

PHILO OF ALEXANDRIA,  
*ON CULTIVATION*

SBL Press

PHILO OF ALEXANDRIA  
COMMENTARY SERIES

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Number 4



PHILO OF ALEXANDRIA,  
*ON CULTIVATION*

Introduction, Translation, and Commentary

Albert C. Geljon and David T. Runia

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*This book is dedicated to  
Ellen Birnbaum  
and  
James Royse  
Philo scholars and dear friends*

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*Gregory E. Sterling*

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GENERAL INTRODUCTION  
TO THE PHILO OF ALEXANDRIA  
COMMENTARY SERIES

Philo of Alexandria (c. 20 BCE–c. 50 CE) was a member of one of the most prominent families of the large and influential Jewish community in Alexandria. We know more about his brother and his family than we do about Philo. His brother, Julius Gaius Alexander, held a responsible governmental position (Josephus, *AJ* 18.159, 259; 19.276–277, 20.100) and became known to the emperor's family through Herodian intermediaries (Josephus, *AJ* 19.276–277). His *praenomen* and *nomen* suggest that the family was associated in some way with Julius Gaius Caesar. It may be that Caesar granted Roman citizenship to Alexander's grandfather for assistance during the Alexandrian War (48–47 BCE). Alexander made the most of his position and became exceptionally wealthy (Josephus, *AJ* 20.100). Josephus reported that he covered nine of the temple doors in Jerusalem with gold and silver (*BJ* 5.201–205), an act of patronage that attests his immense resources as well as his commitment to Judaism. Alexander's standing is confirmed by the roles of his two sons. The archive of Nicanor suggests that Marcus Julius Alexander was active in the import-export business that moved goods from India and Arabia through Egypt to the West. He married Berenice, the daughter of Herod Agrippa I and later partner of the emperor Titus, but died prematurely c. 43 CE (Josephus, *AJ* 19.276–277). His brother had one of the most remarkable careers of any provincial in the first two centuries of the Roman Empire. Tiberius Julius Alexander moved through a series of lower posts until he held governorships in Judea, Syria, and Egypt. When he backed Vespasian in the Flavian's bid for the throne, his career quickly rose to its apex: he served as Titus' chief of staff during the First Jewish revolt in 66–70 CE (Josephus, *BJ* 5.45–5.46; 6.237) and as prefect of the praetorian guard in Rome after the war (*CPJ* 418b). While his career strained his relationship with his native Judaism to the breaking point (Josephus, *AJ* 20.100; Philo, *Prov.* and *Anim.*), it attests the high standing of the family.

The most famous member of this remarkable family was paradoxically probably the least known in wider circles during his life. This is undoubtedly due to the contemplative nature of the life that he chose. His choice was not total. He may have had some civic function in the Jewish community.

At least this would help to explain why the Alexandrian Jewish community selected him to lead the first Jewish delegation to Rome after the pogrom in Alexandria in 38 CE, a delegation that probably included his brother and nephew of later fame (*Legat.* 182, 370; *Anim.* 54). The political arena was not, however, where his heart lay; he gave his heart to the life of the intellect (*Spec.* 3.1–6). He undoubtedly received a full education that included training in the gymnasium, the ephebate, and advanced lectures in philosophy. The final training was of enormous importance to his intellectual formation. While he knew and made use of different philosophical traditions such as Stoicism and Pythagorean arithmology, his basic orientation was Platonic. Middle Platonism (c. 80 BCE–c. 220 CE) had become a vibrant intellectual movement in Alexandria in the first century BCE, especially in the work of Eudorus (*fl.* 25 BCE). Philo became convinced that Plato and Moses understood reality in similar ways, although he was unequivocal about who saw it most clearly. His commitment to Judaism is evident in his training in the LXX: he knew it with the intimacy of one who lived with it from the cradle onwards. He also knew the works of some of his Jewish literary predecessors such as Aristobulus, Pseudo-Aristeas, and Ezekiel the tragedian. He was aware of a significant number of other Jewish exegetes to whom he alluded, but always anonymously (*Opif.* 26, 77, and *Migr.* 89–93). The most probable social setting for his literary work is a private school in which he offered instruction in much the same way that philosophers and physicians did.

One of the ways that he taught was through writing. His treatises constitute one of the largest corpora that has come down to us from antiquity. We know that he wrote more than seventy treatises: thirty-seven of these survive in Greek manuscripts and nine (as counted in the tradition) in a rather literal sixth century Armenian translation. We also have excerpts of another work in Greek and fragments of two more in Armenian. The lost treatises are known from references to them in the extant treatises, gaps in his analyses of the biblical texts in the commentary series, and *testimonia*.

