

## WINDOWS OF THE SOUL IN THE WORLDVIEW OF PHILO OF ALEXANDRIA

AURELIAN BOTICA\*

*Emanuel University of Oradea*

**ABSTRACT.** One of the most important paradigm shifts in the history of Greek philosophy was the ‘rediscovery’ of transcendence in the movement of Intermediate Platonism. Less than a century before the birth of Hellenism (late 4th century BC), Plato had advocated an intentional preoccupation with the life of the mind / soul, encouraging the individual to avoid being entrapped in the material limitations of life and instead discover its transcendental dimension. The conquest of Athens by the Macedonians, followed by the invasion of the Orient by Alexander the Great, set in motion sociological and cultural changes that challenged the relevance of Platonic philosophy. The transcendental vision of Platonism left the individual still struggling to find happiness in the world created by Alexander the Great. This was the context in which the schools of Cynicism, Stoicism, Epicureanism and Skepticism challenged Platonism with their call to happiness in this world and by means of the Hellenistic dominance and the rise of Roman supremacy stirred a renewed spiritual and philosophical effort to rediscover the world beyond; that is, the transcendental world of Plato. This was Middle Platonism and the Jewish philosopher Philo of Alexandria was one of its most prolific writers. In this paper, we will examine the concept of the soul in the writings of Philo, with an emphasis on the role that the soul plays in the act of approaching God through the means of the external / material cult (Temple, sacrifices, priests, etc.). Philo offers a complex vision of the soul, one that remains critically relevant to understanding the Greek, Jewish, and Christian thought that emerged after Philo.

**KEY WORDS:** Philo of Alexandria, soul, spiritualization, Temple

### **Introduction**

In the following study, we will analyze several texts from Philo of Alexandria in which he approached the notion of the soul in relation to the Jewish material cult. Even though Philo was a Jewish philosopher, the classic Rabbinic worldview insisted on an almost materialistic approach to the cult. It is true that a number of rabbis paid attention to the state of the heart of the

\* AURELIAN BOTICA (PhD 2007, Hebrew Union College, Cincinnati, United States of America) is Associate Professor of Hebrew and Exegesis at Emanuel University of Oradea, Romania. Email: dan.botica@emanuel.ro.

worshipper as well, especially when one would offer sacrifices or perform other cultic acts. And even when an observer were unable to detect any spiritual problems that would disqualify the worshiper, the rabbis still argued that a person who lacked pure intent or held idolatrous thoughts while performing cultic acts would become guilty in the eyes of God. Philo, however, pushed the limits to interpreting the Law of Moses much further than the rabbis would have felt comfortable with. Philo interpreted cultic texts not only from a literalist perspective, but more so from a spiritual one. But what caused Philo to adopt this approach? We believe three trends of thought found their place in the worldview of Philo and influenced his interpretation of the Law of Moses: the texts of the Old Testament, the environment of Hellenistic Alexandria and a possible relation between Philo and Rabbinic Judaism.

### **The Background to Philo's Method of Allegory**

We believe that the process of searching for spiritual significance in texts dealing with physical processes or entities began with the authors of the Old Testament themselves. In particular, we will show that there existed in the Old Testament the tendency of certain authors to read cultic processes or entities spiritually.

In general, contemporary critics have argued that overall, in the Old Testament man 'is responsible for his acts and their results, not only for his intentions' (Pedersen 1927: 132). This approach considers the issue of 'liability' from the legal more than the ethical or theological point of view, since the primary concern of biblical law was 'the overt act, not the motivation' (Elmslie 1939: 279). From a strictly legal perspective, then, one might argue that 'the act takes precedence in the Hebrew worldview over the attitude of the heart', even though that does not exclude the importance of the 'ethos' or the 'ethics' of attitude, or *Gesinnungsethik* (Botica 2011: 197; Knierim 1991: 431-32; Vriezen 1958: 328). In other words, even if biblical jurisprudence would take into consideration material evidence, it still remains the case that many viewed the law not as a societal or secular construct, but as a living dimension of the covenant between Israel and God. This explains why the concept of liability for the intentions of the heart appears both in narrative and legal, as well as in poetical, sapiential and prophetic texts (Clements 1996: 217-24). As we argue, since the community was all aware of the danger of 'evil intentions', and since for the most part the law could not prosecute 'evil intentions' without considering the 'physical consequences', this crisis 'produced a collateral concept, namely "divine justice"' (Botica 2013: 63-64).

For various authors in the Old Testament this meant that 'coveting will (at the very least) come under the punishment of divine justice', or the

‘heavenly court of law’, a concept that played an important role in Rabbinical literature (Botica 2011: 434, 442, 450; Otto 1994: 169). Nevertheless, the sources do not always show a neat distinction in the worldview of the Bible between (strict) ‘legal’ and ‘moral / ethical / religious’ liability (Otto 1994: 98). In this sense, one would be expected to ‘achieve the “totality of all ethical-life behavior” that leads to “successful life” that is grounded in the interconnectedness of the inward thought process and the willful decisions of men’ (Otto 1994: 98).

Still, a number of authors have recognized in the Old Testament what one may call the phenomenon of ‘spiritualization’, a process by which Old Testament authors (Micah 6:7; Hoseah 14:3; Psalms 49:12f.; 50:12f.; 140:2; 1 Samuel 15:22) emphasized the spiritual / inward significance of a material entity or practice (Botica 2011: 99; Leonhardt 2001: 240-41). Accordingly,

We understand the notion of ‘spiritualization’ as the tendency of ancient authors not necessarily to deny the validity or importance of the external cult (although exceptions do exist), but to emphasize the ‘inward’ cult or the life of the spirit as the ultimate or most superior cultic act (Botica 2011: 250).

