

TWO ANCIENT REWRITINGS OF NUMBERS 11

Christopher BEGG

1. Introduction

Numbers 11 tells of events that transpired shortly after the people's leaving Mount Sinai (see Num 10,11-12). The chapter's (rather convoluted) presentation features three place names, i.e. «Taberah» (11,3; so called because of the «burning» which the Lord unleashed against the people there); «Kibroth-hattaavah» (11,34; at this site the people are given the meat they crave with fatal results for many of them and Moses receives helpers for his leadership role [see 11,4-33]), and «Hazereth» (11,35; the next station along the people's march route).¹ In this essay I propose to study two ancient —both highly abbreviated— rewritings of the Numbers chapter, i.e. those of Josephus in *Antiquitates Judaicae* (hereafter *Ant.*) 3.295-299² and Philo in *De specialibus legibus* (hereafter *Spec.*) 4.126-131.³ My investigation will first examine the two *relectures* separately— taking into account as well the various ancient witnesses for the text of Numbers 11 (MT, LXX, *Vetus Latina* [VL], Vulgate [Vg] and the Targums, i.e. Onqelos [Tg.Onq.], Pseudo-Jonathan [Tg.Ps.-J.] and Neofiti [Tg.Neof.]) and the rabbinic-midrashic commentary on the chap-

1. On Numbers 11, see, in addition to the commentaries: B.D. SOMMER, «Reflecting on Moses: the Redaction of Numbers 11», *JBL* 118 (1999) 601-624.

2. For the text and translation of *Ant.* 3.295-299 I use: H.St.John THACKERAY, *Josephus IV* (LCL), Cambridge, MA – London 1930, pp. 460-465. I have likewise consulted the more recent critical text of the passage in E. NODET, *Flavius Josèphe I: Les Antiquités Juives Livres I à III*, Paris 1990, pp. 150-151 and the translation of and notes on this in *idem*, *Flavius Josèphe II: Les Antiquités Juives Livres I à III*, Paris 1990, pp. 186-187, as well of the annotated translation of L.H. FELDMAN, *Flavius Josephus Judean Antiquities 1-4* (Flavius Josephus Translation and Commentary), Leiden 2000, pp. 321-323.

3. For the text and translation of *Spec.* 4.126-131 I use: F.H. COLSON, *Philo VIII* (LCL), Cambridge, MA 1939, pp. 86-91.

ter⁴ and then conclude with a comparison of their respective handlings of their shared biblical source.

2. *Josephus*

Josephus' free handling of the data of Numbers 11 emerges already at the very start of his version of its account in the opening words of *Ant.* 3.295. These read: «After a brief interval he [Moses] broke up his camp at Mount Sinai,⁵ and passing certain localities of which we shall speak,⁶ came to a place called Esermoth (Ἐσερμούθ).» In this formulation Josephus conflates the departure notice of Num 10,11-12 and the concluding itinerary indication of Numbers 11 («From Kibroth-Hattaavah the people journeyed to Hazeroth [LXX Ἀσηρώθ]...», v. 35a).⁷ The upshot of this procedure is that the historian passes over the brief etiological story concerning the God-sent fire against the querulous people that serves to generate the place name «Taberah» («burning») in Num 11,1-3.⁸ In addition, in thus citing «Hazeroth/Esermoth» the first—rather than the third as in Numbers 11—site to which the people come, Josephus makes this the locality of the episode of the Israelites' complaint over their lack of meat that generates the second place name in Numbers 11, i.e.

4. For a synthesis of early Jewish (and Christian) treatments of Numbers 11, see: L. GINZBERG, *The Legends of the Jews* III, Philadelphia 1968, pp. 243-255; *idem*, VI, pp. 85-90, nn. 458-477.

5. This is Josephus' invariant name for the Mosaic mount of revelation; he never employs the alternative biblical designation, i.e. Mount Horeb.

6. This phrase lacks an equivalent in Num 11,1 (I italicize such elements of Josephus' [and Philo's] version in this essay). As Thackeray (*Josephus* IV, p. 462, n. a) points out, Josephus does not speak subsequently of these localities. His failure to do so is paralleled elsewhere in the vast corpus of the *Antiquitates*; thus, e.g., in *Ant.* 5.31, having cited Joshua's curse against anyone who would rebuild demolished Jericho on the basis of Josh 6,26, he goes on to declare, with an eye to the notice on the fulfillment of this curse in the time of King Ahab recorded in 1 Kgs 16,34, «... in the sequel we shall recount the calamity which it [Joshua's curse] entailed.» In his version of Ahab's reign in *Ant.* 8.318, however, the historian says nothing about the rebuilding of Jericho and the personal catastrophes suffered by the (re-) builder (Hiel) in realization of the earlier curse. Such editorial lapses doubtless reflect the vast extent of the historian's work with its 20 volumes and the lengthy period (an estimated 13 years) that it took him to complete it.

7. Following J. Weill, Thackeray (*Josephus* IV, pp. 462-463, n. b) points out that Josephus' form of the place name, i.e. Ἀσηρώθ, stands closer to the LXX proper name of the figure cited in Gen 10,26, i.e. Ἀσηρωθ (Hebrew/English: «Hazarmaveh») rather than to LXX's place name in Num 11,35 (Ἀσηρώθ).

8. On the rabbinic-midrashic developments concerning Num 11,1-3, see GINZBERG, *Legends*, III, p. 243; VI, p. 85, nn. 458-460. Thus, e.g., in *Sifré to Numbers* 85 two alternative understandings of the reference to «outlying parts of the camp» which the Lord's fire is said to «burn» in Num 11,2 are proposed: the allusion is either to «proselytes» or to the «leading figures» among the people.

«Kibroth-hattaavah» (11,34 // *Ant.* 3.299c), thereby assimilating the two, biblically distinct locations.

