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REVIEW ARTICLE

Ellen Birnbaum and John M. Dillon, *Philo of Alexandria: On the Life of Abraham. Introduction, Translation, and Commentary.* Philo of Alexandria Commentary Series, Vol. 6, Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2021, xxiv + 492p. ISBN 978-90-04-42364-0 (E-Book), ISBN 978-90-04-42363-3 (hardback).

The volume reviewed here is the sixth in the series entitled, "Philo of Alexandria: Commentary Series," edited by Gregory E. Sterling, with the assistance of D.T. Runia. The volume opens with an introduction by Sterling (pp. ix–xv; identical remarks are found in the volumes already published). Following a short overview of Philo's biography (a first-century Jew from a wealthy Judeo-Alexandrian family active in politics and trade in the eastern parts of the Roman empire), Sterling introduces Philo's works. According to Sterling, Philo's treatises can be divided into five groups, three are commentary series (the other two are his apologetic writings and his philosophical writings [p. x]). The first of these, *Quaestiones et solutions in Genesim; Quaestiones et solutions in Exodum* whose target audience seems to be beginning students, discuses basic difficulties of the biblical texts. As its title indicates, it is formatted as questions and answers. The treatises that belong to the second series, the Allegorical Commentary, are intended for a more advanced audience. The format of questions and answers in a running commentary is found in them as well, however in an implicit way, as part of a "more complex form of exegesis". The third series, of which the treatise *De Abrahamo* (="The life of the sage who has attained perfection through teaching or [the first book] of the unwritten laws, that is, about Abraham" [henceforth: *Abr.*]) is part, is the Exposition of the Law (henceforth: the Exposition). This series is not a running commentary, and it rarely cites biblical text. Rather, summaries or paraphrases of the Pentateuch, related one way or the other to the biblical laws, are interwoven into Philo's own thought and sermons (p. xii).

Pages 1–83 of this volume contain an introduction by John Dillon (Trinity College, Dublin) and Ellen Birnbaum (Cambridge, Massachusetts) (henceforth: the authors) to the treatise *Abr.* whose translation is found on pages 85–136. The authors' comments on the translation appear on pages 137–138. The observations and annotations on the treatise are spread out over 270 pages (139–409), and are divided into chapters based on topics, each chapter divided into sub-topics: 1) General remarks; 2) Detailed remarks; 3) Comparisons with Philo's other writings (*Parallel Philonic Exegesis*); 4) A survey of parallels between Philo and early Christian writers (*Nachleben*). The bibliography is found on pages 411–440, and the indices at the end of the volume, pages 441–492.

The first pages of the introduction are dedicated to the place of the Exposition within the broader corpus of Philo's writing, and the place of *Abr.* within this series. While discussing the differences between this series and the other two commentary series (pp. 14–16), the authors conclude that of the three, the Exposition was the latest. And while they are not hasty to conclude, as did Niehoff, that the Exposition was written in Rome,[1] they are ready to accept the conclusion that the series was written after Philo's meeting with Caligula in 39 or 40 CE (p. 16). The treatise intended to serve as the prologue to the Exposition is *De vita Moysis 1–2* (p. 4). To emphasize the accord between the creation/universe, the works of God (the words "nature" and "God" share a meaning in Philo's writings) and the Law, the series itself opens with the composition *De opificio mundi.* The series continues with the biographies of the nation's forefathers. *Abr.* is the first of these and in its wake come *De Isaaco* and *De Iacobo* although these two have been lost. The fourth biography, *De*

[1] See below, notes 2 and 3.

Iosepho, which is not concerned directly with the Law but rather with proper governance, did survive.

Seemingly, these "biographies" are "history" or concrete examples of the reward and punishment of man (as is posited by Philo in *De vita Moysis* and *De Praemiis et Poenis,* the treatise that closes the Exposition series, [p. 6; p. 11]). However, throughout *Abr.* (and to a certain extent throughout *De Iosepho*) it becomes clear that the historical person himself, and not just his life and lot and the fate of his generation, is the archetype. Enos is the archetype of hope and belief in God (*Abr.* 7–15); Enoch is the archetype of regret and transformation when he is taken from a state of sin and begins to act virtuously (*Abr*. 17–26); Noah is the archetype of the perfection of character (*Abr*. 27–47). The forefathers, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob are all archetypes of obedience and complete fealty to the unwritten laws. Moreover, these forefathers are also archetypes for how the unwritten laws are to be acquired (*Abr*. 52). Abraham represents study (although on this point, Philo is not consistent. See *Abr.* 6, where Philo posits that Abraham learned through his own abilities [and the discussion p. 152–153]), Isaac represents nature and Jacob signifies faith.

