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Philo of Alexandria on the contents of the Book of Genesis (*Abr.* 1)

Аннотация. В статье обсуждается странное изложение в начале сочинения Филона Александрийского «Об Аврааме» основного содержания Книги Бытия как рассказа «об урожае и неурожае, голоде и изобилии, гибели и рождении растений и животных и об их росте благодаря хорошему смешению воздуха и времен года». Книга Бытия — это не естественнонаучный трактат и не история метеорологических и климатических явлений. Почему Филон дает ей столь странную характеристику? Слова Филона соотнесены с топосами, распространенными в философской литературе его времени, и предложено следующее объяснение. Свою главную идею — идею соответствия человеческого закона закону природному, в которых одинаково проявляются добродетели человеколюбия и справедливости, — Филон соотносит с планом Книги Бытия. Он хочет представить ее как рассказ сначала о законах мира, затем о законах человеческих. Законы природы должны быть представлены в рассказе о сотворении мира. Однако действительное содержание начала Книги Бытия отличается от того, что ждет от нее Филон; нужных ему рассуждений о человеколюбии и справедливости, присутствующих в созданном Богом мире, здесь нет. Их Филон находит не в сотворении мира, но в его существовании, не в начальных главах, а в продолжении Книги Бытия. Однако в этой части книги природный мир не имеет самостоятельного значения, она посвящена уже жизни человеческой. Таким образом, сюжеты, имеющие лишь косвенное значение в самой Книге Бытия — голод и изобилие, урожай и неурожай и даже благое смешение воздуха и времен года, — неожиданно становятся для Филона самостоятельными важными темами Пятикнижия.

Ключевые слова: Филон, средний платонизм, стоики, Платон, Библия, книга Бытия, комментарий, интерпретация

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Articles

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Philo of Alexandria on the contents of the Book of Genesis (*Abr.* 1)

Abstract. The article discusses the strange presentation at the beginning of Philo of Alexandria's *On Abraham* of the main content of the Book of Genesis as an account "of fruitfulness and barrenness, of dearth and plenty; how fire and water wrought great destruction of what is on earth; how on the other hand plants and animals were born and throve through the kindly tempering of the air and the yearly seasons." The Book of Genesis is not a natural science treatise or a history of meteorological and climatic phenomena. Why then does Philo give it such a strange characterization? Philo's words are correlated with *topoi* common in the philosophical literature of his time, and the following explanation is offered. Philo relates his main idea, the idea of the correspondence of human law to natural law, in both of which the virtues of humanity and justice are equally manifested, to the plan of the Book of Genesis. He wants to present it as an account first of the law of the world, then of human laws. The laws of nature are to be presented in the account of the creation of the world. But the actual content of the beginning of the Book of Genesis differs from what Philo expects from it; the reasoning he needs about humanity and justice present in God's created world is not there. Philo finds it not in the creation of the world, but in its existence, not in the opening chapters, but in the continuation of the Book of Genesis. However, here, in this part of Genesis, the natural world has no independent significance; this part is already devoted to human life. Thus, it turns out that topics that have only indirect significance in the Book of Genesis itself, unexpectedly become for Philo important themes of the Pentateuch in their own right.

Keywords: Philo, Middle Platonism, Stoics, Plato, Bible, Book of Genesis, commentary, interpretation

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Philo's treatise *On Abraham* belongs to the part of Philo's corpus commonly called the *Exposition of the Laws*, which is a systematic exposition and interpretation of the Pentateuch of Moses, apparently addressed to a Greek audience. Philo presents the Pentateuch as a book of laws. The Pentateuch is indeed largely devoted to legislation, but there are other, narrative parts as well. What we are going to discuss is the question of how Philo sees the place of these narrative parts and their relation to the laws themselves.

