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Deconstruction of Violence in Liber Antiquitatum Biblicarum  
50-51**

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### Abstract

This article argues that the movement from Hannah's silent prayer in 50.5 ('Hannah did not want to pray out loud') to her bold declaration in 51.5 ('I will speak my words openly') interrupts a narrative trajectory involving violent zeal in Liber Antiquitatum Biblicarum. Throughout the narrative, the prayers of key individuals for God's merciful action on behalf of the people are rendered efficacious by acts of zeal (zelus) that are both public and violent (47.1-3). By contrast, Hannah's act of silent prayer (framed as 'zeal' in 50.5) is accepted as the accompanying act for the people's prayer (51.2). This vicarious action helps explain Hannah's expanded role as paradigmatic of all Israel in L.A.B. and serves to deconstruct the notion that acceptable zeal from Israel's leaders must be manifested with violence.

### Keywords

Hannah, Liber Antiquitatum Biblicarum, prayer, speech, zeal, narrative, violence

### Disciplines

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### Comments

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## **‘Speak, Hannah, and Do Not be Silent’: Pseudo-Philo’s Deconstruction of Violence in *Liber Antiquitatum Biblicarum* 50-51**

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### **Abstract**

This article argues that the movement from Hannah’s silent prayer in 50.5 (‘Hannah did not want to pray out loud’) to her bold declaration in 51.5 (‘I will speak my words openly’) interrupts a narrative trajectory involving violent zeal in *Liber Antiquitatum Biblicarum*. Throughout the narrative, the prayers of key individuals for God’s merciful action on behalf of the people are rendered efficacious by acts of zeal (*zelus*) that are both public and violent (47.1–3). By contrast, Hannah’s act of silent prayer (framed as ‘zeal’ in 50.5) is accepted as the accompanying act for the people’s prayer (51.2). This vicarious action helps explain Hannah’s expanded role as paradigmatic of all Israel in *L.A.B.* and serves to deconstruct the notion that acceptable zeal from Israel’s leaders must be manifested with violence.

**Keywords:** Hannah, *L.A.B.*, prayer, speech, zeal, narrative, violence

Readers have long recognized the expanded role of female characters in *Liber Antiquitatum Biblicarum*. Thus it is hardly surprising that in Pseudo-Philo’s narrative the *speeches* of women are often expanded from the biblical *Vorlagen*, and this is certainly the case with Hannah’s narrative and song.<sup>1</sup> Although some interpreters have deemed Hannah’s story to be ‘merely at the service’ of the larger narrative of Israel, Hannah is elevated as both a leader in her own right and as a pivotal figure in the unfolding of Israel’s history.<sup>2</sup> As Cheryl Anne Brown has observed, Pseudo-Philo ‘significantly enhances both Hannah’s character and role, and her story becomes paradigmatic of the Israelites’ story. Her crisis is their crisis, her longings are their longings, her fulfillment is their fulfillment’.<sup>3</sup>

Given Hannah’s prominence and the well-known literary sophistication of Pseudo-Philo’s rewritten biblical narrative, it is worth exploring more closely the literary

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<sup>1</sup> In 1 Samuel 2 Hannah’s song is 110 Hebrew words, and in the Latin version of *L.A.B.* 51 it is 276.

<sup>2</sup> Joan E. Cook, *Hannah’s Desire, God’s Design: Early Interpretations of the Story of Hannah* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999), p. 75. Cook, unlike most interpreters, does not grant that Hannah’s role is unequivocally more positive than the biblical account: ‘Hannah is both diminished and expanded in various ways from the biblical personage’ (*Hannah’s Desire*, p. 76).

<sup>3</sup> *No Longer Be Silent: First Century Jewish Portraits of Biblical Women* (Louisville: WJK, 1992), p. 172.

and rhetorical strategies at work within the Hannah episode in *L.A.B.* 50–51. In particular, this article takes as its starting point the intriguing movement from Hannah’s famously misinterpreted silent prayer in 50.5 (‘Hannah did not want to pray out loud’; cf. 1 Sam. 1.13) to her bold declaration in 51.5 (‘I will speak my words openly’). This explicit attention to the movement from silence to speech represents a significant addition to the telling in 1 Sam. 1.1–2.10. I will demonstrate that this movement is intimately related to the *vicarious* role Hannah assumes in the narrative of *L.A.B.*<sup>4</sup>

More specifically, I will argue that interpreters have missed an additional layer in Pseudo-Philo’s retelling, one that seems to affirm but then deconstructs a pattern found in the biblical narrative. That is, prior to the Hannah episode in *L.A.B.*, the public prayers of key individuals such as Moses (12.10) and Phinehas (47.3) are regularly designated as the reason for God’s merciful action on behalf of the people. However, God responds favorably to intercessory prayer only when it is accompanied by an *act of ‘zeal’*, which, thus far in the narrative, is manifested as *violence*. Given this pattern, Hannah’s deed does not simply emphasize her great moral piety by showing her conformity with social expectations that a moral woman should exercise restraint (as interpreters regularly assume). Rather, that God delivers the nation because of her *silent prayer* (unexpectedly but clearly framed by the narrative as an act of *zeal*) deconstructs the notion that acceptable zeal from Israel’s leaders must be manifested with violence.

### **A Preliminary Reading of the Hannah Episode (*L.A.B.* 48-51)**

As in the biblical Judges cycle, in *L.A.B.* 48.4 we learn that the people ‘had no leader in those days, and each one did what was pleasing in his own eyes’. The people seek a leader like Kenaz (a figure invented by Pseudo-Philo as the paragon of good leadership), but are repeatedly frustrated in their attempts to find a leader by casting lots. Finally in 49.3 they ‘pray again’ and settle on Elkanah, but Elkanah responds by saying ‘I will kill myself..., for it is just that I should die only for my own sins rather than to bear the burden of this people’ (49.5). So the people pray again, and God responds vaguely (and

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<sup>4</sup> As will become clear below, on this point I disagree with Cook in that I read Hannah’s act as *necessary*, not simply a representation of the ‘public’ on the level of the ‘private’ (*Hannah’s Desire*, pp. 75-76).

rather grudgingly) that it will be Elkanah's son that will lead them (49.7). Pseudo-Philo's reporting of the repeated thwarting of the people's desires, combined with the hesitancy of God's reply, heightens tensions in the plot and creates the expectation that more will be revealed about the reasons for God's deliverance.

