

**Why So Much Talk? Direct Speech as a Literary and Exegetical Device  
in Rewritten Bible with Special Reference to Pseudo-Philo's *Biblical Antiquities***

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**Introduction: Direct Speech in Scriptural Narratives and Rewritten Bible**

Even the most casual reader of the *Biblical Antiquities* can hardly fail to be struck by the sheer volume of direct speech it contains: almost every single chapter includes a dialogue, a monologue, a testament, or some other kind of talk. Yet a survey of the secondary literature reveals that this feature of the work has attracted very little serious attention from commentators, a fact that is all the more surprising given that speeches are similarly prominent in all the other generally accepted examples of the genre of 'rewritten bible':<sup>1</sup> the *Book of Jubilees*, the Qumran *Genesis Apocryphon (1Q20)*, and Josephus' multi-volume *Jewish Antiquities*. This article has two aims, therefore: first, to demonstrate the extent to which direct speech functions as a key literary and exegetical device for this author; and second, to draw out some of the implications of this textual evidence for an understanding of the view of scripture underpinning both the *Biblical Antiquities* and the rewritten bible texts more broadly.

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<sup>1</sup> This term is used here in its widely accepted sense to refer to a group of texts which retell large portions of the books which came to form the Jewish scriptures, through a combination of expansion, abbreviation, direct quotation and interpretation, although I fully recognise the difficulties and anachronisms inherent in this classification; see further the discussion in e.g. Philip Alexander, "Retelling the Old Testament" in *It is Written: Scripture Citing Scripture. Essays in Honour of Barnabas Lindars* (Eds. D.A. Carson and H.G.M. Williamson; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 99-118; Moshe J. Bernstein, "'Rewritten Bible': A Generic Category Which Has Outlived its Usefulness?" *Textus* 22 (2005): 169-96; Sidnie White Crawford, *Rewriting Scripture in Second Temple Times* (Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 2008); Geza Vermes, *Scripture and Tradition in Judaism* (SPB 4; Leiden: Brill, 1961).

The *Biblical Antiquities*, or *L.A.B.* (from the initials of its Latin title *Liber Antiquitatum Biblicarum*), is a lengthy re-telling of the scriptural narratives from the time of Adam to the death of Saul. Its author is unknown, but is generally referred to as Pseudo-Philo, because the text was transmitted together with Latin versions of Philo's work. Now extant only in Latin manuscripts, it was almost certainly composed originally in Hebrew in the first century CE, then translated into Greek and from Greek into Latin. Although commentators are divided on the question of whether it is to be dated before or after the fall of Jerusalem in 70 CE, that it belongs to a time broadly contemporary with many of the New Testament writings is widely accepted.<sup>2</sup> Considerable research has been undertaken into the forms of scriptural interpretation found in *L.A.B.* and in rewritten bible more generally.<sup>3</sup> This includes valuable studies of the presentation within these writings of central figures such as Abraham,<sup>4</sup> of the treatment of particular themes, like covenant,<sup>5</sup> and of the historical development of the interpretative traditions woven into their retelling of individual episodes, for instance the

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<sup>2</sup> There is no clear indication of date and provenance within the text, so commentators must draw inferences from the sparse references to the Temple and its sacrificial system (e.g. 13:1; 19:7; 22:8; 26:15), and from other indications such as vocabulary and the form of the biblical text in quotations and allusions. Jacobson argues most forcibly for a date post-70 CE: Howard Jacobson, *A Commentary on Pseudo-Philo's Liber Antiquitatum Biblicarum with Latin Text and English Translation* (2 vols.; AGAJU 31; Leiden: Brill, 1996), 1.199-210. An earlier date is preferred by a number of other commentators, however: see e.g. Daniel J. Harrington, "Pseudo-Philo," in *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha Volume 2* (ed. J.H. Charlesworth; New York: Doubleday, 1985), 297-377, p. 299; Frederick J. Murphy, *Pseudo-Philo, Rewriting the Bible* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 6; Charles Perrot and Pierre-Maurice Bogaert, *Les antiquités bibliques. Tome 2: introduction littéraire, commentaire et index* (Sources Chrétiennes 230; Paris: Editions du Cerf, 1976), 67-70.

<sup>3</sup> See e.g. Moshe Bernstein, "Re-arrangement, Anticipation and Harmonization as Exegetical Features in the Genesis Apocryphon," *DSD* 3 (1996): 37-57; Crawford, *Rewriting Scripture*; John C. Endres, *Biblical Interpretation in the Book of Jubilees* (Washington: Catholic Biblical Association of America Press, 1987); Louis H. Feldman, *Studies in Josephus' Rewritten Bible* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2005); Bruce N. Fisk, *Do You Not Remember? Scripture, Story and Exegesis in the Rewritten Bible of Pseudo-Philo* (JSPSup 37; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2001); Howard Jacobson, "Biblical Interpretation in Pseudo-Philo's *Liber Antiquitatum Biblicarum*" in *A Companion to Biblical Interpretation in Early Judaism* (ed. Matthias Henze; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2012), 180-99.

<sup>4</sup> See e.g. C.T.R. Hayward, "The Figure of Adam in Pseudo-Philo's *Liber Antiquitatum Biblicarum*." *JSJ* 23 (1992): 1-20; Jacques T.A.G.M. van Ruiten, *Abraham in the Book of Jubilees* (JSJSup 161; Leiden: Brill, 2012); cf. Louis H. Feldman, "The Portrayal of Phinehas by Philo, Pseudo-Philo and Josephus," *JQR* 92 (2002): 315-45.

<sup>5</sup> See e.g. Betsy Halpern-Amaru, *Rewriting the Bible: Land and Covenant in Post-Biblical Jewish Literature* (Valley Forge: Trinity Press International, 1994); Hindy Najman, *Seconding Sinai: The Development of Mosaic Discourse in Second Temple Judaism* (JSJSup 77; Leiden: Brill, 2003).