The treatises that Philo dedicates to the forefathers who observe the unwritten laws are thus interwoven with the treatises that follow in the Exposition series, those that clarify the written Law: *De Decalogo* which serve as the outline of the written laws (p. 2) and the four volumes of *De Specialibus Legibus* which discuss the particular biblical commandments. Thus, the stories found in Genesis become part of the "Law" (p. 10). The two compositions that conclude the series return to a philosophy of the Law, *De Virtutibus* and *De Praemiis et Poenis* (pp. 11–12).

However, Philo goes beyond transforming the forefathers into examples of fealty to the unwritten laws and the means to achieve it. He goes on to claim that the forefathers are themselves an embodiment of the unwritten laws (*Abr.* 3–6; 276). The idea that an extraordinary individual (for example the king) is the embodiment of unwritten law is found in the writings of Plato, was developed by the Stoics and is also present in pseudo-Pythagorean writings (p. 151). Philo adopts this idea and even goes so far as to transform it into the principle upon which the *bioi* are based. Philo's understanding of individuals as embodiments of the Mosaic law or as unwritten laws themselves appears to be his original contribution (p. 64).

Following their survey of earlier literature which failed to adequately explain this principle, the authors offer their own enlightening discussion (a brief discussion is found on p. 8 and a longer discussion on pp. 396–399). Abraham is not connected at any stage with a particular commandment. Instead, he is consistently identified with virtue. Abraham embodies the virtues of righteousness, justice, courage, wisdom, moderation and the love of humanity. Abraham is described as unwritten laws for he achieved these virtues on his own, the virtues that the written Mosaic laws were destined to bring to the remainder of humanity. "The particular laws replicate the lives of the early figures because these laws either reflect or lead to the identical virtues that the early figures achieved in their own 'untutored' way" (p. 398). We should note that the positioning of the forefathers as the unwritten laws bestows upon them a cosmic dimension, for the unwritten legal system is itself the law of nature.[2]

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2 This aspect of *Abr.* is not sufficiently emphasized by Niehoff (in Maren Ruth Niehoff. *Philo of Alexandria: An Intellectual Biography*. New Haven and London [2018], 125–127). Niehoff limits her comments to the educational and pedagogical goals of *Abr.*. This limitation allows her to emphasize the tie between the Philonic *bioi* treatises and the *bioi* that became popular during this period in Rome (pp. 127–30). For more, see the notes below.

The emphasis on the virtues in *Abr.* explains Philo's choice to weave into the composition ethical essays for which Abraham's life serves as a starting point (for example: the difficulties of emigration [connected to Abraham's emigration from Chaldees to Haran, Genesis 11] §§ 63–65; hospitality and guests [connected to Abraham's hosting of the three unknown figures, Genesis 18] §§ 114–118). A little more difficult to explain is Philo's decision to insert, often without any introduction, an allegorical commentary that takes his audience into universal and spiritual realms and diminishes the historical figure of Abraham (p. 25). However, as the authors show (pp. 342–343, and a short remark on p. 396), the allegorical interpretation does not remain entirely disconnected from the historical character of Abraham. At times, Philo enlists the doctrines of God, the soul, knowledge, and the senses which he presents in the allegorical interpretation to elevate Abraham and compare his behavior with those surrounding him (see for instance *Abr.* 217–224, in a paragraph that contrasts Abraham with Lot).

The complexity of *Abr.* along with its broad scope illuminates the nature of the entire Exposition series. The Exposition is intended to transform the Pentateuch into a coherent and complete unit (appropriately *Abr.* is the only composition in which Philo mentions the Pentateuch [and the name of Genesis as well!], p. 34) which stands up to philosophical criteria and assumes the existence of a universal law, even though originally these five books form a particular, nationalistic corpus. The reader of *Abr.* and the other treatises in the Exposition series would thus conclude that the writings of Moses encompass the best of Greek Philosophy (p. 63). Consequently, it is not surprising that Philo omits portions of Genesis in which Abraham is portrayed as Israel's forefather (this is mentioned in the discussion on p. 43 and pp. 142–143) and does not refer to the covenants God makes with Abraham. It is furthermore clear why Philo occasionally includes in this composition discussions with a decidedly apologetic bent (p. 28; 31).

