THE JEWISH HELLENIST AND THE MEDIEVAL JEWISH PHILOSOPHER:

A COMPARISON OF PHILO OF ALEXANDRIA AND SAADIA BEN JOSEPH

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ABSTRACT

Two of Judaism's greatest philosophers were Philo of Alexandria (c. 20BCE-50CE) and Saadia ben Joseph (882-942). As the first, who influenced the development of Christian dogma, is the only Jewish Hellenistic philosopher from whom a body of work has survived, and the second can be considered the father of medieval Jewish philosophy, a comparison is of import.

The discussion of philosophic concepts includes those of God, His attributes and the idea of a personal God; the Logos; the creation ex nihilo or ex nihilo nihilfit; the duality of man; modes of knowledge; revelation; prophecy; allegorization and anthropomorphization; free-will; reward and punishment; and immortality.

It is shown that despite certain agreements because of their common Jewish background, the two moved in totally different intellectual spheres. Philo was the first to attempt to unite human knowledge and divine revelation. Saadia was equally important in his being the first medieval Jewish philosopher to endeavour to reconcile the Bible and philosophy, revelation and reason.

1. INTRODUCTION

Two of Judaism's greatest philosophers were Philo of Alexandria, also known as Philo Judaeus, and Saadia ben Joseph, or Saadia Gaon. Although their philosophic standpoints have much in common, there are differences, too, that make a comparison of import.

In order to put them in their historic context, it must be mentioned that Philo of Alexandria (c. 20BCE-50CE), a proponent of Hellenistic Greek

philosophy, "is the only Jewish Hellenistic philosopher from whom a body
of works has survived" (Katz, 1975:10). Furthermore, he "greatly in-
fluenced the development of Christian dogma" (Margolis & Marx, 1980:186;
cf. Marcus, 1948:29), with Eusebius, Jerome, Justin Martyr, Clement of
Alexandria and Ambrosius all being indebted to him (cf. Billings,
1979:1-3). In addition, "his general method of exegesis, many of its
details, the determining principles of his religious philosophy, passed into
the Christian Church ..." (Drummond, 1969:2). On the other hand,
Saadia Gaon (882-942) can "be considered the father of medieval Jewish
philosophy of religion" (Guttmann, 1973:69). Guttman (1973:69) points
out that Saadia was the first to develop the ideas of Islamic theology and
philosophy independently, and was also the prime pioneer in undertaking
a systematic philosophical justification of Judaism.

Philo's writings deal mainly with the Pentateuch and can be divided into
three series of treatises (cf. Encyclopaedia Judaica, 1971:XIII:410-411).
The first consists of an exposition of the Pentateuch as a legal code,
whereas the second is a philosophical interpretation of the Pentateuch,
and the third consists of questions and answers on Genesis and Exodus,
being in the form of a Hellenistic commentary with each paragraph headed
by an exegetic question and answered by a short literal and a long
allegorical explanation. Saadia's philosophic system as a whole is found
in his Sefer ha-Emunot ve-ha-De'ot (The book of beliefs and opinions)
originally written in Arabic; this is the earliest Jewish philosophic work
from medieval times to have survived intact (cf. Encyclopaedia Judaica,
1971:XIV:548).

Like all writers, neither philosopher was entirely original, but was in-
fluenced by others.

2. INFLUENCES

Although the various influences on these two philosophers will be pointed
out throughout this paper, it is appropriate to mention the most important
ones at this stage.

Even though Philo is regarded by some scholars as an opponent of the
stoics, the philosophical substructure of his world view may be described

as "a stoicism with a strong Platonic bent and some neo-Pythagorean in-
fluences" (Encyclopaedia Judaica, 1971:XIII:411). Until the middle of the
sixteenth century, the Church Fathers thought of Philo as a Greek phi-
losopher and "by the time of Herome, it had become a fixed tradition to
regard Philo as a Platonist" (Billings, 1979:2). In particular, the Platonic
influences can be seen in his separation of the world into a lower, ma-
terial, and a higher, spiritual or intelligible, realm. Dillon (in Winston
& Dillon, 1983:77) stresses that "Philo of Alexandria is dependent to at
least some extent on Greek rather than traditional Jewish models for the
specific form of his allegorical exegesis of the Pentateuch." To underline
this influence, Runia (1983:19) contends that

> Philo's debt to Plato is greater than to any other Greek philoso-
> pher, but to a large extent his understanding of Plato's philosophy,
> it is now argued, is filtered through the scholastic traditions of
> Middle Platonism.