Philo's *Exposition of the Laws* begins with a treatise interpreting the account of the creation of the world, and then in *On Abraham* he moves on to the stories of the lives of the biblical patriarchs. As befits an ancient treatise, *On Abraham* begins with a preface that defines its main theme and its place in the overall composition:

> (1) Τῶν ἱερῶν νόμων ἐν πέντε βίβλοις ἀναγραφέντων ἡ πρώτη καλεῖται καὶ ἐπιγράφεται Γένεσις ἀπὸ τῆς τοῦ κόσμου γενέσεως, ἣν ἐν ἀρχῇ περιέχει, λαβοῦσα τὴν πρόσρησιν, καίτοι μυρίων ἄλλων ἐμφερομένων πραγμάτων, ὅσα κατ' εἰρήνην ἢ πόλεμον ἢ φορὰς καὶ ἀφορίας ἢ λιμὸν καὶ εὐθηνίαν ἢ τὰς μεγίστας τῶν ἐπὶ γῆς φθορὰς διὰ πυρὸς καὶ ὕδατος ἢ τοὐναντίον γενέσεις καὶ εὐτροφίας ζῴων καὶ φυτῶν κατὰ τὴν ἀέρος καὶ τῶν ἐτησίων ὡρῶν εὐκρασίαν καὶ ἀνδρῶν τῶν μὲν ἀρετῇ τῶν δὲ κακίᾳ συμβιωσάντων· (2) ἀλλ' ἐπειδὴ τούτων τὰ μέν ἐστι τοῦ κόσμου μέρη, τὰ δὲ παθήματα, τελειότατον δὲ καὶ πληρέστατον ὁ κόσμος, αὐτῷ τὴν ὅλην βίβλον ἀνέθηκεν. (3) ἐπεὶ δὲ τοὺς νόμους κατὰ τὸ ἑξῆς <καὶ> ἀκόλουθον ἀναγκαῖον διερευνᾶσθαι, τῶν ἐπὶ μέρους καὶ ὡς ἂν εἰκόνων ὑπέρθεσιν ποιησάμενοι τοὺς καθολικωτέρους καὶ ὡς ἂν ἀρχετύπους προτέρους διερευνήσωμεν. (4) οὗτοι δέ εἰσιν ἀνδρῶν οἱ ἀνεπιλήπτως καὶ καλῶς βιώσαντες, ὧν τὰς ἀρετὰς ἐν ταῖς ἱερωτάταις ἐστηλιτεῦσθαι γραφαῖς συμβέβηκεν, οὐ πρὸς τὸν ἐκείνων ἔπαινον αὐτὸ μόνον, ἀλλὰ καὶ ὑπὲρ τοῦ τοὺς ἐντυγχάνοντας προτρέψασθαι καὶ ἐπὶ τὸν ὅμοιον ζῆλον ἀγαγεῖν. (5) οἱ γὰρ ἔμψυχοι καὶ λογικοὶ νόμοι ἄνδρες ἐκεῖνοι γεγόνασιν
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> (1) The first of the five books in which the holy laws are written bears the name and inscription of Genesis, from the genesis or creation of the world, an account of which it contains at its beginning. It has received this title in spite of its embracing numberless other matters; for it tells of peace and war, of fruitfulness and barrenness, of dearth and plenty; how fire and water wrought great destruction of what is on earth; how on the other hand plants and animals were born and throve through the kindly tempering of the air and the yearly seasons, and so too men, some of whom lived a life of virtue, others of vice. (2) But since some of these things are parts of the world, and others events which befall it, and the world is the complete consummation which contains them all, he dedicated the whole book to it ‹...› (3) Since it is necessary to carry out our examination of the law in regular sequence, let us postpone consideration of particular laws, which are, so to speak, copies, and examine first those which are more general and may be called the originals of those copies. (4) These are such men as lived good and

> blameless lives whose virtues stand permanently recorded in the most holy scriptures, not merely to sound their praises but for the instruction of the reader and as an inducement to him to aspire to the same; (5) for in these men we have laws endowed with life and reason.[1]

In paragraphs 3 and 4, Philo indicates the place which (according to his interpretation) is occupied in the Pentateuch by the accounts of the lives of the patriarchs, that is, the main part of the Book of Genesis. He describes their role in Platonic terms of general and particular (τοὺς καθολικωτέρους and τῶν ἐπὶ μέρους) and model and copy (ἀρχετύπους and εἰκόνων): the patriarchs serve as models, their lives are models of the law, and legislation proper is a copy taken from this model.

