

# Offering Isaac Again and Again: Pseudo-Philo's Use of the Aqedah as Intertext

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PSEUDO-PHILO INVOKES the so-called Aqedah of Genesis 22 three times: in God's response to Balaam (*L.A.B.* 18.5), in the hymn of Deborah (*L.A.B.* 32.2-4) and in the speech of Jephthah's daughter (*L.A.B.* 40.2).<sup>1</sup> This accords with Pseudo-Philo's pattern of omitting stories from their proper chronological location and intruding them at a later point in his narrative. Howard Jacobson contends that this technique enables Pseudo-Philo to avoid "the tedium of a straightforward consecutive chronological narrative" and to affirm that "the entire history of the Jewish people is one seamless whole, all an integrated and interwoven fabric spun by God and as God's plan."<sup>2</sup> These remarks are surely correct in what they affirm about Pseudo-Philo's theology and compositional technique, but such generalizations discourage readers from carefully examining individual episodes in search of intertextual dynamics and hermeneutical strategies, and from considering whether Pseudo-Philo's narrative links function also as biblical exegesis.

<sup>1</sup> In this study, the term "Aqedah" will serve double duty as shorthand for the biblical episode of the offering of Isaac (Genesis 22), and as a reference to interpretations of that episode in the postbiblical period. Context will clarify which sense is intended. If no contrary notice is given, Latin quotations of the *Liber antiquitatum biblicarum* are taken from the critical edition of Daniel J. Harrington, *Pseudo-Philon, Les Antiquités bibliques I* (SC 229, Paris: Editions du Cerf, 1976). Unattributed English translations are from Daniel J. Harrington, "Pseudo-Philo," in *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha* (2 vols., ed. James H. Charlesworth, New York: Doubleday, 1985) 2: 297-377.

<sup>2</sup> Howard Jacobson, *A Commentary on Pseudo-Philo's Liber antiquitatum biblicarum with Latin Text and English Translation* (AGAJU 31, 2 vols., Leiden: Brill, 1996) 1: 240, 241.

Is Scripture deployed in the *Liber antiquitatum biblicarum* in accord with a hermeneutical strategy? Concerted attempts to address this sort of question have been isolated at best, as Steven Weitzman has observed:

It is only quite recently . . . that students of early postbiblical literature have begun . . . [to pose] many questions that deserve further consideration: How are biblical allusions, citations, and motifs used in compositions from the Second Temple period? Do these compositions exhibit "strategies" in their use of biblical elements? How do these strategies serve the larger literary aims of the compositions that have employed them? And how do we, as readers in the late twentieth century, recover these strategies?<sup>3</sup>

In the following study of Pseudo-Philo's threefold appropriation of Genesis 22 we shall attempt to identify the *intertextual dynamics* and *hermeneutical strategies* at work and to show that the author's rewriting of Genesis 22 principally serves *exegetical agenda*.<sup>4</sup> In the final section we shall also consider the extent to which Pseudo-Philo's narrative might shed light on contemporary debates about the Aqedah in the first century.

### I. Balaam, a Second Abraham? *Liber antiquitatum biblicarum* 18.1-14

In the biblical Balaam cycle of Numbers 22–24 we read how God turned on its head Balak's request that Israel be cursed.<sup>5</sup> The story celebrates both God's provision for Israel in a time of crisis and Israel's ongoing status as God's chosen people.<sup>6</sup> Pseudo-Philo's Balaam narrative (*Liber antiquitatum*

<sup>3</sup> Steven Weitzman, "Allusion, Artifice, and Exile in the Hymn of Tobit," *JBL* 115 (1996) 49. In several ways, his analysis of allusion in Tobit 13 parallels the approach and findings of this study.

<sup>4</sup> On intrabiblical and postbiblical Jewish hermeneutics, see especially Michael Fishbane, *Biblical Interpretation in Ancient Israel* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1985); Richard B. Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989); Daniel Boyarin, *Intertextuality and the Reading of Midrash* (Studies in Biblical Literature; Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990); James L. Kugel, *The Bible as It Was* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997). On intertextuality in the *Liber antiquitatum biblicarum*, see Bruce N. Fisk, *Do You Not Remember? Exegetical Appropriations of Biblical Narrative in Pseudo-Philo* [title still tentative] (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press [forthcoming]).

<sup>5</sup> For this theme of reversal in Numbers, see especially Num 22:12; 23:7-8, 11, 25; 24:10. There is ample evidence to confirm that it was remembered as a case of divine reversal. See Deut 23:5; Josh 24:9-10; Neh 13:2; Josephus *A.J.* 4.6.5-6 §§118, 126; Philo *Mos.* 1.280, 283, 285, 292; *Det.* 71; *Migr.* 113-15.

<sup>6</sup> Balak's own words in Num 22:6b, *אשר תברך מברך*, ironically foreshadow the outcome of the story, and his comical attempts to garner a curse serve only to increase the number and intensity of Balaam's oracles of blessing.

*biblicarum* 18) preserves these themes and several lines of the biblical text,<sup>7</sup> but it also contains noteworthy additions, including the divine response to Balaam's query (18.5-6; corresponding to Num 22:12; cf. v. 20) in which God invokes three patriarchal *blessings* (Gen 22:17; 18:17; 32:24-27) to explain why Balaam should not *curse* Israel.

Almost certainly this multifold appeal to the patriarchal narrative is rooted in the canonical Balaam cycle itself. The conclusion of Balaam's third oracle (Num 24:9b) reads like a quotation of Gen 12:3.<sup>8</sup> Similarly, Balak's appeal (Num 22:6b) and God's rebuke (Num 22:12) both draw from the same pool of patriarchal texts.<sup>9</sup> It appears that Pseudo-Philo's appropriation of Genesis mirrors the hermeneutics of Scripture itself. Explicit references to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in *Liber antiquitatum biblicarum* 18 thus arise naturally out of the cluster of allusions to the patriarchal blessing already "clinging to the story line" of Numbers 22-24.<sup>10</sup>

There is, in fact, ample evidence that other ancient tradents could, and did, slide easily between patriarchal blessing and the Balaam narrative. Philo's allegorical exposition of Gen 12:3 highlights Balaam as a test case.<sup>11</sup> Josephus, in his account of Balaam's first oracle, alludes to the patriarchal blessings (e.g., Gen 15:5; 22:17; 26:3-4).<sup>12</sup> The targumic rendering of Num 23:10

<sup>7</sup> Balaam's encounter with Balak has disproportionate weight in the narrative of the *Liber antiquitatum biblicarum*. It claims 41 percent (102 of 247 lines of the Latin text) of the material between the Sinai theophany (chaps. 11-13) and Moses' farewell address (chap. 19).

<sup>8</sup> Perhaps conflated with Gen 27 29.

<sup>9</sup> Geza Vermes (*Scripture and Tradition in Judaism: Haggadic Studies* [SPB 4, 2d ed., Leiden: Brill, 1973] 132) reads v. 12 as "an allusion to the blessing promised to Abraham and the Patriarchs." Note, however, a fundamental contrast in Genesis 12: God promises blessings/curses on Israel's allies/enemies, in Numbers 22: Balak posits a link between the blessings/curses of Balaam and of God. Other allusions to Genesis in Numbers 22-24 are also possible. See, for example, the echo of Gen 13:16, 28:14 at Num 23:10.

<sup>10</sup> Here we echo Michael Wadsworth, "Making and Interpreting Scripture," in *Ways of Reading the Bible* (ed. M. Wadsworth, Totowa, NJ: Barnes & Noble, 1981) 13, who wrote that the postbiblical interpreter "supplied the narrative links and connections in his exemplar, ciphers of which are strewn about the biblical narrative like so much living 'bricolage' and in such profusion as to suggest that what later tradition saw as midrash is, in fact, something very ancient indeed, clinging to the story line and undergirding it."

<sup>11</sup> The argument of *Migr.* 109-19 is that just as only those who *sincerely* praise the good man merit encomia, so also Balaam shows that lofty praise (ἐγκώμια μυσία) deriving from a mind lacking virtue (ἡ μισάρητος διάνοια) merits condemnation. Likewise, Philo's diction at *Mos.* 1:291 (cf. Num 24:9) may suggest that he caught the echo of Gen 12:3 οἱ μὲν εὐλογοῦντές σε εὐφημίας ἄξιοι, κατὰρας δ' οἱ καταρώμενοι.

<sup>12</sup> Josephus *A.J.* 4:64 §116. For other similarities between Pseudo-Philo's and Josephus' Balaam episodes, see Louis H. Feldman, *Studies in Hellenistic Judaism* (AGAJU 30, Leiden: Brill, 1996) 67-69, cf. Feldman's prolegomenon in Montague Rhodes James, *The Biblical Antiquities of Philo, Now First Translated from the Old Latin Version* (Translations of Early Documents, series 1: Palestinian Jewish Texts [prerabbinic], reprint, New York: Ktav, 1971) lviii-lxvi.

has this link between Numbers and Genesis as its point of departure,<sup>13</sup> and *Num. Rab.* 20.14, explaining the triple encounter of Balaam and the angel, recalls the three blessed patriarchs.<sup>14</sup> The evidence from these sources may suggest not only that Pseudo-Philo's quotation of blessings from Genesis fits within a Jewish exegetical tradition but also that elements in the biblical text itself encouraged such intertextual readings.<sup>15</sup>

It is one thing, however, to establish a link between Numbers 22–24 and Genesis 12–50 and quite another to explain Pseudo-Philo's appeal to specific texts in Genesis. The first of Pseudo-Philo's three patriarchal references in *L.A.B.* 18.5–6 is his marked citation of Gen 22:17 followed by a midrashic summary of the preceding biblical narrative.

And he said to him, "Is it not regarding this people that 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 arrangements of all the stars?"<sup>16</sup> And I demanded his son as a holocaust. And he brought him to be placed on the altar, but I gave him back to his father and, because he did not refuse, his offering was acceptable before me, and on account of his blood I chose them.<sup>17</sup>

Two bits of evidence help to identify the principal function of this patriarchal flashback. First, the explicit biblical citation is the promise of blessing in Gen 22:17. Second, the pericope concludes with a declaration of divine election. The message is clear: Balaam should neither curse the Israelites nor help defeat them, because they are Abraham's chosen seed, those whom God has promised to bless and prosper.

