricious act. Nevertheless, the apostle oversteps two boundary lines his Jewish contemporaries would not cross. The first concerns the scope of God's mercy. Paul expands the application of mercy to an undefined 'all' (πάντας), including Jews and gentiles (cf. 1.16; 2.9; 15.8-12).[211] Paul's expansion of the scope of promise to include those on the fringes reiterates the striking implication that the Jewish people are included in a category previously incomprehensible: ὁ ἀσεβής (cf. 2.9; 4.5; 5.6; see chapter 4 above).

The second boundary line concerns the agency of God. Paul raises the frightening prospect that God *himself* has thrust Jew and gentile alike into the cesspool of ungodliness (11.32). Paul would probably not go so far as to claim that God *directly* caused any human individual to sin, although *indirect* causation came with the giving of Torah (cf. 4.15; 5.20). He points out the culpability of every human agent in the face of God's law 'written on their hearts' if not on tablets of stone (2.12-24). Israel has 'known' her status πρὸς θεόν from of old (10.18-21). The fact that all 'died' in Adam means that the whole of humanity inhabits a global necropolis, intentionally imprisoned there by God. But as 11.30-31 articulates, some of the dead are presently being emancipated from their graves whilst the majority of Jews (and indeed gentiles) rot in disobedience. The freedom that awaits all, in the consummation of the promised blessing to Abraham, is in an act of mercy yet to be revealed.[212] Thus the involute relationship between Israel and her God is resolved by Paul in a pattern of promise in which mercy is given only ever to the ungodly. As in the stark contradiction of Sonya Marmeladova's fierce and peremptory devotion to the impenitent murderer Raskolnikov, the God of Paul is sublimed in an irrevocable loyalty chained by a love for Israel anchored in his word. Thus and only thus, as in Dostoyevsky's dramatic epilogue, can Paul claim that the end of Israel's story is resurrection.

5.4 Conclusion

The value of the foregoing proposition concerning 'contingent' mercy is the simplicity with which it allows us to comprehend Paul's seemingly incoherent thinking in Romans 9–11. To restate my claim, Paul presents his readers in Romans 9–11 with a view to God as the

[211] Whatever Paul intends by the double 'all', it is a far cry from Pseudo-Philo's conviction that there are individuals within Israel who will suffer torment forever due to their idolatry (cf. *LAB* 38.4), with no hope of mercy in the end (although see *LAB* 25.7).

[212] John Calvin, *Commentary on the Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Romans* (Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software, 2010), 258; Cranfield, *Romans 9–12*, 587.

upholder of his promise to Abraham through an agency of reversal and *re*-creation. God's love is not simply his general, beneficent demeanour towards recalcitrant Israel,[213] but a dynamic, incessant comportment of 'reaching for' (10.21), 'grafting in' (11.23), 'taking away' (11.27), 'hardening' and 'saving' (11.25-26), consistent with his calling-into-being of children of promise (9.6-13). I have attempted herein to strike a balance between views both salvation-historical on the one side and apocalyptic on the other. Käsemann is a good example of an interpreter trying to grasp the dynamic of Paul's view of the Christ-event whilst at the same time refusing to shackle God to any degree of human accomplishment outside of faith. He is keen to ward off any interpretation that stinks of 'an immanent process of development', which he accomplishes through suggesting a Pauline dialectic that couples both the continuous breaking of earthly continuity expressed in chapter 9, and the perpetual faithfulness of God in chapter 11.[214] But whereas Käsemann sees that Paul's view of salvation history 'cannot be resolved existentially or calculated rationally', I have looked to God's word of promise as a means to clarify Paul's thinking. The apostle presents a coherent argument for divine franchise. God speaks his word of promise to an insignificant, ungodly pagan. Subsequent human history follows a correspondent trajectory towards the fulfilment of that promise marked by kindness and severity, subjugation and freedom, love and judgment, death and life, despair and hope. The operative paradigm for Paul thus follows a paradox: if the giving of the promise was the selection of one man and thus the *non*-election of the mass of humanity, the fulfilment of the promise is the 'mercying' of the κόσμος made possible by the rejection of one man, Jesus. Although inestimable in terms of mercy, God's actions are yet traceable in his word.