More puzzling are the first paragraphs, which should determine the place that the account of the creation of the world occupies in the Book of Genesis itself. According to Philo, this account only begins the book, but it is essential because it speaks of the world as a whole, not of its individual parts or events; therefore, it is only fair that from this initial account the whole book should get its name. This idea is generally clear. However, the following statement of the main content of the Book of Genesis in the first paragraph looks very strange. It turns out that it tells of fruitfulness and barrenness, of dearth and plenty, of the death and birth of plants and animals, and of their growth through a good tempering of air and seasons. Only at the end of this phrase there is an addition concerning people who lived virtuously and viciously, and syntactically somewhat sloppily, as if these last words were not an organic part of the sentence but were assigned separately.

The authors of a recent commentary on *On Abraham*, John Dillon and Ellen Birnbaum, are not at all confused by this account of the Book of Genesis. They see here an allusion to such events and phenomena as the war between kings in Genesis 14, the barrenness (this is how they interpret the word ἀφορία) of Sarah, Rebecca and Rachel, the famine under Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the years of plenty and then famine in Egypt under Joseph, the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah by fire and the flood in Noah's time [Birnbaum, Dillon 2020: 147].

All of these events are indeed recounted in the Book of Genesis, and many of them play a really important role in the story. One could argue with the interpretation of ἀφορία, which next to φορά should denote not human barrenness, but crop failure. Philo usually uses this pair of words in an agricultural sense (*Op*. 58, *Mo*. 1.265, *Spec*. 1.92, 2.213), almost in the same sense as λιμὸν καὶ εὐθηνίαν.

Although Dillon and Birnbaum are generally correct in relating Philo's summary of the Book of Genesis to these events, one cannot help but be surprised. The Book of Genesis is not a natural science treatise or a history of meteorological and climatic phenomena. Why does Philo give it such a strange characteristic?

To answer this question, it is necessary to relate Philo's words to some of the *topoi* common in the philosophical literature of his day.

[1] English translations from Philo are cited from the Loeb edition by F. H. Colson. *On Abraham* was published in vol. 6 of that edition [Colson 1935].

We will begin our analysis with the pair of opposites, which is the culmination of the phrase, both semantic (since it describes the most grandiose phenomena) and formal (since it occupies most of it): τὰς μεγίστας τῶν ἐπὶ γῆς φθορὰς διὰ πυρὸς καὶ ὕδατος τοὐναντίον γενέσεις καὶ εὐτροφίας ζῴων καὶ φυτῶν κατὰ τὴν ἀέρος καὶ ἐτησίων ὡρῶν εὐκρασίαν.

By τὰς μεγίστας φθορὰς διὰ πυρὸς καὶ ὕδατος Philo means the flood in the time of Noah and the destruction of Sodom, but the very idea of great destruction by fire and water goes back to Plato. In Book III of the *Laws* (677–678), Plato mentions the "ancient legends" about occasional destructions by floods, obviously referring to the myth of Deucalion and Pyrrha, and calls such universal floods the cause of the extinction of civilization: in such catastrophes all achievements of civilization perish, together with all the evils that civilization carries with it. In the *Timaeus* (22) Plato adds to the floods, of which the legend of Deucalion is an example, periodic fires, the memory of which is expressed in the myth of Phaethon. Here, too, Plato uses the notion of catastrophes to explain the lack of continuity in the development of civilization.

Philo applies the same Platonic *topos* of floods and fires to Old Testament history.[2] The myths of Deucalion and Phaethon, to which Plato referred, are replaced by the stories of Noah and the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. As can be seen from his treatise *Moses* II.53, the flood and fire become for him an example of the just and reasonable will of God, who arranged them in order to punish sinners:

> τοὺς ἀφθόνων μὲν ἀγαθῶν ἀξιωθέντας ὅσα κατ' εὐεξίαν σωμάτων καὶ τὰς περὶ πλοῦτον καὶ δόξαν καὶ τὰ ἄλλα ἐκτὸς εὐτυχίας, ἀρετῆς δ' ἀφηνιάσαντας καὶ οὐκ ἀνάγκῃ γνώμῃ δ' ἑκουσίῳ πανουργίαν καὶ ἀδικίαν καὶ τὰς ἄλλας κακίας, ὡς μέγα ὄφελος τὴν μεγίστην ζημίαν, ἐπιτηδεύσαντας καθάπερ οὐκ ἀνθρώπων ἐχθροὺς ἀλλὰ τοῦ σύμπαντος οὐρανοῦ τε καὶ κόσμου τὰς ἐν ἔθει τιμωρίας οὔ φησιν ὑπομεῖναι, ἀλλὰ καινοτάτας καὶ παρηλλαγμένας, ἃς ἐμεγαλούργησεν ἡ πάρεδρος τῷ θεῷ μισοπόνηρος δίκη, τῶν τοῦ παντὸς δραστικωτάτων στοιχείων ἐπιθεμένων ὕδατος καὶ πυρός, ὡς καιρῶν περιόδοις τοὺς μὲν κατακλυσμοῖς φθαρῆναι, τοὺς δὲ καταφλεχθέντας ἀπολέσθαι.
>
> Therefore all those to whom God thought fit to grant abundance of the good gifts of bodily well-being and of good fortune in the shape of wealth and other externals—who then rebelled against virtue, and, freely and intentionally under no compulsion, practised knavery, injustice and the other vices, thinking to gain much by losing all, were counted, Moses tells us, as enemies not of men but of the whole heaven and universe, and suffered not the ordinary, but strange and unexampled punishments wrought by the might of justice, the hater of evil and assessor of God. For the most forceful elements of the universe, fire and water, fell upon them, so that, as

[2] On Philo's dependence on Plato see [Runia 1983: 54–55].

> the times revolved, some perished by deluge, others were consumed by conflagration.[3]

Thus, the role of the flood and the fire is to punish sinners and fulfill justice. In this passage from the *Moses*, there is another important detail that makes it possible to better understand the opening phrase of *On Abraham*. Water and fire here are not simply natural forces, but two elements called "the most active" (τῶν τοῦ παντὸς δραστικωτάτων στοιχείων). In the sentence from *On Abraham*, water and fire also appear as elements, and they are named together with the other two elements, earth and air: τὰς μεγίστας τῶν ἐπὶ γῆς φθορὰς διὰ πυρὸς καὶ ὕδατος ἢ τοὐναντίον γενέσεις καὶ εὐτροφίας ζῴων καὶ φυτῶν κατὰ τὴν ἀέρος καὶ ἐτησίων ὡρῶν εὐκρασίαν.

Although the elements are named here together, they are not put in the same row: their role in natural processes is different. The earth is only a habitat (τὰ ἐπὶ γῆς). Air is environment; the well-being of living nature depends on its condition (κατὰ τὴν ἀέρος καὶ τῶν ἐτησίων ὡρῶν εὐκρασίαν), i. e. its participation is more active, but still less than the role of fire and water, which affect most actively and directly (διὰ πυρὸς καὶ ὕδατος), cf. τῶν τοῦ παντὸς δραστικωτάτων στοιχείων in the *Moses*.

The closest parallel to our passage, as well as that of the *Moses*, is a passage from Proclus' *Commentary on Plato's Timaeus* [Diehl 1903–1906 (1): 106–107],[4] where the ideas expressed by Philo are explained in great detail. Proclus comments the same place in Plato's *Timaeus* (22b8–c3), to which Philo refers, about catastrophes occurring from time to time, which take away a large part of humanity, and explains why they are caused by fire and water (διὰ τί δ' αἱ μέγισται τῶν φθορῶν πυρὸς πλεονεξίαν καὶ ὕδατος, ἀλλ' οὐ τῶν ἄλλων στοιχείων, I.106.31–32). According to him, these two elements are the most active of the four. The most active is fire (τὸ μὲν δὴ πῦρ δραστήριον ἔχει καὶ ποιητικὴν ἐν τοῖς στοιχείοις τάξιν), capable of passing through all others and destroying them (here Proclus is referring to the Stoic idea of the turning of everything into fire at the moment of the world-conflagration). Fire is followed by water (I.107.1–5): it is quicker than the earth to come into motion (εὐκινητότερον μέν ἐστι γῆς) and less than air to be influenced from outside (δυσπαθέστερον δὲ ἀέρος); the first feature endows it with activity (τῷ μὲν εὐκινήτῳ δύναται δρᾶν), and the second protects it from loss of power (τῷ δὲ δυσπαθεῖ βιαζόμενον μὴ πάσχειν μηδὲ δισκορπιζόμενον ἀσθενεῖν).