The core content of Numbers 11 (vv. 4-34) concerns the complex of events which transpire at a site that ends up getting the name «Kibroth-hattaavah». This new development within the chapter is introduced in 11,4a with a notice on the «strong craving» felt by «rabble»⁹ among the people, who, for their part, proceed to voice to an extended complaint (vv. 4b-6) concerning their desire for meat (v. 4b), their memory of the culinary bounty they had enjoyed in Egypt (v. 5), and their current sense of enervation, given that all they have to look at is «this manna» (v. 6). Josephus (3.295b-296) leaves aside the «rabble» and its «craving», likewise giving the crowd's complaint a content of his own:¹⁰

(3.295a) There the multitude (τὸ πλῆθος; 11,4, the sons of Israel) began (ἄρχεται)¹¹ to revolt (στασιάζειν)¹² once more¹³ and to reproach (αἰτιᾶσθαι) Moses¹⁴ for the trials that they had undergone on these peregrinations:¹⁵ (3.296) that good land (γῆς... ἀγαθῆς) which he had persuaded them to quit was now lost (ἀπολέσειαν) to them,¹⁶

9. Thus RSV's rendering of MT's חֲסִידֵי אֱלֹהִים; LXX ὁ ἐπιμυκτός. In *Tg. Ps.-J.* Num 11,4 the group in question are called «strangers» (ניירי), while *Sifré on Numbers* 86 offers two alternative understandings of the term: the proselytes or the elders.

10. In particular, Josephus does not explicitly have the people ask for «meat», as they start off doing in Num 11,4b. In addition, in line with his frequent procedure elsewhere, he recasts the direct discourse of 11,4b-6 in indirect; on this feature of Josephus' retelling of the Bible, see C.T. BEGG, *Josephus' Account of the Early Divided Monarchy* (BETL 108), Leuven 1993, pp. 33-34, n. 175.

11. Here, as often elsewhere in his rewriting of the Bible, Josephus introduces the historic present form where the LXX has some past form (εἶπεν in 11,4b). On the phenomenon, see BEGG, *Josephus' Account*, pp. 10-11, n. 32.

12. This is the verbal cognate of the noun στάσις, a key term in Josephus' retelling of biblical history whereby he focuses attention on the recurring phenomenon of «civil strife» and its harmful consequences throughout that history, doing so doubtless under the influence of his personal experience of the horrors of intra-Jewish conflict during the Great Revolt. On the point, see L.H. FELDMAN, *Josephus's Interpretation of the Bible*, Berkeley (CA) 1998, pp. 140-143.

13. With the above formulation Josephus introduces an evaluation of the people's complaint that lacks an explicit counterpart in Num 11,4b-5. With the term «once more» (πάλιν) the historian connects this new instance of the people's recalcitrance with their previous complaints at Marah (*Ant.* 3.1-8 // Exod 15,22-26), Elim (3.9-32 // Exod 15,27-16.36); and Rephidim (3.33-38 // Exod 17,1-7).

14. In Num 11,4b-6 no addressee for the people's complaint is named. In making Moses that addressee, Josephus anticipates 11,13 where Moses, speaking to God, declares: «... they [the people] weep before me, and say, "Give us meat, that we may eat."» Josephus uses the above verb αἰτιᾶσθαι of the people's censuring of Moses also in *Ant.* 2.327; 3.307.

15. The above phrase, spelling out the content of the people's reproach against Moses and alluding back to everything they have already endured under his leadership, lacks a counterpart in their words as cited in 11,4b-6.

16. The above formulation represents Josephus' free, generalizing rendering of the people's words in Num 11,5: «We remember the fish we eat in Egypt for nothing, the cucumbers, the

but, instead of the felicity (εὐδαιμονίας)¹⁷ which he had promised to procure,¹⁸ they were wandering in these miseries (παλαιπωρίας),¹⁹ lacking water²⁰ and, should the manna (τὴν μάνναν, LXX 11,6 τὸ μάννα) happen to fail, doomed to utter destruction (ἀπολούμενοι; compare ἀπολέσειαν, 3.296a).²¹

Loosely attached to the people's mention of the manna in Num 11,6b one finds in 11,7-9 a series of parenthetical remarks concerning this substance: its appearance (v. 7), the people's handling of it (v. 8a), its taste (v. 8b), and the time of its falling (v. 9).²² Thereafter, Num 11,10 records the irritation of both the Lord and Moses at the people's «weeping».²³ Josephus, for his part, passes over the content of 11,7-9 —understandably so given its seemingly extraneous character and the fact that in *Ant.* 3.28, following Exod 16,31, he has already spoken of the manna's taste and appearance (compare 11,7.8b). In place thereof, he interjects (3.297) a segment concerning an (ineffective) attempt, on the part of an unnamed figure, to persuade the crowd to cease its verbal assault on Moses:

melons, the leeks, the onions and the garlic.» The people's use of the designation «good land» for Egypt here takes on blasphemous connotations in view of the fact that in Exod 3,8 the same designation is applied by God himself to the land whither he will lead the people from their Egyptian oppression (in Josephus' rendering of Exod 3,8 in *Ant.* 2.268 the reference is to «this favoured land [γῆν... εὐδαιμόνα].»)

17. On Josephus' use of this key word of Greek moral philosophy (though never used in the LXX), see: H.-F. WEISS, «Pharisäismus und Hellenismus. Zur Darstellung des Judentums im Geschichtswerk des jüdischen Historikers Flavius Josephus», *OLZ* 74 (1979) 421-433, c. 427; S. MASON, *Flavius Josephus and the Pharisees: A Composition-Critical Study* (SBP 39), Leiden 1991, p. 185.

18. This reference to Moses' «failure», without parallel in Num 11,4b-6 accentuates the character of Josephus' version of the people's words as a «reproach» directed against their leader himself.

19. The noun παλαιπωρία is a *Leitwort* of Josephus' account of the Mosaic period, being used by him both of the «misery» of the people before and after their escape from Egypt (see *Ant.* 2.202,204,289; 3.11; 4.177) and of that of Moses himself (2.257; 2.68; 4.42).

20. The people's above assertion might be seen as Josephus (highly paraphrastic) rendering of their declaration in 11,6a: «but now our strength is dried up...».

21. Contrast the people's concluding declaration in Num 11,6b «... there is nothing at all but this manna to look at» (compare the elaboration of the ending of this declaration in *Tg. Ps.-J.* («the manna which we are looking on like a poor man who is looking out for the remains of the plateful from the hands of his Master»). Josephus gives his version of the «manna story» of Exod 16,1-36 in *Ant.* 3.9-32 (setting this at «Elim» [Elis], whereas according to Exod 16,1 the manna was given subsequent to the people's leaving Elim).

