

PHILO'S POETICS OF ASSOCIATION:
THE USE OF SECONDARY AND TERTIARY LEMMAS IN *ON THE CHERUBIM*

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I. Introduction: Φίλων, Faulkner, and the Poetics of Association

I am grateful to Annewies van den Hoek, Ronald Cox, and the Philo Seminar steering committee for the invitation to present a paper on the use of secondary and tertiary biblical lemmas in Philo's allegorical treatise, *On the Cherubim*. Before I turn to this task, I wish briefly to say a word as to why this subject might hold interest for anyone who does *not* happen to be writing a commentary on *De cherubim*, as well as to provide a new vista for reconsidering some old questions about Philo's commentary technique in the Allegorical Commentary.

1. Philo as Literary Critic and Scriptural Architect

Amongst the many contributions of Philo of Alexandria's vast corpus to the study of early Judaism and Christianity, the one that comes first (at least logically)—and which perhaps remains the most understudied—is neither the theological, nor the philosophical, nor even the exegetical *per se*, but the “literary critical.” Like Porphyry, whose allegorical exegesis of *Od.* 13.102–12 in

The Cave of the Nymphs is sometimes heralded as an early work of “literary criticism,”¹ Philo was in the first place a *reader* of ancient texts. He attributed to the five books of Moses the kind of literary unity that Plato says should adhere in the case of a *single* treatise.² The five books of the Pentateuch are thus related to one another organically, rhetorically, and theologically, as parts of a body, of which, Philo in one place suggests, the “blessings” of Genesis 33 are the “head.”³

In keeping with this somatic principle, the Allegorical Commentary distinguishes itself by Philo’s weaving together, as upon the loom of Penelope, a new fabric of scriptural derivation that draws its threads not from one book (Genesis), but, principally, from five—“fleshing out” the bare bones of Moses’ first book with the sinews, muscles, and skin of the other four, as well as the odd text from the prophets or writings.

While the treatises of the Allegorical Commentary follow a sequential principle with regard to the primary biblical texts to which they attend, Philo not uncommonly adorns these expositions with interpretations of biblical texts that are called “secondary”—texts which are not a part of the cell under the microscope, but which are derived from tissue drawn from the same living organism. Secondary texts may themselves be adorned with yet a third level of texts, called “tertiary.” What compels Philo, on any given occasion, to make these scriptural amplifications is probably a mystery known not even to the Alexandrian himself, but only to his guardian Logos. Whatever his motivations, implicit in this adduction of secondary and tertiary biblical lemmas is a literary and theological argument that scripture constitutes a unified body. Philo can thus be thought of not

¹ On Porphyry’s allegory as literary criticism, see Robert Lamberton, *Porphyry, On the Cave of the Nymphs: Translation and Introductory Essay* (Barrytown, NY: Station Hill, 1983).

² Plato, *Phaedr.* 264c.

³ Philo speaks of these blessings to the individual tribes in Gen 33 as “the head of the whole lawbook” (*Mos.* 2.290). While the *Vita Mosis* most clearly relates to the Exposition of the Law (so E. R. Goodenough), there is reason to wonder (as Gregory Sterling has) whether it might have provided an introduction to the entire Philonic corpus, as Porphyry’s *Life of Plotinus*.

merely as a scriptural exegete, but even more fundamentally as a scriptural architect or craftsman, building a new theological edifice through a process I will here call “the poetics of association.”

2. *Three Levels of Analysis: Textual Source, Modes of Transition, and Associative Logic*

Viewing Philo’s “poetics of association” as a literary critical task as well as a theological one immediately elicits a preliminary conclusion—that Philo’s secondary lemmas come in two kinds: those that derive from the hand of Moses and those that do not. This will be an important point of analysis when we turn to *On the Cherubim*. In addition to (i) the source of the secondary text, students of the Allegorical Commentary have routinely analyzed Philo’s commentary structures in light of what David Runia calls (ii) “the mode of transition (MOT),”⁴ i.e. the criterion of selection by which the commentator or homilist identifies a secondary text by which to explicate the meaning of the primary one. According to Runia, the primary MOTs used by Philo are “verbal” and “thematic.”⁵ Although occasionally Philo makes his MOT explicit, more often the implicit logic by which he relates one text to another goes unstated, and may not be revealed until a relatively late stage in the exposition of a text.

Viewed in one light, the task of this paper is simple enough: to gather a list of Philo’s biblical lemmas in *On the Cherubim*, determine a “mode of transition” between them, and to draw some analytical conclusions. This task, however, raises several important technical challenges. What “counts” as a lemma, such that it ought to be figured in the emerging textual schema? Must it be a citation, or are allusions also important to track? If allusions are considered, do they need to be at least three words? Or might Philo, at times, allude to the logic of a source in paraphrastic

⁴ David Runia, “Further Observations on the Structure of Philo’s Allegorical Treatises.” *VC* 41 (1987): 105–38, esp. 133–134.

⁵ *Ibid.* Throughout the present study, I adopt the term “lexical” in place of “verbal.”

ways that do not echo his source text directly?⁶ A conservative method would count only lemmatic citations, i.e. instances where Philo indicates a biblical lemma is being quoted through a formulaic verb such as λέγει. Seasoned students of Philo will recognize that such a conservative approach, while useful in determining a baseline, does not proffer a complete picture of Philo's exegetical poetics. Philo is especially fond of introducing secondary and tertiary lemmas by ways of allusion—allusions which nonetheless function as though it were the beginning of a lemmatic commentary, which Philo continues to pursue in sequential fashion through the treatise. In these cases, what begins as an allusion for Philo will often “touch ground” in one or more explicitly marked citations of the implicit secondary lemma(s); but the degree to which Philo uses citations varies greatly from one instance to another.

In fact, leaving the mode of transition or the full scope of the secondary or tertiary lemma unstated is part of Philo's literary artistry. Intentionally withholding the full scope of the lemma rouses the reader's curiosity and interest, as the mystery of the Mosaic oracles' ὑπόνοια is gradually revealed. Although formally different, the effect on Philo's advanced Jewish student would not have been unlike that upon the hearer of a rabbinic *petiḥah* homily, in which the listener's theological attention is piqued and engaged by the puzzle of determining the textual or thematic relationship between the “distant text” and the Torah reading in the lectionary.

In addition to attending to the (i) source of the secondary lemma and (ii) the mode of transition, there is a third question that arises in analysis of Philo's secondary and tertiary lemmas: (iii) to what degree are *all* of Philo's associated texts in a given “chapter” or “treatise” governed

⁶ As an example of one such instance of a “single word” allusion that is still theologically important, see *Mut.* 134, in which an echo of Exod 34:33–35 is “veiled” beneath a more explicit reference to Exod 3:6. For a theoretical assessment of the problem of “composite citations” that might helpfully be expanded to address “composite allusions,” see Sean A. Adams and Seth M. Ahorn, eds., *Composite Citations in Antiquity: Volume One, Jewish, Graeco-Roman, and Early Christian Uses* (London: Bloomsbury, 2016), esp. eidem, “What is a Composite Citation? An Introduction,” 1–16; and James R. Royse, “Composite Quotations in Philo of Alexandria,” 74–91.

by an underlying thematic logic? Conversely, to what degree is his commentary the production of simply anthologizing various preformed exegetical traditions in a more *ad hoc* and superficial manner? On these points, scholars of the Allegorical Commentary are divided. Those like David Runia and Valentin Nikiprowetzky have argued for a kind of minimal or loose theological coherence within the treatises as a whole, and a more sustained but still limited unity within the individual “chapters” of a Philonic treatise.⁷ Key to this position is Runia’s hermeneutic principle, “the finality of the Philonic text,”⁸ by which he means to encourage attention to Philo’s own interpretations and discourage elaborate attempts to render unspoken logics present beneath them. On the other end of the spectrum, scholars like Jacques Cazeaux argue for the presence of theological deep structures underlying various treatises and patriarchal cycles within the Allegorical Commentary.⁹

My own position on this third question, which is admittedly still in formation, is something of a middle ground between Runia and Cazeaux. While Runia’s principle of “the finality of the Philonic text” remains a wise starting point, attending simply to the theological connections that Philo makes explicit may cause deeper connections and architectonic affinities that arise by attending to Philo’s “poetics of association” to be missed. What is needed is a theoretically responsible method of moving beyond the description of MOTs—which still remains an essential preliminary task—to a charting of the underlying logic implicit not only at the level of the chapter, but of the treatise, the patriarchal cycle, and the Allegorical Commentary as a whole.

