

THE FLIGHT OF HAGAR ACCORDING TO JOSEPHUS

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RESUMO

Este artigo apresenta uma leitura detalhada deste evento de acordo com *Ant.* 1.186-190(191a), do escopo de Agar em relação a uma Vorlage (Gen. 16) e a tradução judaica (Philo e *Gen. Rab.* 45). Josefo está mais perto de Gênesis 16 a este respeito do que com outras fontes. Josefo parafraseia o texto bíblico enquanto que Philo e *Gênesis Rabbah* alegoriza a história de Agar.

ABSTRACT

This essay offers a detailed reading of Josephus' account, in *Ant.* 1.186-190(191a), of Hagar's flight in relation both to its biblical Vorlage (Genesis 16 in its various ancient text-forms) and the wider early Jewish tradition (Philo and *Gen. Rab.* 45 in particular). Among the essay's findings are that Josephus' version streamlines the Genesis 16 story, while also attempting to resolve various problems posed by this and retouching the source portrayal of the chapter's characters. In comparison with other early Jewish treatments of Genesis 16, Josephus' handling stands out as a rather extended paraphrase of the biblical narrative, that, as such, contrasts with the atomistic approach to the biblical data adopted by Philo and *Genesis Rabbah*, just as it eschews the former's thoroughgoing allegorization of Hagar's story.

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INTRODUCTION

The figure of Hagar the Egyptian makes a double, disruptive appearance in the story of Abraham and Sarah (Genesis 12-25), first in Genesis 16 (where she temporarily flees from their household) and then in Gen 21:1-21 (where she is permanently expelled by them). In this essay I wish to examine Josephus' rewriting, in his *Antiquitates judaicae* (hereafter *Ant.*) 1.186-190(191a) of the former passage.¹ In conducting this study, I shall compare Josephus' version with the various ancient text-forms of Genesis 16 (MT, LXX, the targums) on the one hand and with other early Jewish treatments of the biblical passage² on the other. The aim of this double comparison is to determine both the commonalities and the distinctive features of Josephus' presentation of Hagar's flight vis-à-vis the above two corpora. For purposes of the comparison, I divide up the material of Genesis 16 and *Ant.* 1.186-190(191a) into four component segments as follows: (1) Characters' initial interaction (16:1-3// 1.186-187); (2) Crisis among characters (16:4-6// 1.188); (3) Angelic encounter (16:7-12// 1.189); and (4) Closing notices (16:13-16// 1.190-191a).

CHARACTERS' INITIAL INTERACTION

Genesis 16 opens in v. 1 with mention of the story's three

¹ For the text and translation of *Ant.* 1.186-190(191a), I use H.St.J. Thackeray, *Josephus IV* (Loeb Classical Library; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press; London: Heinemann, 1930), 92-96. I have likewise consulted the text of this passage in E. Nodet, *Flavius Josèphe, Les Antiquités juives*, Vol. I: *Livres I à III introduction et texte* (Paris: Cerf, 1900), 31-32 and his translation thereof in Vol. II (1990): *Livres I à III: traduction et notes*, 44-45 as well as the annotated translation of L.H. Feldman, *Flavius Josephus Judean Antiquities 1-4* (Flavius Josephus Translation and Commentary 3; Leiden: Brill, 2000), 70-72. On Josephus' handling of Genesis 16, see further the summary remarks of Thomas W. Franxman, *Genesis and the "Jewish Antiquities" of Flavius Josephus* (BibOr 35; Rome: PBI, 1979), 138-140.

² These include the summary renderings of the content of Genesis 16 found in *Jub.* 14.21-24 and *L.A.B.* 11.2 as well as the more elaborate developments of the biblical data met in *Gen. Rab.* 45 and the Philonic corpus (*Abr.* 245-254; *Cher.* 3-6; *Cong.*, *passim*; *Fug.*, *passim*; *Leg.* 3.244-245; *Som.* 1.238-240). For a survey of this material, see L. Ginzberg, *The Legends of the Jews I* (Philadelphia: JPSA, 1968), 237-239; V, 231-233, nn. 116-122.

(human) characters (Sarai, Abram, and Hagar³) and of the non-fertility of the first of these that gives rise to the entire following story. There after, Sarai makes her proposal to Abram that she procure children for herself via his coupling with Hagar (16:2a), a proposal to which Abraham agrees (16:2b), whereupon Sarai gives Abram, who has now sojourned ten years in Canaan, Hagar “as his wife” (16:3). Josephus markedly modifies this entire sequence in *Ant.* 1.186-187. His rendering opens (1.186a) with a place indication held over (and adapted) from Gen 13:18a (“so Abram moved his tent and came and dwelt by the oaks/terebinths of Mamre, which are at Hebron...”): “Abraham was living near the oak (δρύν = LXX Gen 13:18)⁴ called Osyges (Ὀγύγιον),⁵

