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**From the Thick Marshes of the Nile
to the Throne of God:
Moses in Ezekiel the Tragedian
and Philo of Alexandria**

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On two different occasions, Philo mentioned reactions of audiences to plays in a theater when he was present. While noting the different ways that humans respond to stimuli, he wrote: “When I have been in the theatre, I have often noticed that some are so moved by a melody sung by the actors on the stage or performed by the musicians that they are aroused and spontaneously join in an outburst of approval.” He noted that “others are so unaffected that that one might suppose that in this way they are no different than the lifeless benches on which they are sitting.” Still others, “are so repulsed that they leave the performance and as they depart, cover their ears with each of their hands . . .”¹ On another occasion he commented on the reaction of an audience to a couplet from Euripides’s *Auge* that praised freedom: “I saw the entire audience stand up in enthusiasm to their full height and

¹Philo, *Ebr.* 177.

raise their voices together powerfully with continuous shouts of approval both for the sentiment and for the poet.”²

While the descriptions in these statements are dramatic, I understand them to refer to actual experiences that Philo had in the theatre. Philo knew classical drama. He mentioned all three of the major tragedians by name: Aeschylus,³ Sophocles,⁴ and Euripides.⁵ He cited Aeschylus six times⁶ and alluded to lines from his tragedies nine more times.⁷ He only cited Sophocles once,⁸ although he alluded to lines from him seven times.⁹ His favorite classical tragedian was Euripides: he cited him seventeen times¹⁰ and alluded to lines from his plays another eight

²Philo, *Prob.* 141 Cf. also *Anim.* 23.

³Philo, *Prob.* 143.

⁴Philo, *Prob.* 19.

⁵Philo, *Prob.* 99, 116, 141.

⁶Philo, *Prob.* 143 cited TrGF 3:20; Philo, *Aet.* 49 cited TrGF 3:139; Philo, *Anim.* 47 cited TrGF 3:162; Philo, *Prov.* 2.8 cited TrGF 3:344; and Philo, *Prov.* 2.90 cited TrGF 3:345. I owe these references and those below to the index of David Lincicum, “A Preliminary Index to Philo’s Non-Biblical Citations and Allusions,” *SPhA* 25 (2013): 139-167. On the reference in *Anim.* 47 see David Lincicum, “Aeschylus in Philo, *Anim.* 47 and *QE* 2.6,” *SPhA* 25 (2013): 65-68.

⁷Philo, *Ebr.* 126 alluded to *Eu.* 107; Philo, *Opif.* 132, alluded to *Pr.* 90; Philo, *Opif.* 144; *Mos.* 1.279; *Spec.* 4.14; 4.236; *Virt.* 80, alluded to TrGF 3:162 (although this may be through Plato, *Resp.* 3.391e); Philo, *Sacr.* 93 alluded to TrGF 3:394; and Philo, *Aet.* 139 alluded to TrGF 3:402.

⁸Philo, *Prob.* 19, cited TrGF 4:755.

⁹Philo, *Jos.* 48, alluded to *Hipp.* (?); Philo, *Prob.* 42 alluded to *OC* 1293; Philo, *Gig.* 56; *Ebr.* 8; *QG* 4.159, alluded to TrGF 4:910; and Philo, *Spec.* 1.74; 3.50 alluded to TrGF 4:945.

¹⁰Philo, *Prob.* 116 cited *Hec.* 548-51; Philo, *Ios.* 78 cited *Ph.* 521; Philo, *Spec.* 4.47 cited TrGF 5:200.3-4; Philo, *Prob.* 141 cited TrGF 5:275.3-4; Philo, *Somn.* 1.154; *Mos.* 1.31 cited TrGF 5:420; Philo, *Leg.* 3.202; *Ios.* 78; *Prob.* 25 cited TrGF 5:687; Philo, *Prob.* 98-104 cited TrGF 5:839.8-14; Philo, *Leg.* 1.5; *Aet.* 5, 144 cited TrGF 5:839.12-14; Philo *Prob.* 145 cited TrGF 5:839.1; Philo, *QG* 4.203 cited TrGF 5:954; Philo, *Prob.* 22 cited TrGF 5:958.

times.¹¹ The Alexandrian Jew appears to have known other tragedians as well, such as Ion¹² and alluded to two anonymous tragedians as well.¹³

Philo's tastes were not restricted to the serious: he also knew comedies. He alluded to Aristophanes, the most famous representative of Old Comedy twice,¹⁴ and cited Menander, the celebrated playwright of the New Comedy three times¹⁵ and alluded to him once.¹⁶ He did not cite any of the known figures of the Middle Comedy; however, he did know comedies beyond Athens and cited Epicharmus, the Sicilian writer of comedies, once¹⁷ and alluded to him once.¹⁸ On another occasion he alluded to an unidentified comic poet.¹⁹ Philo's enjoyment of Greek tragedy and comedy is not surprising: one of the Jewish translators in Pseudo-Aristeas indicated to the king that his idea of relaxation was "to observe whatever is performed with decorum."²⁰ Philo apparently followed the advice.²¹

¹¹Philo, *Ios.* 48 alluded to *Hipp.* (?); Philo, *QG* 4.211 alluded to *Hipp.* 331; Philo, *Mos.* 1.135; *Spec.* 2.133 alluded to *IA* 122; Philo, *Somn.* 1.172 alluded to TrGF 5:484; Philo, *Mut.* 152 alluded to TrGF 5:484.1; Philo, *Aet.* 57 alluded to TrGF 5:839.12-14; Philo, *Cher.* 26 alluded to TrGF 5:911.

¹²Philo, *Prob.* 134 cited TrGF 1:53.