⁷ Valentin Nikiprowetzky, *Le Commentaire de l’Écriture chez Philon d’Alexandrie: son Caractère et sa Portée: Observations philologiques*, ALGHJ 11; (Leiden: Brill, 1977); David Runia, “The Structure of Philo’s Allegorical Treatises: A Review of Two Recent Studies and Some Additional Comments,” *VC* 38 (1984): 209–56; idem, “Further Observations.”

⁸ Runia, “Structure,” 237.

⁹ Jacques Cazeaux, *La Trame et la Chaîne: ou les Structures littéraires et l’Exégèse dans cinq des Traités de Philon d’Alexandrie*, ALGHJ 15; (Leiden: Brill, 1983).

3. *The Poetics of Association in Φίλων and Faulkner*

As a way of reopening the question of implicit associative logic in Philo's Allegorical Commentary—and perhaps as a *captatio benevolentiae* for literary critics who might have a burgeoning interest in Philonic allegory—I want to make a brief detour and compare Philo with a more proximate “associative poet” of North American extraction, William Faulkner. In particular, I wish to look at the poetics of association employed by Faulkner in the magisterial first chapter of his novel, *The Sound and the Fury*. Those purely interested in the study of *On the Change of Names* may wish to skip this section (I.3) and move on to Section II.

The decision to compare Φίλων and Faulkner stems from more than the accidental trilateral consonance between their names (*Filōn, Faulkner*). Both men, in their own respective genres and idioms, demonstrate that to be a good composer of spiritual works, whether theological commentaries or novels, one must first be a good reader of texts. Oftentimes, both skills develop simultaneously. As Faulkner notes in “An Introduction for *The Sound and the Fury*,” published in *The Southern Review* in 1972:

I wrote this book and learned how to read....I discovered that I had gone through all that I had ever read, from Henry James through Henty to newspaper murders, without making any distinction or digesting any of it, as a moth or a goat might....With the *Sound and the Fury* I learned to read and quit reading, since I have read nothing since.¹⁰

Faulkner's first chapter of *The Sound and the Fury* introduces readers to the tragedy of the Compsons—an early twentieth-century Mississippi family in the fictional county of Yoknapatawpha—through the memory and consciousness of Benjamin “Benjy” Compson, an adult “manchild” with a mental disability. As a result of his rational limitation, Benjy's narration of the family story proceeds almost at random through a series of loosely associated memories that span

¹⁰ William Faulkner, “An Introduction for *The Sound and the Fury*,” *The Southern Review* 8 (1972): 705–10.

a number of decades. Faulkner originally wished to print these scenes in different colors of ink; but when that plan was rejected, he settled on signaling the transitions in Benjy's memory by italicizing lines. These italics serve as Faulkner's primary "mode of transition" to help the reader through the labyrinth of Benjy's damaged recollections.

I say that Benjy narrates "almost at random" because Faulkner, as an associative poet of the first rank, has also connected the various scenes of Benjy's fluid consciousness by way of superficial lexical connections which serve as supplemental MOTs. As an example of Faulkner's poetic technique, one may take the very first transition of the Benjy chapter. The chapter opens on April 7, 1928. A fully adult Benjy and a family servant named Luster (who is charged with watching him) are walking along a fence dividing the family property from a golf course. The first words that Benjy hears from beyond the fence are "Here, **caddie**."¹¹ The significance of these words only become apparent to the reader when Faulkner has Benjy make his first transition, back in time to another moment when Benjy stood stuck on a different fence, this time with his beloved sister. "*Caddy uncaught me, and we crawled through.*"¹² The memories of walking with Luster by the golf course and of crawling under the fence with Caddy on Christmas eve are associated in Benjy's mind by the homophony of the words "caddie" and "Caddy." Using Philonic language, Faulkner uses a modified kind of "lexical" MOT to move from the first Benjy scene to the second.

Benjy's association of the golf course with his sister is predicated upon an accident of sound. Faulkner's decision, however, to make Benjy's first associative leap a specious one is not devoid of reason. Rather, Benjy's accidental verbal association illustrates the eponymous question

¹¹ William Faulkner, *The Sound and the Fury*, Corrected edition (New York: Vintage International, 1990 [1929]), 3. All italics are original to the 1984 corrected text by Jill Faulkner Summers. All emboldening is added by this author for emphasis.

¹² Faulkner, *The Sound and the Fury*, 4.

of Faulkner's entire novel: whether there is such a thing as moral meaning and human destiny; or whether the story of human suffering is nothing more than "a tale / told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, / signifying nothing" (Shakespeare, *Macbeth* Act 5, Scene 5). Here, the contrast between Faulkner and Philo could not be starker. Whereas in Benjy's mind, we find a poetics of association potentially divested of all rationality, in Philo's Allegorical Commentary we encounter instead a poetics of association thoroughly orchestrated by the Logos.

What is striking, however, as the Benjy chapter progresses is that Faulkner increasingly illuminates certain truths about the Compson family through Benjy's imperfect logic. Struggling against Macbeth's moral nihilism, Faulkner finds (or creates) for Benjy a logic of association that, for all its impairments, speaks to a rationality undergirding the seemingly senseless vicissitudes of history. We find an intriguing example of this power of association to produce a sense of *logos* later in chapter one, when Benjy's memory alternates between two interrelated scenes—Caddy's wedding and his Grandmother's (Dammud's) funeral—four times in unbroken succession. Salient in Faulkner's associative poetics in this sequence is his use of lexical and thematic MOTs in six out of seven scene-changes. In both scenes, Benjy seems to be standing outside the identical window of the Compson house, although accompanied by a different cast of characters. In each of the paired texts below, the lines quoted follow directly one upon the other with no indication other than the italics that the scene has shifted (I have added the editorial tags [Wake] and [Wedding] to identify the provenance of each memory).

[Wake] Versh took me up and we went on **around** the kitchen.

[Wedding] *When we looked **around** the corner we could see the lights coming up the drive.*¹³ [MOT: Lexical]

[Wake] Versh said they both were and Caddy said to **be quiet**, like Father said.

[Wedding] ***You ain't got to start bellering** now, T. P. Said. You want some this sassprilluh.*¹⁴ [MOT: Thematic]

[Wake] “**They haven't started yet,**” Caddy said.

[Wedding] ***They getting read to start,** T. P. said.*¹⁵ [MOT: Lexical]

[Wake] “What you **seeing.**” Frony whispered.

[Wedding] ***I saw them. Then I saw Caddy, with flowers in her hair and a long veil like shining wind. Caddy Caddy***¹⁶ [MOT: Lexical]

In Faulkner's associative poetics, Benjy's seemingly stream-of-consciousness vacillation masks a deeper thematic logic. The Compson family is caught between a sober tragedy and a drunken comedy. Dammud's funeral and Caddy's wedding, moreover, each spell the demise of Benjy's childhood way of life—an exile from Eden—and the disappearance of Faulkner's beloved Old South.

Faulkner's underlying logic in this section of the Benjy chapter is rendered more explicit, as if by fraternal sympathy, in a memory of Caddy's wedding narrated by Benjy's elder brother Quentin in the second chapter of *The Sound and the Fury*. Quentin, a Harvard College student, is laying out his fine evening attire, in which he will later commit suicide in the Charles River. Caught

¹³ Faulkner, *The Sound and the Fury*, 37

¹⁴ Faulkner, *The Sound and the Fury*, 37

¹⁵ Faulkner, *The Sound and the Fury*, 38.

¹⁶ Faulkner, *The Sound and the Fury*, 39.

up in a memory of Caddy's wedding, one of the most devastating events of his life, he is interrupted mid-thought by his roommate Shreve, who is concerned with his welfare:

*That quick her train caught up over her arm [Caddy] ran out of the mirror like a cloud, her veil swirling in long glints her heels brittle and fast clutching her dress onto her shoulder with the other hand, running out of the mirror the smells roses roses the voice that breathed o'er Eden She ran out of her dress, clutching her bridal, running into the bellowing where T. P. in the dew Whooeey **Sassprilluh** Benjy under the box bellowing. Father had a V-shaped silver cuirass on his running chest*

Shreve said, "Well, you didn't.... **Is it a wedding or a wake?**"¹⁷

Shreve's misplaced inquiry explicitly puts to Quentin, in chapter two, the question that Benjy in his own limited way is implicitly wrestling with in chapter one.¹⁸ By associating the memories of the two brothers, Faulkner reveals an architectonic unity between the Benjy and Quentin chapters and bequeaths that unity to the novel as a whole.

