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Chapter 4

ABRAHAM IN REWRITTEN SCRIPTURE

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Introduction: “Rewritten Scripture”

The extant literature of the Second Temple period attests to widespread and ongoing reflection on the significance of Israel’s founding ancestor Abraham. The scriptural narratives about his life are frequently re-shaped by later authors in order to express their theological convictions, and respond to the challenges of changing social and historical contexts. This chapter will explore the treatment of Abraham within a small sub-set of this corpus, a group of texts traditionally categorized as “rewritten bible”.¹ These offer a continuous retelling of large sections of the scriptures, following their broad outline, but re-presenting them through a combination of expansion, abridgement, omission, and reordering of their material. This designation has become contested in recent decades, partly because of a concern that it may give the misleading impression that a fixed or canonical “bible” existed in the early centuries BCE, so the term “rewritten scripture” has increasingly come to be preferred within scholarship.

These texts form part of a broad spectrum of reworking older authoritative sources, ranging from minor scribal revisions to the composition of new “parabiblical” writings anchored only loosely in the scriptural narratives, like the *Life of Adam and Eve*, for example.² The boundaries of the genre are somewhat imprecise, then, and continue to be debated. Nevertheless, definite examples of this form of interpretation can be identified, so this investigation will focus on three works which are widely accepted as major representatives of it: the book of *Jubilees*,

1. See G. Vermes, *Scripture and Tradition in Israel* (SPB, 4; Leiden: Brill, 1961), 95; for further description of the literary form and its characteristics, see P.S. Alexander, “Retelling the Old Testament”, in *It Is Written: Scripture Citing Scripture. Essays in Honour of Barnabas Lindars*, eds. D.A. Carson et al. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 99–118.

2. For a discussion of this exegetical process and the scope of the terms “rewritten scripture” and “parabiblical”, see S. White Crawford, *Rewriting Scripture in Second Temple Times* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008), 2–15.

the Qumran *Genesis Apocryphon* and the *Biblical Antiquities of Pseudo-Philo*.³ The primary aim of the chapter is to sketch out the main features of the presentation of Abraham within these rewritten scriptures, highlighting especially any shared themes or common exegetical techniques. It will also consider how the treatment of the patriarch relates to the wider theological emphases and historical setting of each author.

Book of Jubilees

The starting point for this study is the book of *Jubilees*, which provides a particularly comprehensive treatment of the figure of Abraham. This work presents itself as a record of divine revelation made to Moses through an angel on Mount Sinai (see e.g., *Jub.* 1:1, 26; 2:1), and retells in detail, and with considerable amplification, the narratives of Genesis 1 through to Exodus 14. Many of the author's supplements emphasize the theme of God's covenant with Israel, and the need to maintain this relationship by careful observance of the traditional laws and separation from other nations.⁴ Some connections between *Jubilees* and the Enochic literature are evident, including advocacy of a 364-day solar calendrical system (e.g., *Jub.* 6:32; see also *Jub.* 4:15-25 for other shared traditions).⁵ *Jubilees* is generally dated to around the middle of the second century BCE.⁶ Originally composed in Hebrew, it survived mainly in an Ethiopic translation.⁷ At least fifteen fragmentary manuscripts of a Hebrew text were also discovered at Qumran,⁸ demonstrating its influence in some sections of early Judaism.

3. Josephus, *Ant.* 1–11 is also generally included within the category of rewritten scripture, but will not be considered here as his writings are treated in full elsewhere in this volume.

4. For further detail on the key themes of *Jubilees*, see J.C. Vanderkam, *The Book of Jubilees* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2001); and S.E. Docherty, *The Jewish Pseudepigrapha* (London: SPCK, 2014), 14–23.

5. These parallels are explored more fully in J.C. Vanderkam, "Enoch Traditions in *Jubilees* and Other Second Century Sources", in *SBL Seminar Papers 13*, ed. P.J. Achtemeier (Missoula: Scholars Press, 1987), Vol. 1, 229–51.

6. For further detail, see Vanderkam, *Jubilees*, 17–21.

7. As well as this G'ez version, a partial Latin translation and some quotations in Greek are extant. Further discussion of textual transmission and translations can be found in J.C. Vanderkam, *The Book of Jubilees* (2 vols.; Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium, 510–11/Scriptores Aethiopicici, 87–8; Leuven: Peeters, 1989), 1:ix; 2:xi–xiv; and O.S. Wintermute, "Jubilees: A New Translation and Introduction", in *OTP*, Vol. 2, 41–3.

8. 4Q216, or 4QJub^a, is the most extensive of these, on which see J.C. Vanderkam and J.T. Milik, "The First *Jubilees* Manuscript From Qumran Cave 4: A Preliminary Publication", *JBL* 110 (1991): 243–70.

Approximately one quarter of the book is devoted to the life of Abraham. This section follows closely both the sequence and content of the Pentateuchal sources (Genesis 12–25), covering in full key episodes, such as Abraham’s call to journey to the land of Canaan (Gen. 12:1-10; *Jub.* 12:22–13:9); the two accounts of the making of the covenant (Gen. 15:1-21; 17:1-14; *Jub.* 14:1-20; 15:1-34); and the aborted sacrifice of Isaac (Gen. 22:1-19; *Jub.* 17:15–18:19). Heavily summarized versions are also included of the break with Lot (Gen. 13:5-13; *Jub.* 13:17-18); the battle with the kings (Gen. 14:1-12; *Jub.* 13:22-24); and the visit of three messengers to Abraham at the Oaks of Mamre, and his subsequent dialogue with God about the destruction of Sodom (Gen. 18:1-33; *Jub.* 16:1-6). His second attempt to pass off his wife as his sister to a king outside Canaan (Gen. 20:1-18) is omitted entirely. There is a lacuna in the surviving texts at the point of Abraham’s encounter with Melchizedek (*Jub.* 13:25; see Gen. 14:14-20), so it is not clear exactly how that meeting was originally treated; but, in line with a wider interest in ritual and priestly matters,⁹ the incident is used to stress the enduring nature of the commandments about tithing (*Jub.* 13:25; cf. Gen. 14:20).