¹³Philo, *Prob.* 145 alluded to TrGF 2:318 and Philo, *Aet.* 27 alluded to TrGF 2:327a.

¹⁴Philo, *Opif.* 312 alluded to *Av.* 971 and to *Ra.* 382.

¹⁵Philo, *Her.* 5 cited frg. 312 KT; Philo, *QG* 4.120 cited frg. 581 Kock; and Philo *Abr.* 134 cited frg. 786 KT.

¹⁶Philo, *Mos.* 2.13 alluded to frg. 786 KT.

¹⁷Philo, *QG* 4.203 cited frg. 260 PCG (46 DK).

¹⁸Philo *Post.* 214 alluded to frg. 214 PCG. Cf. also Philo, *Sacr.* 35 that alluded to Ps-Epicharmus frg. 271 PCG.

¹⁹Philo, *Contempl.* 43 alluded to PCG 8:475.

²⁰*Ep. Arist.* 284.

²¹For a treatment of Philo's relationship to classical drama see Erkki Koskenniemi, "Philo and Classical Drama," in *Ancient Israel, Judaism, and Christianity in Contemporary Perspective: Essays in Memory of Karl-Johan Illman* (ed. Jacob Neusner, Allan J. Avery Peck, A. Laato, R. Nurmela, and K.-G. Sandelin; Studies in Judaism; Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 2006), 137-151.

Did Philo know any Jewish playwrights or plays? Through a twist of fate, the best preserved tragedy that we have from the Hellenistic world is the *Exagoge* of Ezekiel.²² While the date and provenance of Ezekiel are debatable, I place him in Egypt in the second century BCE.²³ Philo never mentioned Ezekiel by name or openly cited any of his plays, but this is hardly a surprise: he did not mention Jewish predecessors by name. The closest that Philo came to naming Jewish predecessors was in his preface to the *Life of Moses* where he wrote: "I will relate the story of Moses as I have learned it both from the sacred books which he left behind as marvelous monuments of his wisdom and from certain elders of the nation."²⁴ Who were the elders? Was Ezekiel's *Exagoge* in Philo's library or did he see a version of the play performed?²⁵

I propose to examine the relationship between Ezekiel's *Exagoge*²⁶ and Philo of Alexandria's *Life of Moses*²⁷ in three areas: verbal parallels, exegetical traditions,

²²There are seventeen fragments preserving 269 lines in iambic trimeter that Alexander Polyhistor cited which were in turn cited by Eusebius, *Praep. ev.* 9.28-29. Clement, *Strom.* 1.23.155.1-5 and 6-7 has parallels to frgs 1 and 2 and Eustathius, *Commentary on the Hexameron* has a parallel to frg 17. There is another fragment preserved in Epiphanius, *Haer.* 64.29.6-30.1 (=frg 18), but I do not consider this to belong to the *Exagoge*, although it is possibly from another work of Ezekiel.

²³The *termini* are the translation of Exodus into Greek (third century BCE) and Alexander Polyhistor (ca. 110-post 40 BCE). See *FGrH* 273.

²⁴Philo, *Mos.* 1.4.

²⁵There has not been a study dedicated to this issue. Carl R. Holladay, *Fragments from Hellenistic Jewish Authors. Volume 2: Poets* (SBLTT 30/SBLPS 12; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1989), 301-529, esp. 317, and Howard Jacobson, *The Exagoge of Ezekiel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), esp. 38-39, both thought that Philo probably knew Ezekiel. David T. Runia, "God and Man in Philo of Alexandria," *JTS* 39 (1988): 48-75, esp. 53, was less sanguine about the possibility.

²⁶I have used the edition of Holladay, *Poets*, 301-529 and consulted Jacobson, *The Exagoge of Ezekiel*.

and thematic similarities. While it would be possible to consider the relationship between Ezekiel and the entire Philonic corpus, I will concentrate on the *Life of Moses* since it has the most numerous parallels and offers us the opportunity to ask whether Philo was influenced by Ezekiel's play in a more sustained way rather than exploring a series of isolated occurrences.²⁸ I assume that both Ezekiel and Philo used a form of the Greek text of Exodus as their base. I have compared both to the Göttingen *Septuaginta*.²⁹ I am only concerned with occurrences where Ezekiel and Philo agree in departing from the biblical text. A common departure from the Greek Bible does not demonstrate dependence; there are a number of other possibilities such as variant readings, similar embellishments of a narrative by authors who think in Hellenic terms, and common exegetical traditions that both may attest. I will try to take these factors into account as I work through the similarities. I am distinguishing verbal parallels from exegetical traditions by using the latter for the texts where there are common interpretations but no verbal parallels. I have reserved the category of thematic parallels for similar concepts that are not directly grounded in a common exegetical tradition. We want to ask whether the evidence suggests that Philo knew Ezekiel directly—either through having observed a performance or having a copy of the play in front of him.

²⁷I have used the text of Leopold Cohn, ed., *Philonis Alexandrini opera quae supersunt. Volume 4* (Berlin: Georg Reimerus, 1902; reprinted Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1962).

²⁸Unfortunately, *QE* is not extant until Exod 12:2 or it would have been a natural section of the Philonic corpus to use as a point of comparison.

²⁹John William Wevers, ed., *Septuaginta Vetus Testamentum Graecum. Volume 2.1: Exodus* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1991).