<sup>13</sup> *Tg Neof* Num 23 10, "Who can count the young men of the house of Jacob, of whom it has been said that they would be blessed like the dust of the earth? Or who can number one of the four arrangements of the camp of the children of Israel, concerning whom it has been said 'They shall be numerous like the stars of the heavens?'" (McNamara's translation in *Targum Neofiti 1 Numbers*, translated, with apparatus and notes, by Martin McNamara, *Targum Pseudo-Jonathan Numbers*, translated, with notes, by Ernest G. Clarke [Aramaic Bible 4, Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press/Michael Glazier, 1995] 131). Pointing in the same direction is *Tg Ps-J* Num 22 12, "Do not curse the people, for they are blessed by me from the days of their ancestors" (Clarke's translation, *ibid.*, 252–53). See also Louis Ginzberg, *The Legends of the Jews* (7 vols., Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1909–38) 3: 359.

<sup>14</sup> *Midrash Rabbah, Numbers 2* (ed. H. Freedman and M. Simon, London: Soncino, 1939) 800–801.

<sup>15</sup> Throughout this study we shall speak more modestly of an exegetical tradition rather than of an interpretive trajectory, since the latter is comprised of a series of more or less verifiable and related causes and effects which may even move toward an identifiable goal. On the pitfalls of talking about trajectory, see E. P. Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism: A Comparison of Patterns of Religion* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1977) 20–24.

<sup>16</sup> On Abraham's vision and cosmic journey, see below on *L.A.B.* 32 2–4.

<sup>17</sup> *L.A.B.* 18 5.

But why does Pseudo-Philo include a midrash on the Aqedah? Was our author simply indulging a storyteller's passion for a favorite tale? Was he heir to postbiblical traditions about Balaam? Were there lexical correspondences to be exploited? Did the stories of Balaam and Abraham already stand in an intrabiblical hermeneutical relationship? On a superficial level, perhaps, the biblical stories of Balaam and Abraham are similar: a threat to Israel's existence is countered by divine intervention. Moreover, both stories emphasize obedience: Abraham is blessed for *obeying* God (Gen 22:12, 16, 18), and Balaam *obediently* speaks only the messages which God gives him (Num 22:18, 38; 23:12, 26; 24:13). But it is doubtful that such loose parallels would be enough to generate Pseudo-Philo's pointed appeal to the Aqedah.<sup>18</sup> Philip Davies and Bruce Chilton suggest that Pseudo-Philo's appeal to the Aqedah is grounded in the half of Gen 22:17 *not* cited in the *Liber antiquitatum biblicarum*, "Your seed will possess the gate of his enemies." Since these words are echoed in Num 24:8, 17-19, Pseudo-Philo saw fit to return to their source.<sup>19</sup> But once again, it is difficult to imagine so brief a reference to Israel's future military conquests (Gen 22:17b) generating an entire midrash on the Aqedah.

More promising as an explanation for Pseudo-Philo's appeal to the episode involving Isaac is the cluster of intrabiblical correspondences between the Balaam and Isaac narratives, correspondences explored recently by Hedwige Rouillard.<sup>20</sup> She contends that Abraham's sacrifice of Isaac is the closest biblical parallel to the holocausts prescribed by Balaam (Num 22:40; 23:1-6, 14-17, 29-30).<sup>21</sup> She also contends that the shapers of the Balaam saga sought

<sup>18</sup> Arguably, a number of other biblical episodes might provide even closer parallels. The Joseph cycle, for example, with its poignant conclusion (Gen 50:20), would need only minor adjustments to serve as the clincher in God's (i.e., Pseudo-Philo's) argument (*L A B* 18:5-6) "Even though you intended to do harm to me, God intended it for good, in order to preserve a numerous people, as he is doing today." Cf. *L A B* 8:9-10.

<sup>19</sup> P. R. Davies and B. D. Chilton, "The Aqedah: A Revised Tradition History," *CBQ* 40 (1978) 528. Thus, each of the two halves of Gen 22:17 contains a theme important in the Balaam cycle: divine blessing (rather than curse), and Israel's military victory (rather than defeat). H. Rouillard, *La péripécie de Balaam (Nombres 22-24) La prose et les oracles* (EBib n s 4, Paris: Gabalda, 1985) 168, incorporates this correspondence into her argument for the literary dependence of Numbers 22-24 upon Genesis 22, describing the promise of seed (Gen 22:17a) as "le contenu exact" of the first oracle of Balaam, and the promise of military victory (Gen 22:17b) as the conclusion of the second oracle.

<sup>20</sup> Rouillard, *La péripécie de Balaam*, 160-76.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 166. Rouillard makes this claim on the basis of three analytical categories: "esprit," focal distance, and procedure. In terms of size, the closest biblical parallels are the prescribed and repeated national acts of sacrifice (e.g., Exodus 29, Numbers 28-29), in terms of details, the historical books provide the best points of comparison, with the closest parallels coming in the individual acts of, for example, Samuel, David, and Solomon.

Table 1 *Parallels between the Balaam Cycle and the Abraham Cycle*

Balaam and Abraham Separate from Others to Encounter God			
	Numbers (Balaam)		Genesis (Abraham)
22:8	"Spend the night here (פה), and I will bring word back to you (והשבתי אתכם) as the LORD may speak to me."	22:5	And Abraham said to his young men, "Stay here (שבו לכם פה) with the donkey, and I and the lad will go yonder, and we will worship and return to you (ונשובה אליכם)."
22:19	"and now please, you also stay here (שבו נא בזה) tonight, and I will find out what else the LORD will speak to me."		
23:3	"Stand beside your burnt offering, and I will go (ואלכה); perhaps the LORD will come to meet me, and whatever He shows me I will tell you." So he went (וילך) to a bare hill.	22:6b	So the two of them walked (וילכו) on together.
		22:9a	Then they came to the place of which God had told him
23:15	"Stand here (החיצב כה) beside your burnt offering, while I myself meet the LORD yonder."		
Morning Travel by Donkey with Two Companions			
	Numbers (Balaam)		Genesis (Abraham)
22:21	So Balaam arose in the morning (ויקם . . . בקר) and saddled his donkey (ויחבש את אתנו)	22:3a	So Abraham rose early in the morning (וישכם . . . בקר) and saddled his donkey (ויחבש את חמרו),
22:22c	Now he was riding on his donkey (על אתנו) and his two servants were with him (ושני נעריו עמו).		and took two of his young men with him (ויקח את שני נעריו).

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Table 1—*Continued*

God, or the Angel of the Lord, Speaks or Prevents Violence			
	Numbers (Balaam)		Genesis (Abraham)
22:12	And God said to Balaam, "Do not go with them; you shall not curse the people ...	22:1b	God tested Abraham, and said to him, "Abraham!" ...
22:22b	... and the angel of the LORD (מלאך יהוה) took his stand in the way as an adversary against him.	22:11-12	But the angel of the LORD (מלאך יהוה) called to him from heaven, and said ... "Do not stretch out
22:32a	And the angel of the Lord (מלאך יהוה) said to him, "Why have you struck your donkey these three times?"		your hand against the lad, and do nothing to him ..."
Constructing an Altar and Preparing a Sacrifice			
	Numbers (Balaam)		Genesis (Abraham)
23:1-2a	Then Balaam said to Balak, "Build seven altars for me here (בנה לי מזבחת שבעה מזבחת) and prepare seven bulls (פרים) and seven rams (אילים) for me here." And Balak did just as Balaam had spoken ...	22:9b	... and Abraham built the altar there (... ויבן שם), and arranged the wood, and bound his son Isaac and laid him on the altar on top of the wood.
23:14b	... and built seven altars (ויבן שבעה מזבחת)		
23:29-30a	"Build seven altars for me here and prepare seven bulls and seven rams for me here." And Balak did just as Balaam had said ...		

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Table 1—*Continued*

Offering a Holocaust			
	Numbers (Balaam)		Genesis (Abraham)
23:2b	and Balak and Balaam offered up (רִיעֵל) a bull (פֶּרֶ) and a ram (אֵיל) on each altar.	22:10	And Abraham stretched out his hand, and took the knife to slay his son.
23:14c	and offered (רִיעֵל) a bull and a ram (אֵיל) on each altar.	22:13b	and Abraham went and took the ram (הָאֵיל), and offered him up for a burnt offering (רִיעֵלָהּ לַעֲלֹה) in the place of his son.
23:30b	and offered up a bull and a ram (אֵיל) on each altar.		
The Holocaust Is Followed by Blessing			
	Numbers (Balaam)		Genesis (Abraham)
23:7-12	[Balaam's three oracles bless	22:16-18	[God blesses Abraham and his seed (22:17a) and promises military conquest (22:17b).]
23:18-26	Jacob's seed (23:10) and promise		
24:1-9	military conquest (23:24; 24:7-9; cf. 24:17-19).]		
The Return to Those Who Were Waiting			
	Numbers (Balaam)		Genesis (Abraham)
23:6a	So he returned to him (וַיָּשָׁב אֵלָיו)	22:19a	So Abraham returned to his young men (וַיָּשָׁב . . . וְעַבְדָּיו), and they arose and went together . . .
23:17a	And he came to him (וַיָּבֹא אֵלָיו)		

to imitate the Aqedah to show that in obedience Balaam is a second Abraham.<sup>22</sup> As such, Abraham himself, not his sacrifice, is the religious and literary model for Balaam. Table 1 highlights the kind of evidence that gives Rouillard's proposal a measure of plausibility.<sup>23</sup>

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> I have employed the *NASB*, inserting Hebrew only where the English might suggest lexical overlap. An additional "parallel" not included below turns on the use of homonyms of שָׁבַע. Rouillard (*La péripécie de Balaam*, 167-68) argues, implausibly, that the mysterious seven



Admittedly there are more differences than similarities between the two stories. Only a few of the lexical parallels are substantial, and the narrative sequences are different. There is no analogue for Balak, and the donkey is obviously not to be compared with Isaac! Accordingly, the evidence may not warrant our calling Balaam a "second Abraham." It may be, however, more than enough to establish an intertextual relationship between episodes,<sup>24</sup> or at least to find a biblical reason explaining why later tradents read Numbers 22–24 together with Genesis 22.

