



JOSEPHUS AND PLUTARCH ON LAWGIVERS

WESTWOOD (U.) *Moses among the Greek Lawgivers. Reading Josephus' Antiquities through Plutarch's Lives*. (Supplements to the *Journal for the Study of Judaism* 210.) Pp. xiv + 264. Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2023. Cased, €116, US\$129. ISBN: 978-90-04-68134-7. doi:10.1017/S0009840X24000295

This monograph, which is a revision of W.'s 2020 dissertation, explores Josephus' depiction of Moses as lawgiver in *Antiquities of the Jews* (*AJ*) in comparison with Greek lawgivers, principally in dialogue with Plutarch's *Lycurgus*, *Numa* and *Solon*. Notwithstanding this reviewer's limited juxtaposition of Josephus and Plutarch (*In the Court of the Gentiles* [2023]), an extended comparison of these two contemporaries is, as W. notes (pp. 7–9), a debt that has remained outstanding ever since L. Feldman's initial efforts several decades ago ('Parallel Lives of Two Lawgivers', in: J. Edmondson et al. [edd.], *Flavius Josephus and Flavian Rome* [2005]). W.'s work is an indication of the fruitfulness of integrating Josephus with his Graeco-Roman environment and succeeds in elucidating Josephus' Moses with light cast from Plutarch, though I still have some quibbles and a few weightier criticisms.

Chapter 1 surveys scholarship on Josephus' Moses, dwells at length on audience and aims in *AJ*, introduces Plutarch and justifies the comparison with Josephus, and summarises the method and contents of the study. I could find no statement about the Greek text of Josephus that W. used; and the lack of engagement with a formal analytical method or theoretical approach is not crucial but nevertheless felt. Post-colonial theory comes to mind, as in J.M.G. Barclay's commentary (*Against Apion* [2007], pp. lxxiii–lxxi), especially since W. is concerned with Josephus' minoritised appeal to and challenge of dominant Greek ideals. W.'s position on Josephus' audience is unconventional, in that Greek readers of *AJ* are prioritised nearly to the exclusion of Romans on the basis that Josephus addressed *AJ* in the preface to ἄπασιν . . . τοῖς Ἑλλήσιν. These 'Hellenes/Greeks' have usually been understood to be non-Jews generally, including Romans. S. Mason is most responsible for the turn towards prioritising Roman readership, premised especially on the localised nature of ancient publication and on the extensive Roman material in Book 19 ('Introduction' to Brill's *Flavius Josephus: Translation and Commentary* series, vol. 3 [2000]). This audience, however, is Roman primarily in terms of location in the capital and the concomitant milieu there; Greek provincials in Rome are included. Even Mason's dissenters, L. Huitink and J.W. van Henten, stress mainly the choice of composing in Greek as enabling a broader readership in the provinces (*Zutot* 6 [2009]). W. accepts Mason's localised publication of *AJ* in Rome, but construes 'Hellenes/Greeks' as a narrower group there with perspectives that can be contrasted with those of Romans. While W. allows Roman readership in through the backdoor (p. 12 n. 48), it is given little consideration or explanatory power. W.'s isolation of a narrowly Greek readership falters on the internal evidence of *AJ*, assumed consistency in Josephus' use of the term 'Hellene/Greek' (A. Ophir and I. Rosen-Tvi, *Goy* [2018], pp. 128–9) and the contemporaneous usage of 'Hellene/Greek' by Paul to refer to non-Jews collectively (1 Cor 1:22–4). However, W. is to be commended for renewing an old debate with a fresh perspective.

Chapter 2 sets out Greek models of the lawgiver, especially in Plato, Plutarch and Dionysius of Halicarnassus, and contrasts them with Roman writers, mainly Cicero but also Livy. Of particular value is W.'s survey of laws and lawgivers in Plato and the

reception of his ideas in later writers, as well as W.'s demonstration that Greek writers tend to assume that laws require lawgivers whereas Roman writers do not.