We believe that in looking for the spiritual significance of cultic acts and entities Philo did not initiate a radical break with the Jewish Scriptures that he grew up with. There already existed in the Scriptures intimations for such an approach. Notice the accent on the spiritual significance of cultic practices and on the inward attitude of the worshiper in the following passages:

I know, my God, that you test the heart and have pleasure in uprightness. In the uprightness of my heart I have freely offered all these things (1 Chronicles 29:17).

Who shall ascend the hill of the LORD? And who shall stand in his holy place? He who has lean hands and a pure heart, who does not lift up his soul to what is false and does not swear deceitfully (Psalm 24:3-4).

I will praise the name of God with a song; I will magnify him with thanksgiving. This will please the LORD more than an ox or a bull with horns and hoofs (Psalm 69:30-31).

The one who offers thanksgiving as his sacrifice glorifies me (Psalm 50:23).

The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise (Psalm 51:17).

All the ways of a man are pure in his own eyes, but the LORD weighs the spirit (Proverbs 16:2).

Even though the phenomenon of spiritualization has been taken into account by various authors, not all have understood it in the same way. Fiorenza used the term ‘transference’ instead of ‘spiritualization’, which in her views shows that ‘Jewish and Hellenistic cultic concepts were shifted to designate a reality which was not cultic’ (Fiorenza 1976: 159-61). In the Old Testament, however, the process of reinterpreting non-spiritual entities from a spiritual perspective is observed most evidently in the poetical and prophetic literature. In Otto’s view, ‘the extension to the inner attitude of man shows the transition from a judiciary prohibition’ (in the legal and narrative texts) ‘to an ethical appeal’ (in the poetical / wisdom / prophetic texts, see Otto 1994: 169). He argues that Wisdom and Prophecy authors ‘infused the cult with a strong ethical component’ (Botica 2011: 107). We believe that Otto’s social construct of *gessinungsethisch* (intention-ethical) interpretation is only partially correct. He seems to imply that only within ‘the interaction between cultic, wisdom, and prophetic literature’ one may see the preoccupation with inward themes at work. But the Old Testament showed early tendencies for this approach in the texts of the Pentateuch as well. Some of the earliest legal / criminal and cultic texts seem familiar with the application of, for example, the role of intention to material cases such as murder or cultic impurity. That is,

one may imagine a linear development of the notion of *Divine appraisal of intention*, one that begins in the cases of *criminal law*, it extends in a more elaborate form to *cultic law* and finds its profound formulation in the theological statements of the Psalms, Proverbs, and the Prophets (Botica 2011: 456).

Even a more skeptical author like Crusemann observed that ‘the classification and distinction between intentional-planned and unintentional-accidental acts grew outward from homicide to other areas of conduct’ (Crusemann 1992: 319).

The second current of thought that exercised a profound impact on the way in which Philo read the Law of Moses was Hellenism. One should keep in mind that Philo was born and raised in Alexandria, a city much like a river in which flowed the streams of Egyptian, Ptolemaic, Greek and Jewish cultural influences (Applebaum 1974: 473; Gruen 2002: 115). In the centuries following the spread of Hellenism, Alexandria, more than any other city in the Roman Empire, became the place where one could be influenced by the wider, critical attitude toward the religious cult that had appeared centuries before among the Sophists and that subsequently had influenced Stoicism and the other Hellenistic schools (Botica 2011: 243; Pulleyn 1997: 1996; Burkert 1985: 305-306, 311). In particular, Burkert lists Anaximandros, Anaximenes, Xenophanes, Heraclitus, and Parmenides as the ‘earliest

thinkers whose views played a crucial role in the reformulation of traditional beliefs’.

Philo was a man of his age. Reinterpreting traditional texts according to the method of allegorization was perfected in Alexandria after centuries of development, beginning with early Greek philosophers who sought to undermine the vision of the mythical poets (Tate 1934: 105-06; Pepin 1958: 95-111). The method of allegory, however, was not always meant to be polemical; at least not against Homer himself. Both ancient and modern scholars considered Homer as the foundation for all subsequent efforts at defining the Greek education (Rollinson 1981: 3). After all ‘Homer and Hesiod were one of the bones on which Greek philosophy cut its infant teeth’ (Tate 1934: 107). As Blonningen noted, most philosophers did not equate ‘criticism’ of the myths with their ‘repudiation’ (Blonningen 1992: 20; Burkert 1985: 334).

We can assume, then, that one of the reasons for the rise of the method of allegorical interpretation was in fact the critical reinterpretation of the Homeric myths in particular and the material expressions of Greek religion in general. As Nikiprowetsky showed, not a few intellectuals criticized animal sacrifices during Hellenistic times (Nikiprowetsky 1996: 199-216). In this study, we will show that Philo did not fully embrace this belief, but that he construed his allegorical interpretation of the sacrifices in part to address Greek polemics against Judaism, but also to appropriate the Greek culture into the Jewish exegetical mindset. Philo’s extensive quotes and allusions to the Greek philosophers betrays his critical admiration for them. Dawson is to some extent correct to say that ‘for Philo allegorical interpretation is an effort to make Greek culture Jewish rather than to dissolve Jewish identity into Greek culture’ (Dawson 1991: 74). Philo lived during the Intermediate, or Middle Platonic, phase of the Platonic movement. That was a time of fervent spiritual and philosophical inquiries. Middle Platonism was a movement that succeeded the period of the Hellenistic Schools of Skepticism, Epicureanism, and Stoicism. By ‘succession’ we do not mean to suggest that Middle Platonism caused the abandonment of the teachings of the Hellenistic Schools. We know for a fact that Stoicism was still in vogue during the first two or three centuries of the Christian era, and that a number of Christian early Fathers had fallen under the influence of some of its fundamental tenets. Middle Platonism rather offered worshipers a better answer to the spiritual crisis of the age. As a Hellenistic Jew, Philo had all the reasons to use the symbolic interpretation through the means of allegory to its full extent.