This present chapter complements the previous one on Romans 4 by offering a holistic view of Paul's understanding of the relationship between God's word and human faith, and the divine agency of mercy that bridges the two. Whilst a full treatment of Romans is desired to complete the picture, these two sections within the letter, including Romans 3.27–5.11 and Romans 9–11, are sufficient at this point to provide substantial material for a comparison with the related theological concerns of Pseudo-Philo as expressed in our earlier chapters. The conclusion to this thesis will now engage both texts, Romans and LAB, in a comparative exercise that seeks to maximise both the similarities and differences between them, in order to present a sharper image of the theological thinking concerning God's word and human faith that informed each author's composition.

[213] This position is common; note Ziesler, *Romans*, 287.
[214] Käsemann, *Romans*, 308.

6. Conclusions

6.1 Introduction

The purpose of the foregoing chapters was to analyse divine speech and human faith in both LAB and Romans for the purpose of comparison. Both authors are preoccupied with the relationship between God and his people. Pseudo-Philo's pressing concern in LAB is the fidelity of Israel to the God who is completely faithful to his word. Paul's driving motivation in Romans is the unification of disparate groups within the people of God around the inclusive gospel of hope in which God reveals himself faithful to his word. God's faithfulness and the human response to divine revelation are both so central to these texts, and yet, as we have seen, both Jewish authors handle their shared scriptures differently. Whilst the narratives of Israel's early history are appealed to as authoritative and instructive, the characters from those stories who stand as representatives for the people to follow (or not) are employed in divergent ways. God's behaviour, thoughts, and/or speech are also amended by both authors by varying degrees from the scriptural account in order to fit the present situation of readers in ancient Palestine and Rome. In what follows, I bring together the results of our analysis of LAB and Romans into a comparative compositional frame (CCF), as discussed in the introduction, to articulate their similarities and differences, and what these might contribute to our understanding of both texts. I will first summarise my analysis of both texts, before placing the two side-by-side.

6.2 Summary of Pseudo-Philo

My study of Pseudo-Philo was conducted in two parts. The opening chapter examined the role of God's word in the narrative. I suggested two propositions through which to comprehend the theological import of divine speech for the author. The first proposition is that God's word is the source of Israel's hope. The second, God's word is the instrument of Israel's judgment. These two propositions were made specifically to weld together the competing suggestions by Murphy and Jacobson regarding the dominant theme of LAB. Murphy, and others, stress the covenant as central. Jacobson points to divine sovereignty. My coupling exercise argued that God himself begins and sustains Israel's existence through his words, and that the things he says determine the things he does on their behalf. I supported this argument through three case studies, two on the side of hope, including the golden calf at Sinai (LAB 12) and Joshua's reiteration of God's covenant speech (LAB 23), and one on the

side of judgment, a sustained narrative from Micah to the Tribes' civil war (LAB 44-47). Concerning God's word as a source of hope, I concluded that God's engagement with his people is determined through words of revelation in which he is manifested as both sovereign and faithful, committed to his chosen people unswervingly and forever. Concerning God's word as a source of judgment, I concluded that the rebellious history of Israel was not merely foreknown by God, but that the idolatrous behaviour of his people actually shows God to be truthful, faithful to all he says and thus trustworthy beyond doubt. Ultimately, the history of Israel is a history of divine speech, a history predicated upon what God says to, for, and about his people. The existence of Israel is initiated and sustained by God's words, including his actions long after the initial encounter with Abraham. God's character is explained by Pseudo-Philo to his first-century audience through an exhibition of divine speech in order to highlight the hope and judgment that are theirs in God's word.

The second chapter engaged with two interpretive keystones that have dominated the study of LAB for many years. The first is Murphy's 'plan-form', which sees a conflict between divine plans and human plans operative throughout the narrative. I suggested reading LAB through a proposed alternative framework that forefronts the role of human faith, a 'faith paradigm'. The purpose of this new framework is to better account for Pseudo-Philo's emphasis on the expected human response to divine revelation, that is, trust in God against all odds. But I also countered what I perceived to be a major shortcoming of the plan-form: God and the human characters in LAB are rarely presented as directly opposing one another; the conflict is on the human level. The second interpretive keystone I engaged is Nickelsburg's emphasis on leaders in LAB. The difficulty here is that some of LAB's most prominent characters were not divinely sanctioned (or 'good') leaders at all. The author finds some of his best examples of faith from every stratum of the social hierarchy. The faith paradigm is able to account for the shortcomings of both interpretive suppositions, including the plan-form and exemplary leaders, by offering a heuristic framework centred on human trust that is capable of exposing the theological underpinnings of Pseudo-Philo. At the end of an examination of Abraham, Amram, and Hannah, as presented in LAB, I concluded that faith for the author entails a radical grasping onto God as he has revealed himself in his words. The truly faithful respond in obedience to God's word and defer to him against all odds in any and every crisis. True faith is a radical departure from reasonable solutions to trusting the God who reveals himself in his speech. Personal and corporate deliverance through direct intervention by God are the fruits of legitimate faith.

