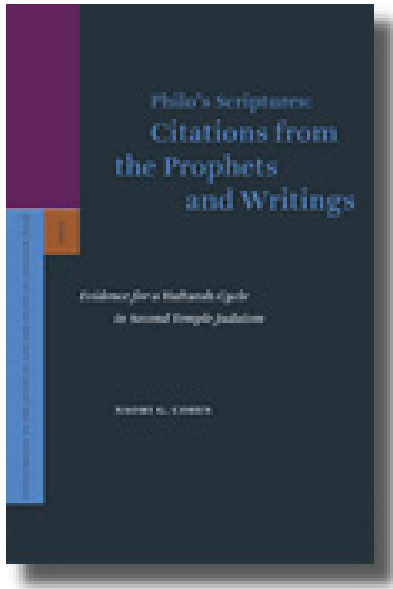


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Cohen, Naomi G.

Philo's Scriptures: Citations from the Prophets and Writings: Evidence for a Haftarah Cycle in Second Temple Judaism

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Naomi G. Cohen, presently a senior research fellow at Haifa University, has published a study that is both interesting and bold in its thesis. It is interesting because, in spite of the fact that Philo's use of the Scriptures has been the object of so many studies, no one has explicitly investigated his references to the Prophets and the (other) Writings. Hence there has been a need for a study like this. Furthermore, Cohen is bold, to say the least, in her thesis. She not only investigates the various citations in Philo from these sections of the Scriptures, but she also forms three bold theories about what can be gathered from Philo's use and presentations of them in his writings. A main intriguing question that triggered her research on Philo's nonpentateuchal citations was: What in fact evoked Philo's use of these quotations? Her theses provide her response.

Her primary theses can be stated thus. (1) Philo's citations from the latter prophets indicate that the Haftarah cycle now current between the 17th of Tammuz until the Day of Atonement was becoming customary in Alexandria during his days; that is, the major texts treated by Philo are confined to those with which his readers would have been familiar from their worship. Hence Philo is one of the earliest witnesses of this cycle of the Haftarah. (2) Philo's text was not in Hebrew but was the Septuagint, and sometimes his use reflects the use of literary sources, sometimes translated from a Hebrew/Aramaic

original, and he probably had access to a lexicon of the entire Bible in the Greek language, based upon the Hebrew text. (3) Cohen suggests that Philo knew about and for some time was a member of an allegorical circle composed of teachers, scholars, and students who were devoted to radical philosophical allegorization.

The book consists of eight chapters and some endnotes, and I shall briefly present the various chapters before adding some evaluative comments to her theses. But let it at the outset be said that this book is both interesting and refreshing reading; Cohen's knowledge of rabbinic literature makes her, in my mind, an interesting scholar providing much insight into Philo as a Jew.

The first chapter, called "The Man Philo as a Product of His Time" (1–23), gives a kind of overview of Cohen's main tripartite thesis. She briefly presents the thesis, giving some of her arguments, thus providing a kind of preview of what is to come in the next chapters. She also briefly discusses the Jewishness of the Alexandrian Jewish communities, arguing that both the references of 4 Maccabees and much from Philo indicate a use of Scripture as a living tradition more than from the Bible as a text (6). The Judaism of Alexandria is not, however, to be considered as monolithic but as a complexity of different groups and viewpoints living together in what Cohen calls an "ongoing and lively disharmony" (8). Furthermore, when it comes to Philo himself, Cohen strongly underlines that he is to be read and understood as a Jew writing for Jews. Most probably his writings were "for the educated element of the contemporary Jewish community." The question is not how Jewish Philo was but rather this: Given his Jewishness as a self-evident axiom, how can we understand his writings?

Chapter 2, then, deals with how Philo quotes the Pentateuch (25–53). The chapter is a somewhat revised version of an article published in *Studia Philonica* 1997 (issued as a Festschrift for David Winston). This chapter is probably one of the less-integrated in the book and does not provide much substantiation of Cohen's three main theses but focuses on Philo's quotations from the Pentateuch. Though Philo uses a variety of terms when referring to the Bible as a whole and quotes from the Pentateuch hundreds of times, only in a few cases does he use the names of the individual books. "Genesis" is found in at most four places; two of these, Cohen argues, are cases of mistaken identity; the book of Exodus is identified by name in four cases, never by the term "Exodus"; it is called "Exagoge." Leviticus is mentioned by name only three times, Numbers never, and the Deuteronomy is mentioned only twice. Cohen then discusses Philo's uses of terms/words such as "Protrepitkos," "Parainesis," and "Epinomois" as possible names for the book of Deuteronomy but dismisses them all. Philo was surely familiar with the separate names of these biblical books, but it was the Pentateuch as a whole that served as his conceptual unit.

Then, from the third chapter on, Cohen deals more specifically with Philo's citations from the Prophets and the Writings. Chapter 3, however, deals with 'A Traditional Haftarah Cycle' (55–69). This chapter is also a revised and lightly modified version of an earlier study, published in *JJS* in 1997. The main purpose of the chapter is to demonstrate "the overwhelming degree of correlation" between Philo's rare quotations from the Prophets and the traditional Haftarah string "Admonition, Consolation, and Repentance" that are recited 'between the 17th of Tammuz and the Day of Atonement" (55). She explains the relevant dates in the Jewish calendar and then provides two charts that contain all the citations and allusions from the Latter Prophets, arguing that they provide a striking congruence between Philo's citations and the Haftarah cycle. Hence Philo seems to provide evidence for the existence of at least the beginnings of this cycle of the Haftarah long before the destruction of the Second Temple.