³In MT and LXX Gen 16:1 Hagar is qualified simply as Sarai’s “Egyptian maid.” Targums *Onqelos* and *Pseudo-Jonathan* 16:1, as well as *Gen. Rab.* 45.1 and *Pirqe R. El.* 26.2, expatiate on this characterization, identifying Hagar as the daughter of Pharaoh who had given her to Sarai at the time of her sojourn in Egypt. *Gen. Rab.* 45.1 likewise connects Hagar’s name with the Hebrew word for “reward,” i.e. נָגַד (II). Philo, for his part, invests (see, e.g., *Cher.* 3-6; *Congr.* 11-23; *Leg.* 3.242-245; *Som.* 240) each of the three biblical figures with an allegorical significance: Hagar represents the preliminary/lower studies (grammar, geometry, astronomy, rhetoric, music, etc.) and as such has a subordinate status; Sarah symbolizes philosophy, the more exalted and authoritative branch of learning that offers one access to virtue and ultimate knowledge, while Abram stands for the seeker after intellectual and moral perfection who, in his quest, must first imbibe what “Hagar” has to offer before he can proceed to “Sarah’s” offerings. As for Hagar’s name, Philo asserts (*Cong.* 20) that this means “sojourning,” while her “Egyptian” ethnicity alludes to the “corporeality” that is the prerequisite for the preliminary studies that she represents.

⁴In MT Gen 13:18, the reference is to trees in the plural: בְּאֵלֵי מְמֵרָה.

⁵This name of the person associated with the “oak” takes the place of Gen 13:18’s “Mamre” (a name which Josephus does reproduce in his version of Gen 18,1 [the heavenly visitors’ appearance to Abraham at the oak(s)/terebinth(s) of Mamre in *Ant.* 1.196). On “Ogyges” as a very early king of Athens, whose name became a Greek adjective (ὠγύγιος) meaning “primeval,” see the extended discussion in Feldman, *Judean Antiquities* 1-4, 70-71, n. 584. Cf. also *Bellum judaicum* (BJ) 4.533, where Josephus mentions a “huge terebinth tree (τερέβινθος... τὸ δένδρον), which is said to have stood there since the creation,” located “at a distance of six strada from the town” (i.e. Hebron; see BJ 4.530, the same locality with which he connects the “oak” cited in *Ant.* 1.186); see above.

a place in the land of Canaan ⁶ not far from the city of the Hebronites....”⁷

Having thus made delayed use of Gen 13:18a in 1.186a, Josephus proceeds (1.186b) to draw on the reference (“Now Sarai, Abraham’s wife bore him no children”) to Sarai’s sterility of Gen 16:1a. In so doing, however, he turns the reference into a “nonbiblical” prayer by Abraham regarding this state of affairs: “... *when distressed at his wife’s sterility, he besought (ἰκέτευει)*⁸ *God to grant him the birth of a male child.*”⁹ To this mention of Abraham’s prayer, he attaches, in

⁶This indication is without counterpart in Gen 13:18. (I italicize such elements of Josephus’ presentation that lack a direct parallel in the biblical narrative in this essay.)

⁷The corresponding indication in Gen 13:18 reads “(the oaks of Mamre), which are at Hebron.” On Josephus’ association of Hebron and an ancient nearby tree, see n. ⁵.

⁸Note the historic present form. Josephus regularly introduces this form where the LXX uses some past form in his retelling of biblical history; see C.T. Begg, *Josephus’ Account of the Early Divided Monarchy* (AJ 8,212-420) (BETL 108; Leuven: Leuven University Press/Peeters, 1993), 10-11, n. 32.

⁹This prayer by Abraham transfers to him the initiative regarding Sarai’s sterility taken by the latter in Gen 16:2 (where she proposes to Abraham a scheme for getting children for herself involving a coupling of her husband and her maid, Hagar). That “transfer” accentuates the role of Abraham in the proceedings, while, conversely, diminishing that of Sarai; it likewise highlights the piety of the patriarch who looks to God – rather than to human endeavor as does Sarai in Gen 16:2 – for the resolution of the couple’s plight. At the same time, the reference to Abraham’s distressed prayer here echoes his prior complaint to God about his ongoing childlessness in Gen 15:2-3 (// *Ant.* 1.183b). Josephus’ formulation here has as well a close verbal parallel in the (likewise “unbiblical”) initiative he ascribes to Manoah, the future father of Samson in *Ant.* 5.276 (“... having no children by her [his wife] and being distressed [δυσφορῶν] at the lack of them, he was wont... to entreat [ἰκέτευεν] God to give them offspring of their wedlock.” In contrast to Josephus who thus eliminates/transfers Sarah’s word of Gen 16:2a, Philo provides her (*Abr.* 248-252) with a five-paragraph discourse to her husband in which, e.g., she declares (249) that she will have “no jealousy” towards the other woman Abraham might take and (251) extols the character of Hagar, as “outwardly a slave, inwardly of free and noble race.” Subsequently, Philo (*Abr.* 253) expatiates as well on Abraham’s “hearkening to the voice of Sarai” as cited in Gen 16:2b, referring to the patriarch’s “increased admiration for the wifely love, which never grew old and was ever showing itself anew and her careful forethought for the future....” Note further *Gen. Rab.* 45.2’s equation of Abraham’s “hearkening to Sarai’s voice” (thus Gen 16:2b) with his listening “to the voice of the Holy Spirit” that spoke through her

turn (1.187a), a notice concerning the divine response that, like the prayer itself, lacks a counterpart in Genesis 16: “*Thereon God bade him be assured that, as in all else he had been led out of Mesopotamia for his welfare, so children would come to him.*”¹⁰

Following the above, two-part substitution for Sarai’s intervention and Abram’s response as cited in Gen 16:2, Josephus (1.187b) rejoins the biblical story line with the “conferral” of Hagar on Abraham by Sarai as related in Gen 16:3. In doing so, however, Josephus makes Sarai’s action a matter of her obeying a divine directive: “*and by God’s command*¹¹ Sarai brought to his bed one of her handmaidens, an Egyptian named Agar, *that he might have children by her.*”¹²

(compare b. *Meg.* 14a where Sarah is reckoned as one of the seven biblical prophetesses).