6.3 Summary of Romans

In Romans 4, I suggested that a 'pattern of promise' undergirds Paul's presentation of Abraham, in light of the Christ-event. The pattern is modelled on the event and contents of the promise to Abraham, in which an ungodly person is encountered by the word of God and transformed thereby into a righteous person. Faith is the necessary response to the word of God. I argued that Christ is the validation and galvanisation of the promise, who opens that initiating word of God to a broader scope and longer reach across the spectrum of humanity. I began with an initial review of three main interpretive models, including the traditional (Abraham as exemplar of faith), the New Perspective (Abraham as origin of the story), and Paul Within Judaism (Abraham as pneuma-biological father of gentiles). This was followed by a short history of interpretation of Paul's 'boasting' language since Bultmann (with a quick look back to Luther). My exegesis of Romans 3.27–5.11 engaged Paul's text in three parts, including 3.27–4.12, in which I argued that boasting is put to death in the apostle's rhetoric; 4.13-25, an interlude in which Christ is presented as the confirmation of the promise and in which the death-to-life motif is explicit; and 5.1-11, in which boasting is reborn for the believer through the act of God's redemption in love through Christ and the Spirit. I concluded this first chapter on Romans with a brief critique of the three main interpretive options. I suggested that Abraham's role is to point, not to his own faith or fatherhood, but to the God who carries believers through present sufferings to final glory, just as he has promised. God's personal confirmation and galvanisation of his promise in Christ, and the accompanying devaluation of the Law, has resuscitated boasting as eschatological confidence in the certainty of divine promise. Trust in God is rooted in his word revealed in Christ.

In Romans 9–11, Paul answers the question of God's faithfulness to his word through a review of Israel's history, starting with Abraham and ending in the eschaton. Romans 9–11 was presented as a logically coherent and theologically profound demonstration of God's mercy as congruous with the ungodly state of humanity. This case was made in two parts. First, I suggested that Romans 9.6-13 constitutes the bedrock of a framework in which God's freedom to be merciful is bound by his promise to Abraham. The apostle demonstrates through the patriarchs in 9.6-9 that God has constrained himself via promise to a course of action marked by the calling of the ungodly. In contrast to anti-biological views of the passage, where 'true' Israel is spiritual, not biological, I proposed that Paul's thinking operates according a 'bioclectic' logic in which children of promise are conceived through both human procreation and divine agency, which explains the continuing relevance of the biological descendants of Abraham, i.e., 'Israel', the Jewish people. In 9.10-13, I argued for

exclusivity as inherent in the logic of grace. Divine mercy is not completely free, but is constrained by God's own words of promise, both to bless and to reject. We then moved to Romans 11.17-32, where I argued that God's mercy is contingent upon the ungodliness of humanity. Whilst this condition is brought about by God himself, he is also the agent of resurrection according to his word. This claim was supported through a discussion of the olive tree metaphor (11.17-24) and Paul's closing statements concerning Israel, and the gentiles, to close his argument (11.25-32). We considered the passage in terms of the meaning of 'all Israel', the irrevocability of God's love for Israel, and the theological paradox of divine subjugation. The framework established by both the contents and event of promise, that God gives mercy to the ungodly, is apparent: God's mercy to ethnic Israel is contingent upon their disobedience, just as his obligation to be merciful to the gentiles is due to their ungodliness. In a strange paradox, the divine impetus to mercy sets the course of history in the direction of disobedience through the agency of divine subjugation (11.32). All have sinned, therefore all might participate in this mercy. I suggested using Möbius to conceptualise Jews and gentiles on a singular plane of mercy but with different starting and ending points. I concluded that, for Paul, ethnic Israel's irrevocable relationship to God is the outflow of a pattern of promise in which only the ungodly are fit for mercy.