In the first part of Chapter 3 W. moves to the latter part of the preface of *AJ*, which introduces the creation account and expounds Moses as deriving the Jewish laws through his understanding of the divine nature. W.'s comparison of emphases in this passage with those of Greek lawgivers is insightful. However, W. overlooks probable dependence upon Philo's *On the Creation of the World*; indeed, W. never cites this work. Dependence upon *Life of Moses* is considered, but dismissed later, in the context of Josephus' description of the tabernacle (p. 127). Josephus' dependence on Philo in *AJ* for these (and other) topics is widely held (G. Sterling, *SPhiloA* 25 [2013]), and consideration of how Josephus shaped Philo's ideas would have added further nuance. In the second part of Chapter 3 W. turns to the early life of Moses in *AJ* 2, arguing convincingly that in terms of Moses' education, exile and reluctance to lead, Josephus' depiction is even more intelligible in light of Greek assumptions about lawgivers. But material useful for W. on the early life of Moses in *AJ* is sparse, particularly since much of W.'s treatment of Moses' education hinges on a single textual variant. Even W. admits that 'the first stage of Moses' story has little to do with his role as legislator' (p. 99).

Chapter 4 covers Josephus' depiction of Moses at Sinai and the immediately surrounding contexts. W. shows that ambivalence and ambiguity about divine or human origin of law is mirrored in Plutarch, as are some aspects of Moses' institution of the tabernacle and priesthood. On the written-ness of law, though, Josephus does not share Plutarch's discomfort. One shortfall of this chapter is W.'s self-professedly restrained engagement with Josephus' adaptation of the biblical text. The ambivalence and ambiguity that W. finds can be ascribed to some degree to the fact that the narrative of Exodus is, as others have observed (B. Sommer, *Revelation and Authority* [2015], pp. 27–98), notoriously inconsistent precisely about the law's nature (oral or written), extent (wholly or partially revealed), source (God or Moses) and immediate audience (Moses, assorted others or the whole people). Ambiguity and ambivalence are, in fact, recurring features of *AJ*, while they have also been found in Plutarch and are intrinsic to his biographical project (*In the Court of the Gentiles* 38–56). Leaving aside my own attempts to grapple with this common feature of both Josephus and Plutarch (published only months before W.), I still wished to see some manner of further reflection and integration by W. of ambiguity and ambivalence as semantically productive, whether or not authorially intended. The important work of O. Gussmann on priestly matters in Josephus is notably absent (*Das Priesterverständnis des Flavius Josephus* [2008]).

Chapter 5 analyses the manner in which the lawgiver leaves the law with the people and thence departs, as well as the bulk of the Mosaic laws themselves. Some readers might have appreciated treatment of the laws in a separate chapter alongside the legal material from Chapter 4. As to W.'s conclusions, first, much like Plutarch, Josephus has reframed conflict, which Moses encounters as *stasis*, but, unlike Plutarch, it is ultimately overcome by divine punishment. Second, the attention to the transition from lawgiver to law-abiding period afterwards is shared by Josephus and Plutarch, as is the depiction of the lawgiver's death as deification, though not without discomfort by Josephus. Third, although the terms and concepts Josephus uses in discussing the Mosaic laws are at home with Greeks and their lawgivers, the content is quite foreign to Greeks in many respects; Josephus the former priest would accommodate audiences only so far. While the work of M. Avioz was not published in time for W.'s dissertation, it demanded engagement in the published monograph (*Legal Exegesis of Scripture in the Works of Josephus* [2021]).

W. closes with a brief summary and conclusions (Chapter 6). After highlighting areas where Josephus appeals to and challenges Greek ideals about lawgivers, a few paragraphs of synthesis point towards the implications of the study. This section is little changed from

the dissertation and would have benefited from more critical reflection and expansion. Taken as a whole, though, this is an important and sound study that offers Classicists an entry to Josephus through Plutarch.

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