This survey demonstrates how intertwined Jewish and philosophic elements are in Philo's writing in general, and in *Abr.* in particular. The survey also demonstrates the importance of the cooperation between the two authors of this Commentary, Dillon, an expert on the founding of the Greek philosophical schools and their development during the Hellenistic period, and Birnbaum, whose research focuses on the Jewish context in which Philo was active, as well as the Jewish aspects of his writing and the interpretation and exegesis he offers to the Bible. The authors' deep familiarity with Philo's writing and their admiration of him can be sensed on every page of the book (and this admiration brings the authors even to adapt Philo's point of view. Thus on p. 155 they assert that Moses wrote the book of Genesis).

I want to cite an example of the combination of the authors' different perspectives through a brief review of their elucidation of Philo's interpretation of Genesis 18, the chapter that tells of the visit of the three figures to Abraham during the "heat of the day" (according to the Masoretic reading) or the middle of the day (as is found in the Septuagint) (*Abr.* 119–132). As stated, Philo interprets the visit through the lens of ethics, focusing on issues of hospitality and guests. However, along with this, Philo also offers both a literal and an allegorical interpretation. These three forms of exegesis, literal, ethical and allegorical, all react to the textual difficulties in the biblical tale, first and foremost, the confusing interchange between singular and plural person and between divine and human beings which continues throughout the passage (p. 253). Philo relates to the identity of the visitors in his literal and ethical interpretations and to the question of their number, one or three, in his allegorical interpretation.

In his literal interpretation Philo claims that these guests are not human but divine. This identification helps forget the connection between the three guests approaching Abraham and God, who speaks to Abraham in the first verse of the chapter ("And the Lord appeared to him at Elonei

Mamre, while he was sitting at the entrance to the tent during the heat of the day") and to whom Abraham may be speaking in verse 3, where he addresses someone with the term "My Lord" (second person singular) (p. 261). Philo, following his interpretive decision to grant these guests divine status, asserts that they neither ate nor drank (*Abr.* 110, 118), whereas in Genesis itself, both in the Masoretic text and in the Septuagint, it is stated explicitly that they did eat (vs. 8). The authors note that the non-material existence of angels is already assumed in the book of Judges. Philo discusses the nature of angels in his composition, *Quaestiones et solutions in Genesim* 4.9. Here, in *Abr.*, he voices the conclusions he reached there (p. 254). However, the authors also suggest that Philo may be relying here on an older tradition, for a similar interpretation is found in Josephus, as well as Targum Neofiti and Pseudo-Jonathan.

Although the three beings are presented at the outset as equals, in the continuation Philo asserts that the announcement of Isaac's birth was uttered by only one, the most important of the three (*Abr.* 110). The authors comment that in rabbinic literature, which also grapples with this interpretive problem, either the Divine Presence is the speaker while the other two angels accompany Him (Genesis Rabbah 48:9) or the angel Michael is the speaker (p. 255). Philo adds that had the announcement come from all three angels, "it would have been contrary to philosophy for them to have spoken about this all together". The authors offer two explanations for what Philo meant by this. The first is related to the context—that it contradicts "the way of cultured people." The second is connected to the allegorical interpretation found in the continuation of Philo's writing (*Abr.* 119–132). According to this allegorical interpretation, one of the three guests is God and the other two are God's powers. In a later paragraph, *Abr.* 143, Philo writes that God is the one who bestows goodness upon the world and not his powers. Thus, only God could announce to Abraham the coming birth of his son. At the same time, as is noted by the authors, in his ethical interpretation Philo refers to all three guests as bearing good tidings (*Abr.* 115, and the comments on pp. 257–258).

There is yet another contradiction: According to Philo, only Sarah understood that the guests have divine qualities and thus she was ashamed of having laughed when hearing the promise (*Abr.* 112). The authors observe that in Genesis itself Sarah is not ashamed, she is afraid. Analyzing Philo's reworking of the biblical texts, the authors suggest that Philo did not want to be portray God as threatening. However, in the continuation Philo reports that Sarah was indeed afraid (*Abr.* 206).