¹⁰ The above divine assurance – which takes the place of the notice of Abraham’s “harkening to the voice of Sarai” in Gen 16:2b – serves to reinforce the guarantee given Abraham just previously in Josephus’ version of the Deity’s word to the patriarch of Gen 15:5 in *Ant.* 1.183c: “... God announced that a son would be born to him, whose posterity would be so great as to be comparable in number to the stars” Where as in Gen 16:2 a Sarai’s concern is with getting children for herself, in Josephus’ presentation both the patriarch’s prayer and the divine response to this focus on the patriarch’s own obtaining of children.

¹¹ With this interjected indication, Josephus disposes of any concerns readers might have about the propriety – is this not a matter of one spouse inducing the other to commit adultery? – of what Sarai (and Abram) are about to do. He likewise accentuates – as he had done previously in the case of Abram (see n. ⁹) – the piety of Sarai who, unlike her biblical counterpart, only acts when so directed by God.

¹² Compare Gen 16:3b: “... Sarai... took Hagar the Egyptian, her handmaid, and gave her to Abram... as a wife [*Tg. Ps.-J.*: and I (Sarai) will set her (Hagar) free].” Josephus’ formulation avoids giving Hagar wife status. At the same time, its indication concerning the purpose of Sarai’s initiative reads like a narrative transposition of Sarai’s concluding word concerning her maid in 16:2a (“it may that I shall obtain children by her”) in which the children to be borne by Hagar will be Abraham’s rather than Sarai’s. From Gen 16:3 Josephus omits its opening chronological allusion (“after Abram had dwelt ten years in the land of Canaan”). *B. Yeb.* 64a finds in this reference an indirect biblical warrant for the rabbinic requirement that after ten years of childless marriage, a man is to divorce his wife. Philo (*Cong.* 81), for his part, sees in this allusion a reference to a milestone in Abraham’s intellectual development, i.e. the moment at which he passes from the boyhood dominated by passions to the adolescence that he will devote to the “preliminary studies” represented by Hagar (see n. ³).

CRISIS AMONG CHARACTERS

The interaction among the story's three characters takes a negative turn in Gen 16:4 as Hagar, once she conceives by Abram, begins looking contemptuously on Sarai. Josephus' version (1.188a) expatiates on the maid's insolent behavior, thereby further vilifying her and providing a greater justification for the harsh treatment to which she will be subjected by her "owners": "Becoming pregnant,¹³ this servant had the insolence to abuse (ἐξυβρίζειν) Sara,¹⁴ *assuming queenly airs as though the dominion were to pass to her unborn son.*"¹⁵

Sarai in Gen 16:5 responds to Hagar's provocation by addressing Abram with sharply reproachful words that, e.g., call God to "judge" between her and him. As he did with Sarai's earlier word to her husband, Josephus passes over this speech by Sarai as well.¹⁶ Given this

¹³ Josephus omits/presupposes the happening cited at the opening of Gen 16:4 ("And he [Abram] went in to Hagar").

¹⁴ Gen 16:4b reads: "(Hagar) looked with contempt (LXX ἠτιμάσθη) on her mistress." Josephus' term (ἐξυβρίζειν) for Hagar's "abusing" of Sarai is cognate of the key word, hubris, of Greek tragedy; as such, its use here sets up the expectation that Hagar will undergo retribution for her *hubris* towards Sarai. In his allegorical treatment of Genesis 16 in *Cong.* 127-128, Philo portrays the insolent Hagar as representative of those teachers of "preliminary studies" who become so prideful over the achievements of their pupils that they look down on the higher stage (symbolized by Sarah) of wisdom and virtue (see n. 3).

¹⁵ Josephus' accentuation of Hagar's insolence towards her mistress has a counterpart in *Gen. Rab.* 45.4 which relates that when, at Sarai's urging, matrons came to visit the pregnant Hagar, she would tell them that Sarai's appearance of righteousness was a sham, as evidenced by the fact that she had been unable to conceive for many years, whereas Hagar herself had done so on her very first night with Abraham.

¹⁶ Thereby, he avoids attributing to Sarai the aggressively "disrespectful" words her biblical counterpart addresses to her husband (who, after all, had only acted on a proposal initiated by Sarai herself). On the other hand, for the second time, he denies Sarai the voice (and the initiative-taking in face of problem-situations) the Bible ascribes to her. By contrast, the targums, as well as *Gen. Rab.* 45.5, expatiate on Sarai's reproaches to her husband, with *Tg. Neof.* Gen 16:5, e.g., having her remind him of how she had misrepresented herself as a sister to Pharaoh (see Gen 12:10-12) and thereby saved Abram's life. In this (and the other targums), Sarai concludes her discourse by invoking the Lord's intervention in the relationship between her and Abram that will enable them to dispense with the progeny of her

omission, the historian likewise passes over Abram's capitulatory response to his wife's verbal assault on him in 16:6a ("Behold, your maid is your power; do to her as you please"). Instead he (1.188b) represents Abraham as himself taking the lead in handing over the culprit to his wife: "Abraham having thereupon consigned her to Sarai for chastisement...."