22. For the rabbinic commentary on Num 11,7-9, see *Sifré on Numbers* 88 (where the biblical segment is represented as God's response, highlighting the many beneficent qualities of the manna, to the people's derogation of the manna in 11,6b). Compare *Tg. Ps.-J.* whose rendering of Num 11,7-9 is preceded by the inserted statement «Woe to the people whose food is bread from heaven and who were grumbling.»

23. According to *Tg. Ps.-J.* Num 11,10 and *Sifré on Numbers* 89 the people's weeping was prompted by their hearing that they would have to renounce consanguineous marriages.

Amid this torrent of abuse showered upon the hero (ἄνδρα), there was yet one who admonished them not to be unmindful of Moses and what he had suffered for the salvation of all (κοινῆς σωτηρίας)²⁴ nor to despair of (ἀπογινώσκειν) the help of God (τῆς ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ βοήθειας²⁵).²⁶ But at that the multitude was only roused the more and uproariously (θοορυβῆσαν)²⁷ and yet more fiercely inveighed against Moses.²⁸

Having thus substituted a sequence of his own for the data of both Num 11,7-9 and 10 in 3.297, Josephus continues in what follows to go his own way vis-à-vis the sequel of the biblical account. There, Moses (11,11-15) addresses the Lord with a querulous complaint concerning both the difficulty of the leadership task that has been imposed on him (vv. 11-12,14) and the impossibility of his satisfying their demand for meat (v. 13), the whole concluding with a melodramatic appeal that the Lord put him out of his misery by «killing» him. In response, the Lord (11,16-20), takes each of Moses' complaints in turn,

24. Josephus uses the above phrase also in *Ant.* 10.12; 11.137; cf. 11.227. I draw this and subsequent indications concerning Josephus' word usage from K.H. RENGSTORF (ed.), *The Complete Concordance to Flavius Josephus* (2 vols.), Leiden 2002.

25. On God as «help, helper» as an important component of Josephus' theology, see: H.W. ATTRIDGE, *The Interpretation of Biblical History in the Antiquitatum Judaicae of Flavius Josephus* (HDR 7), Missoula (MT) 1976, pp. 79-92; T. JONQUIÈRE, *Prayer in Josephus*, Dissertation, Utrecht 2005, pp. 77,220.

26. Josephus' inspiration for the above-cited intervention of Moses' supporter remains elusive. Thackeray (*Josephus IV*, p. 463, n. c), suggests that «it is possibly to be connected with the story of Eldad and Medad [which Josephus leaves aside completely, see below] who “prophe-sied in the camp”, Numb. xi.26». Nodet (*Flavius Josephus II*, p. 186, n. 5) and Feldman, *Judean Antiquities 1-4*, p. 323, n. 904), refer to Thackeray's suggestion, the former appearing to agree with it, the latter pointing out several difficulties posed by it, i.e. in Num 11,26-29: «... there are two prophets [as opposed to the single figure of *Ant.* 3.297], and there is no indication of the contents of their prophecies». Picking up on Thackeray's indication, I would suggest that Josephus may have found the inspiration for his depiction of a single figure intervening in favor of Moses in Joshua's appeal (Num 11,28) to Moses (whose «minister» he is) that the latter «forbid» the prophesying of Eldad and Medad, an appeal that Moses himself (11,29) characterizes as an expression of «jealousy for my sake» on the part of Joshua. B. MALINA, *The Palestinian Manna Tradition* (AGJU 7), Leiden 1968, pp. 65-67 takes a different tack: for him, Josephus' «protes-tor» in 3.297 and the «rebuttal» of the people's derogation of the manna (11,6b) which the sources cited in n. 22 see being articulated in 11,7-9 would go back to a pre-existing «... haggada using this text [Num 11,7-9] as a protest, [while] Josephus probably read such a protest in the Aramaic Bible he used» (p. 65). Conceivably, both proposed «inspirations» were operative upon Josephus in his «creation» of an advocate for Moses here in 3.297.

27. Josephus uses the verb θοορυβέω in reference to the people under Moses' leadership also in *Ant.* 3.43; 4.37.

28. In the above insertion Josephus highlights the recalcitrance of the «multitude» and its animosity towards Moses personally —even in the face of an appeal that «not be unmindful» of their leader's exertions for them. Thereby, he, in turn, highlights the magnanimity of Moses who, in what follows (see below) nonetheless promises to intervene with God on their behalf. In this same line, the historian likewise leaves aside the reference to Moses' being «displeased» with the people's complaint in Num 11,10b.

laying down a procedure whereby Moses will be provided with assistants (vv. 16-17) and enjoining him to inform the people that meat will be given them to their own undoing in punishment for their questioning why they ever came out of Egypt (vv. 18-20). Josephus omits the entire sequence of Num 11,11-20 with its unflattering depiction of Moses as a leader who appear unequal to his task and whines at length about this to God²⁹ and a divine response that is itself keyed to Moses' two-fold complaint. In place thereof, he presents (3.298a) a more self-assured Moses who, *sua sponte*, informs the people that he will find meat for them:

He, however, to embolden (παρὰθαρσύνων)³⁰ them in their deep despair (ἀπεγνωκότας, see ἀπογινώσκειν, 3.297), promised, albeit so shamefully outraged (περιβρισημένος) by them,³¹ to procure for them meat in abundance, not for one day only but for many more.³²

In Num 11,21-22 Moses responds to the Lord's entrusting him with a message for the people (11,18-20) by voicing a series of skeptical comments and questions about the possibility of so many persons being provided with the promised meat, whereupon the Lord (11,23) brusquely terminates their exchange with the words: «Is the Lord's hand shortened? Now you shall see whether my word will come true for you or not.» Here again, the biblical account does not seem to reflect well on Moses, whose expression of unbelief in what the Lord has just told him prompts the latter to break off their conver-

29. Rabbinic-midrashic tradition (see, e.g., *Sifré on Numbers* 91) attempts to ameliorate the portrayal of Moses in Num 11,11-15, affirming that his request for death at the Lord's hands was prompted, not as appears to be the case in 11,20 by Moses' chagrin over his sense of inadequacy as a leader, but rather, more «altruistically» in response to the Lord's showing him all the punishments that were destined to come upon Israel —something that Moses would rather die than live to see. *Tg. Ps.-J.*'s rendering of Num 11,15 amplifies Moses' plea that the Lord «kill» him with the appended phrase «with the death in which the righteous rest».

