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THE USE OF BIBLICAL PERSONAGES TO DESCRIBE THE SOCIETIES OF PHILO OF ALEXANDRIA AND FLAVIUS JOSEPHUS

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DIGEST

Philo and Josephus represent two different Jewish systems operating independently during the First Century, CE. Josephus represents the Pharasaic system of Palestine. Philo applies his unique neo-Platonic philosophic system to the Pentateuch and establishes a Hellenistic-Pentateuchal Judaism.

Both men write commentaries to the Torah. In this study, Abraham serves as the case study in order to describe the two different systems. Philo describes Abraham as a Philosopher-King. His journey from Chaldea to Canaan via Haran becomes a neo-Platonic quest. He migrates from the shadow world of Chaldea to the world of sense perception (Haran), after which he leaves for Canaan, the metaphysical world. At the end of his quest, Abraham becomes the Form of the Jew.

Josephus' description of Abraham is one of a warrior and statesman. When Abraham leaves Chaldea, he is already philosophically complete. Josephus turns Abraham into an Aristotelian philosopher. Yet, Josephus' philosophic system is only a minor part of his total writings; he is more interested in writing a political-military history of his people.

Abraham's actions in the world also show him to be an apologetic figure. Josephus attempts to portray Abraham and his family in a favorable light. Abraham becomes a Roman noble, as familiar with the Greek classical legends as he is with the Oral and Written Laws. Furthermore, he becomes the indirect ancestor of certain Greek mythological heroes.

A comparison of Philo and Josephus shows that Josephus is not dependent upon Philo as a source for his historical writings. Josephus' description of Abraham is quite different than that found in Philo's writings. These two writers have different reasons for writing their respective books. Consequently, any similarity between these two authors is purely coincidental.

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INTRODUCTION

Philo and Josephus, important and innovative writers during the First Century, CE, have assumed their rightful places as seminal thinkers in the history of the Jews. Philo is the founder of the Jewish school of Neo-Platonic thought. Josephus is the first Jewish historian and historiographer of the post-Biblical era.

Even though Philo preceeded Josephus by only about fifty years, each conceptualized Judaism in different ways. Philo, influenced by life in Alexandria and his schooling in Greek philosophy, places the stories of the Torah in a neo-Platonic framework. These personages take on philosophic significance; Philo's allegorical treatment of them exemplifies the neo-Platonic quest for the essence of the Godhead (First Cause) and knowledge of the Forms.

Josephus, writing in Rome but schooled in Pharasaic thought, wrote a political history of the Jewish people. The ritual and ceremonial aspects of the Bible are secondary to Israel's political and military record. While Josephus does engage in some philosophical speculation, the Biblical personages he describes are placed within Roman society. Consequently, they express Greco-Roman ideals. For

Josephus, the Bible, and the people whom it describes, are certainly no different than Roman nobles. At times, they are even superior to Romans.

One may read the works of both Philo and Josephus as commentaries to the Bible. These commentaries reflect the importance that their respective societies place upon philosophy and history, respectively. Furthermore, Josephus adds the Two-Fold Law to his study of the Bible, since Oral Law and oral traditions are as valid as the Torah.

Both Philo and Josephus focus upon Abraham as the founder of the Jewish people. For Philo, Abraham is the Form of the Jew. Later Jews, including Moses, must try to emulate Abraham. Abraham and his family take on philosophic significance. For example, Abraham is the first to embark upon the neo-Platonic quest for the essence of the Godhead (First Cause) and knowledge of the Forms.

To Josephus, Abraham is not a philosopher-king in the neo-Platonic model, nor is he a Biblical patriarch. Abraham becomes a king, who lives in a Roman style palace, and wins spectacular military victories. He does not need to embark upon a philosophic quest; his mind is already perfect before he leaves Chaldea.

In this study, the original sources speak for themselves. Often, the writings of Philo and Josephus are placed next to the appropriate Biblical verses in order to note the differences between them. Parts One and Two of this study provide an analysis of the treatment of Philo and Josephus, respectively. A comparison of their works is presented in Part Three From these comparisons, it is clear that Josephus did not draw upon Philo as one of his sources. Furthermore, both writers respond to unique circumstances which call for differing interpretations of Scripture. Philo and Josephus describe two different Jewish systems operating simultaneously, the Hellenistic-Penteteuchal and the Pharasaic-Hellenistic. An analysis of the Abraham story makes this clear. Through Abraham, we will see how these systems operated in the First Century, CE.

PART ONE

PHILO

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Philo synthesizes Greek philosophy, as taught by Plato and Aristotle, with the basic tenets of Judaism, as Philo understands them. As will be shown, Philo places the Hebrew Bible in the mainstream of Hellenistic thought, through the use of allegory. Abraham is his concrete example of the ramifications of his philosophic speculations.

Unlike many of his contemporaries living in Palestine, Philo portrays Abraham as the Ideal Jew. Moses, and all subsequent Jews, must instead emulate the Patriarchs. Philo has subtly shifted emphasis from the Two-Fold Law of Moses to the Patriarchal quest for philosophic truth, which becomes for Philo the _sine qua non_ of Judaism.

In the _Allegory_, Philo makes it very difficult to read the Abraham story as a single unit; glimpses of Abraham are scattered throughout many different works. He uses Abraham as an example for his topic at hand, be it dreams or philosophic quests or anything else. Consequently, on looks in many places in order to bring together elements of the

Abraham story, even in a book such as De Migratione Abrahami, which purports to describe the philosophical aspects of the ahistorical Abraham story.

However, Philo does not write about two different Abrahams. His treatment of Abraham in De Abrahamo is not significantly different than Abraham's portrayal in the Allegory. Abraham is a philosopher, for both Jews and Gentiles. Philo describes Abraham's calling in similar language for both groups for whom he writes. He gives a more elaborate philosophical system in his more allegorical works, yet he does not turn to apology when describing the first few verses of Genesis 12. Abraham stands on his own, as the philosopher-King par excellence for both Jew and Gentile.

Philo displays a deep knowledge of Judaism and loyalty to Jewish practices. Yet, his explanations for Biblical events are thoroughly Hellenized. Abraham is represented as one who embarks upon a philosophic quest in his journey from Chaldea to Canaan. Every event in his life has philosophic significance. At the end of his life, Philo even pronounces Abraham, Sarah and Isaac as non-human since they have attained eternity through their pursuit of the Forms and true knowledge of the Godhead, an everflowing Font of Wisdom, from which Abraham drinks. Through Abraham's journey, Philo outlines a neo-Platonic philosophical system

within a Pentateuchal framework. Yet, his Biblical commentary cannot be considered Midrash in the technical sense, since he did not possess a Rabbinic framework of analysis. Philo, far removed from Palestine, adapted Judaism in order to make it a viable system for his peculiar Hellenistic-Jewish society. His use of Abraham shows how this was done.

CHAPTER 2

THE CALL OF ABRAHAM

EXPOSITION

Philo (Abr. 60ff) writes that Abraham is "filled with a zeal for piety, the highest and greatest of virtues." He "was eager to follow God and to be obedient to His commands." Genesis 12.1 does not state that Abram was particularly pious. He is not eager to follow God; rather, he follows his father Terah to Haran, where he receives God's commandment to leave for Canaan.

Philo continues (Abr. 60):

> (U)nderstanding by commands not only those conveyed in speech and writing but also those made manifest by nature with clearer signs, and apprehended by the sense which is the most truthful of all and superior to hearing, on which no certain reliance can be placed.

In this citation, Philo outlines a theme that runs throughout De Abrahamo: nature is the supreme teacher, superior to the senses which apprehend it. True apprehension of nature is trans-sensual, a special type of seeing is required, the contemplation of nature and its Forms.

For Philo, Abraham transcends the literal words of the Torah. The literal meaning of the Torah, while important, is sufficient for the man of wisdom; he demands to know the natural law as well. The Torah is only the locus for the study of Abraham and other men of wisdom and therefore must be studied (Abr. 61). Yet, true Torah goes beyond the written words; it is found in philosophic speculation.

God bids Abraham to leave his home in Chaldea for a strange land. (Abr. 62 and note). Abraham's ready assent and his refusal to "yield to the charms of his kinsfolk and country" impresses Philo. Banishment is second only to death as a form of punishment, for with banishment a person would lose his culture and his family (Abr. 64). Abraham, in his willingness to leave his culture for Canaan, shows himself of great courage, since it is against human nature to leave one's home willingly (Abr. 67):

> (Abraham) followed a free and unfettered impulse and departed with all speed first from Chaldea...and migrated to Haran; not long afterwards he left this too for another place....

Genesis 12.1 contradicts Genesis 11.31ff. In the former verse, the LORD said to Abraham, "Go forth from your native land and from your father's house." Abraham's native land was Ur, not Haran. Philo recognizes this discrepancy and writes as if Abraham was still in Chaldea. Philo's

interpretation, therefore, is that Abraham received his command in Chaldea but journeyed with his family first to Haran, since that was along the established route from Ur to Canaan. In the Allegory, Philo gives philosophic meaning to each stage in Abraham's now philosophical quest. In the Exposition, however, Philo implies that the command of Genesis 12.1ff was given in Ur, the grammatical form of the verb being in past perfect tense (Vayomer - the LORD had said).

Chaldea was the home of astrology and the world of ignorance. It was impossible for Abraham to embrace God in such a place. As a Chaldean, Abraham does not contemplate any notion of the harmonious workings of the cosmos, not even sense perception (Abr. 77). Once he departs, Abraham can discern that "the world is not sovereign but dependent, not governing but governed by its Maker and First Cause" (Abr. 78). Only then did Abraham discover his sense of sight, the ability to understand nature and its governing cause, namely God. By leaving the land of ignorance, Abraham discovers through sense-perception the true workings of the intelligible world, the world of Haran. Philo adds (Abr. 80) that it is only by the grace of God that He was seen by Abraham. It is impossible for one to apprehend God, unless God so desires. God draws the lover of wisdom near to Him at the end of his quest along the path of wisdom.

Philo, in his comment upon Genesis 12.9, remarks that Abraham dwelt in the wilderness during his second migration. In the wilderness of the Negev, away from all civilization, Abraham found solace and the quiet in which to contemplate God. Philo (Abr. 87) comments that those who seek God love the quiet, which is also dear to God. Philo turns Abraham's journey through the Negev into a mystical quest for the true nature of God.

Philo summarizes the first verses of the Abraham story (Abr. 88):

> ...(M)an, in obedience to divine commands was drawn away from the stubborn hold of his associations and how the mind did not remain for ever deceived nor stand rooted in the realm of sense, nor suppose that the visible world was the Almighty and Primal God, but using its reason sped upwards and turned its gaze upon the intelligible order which is superior to the visible and upon Him who is maker and ruler of both alike.

Philo describes Abraham as the exemplar of the philosophic quest. Abraham breaks free from the world of darkness and ignorance and even from the world of sense-perception through the use of his intellect. Abraham, through the use of reason, contemplates the world of metaphysics, for this realm is considered superior to the natural, physical world.

Philo posits three levels of thought. Chaldea exemplifies the world of the ignorant, where one thinks that the visible world is God, a pantheistic world view. The second level is the world of sense-perception, symbolized by Haran. This is the intelligible, physical, world known to the five senses. The third, and highest, level of philosophic speculation is the world of metaphysics, Canaan. In the third realm, one can actually gaze upon God through an act of divine grace.

Abraham is the first one to believe in God as the First Cause (Virt. 216-218). Philo adds that Abraham also discovers God's providential nature. Abraham's spirit is similar to the spirit of a king, the neo-Platonic philosopher-king.

ALLEGORY

Philo begins his allegorical1 treatment of the Abraham story with an analysis of the names of Abraham's brother Nahor, his wife Milchah and concubine Reumah (Congr. 43-53). Nahor means Nach Or, "light rested". Philo implies that Nahor symbolizes an unattained goal in philosophic thought. Using his example of the flute player (Congr. 46), it is an irrational action if one has a special ability to comprehend the metaphysical truths upon which the sensual world is

based and does not utilize it. Nahor, since he did not complete the (philosophic) journey with Abraham to the land of Canaan, is the unrealized potential of the human mind; he stands for astrological speculation which only comprehends the world of physics, not philosophic thought. His knowledge "rested" on the comfortable couch of astrology, and went no further.

Milchah is a queen. The queen of sciences is astrology (Congr. 50). Nahor therefore marries, as it were, into the cult of the astrologer. For Philo, the astrologer epitomizes the world of sense perception; he is one who only studies the externals, with no knowledge of a creator of the cosmos.

Reumah, Nahor's concubine (Genesis 22.24), stands for "seeing something". She symbolizes the skeptics, "who do not concern themselves with the best things in nature ... but spend themselves on petty quibbles and trifling disputes" (Congr. 52). Reumah, and her "housemates" are incapable of the quest for the better things in life.

In this pericope, Philo states his purpose for writing an allegorical treatment of the Bible (Congr. 44):

> Now let no sane man suppose that we have here in the pages of the wise legislator an historical pedigree. What we have is a revelation through symbols of facts which may be profitable to the soul. And if we translate the names into our own tongue, we shall recognize that what is here promised is actually the case.

To Philo, the revealed Scriptures are ahistorical. This Torah, which God revealed to Moses, is a source book for philosophic thought. Abraham's travels, and even his family, are allegorized. Philo, while undoubtably believing in a literal Abraham, posits an Abraham who embarks upon a philosophic quest, a journey from the darkness of Chaldea to the light of Canaan, and from there to the perfection of his soul. Scripture is a philosophic document, which allows Philo to reinterpret and transcend the historical narrative so as to conform to philosophic commitment.

Abraham's father, Terah, is the Jewish Socrates (Som. i 58). Terah is self-knowledge itself, a certain way of thinking which enriches those who partake of this discipline. To this extent, he is greater than Socrates, who was merely human. Terah was the Form of Self-Knowledge to which Socrates and Plato would aspire.

Terah is also the "scent explorer" (Som. i 47-51). He explores the nature of virtue but does not acquire it. He "smelled but did not taste." Terah was only able to break

free of astrology in Chaldea; he could not overcome the grip of sense perception in Haran, where he died.

In Chaldea, Abraham was known as Abram, a "man of heaven" (Gig. 62). He searched for the nature of the "supra-terrestial and ethereal region", the cosmos, for the true nature of God. Abram translates as "uplifted father" (Av ram). He is "father mind", reaching to the sphere of aether for knowledge, the father of our compound being. Through his change of name (Gig. 63), Abraham rises to a better state and becomes a man of God.

Genesis 11.29 states that Abram took Sarai as his wife. Abraham, by taking a wife, becomes associated with the good things appropriate to him (Post. 75-78). He makes a deliberate choice of the good, since he has taken Reason as his spouse and Knowledge as his partner in life. Sarai, therefore, symbolizes the Virtues of Reason and Knowledge.

Philo also allegorizes the name "Chaldea" (Mig. 177-189). The Chaldeans elaborated upon astronomy[2]. They knew that there was a harmony between the earth and heaven. The universe is a perfect symphony, produced by the sympathetic affinity between its parts. However, the Chaldeans also thought that the visible universe equaled God, or at least contained God as the soul of the whole. Fate and Necessity

were therefore divine, which meant that there was no originating (First) Cause for the creation of the universe.

For Philo, the idea of a God trapped in nature is untenable; Abraham escapes from this place of darkness. Abraham goes to Haran (Mig. 184), the place of sense perception (Mig. 187). "Haran" becomes the heavens above human thought. One must first explore himself and his nature; this leads to a knowledge of the Godhead. Just as there is a mind within each person, there is a Mind controlling the universe, enduring and sovereign over the observable world. Haran, as the locus of sense perception, is the opening (hole) used by the faculties of the senses through which one must enter in order to come closer to the true nature of the Godhead.

In order for Abraham to go to Haran (Mig. 187-198, Quis Her. 289, Mut. 16, Som. i 160f), he first relinquishes astrology. Since he was endowed with reason, Abraham could leave the darkness in order to worship the First Cause of all things. For the Chaldeans, the universe is the primal God, not God's handiwork. "God would not bestow on him a fresh and in a sense a novel race and nation, if he were not cutting him right adrift from the old" (Quis Her. 278). Abraham leaves the world of the created and sensible for the realm of the intelligible and creative Cause in order to

build a "fabric of good order and stability" (Quis Her. 287-289). Abraham is the founder of "Israel, which observes and contemplates all the things of nature" (Quis Her. 179).

In Haran, Abraham is able to consider his own nature through the application of sense perception. He can look through that hole and open up the road that leads from his own self to the Godhead; he can begin his journey on the path of wisdom. Upon this path, his mind moves from the sensible world to the realm of the intellect, metaphysics.

Abraham leaves Haran, the world of sense perception, only after he masters it (Som. i 60). He seeks to know "Him Who in reality Is." For Philo, a "man who has despaired of himself is beginning to know Him that Is." Abraham endures trials of the soul in Haran, in order to leave Haran for a higher place.

In Genesis 12.1, God commands Abraham to "Go forth from your native land, the land of your birth, and from your father's house to the land that I will show you."3 After stating that God's Will is intended to cleanse a man's soul and give it the starting point for full salvation in its removal from the localities of body, sense perception and speech, Philo identifies these three localities (Mig. 1-12). The land symbolizes the body. The "land of your birth" is

the realm of sense perception, the knowledge that the irrational and the rational halves of the mind constitute one's soul. The "father's house" is the power of speech. Mind is the father, in charge of the body. God, as the Mind of the universe, "has for His house His own Word (Logos)". This Logos is the Helmsman of the Universe; He uses speech as its oar. Speech is the method of transmission for divine revelation. Abraham must leave his body, his sense perception and the power of speech behind in order to reach his goal, to discover the essence of the Godhead.

In departing from these three obstacles, Abraham is commanded as follows (Mig. 7f):

> Make thyself a stranger to them in judgement and purpose; let none of them cling to thee; rise superior to them all; they are thy subjects, never treat them as sovereign lords; thou art a King, school thyself once and for all to rule, not to be ruled; evermore be coming to know thyself....

Abraham rises above the Chaldeans through the proper development of his intellect. He rises above the people of Haran through the abandonment of sense perceptions. He becomes a philosopher-King.

For the soul to inherit the good of God, it must leave behind body (land), Kinsfolk (senses), and speech (father's house). One must also "be a fugitive from thyself and issue

forth from thyself" (Quis Her. 69-74). One's mind comes under the control of God and is drawn inexorably towards the Divine Mind. God is the source of accurate thinking and unerring apprehension. Truth will lead the way to the Divine Mind and remove all obstacles in one's path. After Abraham forsakes body, sense and speech, he begins to meet with God's powers (Det. 159). God appears to him, since he has escaped things mortal.

In Genesis 12.1, God promises to fulfill His promise to Abram in the future. Abraham, therefore, shows the trust which his soul places in God, since he agrees to a future fulfillment of His promise (Mig. 43f). Abraham's faith, as Philo states in this pericope, is the perfect good; he exhibits the Form of Faith through his trust in God.

Philo interprets Genesis 12.2 as the rewards God gives to the soul in search of metaphysical truth (Mig. 53). The first reward, given to the soul after it renounces mortal things, is that God shows it things immortal and the power to contemplate them. The second reward is progress in the principle of virtues (arete). The idea of "nation" is interpreted as numerous descendants, united by a common method of philosophic thought. The notion of "great" is the rising quality of those descendants. The growth of the people would not just be quantitative, it would be qualitative as well.

The third gift is a life of "blessing", which Philo interprets as excellence of reason and speech (Mig. 70-73). One cannot attain a life of contemplation and a greatness of things fair and beautiful without this particular form of excellence. God's blessing of Abraham is allegorized; He endows him with excellence of reason and speech, which is essential for Abraham to possess in order to obtain his other gifts.

According to Philo, the word "blessing" takes on a special meaning (Mig. 70-73). Blessing (eulogy) is a combination of the ideas of Virtue (arete), and reason and speech (logos). One speaks under the guidance of rhetorical training. God gives both parts of the logos to His followers; in combination with arete, these people are indeed blessed.

The fourth gift of Genesis 12.2 is the gift of a great name. Philo states that "reality is better than reputation, happiness comes of having both" (Mig. 86-93). If one is truly respected (reputation), and this respect is warranted, then one will be truly happy. The letter of the law keeps the body healthy. This leads to a clearer conception of the true meanings found within the soul.

Philo's fifth gift is simple being, free of pretence and worthy of blessing (Mig. 106f). "Thou shalt be one to

be blessed", by "Him Who is in reality 'blessed'". Being praiseworthy is greater than being praised, since the former is an inherent state, the latter only a matter of opinion (Mig. 108). Nature is a greater source of truth than opinion. Therefore, the natural, inherent worthiness of the state of blessedness is of greater force than being blessed by man, since God will acknowledge one's worthiness.

God will also bless those who bless Abraham (Genesis 12.3). Philo states (Mig. 110):

> That these promises as well as the others are made to shew honour to the righteous man is clear to everybody ... for encomiums are due to him who praises the good man and blame again to him who blames him. Praise and blame are not accredited so much by the ability of speaker and authors, as by the truth of facts....

Philo reiterates his concern that praise be meted out to those who are worthy. To praise a praiseworthy man is to bring honor upon oneself. When one offers either praise or blame, he should be doing so accurately, lest he bring wrath upon himself.

Through Abraham, all the tribes of the earth will be blessed (Genesis 12.3). Philo implies (Mig. 119):

> (T)hat if the mind continues free from harm and sickness, it has all its tribes and powers in an healthy condition, those whose province is sight

> and hearing and all others concerned with sense perception, and those again that have to do with pleasures and desires, and all that are undergoing transformation from the lower to the higher emotions.

Philo refers to the tribes as the senses and emotions. If the mind is healthy, than the body will be healthy. Furthermore, those who look to Abraham, whether they be in Chaldean, Haran or in transient states of existence, will be strengthened. For Philo, the righteous man is the foundation for all humankind (Mig. 121). God is the only possessor of unlimited riches.

A person's highest aim is to live agreeably with nature (Mig. 127-139)[4]. When the mind walks on the path of virtue, using right reason, then a person follows God and lives in harmony with nature. A person's actions become equal to the word of God, since they manifest God' Divine word, the Law. The final aim of knowledge is to hold that human beings know nothing; God alone is wise.

Genesis 12.4 states that Abraham began his journey when he was seventy-five years old, the minimum age for awareness of a perceptible and intelligent Being. Philo defines seventy as intellectual apprehension. The "five" describes the five senses, the inferior world of sense perception. At age seventy-five, the state of one's mind is the world of sense perception; it is all one knows (Mig. 207).

Few can achieve Abraham's goal. These people must despise vanity in order to reach for heaven (Praem. 26f). They long to contemplate and to be with things divine. These few reject the senses, cast aside the irrational part of the soul, and use only mind and reason as the paths to discover the immaterial and conceptual. Abraham, and those like him, receive faith in God as one of their rewards, along with life-long joy and a perpetual vision of God.

SUMMARY

Philo's assertion that the Bible is ahistorical is a radical departure from the Palestinian norms of Pharasaic thought. By turning the Torah into a purely allegorical document, Philo establishes certain philosophic truths, using the Abraham of the Allegory as his philosophic mouthpiece. Abraham is the first to discover that God is the First Cause of the universe.

Abraham's departure from Chaldea to Haran, and later to Canaan is reminiscent of Plato's Parable of the Cave. In Plato's allegory, chained prisoners sit in the dark, unaware that the shadows they see are unreal. A prisoner breaks free of his chains, turns around and sees the world as it truly is. He then leaves the cave to acquire philosophic knowledge of the Forms, only to return as a philosopher-king and instruct others in what he has learned.

Philo's cave is Chaldea, the world of darkness and shadows. Abraham breaks free of Chaldea and sees the natural world as it really is, through his faculties of sense perception. Philo describes this stage of Abraham's journey,the study of sense perception, as his stay in Haran. Finally, Abraham leaves the cave and learns about God, the ultimate Form, in Canaan. He becomes a philosopher-king, the model for all Israelites to imitate.

In the Allegory, Biblical names take on certain allegorical meanings, which emphasize the elements inherent in a philosophic quest. Philo recognizes that not all individuals are blessed with equally sagacious minds. Abraham is the model for all Jews to follow; it is incumbent upon each Jew to live up to the standard of arete which Abraham sets. He is not simply the founder of the Jewish people, Abraham is also the founder of Jewish philosophy.

Philo's peculiar form of Jewish philosophy is reminiscent of both Plato and Aristotle. Philo combines elements of Platonic thought, such as the Forms, with Aristotelian notions of the First Cause. In doing so, Philo creates a new form of philosophy, Jewish neo-Platonism.

Philo outlines several themes relevant to his philosophical intentions. First, nature is the supreme teacher. One can learn about the physical world through sense perception. This level of inquiry, which Philo calls Haran, is attainable for most men, should they decide to seek wisdom.

Second, Philo posits three levels of intellect. A person begins in Chaldea, the world of shadows. He is able to rise to Haran, the world of sense perception through his intellect.

Further use of intellect leads one to the land of Canaan, the world of metaphysics. Few people attain this level; that is why Abraham is so important to Philo, he is the first person ever to acquire sufficient wisdom in order to see God, i.e. to understand God's true nature.

Related to this progression of the intellect is Philo's moralizing regarding those who attempt this journey but fail. Philo is very negative towards those who fail, such as Terah and Nahor[5]. The goal of knowing the true nature of God is an attainable but difficult one. Philo looks askance at those who have failed; they are saddled with various defects which prevent them from reaching the realm of metaphysics.

Finally, the Allegory is stylistically different from the Exposition. In De Abrahamo, Philo writes for people who already have a basic knowledge of the Bible. He feels no need to cite Biblical verses, as he does in his Allegory. A reader of the Exposition, presumably Jewish, would find that it is a fair approximation of the Biblical narrative.

NOTES

1. cf. Sandmel, Samuel. Philo of Alexandria (New York: Oxford Press, 1979), p. 77, for a complete listing of Philo's works classified as allegorical, along with their relevant Biblical verses.

2. For Philo, and other classical writers, the terms "astronomy" and "astrology" are equivalent. Astrology was indeed the "queen of the sciences" since the proper reading of the stars could predict the future. This paper, in the spirit of the classical age, will also use the two terms interchangeably.

3. Translation mine. The JPS translation which I use throughout this thesis has unfortunately omitted the translation of the word Mi-molad't'cha.

4. Colson and Whitaker's footnote to Mig. 128 (note d) suggests that Philo implies that Moses originated Greek philosophic thought. This notion will be examined later in this paper.

5. Lot is the supreme example of failure, as will be shown in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 3

LOT

EXPOSITION

Philo portrays Lot in a negative way (Abr. 212-224). Lot is unreliable and hesitating, leaning this way and that. In Genesis 13. 5-11, Lot's servants emulate Lot; they are also quarrelsome. Abraham does not want to distress Lot by arguing with him so he negotiates an agreement to divide the land between them. Philo comments that this action results in peace, the greatest of gains. Philo is also impressed because Abraham, who was morally and numerically stronger, gave in to his weaker nephew (Abr. 217) This indicates Abraham's great character of soul (Abr. 218ff):

> The senior and dominant (personality traits) are wisdom and temperance and justice and courage and virtue regarded as a whole and actions inspired by virtue, but the junior are wealth and reputation and office and good birth, good not in the true sense but in the sense which the multitude give to it, and everything else which coming after the things of soul and body takes the third place which is necessarily also the last. Each of the two characters possess what we may call flocks and herds.