However, one must remember that as a Jew, Philo "never wavered in his
loyalty" to "the dominating presence of the Mosaic legislation" (Runia,
1983:2).

Like Philo, Saadia was influenced by the stoics, Plato, neo-Platonists and
also Aristotle, but for his fundamental theses he was dependent on the
Kalam, inclining towards its rationalist Mu'tazilite school which was similar
to the Jewish position with regard to its belief in the concept of God's
unity and in its following the doctrine of free will. However, as Guttmann
(1973:70) maintains,

> he denied the atomism of the Kalam and substituted Aristotelian
> views on natural science; in his psychology he combined Platonic
> and Aristotelian elements. Even where he agreed in principle with
> the tenents of Kalam, he frequently developed these notions in an
> independent fashion.

According to Cahn (1962:329), the greatest influence on Saadia was the
Arab philosopher Ibn al Rashid whose ideas Saadia incorporated   into
Jewish ideology, but with the prime aim of strengthening Jewish faith.

With this as background, the various philosophic concepts of Philo and Saadia will be discussed.

3. PHILOSOPHIC CONCEPTS

3.1 God

The influence of the traditional Jewish idea of God can be found in Philo's stressing of God's transcendence and spirituality. In rejecting stoic materialism and pantheism, he denies the concept of a personal God, albeit not consistently. He rejects anthropomorphic characteristics in discussing God, elevating him "above all values and perfections conceivable to the human mind" (Guttmann, 1973:27). He contends that it is wrong to suppose that God feels any passion, as "disquiet is peculiar to human weakness" and has no relation to God.

> All the same the Lawgiver uses such expressions, just so far as they serve for a kind of elementary lesson, to admonish those who could not otherwise be brought to their senses. (Philo, 1968:III:37).

As only His bare existence can be comprehended by the intellect, Philo prefers to call God "He Who Is" or even "Being". This transcendentalism surpasses even that of Plato, with God transcending virtue, knowledge, the good and the beautiful:

> God being uncreated and the Author of the creation of the others needs none of the properties which belong to the creatures which He has brought into being (Philo, 1968:III:39).

With regard to proving the existence of God, Philo adopts Plato's causal approach that for the world to exist something must have brought it into being. Blau (1971:53) refers to Philo's citing of Isaiah 66:1 in which the prophet reports God's saying, "The heaven is my throne and the earth is my footstool." As both these objects must have a cause, God must be that and also distinct from the heavens and earth. However, if everything had a cause, then something must have caused God, too, and one is faced with an Infinite Regress.

Philo tries to overcome this with the Aristotelian argument of the original agent, or Unmoved Mover being God. He also adopts the argument from design: as so much order exists in the world (such as the seasons), there must be one who established the order, just as if one sees a house, one must realise there is an artificer behind it: "We see then, that any piece of work always involves the knowledge of a workman" (Philo, 1968:VII:117). Blau (1971:54-55) mentions another argument that Philo uses - that of introspection: we can comprehend that a mind is in our body, even if distinct and separate.

Similarly, the Universal Mind which is in the universe is God. But, as Blau (1971:55) says, "God is always outside the world, although His powers are exerted in the world." Although all these "proofs" are different in detail, they are of the same order as all depend upon reasoning by analogy or from an effect to its cause. A final, and different order of proof that Philo refers to is that based on immediate intuition or direct knowledge: revelation or prophetic inspiration - even though one must remember that the essence of God is forever unknowable.

Like Philo, Saadia regards God as omniscient and omnipotent, and his concept of the nature of God is based on his view of God as creator. He considers that the existence of the one God as Creator is a certainty of reason just as much as it is a doctrine of revelation. Guttmann (1973:74) maintains that "Saadia's proof follows the usual arguments of the Kalam, which show that the world must have had a beginning in time, and therefore presupposes a Creator." Following Philo's line of reasoning, Saadia considers the causal proof of God's existence in holding that He is the cause of all corporeal existence. Furthermore, He is incorporeal, for if He were not, something beyond Him would have had to be the cause of His existence:

> ... since the Creator of all bodies cannot be of the same species as His creatures, and since the bodies are many in number, it follows of necessity that He be one. For if He were more than one, there would apply to Him the category of number and He would fall under the laws governing bodies (Saadia, 1948:96).

