

What's in a Name?

The Place of Philo's *De mutatione nominum* in the Allegorical Commentary (Draft only; not for citation)

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The effort to understand the structure of Philo's biblical commentaries goes back to antiquity. As a young man, Eusebius of Caesarea helped the priest Pamphilus organize the library at Caesarea.¹ One of the tasks was to catalogue the treatises of Philo that Origen had brought from Alexandria. In his list of Philo's treatises,² Eusebius suggested that they fell into three major groups: there were fifteen different treatises in at least twenty-three scrolls on Genesis,³ six different treatises—although only four in reality—in eleven scrolls on Exodus,⁴ and nine single-scroll works.⁵ The bishop recognized the separate nature of the *Questions and*

¹On the library see Andrew Carriker, *The Library of Eusebius of Caesarea*, VCSup 67 (Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2003), esp. 2-12; and Anthony Grafton and Megan Williams, *Christianity and the Transformation of the Book: Origen Eusebius, and the Library of Caesarea* (Cambridge: Belknap, 2006).

²Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 2.18.1-8.

³Philo, *Leg.* (unspecified plural=multiple scrolls), *QG, Agr.* 1-2 (=Agr. and Plant.), *Ebr.* 1-2 (one lost), *Sobr., Conf., Fug., Congr., Her., Virt., Mut., Test.* 1-2(=lost), *Migr., Gig./Deus*, and *Somn.* 1-5

⁴Philo, *QE* 1-5, *On the tabernacle* (=QE 2), *Decal., Spec.* 1-4, *On animals for sacrifice* (=Spec. 1.162-256), and *Praem.*

⁵Philo, *Prov., Hypoth., Ios., Anim., Improb.* (=lost), *Prob., Contempl., Nom.* (=spurious), *Virt.* (=Flacc., Legat. and three other lost treatises and not the preserved *Virt.*)

Answers on Genesis and Exodus, but did not distinguish between the Allegorical Commentary and the Exposition of the Law and certainly not any subdivisions within them.⁶

The next effort that we know about took place when sixth century Armenian Christians in Constantinople elected to translate Philo's works so that Armenian students could follow their Greek instructors explanations of Philo's complex Greek texts.⁷ The Hellenizing School—as it has come to be known—did not attempt to preserve all of Philo, but the parts that the Greek teachers used.⁸ They arranged his works into major blocks. For example, according to Grigor Abasean's *The Book of Causes*,⁹ there were seven blocks of material: providence,¹⁰ creation,¹¹ allegory,¹² the lives of the patriarchs,¹³ the appearance at Mamre,¹⁴ the Exodus,¹⁵ and

⁶On Eusebius's knowledge of Philo's library and the importance of this evidence see David T. Runia, *Philo in Early Christian Literature: a Survey*, CRINT 3.3 (Assen: Van Gorcum; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993), 16-31 and Sabrina Inowlocki, *Eusebius and the Jewish Authors: His Citation Technique in an Apologetic Context*, AJEC 64 (Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2006).

⁷On the Armenian corpus of Philo see Folker Siegert, "Der armenische Philon," ZKG 100 (1989): 353-369 and Anna Sirinian, "'Armenian Philo: A Survey of the Literature,'" in *Studies on the Ancient Armenian Version of Philo's Works*, ed. Sara M. Lombardi and Paola Pontani; SPhA 6 (Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2011), 7-44.

⁸On the Hellenizing School see Abraham Terian, "The Hellenizing School: Its Time, Place and Scope of its Activities Reconsidered," in *East of Byzantium: Suria and Aremnia in the Formative Period*, ed. Nina G. Garsian, Thomas F. Mathews, and Robert W. Thomson (Washington, D. C.: Dumbarton Oaks, Center for Byzantine Studies, 1982), 175-186.

⁹On this work see Manea Erna Shirinian, "Philo and the *Book of Causes* by Grigor Abasean," in *Studies on the Ancient Armenian Version of Philo's Works*, 155-189. For a similar but slightly different construction see Olga Vardazaryan, "The 'Armenian Philo': A Remnant of an Unknown Tradition," in *Studies on the Ancient Armenian Version of Philo's Works*, 191-216, esp. 199-200, who follows a scholiast. The difference between the two arrangements is that the order of allegory and the patriarchs is reversed.

¹⁰Philo, *Prov.* 1-2.

¹¹Philo, *QG* 1-3.

¹²Philo, *Leg.* 1-2.

¹³Philo, *Abr.*

¹⁴Philo, *QG* 4.

¹⁵Philo, *QE* 1-2; *Spec.* 1.79-81, 131-161, 285-345; *Spec.* 3.1-7; *Decal.*; *Spec.* 3.8-63; *Samp.*; *Ion*; *Deo*.

contemplation.¹⁶ Like Eusebius, the members of the Hellenizing School did not recognize or ignored Philo's own divisions of his commentaries; their concerns were quite different.

These two sources, the library at Caesarea and the Armenian translation, are the primary sources by which Philo's works have come down to us. It was not until the modern period that the structure of Philo's works became an important question. In the intervening centuries I am only aware of one manuscript that arranged Philo's works in an order that approaches our understanding and it differs significantly. Laurentianus plut. X, also known as Mediceus,¹⁷ an early thirteenth century manuscript, contains twenty-eight treatises including eleven from the Allegorical Commentary¹⁸ and ten from the Exposition of the Law¹⁹ that are arranged in different sequences than we think of them, including inserting *Abr.* into the sequence of treatises in the Allegorical Commentary.