The treatises fall into five major groups: three separate commentary series, the philosophical writings, and the apologetic writings. The three commentary series are Philo's own literary creations; the philosophical and apologetic series are modern constructs that group conceptually similar but literarily independent treatises.

The heart of the Philonic enterprise lay in the three commentary series. Each of these was an independent work with a distinct rationale and form. The most elementary of the three is the eleven book *Questions and Answers on Genesis and Exodus* that cover Gen 2:4–28:9 and Exod 6:2–30:10. As the

title suggests, Philo used a question and answer format to write a running commentary on the biblical text. The questions are often formulaic, but demonstrate a close reading of the text. The answers typically introduce both literal and allegorical interpretations. Although earlier Jewish authors such as Demetrius (FF 2 and 5) and Aristobulus (F 2) used the question and answer device, they did not write zetematic works. The closest literary parallel to Philo's commentary series is the series of zetematic works which Plutarch composed. The pedagogical character of the format and the listing of multiple interpretations suggest that Philo's *Questions and Answers* were written for beginning students in his school who needed to learn the range of possible readings.

The Allegorical Commentary shares some features in common with the *Questions and Answers*, but is profoundly different. Like the *Questions and Answers* these treatises use the question and answer technique in a running commentary. Unlike the *Questions and Answers*, the format is no longer explicit but is incorporated in a more complex form of exegesis. Literal readings are generally downplayed, although Philo sometimes includes them when he thinks they can contribute to the understanding of the text. The main focus, however, is on allegorical interpretations which are expanded through the introduction of secondary, or even tertiary, biblical texts (*lemmata*). While these expansions may give the treatises a meandering feel, in fact there is almost always a thematic unity that makes the treatise coherent. The scope is also different than in the *QG* and *QE*; the Allegorical Commentary provides a running commentary on Genesis 2:1–18:4 with some treatments of later texts in Genesis in the final treatises. Philo was by no means the first Jewish author to use allegory: earlier Jewish writers such as Aristobulus and Pseudo-Aristeas had used allegorical interpretation; however, they did not write allegorical commentaries. Philo's allegorical commentaries are closer in form to commentaries in the philosophical tradition, e.g., the Platonic *Anonymous Theaetetus Commentary*, Plutarch's *On the Generation of the Soul in the Timaeus*, and Porphyry's *On the Cave of Nymphs*. Yet even here there are considerable differences; for example, Philo's treatises have more thematic unity than his pagan counterparts. If the *Questions and Answers* were for beginning students, the Allegorical Commentary was most likely composed for advanced students or other exegetes in the Jewish community. It certainly places much greater demands on the reader, as any modern reader who has worked through them can attest.

The third series, the Exposition of the Law, is different yet. It is not a running commentary, but a systematic exposition of the law of Moses. Unlike

the *Questions and Answers* and Allegorical Commentary, the Exposition of the Law rarely cites the biblical text—except for an occasional word or phrase—but paraphrases or summarizes it and provides a commentary on the summary. The treatment may include both literal and allegorical readings. Its scope extends beyond Genesis and Exodus to include the entire Torah. Philo wrote an introduction to the Exposition in the form of a biography in the two volume *Life of Moses*. The work is similar in function to Porphyry's *Life of Plotinus* which introduces readers to the *Enneads*. Philo organized his understanding of the law in three parts (*Praem.* 1–3; cf. also *Abr.* 2–5; *Mos.* 2.45–47). The first part deals with creation, demonstrating the harmony between the cosmos and the law. The second part is the historical or biographical section that consists of biographies that show how the ancestors embodied the law before it was given to Moses. The third and most complex part is the legislative. Just as some later rabbis, Philo worked through the decalogue and then used each of the ten commandments as a heading to subsume the remaining legislation in the Torah. Unlike the later rabbis, he added a series of appendices under the headings of virtues. He brought the series to a conclusion in a treatise *On Rewards and Punishments* in direct imitation of the end of Deuteronomy. The series was probably intended for a Jewish audience—and perhaps even interested pagan readers—that included but was not limited to the school.

If the three commentary series accentuate Philo's role within the Jewish community, the last two groups of his treatises reflect his efforts to relate to the larger world. The philosophical works use Greek sources and philosophical genres to address some of the major philosophical issues Philo and his students confronted. The apologetic works were probably written—for the most part—in connection with the events of 38–41 CE. They were designed to assist Philo in his efforts to represent the Jewish community to the authorities.

