Paul among the Storytellers: Reading Romans 11 in the Context of Rewritten Bible

Only a generation ago it was possible for a ranking Pauline scholar to offer a learned treatise on Paul’s relationship to Palestinian Judaism and say virtually nothing about how Scripture functioned in either context. The quest for Paul’s “Jewishness” that E. P. Sanders (among others1) inspired, however, combined with the increasing availability of primary sources and the literary turn in late 20th century biblical scholarship, meant it was inevitable that Paul’s use of Scripture would come to be compared closely with the way scripture functions among the traditions of 2nd Temple Judaism. Thus today the claim that Paul’s use of scripture bears a family resemblance to that of other 2nd Temple traditions requires little or no defense. The following claims are not meant to be controversial.

1. **Oral tradition.** As a trained Pharisee, Paul inherited a rich tradition of oral biblical interpretation (1 Cor 10:4; cf. Ga 1:14; Ac 22:3). As James Kugel has elegantly demonstrated, these early oral traditions included a “common store of biblical exegesis” as well as a set of common orientations, sensibilities, understandings of canon, concerns for contemporary relevance, etc.2

2. **Biblical commentary.** Paul’s appeals to Scripture were not principally driven by his desire to explain the OT. The commentary genre was, after all, relatively undeveloped in Paul’s day.3 However much his oral discourses and synagogue sermons included running biblical commentary, Paul’s apostolic correspondence was less expositional than it was theological, pastoral and rhetorical.

3. **Exegetical rules.** Paul does not expound scripture by systematically applying pre-existing exegetical rules. More determinative than received techniques were his newly-formed convictions about the centrality of Jesus’ death and resurrection in God’s plan for both Israel and the nations.4

4 **Worldview.** Although Paul’s approach to Scripture tended to be charismatic and imaginative, he remained firmly grounded in prevailing Jewish theology, including its eschatological expectations, its assumptions about biblical and historical continuity, and its assurance of God’s covenant faithfulness.

*Paul the Storyteller*

These days no one claims that the role of scripture in pre-rabbinic Judaism was monolithic, nor that Paul’s “Jewishness” precluded “Hellenistic” influences on his biblical inter-

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1E.g., J. Bonsirven (1939), W. D. Davies (1948), J. A. Fitzmyer (1960).
3I define *commentary* as explanatory composition that demarcates clearly between authoritative *traditum* and its *traditio*. (I take this pair of terms from Michael Fishbane, *Biblical Interpretation in Ancient Israel* [Oxford, 1985], 6 et passim, who in turn credits D. Knight.) Early exemplars are Philo’s allegories and Qumran’s pesher. As for whether such works were *typical* of early Jewish interpretation, see further, J. Kugel, *Potiphar*.
pretation. What is broadly acknowledged is that Paul’s varied uses of scripture—including his assumptions, citation techniques, hermeneutical strategies and rhetorical appeals—lie well within the broad spectrum of Jewish exegetical literature produced during the 2nd Temple period. Paul, all agree, did not invoke Scripture in a hermeneutical vacuum: the Scripture Paul knew, and to which he frequently appealed, was always Scripture-interpreted. Israel didn’t simply drink from a rock; it “drank from a spiritual, following rock” (1 Cor 10:4). That Paul could cite as Scripture a Greek translation of the “original” illustrates nicely the fuzzy boundary between traditum and traditio. Sharp distinctions between Paul’s text and its interpretation, then, may be anachronistic and historically naïve. Paul is certainly more than the sum of his post-biblical influences, but his often novel Christo- and ecclesio-centric readings of Scripture are more than ex nihilo. If Paul-the-interpreter was sometimes more radical than some of his peers, if he had his own unique exegetical spin, it was not because he stood outside the Jewish exegetical tradition but because, standing within it, he read his text-tradition by a different light: the afterglow of the resurrection of a crucified messiah.

The aim of this paper is to offer further evidence that, on this matter of interpreting Israel’s Scriptures, there are good reasons to bring Paul into conversation with his Jewish contemporaries. More narrowly it will contend that Paul’s letters share several notable features with the genre known to us, since Geza Vermes, as rewritten Bible. Member of this collection—Jubilees, Genesis Apocryphon, Pseudo-Philo’s Liber Antiquitatum Biblicarum, Josephus’ Antiquities, Philo’s Moses—model their narrative framework on Scripture’s historical books, but rarely do they distinguish post-biblical traditions from biblical material. Their biblical exegesis is thus implicit and unmarked, advanced through narrative embellishments, omissions and alterations. Often they assume their readers’ knowledge of the biblical precursor. These works of so-called rewritten Bible (RB) represent a vibrant early stage of Jewish biblical interpretation inspired by, and extended from, the exegesis latent within the Hebrew Bible itself. I would argue that RB remains an under-utilized resource in the task of assessing Paul’s appropriations of Scripture in his Jewish context. Indeed, Pseudo-Philo—arguably the least sectarian and most “Palestinian” of the bunch—may rank among the most illuminating of Paul’s hermeneutical con-

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6Reflecting the current consensus on Paul’s principle relationship with the Greek OT are D.-A. Koch, Die Schrift als Zeuge des Evangeliums: Untersuchungen zur Verwendung und zum Verständnis der Schrift bei Paulus (BHT 69; Mohr-Siebeck, 1986); C. D. Stanley, Paul and the Language of Scripture: Citation Technique in the Pauline Epistles and Contemporary Literature. (SNTSMS 74; Cambridge, 1992); and J. R. Wagner, Heralds of the Good News (Brill, 2002).

7See Fisk, Do You Not Remember? 77-78; Hays, Echoes, 11.

8This point emerged clearly in the “post-Echoes” dialogue between Richard Hays, Craig Evans and James Sanders. In substantial agreement with Evans, Hays writes, “Paul’s discourse is performed within the linguistic symphony (or cacophony, as the case may be) of his culture.” See C. A. Evans and J. A. Sanders, eds., Paul and the Scriptures of Israel (JSNTSup 83; JSOT, 1993). The quotation is from Richard B. Hays, The Conversion of the Imagination: Paul as Interpreter of Israel’s Scripture (Eerdmans, 2005), 155, where Hays’ response is reprinted. Cf. Hagner, “Paul in Modern Jewish Thought,” 157-159.

9E.g., IQapGen 21:5; Juc 31:2; LAB 2:1: 9:3; 12:5; 18:5.

position partners. Both Paul and Pseudo-Philo wrote to assure readers that God’s rule was intact and that God’s plan was unfolding as it should, both advanced these claims through lively engagement with Scripture, and both believed that God’s intimate, sustained involvement in Israel’s affairs meant that meaningful correspondences in history were inevitable. But whereas Pseudo-Philo found those correspondences between episodes in the sacred past, Paul made connections between Israel’s past and her present, between the stories of Scripture and the new story of Jesus.

Toward these ends, we shall consider closely Paul’s use of biblical narrative in Romans 11:1-7, noting how he draws on compositional techniques and hermeneutical strategies found also in RB. This is not to offer RB as the new “hermeneutical key” to Paul (replacing midrash, the favorite of a previous generation). It is, however, a call to give full attention to the narratival dimensions of both scripture and Paul’s use of it, including those features of his use that he shares with contemporaries who likewise trade in the currency of Israel’s stories. And it is to suggest that we are likely to read Paul differently when we approach him as a story-teller, a species of novelist rather than as, say, a legistic sage, an impassioned rhetor or an ad hoc pastoral trouble-shooter.

A People Abandoned?

Romans 10 ends with Paul’s gaze fixed on Israel’s disobedience and rebellion. Chapter 11 begins with Paul denying what might seem to be the dark corollary—that God has now abandoned faithless, sinful Israel and turned to the Gentiles whose salvation, Paul has argued, Scripture has foreseen and foretold. Paul’s case that God has not rejected τὸν λαόν αὐτοῦ rests on two (arguably interlocking) arguments. He points first to himself (11:1b), then to the Scriptures (11:2b). The emphatic καὶ γὰρ, for indeed, and the litany of self-designations—Ἰσραήλιτης, ἐκ σπέρματος Ἀβραάμ, φυλής Βεναμίν—suggest that Paul means to present himself as compelling “empirical evidence” in the case for God’s faithfulness to the line of Jacob. The point is not that Paul speaks as a Jew but that Paul is one—an Israelite from Abraham’s seed and Benjamin’s

11Cf. F. Murphy, Pseudo-Philo 16, 226; H. Jacobson, A Commentary on Pseudo-Philo’s Liber Antiquitatum Bibliarum (2 vols.; Brill, 1996), 241; R. Bauckham, “Pseudo-Philo and the Gospels,” 41. Tracing these themes across 2nd Temple literature is N. T. Wright, New Testament and the People of God, 215-223. Like Paul’s, Pseudo-Philo’s claims about correlations in history reflected his hermeneutical convictions about scripture—that it is a coherent and self-interpreting narrative. Scripture was not simply a fund of wisdom sayings, rhetorical devices and theological symbols; for both traditions it was an important weapon in their exegetical arsenals. Thus both communicated their beliefs about God and covenant not only explicitly but also implicitly, in the way they read and interpreted Israel’s Scripture. (Cf. Hays, Echoes, 147, 157.) For efforts to compare Pseudo-Philo with other NT authors, see Reimnuth, Pseudo-Philo and Lukas; R. Bauckham, “Pseudo-Philo and the Gospels,” 33-76; Craig Evans, “Luke and the Rewritten Bible,” 170-201.

