**Reciting History at Sinai: A Study of**

***Jewish Antiquities* 3.83–88 from a Comparative Perspective**

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**I** *Outline:*

Introduction:

* Retelling Exod 19-20 in light of Deuteronomy
* Greek covenantal terminology
* Lists of examples

*J.A.* 3.86 – Events from Moses' days

* The plagues
* Crossing of the Reed Sea
* Manna falling from heaven
* Water gushing from a rock

*J.A.* 3.87 – Events from the far past

* Adam
* Noah
* Abraham
* Isaac
* Jacob
* Joseph

Conclusion

**II***Jewish Antiquities* 3.83–88[[1]](#footnote-1)

**Antiq. 3:83** Οὕτως δ᾿ αὐτῶν διακειμένων ἐπιφαίνεται Μωυσῆς γαῦρός τε καὶ μέγα φρονῶν, ὀφθείς τε οὖν αὐτὸς ἀπαλλάσσει τοῦ δέους αὐτοὺς καὶ περὶ τῶν μελλόντων κρείττονας ὑπετίθετο τὰς ἐλπίδας, αἴθριός τε καὶ καθαρὸς ὁ ἀὴρ τῶν πρὸ ὀλίγου παθῶν ἦν Μωυσέος παραγεγονότος. **84** ἐπὶ τούτοις οὖν συγκαλεῖ τὸ πλῆθος εἰς ἐκκλησίαν ἀκουσόμενον ὧν ὁ θεὸς εἴποι πρὸς αὐτόν, καὶ συναθροισθέντων στὰς ἐπὶ ὑψηλοῦ τινος, ὅθεν ἔμελλον πάντες ἀκούσεσθαι, “ὁ μὲν θεός”, εἶπεν, “ὦ Ἑβραῖοι καθάπερ καὶ πρότερον εὐμενὴς προσεδέξατό με καὶ βίον τε ὑμῖν εὐδαίμονα καὶ πολιτείας κόσμον ὑπαγορεύσας πάρεστι καὶ αὐτὸς εἰς τὸ στρατόπεδον. **85** πρὸς γοῦν αὐτοῦ καὶ τῶν ἔργων, ἃ δι᾿ ἐκεῖνον ἡμῖν ἤδη πέπρακται, μὴ καταφρονήσητε τῶν λεγομένων εἰς ἐμὲ τὸν λέγοντα ἀφορῶντες μηδ᾿ ὅτι γλῶττα ἀνθρωπίνη πρὸς ὑμᾶς λέγει· τὴν δ᾿ ἀρετὴν αὐτῶν κατανοήσαντες ἐπιγνώσεσθε καὶ τὸ μέγεθος τοῦ νενοηκότος καὶ ἐπὶ συμφέροντι τῷ ὑμετέρῳ πρὸς ἐμὲ μὴ φθονήσαντος εἰπεῖν· **86** οὐ γὰρ Μωυσῆς ὁ Ἀμαράμου καὶ Ἰωχαβάδης υἱός, ἀλλ᾿ **ὁ** τὸν Νεῖλον ἀναγκάσας ᾑματωμένον ὑπὲρ ὑμῶν ῥυῆναι καὶ ποικίλοις δαμάσας κακοῖς τὸ τῶν Αἰγυπτίων φρόνημα, **ὁ** διὰ θαλάσσης ὁδὸν ὑμῖν παρασχών, **ὁ** καὶ τροφὴν ἐξ οὐρανοῦ μηχανησάμενος ἐλθεῖν ἀπορουμένοις, **ὁ** ποτὸν ἐκ πέτρας ἀναβλύσας σπανίζουσι, **87** **δι᾿ ὃν** Ἄδαμος τῶν ἀπὸ γῆς τε καρπῶν καὶ θαλάσσης μεταλαμβάνει **δι᾿ ὃν** Νῶχος ἐκ τῆς ἐπομβρίας διέφυγε, **δι᾿ ὃν** Ἅβραμος ὁ ἡμέτερος πρόγονος ἐξ ἀλήτου τὴν Χαναναίαν κατέσχε γῆν, **δι᾿ ὃν** Ἴσακος γηραιοῖς ἐτέχθη γονεῦσι, **δι᾿ ὃν** Ἰάκωβος δώδεκα παίδων ἀρεταῖς ἐκοσμήθη, **δι᾿ ὃν** Ἰώσηπος ἐδεσπότευσε τῆς Αἰγυπτίων δυνάμεως, οὗτος ὑμῖν τούτους χαρίζεται τοὺς λόγους δι᾿ ἑρμηνέως ἐμοῦ. **88** σεβάσμιοι δ᾿ ὑμῖν γενέσθωσαν καὶ παίδων περιμαχητότεροι καὶ γυναικῶν· εὐδαίμονα γὰρ διάξετε βίον τούτοις ἑπόμενοι καὶ γῆς ἀπολαύοντες καρπίμου καὶ θαλάσσης ἀχειμάστου καὶ τέκνων γονῆς κατὰ φύσιν τικτομένων καὶ πολεμίοις ἔσεσθε φοβεροί· τῷ θεῷ γὰρ εἰς ὄψιν ἐλθὼν ἀκροατὴς ἀφθάρτου φωνῆς ἐγενόμην· οὕτως ἐκείνῳ τοῦ γένους ἡμῶν καὶ τῆς τούτου μέλει διαμονῆς.”