Rouillard is not aware that Pseudo-Philo long ago correlated the Balaam cycle and the Aqedah.<sup>25</sup> If Rouillard's case for intrabiblical links between Numbers 22–24 and Genesis 22 has merit, Pseudo-Philo, in his intertextual composition, may be indebted to the patterns and intratextual correspondences already at work within Scripture. Pseudo-Philo perceived biblical links between the two stories and their principal characters, and he composed his Balaam narrative to exploit them. This strategy may explain why Pseudo-Philo's characterization of Balaam is predominantly sympathetic, even positive, in striking contrast to virtually all other ancient portrayals.<sup>26</sup> Moreover, Pseudo-Philo may have seen Balaam as a figure like Abraham, offering sacrifices to propitiate God and incur favors.<sup>27</sup> If so, the curious remarks of Balak's spokesperson make better sense:

(שבעה) altars and animal pairs of the Balaam episode (Num 23 1, 4, 14, 29) recall God's oath (נשבעתי, niph'al of שבע) to Abraham (Gen 22 16, cf 21 29–32)

<sup>24</sup> On the complex problem whether the final author-redactor(s) of Numbers 22–24 consciously sought to evoke the Aqedah, see Rouillard, *La péripécie de Balaam*, 169–71

<sup>25</sup> Rouillard is concerned with the structure of the Balaam cycle itself and makes few forays into tradition-critical analysis. Perhaps she would argue that the evidence of *Liber antiquitatum biblicarum* 18 strengthens her case for biblical intertextuality in Numbers 22–24.

<sup>26</sup> See Charles Perrot and Pierre-Maurice Bogaert, *Pseudo-Philon, Les Antiquités bibliques* 2 (SC 230, Paris: Editions du Cerf, 1976) 125. Geza Vermes (*Post-Biblical Jewish Studies* [SJLA 8, Leiden: Brill, 1975] 73) describes the Pseudo-Philonian Balaam as a "tragic hero" who "commits no sin but makes two mistakes" (journeying with Balak's envoys, and offering sacrifices) and who finally commits "spiritual suicide." For negative characterizations of Balaam, see Philo *Mos* 1 263–99, *Deus* 181–83, *Cher* 32–37, *Det* 71, *Mut* 202–3, *Conf* 159, *Migr* 113–15, Josephus *A J* 4 6 2–6 §§102–30, 2 Pet 2 15–16, Jude 11, Rev 2 14, *Num Rab* 20 1–20. Most striking are the opposing assessments of Balaam's response to God's query (Num 22 9) in *Num Rab* 20 6 and *L A B* 18 4. In the midrash, which lumps Balaam with Cain and Hezekiah (as three vessels full of urine), we learn what Balaam should have said, a "proper" response remarkably close to what Pseudo-Philo's Balaam *does say*: "Why, Lord, do you try the human race? They cannot endure it, because you know well what is to happen in the world, even before you founded it." See further, Feldman, *Studies in Hellenistic Judaism*, 68; Vermes, *Scripture and Tradition*, 128–29; Michael S. Moore, *The Balaam Traditions: Their Character and Development* (SBLDS 113, Atlanta: Scholars, 1990) 116–22, and references in C. G. Montefiore and H. Loewe (eds.), *A Rabbinic Anthology* (New York: Schocken, 1974) 604–5.

<sup>27</sup> Note that in *L A B* 18 10 Balaam himself offers the sacrifices without the help of Balak, whereas in Num 23 2 Balaam and Balak offer the sacrifices together. (The LXX has Balak alone

Behold I know that when you offer holocausts to God (*cum offeras Deo holocaustomata*), God will be reconciled with men. And now ask even still more from your Lord and beg with as many holocausts (*holocaustis*) as he wishes. But if he should be propitiated regarding my evil deeds, you will have your reward and God will receive his offerings (*et Deus accipiet oblationes suas*).<sup>28</sup>

Readers may recall the similar remarks in *L.A.B.* 18.5, in which God demands Isaac as a holocaust (*in holocaustomata*), an offering (*oblatio*) acceptable (*acceptabilis*) before God.

If these connections between Abraham and Balaam in the *Liber antiquitatum biblicarum* are rather subtle and undeveloped, the same cannot be said for the parallel tradition represented centuries later by Rashi. Commenting on Num 22:23, Rashi reproaches Balaam for hoping to persuade God to let him curse Israel:

And he saddled his ass (ויחבש את אתרו). Hence (we derive) that hatred causes disregard of proper conduct, for he saddled it by himself (שחבש הוא בעצמו). The Holy One Blessed Be He said: Wicked one, Abraham their father has already preceded you (כבר קדמך), as it is stated (Gen 22:3): "And Abraham arose early in the morning and saddled his ass" (וישכם אברהם בקר ויחבש את חמרו).<sup>29</sup>

Also significant are Rashi's remarks at Num 22:34. When Rashi's Balaam charges God with habitually giving orders only to have them revoked by God's angel, he cites the Aqedah as evidence:

If (it) displease thee, I will get me back. In order to oppose the Omnipresent was this answer. (Balaam) said to him: He himself commanded me to go, and you, an angel, cancel his words. He is wont (to do) this; He says something and an angel changes it. He said to Abraham, "Take, now, thy son," etc. (Gen 22:2) and through an angel He cancelled His word. Likewise I, if it displeases you, I must get me back.<sup>30</sup>

These remarks (and others) show Rashi struggling to fill the gap between Num 22:20 (God's commanding Balaam to go) and Num 22:22 (God's becoming angry when Balaam departs). For Rashi, the solution was to portray Balaam as the pagan antithesis to father Abraham.

perform the sacrifice.) Thus, perhaps, the "postholocaust" blessings promised to Abraham (Gen 22:17) are faintly reflected in the "postholocaust" blessings which Balaam dispensed on Israel (*L.A.B.* 18.12).

<sup>28</sup> *L.A.B.* 18.7b.

<sup>29</sup> A. Ben Isaiah and B. Sharfman (eds.), *The Pentateuch and Rashi's Commentary: Numbers* (Brooklyn: S. S. & R., 1949) 235-36. According to Rashi (p. 233), Balaam's "hatred" for Israel was intense. The phrase "by himself," not found in the parallel Abraham episode, is the clue to Balaam's rash behavior: he should have allowed his servants to help.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 238.

Like Rashi, Pseudo-Philo retells the story of Balaam by appealing to Abraham, specifically to Abraham's offering of Isaac, as a canonical reference point, almost as though one paradoxical, enigmatic offering were all one needed to explain another.<sup>31</sup> But unlike Rashi, Pseudo-Philo salvages both the problematic text and the inscrutable Balaam simply by eliminating any hint of God's anger or the angelic rebuke. Sparse as the evidence is, it may suggest that Abraham and Balaam were juxtaposed in an interpretive tradition beginning in the biblical text of Numbers, continuing implicitly in Pseudo-Philo's narrative, and eventually finding expression as an established principle in the exegetical arsenal of rabbis like Solomon ben Isaac.

## II. Israel's Salvation and Isaac's Sacrifice: *Liber antiquitatum biblicarum* 32.1-4

The lengthy "hymn" of *L.A.B.* 32.1-17 is largely a catena of memorable episodes in Israel's history, invoked by Deborah to celebrate God's election and salvation of Israel, and the defeat of Israel's enemies.<sup>32</sup> By no means, however, are these episodes a random sampling; the hymn is composed so as to forge direct, meaningful links between Israel's past and her present. One such link is the recurring reference to cosmic disturbance. The biblical warrant for this theme is Judg 5:20, according to which "the stars fought from heaven, from their courses they fought against Sisera." This poetic retelling of the battle scene (Judg 4:12-16), reminiscent of Josh 10:12-14 (cf. *L.A.B.* 30.5; 32.10), figures prominently in Pseudo-Philo's nonpoetic version of the story:

- 31.1 Deborah . . . said . . . "Rise and . . . attack Sisera, because I see the stars moved from their course and ready for battle on your side."
- 31.2a Immediately the Lord disturbed the movement of his stars.
- 31.2b The stars went forth as had been commanded them and burned up their enemies.

<sup>31</sup> Again Rouillard (*La péripécie de Balaam*, 168-69) does not appear to be aware of Rashi's corroborative testimony. She notes only how Rashi (on Num 23:4) compares the seven altars or sacrifices of Balaam with the total number offered by Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob combined.

<sup>32</sup> Although 32.1 suggests that Barak and all the people sang along, the hymn concludes in the first person singular, "I will cease my hymn . . . I will sing a hymn to him" (32.17), and continues, "And when Deborah made an end to her words . . ." (32.18; cf. Judg 5:3, 7, 12). On the biblical attribution of the song to both Deborah and Barak (Judg 5:1), and on the way the song provides a theocentric framework for interpreting the narrative in Judges 4, see Steven Weitzman, *Song and Story in Biblical Narrative: The History of a Literary Convention in Ancient Israel* (Indiana Studies in Biblical Literature; Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997) 31-36.