The first two major editions of Philo began the process of recognizing the order that Philo had created. The *editio princeps* of Adrianus Turnebus in 1552²⁰ printed seventeen of the

¹⁶Philo, *Contempl.*

¹⁷I have worked through the lists in Howard L. Goodhart and Erwin R. Goodenough, "A General Bibliography of Philo Judaeus," in *The Politics of Philo Judaeus: Practice and Theory*, by Erwin R. Goodenough (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1938), 125-321. For M see #100 (p. 149).

¹⁸Philo, *Leg. 1, Leg. 2, Sacr., Cher.* (the order of *Sacr.* and *Cher.* is reversed from the modern order), *Agr.*, (*Det.* and *Post.* are missing), *Deus, Gig.* (the order of *Deus* and *Gig.* is reversed), *Abr.* (out of place from the Exposition), *Migr., Congr., Somn. 1.*, and *Plant.* (which belongs after *Agr.* but is out of place as the twenty-eighth treatise from Philo).

¹⁹Philo, *Abr.* (included with the treatises from the Allegorical Commentary but should go after *Opif.*), *Opif., Decal. Spec. 1, Spec. 2, Spec. 3, Spec. 4, Moses 1-3* (placed differently, but the placement is still argued), *Virt., Ios.* (should follow *Abr.* after *Opif.*).

²⁰Adrianus Turnebus, *Philonis Iudaei in libros Mosis, de mundi opificio, historicos, de legibus. Eiusdem libri singulares* (Paris: Adrianus Turnebus, 1552). Turnebus arranged the works as follows: *Opif., Leg. 1, 3 (=2), Cher., Sacr., Det., Agr., Plant., Ebr., Sobr., Gig., Deus, Conf., Abr., Migr., Congr., Fug., Her., Ios., Somn. 1, Mos., Virt. 51-174, Spec. 4.136-150, 151-237, Virt. 1-50, Decal., Spec. 2.1-38, 3, 1, Prob., Contempl., Virt. 187-227, Praem., Exs., Aet., Flacc., and Legat.*

treatises in the Allegorical Commentary but has seven major variations from the modern selection and sequence.²¹ In particular, Turnebus placed *Abr.* and *Ios.* in the treatises of belonging to the Allegorical Commentary, a move that suggests that he did not understand the distinction between the Allegorical Commentary and the Exposition of the Law. Thomas Mangey corrected most of Turnebus's mistakes in his 1742 edition of Philo.²² In fact, he listed all of the treatises in the Allegorical Commentary in the sequence that we now use with the exception of placing *Opif.* at the outset of the Allegorical Commentary instead of at the outset of the Exposition of the Law, an arrangement that has been followed by all major editions and translations except the modern Hebrew translation of Philo.²³ Mangey also arranged the Exposition of the Law in the basic sequence that we now know it. These arrangements were

Turnebus's edition was updated by David Hoeschelius and Sigmund Gelenius (Geneva: Petrus de la Rouiere, 1613) and again (Paris 1640).

²¹Turnebus began with *Opif.*, omitted *Post.*, placed *Gig.* and *Deus* after *Sobr.* instead of after *Det.* and *Post.*, introduced *Abr.* from the Exposition of the Law before *Migr.*, reversed the order of *Her.*, *Fug.*, and *Congr.*, omitted *Mut.*, and inserted *Ios.* from the Exposition of the Law.

²²Thomas Mangey, *Philonis iudaei opera quae reperiri potuerunt onia, Textum cum MSS, contulit, quamplurima etiam è Codd. Vaticano, Mediceo, & Bodleiano, scriptoribus item vetustis, necnon catenis graecis ineditis, adjecit, interpretationemque emendavit, universa notis & observationibus illustravit*, 2 vols. (London: William Bowyer, 1742).

²³Suzanne Daniyel-Nataf, Yehoshua Amir, and Maren Niehoff, eds. *Ketavim/Filon ha-Aleksandroni*, 6 vols. (Jerusalem: Bialik Institue and the Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities, 1986-2015). It is odd that this has been the case since Louis Massebieau, *Le classement des oeuvres de Philon* (Paris: E. Loroux, 1889),¹⁴ and Leopold Cohn, "Einleitung und Chronologie der Schriften Philos," *Philologus, Supplementband 7* (1899): 385-436, esp. 392, recognized that *Opif.* belonged to the Exposition of the Law.

followed by C. E. Richter in his 1828-1830 edition²⁴ and more importantly by Leopold Cohn and Paul Wendland in today's standard *editio major*.²⁵

While Cohn had Mangey and Richter as precedents, he worked through the evidence for the sequence of the treatises and set out his conclusions in a famous essay.²⁶ Louis Massebieau and Emile Bréhier, who edited Masebieau's essays, also worked on the chronology and sequence of Philo's works.²⁷ The German scholar and the French scholars agreed in recognizing the three major commentary series, although they reached different conclusions about the sequence: Cohn argued that the Allegorical Commentary preceded both the Exposition of the Law and the *Questions and Answers on Genesis and Exodus* while Masebieau and Bréhier contended that the Exposition of the Law preceded the Allegorical Commentary.²⁸

Fortunately, we do not need to settle the issue of sequence. We are concerned with the selection and arrangement of the treatises in the Allegorical Commentary, in particular *De mutatione nominum*. I propose to address the place of *De mutatione nominum* in the Allegorical Commentary by viewing it from three larger perspectives: the construction of the Allegorical Commentary as a series, the thematic integrity of individual treatises, and the question of subgroups within the series. I think that there are some broad principles that need

²⁴C. E. Richter, *Philonis Iudaei opera omnia: Textus editus ad fidem optimarum editionum*, 8 vols. (Leipzig: E. B. Schwickert, 1828-1830).