**83** While they were disposed thus, Moses appeared, elated and high-spirited. Now when he was seen he rid them of their anxiety and inspired better hopes for the future. With the arrival of Moses the air also became clear and pure of the disturbances that had prevailed a little while before.

**84** Thereupon he summoned the multitude to an assembly to hear what God had said to him; and when they had been gathered together, he, standing upon a certain lofty spot, from which all were about to hear him, said, “God, O Hebrews, just as He also did previously, graciously received me and having prescribed a blessed life for you and a well-ordered constitution, is also coming Himself into the camp.

**85** In His name, therefore, and in the name of the deeds that already have been done for us because of Him, do not despise the words that are said by looking at me, the speaker, or because a human tongue is speaking to you. But recognizing their excellence you will apprehend the greatness of Him who devised them and for your benefit did not begrudge to speak them to me.

**86** For it is not Moses, the son of Amran and Iochabed but

He who forced the Nile for your sake to flow blood-red and overpowered with various plagues the haughtiness of the Egyptians,

He who supplied a path for you through the sea,

and He who devised food to come from heaven for you when you were in need,

He who caused drink to gush forth from a rock when you lacked it,

**87** on account of Whom Adam partook of the fruits from the earth and the sea,

on account of Whom Noah escaped from the Flood,

on account of Whom Abraham, our forefather, from being a nomad obtained possession of the land of Canaan,

on account of Whom Isaac was born to aged parents,

on account of Whom Jacob was adorned with the virtues of twelve sons,

on account of Whom Joseph became master of the power of the Egyptians

—this is the One who graciously bestows these words upon you through me as an interpreter.

**88** Let them be held in reverence by you and let them be more worth fighting for than children and wives. For you will lead a blessed life if you follow them and, enjoying a fruitful earth and a sea that is not stormy and the birth of children begotten in accordance with nature, you will also be terrifying to your enemies. For having come into the sight of God I have become a hearer of an immortal voice. So much of a care does He have for our race and its continuity.”

**III** *Deut 29:2-9* [NRSV]

Moses summoned all Israel and said to them: You have seen all that the Lord did before your eyes in the land of Egypt, to Pharaoh and to all his servants and to all his land, the great trials that your eyes saw, the signs, and those great wonders. But to this day the Lord has not given you a mind to understand, or eyes to see, or ears to hear. I have led you forty years in the wilderness. The clothes on your back have not worn out, and the sandals on your feet have not worn out; you have not eaten bread, and you have not drunk wine or strong drink—so that you may know that I am the Lord your God. When you came to this place, King Sihon of Heshbon and King Og of Bashan came out against us for battle, but we defeated them. We took their land and gave it as an inheritance to the Reubenites, the Gadites, and the half-tribe of Manasseh. Therefore diligently observe the words of this covenant, in order that you may succeed in everything that you do.

**IV** *Lists of Examples*

\* For Jewish/Christian lists of examples, which employ the device of anaphora see e.g.

Jdt 8:26 ("how much…" [ὅσα])

Wis 10 ("She..." [αὕτη])

Sir 16:5 – 10 ("He did not…" [οὐκ + verb 3 sg. aor. ind.])

Heb 11 ("By faith…" [πίστει])

1 Clement 4.1 – 6.4 ("Jealousy…/Because of jealousy…" [ζῆλος /διὰ ζῆλος])

Cf. the recurrence of בו/בה/בם in CD 2:14 – 3:14 (#VI below); Lee 1986; Cosby 1988

\*\* For the employment of a list of examples within a speech in Josephus' works, see e.g.

*B.J.* 5.375-419. For a utilization of anaphora in a further recitation of history put into Moses mouth see *A.J.* 4.43-55, in which the events are introduces via "[You] who" (ὁ).

**V** *4Q422 I, II, III (trans. Elgvin and Tov, DSSR)*

Col. I (Frg. 1)

6. [the heavens and the earth and all] their hosts He made by [His] word.

7. [And He rested on the seventh day from all His work ? whic]h He had been doing. And [His] holy spirit

8. [He gave mankind dominion ? over every ]living [creat]ure and what move[s on the earth.

9. [He set mankind on ? the ear]th, He set him in charge to eat the fru[it of the soil,

10. ]that he shoul[d n]ot eat from the tree that gives know[ledge of good and evil.]