*Aqedah*.<sup>6</sup> However, attempts to explore specifically the exegetical methods employed by these authors, and to identify their underlying hermeneutical and scriptural axioms, are far rarer. In the case of the *Biblical Antiquities*, for example, only Pseudo-Philo's most characteristic exegetical technique, the forging of connections between different parts of scripture, is widely discussed by commentators. This situation is due in part to the serious complexities inherent in properly investigating these writings. Since two of them, *Jubilees* and the *Biblical Antiquities*, are available in full only in translation, and a third, the *Genesis Apocryphon*, has survived only partially, it is often difficult to establish with certainty the form of both the original text and of the scriptural sources being used within it. Distinguishing between citations and allusions is similarly problematic, given that these authors paraphrase so much of the scriptural narrative, rather than quoting it directly. However, Daniel Harrington in particular has sought to move forward the debate about Pseudo-Philo's biblical text.<sup>7</sup> The focus of this article on direct speech also minimises these obstacles, because there is usually little doubt about whether a speech is integral to the original narrative, or about whether it reproduces a scriptural dialogue (however exactly or allusively) or is a new authorial creation.

It is important to acknowledge from the outset that the amount of speech included in the rewritten bible literature is influenced by the form of the scriptures themselves, the texts which they seek to retell and interpret. The name of Robert Alter is associated above all with the developing scholarly appreciation over the last three decades of the particular literary

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<sup>6</sup> Bruce N. Fisk, "Offering Isaac Again and Again: Pseudo-Philo's Use of the Aqedah as Intertext," *CBQ* 62 (2000): 481-507; James L. Kugel, *In Potiphar's House: The Interpretive Life of Biblical Texts* (2nd edn.; London: Harvard University Press, 1994); J.P. Lewis, *A Study of the Interpretation of Noah and the Flood in Jewish and Christian Literature* (Leiden: Brill, 1969); Philip M. Sherman, *Babel's Tower Translated: Genesis 11 and Ancient Jewish Interpretation* (BI 117; Leiden: Brill, 2013); Vermes, *Scripture and Tradition*.

<sup>7</sup> Daniel J. Harrington, "The Biblical Text of Pseudo-Philo's *Liber Antiquitatum Biblicarum*." *CBQ* 33 (1971): 1-17; see also Howard Jacobson, "Biblical Quotation and Editorial Function in Pseudo-Philo's *Liber Antiquitatum*," *JSP* 5 (1989): 47-64.

style of the Hebrew Bible, as he drew attention to the fact that within it "...third-person narration is frequently only a bridge between much larger units of direct speech....".<sup>8</sup> Since dialogue is so pervasive in these narratives and indirect speech is employed quite rarely, it is only to be expected that later Jewish authors would imitate the scriptural models. This preference for direct rather than reported speech itself raises interesting questions about the presuppositions of those who composed and edited the documents which make up the Hebrew Bible. Perhaps they felt that this added to the drama and vividness of their accounts, or else served to foreground and illuminate the central figures in their story. Alter has even suggested that this tendency to turn all the thoughts, feelings and intentions of the characters into an actual speech may indicate something significant about the authors' understanding of language or the human mind: "One is tempted to conclude that the biblical writers did not distinguish sharply between the two [speech and thought] in their assumptions about how the mind relates to reality. Perhaps, with their strong sense of the primacy of language in the created order of things, they tended to feel that thought was not fully itself until it was articulated as speech."<sup>9</sup> Whatever the reason for it, then, direct speech passages underlie much of the material which is being re-presented in the works of rewritten bible. This study seeks to uncover how far these later texts retain the same focus on speech as their scriptural sources; whether and how they increase the amount of direct speech in their version of events; how direct speech is treated and functions within these new narratives; and what might be the reasons for these literary and exegetical practices.

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<sup>8</sup> Robert Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative* (New York: Basic Books, 1981), 65.

<sup>9</sup> See Alter, *Art of Biblical Narrative*, 68.

## Creating New Speeches

The first noteworthy feature of the *Biblical Antiquities* is the frequency with which the numerous supplementary additions to the scriptural narrative take the form of first person direct speech. Thus Israel's leaders are constantly depicted as offering prayers, singing hymns, and making death-bed testaments; this is true of, for instance, Moses (12:8-9; 19:2-5, 8-9), Joshua (21:2-6; 24:1-5), Kenaz (27:7), Deborah (32:1-17; 33:1-5), Phinehas (46:4; 47:1-2) and David (59:4; 60:2-3). Childless wives like Hannah also pray earnestly about their situation (50:4; cf. Manoah's wife 42:2), and the words of lamentation uttered by mourners are sometimes included in full (e.g. 24:6; 33:6), with those spoken by Jephthah's daughter Seila before she is killed as a result of her father's foolish vow (40:5-7) one of the best-known parts of the work. Lengthy speeches are attributed to characters who are silent in scripture, for instance, Kenaz (25:3-6), and wholly new speaking characters are introduced, such as Aod the magician (34:1-5). New dialogues are often created to expand the biblical material: there is, for example, the story of the refusal of Abram and his companions to join in the building of the Tower of Babel (6:2-18), and of Amram, father of Moses, debating with his fellow-elders in Egypt whether the Hebrews should continue to bear children in the face of the threat of infanticide (9:2-8).

These additions serve both literary and exegetical purposes for Pseudo-Philo. First, they can function to heighten the dramatic impact of particularly significant episodes. Kenaz's prayer before the attack on the Amorites, for instance, is set on the eve of a decisive battle (27:7). Second, they may signal important transition points within the narrative, such as the shift to a new leader, a moment which is often marked by a farewell testament (see e.g. 19:1-20:5; 48:1-5). Third, speeches can be inserted to improve the flow of the storyline, by explaining the sequence of events more fully, or by removing a perceived disjuncture in the underlying

scriptural account. Amram's appeal to the Israelites in Egypt (9:1-9), for example, helps to smooth over the potentially awkward jump from the announcement of the barbaric policy of the slaughter of all newborn Hebrew baby boys in Exod 1:22 straight to the description of the conception of Moses in Exod 2:1-2:<sup>10</sup> "Now therefore I will go and take my wife, and I will not consent to the command of the king; and if it is right in your eyes, let us all act in this way..." (9:5).<sup>11</sup> Similarly, Pseudo-Philo's Korah announces the reason for his rebellion against Moses which is unstated in scripture – his anger about the promulgation of the law of tasselled garments: "In that time he commanded that man about the tassels. And then Korah and two hundred men with him rebelled and said, 'Why is an unbearable law imposed upon us?'" (16:1; cf. Num 15:37-16:3).