Highlighting Philo's inconsistencies is an important contribution of the authors' elucidation of his work. Their acquaintance with all of Philo's writings allows them to shed light on this phenomenon. I should also offer my praise for the authors' broad attention to the interpretations, commentaries, exegesis and expositions Philo offers to the "words of Moses". The emphasis of this dimension in their analysis opens the door for a comparison between Philo and other biblical exegetes of his period, of other regions or schools of thought, and enables the authors to examine the commonalities between them and Philo.

Nevertheless, despite his seeming participation in this Jewish dialogue, Philo transforms Abraham into a universal character. Philo notes that in his act of hospitality Abraham exemplifies the virtue of love for other people (*Abr.* 107), a virtue that, as the authors demonstrate, Philo admires and ascribes elsewhere in his writings to both God and human beings (p. 252). Philo's choice to underscore this quality here allows him to downplay Abraham's more nationalistic features. In Genesis, there is no connection between the announcement of the birth of a son and Abraham's warm welcoming. Rather, it is the consequence of the discussion between Abraham and God which began in the context of the covenant rituals, the covenant "between the pieces" (chapter 15) and the covenant over circumcision (chapter 17). However, these, as stated, are not mentioned at all in *Abr.*

(p. 250). Instead, Philo here posits that the announcement of the forthcoming birth of Isaac is given to Abraham as a reward for his generous hospitality (*Abr.* 110). The connection between Abraham's hospitality and the announcement of the birth of a son is also forged by Philo from another direction: Philo asserts that Abraham's soul was filled with joy as a result of his hospitality (ibid.) Such a description is not found in Genesis although Abraham's actions do indicate his elation. Thus, the authors explain, "Philo may wish to intimate the birth – foretold later in this passage (§ 110) – of Isaac, whose name Philo understands allegorically as referring to joy" (p. 253).

Abr. 119–132 contains Philo's allegorical interpretation which grapples with the question of one or three. As I have already mentioned, Philo elevates one of the angels and posits that this angel was none other than God. The other two are God's powers. This triad is found in two alternative (although non-contradictory) explanations that Philo offers.

The first (*Abr.* 119–124) opens with a detail found in the Septuagint: the guests come in "the middle of the day" (in the Masoretic text, "the heat of the day"). Philo employs an analogy created by Plato, between intellectual light and visible-tangible light. He explains the transition from the appearance of one figure to the appearance of three and the subsequent return to singular speech by comparing this occurrence with the earthly reality in which the sun at noon creates the appearance of two points of shade that originate in one. Through the bright light of the intellect, a human being can occasionally come to the knowledge of God, the Father of all, "He who is." However, at other times, he must suffice with merely the reflection of the Father, with God's two active powers in the world, the first, the Creative Power, "God" (Θεός), and the second, the kingly, "Lord" (κύριος). Philo thus takes note not only of the numbers one and three, but also the number two (necessary for him here) and makes use of Neo-Pythagorean thought which blends Platonic ideas with Pythagorean doctrines and places "two" at the top, the "Monad" and the "Dyad" above which stands the singularity which is neither mixed nor connected (ἀμιγὴς καὶ ἀσύμπλοκος, *Abr.* 122).[3]

The second allegorical interpretation (*Abr.* 124–130) retains the three figures but creates a hierarchy within the two powers. In this interpretation, "God" is higher than "Lord". Accordingly, Philo presents a hierarchy among humanity. The highest human beings long for the Father, "He who is" and thus can achieve an understanding of Him. Those human beings with lesser qualities can arrive at an understanding of the benevolent power called "God". At the lowers rank stand those who can comprehend the power of the ruler, "Lord".

As the authors note, the two powers that appear here for exegetical reasons, appear elsewhere in Philo's writings, there too, seemingly, for exegetical purposes (for example, when referring to the two cherubim, *De cherubim* 27–28; *De vita Moysis* 2.97–100; *Quaestiones et solutions in Exodum* 2.62). However, Philo's understanding of these powers is flexible, and in other writings he refers to seven or five powers (pp. 270–271). Philo is also inconsistent in defining the differences

---

3 The attention paid to the Divine found here and in other passages call into question Niehoff's claim that in Philo's early writings he tended towards Platonism and Pythagorean thought, which emphasizes God's separation from the world and God's otherness, and that his stay in Rome towards the end of his life moved him away from these schools and drew him closer to Stoicism which granted greater significance to earthly reality. The problem for Niehoff is that here in *Abr.,* which seems to have been written towards the end of his life, Philo notes God's otherness and distance. Furthermore, the treatises that are part of his Allegorical Commentary, which according to Niehoff were composed towards the beginning of Philo's writing career, exhibit a positive apprehension of earthy reality and strive to connect it with the Divine. See Niehoff (2018) (note 2 Above), 217–223.

between one power and the other (p. 271). Philo's structure of divinity is thus dependent on the context; he does not perceive himself to be restricted to a consistent philosophical doctrine.