²⁵Leopold Cohn, Paul Wendland, Sigofred Reiter, and Ioannes Leisegang, eds., *Philonis Alexandrini opera quae supersunt*, 7 vols. (Berlin: Georg Reimer, 1896-1930; 2nd ed., Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1962).

²⁶Cohn, "Einleitung und Chronologie der Schriften Philos," 385-436.

²⁷Massebieau, *Le classement des oeuvres de Philon*, who worked through the arrangement of the treatises, and Louis Masebieau and Emile Bréhier, "Essai sur la chronologie de la vie et des oeuvres de Philon," *Revue de Histoire des Religions* 53 (1906): 25-64, 164-185, 267-289, esp. 164-185 and 267-279, who worked out the chronology of the treatises.

²⁸Massebieau, *Le classement des oeuvres de Philon*, 3, 7-41, and Cohn, "Einleitung und Chronologie der Schriften Philos," 396-414.

to be recognized in situating a particular treatise. This paper will concentrate on those larger issues and use *De mutatione nominum* as an illustration.

Authorial Constructions

We begin with the construction of the series. While the modern division of Philo's commentaries into three distinct series is generally accepted, there are dissenters.²⁹ French scholars have challenged the distinction between the Allegorical Commentary and the Exposition of the Law. In particular, Valentin Nikiprowetzky argued that the Allegorical Commentary and the Exposition of the Law formed one grand commentary,³⁰ a view that is still held by some leading French Philonists.³¹ I am convinced that the three series are authorial constructions of Philo's own design. There are five indicators or criteria of authorial design: explicit statements, secondary prefaces,³² distinct approaches to the biblical text,³³ literary

²⁹The two most important treatments are Jenny Morris, "The Jewish Philosopher Philo," in Emil Schürer, *The History of the Jewish People in the Age of Jesus Christ*, rev. ed., Geza Vermes, Fergus Millar, and Martin Goodman (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1987), 3:819-870 and James R. Royse, "The Works of Philo," in *The Cambridge Companion to Philo*, ed. Adam Kamesar (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 32-64.

³⁰Valentin Nikiprowetzky, *Le commentaire de l'écriture chez Philon d'Alexandrie* (Leiden: Brill, 1977), 192-202, 241-242, and idem, "Brève note sur le Commentaire Allegorique et l'Exposition de la Loi chez Philon d'Alexandrie," in *Mélanges bibliques et orientaux en l'honneur de M. Mathias Delcor*, ed. André Cquot, Simon Légasse, and Michel Tardieu, AOAT 212 (Kevalaer: Butzon & Brecker; Keukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1981), 321-329.

³¹Most notably Mireille Hadas-Label, *Philo of Alexandria: A Thinker in the Jewish Diaspora*, trans. by Robin Fréchet; Studies in Philo of Alexandria 7 (Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2012), 117-122, 149.

³²A secondary preface is a brief introduction at the outset of a scroll in a multiple scroll work that provides a bridge between the previous scroll and the current scroll by referring back to the previous scroll and orienting the reader to the current scroll. It thus helps to situate the scroll in a series. On secondary prefaces in Philo see Gregory E. Sterling, "'Prolific in Expression and Broad in Thought': Internal References to Philo's Allegorical Commentary and Exposition of the Law," *Euphrosyne* 40 (2012): 55-76, esp. 60-63.

³³There are a number of treatments of Philo's use of the biblical text. I have attempted to summarize my own understanding in "The Interpreter of Moses: Philo of Alexandria and the

forms, and different audiences.³⁴ Let me briefly apply these five criteria to each of the series. I will treat the *Questions and Answers* and Exposition of the Law briefly.

Questions and Answers on Genesis and Exodus. While there is a debate about whether the *Questions and Answers on Genesis and Exodus* precede or follow the Allegorical Commentary,³⁵ there is virtually a unanimous judgment that they are a separate series with their own integrity. The first two criteria do not apply since we do not have any explicit statements by Philo and there are no secondary prefaces. However, the other three criteria do apply. Philo handled the biblical text in a distinct way in this series. He began each *quaestio* with a citation of the biblical text. In the *solutio* the Alexandrian consistently began with a literal interpretation and then moved on to allegorical readings. He rarely used secondary or tertiary

Biblical Text," in *A Companion to Biblical Interpretation in Early Judaism*, ed. Matthias Henze (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2012), 415-435.

³⁴The most important treatments of Philo's audiences are Ellen Birnbaum, *The Place of Judaism in Philo's Thought: Israel, Jews, and Proselytes*, BJS 290/SPhiloMS 2 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1996); Martina Böhm, *Rezeption und Funktion der Vätererzählungen bei Philo von Alexandrien: Zum Zusammenhang von Kontext, Hermeneutik und Exegese im frühen Judentum*, BZ NW 128 (Berlin and New York: de Gruyter, 2005); and Maren Niehoff, *Jewish Exegesis and Homeric Scholarship in Alexandria*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011). Cf. also Erwin R. Goodenough, "Philo's Exposition of the Law and his *De vita Mosis*," *HTR* 26 (1933): 109-125, who argued that the Exposition, in contrast to Philo's other works, addressed a broader audience—including non-Jews.