Verbal Echoes

The first parallels that we will explore are the places where Ezekiel and Philo retold the biblical story by using an identical word or phrase that does not appear in the Greek Bible. I have found sixteen places where this occurs. The first verbal echo occurs in the rehearsal of Exodus 1 when Ezekiel and Philo retold Pharaoh's decision to oppress the Hebrew people. The Greek has, "Let us outwit them (*κατασοφισώμεθα αὐτούς*)."³⁰ Ezekiel and Philo preferred the verb "contrive" (*μηχανάομαι*).³¹ It is worth noting that Philo used the verb "outwit" three times elsewhere but never in connection with Exodus 1.³² More impressively, Ezekiel and Philo both omitted the story of the midwives in their versions of Pharaoh's machinations, probably to remove any hint of complicity.³³ Josephus appears to have been sensitive to this implication, but reacted differently by making the midwives Egyptians.³⁴

The largest number of verbal echoes are clustered around the retelling of Exodus 2, especially the story of Moses's birth and adoption. There are four verbal echoes in the retelling of the exposure of Moses. The Greek Bible explained the rationale of Moses's parents' decision to put him in an ark: "since they were not able to keep him hidden" (*οὐκ ἠδύνατο . . . κρύπτειν*).³⁵ Ezekiel and Philo preferred a participial form of "escape notice" (*λανθάνω*), although Ezekiel used it as a strict

³⁰Exod 1:10.

³¹Ezekiel 7-9, esp. 8; Philo, *Mos.* 1.8. See also Josephus, *Ant.* 2.209, although this is in a general reflection rather than a retelling of the text.

³²Philo, *Leg.* 3.82; *Spec.* 3.186; *Flacc.* 42.

³³Ezekiel 8-13; Philo, *Mos.* 1.8.

³⁴Josephus, *Ant.* 2.206-207.

³⁵Exod 2:3.

analogy to the negative expression in Exodus while Philo used it to describe their success in keeping Moses out of sight for three months.³⁶ According to Exodus their inability to keep Moses concealed led his mother to construct an ark and place him in it (καὶ ἐνέβαλεν τὸ παιδίον εἰς αὐτήν).³⁷ Ezekiel and Philo omitted the ark and suggested that Moses was exposed on the bank of the river. Ezekiel followed the biblical text and had the mother expose her child (ὑπεξέθηκεν); Philo had both parents expose him (ἐκτιθέασι).³⁸ It is important to note that while Ezekiel used a fuller form of the verb, both forms were used for infant exposure.³⁹ In the biblical text Moses's mother set the ark "in the marsh at the river" (εἰς τὸ ἔλος παρὰ τὸν ποταμόν).⁴⁰ Ezekiel and Philo alter each prepositional phrase in similar or identical ways. They qualified the marsh almost identically: Ezekiel had Moses's mother set him "in a thickly grown marsh" (λάσιον εἰς ἔλος δασύ) while Philo suggested that Pharaoh's daughter found the child "in the thickest part of the marsh" (ἐν τῷ δασυτάτῳ τῶν ἐλῶν).⁴¹ Since they omitted the ark, both suggest that Moses was set on the bank of the river rather than at the river. In Ezekiel Moses's mother set her

³⁶Ezekiel 15; Philo, *Mos.* 1.9. Josephus also used it, *Ant.* 2.209, 215, 218 (*bis*), 219.

³⁷Exod 2:3.

³⁸Ezekiel 16; Philo, *Mos.* 1.10. See also §11.

³⁹See the examples in Holladay, *Poets*, 413. Philo, *Mos.* 1.14, uses ἐκκεῖμαι that also means "expose." See Herodotus 1.110. On the issue of infanticide in Philo see Adele Reinhartz, "Philo on Infanticide," *SPhA* 4 (1992): 42-58, esp. 51; Maren R. Niehoff, *Philo on Jewish Identity and Culture* (TSAJ 86; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2001), 163-174; Daniel R. Schwartz, "Did the Jews Practice Infant Exposure and Infanticide in Antiquity?" *SPhA* 16 (2004): 61-95; and Maren R. Niehoff, "Response to Daniel R. Schwartz," *SPhA* 17 (2005): 99-101.

⁴⁰Exod 2:3. See also 2:5.

⁴¹Ezekiel 17; Philo, *Mos.* 1.14.

infant “at the edge of the river” (παρ’ ἄκρα ποταμοῦ) and Pharaoh’s daughter drew him “from the moist bank of the river” (ὕγρας ἀνεῖλε ποταμίας ἀπ’ ἡόνος).⁴² Philo had the parents set him “on the banks of the river” (παρὰ τὰς ὄχθας τοῦ ποταμοῦ).⁴³

The striking similarities continue in the description of the discovery of Moses. Ezekiel and Philo replaced the aorist infinitive of the biblical text “to wash” (λούσασθαι)⁴⁴ with the noun “bathing” (λουτροῖς) when they related Pharaoh’s daughter’s decision to go to the river.⁴⁵ According to the biblical text, when the royal princess saw Moses in the ark, “she said: ‘He is from the children of the Hebrews.’”⁴⁶ Ezekiel and Philo dropped the *oratio recta* and had Pharaoh’s daughter recognize (γινώσκω) that he was from the Hebrews. They altered the syntax from the literal translation of the biblical text⁴⁷ to a similar and more idiomatic Greek construction.⁴⁸ The biblical text did not mention the approach of Moses’s sister;⁴⁹ however, Ezekiel and Philo did by using the same participle: Miriam ran to Pharaoh’s daughter (προσδραμοῦσα).⁵⁰ While the cluster of these three is intriguing, it must be recognized that they could all be explained as similar attempts to overcome

⁴²Ezekiel 31.

⁴³Ezekiel 17; Philo, *Mos.* 1.10.

⁴⁴Exod 2:5.

⁴⁵Ezekiel 20; Philo, *Mos.* 1.14.

⁴⁶Exod 2:6.

⁴⁷Exod 2:6, זה ותאמר מילדי העבריים זה is rendered καὶ ἔφη Ἀπὸ τῶν παιδίων τῶν Ἑβραίων τοῦτο in the LXX.