Within this extensive and largely faithful rewriting of the Abraham Cycle, however, the figure of the patriarch is subtly re-shaped to serve as a model of law-abiding piety.¹⁰ A range of exegetical methods characteristic of rewritten scripture are employed to achieve this end of creating a wholly positive picture of him. First, the use of selective omission and abridgement enables the author to eliminate content that is less central to his overall aims, or to deal with passages perceived as problematic. Perhaps the best-known case of this in *Jubilees* comes in the retelling of the visit to Egypt by Abraham and Sarah during a time of famine in Canaan. Abraham’s morally dubious plan to save his own skin by sending his wife into Pharaoh’s harem is passed over with only the brief notice that Sarah “was taken from him” (*Jub.* 13:12-13; cf. Gen. 12:10-20; *Gen. Apoc.* 20.14).¹¹

Second, small but nonetheless telling divergences from the scriptural narratives are introduced. In the account in *Jubilees* of the divine announcement that the elderly Sarah would soon conceive a son, for instance, rather than *laughing* at this news, Abraham is said to have responded far more appropriately by *rejoicing* at it (*Jub.* 15:17; cf. Gen. 17:17). Since the text is now available only in Ethiopic translation, it is not possible to be certain whether the author chose to use a different, but closely-related, Hebrew verb from the one found in Genesis (קָרַח), or

9. A priestly background is suggested for the author by several commentators because of these concerns; see, for example, Vanderkam, *Jubilees*, pp. 56, 141–2.

10. For a detailed exploration of the relationship between the presentation of Abraham in *Jubilees* and the Genesis source, see J.T.A.G.M. Van Ruiten, *Abraham in the Book of Jubilees: The Rewriting of Genesis 11:26–25:10 in the Book of Jubilees 11:14–23:8* (Leiden: Brill, 2012); and J.C. Endres, *Biblical Interpretation in the Book of Jubilees* (CBQMS, 18; Washington: Catholic Biblical Association of America, 1987), 18–50.

11. The English translation used throughout is that provided in Wintermute, “Jubilees”.

else interpreted that verb in a particular or extended sense.¹² The latter move is possible, however, given that רָפַח is translated with a form of συγχαίρω (“rejoice with”) in the Septuagint of Genesis 21:6. In another example of a minor difference added in order to aggrandize Abraham, the whole of his life is presented as a series of ten trials, which he successfully negotiates (*Jub.* 17:17-18; 19:8; cf. *M. Aboth* 5.3). This motif is evidently an extension of the scriptural account of the divine “testing” of his faith and obedience in the command to sacrifice Isaac (Gen. 22:1).

Third, since the rewritten scriptures are not constrained by the need to follow the order of the source text in the same way as other forms of interpretation, such as lemmatized commentary, elements within the underlying narrative can be rearranged. In *Jubilees*, for example, Abraham and Jacob are depicted as interacting closely with each other over five chapters, even though the death of Abraham is recounted before the birth of his twin grandsons in Genesis. In this section, Abraham is shown bestowing special blessings on Jacob, and confirming him as the one true heir to the divine promises (*Jub.* 19:16-29; 22:10-30). This helps to smooth over some of the more questionable aspects of the Pentateuchal accounts, justifying Rebecca’s favoritism of Jacob over Esau (*Jub.* 19:15-31; cf. Gen. 25:28), for instance, and clarifying that Jacob’s acquisition of the right of primogeniture was not a result of underhand trickery, but was rather a fulfilment of what God had always intended, approved in advance by Abraham (*Jub.* 19:17-25; 22:10-15; cf. *Jub.* 2:20; 15:30; 26:24; *LAB* 18.6; Gen. 25:29-34). The effect on the overall narrative of *Jubilees*, however, is to minimize the significance of Isaac, as Abraham’s role extends further into the patriarchal history, and Jacob becomes active earlier in it.¹³

This reordering of events may serve a particular theological agenda, as argued especially by Halpern-Amaru, in underlining the transmission of Israel’s covenant inheritance through a single, pure, and divinely-chosen patriarchal line centering on Jacob.¹⁴ It is important to recognize, however, that this theme is not simply an ideological import, but has deep scriptural roots. The question of Abraham’s rightful heir is raised in the Pentateuch itself (e.g., Gen. 15:2-5; 17:19-21), for example, and the expectation that the covenant made with him will be fulfilled only through his descendants is frequently reaffirmed there (e.g. Gen. 12:7; 15:18; 17:7-8; 22:17-18; Exod. 32:13; Deut. 1:8). Furthermore, the chronology of the book of Genesis does allow for the interpretation that Abraham and Jacob overlapped

12. Extending or narrowing the range of meaning of a word has been identified as a rabbinic exegetical technique, so arguably is rooted in earlier interpretative practice; see A. Samely, *Rabbinic Interpretation of Scripture in the Mishnah* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 359–76.

13. This is noted by several commentators; Endres, for example, concludes that “Jacob clearly emerges as the central and pre-eminent character in *Jubilees*” (Endres, *Biblical Interpretation*, 18; see also pp. 19, 25–7, 43–7); cf. Vanderkam, *Jubilees*, 45, 54–6.

14. B. Halpern-Amaru, *Rewriting the Bible: Land and Covenant in Postbiblical Jewish Literature* (Valley Forge: Trinity Press International, 1994), 25–54.

for fifteen years (see Gen. 21:5; 25:7, 26; cf. Heb. 11:9 which may reflect such an understanding), and the connection between them is also highlighted in the application of the words of the divine blessing of Abraham to Jacob in his prayer for deliverance from Esau (*Jub.* 19:21-24; Gen. 32:9-12; cf. Gen. 12:2-3; 13:16).