At this point (ch. 50) the story transitions abruptly from Elkanah's open encounter with the people to the realm of Elkanah's home and even Hannah's inner thoughts.<sup>5</sup> Just as the people were frustrated in their efforts to obtain a leader, Hannah is taunted daily by Peninnah for her lack of a child. She travels to the sanctuary in Shiloh, where she is thought by Eli to be drunk as she prays silently for a child. Eli tells her that her prayer has been heard, but, unlike the biblical account, Hannah makes no vow, and, somewhat puzzlingly, we are told that Eli knows that a prophet was foretold but chooses not to reveal this to Hannah (50.8). After Samuel is born and weaned, Hannah returns to Shiloh and sets the boy before Eli. Significantly, Hannah's story is here transposed onto the story of the people as a whole. Eli declares, 'You have not asked alone, but the people have prayed for this. This is not your request alone, but it was promised previously to the tribes' (51.2). Hannah then offers her song, which differs greatly from that recorded in 1 Samuel, not least by its central refrain, 'speak, speak, Hannah, and do not be silent' (51.6).

Although this basic plot and the emphases in the passage are relatively clear, interpreters remain puzzled about at least two details in the passage. First, scholars are uncertain how to understand the present participle of *zelo* in Hannah's reference to Peninnah's daily taunts in 50.5 (*plus me zelans improperet mihi*). Peninnah might legitimately be seen as 'eager' (Harrington), 'jealous'/'envious' (Jacobson, Cazeaux), or

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<sup>5</sup> Cook speaks here of 'two plots in Biblical Antiquities, public and private' (*Hannah's Desire*, p. 71), and some interpreters of 1 Samuel have spoken in similar terms (e.g., David Jobling, *1 Samuel* [Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 1998], p. 136). While Pseudo-Philo's narrative certainly grants Hannah privileged information and contrasts public events with events in the home, it is better to avoid the false dichotomies often associated with the terms 'public' vs. 'private'; cf. Catherine Fales Cooper, 'Closely Watched Households: Visibility, Exposure, and Private Power in the Roman Domus', *Past & Present* 197 (2007), pp. 3-33. Pseudo-Philo's own language intermingles phrases like 'be silent' (*taceo*; 51.6) and 'in her house' (*in domum suam*; 50.8; cf. εἰς τὸ κατάλυμα αὐτῆς in 1 Sam 1.18 LXX) with 'out loud' (*clara voce*; 50.5) and especially the term 'open' (*aperio*; 51.3-4). It is fitting that the term is also applied to the *womb* in 50.4 ('what womb is born opened [*aperta*] or dies closed unless you wish it?').

‘rivalrous’ (Murphy).<sup>6</sup> Second, it is unclear why Pseudo-Philo repeats in 50.3 that Eli was appointed by ‘Phinehas the son of Eleazar the priest’ (28.1, 3; 46.4; 47.1), since there is no mention of Phinehas in 1 Samuel, Phinehas has nothing to do with the Hannah story, and this information has just been reported in the previous chapter when Eli was first introduced (48.2).<sup>7</sup>

Taken together, however, these two details (‘zeal’ and Phinehas) are not in fact obscure or insignificant, because they recall a prominent motif from the preceding chapters. Through a clever use of ‘flashback’ (‘nachholende Erzählung’), the moment that defines the legendary zealot Phinehas is recounted in ch. 47, rather than in its expected place in *L.A.B.* 18.14 (the account of the Israelites’ fornication with the Midianite women).<sup>8</sup> A closer look at this passage reveals that the account of Phinehas’ slaying of Zimri and the Midianite woman recorded in *L.A.B.* 47.1–3 (cf. Num. 25:7–8) holds the key for interpreting Pseudo-Philo’s presentation of ‘zeal’ elsewhere in the narrative.

### **Rightly-Directed Zeal and Efficacious Intercessory Prayer**

To establish that the occurrence of *zelo* in *L.A.B.* 50.5 should be connected with the occurrences of the ‘zeal’ word group in the previous chapters, I rely on two arguments that have been defended elsewhere. First, scholars are virtually unanimous that all of the occurrences of the Latin terms *zelo/zelus* in *L.A.B.* represent the זקן word group in the

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<sup>6</sup> Daniel J. Harrington translates, ‘Peninnah will then be even more eager to taunt me’ (‘Pseudo-Philo: A New Translation and Introduction by D.J. Harrington’, in James H. Charlesworth, *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha, Volume 2: Expansions of the ‘Old Testament’ and Legends* [Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1983], p. 364); Jacobson translates, ‘Peninnah in her envy of me will mock me more’ (*A Commentary on Pseudo-Philo’s Liber Antiquitatum Biblicarum* [Leiden: Brill, 1996], p. 176); Jacques Cazeaux translates, ‘dans sa jalousie, Peninna me fera des remarques encore plus fielleuses’ (*Pseudo-Philon: Les antiquités bibliques. I. Introduction et text critiques* [Sources chrétiennes 229; Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1976], p. 305); and Frederick J. Murphy in his commentary speaks of Peninnah here as Hannah’s ‘rival’ (*Pseudo-Philo: Rewriting the Bible* [New York: Oxford University Press, 1993], p. 190).

<sup>7</sup> Murphy calls the mention of Phinehas in 48.2 ‘in passing’ (*Rewriting the Bible*, p. 189), but my reading suggests that this is not a casual or unimportant detail.

<sup>8</sup> A connection between Phinehas and speech/silence is already introduced in *L.A.B.* 28.3: ‘And Phinehas the son of Eleazar the priest said, “If Kenaz the leader and the prophets and the elders command it, I will speak the word [*dicam verbum*] that I heard from my father when he was dying, and I will not be silent [*non tacebo*] about the command that he commanded me while his soul was being taken away.” And Kenaz the leader and the prophets said, “Speak, Phinehas. Should anyone speak before the priest who guards the commandments of the Lord our God, especially since truth goes forth from his mouth and a shining light from his heart?”’

original Hebrew and the ζῆλόω /ζῆλος word group in Greek.<sup>9</sup> Second, as I have argued at length in a recent monograph, the ‘zeal’ word group (in Hebrew, Greek, and Latin) is best viewed as monosemic.<sup>10</sup> That is, if we employ a ‘monosemic bias’ (a concept used by theorists working within a variety of linguistic frameworks),<sup>11</sup> we view all instances of *zelo/zelus* together, rather than treating them as distinct lexical inputs from separate domains (‘zeal’, ‘jealousy’, ‘eagerness’, etc.). As is evident from a wide range of texts in antiquity, it is the *object toward which zeal is directed* that determines whether zeal is to be evaluated positively or negatively.

From a relevance-theoretic linguistic perspective, we may speak of the strategic ‘shaping’ of the terms *zelo* and *zelus* within Pseudo-Philo’s text, where the meaning of the term *zelus*, and by extension the *concept* of ‘zeal,’ is constructed by the reader from an encyclopedia of mental items such as memories, images, and pieces of anecdotal information.<sup>12</sup> The text itself influences which mental items are activated, with the result that a later occurrence of ‘zeal’ recalls the earlier contexts in which ‘zeal’ was used.