⁴⁸Ezekiel 22, ἔγνω δ’ Ἑβραῖον ὄντα. Philo, *Mos.* 1.15, γνοῦσαν δ’ ὅτι τῶν Ἑβραίων ἐστί.

⁴⁹Exod 2:7.

⁵⁰Ezekiel 23; Philo, *Mos.* 1.16, who used it in the accusative rather than the nominative case.

the literal character of the Greek translation of the Hebrew and fill in the gaps of the narrative.

The verbal echoes continue in later parts of Ezekiel, but not with the same degree of frequency. Ezekiel and Philo embellished the biblical text by adding that he received a royal upbringing (τροφή βασιλική)⁵¹ and education. They agree in wording on the former and in concept on the latter. Philo, in particular, expatiated on Moses's education.⁵²

There are several verbal echoes in the retelling of the burning bush. In contrast to the biblical text that describes it as “this great sight” (τὸ ὄραμα τὸ μέγα τοῦτο),⁵³ Ezekiel and Moses called it a “portent” (τεράστιον).⁵⁴ Moses objected that he was not qualified to lead the Hebrews out of Egypt because “I am weak-voiced and halting” (ἰσχνόφωνος καὶ βραδύγλωσσος ἐγὼ εἰμι).⁵⁵ Ezekiel and Philo expanded this by adding that Moses claimed that he was “not eloquent” (οὐκ εὐλογος).⁵⁶ There are several variants in the manuscript tradition that include “not eloquent” (οὐκ εὐλογος),⁵⁷ “not fluent” (οὐκ εὐγλωσσος),⁵⁸ and “not smooth speaking” (οὐκ εὐλάλος).⁵⁹

⁵¹Exod 2:11 has nothing along these lines. See Ezekiel 36-37 for both. Ezekiel used the plural for “royal upbringing.” Philo, *Mos.* 1.20 and 1.8, used the singular for Moses's “royal upbringing.” He treated his education separately and at length (1.20-24).

⁵²This became a well known tradition as Acts 7:22 demonstrates.

⁵³Exod 3:3.

⁵⁴Ezekiel 91; Philo, *Mos.* 1.71. Josephus, *Ant.* 2.265, called it “an amazing portent” (τέρας . . . θαυμάσιον).

⁵⁵Exod 4:10.

⁵⁶Ezekiel 113-115, esp. 113; Philo, *Mos.* 1.83. It is worth noting that Exod 6:12 reads ἐγὼ δὲ ἄλογός εἰμι. Jacobson, *The Exagoge of Ezekiel*, 204 n. 32 suggested that this lay behind this reading.

⁵⁷F^b c M oI-29*-135-707^{txt} *et al.*

⁵⁸29^c 628 18.

The manuscripts for Philo have the same variations.⁶⁰ This may be a case of an alternate text, although it this is not certain since we also have to allow for scribal adaptation to the text of the LXX familiar to them.

There are three verbal echoes relating to the plagues. The first appears to be a common expansion of the biblical text. The first plague turned not only the rivers into blood, but all of the bodies of water.⁶¹ Ezekiel and Philo both included “springs” (πηγαί) in their descriptions.⁶² The sixth plague in Exodus is introduced with the command: “Take your hands full of furnace soot” (αιθάλη).⁶³ Ezekiel and Philo changed this to “furnace ashes” (τέφρα).⁶⁴ Finally, both Ezekiel and Philo mentioned the destruction of the fruit (καρποί) when the hail struck,⁶⁵ a specification omitted in Exodus although it does mention trees.⁶⁶ Josephus also mentioned “fruit” in his version of the plagues.⁶⁷

Finally, in the exodus proper there are two echoes. The first is the common description of the despoiling of the Egyptians as repayment for the way that the Egyptians treated them. Both make an explicit point of saying that this is a

⁵⁹72-426 131^c-313^c-414^c-551 19-108^{txtc} *et al.*

⁶⁰εὐγλωττος GH² and εὐλαλος V²OK²

⁶¹Exod 7:19.

⁶²Ezekiel 133-134; Philo, *Mos.* 1.99. Some mss of Philo omit πηγαί (BEMA), a move that brought Philo’s text closer to the biblical text. Josephus, *Ant.* 2.294, also includes it.

⁶³Exod 9:8.

⁶⁴Ezekiel 136, ἔπειτα τέφραν οἷς καμινάϊαν πάσω. Philo, *Mos.* 1.127, τέφραν ἀπὸ καμίνου λαμβάνοθσι ταῖς χερσίν.

⁶⁵Ezekiel, 143; Philo, *Mos.* 1.119.

⁶⁶Exod 9:25. See also Ps 104:33 that mentions the vineyards and figs trees specifically.

⁶⁷Josephus, *Ant.* 2.305.

“payment” (μισθός) for past treatment,⁶⁸ a detail not mentioned in the biblical narrative. The two also replaced the biblical description of the passage of the children of Israel through the sea, “into the midst of the sea on dry ground” (εἰς μέσον τῆς θαλάσσης κατὰ τὸ ξηράν),⁶⁹ with “through the salty path” (ἀλურᾶς δι’ ἀτραποῦ)⁷⁰ or “through the dry path” (διὰ ξηρᾶς ἀτραποῦ).⁷¹

While four or more of these may be due to factors other than dependence, a dozen or so are rather striking agreements. I say that they are striking because they are not found in other retellings of the exodus among Jewish authors who wrote in Greek. It is also worth noting that the verbal echoes are distributed through the fragments: nine from fragment 1, one from fragment 2, one from fragment 10, four from fragment 13, and one from fragment 15. The greatest number occur in the retelling of Moses’s birth and the plagues.