6.4 Comparison of LAB and Romans

The concluding comparison of LAB and Romans will be conducted under the two main headings of divine speech and human faith. The discussion will centre on the similarities and differences between both texts on these integral and interdependent themes. This comparison is centred at the point of divine-human intercourse, where God's revelation of himself through his word is met by a human response of trust in that word, and thus in God. Following the proposed method in the introduction, the CCF requires first a 'thick' description of the two exempla we have selected for our analysis in order to provide the data to conduct a robust comparison. That step has been accomplished in the preceding four chapters in our survey of LAB and Romans. Now we turn to the critical third step, the comparison proper. According to the metaphor of framing a composition, this is the point in the comparison when the texts are brought together side-by-side into our frame and discussed in terms of both similarity and difference. Although comments have been made in the above chapters concerning points where both texts seem especially aligned, the following comparative conclusions press the texts further in order to glean the significant points of divergence in their understanding of faith and God's word.

6.4.1 Divine Speech

Despite the difference in genre, both LAB and Romans are firmly rooted in the reality and potential of God's word. Yet there are four areas in which both similarity and difference are apparent. I have structured this part of the comparison in terms of revelation, creation, promise, and mercy.

First, God's speech reveals his person and character. In LAB, every narrative is borne along by the words of God, whether in his dialogues with specific characters, or, more commonly, as divine monologues spoken directly to the ancient audience. Whilst the Law figures into key moments in Pseudo-Philo's narrative, it is not the primary focus. God's newly articulated speeches express the reality of God's word: it is Israel's hope and judgment. Paul shares Pseudo-Philo's emphasis on the word of God as the primary medium of divine revelation, but goes beyond Pseudo-Philo in incorporating Christ into that revelation. In Romans 4, in particular, the quasi-narrative of Abraham drives towards the reality of Christ and the consequences of the event that has validated the promise. The Law is stripped of its value in the new paradigm of righteousness revealed in Christ (3.20). The ancient and sacred ritual of circumcision is removed as a requisite for inclusion in the people of God (3.30). Paul resets the colour scheme of the Jewish picture of God according to the Christ-event, thus changing the picture of God. Whilst both authors draw on the same resource of Scripture, the weight of Pseudo-Philo's narrative rests on the composition of new words from God, for the purpose of explicating God's relationship to his people. Whilst much of this material is drawn from the prophets and the Psalter, Pseudo-Philo's liberality with the original accounts indicates a keen desire to articulate a particular understanding of God for the people of his day that forefronts God as a present participant in his people's history. Paul is also intent to convey a very specific message about God to his ancient Roman audience, and he is clearly willing to capitalise on gaps in the biblical narrative (Rom 4), or to make projections about God's future activities (Rom 11). But in contrast to the elaborated and novel divine speeches of Pseudo-Philo, Paul reveals God through unexpressed human thought: Abraham's steady trust in God in the face of the impossibility of birth through Sarah is rooted in his belief in the one who creates from nothing (4.17) as he has promised (4.20). So whilst divine speech is in both texts a locus of theological richness concerning the character and nature of God, the authors take alternate approaches to how this is presented. Whilst Pseudo-Philo composes new speeches for God, Paul rests his argument in the supposition of divine verbal fidelity. Whereas LAB includes extended additions to the scriptural account to argue that God has not

lied (as in the fable of the lion; LAB 47), Romans is built on the assumption that God's word has not failed and argues the case for God (and Israel) from that theological anchor (Rom 1.2; 9.6).