³⁵Those who think the *QGE* were written prior to the Allegorical Commentary include Abraham Terian, "The Priority of the *Quaestiones* among Philo's Exegetical Commentaries," in *Both Literal and Allegorical: Studies in Philo of Alexandria's Questions and Answers on Genesis and Exodus*, ed. David M. Hay; BJS 233 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1991), 29-46; idem, *Quaestiones et solutiones in Exodum. I et II e versione armeniaca et fragmenta graeca*, PAPM 34C (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1992), 27-51; and Gregory E. Sterling, "Philo's *Quaestiones*: Prolegomena or Afterthought," *Both Literal and Allegorical*, 99-123. Those who argue that the *QGE* come after the Allegorical Commentary include Cohn, "Einleitung und Chronologie der Schriften Philos," 403-404 and Niehoff, *Jewish Exegesis and Homeric Scholarship in Alexandria*, 152-168, esp. 157-158 and 168.

texts in his answer (criterion 3).³⁶ The form is also distinct: it is the first full zetematic commentary from a Jewish author that we have (criterion 4).³⁷ Finally, the audience appears to be specific (criterion 5). While there are different possibilities, I suggest that the *Questions and Answers* reflect the school instruction in which a teacher posed questions about a text that was under consideration. The *Questions and Answers* was a type of first text for students within Philo's school. It helped them learn how to read the text in a careful way and to know what questions to ask and the range of possible answers.³⁸

The Exposition of the Law. The Exposition of the Law has the best attestation as an independent work: all five criteria attest Philo's hand in shaping it as a distinct series. On three different occasions Philo laid out the plan for the Exposition (criterion 1). While the three plans do not agree in all of the specific details, they make it clear that he had reflected on the series as a whole and thought of it as a unit.³⁹ More importantly for our purposes, they indicate that Philo planned subunits within the Exposition, a point to which we will return below.

³⁶On the absence of secondary texts in *QGE* see David T. Runia, "Secondary Texts in Philo's *Quaestiones*," *Both Literal and Allegorical*, 47-79.

³⁷Compare Aristotle, *Quaest. hom.*; Plutarch, *Quaest. plat.* Earlier Jewish authors used the *quaestio*, but did not write zetematic commentaries—at least none that we know about, e.g., Demetrius, frgs. 2 and 5; Aristobulus, frg. 2. On the form see Sze-Kar Wan, "The *Quaestiones et solutions in Genesim et in Exodum* of Philo Judaeus: A Synoptic Approach," (Ph.D. diss., Harvard University, 1992) and Annelie Volgers and Claudio Zamagni, eds., *Erotapokriseis: Early Christian Question-and-Answer Literature in Context*, CBET 37 (Leuven: Peeters, 2004).

³⁸On this see Gregory E. Sterling, "The School of Moses in Alexandria: An Attempt to Reconstruct the School of Philo," forthcoming. See also idem, "The School of Sacred Laws': The Social Setting of Philo's Treatises," *VC* 53 (1999): 148-64; and idem, "Philo's School: The Social Setting of Ancient Commentaries," in *Sophisten in Hellenismus und Kaiserzeit: Orte, Methoden und Personen der Bildungsvermittlung*, ed Beatrice Wyss; STAC (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, forthcoming), 123-142.

³⁹Philo, *Mos.* 2.45-47; *Abr.* 2-5; and *Praem.* 1-3. For a detailed analysis of the three statements see Gregory E. Sterling, "Prolific in Expression and Broad in Thought," 67-69.

Every treatise opens with a secondary preface that links it to the preceding treatise (criterion 2).⁴⁰ The only exceptions are the first treatise in the series, *Opif.*, and the introductory biography to the series, *Mos.*⁴¹ Since secondary prefaces are intended to connect scrolls in a multi-scroll work, Philo's consistent use of secondary prefaces makes it clear that he wanted readers to understand that the scrolls comprised a unified and continuous whole.

The unique character of the Exposition is also signaled by Philo's approach to the biblical text (criterion 3). He rarely cited the biblical text as a basis for his comments, but retold it and then wrote a commentary on the retelling. This led Peder Borgen to call it rewritten Bible, a classification that recognizes the technique but not the fact that Philo then provided a commentary on it.⁴² The effect of providing an allegorical commentary on a retelling of the text in a treatise like *De Abrahamo* is to combine both levels of reading.

The literary character is also different: there are five *bioi* associated with this attempt to cover the entire Pentateuch (criterion 4).⁴³ Finally, the work presumes the broadest audience, including interested outsiders (criterion 5). I think that these treatises might reflect the type of

⁴⁰Philo, *Abr.* 1-6; *Ios.* 1; *Decal.* 1; *Spec.* 1.1; 2.1; 3.7; 4.1, 132-35; *Praem.* 1-3.

⁴¹Albert C. Geljon, *Philonic Exegesis in Gregory of Nyssa's De vita Moysis*, BJS 333/SPhM 5 (Providence: Brown Judaic Studies, 2002), 7-46, has shown that *Mos.* is a type of introductory biography. I think that it belongs to the Exposition of the Law since it contains a plan for the Exposition (2.45-47) and refers to it explicitly within the Exposition (*Virt.* 52; *Praem.* 53). For details see Sterling, "Prolific in Expression and Broad in Thought," 72-74.