The inclusion of supplementary material is the main tool employed in *Jubilees* to reshape the presentation of the patriarch and to fill in perceived gaps in the underlying scriptural accounts. Apart from his relationship with Jacob, the author demonstrates a particular interest in two periods of Abraham's life about which the book of Genesis provides very little information: his early years, before his call to journey to the promised land, and his last days and death. In extensive additions inserted at these points in his narrative, the author embellishes the character of Abraham in a number of ways, emphasizing especially his learning, prayerfulness, and opposition to idolatry. Abraham is said, therefore, to have possessed various kinds of knowledge, including of writing, astrology, and the Hebrew language (*Jub.* 11:8, 16; 12:25-27), and also to have been able, at a remarkably tender age, to teach the Chaldeans how to make more effective farming implements (*Jub.* 11:23). This motif of Abraham's exceptional wisdom is shared with other examples of rewritten scripture (see e.g. *Gen. Apoc.* 19.25; *Ant.* 1.167).

He is also depicted throughout *Jubilees* as a man of constant prayer. He is shown asking for divine guidance about whether to leave Haran, for instance (*Jub.* 12:19-21); regularly offering sacrifices (*Jub.* 13.4, 8-9; 14:11; cf. Gen. 12:8; 13:18); like Noah before him (*Jub.* 6:17-19; cf. 14:20), keeping the major festivals even before their prescription in the Mosaic Law (*Jub.* 15:1-2; 16:20-31; 18:18; 22:1); and praying in thanksgiving to God for the blessings of his life as he approaches his death (*Jub.* 22:6-9). The efficacy of Abraham's prayer is widely celebrated within early Jewish literature (see e.g. *T. Abr.* 14.5-15; *Gen. Apoc.* 20.12-23), in a development of the scriptural reports of his intercession on behalf of the people of Sodom (Gen. 18:22-33) and frequent direct converse with God (Gen. 12:1-3; 13:14-17; 15:1-21; 17:1-21; 21:12-13; 22:1-2, 11-12).

The principal theme in these expansions, though, is Abraham's strong rejection of idolatry. According to *Jubilees*, he even separates from his own father in his youth in order to avoid its futility (*Jub.* 11:16-17; 12:1-8). His hostility to idol-worship eventually culminates in his decision to burn a local temple, an event which causes his brother to lose his life and prompts the family's departure from Chaldea, a move which is unexplained in scripture (*Jub.* 12:12-15; cf. *Apoc. Abr.* 1-6; cf. Gen. 11:31-32). This passage reflects an interpretative connection between the place name "Ur" (Gen 11:28, 31) and the similar-sounding Hebrew word for "flame" אור (cf. *LAB* 6.1-18), thereby demonstrating the close attention paid by early Jewish interpreters to the individual words of scripture. The older Abraham continues to accentuate the dangers of both idolatry and close contact with gentiles in his ethical exhortations (e.g. *Jub.* 21.3-4; 22.16-22), so the importance of this message for the author is evident. This may be an indication of the *Sitz im Leben* of *Jubilees*; Vanderkam, for instance, argues that it was composed in the Maccabean period to oppose any accommodation to the Hellenizing reforms of Antiochus IV

Epiphanes.¹⁵ However, since the claim that Abraham's monotheism was the initial cause of his migration is not unique to *Jubilees* (see e.g. *Ant.* 1.155–57) and may reflect traditional exegesis, these passages do not provide decisive evidence about the work's historical setting. Indeed, this narrative may well have been created primarily to deal with the potentially problematic implication of a particular verse in the book of Joshua that Abraham himself participated in the worship of foreign gods: "Thus says the Lord, the God of Israel, 'Your fathers lived of old beyond the Euphrates, Terah, the father of Abraham and of Nahor; and they served other gods . . .'" (Josh. 24:2).¹⁶

Many of the supplementary passages included in *Jubilees* are written in the form of monologues or dialogues, and so increase the amount of direct speech present within a narrative that is already rich in direct speech, following the scriptural sources. This feature adds both vividness and a sense of authenticity to the retelling. Abraham's life ends in *Jubilees*, for example, with him giving a series of blessings and lengthy farewell speeches to his descendants (*Jub.* 19:26–22:30). In these, the author is able to express directly, and with apparent patriarchal authority, teaching that he wants his contemporary audience to hear.¹⁷ He is clearly drawing on the examples of the death-bed speeches of figures like Jacob (Gen. 49:1–27) and Moses (Deut. 31:30–33:29), perhaps on the basis of a hermeneutical assumption that if one of Israel's ancestors gave such a final testament, so, too, must others have done.

This axiom about the coherence of scripture prompts the author to draw out further correspondences between Abraham and other characters. His accounts of Abraham's early monotheism, for instance, reflect traditions about the destruction of a temple housing idols by Job (*T. Job* 2.1–5.3). An association between Abraham and the righteous-but-Satan-tested Job is also exploited in the development of the *Aqedah* narrative in *Jubilees*, in which responsibility for initiating this trial is attributed to Mastema, chief of the evil spirits (*Jub.* 17.15–18; cf. Job 1:1–12), thereby absolving God of any implication of cruelty (cf. 4Q225 2.i.9–10; *LAB* 32.1–2; *b. Sanh.* 89b; *Gen. Rab.* 55.4).¹⁸ In another non-scriptural expansion about Abraham's

15. Vanderkam, *Jubilees*, 139–41.

16. For similar attempts to distance Abraham from the paganism of his ancestors, see also e.g. *LAB* 23.5; *Judg.* 5:6–9. All biblical quotations in English in this chapter follow the RSV.

17. This use of the testamentary form to put forward theological or ethical teaching is exemplified particularly clearly in the *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs*. Abraham's testaments in *Jubilees* are treated at length in Van Ruiten, *Abraham in the Book of Jubilees*, 253–329.

18. Parallels between Job and the Abraham of *Jubilees* are suggested by a number of commentators; see e.g. J.C. Vanderkam, "The *Aqedah*, *Jubilees* and *Pseudojubilees*", in *The Quest for Context and Meaning: Studies in Biblical Intertextuality in Honor of James A. Sanders*, eds. C.A. Evans et al. (Biblical Interpretation Series, 28; Leiden: Brill, 1987), 241–62; and M. Kister, "Observations on Aspects of Exegesis, Tradition, and Theology in Midrash,

early life, he is described as saving the populace of Chaldea from starvation by turning away flocks of crows sent by Mastema at sowing time to eat all the seed before it had taken root (*Jub.* 11:11-13, 18-24). Here, Abraham takes on some of the attributes of Joseph, an Israelite who was likewise able to provide the inhabitants of a foreign land with sufficient food (*Gen.* 37:56-57).¹⁹ This story also echoes the first account in Genesis of the sealing of the covenant, in which Abraham prevents birds of prey from landing on the animal carcasses being offered (*Gen.* 15:11), so that his actions on one occasion are assumed to be capable of repeating at another.