The Exegetical Traditions

We have already noted three exegetical traditions that Ezekiel and Philo had in common that differ from the biblical text: the omission of the midwives,⁷² the absence of an ark and the exposure of Moses on the bank of the river⁷³ and the inclusion of Moses’s royal education.⁷⁴ We now need to consider those that have no verbal echoes attached to them. There are at least ten of these.

⁶⁸Ezekiel 162-166, esp. 166; Philo, *Mos.* 1.141.

⁶⁹Exod 14:22.

⁷⁰Ezekiel 229.

⁷¹Philo, *Mos.* 1.179; 2.254, ἐπὶ ξηρᾶς ἀτραποῦ. Cf. Artapanus, frg 3 (Eusebius, *Praep. ev.* 9.27.36), διὰ ξηρᾶς ὁδοῦ.

⁷²Ezekiel 8-13; Philo, *Mos.* 1.8.

⁷³Ezekiel 16-17; Philo, *Mos.* 1.10, 14.

⁷⁴Ezekiel 36-37; Philo, *Mos.* 1.20-24.

The first three relate to the retelling of Exodus 2. According to the biblical text, Moses's sister watched what would happen to her infant brother "from a distance" (μακρόθεν).⁷⁵ Ezekiel and Philo suggested that she stood nearby, although they do not agree in wording: the former used "near by" (πέλας)⁷⁶ and the latter "a little way off" (μικρὸν ἄποθεν).⁷⁷ Josephus has a similar but different version: he said that Miriam walked along beside the ark.⁷⁸ Unlike Ezekiel and Philo he kept the ark; like them, he kept Miriam close. Ezekiel and Philo also agree in the timing of the naming of Moses. In the biblical tradition he was named after his mother brought the weaned Moses to the house of Pharaoh,⁷⁹ while in Ezekiel and Philo he was named when Pharaoh's daughter found him on the bank of the Nile,⁸⁰ a tradition that Josephus also knew.⁸¹ When he was grown the biblical text suggests that he became aware of the distress of his own people, and went out to see them.⁸² Ezekiel and Philo state that he broke with Pharaoh when he came to understand his evil machinations.⁸³ This could be a common independent move to explain Moses's break with his past, although the similarity of the agreement is worth noting.

There are two exegetical agreements in the retelling of the burning bush. Both elaborate on Moses's amazement that the bush was not consumed by the

⁷⁵Exod 2:4.

⁷⁶Ezekiel 18.

⁷⁷Philo, *Mos.* 1.12.

⁷⁸Josephus, *Ant.* 2.221.

⁷⁹Exod 2:10.

⁸⁰Ezekiel 30-31; Philo, *Mos.* 1.17.

⁸¹Josephus, *Ant.* 2.228.

⁸²Exod 2:11, κατανοήσας δὲ τὸν πόνον αὐτῶν.

⁸³Ezekiel 40-41, πρὸς ἔργα γὰρ/θυμός μ' ἄνωγε καὶ τέχνασμα βασιλέως; Philo, *Mos.* 1.33, εἰ μὴ κατεῖδεν ἐν τῇ χώρᾳ μέγα καινουγηθὲν ὑπὸ τοῦ βασιλέως ἀσέβημα. Philo then related the events of Exod 1 (§§34-39).

flame.⁸⁴ Ezekiel wrote: “its growth remains entirely green.”⁸⁵ Philo said, “it remained as it was before it began to burn; it lost nothing but, on the contrary, gained in brightness.”⁸⁶ These could easily be independent expansions of authors who wanted to enhance the dramatic quality of the biblical narrative. Josephus has a similar expansion. He wrote: “the fire . . . left the green throughout the bush and its bloom was left unharmed, nor was one of its fruit bearing branches consumed.”⁸⁷ The second agreement is more complex. In the biblical text, the divine voice spoke from the burning bush. In Ezekiel and Philo, a being appeared. Ezekiel had God say: “From the bush the divine word shines out to you” (ὁ δ’ ἐκ βάλτου σοι θεῖος ἐκλάμπει λόγος).⁸⁸ The expression “divine word” has been understood from “divine speech” to the “divine Logos.”⁸⁹ If the latter were the case, Ezekiel would be among the first to attest a belief in the Logos. For the present we do not need to adjudicate this debate but to ask whether Philo was aware of the interpretation. The commentator described the flame that Moses saw and then said: “someone might suppose that this was the Image of the Existent, but let it be called an angel because it announced the things that were about to occur with a silence clearer than a voice by means of a vision that accomplished great things.”⁹⁰ For Philo the Logos was the Image of God.⁹¹

⁸⁴Exod 3:3, τί ὄτι οὐ κατακαίεται ὁ βάλτος.

⁸⁵Ezekiel 90-95, esp. 92.

⁸⁶Philo, *Mos.* 1.68. See also 1.65.

⁸⁷Josephus, *Ant.* 2.267.

⁸⁸Ezekiel 99.

⁸⁹For options see Howard Jacobson, “Mysticism and Apocalyptic in Ezekiel’s *Exagoge*,” *Illinois Classical Studies* 6 (1981): 272-93 and the summary discussion in Holladay, *Poets*, 455.

⁹⁰Philo, *Mos.* 1.66.

⁹¹Philo, *Opif.* 25; *Leg.* 3.96; *Her.* 231; *Spec.* 1.81; 3.83, 207; *QG* 2.62.

He appears to know this interpretation, but rejected it in favor of an angel. If he did not know Ezekiel, he knew an interpretation that was similar to the tragedian's.