The lover of externals prefers silver, gold, clothing wealth, arms and cavalry. However, the lover of moral

principle, the senior traits, devotes himself to the principles of each separate virtue and the truths discovered by wisdom.

The presiders over each of these different personality traits are called herdsmen. The "external herdsmen" shepherd wealth and glory while the "shepherds of virtue" prefer genuine goods (i.e. Forms) to the spurious goods found in the world of sense perception. This leads to a natural conflict between them, a conflict of the soul. Philo's description of the quarrel between the shepherds of Abraham and Lot becomes an allegory for this battle for control of the soul between sense perception (Lot) and higher reasoning (Abraham). Lot, although originally a follower of Abraham, slides back into a life of sense perception and preoccupation with externals. Abraham, in separating from Lot, the lover of externals, realizes that it is impossible for the lover of wisdom to have any common ties with the lovers of externals (Abr. 224). Consequently, Lot leaves Abraham's territory.

ALLEGORY

Philo comments specifically upon Genesis 12.4, "And Lot went with him" (Mig. 148-151). Originally, Lot accompanies Abraham upon his journey to gain wisdom. Yet, the very name

"Lot" symbolizes turning aside from either the good or the bad. Abraham, the lover of wisdom, finds himself pulled away from true wisdom by his nephew Lot. Lot creates obstacles in Abraham's path; he is carried off by enemies of the soul.

In order to advance in knowledge, the mind must thrust away sense perception, symbolized by Lot (Mig.13). Abraham separates from Lot (comment to Genesis 13.9) since he cannot dwell with those who lean towards sense perception.

SUMMARY

Philo's negative portrayal of Lot continues through the stories of Sodom and Gomorrah, found in Chapter 7. He is angry with Lot because Lot should have been Abraham's chief disciple and accomplice during this early phase of Abraham's spiritual quest.

Lot demonstrates that a person can slide back into the world of sense perception, unable to recover. Later, Lot slides even further into Philo's cave of darkness and shadows, never to escape. Philo uses Lot to teach the principle that if a person has knowledge, he should use it to purify his soul. When one ignores the wisdom which he has attained, it is a grievous error; he has been carried off by enemies of the soul.

CHAPTER 4

WARS OF THE KINGS

EXPOSITION

Philo's description of the events of Genesis 14 contains some interesting omissions as well as certain embellishments of the story (Abr. 226f):

> That part of the inhabited world which lies towards the east was in the hands of four great kings who held in subjection the nations of the Orient on both sides of the Euphrates... Only the country of the Sodomites, before it was consumed by fire, began to undermine this peaceful condition by a long-standing plan of revolt... (I)t was ruled by five kings who taxed the cities and the land... and hence it had a plurality of rulers who loved it and were fascinated by its charm.

Philo omits the names of the nine kings involved in the fighting (Genesis 14.1f). Nor does Philo mention that the five kings around Sodom were subject to Chedorlaomer for twelve years before they revolted. Furthermore, Genesis 14 does not provide any evidence for Philo's assertion that these five subject kings ruled adjoining districts of Sodomite territory. In fact, Genesis 14.2 specifically states that the kings ruled different cities: Sodom, Gomorrah, Admah, Zeboiim and Bela (Zoar). The political alignment of the kings is not important.

Therefore, Philo can state that the Sodomite kings revolt. One might think that only the king of Sodom revolts. However, since Philo places the five kings in one locale, he actually that all five kings revolt together, as in the Genesis account (Genesis 14.4).

Nowhere in the Genesis account does it state that the four kings of the east ruled territory east of the Euphrates. At the time of Abraham, there were no powerful eastern empires, such as the Assyrians, Babylonians or Persians. Egypt or the Hittites might have been influential in Palestine. With the exception of Genesis 14, there seems to be a power vacuum in Canaan. Perhaps Philo draws upon legend in his account.[1]

Philo's omission of any proper names in the Sodom and Gomorrah stories includes Lot's, whom he describes simply as the "nephew of the Sage" (Abr. 229). Abraham is the only name mentioned in this story. Philo is not able to allegorize the names of the nine warring kings since they are not of Hebrew origin. He already has analyzed the name "Lot"[2], so any further analysis is superfluous. Also, if Abraham is the hero of this story, as Philo intends to show, than names other than Abraham's detract from the heroic feat of the rescue of his nephew.

Philo draws upon Genesis 23.4 to comment that Abraham was simply a stranger and immigrant among the native population. Being a resident alien, he could not easily draw upon the local population for support (Abr. 231f).

Instead, Abraham finds his support among his household (Abr. 232):

> But he obtained allies in quite a new quarter, for resource is found where resource is none, when one is set on deeds of justice and kindness. He collected his servants and, after bidding those who had been acquired by purchase to remain at home, since he feared that they might desert, he made a roll-call of those who were home-bred, distributed them into centuries and advanced with three battalions. Yet he did not trust in these, for they were but a small fraction of the kings' forces, but in God, the champion and defender of the just.

Philo implies that Abraham had purchased slaves, who of necessity remained behind. He can make this assumption based upon Genesis 14.14, where it states that Abraham mustered his home born retainers. Yet, the Genesis verse does not mention any bought slaves. Philo, living in a culture where nobles did in fact purchase slaves, simply assumes that Abraham lived in a similar culture.

Philo's description of Abraham's army reinforces this anachronism. Abraham divides his forces into three centuries, the basic Roman fighting unit, 300 men in all.

Genesis 14.4 makes no mention of any division of Abraham's forces. Philo simply assumes that Abraham's army was organized like a Roman legion.3

Abraham also knew that he was not strong enough to defeat a great army. He places his trust in a providential God, who rewards Abraham's faithfulness by delivering the enemy into his hand and freeing Lot.

Amazingly, Abraham is not only victorious (Abr.234), he escapes without any casualties (Abr. 235)! He attacks while the enemy prepared for sleep (Abr. 233f), slaughtering many while they were in their beds; the rest of the enemy's forces fell during the surprise attack. After the successful battle, which did not include the chase to Hobah (Genesis 14.15), Abraham led a triumph before "the high priest of the most high God" (Abr. 235). This anonymous priest (Melchizedek of Genesis 14.18) was moved to praise Abraham and offer a thanksgiving sacrifice to God.

After this literal rendering of the Genesis text, Philo proceeds to give an allegorical meaning to this battle (Abr. 236-244). The four Sodomite kings represent the four passions: pleasure, desire, fear and grief (Abr. 236). The five eastern kings represent the five senses: sight, touch, hearing, taste and smell (Abr. 239f):

> For the five are subject to the four, and are forced to pay them the tolls and tributes determined by nature. Griefs and pleasures and fears and desires arise out of what we see or hear or smell or taste or touch, and none of the passions would have any strength of itself if it were not furnished with what the senses supply... And while the said tributes are rendered the alliance between the kings holds good, but when they are no longer paid discord and war at once arise, and this obviously happens when old age with its pains arrives.

Philo has taken an actual war and transforms it into a struggle for control of a person's body. Sense perception dictates one's emotions, information before the mind can decide upon a proper emotional state, be it grief, pleasure, fear or desire. The discord about which Philo comments arises when the faculties of sense perception fail, leading to improper signals (or no signals at all) for the mind to interpret.

Furthermore, the nine "kings", the senses and the emotions, are corruptible, and are also the very sources of corruption (Abr. 244). Therefore, only God, in the form of the "truly divine and holy Word" (aretais Logos) can overcome the nine overlords. Philo proves his point through numerology; the place of virtue is tenth in the listing of passions and emotions. Ten is the "supremely perfect number"[4]. Therefore, should one acquire virtue, he can overcome the passions and senses within himself. The lesson

of this war is that one should attempt to attain virtue through knowledge of the arete Logos, the divine and virtuous Word of God.

ALLEGORY

Philo's allegorical works draw upon the themes implicit in De Abrahamo. Philo continues his discussion of the four passions which are engaged in a war with the five senses for control of the soul. These destructive elements are, in turn, about to attack the soul (Cong. 92). Abraham, representing the tenth element, Virtue, ends all nine governments; he conquers both the passions and the emotions (Cong. 92).

The battle for the soul takes place at the future sight of the Dead Sea (Salt Ravine). Philo comments that the place of vices and passions is hollow, rough and ravine-like; it is salty and bitter pangs emanate from it (Conf. 26). The Dead Sea in this regard is similar to Chaldea; it is another of Philo's caves, where a philosopher-king must return in order to conquer his passions. Abraham comes to the stronghold of vices and passions and destroys this unholy alliance which did not have the sanctity of oath or covenant (Conf. 26).

In the Allegory, Philo comments upon the name Kadesh (Fug. 196)[5]. Kadesh is the Spring of Judgement, as such it is called "holy". The wisdom of God is holy; its task is to sift the universe[6] and separate opposites from each other in order to arrive at a clearer understanding of the workings of nature and of the metaphysical world.

In this battle, the enemies of the soul take Lot with them (Mig. 150). As noted in Chapter 3, Lot is the symbol of a relapse from a higher to a lower state of existence. Abraham, as the philosopher-king in training, must bring his nephew, i.e. lapsed seekers of truth, back to the proper path of philosophic quest. Lot lost the battle for control of his soul; Abraham, representing completeness (the number ten), helps to defeat Lot's passions and forces him to regain control of his mind.[7]

In the Allegory, Philo also comments upon Abraham's allies, listed in Genesis 14.24 as Aner, Eshkol and Mamre (Mig. 164f). Eshcol represents good natural ability; his name means "fire". Aunan (Aner) is a lover of reward in the war against the passions and senses.

Philo establishes a connection between seeing and contemplation (Mig. 165). This statement is not elaborated upon; it seems to mean that there is a certain type of

seeing that goes beyond mere vision. Philo implies that this form of seeing, which he calls Aunan, is actually a way of understanding an object in its true Form.

Philo also comments upon the role of Melchizedek (Leg. All. iii 79-82). Melchizedek is both the king of peace (Salem) and God's own high priest. In an expository verse (Virt. 22), Philo comments that peace (defined as stability or harmony) is the ordinary sphere of all the virtues; Abraham battles to restore peace, due to a sense of philanthropia. In the Legum Allegorum iii, Melchizedek is "the righteous king, author of laws." He resorts to persuasion rather than decrees. A despot is a ruler of war. Melchizedek, in contrast to a despot, is a king, a prince of peace (Salem) since he conceives of God in lofty ways. He precedes Abraham on the path of wisdom.

Abraham dedicates one-tenth of the spoils as a thank offering (Cong. 93). He provides calm in place of storm, health in place of sickness and life in place of death. His tithing shows that Abraham is a Man of Practice (Cong. 99). He is aware of sense and he uses sense properly. Abraham is knowledgeable regarding rhetoric, and therefore is a good speaker. He also knows of metaphysics, which he learned in part from Melchizedek.

Abraham takes no tribute for himself (Genesis 14. 22f). Rather, he stretches out his soul's operation (hand) to God (Leg. All. iii.24f). For the ordinary man, the passions remain guarded and hidden in the land of Shechem, the land of toil (Leg. All. iii. 25). For a wise man such as Abraham, these passions perish forever.

By refusing to take his tribute, Abraham is in harmony with the will of God (Leg. All. iii 197). He retains his own property, yet rids himself of the passions. Since Abraham makes his soul stretch towards God, he would not take from the natural world, since he knows that God is the Ultimate Cause. He only partakes of God's bounty (Ebr. 105-110).

Abraham's soul of Genesis 14 is being trained to rise to a higher level of perfection, which occurs in the Akedah (Genesis 22). Abraham must win the battle for his soul in order to proceed along the path of wisdom (Mig. 167). He conquers his passions and emotions through this war; he is now ready to work towards a higher level of wisdom.

SUMMARY

In the Allegory, Philo has no interest in presenting anything other than a philosophic exegesis of the war of the kings, which he defines as a war for control of a man's soul. With this in mind, it is clear that the allegorical works only continue the exegesis found in De Abrahamo.

Through this exegesis, Philo speaks to both Jew and Gentile. This philosophic battle is common to all men; Abraham is only a Jewish exemplar of this war. Any thinker must, of necessity, endure such a battle of the soul. He must return to the cave from whence he came and conquer it. By doing so, he conquers his base emotions and senses; this is what Philo means when he says that Abraham refused to take his portion of the tribute. A man who has conquered these nine kingdoms has no need of material things; he is interested only in arete Logos, in things divine.

Some people, like Lot, fail in their own personal war. The enemies of the soul, base emotions and sense perception, carry off these victims. They have to be rescued by people, such as Abraham, who have conquered their emotions and return to the cave in order to help those who have not been as successful.

A person must overcome his emotions and sense perception in order to enter the world of metaphysics. The mind must be trained and the soul must be purified through knowledge of the arete Logos. Abraham's successful conclusion to this war illustrates the hardships that one must endure along the path to wisdom.

NOTES

1. Josephus describes the five eastern kings as Assyrian generals. cf. Chapter 14.

2. cf. Chapter 3 for the meaning of Lot's name.

3. Or perhaps Philo is engaging in a form of apology. This question is examined below in the conclusion to the entire commentary to Philo, Chapter 10, p. -.

4. cf. Abr. 244, vol. vi, p. 120, note a, for the perfect qualities of the number ten.

5. This comment is also appropriate to the flight of Hagar, upon which this book is based.

6. Kadesh can also mean "to separate". Something that is holy is separated from that which is profane. For example, "You separated (Kidashta) the Shabbat from the rest of the week".

7. For Philo, this war is one of the soul. As shown later, Josephus narrates this war as a purely political event. He does not even bring God into the story as a providential element; this battle is fought solely by humans. To Josephus, Abraham is simply a fine general.

CHAPTER 5

THE COVENANT OF THE PIECES

EXPOSITION

The Genesis story presents the covenant between the pieces as the climactic event concerning the first announcement that Abraham would have an heir and numerous descendants (Genesis 15. 1-21). The LORD promises Abraham that Eliezer would not be his heir, and after hearing God's revelation, Abraham places his trust in the LORD (Genesis 15.6).

Philo expounds upon the idea that Abraham trusted in God (Abr. 262-274). Interestingly enough, this citation is at the very end of De Abrahamo. Philo intends for his reader to ponder the meaning of trust in God, which he defines as faith, upon the completion of this book (Abr. 268):

> Faith in God, then, is the one sure and infallible (sic) good, consolation of life, fulfillment of bright hopes, dearth of ills, harvest of goods, inacquaintance with misery, acquaintance with piety, heritage of happiness, all-round betterment of the soul which is firmly stayed on Him Who is the cause of all things and can do all things yet only wills the best.

Philo equates the Good with faith in God. Faith in God leads to the betterment of the soul; it purifies the soul

and leads to true happiness. God is defined as the First Cause who is able to bestow reward and punishment upon mankind, yet only desires to give to humanity that which will benefit it.

A person who moves toward God along the path of virtue walks on an firm, safe and unshaken path. This person, who is acquainted with wisdom, possesses common (sound) sense and faith in God, is called an elder. An elder, the wise man, is first among humans, just as the soul is primary in a body - and the mind is primary within a soul.

God seals his revelation to Abraham with a promise of gifts. At this stage in Abraham's philosophic quest, he already speaks with God as a friend. For Philo, the covenant of the pieces exemplifies Abraham's attainment of wisdom as faith in God. Because of his faith, Abraham merits the title of elder and stands above other humans.

ALLEGORY

Philo expands upon his rather cursory expository treatment of the covenant between the pieces in the Allegory. He first examines the phrase from Genesis 15.1, "Your reward shall be very great." (Quis Her. 1f); where Abraham wonders if Eliezer will be his sole heir.

Before answering this question, Philo discusses how a person should act during a revelatory experience (Quis Her. 3-9). Abraham should have been struck mute due to a sense of overwhelming joy at being addressed by God. Yet, for the man of wisdom, the language of understanding becomes articulated; wisdom pours forth in streams of thought. Philo adds that a person should speak to God only when he is pure from sin and his conscience is loyal to his Master. Philo cites Genesis 26.3-5, God's revelation to Isaac, as indirect proof of Abraham's loyalty.

Abraham shows a sense of confidence before God due to his conversation with God (Quis Her. 22). This confidence is also mingled with caution since Abraham addresses God as Master (Adonai, spelled in its original form, not as in the Tetragrammaton). Philo contends that "Master" (Despotos) implies the ability to inspire fear and terror. For Abraham to approach God as his Master, therefore, he was first reduced to an elemental, pure state (Quis Her. 24-30):

> He who says, "Master, what wilt thou give me?" virtually says no less than this, "I am not ignorant of Thy transcendent sovereignty; I know the terrors of thy power; I come before Thee in fear and trembling, and yet again I am confident. For Thou hast vouchsafed to bid me fear not; Thou hast given me a tongue of instruction that I should know when I should speak, my mouth that was knitted up Thou has unsewn, and when Thou hadst opened it, Thou didst strengthen its nerves for speech...Thou, Master, art my country, my

> kinsfolk, my paternal hearth, my franchise, my free speech, my great and glorious and inalienable wealth. Why then should I not take courage to say what I feel?... Yet I, who proclaim my confidence, confess in turn my fear and consternation, and still the fear and the confidence are not at war within me in separate camps, as one might suppose, but are blended in a harmony... For I have learnt to measure my own nothingness, and to gaze with wonder on the transcendant heights of thy loving-kindness. And when I perceive that I am earth and cinders or whatever is still more worthless, it is just then that I have confidence to come before Thee, when I am humbled, cast down to the clay, reduced to such an elemental state, as seems not even to exist.

Even though Abraham knows that God exercises providence over the world, often in the form of punishment, he is not afraid. God has given Abraham wisdom, and through wisdom, Abraham has learned the art of rhetoric whereby he can speak effectively with God.

Abraham reiterates in this speech a theme examined in the previous chapter. He notes that the conflict between fear and confidence is balanced within his soul. Abraham fought his private war between the senses and the emotions. He has already conquered his passions; even though he is fearful of God's revelation, he has the confidence to listen and understand what is happening to him.

Philo speaks of God's beneficence as a torrent of loving kindness pouring over the fields of our souls (Quis Her. 31ff). The water must flow in due measure; it cannot

be an unlimited amount. In other words, the thirstier the soul, the more God's bounty can be absorbed. Man's excellence must press upwards towards heaven and banquet on incorruption (Quis Her. 35).

Abraham, as a member of the chosen people, deserves an heir (Quis Her. 36f). He has the zeal to sow and beget children of the soul. The souls of children are "virgin and tender and rich in nature's gifts[1], ready to receive the glorious and divine impressions of virtues craving" (Quis Her. 38). Philo assumes that the Jews are the chosen people; Abraham, and by implication the entire Jewish people, is obligated to procreate and nurture children who can be instructed in the proper path of wisdom.

Philo makes Masek (instead of the Biblical locale Dammesek) the wife of Eliezer (Quis Her. 40). Masek means "from a kiss." Philo distinguishes between a kiss and loving. A kiss is superficial salvation; loving is the uniting of souls. The life of the senses has a feeling of affection. The wise man greets her with a kiss, but he does not love the senses. In other words, he respects sense perception, but does not embrace it. Masek therefore cannot be the mother of children of the soul; she is only able to give birth to children schooled in sense perception (Quis Her. 52).

Consequently, Abraham asks the following question (Quis Her. 65):

> Since thou has not given me that other seed, the mentally perceived, the self-taught, the divine of form, shall the child of my household be my heir, he who is the offspring of the blood-life?

Abraham asks if his offspring will only live in the realm of sense perception and not follow the path of wisdom. He wants to know if his children will embrace his values and come to possess his virtue.

God replies that incorporeal natures inherit intellectual things (Quis Her. 66). Abraham's descendent shall come "from thee" (Genesis 15. 4, Quis Her. 68). Abraham's offspring will come to possess his intellectual ability. They will also inherit the good things of God and leave the land (body), kinsfolk (senses) and father's house (speech). They shall also leave their body and issue forth in purity of soul and accurate thinking (Quis Her. 69, 74).

Philo also elaborates upon Genesis 15.5: "Look up to heaven and count the stars." The seeds in the soul are far reaching and radiant; they are like the outermost sphere of the cosmos. The mind goes forth to the outermost bound, beyond sense perception, free even from itself (Leg. All. iii 39-41).

Two sanctuaries exist for Philo, one is mental, the other is in the world of sense perception (Quis Her. 75-89). The observable world is a cathedral for the order of sense perception. He who desires to be God's attendant is the heir of glorious wealth in nature, given from above, for "heaven is the treasury of divine blessings" (Quis Her. 76).

The common man has lost sight of that which it thinks it possesses; he is blind to metaphysics. Only a worthy man can truly see; consequently he is called a prophet or a seer (Quis Her. 78). If this prophet ventures "outside", if he can see beyond the world of sense perception, he is called a seer of God. Philo defines the people Israel as seers of God (Quis Her. 78). When the mind ministers to God in purity, the mind is divine, not human. Israel concerns itself with matters divine.

The soul of Abraham is the counterpart of heaven, even transcending heaven and reaching the pure Forms of being, harmonious order (Quis Her. 88).[2] Abraham's soul is a heaven on earth, having within it pure forms of being, with dazzling moral qualities.

Philo returns to the theme found in De Abrahamo of Abraham's faith in God (Quis Her. 90-95). Here, Philo defines Genesis 15.6 as God, who speaks praise due to one

who has believed in Him. Faith is the most perfect virtue, possessed only by worthy men, since trust in God is no easy matter. God actually confirms an old promise He had made in Chaldea (Quis Her. 96-99), Abraham would inherit wisdom, not sense perception, perceived through a "wholly pure and clear mind." Furthermore, Abraham, as a lover of wisdom, must know the method of attaining wisdom (Quis Her. 100f).

Regarding the actual sacrifice of Genesis 15.9-21, Philo gives each animal an allegorical meaning (Quis Her. 102-112). The heifer symbolizes the soul, God and His excellences. The ram symbolizes speech. The goat is sense perception, which reports faithfully and honestly to the soul. By dedicating these symbols to God, Abraham is able to lead a happy and blessed life.

Philo continues this thought with an observation. If God has no need of anything, He "takes" a sacrifice in order to "train" mankind in piety and places within man a zeal for holiness, which spurs mankind to God's service (Quis. Her. 123-127). The heifer now becomes the easily trainable soul. The ram becomes the faculty of speech, which is active in argument and fully developed, trained in rhetoric. The goat "dashes and darts on the sensible world". All of these animals are three years old, since three is the perfect number whose sum of one plus two adds up to the

whole, and as such is complete. The turtle dove and pigeon represent divine and human reason. Like the turtle dove, the Divine wisdom is a lover of solitude. The pigeon, human reason, enjoys the company of mortals.

Genesis 15.10 does not state whether Abraham or God divided the animals in two. God's Word is a succession of material and immaterial utterances whose natures appear to be interwoven (Quis Her. 129-132). The severing Word never ceases to divide. The soul is divided into its rational and irrational halves; speech is divided into true and false; sense is divided between objects perceived in the physical world and objects known only in the world of metaphysics. This is the symbolism behind the cutting in half of the animals. Regarding the birds, since they represent incorporeal and divine knowledge, they cannot be divided into opposites.

Philo decides that God divided the animals, since man cannot cut exactly in the middle (Quis Her. 141-153). God divides between things material and immaterial. God also divides between all forms of equality: number, magnitude and proportion. The opposites joined together form a whole. God as the Severer stands above the six divided parts of the animals as number seven, as represented in the Menorah. One has begotten the seven (Quis Her. 213-215).

The irrational part of the soul is divided into six parts: sight, hearing, taste, smell, touch, voice, and reproductive facility (Quis Her. 230-233). God leaves the rational part of the soul undivided; the outermost sphere of existence is left unsevered. The six divisions also produce (and typify) the seven circles of planets[3].

The birds that swoop downward, which Abraham chases away in Genesis 15.11, are different than doves and pigeons: they are birds of prey. Philo comments that it is against their nature for winged birds to soar downward; they represent those who cannot live their natural life and so descend into the pit of darkness (Quis Her. 237).

Philo translates Genesis 15.12, using the word "ecstacy" for "a great dread" (Quis Her. 249-265). Ecstacy represents a mad fury which leads to mental delusion. It also means extreme amazement at events, passivity of mind or, at best, a divine possession or frenzy. Philo represents Abraham's experience as a God possessed experience, the last definition of ecstacy.

The prophetic experience comes in a way which the recipient does not understand (Quis Her. 266). For example, Genesis 15.3 uses the passive voice, "It was said to Abraham." When the prophet is speaking, the organs of speech, the mouth and tongue, are wholly in use by God.

Philo also comments upon God's revelation of the future sojourn in Egypt, found in Genesis 15. 13-16 (Quis Her. 293-306). This exile will bring about the complete restoration of the soul in the fourth generation. The first generation of the soul is the first seven years of childhood, where a child learns the simplest elements. The second generation follows childhood; the soul begins to associate with evils. The body is in bloom and the soul is inflated. In the third generation of the soul, philosophy begins to heal the mind, which leads to sound reasoning. Finally, in the fourth generation, the powers and vigor within the soul apprehend good sense and the soul turns from sinning. At that time, the soul can defeat the "talkers", the Amorites, whose unanalyzed and unclassified sophistry will be refuted (Quis Her. 308-312). God, acting as the torch bearer, sows sparks to be warmed by virtue. The soul of one who loves this learning is like a furnace; each serves as a place to prepare the food of metaphysical thought.

God's promise to Abraham of Genesis 15.18 is transformed. No longer is there any Biblical notion of covenant. Abraham becomes the heir of the knowledge of truth. The land which God promises to him is actually the wisdom of God. God is the great river of joy and gladness that extends from Egypt to the Euphrates, from the mortal to the imperishable (Quis Her. 313-316). God promises Abraham

that He will work ruin and destroy the ten nations mentioned in Genesis 15.19f and give their land to Abraham's descendants. Philo here extends the meaning of the number ten to cover praise and blame, honor and chastisement.

God promises Abraham the "better part in ourselves" (Som. ii 255-260). Egypt represents the passions; the river Euphrates represents the soul. God will remove Abraham from the passions and move him towards the soul as his heritage.

SUMMARY

In the story of the covenant between the pieces, Philo is more concerned with the question of Abraham's proper heir than he is with the actual sacrifice. He devotes more space and thought to the question of children and their philosophic education than to the sacrifice and its meaning.

Philo also deals with the question of reward and punishment. God desires to give only of His Good to the world. However, mankind forces Him to punish the ignorant. He does this by withholding His beneficence.

Philo also provides a definition of the term "elder". This term, often used in the Bible, describes a man who has attained wisdom. He stands above his common man, since he is blessed with a developed mind. A prophet is one so schooled in wisdom. Philo implies that if one is schooled in wisdom to a high degree, he cannot help but be a prophet. Furthermore, if this prophet becomes aware of the true metaphysical nature of the cosmos, he is called a prophet of Israel. Israel by definition has a greater ability to comprehend the true workings of the heavens and come closer to God by doing so.