The triangular conflict recounted in Gen 16:4-6 culminates in v. 6b as Sarai "deals harshly with" Hagar who "flees from her." Josephus (1.188c) elaborates, focussing attention on Hagar and his reactions to her mistress's measures against her: "... she, unable to endure her humiliations (ταλαιπωρίας),¹⁷ resolved to fly¹⁸ and entreated (ἰκέτευεν) God¹⁹ to take pity on her."²⁰

Hagar, who as a Egyptian, pertains to an people that were themselves descended from the Mesopotamians who earlier afflicted Abram. The rabbis cited in *Gen. Rab.* 45.5 likewise comment unfavorably on Sarai's words as cited in Gen 16:5, accusing of being a talkative woman who even scratched Abram's face and who, in punishment for her impetuous appeal for God's judgment against him (see Gen 16:5 *in fine*) had her lifespan reduced by 48 years.

¹⁷ Like Gen 16:6, Josephus leaves indeterminate the nature of Sarai's punitive requital of Hagar. Compare *Gen. Rab.* 45.6 which represents Sarai disallowing cohabitation between her and Abram, slapping her face with a slipper, and compelling Hagar to carry the buckets and towels that Sarai used at the baths. See also *Gen. Rab.* 45.5, where Sarai is charged with having cast the evil eye on Hagar with the result that the latter miscarried, such that the child that the angel declares Hagar is carrying in Gen 16:11 is the product of a subsequent coupling between her and Abram.

¹⁸ In Gen 16:6b Hagar actually does "flee from" Sarai. According to Philo (*Fuga* 3-6), Hagar's flight was prompted by "shame."

¹⁹ This is the same phrase used of Abraham in *Ant.* 1.186b when appealing to God concerning his childlessness. Josephus thus parallels Abraham and Hagar in the role of prayers that Genesis 16 does not ascribe to either of them. Subsequently (see 1.190 *in fine*), we will be told that God did hear Hagar's appeal – just as he does that of Abraham here.

²⁰ Where as in 1.188a Josephus went beyond Gen 16:4 in accentuating the insolence of Hagar, here he redresses the balance in his portrayal of her, ascribing to her a pious initiative in the face of her sufferings that the Bible does not mention. (Conceivably, however, Josephus found inspiration for his addition in the name "Ishmael" that the angel awards Hagar's unborn son in Gen 16:11, that name, meaning "God has heard," presupposing a previous appeal by Hagar.)

ANGELIC ENCOUNTER

A new character makes his appearance in Gen 16:7, i.e. “the angel of the Lord,” who thereafter (vv. 8-12) engages in an extended exchange with Hagar. Their encounter, according to 16:7, took place “by a spring of water in the wilderness, the spring on the way to Shur.” Josephus’ rendition (1.189a) leaves the locale more indeterminate: “But as she went on her way through the wilderness, an angel of God (ἄγγελος θεῖος)²¹ met (ὑπαντίαζει)²² her...” The angel’s interaction with Hagar commences in 16:8a with him asking her whence she has come and whither she is going, this eliciting the latter’s statement (16:8b) that she is fleeing from her mistress Sarai. Josephus leaves this opening exchange aside.²³ In so doing, he passes directly to the angel’s injunction of 16:9 (“return to your mistress, and submit to her”), likewise amplifying this:

and bade her to return to her²⁴ *master and* mistress (πρὸς τοὺς

²¹ LXX ἄγγελος κυρίου. On Josephus’ angelology, see C.T. Begg, “Angels in the Work of Flavius Josephus,” in *Deuterocanonical and Cognate Literature Yearbook 2007: Angels* (ed. F.V. Reiterer et al.; Berlin/New York: de Gruyter, 2007), 525-536. As pointed out in this article, Josephus evidences a certain tendency to downplay the role of angels in biblical history, but by no means does so consistently. On Josephus’ virtual total avoidance of the LXX’s use of κύριος (= MT Yhwh) as a divine title, see Begg, *Josephus’ Account*, 45, n. 218.

²² LXX Gen 16:7 εὔρεν. On Josephus’ penchant for using the historic present where the LXX has a past form, see n. 8.

²³ The angel’s questions as cited in 16:8 might appear otiose coming from a supernatural being who would be presumed to know such matters without having to ask. In addition, Hagar’s response – with its implied accusation of Sarai – does not tell readers anything they do not know already on the basis of 16:6. Compare Philo’s (*Fuga* 203) comment concerning the angel’s word as cited in Gen 16:8a: “In thus addressing her he does not express doubt or inquiry; rather he is reproaching and putting her to shame; for we may not think that an angel is ignorant of anything.” (In *Fuga* 206 Philo commends Hagar for “receiving,” her answer of 16:8b, “reproof with gladness.” He then continues: “Of her gladness she has given plain evidence by not accusing her mistress and by laying the blame of her flight upon herself, and by making no answer to the second question ‘Whither art thou going?’ for it was uncertain, and regarding uncertainties suspension of judgement is not only safe but requisite.”)