The Abraham of *Jubilees* is, then, a very recognizable version of his scriptural counterpart, the founder of the people of Israel and the vehicle of God's covenant with them. He comes across, however, as a clearer model of virtue and proper behavior. His more questionable actions, like offering his wife to Pharaoh's harem in order to save his own skin, or laughing at a divine message, are smoothed over, and his wisdom, righteousness, and steadfast monotheism are enhanced. In important supplements to the Genesis narratives, which depend on a close engagement with the scriptures as a whole, correspondences between Abraham and other key biblical figures, such as Noah, Jacob, Joseph, and Job, are highlighted.

The Genesis Apocryphon

The Qumran discoveries raise fresh questions about the scope and form of rewritten scripture, such as whether the category should be expanded to include revised and expanded biblical manuscripts like the *Reworked Pentateuch* (4Q158 or 4QRP), or works like the *Temple Scroll* (11QT), which re-presents legal rather than narrative material.²⁰ Only the *Genesis Apocryphon* however (1Q20 or

Pseudepigrapha, and Other Jewish Writings", in *Tracing the Threads: Studies in the Vitality of the Jewish Pseudepigrapha*, ed. J. Reeves (SBLJL, 6; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 1994), 1-34. Van Ruiten, however, stresses rather important differences between Job and Abraham in his "Abraham, Job and the *Book of Jubilees*: The Intertextual Relationship of *Genesis* 22:1-19, *Job* 1:1-2:13 and *Jubilees* 17:15-18:19", in *The Sacrifice of Isaac: The Aqedah (Genesis 22) and its Interpretations*, eds. E. Noort et al. (TBN, 4; Leiden: Brill, 2001), 58-85.

19. This episode is discussed in some detail in Van Ruiten, *Abraham in the Book of Jubilees*, 27-30. Similar traditions in Syriac sources are highlighted in S. Brock, "Abraham and the Ravens: A Syriac Counterpart to *Jubilees* 11-12 and its Implications", *JSJ* 9 (1978): 132-52. Some commentators see this tale involving literal seed as a metaphor for the future establishment of Abraham's "seed" or descendants in the land; see e.g. C.D. Crawford, "On the Exegetical Function of the Abraham/Ravens Tradition in *Jubilees* 11", *HTR* 97, no. 1 (2004): 91-7 (93-4).

20. For a helpful overview of this debate, see M. Bernstein, "'Rewritten Bible': A Generic Category Which Has Outlived its Usefulness?", *Textus* 22 (2005): 169-96.

1QapGen)—found in Cave 1 in a single, though incomplete, copy—has so far achieved wide (albeit not universal) acceptance as an example of the genre. Doubts have been expressed about this classification, because it is written in Aramaic, prompting suggestions that it is closer to an interpretative translation like the targumim.²¹ In addition, large parts of the narrative are presented as first-person speech, and often differ markedly from the Pentateuchal sources. Nevertheless, given that the rewritten scriptures characteristically include substantial supplements, and were not all composed in Hebrew (cf. Josephus's *Jewish Antiquities*), this term remains the best description for the *Genesis Apocryphon*. The text appears to draw on a number of sources, and shares some exegetical, chronological, and geographical traditions with the Enochic literature and with *Jubilees*. There is, however, no settled consensus as to whether it was written after and in dependence on *Jubilees*, or vice versa, or if both authors made independent use of common material.²² Its composition is usually dated to the second century BCE,²³ and the language and handwriting of the scroll itself to the first century BCE.²⁴

The extant text covers Genesis 5:18–15:4, approximately, but the original work was almost certainly more extensive. The first seventeen, often-fragmentary columns, focus on the antediluvian patriarchs, primarily Noah, demonstrating a particular interest in his unusual conception and his visionary powers. An evident emphasis on the legitimacy of Noah's parentage may reflect a concern similar to that present in *Jubilees* to defend the purity of Israel's ancestral line (*Gen. Apoc.* 4.14–16; cf. e.g. *Jub.* 19.16–29). This section illustrates several of the exegetical techniques commonly employed within rewritten scripture, including the creation of new narratives about the early lives of scriptural characters, and the insertion of additional dialogue (see e.g., *Gen. Apoc.* 2.3–18; 19.17–21).

The retelling of the Abraham Cycle is found in columns 19 to 22, although it probably began in the now badly damaged column 18. This part of the scroll is reasonably intact, and the scriptural source is followed more closely than is the case in the earlier treatment of Noah. The surviving narrative opens just before Abraham's excursion into Egypt at the time of the famine, goes on to cover his

21. See e.g., M.R. Lehmann, "1Q Genesis Apocryphon in the Light of the Targumim and Midrashim", *RevQ* 1 (1958–59): 249–63.

22. See e.g., J.L. Kugel, "Which is Older, Jubilees or the *Genesis Apocryphon*? An Exegetical Approach", in *The Dead Sea Scrolls and Contemporary Culture: Proceedings of the International Conference held at the Israel Museum, Jerusalem (July 6–8, 2008)*, eds. A.D. Roitman et al. (STDJ, 93; Leiden: Brill, 2010), 257–94.

23. For further detail on dating, see e.g., D.A. Machiela, *The Dead Sea Genesis Apocryphon: A New Text and Translation with Introduction and Special Treatment of Columns 13–17* (STDJ, 79; Leiden: Brill, 2009), 8–17, 141.