Philo also begins to develop his theory of emanation in this pericope. God is described as a flowing stream, watering the fields of our soul. Often, that stream floods our "fields", and our minds become marshy. God has given us too much to comprehend. But if our "fields" remain thirsty, than God's flowing stream will continue to nourish our souls. The thirstier our souls become, the greater the amount of divine knowledge that one can absorb.

The covenant ceremony itself symbolizes the dedication of the soul, speech and sense perception to God. God is incorporeal and has no need of sacrifice. Yet, He requires sacrifice in order to train the human soul for divine service. Abraham's actions symbolize the growth of a human soul. The covenant is transformed from a legal contract into a spiritual quest.

NOTES

1. Colson and Whitaker, in their translation of Philo, note that this is similar to Plato's Phaedrus 245A. cf. vol. IV, p. 302, note a.

2. cf. Plato. Timaeus. Translated by H.D.P. Lee. (London: Penguin Books, 1965), 47 B-E, p. 64.

3. cf. Plato: Timaeus 36D, p. 49.

CHAPTER 6

SARAH, HAGAR AND ISHMAEL

EXPOSITION

When Abram and Sarai journey to Egypt to escape a famine in Canaan (Genesis 12.10-20), Sarai passes for Abram's sister before Pharaoh. When Pharaoh discovers his error, after God had sent plagues upon the Egyptians as a punishment for taking Sarai from Abram, he deports Abram and Sarai.

Philo delights in telling this story (Abr. 89-98). Since Abraham had recently left the world of sense perception and was beginning to engage in the study of metaphysics, God took it upon Himself to reward Abraham by protecting his marriage while in Egypt (Abr. 89f). Sarah was "distinguished greatly for her goodness of soul and beauty of body, in which she surpassed all the women of her time" (Genesis 12.14f, Abr. 93). Consequently, the Egyptians admired her and brought her to Pharaoh. Abraham, who was unable to protect her since he was also at Pharaoh's mercy, appealed to God for help. God remembered His promise to Abraham and protected Sarah's chastity (Abr. 98).

Philo then gives an allegorical interpretation of this story (Abr. 99ff). Abraham stands for "the good mind."

Sarah, literally a "sovereign lady", stands for Virtue, since "nothing is more sovereign or dominant than Virtue". Furthermore, their marriage is not a purely physical convenience; there is a symbolic meaning to their relationship (Abr. 100f):

> Now in a marriage where the union is brought about by pleasure, the partnership is between body and body, but in the marriage made by Wisdom it is between thoughts which seek purification and perfect virtues. Now the two kinds of marriage are directly opposed to each other. For in the bodily marriage the male sows the seed and the female receives it; on the other hand in the matings within the soul, though virtue seemingly ranks as wife, her natural function is to sow good counsels and excellent words and to inculcate tenets truly profitable to life, while thought, though held to take the place of the husband, receives the holy and divine sowings.

Abraham and Sarah's marriage symbolizes the union of Wisdom with Virtue, a "mating within the soul". Sarah actually sows the seeds of good counsel and teaches Abraham the proper path. Abraham receives these life giving "seeds" in his mind; he does not transmit his "seed" to Sarah. Their marriage is metaphysical, a far cry from Genesis 11.29f, where Sarai is described as Abram's barren wife.

Philo virtually omits Sarah from De Abrahamo by not mentioning her again until he recounts her death (Abr. 245f). Philo tells the story of her dealings with the Egyptian Hagar as a reminiscence, and not in its proper

sequence (Abr. 247-254). He places a speech in Sarah's mouth whereby she offers Hagar to Abraham in her stead (Abr. 248-252). Philo invents this speech, based upon Genesis 16.2. Sarah is not jealous of another woman; she recognizes that her giving of Hagar to Abraham is in fulfillment of the natural law of a man providing an heir. The children would become Sarah's through adoption. Even though Hagar is an Egyptian; her conduct suggests that she acts like a Hebrew.

Philo omits any mention of the conflict between Sarah and Hagar. He also passes lightly over the birth of Isaac, who is not even mentioned by name (Abr. 254). Philo only states that Isaac was "a reward for their high excellence, a gift from God the bountiful."

ALLEGORY

Abraham begins his philosophic quest as a homeless immigrant. The stress of famine, which Philo describes as a dearth of passions (Quis Her. 287-289), pushes him into Egypt. He routs his enemies (wrongdoing) and migrates from the creed of Chaldea to the creed of the lovers of God. Egypt represents the bodily region, and as such is inferior to Abraham's creed. Abraham descends into the cave (Egypt) once again, in order to enlighten those living in darkness.

Sarai means "my sovereignty" (Cong. 2). Philo defines sovereignty as that which has control over a person, such as Wisdom , self control, individual righteousness and other virtues. Philo likens sovereignty, a person's decision making self, to a queen.

Philo recognizes a paradox regarding this ruling power (Cong. 3). This sovereignty is simultaneously barren and prolific. Virtue is barren regarding "all that is bad", yet it is also the "fruitful mother of the good" (Cong. 3). Virtue bears unceasingly, her children are honest words, innocent purposes and laudable acts (Cong. 4).

One cannot mate with Virtue until he has first mated with her handmaiden, the "culture gained by the primary learning of the school course" (Cong. 9). The seeker of wisdom first learns about the physical world and the arts, necessary for existence in the physical world, before he learning about the metaphysical truths. The lower learning includes the study of grammar, geometry, astronomy, rhetoric, music and other areas of intellectual study. Sarah, since she represents Virtue, cannot mate with Abraham until he has embraced Hagar, the lower learning. (Cong. 11f). Only after these "childhood" subjects are mastered can Abraham continue on his "adult" path towards Wisdom (Cong. 19, 23).

Hagar, whose name means "sojourning", symbolizes the lower education. Those who wallow in this area are called Egyptians, since sense perception is essential to this level of learning. Egypt, therefore, is called a "soul-vessel", since the "bodily part of the soul is riveted (sic) to the vessel of the soul as a whole" (Cong. 21).

As a learner, Abraham obeys the commands of Virtue (Cong. 63-70). He values attention, memory and the placing of deeds before words. Abraham "hearkened" unto Sarah when she suggests that he first learn the school curriculum (Genesis 16.2, Cong. 63).

Sarah is the paramount Virtue. It is only after Abram becomes Abraham (Genesis 17.5), and thereby it is known that he is perfect, does he merit Sarah. Furthermore, Philo states that "if we choose to hearken to all that Virtue (Sarah) recommends, we shall be happy" (Leg. All. iii 244f).

Virtue is gentle, sociable and kindly (Cong. 71-82). Since Abraham is not yet able to mate with Virtue and to beget by Wisdom, Virtue gives him her handmaiden, the culture of the schools. Virtue is always a lawful wife when the lower education (Hagar) ministers to her. The path of Wisdom is from the school to the study of philosophy, thereby leading to Wisdom. Hagar, the lower school, is

ignorant and undisciplined. Only after she comes under the aegis of perfection (Virtue) does she become disciplined (Cong. 88f).

Philo expounds upon Genesis 16.3, regarding the decade since Abraham and Sarah took up residence in Canaan (Cong. 121). The school curriculum is a lengthy program, lasting ten years. The proper understanding of that curriculum comes only after intelligence is hardened; the curriculum places within a student proper quickness of mind. Philo adds that Abraham, as the learner, makes Knowledge his teacher (Cong. 122).

Philo then comments upon Genesis 16.4, Hagar's insolence towards Sarah after she becomes pregnant (Cong. 127-130). Philo compares Hagar's arrogant behavior to a condition which he calls "having in the womb". Abraham is her gifted pupil, which gives her (Cong. 128):

> (A) swollen, vanity-ridden condition, robed in a vesture of inordinate pride, which makes some people appear to dishonour virtue, the essentially honourable mistress in her own right of the lower branches of knowledge.

Hagar takes undue pride in her successful pupil, leading to her "pregnancy without Wisdom" (after Cong. 130). Hagar does not repudiate her undue self-love; nor does she realize that she is only the handmaiden to a greater

sovereign, Queen Virtue, herself. Sarah saw Hagar's womb and was dishonored by it. Philo comments that the practitioners of the lower arts see their own products dimly, yet Knowledge (Abraham) clearly apprehends their products (Cong. 139-151). Elsewhere (Cher. 3-6), Philo describes Hagar as a lowered sphere, since she twice departs from sovereign Virtue, Sarah.

In her insolence, Hagar neglects Sarah, who by her standing as Virtue, is the foundation of the lower studies. Therefore, Virtue rebukes Abraham for unduly embracing the "lower forms of training" (Cong. 151-153). She asks that God judge between the higher and lower forms of training (after Genesis 16.5). Interestingly, Philo adds that Sarah does not condemn Abraham, she merely doubts that his heart is truly set upon a path leading towards Virtue and Wisdom. Abraham, by his comment of Genesis 16.6, removes her doubts; Sarah, the embodiment of Virtue, is allowed to do whatever she pleases to Hagar (Cong. 153).

Philo posits three motives for flight: hatred, fear and shame (Fug. 1-6). Out of a sense of hatred, one leaves his spouse. Jacob's flight from Laban was an escape out of anger. Out of a sense of fear, one leaves his parents or masters, as Jacob left Esau. Hagar's humiliation is prompted by shame; this is why an angel, possessing the

Divine Logos, meets her along her journeys. An angel teaches Hagar humility.

Abraham also calls Hagar a servant girl (Genesis 16.6). The training of the schools is junior to a life of Virtue. Full honor goes to Knowledge and Wisdom, the "full grown mistress" (Cong. 153-159). Abraham places Hagar in the "hands" of Virtue, since the school subjects require the use of the hands. Jealousy does not motivate Sarah to punish Hagar. Philo claims that the Bible is not speaking about two women; rather it speaks of a clash of two minds, the mind of preliminary learning (Hagar) and Sarai, the striver for Virtue (Cong. 180).

Philo elaborates upon Hagar's encounter with the angel in Genesis 16.7 (Fug. 119):

> (T)he angel who decreed a return home to a soul whose shame was like to lead into wandering, and well-nigh was its escort back to the frame of mind which wanders not.

Hagar's soul was likely to lead her into a sense of perpetual wandering. It is the angel's task to lead the school curriculum back from wandering lost in the desert to a stable and unswerving path.

Philo posits five different meanings for the word "Spring" (Genesis 16.7, Fug. 177). The first meaning

equates spring with Mind. Spring can also mean education, either a good or a bad disposition, or even God, the "Maker and Father of the Universe Himself." Regarding Hagar, the "spring" of mind is appropriate in describing the lower education. Hagar does not avail herself of Wisdom's sustenance, yet she sits nearby, either unwilling or unable to drink from Wisdom's font (Fug. 202f). Therefore, the angel returns to reproach her. Philo transforms the angel's inquiry of Genesis 16.8 into a philosophical speculation (Fug. 204-206):

> Even the secrets of the womb, which are hidden from created beings, the angel knows with certainty: "Lo, thou art with child,... and shalt call his name Ishmael" (Genesis 16.11) For it is not in the power of man to know that the embryo is a male... So the words "Whence comest thou" are spoken to rebuke the soul that is running away from the better judgement.

Philo describes Hagar as inferior to a Hebrew. She is an Egyptian, the embodiment of sense perception. Consequently, she is not qualified to see the Supreme Cause, God (Som. i 240).

Hagar casts aside her gains in life, such as Abraham, and chases after uncertainties. After realizing her mistake, she receives her reproof with gladness; she listens to the angel and is promised a son, Ishmael, called such since she hearkens to God (Fug. 208). Hagar humbles

herself; in so doing, she relinquishes her irrational highmindedness (Fug. 207). Ishmael, since he represents hearing, is the second son, even though he is born first. Philo gives primacy to the sense of sight, a clear understanding devoid of falseness, which is embodied in Israel ("seeing God"), a descendant of Isaac.

Ishmael was subject to a rude birth (Fug. 209-211). Hagar's soul was pregnant with the Sophist's principle of arguing for argument's sake. It was in constant battle. Consequently, Ishmael embodies sophistry, which Philo despises.

Hagar's second flight is also described as a philosophic journey (Fug. 212f). Hagar and Ishmael come to a well between Kadesh and Bared. To Philo, the pair is balanced between the evil (Bared) and the holy (Kadesh). He states that it is actually Abraham who is on the border between the holy and the profane; he is not yet ready to share in a "life of perfect goodness."

Genesis 20.1-18 speaks of Abraham's stay in Gerar, a Philistine town under the rule of Abimelech. Once again, Abraham passes Sarah off as his sister and the Philistines are punished for taking Sarah as the king's concubine. Abimelech learns of Sarah's true identity through a dream and bribes Abraham to release his country from God's curse.

A mind, such as Abimelech's, is in harmony with the Mind of the Universe. During a revelatory experience, the human mind is possessed and God-inspired, and in an ecstatic state. The mind is capable of receiving prophecy; in Abimelech's case, God warns him of what would happen should he engage in an adulterous relationship with Sarah (Som. i 1-2)

Finally, Philo describes Sarah, Virtue, as the "motherless ruling principle of things, begotten of her father alone, even God the Father of all" (Quis Her. 62). Apparently, God is the Father of Virtue. As such, He is the Form of Virtue, towards which all humanity strives. Irrational beings, such as Masek, the mother of Eliezer (Quis Her. 61), produce children possessed of the irrational, female attributes. Sarah, who is the Form of Virtue herself, only produces children who possess the male attributes of Virtue and Wisdom.

SUMMARY

Regarding Sarah, Hagar and Ishmael, Philo's Exposition is different from the Allegory. Philo uses the greater parts of three allegorical books to explain Genesis 15-16: Quis Rerum Divinarum Heres Sit, De Congressu Quaerendae Eruditionis Gratia, and De Fuga et Inventione. The description of Hagar and Ishmael especially concerns Philo; these are two Genesis characters whom the Biblical writer abandons after their brief episodes are described.

Philo uses these three personages to outline his educational curriculum. Abraham and Sarah are involved in a philosophic marriage; the mating in the soul between mind and Virtue will lead to Wisdom. Before this marriage can be consummated, Abraham (mind) must first learn about the physical world through the classical curriculum: rhetoric, grammar, mathematics, etc. Education, the lower school (Hagar), is necessary training for philosophy; one learns physics before metaphysics, knowledge through sense perception precedes the knowledge of Virtue (Sarah). Education is Wisdom's concubine, Wisdom's wife is Virtue.

The wise man's decision making self is sovereign. Yet, that mind must be trained. The human mind can be in harmony with the Mind of the universe only through education.

Egypt is the world of sense perception. Abraham returns to Egypt, the cave, in order to purify his soul and rescue those living in the darkness. Philo implies that Abraham brought Hagar out of that darkness; she is an Egyptian who acquired Hebrew culture. Abraham brought the school curriculum out of the darkness and made it his concubine, a necessary stop along his path of Wisdom.

CHAPTER 7

SODOM AND GOMORRAH

EXPOSITION

Philo places the visit of the three men (angels) to Abraham (Genesis 18.2ff) immediately after his description of the inhospitality of the Egyptians (Abr. 107-132). As is his tendency throughout his writings, Philo entirely omits any mention of circumcision, in this case Abraham's and Ishmael's[1]. Consequently, he sees no need to follow the Biblical plot and so the travelers do not arrive while Abraham is sitting outside his tent, recovering from his operation. Abraham runs to greet them and begs them to stay with him and join in a meal, to which they readily assent (Abr. 107).

Philo shows that he has a rudimentary knowledge of kashrut. Abraham commands Sarah to bake three cakes, chooses a calf for slaughter and has his servant prepare it (Abr. 109). In contrast to Genesis 18.8, he does not serve curds and milk with the meat. Philo's conception of contemporary dietary customs, and the knowledge that his audience would be familiar with the peculiar Jewish eating habits, leads him to consciously omit the milk products from this meal.

Since Philo has already stated that these travelers are of a divine nature (Abr. 107), the trio feasts "not so much on their viands prepared for them as on the goodwill of their host" (Abr. 110). Divine beings have no use for food. In this spirit, the travelers feast upon Abraham's hospitality and not the food. Philo sidesteps the sensitive issue of divine beings who eat of human sustenance.

Philo places one of the three travelers in a position of superiority (Abr. 110). Among a delegation of refined people with a previously agreed upon message to deliver, one person acts as the spokesperson, and the others simply nod in assent. This traveler announces that a son would be born to Abraham and Sarah within a year's time. The announcement stuns Abraham and Sarah (Abr. 111-113) who were well past the age of parenthood. Philo paraphrases Genesis 18.12, where Sarah laughs at the possibility of giving birth. The travelers (not the LORD, as in Genesis 18.13) rebuke Sarah with the words of Genesis 18.13, which God originally said to Abraham, "Is anything too wondrous for the LORD." Only after this rebuke does Sarah realize that these visitors were "prophets or angels, transformed from their spiritual and soul-like nature into human shape" (Abr. 113). Philo equates prophets and angels; through the attainment of wisdom, a person can rise above his physical nature and dwell, as it were, in the land of metaphysics. He would

then be like an angel. Sarah's denial of her laughter is due to her belated recognition of the divine nature of Virtue, rather than the fear she exhibited in Genesis 18.15.

After concluding his literal adaptation of this story, Philo proceeds to give another interpretation of this story, centered upon Abraham's sense of virtue (Abr. 114ff). Abraham's hospitality is symbolic of a greater virtue, piety (Abr. 115):

> Som.e may feel that the house must have been happy and blessed in which such an event as this took place, that wise men halted there and made a stay who would not have deigned even to look inside if they saw anything hopelessly wrong in the souls of the inmates... where angels did not shrink from halting and receiving hospitality from men.

Abraham's house is a place of virtue. A virtuous abode knows joy, happiness, and blessing. Angels, as Philo now calls the three visitors, do not normally interact with humans, unless the human souls are sufficiently elevated and possessed by virtue. Abraham possesses such a soul.

These angels feast upon Abraham's virtue (Abr. 116). They appear actually to eat and to partake of Abraham's hospitality (Abr. 118). They show honor upon one of "their kinsmen and fellow servant who had sought refuge with their master." Abraham's soul is sufficiently virtuous so that more advanced seekers of wisdom, called angels, feel comfortable calling upon him.

Philo relates that the supreme honor the angels give to Abraham is their assumption of human form (Abr. 118). Philo finally decides that angels are incorporeal beings. They do not actually eat and drink; they only pretend to do so in order to appease Abraham, a traveler along the path of wisdom and the embodiment of the virtue of piety among men.

Philo's allegorical interpretation of this visit occurs in De Abrahamo 119:

> Spoken words contain symbols of things apprehended by the understanding only. When, then, as at noon tide God shines around the soul, and the light of the mind fills it through and through and the shadows are driven from it by the rays which pour all around it, the single object presents to it a triple vision, one representing the reality, the other two the shadows reflected from it. Our life in the light which our senses perceive gives us a somewhat similar experience, for objects standing of moving often cast two shadows at once.

When the sun is directly overhead, as it is at noon, there are no shadows cast upon the ground. When God speaks, He often speaks at noon, a shadowless time. When God speaks, the shadows of ignorance vanish from sight and one is left with a clear apprehension of God, if and only if one has already escaped from the world of shadows. Abraham, standing in the noon sun, clearly apprehends the Godhead, symbolized by the one angel standing over and above the other two, who are emissaries to Sodom, the place of shadow existence.

The Godhead is not in the shadows (Abr. 120f). Rather, He holds the central place in the universe, since He is called "He that is" (Ehyeh asher Ehyeh, Exodus 3.14). He is surrounded on either side by the senior Potencies, "God", here a technical term meaning the Creator of the All, and "Lord", the "fundamental right of the maker to rule and control what he has brought into being" (Abr. 121). These two Potencies are found within the Central Being. The triple vision of the angels is actually a vision of a single object. Abraham speaks of these three elements as if they were actually one being (Genesis 18.3); Philo extends the grammatical construction of this verse and turns it into the fundamental thought of philosophic speculation.

Philo next moves to a description of the city of Sodom (Abr. 133ff), based upon Genesis 19.1ff:

> The land of the Sodomites... was brimful of innumerable iniquities, particularly such as arise from gluttony and lewdness, and multiplied and enlarged every other possible pleasure with so formidable a menace that it had at last been condemned by the Judge of All. The inhabitants owed this extreme license to the never failing lavishness of their sources of wealth... and the chief beginning of evils... is good in excess.2

The Sodomites were blessed with a prolific harvest and great wealth. However, they do not use their wealth wisely; they engage in gluttony and other self indulgent pleasures. Their excessive lust, inebriation and forbidden forms of

intercourse, including sodomy, led to total corruption. Philo includes the corruption of their souls as further reason why God was moved to destroy them (Abr. 135-137). He fears that the Sodomites, if left unchecked, would eventually corrupt the entire human race. God causes a firestorm to destroy the fields on the plain, the forestland and entire cities. The flames destroy all that is visible, penetrate the ground, and destroy the soil, rendering it unable to sustain life (Abr. 139f). Philo adds that the remnant of this firestorm can still be observed in smoldering monuments and brimstone, a mined product (Abr. 140f).

Philo omits Abraham's bargaining with God over the fate of Sodom. He also omits any mention of the name "Gomorrah" or of Lot.

Philo provides a rich allegorical meaning to this story (Abr. 142ff). Only two of the three angels continue to Sodom. Philo determines that the third angel is in fact the "truly Existent", who felt that the execution of a punishment should be left to subordinates so that He might be known as the cause of good, not evil (Abr. 143).

Philo states that God ordered five cities destroyed, representing the five senses, the instruments of pleasure in

the human body. He determines that these are the five cities of the plain, who warred against the four passions (Genesis 14).

Philo further divides the five senses. Touch, taste and smell are the three base animal senses. Hearing and sight are more elevated, with sight being the highest of the senses. The city of Zoar represents sight (Abr. 166); it is the only city of the five that remains after the firestorm. God destroys the world of carnal sense perception. Only sight, which has the potential to comprehend the world of metaphysics, is saved. It is to Zoar, sight, that a seeker of truth such as Lot (even though he has fallen by the wayside) might flee after the other senses are destroyed.

ALLEGORY

For Philo, the nature of happiness is the commonality of the daily life of virtue loving souls (Cher. 106). For example, the angels in Genesis 18.10 give Abraham the promise of a son, the most perfect thank offering.

Abraham is zealous in doing God's bidding (Sac. 58-60). He bids Sarah (Virtue) to bake cakes. God visits Abraham, attended by His two highest Potencies, Sovereignty and Goodness. Goodness is the measure of all things good.

Sovereignty is the measure of all things corporeal and incorporeal. These three measures, God, Sovereignty and Goodness, are kneaded in the soul. God stands above them, as it were, yet He is revealed in them. Philo writes that Sarah "buried" the cakes:

> Because the sacred story that unveils to us the truth of the Uncreated and His Potencies must be buried, since the Knowledge of divine rites is a trust which not every comer can guard aright.

Philosophic studies are for the elite, not the masses. Sarah (Virtue) buries the knowledge of God's attributes so that the common person will not discover the essence of divine nature. The philosophic quest might be available to anyone who embarks upon the journey, but until that person is ready to study advanced metaphysical concepts, this knowledge is to be kept from him.

Abraham's tent symbolizes his soul (Det. 59-61). When God asks where Sarah is (Genesis 18.9), Abraham replies that she, i.e. Virtue, dwells within his soul. Yet, Abraham is not truly happy. Happiness is the exercise and enjoyment of virtue, not its mere possession (Det. 60). Consequently, God promises that He will send Isaac, perfect happiness, to Abraham, so that he may exercise his virtue.

Abraham is on the same philosophic level as the angels (Mig. 173-175). Should Abraham somehow fall short of

perfection, the Divine Word leads Abraham towards his goal. As Abraham comes closer to full knowledge, his steps become faster and faster until he runs with a vigorous effort towards the Font of Wisdom. God shows His own works to "the soul that longs for all beauteous things" (Leg. All. iii 27). This soul, such as Abraham's, shuns evil, hides and eventually destroys any passions within it. Wisdom is God's friend, not his servant. Abraham registers God as his Father and becomes, as it were, His only son (Sob. 55f).

In his comment to Genesis 18.22, Philo remarks that Abraham stood, unwavering, before God (Som. ii 226f). Abraham does not yield to diversions when he confronts God; he truly sees (comprehends) the Divine Logos. This type of "seeing" implies a closer intimacy; Abraham stands fast and acquires an unswerving mind by stepping close to the power of God (Cher. 18f). Abraham's unchanging soul has access to an unchanging God (Post. 27). With God, there is no turning around, nor is there any variation within Him.

Furthermore, when Abraham draws near to God, he knows that he is but dust and ashes (Quod Deus. 161, Som. i 214). Only when Abraham knows his nothingness can he come before God (Quis Her. 30).

Philo comments that overpowering evil destroyed Sodom (Sac. 122). Sodom represents the soul barren of good and

blind to reason (Cong. 109). Abraham begins his negotiations with the number fifty (Genesis 18.24ff). Fifty, to Philo, represents a message of redemption, drawing upon the description of the Jubilee year found in Leviticus 35.10 (Sac. 122, Mut. 228f). Abraham eventually lowers his plea to ten souls. Ten is the lower limit; it represents the training of education (1+2+3+4=10) and therefore can be accepted as a respite for the soul (Cong. 109, Sac. 122, Mut. 228f). By failing to even find ten souls, the Sodomites prove themselves uneducated and beyond redemption. They are barren of wisdom and blind in understanding, even though they are sharp of sight (Conf. 27). They bring ruin upon sacred and holy thoughts, represented by Sodom's guests, the angels.

When Abraham "returned to his place" (Genesis 18.33), he meets with the sacred Logos (Som.. i 70). God had withdrawn and therefore He did not send forth visions. Only His inferior Potencies transmit revelation to Abraham.

Regarding Genesis 19.11, Philo comments that the Sodomites "wearied themselves seeking the door" in order to carry out their unnatural lust for the men (Fug. 144-146). The nature of these souls will always be child-like and immature; their natures will be convicted of foolishness.

Just before the great firestorm, the sun rose upon Zoar (Genesis 19.23). To Philo, the sun symbolizes the divine Logos. It shelters "those akin to virtue but who turn away", such as Lot (Som. i 85f). The sun also ruins Virtue's adversaries. As Philo states in the Exposition, those who rebel against Virtue are enemies "of the whole heaven and universe" (Mos. ii 53-55). They suffer strange and unexampled punishments from the elements, especially from fire and water.

Lot's wife lags behind on their journey, since her nature is hostile to truth (Ebr. 164-170). Those who do not desire to find or to seek wisdom impair their power of reasoning (Fug. 121f). They refuse to be trained and become "blind". Lot's wife neglects that which is in front of her. She constantly looks behind her and longs for her ignorant state. By doing so, she becomes like a deaf and lifeless stone, of no value to anyone. When one turns away from sense perception, the stop along the road to Virtue, the "woman inherent in their nature" leads to even more straying (Som. i 246-248). The soul is consequently set up like a worthless pillar, a monument to ignorance.