12Midrash describes a genre of rabbinic literature but it can also refer to an hermeneutical approach that spans many genres, in which sense RB and midrash are not at all mutually exclusive. See Hays, Echoes, 10-14, for an assessment of the various ways “midrash” has functioned (often unsuccessfully) to illuminate Paul’s use of Scripture.


14For this emphatic construction elsewhere in Paul, see Rom 15:37; 1 Cor 8:5; 11:9; 12:13, 14; 14:8; 2 Cor 2:10; 3:10; 5:2; 5:4; 13:4; Pp 2:27; 1 Th 3:4; 4:10; 2 Th 3:10. (Rom 16:2 may be non-emphatic.)

line. Unlike many of Paul’s Roman readers, Paul himself is no Gentile transplant; Israel’s ancient story is his family history. As we shall see, this self-reference may be what calls to mind another solitary figure—the prophet Elijah—whose life, like Paul’s, testified similarly to God’s faithfulness to Israel.

Paul’s double refusal to contemplate God’s abandonment of Israel has drawn considerable attention, both in terms of its implicit theology and its echoes of antecedent scripture:

μη ἀπόστατο ὁ θεός τὸν λαὸν αὐτοῦ; μη γένοιτο.
οὐκ ἀπόστατο ὁ θεός τὸν λαὸν αὐτοῦ ἐν προέγνω.

To the trained ear, the use of ἀποθέομαι (repudiate, reject) to describe God’s stance toward Israel would recall a cluster of Scriptural texts in which abandonment is seen as a real possibility, even a foregone conclusion. Among these 2 Kings 21:14 stands out for its intensity and its use of several other words relevant to Paul’s argument: καὶ ἀπόστασις τῆς κληρονομίας μου καὶ παραδόσω αὐτοῖς εἰς χείρας ἐχθρῶν. Paul’s double denial, then, is not simply the next step in his argument; it is also a glance back at the history of Israel’s privileged yet precarious relationship with her God.

Twin Prophets, Twin Messiahs

The closest Scriptural parallels to Rom 11:1a, 2a are found in 1 Sam 12:22 and Psalm 93:14, both of which deny that God has repudiated Israel. Paul’s language may be indebted to both.²⁰

²⁰Similarly, E. E. Johnson, “Romans 9:11—The Faithfulness and Impartiality of God,” in D. M. Hay & E. E. Johnson, eds., Pauline Theology Volume III: Romans (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1995), 231-232; Watson, Paul, Judaism, and the Gentiles (Eerdmans, 2007), 304, 334-335. Contra Dunn, Romans, 635. Note the use of λέγω or λαλῶ in Ro 3:5; 1 Co 9:8; 10:15; 2 Co 11:17, 23; Ga 3:15. Paul’s use of ἐγὼ puts the focus on his identity, not his perspective. Hays, Echoes, 69, takes Paul’s self-reference principally to indicate “that Paul, as a Jew, should never be suspected of suggesting such an appalling idea.” But the focus of Paul’s subsequent argument, as Hays’ parenthetical remark acknowledges, is on the survival of a remnant of faithful Jews within unfaithful Israel. To read Paul’s language in v.1 as conceptually linked to the remnant theology of vv.2-6, rather than as a disconnected, purely rhetorical intrusion, is to be preferred.

²¹On the likelihood that Paul’s Roman readers were predominantly Gentile converts, see Bruce N. Fisk, “Synagogue Influence and Scriptural Knowledge Among the Christians of Rome,” in Stanley Porter and Christopher Stanley, eds., As It Is Written: Studying Paul’s Use of Scripture (Atlanta: SBL, 2008), 157-185, esp. 166-169.

²²See also Jer 2:37 (ὅτι καὶ ἐνεκάθεν ἐξελέξατο, καὶ αἱ χείρες σου ἐπὶ τῆς καυραλίας σου ὧν ἀπόστασις κύριος τὴν ἐξιδία σου, καὶ οὐκ ἐφιδοθήκησαν ἐν αὐτῷ); 2 Ch 35:19d (ΜΤ 2Κ 23:27; καὶ ἔπινεν κύριος Καὶ γε τὸν Ἰουδαίον ἀποτέλεσαν ἀπὸ προσώπων μου, καθὼς ἐπέστησα τὸν Ἰσραήλ, καὶ ἀποστάσεν ἡν τὸν πόλιν, ἵνα ἐξελέξισιν, τὴν ἑρωισμαθή, καὶ τὸν οἶκον, καὶ εἶπα Ἐσταὶ τὸ δοματία μου ἑκεῖ); Ez 5:11 (διὰ τὸ διὰ τὸν Κύριον ἔλεης κύριος, καὶ μὴ ἐνθάνεται τὸν τῆς ἐν πάσιν τοῦ θεολογίαν σου, κἀγὼ ἀπόστασις σου, οὐ φεστάνεται μου ὁ διονυσίος, κἀγὼ οὐκ ἐκλείψομαι, οὐ πεπληρώσατο τὸν πολύμσας; note the hints of hope in the context, esp. Ez 5:13 and 6:8; Ez 11:16 (διὰ τὸν τοῦ Τάδε λέγει κύριος ὅτι ἀφέωνυμαι αὐτοῖς εἰς τὸ ἔθνος καὶ διασποράν τοῖς αὐτοῖς εἰς πάσην τὴν γῆν, καὶ ἐσομαι αὐτοῖς εἰς ἐπίκαιρα μικρὸν ἐν τοῖς χέρισιν, οὐ δὲ εἰσέλθωσαν ἐκεῖ; here God promises future restoration [v.16b-17] in terms of protection during exile and regathering to the land); Hos 9:17 (ἀπόστασαν αὐτοῖς ὁ θεός, ὅτι οὐκ εἰσήκουσαν αὐτοῦ, καὶ ἔσοδον πλανήσεται ἐν τοῖς ἔθνοις.) See further, Dunn, Romans, 634, Wagner, Heralds, 227, notes 30-32.
The first passage records Samuel’s oracle in response to the people’s ill-conceived, faithless demand for an earthly king (1 Sam 8:5-6, 19; 10:19; 12:12). Significantly, Samuel’s reply to their request (1 Sam 12:20-25) would need only minor revisions before Paul could level it at unbelieving Israel in his day.²⁰