When this sensitivity to the ‘shaping’ of terms within a given discourse is applied to the passage in question, Harrington’s translation in which Peninnah was ‘more eager to taunt me’ (50.5) is seen to be inadequate. I contend that the translation ‘in her zeal will mock me more’ better situates this occurrence within the larger pattern of ‘zeal’ in *L.A.B.*, since the mention of Phinehas and the negative zeal of Peninnah creates a frame within which Hannah’s actions are to be evaluated.

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<sup>9</sup> Though *L.A.B.* survives only in Latin, scholars are virtually unanimous that the Latin is a translation of Greek which is itself a translation from a Hebrew original. The sections of *L.A.B.* discussed here show a dependence upon the Hebrew of Numbers 25, and the consistent translation of זָעַק with ζῆλόω /ζῆλος in all manuscripts of the LXX. For the evidence that *L.A.B.* originally existed in Hebrew rather than Aramaic or Greek, see Daniel J. Harrington, ‘The Original Language of Pseudo-Philo’s *Liber Antiquitatum Biblicarum*’, *HTR* 63, no. 4 (1970), p. 503-14; and the discussion in Jacobson, *Commentary*, 1:215-224.

<sup>10</sup> See *Paul’s Language of Ζῆλος: Monosemy and the Rhetoric of Identity and Practice* (Biblical Interpretation Series; Leiden: Brill, 2015). Ancient writers as diverse as Cicero, Plutarch, and the apostle Paul advance a variety of rhetorical aims by the repeated and strategic use of the terms זָעַק/ζῆλος/*zelus*. These rhetorical strategies often go unnoticed when the word group is viewed as polysemic and therefore translated using different English words.

<sup>11</sup> See, e.g., Thorstein Fretheim, ‘In Defense of Monosemy’, in *Pragmatics and the Flexibility of Word Meaning* (ed. Németh T., Enikő and Károly Bibok; Amsterdam: Elsevier Science, 2001), pp. 79-115; Gregory P. Fewster, *Creation Language in Romans 8: A Study in Monosemy* (Linguistic Biblical Studies 8; Leiden: Brill, 2013); and Charles Ruhl, *On Monosemy: A Study in Linguistic Semantics* (Albany: State University of New York, 1989).

<sup>12</sup> See further Agustín Rayo, ‘A Plea for Semantic Localism’, *Noûs* 47, no. 4 (2013), pp. 647-79.

The *zelus* word group occurs twenty times in *L.A.B.*<sup>13</sup> In a few instances, Pseudo-Philo uses *zelo/zelus* positively for the zeal of God (*L.A.B.* 9.6; 11.6), Moses (*L.A.B.* 58.1), and Phinehas (*L.A.B.* 47.1–3).<sup>14</sup> Yet the text also employs several *negative* examples of zealous action in the earlier chapters of *L.A.B.* that contribute to the meaning of *zelo/zelus* as shaped by the text. These include characters whose ‘envy’ leads to their condemnation, such as Balaam.<sup>15</sup> In the case of the tribes who set up the unsanctioned altar around the Jordan in *L.A.B.* 22 (cf. Josh 22:10), the text specifies that their action is done ‘so they will have zeal for seeking the LORD’ (*ut sit eis animositas*<sup>16</sup> *ad exquirendum Dominum*; *L.A.B.* 22.4).<sup>17</sup> Before Joshua<sup>18</sup> and the people offer a prayer on the altar-builders’ behalf (*L.A.B.* 22.7), the text makes clear that such action must be properly directed: ‘For if you have done this act out of cunning, it will be avenged upon you...but if you have done it...on account of your sons, God will be merciful to you’ (22.6).<sup>19</sup> In other words, zeal is a good thing only when rightly-directed and rightly-motivated, and God extends mercy in response to the right kind of zeal. The question raised by the text is: what does this kind of zeal look like?

<sup>13</sup> *L.A.B.* 9.6; 11.6; 18.11; 20.5; 32.1, 2; 39.2; 44.7; 44.10; 45.6; 47.1 (2 occurrences); 47.7; 50.5; 58.1; 59.4; 62.1; 11 (2 occurrences); 64.8.

<sup>14</sup> The references associated with Moses and Phinehas are discussed below. The reference to God’s zealous beneficence in the story of Amram is representative of the earlier portrayal of ‘zeal’ in the narrative: *Et quis sciet si pro hoc zelabitur Deus, ut liberet nos de humiliatione nostra?* (‘And who knows if God will *act zealously* on account of this to free us from our humiliation?’; *L.A.B.* 9.6).

<sup>15</sup> Balaam speaks of the nations ‘being envious’ (*zelabitur*) of God’s ‘vine’ Israel in *L.A.B.* 18.11, and in the very next verses Balaam instigates the seduction of the Israelites by the Midianite women (*L.A.B.* 18.13) for which he is subsequently doomed to eternal punishment (‘I, however, will gnash my teeth’; *L.A.B.* 18.12). In several other instances the term *zelus* is not used, but given the similarities to other actions explicitly labeled ‘zealous’, the incidents contribute to the accretion of mental images associated with *zelo/zelus*. For example, in *L.A.B.* 16.4, Korah rebels against the law and is ‘swallowed up’ (*deglutivit*; *L.A.B.* 16.6), and in *L.A.B.* 39.10, Jephtha makes a rash vow and subjects his daughter to a cruel death (*L.A.B.* 40.8).

<sup>16</sup> *Animositas*, occurring only here and in *L.A.B.* 6.9 (‘Until the *animositas* of the people of the land ceases...’), may mean ‘boldness’ or ‘wrath’, but it is properly translated in this context as ‘zeal’, ‘ardor’, or ‘eagerness’ (cf. Aug. *Civ.* 14.2). Jacobson (2.700) may be correct that *animositas* comes here through the Greek *θυμός* (‘passion, wrath’), but I find it likely that the original Hebrew was קנאה. *θυμός* is used to translate קנאה in the pivotal verse about zeal, Num 25:11 LXX, and the words also occur together in Prov 6:34; 7:4; Ezek 5:13; 16:38; 16:42; 23:25; and 36:6 (Ezek 16:38 even couples the words together with *vav/kai*: קנאה וקנאה/θυμός και ζήλος). Therefore it is likely that *animositas* here is at least subtly connected with *zelo/zelus*, even if it does not represent an actual occurrence of קנאה.

<sup>17</sup> In Josh. 22:24–25 the tribes claim that their motivation was *fear* that later generations of Israelites would cause their descendants to stop fearing the LORD, since they had no altar.

<sup>18</sup> Interestingly, in Joshua 22 it is *Phinehas* who plays the conciliatory role in this story.

<sup>19</sup> *Si in astucia fecistis hanc rem, vindicabitur in vobis...si autem...fecistis...propter filios vestros, misericors erit vobis Deus*; *L.A.B.* 22.6.