24. See e.g., the early detailed study by E.Y. Kutscher, "Dating the Language of the *Genesis Apocryphon*", *JBL* 76 (1957): 288–92.

separation from Lot and his involvement in the battle with the kings, and then ends abruptly mid-way through his discussion with God about whether Eliezer would be his heir (see Gen. 12:7–15:4). There is no way of knowing how much more of the book of Genesis was originally rewritten, nor whether extra information about Abraham's life before his call was provided, as is the case in both *Jubilees* and the *Biblical Antiquities*.

It is the account of Abraham's time in Egypt which receives the greatest elaboration in the *Genesis Apocryphon*. Abraham is presented here as speaking in the first person, perhaps to add vividness and dramatic effect to the narrative, or to enhance its authority, creating the impression that the audience are now privy to what the patriarch really said and thought. He is, for instance, shown weeping with distress at Sarah's removal into Pharaoh's harem (*Gen. Apoc.* 20.10, 16; cf. the sadness he later feels at parting from his nephew Lot, *Gen. Apoc.* 21.7). The author's main concern, however, appears to be to justify Abraham's rather questionable behavior on this occasion. He thus includes a description of a warning dream he experiences on the night he crosses over the Egyptian border, in which he sees a palm tree saving a cedar tree from being destroyed by people. In discussion of this dream with his wife, they realize that its message is that, as they travel on, he (the cedar) must ask Sarah (the palm tree) to pretend to be his sister in order to save his life (*Gen. Apoc.* 19.14–22). This supplementary passage makes clear, then, that Abraham's deception is approved in advance by both God and his wife. It also helps to fill in some of the gaps in the scriptural version of this episode, explaining, for instance, how Abraham knew that he would be in danger in Egypt (cf. Gen. 12:11–13), and later how Pharaoh eventually learned from Lot of the real relationship between Abraham and Sarah (*Gen. Apoc.* 20.22–23). The order of events is also slightly rearranged, so that Abraham receives gifts from Pharaoh only after he has healed him and Sarah has been returned to him. This is a less problematic sequence than that recorded in Genesis, where Abraham is rewarded as soon as Sarah is taken away from him (*Gen. Apoc.* 20.27–33; Gen. 12:15–16); this difficulty is already addressed in the second scriptural narrative of his journeys abroad to escape famine (Gen. 20:14–16). Abraham's virtue and special status are thus enhanced, and his superior learning is highlighted, as in other rewritten scriptures: the Egyptians look to him for wisdom and truth, for example, and he is able to read and so pass on the ancient teaching of Enoch (*Gen. Apoc.* 19.25).

The motif of the efficacy of Abraham's prayer, present in the parallel Genesis narrative of his dealings with Abimelech, is also heightened here (*Gen. Apoc.* 20.21–29; Gen. 20:17), and elsewhere in the text, where, as in *Jubilees*, he is shown repeatedly building altars and offering thanksgiving sacrifices (*Gen. Apoc.* 21.1–4). This rewriting of Abraham's time in Egypt may be partly intended to harmonize Genesis chapters 12 and 20, then, since it also details the physical afflictions visited on the Pharaoh which prevent him from defiling Sarah (*Gen. Apoc.* 20.16–29; Gen. 20:3–7, 17–18).

As is frequently the case in the rewritten scriptures, this narrative brings out underlying correspondences between biblical characters and events. Abraham's symbolic dream, for instance, links him to Joseph and Daniel, who are both saved

from harm at the hands of foreign rulers through their ability to interpret dreams (Gen. 40:9-19; 41:17-36; Dan. 2:1-49; 4:4-27). Joseph's location in Egypt activates this connection, and Abraham's dream shares with Nebuchadnezzar's the specific image of a tree threatened with destruction (*Gen. Apoc.* 19.14-17; Dan. 4:10-14). Earlier in the text, Noah also receives a vision about the cutting down of some trees and his own establishment as a great cedar (*Gen. Apoc.* 13.9-14.7). The author's intention to present Noah and Abraham as parallel figures is clear, then, especially as Noah is also addressed with words reminiscent of those spoken in scripture to Abraham: "Do not be afraid, Noah, I am with you and with your sons . . ." (*Gen. Apoc.* 11.15; cf. Gen. 15:1).²⁵

Abraham's actions also appear to be interpreted here in the light of analogies with the Exodus narratives, which depict another Egyptian ruler suffering plagues as part of God's plan to save the Israelites, and show Moses as more powerful than all of the Pharaoh's magicians (*Gen. Apoc.* 20.18-21; cf. e.g., Exod. 7:8-12).²⁶ The lengthy, poetic expansion in the *Genesis Apocryphon* of the brief notice about Sarah's beauty (Gen. 12:15) is also influenced in both form and content by scriptural models, drawn especially from the wisdom literature (*Gen. Apoc.* 20.1-8; cf. Song 4:1-5; 6:4-7; 7:1-9; Prov. 31:10-31).

The retelling of the subsequent Abraham narratives closely follows the scriptural sequence and content, without much supplementation. The separation with Lot is summarized and arguably minimized, with care being taken to ensure that no blame for it should be attached to Abraham (*Gen. Apoc.* 21.6-7). His righteousness and virtue are intensified in this account of the aftermath of the battle with the kings, as, in addition to refusing any of the spoils of war, he also frees all those who were taken prisoner (*Gen. Apoc.* 22.24-26; Gen. 14:22-24). Although the covenant narratives themselves are not discussed in the surviving fragments, the divine promises of descendants and land, repeated to Abraham after his parting from Lot in Genesis, are included here (*Gen. Apoc.* 21.12-14; Gen. 13:14-17). The precise descriptions given of the extent of this promised land may indicate a concern with proving the ownership and occupancy rights to it of contemporary Israelites (*Gen. Apoc.* 19.12-13; cf. 16.9-17.19; 21.8-22).

The presentation of Abraham in the *Genesis Apocryphon* is more limited than that of *Jubilees*, partly as a result of its fragmentary extant state, and there are no clues about the way in which this author may have treated those events of the patriarch's life which generated most interest among other early Jewish interpreters, such as his call, the covenant, and the aborted sacrifice of Isaac. This work does,

25. All translations of the *Genesis Apocryphon* in this chapter are taken from F. Garcia Martinez and E.J.C. Tigchelaar, *The Dead Sea Scrolls Study Edition* (Leiden: Brill/Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), Vol. 1, 28-49.