Lastly, since Philo was Jewish and he had contact with rabbinic figures in Jerusalem, one must wonder to what extent was Philo influenced by the rabbinical methods of interpretation (Botica 2011: 195; Rabello 1979: 735;

Borgen 1984: 124; Goodenough 1986: 9). Did Philo actually write law when interpreting the legal portions of the Scripture? Can we even be sure of the proper dating of Rabbinic sources, in order to set Philo's views against those of the rabbis? (Schurer 1973: 1.874-75). Mack distinguishes between the notions of 'theoretical halakha' and 'practical jurisprudence', showing that 'there are obvious differences in style and genre between Philo and rabbinic sources' (Mack 1984: 227-71). He suggests an approach that will focus more on 'the literary / exegetical types of interpretation, not so much on mere content, since there are obvious differences in style and genre between Philo and rabbinic sources'. For example, Philo almost never takes into account expert legal precedents, nor does he engage with opposing scholars in order to reach a majority consensus, as more or less was expected in rabbinical procedures. It is evident that he employs a unique, personal style that seems more philosophic and theological, than legal. It is not unreasonable to suggest that Philo may have been influenced in part by Oral Law sources, since it was likely that the Jewish population of Egypt may have been 'dependent on Palestine for halakhic matters' (Wolfson 1947: 1.188; Kasher 1985: 231-61, 346-57). Mennard, too, while acknowledging the evident Hellenistic component present in the writings of Philo, does not exclude a relatively close relationship between Philo and Palestinian halakha (Mennard 1966: 7.1299-1304). Nevertheless, Tcherikower argued that in addition to taking Philo's own philosophical ideas into account, one cannot account for parallels between Philo and Rabbinic law until

we have discarded the numerous cases where Philo's law, while similar to the rabbinic, may be accounted for (1) by Hellenistic or Roman influence; (2) by an almost unavoidable evolution of ideas; (3) by what must have been familiar to any Jew anywhere; (4) by a naïve interpretation of Scripture (Tcherikower 1957: 1.1-111, esp. 32-33).

Overall, the scholarly consensus appears to incline toward accepting a minimal degree of influence via Jewish Rabbinic sources on Philo. As Brehier argued, Philo's allegorical method 'gives his legal writings a symbolical, non-practical character' (Brehier 1908: 30-31). Amir too insisted that in *De Specialibus Legibus* Philo sought to establish the superiority of Moses over all other legal systems of the world by 'throwing light on the meaning and intention of the Law' (Amir 1983: 17, 44; Botica 2011: 202). Which means it may at time be difficult to redeem Philo's philosophical approach with the stern practicality of most Jewish Rabbinic arguments. Especially when, as Heinemann noted, 'the concept of the Temple as the "soul" is largely unsupported in rabbinic literature' (Heinemann 1932: 54-57, 66, 74, 463). True, one may establish certain points of connection on the level of content, as Wenschckewitz has done pointing to 'prayer, charity, repentance, humili-



ty, and suffering' as concepts that the rabbis used to substitute for the physical cult (Wenschckewitz 1932: 24, 69). But the differences of style and the overall accent of Philo on the allegorical / symbolical / spiritual dimension raises a number of questions on this issue.

### **The Soul and the Method of Allegorical Interpretation**

Philo used the word 'soul' (*psychē*) in his works almost 1600 times. (For quotations on Philo we relied on the *Philo Concordance Database*, edited by Peder Borgen, Kare Fuglseth, and Roald Skarsten in 2005). It would be an almost impossible task to take into account each and every reference. We have therefore chosen to focus here on the manner in which Philo employed the word 'soul' in texts related to the material cult of the Temple.

In Philo's view, which he derived from the Platonic division of the soul, the soul has divine origins and it contains three, hierarchically ordered parts (*Leg.* 1.71; Wolfson 1947: 1.427; Runia 1986: 301-05; Ryu 2015: 33; Rogers 2012: 99-100). The first and the most superior is the *rational* part (*to logikon*), the second, the *passionate* (*to thumikon*), and the third, the *appetitive* part (*to epithumētikon*). Evidently, in the classical and here the Philonic worldview, the aspect that defines the human being is *reason*. Each of the soul parts has a corresponding virtue, evidently ranked according to the same order: the first is *prudence*, or *practical wisdom* (*phronēsis*), the second, *courage* (*andreia*), and the third, *temperance* (*sōphrosynē*). Yet another construct of Philo's view of the soul can be obtained by diagramming the soul in two parts: the *rational* part, which is the mind, and the *non-rational* part, which contains the five senses, speech, and the power of generation (*Det.* 1.168).