The next exegetical tradition is also involved. Ezekiel wrote that when God spoke to Moses from the bush, he said: "I am the God of your ancestors, about whom you speak/Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob the third./ I have remembered them and my gifts (to them)."⁹² This is based on Exodus 3:6, "I am the God of your ancestor, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." This is clear, but what are the "gifts"? This appears to draw from Exodus 2:24: "God remembered his covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob." Ezekiel may have conflated the two texts and called the covenant God's gifts. This may have been a way for Ezekiel to minimize national claims of the Hebrews of his day. Philo omitted all of these references in his *Life of Moses*. He did know the tradition that the covenant was linked with gifts. The treatise *On the migration of Abraham* interprets God's covenant with Abraham in Genesis 17 as five "gifts" (δωρεαι).⁹³ While this is an argument from silence, it is worth noting that both Ezekiel and Philo omit the covenant—at least the fragments of Ezekiel that we have—and understand the covenant as a gift.⁹⁴

⁹²Ezekiel 104-106.

⁹³Philo, *Migr.* 1-127. Cf. also *Mut.* 52.

⁹⁴This has been addressed in detail by William Horbury, "Ezekiel Tragicus 106: δωρήματα," *VT* 36 (1986): 37-51, esp. 42-45, although he makes the connections by pointing out the use of the "gifts of God" in l. 35. See also Avie Marie Schwemer, "Zum Verhältnis von Diatheke und Nomos in den Schriftn der jüdischen Diaspora Ägyptens in hellenistisch-römischer Zeit," in *Bund und Thora: Zur theologischer Begriffsgeschichte in alttestamentlicher frühjüdischer und urchristlicher Tradition* (ed. F. Avemarie and Hermann Lichtenberger; WUNT 92; Tübingen: Mohr (Siebeck), 1996), 67-109, esp. 92-101.

The first sign that God gave Moses to assure him that the divine presence would be with him was turning his rod into a snake.⁹⁵ Both Ezekiel and Philo expand the description of the snake and Moses's fear.⁹⁶ These are likely common expansions that we should expect when in later retellings.

The next three common interpretations deal with the exodus proper. Ezekiel and Philo both stated that the Israelites were unarmed when they left the land. The Hebrew text does not make this point. The MT of Exodus 13:18 reads, "the children of Israel went up from Egypt in battle array" (וַחֲמִשִּׁים עָלוּ בְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם) which the Greek renders "the children of Israel went up out of Egypt in the fifth generation," (πέμπτη δὲ γενεᾷ ἀνέβησαν οἱ υἱοὶ Ἰσραὴλ ἐκ γῆς Αἰγύπτου), reading a number in the place of a participle. Ezekiel and Philo made the unarmed nature of the Hebrews explicit;⁹⁷ however, this was a common tradition as early as Demetrius.⁹⁸ The next tradition is similar: the biblical text suggests that Moses stretched his hand out over the sea and a south wind blew all night causing the sea to be dried up.⁹⁹ Ezekiel and Philo have the sea split immediately when Moses struck it with his rod. There are two differences: in the biblical text Moses stretched his hand out over the sea, in Ezekiel and Philo, he struck it with his rod.¹⁰⁰ In the biblical text, the wind dried the sea over the course of the night; in Ezekiel and Philo

⁹⁵Exod 4:3.

⁹⁶Ezekiel 122-126; Philo, *Mos.* 1.77.

⁹⁷Ezekiel 210; Philo, *Mos.* 1.170.

⁹⁸Demetrius, frg. 5 (Eusebius, *Prep. Ev.* 9.29.16); Wis 10:20; Josephus, *Ant.* 2.321. Contrast, Pseudo-Philo, *L.A.B.* 10.3, who thought that they were armed.

⁹⁹Exod 14:16, 21.

¹⁰⁰Ezekiel 227-228; Philo, *Mos.* 1.177.

the sea split as soon as Moses struck it with his rod.¹⁰¹ Artapanus, Pseudo-Philo, and Josephus also knew the tradition of Moses striking the sea and splitting it.¹⁰² Both Ezekiel and Philo expanded the role of the pillar of fire that guided the Israelites.¹⁰³ Ezekiel and Philo both suggested that God caused fire to appear behind the Hebrews, although they have slightly different understandings of it. In Ezekiel a great flame appeared to the Egyptians;¹⁰⁴ in Philo, the vision of God flashed rays of fire.¹⁰⁵ Artapanus and Josephus also thought that fire was involved in the destruction of the Egyptians.¹⁰⁶

There is one other tradition that we should mention. The biblical text says that the entire Egyptian army was destroyed: “not even one of them was left.”¹⁰⁷ This created a problem for Ezekiel who needed to narrate the story without having the action appear on the stage. He chose to do what other tragedians had done: he had a messenger report the destruction, in this case, an Egyptian survivor, a point that is made clear from the first person narration and Eusebius’s introductory frame.¹⁰⁸ Philo followed the biblical text and emphasized the complete destruction of the Egyptian army “so that not even a torch-bearer was left to announce to the

¹⁰¹Ezekiel 227-228; Philo, *Mos.* 1.177, although Philo also recorded the tradition about the wind (§176).

¹⁰²Artapanus, frg. 3 (Eusebius, *Praep. ev.* 9.27.36); Pseudo-Philo, *L.A.B.* 10.5; Josephus, *Ant.* 2.338.

¹⁰³Exod 14:24.

¹⁰⁴Ezekiel 234.

¹⁰⁵Philo, *Mos.* 2.254.

¹⁰⁶Artapanus frg. 3 (Eusebius, *Praep. ev.* 9.27.37) and Josephus, *Ant.* 2.343.

¹⁰⁷Exod 14:29.

¹⁰⁸Ezekiel 202, 204, 211, 214, 215, 218, 223, 230, 213, 235, 238, 239, 240. See also the introductory frame to frg 15 (Eusebius, *Praep. ev.* 9.29.14).

