

To On

The First Century Jewish writer Philo also wrote of this distinction. On the one hand, he saw Elohim as beyond man and far removed from the finiteness of this universe. He refers to this concept in Greek as TO ON (that which exists) and TO ONTOS ON “that which alone truly exists”. This concept of Elohim is conceived as virtually outside this universe with no real contact with it. This unknowable Elohim appeared from Ex. 20:21.

(7) Do not, however, think that the living God, he who is truly living, is ever seen so as to be comprehended by any human being; for we have no power in ourselves to see any thing, by which we may be able to conceive any adequate notion of him; we have no external sense suited to that purpose (for he is not an object which can be discerned by the outward sense), nor any strength adequate to it: therefore, Moses, the spectator of the invisible nature, the man who really saw God (for the sacred scriptures say that he entered "into the Darkness," (Ex. 20:21.) by which expression they mean figuratively to intimate the invisible essence), having investigated every part of every thing, sought to see clearly the much-desired and only God; (8) but when he found nothing, not even any appearance at all resembling what he had hoped to behold; he, then, giving up all idea of receiving instruction on that point from any other source, flies to the very being himself whom he was seeking, and entreats him, saying, "Show my thyself that I may see thee so as to know Thee."(Ex. 33:13.) But, nevertheless, he fails to obtain the end which he had proposed to himself, and which he had accounted the most all-sufficient gift for the most excellent race of creation, mankind, namely a knowledge of those bodies and things which are below the living God. (9) For it is said unto him, "Thou shalt see my back parts, but my face shall not be beheld by Thee."(Ex 33:23.) As if it were meant to answer him: Those bodies and things which are beneath the living God may come within thy comprehension, even though every thing would not be at once comprehended by thee, since that one being is not by his nature capable of being beheld by man. (10) And what wonder is there if the living God is beyond the reach of the comprehension of man, when even the mind that is in each of us is unintelligible and unknown to us? Who has ever beheld the essence of the soul? the obscure nature of which has given rise to an infinite number of contests among the sophists who have brought forward opposite opinions, some of which are inconsistent with any kind of nature.

(On the Change of Names 7-10)

...they never attribute any of the properties of created beings to him [the Living God]. (62) Now to these disciples, that principal assertion in the sacred oracles is especially well adapted, that "God is not as man," but neither is he as heaven, nor as the world; for these species are endued with distinctive qualities, and they come under the perception of the outward senses. But he is not even comprehensible by the intellect, except merely as to his essence; for his existence, indeed, is a fact which we do comprehend concerning him, but beyond the fact of his existence, we can understand nothing.

(On the Unchangableness of God 61-62)

Emanations

"The primal existence is God, and second the God-Word"
(Allegorical Interpretation II, 86)

"The Creator of the world sends out His powers
from an eternal and invisible place"
(Q&A on Genesis, II, 48)

The Triad

Philo raises the question

"...regarding its Creator, asking of what sort this Being is so difficult to see, so difficult to conjecture. Is He a body or incorporeal or something exalted above these? Is He a single nature... Or a composite Being?...and seeing that this is a problem hard to pursue, hard to take in by thought, he prays that he may learn from God Himself what God is."
(Flight and Finding, 164)

Philo doesn't answer this question here, but he does answer these questions elsewhere. In *On the Confusion of Tongues*, 62, He calls God "incorporeal" and in a later section, he describes God as a "Triad" (Trinity). He refers to God as "...the Lord God of three natures..."(Philo; *On the Change of Names II*, 11).

(12) but in order that the human race may not be wholly destitute of any appellation which they may give to the most excellent of beings, I allow you to use the word Lord as a name; the Lord God of three natures--of instruction, and of holiness, and of the practice of virtue; of which Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob are recorded as the symbols*.
(*On the Change of Names 12*)

He also says:

...it is reasonable for one to be three and for three to be one, for they were one by a higher principle... ...in the place of one, He makes the appearance of a *triad* [trinity]... He cannot be seen in his oneness without something [else], the chief Powers that that exist immediately with him... the Creative, which is called "Elohim" and the Kingly, which is called "Lord"... he begins to see the sovereign, holy, and divine vision in such a way that a single appearance appears as a triad [trinity], and the triad [trinity] as a unity.
(Philo; *Questions on Genesis, IV, 2*)

According to Philo God appears as a Triad -- himself and his two Powers: Creative and Ruling. To the "purified soul," however, God appears as One.