²⁴ Josephus dispenses with the reintroduction of the “angel of the Lord” as the speaker with which 16:9 opens (as do the subsequent vv. 10 and 11). In *Gen.*

δεσπότας),²⁵ *assuring her she would attain a happier lot through self-control* (σωφρονούσαν²⁶), ²⁷ *for her present plight was but due to her arrogance and presumption* (ἀγνώμονα καὶ αὐθάδη)²⁸ *towards her mistress*²⁹; *and that if she disobeyed and pursued her way she would perish...*³⁰

Rab. 34.7 the fourfold repetition of the designation “the angel of the Lord” for Hagar’s interlocutor prompts speculation about how many angels spoke with her, one opinion being that there were four, another that the figure was five. (In this same passage various rabbis are quoted regarding Hagar’s seeming lack of fear in her interaction with the angel, one of them attributing this to Hagar’s having been part of the household of Abraham that received visits by angels and so was accustomed to them.) On Josephus’ characteristic substitution of indirect for the direct address used for the angel’s words throughout 16:8-12, see Begg, *Josephus’ Account*, 12-13, n. 38.

²⁵ In Gen 16:9 Hagar is told to return to her mistress alone. With the above phrase (literally: “to her masters”), Josephus takes care to give Abraham a place in the angel’s directive.

²⁶ On words of the *swrfon*-root in Greek literature generally, see C. Spicq, *Notes de lexicographie néo-testamentaire* II (OBO 22,2; Fribourg: Editions universitaires; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1978), 867-874. For the Greeks, *swfrosunh* was one of the four cardinal virtues, which Josephus takes care to attribute to many of the biblical heroes; see L.H. Feldman, *Josephus’ Interpretation of the Bible* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 109-113.

²⁷ The above conditional promise of a better life for Hagar could be seen as Josephus’ transposition of the second element (“and submit to her [Sarai]”) of the angel’s directive to her in 16:9. Compare Philo’s (*Fuga* 207a) comment concerning that injunction: “for the teacher [Sarah] is an advantage to the learner [Hagar], and bond service under Good Sense a gain to her that is imperfect.” Commenting further on the angel’s additional command that Hagar “submit” to Sarai, Philo (*Fuga* 204b) remarks that she was being called on thereby to humble himself “with a noble humiliation which carries with it the overthrow of irrational high-mindedness.”

²⁸ This adjectival collocation occurs only here in Josephus.

²⁹ This explanation of the cause of Hagar’s present distress lacks an equivalent in the angel’s injunction of 16:9. It picks up on Josephus’ accentuated portrayal of Hagar’s insolence in 1.188a, now having the angel disclose to her the reprehensibility of her behavior.

³⁰ Josephus interjects this negative alternative into the angel’s word of Gen 16:9 that itself only envisages a single, positive possibility for Hagar, i.e. return to her mistress. Thereby, he makes clear to Hagar (and to readers) what would happen should Hagar disregard the angelic injunction given her.

The continuation of the angel's words in 16:10-12 focuses on the posterity promised Hagar, i.e. many descendants (v. 10), in particular a son to be named Ishmael (v. 11) and the lifelong adversarial role that will be his (v. 12). From this sequence, Josephus omits the opening promise of 16:10.³¹ As for the "son-promise" of 16:11-12, the historian limits himself to the (conditional) announcement that Hagar will have a son (// 16:11a) and an attenuated version of the predictions about that son's combativeness of v. 12. His rendering of 16:11-12 reads then: "... *but if she returned home*,³² she would become the mother of a son³³ *hereafter to reign over* (βασιλεύσοντος)³⁴ that country."³⁵

³¹ Conceivably, Josephus saw this promise ("I will so greatly multiply your descendants that they cannot be numbered for multitude") as obscuring the uniqueness of the similar promise God makes to Abram in Gen 15:5 (// *Ant.* 1.183) about his having progeny as numerous as the stars of heaven and so omitted it.

³² This condition prefaced to the son-promise of Gen 16:11a lacks a biblical counterpart. It picks up and reinforces the angel's directive that Hagar return to "her master and mistress" at the opening of 1.189 (// 16:9).

³³ Josephus leaves aside the angel's statement about Hagar's being with child of 16:11a? – a matter of which Hagar (and the reader) would be well aware at this point (On rabbinic tradition's treatment of the question of why the angel should need to tell Hagar of her pregnancy, see n. 17.) He likewise passes over the appended angelic instruction that Hagar is to name her son "Ishmael" and the explanation of this name in terms of the Lord's "having heard your affliction" of 16:11b, holding over these indications until a later point; see 1.190b.

³⁴ This verbal form echoes the participle βασιλίζουσα used of Hagar in 1.188a, lending a measure of validity to the "queenly airs" Hagar assumes there; see next note. The term ("rule") as used of Ishmael here has an equivalent in *Tg. Neof.* 16:12, which renders MT's reference to Ishmael's hand being "against every man" with "his hands shall rule (יָשַׁלְתָּ) over all."