⁴²Peder Borgen, *Philo of Alexandria: An Exegete for His Time*, NovTSup 86 (Leiden: Brill, 1997), 46-79, esp. 63-79.

⁴³Philo, *Mos.* 1-2; *Abr.*, and *Ios.* Two other *bioi* have been lost: *De Isaaco* and *De Jacobo* (*Ios.* 1).

presentations that Philo gave to larger groups who came to hear him expound the laws of Moses in much the same way that Epictetus, Plotinus, and Proclus offered “public lectures.”⁴⁴

The Allegorical Commentary. The Allegorical Commentary is also a distinct work. While we do not have any Philonic statements about its plan (criterion 1), we do have secondary prefaces for six of the preserved nineteen treatises (criterion 2). The first three create a network of four treatises. There are four treatises that deal with Noah after the flood: *Agr.*, *Plant. Ebr.*, and *Sobr.* Philo linked these four with secondary prefaces: *Plant.* 1 refers back to *Agr.*,⁴⁵ *Ebr.* to *Plant.*,⁴⁶ and *Sobr.* back to *Ebr.*⁴⁷ The prefaces make the works into a unit on Noah. The other three secondary prefaces are scattered. Two of these refer back to works that have been lost⁴⁸ and the other to a preceding work, i.e., *Fug.* refers back to *Congr.*⁴⁹ The inconsistent use of secondary prefaces is not surprising. While Diodorus Siculus used them regularly in his *Bibliotheke*,⁵⁰ Josephus used them occasionally in his *magnum opus*: he

⁴⁴For the evidence see Sterling, “The School of Moses in Alexandria: An Attempt to Reconstruct the School of Philo.”

⁴⁵See also Philo, *Agr.* 181, that anticipates *Plant.*

⁴⁶Philo, *Ebr.* 1.

⁴⁷Philo, *Sobr.* 1. This appears to be a reference to a lost treatise of *Ebr.* Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 2.18.2, thought that Philo wrote two treatises on *Ebr.* Since the treatise opens by referring to five topics and the treatise only handles three of the five, it is likely that our treatise is *Ebr.* 1 and that *Ebr.* 2 is lost. This is at odds with the statement in our papyrus that states that it is *Ebr.* 2. See James R. Royse, “The Oxyrhynchus Papyrus of Philo,” *Bulletin of the American Society of Papyrologists* 17 (1980): 160-161. I have followed the statements of the text rather than the papyrus.

⁴⁸Philo, *Her.* 1, refers back to a lost work on rewards based on Gen 15:1; and *Somn.* 1.1, refers to a preceding work (= *Somn.* 1; our *Somn.* 1 is then *Somn.* 2).

⁴⁹Philo, *Fug.* 2.

⁵⁰All of the extant books except for 2, 3, and 11 have secondary prefaces. On Diodorus’s practice see Kenneth S. Sacks, “The Lesser Prooemia of Diodorus Siculus,” *Hermes* 110 (1982): 434-444, and idem, *Diodorus Siculus and the History of the First Century* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990), 9-22.

employed them in five of the twenty scrolls of his *Antiquitates*.⁵¹ The secondary prefaces make us realize that Philo conceived of the Allegorical Commentary as a unity.

As is well known, Philo handled the biblical text differently in the Allegorical Commentary than he did in either the *Quaestiones et solutiones* or the Exposition of the Law (criterion 3). The exegesis is lemmatic: it works from selections of the biblical text. It is, however, lemmatic in a far more complex way than the other two series. Philo anchors his exegesis in the main biblical lemma from Genesis, but adds secondary and tertiary layers of commentary based on other biblical lemmata. While the references to the main biblical lemmata are clear, the relationship among the secondary and tertiary lemmata are not always immediately transparent.⁵² Still the basic pattern of his exegesis is unambiguous.⁵³ The interpretations are overwhelmingly allegorical.

The specific literary form of the treatises in the Allegorical Commentary is—in many ways—*sui generis* (criterion 4). It clearly has roots in the Stoic allegorical interpretations of Homer and Hesiod as represented by commentators like Cornutus and Heraclitus, but goes beyond them in developing the narrative. It is closer to the philosophical commentaries in the larger Platonic tradition, e.g., the Middle Platonic *Anonymous Theaetetus Commentary* and

⁵¹Josephus, *A.J.* 8.1; 13.1; 14.1; 15.1; and 20.1.

⁵²This has produced a number of negative judgments. F. H. Colson, “Philo’s Quotations from the Old Testament,” *JTS* 41 (1940): 250, thought that his argumentation presented “an awful tangle.”

⁵³The most helpful summary of Philo’s handling of the lemmatic exegesis is Albert C. Geljon and David T. Runia, *On Cultivation: Introduction, Translation, and Commentary*, PACS 4 (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 10-21, esp. 10-16.

Neo-Platonic commentaries like Porphyry's *On the Cave of the Nymphs* and Proclus's *Commentary on the Timaeus*.⁵⁴ It is, however, distinct in ways that we will sketch below.

Finally, the audience for the Allegorical Commentary is different than the audiences for the other commentary series (criterion 5). The implied reader of these treatises knows both the biblical text and the Greek philosophical tradition reasonably well. I suggest that these treatises were for advanced students in Philo's school.

The upshot of this discussion is that we need to think about the place of each treatise as a unit in a larger unity. Treatises do not stand on their own; they are units within a larger whole.