Secondly, both LAB and Romans view God's word as creative, and thus the source of their hope. In LAB, Amram bases his plea before the people on a word spoken prior to their creation (9.4). LAB includes accounts of creation via divine speech that are not recorded in Scripture: new creation is mentioned in 3.6; Isaiah's language of 'stretching out the heavens' (Isa 44.24) is mirrored in 12.8; the Red Sea crossing is analogous to God's separating the waters at the creation of the world in 15.8; Isaac was formed by God himself in Sarah's sterile womb in 23.8; and Israel was created in the resonance of God's voice echoing through the chaos in 60.2. Thus, Pseudo-Philo affirms the fidelity of God to his people through demonstrating the creative activity of divine speech throughout their history. Notably, this creative power is directed at all times to Israel over against the nations. Whilst there are hints of blessing to the nations in the text, nowhere is Pseudo-Philo explicit concerning the mutuality of benefits to 'all' due to the agency of God's word. Paul, however, views the movement of God's people through history on a different trajectory. Although Paul shares the idea with Pseudo-Philo that Israel was spoken of prior to their actual existence (LAB 9.4; Rom 8.28), Romans moves a step beyond LAB in suggesting that the possibility of Israel's deliverance (and of the entire cosmos) lies within the conceptual sphere of resurrection. Furthermore, whilst sharing a view of God's word in which divine speech initiates the history of God's purposeful engagement with his people (i.e., the promise to Abraham), Paul stresses the inclusion of those people typically considered outside the scope of Israel as fellow members of God's redeemed family. In Romans, Israel and the nations leapfrog one another through overlapping periods of revelation and election, but in the end both groups are included within the scope of God's redemption made possible in the Christ event, as promised to Abraham (11.32). In a sharp contrast, the nations in LAB provide a backdrop of idolatry against which Israel's leaders stand in sharp relief, and through which the periodic falling away of disobedient Israelites is comprehended. The difference for Paul is that God's agency of 'calling' is not restricted to Israel, but is a blessing enjoyed by Jew and gentile alike (9.24). Thus the creative agency of God's speech, though a recurrent theme in both texts, differs sharply in terms of its application across the spectrum of humanity. The point of departure for Paul is the Christ-event, which has meant the opening of the promise to 'all' (4.16). Whilst the inclusion of the nations within the scope of divine creative speech would be strange for Pseudo-Philo, perhaps even inimical to his view of God as faithful to his word,

the opposite is true for Paul: the acceptance of the gentiles is intrinsic to the divine plan for all of humanity, and thus marks the point at which God is truly faithful to his word.

Thirdly, although both texts stress the importance of the Abrahamic promise, the distinction concerning the nations is a critical point of departure between LAB and Romans. Whilst Paul is explicit in Romans concerning the inclusion of gentiles within the scope of God's promise of 'blessing', Pseudo-Philo omits references to the 'nations' in his retelling of the promise-event in the various instances where the contents of the promise are reiterated (i.e., 18.5; 23.4-7). LAB records God's speech to Balaam: 'I spoke to Abraham in a vision, saying, 'Your seed will be like the stars of the heaven' (18.5); the emphasis is Israel's election. Abraham is predicted earlier in the narrative to be the future 'father of nations' (4.11). These nations are not, however, included in any 'blessing' as in Genesis 12 and 15. On the contrary, God's chosen people will be glorified 'above all nations' (11.1). There is a vast chasm in LAB separating Israel from the nations, who are characterised by idolatry. In fact, the reason why God's people suffer rebuke, oppression, and rejection is because they succumb to participating in idolatrous practices that effectively plant them within the camp of the ungodly. For Paul's part, his logic in Romans inhabits another plane of existence in which Israel and the nations coexist as 'ungodly', soteriologically dependant upon the singular gift of mercy in Christ (3.23). The paradox of promise in Romans requires that the recipients of mercy first be the most undeserving of such a gift. God makes all of humanity fit for his grace through sin and Law, and since both Jew and gentile have sinned, both might receive a gift that is incongruous with their moral or ontological status (11.32). However, even whilst he levels humanity on the same axes of sin and salvation, Paul does not erase the ethnic distinction between Jews and gentiles, since this distinction is written into the promise itself.