Cosmic disturbance also forms the point of departure for Deborah's hymn: "Behold the Lord has shown us his glory from on high" (*Ecce de alto ostendit nobis Dominus gloriam suam*, 32.1). Accordingly, several episodes are quite clearly included in the hymn because of similar cosmic phenomena.<sup>33</sup> After completing a rehearsal of Israel's past, Deborah turns to present events, emphasizing how God "commanded the stars and said, 'Depart from your positions and burn up my enemies so that they may know my power.'" Obediently, "the stars came down and attacked their camp and guarded us without any strain" (32.11). Later, God promises that "there will not again arise such a day on which the stars will band together and attack the enemies of Israel as was commanded them" (32.14), and God instructs Deborah to proclaim how "the stars fought for them" (32.15). Her final refrain sounds this same note once more: "[God] has diverted the stars from their positions and attacked our enemies" (32.17).<sup>34</sup>

In a hymn by an author so preoccupied with the realm of cosmic activity, it is striking that more than one third of the hymn is devoted to a detailed retelling of the Aqedah episode of Genesis 22:

And all the angels were jealous of him, and the worshiping hosts envied him. And since they were jealous of him, God said to him, "Kill the fruit of your body for me, and offer for me as a sacrifice what has been given to you by me." And Abraham did not argue, but set out immediately. And as he was setting out, he said to his son, "Behold now, my son, I am offering you as a holocaust and am delivering you into the hands that gave you to me." But the son said to the father, "Hear me, father. If a lamb of the flock is accepted as sacrifice to the Lord with an odor of sweetness and if for the wicked deeds of men animals are appointed to be killed, but man is designed to inherit the world, how then do you now say to me, 'Come and inherit life without limit and time without measure'? Yet have

<sup>33</sup> At Sinai, "the heavenly hosts speeded the lightnings on their course . . . and the earth was shaken from its firmament" (32.7; cf. Exod 19:18-20); when Moses was dying, he was told that the sun and the moon and the stars were servants to him (32.9). When Israel was at war with the Amorites, Joshua addressed the sun and the moon: "You who have been made servants between the Most Powerful and his sons, behold, now the battle is still going on, and do you abandon your duties? Therefore, stand still today, and give light to his sons and darkness to his enemies" (32.10); cf. Josh 10:12.

<sup>34</sup> Each of the remaining stories in Deborah's hymn includes a divine voice or miraculous intervention. At Babel, God "sent forth his voice to confuse the languages of men" (32.1); God "took Abraham our father out of the fire . . . and freed him from the bricks destined for building the tower" (32.1; cf. 6.1-8.1); in response to angelic jealousy, "God said to [Abraham], 'kill the fruit of your body for me'" (32.2); when Abraham had obeyed, "the Most Powerful hastened and sent forth his voice from on high" to intervene (32.4); to Isaac, God "gave . . . two sons, both also from a womb that was closed up" (32.5); God "brought [Israel] out of [Egypt]" (32.7). These episodes, no less than the others, demonstrate God's frequent involvement on Israel's behalf.

I not been born into the world to be offered as a sacrifice to him who made me? Now my blessedness will be above that of all men, because there will be nothing like this; and about me future generations will be instructed, and through me the peoples will understand that the Lord has made the soul of a man worthy to be a sacrifice." And when he had offered the son upon the altar and has bound his feet so as to kill him, the Most Powerful hastened and sent forth his voice from on high saying, "You shall not slay your son, nor shall you destroy the fruit of your body. For now I have appeared so as to reveal you to those who do not know you and have shut the mouths of those who are always speaking evil against you. Now your memory will be before me always, and your name and his will remain from one generation to another."<sup>35</sup>

Three factors may shed light on Pseudo-Philo's compositional strategy.

1. Pseudo-Philo apparently sees a meaningful correspondence between God's deliverance of Israel from Sisera and of Isaac from Abraham's knife. He begins the hymn by recalling the much earlier episode at Babel: "The Lord has shown us his glory from on high (*de alto*), as he did in the height of the heavenly places when he sent forth his voice (*emittens vocem suam*) to confuse the languages of men" (32.1). Note that almost identical language—*misit de alto vocem suam*—is used to describe how God "sent forth his voice from on high" to prevent Abraham from killing Isaac (32.4). Texts like Deut 4:36 and Ps 18:14 may have influenced Pseudo-Philo's diction here,<sup>36</sup> but the principal source lies closer to hand, in the phrase וַיִּקְרָא . . . מִן הַשָּׁמַיִם in Gen 22:11, 15. Thus, Pseudo-Philo casts God's deliverance of Israel from Sisera as a historical reflex of two earlier and more renowned interventions: at Babel, and at Moriah.<sup>37</sup> The God of Genesis 11 and 22 is still intervening in Judges 4.

2. The inclusion of Genesis 22 in Deborah's hymn may owe something to the imagery in Gen 22:17, "I will make your offspring as numerous as the stars of heaven." We recall that already, in *L.A.B.* 18.5, Pseudo-Philo has drawn explicit attention to this verse, and to some sort of cosmic journey: God said "Is it not regarding this people that 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 arrangements of all the stars?" Jacobson plausibly explains Abraham's "vision" as a recasting of Gen 15:5

<sup>35</sup> *L.A.B.* 32.2-4. In the Latin text, 36 percent of the author's rehearsal of Israel's past concerns the Aqedah. In the next longest segment, 32.7-8, the author describes the heavenly and terrestrial upheaval attending the giving of the Law at Sinai.

<sup>36</sup> Noted by Jacobson, *Commentary*, 2. 869.

<sup>37</sup> For Pseudo-Philo, the story of Babel is part of the Abraham cycle (*Liber antiquitatum biblicarum* 6-7). God's direct involvement in the victory over the Canaanites is emphasized in Judg 4:15, 23; 5:11, 20.

(cf. מַחֲזֶה in Gen 15:1).<sup>38</sup> Davies and Chilton, however, opt to take *L.A.B.* 18.5 as midrash on Gen 22:14, 17.<sup>39</sup> Common to both Genesis 15 and 22, in any case, is God's promise that Abraham's descendants would rival the vast numbers of the heavenly hosts. How, tradents well might wonder, could Abraham fully have grasped these promises without some kind of divinely led intergalactic tour? Hence, the literature abounds with references to Abraham's heavenly journey.<sup>40</sup> If this tradition of a cosmic journey does lie beneath the surface of *Liber antiquitatum biblicarum* 32, there is certainly no suggestion that the stars participated actively in God's deliverance of Isaac from Abraham, as they did in God's deliverance of Israel from Sisera.<sup>41</sup> Still, the prominence of the imagery of stars in two separate episodes involving Abraham may have been enough to encourage tradents like Pseudo-Philo to include the Aqedah in his retelling of the time when "the stars fought from heaven" (Judg 5:20).

3. The Aqedah in *Liber antiquitatum biblicarum* 32 does more than simply illustrate the principle that God rescues his own. Pseudo-Philo emphasizes, at least as emphatically, that Isaac was an active and worthy participant in the drama along with God and Abraham. In Isaac's own words: "Have I not been born into the world to be offered as a sacrifice to him who made me?" (*L.A.B.* 32.3). Pseudo-Philo accords Isaac full, active, and consenting status in the drama.<sup>42</sup> Indeed, as God declares to Abraham, Isaac's submis-

<sup>38</sup> Jacobson, *Commentary*, 582. The journey "above the firmament" would thus be a midrashic expansion of the statement that God brought Abraham outside and said, "Look toward heaven" (Gen 15:5).

<sup>39</sup> Davies and Chilton, "The Aqedah," 527-28.

<sup>40</sup> See 2 *Bar.* 4:5 (elaborating on Gen 15:17-21); *Testament of Abraham* 10; *Apocalypse of Abraham* 12:10; 15:4-5; 19:3; 20:2-5; 21:1-5; 4 *Ezra* 3:13-15; *Gen. Rab.* 44.12; 53.4. Cf. also *L.A.B.* 4.11; 23.5-6.

<sup>41</sup> Were these heavenly hosts through whom Abraham journeyed perhaps associated with the angels who, according to tradition, challenged God to test Abraham's character by offering his son? The theme of the jealous angels is clearly important for Pseudo-Philo. According to *L.A.B.* 32.1, "All the angels were jealous of him, and the worshiping hosts envied him; and since they were jealous of him, God said to him, 'Kill.'" In *L.A.B.* 32.4 Pseudo-Philo has God say, after rescuing Isaac, "Now I have . . . shut the mouths of those who are always speaking evil against you," and in *L.A.B.* 32.13 he clearly associates the heavens with the angels: "Go, earth; go, heavens and lightnings; go, angels of the heavenly host." Variations on the theme of the jealous angels occur in *Jub.* 17:16; 18:12; *Gen. Rab.* 55.4; 56.4; *b. Sanh.* 89b (cf. Job 1:6-12). See Kugel, *Bible as It Was*, 171-72; Vermes, *Scripture and Tradition*, 200-201.

<sup>42</sup> The tradition of a willing, even eager, Isaac is early and widespread. Compare *L.A.B.* 32.2-4 (above) Josephus *A.J.* 1.13.4 §232; 4 *Macc* 13:12; 16:18-20 (cf. 7:12-14); *Tg. Neof.* Gen 22:10; *Tg. Ps.-J.* Gen 22:1, 10, etc. The voluntary, sinless martyrdom of Taxo and his seven sons in *As. Mos.* 9:1-7 may be modeled on the Aqedah; so Betsy Halpern-Amaru, *Rewriting the Bible: Land and Covenant in Post-biblical Jewish Literature* (Valley Forge, PA: Trinity International, 1994) 64-67. For the biblical bases of the tradition, see Kugel, *Bible as It Was*, 173-77. For tradition

sive cooperation is essential to the divine plan: "Now your memory will be before me always," says God, "and your name and his will remain from one generation to another" (*L.A.B.* 32.4). God's continued blessing and protection of Israel under Moses, Joshua, and even Deborah cannot be separated from the fact that God continues to remember the names, and the piety, of Abraham and Isaac. As Deborah explains in *L.A.B.* 32.12-13:

We will not cease singing praise, nor will our mouth be silent in telling his wonders, because he has remembered both his recent and ancient promises and shown his saving power to us . . . Go, earth, go, heavens and lightnings, go, angels of the heavenly host, go and tell the fathers in their chambers of souls and say, "The Most Powerful has not forgotten the least of the promises that he established with us, saying, 'Many wonders will I do for your sons'"