Fourth, speeches and prayers also act as windows into the emotions, thoughts and inner motivation of the scriptural characters. Readers are likely to be moved by the obvious distress caused to Hannah by the taunts of her rival wife Peninnah (50:1-5; cf. 1 Sam 1:1-11), for instance, and can better understand both the reasons for Jael's murder of Sisera and the divine sanction for her action (31:3-8; cf. Judg 4:17-22): "And when Sisera was sleeping, Jael went out to the flock and got milk from it. And when she was milking she said, 'And now be mindful, Lord, of when you assigned every tribe or race to the earth. Did you not choose Israel alone and liken it to no animal except to the ram that goes before and leads the flock? And so look and see that Sisera has made a plan and said, "I will go and punish the flock of the Most Powerful One.".... But this will be the sign that you act along with me, Lord, that, when I enter while Sisera is asleep, he will rise up and ask me again and again, saying, "Give

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<sup>10</sup> Bauckham also reads *L.A.B.* chapter 9 in this way; see Richard Bauckham, "The Liber Antiquitatum of Pseudo-Philo and the Gospels as 'Midrash'," in *Gospel Perspectives III. Studies in Midrash and Historiography* (eds. R.T. France and D. Wenham; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1983), 33-76, p. 54. He also makes the wider observation relevant to this investigation, that: "At many points in LAB, prophecies and divine speeches, added to the biblical narrative, function to give theological interpretations to the narrative (e.g. 44:6-10; 45:6; 47:3-8; 49:7-8)..." (p. 37).

<sup>11</sup> All English translations of the text of *Biblical Antiquities* are taken from Harrington, "Pseudo-Philo".

me water to drink,” then I know that my prayer has been heard.” (31:5). A particularly good example of dialogue being used in this way is to be found in Pseudo-Philo’s account of the Israelites reaching the shore of the Red Sea after their escape from Egypt. He depicts the tribes urgently discussing their various options, wondering aloud whether they should stand and fight, or surrender to the pursuing Egyptians and return to their slavery, or throw themselves into the sea to die rather than face mass slaughter at the hands of their enemies (10:3). This debate draws the audience in to the hard choices their ancestors had to take, and is evidently based on traditional interpretation, as a similar three-way or four-way division of opinion is recorded also in Samaritan tradition (*Memar Marqah* 4.8) and in Targum Neofiti.<sup>12</sup>

Finally, the monologues and dialogues created by the author function throughout the text as a vehicle for his scriptural exegesis, serving especially to support his main theological emphases - on God’s enduring faithfulness to the covenant, and on God’s great mercy which will ultimately triumph over the justifiable divine anger at peoples’ sins. This theme is reinforced, for example, in Amram’s exhortation to his fellow-elders before the conception and birth of Moses, at a time when the very survival of the Hebrew people in Egypt is in doubt: ““It will sooner happen that this age will be ended forever or the world will sink into the immeasurable deep or the heart of the abyss will touch the stars than that the race of the sons of Israel will be ended. And there will be fulfilled the covenant that God established with Abraham... For God will not abide in his anger, nor will he forget his people forever, nor will he cast forth the race of Israel in vain upon the earth; nor did he establish a covenant with our fathers in vain...” (9:3-4; cf. 19:11; 21:4; 22:5; 27:7; 28:5; 35:3; 39:4-7; 49:3).

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<sup>12</sup> For further discussion of this verse, see e.g. Bauckham, “Liber Antiquitatum and the Gospels”, 44-46; Harrington, “Pseudo-Philo”, 317; Jacobson, *Commentary on Pseudo-Philo*, I, 436-37; Murphy, *Pseudo-Philo*, 62.

Significantly, the kind of expansion of dialogue and the creation of prayers and speeches which is so characteristic of the *Biblical Antiquities* is a notable feature of the rewritten bible literature more generally. This aspect of Josephus' twenty-volume *Jewish Antiquities* is widely recognised, for instance, so need not be laboured here at length.<sup>13</sup> Josephus composed a substantial number of lengthy speeches, and commentators like Harry Attridge and Louis Feldman have highlighted the way he uses this additional material to enhance the dramatic impact of his narrative, and to bring out the inner thoughts and motivations of important scriptural characters.<sup>14</sup> These speeches also enable him to voice his own theological and ethical convictions, such as the belief in divine providence and in the certainty of reward for the righteous and punishment for the wicked.<sup>15</sup>

This feature may be less pronounced in the *Book of Jubilees* than in the later writings of Josephus or Pseudo-Philo, yet nonetheless it is present. Speeches and prayers occur throughout the text, supplementing the scriptural material with new information and a greater vividness, and enabling the author to explain the meaning of the narrative, or to express some of his key theological ideas. Prayers are offered by Noah (10:3-6) and Abraham (12:19-21), for example, and several of the patriarchs deliver a farewell testament (e.g. Noah, 7:26-39; Abraham, 20:6-10; 21:1-26; Isaac, 36:1-11) or a blessing over their descendants (Terah on Abraham, 12:29; Abraham on Jacob, 19:26-9 and 22:11-24; Rebecca on Jacob, 25:15-23). Through these additional speech passages, *Jubilees* stresses above all the importance of remaining faithful to the covenant and the law, particularly by avoiding idolatry and

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<sup>13</sup> See e.g. Harold W. Attridge, *The Interpretation of Biblical History in the Antiquitates Judaicae of Flavius Josephus* (1976, Missoula: Scholars); Louis H. Feldman, *Josephus's Interpretation of the Bible* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988); Feldman, *Studies in Josephus' Rewritten Bible*; Donna R. Runnals, "The Rhetoric of Josephus", in *Handbook of Classical Rhetoric in the Hellenistic Period 330 B.C. – A.D. 400* (ed. S.E. Porter; Leiden: Brill, 1997), 737-54.

<sup>14</sup> See e.g. Attridge, *Interpretation of Biblical History*, p. 88.