### ***The Use of zelo/zelus in L.A.B. 44–47***<sup>20</sup>

This pattern of misguided zeal as a foil for rightly-directed zeal becomes more explicit in *L.A.B.* 44–47, where six of the twenty occurrences are clustered. Though translators have largely weakened the impact of the motif of zeal in *L.A.B.* 44–47 by failing consistently to translate the occurrences of *zelo/zelus* (*L.A.B.* 44.7; 44.10; 45.6; and 47.7), these instances of poorly-directed zeal set the stage for the positive example of Phinehas' zealous action in *L.A.B.* 47.1–3.

***L.A.B. 44.7.*** In chapter 44, Pseudo-Philo recounts the tale of Micah and his idols (Judg. 17). God expresses anger at Israel for violating each of the ten commandments, saying, 'And though I commanded them not to commit adultery, they have committed adultery with their zeal'.<sup>21</sup> The problem is not that the people have *zelus*, but that it is directed at the wrong object.

***L.A.B. 44.10.*** Immediately following, God promises to punish not only Micah, but all the people who 'sin against me' (*peccant in me*), declaring that the 'race of men will know that they were not zealous for me in the inventions they made'.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Some material in this section is adapted from ch. 2 of *Paul's Language of Ζήλος*.

<sup>21</sup> *Et cum precepissem ies non mechari, zelum suum mechati sunt*. Daniel J. Harrington's translation properly captures the connection with zeal ('Pseudo-Philo', p. 358). Jacobson is less helpful: 'Though I commanded them not to commit adultery, they have adulterated their devotion' (*Commentary*, 1.167). Despite his translation, however, Jacobson astutely conveys the connection with zeal in his commentary. Projecting that the original was הנאיפו את קנאתם (making 'zeal' the object of 'to commit adultery', as in the Latin), Jacobson comments that this phrase 'would apparently mean that the zeal that Israel, as a loyal spouse, should have directed toward God, they directed toward some idols' (*Commentary*, 2.1017).

<sup>22</sup> *Et nunc sciet genus hominum quoniam non zelabunt [me] in adinventionibus que faciunt*. Christian Dietzfelbinger's translation, 'Wissen, dass sie nicht eifern', is the only published translation to bring out the sense that the people *were not zealous (for God)* when they made idols instead of rising up against Micah (*Pseudo-Philo: Antiquitates biblicae [Liber antiquitatum biblicarum], Jüdische Schriften aus hellenistisch-römischer Zeit*, Lfg. 2 [Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus G. Mohn, 1975], p. 171). *Eifern* is an intransitive verb in German, but often uses *gegen* or *für* to indicate being zealous for or against someone or something. This may explain why Dietzfelbinger follows a variant manuscript ( $\pi$ ) and does not translate the Latin accusative *me*—his translation thus faithfully renders the Latin (of  $\pi$ ) without violating German grammar. Unfortunately, Jacobson mistranslates: 'they should not provoke me by their devices that they devise' (*Commentary*, 1.168). Harrington likewise translates: 'they will not make me jealous by their inventions that they make' (*OTP* 2.359). Jacques Cazeaux's French is similar: 'qu'il ne me rendra pas jaloux avec les trouvailles qu'il fait' (*Pseudo-Philon*, 305). Each of these translations erroneously attempts to make it *God's* zeal that is spoken of here, but the Latin is clear that it is the *people* who were not zealous.

**L.A.B. 45.6.** In the next chapter, Pseudo-Philo records the horrific story of the Levite's concubine (*L.A.B.* 45.1-5; *Judg.* 19.1-30). God expresses anger that the 'foolish people' (*populus insipiens*) were not 'disturbed' (*conturbatus est*) when Micah led them astray with the idols, but *were* stirred by what happened with the Levite's concubine. The assessment is clear: 'And so, because they were not zealous then, therefore he let their plan turn out badly and their heart be confused'.<sup>23</sup>

**L.A.B. 47.1-3.** This leads us to the cluster of references to 'zeal' in *L.A.B.* 47. Phinehas is in a desperate predicament. The Israelites had taken Phinehas' advice to consult the priestly lots and had received assurance of victory (*L.A.B.* 46.1; cf. *Judg.* 20.28), but are routed by the Benjamites (*L.A.B.* 46.3; cf. *Judg.* 20.21, 25).<sup>24</sup> Tearing their clothes and placing ashes on their heads, the people pleadingly question God about God's 'deception' (*seductio*; *L.A.B.* 46.4).<sup>25</sup> Will the people rise up against Phinehas? Will God finally answer their cries for help? Phinehas prays in *L.A.B.* 47.1:

Ego enim memor sum in iuventute mea, quando peccavit Zambri in diebus Moysi famuli tui, et ingressus intravi<sup>26</sup> ego et zelatus sum zelum anime mee, et ambos suspendi in romphea mea.

For I remember in my youth when Zimri sinned in the days of Moses your servant, and I went in and was zealous with the zeal of my soul, and hoisted both up on my spear.

Given the way the *zelo/zelus* word group has been shaped by the narrative, and given the literary technique of omitting mention of this significant event in *L.A.B.* 18.14, this short paraphrase is conspicuous. Unquestionably, Phinehas' act of godly zeal is rightly-directed. Given the set-up in 45.6 ('because [the people] were not zealous then...'), it seems clear that Phinehas' zeal is precisely the zeal that has been missing.

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<sup>23</sup> *Et ideo quia non sunt tunc zelati, propterea sit eorum consilium in vanum et conturbabitur cor eorum.* Harrington fails to make clear the connection with zeal: 'And so because they were not provoked to anger then, therefore let their plan be in vain, and their heart will be so disturbed' (*OTP* 2.454).

<sup>24</sup> In *Judges* 20, the Israelites are twice routed before consulting Phinehas, after which they are eventually victorious (*Judg* 20:35). Pseudo-Philo places Phinehas in a predicament by having him involved *before* the people are routed, which sets up Phinehas' pleading prayer in *L.A.B.* 47.1-3.

<sup>25</sup> *Que est seductio hec qua seduxisti nos Domine?* ('What is this deception by which you have deceived us, Lord?'). Pseudo-Philo ironically uses the same root (*seduco*) to describe the people being 'led astray' by Micah's idols rather than to be zealous for God (see *L.A.B.* 47.7, above). God 'deceived' (*fallo*) them in *L.A.B.* 47.8: *Propterea fefelli vos et dixi: Tradam vobis illos* ('Therefore I deceived you and said, "I will deliver them to you"').

<sup>26</sup> The manuscripts grouped as  $\pi$  have *et ingressu intravit ad Midianitan*: 'and he went in to the Midianite woman'; see *Gen* 16:4 and 29:23. *Pirque de Rabbi Eliezer* 47 uses this same language: בא בזנות על המדנית; cited in Jacobson, *Commentary*, 1046.