Philo believed that, since the soul has a divine origin, it aims to achieve salvation by returning to God, its ultimate origin (Seland 2012: 275). In order to reach this state, the soul must fight against the entrapments of the material body—which Platonic philosophy associated with a tomb or a prison—by cultivating godly virtues (Runia 1986: 262-63; Dawson 2003: 89-108). Since God revealed the Law for this very purpose, and by Law Philo meant not only the legal part, but the narrative stories of the patriarchs as well, it is the duty of each person to acquire the principles that would nourish the rational / spiritual life of the soul. (Note *De Posteritate Caini* 1.62 for the pairs of Abraham and Sarah, Isaac and Rebeckah, Leah and Jacob, as both historical characters who embodied the virtues and symbols of the virtues themselves. Conversely, characters such as Cain, Laban, Pharaoh, and others were symbols of a number of vices). As Kamesor noted, the historical part of the Pentateuch 'constitutes an allegorical portrayal of the ethical and spiritual progress of the individual' (Kamesar 2009: 85). This progress is critical for the life of virtue, which Philo associates with 'an upward movement of the soul'. One should recognize here the context of the Platonic

dualism between body, as the prison of the soul, and soul, as an ultimate, immortal essence. In order to escape its prison, the soul must struggle upward by living a life of wholesome virtue. For Philo, this too is an approach by which the wise person will discover the rational / spiritual lessons that contained in the literal (physical / material) examples of the Law of Moses, lessons that will help the philosopher in his or her progress.

Philo grounded his adoption of the method of allegory in the practices of the Therapeutae, the Jewish ascetics who supposedly had settled in the vicinity of Alexandria. Philo noted in *De Vita Contemplativa* 1.78 that they discovered ‘the inner meanings... conveyed in allegories’ (*uponoiōn en allēgoriais*, see Svendsen 2009: 37; De Conick 2006: 278). They ‘consider the whole Law book to be like a living being with the literal ordinances as the body, and the invisible meanings stored up in its sayings as its soul’. Philo explains the notion of discovering the ‘inner’ or the ‘invisible meanings’ as the ability of one ‘looking up with the eye of his mind’ (*omma tēs dianoias*, *Somn.* 1.199). Another metaphor is that of seeing with the eyes of ‘reason’ (*logismos*, *Spec.* 1.259), or contemplating (*theōrein*) the visible facts as ‘incorporeal and naked’ (*asōmata kai gūmna*, *De Migr.* 1.236). In the context of the Cult of Moses, when interpreting the physical entities or acts that pertain to Temple rituals, Philo often viewed them as ‘verbal symbols’ (*rēta sūmbola*) appreciated only by the ‘intellect’ (*dianoia*) through the ‘rule of allegory’ (*tois tēs allēgorias kanosin*, *De Spec.* 1.287).

### **Philo’s View of the Soul and the Re-interpretation of the Cult**

As is now evident, Philo took an approach that had been taken hundreds of years earlier by the Greek philosophers who reinterpreted critically the texts of Homer. We need to understand, however, that the similarities between Philo and the Greek philosophers work less on the level of worldview and more on that of methodology. In other words, unlike his predecessors who did not all accept uncritically the Homeric vision of the world and the gods, Philo doubted neither the historical account of Moses, nor the relevance of the Mosaic laws. Philo never repudiated the material efficacy of sacrifices. Even ‘if circumcision is really a symbol of the extirpation of passion and feasts only a symbol of thankfulness to God, physical circumcision and feasting must nevertheless take place’ (Svendsen 2009: 186; *Migr.* 89-94).

It still remains the case that Philo viewed the Temple in Jerusalem in terms not too different from the conclusions drawn by Hellenistic philosophers. Seneca, for example, thought that the ‘human body and soul’ could in fact function as the Temple of god’ (*Epistulae* 31.11). We already noted that a number of Greek and Hellenistic philosophers criticized the Homeric worldview of the gods, arguing for the ‘internalization / spiritualization’ of



empirical religion as a whole. In this sense, we may note Poseidonius' notion of 'finding god in the temple of the soul' and the ability of seeing with the spiritual eyes the reality of the heavenly sanctuary, and the idea that the 'earthly temple' is insufficient to hold God, and that the universe becomes 'the most holy temple and most worthy of a god' (Botica 2011: 247; Heinemann 1932: 49; Thompson 1979: 567-78). Haussleiter too pointed to Pythagoras, Heraclitus, Aristotle, Theophrastus, and the Stoic Zeno, who believed that the true Temple resides within the mind in order to show that the belief of 'god indwelling the human soul' was operating from early Greek all the way to Hellenistic and Roman times (Haussleiter 1957: 794-96, 799-811). Plato was himself known for advocating respect for traditional religion while emphasizing the 'the spiritual / noetic life'—all in the context of the overall uneasiness with the practice of animal sacrifices (*Laws* X, 885b; Nikiprowetzky 1996: 80-81).

If Heinemann and Wenschkewitz are correct that Philo's division of the offerings in *De Specialibus Legibus* 'followed closely Greek philosophical and rhetorical traditions', then it is possible that in his allegorical approach Philo may have been influenced by Greek philosophical and mystical approaches (Heinemann 1932: 62-65, 68; Nikiprowetzky 1996: 76). A number of scholars have suggested the idea that, since Alexandria was a medium in which both Greek philosophy and Oriental mysticism flourished, it is not impossible that Philo may have drawn inspiration from Greek mystical sources as well (Reitzenstein 1978: 416; Kasemann 1980: 328; Goodenough 1962, 1986: 134-60). Note the concept of 'rational worship' (*logikēn latreia*) and *Corpus Hermeticum* 1.31 for the expression: to 'receive pure spiritual sacrifices from a soul and heart offered to you, the inexpressible, the ineffable, called in silence'.