30. Josephus uses the verb *παρὰθαρσύνω/παρὰθαρσύνω* of Moses' «emboldening» the people in *Ant.* 3.47 in connection with the Amalekite threat.

31. With the above phrase, Josephus continues his explicit negative commentary on the people's dealings with their leader that goes beyond what one finds in the Bible itself; see n. 28.

32. This conclusion to Moses' discourse to the people draws on the wording of the message the Lord entrusts to Moses for delivery to the people in Num 11,18b-20a: «Therefore the Lord will give you meat and you shall eat. You shall not eat one day, or two days, or five days, or ten days, or twenty days, but a whole month...» In Josephus rendering the source mention of the Lord as the giver of the meat disappears, as does the ominous continuation of the divine announcement in the remainder of 11,20: «(you shall eat) until it comes out your nostrils and becomes loathsome to you, because you have rejected the Lord who is among you, and have wept before him, saying: “Why did we come forth out of Egypt?”» (As commentators often point out the announcement about the meat coming out the people's nostrils after a month of eating in 11,20 does not, in fact, correspond to what happened to them according to 11,33).

sation with an implicit reproach to the former.³³ In this instance, Josephus (3.298bc) transposes the problematic Moses-God exchange into one between the unbelieving people and their confident leader:

But since they put no faith (ἀπιστοῦντων)³⁴ in that and someone asked whence he could get for such myriads those predicted supplies,³⁵ «God», said he, «and I»,³⁶ though vilified by you,³⁷ will never cease our efforts on your behalf; they will come at no distant date.³⁸

In Numbers 11, the Lord's telling Moses: «now you shall see whether my word [i.e. about his providing meat for the people, 11,18-20] will come true or

33. The problematic depiction of Moses in Num 11,21-23 prompts a variety of comments in Jewish and Christian tradition, all designed, in their various ways, to counteract the negative impression of him conveyed by the biblical text on first reading. Thus, *Tos. Sot.* 6.7 turns Moses' skeptical questions of 11,22 into a query about the rightness/sensefulness of the Lord's announced intention in 11,18-20 of giving the people meat, an apparent benefit that will turn into a source of harm for them, comparing this to one's feeding an ass and then immediately killing it. Theodoret of Cyr (*Quest. in Num.* 19; see *P.G.* 80, c. 372) remarks that Moses' «doubting» in 11,21-22 shows that he was «not only a prophet, but also a man.» Philo (*Her.* 20), for his part, finds something to commend in Moses' pointed questions in both Num 11,12 and 11,22, concerning which he avers: «But the man of worth has such courage of speech, that he is bold not only to speak and cry aloud, but actually to make an outcry of reproach, wrung from him by real conviction, and expressing true emotion.»

34. On Josephus' use of faith/belief terminology, see D.R. LINDSEY, *Josephus and Faith: πίστις and πιστεύειν as Faith Terminology in the Writings of Flavius Josephus and the New Testament* (AGJU 19), Leiden 1993.

35. With the above (indirect discourse) question attributed to a «someone» from the unbelieving crowd, compare Moses' own address to God in Num 11,21-22: «... The people among whom I am number six hundred thousand on foot, and thou [God] hast said, "I will give them meat, that they may eat a whole month". Shall flocks and herds be slaughtered for them, to suffice them? Or shall all the fish of the sea be gathered together for them, to suffice them?» Via his introduction of this «someone» —the negative counterpart of the «someone» who urges the people to recall Moses' past exertions on their behalf and not «despair of God's aid» in 3.297— Josephus exonerates Moses by transferring his expression of disbelief in the Lord's announcement to another (who himself is reacting to Moses' own assurances in 3.298a).

36. Here, exceptionally, Josephus has a character employ direct address; compare n. 10.

37. This inserted phrase picks up on Josephus' previous negative characterizations of the people's stance towards their leader: «the multitude began to revolt once more and to reproach Moses» (3.295); «this torrent of abuse showered upon the hero» (3.297a); «but the multitude was only roused the more and uproariously and yet more fiercely inveighed against Moses» (3.297b); «(Moses) so shamefully outraged by them» (3.298a); «... they put no faith in that [i.e. Moses' assurance to them]» (3.297b).

38. Moses' above, self-confident reply might be seen as Josephus' transfer to him of God's own assured response to Moses' expression of disbelief in Num 11,23: «Is the Lord's hand shortened? Now you shall see whether my word will come true or not.» On Josephus' virtually total avoidance of the word «Lord» (Κύριος) as a divine title —this likely due to its non-currency in that usage outside the LXX— see BEGG, *Josephus' Account*, 45, n. 218.

not» (v. 23), only finds its resolution in v. 31 where a «wind from the Lord brings quails from the sea to the people's camp». The connection between these two items in the present text of Numbers, is «interrupted» by a two-part sequence dealing with the realization of the Lord's announcement about how he intends to provide assistants for Moses (11,16-17) in 11,24-30 (where first seventy elders are endowed with Moses' spirit at the tent of meeting [vv. 24-25,30] and then two named figures, Eldad and Medad, receive the same endowment [vv. 26-29]).³⁹ Josephus passes over this entire segment (just as he does its preparation in the divine word of 11,16-17; see above).⁴⁰ In place thereof, he proceeds immediately to his version (3.299) of the quail episode as told in Num 11,31-34. In recounting that episode, the historian likewise compresses⁴¹ the more detailed (and somewhat obscure) biblical indications con-

39. On the rabbinic-midrashic and targumic elaborations of the content of Num 11,24-30 (in which, e.g. a content for the «prophesying» attributed to Eldad and Medad is supplied and the pair's superiority over the seventy elders who prophesied temporarily according to 11,25 is highlighted), see GINZBERG, *Legends* III, pp. 248-253; VI, pp. 87-99, nn. 472-484.