Thematic Unity

At the same time, the units are discrete in ways that suggest that the length and contents were not solely determined by the length of a papyrus scroll. I suggested that Philo's treatises were similar to but distinct from commentaries in the philosophical tradition. They differ markedly by developing specific themes for each scroll.⁵⁵ It is correct to say that the Allegorical Commentary is a running commentary on the text of Genesis 2:1-17:22—or 18:2 if we include the fragment *De Deo*. The commentaries do not, however, provide a balanced or relatively even treatment of the different units of the biblical text. Philo wrote treatises on

⁵⁴The most important treatments of the form of the commentaries are John M. Dillon, "The Formal Structure of Philo's Allegorical Exegesis," in *Two treatises of Philo of Alexandria: A Commentary on De gigantibus and Quod Deus sit immutabilis*, by David Winston and John Dillon; BJS 25 (Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1983), 77-88; David T. Runia, "The Structure of Philo's Allegorical Treatises: A Review of Two Recent Studies and Some Additional Comments," VC 38 (1984): 209–256; and idem, "Further Observations on the Structure of Philo's Allegorical Treatises," VC 41 (1987): 105–138.

⁵⁵On Philo's division of his work into specific books see James R. Royse, "Philo's Division of His Works into Books," *SPhiloA* 13 (2001): 59-85.

significantly different lengths of the biblical text from a half verse in both *Agr.* and *Plant.* to a full modern chapter in *Leg.* 1 and *Her.*⁵⁶ Why vary the length of the biblical text so much?

Philo typically organized the treatises around a specific theme.⁵⁷ We do not know if he assigned titles to the treatises, but in his secondary prefaces he consistently states basic themes for the treatises to which he refers. For example, in the secondary preface that opens *Plant.* he summarized both *Agr.* and *Plant.*: “In the former book we discussed the matters pertaining to general agricultural skills, at least what was appropriate to it. In this book we will explain—as best we can—the particular skill of tending vines.”⁵⁸ The statement is more than a summary of the biblical text; it is a summary of the contents of the two treatises around an organizing theme. Similarly, Philo opened *Fug.* with a reference back to *Congr.* and a summary of *Fug.*: “Having discussed in the preceding the things that were appropriate to the preliminary studies and evil, we will next record the treatment of fugitives.”⁵⁹ The other secondary prefaces make similar statements about the respective treatises they address.⁶⁰ These are the only direct

⁵⁶Philo, *Agr.* covers Gen 9:20a and *Plant.* explains Gen 9:20b; while *Leg.* 1 explores Gen 2:1-3:1a and *Her.* Gen 15:2-18.

⁵⁷I am arguing against the position of Nikiprotwetzky, *Le commentaire de l'Écriture chez Philon d'Alexandrie*, who thought that the sequential nature of Philo's exegesis only allowed for a “loose thematic” unity. I agree with Nikiprotwetzky that Philo incorporated *quaestiones et solutiones* into the Allegorical Commentary, but think that the explicit statements in the secondary prefaces must be taken more seriously than he allowed.

⁵⁸Philo, *Plant.* 1. Cf. the conclusion of *Agr.* 181, that sets up *Plant.*: “Let us speak in turn about his skill in cultivating plants.”

⁵⁹Philo, *Fug.* 2.

⁶⁰Philo, *Ebr.* 1: “We have mentioned—to the best of our ability—the things that other philosophers have said about intoxication as a metaphor in the preceding book. Let us now consider what the incredibly great and wise lawgiver thinks about it”; *Sobr.* 1, “Having gone through the things the lawgiver said about intoxication and nakedness previously, let us begin to append the subsequent account to what has been said” (note the absence of a theme for *Sobr.* in this statement, but not in the treatise); *Her.* 1, “In the preceding treatise we worked through the topic of rewards as accurately as possible” (note again the absence of the theme

statements that we have from Philo about the treatises as a whole. They suggest that he organized his treatises around specific themes.

There is, however, a limit to the unity that we should not ignore, a factor generated by the sequential nature of Philo's exegesis of the biblical narrative. In some treatises, the theme works for a section of the treatise, but not necessarily for all of it. For example, in *De mutatione nominum*, the theme proper works for §§60-129 where Philo works through a series of name changes. We might expand this and include Philo's discussion of the names of God in §§11-17 (see §§1-53). While this unit does not deal with a change of names, it does explain the rationale for different divine names and could be understood to reflect the broader theme. However, the theme does not apply to Philo's subsequent interpretation of Gen 17 in the treatise.⁶¹ The treatise is a good example of how the theme may work for some of the treatise but not all of it. There are other treatises where the theme works for the entire treatise. The most obvious example of this is *De somniis*, but it also works well for *De fuga et inventione*.

It is thus possible to speak of thematic unity as long as we keep in mind that the treatises do not have the type of close-knit structure and coherence that we would expect in a twenty-first century monograph. Even when the treatise is clearly organized around a major theme or two, the layers of secondary and tertiary lemmata take readers into subjects that are at some distance from the main theme. The key structural device for Philo was the main biblical

for *Her.* in this statement, although the treatise has a clear theme); *Somn.* 1.1, "The work prior to this one encompassed God-sent dreams incorporated in the first type, in which—as we said—the Deity sends dreams to us in our sleep by his own initiative. In this treatise we will show—to the best of our ability—those that belong to the second type."