This expansive corpus is the single most important source for our understanding of Second Temple Judaism in the diaspora. While some of the esoteric and philosophical aspects of his writings reflect a highly refined circle in Alexandria, the corpus as a whole preserves a wide range of exegetical and social traditions which enable us to reconstruct a number of beliefs and practices of Jews in the Roman empire. The difficulty that we face is the limited evidence from other Jewish communities.

This can be partially solved by expanding the comparisons to early Christian writings which were heavily indebted to Jewish traditions. As is the case with virtually all Second Temple Jewish texts composed in Greek, Philo's corpus was not preserved by Jews but by Christians who found his writings so

irresistibly attractive that they gave him a *post mortem* conversion. In some *Catena*e he is actually called "Philo the bishop." A number of important early Christian authors are deeply indebted to him: Clement of Alexandria, Origen, Didymus, Gregory of Nyssa, and Ambrose in particular. While there is no solid evidence to show that New Testament authors knew his writings, they certainly knew some of the same exegetical traditions that he attests. His writings therefore serve both as a witness to some exegetical traditions of first century Christians and as a source for some second century and later Christians.

One of the factors that made Philo so attractive to Christians was the way that he combined Greek philosophy, especially Middle Platonism, with exegesis. The eclectic nature of his thought and the size of his corpus make his writings a particularly important source for our understanding of several Hellenistic philosophical traditions. The combination of Middle Platonism and Jewish exegesis also makes Philo important for the study of Gnosticism, especially for those scholars who argue that the second century Christian Gnostic systems had significant antecedents in Jewish circles.

It is remarkable that in spite of the obvious importance of these writings and their complexity, no series of commentaries has been devoted to them. The present series is designed to fill that void. Each commentary will offer an introduction, a fresh English translation, and a commentary proper. The commentary proper is organized into units/chapters on the basis of an analysis of the structure of each treatise. Each unit/chapter of the commentary will address the following concerns: the context and basic argument of the relevant section, detailed comments on the most important and difficult phrases, passages where Philo treats the same biblical text, the *Nachleben* of Philo's treatment, and suggestions for further reading when appropriate. There will be some variation within the series to account for the differences in the genres of Philo's works; however, readers should be able to move from one part of the corpus to another with ease. We hope that in this way these commentaries will serve the needs of both Philonists who lack sustained analyses of individual treatises and those who work in other areas but consult Philo's works.

Most of the volumes in this series will concentrate on Philo's commentaries. It may seem strange to write and read a commentary on a commentary; however, it is possible to understand the second commentary to be an extended form of commentary on the biblical text as well. While Philo's understanding of the biblical text is quite different from our own, it was based on a careful reading of the text and a solid grasp of Greek philosophy. His commentaries permit us to understand how one of the most influential

interpreters of the biblical text in antiquity read the text. The fact that his reading is so different from ours is in part the fascination of reading him. He challenges us to enter into a different world and to see the text from another perspective.

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## PREFACE

Philo's allegorical treatises have long been a challenge for readers and interpreters. Some features are clear enough. They are commentaries on passages taken from the book of Genesis. They attempt to uncover the deeper meaning of the scriptural verses on which they focus. That deeper meaning concerns the history of the soul and makes use of doctrines drawn from Greek philosophy. But how exactly do they work as treatises? Why is the main biblical passage often left behind and copious attention lavished on other texts? Why do their structures have to be so labyrinthine? How are we meant to read them? Scholars have been grappling with these questions for many years.

This commentary on Philo's treatise *On Cultivation* is the first in the Philo of Alexandria Commentary Series that focuses on an allegorical treatise. It has had very few predecessors, certainly in the English language. Of these the commentary on the double treatise *On the Giants* and *That God is Unchangeable* by John Dillon and David Winston (1983) deserves mention as a pioneering work. Dillon's student Andreas Kilaniotis prepared a commentary on *On Cultivation* for a Trinity College Dublin PhD, but it remained unpublished. For the authors, building on these works and other scholarly endeavours, it has been an exciting journey of discovery as they attempted to determine how best to understand and then explicate the structure and the meaning of this unusual and complex work.

The genesis of the present work occurred as follows. In 2008 Albert Geljon decided he would like to contribute a commentary to the series, but was uncertain of his ability to provide a translation in a language that was not his mother tongue. After discussions with the series' General editor and Associate editor, David Runia offered to collaborate with him to produce the commentary. This offer was readily accepted. A year later the first fruits of the collaboration were presented to the Philo of Alexandria Group at the Society of Biblical Literature Annual Meeting in New Orleans, Louisiana in November 2009. Since then the two authors have continued to work closely together, despite the geographical divide between them, meeting every northern summer and staying in touch with each other through email and skype.