These points may explain *why* Pseudo-Philo included the reference to the Aqedah, but they do little to explain the content of Isaac's speech in *L.A.B.* 32.3.<sup>43</sup> Isaac begins by observing that "a lamb of the flock is accepted as sacrifice to the Lord with an odor of sweetness," and that "for the wicked deeds of men animals are appointed to be killed." These remarks clearly foreshadow the sacrificial system God will establish in Israel (see, e.g., Leviticus 4-6, 8-9, 16; Numbers 28), but they also offer an interpretation of Gen 22:7-8, 13, in which Isaac is implicitly compared to "the lamb for a burnt offering (לעלה)." Whether or not this comparison of Isaac with animal sacrifices is a claim of expiatory efficacy for Isaac's sacrifice is difficult to ascertain.<sup>44</sup>

histories, see Jon D. Levenson, *The Death and Resurrection of the Beloved Son: The Transformation of Child Sacrifice in Judaism and Christianity* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993) 187-99; L. H. Feldman, "Josephus as Biblical Interpreter: The 'Aqedah,'" *JQR* 75 (1985) 218-22, 226, 234-36, 242-44; R. Hayward, "The Present State of Research into the Targumic Account of the Sacrifice of Isaac," *JJS* 32 (1981) 135-37, 148-49; Davies and Chilton, "The Aqedah," 541; Vermes, *Scripture and Tradition*, 193, 197-206; R. J. Daly, "The Soteriological Significance of the Sacrifice of Isaac," *CBQ* 39 (1977) 45-75; R. Le Déaut, "La présentation targumique du sacrifice d'Isaac et la sotériologie paulinienne," in *Studiorum Paulinorum Congressus Internationalis Catholicus*, 1961 (2 vols., *AnBib* 17-18, Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1963) 2:566; George Foot Moore, *Judaism in the First Centuries of the Christian Era: The Age of the Tannaim* (3 vols., Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1927-30) 1:539-41; Jacobson (*Commentary*, 863) rightly notes that Davies and Chilton "seriously underestimate" this element in Pseudo-Philo's account.

<sup>43</sup> The most detailed treatment to date is that of Jacobson, *Commentary*, 2:863-69.

<sup>44</sup> See Brevard S. Childs, *Biblical Theology of the Old and New Testaments: Theological Reflection on the Christian Bible* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992) 327-28. "The effect for the informed reader [of Genesis 22] is that the story of Abraham's uniquely private experience is thus linked to Israel's collective public worship, and conversely Israel's sacrifice is drawn into the theological orbit of Abraham's offering." For claims that the Aqedah was considered expiatory already in the first century, see Hans Joachim Schoeps, "The Sacrifice of Isaac in Paul's Theology," *JBL* 65 (1946) 389; Feldman, "Josephus as Biblical Interpreter," 240.

Further questions arise from the cryptic nature of Isaac's question to Abraham. Howard Jacobson, after reviewing various unsatisfying proposals in the literature (e.g., by Harrington, Delling, Davies and Chilton, and Feldman), opts to emend the text to read "How is it that you do *not* say to me 'Come and inherit a secure life and time without measure'?"<sup>45</sup> With this emendation, Isaac would be encouraging Abraham to view his death more positively, as his opportunity to inherit eternal life; Isaac's eagerness to lay down his life would, thus, emerge all the more clearly.

Isaac's final words are equally difficult: "Now my blessedness will be above that of all men,<sup>46</sup> because there will be nothing like this; and about me future generations will be instructed,<sup>47</sup> and through me the peoples will understand that the Lord has made the soul of a man worthy to be a sacrifice."<sup>48</sup> Whether or not these words are a dim reflection of Gen 22:17-18 (God's promise to Abraham to multiply Israel and to bless the nations; cf. *L.A.B.* 32.4; 18.5), they are certainly a striking declaration of Isaac's unique status and worthiness in God's plan.<sup>49</sup>

But why was Isaac blessed above all others? Was he simply an exemplary martyr? Is Pseudo-Philo disputing contemporaries who held that Isaac's death should encourage other voluntary acts of martyrdom?<sup>50</sup> Did he believe that Isaac's sacrifice had accrued certain merits, or that it somehow brought benefit to others? It is testimony to the remarkable exaltation of Isaac in this passage that several have treated these words as a polemic against early

<sup>45</sup> Jacobson, *Commentary*, 2 864 The Latin has *quomodo nunc dicis mihi*, "How then do you now say to me?" Thus, the proposed change is from *nunc* to *non*

<sup>46</sup> On why Harrington's rendering, "my blessedness will be above that of all men," is preferable to Davies and Chilton's "my blessing will be upon all men," see Jacobson, *Commentary*, 2 866 The Latin is *erit mea beatitudo super omnes homines*

<sup>47</sup> The word "future" in Harrington's translation is unnecessary Jacobson (*Commentary*, 149, 867) proposes that behind *annunciabuntur*, "will be instructed," is a form of εὐαγγελίζω, derived in turn from a form of εὐλογίζω (ברך) His plausible reconstruction, an echo of Gen 22 18, means "through me nations will be blessed" We might compare *Tg Ps-J* Gen 22 18 "All the peoples of the earth shall be blessed *because of the merits of your son* (בגין זכוות בנך)" It is not clear why this is rendered "of your children" by Michael Maher, *Targum Pseudo-Jonathan Genesis* (Aramaic Bible 1B, Collegeville, MN Liturgical Press, 1992) 81, the plural בגין occurs in *Tg Onq* Gen 22 18

<sup>48</sup> *L.A.B.* 32 3

<sup>49</sup> Davies and Chilton ("The Aqedah," 525-26) grant that Isaac's offering is accorded "some unique status," and that *L.A.B.* interprets the "seed" of Abraham by which all the nations of the earth will be blessed (Gen 22 18) narrowly, as Isaac himself Cf Paul's similar strategy in Gal 3 16

<sup>50</sup> Frederick J Murphy, *Pseudo-Philo Rewriting the Bible* (New York Oxford University Press, 1993) 146



Christian claims concerning the merits of the death of Christ.<sup>51</sup> Whatever else may be said, the Isaac we see here is an active, full-fledged participant in the drama. His self-offering combines somehow with Abraham's obedience to warrant God's blessings upon Israel.

### III. Jephthah's Daughter, a New Isaac? *Liber antiquitatum biblicarum* 40.1-9

The appeal to the Aqedah in the story of Jephthah (*L.A.B.* 40.1-9; cf. Judges 11) is in many ways more straightforward. When Jephthah's daughter, here named Seila, learns that she will be offered up in sacrifice, she immediately invites her father to compare their circumstance to the similar plight of Abraham and Isaac. The invitation raises several hermeneutical questions. Is the episode with Isaac intruded simply because of superficial parallels in the plot line (father offers only child in sacrifice to Yahweh)? Because both children are described as יחיד, "only, solitary; favored one"?<sup>52</sup> Perhaps for Pseudo-Philo the "historical" daughter of Jephthah could have responded as she did only if she possessed prior knowledge of the episode with Abraham and Isaac. For whatever reason, Pseudo-Philo treats the genuine symmetry between the two stories as a divinely inspired surplus of meaning, a surplus he felt compelled to exploit by forging even closer ties between the two episodes.<sup>53</sup>

According to Pseudo-Philo, the closest parallel (beyond the human sacrifice itself) concerns the willingness of the two child victims. Seila's version of the Aqedah in *L.A.B.* 40.2 draws careful attention to Isaac's active role:

And who is there who would be sad in death, seeing the people freed? Or do you not remember what happened in the days of our fathers when the father placed the son as a holocaust, and he did not refuse him but gladly gave consent to him, and the one being offered was ready and the one who was offering was rejoicing?

<sup>51</sup> Davies and Chilton ("The Aqedah," 526 n. 31), who date the *Liber antiquitatum biblicarum* between 70 and 135 C.E. (517 n. 7), suggest that the phrase *non erit aliud*, "there will not be another [sacrifice]," as they interpret it, "may well testify to the author's awareness of Christian claims concerning Christ's atonement as efficacious for all men." Jacobson (*Commentary*, 2:867) is even more explicit: "This sounds like polemic against the Christian view that the sacrifice of Isaac was nothing more than a precursor of and model for the genuinely significant event that was the sacrifice of Jesus."

<sup>52</sup> Gen 22:2 has יחידך, Judg 11:24 has יחידה. Cf. *unigenitus* in *L.A.B.* 39:11, 40:1. For יחיד as "favored one," see Levenson, *Death and Resurrection*, 14, 26-31, 200, 207.

<sup>53</sup> In her speech, Seila (1 e), Pseudo-Philo neglects to mention the profound differences between the two biblical stories, namely, that Abraham acted in direct obedience to God's command, and that Isaac did not actually die. On the contrasts between the two episodes, see Phyllis Trible, *Texts of Terror: Literary-feminist Readings of Biblical Narratives* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984) 101.