This approach of Philo could be the result of the intellectual milieu in which he was active, for, during his lifetime, Middle Platonism reigned. In this school of thought, Platonism, Stoicism and Pythagoreanism each expresses its own ideas and notions in the terms and concepts used by the others (p. 63). The fact that Philo collects philosophical ideas and shapes them according to his needs is thus in line with other thinkers of his time and not at all surprising. His constructions, and the needs they serve, are discussed thoroughly by the authors. The authors furthermore demonstrate well the breadth of Philo's knowledge of Greek and Roman literature, identifying allusions to, paraphrases of and hints at well-known works, and display Philo's frequent use of other elements of the Greek and Roman culture (a general survey can be found in the introduction, pp. 64–66). They note the richness of Philo's vocabulary, the use he makes of terms and expressions from (upper class) daily and special activities (thus the "prize" included in Philo's statement regarding the reward Abraham received for hosting the three visitors is taken from the field of athletic competitions, p. 254). They also discuss unique expressions, fused from ordinary and peculiar terms (ἀμιγὴς καὶ ἀσύμπλοκος mentioned above is one example. See also: μετάνοια καὶ βελτίωσις, repentance and improvement, "the latter term seems not to be used before Philo" [p. 165] while the former receive in *Abr.* additional meaning, not found in the Greek philosophical tradition [pp. 165–166]). All of this brings to the fore the characteristics of Philo's intended audience—an intellectual group that adheres to philosophical discourse. And if we combine this with what was stated above concerning a "Torah," the Pentateuch, that lives up to philosophical standards, as well as Philo's desire to present a flawless Judaism, we can arrive at the conclusion that his audience was not necessarily Jewish.

A Few Words of Critique

1

The authors' introduction is, at times, unwieldy. There are sub-chapters that would have been better as appendices than introductions. Thus, for instance, the discussion of the assimilation of biblical verses in *Abr.* and the long list of quotes and/or allusions to them in the composition (pp. 37–42). The introduction lacks, in my opinion, a precise survey of Middle Platonism and a clarification of the authors' claim that it serves as the correct background to understanding Philo. This topic is dealt with in only a few pages (pp. 63–64) and the authors suffice with references to earlier literature (n. 85).

Furthermore, the sub-chapter "Traditional and Original Interpretation" which deals with the influence Jewish exegetes had on Philo and the earlier efforts at biblical interpretation upon which he relies (pp. 44–48) should have included or been juxtaposed with the chapter, "Intellectual and Cultural Influences" (pp. 60–66) since the topic which opens the latter sub-chapter, Jewish tradition, is also discussed in the former.

Another problem with the work is that while the commentary is extremely detailed, it is at times not sufficiently edited. The same facts are repeated, sometimes in proximity. For instance, the same sentence found on p. 165 is found at the bottom of 164: "In *Abr.*, however, Philo focuses not on LXX Gen 5:22… but on LXX Gen 5:24 and the notion that God's transference of Enoch guaranteed that his change was for the better" (p. 164, bottom); "Philo focuses, however, not on the etymology but rather on the meaning of the transference, which, because it was accomplished through divine assistance, necessarily signifies a change for the better" (p. 165, top). Another example is the authors' discussion of the unwritten laws, a topic treated on several occasions. It is mentioned briefly

in the introduction, pp. 52–53 and again on p. 63. The paragraph on p. 63 concludes, "As Johan Martens points out, however, Philo also introduces two unique applications of 'unwritten law' – by associating it directly with nature and by claiming 'in an idiosyncratic use of the term, that certain people *are* unwritten laws.'" The topic is again discussed on p. 152, where the authors compare Philo's unwritten laws with that in Second Temple literature. On p. 162, the authors analyze the relationship between Philo's "unwritten law" and the rabbinic concept of "Oral Torah." On both of these pages, the concluding sentence refers to Johan Martens: "According to Johan Martens (2003, 88), Philo is unique among ancient writers in linking the concept of unwritten law with the law of nature" (p. 152); "According to Martens, Philo is unique in applying the phrase to nature and people" (2003, 88) (p. 162).