In addition, scholars have long noted the parallels between Philo and Stoicism (Heinemann 1932: 54; Wenschkewitz 1932: 58). Given the preeminence of the doctrine of the Logos in both Philo and the Stoics, one would be on safe ground to assume that Stoicism may influenced the worldview of Philo. Both Philo and the Stoics stressed the rational nature of humanity and both appealed to the idea of 'rational sacrifice' (*logikēn latreia*, see Fergusson 1980: 1154; Kasemann 1980: 326; Dodds 1954: 196).

The examples we have listed in the Appendix illustrate the application of allegory to, and the spiritualization of, the Law of Moses. In Philo's view, keeping the Sabbath benefits not only the soul, but also the body (*Spec.* 2.260). And in bringing animal sacrifices both the soul and the body are purified (*Spec.* 1.256-272; Leonhardt 2001: 240). But since the soul is more important than the body, 'the purification of the soul is of greater consequence than the purification of the body', a notion which can only result from the process of the allegory on Temple, priesthood, and sacrifices (Kla-

wans 2000: 64-65; Nikiprowetzky 1996: 83). Since sins defile the soul, the 'sacrificial acts of atonement' are less remedies against the punishment for sin, and more means by which the soul is cleansed by moral impurity. Since the soul is the most important and the only immortal part of humanity, the animals that are to be sacrificed must be perfect and faultless (*Spec.* 1.259). However, in making sure that the victim is faultless, the priest is in fact evaluating his own soul, in order that it may be free of any imperfections (*Spec.* 2.1). Likewise, when priests offer sacrifices in the Temple, they undergo the rite of cleansing not only to prepare their bodies, but to fulfill the most important part of the ritual, namely, the purification of the soul (Wenschkewitz 1932: 69; Nikiprowetzky 1996: 90-96; Fergusson 1980:1151-89).

For Philo, the cult, with its myriad of offerings, personnel, libations, and commands, pointed the true believer to a realm that was higher, more superior to the earthly one, as Daly observed pointing to over 200 passages on 'sacrifices in Philo, many of which were interpreted allegorically' (Daly 1978: 389-422). For example, the Law of Moses states that the High Priest enters the Holy of Holies once every year (Leviticus 16). But to gain access to the ultimate realm of spiritual realities, the philosopher needs to read the text with different eyes and see 'the soul entering the holy, spiritual realm' (*Migr.* 102; *Somm.* 231-33; Botica 2011: 282).

Likewise, Leviticus 8:29 states that Moses took the breast of the ram and waved it for a heave offering before the Lord. On the literal level, Philo defines the ram as an animal that is by 'nature inclined to pushing and full of anger and impetuosity'. On the spiritual or the allegorical level, the ram becomes a symbol for the 'pernicious offspring of a contentious and quarrelsome soul' (*Leg.* 3.130). On the literal level, Philo accepts the Mosaic laws of sacrifices. Yet the same cultic act, for example, of removing the breast of the animal, becomes a spiritual experience by which God liberates the soul from the power of the 'mischievous passions'. Philo applies the same method of allegorization when he describes Moses removing the 'heave-shoulder' of the ram, a symbol of the fact that the soul must be freed of any negative impediments and thus support the nourishment of the true virtues (*Leg.* 3.136; Cohen 1993: 9-23).

### **Conclusions**

Our aim in this study was to examine the Philonic notion of the soul in relation to the Cult. We have shown that, when Philo dealt with the Mosaic laws pertaining to the Cult, he sought primarily to derive the spiritual and / or the allegorical meaning of the text. Now, when approaching this subject, most scholars have considered the terms 'spiritualization' and 'allegorization' as nearly identical. Still, 'while the foci of two methods may at times

overlap, “allegorization” must be seen as a method the focus of which was not primarily the spiritual dimension’, though it could and it did often suggest that (Botica 2011: 242-43). When applying the method of allegory to Old Testament characters or entities, Philo often had material / practical subject-matters in mind, not only spiritual ones. In fact, more often than not Philo reached conclusions that appealed to the moral and ethical, rather than the spiritual, aspect of life. In the case of Joseph and the Egyptians, for example, he seemed interested not only in ‘the life of *reason* (*i.e.* Joseph)’ versus that of *ignorance* (Egypt), but also in ‘the *ethical* / *virtuous behavior* against the *immoral* / *unethical* one.

Overall, however, Philo believed that, since the soul is immortal, the philosopher must ultimately seek the spiritual nourishment that would help him move toward the final destination of the soul. And the means by which one feeds his soul with the spiritual nutriments of the Law is the method of allegorical interpretation. In essence, the worshiper would probe into the spiritual significance of the material entities and always aspire to discover the more superior reality, as if he were beholding the material world through the eyes of heaven, ‘distinguishing between the physical and the spiritual eyes with which to perceive’ reality (Heinemann 1932: 49; Botica 2011: 255; Amir 1983: 124-25).