Having looked at Faulkner's *The Sound and the Fury*—which itself is a story about the loss of innocence and expulsion from Eden—we turn to Philo's associative poetics in *On the Cherubim* with a nuanced set of questions in hand. Like Faulkner, Philo wishes to take up the biblical story of first expulsion of Adam and Eve and apply it to a new situation: his allegory of the soul. To what degree do Philo's allegorical associations reveal his habits as a reader? Is attending to Philo's modes of transition sufficient for understanding his theological meaning, or are his MOTs signposts pointing toward a deeper thematic logic? When does this logic extend beyond the mere chapter to the treatise, patriarchal cycle, or Allegorical Commentary as a whole? Although Philo and Faulkner differ in the sources which they associate (scripture/family

¹⁷ Faulkner, *The Sound and the Fury*, 81–82.

¹⁸ Faulkner links Quentin's memory of Caddy's wedding (in the original italics) with Benjy's across the two chapters through a further lexical connection: "sassprilluh." The word appears *only here* outside the Benjy chapter, clearly relating the devastating significance of Caddy's wedding for both brothers.

memories), have different philosophies of language,¹⁹ and use divergent principles of association, the foregoing study of *The Sound and the Fury* gives new warrant for these questions. Put another way: if an architectonic logic undergirds Faulkner's apparently random associative poetics, might a different kind of unseen *Logos* be operating in Philo's association of primary, secondary, and tertiary lemmas in the Allegorical Commentary (so Cazeaux)? Alternatively, might the presence of an explicit logic and use of a traditional commentary form in Philo's treatises preempt his need to rely on unspoken architectonic structures (so Nikiprowetsky, Runia), which are so necessary in a modernist novel like *The Sound and the Fury*? As hinted above, my thesis is that there are in Philo's *magnum opus* elements of each kind of associative logic, the surface-level and the deep structural. The task at hand, when considering Philo's (ii) modes of transition and (iii) the thematic subcurrents in *On the Cherubim*, is to determine the relative degree of each.

II. The Lemmatic Structure of *On the Cherubim*

The first task in assessing Philo's use of secondary and tertiary lemmas in *On the Cherubim* is to take stock, from a very high altitude, of the use and density of each type of lemma in the treatise as a whole. I will then focus on several *loci* in the treatise that demonstrate distinct subpatterns of the adduction of secondary and tertiary lemmas, with a special emphasis on tertiary lemmas. Finally, I will zoom out again and draw some conclusions. In particular, I will suggest as a working hypothesis that the uneven use of secondary and tertiary lemmas indicates *On the Cherubim*'s role as a "hinge treatise" in the Allegorical Commentary, which Philo uses to transition between his "Adam cycle" and his "Cain cycle."

¹⁹ See Olga Kuminova, "Faulkner's *The Sound and the Fury* as a Struggle for Ideal Communication," *Literature Interpretation Theory* 21 (2010): 41–60.

The following table (Table One) includes all the Supplemental Biblical (and Classical) Lemmas that I have identified in *On the Cherubim*, classified according to their primary lemma. For the sake of simplicity and definitional clarity, I use “Supplemental Biblical Lemma” (SuppBL) to refer to Secondary Biblical Lemmas (SBL), Contextualizing Biblical Lemmas (CBL), and Tertiary Biblical Lemmas (TBL) cumulatively, as well Philo’s rare substitution of a classical, non-biblical quotation or allusion in one of these positions. Recognizing the formal interchangeability of biblical and classical texts in Philo’s commentaries does *not* mean that they possess an equal degree of theological authority or innate literary congruence with Pentateuchal and other scriptural texts. I will deal with the issue of lemmatic provenance directly in the subsection “Sources” below. Thematic and Lexical MOTs are indicated by “T” and “L” respectively.

TABLE 1: SECONDARY AND TERTIARY LEMMAS IN *ON THE CHERUBIM*

| No. | <i>Cher.</i> Sec. | 1° [or 2°] | 2°, 3°, C | Biblical Lemma | Citation / Allusion | Transition Type | QG / QE Parallel |
|-----|----------------------|---------------|--------------|---|-----------------------------|-------------------------------|----------------------------|
| 1 | <i>Cher.</i> 1 | Gen 3:24a | C | Gen 3:23 | Citation, single word | T | 1° not treated in QG |
| 2 | <i>Cher.</i> 3 | Gen 3:24a | 2° | Gen 16:6–14 | Allusion | T | ∅ |
| 3 | <i>Cher.</i> 3 | Gen 3:24a | 2° | Gen 21:10 (<i>Pace</i> Colson; cf. Gen 21:14!) Check LXX apparatus / Hebrew (<i>G-grsh; D- shlch</i>) | Allusion | L (ἐκβάλλω) | ∅ |
| 4 | <i>Cher.</i> 4 | [Gen 16:6–14] | 3° | Gen 17:5 | Allusion | T (Abram's Name Change) | ∅ |
| 5 | <i>Cher.</i> 5 | [Gen 16:6–14] | 3° | Gen 17:15 | Allusion | T (Sarai's name change) | ∅ |
| =2 | <i>Cher.</i> 6 | Gen 3:24a | 2° | Gen 16:6–14 | Allusion | T | ∅ |

| No. | <i>Cher.</i> Sec. | 1° [or 2°] | 2°, 3°, C | Biblical Lemma | Citation / Allusion | Transition Type | QG / QE Parallel |
|-----|---------------------------|--|--------------|---|------------------------|---|------------------------|
| =4 | <i>Cher.</i> 7 | [Gen 21:10] | 3° | Gen 17:5 | Allusion | T | ∅ |
| =5 | <i>Cher.</i> 7 | [Gen 21:10] | 3° | Gen 17:15 | Allusion | T | ∅ |
| 6 | <i>Cher.</i> 8 | [Gen 21:10] | 3° | Gen 18:11 | Allusion | T (Birth of Isaac) | ∅ |
| 7 | <i>Cher.</i> 8 | [Gen 21:10] | 3° | Gen 21:9 (+ Colson, sees Gen 26:8) | Allusion | T (Playing) | ∅ |
| =3 | <i>Cher.</i> 8 | Gen 3:24a | 2° | Gen 21:10 | Allusion | L (ἐκβάλλω) | ∅ |
| 8 | <i>Cher.</i> 9 | Gen 3:24a | C | Gen 21:12 | Allusion | T | ∅ |
| =3 | <i>Cher.</i> 9 | Gen 3:24a | 2° | Gen 21:10 | Citation (!) | L (ἐκβάλλω) | ∅ |
| 9 | <i>Cher.</i> 12 | Gen 3:24b (ἀπέναντι, ἀντικρῶ) | 2° | Gen 4:16 | Citation | L (κατέναντι) Cain | 1° QG 1.57 |
| 10 | <i>Cher.</i> 14 | Gen 3:24b | 2° | Num 5:18 | Citation | L (ἐναντίον) Woman on Trial | ∅ |
| 11 | <i>Cher.</i> 15 | [Num 5:18b] "uncover | 3° | Deut 16:20 | Citation | T (Judge justly) | ∅ |
| 12 | <i>Cher.</i> 16 | [Num 5:18b] "uncover" | 3° | Deut 29:29 | Citation | T (Hidden things known to God) | ∅ |
| =10 | <i>Cher.</i> 17 | Gen 3:24b | 2° | Num 5:18 | Citation | L | ∅ |
| 13 | <i>Cher.</i> 18 | Gen 3:24b | 2° | Gen 18:22 | Citation | L (ἐναντίον) Abraham | ∅ |
| 14 | <i>Cher.</i> 18 | [Gen 18:22] | C/3° | Gen 18:23 | Citation | T | ∅ |
| 15 | <i>Cher.</i> 25 | Gen 3:24c "Cherubim/Flaming Sword" | 2° | Exod 25:19– 20 (Colson puts only v.19) | Allusion | L ("Cherubim", second physical allegory) | 1° QG 1.57 |
| 16 | <i>Cher.</i> 31 | Gen 3:24c | 2° | Gen 22:6 | Citation | T ("The fire and the knife", third moral allegory) | ∅ |
| 17 | <i>Cher.</i> 32 | [Gen 22:6] | 3° | Num 22:29 | Citation | L (μάχαιρα) | ∅ |
| 18 | <i>Cher.</i> 35– 36 | [Gen 22:6] | 3° | Num 22:30– 31 | Allusion | L (Logos in the Road with μάχαιρα) | ∅ |