<sup>15</sup> See e.g. Attridge, *Interpretation of Biblical History*, pp. 109, 182; and H.W. Attridge, "Josephus and his Works", in *Jewish Writings of the Second Temple Period. Apocrypha, Pseudepigrapha, Qumran Sectarian Writings, Philo, Josephus* (ed. M.E. Stone; CRINT Vol. 2; Assen/Philadelphia: van Gorcum/Fortress, 1984), 185-232, pp. 213, 218-9.



intermarriage with gentiles. An impassioned oration decrying the worship of dumb idols is attributed to the youthful Abram (12:2-5), for instance, and both his death-bed testament and his blessing of Jacob centre on the dangers of fornication, marriage to non-Israelite women, and worship of other gods (20:6-9; 22:16-22; cf. 25:1-3). Isaac's last words to his sons echo this warning against idolatry and recall the everlasting nature of the Abrahamic covenant: "And regarding the matter of idols, I command you and admonish you to scorn them and hate them and not to love them because they are full of error for those who worship and bow down to them. Remember, my sons, the Lord, the God of Abraham, your father, and (that) I subsequently worshiped and served him in righteousness and joy so that he might multiply you and increase your seed like the stars of heaven with regard to number and (so that) he will plant you on the earth as a righteous planting which will not be uprooted for all the eternal generations..." (36:5-6).<sup>16</sup> The Qumran *Genesis Apocryphon* is a much looser retelling of the scriptures than *Jubilees*, and the extant portions of it treat only Noah and Abram, but this text too includes large sections of first person direct speech.<sup>17</sup> Additional dialogue is created between the patriarchs Abram and Lamech and their relatives (Col. XIX, 17-21; Col. II, 3-21), for example; three Egyptian princes give Pharaoh a glowing verbal report of Sarai's beauty (Col. XX, 2-8); and a prayer of Abram for the safety of his wife after she is taken away by Pharaoh is also recorded (Col. XX, 12-15).

The rewritten scriptures are not, of course, original or unique in either their interest in the emotions and thoughts of their characters or in their tendency to create speeches for them. On the contrary, these features are widespread in Second Temple Jewish literature generally, and

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<sup>16</sup> All English translations of the text of *Jubilees* are taken from from O.S. Wintermute, "Jubilees," in *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha Volume 2* (ed. J. H. Charlesworth; New York: Doubleday, 1985), 35-142.

<sup>17</sup> *Jubilees* and the *Genesis Apocryphon* share a number of common exegetical traditions and text-forms, so some kind of relationship between them is widely accepted, but commentators differ in their views about their order of composition and the direction of dependence; see e.g. the discussion and references to further literature in Wintermute, "Jubilees", 43-44; cf. Geza Vermes, *The Complete Dead Sea Scrolls in English* (London: Penguin, 1997), 449.

are particularly evident in the deuterocanonical books of Judith, Susanna, Tobit and Greek Esther. The prayers composed by the authors of rewritten bible also follow a similar pattern to those found in the Apocrypha (see e.g. Jud 7:23-28; 9:2-14; 16:1-17; Tobit 3:1-6, 11-15; 8:5-6, 15-17; 11:14-15; 13:1-18; Est 14:3-19). The inner lives of individual scriptural figures are further developed in interesting ways in pseudepigraphical texts like *Joseph and Aseneth*, *The Life of Adam and Eve*, and the *Testament of Job*. The reason for the prevalence of speeches and prayers in rewritten bible thus doubtless owes a great deal, not only to scriptural norms as has already been observed, but also to contemporary literary conventions, both specifically Jewish and wider Graeco-Roman expectations. The influence on Josephus in particular of Greek literary and historiographical models is generally acknowledged, for example.

Nevertheless, it is important to stress just how often the scriptural narrative is supplemented in the rewritten bible literature with lengthy direct speech passages, and to probe further the significance, effects and purposes of this technique. In a recent study of the interpretative re-use of scripture in early post-biblical Jewish prayers, for instance, Judith Newman has highlighted how these function to reinforce a shared understanding of Israel's history (see e.g. Jud 9:2-14; Est 14:3-19; cf. Neh 9:5-38), and it seems that prayers operate in this way in the *Biblical Antiquities*, too.<sup>18</sup> Deborah's hymn after her victory over Sisera, for example, provides an opportunity to remind the audience of *L.A.B.* of the many previous occasions when God has acted to protect the Israelites in faithfulness to the covenant promises. Here, the election of Abraham, the deliverance of Isaac from potential slaughter, the blessing of Jacob and the Sinai theophany are all recalled to evoke from the people the desired response: "So we will not cease singing praise, nor will our mouth be silent in telling his wonders,

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<sup>18</sup> Judith H. Newman, *Praying by the Book: The Scripturalization of Prayer in Second Temple Judaism* (SBLEJL 14; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1999).

because he has remembered both his recent and ancient promises and shown his saving power to us....” (32:12). The testaments created by Pseudo-Philo offer an especially appropriate setting for this kind of theological retelling of history in speech, as a patriarch recalls significant events in both his own life and in the life of Israel in order to exhort his descendants to continued trust in God (e.g. 19:2-5; 23:4-13; 32:1-17; cf. Jud 8:11-27; 11:5-19; Tobit 4:3-21; 14:3-11).