The tidy correlation in the final clauses—Isaac was ready (*paratus*) and Abraham was glad (*gaudens*)—is reminiscent of an early targumic rendering in which Isaac's eager willingness is likewise emphasized:

Abraham stretched out his hand and took the knife to kill Isaac his son Isaac answered and said to Abraham his father, "Bind my hands properly that I may not struggle in the time of my pain and disturb you and render your offering unfit and be cast into the pit of destruction in the world to come. " In that hour the angels of heaven went out and said to each other, "Let us go and see the only two just men in the world The one slays, and the other is being slain. The slayer does not hesitate, and the one being slain stretches out his neck "54

Seila, in her final words (*L.A.B.* 40.3) likewise emphasizes her own voluntary self-submission:

I am not sad because I am to die nor does it pain me to give back my soul, but because my father was caught up in the snare of his vow, and if I did not offer myself willingly for sacrifice (*sacrificium*), I fear that my death would not be acceptable or I would lose my life in vain (*aut in vano perdam animam meam*). These things I will tell the mountains, and afterward I will return.<sup>55</sup>

This portrayal of Jephthah's daughter as a willing and even joyful sacrifice is, by rabbinic standards, only a modest embellishment of the biblical narrative. In *Judg* 11:36, the girl says, "My father, if you have opened your mouth to the Lord, do to me according to what has gone out of your mouth, now that the Lord has given you vengeance against your enemies, the Ammonites."<sup>56</sup>

Far more imagination and creativity are required, however, to establish from Scripture Isaac's willing cooperation. We read of Abraham's words and actions, but essentially nothing of Isaac's response. Nevertheless, Pseudo-Philo, like many early tradents, could not resist reading between the lines. If Isaac was old enough to walk for three days (*Gen* 22:4) and to carry the firewood up the mountain (*Gen* 22:6), surely he was strong enough to resist

<sup>54</sup> A passage in the *Fragmentary Targum* cited by Vermes, *Scripture and Tradition*, 194 On the theme of Isaac's willingness in the *Liber antiquitatum biblicarum*, see n 42 and below

<sup>55</sup> Seila's speech in *L A B* 40 2-3 is obviously patterned on Isaac's speech in 32 3 Cf Perrot and Bogaert, *Pseudo-Philon, Antiquités* 2, 189-90

<sup>56</sup> Translation in the *NRSV* The biblical daughter spends two months in the mountains weeping (*Judg* 11 37-39), more than enough to justify Pseudo-Philo's lengthy composition of Seila's lament (*L A B* 40 5-7) The postbiblical origins of the midrash on Jephthah's daughter are obscure, however On the funeral song of Seila and its relation to both Scripture and Greek myth, see I Frohlich, "Historiographie et aggada dans le *Liber antiquitatum biblicarum* du Pseudo-Philo," *Acta antiqua Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae* 28 (1980) 353-409, esp 394-401

an old man's efforts to bind him. It could only be that Isaac, like Seila, bravely and willingly embraced death, that he was a heroic martyr in a noble cause.<sup>57</sup>

Pseudo-Philo may forge a second, less obvious link between these episodes: the value or merit attached to each sacrifice. As we have noted above, Seila, in her initial response to the news of her imminent demise (*L.A.B.* 40.2), made reference to Jephthah's recent military victory: "And who is there who would be sad in death, seeing the people freed?" Readers of *Judg* 11:30-33, 36 might surmise that God gave Jephthah victory in battle because he had vowed to offer up something to God. For obvious reasons, Pseudo-Philo labors to counter this reading, explaining that victory came *not* because Jephthah vowed but because the people prayed (*L.A.B.* 39.11; cf. 39.7).<sup>58</sup> Nevertheless, Pseudo-Philo offers several hints that Seila's self-offering (rather than Jephthah's vow) had merit:

- 40.2      Seila's opening words associate her own death with Israel's liberation.
- 40.3a     Seila twice describes her death as "giving back" or "delivering" (*red-dere*) her soul to God (cf. 40.4; 32.2).
- 40.3b, 5   Seila expresses concern that her death be acceptable before God, and (twice) that her life not be lost in vain.
- 40.4a     God's approval of her sacrifice is clearly indicated: "I have shut up the tongue of the wise men . . . so that they cannot respond to the

<sup>57</sup> See n. 42. Some have suggested that this passage reflects the social-historical setting in which the *Liber antiquitatum biblicarum* was composed. Did the Aqedah epitomize for Pseudo-Philo the appropriate response in times of social crisis, when God's faithfulness was hard to discern? The lament of Jephthah's daughter in *L.A.B.* 40.5-7 could point in this direction (as could Isaac's extended speech in chap. 32). This would accord with 4 Maccabees, a slightly earlier composition in which the Maccabean martyrs are compared to Isaac (cf. 4 Macc 7:14; 13:12; 16:20). For Vermes (*Scripture and Tradition*, 203-4), it may well have been the persecutions of Antiochus (167 C.E.) that first gave rise to the tradition of the Aqedah. Davies and Chilton ("The Aqedah," 527-28) suggest that Pseudo-Philo's appeals to Isaac's offering point to an elevation of sacrificial service, even martyrdom, in Palestine after 70 C.E. Whether or not persecution and martyrdom were the matrix of early Jewish traditions of the Aqedah, the combined testimony of Pseudo-Philo and Josephus suggests that already in the latter decades of the first century those traditions were becoming more complex. See Levenson, *Death and Resurrection*, 186-92.

<sup>58</sup> Josephus (*A.J.* 5.7.10 §§265-66) offers an illuminating parallel at this point. On the one hand, he describes the girl's death as something demanded ἐπὶ νίκῃ τοῦ πατρὸς καὶ ἐλευθερίᾳ τῶν πολιτῶν which H. St. J. Thackeray, *Josephus* 5 [LCL; London: Heinemann; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1934] 121, translates as "in return for her father's victory and the liberation of her fellow-citizens.") On the other, Josephus assures his readers that the sacrifice which Jephthah offered was οὐτε νόμιμον οὐτε θεῷ κεχαρισμένην (which Thackeray translates as "neither sanctioned by the law nor well-pleasing to God"). On Josephus' apologetic agenda, see L. Feldman, "Josephus as Biblical Interpreter," 228-30; idem, *Studies in Hellenistic Judaism*, 78-79. Cf. *Gen. Rab.* 60.3: "Said the Holy One . . . to him: 'Then had a camel or an ass or a dog come forth, thou wouldst have offered it up for a burnt-offering?' What did the Lord do? He answered him unfittingly and prepared his daughter for him."

daughter of Jephthah . . . in order that my word be fulfilled and my plan that I thought out not be foiled."<sup>59</sup>

40.4b God declares, "Her death will be precious before me always" (*erit mors eius preciosa ante conspectum meum omni tempore*)<sup>60</sup>

Nowhere in *L.A.B.* 40.1-9 are we explicitly invited to compare the "preciousness" of Seila's death with the worthiness of Isaac's offering, but surely the comparison is implied. Pseudo-Philo's story of Jephthah works only if God treasured the self-offering of the "blessed" and "worthy" Isaac alongside that of the "wise" Seila.<sup>61</sup>

At the very least, Isaac provides Seila (and all subsequent martyrs) with an ideal example of how to suffer bravely.<sup>62</sup> But *L.A.B.* 40.1-9 is more than a mere appeal to an earlier, paradigmatic episode. By invoking the story of Isaac to illuminate the story of Jephthah Pseudo-Philo is able to affirm that God was directly involved (39.11; 40.4), to confirm that Jephthah's daughter was indeed sacrificed (40.8), and to dignify and sanctify Seila's self-offering (40.3-4). It becomes, in effect, "the feminine counterpart of the *aqedat yizhaq*."<sup>63</sup> The exegetical leverage also works in the other direction: Seila's heroic virtue and courageous submission are mapped back onto Isaac. It is because the biblical daughter of Jephthah gave verbal consent to her fate (Judg 11:36a), and because her death was somehow bound up with Israel's triumph (Judg 11:36b), that Pseudo-Philo is able to read these themes back into the story of Isaac, a story not simply about the obedience of Abraham but also, now, about the willingness and blessedness of Isaac and about the fulfillment of his sacrifice.

For Pseudo-Philo, in other words, the two biblical passages are *mutually interpretive*.<sup>64</sup> It may be true that "the daughter of Jephthah is presented

<sup>59</sup> According to some rabbinic traditions, the sages should have known that Jephthah's vow was invalid (cf. *Gen Rab* 60 3, *Lev Rab* 37 4). Here, however, God prevents them from interfering with the divine plan. Similarly, Philip S. Alexander, "Retelling the Old Testament," in *It is Written: Scripture Citing Scripture* (ed. D. A. Carson and H. G. M. Williamson, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988) 110.

<sup>60</sup> This is a clear allusion to Ps 116 15, "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his faithful ones" (Vg Ps 115 6, *Pretiosa in conspectu Domini mors sanctorum eius*). Pseudo-Philo may have considered this psalm to be particularly apt commentary on the episode of Jephthah, since in vv. 14 and 18 (LXX and Vg 115 9) the psalmist declares, "I will pay my vows to the Lord in the presence of all his people."

<sup>61</sup> Compare *L.A.B.* 32 3-4. Likewise, with *L.A.B.* 18 5 in the background, we must view Isaac's sacrifice, like Seila's death, as somehow accomplished.

<sup>62</sup> Davies and Chilton ("The Aqedah," 527) contend that the passage "witnesses not to an Aqedah but to the exemplary value of Isaac's Offering for other would-be martyrs."

<sup>63</sup> Alexander, "Retelling the Old Testament," 110. On ambiguities within the biblical account of Jephthah, see Levenson, *Death and Resurrection*, 13-17.

<sup>64</sup> This evidence that text and intertext were mutually interpretive counts against the claim, advanced by Richard Bauckham ("The Liber Antiquitatum Biblicarum of Pseudo-Philo

here as a new Isaac in the joyous and spontaneous offering of herself,"<sup>65</sup> but it is equally true that Isaac is re-created here in the image of Jephthah's daughter. If Pseudo-Philo portrays Balaam in chap. 18 as a quasi Abraham, in chap. 40 he redraws Isaac borrowing colors from the heroic depiction of Seila.<sup>66</sup> Seila's speech and acts compel readers to return to Genesis 22 and reread that earlier (and clearly more important) story through the lens of Judges 11.

#### IV. Summary: Pseudo-Philo's Use of Genesis 22

Pseudo-Philo's use of Genesis 22 is neither arbitrary nor idiosyncratic. He was engaged, rather, in sober biblical exegesis, exegesis that responded to at least four distinct phenomena.