Saadia attributes three essential qualities to God: life, power and wisdom, to which unity and uniqueness should also be added, according to Guttmann (1973:77). This does not imply a plurality in God as these qualities are united in Him; however, because of the shortcomings of language, we have to speak of them as separate.

Therefore, God's attributes are identical with his essence, a notion that follows the Mu'tazilite doctrine of God (cf. Guttmann, 1973:78). As a result of this concept, Saadia believes that there is only one force in this world, consisting of positive factors such as light and goodness. Negative elements, such as darkness and evil, are not forces as such but merely are symptomatic of the lack of light or goodness. Therefore, "evil is only the lack of good or indiscriminate use thereof" (Cahn, 1962:331).

Unlike Philo, Saadia prayed to a personal God, while philosophizing about the God who is pure being. Silver (1974:350-351) summarizes Saadia's belief as follows:

> The God of action, who is in tension with history and man, somehow blends into a divine intelligence, who does not rush to man's side but has man come to Him through awareness and understanding. Saadia (sic) seems not to have been troubled by any sense of inconsistency; indeed, he was supremely confident of his intellectual powers. God is self-sufficient. God's self-sufficiency proves that all God does is good, hence wise. God acts in history, listens to prayers, and performs miracles.

Philo, on the other hand, attempts to overcome any possible contradictions on this level by his doctrine of the Logos.

3.2 Logos

The attempt to establish God's relation to the world and to bridge the gap between Him and material, resulted in Philo's doctrine of intermediate beings, and particularly that of the Logos.

The voice told me that while God is indeed one, His highest and chiefest powers are two, even goodness and sovereignty. Through His goodness He begat all that is, through His sovereignty He rules what He has begotten. And in the midst between the two there is a third which unites them, Reason (the Logos), for it is through reason that God is both ruler and good (Philo, 1968:II:21).

Because, according to Philo, God is transcendent and apart from the world, an intermediary power is required. Such is the Logos which "comes to be distinguished from God Himself, without being ontologically disconnected from Him" (Encyclopaedia Judaica, 1971:XIII:413).

Evidently the Logos is identified with the mind of God at times, is sometimes symbolized by the high priest and at other times is seen as being midway between man and God.

Guttman (1973:28) finds that Philo's concept of divine powers combines the Platonic doctrine of ideas, the Stoic logoi spermatikoi which permeate the cosmos, and Jewish angelogy (cf. also Bréhier, 1950:84-90). The Logos corresponds to all three in being the unity of ideas, the simple source of cosmic power and the highest of the angels. Guttman (1973:28) adds:

> This combination of Stoic, Platonic, and Jewish notions has resulted in a complicated mixture riddled with contradictions. These contradictions concern the relationship of these intermediate beings to God. Sometimes they are thought of as powers inherent in God and sometimes as effects proceeding from him and their mutual relations to each other; lastly, it is hard to decide whether they are personal or impersonal beings.

Therefore, what one sees as God's activity is really the activity of the Logos (cf. Silver, 1974:213).

The problem with all of this is that the Logos appears at times to be a second god. Moreover, if the Logos acts at God's command, then God must have some influence over it; therefore, God, the transcendent power, does still act in his commanding. And if God cannot control the

Logos, then He is hardly omnipotent. It appears, therefore, that the Logos adds as much confusion as clarification to Philo's attempt to establish God's relation to the world. In addition, it seems that Philo believes that it was not necessarily God but the Logos that created the world.

3.3 Creation

A philosopher's theory of creation is inextricably intertwined with his doctrine of God. The question here is whether the two philosophers being examined consider whether the world was created ex nihilo or ex nihilo nihilfit (from formless matter). Philo is careful to remove the genesis of the world beyond the confines of time (cf. Drummond, 1969:1:292) and states that it was created out of pre-existent matter.

> Time began either simultaneously with the world or after it. For since time is a measured space determined by the world's movement, and since movement could not be prior to the object moving, but must of necessity arise either after it or simultaneously with it, it follows of necessity that time also is either coeval with or later born than the world (Philo, 1971:1:21).

However, Winston (1981:7) points out a degree of confusion here as "it is exceedingly unclear whether that matter was itself, in Philo's view, a product of God's creative act."