<table>
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<tr>
<th>1 Samuel 12:20-25</th>
<th>1 Kings 12:20-25</th>
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<td>20 Do not be afraid; you have done all this evil, yet do not turn aside from following the Lord, but serve the Lord with all your heart; 21 and do not turn aside after useless things that cannot profit or save, for they are useless. 22 For the Lord will not cast away his people, for his great name’s sake, because it has pleased the Lord to make you a people for himself. 23 Moreover as for me, far be it from me that I should sin against the Lord by ceasing to pray for you; and I will instruct you in the good and the right way. 24 Only fear the Lord, and serve him faithfully with all your heart; for consider what great things he has done for you. 25 But if you still do wickedly, both you and your king will be swept away.</td>
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<td>20 καὶ εἰπεν Σαμουὴλ πρὸς τὸν λαόν Μὴ φοβεῖσθε ὃμως πεποιήκατε τὴν πόλιν κακὰ τὰ τάτα τοῖς πλὴν μὴ ἔκκλησεν ἀπὸ ὑπόθεσε κυρίῳ καὶ δουλεύσατε τῷ κυρίῳ ἐν δῇ κορδίᾳ ὑμῶν 21 καὶ μὴ παραπέμπῃ ὑπὸ τῶν μηθὲν ὄντων οὐ ὡς περανοοῦσιν σὺν οὐ καὶ μὴ ἔκκλησεν ὑμῖν, ὑς ὡς περανοοῦσιν σὺν οὐ καὶ μὴ ἔκκλησεν. 22 ὑμῖν, ὑς ὡς περανοοῦσιν σὺν οὐ καὶ μὴ ἔκκλησεν. 23 καὶ ημῶν μηθὲν ποιήσεις τῷ κυρίῳ ἐν δῇ κορδίᾳ καὶ δουλεύσατε τῷ κυρίῳ καὶ δειεῖσθε ὑμῖν τὴν δὸν τὴν ἀγαθὴν καὶ τὴν εὐθείαν τῶν ἀνθρώπων τῶν κακῶν καὶ τῶν κακῶν ὑμῶν, ὡς ὡς περανοοῦσιν σὺν οὐ καὶ μὴ ἔκκλησεν. 24 ὡς ὡς περανοοῦσιν σὺν οὐ καὶ μὴ ἔκκλησεν. 25 καὶ δὲν κακὸς κακοποίησεν, καὶ ὡς ὡς μὴ καὶ δὲν κακοποίησεν.</td>
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The situations of Paul and Samuel are symmetrical. Both are frustrated by the faithlessness of their people, both are convinced that God would not ultimately abandon his people in spite of their obstinacy, and both are committed to intercede on Israel’s behalf. Almost certainly Paul’s mention of his Benjamite lineage (11:1) would have encouraged biblically schooled readers to think of another Benjamite Saul whose rise to the throne (1 Sam 9–11) provides the context for Samuel’s oracle (12:20-25) to which Paul here may be alluding. Samuel’s words come after the people finally acknowledge their guilt for demanding a king (1 Sam 12:19; cf. 10:16, 24-25; 11:15; 12:1), and in response to their fearful appeal to Samuel to pray for them. Insofar as Paul alludes to the story of Samuel and Saul of which the oracle in 1 Sam 12:22 is both moral and climax, he appears to view events in his own day in its light. Israel’s “chronic failure to trust God alone”²¹ and God’s abiding covenant loyalty tie the two episodes together. As does the centrality in each story of Israel’s anointed King. Both Samuel and Paul enjoin Israel to acknowledge her newly appointed King Messiah. Whereas Israel in Samuel’s day

²⁰Similarly, Hays, Echoes, 69.
²¹Wagner, Heralds, 229.
demonstrated disbelief by demanding a Messiah, Israel now shows her disbelief by rejecting one.\textsuperscript{22}

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Samuel</th>
<th>Paul</th>
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<tr>
<td>Israel demands a King Messiah</td>
<td>God raises up a King Messiah</td>
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<tr>
<td>God appoints Saul over Israel</td>
<td>Israel rejects Jesus</td>
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<tr>
<td>Saul prays for Israel’s salvation.</td>
<td>Paul prays for Israel’s salvation (Rom 10:1)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Samuel proclaims God’s loyalty.</td>
<td>Paul proclaims God’s loyalty.</td>
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Pseudo-Philo’s revision of 1 Samuel 8–12 in LAB 56–57 offers several instructive parallels. First, in LAB Israel does not ground her request for a king in an inappropriate desire to be like other nations as she did in 1 Sam 8:5, 20. On the contrary, Israel’s request derives from her zeal to obey a biblical command.

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<th>1 Sam 8:5 (NRSV):</th>
<th>LAB 56:1 (Jacobson):</th>
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<tr>
<td>You are old and your sons do not follow in your ways; appoint for us, then, a king to govern us, like other nations.</td>
<td>Behold now you are old, and your sons do not walk in the ways of the Lord\textsuperscript{23} Now appoint over us a king to judge us, because the word that Moses spoke to our fathers in the wilderness must be fulfilled, “Appoint from your brothers a king over you.”</td>
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The citation of Deut 17:15 (“Appoint from your brothers a king over you”) nicely illustrates Pseudo-Philo’s penchant for intruding secondary texts into his primary narrative.\textsuperscript{24} This practice is both Pseudo-Philo’s preferred way of demonstrating the unity and harmony of scripture, and an important means by which he advances his interpretations. Secondary texts in Pseudo-Philo transform the primary story even as they themselves are transformed.\textsuperscript{25} The remarkable thing here is that LAB turns the apodosis of a condition in the biblical precursor into a free-standing command. Whereas Moses’ words in Deuteronomy, far from endorsing monarchy, sought to constrain the institution once it arose, Deut 17:15 in Pseudo-Philo has become a divine charge that Israel was compelled to obey.\textsuperscript{26} This semantic reversal, accomplished largely by omitting the

\textsuperscript{22}For Saul as Christos, see 1 Sam 9:16; 10:1; 12:3, 5.

\textsuperscript{23}Harrington and James follow LAB ms.\(\Delta\) here which in turn reflects the Biblical precursor (1 Sam 8:5): \textit{in vils tuis in your ways}. Jacobson, \textit{Commentary} 2.1148-1149, proposes harmonization as the reason to prefer an original \textit{Domini}.

\textsuperscript{24}See Bruce N. Fisk, \textit{Do You Not Remember?} (the title of which alludes to this practice); idem., “One Good Story Deserves Another: The Hermeneutics of Invoking Secondary Biblical Episodes in the Narratives of Pseudo-Philo and the Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs,” in Craig Evans, ed., \textit{The Interpretation of Scripture in Early Judaism and Christianity} (JSPPS 33; Sheffield, 2000), 217-238; idem., “Gaps in the Story, Cracks in the Earth: The Exile of Cain and the Destruction of Korah in Pseudo-Philo (\textit{Liber Antiquitatum Bibliarum} 16), in C. A. Evans, ed., \textit{Of Scribes and Sages: Early Jewish Interpretation and Transmission of Scripture} (T & T Clark, 2004), 20-33; James Kugel, \textit{In Potiphar’s House}, 261, calls this practice “back-referencing,” though the direction is not always backward, canonically or chronologically.

\textsuperscript{25}See “One Good Story,” esp. pp. 220-221.

\textsuperscript{26}In this reading, Pseudo-Philo aligns with several latter rabbinic sources. See references in Jacobson, \textit{Commentary}, 2.1149. There is textual uncertainty about whether to read complectum est verbum (“the word has been fulfilled”; so \(\Delta\), Harrington, James, Murphy) or complectendum est verbum (“the word must be fulfilled”; \(\pi\), Cazeaux [“il faut que s’accomplisse la parole”], tentatively Jacobson). The people see themselves either witnessing or enacting scriptural fulfillment.
context, means that a biblical injunction to appoint only the ruler whom God chose has become an explicit command to appoint a king.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Deut 17 (MT)</th>
<th>Deut 17 (LXX)</th>
<th>LAB 56:1</th>
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<td>14 ἔλας δὲ εἰσέλθης εἰς τὴν γῆν, ἵνα κύριος ὁ θεός σου διδάσκῃ σοι ἐν κλήρῳ, καὶ κληρονομήσῃ αὐτήν καὶ κατοικήσῃ ἐπὶ αὐτὴν καὶ εἰς ᾧ ἦμερας Καταστήσατο ἐκείνου ἐρχοντα καθά καὶ τὰ λοιπά ἐθνῆ τὰ κύκλω μου, 15 καθιστῶν καταστήσεις ἐπὶ σκευατὸν ἐρχοντα, διὸν ἐν ἐκλέξει τοῦ κύριου τοῦ θεοῦ σου αὐτῶν. ἐκ τῶν ἀδελφῶν σου καταστήσας ἐκεῖ σκευατὸν ἐρχοντα σοι δυνήσῃ καταστήσασθαι ἐπὶ σκευατὸν ἀνθρώπων ἀλλήλων, διὸ οὐκ ἀδελφοῖς σου ἐστίν.</td>
<td>Constituendo constitute de fratribus tuis super te principem.</td>
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According to 1 Sam 8:7-8 (cf. 12:12, 17; Dt 17:14), Israel’s stated desire to be like other nations was an explicit rejection of theocratic rule:

οὐ δὲ ἐξουθενήκασιν, ἀλλ’ ἐμὲ ἐξουθενόκασιν τοῖς μὴ βασιλεῦσέν ἐπὶ αὐτῶν. κατὰ πάντα τὰ πολίτες, ἐποίησαν μοι ἢ ἢ τοὺς ἡμέρας ἄνηγαγόν αὐτοὺς εἷς Ἄγαθπον ἐκ τῆς ἡμέρας ταῦτης καὶ ἐγκατέλειπον με καὶ ἔδοξεν θεοὶ εἴτε ρούς, οὕτως αὐτοὶ ποιοῦσιν καὶ σοὶ. 27