Egyptians the sudden disaster.”¹⁰⁹ Howard Jacobson thought that this point–shared by Josephus¹¹⁰–was a direct polemic against Ezekiel in defense of a more literal reading of the biblical text.¹¹¹ However, the expression used by Philo and Josephus is a trope that emphasized the complete destruction of an army.¹¹² I see no need to understand this as a polemic; it reflects the fact that Philo did not have the same constraint that Ezekiel faced and followed the biblical text more closely.

Most of the exegetical traditions have parallels in other texts–hardly a surprise. They are distributed widely across the fragments: four from fragment 1, two from fragment 2, one from fragment 8, two from fragment nine, one from fragment 12, and three from fragment 15.

Thematic Parallel

The final point of comparison is the most famous. In fragments six and seven, Ezekiel narrated a dream that Moses had and his father-in-law’s–Raguel’s–interpretation of the dream.¹¹³ Moses said: “There appeared to be on the summit of Mount Sinai a certain great throne that reached up to a vale of heaven.¹¹⁴ On it sat a certain noble person who had a diadem and a great scepter in his left hand. With his right hand, he motioned to me and I stood before the throne.” The vision of the

¹⁰⁹Philo, *Mos.* 1.179.

¹¹⁰Josephus, *Ant.* 2.344, although Josephus did not mention the destruction of even torch-bearers.

¹¹¹Jacobson, *The Exagoge of Ezekiel*, 152.

¹¹²See Obad 18 (LXX). F. H. Colson pointed this out in PLCL 6:368-369 n. a.

¹¹³Ezekiel 68-89.

¹¹⁴There is a problem with the text. The major issue for our purposes is whether to read “Sinai” (Σιναιου) or not. The text is corrupt. The best reading is Sinai in my judgment. Even if we read “lofty” (αιπεινοῦ)–as Jacobson suggests–we would naturally identify the mountain with Sinai. For details on the mss and emendations see Holladay, *Poets*, 439-440 n. 72.

divine throne on Sinai is not surprising, but the next statements are: “he handed me the scepter and told me to sit on the throne. He gave me the royal diadem and vacated the throne. I saw the entire circle of the earth, beneath the earth and above heaven.” Then in a statement that reminds us of Joseph’s dream,¹¹⁵ Moses said: “a large group of stars fell on their knees before me; I numbered them all and they passed by me like a company of soldiers.” Raguel interpreted the dream to signify that Moses will sit as humanity’s judge on the throne with the power to perceive the past, present, and future.

The dream and its interpretation are a clear expansion of the biblical text and have been the subject of extensive discussion.¹¹⁶ I am inclined to think that Ezekiel has drawn on two statements from Exodus for the inspiration of this dream: Moses’s ascent to Sinai into the presence of God and the statement in Exodus 7:1: “behold, I have set you as god to Pharaoh.” The former appears to me to be obvious; the latter is likely because God vacates the divine throne and installs Moses upon it. While the play will go on to remind Moses that he is mortal,¹¹⁷ the dream suggests that he is—in

¹¹⁵Gen 37:9.

¹¹⁶L. Cervaux, “Influence des Mystères sur la Judaïsme Alexandrin avant Philon,” *Le Muséon* 37 (1924): 29-88, esp. 54-58; Erwin R. Goodenough, *By Light, Light: The Mystic Gospel of Hellenistic Judaism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1935; reprinted by Amsterdam: Philo Press, 1969), 290; idem, *Jewish Symbols in the Greco-Roman Period* (13 vols.; Bollingen Series 37; New York: Pantheon Books, 1953-1968), 9:101, who understood the dream as an example of Orphic mysticism; Wayne Meeks, “Moses as God and King,” in *Religions in Antiquity: Essays in Memory of E. R. Goodenough* (ed. Jacob Neusner; SHR 14; Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1968), 354-371; E. Starobinski-Safran, “Un poète judéo-hellénistique: Ezéchiel le tragique,” *Museum Helveticum* 31 (1974): 216-224; Carl R. Holladay, “Portrait of Moses in Ezekiel the Tragedian,” *SBLSP* (1976): 447-452; Howard Jacobson, “Mysticism and Apocalyptic in Ezekiel’s *Exagoge*,” *Illinois Classical Studies* 6 (1981): 272-293; and Pieter van der Horst, “Moses’ Throne Vision in Ezekiel the Dramatist,” *JJS* 34 (1983): 21-29.

¹¹⁷Ezekiel 102.

some way–divine. If Ezekiel drew any inspiration for this from the biblical text, the obvious place to turn is Exodus 7:1. The absence of any direct allusion has led interpreters to look for parallels of figures on divine thrones in Hellenistic or Jewish sources. The parallels selected determine the interpretation.¹¹⁸

While the issue has generated a fascinating debate, I would like to keep our focus on the question at hand. Is there any evidence that Philo knew this dream? He did not repeat the dream or the interpretation; however, on two occasions, he hinted at divine status for Moses in his *Life of Moses*. The first occurs in an excursus in which Philo reflected on Moses's authority.¹¹⁹ The key passage comes immediately after Philo argued that the elements of the cosmos obeyed Moses because he was God's friend and as God's friend had a share in God's possession.¹²⁰ This led him to Moses's ascent on Mount Sinai. He wrote: "For he was named god and king of the entire nation and entered into the darkness where God was, that is, into the unseen, invisible, incorporeal, and archetypal reality of what exists."¹²¹ The reference to Moses as god is to Exodus 7:1. The reference to Moses as king is part of the larger portrait of Moses in book 1 of the *Life of Moses*.¹²² The entrance into the darkness is a reference to Moses's ascent on Sinai.