26. The use of intertextuality in this section of the text is explored particularly in M.J. Bernstein, "The *Genesis Apocryphon*: Compositional and Interpretive Perspectives", in *A Companion to Biblical Interpretation in Early Judaism*, ed. M. Henze (Grand Rapids/Cambridge, UK: Eerdmans, 2012), 157-79 (173-4).

however, resemble other examples of rewritten scripture in offering a version of Abraham who is even more righteous and prayerful than his scriptural counterpart, who expresses his thoughts and emotions more fully, and whose connections with other significant figures, such as Noah, Joseph, Moses, and Daniel are highlighted.

Biblical Antiquities

The final example of rewritten scripture to be included in this study is the *Biblical Antiquities*, also known as *LAB* (from the initials of its Latin title, *Liber Antiquitatum Biblicarum*). Its author is unnamed, but is often referred to as *Pseudo-Philo*, because the text was transmitted together with Latin versions of the writings of Philo of Alexandria. He provides an often free re-telling of the scriptural narratives from the time of Adam to the death of Saul, substantially summarizing some sections, whilst greatly embellishing others. Now extant only in Latin, *LAB* was almost certainly composed originally in Hebrew, then translated into Greek, and from Greek into Latin. It is generally dated towards the end of the first century CE, although there have been occasional attempts to place it later.²⁷ The Abraham Cycle is not retold fully in it, nor presented in straightforward chronological order, but many of its central episodes are at least alluded to. This rewriting shares with *Jubilees* a particular interest in Abraham's early life, and an emphasis on the centrality of the covenant made with him.

Pseudo-Philo's treatment of the patriarch exemplifies several of his most characteristic exegetical techniques. First, he introduces Abraham early in his narrative, in two "flashforwards" in which his birth and future role in the establishment of the covenant are predicted, initially by one of his ancestors, and then by God himself (*LAB* 4.11; 7.4). These establish both the significance and the righteousness of Abraham from the outset, and also subtly point to correspondences between him and Noah, the first recipient of God's covenant, and an equally "blameless" figure (*LAB* 3.4; 4.11).

Second, the author includes additional material which fills in perceived gaps in the scriptural accounts, removes any suggestion that Israel's founding ancestor was

27. There is no clear indication of date or provenance within the text, so inferences have to be drawn from, for example, the form of the biblical quotations, or any references to the Temple (e.g. *LAB* 13.1; 19.7; 22.8; 26.15). For arguments for a date post-70 CE, see H. Jacobson, *A Commentary on Pseudo-Philo's Liber Antiquitatum Biblicarum with Latin Text and English Translation* (2 vols.; AGAJU, 31; Leiden: Brill, 1996), Vol. 1, 195–212. A slightly earlier date in the first century CE is preferred by a number of other commentators, however: see D.J. Harrington, "Pseudo-Philo", in *OTP*, Vol. 2, 297–377 (299); and C. Perrot and P.-M. Bogaert, *Les antiquités bibliques. Tome 2: introduction littéraire, commentaire et index* (SC, 230; Paris: Editions du Cerf, 1976), 67–70. For a more recent argument that it was produced by a Latin-speaking Jewish community in Rome in the third or fourth century CE, see T. Ilan, "The Torah of the Jews of Ancient Rome", *JSQ* 16 (2009): 363–95.

an idolater, and generally highlights his virtues. In an important expansion describing Abraham's life prior to his call, for instance, he inserts him into the Tower of Babel episode (*LAB* 6.3–18; cf. 23.5; 32.1; Gen. 11:1–9). In this narrative, Abraham and eleven others, including his kinsmen Nahor and Lot, are shown refusing to join the rest of the population of Babylon in making the bricks for the tower's construction—an activity possibly understood as carrying magical overtones (*LAB* 6.2)²⁸ even when threatened with death by fire. Abraham alone resists an offer of help to escape the country from a well-disposed chief, Joktan, confident in God's power to protect and save him (*LAB* 6.4–11). As a consequence, he is thrown into a furnace by his adversaries, but remains completely unharmed, while 83,500 (a typically exaggerated figure, see e.g. *LAB* 43.8; 46.2–3) of those who gather to watch his killing are themselves burned alive (*LAB* 6.17). Abraham is presented here, then, as an exceptional character who stands out from all others,²⁹ and his bravery, righteousness, and trust in the one true God are all emphasized. This serves both to explain his election as the recipient of the covenant, and to enhance his suitability as a role model for later generations, who may face similar dilemmas about how far to participate in the idolatrous practices of their gentile neighbors, a subject on which it appears that *Pseudo-Philo* takes a particularly uncompromising stance.

This supplementary narrative may have been created partly to interpret an otherwise unexplained scriptural reference to Abraham having been “redeemed” (presumably from some dangerous situation) by God (Isa. 29:22). It is an important illustration of the author's exegetical method, however, as it deliberately links two events (the building of the Tower of Babel and the call of Abraham) which are adjacent to one another, but not explicitly related, in the book of Genesis.³⁰ This is part of the wider hermeneutical approach underpinning the rewritten scriptures, in which connections between originally discrete texts and characters are consistently drawn out. This passage, for instance, is clearly inspired by the early chapters of the book of Daniel, in which another scriptural hero, together with his companions, remains steadfast in his rejection of the idolatry of the Chaldeans despite the threat of death by fire, and whose faith brings about his deliverance (Dan. 1:1–3:30; cf. Daniel 6).³¹ Specific parallels between Abraham and Daniel

28. This is suggested by Bogaert, but is rejected by Jacobson: see P.-M. Bogaert, *Abraham dans la Bible et dans la tradition Juive* (Brussels: Institutum Iudaicum, 1977), 48; and Jacobson, *Commentary*, Vol. 1, 355–6.

29. The extent to which Abraham is strongly contrasted with all his contemporaries in *LAB* chapters 6–8 is drawn out particularly in P.-M. Bogaert, *Abraham dans la Bible*, 51.