1. Gaps and surpluses in the biblical narrative. Some of Pseudo-Philo's embellishments and transformations of the story of Isaac are clearly meant to solve perceived problems in the biblical narrative. What was Isaac thinking? Did he not resist? Scripture's surprising silence drove the earliest interpreters

and the Gospels as 'Midrash,' " in *Gospel Perspectives 3 Studies in Midrash and Historiography* [ed R T France and David Wenham, Sheffield JSOT Press, 1983] 58-59), that Pseudo-Philo "has not in any way assimilated [Seila's] story to that of Isaac" and also, more generally, that "other passages of Scripture are always utilized as a means of explaining and interpreting *this* [i e., the primary] narrative " It is true that Pseudo-Philo "does not portray Jephthah's role in the story as praiseworthy, by analogy with Abraham's" but the focus of chap. 40 is clearly on Seila and Isaac, *both* of whom are transformed by their juxtaposition in the narrative Bauckham's contention that subsidiary Scripture in the *Liber antiquitatum biblicarum* always functions primarily to explain the primary narrative is related to his larger concern to portray Pseudo-Philo's composition as relatively constrained and to counter those (e g., Michael Goulder) who claim that the evangelists, as midrashists, would have created narrative episodes freely out of secondary texts (i e., OT passages)

<sup>65</sup> Perrot and Bogaert, *Pseudo-Philon, Antiquités 2*, 191

<sup>66</sup> Numerous authors have noted Pseudo-Philo's particular interest in female characters. See especially Cheryl Anne Brown, *No Longer Be Silent First-Century Portraits of Biblical Women* (Louisville Westminster/John Knox, 1992), Betsy Halpern-Amaru, "Portraits of Women in Pseudo-Philo's *Biblical Antiquities*," in "Women like This" *New Perspectives on Jewish Women in the Greco-Roman World* (ed Amy-Jill Levine, SBLEJL 1, Atlanta Scholars, 1991) 83-106, Joan E Cook, "Pseudo-Philo's Song of Hannah Testament of a Mother in Israel," *JSP* 9 (1991) 103-14, Cynthia Baker, "Pseudo-Philo and the Transformation of Jephthah's Daughter," in *Anti-covenant Counter-reading Women's Lives* (ed Mieke Bal, JSOTSup 81, Bible and Literature 22, Sheffield Almond, 1989) 195-209, Pieter Willem van der Horst, "Portraits of Biblical Women in Pseudo-Philo's *Liber Antiquitatum Biblicarum*," *JSP* 5 (1989) 29-46, Eileen Schuller, "Women of the Exodus in Biblical Retellings of the Second Temple Period," in *Gender and Difference in Ancient Israel* (ed Peggy L Day, Minneapolis Fortress, 1989) 178-94, Don Polaski, "On Taming Tamar, Amram's Rhetoric and Women's Roles in Pseudo-Philo's *Liber Antiquitatum Biblicarum* 9," *JSP* 13 (1995) 79-99

to offer a reasonable explanation. It may be that virtually all narrative expansions and intertextual connections in the *Liber antiquitatum biblicarum* arose as biblical *interpretation*, as strategic responses to various “problems” (gaps, surplus, conflict, moral failure, etc.) in the biblical text. Whatever else may be said about the imaginative embellishments in that work, we must also recognize that it is the product of an author, a community, and a tradition profoundly shaped by the Hebrew Scriptures.<sup>67</sup>

2. Biblical themes. Many of Pseudo-Philo’s narrative expansions have as their point of departure a phrase, motif, or theme in the biblical precursor. The theme of divine deliverance in Judges 4–5 evidently prompted the inclusion of the episode with Isaac in Pseudo-Philo’s reworking of Deborah’s hymn (*L.A.B.* 32.1–17). Similarly, the symmetry between the plights of Jephthah and Abraham—a father is compelled to sacrifice his only child to Yahweh—invited Pseudo-Philo to correlate those two stories in *L.A.B.* 40.1–9.

3. Biblical intratextuality. Pseudo-Philo introduces Genesis 22 into various other narratives precisely because he perceives that they were already related “intratextually” in Scripture. Anticipating developments in later, rabbinic hermeneutics, Pseudo-Philo treats his principal narrative and his various secondary passages as already connected, and therefore as mutually interpretive. In his strategic appeal to Genesis 22 in the Balaam episode (*Liber antiquitatum biblicarum* 18) he trades on intratextual connections between Numbers 22–24 and Genesis 22. He may also have considered the biblical reference to Jephthah’s *only* child (Judg 11:34) as a deliberate reflex of Gen 22:2. In *Liber antiquitatum biblicarum* 40 Genesis 22 interprets Judges 11, but the hermeneutical leverage works the other way as well: Judges 11 demands a reinterpretation of Genesis 22.

4. Early Jewish midrashic tradition. Many of Pseudo-Philo’s narrative revisions incorporate traditions “in the air” in his day. This should come as no surprise, but it has not always been fully appreciated. Pseudo-Philo may have been “a man of individual views and convictions,”<sup>68</sup> but his hermeneutics cannot be called idiosyncratic, nor should his narratives be treated in isolation from the vast corpus of postbiblical exegetical literature, both Jewish and Christian. His work is an exceptionally important witness to the early stages of Jewish biblical interpretation.

<sup>67</sup> For the theory that the *Liber antiquitatum biblicarum* preserves the traditions and theology of synagogue preachers in Palestine before 70 C.E., see Perrot and Bogaert, *Pseudo-Philon, Antiquités* 2, 30–39.

<sup>68</sup> Vermes, *Post-Biblical Jewish Studies*, 73.

## V. Pseudo-Philo, Tradition-history, and the Emergence of the Aqedah

Whether or not a fully developed theology of the Aqedah antedated the NT and influenced early Christian reflections on the death of Christ has been a matter of lively debate in recent years.<sup>69</sup> Here we must limit our remarks to the theology of the Aqedah in Pseudo-Philo's *Liber*.<sup>70</sup>

On the one hand, Robert Daly sees the appropriation of Genesis 22 in *Liber antiquitatum biblicarum* 18 as "the probable direct mediator of a developed haggadah of the Aqedah from the Jewish to the Christian traditions."<sup>71</sup> He thinks that "the emphasis on Abraham's unconditional obedience as well as the relationship between the merit of the sacrifice of Isaac and the election of Israel are familiar to the whole Aqedah development" and suggests that the reference to blood (*pro sanguine eius elegi istos*, *L.A.B.* 18.5) is most likely a reflex of "an essential expiatory function for the Aqedah."<sup>72</sup>

On the other hand, Philip Davies and Bruce Chilton vigorously deny the existence of a developed doctrine of the Aqedah (including the notion of expiation or vicarious atonement) before the NT period, contending that *Christian* influence upon *Jewish* traditions of the Aqedah is more likely than

<sup>69</sup> Among representative studies published since 1960 are Shalom Spiegel, *The Last Trial On the Legends and Lore of the Command to Abraham to Offer Isaac as a Sacrifice, the Aqedah* (New York Pantheon, 1967), Le Déaut, "La présentation targumique," 563-74, Nils Alstrup Dahl, "The Atonement—An Adequate Reward for the Aqedah? (Ro 8 32)," in *Neotestamentica et Semitica Studies in Honour of Matthew Black* (ed E Earle Ellis and Max Wilcox, Edinburgh T & T Clark, 1969) 15-29, Vermes, *Scripture and Tradition*, 193-227 (see esp pp 199-201), B D Chilton, "Isaac and the Second Night a Consideration," *Bib* 61 (1980) 78-88, J Swetnam, *Jesus and Isaac A Study of the Epistle to the Hebrews in the Light of the Aqedah* (AnBib 94, Rome Biblical Institute Press, 1981), Feldman, "Josephus as Biblical Interpreter," 212-52, C T R Hayward, "The Sacrifice of Isaac and Jewish Polemic Against Christianity," *CBQ* 52 (1990) 292-306, Levenson, *Death and Resurrection*, 173-232, G Vermes, "New Light on the Sacrifice of Isaac from 4Q225," *JJS* 47 (1996) 140-46

<sup>70</sup> Evidence for or against an origin of the *Liber antiquitatum biblicarum* before the year 70 has thus far proved inconclusive For a painstaking, though not always unassailable, defense of a date between 70 and 150 C E, see Jacobson, *Commentary*, I 199-210 See also Fisk, *Do You Not Remember?* chap 1 Even if the work was composed after 70 (or even early in the second century), it would almost certainly preserve numerous pre-Christian Jewish traditions, cf Hayward, "Sacrifice of Isaac," 301

<sup>71</sup> Daly, "Soteriological Significance," 59

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid*, 62-63 On the rabbinic tradition of Isaac shedding his blood (or being reduced to ashes), see Vermes, *Scripture and Tradition*, 205-6, Schoeps, "Sacrifice of Isaac," 389-90, Jacobson, *Commentary*, I 583, Hayward, "Sacrifice of Isaac," 292-306, Levenson, *Death and Resurrection*, 180-81, 192-99 See further below

the other way around.<sup>73</sup> In certain respects their mission “of demolition and reconstruction” must be deemed a success; the authors of many studies published before 1980 defined the Aqedah too loosely, or retrojected later Christian or rabbinic theological developments onto the early evidence, or attached too much significance to a mere handful of references.<sup>74</sup> The narrow definition of the Aqedah defended by Davies and Chilton is similarly problematic, however, for it restricts the “database” to haggadic presentations “of the vicariously atoning sacrifice of Isaac.”<sup>75</sup> This definition has the twin effects of overstressing atonement or expiation in the tradition and of denying the label “Aqedah” to all but the latest, most developed stages of that tradition.<sup>76</sup> Davies and Chilton are right in asserting that a fully developed doctrine of the Aqedah is later than the New Testament (though it is not necessarily anti-Christian).<sup>77</sup> But this finding does not diminish the significance of those embellishments and transformations of Isaac in traditions which were already known in the first century and which ultimately led to a fully formed doctrine. Among these must be included the aggadic emphasis upon Isaac’s willing and active participation in the act of offering, and the view that his self-offering was virtuous, meritorious, and even beneficial for others.

In this regard, Pseudo-Philo is a pivotal witness to the development of the traditions of the Aqedah.<sup>78</sup> In chaps. 32 and 40 of the *Liber* Isaac is portrayed

<sup>73</sup> Davies and Chilton, “The Aqedah,” 517, 529, 537, 539–41. Similarly, Robin M. Jensen, “The Binding or Sacrifice of Isaac: How Jews and Christians See Differently,” *Bible Review* 9 (1993) 45. But see Hayward, “Present State of Research,” 127–50; idem, “Sacrifice of Isaac,” 292–306.