It seemingly would have been better to dedicate a broader discussion of this important topic in the introduction and to survey the entire topic there and then to reference this discussion in the commentary. The initial fault for this probably should be laid at the feet of Philo himself, for he is both wordy and repetitive. However, for the sake of clarity it would have been better for the authors to concentrate their remarks on a given topic in one place instead of brief comments strewn throughout their commentary. For instance, why should the reader have to read on p. 254 a partial commentary concerning the angels' avoidance of food (commentary on Abr. 110) and then return to another partial discussion on p. 258 (commentary on Abr. 118)?

2

The recognition of Philo as a biblical interpreter who focuses on sacred scriptures (p. 35) aids the authors in locating Philo within his Jewish context. Most of the comparisons the authors make are with rabbinic literature, primarily Genesis Rabbah, the amoraic midrashic collection on Genesis. Nevertheless, the authors familiarity with rabbinic literature is, to put it mildly, not deep. I will again mention God's two powers, "God" and "Lord." The authors compare these powers with two measures ascribed to God in rabbinic literature, beneficence and vengeance or the measures of justice and mercy (p. 271). Unfortunately, on the page in which this comparison is summarized there is not a single reference to any composition considered to be part of tannaitic or amoraic literature nor to any study of the topic. Furthermore, we can question whether the rabbinic doctrine of God's two measures is indeed parallel to the two powers in Philo's thought. Philo describes "God" as following a plan whose goal is to bring good to the created world. Philo posits the existence of human beings with the moral and intellectual capacity to comprehend this plan and to correctly evaluate it. Other human beings lack such comprehension; to them God's program remains unknown. From their point of view, the events that occur in the cosmos are random and sporadic. In the understanding of such individuals, God does not intend to bestow goodness upon the world, but rather acts out of caprice. It is for this reason that in their eyes God is a "Lord". This construction of the world is not similar to that found in rabbinic literature. The measures of goodness and vengeance are not two ways of comprehending reality but two ways in which God rules over the world, based on God's own will, in accord, of course, with humanity's conduct.

Interestingly, it is in Qumran writings where we find a worldview similar to that found in *Abr*. This similarity should not, by now, surprise us, for over the last decades scholars have increasingly noted the impact of Hellenistic thought on Qumran wisdom writings, in particular in the composition known as 4QInstruction.[4] 4QInstruction indicates that during the third century B.C.E. philosophical

[4] It is not possible to list here the thousands of articles treating the wisdom literature discovered at Qumran and its importance for the study of Second Temple literature. There is no doubt,

discourse began to penetrate Jewish thought, and with it the universal aspects of philosophy.[5] Like Philo, the Qumranic composition[6] ranks human beings based on their capacity to understand and grasp God's activity in the world. Human beings are born with the spiritual ability to comprehend; they acquire these talents upon their creation.[7] 4QInstruction presents the "human with spiritual ability" who can understand the "the unfolding mysterious plan," God's plan that came into being before creation and is realized in both the cosmos and in history from that point forward. Having internalized and understood this plan, those with sufficient intellectual ability can offer thanks to God for His goodness and righteousness. In contrast, 4QInstruction presents the "spirit of the flesh," the human being who lacks spiritual and ethical ability.[8] The former completely accords with the people of "God" and the latter with those of "Lord."

In short, it would have been better to compare Philo's writings with literature formed in the land of Israel during the Hellenistic period. Such a comparison would have indicated the similarity but also the gap between them. Philo strived for the knowledge of God, and it is not coincidental that he uses the sense of sight as a metaphor. Qumran literature lacks such boldness, and instead suffices with the effort to understand God's mysterious plan. Thus, Qumran uses the verb ה.ג.ה, "to ponder." However, the authors are not familiar with the wisdom literature discovered Qumran's caves, and in general it seems that they have only vague knowledge of Second Temple literature. The work through which they view this Jewish literature is James Kugel's book, from 1998.[9]

Lack of awareness of primary literature and scholarship (mostly in Hebrew) also affects the sporadic references to the book of Jubilees in the Commentary. The statement (p. 406) that there is

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however, that the publication of the Cave 4 wisdom texts sparked interest and discussion. For initial studies see, John J. Collins, 'Wisdom Reconsidered in Light of the Scrolls', *DSD* 4 (1997), 265–281; J. Strugnell, D. J. Harrington and T. Elgvin, *Qumran Cave 4.XXIV: Sapiential Texts, Part 2: 4QInstruction (Mûsār lĕ Mēvîn): 4Q415ff. with a Re-edition of 1Q26.* DJD 34, Oxford (1999).