Lot's two daughters, who escape with him (Genesis 19.30-38), are called Counsel and Consent. They desire intercourse with Mind, their father. Philo states that they

advocate a drunken and frenzied soul in order to pursue their evil intentions (Post. 175f). Lot is the parent of daughters, no male (perfect) growth was within his soul. Elsewhere, Philo comments that his elder daughter is named Deliberation and the younger, Assent (Ebr. 164-170). Assent always follows Deliberation in the normal sequence of events. When the Mind is without knowledge, when Deliberation and Assent are in contact with it, they become the Mind's partners in bed (Ebr. 203).

The incestuous children born from these encounters are Ammon and Moab (Genesis 19.37f). The Ammonites take their natural form from the sense perception of their mother, Deliberation. They take no thought of God. The Moabites take their nature from Lot, their father. (Leg. All. iii 81). Moab means "from a father", i.e. from Mind. Lot, as Mind, prostitutes himself to the senses, which leads to the birth of Moab (Som. i. 89).

SUMMARY

Philo makes an interesting and important statement when he comments upon Sarah being in Abraham's tent: Virtue (Sarah) dwells within Abraham's soul (the tent). Virtue has become an integral part of Abraham's persona; not only is he wed to Virtue (arete), he has internalized it. Virtue is Abraham's life partner, who now finds Abraham worthy of procreation and true Happiness, Isaac.

The triple vision of the men appearing before Abraham is also interesting. Abraham sees the Central Being, flanked on either side by his two Potentials, God the Creator and Lord, the Master of the Created World. Philo provides a system whereby the Central Being activates these potentials through an act of conscious volition. Creation and Providence, therefore, are acts of Divine volition; the Godhead can choose to create or destroy, reward or punish.

Philo does not mention the Dead Sea by name. He seems to have no awareness of Palestinian geography, at least in the Dead Sea region. The fertile region near the Dead Sea of which he writes may be En Gedi, but this is not definitive. Philo depends upon hearsay for his description of the area that was once Sodom and Gomorrah.

The destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah symbolizes God's destruction of corrupt sense perception. In De Vita Moses, cited above, Philo links the destruction of the plain with the Deluge as examples of God destroying corrupt sense perception. Sight alone is preserved, in the form of Zoar.

Zoar represents sight as a philosophic concept, a metaphor for comprehension. True "seeing" goes beyond mere looking at an object, be it terrestrial or heavenly. The verb "to see" means to understand an object in its metaphysical Form, and to attempt to bring the object in normal sight to its Ideal state, be it a chair, an apple or the virtue of piety.

Finally, Philo shows himself as a precursor to Christian thought. He posits a trinity of belief: a Central Being, surrounded by the Creator and the Master. In Christian thought, these are the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Furthermore, Philo places God as the philosophic Father to Abraham. In the following chapter, Philo states that God "mated" with Sarah to bring forth Isaac. This thought is a clear forerunner of the Synoptic Gospel stories regarding the birth of Jesus.

NOTES

1. Philo mentions circumcision only in passing (Mig. 92). He devotes no other space to it, either in the Exposition or in the Allegory. The reason for this curious omission will be examined in the conclusion to Philo's materials.

2. This quote is attributed to Menander.

CHAPTER 8

ISAAC

EXPOSITION

Philo calls the events of the Akedah Abraham's greatest action (Abr. 167ff). Isaac is his "only and dearly cherished son, a child of great bodily beauty and excellence of soul" (Abr. 168). Genesis 22.2 does not speak of Isaac's beauty or his arete; there, he is simply Abraham's only, beloved son.

Isaac shows a "perfection of virtues beyond his years" (Abr. 168). Because of this trait, Abraham loves him more than a father normally loves his son. He chooses to love the virtue within Isaac.

Even though God's command to sacrifice Isaac surprises Abraham, he steadfastly observes God's order. Abraham proves that his love for God is more powerful than his affection for Isaac (Abr. 170).

Unlike the narrative found in Genesis 22.6, Abraham gives Isaac the fire to carry for the sacrifice after they leave the two servants (Abr. 171):

> For he thought it good that the victim himself should bear the load of the instruments of sacrifice, a light burden indeed, for nothing is less toilsome than piety.

Abraham adds a physical burden to Isaac's metaphysical "burden" of piety. Father and son walk together with "equal speed of mind rather than body" to the appointed sacrificial mountain (Abr. 172). Abraham and Isaac were of the same mind regarding the importance of this sacrifice.

Philo suggests that Abraham suddenly grabs Isaac, throws him upon the altar and suddenly lifts his knife to kill his son (Abr. 176). Abraham deviates from Genesis 22.9, since he does not bind Isaac before placing him upon the altar.

In Philo's account, God the Savior, not an angel, rescues Isaac, unlike Genesis 22. 11 (Abr. 176f). Twice He calls upon Abraham to spare the child:

> So Isaac was saved, since God returned the gift of him and used the offering which piety rendered to Him to repay the offerer, while for Abraham the action, though not followed by the intended ending, was complete and perfect, and the record of it as such stands graven not only in the sacred books but in the minds of the readers.

Abraham's reward for his piety is the abrogation of the sacrifice; Isaac would remain alive. In his mind, Abraham reckons that he had actually completed the sacrifice, since

God had kept him from offering Isaac upon the altar. Philo notes that this episode has had an indelible psychic impression upon the minds of Jews throughout the ages.

Philo next enters upon a long discourse concerning child sacrifice (Abr. 178-199). Greeks, and some barbarian peoples, had long considered it a virtue to sacrifice their children for the good of the state in times of war, for glory, or for service to the Gods. Abraham, though, was possessed of none of these motives (Abr. 188f). Philo suggests that in Chaldea, Abraham's ancestral home, child sacrifice was not practiced. He does not perform the intended act in public, nor is the sacrifice in response to public pressure.

Abraham's intended child sacrifice is intended to show that he "made a special practice of obedience to God" (Abr. 192). Since child sacrifice was unknown in Canaan, for Abraham to have willingly introduced this custom, when he himself had not known it in Chaldea, would have been a "fight against nature" (Abr. 193). Furthermore, Abraham especially loves Isaac, born to him in his old age (Abr. 195). A father who "gives his only darling son performs an action for which no language is adequate" (Abr. 196). This sacrifice is unparalleled in human history. Abraham is also unique, since he officiates as the priest at his own son's

immolation (Abr. 198). These actions demonstrate that Abraham "devoted his whole soul through and through to holiness and disregarded the claims of their common blood" (Abr. 198). He completely dedicates his existence to God, unlike the skeptics (who regard Abraham's possible motives as profane) whom Philo refutes through this citation.

In his allegorical account within the Exposition, Philo calls Isaac "Laughter" (Abr. 201ff). This Laughter is not just a feeling of "amusement"; rather, it is due to a good feeling that arises when true understanding, Joy, is attained. Isaac is the Form of Laughter. Abraham's sacrifice of Laughter shows that rejoicing is primarily God's domain (Abr. 202f):

> ... (R)ejoicing is most closely associated with God alone... The nature of God is without grief or fear and wholly exempt from passion of any kind, and alone partakes of perfect happiness and bliss... God, Who has banished jealousy from His presence in His kindness and love for mankind, fitly rewards by returning the gift in so far as the recipient's capacity allows.

The Akedah comes to symbolize mankind's abrogation of God's Form of Joy, who is returned to humanity through an act of Divine grace. Joy belongs to God; but He will allow humans to partake of it as much as possible. Philo states that joy among humans is always mixed with grief; it is not pure. God blends grief with joy on its descent from the heavens (Abr. 205).

Sarah fears that joy belongs to God alone (from Genesis 17.17, cf. Abr. 206, Spec. Leg. ii 54). Consequently, she denies that she ever laughed. God reassures her, however, that her laughter is warranted; she may participate in Joy (Abr. 206, Philo places the first announcement of Isaac's birth, Genesis 17.17, after the Akedah story).

ALLEGORY

When God announces Isaac's birth, Abraham is ninety-nine years old, one year short of 100, the symbol of perfection. Isaac, self-taught Joy, the best of good emotions, makes Abraham perfect, since he is born when Abraham is 100 (Mut. 1-7).

Philo states that the eye of the soul, not the body, receives presentations of Divine wisdom. This eye sees without the assistance of light or any other agent. When God is seen by man, this revelation takes place without any sensual (physical) light, it is truly metaphysical, since God is the fountain of purest radiance.

God should be unknowable, inconceivable and incomprehensible (Mut. 15-19). Commenting upon Genesis 17.1, Philo interprets the phrase "was seen" as a manifestation of one of the Potencies which accompany the

Godhead, in this case the Potency of Kingship. Abraham's migration from Chaldea leads to a realization that there is a supreme Ruler over the world, which Philo calls Lord. For those on their way to betterment, He is God and Lord; they are guided by Lord (King) and benefit by God, the Creator (Mut. 23f).

Philo comments upon Genesis 17.1, "I am thy God". This phrase is not used in a literal sense, "for the Existent considered as existent is not relative. He is full of Himself and is sufficient for Himself" (Mut. 27). The Divine Being is eternal and unchanging (Mut. 28). He has projected his Potencies into the world, who may be spoken of as relative, such as the kingly and beneficial Potencies. Philo calls the creative Potency his Artificer, the Demiurge (Mut. 29):

> ...(T)hrough this the Father who is its begetter and contriver made the universe, so that "I am thy God" is equivalent to "I am the Maker and Artificer (Demiurge)."

Philo's Demiurge is not the Godhead; it is the creative Potency, called God, found within the Godhead. This Demiurge created the world but it does not exercise providence over it; that belongs to another Potency, Lord. The phrase "I am thy God" is said to a man of virtue, such as Abraham. Only such a man can comprehend the esoteric

meaning of such a phrase. When the Godhead addresses Abraham in Genesis 17.1, to change his name, to announce Isaac's birth and to command circumcision, He calls upon Abraham as the Demiurge, the creative Potency.

This Godhead commands Abraham to become blameless (Genesis 17.1). It is a challenge to Abraham; he is to set his hand to excellence. Should he fail to achieve this difficult human goal, he should at least abstain from sin, an easier goal, in order to escape blame for the wrongdoings among humans (Mut. 47-51). Righteous conduct leads to praise; but the abstention from sin saves one from censure. The complete acquisition of virtues is impossible; one should be content with the overthrow of vices. Freedom from sin and guilt leads to a happy life; for one who leads such a life, God leaves a covenanted portion of His grace.

Covenants are for those worthy of such a gift. They are symbols of God's grace, set between Himself and the recipient. Nothing stands between God and a person's soul except His grace (Mut. 51-53).

In Genesis 17.3, Abraham "fell on his face" before God. God stands above him, unchanging, yet He moves the frame of creation (Mut. 54-56). God's motion is self-extension; He shows His unalterable, unchanging nature. By falling,

Abraham shows his relatively unstable nature, subject to change. His "face" symbolizes the senses, mind and speech.

The covenant of Genesis 17.4 implies a partnership. Its highest form is expressed by the words "I Myself", the beginning and foundation of all bounties. God Himself is a portion of those who receive Him (Mut. 57-59).

The occurrences of Genesis 17.5 show that Abraham has embarked upon a higher stage of learning. He has left the study of nature for a life of wisdom, a lover of God (Cher. 7). Consequently, God changes Abram's name to Abraham, the "chosen father of sound." Through this change, Abraham embodies what Philo calls "good man's reasoning" (Gig. 62-64). Sound is a function of reason; the father is a mind that has grasped the Good.

Sarai also has her name changed to Sarah; a change from personal sovereignty to a type of generic, imperishable Virtue. Generic wisdom is sovereignty itself and as such is imperishable. Each virtue is a queen, sovereign ruler "of the course of human life" (Mut. 77-80).

Abraham and Sarah's changes of names are signs of higher moral values. Abraham has come to symbolize a lover of wisdom. Sarah, as Virtue, is the fruit of study (Mut. 60-76).

Virtue (Sarah) is full of joy at her pregnancy. A good man, such as Abraham, has laughter and a glad heart. His offspring is laughter itself, Isaac (Leg. All. iii 217).

When a gift is given, the giver presents something of himself. God gives Abraham and Sarah the Form of Laughter. Isaac does not represent anything human, rather Isaac is "the best of the good emotions, joy, the Isaac who is the laughter of the heart, a son of God" (Mut. 130-132). Isaac, the Form of Happiness, cheers peaceful souls.

Philo infers that Isaac's conception and birth is anything but common. Isaac, as the Form of Laughter and Joy (Cher. 8), is a son of God. God has implanted Joy within the womb of Virtue (Sarah). The resemblance to later Christian thought is striking.

Philo next analyzes the statements of Genesis 17.16 (Mut. 141-151). The phrase "from her" means that which comes into being outside of her, immediately. Virtue is the mother of any good. Consequently, Sarah bears offspring worthy of love. Her "child" is her only one, a truly genuine and free natured son, a free born soul. "I will bless her" means that God will give of His Virtue to Sarah. "Kings", rulers appointed forever by Nature, will be Isaac's descendants, trained in Virtue and possessing Joy.

Isaac is praised even before his birth (Leg. All. iii 85-87). Joy gladdens the heart, even as an object of hope. Isaac is the Laughter of soul, Joy and Gladness. The inheritance of good beyond all hope leads to laughter and the recognition that God is the cause of good and gracious gifts (Mut. 154-157).

It is also illogical that a person could laugh before Laughter entered the world (Mut. 154-157). Nature, however, provides a foreshadowing. When a person hopes for something, his soul rejoices in anticipation. Philo calls this "joy before joy" hope. Sarah's laughter shows that Virtue possesses a natural state of happy feeling.

In Genesis 17.17., Abraham "fell", not from God but from himself (Mut. 175-188). He clung to God but fell from his own conceit. God's love raised him up. This Biblical verse also shows that Abraham doubted God's promise. Philo states that a man wavers but not God. A man possesses images far below the Forms, leading to doubt.

In Genesis 17.18, Abraham prays for Ishmael. Ishmael means "one who hears God." Those who extol their own minds are spiritually lost (Mut. 201-204). When Abraham prays for Ishmael, he is not concerned with Ishmael's physical health, rather he "prays that what he hears from God may abide for

ever with the soul and stir him into a living flame" (Mut. 209f). He hopes that Ishmael can come closer to God and discover God's gifts (Mut. 216-219).

In Genesis 17.19, Abraham asks blessings for both Isaac and Ishmael, which God grants (Mut. 252-262). Sarah (Virtue) shall bear a son, as did Hagar, the lower instruction. Sarah's child will learn from itself, not from teachers of the lower school. Isaac, the self-taught man, is also of a self originated and self consummated nature. Philo explains that there are two types of virtue, one where virtue is taught; the other where the teacher is also the learner. Isaac embodies the latter type of learning (Mut. 263-269). He learns "not (from a) teacher but (from) himself" (Som. ii 10). He constantly attains fresh vigor and renewed youth. Yet, both types of virtue are open to humans through the covenant.

In Genesis 17.22, God completes His revelation. Philo takes this to mean that God had perfected Abraham (Mut. 270). He fills Abraham with immortal thoughts.

Isaac is not a man, he is a pure thought, beautiful by nature (Fug. 167). Sarah bore Isaac in her old age, when sense perception decays and immortal thoughts reach their

prime. She gives birth without the aid of midwives; Virtue needs no intermediary to bring forth Laughter (Mig. 139-142).

God bestows the fruit of His sowing as a gift (Cher. 45):

> ... God begets nothing for Himself, for He is in want of nothing, but all for him who needs (or prays) to receive.

The Godhead has no Potentialities. They stand on either side of Him; they are the causative forces in the world. His Potentiality, God, is the Creator of Laughter and Joy. God is Isaac's father but He gives to Abraham His son, as it were, Gladness, the offspring of wisdom (Det. 123-125).

In his comment to Genesis 21.12, Philo states that Ishmael is still called a child in his adulthood. Philo likens him to a sophist. Isaac, though, is called an adult; even as a child, he inherits wisdom (Sob. 9).

Once Abraham attains this Happiness, he casts aside preliminary studies (Hagar) and sophistry (Ishmael). With the approval of God, he subjects them to eternal banishment (Genesis 21.10, Cher. 7-10, Post. 130f). "Wisdom has no kinship with the Sophist's culture." Wisdom studies truth,

the knowledge of right reason. The offspring of God are perfect Virtues, they are the Truth. Philo implies that Truth is equivalent to Torah (Quod Deus. 4).

Philo describes the "place" of Genesis 22.3f as the preliminary stay in the world of sense perception (Post. 17-20). The wise man constantly tries to discern the Ruler of the Universe. He begins by dwelling in the world of sense perception, studying nature. His mind, though, is still ignorant of the knowledge of the First Cause. God, however, is motionless, both near and far to the seeker of truth. God is all and the self is nothing (Mig. 139-142).

The Mind, at the summit of knowledge, will render everything to God. Abraham's sacrifice was not of his son, since Isaac was not really human, but of the mind's superior "male" attributes, the progeny of the rich and fertile soul, Divine growth (Mig. 139-142).

Philo calls the fire of Genesis 22.7 the efficient cause, Mind (Fug. 132-136). The wood is a passive object, which the mind perceives. The finished result is the mind's perception. The ram is "reason keeping quiet." The best offering is quietness and the suspension of judgement in matters that lack proofs.

Following the near sacrifice (Genesis 22.17), God confirms his promise to Abraham by an oath (Leg. All. iii 203-210). The very words of God are oaths and laws calling for accomplishment in an act. Only God can reveal His essence since only He has the exact knowledge of it. Philo continues by stating that men who swear by God are actually impious since one cannot know God's nature; men can swear only by God's Name, His interpreting word. For perfect beings, however, the "primal Being is their God." The wise man is blessed due to his fixed state and disposition. Consequently, he can call upon God directly.

SUMMARY

Isaac is the Form of Laughter (Joy, Gladness). Upon earth, Grief is always mixed with Joy; the Form of Joy is approximated but never attained. Isaac also represents self-taught knowledge, compared to Abraham, the student of the natural and metaphysical worlds. His self-taught knowledge leads him to achieve arete at an early age.

Philo also devotes many verses to the study and refutation of child sacrifice. Perhaps Philo acts as an apologist in De Abrahamo; his audience might have assumed that Jews engaged in the immolation of children. Consequently, Philo summons social, cultural and philosophic reasons why Abraham would not engage in child sacrifice.

Philo also portrays the Godhead as the Font of all wisdom. His Potencies, such as the Demiurge, emanate from Him, while He remains unchanging. In order to partake of the Godhead, one must be as good as possible. In this way, a man can achieve a Covenant with God. Philo defines covenant as the sufficient acquisition of wisdom within a man which leads God, through an act of grace, to converse with him.

Abraham's change of name shows that he is now fully in the metaphysical realm. He has no need of sense perception;

with generic, eternal Virtue (Sarah) at his side, Abraham is a perfect soul. Through the act of Akedah, Abraham rises to an even higher state of perfection, since he is willing to sacrifice Joy, a supreme Form, in order to remain loyal to God.

CHAPTER 9

CONCLUDING EPISODES

EXPOSITION

When Sarah dies (Genesis 23.1 ff), Philo relates that Abraham grapples with sorrow and conquers it (Abr. 256). He determines that reason would prevail over the natural emotions centered around the grieving passions. Abraham realizes that nature had taken its course and therefore he moderated his feelings of loss (Abr. 257). Death, according to Philo, is "not the extinction of the soul but its separation and detachment from the body and its return to the place whence it came; and it came, ... from God" (Abr. 258). He accepted Sarah's death "with equanimity" (Abr. 259).

Philo calls Abraham the first person to believe in God (Virt. 216). He establishes that there is one Cause who provides for the world. The leaders of the country approach Abraham and call him a "King from God among us" (Abr. 261). Abraham is not a political ruler; Genesis 23.6 calls Abraham a Nasi, literally a prince, but Philo translates this word as basileus, a King, following the Septuagint (Virt. 216). Philo intends that Abraham be called a philosopher king, whose wisdom comes from God. Those who follow King Abraham are following in God's way.

Abraham sets the standard of nobility for future proselytes. They come to "settle in a better land" (Virt. 219). When they choose to follow Abraham, they leave the world of sense perception and enter the metaphysical world.

Only Isaac inherits Abraham's patrimony (Virt. 207). The children of Abraham's concubine are excluded; they are denied any inheritance and sent away.

Philo does not relate any circumstances regarding Abraham's death in De Abrahamo. His concluding remark bears mentioning:

> ...(T)he founder of the nation, one who obeyed the law, some will Say, but rather, as our discourse has shown, himself a law and an unwritten statute.

Abraham does not follow God's law, he is the paradigm of it. Later generations of Jews do not innovate; they emulate Abraham as best they can. Even Moses, as great as he is, relates Abraham's great deeds with admiration, Abraham "did the divine law and the divine commands" (Abr. 275).

ALLEGORY

Philo interprets Genesis 23.4 as follows (Conf. 79):

> You... are children of the soil who honour the dust and clay before the soul and have adjudged the precedence to the man named Ephron, which being interpreted is 'clay'.

Abraham is a stranger to this form of behavior, merely sojourning among those who dwell in base sense perception. Abraham, as he removes himself from the world of death, also removes himself from earthy beings such as Ephron. Sarah's death and burial therefore shows that Abraham has totally removed himself from the physical world; his mind dwells in the world of metaphysics.

When the Hittites call Abraham a "King from God among us" (from Gen. 22.6), they realize that Abraham's kingship does not derive from his material wealth; rather, his kingship is "in his mind" (Mut. 152). Abraham, just as he is characterized in De Abrahamo, is a philosopher king. He, a prudent and holy man, rules over the imprudent and profane, since his soul is more perfect than those among whom he dwells.

In the Septuagint, the Cave of Machpelah is called a "double cave", a pair of memories (Som. ii 26n). Philo

implies a notion of duality: "duality is blessed when the soul couples its contemplation of Creation with the acknowledgment of the Creator" (cf. Philo, vol. v., Appendix, p. 608). Duality is cursed when it mingles good and evil. Machpelah is a blessed cave; The soul wedded to virtues resides in such a double cave (Post. 62). The double cave, therefore, is the most excellent abode of the wise souls, Abraham and Sarah, for example (Som. ii 89f).

The word "Hittite" (Gen. 23.6) means "removing". The Hittites are the enemies of reason (Som. ii 89f). They remove instruction from the world. As such, they represent the regressive elements among humans.

Eventually, Abraham rids himself of his concubines (Leg. All. iii 197). He leaves nothing for the "false, bastard thoughts" whom Keturah bred. Abraham bequeaths his "perfect" wealth, his "real substance", for Isaac alone (Conf. 74). Keturah, the symbol for incense burning, spreads the sweet fragrance of secular learning over the soul, which needs food, not her fragrance.

Abraham passes from vanity to truth. He spurns Chaldean astrology and turns from sophistry to sagacity through divine instruction (Praem. 58). He recognizes in the his use of right judgement and in the stability of his

soul a goodly old age (Quis Her. 291). At his death, Abraham "inherited incorruption and became equal to the angels", the host and people of God (Sac. 5).

SUMMARY

Philo passes lightly over the deaths of Sarah and Abraham. For Philo, their physical deaths are not important; they had already passed from the physical world into the world of metaphysics. They were not really human, they were Forms which later Jews would try to emulate. Philo raises Abraham and Sarah to paradigmatic characters. Therefore, they could never die.

CHAPTER 10

CONCLUSION

Philo's use of Abraham is a good example of how Philo's philosophic system operates. Philo has taken his abstract philosophical speculations and gives them a concrete form. Abraham symbolizes the philosophic quest as defined by Philo.

Philo describes three stages of a man's quest for philosophic truth concerning the nature of the Godhead (theological speculation) and the workings of the universe as a whole (epistemology). Following Plato, the highest ideals are the Forms. Although he does not explicitly state a theory of Forms in the Abraham episodes, it is clear that every name in the Bible is indeed a Form. Sarah, for example, is the Form of generic Virtue. Isaac is the Form of Laughter or Joy. Abraham is the Uplifted Father of Sound, who discovers the true nature of the Godhead.

Philo describes the Godhead as the Central Being. The Hebrew word for God, Elohim, is the Creator or Demiurge. The Hebrew for Lord, YHVH, is the Master of the created world who exercises Providence over the world. Philo places

both these Potencies, as he calls them, into the Godhead. They are subservient to the Central Being, which has no Potencies. The Central Being is the Aristotelian First Cause. Through this trinity (symbolized by the three angels who visit Abraham and then Sodom), Philo has taken the first step out of classical Greek philosophic thought and combined the works of Plato and Aristotle into a new, neo-Platonic philosophic system.

In order to reach the world of Forms, the metaphysical world in which the First Cause and its two Potencies dwell, Abraham, and by extension other seekers of wisdom, must first pass through two preliminary stages. As shown earlier (cf. Chapter 2), Philo's journey bears a remarkable similarity to Plato's Parable of the Cave.

The first stage, where all men begin their journey, is symbolized by Chaldea, where Abraham was born. Chaldea is the world of ignorance and shadows. The only science known to the shadow dwellers is astrology. Astrologers believed that the universe equaled God, that God is within the universe and consequently limited by the universe. For a Jew such as Philo, God is necessarily greater than the universe. Since Philo believes that the Godhead's Creator Potency (Demiurge, Elohim) created the universe, Abraham must reject the astrologers' view. His rejection of

Chaldean astrology causes Abraham to leave for the second level of his journey, his stay in Haran, the world of sense perception.

Haran represents the study of the visible world, using the five senses as tools for that exploration. In Haran, Abraham learns that nature is the supreme teacher. By studying nature, one can begin to gain an awareness of the Forms inherent in the world. Abraham learns all that there is to learn about sense perception in Haran. Then he realizes that there is nothing more to learn there, but that there is another, higher level of awareness, symbolized by Canaan. He completes his quest in Canaan.

Philo felt that most men could aspire to a "Haran" level of awareness. Yet few could continue the philosophic quest. Nachor, Abraham's brother, remained in Haran; his "light rested." Lot attempts to complete his journey, but slides back; he is a failure in Canaan.

In Canaan, Abraham is free to perfect his soul. He conquers the war in his soul between the senses and emotions (War of the Kings, Genesis 14). Abraham then schools himself in the basic educational curriculum, represented by his mating with Hagar, who represents the lower learning, science, rhetoric, mathematics, etc. Finally, Abraham

merits Sarah, generic, eternal Virtue. Their union produces Isaac, the Form of Laughter, given by the Godhead. Abraham's climactic act is the Akedah, in which he attempts to give Laughter back to the Godhead, to whom it belongs. Through Akedah, Abraham has achieved wisdom and true metaphysical knowledge of the Godhead. He has become a philosopher-king, longing to be with things divine.

For Philo, the Torah is an ahistorical document. Torah is a philosophic discourse couched in narrative form. As a Jew, Philo probably believed in an historical Abraham. Yet, Philo discerns an esoteric meaning within the text which he feels compelled to explain.