Because Israel had scorned God’s rule (ἐξουθενέα, ἐξουθενω), and consistently forsaken God (ἐγκαταλείπω), God would not heed (ἐπακοοῦ) Israel’s cry when their king became oppressive:

καὶ βοήσασθε ἐν τῇ ἡμέρᾳ ἐκείνῃ ἐκ προσώπων βασιλέως ὑμῶν, οὐ ἐξελέξασθε ἑαυτοῖς, καὶ οὐκ ἐπακούσεται κύριος ὑμῶν ἐν ταῖς ἡμέραις ἐκείναις, δι᾽ ἡμές ἐξελέξασθε ἑαυτοῖς βασιλέα. (8:18)

Pseudo-Philo’s rewritten account once again exercises creative license. Gone is any suggestion that Israel rejected God’s rule, any hint that Israel was following a well-established pattern of infidelity. There is only the slightest suggestion that Israel will reap what she has sown (LAB 56:3; cf. 1 Sam 12:17-20a). These omissions simultaneously remove the most problematic aspects of the Samuel episode and supply in their place a positive biblical warrant for the nation’s shift to monarchical rule. Pseudo-Philo, that is, brazenly replaces vice with virtue, a hermeneutical move comparable to some of Paul’s transformations, such as his surprising reading of Hosea 1:10 and 2:23 in Romans 9:24-26 wherein the prophet’s references to Israel’s restoration become promises of Gentile inclusion. 28 For both Paul and Pseudo-Philo, the exegesis

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27Similarly Josephus, Ant. 6.38, in which God consoles a fretful Samuel, ὡς οὐκ ἔκειν ὑπερήφανοισαντας ἀλλ’ ἔκατον ("since it was not him whom they had spurned, but God Himself").

28See especially Wagner, Heralds, 79-85.
of a specific text is fueled not only by theological commitments but also by the hermeneutical assumption that Israel’s Scriptures are coherent and self-interpreting.

Samuel’s response to the people’s request for a king in Pseudo-Philo includes another type of creative reclamation. According to LAB 56:2, Israel was simply guilty of poor timing; their request for a king was not wrong, it came too early:

And when Samuel heard talk of a kingdom, he was very sad in his heart and said, “Behold now I see that it is not yet the time (non est adhuc tempus) for us to have an everlasting kingdom and to build the house of the LORD our God, for these people are seeking a king before the proper time (petentibus regem ante tempus).” (LAB 56:2)

This revision may reflect the tradition found in later rabbinic sources that Israel erred by requesting a king before (ante) erecting a temple. More likely the move is simply meant to alleviate the awkwardness God hand picking a king who turns out so bad (1 Sam 9:16), in which case the nation’s demand for a king is no longer a sign of collective infidelity. Either way, there is no veiled threat of abandonment (cf. 1 Sam 12:15, 25); the covenantal relationship between God and Israel remains intact and unquestioned; and all the vicissitudes of Saul’s reign are subsumed under the divine plan (LAB 56:3; contra 1 Sam 9:16; 15:11). Samuel has no need to deliver the sort of ominous oracle we find in 1 Sam 12:20-25, nor to assure the people that “the LORD will not abandon his people” (12:22; cf. Rom 11:1-2).

In contrast to LAB, the story of Samuel and Saul floats beneath the surface of Paul’s letter with only a few narrative tips visible above the waterline. Paul shares Pseudo-Philo’s zeal for the irrevocability of God’s promises to Israel, but the way each tractant defends Israel’s privileged position differs sharply. Pseudo-Philo’s bold rewrite of the Samuel episode has the people zealous to conform to the scriptures, not the nations, and it downgrades their distrust in God to mere impatience. By contrast, Paul’s allusion to the Samuel story—if allusion it is—invites his readers to imagine themselves taken up into Israel’s story or, at least, to recognize a fundamental historical symmetry between past and present. Unlike Pseudo-Philo, Paul does not reduce or minimize Israel’s sin; their disobedience and obstinacy (10:21) continues into the present. A remnant, but only a remnant, remains faithful (11:5).

Covenantal Theology as Hermeneutical Impulse

The other biblical text that bears striking similarities to Romans 11:1-2 is Psalm 93:14 (MT 94:14). Wagner has identified points of correspondence between Paul’s argument and the psalmist’s lament—chief among them the shared conviction that God will ultimately vindicate his righteous ones—and contends for the originality of the v.l. την κληρονομίαν in Rom 11:1, which makes an allusion to Psalm 93:14 in Romans 11:1-2 all but assured since now both Paul and the psalmist use λαός and κληρονομία in back-to-back clauses.

Whether we read κληρονομία or λαός in 11:1, however, Paul’s argument turns on the conviction that Israel’s god will keep his promises to Abraham and remain ever faithful to the people he has chosen for himself. Thus the beginning of Romans 11 is mirrored at its end:

κατὰ δὲ τὴν ἐκλογὴν ἄγαπητοι διὰ τοῦς πατέρας: ἀμεταμέλητα γὰρ τὰ χαρίσματα καὶ ἡ κλήσις τοῦ θεοῦ.

This belief that God’s loyalty to Israel was tied to Israel’s status as God’s possession is not only rooted deeply in Israel’s scriptures (e.g., Deut 7, 32); it is also widespread across the literature of 2nd Temple Judaism. We can scarcely sense the depth of Paul’s convictions on the matter unless we read his letters in this context. Psalms of Solomon 7, to take one example, assures Israel of God’s continued care in the face of Gentile (i.e., Roman) oppression. Although the present distress reflects God’s righteous discipline of sinful Israel, discipline will one day give way to mercy, and to judgment upon the nations. God, in other words, has not abandoned his people. Note the phrase οὐκ ἀπέση in verse 8.

| Μή ἀποσκηνώσης ἄφ’ ἡμῶν, ο θεός, ἵνα μὴ ἐπιθυμήσῃ· ημῖν οἱ ἐμελήσωσιν· ἡμᾶς διωρέσων. ὦ τία ὀπάσον οὐς, ὁ θεός· ἵνα μὴ παθητάσω τὸ ποὺς... ήμιν καὶ παῖσιν· ημᾶς καὶ μὴ δής ἔθεσιν. ἦν αὐτῷ· καὶ ὅμως ἐφαρμοσθησα· τοῦ συντελέσας τις ἡμᾶς. ἐν τῷ κατακεραυνῷ τὸν ἁμένα· καὶ εἰς ἑαυτὸν ἡμᾶς· ἦν αὐτῷ· καὶ ἡμᾶς· ἐπικελεοῦσα· σε· καὶ ἐπικρατεῖς· ἡμᾶς· ὅτι σε ὁ ἱεροσύνη· τὸν γένος Ισραήλ· εἰς τὸν ἃνα καὶ οὐκ ἀπόσῃ· καὶ ἡμῖς· ὅταν· χιλιάδα· οὗτοι· καὶ τό· διδάσκεται· καὶ παῖσιν· θύμων· καὶ παῖσιν· καὶ παῖσιν· ἠμῖν· ἢ· ἐπιθυμεῖ· αὐτοῖς. | 1. Do not move away from us, O God, lest those who hate us without cause should attack us. 2. For you have rejected them, O God; do not let their feet trample your holy inheritance. 3. Discipline us as you wish, but do not turn (us) over to the gentiles. . . 4. For you are kind, and will not be angry enough to destroy us. 5. While your name lives among us, we shall receive mercy and the gentile will not overcome us. 6. For you are our protection, and we will call to you, and you will hear us. 7. For you will have compassion on the people forever and you will not reject (them); 8. And we are under your yoke forever, and (under) the whip of your discipline. 9. You will direct us in the time of your support, showing mercy to the house of Jacob on the day when you promised (it) to them. |

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The same cry for mercy sounds in Ps. Sol. 9, and with it the same assurance that God’s choice of Abraham’s children is irrevocable. Once again, the phrase οὐκ ἀπώσῃ εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα is reminiscent of Paul’s dictum:

| Kai vón sò o theós, kai hímex laos, ἢν ἡγίστας· idé kai kíkritpóso, o theós Israēl, ἐτι σοὶ δόμην, και μὴ ἀποστήσῃς ἔλεος σου ἀπ’ ἡμῶν, ἵνα μὴ ἐπιθύνηται ἡμῖν. | And now, you are God and we are the people whom you have loved; look and be compassionate, O God of Israel, for we are yours, and do not take away your mercy from us, lest they set upon us. For you chose the descendants of Abraham above all the nations, and you put your name upon us, Lord, and it will not cease forever.
| ὁτι σὺ ἠρέταις τὸ σπέρμα Αβραάμ παρὰ πάντα τὰ ἔθνη καὶ ἔθνος τὸ ὄνομα σου ἐπ’ ἡμᾶς, κύριε, και οὐκ ἀπώσῃ εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα. | You made a covenant with our ancestors concerning us, and we hope in you when we turn our souls toward you. May the mercy of the Lord be upon the house of Israel forevermore.
| ἐν διωχὴς διέθου τὸς πατρίσιν ἡμῶν περὶ ἡμῶν, καὶ ημεῖς ἐλπίσαμεν ἐπὶ σὲ ἐν ἐπιστροφῇ νυμφῆς ἡμῶν. τοῦ κυρίου ἢ ἐλεημοσύνη ἐπὶ οὖν Ἰσραήλ εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα καὶ ἐτὶ. |