³⁵ "That country" here would seem to be "the [not further identified] wilderness" where Hagar encounters the angel according to 1.189a. The above formulation is Josephus' compressed, prosaic and attenuated version of the angel's announcement of 16:12 ("He shall be a wild ass of a man, his hand against every man and every man against him, and he shall dwell over against his kinsmen"). Elsewhere too, Josephus tends to substitute prosaic equivalents for the Bible's figurative language (*in casu* "a wild ass of a man"), just as he regularly plays down biblical references to conflictual relationships between foreign peoples (here the Ishmaelites or Arabs) and his own people (the "kinsmen" over against whom Ishmael will dwell according to 16:12). On the latter point, see Feldman, *Josephus's Interpretation*, 243 (Feldman notes in this connection that Josephus also omits the notice of Gen 21:20 about Ishmael's becoming an expert Bowman while living in

CLOSING NOTICES

Genesis 16 concludes with a series of notices on what happened subsequent to the angel's words to Hagar (16:8-12). That series opens with a declaration by Hagar in which she gives (16:13a) a name ("Thou art a God of seeing") to the Lord who has just spoken to her, this name, in turn, being prompted by the (textually difficult) reflection attributed to the fugitive in 16:13b: "Have I really seen God and remained alive after seeing him?", RSV).³⁶ To this two-part word of Hagar, Gen 16:14, in turn, 16:14 appends the etiological notice: "Therefore the well [see 16:7, where the reference is to a spring of water in the wilderness] was called Beer-la-hai-roi; it lies between Kadesh and Bered." Josephus passes over this entire sequence.³⁷ In place thereof, he substitutes

the wilderness). Finally, the angel's declaration here in 1.190a provides a clarification concerning what is said of Hagar in 1.188 ("... assuming queenly airs as though the dominion were to pass to her unborn son"): that son will indeed exercise a dominion, not however over the household of Abraham – as Hagar had supposed – but rather over "that [desert] country." *Gen. Rab.* 45.9, for its part, offers various rabbinic remarks about the language of Gen 16:12. Thus, e.g., it cites alternative understandings of the designation of Ishmael as a "wild ass" (i.e. this refers to the barbarous environment in which he will be reared or is intended to call attention to Ishmael's future role as one who will plunder not just property but human lives). In addition, it records the dictum of R. Eleazar according to whom the angel's prediction about every man's hand being against Ishmael and his hand being against them was fulfilled in the days of the conqueror Nebuchadnezzar. As for Philo, he (*Fuga* 209-211) develops the indications given in Gen 16:12 concerning Ishmael's future activities into an allegorical portrait of the figure as a "proto-Sophist" with, e.g., "his pretence of excessive open-mindedness, and his love of arguing for arguing's sake" (209c), a posture which evokes the opposition of "all representatives of the science... since they naturally shew fight, as in defence of offspring of their own, that is of the doctrines to which their soul has given birth" (210).

³⁶ On the question of the reading here, see the commentaries.

³⁷ Various factors may have influenced him in doing so: his general tendency to "detheologize" biblical happenings (on which see Feldman, *Josephus's Interpretation*, 205-214), the fact that Hagar's word of 16:13 (and the attached notice of 16:14) play no further role in the course of the narrative, the seeming discrepancy between Hagar's reference to "seeing God" and the preceding designation of her interlocutor as the "angel of the Lord" (in *Gen. Rab.* 45.10, R. Joshua, speaking in the name of R. Idi, alludes to this problem, averring that God's

(1.190b) explicit mention of a matter that the biblical presentation itself simply presupposes, i.e. Hagar's acting on the angel's injunction that she go back to her mistress (16:9) and being taken in once she did so: "Obedient to this behest she returned to her master and mistress (πρὸς τοὺς δεσπότας),³⁸ was forgiven (συγγνώμης³⁹ ἔτυχεν)...."⁴⁰

The closing notices of Genesis 16 continue in vv. 15-16, where Hagar bears a son to Abram (v. 15a), who names him "Ishmael" (v. 15b), being 86 years old at the moment of his birth (v. 16). Josephus (1.190c-191a) reproduces the content of these two verses with a variety of modifications: "... and not long after⁴¹ she gave birth (τίκτει)⁴² to Is(h)mael (Ἰσμάηλον),⁴³ a name which may be rendered 'Heard of God' (θεόκλυτον)⁴⁴ because God had hearkened (εἰσακούσαι)

communication was "through the medium of an angel"; see also *Fuga* 212 where Philo states, apropos of Hagar's response ("thou art a God of seeing") to her angelic encounter, "... angels are God's household-servants, and are deemed gods by those whose existence is still one of toil and bondage"), as well as his previous omission of the reference to the wilderness "spring" – to which the mention of the "well" in 16:14 harks back – of 16:7.

³⁸ Josephus' specification that Hagar returned to both "her masters" here echoes his version of the angel's injunction in 1.189a where the same wording is used.

³⁹ On the use of this term in Greek literature generally, see K. Metzler, *Der griechische Begriff des Verzeihens untersucht am Wortstamm συγγνώμη von den ersten Belegen bis zum vierten Jahrhundert n. Chr.* (WUNT 2,44; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1990).

⁴⁰ The above formulation redounds to the credit of all three parties involved: the formerly recalcitrant Hagar obeys the angel's injunction, and both her offended masters extend pardon to her when she does so.

⁴¹ This chronological indication lacks a parallel in Gen 16:15.

⁴² LXX ἔκεκεν. Once again, Josephus substitutes an historic present form; see n. 8.

⁴³ LXX Ἰσμάηλ. With the above formulation Josephus avoids attributing the naming of the newborn to Abraham as does 16:15 - doing so, perhaps, in view of the fact that in Gen 16:11 Hagar is told that she is to be the one who is to name her son. Josephus thus "sidesteps" the question - raised by the juxtaposition of 16:11 and 15 - of who actually named the couple's progeny.