Finally, for both authors, divine mercy flows to human recipients from divine speech. God acts to save his people as he has promised, and he exercises priority in every instance. Yet there is a difference in the measure by which both authors portray God's initiative. For Pseudo-Philo, the distribution of God's mercy can be legitimately doubted the further Israel descends into the cesspool of idolatry. Mercy in LAB is the enactment of divine salvation given to the people due to individual fidelity. Singular actors, such as Abraham and Kenaz, exemplify the ideal human posture in the face of apparent divine absence and they are rewarded with various manifestations of deliverance. This is apparent the further one moves through the narrative, in particular during the period of the Judges, where the absence of good leaders drives the entire nation into judgment. Certain individuals and groups warrant destruction (without a hint of redemption) because of their idolatry. God himself even goes to the extreme of lying to his people in order to be faithful to his own words (47.8). This

enigma, the God who lies to be true, Paul will not entertain. But just as controversial is Paul's view that ungodliness is the prerequisite for mercy. His logic of reversal cannot make sense outside of a framework in which God acts proactively to create the righteous out of their opposite, to offer his enemies reconciliation through the death of his own Son (5.10). Mercy is a creative force that actively seeks out those who deserve the opposite (11.30-31). The paradox of promise that structures Paul's worldview flips the logic of grace and turns the impetus of mercy upside down. He also extends the reach of mercy beyond the borders of Israel. In LAB, humanity is divided into three groups: the nations, faithful Israelites, or idolatrous Israelites. Only one group can confidently expect to receive mercy and to experience eschatological hope. In Romans, all humanity trudges onwards in the footsteps of God, for 'all have sinned' that God 'might be merciful to all' (11.32). There is no evading the one who both entraps and frees. Ultimately, the promise stands over against sinners and the nations in LAB, whilst standing as a beacon of hope for those who maintain unswerving, radical trust in God. In Romans, God's word anchors hope through the phenomenon of resurrection as believed in by Abraham and as exemplified in the Christ-event. Paul braids divine promise together with the human response of faith as two integral parts of the divine-human intercourse. The promise-event remains for Paul a historical and effective placeholder for his thinking about the Jewish people, the gentiles, Scripture, and God, as though the force generated when the stake of promise was plunged into the ground resonated outwards in every direction towards an unseen horizon that Paul can only describe as a 'mystery'. Pseudo-Philo, on the other hand, directs attention to events outside of the scriptural record, the time of 'chaos' and pre-existence, in order to stress the here-and-now of his readers' life of faith. Paul may share this pre-creation view, but he does not state it explicitly in terms of promise. He speaks of God's foreknowledge in Romans 8.29 and 11.2, and employs a suggestive 'beforehand' in 9.23. But the impetus for God's recreative agency of mercy remains the utterance and content of the promise, now confirmed in Christ for its future consummation on behalf of Jew and gentile alike.

6.4.2 Human Faith

Both LAB and Romans are clearly concerned to exhibit, and thus to encourage, a response of trust in God's revelation of himself in his word. The following comparison of both texts on the theme of faith is structured in terms of object, measure, and result. First, faith in both LAB and Romans is a response to divine speech. The God of Scripture, indeed, the God of the promise, is the exclusive object of faith in both texts. LAB is explicit concerning the

singularity of faith: idolatry is the great sin that removes even members of Israel from the reach of divine mercy (25.7). God has spoken, and in response to these divine revelations, human agents are expected to respond with a posture of radical trust in God. In Romans, Paul describes Abraham's trust in God in terms of recreation and resurrection (4.17) and it is intrinsically connected to the promise of God (4.20). But these passages are both preceded by Paul's thesis statement of 3.21-26, in which faith is directed to Jesus Christ (3.22, 26), and followed by statements concerning trust in the one who raised Christ from the dead (4.25). Faith in Romans is directed to Christ, both as the revelation of God's righteousness and the one who validates the promise. Paul's entire argument concerning boasting in Romans 3.27–5.11 hinges on the new reality brought about by the Christ-event. Resurrection to new life as a child of God, and no longer his enemy, is possible only through the atoning work of Jesus. The Christ-event shifts the paradigm for Paul without abolishing its essential scriptural foundations, most importantly, its origin in the promise-event (4.16). Pseudo-Philo, alternatively, does not rest his hermeneutical fulcrum on the advent of a Messiah-figure presaged in the same scriptures used by Paul. Rather, he looks to Israel's foundational biblical history to show faith at the fringes as exhibited in biblical exemplars of radical trust in God.