The point is reiterated with one final occurrence of *zelus* in *L.A.B.* 47.7. In the form of an analogy, the ‘fable of the lion’ reiterates the people’s inaction and solidifies the connection between rightly-directed zeal, God’s favorable response, and, significantly, ‘silence’. Just before we hear that God answers Phinehas’ prayer at the conclusion of the fable, God sums up the central issue: ‘No one acted zealously but all of you were led astray . . . and you were *silent* like that evil lion’ (47.7).<sup>27</sup>

### ***The Parallel With Moses***

Once the emphasis on Phinehas’ zeal is recognized, the wider presentation of intercessory prayer in *L.A.B.* becomes more sharply defined: *God responds favorably to prayer accompanied by properly-directed zealous action*.<sup>28</sup> Several figures stand out as exemplars. First, Amram responds to the mistreatment of the Israelites in Egypt by zealously defying the order of the king (*L.A.B.* 9.5) at risk of his own life. Amram’s hope is that because of his *action (pro hoc)* ‘God will *act zealously* to free us from our humiliation’ (*zēlabitur Deus, ut liberet nos de humiliatione nostra; L.A.B.* 9.6), and indeed God does. Second, Cenaz, whose role is greatly expanded in *L.A.B.*,<sup>29</sup> demonstrates Phinehas-like zeal in rooting out the sinners in *L.A.B.* 25.3–26.5,<sup>30</sup> and then ventures into the Amorites’ camp alone (*Et descendit Cenez solus et oravit*) before receiving the sign from God that his prayer for deliverance will be answered (*L.A.B.*

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<sup>27</sup> *Et nullus zelavit sed omnes seducti estis...et tacuistis sicut malus ille leo*; translation adapted from Jacobson (*Commentary*, 1.171). Again, Harrington’s translation masks the word *zelo*: ‘and no one was provoked but all were led astray’ (*OTP* 2.361).

<sup>28</sup> Several words are used to describe *intercessory prayer* in *L.A.B.* The verb *ōro* (‘to pray’) occurs in this sense in some 29 verses in *L.A.B.* (12.8; 19.3, 8; 22.7; 25.6; 27.7-8; 33.4-5; 39.7, 11; 40.3; 42.2, 5; 43.7; 46.4; 47.3; 49.3, 6; 50.4-8; 51.2; 52.3; 53.12; 55.1); the noun *ōrātio* (‘prayer’) in eight (31.5; 32.7; 39.11; 40.3; 44.10; 50.4-7); the verb *exclāmo* (‘to cry out’) in five (4.5; 10.4, 5; 32.7, 11); the verb *rogo* (‘to ask’) in four (15.5; 18.7; 21.3; 62.6); the verb *exōro* (‘to persuade by entreaty’) in three (13.2; 33.5; 40.3); and the noun *petītio* (‘petition’) in 53.11. The underlined verses are directly related to the prayers of Moses, Amram, Cenaz, Jael, and Phinehas.

<sup>29</sup> Cenaz is the younger brother of Caleb and father of Othniel (Josh. 15.17; Judg. 1.13; 3.9, 11), but nothing is recorded about him except his name, neither in the Scriptures nor in other Jewish literature outside of *L.A.B.*; cf. Josephus *Ant.* 5.182 (Κεβλαζος). Pseudo-Philo devotes a large portion of *L.A.B.* to the figure of Cenaz (*L.A.B.* 25-28), so his character is valuable for detecting important themes.

<sup>30</sup> *Predico autem vobis hodie quoniam, etsi de domo mea aliquis exierit in sortem peccati, non salvabitur sed igne concremabitur* (‘I promise to you today that even if someone from my own household comes out in the lot of sin, he will not be saved but will be burned in the fire’); *L.A.B.* 25.3.

27.6–8).<sup>31</sup> Third, Jael (cf. Judg. 4:17–24), much like Cenaz, takes the initiative in plotting to kill Israel’s enemy Sisera before waiting for God’s favorable answer to her prayer that God ‘remember’ Israel (*L.A.B.* 31.3–9).<sup>32</sup>

The most convincing example of Pseudo-Philo’s efforts to link intercessory prayer with zealous action, however, is that of Moses. The chronology of Moses’ smashing of the tablets (Exod. 32.19) has been reworked in *L.A.B.* 12.4–10 so that it corresponds with the example of Phinehas in *L.A.B.* 47.<sup>33</sup> In the biblical account, Moses pleads for the people (Exod. 32.11–13) and God relents (וינחם יהוה; Exod. 32.14) *before* Moses ‘burned with anger’ (ויחר־אֵר) and smashed the tablets (Exod. 32.19). By contrast, Pseudo-Philo tells the story so that: (1) God commands punishment (*L.A.B.* 12.4), (2) Moses acts (in a zealous manner)<sup>34</sup> in smashing the tablets (*L.A.B.* 12.5),<sup>35</sup> (3) Moses intercedes for the people (*L.A.B.* 12.8), and (4) God relents (*L.A.B.* 12.10). The parallels are striking:

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<sup>31</sup> In the very next chapter, Cenaz summons Phinehas and pays him great respect as the time of his death draws near (*L.A.B.* 28.1–5).

<sup>32</sup> *Ecce nunc memor esto, Domine.... Hoc autem signum erit quod facies mihi Domine* (‘Behold, now remember, Lord.... This will be the sign that you act for me, Lord’); *L.A.B.* 31.5.

<sup>33</sup> Yonatan Grossman has suggested that Num. 25 is linked in several ways to Exod. 32: ‘In his zeal for God, Moses commanded the people of his tribe to take ‘each man his sword,’ and to kill all those who had ‘made sport’ with women. Phinehas, overcome with zeal for God, had simply internalized what ‘his teacher,’ Moses, ‘taught’ when he came down from Sinai’ (‘Divine Command and Human Initiative: A Literary View on Numbers 25–31’, *Biblical Interpretation* 15, no. 1 [2007], p. 60). Perhaps these connections in the biblical account inform Pseudo-Philo’s connection of these episodes to intercessory prayer.

<sup>34</sup> Although Pseudo-Philo does not explicitly refer to Moses’ act as one of *zelus*, the concept is present even without an explicit linguistic connection, since the ‘shaping’ of words is not limited to adjacent sentences. In addition, this study has worked *backward* from Phinehas to Moses, but of course we encounter Moses first on a ‘left to right’ reading assumed by the narrative. Pseudo-Philo’s text may be more concerned with showing the importance of zealous action *chronologically* than linguistically at this point, after which it shapes the grab-bag invoked by *zelo/zelus* in preparation for the prime example of Phinehas. Pseudo-Philo does, after all, attribute *zelus* to Moses *after* having developed the theme (*L.A.B.* 58.1), albeit not specifically in reference to the smashing of the tablets. It is interesting to note that Moses ‘spoke with my [God’s] zeal’ when he demanded that Amalek’s name be ‘destroyed from the earth’ (*Disperdam nomen Amalech de terra, que locutus sum sub zelo meo*), which is reminiscent of ‘my zeal’ applied to Phinehas in Num. 25.11 (MT: קנאתי; Vulg.: *zelo meo*).