The characterization of fire and water as δραστικώτατα στοιχεῖα by Philo coincides with Proclus' δραστήριον ἔχει τάξιν about fire and δύναται δρᾶν about water. This *topos* combined the Platonic notion of catastrophes caused by these two elements and the Stoic contraposition, going back to Chrysippus, between the active (fire and air) and passive (earth and water) elements; it obviously arose from interpreting the *Timaeus* through the prism of Stoic ideas.

[3] Trans. in [Colson 1935].
[4] See also the English translation in [Tarrant 2006].

As for earth and air, Proclus presents their role in the same way as Philo does. Philo gives the collective designation of the living creatures as τὰ ἐπὶ γῆς and explains their well-being by the state of the air, κατὰ τὴν ἀέρος καὶ τῶν ἐτησίων ὡρῶν εὐκρασίαν. Proclus writes in more detail (I.107.7–14), and from his words the double meaning of these elements becomes evident: not only are they less "active" but they are also "closer" (οἰκειότερα) to man, being his place and environment:

> φαίης δ' ἂν καὶ ὅτι τὰ λοιπὰ δύο στοιχεῖα μᾶλλόν ἐστιν ἡμῖν οἰκειότερα· καὶ γὰρ τὸ πεζοὺς ἡμᾶς εἶναι πρὸς τὴν γῆν οἰκειοῖ, καὶ τὸ πανταχόθεν ὑπὸ ἀέρος περιέχεσθαι καὶ ἐν ἀέρι ζῆν καὶ ἀναπνεῖν ἡμᾶς τὸν ἀέρα τὴν πρὸς αὐτὸν συγγένειαν τῶν ἡμετέρων ἐπιδείκνυσι ἀέρα τὴν πρὸς αὐτὸν συγγένειαν τῶν ἡμετέρων ἐπιδείκνυσι σωμάτων.
>
> You could also claim that the remaining two elements belong more naturally to ourselves. It may also be said that the other two elements are closer to us. We walk, and this brings us closer to the earth. We are surrounded on all sides by air, in it we live and breathe it, and this points to its kinship with our bodies.[5]

Because these elements are "closer" to us, they are less destructive. On the contrary, our well-being is based on these two elements. The *topos* of the beneficial role of earth and air is found in a philosophical discourse from the *Olympic Oration* by Dio of Prusa, which is devoted to explaining the origin of the common notion of a good and caring god: "When the fetus falls from the womb, still sluggish and inactive, it is received by the earth, truly its mother, and air, blowing and breathing, immediately awakens it with nutrition more moist than milk, and allows it to make a cry. It would be right to call this the first nipple that nature gives to the newborn. And having experienced it, and realizing it, men could not help but admire and love the deity" (12.31–32). Immediately following this, Dio also speaks of the life-giving role of the harmonious arrangement of the seasons, not allowing one of them to dominate excessively ("and moreover they understand of the seasons that they come with perfect precision and do not allow extremes in any direction for our preservation", 12.32), i. e., he mentions in this context the same fact to which Philo refers (τῶν ἐτησίων ὡρῶν εὐκρασίαν).

This *topos* is of Stoic origin: the Stoics referred to this first natural notion of a caring god as one of the proofs of the existence of divine Providence. The closest parallel is found in Cicero's dialogue *On the Nature of the Gods* (II.13–14), where the author of this argument is named Cleanthes: "Our Cleanthes says that notions of gods arise in men's minds from four reasons ‹...› One of these notions, he thinks, we get from the many conveniences brought about by good tempering of the air (cf. τὴν ἀέρος εὐκρασίαν by Philo), fertile soil, and many other conveniences".