In contrast with Philo, Saadia considers that the world was created ex nihilo in time. He propounds his view in the following way:

> I found that it is wrong to assume that things were created from something already existent. Such a view is self-contradictory, because the term creation implies that the substance of the thing is created and has a beginning in time, whilst the qualifying statement, "From something" implies that its substance was eternal, uncreated and without beginning in time. If we assume that things were created ex nihilo, there is no self-contradiction (Three Jewish Philosophers, 1969:59-60).

Saadia presents four proofs for creation, the first founded on Aristotelian premises and the other three taken from the Kalam (cf. Encyclopaedia Judaica, 1971:XIV:550). He first concludes that the force preserving the world is finite and as a result the world itself must be finite, that is have a beginning and an end. Secondly, he argues that as anything that consists of two or more elements must have been put together in time, the world must have been created at some point in time. The third proof considers that as the world is made up of various substances all of which are the bearers of accidents which·originate in time, the world itself must have originated in time. Fourthly, if the world were uncreated, time would be infinite, and infinite time could not be traversed; as a result the present moment could not have arrived, and as.it clearly exists, time cannot be infinite and, thus, the world must have had a beginning (cf. Saadia, 1948:40-46).

It is clear, therefore, that the two philosophers disagree strongly on the point of creation. However, they have more in common when it comes to the consideration of the nature of man. 3.4 Man

Philo regards man as a duality, being composed of body and soul, the former connecting him with matter and the latter with God. The mind, which is "the sight of the soul" is the dominant element.

> This branch of the soul was not formed of the same elements, out
> of which the other branches were brought to completion, but it
> was allotted something better and purer, the substance in fact out
> of which divine natures were wrought. And therefore it is rea-
> sonably held that the mind alone in all that makes us what we are
> is indestructible (Philo, 1986:III:33).

Man must make a fundamental choice concerning the direction of his life. The alternative, according to the Encyclopaedia Judaica. (1971:XIII:413),

> is identified by Philo with the struggle of the stoic sage for the
> control of his passions by reason, and so the whole of stoic ethics
> becomes integrated into Philo's religious philosophy.

Being placed by nature halfway between the remote deity, the essence and fountain of pure intellect, and the material substance which is the domain of sinful passions, man's task is to abandon his lower existence and to rise to God (cf. Lewy in Three Jewish philosophers, 1969:18). This does not mean that Philo recommends flight from the world; he rather looks upon the practical life as the prerequisite for the contemplative one, even if the spiritual alone has genuine value. He holds that man's life can reach fulfilment only in the life of the spirit as the material is subject to change and decay.

It is, then, of supreme importance that men should be made aware of the permanent reality of which the world is but a distorted reflexion. This true reality is the mind or will which is beyond all existence as its cause and principle, the living, self-conscious Being who has made this universe and who now governs and guides it (Billings, 1979:13).

As a result of this concept, he maintains that there is a stage beyond science and philosophy which is the highest achievement of the mind: wisdom.

For wisdom is a straight high road, and it is when the mind's course is guided along that road that it reaches the goal which is the recognition of knowledge of God. Every comrade of the flesh hates and rejects this path and seeks to corrupt it. For there are no two things so utterly opposed as knowledge and pleasure of the flesh (Philo, 1968:III:81-83).

This is paralleled by his anthropology in which he lists three types of man: earth-born, heaven-born and God-born.

The earth-born are those who take the pleasures of the body for their quarry, who make it their practice to indulge in them and enjoy them and provide the means by which each of them may be promoted. The heaven-born are the votaries of the arts and of knowledge, the lovers of learning. For the heavenly element in us is the mind, as the heavenly beings are each of them a mind. And it is the mind which pursues the learning of the schools and

the other arts one and all, which sharpens and whets itself, aye,
and trains and drills itself solid in the contemplation of what is
intelligible by mind. But the men of God are priests and prophets
who have refused to accept membership in the commonwealth of the
world and to become citizens therein, but have risen wholly above
the sphere of sense-perception and have been translated into the
world of the intelligible and dwell there registered as freemen of
the commonwealth of Ideas, which are imperishable and incorporeal
(Philo, 1968:II:60-61).

He describes the reconciliation between the soul and God in two ways:
God's descent into the human soul and the soul's ascent to God:

In both, the interplay of transcendence and immanence in the
concept of God is of decisive importance. God the exalted, superior
to every thinkable human category, comes to merge with the human
soul, or the soul surpasses even the summit of Plato's ideal heaven
- this is what happens in the unity between God and man
(Encyclopaedia Judaica, 1971:XIII:414).