¹¹⁸The sharpest debate has been between van der Horst and Jacobson. See van der Horst, "Moses' Throne Vision in Ezekiel the Dramatist," 21-29, who argued for a background in mysticism and the Enochic literature in particular; Jacobson, *The Exagoge of Ezekiel*, 89-97 and idem, "Mysticism and Apocalyptic in Ezekiel's *Exagoge*," 272-293, who argued that the dream was a polemic against the mystical view; and van der Horst, "Some Notes on the *Exagoge* of Ezekiel," *Mnemosyne* 37 (1984): 354-375, who offered a rejoinder.

¹¹⁹Philo, *Mos.* 1.148-162.

¹²⁰Philo, *Mos.* 1.156-157.

¹²¹Philo, *Mos.* 1.158.

¹²²Philo, *Mos.* 1.334; 2.1-7.

The question that we need to pose is did Philo draw any inspiration for the combination of cosmic, royal, and divine qualities from Ezekiel's *Exagoge*? Many have answered affirmatively based on the obvious concurrence of the key elements,¹²³ but by no means all.¹²⁴ The issue is not whether Philo thought that Moses shared in the essence of God; he was clear in his writings that the gap between the truly Existent and humans was real. The issue is whether he thought that Moses had participated in the divine in ways that other mortals had not.

A text that has not received the attention that it deserves in the debate is Philo's treatment of Exodus 24:2 in the *Questions and Answers on Exodus*. The biblical text specified that only Moses should ascend Mount Sinai. Philo explained why: "For when the prophetic mind becomes divinely inspired and filled with God, it becomes like the monad, not being at all mixed with any of those things associated with duality." The prophetic mind reminds us of Raguél's interpretation more than Moses's dream; however, the reference to the monad is the element that Philo elected to expand. He continued: "But he who is revolved into the nature of unity is said to come near God in a kind of family relation, for having given up and left

¹²³See Wayne A. Meeks, *The Prophet King: Moses Traditions and the Johannine Christology* (NovTSup 14; Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1965), 147-149, 153, 156-157; idem, "Moses as God and King," 354-371; van der Horst, "Moses' Throne Vision in Ezekiel the Dramatist," 21-29, esp. 25-26; M. J. J. Menken, "The Provenance and Meaning of the Old Testament Quotations in John 6:31," *NovT* 30 (1988): 39-56, esp. 49-51; Martha Himmelfarb, *Ascent to Heaven in Jewish and Christian Apocalypses* (New York: Oxford, 1993), 48-49, 70-71; and Peder Borgen, *Philo of Alexandria, An Exegete for His Time* (NovTSup 86; Leiden/New York/Köln: Brill, 1997), 201-205.

¹²⁴The most important challenges have come from Carl R. Holladay, *Theios Aner in Hellenistic Judaism: A Critique of the Use of This Category in New Testament Christology* (SBLDS40; Missoula, MT: Scholars Press, 1977), 108-129; Runia, "God and Man in Philo of Alexandria," 53-63; and Louis H. Feldman, *Philo's Portrayal of Moses in the Context of Ancient Judaism* (CJAS 15; South Bend: University of Notre Dame Press, 2007), 339-348.

behind all mortal kinds, he is changed into the divine so that such men become kin to God and truly divine."¹²⁵ The point that I wish to make is that Philo had no hesitation in calling Moses divine in association with his experience on Sinai. While he did not allude to Exodus 7:1—he rarely cited secondary lemmata in the *Questions and Answers*¹²⁶—it was likely in the background of his exposition.

This may also explain—in part—why Philo presented the death of Moses as he did at the end of the *Life of Moses*. Philo wrote: “Later, at the time when he was about to set off on his migration from here to heaven, having left mortal life to become immortal, he was summoned by the Father who converted his dual nature—body and soul—into the nature of the indivisible monad and transformed him through and through into mind pure as the sunlight.”¹²⁷ While there is no reference to Moses as god here, it is clear that a type of apotheosis has occurred, an apotheosis that is similar to the earlier experience at Sinai.

Conclusion

Had Philo either watched a performance of Ezekiel’s *Exagoge* or read a copy of the play? I am not asking whether Ezekiel was a major source for Philo’s *Life of Moses*: the scope and the scale of the two works are so different that this is not a realistic way to pose the question. I am asking whether Ezekiel’s portrait of Moses served as one of the influences on Philo’s portrayal in the *Life of Moses*.

¹²⁵Philo, *QE* 2.29.

¹²⁶See David T. Runia, “Secondary Texts in Philo’s *Quaestiones*,” in *Both Literal and Allegorical: Studies in Philo of Alexandria’s Questions and Answers on Genesis and Exodus* (ed. David M. Hay; BJS 232; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1991), 47-79.

¹²⁷Philo, *Mos.* 2.288. This is the first part of a longer Greek sentence that goes on to mention the fact that Moses prophesied to each tribe and even his own death.

I am inclined to think that it was. The number of verbal echoes and exegetical traditions that the two shared is impressive. Philo did not use Ezekiel's *Exagoge* as a basis for his portrait of Moses—the biblical text served this role; however, Philo apparently liked a number of Ezekiel's turns of phrases and interpretive moves well enough that they became part of his own reading of the story of Exodus. Ezekiel had no authoritative status for Philo; the commentator could depart from him as well as accept him depending on his own judgments. Philo apparently found the retelling of Moses's birth, the story of the burning bush, and—I think—the dream of Moses intriguing.

If I am right, it means that we should not think of Philo as someone who lived in isolation working in his study or offering lectures to students. Rather, he was someone who appreciated the theater and either watched or read the script of one Jewish play enough times that selections from it became a part of his own reading of the biblical text.