We find the same *topos* in Philo in *De spec. leg.* I.34, where he also explains the appearance of our first natural idea of a creator-God, again mentioning the

[5] Trans. by H. Tarrant [2006: 202].

same good tempering of air and seasons: "When one comes to this truly great city, to this world, and sees ‹...› both the good tempering of the air and the turns of the seasons (εὐκρασίας ἀέρος καὶ τῶν ἐτησίων ὡρῶν τροπάς) ‹...›, is it not natural, and even more so, is it not necessary that he should receive the concept of a creator, and a father, and also a leader?"

All of the parallels cited suggest that the idea of the benefit that air brings has been linked to an affirmation of the role of divine providence. In the passage from *On Abraham*, the involvement of divine providence is described in images not only positive but also negative. Fire and water are given a negative meaning, but they are no less necessary because in their activity justice is expressed, punishing sins.

If we look at the other pairs of opposites in the same series, we also find them in Stoic texts that tell how intelligently God has arranged our world. Such a series of opposites, good and evil, is reminiscent, for example, of the Stoic theodicy of Epictetus, according to which God creates good and evil equally for the sake of the good harmony of the whole: Epictetus I.12.16 διέταξε δὲ θέρος εἶναι καὶ χειμῶνα καὶ φορὰν καὶ ἀφορίαν ἀρετὴν καὶ κακίαν καὶ πάσας τὰς τοιαύτας ἐναντιότητητας ὑπὲρ συμφωνίας τῶν ὅλων "he has arranged that there should be summer and winter, and fruitfulness and barrenness, virtue and vice and all such opposites for the sake of the harmony of the whole".

Thus, the whole strange phrase of Philo is in one way or another related to the topics, primarily Stoic, which described the good role of God and divine providence in the arrangement of the world, a world in which there is not only good but also evil. It remains for us to understand why this *topos* is so important to Philo, why our author resorts to it to present the contents of the Book of Genesis, even though its content does not quite correspond to it.

Several similar passages in Philo, where he also explains the structure and the intent of the Pentateuch, help us to answer this question. At the beginning of his treatise *On the Creation of the World*, dealing with the first chapters of the Book of Genesis, Philo explains that the Pentateuch as a whole is concerned with legislation, but that Moses precedes the account of the creation of the world for the following reason (*Op.* 3):

> ἡ δ' ἀρχή, καθάπερ ἔφην, ἐστὶ θαυμασιωτάτη κοσμοποιίαν περιέχουσα, ὡς καὶ τοῦ κόσμου τῷ νόμῳ καὶ τοῦ νόμου τῷ κόσμῳ συνᾴδοντος καὶ τοῦ νομίμου ἀνδρὸς εὐθὺς ὄντος κοσμοπολίτου πρὸς τὸ βούλημα τῆς φύσεως τὰς πράξεις ἀπευθύνοντος, καθ' ἣν καὶ ὁ σύμπας κόσμος διοικεῖται.
>
> His exordium, as I have said, is one that excites our admiration in the highest degree. It consists of an account of the creation of the world, implying that the world is in harmony with the Law, and the Law with the world, and that the man who observes the law is constituted thereby a loyal citizen of the world, regulating his doings by the purpose and will of Nature, in accordance with which the entire world itself also is administered.[6]

[6] Trans. by G. H. Whitaker [Colson, Whitaker 1929: 7].

The idea of correspondence between natural law and human law was implicit in Greek thought since antiquity, but this correspondence was most clearly expressed in the philosophy of the Stoics.[7] According to the Stoics, there is one universal law in the world (ὁ κοινὸς νόμος) that determines both the structure of the world and the rules of human life, and the essence of this law is in correct rational principles (ὁ ὀρθὸς λόγος). To live according to such a law, observable in nature itself, is for the Stoics the primary goal (Diogenes Laertius 7.88). In the law by which the world is ordered, divine justice, humanity, and in general all possible virtues are manifested (cf., e. g., SVF 2.528, which describes the world as a community of men and gods governed by reason, that is, by natural law: "there is a community among them because of their communion with reason, which is law by nature", and the world order as based on the care for humans, justice and other virtues: "it must be assumed that God, who arranges everything, cares for men accordingly, being virtuous, gracious and humanistic as well as just, and having all other virtues as well").