### **Using Direct Speech Within Summary Narrative**

In addition to such newly created speeches, a second important feature of the *Biblical Antiquities* is the author’s treatment of the dialogues which are already present in the underlying scriptural narratives. It is very striking how often these spoken words are actually cited rather than paraphrased, even where other elements of the story are summarised. It is not the case that biblical episodes can *never* be retold without speech: in those which are reported in a heavily condensed form, for example the Hagar episode or the Joseph story (8:1, 9-10), dialogue is completely lacking. However, when a narrative is rewritten more fully, there is a distinct preference for including at least some parts of the original direct speech. Pseudo-Philo’s account of the flood (3:1-12) serves to illustrate this point well. No fewer than seven separate scriptural direct speech citations are included here, making up about two thirds of this chapter. These quotations follow the sequence and content of the spoken exchanges recorded in Genesis fairly closely (see Gen 6:3, 7, 13-21; 7:1-4; 8:15-17, 21-22; 9:1-17), sometimes summarising it (3:4; cf. Gen 7:1-4), and at other times expanding and updating it (e.g. 3:10; cf. Gen 8:21-22). Although the flood narrative is compressed overall, then, almost all of the direct divine speech of God to Noah is retained in some form in this retelling. The same pattern can be seen in, for instance, Pseudo-Philo’s presentation of the Tower of Babel

incident (7:1-5; cf. Gen 11:1-9), the interaction between Balaam and Balak (18:1-14; cf. Num 23:1-30), and the call of Samuel (53:1-13; cf. 1 Sam 3:1-18).<sup>19</sup> Even in the lengthy genealogy which opens *L.A.B.*, the one example of direct speech from the underlying section of Genesis is retained, albeit in considerably altered form: “And Lamech... called him... Noah saying, ‘This one will give rest to us and to the earth from those who dwell on it – on account of the wickedness of whose evil deeds the earth will be visited...’” (1:20; cf. Gen 5:29).

In a further exegetical move, Pseudo-Philo frequently depicts God as quoting himself in later speeches, thereby accentuating even further the importance, truth and ongoing relevance of the divine words. To take just one of numerous examples, at the time of the making of the golden calf, God addresses Moses as follows: “‘Are the promises that I promised to your fathers when I said to them, ‘To your seed I will give the land in which you dwell’ – are they at an end?’” (12:4; cf. Gen 12:7; cf. *L.A.B.* 11:1; 14:2; 15:5; 16:2; 18:5; 19:11; 20:2; 23:5). This technique is widely recognised by commentators, with Frederick Murphy terming it ‘nested quotations’, for instance, and Bruce Fisk ‘subsidiary citations’, but existing studies have not emphasised sufficiently the fact that it is *direct divine speech* which is often reiterated and re-contextualised in this way.<sup>20</sup> Through this repetition of God’s words as spoken in scripture, the author establishes his central theological messages, especially the hope for the realisation of the covenant promises to Israel.

This method of including direct speech citations within summary narrative is not confined to the *Biblical Antiquities*, but is employed in other examples of the rewritten bible genre, too.

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<sup>19</sup> Fisk and Murphy have both previously observed that the direct discourse elements in the Balaam episode are emphasised in *L.A.B.* chapter 18, without drawing any wider conclusions; see Fisk, *Do You Not Remember*, 227; and Murphy, *Pseudo-Philo*, 84.

<sup>20</sup> Murphy, *Pseudo-Philo*, 140, 181; Fisk, *Do You Not Remember*, 20-22, 137, 162; and Bruce N. Fisk, “Scripture Shaping Scripture: The Interpretive Role of Biblical Citations in Pseudo-Philo’s Episode of the Golden Calf,” *JSP* 17 (1998): 3-23, p. 10.

In the account in *Jubilees* of Eve being persuaded to eat of the fruit of the forbidden tree, for instance, the scriptural dialogue between Eve and the serpent is reproduced in its entirety, as are the curses spoken by God to both Adam and Eve (*Jub* 3:17-25; cf. Gen 3:1-19). Similarly in the *Genesis Apocryphon*, God is presented as speaking directly to Abram after his parting from Lot about the land which he has been promised (Col. XXI, 8-14; cf. Gen 13:14-17), and much of the conversation between Abram and the King of Sodom following the slaughter of the kings is included, together with the words of the blessing recited by Melchizedek on this occasion (Col. XXII, 15-24; cf. Gen 14:19-24).

Indeed, so central is direct speech to the retelling of scripture for these interpreters that they can even sum up an entire episode in one speech citation. Presumably they intended such quotations to encapsulate the story, and bring to mind the whole of it for their audience, but it is surely significant that it is the spoken word and not a narrative report which functions in this way. The encounter between Judah and Tamar is not related in full in the *Biblical Antiquities*, for instance, but it is, so to speak, expressed in a nutshell through the quotation of one verse in the speech attributed to Amram, Tamar's declaration when she is accused of committing adultery that: "He who owns this staff and this signet ring and the sheepskin, from him I have conceived..." (9:5; cf. Gen 38:25). The announcement of Sarah's conception of Isaac is similarly passed over speedily by Pseudo-Philo in a couple of sentences, but this brief summary consists almost entirely of divine direct speech: "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.' And Abraham knew Sarah, his wife, and she conceived and bore Isaac...." (8:3; cf. Gen 17:1-18:15; 21:1-2). This technique also is employed in *Jubilees*, where, although the flood narrative is greatly abridged, it opens

with a direct statement by God: “And the Lord said, ‘Let everything which is upon dry land be blotted out: men and cattle and beasts and birds of the heaven and whatever moves on earth...’” (5:20; cf. Gen 6:7, 17; 7:4).

It is important to recognise that these dialogues and divine declarations do not always reproduce the underlying scriptural words exactly, or even closely. The authors of the rewritten bible texts can, therefore, employ direct speech within narrative accounts as a vehicle for presenting their own theology, values and interpretations, just as they do through the supplementary prayers and speeches which they create. It seems, then, that it is the *form* of direct speech, rather than the specific content of the words, with which they were most concerned. This conclusion is important, because it suggests that scriptural speech may have held a special status within late Second Temple Jewish exegesis, a potential hermeneutical axiom which will be explored further below.