Pseudo-Philo, roughly contemporary with Paul, is not only consumed with defending the irrevocability of God’s covenant with Israel; his covenant theology is a fundamental hermeneutical impulse. Thus, in Pseudo-Philo’s account of the exodus (LAB 10:2) when the people are trapped between the sea and the Egyptian army, rather than blaming Moses for bringing them into the desert to die (cf. Ex 14:11-12) the people invoke God’s promise to Abraham (Gen 12:7):

Is it for this that God has brought us forth, or are these the covenants that he established with our fathers, saying, “To your seed will I give the land in which you dwell” that now he might do with us whatever is pleasing in his sight?

Likewise, LAB 15:4 embellishes Num 14:2-4—the people’s reaction to the ten spies—by recalling (cynically) God’s promise, this time the promise to Moses at the burning bush (Ex 3:8, 17, etc.):

But the people... were very disturbed and said, “Are these the words that God spoke to us, saying, “I will bring you into a land flowing with milk and honey”? And how does he now bring us up so that we should fall upon the sword and our wives be taken into captivity?”

Insofar as the people at Kadesh explicitly challenged God’s trustworthiness, their culpability is greater in LAB than it is in the biblical precursor, but so is their awareness of God’s promises. Pseudo-Philo’s rewriting of the call of Gideon is similarly revealing. In Judges 6:13, Gideon’s anguish is expressed in terms of divine abandonment:

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32See also LAB 4:5; 7:4; 8:3; 9:3, 7; 11:1, 3, 5, 12:9-10; 13:6; 22:7; 23:1-2, 11; 28:2, 5; 30:4, 7; 32:8, 12-14. For the key Latin terms in LAB, see Frederick Murphy, Pseudo-Philo, 244, 293, 307, and Bruce Fisk, Do You Not Remember? 45-46.
34On the people’s citation of the land promise (Gen 12:7) when sheer physical survival was the immediate need, see Fisk, Do You Not Remember?, 156-157.
35For a fuller discussion, see Fisk, Do You Not Remember?, 195-199.
In Pseudo-Philo’s hands, Gideon’s cry of dereliction becomes a declaration of Israel’s divine election, couched in language drawn from Deuteronomy 7:6 (cf. 14:2).\textsuperscript{36}

[Gideon] said to him, ‘... Israel has fallen into distress... And where are the wonders that our fathers described to us, saying, “The LORD has chosen Israel alone before all the peoples of the earth”? And behold now he has delivered us up and forgotten the promises that he told our fathers. .’

The centrality of election in Pseudo-Philo’s theology is further clarified by the angel’s response to Gideon:

“You have not been delivered up without reason . . . ; because, as you have abandoned the promises that you have received from the LORD, these evils have found you out. . . But he will have mercy, as no one else has mercy, on the race of Israel, though not on account of you but on account of those who have fallen asleep.”  

LAB 35:2-3

As these rewritten narratives demonstrate, Pseudo-Philo’s assurance of Israel’s survival is predicated on his confidence in God’s faithfulness to the ancient promises.\textsuperscript{37} Israel’s privilege is tied not to national virtue or merit but to God’s elective choice and honor. However much it might seem to Pseudo-Philo’s readers that Israel’s oppressors were going unchecked, future events will rescue God’s people and vindicate God’s faithfulness. Resonances between Pseudo-Philo’s covenantal theology and Paul’s are not difficult to hear, as the following pairs of texts illustrate.

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35Similarly Jacobson, *Commentary*, 913.

36For further examples, see LAB 9:4; 13:10; 18:11; 19:2; 21:5; 23:13; 49:3. Noteworthy is LAB 49:6 which recounts the people’s prayer of desperation during the time of Phinehas: “LORD God of Israel, why have you abandoned your people in the victory of their enemies, and in the time of distress why have you neglected your inheritance? . . . For if the ordinances that you have established with our fathers are true, saying, ‘I will multiply your seed,’ and they will experience this, then it would have been better to say to us, ‘I am cutting off your seed,’ than to neglect our root.” Note the pairing of “your people” and “your inheritance” (cf. Rom 11:1-2) and how the people invoke the patriarchal promise—most likely Gen 22:17 (cf. Gen 26:4, 24)—to challenge God’s apparent abandonment.
9:4 nor will he cast forth the race of Israel in vain upon the earth; nor did he establish a covenant (testamentum) with our fathers in vain (nec in vanum disposit testamentum patribus nostris).

39:7 LORD, look upon the people that you have chosen, and may you not destroy the vine that your right hand has planted, in order that this nation, which you have had from the beginning and always preferred and for which you made dwelling places and brought into the land you promised may be for you as an inheritance...

49:3 For I know that God will not reject us forever (Scio enim quia non in finem nos abiciet Deus).

12:9 Even if you plant another vine, this one will not trust you (nec hec tibi credet), because you have destroyed the former one.

9:4-6a They are Israelites, and to them belong the adoption, the glory, the covenants (at διαθήκαις), the giving of the law, the worship, and the promises; to them belong the patriarchs, and from them, according to the flesh, comes the Messiah, who is over all, God blessed forever. Amen. It is not as though the word of God has failed (Οὐχ οἶνον δὲ ὁτι ἐκπέπτωκεν ὁ λόγος τοῦ θεοῦ).

11:2 God has not rejected his people whom he foreknew (. . .).

11:19-21 You will say, Branches were broken off so that I might be grafted in. . . . They were broken off because of their unbelief, but you stand only through faith. . . . For if God did not spare the natural branches, perhaps he will not spare you.

Notwithstanding uncertainties about the purpose of Romans and the views of Paul’s opponents, we know much more about Paul’s social context (theology, audiences, opponents) than we do about Pseudo-Philo’s. We have copies of Paul’s personal correspondence as well as non-Pauline texts (e.g., Acts) that refer explicitly to Paul, his contemporaries and his churches. Almost everything we know about Pseudo-Philo comes from the rewritten narrative itself (now, alas, two languages removed from the original). Does Pseudo-Philo’s covenant theology help us reconstruct his original audience? Were some members of Pseudo-Philo’s community, weary of Roman domination or traumatized by Jerusalem’s destruction, inclined to doubt God’s faithfulness to Israel?38

Roughly contemporary with LAB, 4 Ezra and 2 Baruch confirm the presence of communities struggling to reconcile covenant promises with post-70 realities.39 Pseudo-Philo’s recurring defense of Israel’s irrevocable status and final restoration may suggest a similar historical context.40 Nevertheless, the fact that there is no consensus on the date of LAB relative to 70

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CE,41 coupled with the likelihood that LAB (whatever its date of composition) preserves much older interpretive traditions,42 makes it precarious to argue that Pseudo-Philo shaped his narrative explicitly to console Jews after the fall of the Temple.43 Indeed, Pseudo-Philo’s unusual interest in the period of the Judges may suggest that his social context is one of “faith-fatigue” due to foreign occupation, rather than of faith-crisis due to devastation and exile.

But if the social setting and occasion of LAB remain elusive, we may yet conclude that Paul and Pseudo faced roughly analogous historical dislocations.44 Like LAB, Romans is (in part) a defense of divine faithfulness,45 a response to a crisis at least as troubling as political upheaval or military dislocation:

Paul’s problem arises instead from a different sort of historical phenomenon, not the occupation of Israel by a Gentile mi—litary power but the apparent usurpation of Israel’s favored covenant status by congregations of uncircumcised Gentile Christians.46

Analogous to Pseudo-Philo’s composition, Paul wrote Romans in response to unforeseen and unwelcome historical developments—chief among them the widespread Jewish rejection of Jesus. To make his case for God’s abiding faithfulness, Paul turns to Israel’s scriptures where he finds covenant promises to Israel wending between stories of national unfaithfulness.47 Paul’s appeals to this story are driven by theological convictions rather than exegetical techniques, but the creativity with which Paul appropriates Scripture is not distinctively Christian nor distinctively Pauline; it is, rather, a standard feature of early Jewish exegesis of the sort we encounter in works of rewritten Bible.