This concept is closer to the world of mysticism than to the ethical reli-
gion of Judaism, "in line with Philo's preference of immediate intuition
over and above the rational knowledge of God" (Guttmann, 1973:30).

Like Philo, Saadia sees man as a composite of body and soul, created
together:

Our Lord, blessed and exalted be He, has informed us that man's
soul has its origin in his heart simultaneously with the completion
of the formation of his body (Saadia, 1958:235).

He views the soul as being composed of very fine material and having
three essential faculties: appetite, which controls growth and reprod-
uction; spirit, or courage, which controls the emotions; and reason,
which controls knowledge. This, as Katz (1975:125) notes, is the famous
tripartite Platonic account of man which Saadia took over from Islamic
Platonism.   It is because of this that the Hebrew language has three

-125-

different names for the soul: nefesh, ruah and neshamah, which refer respectively to the three faculties (cf. Saadia, 1948:244).

Saadia maintains that the soul cannot act on its own and, as a result, is placed in the body which serves as its instrument. He adds:

> Now it is a mistake to apportion these (three) faculties among two distinct (psychic) elements, one of which has its seat in the heart while the other is located in the rest of the body. All three powers belong rather to one soul, to emphasize which fact the language of Scripture has coined two additional designations, besides those previously listed; namely, hayyah (living) and yehidhad (unique). It is called hayyah (e.g. Job 33:20) because of its capacity to survive when its Creator grants it survival. It is also yehidhah (e.g. Ps. 22:21) because there exists nothing comparable to it among all creatures, either celestial or terrestrial (Saadia, 1948:144)

By his actions, which implies the performance of the divine commandments, man can reach true happiness; and any reward comes through actions for which man himself is responsible. Therefore, the correct way of life is that which results in the satisfaction of man's needs and in the development of his powers. As Guttmann (1973:80) says, "the injunction to live a happy life, and the ethics of commandment and duty, stand side by side without any attempt at reconciliation."

Similarly, Philo expresses the goal of the ethical life in terms of striving for happiness. It is this which is the highest good and the most fitting object of desire and hope for the philosophically oriented person. In agreement with Greek philosophers, especially Plato and Aristotle, Philo sees happiness as the product of two types of virtue: an intellectual virtue, which he calls wisdom, and a moral virtue, which he calls prudence. "Whereas wisdom or intellectual virtue can be taught, prudence or moral virtue is the fruit, not of teaching, but of habitual practice" (Blau, 1971:60).

The notion of free-will is a problem in both their philosophies as if man is not free he cannot be held responsible for his actions; if he is free, then God cannot be omnipotent and possibly not omniscient either.

In The unchangeableness of God, Philo contends that man is free, can make voluntary choices, is able to know good from evil, and can act accordingly. Therefore, he "is with reason blamed for what he does wrong with intent, praised when he acts rightly of his own will" (Philo, 1968:III:33-35). Paradoxically, however, Philo stresses that without the help of God, man cannot do good by his own power; in the face of religious experience, he is impotent before God (cf. Guttmann, 1973:29).

Saadia also appears to be unable to resolve this question. In contrast with the Islamic doctrine of predestination, he asserts that man must have freedom of choice as he is responsible for his actions, and if he did not have this freedom it would be unjust for God to reward or punish him (cf. Saadia, 1948:187). In attempting to reconcile the paradox of free choice with God's foreknowledge, Saadia says that God's knowledge does not cause man's actions and, thus, does not curb his freedom of choice:

> ... let me say ... that the Creator, magnified be His majesty, does not in any way interfere with the actions of men and that He does not exercise any force upon them either to obey or disobey Him (Saadia, 1948:188).

God simply knows what the result of man's deliberation will be and does not try to influence him. The question is, however: if God knows what man will do, is this not in itself predestination and a contradiction of Saadia's stated opinion?