| No. | <i>Cher.</i> Sec. | 1° [or 2°] | 2°, 3°, C | Biblical Lemma | Citation / Allusion | Transition Type | QG / QE Parallel |
|-----|----------------------|---------------------------------------|--------------|---|------------------------|--|------------------------|
| 19 | <i>Cher.</i> 41 | Gen 4:1a "knew his wife" | 2° | Gen 21:1 | Allusion | T Sarah | 1° not treated in QG |
| 20 | <i>Cher.</i> 41 | Gen 4:1a | 2° | Gen 25:21 | Allusion | T Rebecca | Ø |
| 21 | <i>Cher.</i> 41 | Gen 4:1a | 2° | Gen 29:31 | Allusion | T Leah | Ø |
| 22 | <i>Cher.</i> 41 | Gen 4:1a | 2° | Exod 2:22 | Allusion | T Zipporah | Ø |
| =19 | <i>Cher.</i> 45 | Gen 4:1a | 2° | Gen 21:1 | Allusion | T Sarah | Ø |
| =21 | <i>Cher.</i> 46 | Gen 4:1a | 2° | Gen 29:31 | Allusion | T Leah | Ø |
| =20 | <i>Cher.</i> 47 | Gen 4:1a | 2° | Gen 25:21 | Allusion | T Rebecca | Ø |
| =22 | <i>Cher.</i> 47 | Gen 4:1a | 2° | Exod 2:22 | Allusion | T Zipporah | Ø |
| 23 | <i>Cher.</i> 49 | [19–22] | 3° | Jer 3:4 | Citation | Thematic | Ø |
| 24 | <i>Cher.</i> 50 | Gen 4:1a | 2° | Gen 18:11 | Allusion | Sarah | Ø |
| | | | | | | | |
| 25 | <i>Cher.</i> 54 | Gen 4:1b "and she brought forth Cain" | C | Gen 4:25 | Citation | L/T Seth | 1° not treated in QG |
| 26 | <i>Cher.</i> 57 | Gen 4:1b | C | Gen 3:20 | Allusion | T | Ø |
| 27 | <i>Cher.</i> 58 | Gen 4:1b | C | Gen 2:18 | Allusion | T | Ø |
| 28 | <i>Cher.</i> 60 | Gen 4:1b | C | Gen 2:21 (see Gen 4:1; cf. LXX Gen 3:20) | Allusion | T | Ø |
| 29 | <i>Cher.</i> 63 | Gen 4:1b | 2°CL | <i>Unde?</i> (Alexander's boast) See Plutarch, <i>Alex.</i> 20. | Citation | T (ἐμά) - Alexander | Ø |
| 30 | <i>Cher.</i> 67 | Gen 4:1b | 2° | Gen 31:43 | Citation | T (ἐμόν) - Laban | Ø |
| 31 | <i>Cher.</i> 72 | [Gen 31:43] | 3° | Exod 21:5–6 | Citation | L (μου) – The slave who will not be free | Ø |
| 32 | <i>Cher.</i> 74 | Gen 4:1b | 2° | Exod 15:9 | Citation | T - Pharaoh | Ø |
| =32 | <i>Cher.</i> 77 | Gen 4:1b | 2° | Exod 15:9 | Citation | T - Pharaoh | Ø |

| No. | <i>Cher.</i> Sec. | 1° [or 2°] | 2°, 3°, C | Biblical Lemma | Citation / Allusion | Transition Type | QG / QE Parallel |
|-----|----------------------|---|--------------|-------------------|--------------------------|--|------------------------|
| 33 | <i>Cher.</i> 78 | [Exod 15:9] | 3°CL | <i>Unde?</i> | Allusion | T - Sisyphus | ∅ |
| 34 | <i>Cher.</i> 84 | Gen 4:1b | 2° | Num 28:2 | Citation / Paraphrase | L (μου, ἐμοί) – God alone possesses everything; God alone may keep the feast | ∅ |
| 35 | <i>Cher.</i> 87 | [Num 28:2] | 3° | Exod 20:10 | Citation | T - The Sabbath is, properly speaking, God’s | ∅ |
| 36 | <i>Cher.</i> 106 | [Num 28:2] | 3° | Gen 18:5 | Allusion | T – God has entered into the house of Abraham | ∅ |
| 37 | <i>Cher.</i> 108 | Gen 4:1b | 2° | Lev 25:23(abc) | Citation | L (ἐμῆ) – “The Land is mine” | ∅ |
| =37 | <i>Cher.</i> 119 | Gen 4:1b | 2° | Lev 25:23(c) | Citation | T – “You are strangers” | ∅ |
| =37 | <i>Cher.</i> 121 | Gen 4:1b | 2° | Lev 25:23(a) | Citation | T – “the land shall not be sold” | ∅ |
| 38 | <i>Cher.</i> 128 | Gen 4:1c “I have acquired a man through God” (<i>Cher.</i> 124) | 2° | Gen 40:8 | Allusion | L (διὰ τοῦ θεοῦ) | QG 1.58 |
| 39 | <i>Cher.</i> 130 | Gen 4:1c | 2° | Exod 14:13 | Citation | L (παρὰ τοῦ κυρίου) | ∅ |

III. Analysis of Philo’s Use of Secondary and Tertiary Lemmas in *On the Cherubim*

I will assess this data under four subheadings: (1) Initial Global Observations; (2) Sources of Supplementary Lemmas; (3) Modes of Transition and Associative Poetics; and (4) Concluding remarks on the place of *On the Cherubim* within the Allegorical Commentary.

1. Initial Global Observations

A global analysis of this data, attending to the relative frequency of secondary and tertiary lemmas in the work, confirms the judgments of F. H. Colson and Maximilian Adler that the *On the Cherubim* seems to possess two primary movements: *Cher.* 1–39, which treats Adam’s expulsion and the scene of the Cherubim with the whirling sword; and *Cher.* 40–130, which looks primarily to the birth of Cain and the vices of human acquisitiveness and self-reliance.²⁰ Adler, who argued strongly against the unity of this treatise, supported his argument by an assessment of its exegetical structure. He suggested that whereas *Cher.* 1–39 stays thematically unified at the primary and non-primary levels, *Cher.* 40–130 descends into increasingly complex digressions which seem like literary “excursuses” or “insertions.”²¹ Unfortunately, Adler’s analytical schema for assessing different “types” of Philonic exegesis in the Allegorical Commentary (Types A-E) does not provide a clear picture of the difference that Adler rightly intuited and registered. Rather, both *Cher.* 1–39 and *Cher.* 40–130 in his characterized by Type E (the introduction of a philosophical elaboration supported by a supplementary biblical lemma).²² A more nuanced approach to differentiating Philo’s types of exegesis must clearly be developed.

At present, I wish to prescind from any judgment about the unity of the treatise. Many ancient works, like Plato’s *Phaedrus*, possess a multiple movement structure, which occasions

²⁰ F. H. Colson, *Philo* (LCL), 2:3–4. Maximilian Adler, *Studien zu Philon von Alexandria* (Breslau: M. and H. Marcus, 1929), 24: “In dem Zustande und Umfange, in welchem das Buch De Cherubim auf uns gekommen ist, enthält es nur die Interpretation zweier Verse der Genesis, nämlich 3, 24 und 4, 1. Eine Verbindung dieser beiden Partien fehlt; die Erklärung stehen unvermittelt nebeneinander....”

²¹ Adler, *Studien zu Philon*, 28.