41See B. Fisk, Do You Not Remember? 34-40. Nancy Colvert-Koyzis, Paul, Monotheism and the People of God: The Significance of Abraham for Early Judaism and Christianity (JSNTSup 273; T & T Clark, 2004), 42-44, represents those who regard Pseudo-Philo’s interest in good and bad leaders as evidence that he sought a way out of Roman oppression, perhaps during or shortly after the first Jewish War.


43On the merits and risks of “mirror-reading” a text to discern its social setting, see John M. G. Barclay, “Mirror-reading a polemical letter: Galatians as a test case,” JSNT 31 (1987), pp. 78-79. Barclay’s criteria for reconstructing the opponents of a polemical text include frequency, consistency, and historical plausibility (84-85). Whatever the inherent dangers of mirror-reading Paul, they are surely multiplied with works such as LAB.


47Richard Hays, Echoes, 73, observes that Scripture in Romans testifies to God’s “unbroken faithfulness to Israel” with “an extraordinary—indeed, almost monotonous—thematic consistency.”
**Paul Rewrites the Bible**

To examine further this fraternal bond between Paul-as-storyteller and the authors of RB, we turn to Romans 11:2b-5 where we catch Paul in the act of "rewriting" the biblical story of Elijah.\(^{48}\) Unlike many works of early Biblical interpretation,\(^{49}\) Paul draws clear lines between traditum and traditio—between scripture and commentary. Verse 2 deploys a typical citation formula (ὅσον οὖν ὁ Ἱλαρίων ἦν οὗτος ή γραφή;) verse 4 treats the biblical text as an oracular utterance (πάλιν τι ἔγεισαν αὐτῷ ὁ ἔρημος) uttered by the mysterious God Elijah encountered at the Horeb cave.\(^{50}\) Unless οὖν οὖν οἱ ὀνόματε is purely formulaic, Paul assumes his readers know something of the Elijah story.\(^{51}\) Accordingly, he supplies no context for Elijah’s litany of complaints, nor are readers told why “Israel” committed these offenses nor why Elijah’s head count of the faithful is off by 6,999. Although what Paul assumed about the biblical literacy of his readers is of considerable interest to scholars these days,\(^{52}\) these assumptions are not often examined alongside those of his Jewish contemporaries, like Jubilees, Genesis Apocryphon and Pseudo-Philo. LAB routinely assumes biblical literacy among its readers, most notably when it alludes to biblical episodes and details that the author has omitted from his rewritten account. The following examples could be multiplied in LAB and elsewhere in the RB corpus.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rewritten Episode</th>
<th>Contains</th>
<th>Previously omitted from</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>LAB 9:5</td>
<td>Exodus 1</td>
<td>LAB 8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Amram alludes to the story of Tamar (Gen 38:24)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>LAB 11:15</td>
<td>Exodus 24</td>
<td>LAB 1-2 (Gen 2:9; 3:22)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>The Tree of Life</td>
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<tr>
<td>LAB 15:6</td>
<td>Numbers 14</td>
<td>LAB 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Recalls 3rd day of creation (Gen 1:9)</td>
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<tr>
<td>LAB 16:2</td>
<td>Numbers 16</td>
<td>LAB 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Recalls Cain’s murder of Abel (Gen 4)</td>
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<tr>
<td>LAB 18:5-6</td>
<td>Numbers 22</td>
<td>LAB 8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>God reminds Balaam of Aqedah (Gen 22) and Jacob’s wrestling match (Gen 32)</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

\(^{48}\)For the textual history of 3 Kingdoms 19:10, 18 as it relates to Paul’s usage, see Christopher D. Stanley, “The Significance of Romans 11:3-4 for the Text History of the LXX Book of Kingdoms,” *JBL* 112 (1, 1993), 43-54. My remarks about Paul’s creative use of the text presuppose his work.

\(^{49}\)E.g., LAB, Genesis Apocryphon, Jubilees, Josephus’ *Antiquities*, 1QH, Sirach, Ps Solomon, 1 Enoch 6-11 and the Testamentary literature.

\(^{50}\)The word ἐρημός, a NT hapax, is difficult. The cognate verb ἐρημάζω is used of divine instructions in the NT (Matt.2:12; 22; Luke 2:26; Acts 10:22; Heb 8:5; 11:7) and in Josephus (Ant.5.42; 10.13). LSJ, s.v., suggests "oracular response, divine injunction or warning" for this passage and a few others, including 2 Macc.2:4. On the semantic range of cognates in Philo (esp. ἐρημάζω, "oracular response"), see Y. Amir, “Authority and Interpretation of Scripture in the Writings of Philo,” in *Mikra*, 429-431. Anthony T. Hanson, “The Oracle in Romans XI.4” *NTS* 19 (1973), 300-302, finds the word highlights “the localization, the awesomeness and probably the indirectness of the divine communication" (p.301). According to Paul E. Dinter, “The Remnant of Israel and the Stone of Stumbling in Zion According to Paul (Romans 9-11)” (Ph.D. diss., Union Theological Seminary, 1979), 43, the word “oracle" reflects the “lively, even personified, sense in which [Paul] perceived the Scriptures.” On Paul’s depiction of scripture citations as a spoken utterance, see comments and references in F. Watson, *Paul and the Hermeneutics of Faith*, 45.

\(^{51}\)On this formula in Paul, see Rom 6:16; 1 Cor 3:16; 5:6; 6:2; 8:3, 9, 15, 1, 19; 9:13, 24; cf. ὁ γὰρ οὗτος in Rom 6:3 and esp. 7:1 (which refers to his readers knowledge of the law: γνῶσιν γὰρ νόμον κληρονομοῦν). 1 Cor 6:16 is the only other place Paul uses this idiom to introduce a “known” biblical passage:[ὁ] οὖν οὖν δι’ ὅ αὐτός καὶ τῇ πάρνη ἐν σώμα ἐκτὸς: Τοὺς θυσίας γὰρ, φησὶν, οἱ δόθη ἐς σάβακα μένος.

I have argued elsewhere that Pseudo-Philo’s allusions to unarrated material do important hermeneutical work for him. Here we observe only that this compositional technique is effective only if readers already know the story.  

Paul’s selective rewriting of the Elijah narrative (Rom 11:2-5) shares several compositional features with works of RB. One such feature is catchword linkage or gezerah shawah.  

Both verses Paul cites from 1 Kings contain cognates of λέιπω: ὠπελείφθην (11:3) and κατέλιπτων (v.4). In order to link the Elijah narrative to his own situation, Paul describes fellow Jesus-believing Jews with the cognate λείμα (11:5). But all of this—both his appeal to Elijah and his own diction—has surely been inspired by Isaiah (10:22-23; 1:9) to whose remnant theology Paul has recently appealed (Rom 9:27-29).

Similarly noteworthy is Paul’s abbreviation of ὁ υἱός Ἰσραήλ (7 εἰς 23 MT) to Ἰσραήλ, so as to align the biblical text more closely with his usage in 10:19, 21 and throughout Romans 9-10. The “Israel” of Paul’s day thus stands in direct continuity with Elijah’s Israelites. Catchword linkages such as these are common in rewritten Biblical narratives. LAB 16:2-3, for example, uses the catchword deglutio (swallow; LXX; καταπίνω) from Num 16:30, 32, 34 to tie Korah’s rebellion to Abel’s murder (Gen 4:1-16): the ground “swallowed” Korah’s men just as it had “swallowed” Abel’s blood. Examples could be multiplied.