⁶¹Gen 17:3 (§§54-56), 4 (§§57-59), 16 (§§130-153), 17a (§§154-174), 17b (§§175-200), 18 (§§201-251), 19 (§§252-260), 20 (§§261-263), 21 (§§264-266), 21 (§§267-278), and 22 (§279).

lemma. It is the main biblical lemma that Philo selected that is at the heart of the theme whether the theme is co-extensive with all of the text that Philo addressed or not. There is enough unity in the treatise that the titles assigned to them are generally accurate summaries of the basic contents of the work. For this reason I think that we need to take the unity of treatises seriously, although I think that a careful study of this issue remains a *desideratum*.

The importance of recognizing the thematic unity of the treatises is that we must take their thematic unity into consideration when we ask whether there are subunits beyond the individual treatises in the Allegorical Commentary. It is to this question that we now turn.

Subgroups of Allegorical Commentaries

As we indicated above and is well known, there are distinct subunits within the Exposition of the Law. Philo's first two summaries of the plan for the Exposition offer two parts: creation and the laws.⁶² The final summary adds one more subunit: creation, historical works, and legislation.⁶³ Does the Allegorical Commentary also have subunits? Does *De mutatione nominum* belong to a cycle of treatises within the Allegorical Commentary or does it stand as a discrete unit within the larger commentary series?

Since the nineteenth century, scholars have explored different options. Massebieau and Bréhier began this inquiry by suggesting that Philo's treatises could be grouped chronologically on the basis of allusions to persecutions against the Jews.⁶⁴ They organized the treatises into

⁶²Philo, *Abr.* 2-5; *Mos.* 2.45-47.

⁶³Philo, *Praem.* 1-3. Adam Kamesar, "Biblical Interpretation in Philo," *The Cambridge Companion to Philo*, 74-77, noted that Josephus, *A.J.* 1.18, had the same threefold division and suggested that the threefold division may have been a traditional schema.

⁶⁴Massebieau and Bréhier, "Essai sur la chronologie de la vie et des oeuvres de Philon," 170-185.

four groups: *Leg.* through *Gig./Deus* were written during a period of peace and prosperity; *Agr.* through *Conf.* reflect the turbulent years under Caligula; *Her.*, *Congr.*, and *Fug.* suggest a return to a profound peace; and *Somn.* turns back to the persecutions. There are several problems with this. First, I am very skeptical about Massibeu's basic methodology: the allusions are vague at best; I do not think that we can recreate a political history from the treatises. Second, while it is possible that Philo wrote the Allegorical Commentary over the course of his lifetime, I am inclined to think that he wrote it—or at least the bulk of it—prior to the Exposition of the Laws, a problem for Massibeu's and Bréhier's reconstruction.⁶⁵

The next major effort to analyze the treatises of the Allegorical Commentary was by another French scholar, Jacques Cazeaux. Cazeaux wrote two large works in which he applied structuralism to groups of texts that he identified as the Abraham cycle and the Noah cycle.⁶⁶ He took his cue from *Sacr.* 83-85 and argued that the *Migr.*, *Her.*, *Congr.*, *Fug.*, and *Mut.* formed a unified series of treatises. Similarly, he suggested that *Gig/Deus*, *Agr.*, *Plant.*, *Ebr.* and *Sobr.* form a cycle. While Cazeaux's work is an impressive intellectual accomplishment, he fails to take the fundamental lemmatic nature of Philo's exegesis into account, a failure that leads to an oversight of the basic structure of Philo's treatises and an overdeveloped sense of unity.⁶⁷

⁶⁵See my "Prolific in expression and broad in thought."

⁶⁶Jacques Cazeaux, *La trame et la chaîne: Ou les structures littéraires et l'exégèse des cinq des Traités de Philon d'Alexandrie*, ALGHJ 15 (Leiden: Brill, 1983) and idem, *La trame de la chaîne, II: Le cycle de Noé dans Philon d'Alexandrie*, ALGHJ 20 (Leiden: Brill, 1989).

⁶⁷The most important critique is Runia, "The Structure of Philo's Allegorical Treatises." For a recent attempt to work from Cazeaux see Uri Gershowitz and Arkady Kovelman, "A Symmetrical Teleological Construction in the Treatises of Philo and in the Talmud," *Review of Rabbinic Literature* 5 (2002): 228–246, who argue that Philo and the rabbis followed two organizational principles: anticipation and symmetry. Anticipation refers to the points that open and close a treatise and symmetry to the process of moving through the treatise.

There are other works that have attempted to organize the treatises in the Allegorical Commentary, but these are the major efforts.⁶⁸ Our analysis above suggests that we need to think through several factors when addressing this question. On the one hand, we need to explain how a treatise fits into the Allegorical Commentary that Philo considers a single work. On the other hand, each treatise within the Allegorical Commentary has a literary integrity that should be respected. How can we address these factors that push both outward and inward?

I would like to offer a simple—but I hope not simplistic—proposal, one that is relatively transparent in the treatises themselves. Philo used characters in Genesis as a means of introducing approaches to virtue. He organized the ancestors into two triads⁶⁹ and wrote a trilogy on the second triad of ancestors in the Exposition of the Law: Abraham acquired virtue by learning, Isaac was born with virtue, and Jacob came to virtue through practice.⁷⁰ I suggest that Philo used select characters and their relationship to virtue as a major structural device in the Allegorical Commentary. There are three major clusters around specific characters:

Character	Treatises
Cain	<i>Sacr.</i> <i>Det.</i> <i>Post.</i>
Noah	<i>Gig./Deus</i> <i>Agr.</i> <i>Plant.</i> <i>Ebr.</i> <i>Sobr.</i>

⁶⁸E.g., Gary Thorne, “The Structure of Philo’s Commentary on the Pentateuch,” *Dionysius* 13 (1989): 17-50, esp. 22-24, argued that all three series should be read as a unit. He thinks that *Opif.* 3 is the key to the entire project. While there is some merit in recognizing the common ground among the series, it is a mistake to ignore the very different character that each series has..