We are now in a better position to argue that the most plausible source of influence for Philo’s method of allegory may have been primarily Greek philosophy, and only secondarily the trend to reinterpret cultic entities in the Old Testament and, to a lesser extent, the Rabbinic Literature (Botica 2011: 266; Dawson 1992; Kamesar 1994: 56; Pepin 1958). They share a common terminology and an overall background into the idea of how the soul ought to relate to the material world. True, there exist differences. When reading Philo’s comments against the background of the Greek allegorists, it is hard to miss the unique nature of his worldview. We believe that the difference may be explained to a large extent by religious vision in which they believed and the historical sources from which they drew their inspiration: Moses for Philo and Homer for the Greek allegorists (Rollinson 1981; Tate 1929: 142-54; Long 1992: 41-46; Kamesar 1998: 34-65).

### Abbreviations

<i>Abr.</i>	<i>De Abrahamo</i>
<i>Agr.</i>	<i>De Agricultura</i>
<i>Congr.</i>	<i>De congressueru ditionis gratia</i>
<i>Contempl.</i>	<i>De vita Contemplativa</i>
<i>Det.</i>	<i>Quod deterius potiori insidari soleat</i>
<i>Deus.</i>	<i>Quod Deus sit immutabilis</i>
<i>Her.</i>	<i>Quis rerum divinarum heres sit</i>

<i>Leg.</i>	<i>Legum Allegoriae</i>
<i>Migr.</i>	<i>De migratione Abrahami</i>
<i>Mut.</i>	<i>De mutatione nominum</i>
<i>Sacr.</i>	<i>De sacrificiis Abelis et Caini</i>
<i>Somn.</i>	<i>De somniis</i>
<i>Spec.</i>	<i>De specialibus legibus</i>
<i>Post.</i>	<i>De Posteritate Caini</i>
<i>QE</i>	<i>Quaestiones et solutiones in Exodum</i>
<i>QG</i>	<i>Quaestiones et solutiones in Genesin</i>
<i>Sobr.</i>	<i>De Sobrietate</i>

**Table 1. The soul in relation to the Temple and Temple objects**

Category	Literal form	Spiritual / Symbolical Interpretation	Reference
Temple and Objects of the cult	Temple	the human soul	<i>Spec.</i> 1. 12, 66ff.
	height of altar (3 cubits)	height of the soul which sacrifices	<i>QE</i> 2.100
	altar and its fire	soul of the sage and light of mind	<i>Spec.</i> 1.287
	robe	garment of opinions and impressions of the soul	<i>Leg.</i> 2.56
	furnishings, robes of priests	soul inwardly pure towards God	<i>Mut.</i> 43
	washing feet in bronze basin	washing anything disgraceful from the soul	<i>Mig.</i> 1.98
	the quadrangle (square) of the altar as symbol	he who offers a sacrifice should 'in no way be deficient or lame in soul'	<i>QE</i> 2.99 (2.101, 115)
	dividing the shekel in two parts	two parts of the soul: one free from passions	<i>Her.</i> 1.186
	lampstand with six branches	soul with six divisions	<i>Her.</i> 1.225
	salt added on offerings for preservation	the soul preserves the bodies from being destroyed	<i>Spec.</i> 1.289

**Table 2. The soul in relation to Temple Personnel**

Category	Literal form	Spiritual / Symbolical Interpretation	Reference
	the priest entering Holy of holies	conviction enters soul to heal it from pollution	<i>Deus.</i> 1.135
	the priest entering Holy of holies	movement of soul entering spiritual realm	<i>Migr.</i> 104; <i>Som.</i> 2. 231-233; <i>Her.</i> 1.84
	the High Priest	the rational soul	<i>Ebr.</i> 134; <i>Leg</i> 2.156
	priests without physical blemish	symbols of perfection of soul	<i>Spec.</i> 1.80

**Table 3. The soul in relation to Temple Festivals**

Category	Literal form	Spiritual / Symbolical Interpretation	Reference
Temple Festivals	special festivals	life of the soul, thoughts, and virtues	<i>Spec.</i> 2.42
	Passover	purification of soul	<i>Spec.</i> 2.147
	Passover	the soul anxious to unlearn its subjection to irrational passions	<i>Her.</i> 192
	rejoicing at feast	joy and gratitude of soul toward God	<i>Mig.</i> 1.92

**Table 4. The soul in relation to Temple rituals**

Category	Literal form	Spiritual / Symbolical Interpretation	Reference
Temple Rituals	third offering	healing of the soul	<i>Spec.</i> 1.197
	the 'Order' of the first born or first fruit offerings	movements of the soul	<i>Sacr.</i> 73
	animal offerings	elements of universe, the soul	<i>QG</i> 3.4f. <i>QE</i> 1.5f.
	head of the animal offering	soul purified of its desires	<i>QE</i> 1.17
	offering fatty part of sacrifice	surrendering to God all that is cheerful and pleasant in the soul	<i>Sacr.</i> 1.136
	whole offering and first fruits	the whole soul and the divided soul	<i>Sacr.</i> 109ff.; cf. 82ff.
	male offering	rational part of soul	<i>Spec.</i> 1.201
	female offering	irrational part of soul	<i>Spec.</i> 1.201
	part of the flayed animal	soul in its nakedness, without false conjectures	<i>Sacr.</i> 84
	washing the entrails of the animals	washing the soul from intentional or unintentional reproach, passions.	<i>Leg.</i> 1.141ff.
	Moses washing his feet with blood of burnt offering	all intentional and unintentional uncleanness removed from soul	<i>Mig.</i> 1.67
	sacrificing perfect victim	purification of the soul from passion	<i>Spec.</i> 1.259-60
	pouring libation of blood	the blood of the soul	<i>Leg.</i> 2.56; <i>QE</i> 2.14
	sacrifices of seventy heifers	sacred number of perfect fruits of the soul	<i>Mig.</i> 1.202
	worship through sacrifice	a soul bringing simple reality as its only sacrifice	<i>Det.</i> 21
	leavened and risen dough	movements of the soul	<i>QE</i> 1.15
	oil and frankincense	soul brimful of truths of all sincerity and purity	<i>Som.</i> 2.73f. <i>Spec.</i> 1.273-77
libations	soul desiring moral excel-	<i>QE</i> 2.71	