A second feature common to Paul and early Jewish biblical interpretation is strategic omission. Paul’s goal is not to rehearse biblical history, so we should expect biblical references to be economical and concise. It is: Paul cites only two verses from the lengthy episode in 1 Kings: Elijah’s complaint (Rom 11:3; 1 Kings 19:10, 14) and part of God’s reply (Rom 11:4; 1 Kings 19:18). For crucial context and details, as Wagner observes, Paul’s readers are on their own:

53For other examples of authors assuming biblical knowledge, see above, note 8.
56Cf. P. Dinter, “Remnant of Israel,” 38: “the line of Paul’s argument flows directly from the citation/statement in 10:21, where he characterized Israel as a ‘disobedient and contrary people’ (Isa.65:2). It is this laos and their fate that Paul now considers in 11:1-12.”
57See further, Fisk, “Gaps in the Story.”
58Most famously, see Josephus’ omission of the Golden Calf episode (Ant. 3.99-101). Cf. Pseudo-Philo’s omission of awkward elements of the Shechem episode (Gen 34) in LAB 8.7. The exegetical impact of such omissions must not be overlooked.
Paul treats the story as one familiar to his hearers, one whose relevance to his present argument requires no explanation, and he invites them by his mild rebuke to reflect on the narrative and to draw from it the same conclusions he as drawn.\(^{59}\)

Several elements of the biblical precursor are conspicuous in their absence. We hear nothing about Elijah’s virtue and zeal (1 Kings 19:10a, 14a); Paul’s point is not about Elijah’s exemplary character\(^{60}\) but about Israel’s non-disqualification. Romans 11:3 likewise fails to record Elijah’s charge that Israel had forsaken God or God’s covenant.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1 Kings 19:10 (MT)</th>
<th>1 Kings 19:10 (LXX)</th>
<th>Romans 11:3</th>
</tr>
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| 1 Kings 19:14 | 1 Kings 19:14 | 1 Kings 19:14 |

If Paul’s goal was merely to summarize and characterize Elijah’s speech, this element (ἐγκατέλειψαν σα εἰς τοὺς Ισραήλ) would be the obvious one to include since (a) it is the first charge listed in both v. 10 and v. 14, (b) it is the most foundational of all the charges, and (c) it arguably provides the closest parallel to events in Paul’s day. All of this suggests that the omission is intentional and not without significance: the charge that Israel had violated the covenant is precisely what Paul did not wish to emphasize.\(^{61}\) Thus, Paul’s rewritten narrative makes his case for him better than would the biblical precursor itself.

\(^{59}\)Wagner, Heralds, 232-233. Wagner grants that Paul “may be mistaken with regard to the ‘hearer competence’ of some in his audience” (ibid, 232, n.51) but suggests that the introductory formula, ἢ οὔκ ἔστω ὅπερ Ἡλίας, implies that Paul assumed some prior knowledge.

\(^{60}\)Contrast Josephus, Ant. 8.328-354, on which see below.

\(^{61}\)Paul also skips over 1 Kings 19:15-17, since this pertains to the installation of kings, the commissioning of Elisha, and divine judgment on the infidels who have so upset Elijah. This omission is predictable but not insignificant, for it fundamentally alters the focus of God’s response.
Third, Paul, like his fellow traditions, engages in *aggadic embellishment* by quietly intruding the reflexive pronoun ἐμαυτῷ into the story of Rom.11:4. 62

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1 Kings 19:18 MT</th>
<th>1 Kings 19:18 LXX</th>
<th>Romans 11:4</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I have left / will leave (ἀφέσαν) in Israel 7000, all the knees which did not bow to Baal.</td>
<td>You will leave (καταλείποντος) in Israel 7000 men, all the knees which did not bow to Baal.</td>
<td>I left for myself (κατέλειπον ἐμαυτῷ) 7000 men who did not bow the knee to Baal.</td>
</tr>
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</table>

The key word in God’s response to Elijah, καταλείπον, describes God’s action of *leaving* the 7,000 faithful. Unless Paul’s Vorlage differed at this point from both MT and LXX traditions, we must conclude that he has added the word ἐμαυτῷ, thus altering the semantic force of the governing verb and the entire clause. 64 In the *traditum* God promised to keep 7,000 non-apostates alive; according to Paul’s new *traditio* God has already set apart 7,000 for himself. As “co-author” of a new sacred text, 65 Paul’s citation provides scriptural warrant for an *elect* remnant grounded in God’s covenant faithfulness, 66 a move that clearly supports his argument (v.6). The survival of the remnant in Elijah’s day was due, says Paul, to divine grace, not to the merits of the faithful. It was not enough simply to observe that a parallel remnant exists “in the present time” (οὕτως . . . καὶ ἐν τῷ νῦν καυρῷ λείμμα . . . γέγονεν). 67 Paul also needed to say that this remnant came about “in accordance with (God’s) gracious election” (κατ’ ἐκλογὴν χάριτος). 68 Thus, Paul’s version of 1 Kings 19:18 in v.4 supports both halves of Paul’s argument in v.5:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Remnant</th>
<th>Election / Grace</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>κατέλειπον</td>
<td>ἐμαυτῷ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>λείμμα</td>
<td>κατ’ ἐκλογὴν χάριτος</td>
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In other words, the Elijah narrative advances Paul’s remnant theology in part because of transformations that Paul has introduced into the biblical precursor. 69 Paul’s answer to charges of

62 Paul’s addition of ἐμαυτῷ may have been influenced by 1 Sam 12:22; ὁ διὰ εἰκασίας προσελάβη τῷ ἀντί οὗ ἐξ ἱλαρίας. The Vulgate has *dereliquam mihi*, apparently by attraction to *reliqui mihi* in Rom 11:4.

63 Targum, Peshitta and Lucianic text all support the MT ἡττήσω (Hiphil perfect, first pers. sg.); cf. Wagner, *Heralds*, 235 n.60; Cranfield, *Romans*, ICC (T. & T. Clark, 1979), 546. The LXX employs καταλείπον to render a hiphil of ἔρχομαι some 23 times (so, Hatch & Redpath), but here the imperatival future (second pers. sg.) significantly alters the focus: the divine word is no longer a promise (MT) but is now a command addressed to Elijah (LXX). It is difficult to know whether Paul’s Vorlage followed the MT here, but clearly the LXX reading would have undermined his point.

64 The assessment of J. D. G. Dunn, *Romans 9-16*, WBC 38B (Word, 1988), 637, that this is “a good example of elaborative or paraphrastic translation” (637) does not do justice to the hermeneutical significance of Paul’s revision here. Ernst Käsemann’s remark, *Romans* (Eerdmans, 1980), 299, is similarly inadequate: “whether another LXX version had some influence here or whether Paul made the changes himself is a moot question.”

65 The phrase is Fishbane’s. See *Biblical Interpretation*, 87; Fisk, *Do You Not Remember?* 55-56 and n.3.

66 Cf. Dunn, *Romans*, 637.

67 This was his point in citing Isa. 10:22 (cf. ἐκάθεμμα) at Rom 9:27.


divine abandonment is bound up with God’s ἐκλογή (11:5, 7, 28; cf. 9:11) and χάρις (11:5, 6a,b,c, 29), attributes his rewritten version of the ancient story brings into view. God’s gracious election in the past grounds Paul’s hope for the salvation of his kinsfolk in the future (11:12, 15, 23, 25-32).

Paul among the Tradents

As we might expect, these features—catchword linkage, strategic omission and creative embellishment—also characterize Josephus’ rewriting of 1 Kings 19:9-18 (Antiquities 8.350-352).⁷⁰

But a voice which came from someone, he knew not whom, asked him why he had left the city to come to that spot, whereupon he said that
it was because he had killed the prophets
of the strange gods
and had convinced the people
that the only true God was the Eternal,
whom they had worshipped from the beginning;
and it was for this reason that he was being sought for
punishment by the king.

And again he heard a voice telling him to come out into the open air on the morrow,
so he should learn what he must do.

The next day, therefore, he came out of the cave and
heard the earth rumble and saw a brilliant fiery light.

And, when all became quiet,
a divine voice exhorted him not to be alarmed by what
was happening,
for none of his enemies should have him in their power
... “But,” said the voice, “of the impious people
Azazel shall destroy some, and Jehu others.”

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Josephus condenses Elijah’s answer in 1 Kings 19:10 from 6 propositions to 2, strategically omitting all references to Israel (Jezebel) killing the true prophets (cf. 1 Kings 18:4, 13) and abandoning worship of the true God. The new Elijah highlights, rather, another killing: his own act of killing the Baal prophets (1 Kings 18:40). It is unlikely, however, that Josephus’ replacement of Israel’s “bad” killing with Elijah’s “good” was arbitrary. Elijah’s response in 1 Kings contains a biblical catchword—an allusion to the zeal that drove Phinehas to execute the idolatrous Zimri and his Midianite consort in Numbers 25.⁷¹

(cf. Rom 9:27-29) but he appears to underestimate Paul’s own creativity in this reading strategy.

⁷⁰Greek text and English translation, LCL.