30. See also e.g., the definite causal link made between the pronouncement of the law about tasseled garments and Korah's rebellion against Moses (*LAB* 16.1; cf. Num. 15:37–16:3).

31. Compare the use of scriptural models to develop the character of Kenaz in *LAB* chapters 25–28.

include the details that all those who accuse them suffer the very fate intended for them (Dan. 3:22; 6:24; *LAB* 6.17); that both are addressed by a gentile ruler as servants of God (Dan. 3:26; *LAB* 6.11); and that Joktan is as reluctant to punish Abraham as King Darius is to throw Daniel into the lions' den (Dan. 6:14; *LAB* 6.6).

After this rather dramatic introduction to Abraham, the main events of his life are summarized in just a few lines, including his journey to Canaan, his parting from Lot, the birth of Ishmael from his concubine Hagar, the making of the covenant, and the conception of Isaac (*LAB* 8.1–4). The whole patriarchal history is retold very succinctly at this point in the *Biblical Antiquities*, and without the kind of elaboration with which the later period of the Judges is treated.³² Such selectivity enables the authors of rewritten scripture to emphasize those parts of their source which they consider particularly important or relevant for their audiences. Despite this economical coverage of the Abraham Cycle here, however, the actual covenant promises made to him are stated: “And God appeared to Abram, saying, “To your seed I will give this land, and your name will be called Abraham, and Sarai, your wife, will be called Sarah. And I will give to you from her an everlasting seed, and I will establish my covenant with you” (*LAB* 8.3).³³ This is not a verbatim reproduction of any one Genesis text, but unmistakably draws from several passages, especially the second account of the establishment of the covenant (Gen. 17:2–8, 15–21). The frequent use of direct speech and divine announcements (see e.g., *LAB* 7.4; 10.2; 12.4; 14.2; 18.5; 23.5–7; cf. 49.6) to encapsulate particularly important information within summary passages, is a striking feature of the *Biblical Antiquities*.³⁴

As in the other rewritten scriptural texts, a large amount of new dialogue and direct speech is also added into the narrative, thereby heightening the authority, immediacy, and ongoing relevance of the teaching presented. For instance, *Pseudo-Philo* creates a number of lengthy speeches in which major characters review Israel's history. Within these, he frequently employs the device of retelling scriptural

32. Some commentators argue that *Pseudo-Philo's* evident interest in this era indicates that he perceived a need for a new kind of leadership for the people of his own time, inspired by the bold, decisive and law-observant judges of the past; see especially G.W.E. Nickelsburg, “Good and Bad Leaders in *Pseudo-Philo's Liber Antiquitatum Biblicarum*”, in *Ideal Figures in Ancient Judaism: Profiles and Paradigms*, eds. G.W.E. Nickelsburg et al. (Ann Arbor: Scholars Press, 1980), 49–65.

33. The English translation of *LAB* used throughout is that provided in Harrington, “Pseudo-Philo”.

34. A similar tendency to retain direct speech within speeches and reviews of history, is also in evidence in sections of the New Testament, such as Stephen's speech before his stoning (Acts 7:3, 7). For a fuller examination of this feature, see S.E. Docherty, “Why So Much Talk? Direct Speech as a Literary and Exegetical Device in Rewritten Bible with Special Reference to *Pseudo-Philo's Biblical Antiquities*”, *Svensk Exegetisk Årsbok* 82 (2017): 52–75.

events out of sequential order by means of “flashbacks.” The events of Abraham’s life thus receive further interpretation in speeches attributed to Balaam, Joshua, and Deborah (*LAB* 18.5–6; 23.4–8; 32.1–4). In two of these passages, the offering of Isaac, omitted from the initial summary of the Abraham Cycle (*LAB* 8.1–4), is recalled (*LAB* 18.5; 32.2–4; cf. the further allusion to the *Akedah* in the context of the sacrificial death of Jephthah’s daughter in 40.2).³⁵ This episode is sketched only in outline in these speeches, but with important interpretative amplifications, some of which also appear elsewhere in early Jewish tradition. As in *Jubilees*, for example, this incident is said to have been prompted by the jealousy of the angels towards Abraham (*LAB* 32.3; *Jub.* 17:15–16; cf. *Gen. Rab.* 55.4), and, as in Josephus, Isaac is presented as accepting his fate joyfully (*LAB* 18.5; *Ant.* 1.232). These developments are doubtless partly a response to concerns that the *Akedah* narrative, as it is recorded in scripture, presents neither God nor Abraham in an especially favorable light, and they may also have been prompted by questions about what “words” or “things” (Hebrew דברים) immediately preceded God’s request that Abraham sacrifice his son according to Genesis 22:1.

Pseudo-Philo’s retelling of the *Akedah* is shaped above all, however, by his ability to discover and exploit intertextual connections from right across the scriptures. In emphasizing the voluntary nature of Isaac’s offering within Deborah’s speech (*LAB* 32.3), for instance, he is subtly interacting with the motif present in the scriptural song of Deborah, that the Israelites and their leaders offered themselves willingly in battle on behalf of the people (*Judg.* 5:2, 9).³⁶ Balaam’s address also highlights correspondences between God’s promises of blessings to Abraham, the blessing of Jacob after he wrestles with God, and Balaam’s words to Balak in the book of Numbers about blessing and cursing: “And do you propose to go forth with them to curse whom I have chosen? But if you curse them, who will there be to bless you?” (*LAB* 18.6; cf. *Gen.* 12:2–3; 32:28–29; *Num.* 22:6, 12; 23:8, 11; 24:9). These connections are implicit in the scriptural Balaam narrative itself, and are recognized by other early Jewish interpreters, such as Josephus (*Ant.* 4.116).³⁷

Similarly, *Pseudo-Philo*’s version of Joshua’s covenant renewal speech (*LAB* 23.4–8) enriches this base-text (*Josh.* 24:2–3) by bringing together several other scriptural references to Abraham, including the Genesis narratives (*Gen.* 12:1–2; 15:1–21; cf. 11:29) and the description in Isaiah of Abraham as the “rock” from

35. A number of studies treat in detail the presentation of the *Akedah* in *LAB* and its possible influence on early Christian understanding of the death of Jesus; see e.g., Vermes, *Scripture and Tradition*, 193–227; R.J. Daly, “The Soteriological Significance of the Sacrifice of Isaac,” *CBQ* 39, no. 1 (1977): 45–75; and J. Swetnam, *Jesus and Isaac: A Study of the Epistle to the Hebrews in the Light of the Aqedah* (AB, 94; Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1981).