40. As FELDMAN, *Judean Antiquities* 1-4, p. 322, n. 899, comments concerning the historian's omission of 11,26-29: «One would have expected Josephus, given his interest in prophecy, to include [this text], but one would then have to explain the fact that Eldad and Medad, who had declined the honor of serving with the 70 elders, had, nevertheless been accorded the gift of prophecy, as well as the embarrassing disagreement between Moses and his handpicked successor, Joshua, as to what to do with them.» As further explanations of Josephus' omission of the entire «assistants for Moses strand» in Num 11,4-35 (vv. 11,12,16-17,24-20), I would suggest the following considerations: That strand could appear extraneous within its present context, the «quail story» and indeed has been ascribed by scholars to a different hand/source than the latter. As noted above, Moses' complaints (which set the entire above sequence in motion) about the overwhelming burden of the leadership role the Lord has imposed upon him in 11,11-12 leave one with a negative impression of Moses as one who is not equal to his God-given task. Also potentially problematic for Moses' image is the reference (11,17.25) to the Lord's taking some of the spirit that is upon him and conferring this on those designated to be assistants which might suggest that a diminution of Moses' charisma is involved —conceivably as a punishment for his previous outburst (on the wider Jewish tradition's handling of this difficulty, see, e.g., the comment of Philo, *Gig.* 24 on Num 11,7: «But think not that this taking of the spirit comes to pass as when men cut away a piece and sever it. Rather it is, as when they take fire from fire, for though the fire should kindle a thousand torches, it is still as it was and is diminished not a whit.»). Finally, the strand in question within Numbers 11 features references (11,17.25.26) to Moses' «spirit» (LXX πνεῦμα) that is ultimately the spirit of the Lord himself. That usage, however, contrasts with Josephus' own tendency to avoid mention of the human (and particularly the divine) «spirit» in his rewriting of biblical history, on which see: E. BEST, «Use and Non-Use of Pneuma by Josephus», *NovT* 3 (1959) 218-233; J.R. LEVISON, «Josephus' Interpretation of the Divine Spirit», *JJS* 47 (1996) 234-255, esp. 252-254.

41. His doing this is likely due to the fact that in *Ant.* 3.25 Josephus has already expatiated on the passing reference («in the evening quails came up and covered the camp») to an earlier bestowal of quail on the people that one finds in Exod 16,13a. His elaboration of this reference reads: «And not long after, a flock of quails —a species of birds abundant above all others, in the Arabian gulf— came flying over this stretch of sea, and alike wearied by their flight and withal

cerning the coming of the birds and the people's gathering of these found in 11,31-32.⁴² His rendering on these developments in 3.299a reads: «*Even as he spake,*⁴³ the camp was filled with quails (ὄρτύγων)⁴⁴ on every side,⁴⁵ and they gathered and collected them.»⁴⁶

The feeding miracle of Num 11,31-32 takes a negative turn in 11,33 where, even as the people are masticating the meat, the Lord's anger flares up against them and he smites them with «a very great plague». Josephus' rendering (3.299b) of this notice introduces a explicit motivation for the Lord's punitive initiative: «However God, not long after,⁴⁷ chastised (μετέρχεται)⁴⁸ the Hebrews⁴⁹ for their abusive insolence (θρασύτητος καὶ λαιδορίας)⁵⁰ towards

accustomed more than other birds to skim the ground, settled in the Hebrews' camp. And they, collecting them as food devised for them by God, assuaged their hunger; while Moses addressed his thankful prayers to God for sending succour so prompt and in keeping with His promise.» With this anticipation of an element of Numbers 11, compare Josephus' retrojection of the «manna parenthesis» of 11,7-9 into his rendering of Exodus 16 in *Ant.* 3.28; see above.

42. On the elaborations of the biblical quail story in rabbinic-midrashic tradition, see GINZBERG, *Legends* III, pp. 253-255; VI, p. 90, nn. 485-487.

43. This phrase, underscoring the veracity of Moses' just previous announcement (3.298c) that the promised meat «will come at no distant date», takes the place of the opening notice of 11,31: «And there went forth a wind from the Lord, and it brought quails from the sea.» Josephus has anticipated Numbers' mention of the «sea» as the place from which the quails emerge in his version of Exod 16,13a in *Ant.* 3.25; see n. 41.

44. LXX Num 11,31-32 speaks of ὄρτυγμήτρων. Josephus' one remaining use of the word ὄρτυξ is in *Ant.* 3.45, his expanded version of Exod 16,13a; see n. 41.

45. Compare the more detailed indications concerning the birds' descent in Num 11,31 («a wind from the Lord) let them [the quails] fall beside the camp, about a day's journey on this side, and a day's journey's on the other side, round about the camp, and about two cubits about the face of the earth.» On the various possible understandings of the final datum of this formulation, see the commentaries.

46. Here too, Josephus compresses a more detailed biblical notice; see Num 11,32: «And the people rose all that day and all night, and all the next day, and gathered the quails; he who gathered least gathered ten homers; and they spread them out for themselves around the camp.»

47. Josephus generalizes the chronological indication of 11,33 («while the meat was yet between their teeth, before it was consumed...»). He likewise substitutes «God» for the source's double mention of «the Lord» (see n. 38). In Josephus' presentation, the discrepancy (on which see n. 32) between what the Lord announces concerning the people's fate (and when this will befall them) in 11,19-20 and what actually happens to them in 11,33 does not arise, since, as noted above, he does not reproduce the former sequence.

48. Josephus uses the verb μετέρχομαι in Moses' prayer that God punish the rebels Abiram and Dathan in *Ant.* 4.47. On the historical present form employed by him here in 3.299, see n. 11.

49. On Josephus' use of this designation for his people in relation to other such designations also employed by him («Israelites», «Jews») employed by him, see G. HARVEY, *The True Israel: Uses of the Names Jew, Hebrew, and Israel in Ancient Jewish and Early Christian Literature* (AGJU 35), Leiden 1996, pp. 124-129.