Curiously, Philo almost completely omits any mention of circumcision. He does not describe the events of Genesis 17.6-14 or Genesis 17.26f at all. Nor does he write about the laws of circumcision found in Leviticus. If this omission is an apologetic one, it makes no sense. Philo explains many curious events, such as the Covenant between the Pieces and the expulusion of Hagar and Ishmael, in an allegorical, philosophic way. His "excuse" is that the Torah is not to be taken literally but allegorically. Circumcision could have been interpreted in the same manner, but it is omitted in both the Exposition and the Allegory, which means that Jews and Gentiles both were denied Philo's explanation of circumcision.

Unless circumcision is described in Philo's lost treatise on Isaac, Philo's omission can be construed as a denial of the custom. Philo may not have believed in circumcision. An alternate explanation is that in his apology, Philo just refused to write of this Mitzvah. Neither position can be proved conclusively.

Finally, Philo presents a system of Judaism radically different from the Rabbinic system current in the First Century. The Jews of Alexandria responded to different challenges than those in Palestine. It seems that they followed the Septuagint; Hebrew was reserved for a scholarly class, to which Philo belonged. Furthermore, in order to justify Judaism to themselves as well as to their thoroughly Hellenized Greek and Egyptian neighbors, Judaism had to be defined in terms that they would understand. Philo chose the method of philosophical discourse as his way to present Judaism in the most favorable way possible, which was also easy to comprehend for anyone trained in philosophy. Abraham, in his search for the Fountain of Wisdom, is the Form of the Seeker of Knowledge, whom later generations would emulate. As shown in the next section, Philo's portrayal of Abraham is very different than Josephus', who is primarily interested in Torah as political history. Philo's thought is the basis for later neo-Platonic philosophy; Rabbinic Jews had no use for such systematic

philosophical speculation however much they may have integrated elements of such a system into their own teachings.

PART TWO

JOSEPHUS

CHAPTER 11

INTRODUCTION

In his introduction to Jewish Antiquities (Proem 1), Josephus writes of four different motives of a historian: eager to display his literary skill and win fame; to gratify the people about whom he writes; to set in order the events in which he has participated; and to write history for the public benefit. Josephus fancies himself as fulfilling the latter two motives. Jewish Antiquities is to be a chronicle of the entire history of the Jewish people, which the entire Greek speaking community will find worthy of attention.

Josephus wonders if the ancient Hebrews would want to communicate Biblical history to the Greeks. He also asks, rhetorically, if the Greeks would want to learn of Jewish history. In reply, Josephus (JA I.10-12) alludes to the desire of Ptolemy II (Philadelphus) to translate the Bible into Greek. The account of the Septuagint's translation is Josephus' proof that Greeks are interested in Jewish history, and that it is acceptable to narrate Biblical history in a contemporary framework.

Josephus defines Scripture in the following ways:

> (Scripture) embraces the history of 5,00 years and recounts all sorts of surprising reverses, many fortunes of war, heroic exploits of generals, and political revolutions." (JA I.13)

> (M)en who conform to the will of God, and do not venture to transgress laws that have been excellently laid down, prosper in all things beyond belief, and for their reward are offered by God felicity...." (JA I.14)
>
> God possesses the very perfection of virtue...men should strive to participate in it (JA I.23).

In these terms, Josephus wishes the reader to examine his work. Scripture is a religio-political history. God offers reward and punishment according to man's actions. God is perfect virtue, man is obligated to be as "god-like" as possible. God is the ultimate Cause.

Revelation for Josephus is the actualization of a person's intellect. For if man would only think properly, he would of logical necessity come to believe in the Jewish God. Josephus' removal of revelation as God's primary tool of transmission will have tremendous consequences.

Josephus models his Jewish Antiquities upon an earlier work, the Roman Antiquities of Dionysius of Halicarnassus. As Thackery has noted[1], besides having similar titles, both works are divided into twenty books. Josephus shows that the Jewish people has a history as illustrious as the Roman people.

As will be shown, Josephus is often at variance with the Torah. Yet, Josephus promises faithfully to translate

the Bible, "neither adding nor omitting anything" (JA I.17). Since Josephus considered the Torah inviolate, he must have had reasons for variance, as well as sources that were of equal authority to the Written Law.

There are three reasons for variance. First, Josephus tries to render the text intelligible for a Roman reader. The use of Greek posed certain problems. Technical terms in Hebrew, such as "El Shaddai" or "Milah", do not translate well into Greek. Also, the use of certain Greek words, such as "arete" or "Demiurge", while helpful, connote certain ideas of Greek philosophy that are absent in the original Hebrew. An example of this is Josephus' use of "Demiurge", examined in a later chapter.

The second reason for variance is to fill in lacunae in the Biblical text. Josephus is concerned that his readers understand why an event occurred, even when the Bible does not furnish a motive. Such speculation is common among First Century Aggadists; Josephus follows in their tradition.

A final reason for variance is Josephus' apologetic intent in writing Jewish Antiquities. Josephus will attempt to present the story of the Jews in the most favorable light possible, without offending his Roman patrons. Josephus

omits, for example, the story of the Golden Calf. He also changes Abraham's status before Pharaoh from a renegade to a visiting philosopher-king.

Ten possible sources for Josephus to be at variance with the Torah are as follows. Each of these will be cited in later chapters as Josephus' referents and bases for variant narrations:

1. Access to oral traditions, lost to us.
2. Access to oral traditions, known to us through Targum, Midrash, Mishnah and the Dead Sea Scrolls.
3. Access to other written histories, lost to us.
4. Access to other written histories, known to us, such as Jubilees.
5. Access to the Septuagint.
6. Knowledge and influence of Plato.
7. Knowledge and influence of Aristotle.
8. Knowledge and influence of Stoicism and other schools of Greek philosophic thought.
9. Other Greco-Roman historians, such as Berossus.
10. General influence of Pharasaism upon Josephus' thought processes.

Josephus considered many of these sources to be as authoritative as the Bible, an infallible document. Oral traditions especially were on an equal footing. Through his use of oral traditions, Josephus emerges as a true Pharisee.

Finally, Josephus appears in three guises, apart from his major function as a historian: he is a theologian, evidenced by his treatment of Genesis 12.1ff, the "call of

Abraham"; an apologist, in the stories of Hagar and Ishmael, for example; and a moralist, evidenced also in the Hagar stories and in the story of the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah.

NOTES

1. Josephus. Jewish Antiquities, translated by H. St. John Thackery. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1978), vol. IV, p. ix. Hereafter, this document will be referred to as Josephus or JA.

CHAPTER 12

ABRAHAM'S CALLING

Josephus (JA I.146) begins his discussion of the Hebrews with the birth of Heber (Eber). Eber is the ancestor of Therrus (Terah), the father of Abraham, "who was tenth in descent from Noah, and was born in the nine-hundred-and-ninety-second year after the flood" (JA I.149).

Josephus has added 700 years to the time period between the Deluge and the birth of Abraham[1]. Genesis 11. 10-26 observes that 292 years passed from the time of the flood to Abraham's birth. The Septuagint posits 1,072 years, and also adds another generation, Kanaan, the son of Arpachshad and the father of Shelah. Josephus calculates that 992 years passed during this period.

Josephus does not use the calendar system current among Jews today, who follow the Creation of the World (Anno Mundi) calendar[2], which originated about 240 CE in Palestine. Josephus follows instead the calendar scheme of Demetrius (221-204 BCE) who had placed Adam's birth 2,264 years before the Deluge[3]. This chronology fits Josephus' reckoning, at least in his anti-deluvian accounts, with important support given by the Septuagint.

Josephus finds the Septuagint/Demetrian chronology authoritative, even over the Biblical enumeration. The Demetrian calendar, therefore, was of the same level of authority as the Bible, equal in authority to the revelation at Sinai. For had this calendar not had the force of revelation behind it, Josephus could never have drawn upon it for his chronology. Also, a Greek-literate public, who could possibly refer to the Septuagint for verification, would find that this counting scheme was simply more convenient.

Abraham (JA I.151) has two brothers, Nachor and Aran (Haran). Aran, who died in Ur, had three children, Lot, Sarra and Melcha (Milchah)[4]. Josephus is forced to make Lot and Sarra siblings since he has already equated Sarra with the Biblical Iscah[5].

Genesis 11.31 does not explain why the clan moved, a concern which Josephus addresses (JA I.151). Terah had the intention of moving all the way to Canaan in his old age. Josephus elaborates upon Terah's possible reason; by stating that Terah was upset with Haran's death and intent on leaving Ur, the site of his greatest tragedy.

Underlying the Genesis account, therefore, is a repository of oral traditions, which would explain the

lacunae in the Biblical text. Genesis is then a digest of a far richer tradition, forever lost.

There is no way to determine if Josephus had access to any oral traditions or to any lost written records. He writes in such a way that one must conclude that Josephus utilized Aggadah, and perhaps his own interpretations of these events, to close the gaps in the Biblical record. One example of this is his aforementioned genealogical tampering. A second example is the substitution of "Sarra" for "Iscah". Yet a third departure from the strict Biblical text is Josephus' description of Terah's move, due to mourning over the loss of his beloved son Haran.

In contrast to Genesis 12.5, Josephus (JA I.154) has Abraham adopt his nephew Lot. Adoption is a Roman custom. Younger relatives or proteges were adopted by more powerful elders, and thereby accorded the full rights due to a direct descendant. Julius Caesar, for example, adopted his nephew Octavian, the later Augustus Caesar. Abraham, in adopting Lot, accords to him the rights of primogeniture. Yet, Josephus has erred in this instance; the Genesis text will not allow Lot to inherit Abraham's fortune. Indeed, by the end of the Abraham narrative, Lot is forgotten, living in disgrace in Zoar. Josephus' manipulation of the Biblical text in this instance cannot be substantiated as Josephus

knows. He does not pursue this line of reasoning later in the narrative.

No reason is given in Genesis 12.1ff for God's bidding of Abram. There are no legends of Abram's merit recorded in Genesis; it is simply assumed that God called Abram, and he followed.

JA I.154-157 is Josephus' attempt to bridge this gap in the Genesis text. Josephus offers a philosophic reason for Abram's calling (JA I.155f). In effect, he turns Abram into a natural theologian:

> ...He was thus the first boldly to declare that God, the creator of the universe, is one, and that, if any other being contributed aught to man's welfare, each did so by His command and not in virtue of its own inherent power. This he inferred from the changes to which land and sea are subject, from the course of sun and moon, and from all the celestial phenomena; for, he argued, were these bodies endowed with power, they would have provided for their own regularity...

Josephus gives three reasons why Abraham merited God's call. One, God is the creator of the universe (<u>demiourgos ton holon</u>). Second, God is One. Third, Abraham's beliefs were determined by observation. Josephus removes the arbitrary will of God from this story.

The use of the Greek word "Demiurge" immediately leads one to compare Josephus with Plato6. In the <u>Timaeus</u>, Plato

introduces the concept of a Creator-God into Greek philosophy. Man's reason is divine, his business is to become like the divine by reproducing in his own nature the beauty and harmony of the cosmos (itself a god) with the body and the soul.

The Demiurge is not a religious figure nor an object of worship. In the Timaeus, Plato argues that the universe is produced by the combination of Reason and Necessity. "Reason overruled Necessity by persuading her to guide the greatest part of the things that become towards what is best." (Timaeus 48M) Necessity is irregular, disorderly and open to Reason. Reason, on the other hand, must persuade Necessity; it is not omnipotent. The Demiurge, therefore, designs the universe to be "as good as possible"; its purpose is restricted by Necessity and operates upon pre-existent materials. The limits of these materials limit the Demiurge's desire for perfection. (The Receptacle and Forms are also independent of the Demiurge.) Perhaps Plato means the Demiurge to be simply a mythical symbol, standing for divine Reason, working for good ends. The Timaeus teaches one to regard the universe as revealing the operation of Reason, not chance. So if Reason is not the creator, the true Creator's identity is unclear.

There are two possible reasons why Josephus would have Abraham believe God is a Demiurge7. First, Josephus

believed in the Demiurge. Second, the Genesis creation epic suggests a Demiurge in the eyes of Hellenistic readers.

To determine if Josephus held to a concept of a Demiurge, one must look at JA I.27, his rendering of the Creation Story. Here, God is called "theos" and not "Demiurgos". There is no allusion to the Timaeus in Josephus' creation myth. Josephus, therefore, did not necessarily believe in the Demiurge since there is no detailed description of anything remotely resembling this concept in the creation epic. Nor is there any notion of a Receptacle or Forms. Josephus does not have a Platonic explanation for creation. The "Demiurge" was simply a well-known term for God in the Hellenistic world.

Anaxagoras[11] stated that the "orderly state of the universe manifests a design perfected by the rational power of an infinite mind." The universe showed regularity. Abraham, though, inferred the Demiurge from the irregularities of the heavenly bodies. Josephus has changed the original Platonic argument arguing for the existence of the Demiurge; the Stoics argued that proof for the existence of the Demiurge is the regularity of heavenly bodies. Josephus, in attempting to refute Stoicism, infers that the Stoics are like the Chaldeans, unaware of the proper proofs. Josephus presents Abraham as an innovator, proving that God is One and that He exercises providence over the universe.

Regarding Josephus' second possible reason for the use of "Demiurgos", Josephus does not deal with the question of the world being created ex nihilo. Creation was not a great interest of Josephus since it had no political bearing on Jewish history. Josephus consistently uses the term "theos" throughout the creation story; a Hellenistic reader would not confront a "Demiurge" until he read about Abraham, and then only in passing.

To conclude this point, Josephus uses the term Demiurge loosely and out of context. Abraham might say that God is the Craftsman[8] of the universe but "theos" is the word used for God everywhere else, including the creation story. Josephus has no use for a Demiurge as his philosophic concept of God. The notion was also contrary to Pharasaic theories of creation.

The remaining two major points, namely that God is One and that His unity can be determined by observation and inferences drawn from the natural world, will be examined together. The command of Genesis 12.1 comes from the mouth of God. In reply, Abram goes, "just as the LORD had commanded him" (Genesis 21.4). There is no philosophic speculation in these few verses; the LORD is the active agent, not Abram.

Josephus' dilemma is that the notion of the Unity of God might not be a pre-Mosaic idea. There is the distinct possibility that Abram did not even think of God as One! After all, Abram knew nothing of the Torah. Genesis 12.8 states that Abraham called upon God as YHWH, but there is no talk of God being a unity. Consequently, Josephus did not infer absolute monotheism from the Genesis account; this concept must come from another source.

A basic tenet of Judaism is that God is One. Therefore, if Abraham is the founder of Judaism, he must necessarily believe in strict monotheism, even though the Torah does not explicitly say so. Josephus needed Abraham to state that God is One in order to maintain theological consistency regarding the nature of God.

Regarding Josephus' sources for this assertion, two possible reasons arise. One, since the Unity of God is a basic Jewish tenet, Josephus assumed Abraham believed in this as well. Second, and a more compelling reason, is that Josephus drew upon natural theologians, such as Aristotle, in order to place Abraham in a proper Greco-Roman framework. In other words, Josephus proves, through the mouth of Abraham, that God is One because of natural phenomenon.

Aristotle's cosmology[9] states that the planets and stars are composed of aether, the fifth element. This

aether is responsible for the circular rotations of the heavenly bodies. It is a continuous, permanent, eternal, characteristic of celestial movements, confirmed by our senses. The world is also finite, spherical and eternal. The heavens rotate in fixed spheres around the fixed earth. Each planet is a rational being, including the outermost sphere of fixed stars. Physical change must therefore be due to an extra-physical cause, such as an Unmoved Mover (Physics Bk. VIII).

God, therefore, is an Ultimate Cause. Abraham discovered this truth upon reflection, centuries before Aristotle. This is another implicit proof for Josephus that since the Jews arrived at the truth regarding the cosmos before the Greeks, the Jews are superior. Using the Aristotelian method, the observation of the natural world, Abraham arrived at the concept of the Unity of God.

Abraham was the ideal statesman[10], skilled in persuasion and the power of logical deduction. Abraham's astronomical observations meant that he possessed scientific knowledge. Furthermore, Antiquities I.157 shows that he attempted to persuade his fellow Chaldeans of the proper truth, and for this reason, he was forced to leave for Canaan.

Aristotle (Rhetoric 1355A21ff) says that "Those speaking the truth and doing so justly have an obligation to be persuasive." Josephus (JA I.154) states that Abraham was indeed "persuasive with his hearers". He fulfilled Aristotle's admonition to preach the truth.

Josephus uses the Greek word akroumenious to define "persuasion". This technical term refers to students listening to philosophical lectures. The allusion is that Abraham had established his own philosophical school in Canaan, teaching Aristotelian thought centuries before Aristotle.

The chief goal of the study of philosophy was to use "truth" for conversionary purposes. Through rational arguments, one would logically determine one's proper course in life. Philosophic discourse was not an end in itself, it was vitally important in determining one's self-identity in the classical world. If one found a certain philosophic truth more compelling than the philosophy he was currently utilizing, that person would be compelled to change his philosophy and thereby adopt a new way of life.

Josephus (JA I.161ff) adds philosophic missionizing as a reason why he left Canaan for Egypt (Genesis 12.10). Were Abraham to find Egyptian philosophy "more excellent than his

own", he would adopt it. If Egyptian philosophy was found wanting, Abraham would instruct the Egyptians in the proper truth. Abraham entered Egypt as a missionary, the head of a Hellenistic school of philosophy, to dispute with the heads of rival schools. Abraham sought to become a theology student (akroatus, as in "persuasion" above) of the Egyptian priests.

Abraham (JA I.166ff) sits with adherents of the various Egyptian sects and instructs them in proper thought, using the tools of logic[11]. He also introduces the Egyptians to arithmetic and Chaldean science (i.e. astronomy). Abraham is the conduit through which scientific knowledge flowed, from the Chaldeans to the Egyptians and then to the Greeks. Abraham taught the Egyptians the sciences for which they later became famous. For Josephus, Abraham conforms to the worldly outlook of the Hellenistic Age. According to Josephus, the Greeks, and by implication the entire classical world, are indebted to Abraham for stripping away the ignorance of the Egyptians.

The Rabbis also described Abraham as a missionary. Yet, they did not place him in any philosophic setting. Rather, his missionary activities revolved upon his family and those with whom he came into contact, by chance and not by design.

SUMMARY

Josephus, in perhaps his most radical departure from the Biblical text, turns Abraham into a philosopher and a theologian par excellence. Abraham is skilled in the arts that Josephus' readers hold most dear: rhetoric, logic and mathematics. Abraham is able to debate abstract philosophy on the highest levels and is also open-minded regarding his own philosophical conclusions. Josephus has changed Judaism from a revelatory to a philosophical religion through Abraham the philosopher, a concept alien to the Bible.

In a different way, Josephus is in line with the Pharasaic thought of his time. According to the Aggadah, Abraham did merit God's calling[12]. The issue of predestination does not arise in Josephus' account of this story. For Josephus, God chose Abraham for specific reasons, namely, Abraham merited his calling due to his philosophic beliefs.

NOTES

1. This discussion follows Josephus, pp.72f, n. h.

2. cf. Wacholder, B.Z., Essays on Jewish Chronology and Chronography (New York: Ktav, 1976), p.XIIff.

3. Wacholder, p. XI.

4. According to Genesis 11. 27-31, Lot is the son of Haran. Yet, it is unclear here just who Sarai's parents were. Genesis 20.12 would confirm that Lot and Sarai could not be siblings; Sarah was Abraham's half-sister, not his niece.

5. For the association of Iscah with Sarah, cf. below to Chapter 16, regarding Sarah.

6. This discussion will follow the work of F.M. Cornford, commenting upon Plato's Timaeus 29D-30C. cf. Cornford, F.M., Plato's Cosmology (New York: Humanities Press, Inc., 1952), pp. 33-39.

7. A third reason is the supposed affinity between Josephus and Philo. This relationship will be shown to be mere coincidence in a later chapter. Therefore, this reason will be held in abeyance. cf. Chapter 23, the (supposed) dependence of Josephus upon Philo.

8. "Craftsman" is a better translation of Demiurge than "Creator".

9. The discussion of Aristotle follows the work of D.J. Allen, The Philosophy of Aristotle (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1970), pp.35-39.

10. Following L. Feldman: "Abraham the Greek Philosopher in Josephus" (Source unknown, 1968), vol. 99, pp. 143-156. Reprint in Hebrew Union College Library.

11. Note that in Genesis 12.19f, Pharaoh deports Abram due to Sarai's masquerading as his sister. Josephus has thus given Abraham a favorable impression, instead of the ignominy of Genesis 12.20. The debacle with Sarai is chronicled in a later chapter.

12. Jubilees 12.12ff furnishes the reader with one account of Rabbinic legend.

CHAPTER 13

WARS OF THE KINGS

Genesis 14.1-24 tells a most interesting tale, the war between the four kings of the north and the five kings of the Valley of Siddim. Specifically, Kings Amraphel (of Shinar), Arioch (of Ellasar), Chedorlaomer (of Elam) and Tidal (of Goiim) defeated Kings Bera (of Sodom), Birsha (of Gomorrah), Shinab (of Admah), Shemeber (of Zeboyim) and the unnamed king of Bela (i.e. Zoar). These five kings served Chedorlaomer for twelve years, after which time they rebelled.

Before Chedorlaomer returned to subdue his subject countries, he defeated, in the fourteenth year, the Rephaim in Ashterot-Karnaim, the Zuzim in Ham, the Emim in Shaveh-kiriathaim and the Horites in the hill country of Seir. Furthermore, he subdued the AmaleKites in En-mishpat (i.e. Kadesh) and the Amorites in Hazazon-tamar.

The great battle between the kings took place in the Valley of Siddim, later to become the Dead Sea (Genesis 14.3). The forces united behind the rebellious Sodomite king were defeated; the kings of Sodom and Gomorrah fled into the bitumen pits, others escaped into the hills. The victorious forces sacked Sodom and Gomorrah and captured Lot, who was living in Sodom.

After learning of Lot's fate, Abram mustered his servants and his family into a 318-man brigade and pursued the enemy until they reached Dan. That night, they defeated the forces of Chedorlaomer and pursued them as far as Hobah, north of Damascus. Abram brought back the confiscated property, and freed Lot along with the other prisoners.

Upon his return to an unspecified location, Melchizedek, king of Salem, blessed Abram (Genesis 14.19f):

> Blessed be Abram of God Most High,
> Creator of heaven and earth.
> And blessed be God Most High,
> Who has delivered your foes into your hand."

Furthermore, Abram refused to partake of the booty; instead he demanded that the property be returned to its rightful owners. Only Aner, Eshkol and Mamre, Abram's allies, would take their shares as prizes of war.

Josephus' placement of this story is anachronistic; the wars took place when "the Assyrians were masters of Asia" (JA I.171-182) . According to the annals of Biblical history, the Assyrian conquests occurred at least one thousand years after Abraham's death. The Sodomites, according to Josephus, were an extremely wealthy and youthful nation. Furthermore, the five kings ruled over specific provinces; Josephus seems to imply that Sodom was divided into autonomous cantons.

Upon the rebellion in the thirteenth year, the Assyrians sent their generals, Amarapsides, Arioch, Chodolamor, and Thadal, to subdue the people. They first ravaged Syria and subdued the giants (presumably the Rephaim) and camped in the valley of the Bitumen pits. They then defeated the Sodomites and captured Lot.

According to Josephus, Abraham needed five days to overtake the Assyrians in the neighborhood of Dan, which was supposedly a source for the Jordan River. Abraham's surprise attack caught the Assyrians either asleep or drunk, insuring his victory. The five day journey is an unknown Aggadic addition. Similarly, Dan as a source for the Jordan River is an etymological exercise with no basis in fact.

After he pursued the "Assyrians" to Obah (Hobah), near Damascus, Abraham freed the captives and returned home in peace. The King of Solyma (Salem), Melchisedek (the Righteous King), a priest of God, received Abraham in triumph. His city would later be called Hierosolyma (Jerusalem). During the course of the banquet, he praised Abraham and offered thanks to God for the victory. Abraham offered the King a tithe of the spoil, and he accepted the gift, which is consistent with the Biblical account. Abraham took none of the spoils for himself, only giving his allies their shares.

Josephus, while accurate in his description, changes the story in order to properly explain Biblical warfare. He does not use the Greek word for "King" (basileus) when describing his Assyrian rulers; he uses the term for "general" (strategos). Basileus is reserved for the five Kings of Sodom. The Assyrian King has sent his five best generals to subdue a rebellious province. Josephus has turned this war into one of conquest, similar to the Assyrian invasions that plagued Israel later in its history.

The Genesis account does not describe Abraham's actions as divinely commanded. This war is a purely profane event; there is no evidence of divine intervention.

Josephus also renders this a purely political event. He speaks of the Assyrian generals as subduing the giants, presumably the Rephaim. Josephus also makes Lot an ally of the Sodomites when he is actually a citizen of Sodom. Josephus also portrays the Sodomites as Abraham's friends and neighbors. The Assyrian defeat is attributed to drunkenness.

Furthermore, Josephus (JA I.178) moralizes upon the Assyrian defeat:

> ...proving that victory does not depend on numbers and a multitude of hands, but that the ardour and mettle of the combatants overcome all odds, seeing that with three hundred and eighteen of his servants and three friends he had defeated so great a host....

In other words, if an army is properly motivated, it can defeat a greater foe. God is not a necessary element for victory. Josephus here establishes a motif that will serve him in good stead in further accounts of Biblical warfare[1].

SUMMARY

Josephus has kept the basic account intact. He has added Aggadic embellishments, such as the five day march and Abraham's friendship with the Sodomites. These additions serve to enliven the Biblical story. A Roman reader would enjoy Josephus' additions; they make Abraham's victory greater than it was in Genesis. Yet, what is most important in this pericope is Josephus' implicit acknowledgment that the Jewish God has no role in military history; that war is a human invention played out by humans, with no divine assistance.

NOTES

1. For examples, cf. JA II. 329-333, regarding Exodus 14.3-31, the crossing of the Red Sea and the destruction of Pharaoh's armies. Also, cf. JA III. 39-60, regarding the first war with Amalek (Ex. 17.8-16).

CHAPTER 14

SODOM AND GOMORRAH

Many issues arise when one compares JA I. 194-206 with its counterpart in Genesis 18.17-19.38. The variations between the two Sodom and Gomorrah accounts suggest that that several problems arose for Josephus when he confronted this text.

Josephus does not use the name "Gomorrah" in his narrati . The Genesis account mentions Gomorrah only in passing; when the "men" reach Sodom, Gomorrah ceases to be mentioned. Likewise, Abraham bargains for ten righteous men in Sodom, not Gomorrah. Josephus, therefore, seems to conclude that Gomorrah was incidental to the Biblical account and mention of this city could easily be removed. The Roman reader need not be confused unnecessarily.

Genesis 18.20 states that since the iniquity of the Sodomites and Gomorrahites is so great, God is obliged to destroy the two cities of the plain. Josephus, perhaps influenced by Pharasaic legends1, lists five reasons for the destruction of the cities (I. 194): insolence, impiety, ingratitude towards God, xenophobia and misogony. Josephus adds that this conduct led God to:

> ...chastise them for their arrogance, and not only to uproot their city, but to blast their land so completely that it should yield neither plant nor fruit whatsoever from that time forward.