... the Father of the universe, who in the sacred scripture is called by his proper name,

‘I am that I am’; and the beings on each side are those most ancient powers which are always close to the living God, one of which is called his Creative Power, and the other his Royal Power. And the Creative Power is God, for it is by this that he made and arranged the universe; and the Royal Power is the Lord, for it is fitting that the Creator should lord it over and govern the creature. Therefore, the middle person of the three, being attended by each of his powers as

by body-guard, presents to the mind, which is endowed with the faculty of sight, a vision at one time of one being, and at another time of three; ...
(Abr. 119-123).

Abraham, Isaac and Jacob as Symbols and Gen. 18

(12) but in order that the human race may not be wholly destitute of any appellation which they may give to the most excellent of beings, I allow you to use the word Lord as a name; the Lord God of three natures--of instruction, and of holiness, and of the practice of virtue; of which Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob are recorded as the symbols.

(On the Change of Names 12)

Who were the “three men”? They are Abraham, Isaac and Jacob...”
(Zohar 1:98b)

This does not mean that Abraham Isaac and Jacob appeared before Abraham. In the Kabbalah Abraham, Isaac and Jacob represent the Three Pillars of the Godhead, as we read in the Bahir:

Through the merit of Abraham who was worthy of the attribute of Kindness (CHESED), Isaac was worthy of the attribute of Terror (PACHAD), Jacob was worthy of the attribute of Truth, which is the attribute of Peace.

(Bahir 137)

Abraham... was worthy and took Kindness (CHESED) as his attribute, as it is written “Kindness to Abraham” (Mic. 7:20). Isaac... was worthy and took the attribute of Strength (GEVURAH), which is called Terror (PACHAD). It is thus written “And Jacob swore by the terror of Isaac his father.” (Gen. 31:53)... Abraham is above and Isaac is below him, you will be in the center and take all three. What is the center? It is peace, as it is written “You give truth to Jacob” (Mic. 7:20). Truth is identical with peace, as it is written “Words of peace and truth” (Est. 9:30) It is also written “For peace and truth will be in my days” (2Kn. 20:19)

(Bahir 190)

(Kindness, Truth/Peace and Strength/Terror are terms commonly used to refer to the Three Pillars.)

Throughout this chapter the scribes altered several occurrences of YHWH to “Adonai” (verses 3, 22, 27, 30, 31 and 32). These are six of the 134 places where the scribes altered Adonai to YHWH, all in this one chapter.

Philo says of these “three men”:

...the one in the middle is the Father of the universe, who in the sacred scriptures is called by his proper name, I am that I am; and the beings on each side are those most ancient powers which are always close to the living God, one of which is called his creative power, and the other his royal power. And the creative power is God, for it is by this that he made and arranged the universe; and the royal power is the Lord, for it is fitting that the Creator should lord it over and govern the creature. (122) Therefore, the middle person of the three, being attended by each of his powers as by body-guards, presents to the mind, which is endowed with the faculty of sight, a vision at one time of one being, and at another time of three;

(On Abraham XXIV 121b-122a)

After some bit more he writes that one of these three was the “Word”

For this reason, it seems to me to have been, that Sarah, (Genesis 18:15.) the namesake of virtue, who had previously laughed, denied her laughter to the person who questioned her as to the cause of it, fearing lest she might be deprived of her rejoicing, as belonging to no created being, but to God alone; on which account the holy Word (Logos) encouraged her, and said, “Be not afraid,” thou hast laughed a genuine laugh, and thou hast a share in real joy...
(On Abraham XXXVI 206)

Two Sides of the Triad and the Middle

The First Century Jewish Writer Philo says that the Word reconciles the two sides:

...the Divine Word (Logos)...fills all things and becomes a mediator and arbitrator for the two sides....from the Divine Word (Logos), as from a spring, there divide and break forth two powers. One is the creative through which the Artificer placed and ordered all things. This is named "God". And the royal, since through it the Creator rules over created things. This is called "Lord" And from these two powers have grown the others. **For by the side of the creative power there grows the propitious of which is named "beneficial" while (besides) the royal the legislative, of which is aptly named "punitive".** And below these and beside them is the ark."

(Philo on Q&A on Exodus, II.68)

The Logos

Philo gave a very detailed description to the Word (Logos). To Philo the Word was the creator:

As therefore the city, when previously shadowed out in the mind of architectural skill had no external place, but was stamped solely in the mind of the workman, so in the same manner neither can the world which existed in ideas have had any other local position except the Logos (Word) which made them...
(Philo; On Creation V (20))

Philo taught that the Word (Logos) was the shadow of Elohim and was the instrument of creation.