50. This hendiadys occurs only here in Josephus. Its first component is used only once elsewhere by him, i.e. in *B.J.* 6.171. With this motivation for God's intervention against the people,

*Him; in fact no small number of them perished.*⁵¹ The story of the people's fatal feeding told in Num 11,4-34 concludes in v. 34 with the etiological notice: «Therefore the name of that place was called Kibroth-hattaavah [LXX translates with Μνήματα τῆς ἐπιθυμίας] because they buried the people who had the craving.» Josephus (3.299c) supplies both a transliteration of the Hebrew name for the site and a Greek translation of this inspired by the LXX's rendition, while leaving aside the Bible's concluding explanation of the name given the site: «*And to this day,*⁵² that spot still bears the name of Kabrothaba (Καβρωθαβὰ), that is to say graves of lust (ἐπιθυμίας μνημεῖα).»

As noted above, Numbers 11 ends with the itinerary notice of v. 35, according to which the people advance to Hazeroth where they settle down and where the following episode of Miriam and Aaron's double challenge to Moses (about his «Cushite» wife and his preeminence among the people) in 12,1-16 (see v. 16) transpires as well. As likewise previously noted, Josephus repositions his equivalent to Num 11,35 to the beginning (see 3.295a) of his version of Numbers 11, making this the scene of the feeding story of Num 11,4-34. Here, we further note that the historian also passes over the entire Hazeroth incident recounted in Numbers 12.⁵³ As a result of this double redactional move on his part, Josephus' rendering of Num 11,34 in 3.299c is followed immediately by the opening of his parallel to the «spy story» of Numbers 13-14 in 3.300.

In the proem of the *Antiquities* (*Ant.* 1.26) Josephus informs his audience: «The precise details of our Scripture records will, then, be set forth, each in its place, as my narrative proceeds, that being the procedure I have promised to follow throughout this work, neither adding nor omitting anything.» Our examination of the Josephan version of Numbers 11 in *Ant.* 3.295-299 has made clear that, whatever the historian may have made meant by this claim (or wished his readers to make of it),⁵⁴ the claim cannot be taken a literal, face value—at least in our particular case. In fact, Josephus does omit large portions of Numbers 11 (the incident at Taberah [11,1-3], the «manna appendix»

unparalleled in Num 11,33 itself, compare the Lord's announcement in 11,20 that the meat he is about to give them will become an object of disgust to the people «because you have rejected the Lord who is among you, and have wept before him, saying, “Why did we come forth out of Egypt?”»

51. This indication concerning the large number of those smitten by the Lord takes the place of the concluding notice of 11,33: «and the Lord smote the people with a very great plague».

52. Josephus prefaces his rendering of 11,34 with this typical etiological formula.

53. On the problems of this biblical story (e.g., its expression of contempt for a people widely respected in antiquity, i.e. the Ethiopians/Cushites, and the unresolved question of why only Miriam is punished for her challenge to Moses when her fellow miscreant, Aaron is not) that Josephus avoids by his non-reproduction of it, see FELDMAN, *Judean Antiquities 1-4*, pp. 323-324, n. 911.

54. For a survey of the scholarly discussion on the point, see FELDMAN, *Josephus's Interpretation*, 37-46.

[11,7-9], the exchange between Moses and the Lord [11,11-20], and the twofold spirit conferral [11,24-30]), just as he eliminates the «rabble» of 11,4a as a distinct group of actors and compresses the concluding account of the coming of the quail (compare 11,31-34 and 3.299). Conversely, he either gives those source elements he takes over a content of his own (compare the people's complaint in 11,4b-6 and 3.295b), introduces a speaker (Moses' advocate in 3.297a) unmentioned in the scriptural account,⁵⁵ turns the exchange between Moses and the Lord into one between Moses and the people, here too interjecting an additional, «unbiblical» speaker (compare 11,21-23 and 3.298 and see n. 35). In addition, he «scrambles» the geographical indications of Numbers 11, (generally) recasts the Bible's direct as indirect discourse (see n. 10), avoids its divine title «the Lord» (see n. 38) and utilizes historic present forms whereas the LXX consistently employs past forms (see n. 11).

Josephus' thorough-going reworking of Numbers 11 in content, style, and vocabulary naturally generates a rather different portrayal by him of the chapter's three main characters, i.e. Moses, the people, and God. The Josephan Moses appears more autonomous and self-assured vis-à-vis both his narrative counterparts. Thus, in contrast to the biblical presentation which devotes considerable space to the hero's querulous and skeptical questions to the Deity (see 11,16-20.21-22), Josephus nowhere represents him as addressing himself to God. Rather, in face of the people's complaints, he has Moses respond to them without any prior consultation of the Deity with words (see 3.298) that express his confidence that God will provide what the people are demanding and his own continued solidarity with them, a stance that is then immediately vindicated from God's side by the coming of the quail even while Moses is addressing the people (see 3.299a). In sum, throughout *Ant.* 3.295-299 Moses appears as much more the model leader, fully equally to his onerous task and unquestioningly confident of God's support, than he does in Numbers 11 itself.⁵⁶ Whereas then Josephus «improves» Numbers' depiction of the character of Moses, he correspondingly accentuates the negative portrayal of the people in the biblical account. In particular, he repeatedly inserts wording and editorial commentary—without counterpart in the Bible's narrative—that makes explicit his disapproval of the stances adopted by the people towards their leader (see n. 37). In the same line, he represents the crowd as only incited to a greater recalcitrance by the plea made on Moses' behalf by one of their number (see 3.297),⁵⁷ even

55. On this point, see n. 26.

56. On the Josephan portrait of Moses overall, see FELDMAN, *Josephus's Interpretation*, 373-442.

57. This nameless figure—possibly inspired by the reference to Joshua and his zeal for Moses' standing in Num 11,28 (see n. 26)—is the one honorable exception to the otherwise unrelievedly negative portrayal of Moses' people in 3.295-299.

as he attributes (3.298b) to a representative of the crowd the skeptical question about the obtainability of the promised supplies that Num 11,22 ascribes to Moses himself. A final such touch in Josephus' accentuation of the crowd's incorrigibility is his interjection of a motivation for God's smiting them («for their abusive insolence towards Him») in 3.299b (compare Num 11,33 where such a motivation for the divine blow is absent).⁵⁸