Secondly, the measure of faith in God expected from human actors in both texts is described in radical terms. Romans and LAB both exhibit trust in God as an extreme stance of fidelity against impossibility. Faith in both texts is something that lies outside the normal bounds of reason, yet despite this similarity they differ considerably in defining what makes faith radical. True faith in LAB is against all human odds; true faith in Romans is in the reality of resurrection. For Pseudo-Philo, if faith is to meet the standards of God's expressions of fidelity, it can be nothing less than an absurd level of trust in the face of impossible circumstances. God's people must look back to his promises as they look forward in hope of its fulfilment when confronted by enemies both external and internal. This was the emphasis of Chapter 3 above on faith in LAB: righteous individuals face demise at the hands of both foreign oppressors and their own people, with nothing left but to trust in God. In each case, Pseudo-Philo dramatically heightened the stakes of each situation in order to place his characters in situations impossible to resolve through human means. These characters' only hope was the direct intervention of God himself, whether that meant the destruction of Abraham's enemies at the fiery furnace or the birth of a child through Hannah's sterile womb. Hope is thus an attendant component of the human response to God's word, because those who remain faithful to God can expect his deliverance. Idolatry, or a lack of faith, results in destruction. The three characters we looked at in LAB trusted God to rescue them from external human danger, and because of their fidelity against impossible odds, he saved both

those individuals and his people as a whole. But in Romans, the danger is God himself; all are unrighteous, thus enemies of God (5.10). So whilst faith for Paul is also a radical expression of trust in God, the oppressor is each individual's own sin and the God who stands against them (3.23), yet offers them peace (5.1). This logic of reversal, in which God makes what is out of what is not, and creates a new thing out of its opposite, is the bedrock of faith in Romans (4.17). Thus whilst both texts promote a concept of trust in God that borders on irrationality, they justify this radicality differently: Pseudo-Philo places righteous biblical characters in impossible situations that test their faith in God to the extreme; Paul locates all of humanity in the category of 'ungodly' whose faith is both prefaced by God's actions in Jesus Christ and directed to that same crucified, and resurrected, Christ.

Finally, both texts speak of the results of faith in terms of deliverance, which has implications for both authors' conceptualisation of the divine-human relationship. In LAB, the rewards for a stance of determined and unwavering trust in the God of Israel include rescue from enemies and blessing from God. Pseudo-Philo exhibits to his Jewish readers a God who delivers those who are radically faithful to him despite overwhelming odds; they must hold fast to him as they await his anticipated deliverance. God's frequent speeches are a reminder of his presence in Israel's history, and the stories of their heroes of the past are meant to inspire Pseudo-Philo's readers to present and future action. If Hannah could remain faithful to God despite a permanently sterile womb and be rewarded with a child of prominence, then the audience of LAB can also keep faith with the same God who does as he says, and be rewarded for their expressions of radical trust in return. LAB is consistent in this regard in its portrayal of the potential relationship between individual Israelites and God. If they stay faithful, God will deliver both them and the entire people; the consequences of radical faith are far-reaching. If they stray into idolatry, breaking faith with God by trusting in idols, they and the people are doomed. There is thus an immense weight of pressure on the individual Jewish 'believer' (in LAB's sense) to trust God to the extreme, even as an individual's Jewish peers are falling away to the surrounding culture. For Pseudo-Philo, deliverance depends on faith. In Romans, however, the only hope of rescue for any individual, and for Israel herself, is in divinely initiated transformation into something new. Trust in Romans is the belief that God can create something from nothing, that he can make a new thing out of its opposite. The gospel that Paul articulates involves a transformation which is not just spiritual but ontological. The ungodly are made into the righteous; enemies are made into children; sinners are made into saints. Granted, Pseudo-Philo shares a concept of transformation, in which righteous, faithful individuals are changed by the spirit of God. But the transformation is usually temporary, as in the case of Kenaz when he battles the

Amorites (27.8-12), or, if it is permanent, limited to the physical realm, such as the activation of Hannah's previously sterile womb. Transformation on an individual scale is thus limited to the morphing of heroes into superhuman exemplars of faith. The paradigms in either text are thus antithetical. In Romans, transformation precedes faith; God turns his enemies into his children, and thereafter they exhibit trust in God. The dead are raised to new life in Christ. In Romans, deliverance (from sin) precedes faith; a secondary deliverance (to glory) awaits future realisation. In LAB, faith precedes transformation. Every instance of temporary ontological change is a result of one's radical stance of faith in God. Furthermore, the effect of faith in terms of deliverance and relationship in Romans extends beyond the borders of Israel. Paul's quasi-narratives exhibit human dependence on the mercy of God, not only to save Israel from their sins, but to recreate them *and the gentiles* into something new. God creates his own children from his enemies (8.14-17). LAB nowhere entertains the idea of God's enemies changing their tenor and coming to trust the God of Israel and thus to be called 'his people'. Even Israelites who turn away from God lose their grip on hope. In Romans, alternatively, both Jews and gentiles can 'boast' in hope and in God (5.2-5). For both contingents of humanity, a door is opened to confidence in present and future deliverance in the blessing of God according to his promise to Abraham and his enactment of forgiveness in Christ.