The division of labour can be outlined in the following way. For the translation Albert Geljon prepared a literal Dutch version, which assisted

David Runia as he prepared a fresh English version. The textual notes to the translation were mainly written by David Runia, with some assistance from Albert Geljon on technical manuscript issues. The Introduction (except § 3 The Exegetical Structure of the Treatise) and the Commentary are primarily the work of Albert Geljon. Draft versions of both were read and commented on by David Runia. The bibliography and indices were largely compiled by Albert Geljon. Ultimately the entire translation and commentary are the shared work of both authors, who readily take joint responsibility for what that they have produced.

The authors incurred many debts to both persons and institutions in the course of their research. They wish to express their thanks first of all to Gregory Sterling (Notre Dame, now Yale) for encouraging their proposal and accepting their work in the series that he launched over fifteen years ago. The members of the Philo of Alexandria Group of the Society of Biblical Literature are to be thanked for their encouragement and constructive comments on our work. We are especially grateful to Prof John Dillon (Dublin) for introducing us to his former student Andreas Kilaniotis, and to Dr Kilaniotis for generously allowing us to make use of his unpublished commentary on the treatise. Prof J.C.M. van Winden (Leiden) was prepared despite ill-health to read through our translation and give us the benefit of his peerless knowledge of post-classical Greek prose. Many other scholars, including those of the Philo of Alexandria Bibliography Project, have been lavish in stimulating and assisting us in our research. Of these we single out two American scholars for special mention. Throughout many years James Royse (Claremont, formerly San Francisco and Berkeley) and Ellen Birnbaum (Cambridge Mass.) have shared their journeys with us in doing research on Philo and become very dear friends. To them we dedicate this volume.

Albert Geljon would like to thank the Christelijk Gymnasium in Utrecht, the Netherlands, for supporting his research. The school management and his colleagues were very cooperative in making it possible for him to go on sabbatical leave in the fall of 2010 and make significant progress on the book. He also thanks the De Vogel Foundation for Ancient Philosophy, which funded his visit to the Society of Biblical Literature Annual Meeting in New Orleans in 2009. David Runia wishes to express his deep appreciation to the Council of Queen's College at the University of Melbourne, and in particular its President Mr John Castles AM, for allowing him to spend a full day every week doing his research and also generously providing him with study leave so that he could travel and keep up contact with his academic col-

leagues overseas. Both authors express their thanks to the publishing house Brill for publishing the book, and to TAT Zetwerk and Johannes Rustenburg (Utrecht) for type-setting the text with their customary expertise and enthusiasm.

Utrecht and Melbourne

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## ABBREVIATIONS

Generally the abbreviations of biblical books and ancient texts and modern literature follow the guidelines set out in *The SBL Handbook of Style*, Peabody Mass.: Hendrickson, 1999, and in *The Studia Philonica Annual*, volume XXIII, 2011, pages 217–222. The abbreviation K. or an asterisk refer to the unpublished Commentary of Dr. Andreas Kilaniotis; see further page 40 below.

### ABBREVIATIONS OF PHILONIC TREATISES

<i>Abr.</i>	<i>De Abrahamo</i>
<i>Aet.</i>	<i>De aeternitate mundi</i>
<i>Agr.</i>	<i>De agricultura</i>
<i>Cher.</i>	<i>De Cherubim</i>
<i>Conf.</i>	<i>De confusione linguarum</i>
<i>Congr.</i>	<i>De congressu eruditionis gratia</i>
<i>Contempl.</i>	<i>De vita contemplatione</i>
<i>Decal.</i>	<i>De Decalogo</i>
<i>Det.</i>	<i>Quod deterius potiori insidiari soleat</i>
<i>Deus</i>	<i>Quod Deus sit immutabilis</i>
<i>Ebr.</i>	<i>De ebrietate</i>
<i>Flacc.</i>	<i>In Flaccum</i>
<i>Fug.</i>	<i>De fuga et inventione</i>
<i>Gig.</i>	<i>De gigantibus</i>
<i>Her.</i>	<i>Quis rerum divinarum heres sit</i>
<i>Hypoth.</i>	<i>Hypothetica</i>
<i>Ios.</i>	<i>De Iosepho</i>
<i>Leg. 1–3</i>	<i>Legum allegoriae 1, 2, 3</i>
<i>Legat.</i>	<i>Legatio ad Gaium</i>
<i>Migr.</i>	<i>De migratione Abrahami</i>
<i>Mos. 1–2</i>	<i>De vita Moysis 1, 2</i>
<i>Mut.</i>	<i>De mutatione nominum</i>
<i>Opif.</i>	<i>De opificio mundi</i>
<i>Plant.</i>	<i>De plantatione</i>
<i>Post.</i>	<i>De posteritate Caini</i>
<i>Praem.</i>	<i>De praemiis et poenis</i>
<i>Prob.</i>	<i>Quod omnis probus liber sit</i>
<i>Prov. 1–2</i>	<i>De Providentia 1, 2</i>
<i>QE 1–2</i>	<i>Quaestiones et solutiones in Exodum 1, 2</i>
<i>QG 1–4</i>	<i>Quaestiones et solutiones in Genesim 1, 2, 3, 4</i>
<i>Sacr.</i>	<i>De sacrificiis Abelis et Caini</i>