As we have seen, Josephus, in his rewriting of Numbers 11, highlights the roles assumed by both Moses and the people, the one *in bonam*, the other *in malam partem*. On the other hand, God's own involvement in the events related undergoes a clear diminution in his version as compared with the part played by the Deity in the source account. Specifically, the historian leaves unmentioned the Taberah episode of Num 11,1-3 with its dramatic divine intervention against the refractory people, while throughout his rendering of Num 11,4-34, God does not speak himself (as he does at length in vv. 16-20,23), but is only spoken of, first by Moses' advocate (see 3.297) and then by the leader in person (see 3.298c). Likewise absent in the Josephan rewriting are the multiple references to God's emotional stance towards the people that recur throughout Numbers 11. All in all then, the divine character is a less conspicuous presence in *Ant.* 3.295-299 than is the Lord of its scriptural source.⁵⁹

In conclusion, Josephus' version of Numbers 11 represents an (exceptionally) free, thorough-going, and self-conscious reworking of the biblical material available to him.

3. Philo

More or less passing references to one or other element of Numbers 11 recur throughout Philo's corpus.⁶⁰ His most extensive utilization of the text —and

58. Josephus' accentuation of Numbers 11's implicitly negative portrayal of the people is in line with his generally contemptuous outlook regarding crowds and their behavior —an outlook which he shares with other Greco-Roman historians and political theorists (see e.g., Livy 25.8-9). On the point, see FELDMAN, *Josephus's Interpretation*, 145-147.

59. On such «detheologizing» as a hallmark of Josephus' retelling of biblical history, see FELDMAN, *Josephus's Interpretation*, 205-214.

60. These references are: *Gig.* 25 (the taking of Moses' to confer this upon the elders [Num 11,17] involves no diminution of his endowment, see n. 40); *Sobr.* 19; *Sac.* 77 (the character of the elders spoken of in Num 11,16 and the reason why they in particular are designated to receive Moses' spirit); *Fug.* 186 and *Mig.* 201 the figure «70» prescribed for the elders in Num 11,16); *Mut.* 232; *Sac.* 66 (the import of God's reply to Moses in Num 11,23); *Mos.* 1.208-209 (the two forms of food supplied the people in Numbers, i.e. the manna [vv. 7-9] and the quail [vv. 31-32]); *Migr.* 155 (the significance of the «mixed people that was among them» spoken of in Num 11,4a); *Her.* 19-20 (the boldness of Moses' speech exemplified in his words to God of Num 11,12-13.22, see n. 33); *Her.* 79-80 (the allegorical significance of the foodstuffs for which

the one on which I shall concentrate here—, occurs here, however, in *Spec.* 4.126-131 at the conclusion of a section (4.78-131) devoted to the Decalogue's prohibition of covetness.⁶¹ The Alexandrian introduces his rendering of the biblical quail story with the following remark (4.126):

Moses censures those of his own day as gluttons (γαστριμάργους)⁶² who suppose wanton self-indulgence (κατηδυσπαθεῖν)⁶³ is the height of happiness (εὐδαιμονικόν),⁶⁴ who not contented to confine luxurious living to cities where their requirements would be unstintedly supplied and catered for, demanded the same in wild and trackless deserts and expected to have fish (ἰχθύων), flesh (κρεῶν)⁶⁵ and all the accompaniments of plenty exposed there for sale.

Following this extended preface, Philo proceeds (4.127a) to summarily recount the people's outcry as narrated in Num 11,4-6 (cf. 11,6) and the divine decision to both accommodate and punish them (see 11,18-20):

Then, *when there was a scarcity*, they joined together to accuse and brow-beat their leader with shameless effrontery,⁶⁶ *and did not cease from giving trouble* (νεωτερίζοντες)⁶⁷ until their desire was granted though it was to their undoing.⁶⁸

To this notice, in turn, he attaches an editorial comment (4.127b) concerning the theological lessons the fatal feeding of the people were intended to

the people long in Num 11,5-6). It should be kept in mind that throughout his corpus Philo bases himself on the LXX form of the biblical text, a fact that accounts for his citing portions of Numbers 11 in terms that diverge from the MT in certain of the above references.

61. For a summary treatment of Philo's four-book treatise *De Specialibus Legibus*, see K. SCHENK, *A Brief Guide to Philo*, Louisville, KY 2005, pp. 104-106.

62. Philo's one remaining use of the word γαστριμάργος is in *Abr.* 149. See P. BORGES *et al.*, *The Philo Index*, Leiden, 2000, s.v. I draw all my subsequent indications concerning Philo's word usage from this work as well.

63. Philo's one remaining use of the verb κατηδυσπαθέω is in *Mos.* 1.160.

64. Philo's one other use of this term is in *Spec.* 4.89.

65. With the above two terms Philo begins drawing on the language of Numbers 11, where the people (vv. 4bβ-5αα) cry out: «O that we had meat (LXX κρέα) to eat! We remember the fish (LXX ἰχθύας) we eat in Egypt...»

66. Philo's (indirect discourse) rendition of the people's complaint as cited in Num 11,4b-6 makes explicit the reprehensibility of their initiative, just as it (cf. Num 11,13) specifies that Moses was its object. Compare Josephus' rendering of their words in *Ant.* 3.295b-296.

67. Philo uses the verb νεωτερίζω a total of 24 times in his corpus. For the references, see BORGES *et al.*, *Philo Index*, s.v. On Josephus' negative use of the term (and its cognates) in reference to the «revolutionaries» of his own day and their analogues in earlier Jewish history, see L.H. FELDMAN, *Studies in Josephus' Rewritten Bible* (JSJSup 58), Leiden: Brill 1979, p. 558.

68. With the above notice Philo summarizes —without mentioning the Deity— the content God's announcement to Moses in Num 11,18-20: the people will be given meat in such quantities that it will become an object of revulsion to them.

inculcate: «it was granted for two reasons, to show that all things are possible to God (πάντα θεῶ δυνατά)⁶⁹ who finds a way out of impassible difficulties, secondly to punish those who let their bellies (γαστροός, see γαστρομάργους, 4.126) go uncontrolled (ἀκράτορας)⁷⁰ and rebelled (ἀφηνιαστάς)⁷¹ against holiness (ὁσιότητος)».