### **Allocating a New Speaker for Scripture’s Words**

Added confirmation of the significance and unique position of scriptural direct speech for the interpreters responsible for the rewritten bible texts is provided by a third salient feature of its treatment by Pseudo-Philo: the placing of words originally spoken by one character on the lips of an entirely different person in the retold narrative. This exegetical operation is clearly exemplified throughout the *Biblical Antiquities*, as in the attribution to Saul when he is chosen as king of the protest which is uttered by Jeremiah according to the scriptures: “... For I do not understand what you are saying, because I am young...” (56:6; cf. Jer 1:6). This is a move closely related to Pseudo-Philo’s more general technique of making connections between different parts of scripture, so as to establish parallels between characters and events

and highlight recurring patterns of human and divine behaviour.<sup>21</sup> In this case, for instance, he goes on to draw out explicitly the correspondence between two men chosen for God's service while still in their youth, indicating that he was fully aware that this remark actually originated from Jeremiah: "And Samuel said to Saul, '... consider this, that your words will be compared to the words of the prophet whose name will be Jeremiah...'"(56:6). The spoken words are retained and reproduced then, but they can be transferred to a new context to which they seem equally appropriate. Thus, when Joshua is seeking a divine revelation, he uses the words of Balaam: "And so wait here this night and see what God will say to me on your behalf..." (23:2; cf. Num 22:19). Similarly, it is Gideon rather than Abraham who voices a plea that God should not be angry with him for speaking back (35:6; Gen 18:30-32; Judg 6:17; cf. also *L.A.B.* 19:14 where Moses makes a similar entreaty); and God promises nourishment to Phinehas in the same terms in which Elijah is addressed in 1 Kings (48:1; cf. 1 Kings 17:4): "And I will command my eagle, and he will nourish you there..."<sup>22</sup> The suitability of Israel's leaders like Joshua and Deborah to be successors of Moses is also subtly indicated through the ascription to them of sayings voiced in scripture by him (e.g. 23:2; cf. Deut 6:4; 24:1; cf. Deut 4:26).

While most prominent in the *Biblical Antiquities*, this interpretative technique does occur also in *Jubilees*. There, for instance, Rachel and Leah are said to respond to Jacob's plan to return to Canaan in words familiar from the Book of Ruth: "...we will go with you anywhere you

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<sup>21</sup> To mention but a few of a multiplicity of examples of this technique within *L.A.B.*, the priests at Nob are said to be as wicked as the sons of Eli (63:1); correspondences between the terrible incidents at Sodom and Gibeah are highlighted (45:1-4; cf. Gen 19:1-14; Judg 19:10-29); Korah's rebellion against Moses is interpreted as of a kind with Cain's slaughter of Abel and the pursuit of the Hebrew slaves by the Egyptians (16:2-3; cf. Gen 1:9-10; Exod 14:21-29 at *L.A.B.* 15:5-6); and the parallels between the near-sacrifice of Isaac and the death of Jephthah's daughter are underscored (40:1-9; 18:5; 32:3; cf. Judg 11:36; Gen 22:1-19); cf. *L.A.B.* 12:1; 17:1; 48:1; 49:8). This method has been most fully explored by Bruce Fisk; see *Do You Not Remember?*; and "Offering Isaac Again and Again".

<sup>22</sup> Jacobson provides a long list of other instances of what he calls such "borrowing from analogous biblical contexts" in his *Commentary on Pseudo-Philo*, I. 225-27; see also Bauckham, "The Liber Antiquitatum Biblicarum and the Gospels," 41.

go...” (29:3; cf. Ruth 1:16-17; Gen 31:14-16). Even the fragmentary *Genesis Apocryphon* shows traces of this approach, as Sarai is praised before Pharaoh by the Egyptian princes as the “loveliest of women” and described in terms very reminiscent of the poetry of the Song of Solomon (Col. XX, 2-7; cf. Song 1:8, 15; 4:1-5; 5:9; 6:1, 5-7; 7:1-7).

### **Scriptural Axioms**

This re-application of direct speech to new characters within the rewritten bible literature reveals something important about the understanding of scripture held by these interpreters. Pseudo-Philo, for instance, doubtless believed that the words attributed to Abraham or Moses or Jeremiah or other named individuals were actually spoken by them at the time and in the circumstances reported in the scriptures. However, he appears to have assumed also that the significance of these speeches was not confined to the single situation in which they were first uttered. The fact that they are *scriptural* words – and so ultimately divine communication - makes them suitable for continuous re-allocation to other speakers in analogous contexts. This hermeneutical axiom reflects a strong commitment to the internal coherence and unity of the scriptures. Many of the sayings which are redeployed in the *Biblical Antiquities* in this way do have a rather general or ambiguous meaning, which can readily be made to fit a variety of different settings. For example, Gideon is addressed in *L.A.B.* by an angel with a greeting which in scripture is uttered by the old man at Gibeah on meeting the Levite and his concubine, but which is appropriate for any traveller: “From where have you come, and where is your destination?” (35:1; cf. Judg 6:12; 19:17). The words of Ps 43:3 “Where is your God?” are similarly transformed from a general taunt into the specific abuse directed at Hannah by Penninah (50:5). It seems, then, as if Pseudo-Philo regarded scripture as something akin to a vast treasury of sayings which are potentially



available for ascription to other characters in an infinite range of new contexts.<sup>23</sup> These spoken words are highly valued in their own right, and it is more important to reproduce and re-apply them than to relate their original narrative setting.

This emphasis on direct speech requires an explanation. Two important factors underlying this feature have already been mentioned: the extensive use of dialogue and direct speech within the scriptural writings themselves, and contemporary literary models and norms. Murphy has suggested two other possible reasons for Pseudo-Philo's evident preference for direct speech over indirect. First, he highlights the rhetorical impact of this form, and its potential for drawing an audience into the narrative: "Direct address allows readers to experience the characters' words and actions firsthand, creating the illusion that the readers witness the action directly, not through a narrator."<sup>24</sup> Second, he considers that this device enhances the authority of the author's particular interpretation of Israel's history: since the main speakers are God, whose words can be assumed to be absolutely true and reliable, and the patriarchs and judges and other heroic leaders who were deeply involved in the affairs being reported, their 'testimony' or version of events can be trusted.

These conclusions are valid, and do go some way towards accounting for the expansion of speech and dialogue in *L.A.B.* Pseudo-Philo certainly does stress the idea of scripture as true testimony, as in Zebul's exhortation to the Israelites: "... look to the testimonies that our predecessors have left as witnesses..." (29:4; cf. e.g. 21:1; 22:6; 24:1; 32:8). The certainty that its words will be fulfilled is, for example, an important plank in his central message that the covenant promises will be realised (see e.g. 9:3; 14:2; 21:9; 23:11; cf. 7:4; for his emphasis on the fulfilment of other passages, see e.g. 4:5; 15:5; 19:8; 20:5; 21:5; 26:8; 49:7;

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<sup>23</sup> In her study of early Jewish prayers referred to above, Judith Newman has similarly observed that they reveal that scripture "...can be endlessly mined for quotations and endlessly interpreted..." (*Praying by the Book*, 2).