This punishment is pronounced before Josephus brings the angels to Abraham's atrium for a visit. Genesis had placed this pronouncement of doom after the angelic to visit Abraham and Sarah, in order to announce the birth of Isaac (JA I.196-198).

Yet at the end of verse 198, Josephus details the functions of the angels: one was to announce the birth of Isaac, the other two were to be sent to Sodom. The news distresses Abraham greatly and leads him to make "supplication to God, imploring him not to destroy the just and good along with the wicked." Josephus omits the great negotiating carried on between Abraham and God in Genesis 18.24-31; He only relates the final terms of the negotiations, that if ten righteous men be found in Sodom, God would spare the city.

Lot invited the strangers to be his guests, "for he was very kindly to strangers and had learnt the lesson of Abraham's liberality" (JA I.200). This is Josephus' interpretation of Genesis 19.1-3, which, incidentally mentions only two angels and reinforces his claim that each angel had a specific function. This lesson concerning

hospitality is certainly non-Biblical. Thackery [2] lists Rabbinic parallels, but these seem to be later Midrashim and cannot be definitively linked to the time of Josephus. Yet, perhaps Josephus had another motive in mind when he wrote of Lot's hospitality. Lot is not the most reputable Biblical character. Josephus takes this opportunity to improve Lot's image by saying that he is not only Abraham's nephew, he is also Abraham's disciple.

The Sodomites, according to Josephus, were bent only upon satisfying their own deviant inclinations. They demanded that Lot bring his guests to them so that they might satisfy their prurient intentions. Here, Josephus amplifies the Biblical account: "And they shouted to Lot and said to him, 'Where are the men who came to you tonight? Bring them out to us, that we may be intimate with them'" (Genesis 19.5). Josephus (JA I.200) only adds that "the Sodomites, on seeing these young men of remarkably fair appearance whom Lot had taken under his roof, were bent only on violence and outrage to their youthful beauty." Elsewhere, Josephus[3] wrote:

> ...(this) is the land of Sodom, in days of old a country blest in its produce and in the wealth of its various cities, but now all burnt up. It is said that, owing to the impiety of its inhabitants, it was consumed by thunderbolts; and in fact vestiges of the divine fire and faint traces of five cities are still visible.

In this brief geographical description of the area surrounding Lake Asphaltites (the Dead Sea), Josephus notes that the Sodomites' sin was impiety; sodomy appeared as the sin in Antiquities. Sodomy, incidentally, is the only sin noted in the Bible. Genesis 19.9f, omitted by Josephus, states that the Sodomites tried to force their way into Lot's house in order to attack the visitors. This incident forced some entity, either God or an angel, to blind the Sodomites so that they could not enter the house. Josephus declares the blinding entity to be God, who was "indignant at their atrocities" (JA I.202). Here, Josephus refers to the Sodomites as criminals.

Another contemporary source for the Sodom and Gomorrah story comes from Jubilees4:

> ...the Lord executed his judgements on Sodom, and Gomorrah, and Zeboim, and all the region of the Jordan, and He burned them with fire and brimstone, and destroyed them until this day, even as (lo) I have declared unto thee all their works, that they are wicked and sinners exceedingly, and that they defile themselves and commit fornication in their flesh, and work uncleanness on the earth. And, in like manner, God will execute judgement on the places where they have done according to the uncleanness of the Sodomites, like unto the judgement of Sodom.

Polemics aside, the sins of the Sodomites are defilement, fornication and pandering these sins throughout the world. Josephus agrees with this assessment.

Josephus (JA I.202) departs from the Genesis account (Genesis 19.14-16) in his description of Lot's family. Josephus finds it unthinkable that members of Lot's family, nieces of Abraham would choose to remain in Sodom, even if their husbands would stay. It was also unthinkable that members of Abraham's clan would marry outside of the faith. Josephus simply deletes any mention of Lot's married daughters and their husbands, since they were foolhardy enough to stay behind in the doomed city.

Josephus adds, though, that Lot's two unmarried daughters are still virgins. This he implies from Genesis 19.8; yet this remains unmentioned when he writes that Lot offered his daughters to the Sodomites in lieu of the two angels. These two daughters also had suitors, who remain behind in Sodom. It is surely a possibility that Josephus condensed the accounts of Lot's daughters: the unmarried daughters disappeared from the story; the unmarried, virgin daughters obtained husbands. There is no reason to assume any confusion on the part of Josephus; his distillation of the story is deliberate. Josephus has removed a Biblical verse which might lead to certain uncomfortable conclusions by a Roman reader.

Josephus omits Genesis 19.15-22 regarding Lot's delay in leaving Sodom and his bargaining over Zoar. Lot was in

no position to bargain with God; he was not as virtuous as Abraham. Nor did he really have the time to plead on behalf of Zoar. Josephus went to great lengths to improve Lot's image, to make Abraham's nephew more palatable as a Biblical personage. A literal reading of the Biblical text would place Lot in so favorable a light.

In contrast to both Genesis 19.24 and its parallel in Jubilees 16.5, Josephus changes God's method of destruction from "sulfurous fire"[5] to a "thunderbolt." This Greek passage is reminiscent of Herodotus[6], when he described the fortune of Scyles, upon his entrance into the Bacchic Dionysic cult. Through a vision, he saw his white marble house destroyed by a thunderbolt (Belos). When he describes the destruction of Sodom, Josephus uses dramatic language readily familiar to his readers. Since Zeus (Jupiter) threw thunderbolts, so could the Jewish God. This form of destruction was evident to Josephus long before he wrote Antiquities, as shown above in Josephus' description of Sodom in The Wars. The Jewish God takes an active role in history, through visions and through acts of violence. Josephus does not change the Biblical story simply for apologetic reasons; he does so because an Aggadic tradition supports the change. The oral traditions held as much efficacy for Josephus as did the literal, written Biblical account.

Josephus (JA I. 203) augments the story of Lot's wife. Genesis 19.26 simply states that she looked back, "and she thereupon turned into a pillar of salt." Josephus writes:

> But Lot's wife, who during the flight was continually turning round towards the city, curious to observe its fate, notwithstanding God's prohibition of such action, was changed into a pillar of salt. I have seen this pillar which remains to this day.

Lot's wife continually turned around, out of curiosity, not once but many times. Josephus mentions God' prohibition against turning around after the fact, in contrast to Genesis 19.17, where the angels relay God's prohibition before Lot's family left for Zoar. Josephus (JA I. 203) bears witness to this site. Apparently, a legendary salt pillar near the Dead Sea bore the name of Lot's wife.7 There is no reason to doubt that Josephus had seen this legendary pillar during his life.

In contrast to Genesis 19.30, Lot did actually move to Zoor (Zoar), which Josephus (JA I.204) describes as a tiny oasis amidst the flames. Furthermore, Josephus states that Lot lived a miserable life there, a claim which the Bible does not make. Genesis only notes that he and his daughters lived in a cave.

Josephus abbreviates one of the most peculiar episodes in this story, when Lot cohabited with his daughters.

Genesis 19.31-35 narrated the story whereby Lot's daughters, fearing that the world had been destroyed, made their father drunk and, on successive nights, had sexual intercourse with him (JA I.205):

> His maiden daughters, in the belief that the whole of humanity had perished, had intercourse with their father, taking care to elude detection; they acted thus to prevent the extinction of the race.

This is a difficult problem. Josephus was in the process of rehabilitating Lot. Jews, including Lot, would not be drunkards in Josephus' account of the Bible. Instead, Josephus makes Lot to be a fool; his own two daughters deluded him in an uninhabited oasis in the midst of a firestorm! Perhaps it would have been better had Josephus left Lot as a drunkard.

Josephus' description of Moab and Amman is similar to the Biblical account. His only addition is to comment upon the current fates of the two nations. Moab had become Idumea; the Ammonites were in Coele-Syria, in Eastern Palestine.

SUMMARY

The iniquity of the Sodomites is clear. Josephus only dramatizes and enlightens for his readers a story which would be read with great excitement.

Furthermore, Josephus works hard to place Lot in a favorable light. Being the disciple of Abraham must be balanced against unknowingly committing incest in a barren oasis. Lot's rehabilitation is incomplete, yet Josephus clearly attempts to use every tool at his disposal, such as Bible, Aggadah and classical literature, in order to apologize for Lot and to redeem him in the eyes of a Roman reader. In so doing, he is only partially successful. Lot cannot be the equal of his uncle Abraham.

NOTES

1. Josephus, p. 96, n.a.

2. Josephus, p. 99, n.b.

3. Josephus, Flavius, The Jewish War, trans. H. St. John Thackery (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1979), trans., Bk. IV.482f, p.142/3.

4. Jubilees 16.4-7, found in The New English Bible, Samuel Sandmel, ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1976), p. 37.

5. or "fire and brimstone".

6. The following discussion is based on Josephus JA I.203 n.a, p.100. cf. Herodotus, trans. A.D. Godley (London: William Heinemann, Ltd., 1938), vol. ii pp. 278-281.

7. cf. Josephus, p.100f, note c.

CHAPTER 15

SARAH

Sarah (Sarai in the Bible), the wife of Abraham, is first mentioned in Genesis 11.29f: "...the name of Abram's wife being Sarai...Now Sarai was barren, she had no child." There is no mention of Abram and Sarai being otherwise related, nor is there any motive for their marriage, such as a mythical love story. Sarai's inclusion at this point merely provided Abram with a wife. It is not revealed until Genesis 20.12 that Sarai is indeed Abram's half-sister, "the daughter of my father, but not of my mother." Were this fact important, the Biblical writer would have included it at the end of Chapter 11.1

Genesis 11.31 then recounts how Terah took Abram, Lot and Sarai to the city of Haran, with the eventual goal of reaching Canaan. Sarai is an incidental character in this pericope; Terah and Abram are the principals.

Josephus (I.151) slightly modifies this story. Sarra[2] became the daughter of Abraham's late brother Aran (Haran), the sister of Lot and Melcha (Milcha). Josephus has identified Sarra with the Biblical Iscah, in accordance with Pharasaic tradition[3], from sources such as Targum Pseudo-Jonathan (Genesis.11.29) and Seder Olam Rabbah (Chapter 2)[4].

Seder Olam Rabbah provides the classic Pharasaic interpretation of Genesis 11.29: "...to Iscah, that is Sarah[5]." Josephus only reflects Pharasaic thinking of the First Century by assuming Sarra is the daughter of Aran and the niece of Abraham.

The Aramaic Targum Pseudo-Jonathan states: "Iscah is Sarai[6]." Sarai is an alternative name for Iscah, the daughter of Aran. He has merely simplified the narrative by replacing "Iscah" with "Sarah". "Iscah", instead of "Sarra", would only confuse a Roman reader.

This subtle shift in the Genesis terminology forces Josephus to have Abraham marry his niece, not his half-sister, in contradiction to the Biblical account, where Sarah, as mentioned previously, is Abraham's half-sister. Josephus, however, will continue to insist that Sarah is Abraham's niece as in the Abimelech story (I.209ff).

Sarai is next mentioned in Genesis 12.5. Abram takes her and his nephew Lot to Canaan in response to God's command. Josephus (I.154) again refers to Sarra as the sister of Lot and the daughter of Aran. In this drama, Sarra again simply follows her husband.

Genesis 12.10-20 informs us that Sarai posed as Abram's sister when Abram brought the clan to Egypt. She was a

beautiful woman; Abram feared the Egyptians might kill him in order to keep Sarai as a concubine. As Abram's supposed sister, Sarai would be in a position to keep Abram alive should there be any trouble.

And indeed there was trouble. Pharaoh took Sarai into his palace. In exchange, Abram received many gifts, including cattle and slaves. The LORD intervened in order to save the "chosen couple." When Pharaoh discovered the deception, he threw the couple out of the country in order to release Egypt from the plagues which the LORD had sent upon Egypt.

The consequences of Abram's sojourn in Egypt are discussed elsewhere[7]. Josephus, however, has made Sarra the subject of a marriage alliance (I.165). He changes the story of a migration in search of food into a state visit. In Pharaoh's view, Abraham was a sovereign king who wished to present his sister as a wife to the Egyptian monarch in order to conclude a political alliance. When Pharaoh discovered his error, Josephus reported (JA I. 165):

> ...he (Pharaoh) made his excuses to Abraham: it was, he said, in the belief that she was his sister, not his wife, that he had set his affections on her; he had wished to contract a marriage alliance and not to outrage her in a transport of passion. He further gave him abundant riches....

The Roman reader would not know that Abraham was expelled from Egypt. Rather, Josephus implied that Pharaoh was in awe of Abraham. Just as a vassal king will quickly acknowledge an error before the conqueror, so Pharaoh sought to make amends. Josephus reversed the political positions of Abraham and Pharaoh. Abraham was superior in all ways, even to a Pharaoh. Since Egypt was a center of culture and civilization, with Pharaoh as her leader, Abraham, by being Pharaoh's superior, possessed a superior culture. Sarra, though, remained innocent throughout this whole episode, a silent participant in the charade.

In the Ishmael stories, to be discussed in the following chapter, her passivity comes to an end. She begins to play a dominant role regarding areas considered to be in the woman's domain: childbirth and child-rearing.

After the war between the kings, God had promised Abram many descendents. Yet in Genesis 15.2-4, Abraham fears that Eliezer would be his only heir:

> ..."Oh LORD God, what can You give me, seeing that I shall die childless, and the one in charge of my household is Dammesek Eliezer!"..."Since You have granted me no offspring, my steward will be my heir". The word of the LORD came to him in reply, "That one shall not be your heir; none but your very own issue shall be your heir."

At the beginning of Chapter 16, where the Hagar and Ishmael stories begin, the Bible again notes that Sarai had

borne Abram no children. It was Sarai's idea that Hagar become Abram's concubine. Yet, she later blamed Abram for Hagar's insolence after the handmaid had become pregnant. Sarai was allowed to do with Hagar as she wished, and caused Hagar to flee into the wilderness. She is at first altruistic, then jealous, and finally vindictive. This story shows a woman in anger, whose world has turned against her.

Josephus follows the general themes of this story. Abraham is "distressed at his wife's sterility. He besought God to grant him the birth of a male child." (I.186) God commanded that Hagar be brought to Abraham's bed; this action was not at Sarra's suggestion. As will be shown below, this could be construed as a transfer of power from Sarra to Hagar; Hagar could become the mother of the Hebrews. One could hardly blame Sarra for becoming upset at this turn of events. Josephus furnishes Sarra with a good excuse to be jealous: God seemingly took away her primacy.

Josephus deletes Genesis 17.15. Yet it bears mention for in this verse Sarai's name is changed to Sarah. Josephus has omitted this for the same reason that Iscah was omitted earlier: changing names would only confuse the pagan reader unfamiliar either with the Bible or the Septuagint.

God states in Genesis 17.21f that Isaac, the son to be born to Abraham and Sarah, will receive the Divine Covenant. Josephus also omits these verses. The concept of Covenant, and its corollary, choseness, threatens Josephus; he downplayed the notion of Biblical covenant in favor of military conquest and alliance, as shown in the conclusion to the Josephan material.

Josephus changes the dialogue between God and Abraham (JA I.191), from a promise of covenant to one of future military conquest. Sarra would merely have a son and call him Isaac. As in the Genesis account, Sarra is mentioned only in passing.

The visit of the angels to Abraham and Sarra, chronicled in Genesis 18.1-9, shows a change in Sarah. Sarah listened to the conversation between Abraham and the "men". She laughed and doubted the messengers since she was well above normal childbearing age. Finally, after realizing who these three men actually were (unspecified in the Biblical account but presumed to be angels), Sarah tried to conceal her laughter but God reproved her.

An item by item comparison of the "angels'" visit in Genesis 18.1-9 with the story found in Josephus (I.196-198) leads to some interesting contrasts:

1.	A. sitting outside his tent (18.1)	A. sitting before his courtyard (I.196)
2.	3 MEN appear (18.2)	saw 3 angels, as strangers
3.	A. served curds, milk, bread AND meat (18.8)	A. served bread and meat ONLY
4.	"Men" ate	"Angels" pretended to eat
5.	Inquired of Sarah	Inquired of Sarra
6.	Announced impending birth	Announced eventual birth
7.	Sarah laughed (18.12)	Sarra smiled/laughed
8.	LORD appears (18.13)	-------
9.	God repeats promise	-------
10.	---------	Messengers confess identity

Josephus places Abraham in an atrium at home on his estate. Unlike the Biblical account, he had not just been circumcised. Josephus portrays Abraham as a Roman noble, perhaps a Senator, ready to receive his guests.

Josephus assumes that the three visitors were angels. The Torah makes no such assumption, although later Rabbis almost universally claimed that these visitors were indeed angels. Josephus here follows accepted Pharasaic wisdom.

Regarding Point 3, the food prepared for the visitors, Josephus subtly changes the text. He omits the preparation and consumption of milk and meat together. The Pharasaic

interpretation of this passage has always been that since Abraham predated Moses, he could not possibly know of Kashrut. However, Kashrut was well established in the First Century. If a Roman reader would know anything at all about Judaism, he would know that Jews do not mix milk and meat. Consequently, were the Biblical verse to stand unchanged, it would lead to confusion in the mind of that Roman reader, so used to peculiar Jewish dietary customs. Josephus eliminates the problem by eliminating the phrase.

In the late First Century, CE, men ate food, angels did not. Josephus' angels somehow only pretended to eat, as shown in Point 4, so as to conceal their true identities.

Points 5-7 are the same in both accounts and so do not need further examination.

In contrast to the Biblical account, Josephus does not mention any appearance of God throughout this entire episode (Points 8,9). These events were solely in the [illegible] of the angels. In Josephus' account (Point 10), the angels eventually confessed themselves and their purposes before Abraham.

Abraham engages in yet another charade before the birth of Isaac. He takes Sarah to the Philistine town of Gerar,

ruled by King Abimelech. Sarah passes once again for Abraham's sister; Genesis 20.12 shows us that Sarah was Abraham's half-sister. The consequences are similar to those that befell the Egyptian Pharaoh. Through a dream, God told Abimelech of Sarah's true identity and warned him not to touch her. This entire episode so unnerved the Philistine king that he gave Abraham many riches and property in order to relieve the Philistines of the plague which God had sent upon them.

Just as Sarah had no active role in the Abimelech story found in Genesis, her role is again passive in Josephus (I.207-212). She is once again subject to the whims of foreign, pagan rulers; only God could save her.

Josephus, though, adds a twist to the Genesis story. Abimelech lusted after Sarra and "was prepared to seduce her;" he was hardly the innocent king of the Genesis account. God restrained the King's prurient intentions so he could not sin. Josephus' readers would come to know that God acted to defend Sarra. Josephus shifted the blame for this misunderstanding of Sarra's identity from Abraham to Abimelech. This is line with Josephus' apologetic intent; he does not desire to cast the patriarchs in an unfavorable light.

Finally, Isaac was born to Abraham and Sarah in their old age. Genesis 21.6-8 recounts the celebration of Abraham's household; Sarah is ecstatic and full of laughter.

The laughter quickly turns to anger when Sarah sees Ishmael playing. Sarah forces Abraham to cast Hagar and Ishmael out of the camp. Here again, Sarah shows jealousy and vindictiveness when confronted with the possibility that Ishmael would become Abraham's heir.

Josephus omits Genesis 21.6-8 from his account. All outward joy disappeared; Sarra smiles prior to her pregnancy, not after childbirth.

Ishmael does not fare well in Josephus' account (I.215ff). Josephus, though, furnishes a political motivation for Sarra's actions: Ishmael had been trained to be Abraham's heir. Sarra fears that he might harm Isaac after the parents' death. Therefore, she urged Abraham to send the elder brother away, to avoid a possible fratricidal war.

Rome surely knew of these fratricidal wars in her collective past. The Emperor Domitian himself had taken a back seat to his elder brother Titus. The removal of the

elder brother in the line of succession would sit well with the Emperor. So in this spirit, Josephus rewrote the episode.

Finally, Sarah dies (Genesis. 23.1ff). Abraham was involved in tortuous negotiations in order to obtain the Cave of Machpelah. It was expensive but he eventually obtained the cave from Ephron, the Canaanite.

In Josephus' abbreviated account, Sarra was of such standing that the Canaanites offered to bury her at public expense, as one would bury an Emperor's wife. None of the sorrow nor tension of the Genesis account remains in Josephus' narrative: Sarra died, Abraham bought a burial ground (not a cave) for her, later Abraham and his descendants also built their own tombs there.

Josephus leads the reader to believe that Abraham built a mausoleum upon cemetery land. There are no caves, nor catacombs, mentioned in Josephus' account.

Perhaps with good reason. Christians were buried in catacombs, in caves, underneath Rome. Jews could not be buried in the same manner as the despised followers of Jesus. It was bad enough that the Jews engaged in burial at all. The Roman way was cremation. Were the Romans to

suspect a Christian style burial, the Jews of Josephus' day would have been put in a most unfavorable light.

SUMMARY

How does Josephus change Sarah into Sarra? Josephus endows Sarra with political savvy where Isaac is concerned. He takes blame away from Abraham and Sarra in the "sister" stories and places it on the shoulders of Pharaoh and Abimelech. Sarra is the good Roman wife; her husband is "pater familias" and she must obey him. As long as nothing interfered with Isaac becoming heir to Abraham's throne, she was silent. But when she was crossed, by Hagar and Ishmael for example, she could be ruthless. This point will be borne out in the following chapter.

NOTES

1. Perhaps we have here the mixing of two traditions concerning Sarai. The Rabbis and Josephus both recognized this discrepancy, as shown below.

2. The Biblical Sarah will be referred to as either Sarah or Sarai, depending upon circumstance. The Josephan Sarah will always be referred to as Sarra, the same spelling used by Thackery in the LCL Josephus translation.

3. Josephus, p. 75n.c

4. Josephus, op. cit.

5. Seder Olam Rabbah (Amsterdam Edition, 1711), Chapter 2, p. 3a.

6. Clarke, E.G., et.al., Targum Pseudo-Jonathan of the Pentateuch: Text and Concordance (Hoboken: Ktav, 1984), p.12.

7. cf. Chapter 12 for a full analysis of this peculiar episode.

CHAPTER 16

HAGAR AND ISHMAEL

The stories of Hagar and Ishmael are found in three places: Genesis 16, 21 and 25. Chapter 16 corresponds to JA I. 186-190. Chapters 21 and 25 correspond to JA I. 215-221, Josephus having combined these sections for reasons to be shown below.

JA I.186f reads as follows:

> Abraham was living near the oak called Ogyges, a place in Canaan not far from the city of the Hebronites, when, distressed at his wife's sterility, he besought God to grant him the birth of a male child. Thereon God bade him be assured that, as in all else he had been led out of Mesopotamia for his welfare, so children would come to him; and by God's command Sarra brought to his bed one of her handmaidens, an Egyptian named Agar, that he might have children by her.

Josephus departs from the Biblical text several times within this pericope. "Ogyges" is an antedeluvian tree, with connotations of an Attic and Boetian hero associated with the Greek version of the flood story. Josephus implies that Abraham lived near this legendary tree. Classical readers would readily and immediately place Abraham and Hebron within a specific geographical context, the land of Ogyges, namely Hebron.

Abraham's distress actually occurs in Genesis 15.2f:

> But Abraham said,:"O LORD God, what can You give me, seeing that I shall die childless, and the one in charge of my household is Dammesek Eliezer ... Since you have granted me no offspring, my steward will be my heir.

In both the Genesis and Josephan accounts, God reassures Abraham that he would eventually have a legitimate heir. The Genesis account adds the promise of numerous descendants, equal to the stars in heaven. Josephus also emphasizes that Abraham would have a legitimate male heir.

Josephus does, however, make one radical departure from the Biblical text. In Genesis 16.2, Sarai entreats Abram to consort with Hagar; Josephus narrated that God commanded Sarra to give Agar to Abraham. Therefore, Abraham obeys God; he did not have to accede to a request from his wife Sarai.

This explains Sarra's jealousy of Agar once the handmaiden becomes pregnant. If the idea of using Agar as a concubine comes from God (JA I.187), instead of from Sarai (Genesis 16.2), than She could rightly say that it was not her idea for Agar to cohabit with Abraham, she was also obeying God. By implication, Agar would be disobeying God by "assuming queenly airs." Agar was only to provide a child, not supplant Sarra as the matriarch of the clan.

Genesis 16.6-15 recounts Hagar's flight and her conversation with an angel. The angel plainly commands her to return to Sarai and submit to her punishment. He also announces to her that she will call her son Ishmael and informs Hagar of his future condition.

Josephus (JA I.189f) gives us a different interpretation of this account:

> ... an angel of God met her and bade her return to her master and mistress, assuring her that she would attain a happier lot through self-control, for her present plight was but due to her arrogance and presumption towards her mistress; and that if she disobeyed God and pursued her way she would perish, but if she returned home she would become the mother of a son hereafter to reign over that country ... she returned to her master and mistress and was forgiven.

The key phrase is "self-control", a philosophic answer to her problem. Self-control can best be understood as searching for the proper path in life. In Rabbinic terms, this might be Halachah; to a Greco-Roman reader, this is the path of virtue (<u>arete</u>), best articulated by Stoicism. Were Agar to practice Stoicism/Halachah, she would better herself and avoid future conflicts with Sarra. Agar obeys this request and returns to Sarra . Abraham. She also begins to live the proper life, since she is "obedient to this behest."

Josephus omits any mention of the well at Beer-lahai-roi. God is not mentioned as El-roi, as in Genesis 16.13. Different names for God would surely confuse the Roman reader. Worse still, this multiplicity of names might suggest that the Jews practiced a peculiar form of paganism, instead of the rigid monotheism which Josephus ostensibly presents throughout his works.

Josephus combines the two latter pericopes of the Genesis narrative in verses 215-221. Josephus' placing of Ishmael's lineage after the story of his banishment is not only sensible, it is more logical than the Biblical account, which gives his genealogy in Chapter 25, as a digression, and only in the interest of completeness. Josephus here can dispense with Ishmael and focus instead upon Isaac throughout the rest of his narrative.

Genesis 21.9-21 recounts the expulsion of Hagar and Ishmael, which is paralleled in JA I.215-219. Josephus furnishes a reason for Sarah's jealousy: "She held it wrong that her boy should be brought up with Ishmael, who was the elder child and might do him an injury after their father was dead." Indeed, Sarra was right; Ishmael had a legitimate claim to Abraham's estate; he was the elder son.

What follows is reminiscent of The Madness of Hercules. Here, Josephus' Greek is similar to the Greek tragedian Euripides. In the Euripidean play1, Amphitryon states:

> Nor cowardice nor life craving holds me back
> From death: but for my son I fain would save
> His sons--I covet things past hope, meseems.
> Lo, here my throat is ready for thy sword,
> For stabbing, murdering, hurling from the rock.
> Yet grant us twain one grace, I pray thee, King:
> Slay me and this poor mother ere the lads,
> That-sight unhallowed-we see not the boys
> Gasping out life, and calling on their mother
> And grandsire: in all else thine eager will
> Work out; for we have no defence from death.