²² Adler, *Studien zu Philon*, 28–29. For Adler’s typology of Philonic patterns in the Allegorical Commentary, see *Ibid.* 10–11.

debates about literary unity.²³ As a first step in offering a clearer picture of the difference between Philo’s exegesis in the two movements of *On the Cherubim*, I make an observation about a shift in the density of supplementary biblical lemmas between these two sections, which corresponds with a shift in the primary biblical lemma from Gen 3:24 to Gen 4:1.

TABLE 2: LEMMATIC DENSITY

| Statistic | Formula | <i>Cher. 1–39</i> | <i>Cher. 40–130</i> |
|--------------------------------|----------------------------------|--------------------------|----------------------------|
| Supplementary Lemmatic Density | # of SuppBLs / treatise sections | 24 / 39 = 62% | 28 / 90 = 31% |
| SBLs | N/A | 11 | 18 |
| CBLs | N/A | 3 | 4 |
| SBLs + CBLs | N/A | 14 | 22 |
| TBLs | N/A | 10 | 6* (includes TCLs) |
| SBL / TBL Ratio | SBLs+CBLs / TBLs | 7:5 (21:15) | 11:3 (55:15) |

Table Two represents a clear difference between the two movements of the treatise in what I am calling “Supplementary Lemmatic Density.” This statistic measures the average number of supplementary biblical lemmas per numerical sections within the treatise. As table two indicates, in *Cher. 1–39* Philo uses twice as many secondary and tertiary biblical lemmas per section as he does in *Cher. 40–130* (62% vs. 31%). In other words, Philo is twice as likely to interweave additional biblical texts in this first part of the treatise. While the Supplementary Lemmatic Density of *Cher. 1–39* is higher than *Cher. 40–130*, it is also *lower* than the Supplementary Lemmatic Density of the immediately preceding treatise in the Allegorical Commentary, the third book of his *Allegories of the Laws*.

²³ For an important discussion of literary unity in antiquity, particularly in the case of Plato’s *Phaedrus*, see Malcom Heath, “The Unity of Plato’s *Phaedrus*,” *OSAP* 7 (1989): 151–73; and ‘The Unity of Plato’s *Phaedrus*: a Postscript,’ *ibid.*, 189–91.

The second important statistic in Table Two is the ratio of secondary biblical lemmas to tertiary ones. Tertiary biblical lemmas are biblical texts adduced by Philo to explicate not a primary but a secondary biblical lemma. They represent, to borrow a popular metaphor from screenwriter Christopher Nolan, a third degree of “inception” in Philo’s deep dive into the Mosaic oracles; or a partial refocusing of Philo’s thematic fleshing out of the primary text onto a topic or theme that has been evoked by his secondary biblical lemma. As Table Two indicates, in *Cher.* 1–39 Philo not only employs an absolutely greater number of tertiary biblical lemmas than he does in *Cher.* 40–130 (10:6), he is also more than twice as likely to adduce a tertiary lemma for any given secondary lemma. This suggests that Philo’s “poetics of association” are operating in *Cher.* 1–39 not only with a higher density (or tempo), but also at a greater depth (which one might liken to the addition of new voices in a polyphonic motet) than they are in *Cher.* 40–130.

The picture that emerges from this global analysis of the data allows for a significantly clearer view of Philo’s associative poetics than that given by Adler. First, we can see that despite the more digressive nature of *Cher.* 40–130, the associative poetics of *Cher.* 1–39 are nonetheless denser and more complex than those of the following section.²⁴ Adler also argued that while *Cher.* 1–39 is distinct from *Cher.* 40–130, its exegetical types are nearly identical to *Leg.* 3.²⁵ We have now seen that this is only partially true and that *Cher.* 1–39 is also less dense and stratified than at least some chapters of *Leg.* 3. One working hypothesis explaining both of these *data* is that Philo is in *Cher.* 1–39 writing a kind of *ritardando* from the intensity of *Leg.* 3 at the end of the Adamic cycle, preparing to take up a more measured exegetical pace in his first book in the Cain cycle, to

²⁴ On the digressive nature of *Cher.* 40–130, see Adler, *Studien zu Philon*, 28: “das Neue, das uns hier [in *Cher.* 40–130] entgegentritt, sind Abschweifungen, digressiones, die von einem einheitlichen Gedanken getragen sind, aber so lose mit der Bibelerklärung zusammenhängen, daß sie als Einlagen gefühlt werden.

²⁵ Adler, *Studien in Philon*, 28: “Im ersten Teile § 1—39 (Gen 3, 24)...sind die Typen der allegorischen Exegese verwendet, wie im dritten Buche *Leg.* alleg.”

which he transitions in *Cher.* 40–130. The slower pace of Philo’s associative poetics in *Cher.* 40–130 would in part be in keeping with his pattern in *Leg.* 1 at the beginning of Adamic cycle, although this similarity is muddied by the more digressive nature of *Cher.* 40–130.

2. Sources of Secondary and Tertiary Lemmas

A second angle of approach to Philo’s lemmatic structure in *On the Cherubim* is to look at the sources of his secondary and tertiary lemmas. I have compiled that data, again attending to the hypothesized division of the treatise into two movements, in Table Three:

TABLE 3: SOURCES OF PHILO’S SUPPLEMENTARY BIBLICAL LEMMAS

| Source of SuppBL | <i>Cher.</i> 1–39 | <i>Cher.</i> 40–130 |
|---------------------|-------------------|---------------------|
| Genesis | 17 | 14 |
| Exodus | 1 | 6 |
| Leviticus | 0 | 3 |
| Numbers | 4 | 1 |
| Deuteronomy | 2 | 1 |
| Prophets/Writings | 0 | 1 |
| Non-Biblical Source | 0 | 2 |

Using the analytical criterion of lemmatic provenance, both movements of *On the Cherubim* appear rather even. In both sections, Philo shows a preference for secondary and tertiary biblical lemmas from Genesis, and from the Pentateuch more broadly. In *Cher.* 1–39, he offers two little homiletic exegeses on Numbers and in *Cher.* 40–130 he pays special attention to Exodus and Leviticus (including the very fine exegesis of Lev 25:23 in *Cher.* 108–123). But nowhere in this treatise do we find the same digressive or associative intensity that we witness in *Leg.* 3. While Philo still focuses his exegetical energies on Pentateuchal sources—flowing from his understanding of the common Mosaic authorship of all five books—he does not engage in the project of unveiling their unity with the same degree that he does in *Leg.* 3. More akin to *Leg.* 1,

Philo is focused here less on interpreting Moses through Moses than he is in interpreting Genesis through Genesis. This controverts the stereotype of the Alexandrian as an eisegetical allegorist, constructing a *tour du force* of speculative theology out of every source upon which he can lay his hands. Rather, literary criticism serves as the baseline of Philo's work as an exegete.

It also bears noting, in terms of lemmatic provenance, that in *Cher.* 40–130 Philo actually employs a wider range of sources than he does in *Cher.* 1–39, including one text from Jeremiah and one ambiguous classical quotation (the other classical lemma listed in the table is an allusion). While Philo formally interweaves the prophetic and classical texts into his commentary, each text, on account of its respective source (Jeremiah, non-Jewish author) requires an additional kind of justification for its presence in a theological work. This act of justification on Philo's part—particularly his justification of Jeremiah—reveals that non-Pentateuchal and non-scriptural sources stand at a second and third degree of remove from the sun at the center of Philo's interpretive universe: Moses and his Pentateuch.

3. Five Case Studies in Philo's Associative Poetics

Global considerations of frequency and source, useful as they are, can only take the reader so far into Philo's associative poetics. To get a clear image of his interpretive art in motion, one needs to look at specific snapshots. Here, I offer five—two from the *Cher.* 1–39 and three from *Cher.* 40–130—in order to illustrate the broader trends to which I have been alluding.

3.1 Cher. 3–9: Two Kinds of Expulsion

On the Cherubim 3–9 will provide the locus for a first case study of Philo's associative poetics in the first movement of the treatise. Philo deploys a series of interlocking secondary and tertiary lemmas, all from Genesis, that showcase the architectonic quality of his associative art.