⁷¹The significance of this word, and its connection to Numbers 25, is confirmed by 1 Macc 2:24, 26-27:καὶ εἶδεν Ματθαιαὸς καὶ ἔξηλοσεν, καὶ ἔστρεφεν οἱ νεορὸι αὐτοῦ, καὶ ἀνέρρηκαν θυμὸν κατὰ τὸ κρίμα καὶ δραμοῦν ἔσφαξαν αὐτόν ἕπι τὸν βασιλέα... καὶ ἔξηλοσεν τῷ νόμῳ, καθὼς ἔστρεφεν Φινεὴς τῷ Ζαμβρῷ υἱὸν Σαλόμου, καὶ ἀνέκραξεν Ματθαιαὸς ἐν τῇ πόλει φωνῇ μεγάλῃ λέγων Πάς ὁ ζηλῶν τῷ νόμῳ καὶ ιστόν διαθήκην ἐξελεύσετο ὠπίσω μου. Cf. Josephus’ rewritten account of Matthathias’ speech in Ant. 12.271: “εἰ τις ζηλωτὴς ὑπὸ τῶν πατρίων ἔδωκεν καὶ τῆς τοῦ θεοῦ θρησκείας, ἐπέσω, ἵπποιν, ἐμοῦ.”
As Josephus interprets 1 Kings, he appears to have understood ζηλών ἐξήλωσα in light of Numbers 25, as a reference to Elijah’s righteous slaughter of the prophets of Baal (1 Kings 18:40).\(^{72}\) Josephus’ revised account strengthens his case for Israel’s merits, just as Paul’s rewritten Elijah narrative strengthens his case for God’s faithfulness.

We conclude with three additional points about Paul’s relationship to the story he is telling. First, insofar as Paul is interpreting his own experience through the lens of the ancient story, he may see himself in the figure of Elijah. The apocalyptic significance of Elijah was well known, and Paul’s language in Rom 11:5—οὐτος οὖν καὶ ἐν τῷ νῦν καιρῷ (cf. 3:26)—suggests an eschatological orientation. Thus, Käsemann suggests that Paul appealed to Elijah because he also “seemed to be alone among his people and had to bewail the unbelief of Israel.”\(^{73}\) Dunn presses the correspondence further:

Paul as an Israelite (11:1) echoes Elijah’s complaint against Israel. To that extent Paul sees himself, with a mixture of self-assertion and self-mockery, as a latter-day Elijah..., appealing to God to vindicate his understanding of Israel’s role within God’s saving purpose over against the bulk of his fellow countrymen, and expecting a similar rebuke and reassurance that God’s purpose for Israel is still ‘on course’.\(^{74}\)

It is not often observed that Paul seems to have structured his composition to mirror the dialogical and rhetorical shape of the biblical narrative in which Elijah’s repeated charge of divine abandonment (19:10, 14) is decisively refuted by God (19:15-18).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1 Kings 19</th>
<th>Romans 11</th>
<th>Structure</th>
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</thead>
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<td>10a Elijah’s errant claim</td>
<td>1a Implicit errant claim.</td>
<td>Israel is abandoned.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14 Claim repeated</td>
<td>2a Claim repeated.</td>
<td>Israel is abandoned.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15-18 God’s response</td>
<td>5 Paul’s response.</td>
<td>A remnant remains.</td>
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</tbody>
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Did Paul see himself as a parallel figure—a solitary prophet compelled to ask, in a moment of national distress, whether God has allowed his people to perish? Although the similarities between the two men are striking, Elijah’s words correspond less to Paul’s than to his imaginary interlocutor’s whose question appears in Rom. 11:1a. Likewise, Paul’s response corresponds less

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\(^{72}\) Several other differences between Josephus and his biblical precursor stand out. Elijah makes no claim to be the sole faithful Israelite (but see Ant. 8.338 where Elijah claims to be God’s only prophet). Josephus makes only passing reference to the earthquake and fire (1 Kings 19:11-12). There is, in his account, no covenant crisis and no divine rebuke; only consolation. The remnant language of 1K 19:18 is replaced with God’s promise to protect Elijah.

\(^{73}\) Romans, 301.

\(^{74}\) Romans, 637.
to Elijah’s than to God’s. So if an Elijah typology is present, it is submerged and fractured: as the embattled prophet, Paul is Elijah; as the defender of God’s faithfulness, Paul is Elijah’s harshest critic, who cares not for himself (Rom 9:3) but for fellow Israelites who continue in unbelief.

Second, more briefly, if Paul’s principal concern was to reconcile the relatively small number of Jews who had embraced Jesus as Messiah with his conviction that God was still operating within the boundaries of faithfulness established by the OT, the Elijah narrative allows Paul to explain the presence of a faithful remnant coexisting within the covenant people as a whole at a particular point in Israel’s history. As it was in Elijah’s day, so also in his own.

Third, we might wonder whether Paul saw correspondences between unbelieving Israel in his day and rebellious Israel in Elijah’s, as Dunn implies (above, n.74) and Sanday and Headlam declare: “The spiritual condition is the same. The nation as a whole has rejected God’s message, now as then.” If Paul saw a correspondence between these two faithless majorities, and not just between the two believing minorities, he has again suppressed it well. Perhaps only those accustomed to Paul’s allusive use of scripture will ask whether this might be one of the “suppressed . . . points of resonance between the two texts.” If Paul did mean to link these two groups—those who formerly rejected Yahweh and those who now have failed to embrace Messiah—would it mean that “in the present time” acceptable worship was only possible for those who confessed Jesus as Lord and believed God raised him from the dead (10:9)?

Two biblical references in the context lend weight to this proposal. First, Paul’s critique of unbelieving Israel in Rom.10:16-21 incorporates Deut.32:21, the context of which clearly has the sin of idolatry in view. The portion of Deut.32:21 not cited in 10:19 reads: “They made me jealous with what is no god; provoked me with their idols.” What Paul does cite makes sense only when heard as an ironic inversion of the part he leaves out: the reason God conscripted a non-nation to make Israel jealous is because Israel made God jealous by a non-god, that is, by idolatrous worship (cf. Deut.32:16-17). Second, Isa.65:1-2, cited in Rom.10:20-21, begins an extended indictment of Israel’s apostasy and false worship (vv.1-12). These two OT passages share the verb στιγμά in the MT, which is rendered by παράξενος (provoke to jealousy) in Deut.32:21 and παραξενώ (provoke to wrath) in Isa.65:3.

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75 Cf. Wagner, Heralds, 234, who doubts that Paul wrote with an “Elijah complex”: “Rather than identifying with Elijah’s view of the remnant, Paul emphatically rejects it as a profound misperception of the depth of God’s commitment to preserve his people. In 11:4, he appeals to the divine response to Elijah precisely to insist that he himself is not the sole Israelite who has believed the gospel, but that by God’s grace there exists even now a significantly larger ‘remnant’ of Israel.”


77 The Epistle to the Romans, ICC (T. & T. Clark, 1898), 311.


79 Whether or not this was the “transgression” of 11:11-12 is not clear. Other suggestions include: (1) Israel’s rejection of the gospel (based upon ἐπιστα in 11:20, 23; στιγμα in 11:28; the thrust of Romans 10; cf. Cranfield); (2) Israel’s rejection/crucifixion of Jesus (if κτολακάκι of 5:10 illuminates the phrase κτολακάκι κάσιμον in 11:15; cf. K. Barth, Cranfield); (3) Israel’s failure to understand its own role and the role of the law. (Dunn); (4) hostility to Paul’s Gentile mission (cf. 11:28; L. Gaston).
If Paul’s implicit message is that Jews who reject his gospel are guilty, like ancient Baal worshipers, of covenant violation, his explicit argument is that the fate of his non-believing kinsmen, unlike that of ancient Baal worshipers, was not sealed. The unfaithful majority has not stumbled so as to fall (11:11); they are not consigned to judgment but may repent and be regrafted into the tree (11:24). Thus whatever negative typological function Paul may have attributed to the people of Israel in the Elijah narrative is ultimately subverted. Elijah’s kin may have “forsaken the covenant” and incurred divine judgment, but Paul’s kin stand in line for God’s mercy, if only they do not “continue in their unbelief.”

Paul’s appropriation of the Elijah narrative is both exegetical and revisionary. He interprets the sacred traditum by transforming it, even while absorbing it into his new traditio. In this respect Paul’s story telling, like his covenantal framework and social-historical agenda, has much in common with what we find in works of RB. But if Paul’s rewritings of the biblical precursor can be strikingly revisionary, his audience, then as now, would quite possibly regard many of his subtle revisions as mere explication. Like other early Jewish interpreters, Paul’s transformations of scripture—even his radical ones—were embedded in, disguised as, biblical citations and straightforward commentary. The hermeneutical tension between reiteration and transformation in Paul’s letters, between continuity and change, constitutes a potentially illuminating (and largely unexploited) point of comparison between Paul and those among his Jewish contemporaries who rewrote the Bible.