Were the king to be God instead of Lycus, one might think that Josephus had written this speech for Agar. In his account, Agar left Ishmael to die under a fig tree while she went ahead so as not to be present when he died. Agar actually fulfilled the wish of Amphitryon (JA I.218):

> She (Agar) went her way, but, so soon as her provisions failed her, was in evil case; and the water being well-nigh spent, she laid the little child, expiring, under a fig tree and went farther on, that she might not be there when he gave up his spirit.

In both the Genesis and Josephan accounts, an angel of God saves the pair, directs them to water, and promises Ishmael great blessings and posterity. Josephus only adds that Agar met some shepherds along the way who helped her and her son survive.

Genesis 25.12-18 recounts the genealogy of Ishmael, and his death. Josephus moves this story to verses 220f, after the story of the spring, in order to bring the Ishmael stories into one unit. Josephus knows that Ishmael was the ancestor of the Arabs (specifically the Nabateans) 550 years before Mohammed. The notion, then, that the Muslims are the brothers of the Jews through Ishmael precedes the founding of Islam. Josephus also gives an eteology of Nabatea, a kingdom descended from Ishmael. No such mention can be made in the Bible, a pre-Nabatean document.

SUMMARY

Josephus only slightly changes the Biblical text regarding Hagar and Ishmael. The three major changes of note are: 1) the movement of Chapter 25.12-18; 2) God, in place of Sarah, commanding Abraham to cohabit with Hagar and 3) using Euripides as his model for Hagar's second flight. A minor point is the placing of Ogyges near Hebron. Josephus' omission of El-roi and Beer-lahai-roi are consistent with his intention of simplifying the Biblical text for the Greco-Roman reader. Josephus' treatment of Hagar and Ishmael is generally faithful to the Biblical text yet also intelligible to a classical reader. He has turned part of the story into a Greek tragedy, yet this treatment only enhances the literary value of the story; its Biblical meaning has not changed. Josephus succeeds in making Hagar and Ishmael come alive for his readers, while still portraying Abraham and Sarah favorably in what might have been a most unfavorable episode.

NOTES

1. Euripides, "The Madness of Hercules", trans. Arthur S. Way, found in Euripides (London: William Heinemann, 1919), vol. iii, pp. 152f.

CHAPTER 17

CIRCUMCISION

The issue of circumcision troubles Josephus. This custom, unfamiliar to Romans, was a source of great tension between Jews and Romans. The Romans considered circumcision equal to mutilation while Jews considered it to be a holy Mitzvah, enjoined upon Abraham by God. Few, if any, Mitzvot, were more important than the circumcision of male children on the eighth day after birth.

The Biblical narrative forced Josephus to describe the circumcisions of Abraham, Ishmael and Isaac. Yet, Josephus had no taste for this custom and no desire to explore the issue of circumcision in any detail when he wrote Jewish Antiquities.

Josephus (JA I.191-193) writes about circumcision in reference to the impending birth of Isaac and God's charge to Abraham to circumcise himself and his son Ishmael:

> Furthermore, to the intent that his posterity should be kept from mixing with others, God charged him to have them circumcised and to perform the rite on the eighth day after birth ... So Abraham rendered thanks to God for these blessings and was circumcised forthwith, he and all his household and his son Ishmael, who on that day was in his thirteenth year, his father's age being ninety-nine.

Josephus' reason for circumcision differs markedly from the Biblical account. In Genesis 17.9-14, circumcision is a sign of the covenant. God commands Abraham:

> ...As for you, you and your offspring to come throughout the ages shall keep My covenant. Such shall be the covenant between Me and you and your offspring to follow which you shall keep: every male among you shall be circumcised. You shall circumcise the flesh of your foreskin, and that shall be the sign of the covenant between Me and you. And throughout the generations, every male among you shall be circumcised at the age of eight days. As for the homeborn slave and the one bought from an outsider who is not part of your offspring, they must be circumcised, homeborn and purchased alike. Thus shall My covenant be marked in your flesh as an everlasting pact. And if any male who is uncircumcised fails to circumcise the flesh of his foreskin, that person shall be cut off from his kin; he has broken My covenant.

Circumcision is the mark of a Jew's allegiance to God and God's covenant. Josephus (JA I.192), as quoted above, gives the ritual of circumcision a different meaning. Josephus' explanation of circumcision is to keep Israel separate from other peoples. Circumcision means exclusivity; Jews could not freely and completely mix with Gentiles. Josephus, as shown below, finds this situation problematic.

Among the Romans, evidence does exist that shows circumcision to be considered a barbaric custom. Tacitus1, who wrote shortly after Josephus, held that:

> The Jews regard as profane all that we hold sacred; on the other hand, they permit all that we abhor. They adopted circumcision to distinguish themselves from other peoples by this difference. Those who are converted to their ways follow the same practice....

Tacitus and Josephus speak in almost the exact same words regarding circumcision; it is a practice designed to separate the Jews from the rest of humankind. Yet, Josephus must explain this custom as a virtue. Tacitus clearly shows that Roman society did not approve of circumcision.

Josephus writes that he will explain the practice of circumcision more fully in a later book. This book, tentatively titled "Customs and Causes"[2], would explain Josephus' position concerning circumcision. Unfortunately, Josephus never lived to complete this book.

A comparison of other examples of circumcision in the Bible with their Josephan narrations will help to clarify Josephus' reasons for minimizing or even excluding instances of Biblical circumcision. Referring to the circumcision of Isaac, Josephus (JA I.214) writes:

> Eight days later they promptly circumcised him; and from that time forward the Jewish practice has been to circumcise so many days after birth.

This is in direct opposition to Genesis 21.4, where Isaac's circumcision is in fulfillment of a direct command

of God. Josephus portrays Isaac's circumcision, not as a Mitzvah, but rather as the first instance of a new folk custom among the Jews.

In contrast to Genesis 34.14-24, Josephus does not mention circumcision as the penalty the Shechemites must pay in order to reclaim Dinah, Jacob's daughter. In the Biblical account, Shimon and Levi attack the Shechemites (Hivites) while they are recovering from their circumcisions. Josephus (JA I.337-340) omits any mention of the Sihimites' forced mass circumcision. The Sihimites (Shechemites) are attacked while drunk.

Exodus 4.25f describes the incident where Zipporah, Moses' wife, circumcises Moses and/or his son in order to prevent God's angel from killing the child. Josephus completely omits this strange episode in the life of Moses.

Exodus 12.44,48 states that one must circumcise a bought slave if he had not been previously circumcised. Josephus omits this law, and any mention of Leviticus 12.3, the priestly command to circumcise a male on the eighth day after birth3.

Under Joshua (Joshua 5.2-8), the Israelites, uncircumcised since the exodus from Egypt, underwent a mass

circumcision prior to entering the Promised Land. Josephus does not mention this ceremony at all.

These examples illustrate the contention that Josephus deliberately altered the Bible in order to exclude instances of circumcision wherever possible, as well as minimize his description of circumcision when he had no choice but to include this ritual.

SUMMARY

There are three reasons why Josephus would change the Biblical account regarding circumcision. First, circumcision embarrassed Josephus since Romans considered it barbaric. If Rome considered circumcision as mutilation, as they certainly did, than Josephus would have to eliminate references to it in his text as much as possible since he endeavored to put Judaism in the most favorable light possible.

Second, he intended to explain circumcision elsewhere but did not leave any record of such an essay. Josephus had projected his next work but he did not live to complete it.

Finally, Josephus omitted circumcision because it was a ritual ceremony and not a part of his political/military history. Josephus only explained the circumcision of Abraham, Ishmael and later Isaac since this is the <u>locus classicus</u> of the custom of circumcision, still practiced in his day, and in explaining the Genesis account to his Roman readers, he had no choice but to narrate the circumcision rituals.

This is the most telling explanation. Josephus did not consider the Jewish ritual practices as relevant to his

work, except when needed to explain a certain event or when a ritual's locus classicus appears in the Torah. In the verses relating to the circumcisions of Abraham, Ishmael and Isaac, Josephus provides all the information that the Roman reader needed to know about circumcision: how the custom began and why the Jews continue it. Josephus' silence elsewhere shows that any further mention of circumcision would hinder his work in writing a political history of the Jewish people.

NOTES

1. Tacitus, Historiae in M. Stern: Greek and Latin Authors on Jews and Judaism, trans. M. Stern (Jerusalem: Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities, 1980), V.4:1, 5:1, vol. II, pp.24-26.

2. cf. Josephus, p. 95, note c.

3. cf. Altshuler, David: "Descriptions in Josephus' Antiquities of the Mosaic Constitution" (Ph.D. Dissertation, Hebrew Union College, 1976), p. 29.

CHAPTER 18

AKEDAH

The perplexing story of the Akedah challenges Josephus. He shows in his description great skill in developing an apologetic interpretation, using Aggadah and philosophy to embellish the story.

Franxman1 uses a ten item outline as his basis for examining the Akedah story found in Genesis 22.1-20:

1. theoloquy
2. first stage of journey
3. second stage of journey
4. dialogue between A. and I.
5. sacrifice made ready
6. Isaac's impending death
7. divine intervention
8. the ram sacrificed
9. promises of rewards
10. return home

The theoloquy (1) begins the Akedah story. God tests Abraham (Genesis 22.1f) and commands him to take Isaac to an unspecified location and offer the boy as a sacrifice:

> ...God put Abraham to the test. He said to him, "Abraham," and he answered, "Here I am." And he said, "Take your son, your favored one, Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the heights which I will point out to you."

Josephus (JA I.222-224) augments this simple Genesis theoloquy. He adds a section on the virtues of Isaac, how he was beloved of Abraham, a son born in his old age. Josephus also puts the story into a context readily recognizable to his Gentile readers:

> Now Isaac was passionately beloved of his father Abraham, being his only son and born to him "on the threshold of old age" through the bounty of God. On his side, the child called out the affection of his parents and endeared himself to them yet more by the practice of every virtue, showing a devoted filial obedience and a zeal for the worship of God. Abraham thus reposed all his own happiness on the hope of leaving his son unscathed when he departed this life. This object he indeed attained by the will of God, who, however, desiring to make trial of his piety towards Himself, appeared to him and after enumerating all the benefits that He had bestowed upon him--how He had made him stronger than his enemies, and how it was His benevolence to which he owed his present felicity and his son Isaac--required him to offer up that son by his own hand as a sacrifice and victim to Himself. He bade him take the child up to the Morian Mount, erect an altar and make a holocaust of him; thus would he manifest his piety towards Himself, if he put the doing of God's good pleasure even above the life of his child.

This citation certainly alters the Biblical account. In Genesis 22, Isaac has no qualities, good or bad, of which to speak. Isaac is only acted upon; he does not initiate his own actions. Abraham is the central character in Genesis; Josephus, while recognizing the primacy of Abraham in this story, elevates the role of Isaac to that of a young man imitating the virtues of his father.

Josephus (JA I.224) has already identified Mount Moriah as Abraham's final destination. Genesis 22.2 only speaks of "the land of Moriah". The exact location is unspecified. Mount Moriah has come to be known as the Temple Mount, the site of the two Temples and of the Dome of the Rock.

Josephus draws upon Homer when he writes "on the threshold of old age"2, an allusion to the Iliad. In the Iliad, Priam implores Hektor not to battle Achilleus (22.35f) since Pelion had already killed Priam's other sons (22.44). Josephus contrasts these two great accounts in literature regarding the loss of a son. In contrast to Priam, Abraham would sacrifice Isaac in the name of God; he initiates the sacrifice. In the Iliad, it is Hektor who initiates the conflict with his father, Priam. An educated reader would certainly notice the contrast in the two fathers, one, a Hebrew, encouraging his son to sacrifice for God, the other, a Greek, imploring his son not to die for the gods.

Genesis 22.3-5 recounts the first stage of Abraham's three day journey with Isaac and the servants. After this journey, Abraham commands his servants to stay behind while he and Isaac travel onward.

Josephus, citing Aggadah, expands upon these few verses (JA I.225f):

> Abraham, deeming that nothing would justify disobedience to God and that in everything he must submit to His will, since all that befell His favoured ones was ordained by His providence, concealed from his wife God's commandment and his own resolve concerning the immolation of the child; nay, revealing it not even to any of his

> household, lest haply he should have been hindered from doing God's service, he took Isaac with the two servants and having laden an ass with the requisites for the sacrifice departed for the mountain. For two days the servants accompanied him, but on the third, when the mountain was in view, he left his companions in the plain and proceeded with his son alone to that mount whereon king David afterwards erected the temple.

The last phrase in this citation clearly shows that Josephus identified Mount Moriah with the Temple Mount. Josephus, therefore, furnishes evidence that this Rabbinic tradition goes back to the First Century, CE, if not earlier.

In Josephus' account, Abraham conceals this divinely ordained journey from Sarah. He fears that she would stop this bizarre episode and not allow Abraham to complete this sacrifice. Josephus' writing is reminiscent of other Aggadic legends, specifically Kohelet Rabbah 9/7 and Pirke De-Rabbi Eliezer, Chapter 32. Kohelet Rabbah[3] reads:

> When Isaac returned to his mother, she asked him, 'Where have you been, my son?' He answered her, 'Father took me, led me up mountains and down valleys, took me up a certain mountain, built an altar, arranged the wood, bound me upon it, and took hold of a knife to slay me. If an angel had not come from heaven and said to him, "Abraham, Abraham, lay not thy hand upon the lad," I should have been slain.' On his mother, Sarah, hearing this, she cried out, and before she had time to finish her cry her soul departed....

Pirke De-Rabbi Eliezer4 supports this legend:

> When Abraham returned from Mount Moriah in peace, the anger of Sammael was kindled, for he saw that the desire of his heart to frustrate the offering of our father Abraham had not been realized. What did he do? He went and said to Sarah: Hast thou not heard what has happened in the world? She said to him: No. He said to her: Thy husband, Abraham, has taken thy son Isaac and slain him and offered him up as a burnt offering upon the altar. She began to weep and to cry aloud...and her soul fled, and she died.

The common thread in both of these excerpts is that Sarah did not know of Abraham and Isaac's journey before they left. Aggadah supports Josephus; he is one of the earliest chroniclers of this Rabbinic legend, which explains why Sarah was unaware of the entire Akedah story until it was over.

A plausible deduction from Josephus' Aggadic activity is that the Aggadah developed very early in Palestine, since Josephus himself received oral traditions already well established. Josephus regarded these traditions as authoritative and equal to the Biblical account, since he saw no need to cite the sources of these traditions, as he had done with Berosus and others (JA I. 158ff).

Finally, Josephus omits the preparatory details, such as Abraham rising at dawn, splitting wood and saddling his ass. Josephus has also omitted Genesis 22.5, the dialogue

between Abraham and the servants. These details were unimportant for Josephus' readers and consequently deleted.

Josephus modifies the description of the second stage of the journey, Genesis 22.6-8. He changes the moving dialogue between father and son to a philosophical discourse. The entire section is abbreviated by the first sentence in the following citation (JA I. 227):

> They brought with them all else needed for the sacrifice except a victim. Isaac, therefore, who was now twenty-five years of age, while constructing the altar, asked what sacrifice they were about to offer, having no victim; to which his father replied that God would provide for them, seeing that He had power alike to give men abundance of what they had not and to deprive of what they had those who felt assured of their possessions: He would therefore grant him too a victim, should He vouchsafe to grace his sacrifice with His presence.

The dialogue between Abraham and Isaac has become a lesson in theology. God is Provident, He has the power to bestow divine grace upon His favored ones. He also has the power to cause the wicked to fall. Josephus, in acknowledging God as omnipotent, states that God would provide the sacrifice, even though he omits mention of the ram described in Genesis 22.8.

Josephus also omits Genesis 22.9: He does not mention that Isaac was ever bound upon the altar. Antiquities I.228

simply mentions that the altar had been prepared. Josephus has overlooked, perhaps deliberately, the crucial act of binding, the actual act of Akedah.

Josephus radically alters the dialogue between Abraham and Isaac. Whereas Genesis 22.7f shows that Isaac initiated the dialogue, Josephus (JA I.228-231) places a speech into the mouth of Abraham while Isaac remains silent:

> ...(M)y child, myriad were the prayers in which I besought God for thy birth, and when thou camedst into the world, no pains were there that I did not lavish upon thine upbringing, no thought had I of higher happiness than to see thee grown to man's estate and to leave thee at my death heir to my dominion. But, since it was by God's will that I became thy sire and now again as pleases Him I am resigning thee, bear thou this consecration valiantly; for it is to God I yield thee, to God who now claims from us this homage in return for the gracious favour He has shown me as my supporter and ally. Aye, since thou was born (out of the course of nature, so) quit thou now this life not by the common road, but sped by thine own father on thy way to God, the Father of all, through the rites of sacrifice. He, I ween, accounts it not meet for thee to depart this life by sickness or war or by any of the calamities that commonly befall mankind, but amid prayers and sacrificial ceremonies would receive thy soul and keep it near to Himself; and for me thou shalt be a protector and stay of my old age--to which end above all I nurtured thee- by giving me God in the stead of thyself.

Ronald Sobel[5] postulates that this type of speech is a manifestation of the rationale behind a particular story. If true, than Josephus' explanation of the Akedah should be implicit within this speech. As noted in Chapter 12,

Josephus (JA I.155) states that Abraham was the first to conceive of God and have a "more lofty conception of virtue". Abraham realized that God exercised providence over the world. In his Akedah speech, Josephus echoes this sentiment; God, in exercising His providence over humankind, has summoned Isaac, regardless of his virtues and abilities or those of his father. God is the supreme Father of humankind; one must of necessity please Him. God as a father figure is common in Pharasaic thinking; one need only to look at the sayings of Jesus in the Synoptic Gospels or the sayings of Paul in Acts in order to understand this mode of thought, to which Josephus was an adherent.

A second aspect of this speech is Josephus' notion of covenant. Abraham refers to God as "my supporter (or: benefactor) and ally." A benefactor implies patronage. An ally is a military concept. In contrast, a covenant was simply an agreement regarding prayer and service, not politics. This change will be examined in the conclusion to the Josephan material.

Isaac (JA I.232) received Abraham's speech gladly and rushed to the altar as a sacrifice. In contrast, Genesis 22.9 places the actual binding after the building of the altar. Josephus has altered the Genesis progression in order to insert Abraham's speech.

Genesis 22.11 records that an angel interceded in order to stop the sacrifice. Speaking in the name of God, this angel said (Genesis 22.12), "...For now I know that you fear God...." The Akedah was intended to be a trial of Abraham, to ascertain if he followed God in the proper way.

Josephus (JA I.233-235) changes the angel to God. God did not desire human blood, nor did He want to rob Abraham of his son but rather "...He wished but to test his soul and see whether even such orders would find him obedient."

On the surface, this does not seem like a radical departure. Yet, a careful analysis of Josephus' words shows that he had another agenda in mind. First, Josephus mentions human sacrifice. Perhaps Jews were thought of as engaging in such sacrifice. By stating that the Jewish God does not demand human sacrifice, Josephus has laid this charge to rest. Nor is the Jewish God capricious; He did not desire Isaac's death, who, had he died, would have left Abraham without an heir and God without a people. Rather, God wished to purify Abraham's soul. He wished to know whether His gifts to Abraham were warranted. Since Abraham passed God's test, he, and by implication his children, merited those gifts.

Unlike Genesis 22.13-19, Josephus enumerates the Divine promises before the ram is sacrificed. Isaac would:

> ...bequeath to a virtuous and lawfully begotten offspring a great dominion. He moreover foretold that their race would swell into a multitude of nations, with increasing wealth, nations whose founders would be had in everlasting remembrance, that they would subdue Canaan by their arms and be envied of all men.

Genesis 22.15-18, occurring after the sacrifice of the ram, relates the second call of the angel (not God) to Abraham:

> ..."By Myself I swear, the LORD declares: because you have done this and have not withheld your son, your favored one, I will bestow My blessing upon you and make your descendants as numerous as the stars of heaven and the sands on the seashore; and your descendants shall seize the gates of of their foes. All the nations of the earth shall bless themselves by your descendants, because you have obeyed My command."

Genesis speaks only of battles with Israel's enemies as self-defense, not as a military conquest of Canaan. Nor does the Biblical account speak of increased riches. The Biblical blessing of the nations through Abraham and his descendants is changed to a sense of envy by the nations in Josephus' account.

Josephus (JA I.236) does modify Genesis 22.13. Abraham does not find the ram in a thicket; rather, Josephus has God bring the ram "out of obscurity into their view." By this small change, Josephus shows again the providential nature of the Jewish God, a God who brings about direct change in the world.

Genesis 22.14 is also omitted. Josephus saw no reason to give Mount Moriah another name, i.e. "Adonai-yireh" (Genesis 22.14). In keeping with his intention of simplifying the Bible for a Roman reader, "Adonai-yireh" is deleted from Josephus' account.

Finally, Josephus recognizes a problem with Genesis 22.19, the return of Abraham to his servants and the journey back to Beersheba. The Genesis account does not say that Isaac returned home with his father. This might have lead one to think that Isaac either stayed behind or was indeed sacrificed. In place of this account, Josephus (JA I.236), in contrast, specifically says that they embraced and returned home to Sarra, "and lived in bliss, God assisting them in all that they desired." Josephus removes the need to explain the whereabouts of Isaac. He was still alive after his ordeal, ever more faithful to his father's religious beliefs. Josephus has conveyed the thought that Abraham and Isaac returned home together.

SUMMARY

In the final conclusion to the Josephus materials, which discusses the role of God as benefactor and ally, the Akedah will be cited as an example of a covenantal story becoming a story of future conquest. For now, it is enough to note that Josephus has taken a story laden with religious symbolism and transformed it into a political-sociological event. Josephus' telling of the story is quite accurate, even with his Aggadic and philosophic embellishments.

Subtle changes, such as the combining of the angelic interventions (which became Divine interventions) and the insertion of Isaac into the final verses, show Josephus at his apologetic best. These changes would not anger a Jewish reader since they essentially follow the Aggadah. Yet, they simplify this complex story for the Roman reader without departing from contemporary Jewish thought regarding this tale.

NOTES

1. Franxman, Thomas W., Genesis and the "Jewish Antiquities" of Flavius Josephus (Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1979), p.156.

2. Homer, The Iliad, trans. Richmond Lattimore (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1959), p. 436.

3. Kohelet Rabbah, found in Midrash Rabbah, Rabbi Dr. H Freedman and M. Simon (London: Soncino Press, 1939), vol. viii, p.232.

4. Pirke De-Rabbi Eliezer, trans. G. Friedlander (New York: Hermon Press, 1970), pp.233f.

5. Sobel, Ronald, "Josephus' Conception of History in Relationship to the Pentateuch", (Rabbinic Thesis, Hebrew Union College, 1962), p. 28.

CHAPTER 19

KETURAH

Josephus' genius in transforming Biblical history into a contemporary Greco-Roman story is very much in evidence regarding Keturah, the second wife of Abraham. These four verses (JA I.238-241), in summary form, show certain concerns upon which Josephus elaborated at length elsewhere.

Genesis 25.1-5 tells the story of Keturah, a woman of unknown origins who bore Abraham five sons: Zimran, Jokshan, Medan, Midian, Ishbak, and Shuah. Just as the Biblical writer excluded Ishmael from any possible inheritance, so did he exclude these sons from his wealth in order to protect Isaac:

> Abraham willed all that he owned to Isaac; but to Abraham's sons by concubines Abraham gave gifts while he was still living, and he sent them away from his son Isaac eastward, to the land of the East. (Genesis 25.5f)

Abraham made sure that Isaac would be his unchallenged heir. This story provided eteologies of different Semitic tribes that the Israelites would later encounter, such as the Midianites in Joseph's day and Sheba, whose queen would one day enchant King Solomon.

Josephus expands upon the story of Keturah. Abraham's sons were "strong to labour and quick of understanding" (JA I.238) They were bright and able-bodied children. The genealogies are essentially the same; Josephus had little interest in such studies, unless he knew that the genealogy would serve some purpose. Since the genealogy served no outward Aggadic, moral or apologetic purpose here, Josephus saw no reason to change the Biblical verse.

Yet in true Greco-Roman fashion, Josephus has Abraham send these sons abroad in order to found colonies. The Romans surely knew of colonies; often Roman legions founded colonies de facto such as those along the Rhine River and in Gaul. Jewish colonies then were not unthinkable, especially when one considers that synagogues were in many major Roman cities by the end of the First Century and that Jews had spread throughout the Roman Empire, comprising a high percentage of the population in the eastern provinces.

The specific colonies founded by these sons were mainly in North Africa. Josephus claims that the name "Africa" derived from Eophren (Epher), the son of Madan (Medan). As proof, Josephus cited Alexander Polyhistor, a contemporary of Sulla (JA I.240f):

> Cleodomus the prophet, also called Malchus, in his history of the Jews relates, in conformity with the narrative of their lawgiver Moses, that Abraham had several sons by Katura. He moreover gives their names, mentioning three -- Apheras, Sures, Japhras -- adding that Sures gave his name to Assyria, and the two others, Japhras and Apheras, gave their names to the city of Aphra and the country of Africa. In fact, he adds, these latter joined Heracles in his campaign against Libya and Antaeus; and Heracles, marrying the daughter of Aphranes, had by her a son Didorus, who begat Sophon, from whom the barbarians take their name of Sophakes.

Alexander Polyhistor's attestation would certainly provide convincing evidence that Josephus' narrative was valid. What makes this reference so interesting, though, is the linkage of Heracles to Aphranes, a mispelled name but certainly a grandson of Abraham through Keturah. Josephus links a Heracles legend to the Abraham story. Heracles' child, Didorus, was a direct descendant of both Heracles, the Greek hero, and of Abraham, the father of the Jewish people. To a Roman reader, there could be no more illustrious lineage for a son.

SUMMARY

Josephus has taken a minor and often ignored story in the Book of Genesis and through it linked Abraham to one of the greatest of all Greco-Roman heroes, Heracles. This is a superb example of Josephus' abilities as an apologist; by linking Abraham with Heracles, his readers would raise Abraham in their collective esteem to even greater heights. That Heracles would marry a descendant of Abraham means that Abraham's family was a powerful and desirable family with which to associate, equal to the best families in Rome. Josephus could make no better claim to the excellence of Judaism than by citing this story.

CHAPTER 20

DEATH OF ABRAHAM

Josephus (JA I.256) passes lightly over the death of Abraham. A comparison with Genesis 25. 7-11 leads to some interesting conclusions.

Josephus' account reads as follows:

> Not long after Abraham died, a man in every virtue supreme, who received from God the due meed of honour for his zeal in His service. He lived in all one hundred and seventy five years and was buried at Hebron, beside his wife Sarra, by their sons Isaac and Ishmael.

Abraham died after he had sent his sons by Ketura to found colonies. As discussed in the previous chapter, these sons would colonize distant lands. In so doing, they would pose no threat to Isaac's inheritance.

Abraham was "a man in every virtue supreme (arete akros)." Nowhere in the Genesis account is there any mention of "virtue". Abraham has no outstanding attributes other than his choseness, bestowed upon him by God through no merit of his own. The Hellenistic notion of arete is foreign to Genesis.