6.5 The Value of CCF

The proposed metaphor of framing a composition presents a workable approach for future comparisons in the study of Paul and his peers. The steps to a fruitful comparison as laid out by Smith provide a helpful guide in the setup of comparative works, and the CCF encourages the interpreter to recognise their agency in the comparative endeavour, as opposed to metaphors of dialogue. This is not to say that the dialogue approach is deficient, or that it cannot yield benefit to the interpreter conducting comparisons. But what the CCF does offer to interpreters is a more accurate way of conceiving their role in the comparative exercise. This proposed method is inherently honest about the fact that any comparison depends upon our choice of texts and our efforts at interpretation. What we have done in the previous chapters is treated each text on its own terms, building a thick description of each according to the categories we determined were important to both text. To protect the individual picture of Romans and LAB, we intentionally refrained from making many comparative observations of the texts throughout the analysis. Here in the conclusion, we finally were able to put the texts together and comment on their similarities and differences in a concise and structured

manner, enabled by the groundwork laid in the chapters analysing each text according to human faith and divine speech.

The CCF as employed in the present thesis has offered a number of methodological benefits. First, we were intentional in laying the groundwork for the comparison in terms of correspondences, both pragmatic and conceptual. This critical step led directly to robust descriptions of faith and God's word in LAB and Romans, made possible through exegesis of key passages in both texts. The final steps of comparing both texts and redescribing them were made possible within the comparative frame we had constructed through the previous steps of identifying correspondences and describing both texts as thoroughly as possible. The CCF enabled us to conduct a comparison that capitalised on the differences between both texts at the very points where they are the most alike. Of course, interpreters using the 'dialogue' approach could structure their comparisons along similar lines, parsing each text individually first before coming to the comparison proper. But what is achieved through the comparative compositional frame, that the dialogue approach is unable to accomplish, is a proper understanding of the role of interpreter and texts that maintains the creativity inherent in any comparative endeavour without the danger of speculation found in approaches marked by unachievable relationships (of friendship, for example) between ancient religious documents. Paul and Pseudo-Philo, as far as we know, never spoke to one another. But what they wrote to their audiences can be compared along lines of similarity and difference as tangible ideas placed within the same comparative compositional frame.

6.6 Final Thoughts

Ultimately, both Pseudo-Philo and Paul believe that God must be true to his word, just as they know that God's people must trust that word. But they differ both in their intent for the texts and in their message. Regarding intent, the future dimension of the readers' present hope in God compels them to radical faith in his capacity to bring about the future fulfilment of his word of promise. Paul's goal is to fuse two theologically and ethnically disparate groups of people together in unity around their shared reality of rebirth through the Spirit of God according to the promised blessing to Abraham. Whilst the debates will continue regarding the historical background of Romans and the composition of the audience, Paul is very clear that he wishes Jewish and gentile believers alike to 'glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ with one voice' (15.6). Pseudo-Philo seeks to embolden the faith of his beleaguered people by pointing to examples of radical trust in the God who keeps his word. Although we have no access to the specifics of Pseudo-Philo's audience, whether historical

context or the composition of his audience, the consistent urgency of the author regarding radical faith in the face of overwhelming adversity points to a time of severe insecurity in the history of the Jewish people. Regarding the message, the possibility of divine-human relationship lies at the heart of both texts. But the way that relationship is construed, explained, and justified is split along an impassable crevasse. For Pseudo-Philo, the *possibility* of relationship requires a choice between trusting God against all odds, or capitulating to the surrounding culture of idolatry and doubt concerning the faithfulness of God's word. For Paul, the *impossibility* of relationship between ungodly individuals and the God of promise requires a transformation from death to life, a transaction established in God's word to Abraham and realised in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

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