3.5 Knowledge

Philo describes various modes of knowledge man can employ in approaching an understanding of God. The first is intellectual knowledge which comes from nature and training and is an emanation form the Logos; with this knowledge, man can strive to link himself to God. Secondly, there is empirical knowledge which is just a preparation for the knowledge of God, having no value of its own. Thirdly, as Philo uses science ex-

clusively for religious purposes, philosophic and religious knowledge
become one. Furthermore, there is immediate intuition which, having
no scientific basis, is a repudiation of all theoretical knowledge. Finally,
Philo lauds the mystical knowledge of God, contradicting his earlier praise
of scientific enquiry (cf. Guttman, 1973:30).

Not adhering to Philo's classification, Saadia identifies three sources of
knowledge: sense perception; self-evident principles, such as the ap-
proval of telling the truth and the condemnation of lying; inferential
knowledge gained by syllogistic reasoning - in other words, rational
conclusions from the data provided by sense and reason (cf. Saadia,
1948:16). To these, however, he adds a fourth: that of a reliable
tradition, confidence in the truth of the reports of others, which is es-
sential in the functioning of society (cf. Saadia, 1948:19). As the
Encyclopaedia Judaica (1971:XIV:549) points out: "In Judaism reliable
tradition has special significance in that it refers to the transmission,
through Scripture and the oral tradition, of God's revelation to the
prophets."

It is this concept of revelation to which both philosophers pay a degree
of attention.

3.6   Revelation

In his writings, Philo insists that reason alone cannot guide man to an
adequate and true knowledge of God. To achieve this, "reason must be
aided by revelation, by which Philo meant the record of Sinai as set down
in the Bible" (Silver, 1974:211). It is, therefore, evident that Philo
is in accord with the Jewish concept of revelation in regarding the Torah
as the absolute vehicle of God's truth; revelation clarifies, in a way that
reason cannot, aspects of God, creation and immortality.

It appears that Saadia goes more deeply into this question by maintaining
that although knowledge of the truth can be arrived at through specu-
lation, revelation is necessary in order to transmit the truth to those
not able to investigate rationally; furthermore, even if one is able to
consider rationally, the doctrines contained in the Bible must not be ig-
nored. However, he adds the rider that there is a correspondence be-

tween reason and revelation, and onw cannot refute the other. As a result, "one must reject the validity of any prophet whose teachings contradict reason, even if he accompanies his teachings with miracles" (Encyclopaedia Judaica, 1971:XIV:550). Saadia holds that revelation is necessary for man to gain knowledge of the traditional laws, and also for him to arrive at a knowledge of rational laws, as reason deals only with abstract principles and general norms.

3.7 Prophecy

Following from the concept of revelation is the one of prophecy, and once more Philo and Saadia are at variance in some respects while agreeing in others. In his treatise On the special laws, Philo propounds that "no pronouncement of a prophet is ever his own; he is an interpreter prompted by Another in all his utterances, 'Another' being the 'Divine Spirit'" (Philo, 1968:VIII:37). This is in accord with Saadia's sixth principle in this Book of beliefs and opinions that a Jew must believe that the prophets were sent by God to communicate His message to men, God having appointed the prophets to call sinful man to repentance" (cf. Cahn, 1962:332).

> ... I pondered the matter deeply and I found that there was considerable need for the dispatch of messengers to God's creatures, not merely in order that they might be informed by them about the revealed laws, but also on account of the rational precepts. For these latter, too, are carried out practically only when there are messengers to instruct men concerning them (Saadia, 1948:145).

However, in his esoteric writings, Philo abandons this concept of prophecy being a mission to the people:

> Here prophecy is an act of ecstasy, where man is overflooded with divine light. No perceptible message is connected with this experience, for in its consumation "ears are made into eyes" ... and the message vanishes into flashes of light. (Encyclopaedia Judaica, 1971:XIII:415)

This possibly unorthodox approach can also be found in Philo's allegorical interpretation of parts of the Bible.