Genesis 25.8 provides the indirect Biblical referent:

> And Abraham breathed his last, dying at a good ripe age, old and contented; and he was gathered to his kin.

A good, ripe, content, old age might very well have meant to Josephus that Abraham had achieved arete akros.

Isaac and Ishmael, as in the Genesis account, bury their father. But the burial is not in the Cave of Machpelah; it is instead at Hebron. Josephus simplifies the narrative and omits any description of a cave. He even omits any earlier mention of Machpelah or even of Ephron, the Hittite, mentioned earlier in regards to the death of Sarra.

Also uncharacteristic is the omission of a burial ceremony or of a period of mourning. One would think, after all the praise that Josephus has lavished upon Abraham in this section of Jewish Antiquities, that Abraham merited a funeral fit for an emperor.

As previously mentioned in the Sarra chapter, Josephus felt that the less said about Jewish funeral practices, the better. As the First Century, Herodian ossuaries at the Israel Museum suggest, not only did the Jews bury their dead, they engaged in secondary burial, i.e. exhuming the

bodies and placing the bones in large stone storage containers, which were then re-buried. To a Roman reader, this burial procedure was repulsive; Romans were cremated. Again, Josephus might have feared that Jewish burial practice could be confused with the Christian practices. This linkage would have caused trouble for the Jewish community; consequently Josephus felt obliged to omit any mention of burial practices, the burial itself was sufficient.

Josephus completely omits Genesis 25.11. God's blessing of Isaac could only mean that the terms of the Abrahamic covenant had been passed down to Isaac. As mentioned below in the conclusion to the Josephan materials, Josephus downplays notions of covenant. A "Chosen People" would imply that Rome had not been similarly chosen, a dangerous sentiment indeed. Consequently, the verse is omitted.

SUMMARY

Josephus' minor changes in this story are significant. He has omitted any mention of Ephron the Hittite and of Machpelah. The extension of the Covenant is not mentioned at all. Nor does Josephus mention that Isaac moved the family dwellings to Beer-lahai-roi. Josephus adds the notion that Abraham possessed arete akros, a Hellenistic notion.

These instances are in keeping with Josephus' attempts to simplify the Abraham story. Yet, these various omissions and additions lead the modern reader of Josephus to conclude that his apologetic intentions altered the narration of a simple Biblical story, the death of a great man.

CHAPTER 21

CONCLUSION

In his work, Old Testament Theology, Gerhard von Rad[1] comments specifically upon two covenants which God made with Abraham, the covenant "between the pieces" and circumcision. Regarding the former covenant, Genesis 15.1-21, von Rad writes, "Abraham sinks completely into unconsciousness, while Jahweh alone performs the rites." This is a suzerain covenant, whereby a greater power (God) agrees to protect a lesser power (Abraham).

According to von Rad[2], there are six steps in a general Near Eastern covenantal formulation: preamble, historical prologue, stipulation, conditions, invocation of gods as witnesses, and curses and blessings. The correspondence with Genesis 15.1-21 is clear:

Preamble	Genesis 15.1
Prologue	Genesis 15.7
Stipulations	Genesis 15.9-10
Conditions	Genesis 15.13-16, 17-21
Invocation	omitted
Blessings/curses	omitted

This covenant is unconditional; Abraham is not threatened with any punishment should he or his descendants ever sin. There is no method of punishment within this

covenant. Furthermore, no descendant of Abraham can ever be released from this covenant, whether or not he (or the community) desires it.

Josephus (JA I.183-185) completely disregards this covenantal formulation. In the Genesis account, Abraham does not actually sacrifice the animals, he only prepares them. God passes His torch between the pieces in order to consummate the sacrifice. In Antiquities, after God commends Abraham on account of his virtues and promises him a son, Abraham offers the sacrifice. Unlike the Biblical account, Abraham remains awake throughout this entire episode. Instead of the unilateral suzerain covenant, Josephus writes:

> ...that his posterity would for four hundred years find evil neighbors in Egypt, but that after affliction among them they would overcome their foes, vanquish the Canaanites in battle, and take possession of their land and cities.

The promise of the land of Canaan as God's gift to the children of Abraham has been changed to a promise of future military victory, possibly with God at their side. Josephus does not state that the land is given in perpetuity; perhaps Abraham's descendents could some day lose the land through military conquest. It is not the Promised Land, it is simply Abraham's territory.

The second example that von Rad uses in relation to Abraham is the covenant of circumcision, found in Genesis 17.1-27. The covenant with Abraham in this case consists of three parts: Abraham to become a people, Jahweh to be their God, and the promise of the land. Here, the lack of circumcision does not deny one's personal status, it merely cuts that man off from the children of Abraham. A violation of this covenant will be punished.

Josephus, as shown above, alters the concept of circumcision. Circumcision becomes a mark of distinction among Jews, not a Mitzvah.

Closely associated with the issue of covenant for Josephus is the question of providence (pronoia) as alliance with Abraham. Those who did not conform to God's wish, such as the "Assyrian" kings and later the Sodomites, were simply destroyed. God grants His aid to certain favored people, such as Abraham.

Josephus replaces the concept of covenant, as noted in previous chapters, with the concept of God exercising pronoia by acting as a symmachos, a benefactor/ally3. A benefactor implies a more universal application than the exclusivity of a covenant between God and Israel. Also, the use of alliance terminology would:

> (N)ot imply any necessary, formal, long-term or automatic commitment on the part of God to act on behalf of the Israelites. Terms such as symmachos refer primarily to God's role in time of need, and not to a fundamental agreement which determines the relationship between God and Israel.[4]

Consequently, the covenant between the pieces becomes a simple sacrifice and circumcision becomes a mark of distinction. The birth of Isaac becomes a promise of great warrior nations to come from Isaac[5]. The covenantal nature of these events has vanished in Josephus' account. The special nature of God's relationship with Abraham, the concept of choseness, is not stressed in Antiquities. God's special concern for Abraham stems from his special virtues, such as arete akros.

The Akedah furnishes yet another example of God acting as Abraham's benefactor and ally (JA I.229f):

> "...to God, who now claims from us this homage in return for the gracious favour He has shown me as my supporter and ally." (italics mine)

Josephus' God does not use the occasion of the Akedah to pronounce a covenant. Instead, He uses this episode to demonstrate His efficacy as a benefactor/ally. Josephus has changed the cultic covenant to a political, military alliance. The promise of the land of Canaan is not due to Divine will and eternal covenant, it has become the right of possession due to force of arms6.

Josephus, however, is uncomfortable with the notion of choseness. As stated above, if the Israelites were God's chosen people, then by definition the Romans were not similarly chosen and could not partake of the Jewish God's providence. Were Josephus to emphasize this, he would have found himself in opposition to the Emperor cult in Rome, and to its adherents throughout the Roman Empire. Jews as a group might also have come under renewed attack for placing themselves above the Roman gods. Josephus' minimizing of Abraham's choseness is therefore an apologetic attempt to universalize the Jewish God. Abraham is "chosen", not by the grace of God, but rather due to the actualization of his intellect.

Josephus conceives of Abraham according to Pharasaic doctrine. Josephus adds Aggadah to embellish the Abraham story and close lacunae in the Biblical text. These oral traditions make Josephus' narration come alive for his readers.

When God does administer retributive justice, as in the destruction of Sodom, He does so in a Roman manner, by a thunderbolt. Indeed, whenever God acts in the world, such as in the stories of Akedah, Sodom and Ishmael, Josephus uses classical literature to embellish the story. By doing so, he subtly shifts the concept of Diety for his Roman

reader; the Jewish God has become part of the Roman pantheon. Events in Jewish history take on a Greco-Roman flavor through the use of Homer, Euripides, etc., in their narrations. Abraham is contrasted with Priam at Mount Moriah, Keturah's sons found colonies, Hagar becomes Amphitryon. Biblical events become scenes from Greek tragedies.

Josephus has turned Abraham from the simple nomad of the Bible into a benevolent and wise King, able to instruct the Egyptians in the nuances of classical physics and metaphysics long before the rise of classic Greek philosophy. By doing so, Josephus has repudiated classical authors who wrote derogatory accounts of the origins of the Jews. The Jews had a noble ancestry, as fine as any Roman family. Even Hercules found the Abrahamic line desirable. As an apologist for Judaism, Josephus has done a remarkable job in turning Abraham into a man of virtue, conquest and romance. By implication, the Jewish people of Josephus' day are to be deemed worthy of the same high esteem, for their lineage is noble, and their religion is most excellent. Both conditions are due to their illustrious and unequalled ancestor, Abraham.

NOTES

1. von Rad, Gerhard, Old Testament Theology, trans. D.M.G. Stalker (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1962), vol. I, p. 131ff.

2. von Rad, p. 132.

3. This discussion follows Attridge, Harold W., The Interpretation of Biblical History in the Antiquitates Judaicae of Flavius Josephus (Missoula: Scholars Press, 1976), p. 79ff.

4. Attridge, p. 82. The emphases are the author's.

5. Other examples in Antiquities, not however concerned with the Abraham stories, are: I.103 (Noah's rainbow, Genesis 9.13), I.273 (Jacob stealing Esau's deathbed blessing, Genesis 27.27-29), II.332 (Exhortation of Moses, Exodus 14.13), IV.114ff, 128 (Balaam, Numbers 23.1), and VIII.116f (Solomon, I Kings 8.22, II Chron. 5.12).

6. cf. Franxman, p. 127.

PART THREE

COMPARISONS AND CONCLUSIONS

CHAPTER 22

COMPARISONS

A major concern of historians is the question of whether or not Josephus drew upon Philo as one of his sources. Throughout Antiquitates Judaicae, reference is made in the footnotes regarding possible parallels with Philo, especially concerning the Call of Abraham (cf. Chapter 13). This has led some historians to suggest that Josephus useS Philo as a reference.

This assertion cannot be sustained. A comparison of the Philonic and Josephan materials show that any agreement between the two writers is purely coincidental. Philo is not a source for Josephus, for reasons to be outlined below.

Philo undoubtably was a learned Jew in the Alexandrian community. Yet, Alexandria was far removed from the centers of Pharasaic Judaism in Jerusalem and its environs. His recollection of the area surrounding the Dead Sea shows Philo to be ignorant of Palestinian geography. While the assertion that he was also ignorant of Palestinian Pharasaism cannot be substantiated, it is true that he was not a Pharisee. Philo was not a Pharasaic scholar, he was a Hellenistic Jewish thinker. His frame of reference

regarding the Bible, and also the Septuagint, is different than that of Josephus, who lived and breathed Pharasaism, which included the knowledge of oral traditions and the Hebrew Bible (even though he knew the Septuagint well). Philo never mentions any non-Pentateuchal personages, such as the prophets. Any extra-Toraitic books were non-authoritative for him.

The Greek and Roman mythological systems had begun to break down during the early First Century. No longer did a Roman subject or a Roman citizen necessarily believe in a literal rendering of Homer or Hesiod. The mythological characters already had taken on allegorical meanings. Philo continues this tendency within Jewish thought. While he undoubtably believed in a literal Abraham, Philo also meant for Abraham and his family to take on allegorical significance so that the true philosophic meaning of the Torah could become clear. As will be shown below, the literal meaning of the Torah is secondary to the esoteric interpretation that Philo provides.

Josephus, in contrast, has no room for extensive philosophic speculation in Antiquities. The writings of Thucydides, Herodotus and other classical historians serve as his models. Josephus is very concerned that the rules of history and historiography of his day would be scrupulously followed in his writings.

Furthermore, Josephus was a Pharisee, trained in the Two-Fold Law. Unlike Philo, Josephus held that oral traditions, handed down by the Pharisees, were as authoritative as the Bible. Josephus' adaptation of the Abraham story, therefore, was not an alteration of that story; it was in consonance with the accepted Pharisaic wisdom of his time. If a legend augmented a specific episode in the life of Abraham, then it deserved mention.

Josephus has little use for philosophic speculation in Antiquities. Instead, he often refers to a book which he intended to write which would describe his Jewish philosophical system. What he has left us shows that Josephus felt that Abraham had achieved the true knowledge of God while still in Ur. Since he engaged in proselytism among the Chaldeans, he was expelled. Josephus' philosophic speculations only comprise one or two verses in the entire Abraham narrative. Josephus was interested in political history; he downplayed aspects of philosophy and even ritual that could lead a reader from the true knowledge of the political history of the children of Israel. Abraham is not a Form, nor is he a philosopher-king; he is simply an enlightened and famous King.

Josephus is a rigid monotheist. For him, God is One. He is the Creator and the First Cause within the Unity.

Both Josephus and Philo posit a First Cause, yet they share no similar qualities. Josephus' First Cause is Aristotelian. Furthermore, Josephus' Abraham determines his theories about the nature of God through observation.

Philo's First Cause is neo-Platonic. Abraham's journey from Ur of the Chaldees to Canaan via Haran is a philosophic quest for the Forms in the world and the knowledge of the essence of the Godhead as First Cause. The search for these Forms is couched within the Biblical narrative. Abraham does not complete his search within Chaldea; he acquires a knowledge of sense perception in Haran. Only in Canaan does Abraham complete his journey, symbolized by the events described in Chapters 4, 6 and 8, which show how Abraham perfected his soul through his internal war, his acquisition of the classical curriculum (Hagar) and his eventual mating with Virtue (Sarah) in order to bring Laughter (Isaac) into the world. Only after Laughter is returned to God, who gives it back to Abraham as an act of grace (Akedah), is Abraham's soul perfected; he becomes a philosopher-king, even a Form.

Philo describes the Godhead as a tripartite division. The Central Being (First Cause) is surrounded by His two Potencies, Creator (Demiurge, Elohim) and Master (YHVH). Philo proposes a philosophic system that is built upon

Biblical characters and events, yet is thoroughly Hellenized. In short, Philo has developed one of the earliest of the neo-Platonic philosophic systems.

As stated above, in Philo's system Abraham becomes a philosopher-king. He is noted for his knowledge and his acquisition of wisdom. Political problems disappear, as do his passions. Abraham becomes the Form, the model for later Jews to emulate.

In Josephus' system, Abraham becomes a benevolent king, a statesman. After defeating the "Assyrian" kings, Abraham enjoys a triumph. At his death, Abraham is a wealthy and powerful man, who possessed arete akros, supreme virtue. Yet, this virtue is not expressed as the Form of Virtue; Abraham is simply a great king, not a great philosopher-king.

Philo makes extensive use of the allegorical meanings of names, places and events within the context of his description of the philosophic journey. Sarah becomes generic Virtue, Hagar becomes the lower learning, Chaldea becomes astrology and the world of shadow existence, to name just a few instances. Through his use of allegory, Philo gives the Biblical text a meaning which it did not originally possess. Rather than stating that his

philosophic system was a radical innovation, Philo claims that the Torah outlined this system in an esoteric way; it was up to mankind to determine the true meanings of the Torah, which could be obtained only through allegory. Consequently, history has no meaning for Philo; the historical record found within Scripture is only a screen for the true, hidden, philosophical meaning embodied within it.

Josephus lessens the importance of the ritual aspects of the Abraham story, in line with his apologetic intentions. Yet, even he mentions circumcision, unlike Philo. Josephus also has no use for Philo's allegorical methods; he employs Midrash and Jewish law as his extra-Biblical sources.

Finally, their purposes in writing their respective books greatly differed. Philo lived within the Hellenistic Egyptian society. His books were an attempt to explain Judaism to Jews and Gentiles living in Alexandria. His readers were obviously well schooled in classical Greek thought; both Jews and Gentiles placed the events of the Abraham story within that framework.

Josephus' readers were different. Josephus responded to questions of his Roman patrons in a way that was in

consonance with his Pharasaic upbringing. His books were not intended for Jews, but for Romans. Consequently, Josephus would often shade an event in the life of Abraham, such as Hagar's second flight, in the guise of a Greek tragedy. The Flavians of Josephus' time were generals, not philosophers. Josephus, also a general, wrote about the Jews in a way that his patrons would understand. They were interested in political history, not philosophy. Josephus wrote to please them, without forsaking his Pharasaic heritage.

It is evident, therefore, that Philo and Josephus represent two different Jewish systems operating at about the same time in different locations in the Roman Empire. Each writer responds to the challenges of his respective locale in a way that would best express his society's views about Judaism and the nature of God. A comparison of Josephus and Philo shows that it is possible to have at least two independent Jewish systems working simultaneously within the world. Both systems were rich and vibrant, yet only Josephus' survived, since he is a disciple of the Palestinian Rabbis, who consolidated their power at the end of the First Century. Philo and Josephus show how Jews adapt their religious outlook in light of differing circumstances. Both systems, radically different and equally valid, claimed adherents who took the common name

Jew. In this way, Judaism sought different ways to preserve its heritage among new and strange societies.

The following parallels show the radical differences between Josephus and Philo:

In his description of Lot, Philo shows him to be a seeker of wisdom who failed in his quest. It is difficult for this man to continue his association with Abraham, a wiser and therefore superior man. Lot leaves the world of sense perception with Abraham but is unable to attain Abraham's stature. Once he begins to stagnate, the enemies of the soul, the four passions, carry him off.

Josephus, in contrast to Philo, presents Lot as a purely historical figure. To Josephus, Lot is Abraham's disciple, taught to be hospitable to strangers. Rather than excoriating Lot, Josephus attempts to rehabilitate his image; Lot is Abraham's disciple and adopted son. Yet even Josephus realizes that Lot's incestuous cohabitation with his daughters is wrong; he cannot redeem Lot completely.

Philo presents a purely allegorical explanation of the war between the four northern kings and the five kings of the Sodomite plain. For Philo, this war takes on a meaning completely at variance with Josephus' account. Philo

characterizes this war as one for control of a man's soul. Abraham conquers his base emotions and his senses. Through his hard fought victory, Abraham achieves arete logos, a state of divine bliss. This war within Abraham's soul, which is a purely Philonic interpretation of Genesis 14, brings Abraham farther along on the path to spiritual perfection.

Josephus cannot be bothered with philosophic speculation concerning this war. For Josephus, this war occurred as an event in the history of the Jews. Consequently, Josephus must faithfully report every event concerning this war. It is not a war between emotions and sense-perception, as Philo implies. Rather, Josephus reports this as a purely political event, devoid of any notion of supernatural intervention; he never mentions God in his description of the war.

Perhaps nowhere is the difference between Philo and Josephus more evident than in their descriptions of God's covenants with Abraham, especially the Covenant between the Pieces. To Philo, a covenant represents the dedication of soul, speech and sense perception to the Godhead. Even though this Godhead has no need of any sacrifice, mankind uses this ritual as a training exercise for divine service.

God's covenant with Abraham becomes another step along his spiritual quest; it is not a legal contract as described by van Rad.

Josephus, on the other hand, does not even entertain the notion of covenant in his history of Abraham. In accordance with his general tendency to downplay ritual aspects of Judaism, the ceremonial aspects of this Covenant between the Pieces becomes God's promise to Abraham of a future military conquest of the land of Canaan.

To his credit, however, Josephus deals with the troublesome question of circumcision. This ritual ceremony, enjoined upon Abraham and his descendants as the mark of the covenant, becomes simply a mark of distinction. It is called a curious folk custom, whose explanation is deferred to an unwritten book. God's expression of providence, which in Genesis is inferred by the Covenant, becomes an expression of a military alliance; God is Abraham's benefactor/ally.

Philo curiously ignores circumcision. At no point within his extant writings does Philo refer either to circumcision nor to the verses in Genesis or Leviticus that mention this fundamental ceremony. Philo's silence, which

might lead to interesting conclusions (as mentioned above), clearly shows that circumcision was not an important concept to Philo; it had no allegorical meaning for him.

In the stories of Sarah, Hagar and Ishmael, Philo transforms these important historical characters into neo-Platonic Forms. The sequence of Abraham's mating, first with Hagar and then with Sarah, shows how Abraham's mind developed; he passes from the classical curriculum to the world of metaphysics in his quest for wisdom. Philo uses these characters to outline his educational curriculum. Education is Wisdom's concubine; Wisdom's wife, as stated previously, is Virtue.

Josephus treats Sarah, Hagar and Ishmael as historical characters. Their actions become the makings of a Greek tragedy. Unlike Euripides or Homer, however, the events surrounding these people come to successful conclusions. Yet, there are no hidden truths to be found within their stories; Josephus simply reports historical events as he believed them to have happened, while adding apologetic twists where necessary.

For Philo, the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah represents God's destruction of corrupt sense perception. That which is evil in the world will eventually be

destroyed. Those who attempt, or have attempted, to conquer sense perception will be saved from the holocaust. Those who allow their senses to control their souls will be destroyed.

Josephus, on the other hand, attempts to dramatize further this already exciting story for his Roman reader. A Biblical story of this magnitude needs little analysis; it is a great historical event whose description Josephus relishes.

Regarding Isaac and the Akedah, Philo does not even acknowledge that Isaac is human. He is described as the Form of Laughter. The Akedah is mankind's attempt to return Laughter to the Godhead where it rightfully belongs. The Godhead, through an act of grace, returns Laughter to mankind. The Akedah also shows that Abraham has finally achieved perfection through the attemped sacrifice of his supposed son. Philo even goes so far as to assert that Isaac is the son of God, not Abraham. Had he lived after Jesus' death, Philo would have been suspected of Christian tendencies.

Josephus treats Isaac as the passive victim in the Akedah story. Josephus uses this story to show how God acts as Abraham's benefactor/ally, instead of his covenantal

partner. Isaac is certainly a human being in Josephus' account; he has little use for Forms in his historical account.

Philo does not spend much time on the death of Sarah. For Philo, a Form can never die; Virtue (Sarah) is eternal. At Sarah's death, Abraham is hailed as a basileus, a King. Sarah is buried in Machpaleh, the double cave, the favorite abode of divine souls. Philo intends that Abraham be a Philosopher-King, he is paradigm of Wisdom in the world and is therefore also eternal.

Abraham also rids himself of the corrupting influences of the concubines, namely Keturah. Philo has Abraham expel corrupting virtues; they leave Abraham's domain. Only Isaac remains as his rightful heir.

Josephus changes Keturah from a forgotten second wife to an important ancestor of colonizers. She even becomes the ancestor of Heracles' wife. Josephus' apologetic linkage of Abraham to Heracles only raises Abraham's esteem among the Romans.

Furthermore, the deaths of Sarah and Abraham are given brief treatment in Josephus' writings. He recognizes that people must die; therefore, his eulogies are brief and his history continues forward.

This analysis shows that Josephus could not have consciously drawn upon Philo as one of his sources. Any parallel is simply coincidental. The aims of Philo and Josephus in writing their respective books were so different that it is impossible to believe that they had much in common except that they were both Jews. Yet, their different conceptualizations of Judaism led Philo and Josephus to develop entirely different conceptions of the Bible. Since Josephus and Philo wrote for different communities and used different tools in their analyses, it is evident that Josephus owes no debt to Philo.

CONCLUSION

The comparisons between Philo and Josephus have shown that they lived in very different societies. The differing societal pressures that each writer faced determined in a large measure how they used Abraham in their writings.

Abraham becomes Philo's example of a Philosopher-King. In his philosophical system, every object in the physical and metaphysical realms imitates an Ideal, called a Form. Just as a chair imitates the Form of a Chair, a Jew imitates the Form of the Jew, defined by Philo as Abraham. By imitating Abraham, Jews would draw nearer to the Godhead; they would move from the ignorance of Chaldea, through the world of sense-perception that is Haran, to the land of wisdom, Canaan.

Philo molds Abraham to suit his society. Abraham, as a Hellenistic philosopher, teaches his students the true path of life, the path of wisdom. Abraham is Philo's mouthpiece through which he explains the complexities of neo-Platonic thought. Abraham's entire life is allegorized so as to furnish the reader, who may not be familiar with either the Bible or the Septuagint, with a manual for living.

Philo only alludes to parts of his system at any given place within his writings. References to Abraham are

scattered throughout the Allegory. The entire allegorical story of Abraham's life can be read only with the aid of a concordance to Philo. Yet when the pieces of this puzzle are put together, Philo's system is very clear and Abraham's stature is unchallenged.

In the Exposition, specifically De Abrahamo, Abraham's story is told first literally, and then in allegorical form. The allegory within the expository materials does not conflict with what is in the Allegory. Philo writes the same story for Jews and Gentiles. If the Exposition is written with a mind to explaining Judaism to Gentiles, than this double treatment within De Abrahamo is warranted. First Philo gives a literal meaning of the story, followed by the allegorical meaning, which is the more important story for Philo.

Philo intends for his works to show that Abraham exercises every virtue. In this way, one sees Philo's concern for a moral order in the universe. Above everything else, Abraham's life is a lesson in morality. Philo shows that wisdom accompanied by morality will lead a person to greatness and even immortality, defined by Philo as the attainment of the Forms. Without that necessary moral element, a person such as Lot, for example, would slip back

into the world of shadows. Philo scorns Lot, for Lot is not moral and consequently loses any amount of wisdom which he possessed.

Philo does not concern himself with apologetics. He does not twist the Biblical stories to fit any preconceived scheme. Philo recognizes that certain passages in Genesis are not flattering to Jews. Yet, even these passages are faithfully described, and then allegorized. The allegory is not used to apologize for Jews and Judaism, it is used to give a deeper meaning to Philo's religion. Allegory is a commentary to the Torah, not a substitute for it.

In contrast to Philo, Josephus does engage in apology. Since Josephus' descriptions of Abraham are generally concerned with Abraham as a general or as a king, some adjustment of the text is made. Abraham is no longer a tent dweller, he greets angels in his atrium. Abraham is changed from a Biblical nomad to a Roman landowner, with many slaves and paid servants. He even becomes a colonizer in the true Greek fashion. Abraham is also a better general than his enemies. He is a purveyor of wisdom; unlike his contemporaries, Abraham possesses <u>arete akros</u>. Abraham holds to a higher standard of morality, since he refused to take of the spoils from the war between the kings.

In his writings, Josephus endeavors to portray Abraham as a Roman. Abraham is schooled in the classics; events in his life parallel events described by Homer, Euripides and others. Yet, Abraham triumphs where the Greek heroes fail. Abraham is greater than the Greeks; by extension, the Jews would be judged superior as well.

Josephus tries to explain Pharasaic Judaism to Roman nobles. Consequently, Josephus portrays Abraham as a Jew schooled not only in the Jewish tradition, but also fully cognizant of Roman society.

Josephus, therefore, uses Abraham in two ways. Abraham is an apologetic figure; he explains Judaism to those around him and becomes a man of heroic proportions. Second, Abraham is an historic figure. He is the first to recognize the unity of God and brings Judaism into the world in order to promote his discovery. His life is historically accurate and his deeds are a matter of record.

The differences between the philosopher Philo and the historian Josephus are significant. Consequently, Abraham serves different purposes for each writer. Philo's and Josephus' different uses for Abraham reflect their differing societies. Both address certain needs within different Jewish communities, which existed simultaneously. Abraham's

use for such different purposes testifies to the vitality of Judaism in the First Century and illuminates the continuous redefining of Judaism and Jewish values that have kept Judaism alive throughout the ages.

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