36. This connection is discussed in B.N. Fisk, “Offering Isaac Again and Again: Pseudo-Philo’s Use of the Aqedah as Intertext,” *CBQ* 62, no. 3 (2000): 481–507 (493). For a full discussion of the structure and content of this speech, see A. Livneh, “Deborah’s New Song: The Historical Résumé in *LAB* 32:1–11 in Context,” *JSJ* 48 (2017): 203–45.

37. See further Fisk, “Offering Isaac Again and Again,” 483–4.

which the people of Israel are quarried (Isa. 51:1-2). In a final interesting allusion to the Abraham Cycle within this passage, the nations are envisaged acknowledging the faithfulness of the people of Israel in a clear echo of the statement in Genesis that Abraham's faith was reckoned to him as righteousness: "Behold a faithful people! Because they believed in the Lord, therefore the Lord freed them and planted them" (*LAB* 23.12; cf. Gen. 15:6). This scriptural verse is re-applied to Abraham's descendants, then, and so made directly relevant to the author's own audience, who can hope in God's constant protection from their enemies as long as they remain faithful.

The treatment of Abraham in the *Biblical Antiquities* may be briefer than that found in either *Jubilees* or the *Genesis Apocryphon*, then, but it nevertheless demonstrates the author's convictions about the patriarch's righteousness, faith in the one God of Israel, and enduring significance as the chosen vehicle of the eternal covenant. His depiction of Abraham is enhanced by the employment of several exegetical techniques characteristic of the rewritten scripture genre, particularly the inclusion of extra-scriptural material and the underscoring of his connections with other characters, such as Noah, Jacob, and Daniel.

Conclusions

The Abraham who emerges from the pages of these works of rewritten scripture is recognizably related to the patriarch of Genesis, but is both a smoothed-out and a fuller figure. Perceived gaps in the underlying scriptural accounts, such as the lack of information about his life before his move to Canaan, are filled in; potential problems, including his pagan origins, are addressed; his more dubious actions, like sending his wife into Pharaoh's harem to protect himself, are toned down or omitted; and he can give voice to his innermost thoughts and emotions. Almost all the main events of the Abraham Cycle are retold in detail or alluded to in these texts, but their authors go beyond their source in various ways in order to embellish his righteousness, piety, learning, and suitability as a model for emulation. Both *Jubilees* and the *Biblical Antiquities* pay particular attention to the period before his call, his role in the covenant, and the offering of Isaac. The treatment of Abraham in the extant text of the *Genesis Apocryphon* is only partial, but this author shares a similar concern to exonerate him from any hint of wrongdoing and to enhance his virtues.

The re-presentation of Abraham in these three texts does not provide any definite information about their historical setting or theological purposes, since motifs such as his opposition to idolatry and his prayerfulness are similarly accented within early Jewish literature more broadly. Other emphases detected in them, such as the Israelites' ancient claim to their land, or the importance of covenant faithfulness even under threat, would suit a range of time periods and social contexts equally well.

This investigation does highlight, however, some exegetical techniques employed prominently across this genre. First, it is above all by means of the

inclusion of additional material that the figure of Abraham is reshaped, rather than through other kinds of alteration of the Genesis accounts. The scriptural narratives can certainly be adapted, through re-ordering, summary, and omission, for example, but outside of the major expansions such changes are often minor and limited in scope. The example of the reading “rejoice” for “laugh” in the description of Abraham’s response to the suggestion that his elderly wife would bear a son, is an illustration of this tendency to remain close to the Pentateuchal sources where possible (*Jub.* 15:17; *Gen.* 17:17). Second, these supplements often take the form of direct speech—monologues, dialogues, prayers, dream reports, and so on—a feature which adds vividness, immediacy, and authority to the presentation of Abraham’s life. Since a considerable amount of the original direct speech is retained even when an episode is being summarized (e.g. *LAB* 8.1–3), or else is re-applied to other characters (e.g. *Gen. Apoc.* 11.15; *LAB* 23.12), scriptural speech may have been accorded a special status by these interpreters, who therefore sought to preserve and accurately reproduce these divine words.

Third, these texts are all characterized by a deep awareness of the intertextuality of the scriptures. The “flashback” method employed by *Pseudo-Philo* exemplifies particularly clearly this interpretative aim of highlighting the implicit connections between events and characters. However, such correspondences are drawn out in *Jubilees* and the *Genesis Apocryphon* too, and all three re-presentations of Abraham are influenced by perceived correlations between him and a range of other major figures in Israel’s story, most notably the first recipient of the covenant, Noah, but also Jacob, Joseph, Daniel, Moses, and Job. These authors therefore approached the scriptural narratives expecting to find in them recurring patterns and analogies, and they appear to have extended this hermeneutical axiom to the entire lives of their characters: thus, what Abraham does once (for example, pass a divine test, or drive away circling birds), he can do again; what one person does (such as escape from a furnace, or make a final testament), others can do; and if individuals share one thing in common (birth outside of Israel, for instance, like Abraham and Job, or time spent in Egypt, like Abraham and Joseph), other points of connection between them can be assumed. This form of exegesis depends on a detailed engagement with the scriptures as a whole, but also on a close reading of their individual words, as illustrated, for instance, in the link made between the place name “Ur” and the Hebrew word for “flame” (*Jub.* 12:14; *LAB* 6.1–18). The rewritten scriptures are primarily exegetical rather than ideological in their motivation, then, and share with other forms of early Jewish interpretation a commitment to the internal coherence, truth, and ongoing relevance of the scriptures.