...But the shadow of God is his Logos (Word), which he used like an instrument when he was making the world.
(Philo; Allegorical Interpretation III XXXI (96))

Philo's concept of the "Word" (Logos) is the "image of Elohim" which served as the pattern for the creation of man in Gen. 1:26-27. Philo writes:

...For God does not seem to have availed himself of any other animal existing in creation as his model in the formation of man; but to have been guided, as I have said before, by his own Word (Logos) alone...
(Philo; On Creation XLVIII (139))

But the divine Word (Logos) which is above these does not come into any visible appearance, inasmuch as it is not like to any of the things that come under the external senses, but is itself an image of God, the most ancient of all the objects of intellect in the whole world, and that which is placed in the closest proximity to the only truly existing God, without any partition or distance being interposed between them:
(On Flight and Finding XVIII (101))

Now, Bezaleel, being interpreted, means God in his shadow. But the shadow of God is his Word (Logos), which he used like an instrument when he was making the world. And this shadow, and, as it were, model, is the archetype of other things. For, as God is himself the model of that image which he has now called

a shadow, so also that image is the model of other things,
as he showed when he commenced giving the law to the Israelites,
and said, "And God made man according to the image of God." [Gen. 1:26]
as the image was modeled according to God, and as man was modeled
according to the image, which thus received the power and character
of the model.

(Allegorical Interpretations III 96)

For if it was necessary to examine the mortal body
of the priest that it ought not be imperfect through
any misfortune, much more was it necessary to look
into his immortal soul, which they say is fashioned
in the form of the living God. Now the image of God
is the Word (Logos), by which all the world was made.
(The Special Laws I, 81)

What is the man who was created? And how is that man
distinguished who was made after the image of God? (Gen. 2:7).
This man was created as perceptible to the senses,
and in the similitude of a Being appreciable only by the intellect;
but he who in respect of his form is intellectual and incorporeal,
is the similitude of the archetypal model as to appearance,
and he is the form of the principal character;
but this is the Word (Logos) of God, the first beginning of all things,
the original species or the archetypal idea,
the first measure of the universe.
(Q & A on Gen. I, 4)

Why is it that he speaks as if of some other god,
saying that he made man after the image of God,
and not that he made him after his own image? (Gen. 9:6).
Very appropriately and without any falsehood
was this oracular sentence uttered by God,
for no mortal thing could have been formed
on the similitude of the supreme Father of the universe,
but only after the pattern of the second deity,
who is the Word (Logos) of the supreme Being;
since it is fitting that the rational soul of man should bear it
the type of the divine Word (Logos); since in his first Word (Logos)
God is superior to the most rational possible nature.
But he who is superior to the Word (Logos) holds his rank
in a better and most singular pre-eminence, and how could
the creature possibly exhibit a likeness of him in himself?
Nevertheless he also wished to intimate this fact,
that God does rightly and correctly require vengeance,
in order to the defense of virtuous and consistent men,

because such bear in themselves a familiar acquaintance with his Word (Logos), of which the human mind is the similitude and form.

(Q & A on Gen. II 62)

To Philo, it was the Word to whom the ancients petitioned and payed, for example Philo writes:

But Hagar flees out of shame. And a proof of this is, that the angel, that is the WORD of God, met her, with the intent to recommend her what she ought to do, and to guide her in her return to her mistress's house. For he encouraged her, and said unto her: "The Lord has heard the cry of thy humiliation," which you uttered, not out of fear, nor yet out of hatred. For the one is the feeling of an ignoble soul, and the other of one which loves contention, but under the influence of that copy of temperance and modesty, shame.