<sup>74</sup> For pertinent cautionary remarks about method, see Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*, 28–29.

<sup>75</sup> Davies and Chilton, “The Aqedah,” 515. To limit “Aqedah” to instances in which Isaac’s sacrifice is “the locus of the vicarious atonement previously acquired through the now defunct Tamid” (p. 516) is to rule out, by definition, an emerging doctrine of the Aqedah prior to 70 C.E., since in the main lines of Judaism before 70 a substitute for the temple was not being sought; cf. Perrot and Bogaert, *Pseudo-Philon, Antiquités* 2, 172. For criticism of Davies and Chilton’s analysis of the targumic evidence, including their contention that the Aqedah was a substitute for temple sacrifice after the year 70, see Hayward (“Present State of Research,” 129, 149), who finds little support for their definition in the targums. On the link between Moriah and the temple site, see 2 Chr 3:1 and discussions by I. Kalimi, “The Land of Moriah, Mount Moriah, and the Site of Solomon’s Temple in Biblical Historiography,” *HTR* 83 (1990) 345–62; Daly, “Soteriological Significance,” 46; Vermes, *Scripture and Tradition*, 209; Feldman, “Josephus as Biblical Interpreter,” 227–28; Hayward, “Present State of Research,” 132–34; Levenson, *Death and Resurrection*, 174.

<sup>76</sup> Similarly, Vermes, “New Light,” 144.

<sup>77</sup> See nn. 51 and 73. Hayward, “Sacrifice of Isaac,” contests Davies and Chilton’s claim that the Passion influenced the development of the Aqedah.

<sup>78</sup> Contra Davies and Chilton (“The Aqedah,” 528), who claim that “there is no evidence of an Aqedah to be found” in the *Liber antiquitatum biblicarum*.



as anything but a silent, passive victim; he appears, rather, as a full-fledged, active character standing shoulder to shoulder with Abraham. This elevation of Isaac from spectator to willful participant links Pseudo-Philo's portrayal to both contemporary and later Jewish exegesis.<sup>79</sup> It also constitutes solid evidence of an emerging doctrine of the Aqedah in the first century. The *Liber antiquitatum biblicarum* provides documentation of an early stage of a tradition that reached its zenith in rabbinic works such as *Genesis Rabbah*, *Pesiqta de Rab Kahana*, and the targumim, as well as in Christian compositions like the *Letter of Barnabas* and the writings of Clement of Alexandria and Irenaeus.<sup>80</sup>

Consider again a key phrase in *L.A.B.* 18.5: "because he did not refuse (*quia non contradixit*), his offering was acceptable before me." Davies and Chilton interpret this clause with reference to Abraham's "nonrefusal" rather than to Isaac's willing participation in the sacrifice, and this reading may well be correct.<sup>81</sup> There is, however, an alternative worth considering. In the parallel account at *L.A.B.* 40.2, the one who "did not refuse him" (*non contradixit*) is clearly Isaac; the point is precisely that he went to the altar willingly.<sup>82</sup> If *L.A.B.* 40.2 should inform our understanding of 18.5, Pseudo-Philo may be hinting that Israel's divine approbation, even election, rests (in part) upon Isaac's willing submission to his fate.<sup>83</sup> This way of reading 18.5 also allows for a closer parallel of two clauses introduced by *et*:

<sup>79</sup> See above, n 42 This is not to suggest that preoccupation with Isaac was universal in the early discussions of Genesis 22 Philo's embellished treatment (*Abr* 169-207) is focused exclusively on Abraham, his motives, and his piety (with Isaac's minor role described briefly at §173) Davies and Chilton ("The Aqedah," 521) overstate the point—but only slightly—when they claim that Philo "knows nothing of an Aqedah" Particularly telling is Philo's attempt to associate the etymology of Isaac's name—"laughter, joy"—with Abraham rather than Isaac As Davies and Chilton note (p 520), "The joy is not that of willing martyrdom or self-sacrifice, but the joy of the Sage (Abraham) when he fulfills the demands of God" Likewise, the author of *Jub* 18 1-19 follows the biblical account quite closely

<sup>80</sup> See especially *Gen Rab* 55 4, 56 4, 9, 10, *Pesiq Rb Kah* 23 9, *Tg Neof* Genesis 22, Exod 12 42 For a synopsis of the rabbinic and targumic doctrine, see Davies and Chilton, "The Aqedah," 533-45, Vermes, *Scripture and Tradition*, 193-97, Hayward, "Present State of Research," passim For Christian references, see *Let Barn* 7 3, Clement *Paedag* 1 5 1, Irenaeus *Adv haer* 4 4, and additional references in Schoeps, "Sacrifice of Isaac," 386, Hayward, "Sacrifice of Isaac," 303-5 For an assessment of the themes of the Aqedah in early Christian art and iconography, see Robin M Jensen, "The Offering of Isaac in Jewish and Christian Tradition," *Biblical Interpretation* 2 (1994) 85-110

<sup>81</sup> It is defended also by Murphy, *Pseudo-Philo*, 85, cf p 145

<sup>82</sup> Noted also by Jacobson, *Commentary*, 1 582-83

<sup>83</sup> Although Isaac's role in the midrash of *L.A.B.* 18 5 is less conspicuous than in chaps 32 or 40, it may have been more prominent in the original Hebrew text The difficulties in the logic and syntax of 18 6a, *et Iacob filio eius, tertio*, disappear if we follow Jacobson's proposed emendation (*Commentary*, 1 586) and transpose the words *et dixi tunc angelis Nonne de hoc dixi Ego revelabo Abraha omnia que ego facio* (18 5c) to the place after *et ostendi ei omnium*

<i>et, quia non contradixit,</i>	<i>facta est oblatio eius in conspectu meo</i>
	<i>acceptabilis</i>
<i>et pro sanguine eius</i>	<i>elegi istos</i>
and, because [Isaac?] did not refuse,	his offering was acceptable before me
and on account of [Isaac's] blood	I chose them

There is no suggestion here that Isaac's blood served an atoning function; that idea develops later. The suggestion here is rather that Isaac's merit was a basis for Israel's election. Isaac's *willingness* to shed his blood makes the offering acceptable and makes Israel's election secure.<sup>84</sup>

We conclude with a brief list of those elements of the emerging haggadah discernible in Pseudo-Philo's work.<sup>85</sup>

1. Jealous angels prompted God to demand the sacrifice of Isaac (*L.A.B.* 32.2, 4).
2. Because Abraham obeyed promptly, his offering was acceptable to God (40.2).
3. Abraham told Isaac what was going to happen in advance (32.2).
4. Isaac offered his life willingly and joyfully (18.5?; 32.3; 40.2, 3).
5. Isaac was worthy to be sacrificed and was blessed above all others (32.3).
6. The offering of Isaac was a sacrifice, comparable to burnt offerings prescribed by Law (18.5; 32.3); it may or may not have expiatory value (32.2-3).
7. The offering of Isaac was part of God's plan (18.3; cf. 40.4).
8. The offering of Isaac grounds God's blessing and election of Israel (18.5).
9. The sacrifice of Isaac was considered accomplished (18.5; 32.4).

*astrorum dispositiones* (18.5a). The following translation (based upon Harrington) illustrates this emendation; I have replaced pronouns with italicized proper nouns to remove ambiguities. "Is it not regarding this people that I spoke to Abraham in a vision . . . when I lifted *Abraham* above the firmament and showed *Abraham* the order of all the stars? And then I said to the angels . . . 'Did I not say, "I will reveal to Abraham everything that I do"?' And I demanded *Abraham's* son as a holocaust. And *Abraham* brought *Isaac* to . . . the altar, but I gave *Isaac* back to *Isaac's* father and, because *Isaac* did not refuse, *Abraham's* offering [or *Isaac's* self-offering] was acceptable before me, and on account of *Isaac's* blood, I chose *Abraham and Isaac*. And to Jacob *Isaac's* son, the third one . . ."

<sup>84</sup> Similarly, Perrot and Bogaert, *Pseudo-Philon, Antiquités* 2, 126. For a caution against reading too much into this reference to Isaac's blood, see Hayward, "Sacrifice of Isaac," 301-3, and more generally, Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*, 28-29. This accords with Pseudo-Philo's stress elsewhere on God's concern for one's inner disposition (*L.A.B.* 12.7; 22.6). By contrast, in the biblical account (Gen 22:16-18) the blessing appears to be grounded solely in the outward deed of Abraham. (On the question whether God rewarded Abraham's faith or his obedience, see Levenson, *Death and Resurrection*, 125-42.)

<sup>85</sup> Vermes (*Scripture and Tradition*, 200) offers his own summary of the evidence: "First, Isaac offered his life freely and willingly. Second, his sacrifice is related to other sacrifices offered to God and accepted by Him for the sins of men. Third, Isaac was aware of the beneficent effect of his self-offering upon future generations." Vermes may press the expiatory function of the Aqedah in Pseudo-Philo's work beyond the evidence. For another summary of the theology of the Aqedah in the *Liber antiquitatum biblicarum*, see Daly, "Soteriological Significance," 61, whose summary is heavily dependent upon Vermes.

10. Isaac's act was, and will remain, unique (32.3).
11. Isaac was to be remembered along with Abraham for this episode (32.4).
12. Isaac's self-offering was the exemplary act of martyrdom (40.2-3).
13. Isaac's sacrifice had worth in God's sight (32.3; cf. 40.4).

The gap between the biblical Isaac and the character of the same name in this composition of the first century C.E. is wide indeed. Moreover, many of these traditional elements bear striking resemblance to early Christian characterizations of the death of Christ. It may be impossible to determine whether early Jewish traditions about Isaac fueled the imaginations of early Christians seeking to make sense of the crucifixion, but the testimony of Pseudo-Philo does lend plausibility to the idea that at least some traditions of the Aqedah were available to early Jewish Christians.

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