

PATRIARCHS – A TYPE OF MAN OPEN TO THE SEEING OF GOD

Philo of Alexandria presents the lives of the biblical patriarchs as paradigms of human behaviour, whose stories exemplify upward movement and the conformity of the personal will with the divine will. This process of spiritual ascension is illustrated by the multitude of lessons drawn from the lives of these biblical figures, exemplifying man's constant effort to achieve spiritual harmony and communion with the divine. A central aspect of Philo's philosophy is anticipated in the title "the wise soul (the wise soul!) desires only the true good". This motto essentializes the spiritual ideal proposed by Philo, suggesting a synthesis between human desire and the ideal binomial of truth and good, an objective that transcends the material dimension and guides the wise soul towards a deeper understanding of the world and the divine. In this sense, Abraham becomes a paradigmatic example: in the face of conflict and injustice, he fights not only to save his relative, Lot, but also to protect the divine translated into just action, being supported and protected by God.

Through the concept of "nephesh haya", Philo of Alexandria explores the spiritual and moral dimension of the soul, proposing that the true essence of humanity is fulfilled through the Law, perceived as a manifestation of the Logos and divine order. This philosophical framework conveys a biblical anthropology that suggests that man can find his place and balance in the universe only through an authentic and continuous commitment to divine values and eternal morality. The result is a rich discourse that explores the complexity of the relationship between the human and the divine, with faith as the main instrument of knowledge and spiritual integration. The language and expressions used by Philo seem to be rooted in a tradition close to Saint Irenaeus of Lyons, with ascetic and patristic accents that explore the doctrine of uncreated energies. These energies are conceived as the means through which God interacts with His



REV. IOAN CHIRILĂ

Faculty of Orthodox Theology
"Babeş-Bolyai" University in Cluj-Napoca
ioan.chirila@ubbcluj.ro

creation without confusing Himself with it in a pantheistic way. The parallels we can draw between Philo's thinking and later ideas in Christian theology are fascinating, reflecting a common quest to understand the divine and its manifestations in the world. However, Philo, a contemporary of Jesus Christ, did not interact directly with Him because of the distance separating him from Palestine, where Jesus lived, having settled in Alexandria.

Philo discusses the concept of "seeing God" through the "eyes of the soul," a vision that transcends sensory perception and emphasizes the soul's capacity to access higher spiritual dimensions. He exemplifies this idea through the story of Abraham, whose ability to "see" the divine is a catalyst for authentic happiness and deep fulfilment. Divine vision is not just a passive experience, but has concrete and transformative consequences: Abraham, through this spiritual vision, restructures his will, aligning himself with the divine will. This alignment leads Abraham to exercise his role as leader with a responsibility that transcends ordinary worldly authority. Instead of tyranny, his rule becomes one of guidance and protection, guided by the divine principles he internalized through this vision of God, which sets a model for those who wish to readjust their lives in accordance with the divine will. Thus, Philo provides a link between his philosophical and theological perspective on the role of man in relation to the divine, attempting to describe a synthesis between rational thought and lived spiritual experience. In his analysis, Philo identifies Abraham as an example of authentic submission to God, in which the patriarch's personal will becomes a model of alignment with divine desires. Abraham, far from being confused with any absolute dimension of divinity, nevertheless remains a symbol of human wisdom seeking to integrate itself into the cosmic order orchestrated by God.

Philo emphasizes that humanity is engaged in a perpetual lesson of approaching God, a spiritual journey aimed at approaching our vision of the divine. In this regard, Philo begins with Adam and follows a narrative thread that includes biblical figures such as Enos—the first to call on the name of YHWH—Enoch, and Noah, culminating in Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Enos, whose name means "man," represents a central symbol of humanity and is described as embodying constant hope in God. From Abraham and his descendants, Philo arrives at the concept of "Law," which represents not just a simple collection of divine rules, but a guide to the divine incarnation in the lives of people. By actively seeking God's vision, humanity can reach a perfect incarnation, a goal fulfilled in the one for whom the Law becomes an integral part of his existence.

This search for spiritual vision is presented by Philo not as an end but as a process of transformation, in which the law manifests itself to achieve a deeper communion with the divine, ultimately leading to a model of a complete and balanced spiritual life in harmony with the divine will.

In Philo's thought, the divine illumination of the soul opens the way to a profound meditation on the fundamental essences represented by a trinomial: God, Being, and Lord. This symbolic structure invites broad reflection on divine concepts, emphasizing their interconnection and relevance to the human soul. The study of these relationships allows for a deeper understanding of the promise made to Abraham, through which he becomes a source of blessing for people. This motive transcends national and cultural boundaries. Philo emphasizes the universal dimension of salvation, presenting a messianic vision that gives this trinomial an exceptional spiritual depth. The term "Lord" is evocative, being perceived not only as evidence of Jewish humility in avoiding the pronouncement of the tetragrammaton, but also as a reflection of the soul's desire to detach itself from material values, from "false wealth" and from "external things". This detachment suggests a search for spiritual authenticity, in which the individual aspires to focus on the divine will and its manifestation in his life. The threefold vision thus becomes a frame of reference for meditation, an invitation to better understand the connection between divinity and humanity, as part of a larger whole in the search for salvation. In this way, Philo's discourse outlines a complex relationship between the soul and the divine, highlighting the transcendent purpose of human existence.

From Philo's perspective, it is evident that, despite Platonic influences and Jewish customary traditions, his message is firmly anchored in the idea of universal salvation. This vision emphasizes that God's salvation is not reserved exclusively for a small group but extends to all humanity. Philo portrays the patriarchs as exceptional representatives, precursors of grace, who experienced divine intervention and God's revelation in creation, emphasizing the divine perfection that guides them. In this context, the patriarchs become examples to follow, typologies of the man capable of contemplating God. They illustrate humanity's spiritual quest, demonstrating that it is possible to reach a state of superior happiness. This happiness is considered higher than that experienced by Abraham or Moses, suggesting a broader vision of the Law and divine revelation. Philo thus emphasizes that the supreme ideal is the vision of the incarnate law, of Christ, who becomes the culmination of the human desire for communion with the divine. This vision opens the way not only to a deeper understanding of the relationship between

man and God but also to the possibility that every individual can aspire to a fulfilled and meaningful existence based on divine revelation. In this way, his discourse becomes a profound meditation on the nature of salvation as a universal experience.

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