⁶⁹Philo, *Abr.* 7-47; *Praem.* 7-23.

⁷⁰Philo, *Abr.* and *Ios.* 1, for the lost works *De Isaaco* and *De Jacobo*.

Abraham

Migr.
Her.
Congr.
Fug.
Mut.

The three characters have different relationships to virtue; Cain is the embodiment of self-love;⁷¹ Noah is a model of perfection and one of the members of the first triad; and Abraham acquired virtue by learning and is a member of the second triad. Each individual treatise represents a particular take on the relationship between the character and virtue. In the case of *De mutatione nominum*, the point about Abraham's learning virtue is made explicit multiple times.⁷² The treatise develops an interpretation of Gen 17 that illustrates this, but does not stand in an obvious sequence with other treatises about Abraham in the Allegorical Commentary. This is true for all of the treatises in the stories about Abraham: each illustrates his acquisition of virtue in some way, but there is no movement from one treatise to the next in his progress towards virtue. The movement is due to the narrative of the biblical text.

There is an obvious objection to this. How do we account for the beginning (*Leg.* 1-3 and *Cher.*) and end of the Allegorical Commentary (*Somn.* 1-2) or a treatise like *Conf.* that is neither about Noah nor about Abraham? The beginning and end consist of multi-scroll works that help form their own unit: there were originally four books in *Leg.*⁷³ and five in *Somn.*⁷⁴ The fact that

⁷¹On Cain see Hindy Najman, "Cain and Abel as Character Traits: A Study of the Allegorical Typology of Philo of Alexandria," in *Eve's Children: The Biblical Stories Retold and Interpreted in Jewish and Christian Traditions*, Themes in Biblical Narrative 1 (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 107-118.

⁷²Philo, *Mut.* 12, 83-88.

⁷³Philo, *Leg.* 1-2 is probably *Leg.* 1; *Leg.* 2 is lost as the lacuna suggests (Gen 3:1b-8a is not addressed); *Leg.* 3=*Leg.* 3; and *Leg.* 4 is lost (*Sacr.* 51 and the gap in coverage of Gen 3:20-23).

the beginning and end of the series have a symmetry is worth noting. I would say that *Conf.* serves as a bridge between the two series that address the two major characters of virtue. I would thus posit five major clusters of treatises within the Allegorical Commentary: the creation of humanity and primeval history, Cain, Noah, Abraham, and dreams.

Conclusion

The challenge in analyzing the Allegorical Commentary is that there are forces that push us in different directions. We have identified three: the unity of the series, the literary integrity of each treatise, and the decision to write multiple treatises around specific themes or characters.

It is important that we recognize that the Allegorical Commentary is a Philonic construct not a modern construct: we have only recognized what Philo produced. We need to respect the integrity of the commentary series as a larger unit of work. The work may be fairly summarized as an allegory of the soul that uses allegorical exegesis on multiple lemmatic levels.

Each treatise within the series has a level of thematic unity that should also be respected. As we have seen, the extent or degree of this unity varies. In some treatises, there is a common theme or two for the entire treatise; in other treatises the theme works well for a only a section of the treatise. The key factor is the selection of the main biblical lemma. While it might be tempting to generalize and say that the smaller the main biblical lemma the greater the unity, this does not hold in cases like *Fug.* or *Somn.* Philo was not consistent in the extent of the biblical lemma or in the degree that he thematized it. While we should not overlook the

⁷⁴Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 2.18.4. Our *Somn.* 1-2 probably equals the original 2-3.

variations in the treatises, we should also not overlook the degree to which Philo gave them some unity.

A glance at the treatises in the Allegorical Commentary suggests that they fall into five major groups. Three of these groups focus on individuals and likely reflect Philo's well known penchant for developing his understanding of virtue biographically. If we respect the integrity of each treatise and the sequential nature of Philo's handling of the biblical text, we need not look for progressive movement that advances from one treatise to the next or any other pattern of movement. Each treatise can be understood as a discrete treatment of the text in question. The exception to this is when Philo wrote pairs, e.g., *Agr. and Plant.* or *Ebr. and Sobr.* The treatises that deal with a major figure in the biblical text may be read together, but should not be read in the same way that we would read a biography, e.g., *De Abrahamo*.

E. R. Dodds once called Philo a "jackdaw" rather than a philosopher because of the eclectic nature of his thought.⁷⁵ While it is true that Philo is eclectic in the sense that he presents multiple perspectives and is not consistent, it is a mistake to think that he did not have a basic framework of thought. In the same way, while it is a real challenge to work through a treatise in the Allegorical Commentary and see the relationship between the various subunits, let alone think about the series as a whole, it is a mistake to think that Philo worked without a plan or that the treatises do not reflect that plan.

⁷⁵E. R. Dodds, "The *Parmenides* of Plato and the Origin of the Neoplatonic 'One'," *CQ* 22 (1928): 132.