11. ]he rose against Him and they forgot [His laws

12. ]in evil inclination and for deed[s of injustice

13. ]peace[

Col. II (Frgs. 2–7)

1. And God saw that ?] great and [ was the evil of mankind on the earth ?

2. ] the [

2a. righteous in ] his generation o[n the earth ] to the living God [

3. ] they were saved o[n the earth ] on the earth because[

4. to save ]the[ animals, Noah ] and his sons, [his] wi[fe and his sons’ wives from ]the waters of the flood and from [

5. and the [ They entered the ar[k and] God [sh]ut behind them [ ]and on it he will put[

6. whom Go[d] chose[ ]the sluices of heav[en] were op[en]ed [and] they [pou]red out [rain] on the earth

7. under all the heave[ns to] raise water upon the ear[th forty] days and for[ty]

8. nights there was r[ain ]o[n the earth the water]s were mig[hty] on[ the earth ] (?) in order to

9. know the glory of the High[est ]the[ The bow] He set before him

10. And it shone on [the] heave[ns and it became a sign between God and the ea]rth and man[ki]nd [on the earth ]a fut[ure] sign for generation[s]

11. of eternity. Greatly[ and never more] will a flood[ destroy the earth

12. [the s]et times of day and night [ the lights to shine o]n heaven and ear[th

13. [the earth and ]its [fu]ll[ne]ss everythi]ng He gave [to mankind

Col. III (Frg. 10 a–e)

1. ] and not [

2. the [t]wo mid[wives] *vac*? [and they threw ] *vac*

3. their so[ns] to the Nil[e t]hem

4. [and] He sent them Mo[ses and He appeared] in the vision of[ the burning bush ?]

5. with signs and wonders[ ] ? [

6. and He sent them to Pharaoh[ ] plagues [ ] wo[n]ders for the Egyptians[ ]and they reported His word

7. to Pharaoh to let [their people] go. [And] he hardened [his] heart [so that he would] sin in order that the pe[ople of Isra]el would know <it> for eternal gene[rations]. He turned their [water] to blood.

8. The frogs <were> in all [their] land and lice throughout [their] territory, gnats (?) in their [hou]ses and [they afflic]ted all their and He inflicted with pestilen[ce all]

9. their livestock and their animals He delivered to [deat]h. He plac[ed dark]ness in their land and gloom in their [houses] in order that no one would be able to se[e] the other.[ And He struck]

10. their land with hail and [their] land [with] frost to des[troy al]l the fruit which they ea[t]. And He brought locusts to cover the face of the ear[th], heavy locust in all of their territory,

11. to eat every plant in [their] la[nd, ] and God har[dened] the heart of [Pharao]h so as not to let [them] go and in order to multiply wonders.

12. [And He afflicted their firstborn, ]the prime of al[l their strength

**VI** *CD 2:14 – 3:14 (trans. Cook; DSSR)*

CD 2

14.  *vac* So now, my children, listen to me that I may uncover your eyes to see and to

understand the deeds of

15. God, choosing what pleases him and hating what He rejects, living perfectly

16. in all His ways, not turning away through thoughts caused by the sinful urge and

lecherous eyes. For many

17. have gone astray by such thoughts, even strong and doughty men of old faltered

through them, and still do. When they went about in their willful

18. heart, the <Guardian Angels> of Heaven fell and were ensnared by it, for they did not

observe the commandments of God.

19. Their sons, who were as tall as cedars, and whose bodies were as big as mountains

fell by it.

20. Everything mortal on dry land expired and became as if they had never existed,

because they did

21. their own will, and did not keep the commandments of their Maker, until finally His

anger was aroused against them.

CD 3

1. *vac* By it the sons of Noah and their families <went astray>, and by it they were

exterminated.

2. Abraham did not live by it and was considered God’s friend, because he observed the

commandments of God and he did not choose to follow

3. the will of his own spirit; and he passed them on to Isaac and to Jacob and they too

observed them. They too were recorded as friends

4. of God and eternal partners in the covenant. *vac* But the sons of Jacob went astray by

them and were punished for

5. their errors. In Egypt their descendants lived by their willful heart, too obstinate to

consult

6. the commandments of God, each one doing what was right in his own eyes. They

even ate blood; and the men were exterminated

7. in the wilderness. (God commanded) them at Kadesh ‘*Go up and possess* (*the land*’;

but they chose to follow the will of) their spirit; and they did not listen

8. to their Maker’s voice or the commandments of their teacher; instead they grumbled

in their tents. So God became angry

9. with their company. Their sons perished because of it. Their kings were exterminated

because of it. Their heroes

10. perished because of it. Their land was devastated because of it, and because of it the

members of the forefathers’ covenant committed sin, and so were handed over

11. to the sword because they abandoned the covenant of God, and chose their own will,

and followed their own willful

12. heart, each man doing his own will. *vac* But when those of them who were left held

firm to the commandments of God

13. he instituted His covenant with Israel for ever, revealing

14. to them things hidden, in which all Israel had gone wrong: *vac*

1. The Greek text follows Niese 1892 (here drawn from Accordance Bible). Numbering of passages in both text and translation, as well as the English translation follow Feldman 2000. Emphasis is mine. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)