5 Eibert Tigchelaar, '"Spiritual People", "Fleshly Spirit", and "Vision of Meditation": Reflections on 4QInstruction and 1 Corinthians'. In: F. García Martínez (ed.), *Echoes from the Caves: Qumran and the New Testament*. STJD 85, Leiden (2009), 103–118. Tigchelaar notes other phrases in 4QInstruction which may be Hebrew translations of philosophical terms.

6 4QInstruction was found in a sectarian library and shows similarity, both in terms of worldview and of halakhah, with writings that were clearly composed by the Qumran community. However, the question whether it is a sectarian work is still debated. See: Matthew J. Goff. *4QInstruction.* WLAW 2, Atlanta, GA (2013); Benjamin G. Wold. *4QInstruction: Divisions and Hierarchies.* STDJ 123, Leiden (2018).

7 It is therefore appropriate for 4QInstruction to transform the story of the Garden of Eden into a journey toward the acquisition of enlightenment. Those expelled from Eden are specifically those who were not tempted to eat from the tree of knowledge and in place of cultivating a tree "desirable to make wise" are forced to tend to thorns and thistles ("the earth shall sprout forth thorns and thistles for you"). See: Benjamin Wald, 'The Universality of Creation in 4QInstruction'. *RevQ* 26 (2013), 211–226.

8 Cana Werman, 'The Book of Hagu'. In: J. J. Collins, G. E. Sterling and R. A. Clements, *Sapiential Perspectives: Wisdom Literature in Light of the Dead Sea Scrolls: Proceedings of the Sixth International Symposium of the Orion Center for the Study of the Dead Sea Scrolls and Associated Literature, 20–22 May, 2001*. STDJ 51, Leiden (2004), 125–140.

9 James Kugel. *Tradition of the Bible: A Guide to the Bible as it Was at the start of the Common Era*. Cambridge (1998).

a similarity between *Abr.* 275 according to which Abraham "did the divine law and all the divine commandments" and Jubilees, which seemingly expresses the same assertion, ignores the vast contradiction between the two. The author of Jubilees, like Philo, turns Genesis into an integral part of the entire Torah. However, in contrast with Philo, who as we saw, transforms the entire Pentateuch into a universal work whose heroes and laws fully accord with the law of nature, identical to the universal unwritten laws, Jubilees shapes Genesis and the entire Torah into a work expressive of a particular and zealous nation. In his struggle against the idea of the law of nature with its cosmic dimensions addressed by Jewish-Hellenistic writers, the author of Jubilees cannot suffice with the "the unfolding mysterious plan," found in the wisdom literature discussed above. From the perspective of the author of Jubilees, this is too nebulous of a picture. In its place, Jubilees presents "The Torah and the *Predestined History*." This is the author's name for the pre-creation blueprint which consists of a set of laws that shape historical events and the unfolding of history. It is these ritual/national laws, and not the moral ones, that guide the Divine plan and on whose basis the world and history are conducted.[10] And it is these commandments that Abraham fulfils.

The book of Jubilees also provides an opportunity to clarify the relationship between the unwritten laws and the term "Oral (*al-pe*) Torah." *Oral Torah* is the moniker given by the Sages and perhaps already by the Pharisees to their παράδοσις, the traditions of the forefathers, the folk customs that do not always accord and sometimes even contradict the Pentateuchal commandments. *Oral Torah* originates in a verse in Deuteronomy, "You shall act in accordance with (*al-pe*) the Torah that they instruct you and the ruling that they tell you" (17:11) and is designed to explain why the customs and laws to which the Pharisees adhere are not found in the Pentateuch. In reaction, Jubilees, which originated in priestly circles that disdained the Pharisees, declares itself to be the second Torah given at Sinai in written form. For our sake, we should note the difference between *Oral Torah* which does not accord with (written) Pentateuch, and Philo's unwritten laws which fully accords with the Pentateuch. The two are thus completely distinct ideas, one primarily halakhic and the other philosophical.