Philo opens *On the Cherubim* with a διαίρεσις, distinguishing God’s “sending forth” (ἐξαπέστειλεν) of Adam in Gen 3:23²⁶ and his “hurling out” (ἐξέβαλε) of Adam in Gen 3:24. Whereas the former verb expresses the soul’s temporary expulsion from Eden, from which the soul might return, the latter verb according to Philo denotes the permanent alienation of the soul from virtue. To scripturally “enflesh” this distinction, Philo alludes to two secondary lemmas that illustrate the concepts of temporary and permanent expulsion: Hagar’s first and second departure (*Cher.* 3: ἐξιοῦσαν) from Sara(h) and Abra(ha)m in Gen 16:6–14 and Gen 21:14.

Philo’s amplification of the two Adamic forms of expulsion with two texts relating Hagar’s expulsion creates an allegorical parallelism, juxtaposing a masculine and a feminine figure in his allegoresis. The surface symmetry masks deeper complexities, which will require allegorical unfolding. First, despite the similarities of their narratives according to the letter, Adam and Hagar are not the same *kind* allegorical figures. Whereas Adam represents a type of soul, Hagar is explicitly identified as the “middle *paideia*” (*Cher.* 3), who flees from Sarah, the symbol of “virtue.” Second, while Philo associates his primary lemma, Gen 3:24, with the secondary lemma, Gen 21:14 through both lexical (the verb ἐκβάλλω) and thematic links, Gen 3:23 and Gen 16:6–14 are only more tenuously related. Hagar is never explicitly “sent forth” by Sarah, but is said to “flee.” It would appear, then, that Philo has taken elements from a traditional allegoresis of the Abraham cycle and associated them with the double expulsion of Adam in Gen 3:23 and 3:24.

Simply attending to Philo’s explicit MOTs leaves one with the impression of a rather haphazard association of two Pentateuchal figures. If we press Philo’s association of these primary and secondary lemmas beyond their lexical and thematic association to the level of structural

²⁶ Exod 3:23 is best classified as a “contextualizing biblical lemma” (CBL) rather than a Secondary Biblical Lemma, due to its proximity to the PBL (Gen 3:24).

correspondences between their related narratives, deeper and more sustained allegorical harmonies emerge. As these harmonies reveal, Philo’s conjoining of Adam’s and Hagar’s double expulsions entails a systematic network of allegorical associations that solves a Philonic problem: what to make of the fact that the mind temporally expelled from virtue and the mind permanently alienated from virtue are both called “Adam.” The association of the Abraham cycle with the Adamic cycle provides a solution to this difficulty by providing a scriptural language for psychic differentiation: the second, eternally expelled Adam of Gen 3:24 can be associated with the sophistic Ishmael-mind and Hagar, the preliminary studies; whereas the Adam of Gen 3:23 can be associated with Abraham, and Sarah who is wisdom/virtue (see *Cher.* 10). We may represent this matrix of primary and secondary allegories as follows:

FIGURE 1: PHILO’S ALLEGORY AT THE PRIMARY AND SECONDARY LEVELS

| |
|--|
| <p>1° Eden (Virtue) + Adam¹ (Sage in Progress) :: Adam² (Sophist) + Loss of Eden (No Virtue) 2° Sarah (Virtue) + Abraham (Sage in Progress) :: Ishmael (Sophist) + Hagar (Not Virtue)</p> |
|--|

As Figure One demonstrates, through poetic association at the primary and secondary levels, Philo can differentiate not only the sage from the sophist, but can also name and personify Eden and its absence by deploying a stock allegoresis of Abraham’s two partners, Sarah and Hagar. Additionally, this move allows Philo to map the Adamic narrative of the “loss” of virtue onto the Abrahamic allegory of the soul who progresses by learning, thereby linking plight and solution in constructing this Jewish-Platonist soteriology.

In the case study of *Cher.* 3–9 thus far, we have considered Philo’s associative poetics between primary and secondary texts. In this section, Philo also employs tertiary texts. About this remarkable use of tertiary biblical lemmas, I wish to make four notes. First, (i) this sequence

represents Philo's work as a literary critic *par excellence*. Rather than ranging across the entire scriptures, he interprets Genesis through Genesis, sticking to a single biblical book. Second, (ii) Philo's interweaving of secondary and tertiary lemmas in this passage is as meticulously structured as Faulkner's associations in *The Sound and the Fury*. Third, (iii) the adduction of these tertiary lemmas confirms the hypothesis that Philo is associating Adam's double expulsion not merely with Hagar's narrative, but with the entire Abrahamic cycle. Remarkably, Philo seems to have in mind a fully formed *sequential allegoresis* of the life of Abraham, most likely modeled on the Platonic allegoresis of Odysseus's *nostos*. Fourth, (iv) this sequence of tertiary lemmas helps to answer a question left hanging in the associative matrix created by the primary and secondary lemmas: what is the significance that Hagar, the preliminary studies, can both be expelled in order to return (Gen 16), but also be expelled for good (Gen 21)?

Due to restrictions of space, I will offer further comments on (ii) the formal artifice of this example of tertiary lemmas and (iii–iv) the allegorical embellishment added by these tertiary lemmas to the overall schema presented above in Figure One. First, the interweaving of secondary and tertiary lemmas in *Cher.* 3–9 follows a rigorous structure. The two secondary lemmas, Gen 16:6–14 (2°A) and Gen 21:10 (2°B) are first allusively introduced in *Cher.* 3 in a scriptural sequence that parallels the sequence of Philo's allegoresis of Gen 3:23 (1°A / CBL) and Gen 3:24 (1°B). In *Cher.* 4–5, Philo interweaves allusions to two tertiary biblical lemmas (Gen 17:5, Gen 17:15) intended to explicate his interpretation of his *first* secondary lemma, Gen 16:6–14 (2°A). In *Cher.* 7–8, in turn, Philo adduces four tertiary lemmas (Gen 17:5, Gen 17:15, Gen 18:11, and Gen 21:9) to help explicate his interpretation of his *second* secondary lemma, Gen 21:10 (2°B). At the end of each tertiary “run,” he returns to his secondary lemma—always allusively (until *Cher.* 9, where with a minor climax not dissimilar from Paul's exegetical artistry in Gal 4:30, Philo

finally cites Gen 21:10). This allegorical structure, in which the second round of tertiary lemmas builds upon and supplements the first, has an implicit symphonic symmetry of the variety discovered also in Faulkner’s Wake-Wedding cycle in the Benjy chapter. This symphonic structure can be laid out as follows:

FIGURE 2: THE SYMPHONIC STRUCTURE OF *CHER.* 3–9

| | |
|------------------|---|
| <i>Cher.</i> 1 | Gen 3:23 (CBL) Gen 3:24 (PBL) |
| <i>Cher.</i> 3 | A Theme: Gen 16:6–14 (SBL) B Theme: Gen 21:10 (SBL) |
| <i>Cher.</i> 4–5 | A' Gen 17:5a (TBL - Abram) A' Gen 17:15a (TBL - Sarai) |
| <i>Cher.</i> 6 | Return to A Gen 16:6–14 (SBL) |
| <i>Cher.</i> 7–8 | B' Gen 17:5b (TBL - Abraham) B' Gen 17:15b (TBL - Sarah) B' Gen 18:11 (TBL - Isaac) B' Gen 21:9 (TBL - Ishmael) Return to B Gen 21:10 (SBL) |
| <i>Cher.</i> 9 | Coda: Gen 21:12 (CBL - “Listen to her”) Return to B Gen 21:10 – Citation (SBL) |

The symphonic structure presented in Figure Two not only illustrates (ii) the similar associative artistry in Philo and Faulkner, it also demonstrates (iii) that by interweaving these tertiary lemmas, Philo has added to the Adam – Hagar parallelism an allegory of the entire Abraham cycle running from Gen 16 to Gen 21. Especially remarkable is the way that, at the tertiary as well as the secondary level, Philo attends to the scriptural sequence, such that when the

TBL Gen 21:9 meets the SBL Gen 21:10 in *Cher.* 8 and Gen 21:12 in *Cher.* 9, the scriptural sequence is retained in the development of the allegory.