3.8 Allegorization

By means of the allegorical method, Philo puts forward a philosophical reinterpretation of both the historical and the legal parts of the Pentateuch. He is not innovative as such with regard to the allegorical method, this procedure having been introduced by pre-platonic philosophers, developed by the stoics and then employed by Alexandrine Jews before Philo. Earlier Jewish expositors used allegory, as Philo does, to counteract the mockery of rationalists and to bring the Jewish religion into line with Hellenistic thought. (Cf. Lewy, in Three Jewish philosophers, 1969:13.) Moreover, Philo aims at bringing together the two forms of truth through this method: human knowledge and divine revelation. He examines the Torah, particularly Genesis, "as the subject of a sustained allegory in which the soul burdened with the confusions of life sets out on a spiritual journey that, if properly managed, will permit it to gain truth and immortality" (Silver, 1974:213). Both the patriarchs and the matriarchs appear as nomoi empsychoi ("fleshed out truths") whose lives reveal the basic truths about man, man's nature and God. Furthermore, with regard to the anthropomorphization of God, Philo adopts an allegorical approach: His hands, eyes, limbs and moods that are referred to should not be taken literally but regarded as metaphors. For instance, when the Torah speaks of God's eyes, it does not mean that He possesses the physical organs of vision, but that He knows what occurs. This is all very well, but the mere reference to His "knowing" is also an anthropomorphization and does not really solve the problem. Philo stresses symbolic import but, as Bamberger (1970:90) points out, although many such explanations might be accurate, other "sophisticated interpretations ... would have puzzled the original author."

Saadia follows the same general method as Philo in explaining away the theological difficulties of certain Biblical texts. Biblical statements that seemingly contradict rationality (such as Jacob's ladder reaching to heaven) and anthropomorphic descriptions of God must be considered as allegories. In order to rid the anthropomorphic terms or descriptions of their traditional meaning, Saadia first "neutralizes" them by showing

that they are applied in the Bible to man as well, where they also cannot
be taken literally; then he deduces a fortiori the impossibility of their
literal application to God. Rawidowicz (1974:256) summarizes Saadia's
reasoning in saying:

> If thus head related in the Bible sometimes to man expresses ele-
> vation, eye supervision, face pleasantness or anger, ear
> acceptence, mouth and lip commanding, hand potence, heart wis-
> dom, bowels amiability, leg coercion - how much more these terms
> must convey all those non-bodily meanings when related to God.

3.9 Reward and punishment, and immortality

Another concern of both philosophers is that of theodicy, and they con-
sider why the evil prosper and the good suffer. Philo insists that the
judgements of men and God are not alike:

> For we inquire into what is manifest but He penetrates noiselessly
> into the recesses of the soul, sees our thoughts as though in bright
> sunlight, and stripping off the wrappings in which they are en-
> veloped, inspects our motives in their naked reality and at once
> distinguishes the counterfeit from the genuine (Philo, 1967:
> IX:483).

He contends that God knows who have impious and ruthless souls and
treats them as capital offenders, stressing that none of the wicked really
has happiness, "and this is a very strong proof that providence exists"
(Philo, 1967: IX:487).

In similar vein, Saadia finds the solution as lying in the balance between
suffering in this world and being rewarded in the next, in the world to
come. Therefore, he believes in the immortality of the soul, and also in
the resurrection of the dead (cf. Saadia, 1948:279).

4. CONCLUSION

Philo and Saadia both agree and disagree concerning certain salient
philosophical concepts. This is understandable in the light of the in-

fluences on them. Apart from the obvious Jewish background with its definite and, at times, unique approach where they had much in common, they moved in totally different intellectual spheres: Philo, with Hellenism predominating, and Saadia with the Mu'tazilites as significant.

Both see God as omniscient and omnipotent, but Philo's God, unlike Saadia's, is not a personal one; his Logos fills the gap here. They differ on the theory of creation, Philo stressing that the world was created beyond the confines of time and out of pre-existent matter, and Saadia asserting that it was created ex nihilo in time.

Both consider man as a duality of body and soul, and agree that the goal of the ethical life is to attain happiness, which is the highest good. They pay attention to knowledge, but classify it differently, and Saadia's explanation of revelation is evidently given deeper consideration than that of Philo. On the other hand, Philo has a more complex view of prophecy in not always regarding it as a mission to the people.

Philo and Saadia both explain various aspects of the Bible as allegorical, and discard any attempt to anthropomorphize God physically, but contradict themselves when it comes to the more ethnical, cognitive or even emotional matters. Finally, both believe in man's freedom of choice but cannot really reconcile it to God's omniscience or omnipotence satisfactorily.

Nevertheless, as Guttman (1973:32) points out, Philo was the first to attempt to unite human knowledge and divine revelation and can legitimately be called "the first theologian". Saadia was equally important in his being the first medieval Jewish philosopher to endeavour to reconcile the Bible and philosophy, revelation and reason (cf. Encyclopaedia Judaica, 1971:XIV:549). In this they are similar - and in this their greatness lies.

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