<i>Sobr.</i>	<i>De sobrietate</i>
<i>Somn.</i> 1–2	<i>De somniis</i> 1, 2
<i>Spec.</i> 1–4	<i>De specialibus legibus</i> 1, 2, 3, 4,
<i>Virt.</i>	<i>De virtutibus</i>

## OTHER ABBREVIATIONS

<i>AG</i>	<i>Anthologia Graeca</i>
<i>ANRW</i>	<i>Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt</i>
<i>ALGHJ</i>	Arbeiten zur Literatur und Geschichte des hellenistischen Judentums
<i>BJS</i>	Brown Judaic Studies
<i>CAF</i>	<i>Comicorum Atticorum Fragmenta</i> , ed. T. Kock
<i>CPJ</i>	<i>Corpus Papyrorum Judaicarum</i> , ed. V.A. Tcherikover
<i>CRINT</i>	Compendia Rerum Iudaicarum ad Novum Testamentum
<i>CSEL</i>	Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum
<i>GCS</i>	Die griechischen christlichen Schriftsteller
<i>G-G</i>	H.L. Goodhart and E.R. Goodenough, "A General Bibliography of Philo Judaeus," in E.R. Goodenough, <i>The Politics of Philo Judaeus: Practice and Theory</i> , New Haven 1938, 125–321
<i>HThR</i>	<i>Harvard Theological Review</i>
<i>IG</i>	<i>Inscriptiones Graecae</i>
<i>JJS</i>	<i>Journal for the Study of Judaism in the Persian, Hellenistic and Roman Periods</i>
<i>JSJSup</i>	Supplements to the Journal for the Study of Judaism
<i>LCL</i>	Loeb Classical Library
<i>LSJ</i>	<i>A Greeek-English Lexicon</i> . Edited by H.G. Liddell, R. Scott, H.S. Jones. 9th ed. with revised suppl. Oxford, 1996.
<i>NETS</i>	<i>A New English Translation of the Septuagint</i> . Edited by A. Pietersma and Benjamin G. Wright
<i>OGI</i>	<i>Orientis Graeci Inscriptiones Selectae</i> , ed. W. Dittenberger
<i>PACS</i>	Philo of Alexandria Commentary Series
<i>PAPM</i>	Les Œuvres de Philon d' Alexandrie. Edited by R. Arnaldez, C. Mondésert and J. Pouilloux
<i>PG</i>	Patrologiae cursus completus: series Graeca, ed. J.P. Migne
<i>RecSR</i>	<i>Recherches de Science Religieuse</i>
<i>RHR</i>	<i>Revue d' Histoire des Religions</i>
<i>SC</i>	Sources Chrétiennes
<i>SIG</i>	<i>Sylloge Inscriptionum Graecarum</i> , ed. W. Dittenberger
<i>SPh</i>	<i>Studia Philonica</i>
<i>SPhA</i>	<i>Studia Philonica Annual</i>
<i>SPhM</i>	<i>Studia Philonica Monographs</i>
<i>SVF</i>	<i>Stoicorum Veterum Fragmenta</i> , ed. J. von Arnim
<i>TGF</i>	<i>Tragicorum Graecorum Fragmenta</i> , ed. A. Nauck
<i>VC</i>	<i>Vigiliae Christianae</i>
<i>VCSup</i>	Supplements to <i>Vigiliae Christianae</i>
<i>WUNT</i>	Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament

## INTRODUCTION

### 1. THE PLACE OF THE TREATISE IN THE PHILONIC CORPUS

The Jewish exegete and philosopher Philo of Alexandria was one of the more prolific writers in antiquity. He was also fortunate in that at least two-thirds of his writings have survived, amounting to nearly 50 treatises in all.<sup>1</sup> Given this very large corpus, from antiquity onwards scholars have wished to organize the works in series and groups. By far the largest group of treatises are those which give a commentary on the text of the Pentateuch. From the end of the 19th century onwards it has been agreed that Philo wrote three separate series of exegetical writings. The names of the first two series are modern, but almost certainly correspond to Philo's intentions in planning and executing these works.<sup>2</sup>

- (1) The Allegorical Commentary, in which he offers an allegorical exegesis on Genesis in the form of a running commentary on the biblical text.<sup>3</sup>
- (2) The Exposition of the Law, in which he first treats the creation of the cosmos as described in Gen 1, and then describes the lives of the Patriarchs, whom he regards as living laws. In the remainder of the work he sets out the commandments given in the Torah. In this series Philo mainly offers a literal reading but he also assumes the validity of allegorical exegesis and gives many symbolical explanations.<sup>4</sup>
- (3) The Questions and Answers on Genesis and Exodus. In the form of posing questions and giving answers Philo presents both a literal reading

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<sup>1</sup> For a list of all the lost writings that we have an inkling of see Runia 1992b, 78–79.

<sup>2</sup> The first classifications of Philo's writings in modern scholarship were made by Massebieau 1889 and Cohn 1899; see also Borgen 1984, 117–121. Excellent surveys are given by Morris 1987, 819–870, and Roysse 2009. See also the General Introduction to this volume by Gregory Sterling.

<sup>3</sup> The name of this series is taken from the first treatise *The Allegories of the Law*. For the Allegorical Commentary generally, see Cohn 1899, 393–402; Morris 1987, 830–840; Roysse 2009, 38–45.

<sup>4</sup> The name of the series is not based on an original Philonic title or text. But at *Praep. ev.* 8.12.22 Eusebius calls the series τὰ εἰς τὸν νόμον (The books on the Law). For the Exposition generally, see Borgen 1996.

and an allegorical exegesis of sequences of passages from the two biblical books. These works have for the most part been preserved only in an Armenian translation.<sup>5</sup>

*De agricultura*, in which Gen 9:20a is treated in an allegorical manner, clearly belongs to the Allegorical Commentary. Its place in the series can be seen in the following overview:

1	<i>Legum allegoriae</i> 1–3 ( <i>The Allegories of the Laws</i> ) <sup>6</sup>	Gen 2:1–3:19
2	<i>De Cherubim</i> ( <i>On the Cherubim</i> )	Gen 3:24, 4:1
3	<i>De sacrificiis Abelis et Caini</i> ( <i>On the Sacrifices of Abel and Cain</i> )	Gen 4:2–4
4	<i>Quod deterius potiori insidiari solet</i> ( <i>That the Worse Is Wont to Attack the Better</i> )	Gen 4:8–15
5	<i>De posteritate Caini</i> ( <i>On the Posterity of Cain</i> )	Gen 4:16–25
6	<i>De gigantibus</i> ( <i>On the Giants</i> )	Gen 6:1–4
7	<i>Quod Deus immutabilis sit</i> ( <i>That God is Unchangeable</i> ) <sup>7</sup>	Gen 6:4–12
8	<i>De agricultura</i> ( <i>On Cultivation</i> )	Gen 9:20a
9	<i>De plantatione</i> ( <i>On Noah's Work as a Planter</i> )	Gen 9:20b
10	<i>De ebrietate</i> ( <i>On Drunkenness</i> )	Gen 9:21
11	<i>De sobrietate</i> ( <i>On Sobriety</i> )	Gen 9:24–27
12	<i>De migratione Abrahami</i> ( <i>On the Migration of Abraham</i> )	Gen 12:1–6
13	<i>Quis rerum divinarum heres sit</i> ( <i>Who is the Heir of Divine Things</i> )	Gen 15:2–18
14	<i>De congressu eruditionis gratia</i> ( <i>On the Preliminary Studies</i> )	Gen 16:1–6
15	<i>De fuga et inventione</i> ( <i>On Flight and Finding</i> )	Gen 16:6–14
16	<i>De mutatione nominum</i> ( <i>On the Change of Names</i> ) <sup>8</sup>	Gen 17:1–22
17	<i>De somniis</i> 1–2 ( <i>On Dreams</i> )	Gen 28:12–15, 31:11–13, Gen 37, 40–41

According to Eusebius' catalogue the final work *De somniis* was originally in 5 books and most likely no longer gave a running commentary on the text. But from *Leg.* to *Deo Philo* appears to have given a running commentary on the biblical text. *Agr.* belongs to the group of six treatises (nos. 6–11) that deal with the story of Noah as told in Gen 6–9. The question must be raised as to whether Philo also wrote commentaries on the text of Gen 6:13 to 9:20, i.e. between nos. 7 and 8 in the above table. Scholars agree that it is highly probable that the two lost works *On the covenants* (περὶ διαθηκῶν), to which

<sup>5</sup> For the *Quaestiones* generally, see Hilgert 1991.