<sup>35</sup> Bruce Fisk has argued that the reference to the smashing of the tablets in *L.A.B.* 19.7, in which God does the smashing (*contrivi tabulas testamenti*), indicates that ‘far from being simply the destructive act of an enraged human being, destroying the tablets was viewed as an expression of the divine will’ (*Do You Not Remember? Scripture, Story and Exegesis in the Rewritten Bible of Pseudo-Philo* [Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2001], p. 273). This seems unlikely since in *L.A.B.* 12.5 and in Exod. 32.19 Moses clearly does the smashing, so I am inclined to agree with Jacobson that there is a translation error here from the Hebrew in *L.A.B.* 19.7, in which שברת (‘you smashed’) was misread as שברתי (‘I smashed’) (*Commentary*, 1.626). However intriguing, Fisk’s proposed reading requires an (overly) sophisticated recollection of biblical references on the part of Pseudo-Philo’s readers.

	<i>Moses</i>	<i>Phinehas</i>
<i>divine command</i>	<i>L.A.B.</i> 12.4: ‘Because the people have become corrupted’ ( <i>quoniam corruptus est populus</i> ), they must be destroyed.	<i>L.A.B.</i> 45.4: ‘Because they were not zealous then’ ( <i>quia non sunt tunc zelati</i> ), the people are to be destroyed.
<i>zealous action</i>	<i>L.A.B.</i> 12.5: ‘And hastily, he smashed them to pieces’ ( <i>et festinans confregit eas</i> ).	<i>L.A.B.</i> 47.1: And I was zealous with the zeal of my soul, and hoisted both up on my spear ( <i>et zelatus sum zelum anime mee, et ambos suspendi in romphea mea</i> ).
<i>intercessory prayer</i>	<i>L.A.B.</i> 12.8: ‘Moses went up to the mountain and prayed to the LORD’ ( <i>ascendit Moyses in montem, et oravit Dominum</i> ).	<i>L.A.B.</i> 47.2-3: ‘Phinehas prayed earnestly in his sight’ ( <i>attente oraverat Finees in conspectu eius</i> ).
<i>divine acceptance</i>	<i>L.A.B.</i> 12.10: ‘Behold, I have been made merciful by your speech’ ( <i>Ecce misericors factus sum iuxta sermons tuos</i> ).	<i>L.A.B.</i> 47.3: God was mindful ‘of what Phinehas said’ ( <i>in eo quod dixisti</i> ).

The pattern, once again, is that God responds favorably to prayer accompanied by properly-directed zealous action. In light of all the references to zeal in *L.A.B.* 44–47 and especially the ‘flashback’ to Num. 25 in *L.A.B.* 47.1, the narrative makes clear that God answers Phinehas’ prayer because of Phinehas’ *zeal*.<sup>36</sup> In contrast, because the people ‘were not zealous then’ (*L.A.B.* 45.6), God ignored their plea for victory over the Benjamites. Only after Phinehas implores God to remember his previous zealous action (*L.A.B.* 47.1–2) does God leave the people with the instructive fable (*L.A.B.* 47.4–8) and grant them victory (*L.A.B.* 47.9–10). Thus Phinehas’ prayer is an offer of his own zeal as a stand-in for the zeal that the people should have exhibited in the case of Micah’s idols.

But here, two possibilities present themselves. On the one hand, it is difficult to avoid the implication that in practice zeal means *violence*. If Pseudo-Philo’s readers are familiar with the biblical story of Num. 25 (and *L.A.B.* does seem to assume this), they would be aware that in the biblical account God adopts Phinehas’ zeal *as his own* ( בקנאו )

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<sup>36</sup> Martin Hengel, who approached *L.A.B.* with an eye for evidence of Zealotry in the first century, made a similar observation about *L.A.B.* 47.1-3: ‘Es wird...zunächst in sehr positiver Weise vom Eifer des Pinehas gesprochen, auch die strafabwendende Wirkung des Eifers für Gott setzt man voraus’ (‘In the first place, attention is drawn in a very positive way...to Phinehas’ zeal. At the same time, the effect of this zeal for God in turning away punishment is presupposed’) (*Die Zeloten: Untersuchungen zur jüdischen Freiheitsbewegung in der Zeit von Herodes I. bis 70 n. Chr.*, 3d rev. and enl. ed. [ed. Roland Deines and Claus-Jürgen Thornton; WUNT 283; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2011], p. 168).

את־קנאתי בתוכם, ‘he was zealous with *my* zeal among them’; Num. 25.11). In other words, the violent slaying of Zimri is a manifestation of the very zeal of God.

On the other hand, since the text is clear in these cases that it is the *prayer* of Phinehas (or Moses or others), God’s favorable answer in *L.A.B.* 47.3 could be interpreted as a response only to Phinehas’ *prayer* and not his violent action. Phinehas boldly challenges God to answer his prayer. Pseudo-Philo records God’s response:

Et videns Dominus quoniam attente oraverat Fines in conspectu eius, dixit ad eum: Per me iuravi, dicit Dominus, quoniam si non iurasses [orasses],<sup>37</sup> memor tui non fuisset in eo quod dixisti, neque respondissem vobis hodie.

And the Lord, seeing that Phinehas had prayed earnestly in his sight, said to him, ‘I swear by myself, says the Lord: *if you had not then prayed*, I would not have been mindful of you in what you said, nor would I have answered you today’ (*L.A.B.* 47.3).