⁴⁴ This Greek term is *hapax* in Josephus' corpus. Philo (*Fuga* 208) gives the name an active sense i.e. "hearing God" (ἀκοή θεοῦ) with Hagar as its subject, further making this name indicative of the fact that Hagar, according to the angel, "shall have been chastened (σωφρονησθεῖσα - cf. Josephus' use of the cognate

to her petition (ἰκεσίᾳς).⁴⁵

In the paragraphing of the MT (and the English versions) the chronological indication about Abram's age at Ishmael's birth in v. 16 constitutes the conclusion of Genesis 16. Josephus, by contrast, makes his rendering (1.191a) of this notice ("Abraham was already eighty-six years of age when this son was born to him") the opening of a new segment (*Ant.* 1.191-193), paralleling Genesis 17 and dealing with God's (second) covenant with Abraham.⁴⁶

CONCLUSION

Having now completed my reading of *Ant.* 1.186-190(191a) in relation both to its biblical *Vorlage* and the wider Jewish tradition, I shall now attempt to synthesize my findings regarding the similarities and differences between Josephus' account of Hagar's flight and these two corpora.

In his rendition of Genesis 16, as we noted above, Josephus makes use of a variety of rewriting techniques. Of these, the most prominent is his omission/abbreviation of biblical data. In fact, he significantly abridges the Bible's telling of three of the four segments into which we have divided up Genesis 16 and *Ant.* 1.186-190(191a), i.e. the crisis among the characters, the angelic encounter, and the closing notices. Conversely, it is only in regard to the first of those segments (the

term σωφρονούσας in reference to Hagar in 1.189b) by hearkening to the word of God."

⁴⁵ This appended explanation of the name "Ishmael" represents Josephus' delayed and adapted rendering of the angel's word in Gen 16:11b where the angel informs Hagar that she is to call her son Ishmael "because the Lord has given heed (LXX ἐπήκουσεν) to your affliction." At the same time the formulation also alludes back to Josephus' own insertion in 1.188c according to which the fugitive Hagar "entreated (ἰκέτευεν) God" - an entreaty that God, as stated here in 1.190b, does hear.

⁴⁶ Josephus' handling of the chronological datum of Gen 16:16 is understandable given that in the sequence of Genesis that datum is followed immediately by another similar one, i.e. the reference in Gen 17:1 to Abram's being 99 years old when God appeared to him to initiate the covenant-making described in Genesis 17 (*Ant.* 1.191-193).

characters' initial inaction) that he notably expands on Genesis' presentation. As we further noted, Josephus also, at various junctures in our pericope, rearranges the Bible's own sequence: the reference to the "oaks of Mamre" of Gen 13:18 is held over by him until the opening of *Ant.* 1.186, just as he makes delayed utilization of Gen 16:12b's mention and elucidation of the name "Ishmael" (see 1.190b), and repositions the concluding chronological indication of Gen 16:16 to the start of his rendition of Genesis 17 in 1.191a. Beyond these three characteristic rewriting techniques, Josephus modifies the data of Genesis 16 in still other ways. Thus, he employs historic presents where the LXX reads past forms (see n. ⁸), substitutes indirect for source direct address (see n. ²⁴), and avoids LXX's use of "Lord" as a divine title (see n. ²¹). On the content level, Josephus ventures to introduce changes as well. The "oak" that is the setting for the story's opening action is "called Ogyges" (1.186a) rather than being associated with "Mamre" (so Gen 13:18). It is Abraham not Sarai, as in Gen 16:2a, who takes the initiative in the face of the latter's sterility (1.186b). Rather than Abram being the one to "hear the voice of Sarai" (16:2b), she acts according to "God's command" (1.187b). Thereafter, Abraham hands over the recalcitrant Hagar to Sarah without any prior complaint by his wife (compare 1.188b and 16:6). The angel instructs Hagar to return to both her "masters" rather than to Sarai alone (compare 1.189a and 16:9) and his announcement concerning the future of her unborn son (1.190a) differs markedly from that found in 16:12 (see n. ³⁵).

Josephus' application of the above rewriting techniques generates a version of the story of Hagar's flight that differs rather significantly from the biblical one. Overall, he streamlines Genesis' presentation with, e.g., its quadruple mention of the angel of the Lord as the speaker in 16:8-12 and the seemingly "functionless" notices of 16:13-14. Overall as well, Josephus endeavors to resolve, by means of one or other of the above-mentioned rewriting techniques, the various "gaps" and questions posed by the biblical presentation: Where did the initial interaction between the characters take place (see 1.186a)? Did God have any role in the process that eventuated in the coupling of Abram and Sarai (see 1.186b-187a)? Would an angel really have needed to ask information from Hagar about whence she had come and where she was going, as he does in Gen 16:8? Why does the angel tell Hagar (Gen 16:9) to go back (only) to her mistress rather than also to Abram? Does not the angel's promise concerning Hagar's progeny in

Gen 16:10 obscure the uniqueness of God's earlier assurance to Abram about his own innumerable descendants (see n. ³¹)? Did the fugitive, in fact, act on the angel's instructions about returning and what reaction did she get from her "owners" (see on 1.190b)? Which of his parents bestowed his name on Ishmael - was it Hagar (so Gen 16:11) or Abram himself (so Gen 16:15)?