Having thus provided a kind of overview of the citations, Cohen in chapter 4 (71–102) deals much more in depth with each of Philo's citations from the Latter Prophets, including those discussed in the preceding chapter. Citations are here found in Philo from Isaiah, Jeremiah, Hosea, and Zechariah. Of the five citations from Isaiah (Isa 1:9; 5:7; 50:4; 51:2; 57:21), Cohen finds that all except 5:7 are also to be found in the Haftarah; concerning Jeremiah, she finds 2:13 and 3:4 in relevant Haftarothe, but not 15:10 and 2:3, which are probably cited by Philo too. All three references in Philo from Hosea are from Hos 14:2–10, which are also found in the Haftarah. Finally, Cohen finds that Zech 6:13, used by Philo in *Conf.* 62–63, is not to be found in any of the customary Haftarothe.

In chapter 5 Cohen proceeds to citations from the Former Prophets and Chronicles (103–38). We cannot here present her extensive discussions of each of these references, but just summarize her conclusions. Her point of departure here, as well as in the preceding chapter, is the verses that scholarship has identified as references to the Former Prophets and Chronicles. Her own conclusions are that four of these are mistaken references, one is to be found in the Haftarah too, and four are not. But dealing with each of these references in depth, she suggests that these citations demonstrate that it is not only the Septuagint texts that are quoted, but the Septuagint also serves as the point of departure for the accompanying exegesis. This, Cohen suggests, provides evidence of an original midrashic activity in Greek in Alexandria. She is even more specific: it demonstrates that Philo used a scriptural lexicon that probably included Scripture as a whole; she even talks about a scriptural concordance and a homiletical lexicon of proper names, as well as allegorical commentaries.

Chapter 6, then, deals with the seventeen to eighteen citations of Philo from the Psalms (139–56). Actually, Cohen finds that twenty verses belonging to sixteen different psalms are quoted, paraphrased, or echoed in eighteen different loci in Philo's works. These

references, as well as those dealt with in the next chapter (157–73; citations from Proverbs and Job), are not that relevant for her thesis about the early existence of a comparable Haftarah cycle, as they are not to be found in the Haftarothe she has focused on in this study.

The last chapter (175–97) is of a somewhat quite different nature and focus. Here Cohen tries to draw out some conclusions about what kind of settings Philo may have worked in. The chapter is called “The Allegorical Circle of Moses,” and here she sets forth her theory of Philo’s context as having consisted of an “allegorical circle of Moses” or “confraternity of Moses” and that Philo for some time was a member of such a group but later became estranged from it. This group consisted of scholars, teachers, students, and disciples who engaged in esoteric philosophical allegorization of the Scriptures. Cohen here builds her thesis upon the occurrences of terms such as word combinations of “Moses + member, associate teacher, or pupil,” that is, of Μωυσεως in the genitive singular together with one or more of the terms θιασώτης, έταίρος, γνώριμος, or φοιτητής as referring to such an “exegetical circle,” “confraternity,” or “fellowship.” The main passages from Philo upon which she relies are *Plant.* 39; *Conf.* 39; *Somn.* 2.245; *Conf.* 62; *Congr.* 177, and *Conf.* 44. Furthermore, in *Heres.* 81(82) she finds that Philo identifies with this circle, but in *Mos.* 2.205 she finds a faint trace of criticism, and in *Spec.* 1.319 he disassociates himself from it by way of criticism. Her thesis here is fascinating, and further research will have to take account of it. Only time will tell if it can stand the tests to come.

A brief summary such as this can not do justice to the wealth of information these chapters contain, to the many observations and suggestions Cohen sets forth, and to the value of them all for future research on the nonpentateuchal citations in Philo. Furthermore, as a Jew and expert in rabbinic literature, the author of this volume demonstrates both the interest and profit Jewish scholars are now bringing to the study of Philo.

Not all of the theses are quite convincing. Cohen’s book is valuable as there is no other comparable volume dealing with these nonpentateuchal citations in the works of Philo. Her evaluations of these will be valuable for all other students of Philo. The subtitle of her book, *Evidence for a Haftarah Cycle in Second Temple Judaism*, reveals only one of her theses, but to the present reader it seems that Cohen sometimes presses the evidence to the uttermost. Her view would have been much more convincing had she been able to work out some other arguments than primarily building her case on the fact that *some* of Philo’s nonpentateuchal citations are also to be found in the Haftarah. Furthermore, her thesis about an allegorical circle in Alexandria is both interesting and plausible, but her arguments about Philo’s criticism and finally his distancing himself from such a group (or groups) are not quite convincing, being built on just a few passages, that is, two passages

that are open to other interpretations. Especially Cohen's reading of *Spec.* 1.319 seems somewhat strained. Here too further research is needed. But that is what it is all about; there is still more to do in Philonic research.