This, in fact, was the interpretation of Num. 25 espoused by later writers, who seem troubled that Phinehas’ own zealous initiative constitutes an act of atonement (כפר) for the people (Num. 25.13). The rabbis and targumic writers did praise Phinehas’ zeal as a model for action (e.g., *Ps.-J.* to Num. 25.8: וצלי... ורחולף דאחד רומחא [‘Because he grasped the spear...and prayed...the priests merit three gifts...’]), but separated that action from its capacity to affect God’s will (e.g., *Sifre Num.* 131: לא נאמר לא נאמר [‘“To atone” is not said...’]).<sup>38</sup> These writers seem to be reading Num. 25 through

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<sup>37</sup> The editio princeps reads *iurasset*, thus indicating God as the one who ‘swore an oath’, but all other manuscripts read *iurasses* (‘you swore’). Most translators accept the reading of the editio princeps, but in light of the discussion in this paper about the importance of the efficacy of prayer, it is more likely that Phinehas is indeed the intended subject, and that *iurasses* is a corruption of *orasses* (‘you prayed’). This same confusion occurs in Ovid *Her.* 8.117 (*Per genus infelix iuro[oro]*; ‘By the unhappy line I swear’), so the emendation is not without precedent. The idea that God would credit Phinehas’ *prayer* makes much more sense in the context than some unmentioned *oath* sworn by Phinehas or God. Charles Perrot and P.-M. Bogaert read *iurasset* and understand it as a reference to the covenant with Abraham: ‘mais Pinhas n’a rien juré et les premiers mots de la phrase rappellent le serment divin de l’alliance de Gen. 22, 16 : « Je le jure par moi-même, parole du Seigneur »’ (‘But Phinehas has not sworn, and the first words of the sentence recall the divine oath of the alliance of Gen 22:16: “I swear by myself, says the LORD”’) (*Pseudo-Philon: Les antiquités bibliques II: Introduction littéraire, commentaire et index*, SC 230 [Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1976], p. 206). But if the word is *iurasset*, it must certainly refer to the oath in the previous phrase and not to an unmentioned oath from the past. See further Jacobson, *Commentary*, 2.1049.

<sup>38</sup> As David Bernat summarizes the range of interpretations in Midrashic passages, recensions of the Phinehas-miracle legend, and *Sifre Num.*: ‘In the Rabbinic and Targumic reconstruction of the narrative, Phinehas’ act of violence is fully decoupled from the reversal of the plague. Thus the priest’s zealotry is completely denuded of its power to affect God’s will.... [O]n the other hand...[w]hen Phinehas stood and prayed, he protected his people from decimation by revealing the mercies of heaven’ (‘Phinehas’ Intercessory Prayer: A Rabbinic and Targumic Reading of the Baal Peor Narrative’, *JJS* 58, no. 2 [2007], p. 282).

the lens of the ‘softened’ version of the episode recounted in Ps. 106:28–31, which makes no mention of Phinehas’ zeal:

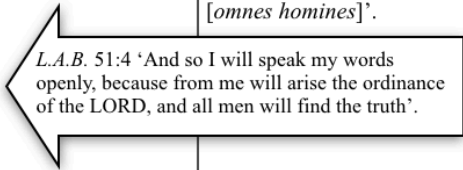
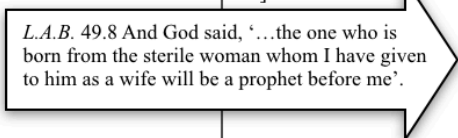
ויעמד פינחס ויפלל ותעצר המגפה...ויכעיסו במעלליהם...ויצמדו לבעל פעור  
ותחשב לו לצדקה לדר ודר עד־עולם

They joined themselves to the Baal of Peor...they provoked [the Lord] by their deeds... and Phinehas stood *and prayed*, and the plague was restrained—and it was reckoned to him as righteousness, from generation to generation forever.

So how do we adjudicate between these two options? For Pseudo-Philo’s readers, is the zeal that moves God to action to be understood as violence, or prayer?

### **The Deconstruction of Zealous Violence in the Hannah Episode**

My contention is that Peninnah’s ‘zealous’ taunting (*zelans improperet* [50.5]) is a signal that the Hannah narrative will participate in the text’s exploration of the nature of zealous human initiative. Peninnah’s zeal is a foil, indicating that Hannah’s commendable act of praying silently is itself an act of zeal. Although Hannah’s zeal is positive like that of Moses and Phinehas, her zealous act is simultaneously unlike theirs; whereas their acts are violent and lead to public acclaim (cf. 14.5; 47.3), Hannah’s prayer is silent and opens her up to public ridicule (50.2). In an unexpected turn in the pattern established thus far in the narrative, Hannah’s prayer is not only answered but is accepted as the accompanying act for the *people’s* prayer (*populus oravit pro hoc*; *L.A.B.* 51.2). This exchange is illustrated in the following table:

	Moses	Phinehas	The People	Hannah
divine command	<i>L.A.B.</i> 12.4: ‘Because the people have become corrupted [ <i>quoniam corruptus est populus</i> ], they must be destroyed.	<i>L.A.B.</i> 45.6: ‘Because they were not zealous then [ <i>quia non sunt tunc zelati</i> ], the people are to be destroyed.	<i>L.A.B.</i> 47.8: ‘And now I have destroyed you, who were silent then [before Micah’s idolatry].’	<i>L.A.B.</i> 50.7 ‘God has shut up my womb...’
zealous action	<i>L.A.B.</i> 12.5: ‘And hastily, he smashed them to pieces [ <i>et festinans confregit eas</i> ].’	<i>L.A.B.</i> 47.1: ‘And I was zealous with the zeal of my soul [ <i>et zelatus sum zelum anime mee</i> ], and hoisted both up on my spear’.		<i>L.A.B.</i> 50.5 ‘Hannah did not want to pray out loud [ <i>orare clara voce</i> ] as all people do [ <i>omnes homines</i> ].’
intercessory prayer	<i>L.A.B.</i> 12.8: ‘Moses went up to the mountain and <u>prayed</u> to the LORD’ [ <i>et oravit Dominum</i> ].	<i>L.A.B.</i> 47.2-3: ‘Phinehas <u>prayed</u> earnestly [ <i>attente oraverat</i> ] in his sight’.		<i>L.A.B.</i> 49.6 ‘they prayed again to the Lord [ <i>oravit iterum ad Dominum</i> ].’
divine acceptance	<i>L.A.B.</i> 12.10: ‘Behold, I have been made merciful by your <u>speech</u> ’ [ <i>sermons tuos</i> ].	<i>L.A.B.</i> 47.3: God was mindful ‘of what Phinehas <u>said</u> [ <i>in eo quod dixisti</i> ].’		<i>L.A.B.</i> 50.7 ‘Go, because I know for what you have prayed; your <u>prayer</u> has been heard [ <i>exaudita est oratio tua</i> ].’

The actions and prayers of Moses and Phinehas moved God to mercy, and in this sense served a vicarious role. Pseudo-Philo makes explicit, however, that only Hannah’s prayer is superimposed upon the prayer of the people: ‘You have not asked alone, but the people have prayed for this [*populus oravit pro hoc*]. This is not your request alone, but it was promised previously to the tribes’ (51.2). Thus the ultimate deliverance of the people arrives not by the violent deeds of Moses and Phinehas, but by the silent zeal of Hannah.

Here we may return to the Hannah narrative in *L.A.B.* 50–51 and identify four features that support my reading. First, Pseudo-Philo has clearly expanded the role of Peninnah as a foil for Hannah: Peninnah’s taunting is not merely occasional (as in 1 Sam. 1.6) but ‘daily’ (50.5), Peninnah speaks in *L.A.B.* (50.1), and Peninnah’s taunting is mentioned at two different points in the episode, the second time highlighting her ‘zeal’.