The distinctiveness of Josephus' retelling of Genesis 16 also manifests itself in his "retouched" characterization of the story's figures. The role of the narrative's lead male character, Abram, first of all, is (positively) accentuated by him in a whole series of instances.⁴⁷ In the face, e.g., of Sarai's sterility it is he - rather than she (see 16:2a) - who takes the pious initiative of praying to God about this and receives assurances from the Deity (1.186b). Thereafter, Abram is the one who initiates the couple's response to Hagar's provocation (compare Gen 16:5-6 and 1.188b). The angel tells Hagar to return to him as well (compare Gen 16:9 and 1.189a), and he joins Sarai in forgiving the returning fugitive (see 1.190a).⁴⁸ Sarai, conversely, emerges as a somewhat diminished - albeit more sympathetic and "godly" - character in Josephus' presentation. Specifically, he passes over both the speaking parts attributed to Sarai in Genesis 16, i.e. her proposal about how her sterility is to be dealt with (v. 2a) and her verbal assault on her husband in response to Hagar's disrespect (v. 5). Whereas in Gen 16:2b Abram listens to his wife's voice regarding Hagar, in 1.187b Sarai acts on "God's command" in handing the maid over to her husband. It is not only to her, but also to him that Hagar is to return (compare 1.189a and 16:9), and the couple jointly forgives her when she does so (see 1.190b).⁴⁹ Of the story's three main (human) characters, it is, however, Hagar whose portrait appears to have undergone the most retouching,

⁴⁷ On the other hand, Josephus, unlike Gen 16:15, does not attribute the naming of Ishmael to Abraham.

⁴⁸ On Josephus' overall portrait of Abraham, see Feldman, *Josephus's Interpretation*, 223-289.

⁴⁹ On Josephus' overall handling of the figure of Sarai/Sarah, see J.L. Bailey, "Josephus' Portrayal of the Matriarchs," in *Josephus, Judaism and Christianity* (ed. L.H. Feldman and G. Hata; Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1987), 154-179, pp. 157-161.

in both *malam* and *bonam partem* at Josephus' hands. Initially, her insolence vis-à-vis her mistress is highlighted (compare 1.188a and 16:4), and the wrongfulness of this is made clear to her (and to the reader) by the angel's "unbiblical" words in 1.189a. At the same time, the historian inserts (1.188 *in fine*) mention of the fugitive Hagar's "praying to God," using the same formula previously employed of Abraham himself (see 1.186b and cf. n. ¹⁹) - a prayer which God is then said to have heard in 1.190c. Similarly, Josephus introduces a reference to Hagar's "obedience" to the angel's instruction at the start of 1.190a, an obedience that brings her the pardon of her "owners."⁵⁰

Of the story's remaining characters, the future of the unborn Ishmael is spoken of in less drastically conflictual terms in 1.189b in fine than in 16:12. Any suggestion that Hagar's angelic interlocutor needs to be informed by her about her movements is eliminated via Josephus' omission of his initial question to her of 16:8a. Overall, the angel's speaking role is diminished, and he appears more in the role of a moral teacher than of a predictor of future events (compare 1.189 and 16:10-12). Finally, in contrast to his frequent "detheologizing" tendency elsewhere in retelling biblical history, Josephus somewhat increases God's role in the events of Genesis 16: the Deity responds to Abram's (unbiblical) prayer concerning his wife's sterility (1.186b) and is the object of a plea for pity by Hagar (1.188 *in fine*), who is subsequently warned by the angel about the consequences of her "disobeying God" (1.189).

At the opening of this essay, I raised the question not only regarding the relationship between Josephus' rendition and Genesis 16 itself, but also between his version and the wider (early) Jewish tradition's handling of the biblical story. Here, by way of conclusion on the latter point, I would point out that as a fairly detailed reproduction of the content of Genesis 16, formulated in the historian's own words, *Ant.* 1.186-190(191a) clearly differs from the approach to the source text taken by the two other post biblical documents most often cited in my study, i.e. the Philonic corpus and *Genesis Rabbah*, both of which

⁵⁰ In contrast to her biblical counterpart, Josephus' Hagar - like his Sarai-figure - remains mute: neither her response to the angel of Gen 16:8b nor her words to and about God of 16:13 is reproduced by him.

(“atomistically”)cite selected words or phrases of the biblical text and then proceed to expatiate on these from various perspectives.⁵¹ Moreover, the allegorical interest that dominates in Philo’s handling of the Hagar story is absent in Josephus’ more straightforward retelling of the narrative. On the other hand, we did note occasional points of contact between his version and these other documents in their handling of the Genesis data. Thus, e.g., Josephus shares with Philo a tendency to turn Hagar into a more complex (and more positive) character, while his accentuation of her (initial) insolence towards her mistress (1.188a) has a counterpart in *Gen. Rab.* 45.4 (see n. ¹⁵).

The figure of Hagar who makes a double, troublesome, appearance in Genesis and then disappears from the Bible, has called forth many centuries of commentary and reflection. Within this interpretative chorus the voice of Josephus, as this essay has attempted to show, stands out as both an early and a distinctive one.

⁵¹ In this regard, Josephus’ handling of the Genesis text stands closer to the treatment of it in *Jub.* 14.21-24 and *L.A.B.* 8.1, each of which provides a summary rendering of the chapter’s core data. In contrast to these other texts, which, e.g., lack any mention of Hagar’s angelic encounter, however, Josephus offers a considerably more expansive retelling of the biblical narrative.