By interweaving the entire Abraham cycle, Philo uses the literary similarity of Adam's and Hagar's expulsions to ground an allegorical typology of the Abraham and Ishmael souls, which cling to Jewish virtue and secular learning, respectively. The problem of Hagar's double expulsion is explained in light of God's transformation of Abram and Sarai into Abraham and Sarah. While Abram remains an astrologer and Sarai is only a specific virtue, Hagar¹ symbolizes a kind of propaedeutic secular wisdom that may help the Abram soul on his way toward virtue. Once Abram has become Abraham and takes Sarah (generic virtue) as his wife, however, Hagar² becomes a purely negative foil. Taking up again the allegorical matrix presented in Figure One, we might modify it now as in Figure Three:

FIGURE 3: PHILO'S ALLEGORY AT THE PRIMARY, TERTIARY, AND SECONDARY LEVELS

| |
|--|
| <p>1° Eden (Virtue) + Adam¹ (Sage in Progress) :: Adam² (Sophist) + Loss of Eden (No Virtue)</p> <p>3° Hagar¹ (Secular Learning) + Sarai (Specific Virtue) + Abram (Astrologer)</p> <p>2° Sarah (Virtue) + Abraham (Sage in Progress) :: Ishmael (Sophist) + Hagar² (Not Virtue)</p> |
|--|

The primary contribution of the tertiary lemmas at the allegorical level is not to reshape the final stage, but to lend an internal consistency to the whole. Such an unspoken logic clearly operates throughout this Philonic chapter. As the following case study demonstrates, there is also reason to suspect that this Abrahamic subcurrent continues to operate throughout the entire first movement of the treatise, *Cher.* 1–39.

3.2 *Cher. 31–36: The Logos and the Knife*

I turn now to a second case study of Philo’s associative poetics: *Cher. 31–36*. Although this locus does not offer as formally complex a specimen of Philo’s exegetical artistry as *Cher. 3–9*, it does offer another example of Philo’s interweaving of secondary and tertiary lemmas and expands the provenance of Philo’s supplementary lemmas beyond the book of Genesis.

Cher. 31–36 belongs to a larger unit in which Philo interprets Gen 3:24c as a primary lemma, particularly two symbolic “riddles” present in this verse, the Cherubim and the flaming sword. Having offered two cosmological allegories of these symbols in *Cher. 21–26*, Philo then offers in *Cher. 27–39*, a “prophecy from his own soul” which explicates the meaning of these symbols according to “a more excellent logos” (σπουδαιότερος λόγος). According to this allegoresis, the Cherubim symbolize the two chief powers of God, while the fiery sword is “reason” (*Cher. 28*). It remains an open question whether Philo already has in mind here “Reason” as *the Logos*, which combines in one principle these two powers (cf. *Q.E. 2.68; Cher. 35*). The primary meaning of λόγος in *Cher. 28* is human reason rightly oriented toward virtue.

But here, a difficulty arises: whose reason is here symbolized? This reason cannot belong to the “Adam” of Gen 3:24, of whom Philo has been speaking at the primary level, since this Adam is the fallen sophist with no chance of using right reason or returning to virtue. In Philo’s allegory, we find an image of human reason untethered to a patriarchal protagonist. To overcome this difficulty, Philo forges an allegorical continuity at the secondary and tertiary levels, adducing two supplementary patriarchal figures to extend his allegory of the soul.

First, as an example of the human soul which possesses reason (“the fiery sword,” ἡ φλογίνη ῥομφαία) and uses it rightly, Philo associates Gen 3:24c with “the fire and the knife” (τὸ πῦρ . . . καὶ ἡ μάχαιρα) carried by Abraham to mount Moriah in Gen 22:6 (*Cher. 31*). The association is thematic rather than lexical. Philo then adduces two sequential tertiary lemmas, Num

22:29 and Num 22:30–31, in order to construct a foil for his Abrahamic soul: Balaam, the soul that has no knife (καὶ εἰ εἶχον μάχαιραν) of reason (*Cher.* 32–36). The mode of transition between the secondary lemma about Abraham and the tertiary lemma about Balaam is lexical.

Critical in our assessment of the logic undergirding Philo’s associative poetics in *Cher.* 1–39 is the observation that the leap between the primary and secondary lemmas in *Cher.* 31–36 seems less clearly motivated than the link between secondary and tertiary. Genesis 3:24c and Gen 22:6 lack the explicit lexical connection that makes the Abraham-Balaam typology seem artless and natural. In fact, Genesis 3:24c and Gen 22:6 evince a kind of “double miss”: neither the same word for “fire” nor the same word for “sword/knife” is used in these *loci*.

Philo’s association of these two lemmas does possess an alternative implicit rationale or *logos*, which might be missed by simply labeling it “thematic”: through adducing the Abrahamic soul, Philo continues the secondary level allegory begun in *Cher.* 3–9. Even more impressive, Philo picks up with the scriptural text where *Cher.* 9 left off (at Gen 21:12) and advances the allegorical narrative to the Akedah scene in Gen 22:6 (*Cher.* 31). While there is clearly a partial break at the primary level of the allegorical narrative (between a focus on Adam and a focus on the Cherubim and the flaming sword), at the secondary level of the allegory Philo narrates a coherent story about the Abrahamic soul who first emerges from astrology to become a sage (*Cher.* 3–9) and then exemplifies the use of reason in contradistinction to the irrational Balaam (*Cher.* 31–36). We can conclude then that Philo’s associative logic and attention to thematic coherence extends beyond the chapter to the entire first “movement” of *On the Cherubim*, which possesses an Abrahamic substructure.

3.3 *Cher. 40–130: A Continuation of the Secondary Pentateuchal Allegory?*

At the beginning of this paper, I wondered whether the received division of this treatise into two movements might spell a certain kind of thematic disunity. I even raised the possibility that coherence between “chapters” of the same movement might be minimal. The evidence of the preceding two case studies convinces me that while thematic unity does not exist at the level of the primary allegory, Philo is developing a coherent allegoresis of the Abraham cycle at the secondary and tertiary levels.

As we turn to the second movement of *On the Cherubim, Cher. 40–130*, it is worth asking whether despite the topical shift of primary lemmatic focus from Adam to Cain, one might find Philo employing a similar method to achieve thematic coherence through associative poetics at the secondary and tertiary levels. *Prima facie*, there is a case to be made.

First, in *Cher. 41–50*, Philo interprets Gen 4:1a (“and Adam knew his wife”). The Adam in view here is clearly Adam², the mind permanently expelled from virtue. To exemplify the opposite of this kind of mind, Philo adduces a string of four secondary lemmas from Genesis and Exodus to illustrate the principle that sages “are not represented as knowing women” (*Cher. 40*). His examples are Abraham and Sarah (Gen 21:1); Isaac and Rebecca (Gen 25:21); Jacob and Leah (Gen 29:31); and Moses and Zipporah (Exod 2:22). Intriguingly, Philo picks up the allegory of the rational soul only one chapter prior to where he left off in *Cher. 36* (Gen 22) and extends it through Exod 2 and the marriage of Moses of Zipporah.

If we continue to focus chiefly on the secondary texts, and ignore complementary and tertiary lemmas, we may detect further Pentateuchal lemmas being sequentially adduced as the *On the Cherubim* moves into the second chapter of its second movement: the meaning of the name of Cain (Gen 4:1b). For example, in *Cher. 67*, Philo adduces Gen 31:43 (circling back from Moses and Zipporah to the Jacob cycle) to relate how Laban imitates Cain’s acquisitiveness and self-

sufficiency. In *Cher.* 74 and 77, Philo adduces Exod 15:9 to demonstrate Pharaoh's vain and self-defeating greed. Finally, in *Cher.* 108, 119, 121, Philo offers an extended homily on Lev 25:23bac (in that sequence), making the counter-claim that only God can truly call the land of Israel "mine."

In the foregoing paragraphs, I have made as compelling a case as I can muster for detecting a thematic coherence at the level of secondary and tertiary biblical lemmas throughout both movements of *On the Cherubim*. I am not convinced that this was Philo's intention nor that this is the net effect on the reader of the final form of *On the Cherubim*. Whereas the secondary lemmas regarding the wives of the virtuous in *Cher.* 41–50 may pick up on the theme of Abraham's wives in *Cher.* 3–9, one has to work hard to keep the Pentateuchal narrative in sequence beyond this.²⁷

3.4 *Cher.* 49: *Jeremiah the Initiated*

I conclude this study of the second movement of *On the Cherubim* with a consideration of two supplemental lemmas not derived from the writings of Moses: the prophecy of Jer 3:4 regarding virginity in *Cher.* 49 and a non-biblical quotation attributed to Alexander the Great in *Cher.* 63. These texts derive from the "second" and "third" source-tiers in Philo's literary critical project to expound the somatic unity of the books of Moses.