<sup>24</sup> Murphy, *Pseudo-Philo*, 20-21; cf. 3, 22.

56:1; 58:1).<sup>25</sup> Even scriptural texts which do not appear on the surface to be predictions are interpreted as foretelling specific future events. The making of the golden calf is read as a fulfilment of the words spoken by God at the time of the building of the Tower of Babel, for instance: ““And now unless I stop them, everything that they propose to do they will dare, and even worse...”” (12:3; cf. Gen 11:1-9; 32:1-35; for other instances of this technique, see e.g. Deut 29:18 at *L.A.B.* 25:5; Deut 22:6 at *L.A.B.* 53:10; Deut 17:15 at *L.A.B.* 56:1). However, it seems necessary to go beyond the observations of Murphy and other commentators to fully explain why the rewritten bible texts should be characterised by so strong an emphasis on direct speech, and why scriptural speech is more likely than scriptural narrative to be reproduced within them. It seems that these authors may have been motivated by a previously overlooked hermeneutical axiom, namely that scriptural direct speech has a special status and should serve as a particular focus of exegetical activity. The question of how far this principle was shared more widely within late Second Temple Jewish interpretation will be addressed below, through a comparison with another literary corpus, the New Testament.

### **Scriptural Speech in Early Jewish Interpretation: The New Testament as a Comparative Case Study**

The preponderance of scriptural citations in the New Testament which take the form of first person direct speech is immediately evident from even the briefest survey of the synoptic gospels (e.g. Matt 2:6; 3:17; 11:10; 12:18-21; 13:14-15; 21:5, 42; 22:4; 26:31; 27:46 and synoptic parallels). In Acts, too, the citations at the heart of the major speeches attributed to Paul and the other disciples are largely comprised of first person direct speech (see e.g. 2:17-

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<sup>25</sup> Bauckham, for example, has noted the importance within *L.A.B.* of a prediction-fulfilment pattern; see his “*Liber Antiquitatum Biblicarum* and the Gospels,” 59-60.

21, 25-28, 34-35; 13:33-35, 41, 47; 15:16-18; 28:26-27; cf. the shorter text cited by Paul in support of his argument at 23:5). As in the rewritten bible literature, these quotations function to support the main themes of Acts, such as the claim that the people of Israel had an enduring propensity to reject God's messengers (7:26-28; cf. 7:51-53). Likewise, in the Letter to the Hebrews, only three of the thirty-plus citations which are included do not reproduce scriptural direct speech (Gen 2:2 at Heb 4:4; Gen 5:24 at Heb 11:5; Gen 47:31 at Heb 11:21).<sup>26</sup> From all seven citations in the first chapter right through to the very last one (13:6), then, this author's predilection for speech-texts is marked, and the oral dimension of these quotations is further emphasised by his choice of introductory formulae employing verbs of speaking, such as λέγειν and λαλεῖν. In particular, scriptural direct speech is often used in exhortatory passages to intensify the immediacy of the divine address to the early Christian communities and highlight its continuing relevance for a new generation: "Today, when you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts..." (Heb 3:7, 15; cf. Ps 95:7; cf. Prov 3:11-12 at Heb 12:5; Lev 11:44-45 at 1 Pet 1:15-16; cf. 3:8-12).<sup>27</sup>

Furthermore, the way in which these direct speech citations are recontextualised in the New Testament closely parallels the exegetical practice of Pseudo-Philo. Just as scriptural texts can be assigned to a different speaker or provided with a new setting in *L.A.B.*, so in the early Christian writings they can frequently be attributed to Jesus (e.g. Ps 22:22 in Heb 2:12; Isa 8:17, 18 in Heb 2:13; Ps 40:6-8 at Heb 10:5-9), or interpreted as relating to a specific situation involving his followers. Peter's protestation during his vision of unclean animals at

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<sup>26</sup> This total counts repeated citations (e.g. Ps 95:7-11; Jer 31:31-34) more than once. While the main citations in Hebrews can be easily identified, there is debate about whether some other uses of scripture are best classified as allusions or citations, so the number given by commentators generally ranges from 32-41. For an overview of this discussion, see Gareth L. Cockerill, *The Epistle to the Hebrews* (NICNT; Cambridge: Eerdmans, 2012), 42-43. In reaching the figure of three non-speech citations, I am excluding Heb 7:1-2 and 12:20, which I take as allusions rather than direct citations (to Gen 14:17-20 and Deut 4:24 respectively), although they are listed as quotations in some sources (see e.g. Gleason L. Archer and Gregory Chirichigno, *Old Testament Quotations in the New Testament* (Chicago: Moody, 1983), xxii. Neither of these are presented in Hebrews as first person utterances, although Deut 4:24 does form part of a speech of Moses in its original scriptural setting.

<sup>27</sup> All translations of the New Testament follow the RSV.

Joppa echoes that of Ezekiel when God instructed him to eat unclean bread, for instance, and so sets up correspondences between the two figures and their actions: “No, Lord; for I have never eaten anything that is common or unclean....” (Acts 10:14; cf. Ezek 4:14). This presupposes a belief in an integral relationship between scriptural narratives and later events which is made explicit in Stephen’s speech in Acts: “As your fathers did, so do you...” (Acts 7:51).