		lence	
	the rising of leaven	the movements within the soul	<i>Spec</i> 2.185
	forbidden to leave leaven or honey upon altar	light and unsubstantial elations of the soul	<i>Congr.</i> 1.169
	sacrifice of males of every creature that opens the womb	womb as soul, power by which the mind conceives many things	<i>Sacr.</i> 1.102

**Table 5. The soul in relation to the animals of the cult**

Category	Literal form	Spiritual / Symbolical Interpretation	Reference
Categories of ritually pure and impure animals	animals who regurgitate and masticate food	soul recollecting knowledge it has acquired in the past	<i>Agr.</i> 1.132
	fish with fins and scales swimming upstream	soul striving upward to perseverance and temperance	<i>Spec.</i> 4.112
	heifer, ram, and goat	soul, speech, external sense	<i>Her.</i> 1.106
	heifer never yoked, ill-treated, but tender and young	soul adapted to receive government, instruction, and superintendence	<i>Her.</i> 1.125
	the he-goat is the leader of the flock of goats	perfect reasoning which purifies the souls from sins	<i>Somn.</i> 1.198
	winged insects for eating	souls soaring on high, taking heaven in exchange for earth	<i>Her.</i> 1.239
	the raven the dove	vices/passions corrupt the soul virtue refuses to dwell with vice	<i>QG</i> 2.39
	the pigeon flying upward	the soul flies upward	<i>QG</i> 3.3
	venomous creeping creatures domestic creeping creatures	foul vices that threaten the soul the joys that give life to the soul	<i>QG</i> 2.57
	female animals male animals	wickedness and passion healthy passions, virtues of soul	<i>Sacr.</i> 1.103

**Table 6. The soul in relation to physical ailments or experiences conveying impurity**

Category	Literal form	Spiritual / Symbolical Interpretation	Reference
----------	--------------	---------------------------------------	-----------



Physical ailments conveying impurity	person with nocturnal emission placed outside holy camp	camp: the soul encamped and fortified against body necessities	<i>Leg.</i> 3.151
	person unclean due to touching sources of uncleanness	unclean dispositions of the soul	<i>Spec.</i> 3.208
	herpes spreading and rendering person ritually unclean	covetous desires spreading throughout the soul	<i>Spec.</i> 4.83
	leprosy spreading on body	passions affecting soul	<i>QG</i> 2.12, <i>Sob.</i> 1.49
	leprosy affecting buildings	destructive pleasures in the soul	<i>Post.</i> 1.16, <i>Det.</i> 1.16
	skin removed by circumcision protecting body against infection	superfluous, extravagant desires causing diseases to the soul	<i>QG</i> 3.42
	swelling of suspected adulteress body	flowing greedy pleasures into soul	<i>Leg.</i> 1.148
	human excrement buried outside camp	all things that threaten to affect the soul	<i>Leg.</i> 3.158

### Bibliography

- Amir Y (1983) *Die hellenistische Gestalt des Judentums bei Philon von Alexandrien*. Dusseldorf: Neukirchener Verlag.
- Applebaum S (1974) The Organization of the Jewish Communities in the Diaspora. *The Jewish People in the First Century*, volume 1 [edited by S Safrai]. Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, pp. 464-503.
- Blonnigen C (1992) *Der griechische Ursprung der jüdisch-hellenistischen Allegorese und ihre Rezeption in der alexandrinischen Patristik*, KSL XV. Berlin: Peter Lang.
- Borgen P (1984) Philo of Alexandria. A critical survey of research since World War II. *ANRW* II: 21.1. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, pp. 98-154.
- Botica A (2011) *The Concept of Intention*. Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press.
- Botica A (2013) The Tenth Commandment and the Concept of Inward Liability. In Arnold BT, Erickson NL, and Walton JH (eds) *Windows to the Ancient World of the Hebrew Bible: Essays in Honor of Samuel Greengus*. Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, pp. 51-66.
- Brehier E (1908) *Les idées philosophiques et religieuses de Philon d'Alexandrie*. Paris: Librairie Alphonse Picard & Fils.
- Burkert W (1985) *Greek Religion* [translated by J. Raffan]. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Clements RE (1996) The Concept of Abomination in the Book of Proverbs. In Fox MV (ed) *Texts, Temples, and Traditions*. Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, pp. 211-226.