Thus, it is the virtues that connect the world law and human law: we see in the world divine providence in which the divine virtues are manifested, and we must follow the same virtues in our own lives as well. This juxtaposition of the two laws, the cosmic law and the human law, explains the significance of the account of the Book of Genesis in the first paragraph of *On Abraham*. Philo retells the first book of the Pentateuch using the topics of divine providence and thus linking this text to further laws. Nature, by promoting human flourishing and, on the other hand, by punishing humans for their sins, sets forth that principle of humanity and justice which underlies the laws of Moses. We have already said how justice is expressed in the flood and the fire. The goodness of other negative phenomena sent by God, famine and crop failure, Philo discusses in his treatise *On the Creation of the World*: God sends us bad weather and crop failure, forcing us to work, as punishment for our tendency to idleness and pleasure, keeping us from indulging in them; Philo calls these phenomena "an appropriate justice, punishing for wicked manners" (δίκη προσήκουσα τιμωρὸς ἀσεβῶν ἐπιτηδευμάτων). The idea of two sides of divine providence leads Philo in the preface to *On the Life of Abraham* to supplement the series with other opposites included in the Stoic theodicy, but traditionally explained differently, rather in a Heraclitean way, by the necessity of the existence of opposites for the good of the whole.

Philo relates his main idea, the idea of the conformity of human law to natural law, to the plan of the Book of Genesis. He wants to present it as an account first of the cosmic law of the world, then of human law. The law of nature is to be presented in the account of the creation of the world. But the actual content of the beginning of the Book of Genesis is different from what Philo expects it to be; the reasoning he needs for divine humanity and justice is not present in the creation account. In his interpretation of the account of creation, in a special treatise devoted to it, Philo, following the Platonists rather than the Stoics, following the *Timaeus* and the tradition of its interpretation, speaks much about

[7] On the philosophical origins of this idea in Philo see [Runia 2001: 106–107], see also [Nikiprowetzky 1977: 117–155].

order and harmony; but his general conception, borrowed from the Stoics,[8] demands that moral laws be found in the world. Philo finds them not in the creation of the world, but in its existence, not in the opening chapters, but in the continuation of the Book of Genesis. But here, in this part of the book, the natural world has no independent significance, this part is already devoted to human life. Thus, it turns out that subjects that play only an indirect role in the Book of Genesis itself, hunger and plenty, fruitfulness and harvest failure, and even the good tempering of air and seasons, suddenly become, for Philo, independent important themes of the Pentateuch. The same sudden shift of interest from the act of creation to the natural phenomena mentioned in the main part of Genesis is found in the second book of *On the Life of Moses*, and it is for the same reason. Philo first says here that Moses prefaced his laws with an account of the creation of the great city, the world, the arrangement of which is reproduced by human laws: τῆς μεγαλοπόλεως τὴν γένεσιν εἰσηγήσατο, τοὺς νόμους ἐμφερεστάτην τῆς τοῦ κόσμου πολιτείας ἡγησάμενος εἶναι (II.51). In order to reveal the peculiarities of this arrangement, however, Philo at once turns to particular phenomena, which "aim at universal harmony and agree with the sensible principle of eternal nature" (τῶν γοῦν ἐν μέρει διατεταγμένων τὰς δυνάμεις εἴ τις ἀκριβῶς ἐξετάζειν ἐθελήσειν, εὑρήσει τῆς τοῦ παντὸς ἁρμονίας ἐφιεμένας καὶ τῷ λόγῳ τῆς ἀιδίου φύσεως συνᾳδούσας, II.52), and gives examples of these particular manifestations of cosmic law: these are, on the one hand, the many bodily and outward blessings given by God and, on the other hand, the natural disasters sent as punishment to sinners — the flood and fire (II.53–56).

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[8] Speaking of Philo's borrowing of Stoic ideas, we assume that the appeal to them by the philosophers of the Platonic school and their combination with Platonic ideas must have taken place before Philo: Philo used a ready-made philosophical language that included the terminology and ideas of different schools. This philosophical koine was taking shape in the Platonic school during the Hellenistic era.

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