(On Flight and Finding (5))

The Logos is the Son of God

Philo Writes of the Word (Logos):

For there are, as it seems, two temples belonging to God; one being this world, in which the high priest is the divine Word, **his own firstborn son**. The other is the rational soul, the priest of which is the real true man,
(On Dreams 215)

And if there be not as yet any one who is worthy to be called a son of God, nevertheless let him labour earnestly to be adorned according to **his Firstborn Word**, the eldest of his angels, as the great archangel of many names; for He is called, "the Authority", and "the Name of God", and "the Word", and "man according to God's image", and "He who sees Israel". . . For even if we are not yet suitable to be called the sons of God, still we may deserve to be called the children of his eternal image, of his most sacred Word; for the image of God is his most ancient word.
(On the Confusion of Tongues XXVIII:146-147)

Thus, indeed, being a shepherd is a good thing, so that it is justly attributed, not only to kings, and to wise men, and to souls who are perfectly purified, but also to God, the ruler of all things; and he who confirms this is not any ordinary person, but a prophet, whom it is good to believe, he namely who wrote the psalms; for he speaks thus, "The Lord is my shepherd, and he shall cause me to lack Nothing;" (Ps. 23:1.) and let every one in his turn say the same thing, for it is very becoming to every man who loves God to study such a song as this, but above all this world should sing it. For God, like a shepherd and a king, governs (as if they were a flock of sheep) the earth, and the water, and the air, and the fire, and all the plants, and living creatures that are in them, whether mortal or divine; and he regulates the nature of the heaven, and the periodical revolutions of the sun and moon, and the variations and harmonious movements of the other stars, ruling them according to law and justice; appointing, as their immediate superintendent, his own right reason (Logos), **his first-born son**, who is to receive the charge of this sacred company, as the lieutenant of the great king; for it is said somewhere, "Behold, I am he! I will send my messenger before thy face, who shall keep thee in the Road."(Ex. 23:20.)
(On Husbandry 50-51)

The Logos as Heavenly High Priest

Moreover Philo's Word was a "priest" whom he compares to Melkizadek:

XXVI. (82) But Melchisedek shall bring forward wine instead of water, and shall give your souls to drink, and shall cheer them with unmixed wine, in order that they may be wholly occupied with a divine intoxication, more sober than sobriety itself. For the Word is a priest, having, as its inheritance the true God, and entertaining lofty and sublime and magnificent ideas about him, "for he is the priest of the most high God." {38} {Genesis 14:18.} Not that there is any other God who is not the most high; for God being one, is in the heaven above, and in the earth beneath, and there is no other besides Him." {39} {Deuteronomy 4:39.} But he sets in motion the notion of the Most High, from his conceiving of God not in a low and grovelling spirit, but in one of exceeding greatness, and exceeding sublimity, apart from any conceptions of matter. ("De Allegoriis Legum," iii. 26).

The fourth and last of the points which we proposed to discuss, is the appointing as a period for the return of the fugitives the death of the high priest, which, if taken in the literal sense, causes me great perplexity; for a very unequal punishment is imposed by this enactment on those who have done the very same things, since some will be in banishment for a longer time, and others for a shorter time; for some of the high priests live to a very old age, and others die very early, and some are appointed while young men, and others not until they are old. And again of those who are convicted of unintentional homicide, some have been banished at the beginning of the high priest's entrance into office, and some when the high priest has been at the very point of death. So that some are deprived of their country for a very long time, and others suffer the same infliction only for a day, if it chance to be so; after which they lift up their heads, and exult, and so return among those whose nearest relations have been slain by them. This difficult and scarcely explicable perplexity we may escape if we adopt the inner and allegorical explanation in accordance with natural philosophy. For we say that the high priest is not a man, but is the Word (Logos) of God, who has not only no participation in intentional errors, but none even in those which are involuntary. (On Flight 106-108)

The Logos as a Paraclete

Philo also describes the Word (Logos) not only as the “Son” of the “Father” but as a PARACLETE who is “perfect in all virtue” and procures “forgiveness of sins” as well as a “supply of unlimited blessings”:

...the twelve stones arranged on the breast in four rows of three stones each, namely the logeum, being also an emblem of that reason (Logos, Word) which holds together and regulates the universe. For it was indispensable that the man who was consecrated to the Father of the world, should have as a paraclete, his son, the being most perfect in all virtue, to procure forgiveness of sins, and a supply of unlimited blessings;
(Life of Moses II, 133-134)

The Logos is the Messiah

Now here is perhaps the most amazing thing, Philo believed this “Word” (Logos) and the Messiah to be one and the same:

"The head of all things is the eternal Word (Logos) of the eternal God, under which, as if it were his feet or other limbs, is placed the whole world, over which He passes and firmly stands. Now it is not because Messiah is Lord that He passes and sits over the whole world, for His seat with His Father and God but because for its perfect fullness the world is in need of the care and superintendence of the best ordered dispensation, and for its own complete piety, of the Divine Word (Logos), just as living creatures (need) a head, without which it is impossible to live."
(Q&A on Exodus, II, 117)