Philo clearly wishes to attribute to Jeremiah a prophetic authority alongside Moses, giving these two texts a kind of theological proximity. On the other hand, Philo explicitly acknowledges the literary non-unity of Jeremiah and the Mosaic books, making this instance of associative poetics more complicated than previous ones. He writes:

I myself was initiated (μνηθείς) under Moses the God-beloved into his greater mysteries, yet when I saw the prophet Jeremiah and knew him to be not only enlightened (μύστης),

²⁷ One must ignore, for instance, the adduction of Num 28:2 in *Cher.* 84, where it interrupts the Pentateuchal sequence. In the end, detecting a continuous Pentateuchal substructure in *Cher.* 40–130 feels more like a case of critical fabrication than of critical recognition.

but a worthy minister (ἱεροφάντης) of the holy secrets, I was not slow to become his disciple.²⁸

Philo then quotes, as a tertiary lemma, Jer 3:4: “Did you not call upon me as your house, your father and the husband of your virginity.” The tertiary lemma serves as a proof for the four foregoing secondary lemmas (mentioned above) proving that the birth of children from Sarah, Rebecca, Leah, and Zipporah (all allegorical symbols of “virtue”) was by divine rather than human parentage (see *Cher.* 41–47). It is telling, however, that one cannot immediately tell to which of these four pairs the Jeremiah quotation most clearly belongs. Philo will explicitly link this verse to the secondary sequence by adducing a text about Sarah, Gen 18:11, in *Cher.* 50. He then goes on, in *Cher.* 51 and 52, to link this tertiary lemma to the primary biblical lemma as well (Gen 4:1a).

Philo’s explicit “double” interweaving of his tertiary lemma, Jer 3:4, with both the secondary and primary lemmas, suggests that a different associative principle is at work here. Philo is keen to relate Jeremiah not merely as the author of an external proof-text, but as someone whose entire religious system is akin to that of Moses. As a result of this theological conviction, Philo associates Jer 3:4 with *both* Gen 18:11 and Gen 4:1a, albeit thematically rather than lexically. This final point illustrates Philo’s ability to differentiate his theological and literary critical tasks. In associating Moses and Jeremiah, his aim is not to identify superficial lexical commonalities, but to trace broader theological coherences between two prophetic corpora. Philo’s thematic mode of transition and his pattern of “double interweaving” demonstrate the difference provenance makes when it comes to supplementary biblical lemmas.

²⁸ Philo, *Cher.* 49.

3.5 *Cher. 63: The Acquisitiveness of Alexander the Great*

Philo uses a third, distinctive kind of supplementary lemma in *Cher. 63*. He cites a legendary *dictum* of Alexander the Great, who upon surveying the territory around him that he had conquered is alleged to have boasted, “This way and that, all are mine (ἐμά).” I have named this kind of associated text a “secondary classical lemma,” on the grounds that it functions *formally* in the same way a supplementary biblical lemma might.

Despite such formal similarity, Philo leaves two important clues that this secondary classical lemma does not hold the same theological status as his quotation of Jer 3:4. First, Philo makes no attempt to defend the religious significance of this citation; he does not even name its historiographical source. Rather, Philo attributes it to oral tradition with the formula ἐκεῖνόν φασιν (*Cher. 63*). Secondly, Philo links his secondary classical lemma to other secondary and tertiary lemmas in the sequence (see *Cher. 67, 72, 84, 87*) through a lexical rather than a thematic connection: Alexander, Laban, and Pharaoh all claim territory and possessions by way of the personal pronoun or personal adjective, “mine.”

At first blush, the lexical connection that Philo forges between the anonymous Alexander saying, Gen 31:43 (*Cher. 67*) and Exod 21:5–6 (*Cher. 72*) seems to lend it some rhetorical authority as a proof in his argument. The lexical nature of its association with these latter texts, however, may also denote a level of superficiality which does not attain in the case of Jer 3:4. Additionally, it is worth noting that unlike Jer 3:4, which offered positive revelation about God, Philo’s secondary classical lemma about Alexander’s acquisitiveness offers negative, non-theological evidence about the possessiveness of human beings. What better secondary evidence could Philo offer to shore up his case that Cain, whose name means “possession” according to a biblical Hebrew etymology, is an allegorical archetype of human acquisitiveness, than the first-person testimony of a real historical actor who exemplified that vice? Such a proof’s authority

would depend not upon divine inspiration, but upon the opposite: personal non-conformity to the will, wisdom, and law of God. This is exactly what Alexander offers Philo.

4. Chapter, Treatise, Cycle, Commentary: Four Levels of Coherence

The foregoing case studies have attended to the more nuanced details of Philo's associative poetics. In this final section, I will step back, widen the analytic lens, and offer some provisional conclusions on how this data, taken cumulatively, illuminates the thematic coherence or disunity in Philo's allegorical project at four levels: the chapter, the treatise, the cycle, and the commentary as a whole.

First, this study affirms that the Philonic chapter provides a base unit of molecular thematic coherence in *On the Cherubim*. Attending to secondary and tertiary levels of discourse illuminates how thematic coherence may be sustained across multiple chapters, as was evidenced in *Cher.* 1–39. In particular, a sequential Abrahamic allegory extended just beneath the surface through the first and final chapters of this “first movement” of *On the Change of Names*.

Does *On the Cherubim* as a whole hang together thematically by way of these secondary allegorical threads? My study of this treatise suggests that it does not. The perception of disunity in this and various other Philonic treatises in the Allegorical Commentary seems to have been felt by ancient as well as modern readers of Philo. This is proven by the “composite titles” of many Philonic treatises, including this one, whose full Greek title Colson renders as “On the Cherubim, and the Flaming Sword, and Cain the First Man Created out of Man.”²⁹ Despite the presence of multiple *foci*, however, the question of whether *On the Cherubim* contains a literary unity or

²⁹ Adler, *Studien zu Philon*, 27–28: “Die sonderbare Zusammensetzung des Titels spricht wohl dafür, daß er nicht von Philon selbst herrührt, sondern später einmal vor das Buch gesetzt wurde, mit dessen Inhalte er sich möglichst genau decken wollte.”

integrity is a question that exceeds the scope of the current paper. To address that question, one would need to return to the issue of “literary unity” in antiquity more generally. In a critical series of studies on Plato’s *Phaedrus*, Malcolm Heath has reiterated that ancient authors permitted a far wider range of topics to be presented together in a single literary composition.³⁰ More work remains to be done in asking how ancient standards of literary unity differ from our own.

Considering the question of the thematic coherence of *On the Cherubim* as a treatise raises the question of whether thematic coherence exists at the level of the scriptural “cycle.” Space has not permitted us to consider particular thematic coherences between the two movements of *On the Cherubim* and the particular themes associated with the Adam and Cain cycles, respectively, but it remains a working hypothesis that *On the Cherubim* represents a “hinge treatise” between these cycles—a status indicated by the change in primary lemmatic focus as well as the exegetical patterns and themes arising at the secondary and tertiary levels.³¹

Finally, *On the Cherubim* does suggest, in my judgment, certain thematic unities in the thematics of the Allegorical Commentary as a whole. In particular, the secondary-level Abrahamic allegory in *Cher.* 1–9 links the Adam Cycle with the Abraham Cycle and first signals, as symphonic leitmotifs, allegorical themes that will be more fulsomely explicated in later treatises. One critical example of this is the series of tertiary lemmas in *Cher.* 1–39 that present, *in nuce*, the significance of Abram and Sarai’s change of names for Philo’s allegory of the soul. This “Abrahamic cluster” in *Cher.* 1–9 prepares the way for Philo’s far more extended treatment of this same subject in *Mut.* 60–129. Instead of finding a single level of coherence in Philo’s treatises, we find a kind of alternation between coherence and disunity, which is part and parcel of the location

³⁰ See note 23 above.

³¹ I am skeptical about Adler’s claim that *Cher.* 1–39 constitutes the lost book five of the *Legum allegoriae* (*Studien zu Philon*, 28).

of Philo's allegorical treatises in a kind of middle ground between thematic σύγγραμμα and commentary proper.