It is equally significant that the New Testament writings manifest the same tendency as the rewritten bible texts to retain elements of direct speech within summary narratives. For example, the selective retelling of Israel’s story in Stephen’s address in Acts chapter 7 is regularly interspersed by citations of first person direct speech from the underlying scriptural sources (7:3, 7, 26-28, 32-34, 35, 37, 40). Two further direct speech citations from the prophets are also introduced to supplement this account (Amos 5:25-27 at Acts 7:42-43; Isa 66:1-2 at Acts 7:49-50). It would appear, then, that these speech-texts are included deliberately in Acts, even though their substance could have been communicated adequately by means of a paraphrase. A similar pattern is present in Paul’s sermon in the synagogue at Antioch in Pisidia, where his brief historical review includes a citation of direct speech, based loosely on 1 Samuel (Acts 13:16-22; cf. 1 Sam 13:14). In Hebrews, too, three citations of scriptural first person direct speech are inserted into the summary narrative of the Sinai theophany at 12:18-29 (Exod 19:12-13 at Heb 12:20; Deut 9:19 at Heb 12:21; Hag 2:6 at Heb 12:26). These quotations are key to establishing the author’s argument, as they function to emphasise the unattainability of Mount Sinai (Exod 19:12-13; Heb 12:20) and the terror attendant on encounters with God under the former dispensation (Deut 9:19; Heb 12:21). There is a further one such citation included in the account of the sealing of the Mosaic covenant (Exod 24:8 at Heb 9:20), which heightens the emphasis on the use of blood in its

rituals. Likewise, the presentation of the ancient exemplars of faith in Hebrews chapter 11, although largely a paraphrase of the events recorded in scripture, also contains a direct citation, recalling God's promise to Abraham of many descendants: "By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises was ready to offer up his only son, of whom it was said, 'Through Isaac shall your descendants be named...'" (11:17-18; cf. Gen 21:12). In addition, there are cases within the New Testament of speech citations being employed to summarise larger narratives, a technique identified above as operative in both the *Biblical Antiquities* and *Jubilees*. The establishment of the Abrahamic covenant, for example, is recalled in both Hebrews (6:14) and Acts (3:25) by quoting God's words from Gen 22:17-18. The construction of the tabernacle is also described in Hebrews by means of a single citation of direct speech (Exod 25:40 at Heb 8:5).

There is ample evidence, then, of a particular focus on scriptural speech in the New Testament as well as in rewritten bible, and within both corpora, scriptural speech is more likely to be retained and augmented than scriptural narrative. That this approach is a feature of early Jewish interpretation more widely receives further confirmation from the research of Alexander Samely into the Pentateuchal targumim.<sup>28</sup> He concludes, firstly, that scriptural texts containing first person speech are almost always reproduced fully in the Aramaic version, and are not generally omitted or paraphrased. Second, he demonstrates that a particular individual (such as one of the patriarchs, a more minor scriptural character, or an angel) is frequently specified as the speaker of words which appear anonymous or indefinite in their original scriptural context.<sup>29</sup> In Targum Pseudo-Jonathan, for instance, the two Hebrew men whom Moses sees fighting (Exod 2:13-14) are identified with some of the rebellious associates of Korah from the later wilderness period (Num 16:12, 24): "And Moses

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<sup>28</sup> See Alexander Samely, *The Interpretation of Speech in the Pentateuch Targums: A Study of Method and Presentation in Targumic Exegesis* (TSAJ 27; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1992).

<sup>29</sup> Samely, *Interpretation of Speech*, 165-83.

went out on the second day *and observed*. And behold, *Dathan and Abiram*, Jewish men, were quarrelling. *And when he saw that Dathan raised his hand against Abiram to strike him* he said *to him*: “Why do you strike your companion?” And *Dathan* said *to him*: “Who is the one who appointed you ruler and judge over us? Do you want to kill me as you killed the Egyptian?” And Moses was afraid and said, “In truth, the thing has become known...” (targumic additions to the MT in italics).<sup>30</sup>

### **Conclusions: Scriptural Speech and Exegetical Axioms in Rewritten Bible**

The extent to which direct speech is employed within the *Biblical Antiquities* and within rewritten bible more widely, then, deserves to be recognised and further explored. The authors of these texts are retelling a source which is already particularly replete with speech units, but they enhance this aspect of the Jewish scriptures in their interpretation. Numerous additional speeches are included in all of these writings, taking a variety of forms, including testaments, prayers, laments, monologues, and new or extended dialogues, and serving both literary and theological functions. On the literary level, this supplementary direct speech adds drama to the narrative, highlights the significance of certain key events, and provides scope for a more defined characterisation of the central figures, offering an insight into their inner thoughts and motivations, in a manner expected of both Jewish and Graeco-Roman writing in this era. Theologically, speeches and dialogues are an important vehicle for emphasising an author’s major themes, such as God’s faithfulness to the covenant, or the serious dangers of idolatry. They are also employed by Pseudo-Philo in particular as exegetical tools to smooth over disjunctures in the scriptural narrative, or to put across a certain interpretation of it. In addition to newly created discourse, a marked tendency within rewritten bible to avoid

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<sup>30</sup> Samely, *Interpretation of Speech*, 12.

summarising or paraphrasing scriptural direct speech has been identified here. Thus speech units which are present in the biblical source are usually retained in the retelling, even though they may not be reproduced accurately and can be expanded or attributed to a different speaker.

This investigation of the textual evidence has led to a significant conclusion about the scriptural axioms underpinning the work of authors like Pseudo-Philo. Their treatment of scriptural speech suggests that it enjoyed a different status from scriptural narrative, prompting interpreters to focus their exegetical activity on it in a special way. The notable concern to include scriptural speeches within the rewritten bible texts and re-apply them to new contexts implies an underlying assumption that their full significance was not confined to the single situation in which they were first uttered. Scriptural words are regarded as divine communication, irrespective of the person named as initially voicing them, so they quite literally ‘speak’ to God’s people for all time in all circumstances. The prominence of speech in other corpora of early Jewish exegetical writings, the New Testament and the targumim, confirms that this view of scripture was not confined to rewritten bible, but was more widely shared. It is an attitude which chimes well with other techniques and principles characteristic of Jewish exegesis, such as the belief that the whole of scripture is intimately connected so that one passage can be used to interpret another; that the scriptures are absolutely true; that they are prophetic in nature so will be seen to be fulfilled in the future; and that they are intended to be heard afresh by each new generation and are not only a record of Israel’s past. It is this understanding which helps to explain *why* there is so much talk in the rewritten bible literature: God’s spoken words are naturally perceived as having an ongoing relevance, a guarantee of truth, and an especially significant and solemn character, meaning that they are worthy of preservation and endless repetition.