- Clements RE (1996) Worship and Ethics. In Graham MP (ed) *Worship and the Hebrew Bible*. Sheffield: JSOT, pp. 78-94.
- Cohen NG (1993) The Greek Virtues and the Mosaic Laws in Philo. *St.Ph.An.* 5(\*): 9-23, 16-17.
- Daly R (1992) *Christian Sacrifice*. Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America.
- Dawson D (1992) *Allegorical Readers and Cultural Revision in Ancient Alexandria*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
- Dawson D (2003) Plato's Soul and the Body of the Text in Philo and Origen. In Whitman J (ed) *Interpretation and Allegory*. Leiden: Brill, pp. 89-108.
- De Conick A (2006) *Paradise Now: Essays on Early Jewish and Christian Mysticism*. Atlanta, GA: The Society of Biblical Literature.
- Dodds C (1954) *The Bible and the Greeks*. London: Hodder and Stoughton.
- Elmslie WAL (1938) Ethics. In Robinson HW (ed) *Record and Revelation: Essays on the Old Testament by Members of the Society for Old Testament Study*. Oxford: Oxford Press, pp. 275-302.
- Fergusson E (1980) Spiritual Sacrifice in Early Christianity and its Environment. *ANRW II*, 23.2: 1151-89.
- Fiorenza S (1976) Cultic Language in Qumran and in the New Testament. *CBQ* 38(\*): 159-177.
- Goodenough ER (1962, 1986) *An Introduction to Philo Judaeus*, Second Edition. Lanham, MD: University Press of America.
- Gruen E (2002) *Diaspora. Jews Amidst Greeks and Romans*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Hausleiter J (1957) *Deus Internus. Reallexikon fuer Antike und Christentum III*. Stuttgart: Anton Hiersemann.
- Heinemann I (1980) *Philons griechische und judische Bildung*. Breslau: M&H Marcus.
- Kasemann E (1980) *Commentary on Romans* [translated by W. Bromiley]. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans.
- Kamesar A (1994) The Narrative Aggada as Seen from the Graeco-Latin Perspective. *JJS* 45(\*): 52-70.
- Kamesar A (1998) Philo, the Presence of 'Paideutic Myth' in the Pentateuch, and the 'Principles' of *Kephalia* of Mosaic Discourse. *StPh Annual* 10(\*): 34-65.
- Kamesar A (2009) *The Cambridge Companion to Philo*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Kasher A (1985) *The Jews in Hellenistic and Roman Egypt*. Tuebingen: Mohr Siebeck.
- Klawans J (2000) *Impurity and Sin in Ancient Judaism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

- Knierim R (1991) *The Task of Theology*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans.
- Krusemann F (1992) *The Torah*. Minneapolis, MN: Fortress.
- Leonhardt J (2001) *Jewish Worship in Philo of Alexandria*. Tuebingen: Mohr Siebeck.
- Long L (1992) Stoic Readings of Homer. In Lamberton R (ed) *Homer's Ancient Readers*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, pp. 41-66.
- Mack BL (1984) Philo Judaeus and Exegetical Traditions in Alexandria. *ANRW II*, 21.1: 227-271.
- Nikiprowetsky V (1967, 1996) La spiritualization des sacrifices et le culte sacrificiel au temple de Jerusalem chez Philon d'Alexandrie. *Etudes philoniennes*. Paris: Cerf, 199-216 [formerly published in *Semitica* 17(\*): 97-116].
- Otto E (1994) *Theologische Ethik des Alten Testaments*. Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer.
- Pedersen J (1954) *Israel. Its Life and Culture*, vols. I-IV, London: Geoffrey Cumberledge.
- Pepin J (1958) *Mythe et Allegorie*. Paris: Editions Montaigne.
- Philo Concordance Database* (2005) [edited by Peder Borgen, Kare Fuglseth and Roald Skarsten]. Bodo, Norway: Institute of Education and Culture.
- Pulleyn S (1997) *Prayer in Greek Religion*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Rabello M (1996) Jewish and Roman Jurisdiction. In Hecht NS (ed) *An Introduction to the Sources and History of Jewish Law*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press, pp. 141-168.
- Reitzenstein R (1978) *Hellenistic Mystery Religions* [translated by J. Steely]. Pittsburgh, PA: The Pickwick Press.
- Rogers TA (2012) Philo's Universalization of Sinai in *De Decalogo* 32-49. In Runia DT (ed) *The Studia Philonica Annual* 24(\*): 85-105.
- Rollinson P (1981) *Classical Theories of Allegory and Classical Culture*. Pittsburg, PA: Duquesne University Press.
- Runia DT (1986) *Philo of Alexandria and the 'Timaeus' of Plato*. Leiden: Brill.
- Ryu J (2015) *Knowledge of God in Philo of Alexandria*. Tubingen: Mohr Siebeck.
- Schurer E (1973) The Jewish Philosopher Philo. In Vermes G (ed) *The History of the Jewish People in the Age of Jesus Christ* 3.2. Edinburgh: T&T Clark, pp: 809-889.
- Seland T (2012) Review of Gurtner D (ed) *This World and the World to Come: Soteriology in Early Judaism*. *Studia Philonica Annual* 24(\*): 275.
- Svendsen N (2009) *Allegory Transformed. The Appropriation of Philonic Hermeneutics in the Letter to the Hebrews*. Tubingen: Mohr Siebeck.
- Tate W (1934) On the History of Allegorism. *Classical Quarterly* 28(\*): 105-06.

- Thompson JW (1979) Hebrews 9 and Hellenistic Concepts of Sacrifice. *JBL* 98(\*): 567-78.
- Tcherikover V (1957) Prolegomena. *Corpus Papyrorum Judaicarum*, volume 1 [edited by Fuks A, Stern M]. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, pp. 1-111.
- Vriezen T (1958) *Outline of Old Testament Theology*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Wenschkewitz H (1932) *Die Spiritualisierung der Kultusbegriffe*. Leipzig: Eduard Pfeiffer.
- Wolfson HA (1947) *Philo*, 2 volumes. Cambridge: Cambridge Press.