<sup>6</sup> It is not known whether this work was preceded by an allegorical exposition of Gen 1. Tobin 2000 argues that several remarks in *Leg.* appear to refer to a missing allegorical treatment of the chapter.

<sup>7</sup> Note that originally *Gig.* and *Deus* formed a single treatise.

<sup>8</sup> It is very likely that the fragment *De Deo* derives from a missing book on Gen 18:1 ff.



Philo refers at *Mut.* 53, have to be placed between *Deus* and *Agr.*<sup>9</sup> In this work Philo would have discussed the covenant between God and Noah (Gen 6:18) and other covenants mentioned in the Pentateuch. Since Eusebius does not list this work in his catalogue of Philo's writings, it can be concluded that it was already missing in his time. It is possible that Philo also discussed the flood in that treatise, or in a separate work that has been lost.

At the very beginning of the book that follows *Agr.* Philo writes (*Plant.* 1): 'In the former book we spoke about all that the occasion called for in relation to the cultivator's skill in general.'<sup>10</sup> From this statement we may deduce that *Agr.* and *Plant.* were originally written as a single work consisting of two books. This conclusion is reinforced by the listing of 'two treatises on cultivation' (τὰ περι γεωργίας δύο) in Eusebius' catalogue (*Hist. eccl.* 2.18.2, cf. Jerome *Vir. ill.* 11: *de agricultura duo*).<sup>11</sup> In addition, Eusebius introduces a quote from *Agr.* 51 with the words: ἐν τῷ περι γεωργίας προτέρῳ (*Praep. ev.* 7.13.3), and a few lines later, before citing from *Plant.* 8–10, he writes ἐν τῷ δευτέρῳ (7.13.4). Contrary to these early indications, however, most of the manuscripts of *Plant.* have as title περι φυτουργίας τὸ δεύτερον. Wendland argues that the original title of *Plant.* was περι γεωργίας β', noting, among other things, that Philo uses the terms φυτουργία and γεωργία interchangeably.<sup>12</sup> The manuscripts of *Agr.* offer the same title as Eusebius and Jerome, περι γεωργίας,<sup>13</sup> and we may assume that this title goes back to Philo himself.

Furthermore the two books *On cultivation* are closely connected to the subsequent treatises *On drunkenness* and *On soberness*, as appears from cross-references. At the beginning of *Ebr.* Philo refers back to the preceding book, and at the beginning of *Sobr.* he refers to his discussion of drunkenness in *Ebr.* Therefore, Borgen and Sterling rightly regard these treatises as parts of a single composition.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>9</sup> Massebieau 1889, 23, Cohn 1899, 397–398, PCW 2.xxii, Morris 1987, 835, Royse 2009, 41.

<sup>10</sup> ἐν μὲν τῷ προτέρῳ βιβλίῳ τὰ περι γεωργικῆς τέχνης γενικῆς, ὅσα καιρὸς ἦν, εἶπομεν. Note that the Greek adjective *proteros* denotes the first of two.

<sup>11</sup> Eusebius may have deduced the two books from Philo's statement in *Plant.* 1, as suggested by Sterling (forthcoming).

<sup>12</sup> PCW 2.xxiv–xxv, see also Cohn 1899, 398.

<sup>13</sup> Only a minority of manuscripts give the number α'; see PCW 2.95.

<sup>14</sup> Borgen 1984, 244, Sterling (forthcoming). Note, however, as Sterling points out, the second reference implies that there was a second book *On drunkenness* that has been lost. Eusebius and Jerome also speak about two books Περι μέθης. So in total there would have been five books in all, a book in each case corresponding to a single papyrus roll.