A gap between Judean literature and Philo is also found in the portrayal of Enoch. The authors correctly note that Enoch's features in *Abr.* do not accord with his features elsewhere in Second Temple literature. Philo presents him as a sinner, whereas in Second Temple literature Enoch is the symbol of righteousness. However, the author's suggestion (p. 176) that Philo wished to demote Enoch's character to restore honor to Moses must be rejected. It is based on an incorrect (despite its being generally accepted) assumption that a "Enochic Judaism" was developed during the Second Temple period to universalize Judaism and reject the particularism embodied by Moses.[11] The problem with this theory is that analysis of Enoch literature reveals that the works included in it do not have a universal world-view but rather call for isolation and express enmity towards the non-Jewish, foreign world.[12] Enoch and his generation are the tools through which the authors call for

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10 Cana Werman, 'The Book of Jubilees in Hellenistic Context'. In: L. LiDonnici and A. Lieber (eds.), *The Heavenly Tablets: Jubilee Volume in Honor of Prof. B. Halpern-Amaru.* Leiden (2007), 133–158.

11 The loudest advocate of this assumption is Boccaccini. See: Gabriele Boccaccini, 'Enochians, Urban Essenes, Qumranites: Three Social Groups One Intellectual Movement'. In: J. J. Collins and G. Boccaccini (eds.), *The Early Enoch Literature*. SJSJ 121, Leiden (2007), 301–327.

12 Cana Werman, '1 Enoch and the New Testament'. In: L. Stuckenbruck and D. Gurtner (eds.), *Second Temple Judaism in Scholarly Perspective: Integrating Recent Developments*. London (forthcoming).

adherence not just to the commandments but also to "inheritance", Jewish custom and practices that convey a rejection of foreign culture.

Enochic literature does not, thus, diminish the significance of Moses. Nevertheless, Enoch writings completely contrast with Philo's attitude towards outside culture and thought. This literature may even be the result of Judean animosity toward Hellenism, similar to that expressed in Jubilees. If Philo was familiar with this literature (and there is no reason or need to assume that he was) then his ascription of sin to Enoch may have been a critique of the stance espoused by the authors of Enoch literature, and their desire for cultural isolation. Thus, the clarification of the differences between Philo and other Second Temple writings again aids us in understanding Philo.

Knowledge of Second Temple literature is also missing in the discussion related to the produce of the tree during its fourth year and its description as "*kodesh hilulim*" in Leviticus 19:24 (p. 160). The only relevant source mentioned by the authors is taken from the Babylonian Talmud, Tractate Berakhot, a composition whose date and place of origin are remote from Philo. The authors do not note the Second Temple halakhic dispute as to how this commandment is to be observed, and the connection its observance has with the obscure expression "*kodesh hilulim*." How the commandment of fourth year fruits was understood and to be observed stood at the eye of the storm with the rise of the Pharisees to power in the second century BCE and it is not coincidental that it is enumerated among the obligations the Qumranites observed scrupulously.[13] According to the priestly halakha, the produce of the tree during its fourth year must be given to the priests while during the fifth year the fruit becomes non-sacred (*ḥol*) and is permitted to its owners and any other person. Priestly law demanded a process of desacralization, a process known from other sectarian writings. "*Kodesh ḥillulim*" is thus interpreted as sacred produce (*kodesh*) which requires desacralization (*ḥilul*) before it is used. In contrast, according to Pharisaic law, this term refers to sacred produce over which praise, *hilul*, to God must be offered before it is consumed—thus it must be consumed in Jerusalem, by the owners themselves.[14] Philo's lack of mention of this dispute indicates a great deal about him and his readership who live in a textual world in which halakhah plays a marginal role, if any.

I want to conclude with words of gratitude: the authors leave ample room for scholars of Second Temple literature to offer further contributions. Their impressive, detailed, serious, and rich work offers precise evaluation of both dimensions of the Philonic treatise, the philosophical and the exegetical. And due to the attention given to the latter, their work serves as a stable and broad foundation upon to further clarify the place of Philo within the world of Jewish literary creations during the Second Temple and rabbinic periods.

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13 Elisha Qimron. *The Dead Sea Scrolls: The Hebrew Writings*, V. 1. Jerusalem (2010), 23, ll. 17–18.

14 Menachem Kister, 'Some Aspects of Qumranic Halakhah'. In: J. Trebolle Barrera and L. Vegas Montaner (eds.), *The Madrid Qumran Congress: Proceedings of the International Congress on the Dead Sea Scrolls Madrid, 18–21 March 1991*. STDJ 11, Leiden (1992), 571–589.