Second, although Hannah's song in ch. 51 is introduced as a 'prayer' (51.3), unlike the biblical account it is *not* in fact a prayer offered to God. This strengthens the case that it is her earlier silent prayer that engenders God's favorable response. As Brown puts it, 'Hannah speaks even when she is silent and even before Samuel is born'.<sup>39</sup>

Third, interpreters are puzzled by the fact that in ch. 49, God seems to tell all the people that he will send them a prophet, but then in ch. 50, Eli is the only one who knows of this, and he even keeps it hidden from Hannah (50.8).<sup>40</sup> If, however, Hannah's prayer is the *reason* for God's favorable response and not simply the *illustration* of it in Hannah's life, the disjunction in the plot can be read as an indicator of the intended overlap between the story of Hannah and the story of the people.

Finally, in 50.5 Pseudo-Philo gives an *explanation* for Hannah's silent prayer that is not found in the biblical account: she does not want to cause the people to blaspheme ('If they know that I am not heard in my prayer, they will blaspheme' [50.5]). Hannah's attention to the *people* not only highlights the way her story intersects with the people's story, but it also draws attention to the way 'silence' has been portrayed in the wider narrative. Tellingly, what is described in *L.A.B.* 45.6 as 'not being zealous' is also described as 'remaining silent' when Micah introduced the idols: 'And if being silent pleases you [*ante conspectum vestrum ut taceatis*], nevertheless the Lord judges. But if you wish to take revenge, the Lord will help you' (*L.A.B.* 45.4).<sup>41</sup>

Thus, since 'silence' and 'zeal' are set up as opposites, there is irony and even defiance in Hannah's silent prayer. My argument is that right at the intersection of Hannah's story and the people's story, and at the intersection of silence as indifference

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<sup>39</sup> *No Longer Be Silent*, p. 173.

<sup>40</sup> Brown surmises that Eli doesn't tell her because 'it would lessen the didactic force and impact of her own struggle of faith... Because Pseudo-Philo holds up Hannah as a model of piety to be emulated by those of his own day, her example would be rendered meaningless were she to know at this point that her prayer would be answered' (*No Longer Be Silent*, p. 153).

<sup>41</sup> It is noteworthy that 'silence' is not present in any of the biblical passages in which the 15 occurrences of the verb *táčeo* are found. Even if we extend the concept of 'silence' in *L.A.B.* to include idiomatic phrases like 'pray out loud' (*orare clara voce*; 50.5), the biblical text is not the provenance of Pseudo-Philo's reference to silence. Word and even domain searches do not tell the complete story, of course, but this strengthens the prominence of 'silence' and 'zeal' in these key moments in the narrative.

and silence as trust, Pseudo-Philo has cleverly inserted Hannah's silent prayer not just *in place of* zealous action but *as* the act of zeal that renders her prayer effective.<sup>42</sup>

Once this pattern is recognized, other episodes can be seen in a new light as well. Seila (Jephthah's daughter) does not use the word 'zeal' (though Pseudo-Philo adds the detail that Jephthah's brother 'envied' him in 39.2), but certainly violence is at work in this episode. And yet, in light of what has happened in the Hannah story, we can revisit the story of Seila and notice a distinct parallel with Hannah. God says to Jephthah, 'But I will surely free my people in this time, not because of him but because of the *prayer* that Israel *prayed*' (*L.A.B.* 39.11). Brown summarizes this passage well: 'This introduces an element not present in the Bible. Israel will be liberated not because of Jephthah, but because of Israel's prayer. This alone is what moves God to act on behalf of the people, not overzealous leaders who make rash vows and thus treat lightly God's holiness'.<sup>43</sup> We can add to Brown's comments that Seila's willing submission to her death is a vicarious and zealous act, just as in the Hannah narrative. The Lord says 'And now let her life be given at his request, and her death will be *precious* (Lat.: *preciosa*/Heb.: *yeqarah*, valuable) before me always, and she will go away and fall into the bosom of her mothers' (40.5). Seila, too, says 'if I did not offer myself willingly for sacrifice, I fear that my death would not be acceptable or I would lose my life in vain' (40.3). Thus Pseudo-Philo's telling of Seila's story already represents an alternative to the pattern of violent zealous action, and anticipates the deconstruction of that pattern in the Hannah narrative.

## Conclusion

Pseudo-Philo's presentation of Hannah's prayer challenges the implication in biblical passages such as Num. 25 (and seemingly in prior episodes in *L.A.B.*) that public prayer accompanied by violent zeal is what prompts God's favorable response. By shaping the mental images associated with the term *zelo* in the previous chapters and then strategically placing the term in ch. 50, the text creates an alternative portrait of zealous

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<sup>42</sup> As Mary Therese DesCamp has noted of the humility of figures such as Hannah in *L.A.B.*, 'All of them take risks—of their lives or their desires—in order to prove their faithfulness' (*Metaphor and Ideology: Liber Antiquitatum Biblicarum and Literary Methods Through a Cognitive Lens* [Leiden: Brill, 2007], p. 301).

<sup>43</sup> *No Longer Be Silent*, p. 99.

action in the Hannah episode. Hannah's silent prayer, dramatically distanced from a violent demonstration of zeal, is presented as the most effective prayer in Pseudo-Philo's entire narrative (resulting in the promised deliverer for the people).

What do we make, then, of the command 'speak, speak, Hannah and do not be silent'? Yes, like the biblical account, the song is a celebration of the prophet who is to rescue Israel. Within Pseudo-Philo's narrative, however, there is also at work in these words an *exchange*, a move from the personal sphere of Hannah's barrenness to the wider sphere of Israel's salvation. In this sense the words are actually ironic and unnecessary, except as a signal of the exchange that has just taken place. Hannah *was* silent, she did not slay the apostate like Phinehas or smash the tablets like Moses, and yet God dramatically answers her prayer and brings deliverance. Indeed, Pseudo-Philo locates great power in Hannah's silence.<sup>44</sup> This is of interest as a literary and rhetorical study of Pseudo-Philo's process and thematic concerns, but also stands as a subversion of the convention, all too common in ancient and modern life, that zeal must be expressed with violence.

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<sup>44</sup> As Michal Beth Dinkler has noted, readers of ancient texts sometimes too quickly associate silence with weakness. Citing examples such as Ovid's *Amores*, Dinkler rightly notes that "equating silence with powerlessness can obfuscate the fact that in some contexts, silence denotes power" (*Silent Statements: Narrative Representations of Speech and Silence in the Gospel of Luke* [BZBW 191; Berlin and Boston: De Gruyter, 2013], p. 16).