The relationship between the *Quaestiones* and the Allegorical Commentary is unclear and remains a matter of dispute.<sup>15</sup> An important difference is that in the *Quaestiones* a literal reading and allegorical exegesis are placed side by side, whereas in the Allegorical Commentary Philo offers most often an allegorical interpretation and sometimes even rejects a literal meaning. Furthermore, in the *Allegory* Philo weaves into his commentary many long digressions and illustrates his interpretation of the main biblical text with references to other verses. This practice is entirely missing in the *Quaestiones*, which are more compact and straightforward. It is illustrative of this difference that the entire treatise of *Agr.* corresponds to a single chapter in the *Quaestiones*, namely QG 2.66, where Philo explains the difference between a cultivator and a worker of the earth allegorically in the same way as he does in *Agr.* 20–22. The allegorical interpretation of the cultivation of the soul, which is so central to *Agr.*, is largely absent in the QG text.<sup>16</sup> Although the precise chronological relationship between the Allegorical Commentary and the *Quaestiones* is unclear, it is certain that they share many links between them and that in many regards they belong together.<sup>17</sup>

The question of the chronological relationship between the Allegorical Commentary and the Exposition of the Law is more difficult and several attempts have been made to shed light on this important question. On the basis of cross-references within Philo's writings L. Cohn argues that the Allegorical Commentary was written before the Exposition and this continues to be the position held by most scholars.<sup>18</sup> A totally different approach was made by L. Massebieau.<sup>19</sup> He tried to link remarks in the treatises to historical and political circumstances in Alexandria, and on the basis of such remarks he divides the Allegorical Commentary into four

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<sup>15</sup> See important observations by Borgen and Skarsten 1976–1977 and Nikiprowetzky 1977, 179–180. An elaborate comparison between QG and treatises from the Allegorical Commentary is given by Méasson & Cazeaux 1991. Marcus' view that the *Quaestiones* were written after the Allegorical Commentary (PLCL suppl. 1, x n.a) is refuted by Terian 1991, who argues that Philo wrote the *Quaestiones* before the two other exegetical series. Sterling 1991 argues that the *Quaestiones* form a kind of prolegomena to the Allegorical Commentary, which is written on the basis of the *Quaestiones*.

<sup>16</sup> Possibly the references to the 'worker-mind of the body' and the 'husbandman-mind' in QG 2.66 are references to the allegory of the soul, but the precise meaning is hidden behind the Armenian.

<sup>17</sup> For an overview of literature and arguments on this question see Roysse 2009, 60–61.

<sup>18</sup> Cohn 1899, 432–434.

<sup>19</sup> Massebieau 1906. After his death in 1904 the study was finished by Emile Bréhier on the basis of Massebieau's notes.

groups.<sup>20</sup> In his view the first treatises—*Leg.* until *Deus*—were written in a peaceful period between the fall of Sejanus, Tiberius' confidant (31 CE) and Tiberius' death (37 CE); the second group—*Agr.* until *Sobr.*—would have been written in the hard times of persecution under emperor Caligula. In his argumentation Massebieau connects Philo's invective against theatres in *Agr.* 35 with the troubles between Jews and non-Jews in Alexandria in 37–38, in which the theatre played an important role.<sup>21</sup> He also assumes that the description of an infirm leader in *Agr.* 47 refers to the weak attitude of Flaccus, prefect of Alexandria, at the beginning of the riots (*Flacc.* 17–19). The third group of writings—*Migr.* until *Mut.*—were then written in the tranquil time under emperor Claudius. As for the books *On dreams*, they are regarded as the first treatises of the Commentary. In contrast to Cohn, Massebieau thinks that the Commentary is written after the Exposition.<sup>22</sup> Massebieau's argumentation is highly speculative and not convincing. It is hardly possible to connect general statements within an allegorical exegesis of a biblical verse with particular historical events and persons.

When all is said and done, in discussions of the chronology of Philo's works there are only two fixed points. The first is the text at the beginning of *Spec.* 3, where Philo speaks of 'an ocean of political troubles' (3.3). There is general agreement that this text refers to the troubles experienced by the Alexandrian Jewish community in 37–38 CE. The second is the statement made when later describing these troubles that he was already an old man (*Legat.* 1). If we make the plausible assumption that all the treatises of the Exposition were written in the same period, Philo must have written the work during the last ten to fifteen years of his life.<sup>23</sup> In this case the Allegorical Commentary would have been written earlier than the Exposition and our treatise may be dated to the period when Philo was at the peak of his powers. But all this is all a matter of conjecture. In actual fact, certainty about the absolute or relative chronology of Philo's writings can never be attained.

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<sup>20</sup> Massebieau 1906, 170–180.

<sup>21</sup> *Flacc.* 41: the theatre was a meeting place for the crowd that had anti-Jewish feelings.

<sup>22</sup> Massebieau 1906, 267.

<sup>23</sup> Assuming that he may have lived till about 50 CE.