Having summarized the content of Num 11,4-20 in 4,127a(b), Philo goes on, in 4.128 to expatiate on the account given in Num 11,31 concerning the arrival of the quails, the instruments of God's twofold purpose according to 4.128:

Rising up from the sea *in the early dawn*⁷² there poured forth a *cloud of quails* (ὄρτυγομήτρως)⁷³ whereby the camp and its environs were all round on every side *darkened* for a distance which an *active* (εὐζώνου)⁷⁴ man might cover in a day, while the height of their flight might be reckoned at about two cubits above the ground⁷⁵ *so as to make them easy to capture*.⁷⁶

In Numbers 11, mention of the quails' arrival (v. 31) is followed immediately by the notice of v. 32 on the people's various responses to this development. Philo, by contrast, pauses to interject a lengthy editorial commentary (4.129a) on those responses:

It might have been expected that awestruck by the marvel of this mighty work they would have been satisfied with this spectacle, and filled with piety (εὐσεβείας) and having it for their sustenance (κἄν ταύτη τραέντας),⁷⁷ would have abstained from

69. Compare the Lord's words to Abraham in LXX Gen 18,14: μὴ ἀδυνατεῖ παρὰ τῷ θεῶ ὁῦμα.

70. Philo uses the term ἀκράτωρ a total of 19 times. For the references, see BORGES *et al.*, *Philo Index*, s.v.

71. Philo uses the term ἀφηνιαστής a total of 17 times. For the references, see BORGES *et al.*, *Philo Index*, s.v.

72. This chronological indication takes the place of the opening reference in Num 11,31 to «a wind from the Lord» that brings the quail from the sea.

73. LXX Num 11,31-32 has the singular, i.e. ὄρτυγομήτρων. Philo uses the above term elsewhere in *Dec.* 16 and *Mos.* 1.209.

74. Philo's two remaining uses of the adjective εὐζωνος are in *Sacr.* 63 and *Legat.* 254.

75. Compare LXX Num 11,31: «... and it (the wind) brought them [the quails] down upon the camp a day's journey on this side and a day's journey on that side, round about the camp, as it were two cubits above the ground (the translation is that of L.C.L. BRENTON, *The Septuagint with Apocrypha: Greek and English*, Peabody (MA) rpt. 1987, p. 190). Philo's rendering both embellishes and clarifies the biblical presentation (particularly with regard to its concluding «two cubits» reference).

76. Philo appends this indication about why God —the unnamed cause of the events related in 4.128— has the quails arrive at this particular level of flight.

77. On his reading and translation of the above phrase vis-à-vis the options adopted by other editors, see COLSON, *Philo VIII*, p. 88, n. b.

fleshy food (κρεωφαγίας).⁷⁸ Instead they spurred on their lusts (ἐπιθυμίαν)⁷⁹ more than before and hastened to grasp what seemed so great a boon...

Only thereafter, does he come (4.129b) to present his (highly embellished) rendering of 11,32:

With both hands they pulled in the creatures and filled their laps with them, they put them away in their tents, and since excessive avidity (ἄγαν πλεονεξίαι) knows no bounds, went out to catch others, and dressing them in any way they could⁸⁰ devoured them greedily, doomed in their senselessness to be destroyed by the surfeit.⁸¹

The story of Num 11,4-34 finds its negative climax in v. 33 where the people are smitten with a «very great plague», expressive of the Lord's «anger» against them, even before they have consumed the meat they had been given. For his version of this happening, Philo seems to draw, not on the wording of 11,33 itself, but rather on the divine announcement of the people's punishment in 11,20 (previously passed over by him) with its reference to their eating the meat «until it comes out your nostrils and becomes loathsome [LXX εἰς χολέραν, to the point of nausea] to you». Turning this announcement into a notice on its fulfillment, the Alexandrian reports in 4.130a: «Indeed they shortly perished through discharges of bile (καθάρσσει χολῆς⁸²)...»⁸³

Rounding off the narrative of Num 11,4-34 is the etiological notice of v. 34, the LXX of which translates the Hebrew place name «Kibroth-hattaavah» by «graves of lust». Philo evidences his dependence on this LXX reading, stating in 4.130b «... so that the place also received its name *from the disaster* (πάθους) *which befell them*,⁸⁴ for it was called “Monuments of Lust” (Μνήματα τῆς ἐπιθυμίας = LXX)...».

The entire chapter Numbers 11 closes with the notice (v. 35) on the people's advance to and stopping at «Hazereth». In place therefore Philo (4.130 *in fine*-

78. Philo's one remaining use of this term is in *Spec.* 1.47. It echoes the use of the word κρεῶν in his version of the people's demand in 4.126.

79. With this term Philo anticipates LXX's translation ([Μνήματα τῆς] ἐπιθυμίας) of the name given the site of the quail episode in Num 11,34.

80. This element of Philo's presentation apparently has in view the concluding indication of Num 11,32: «they spread them [the quails] out for themselves around the camp» (so MT; LXX's rendition translates as «they dried for themselves dryings around the camp»). See COLSON, *Philo* VII, p. 89, n. c.

81. Philo appends the above ominous note to his rendering of Num 11,32; it recalls his earlier reference (4.127a) to the people's desire being granted, «though it was to their undoing».

82. Philo uses the word χολή three times elsewhere: *Ebr.* 222; *Somn.* 2.191; and *Spec.* 1.218.

83. On Philo's formulation here, see COLSON, *Philo* VIII, p. 89, n. d.

84. In Num 11,34 the site gets its name «because there they had buried the people who had the craving».

131) concludes the segment 4.126-131 with an appended reflection/exhortation concerning the «lust» featured in the place name⁸⁵ cited just previously by him:

... lust than which no greater evil can exist in the soul as the story shows. And therefore most excellent are these words of Moses in his Exhortations (παραινέσεσι):⁸⁶ «Each man shall not do what is pleasing in his own sight (οὐ ποιήσει ἕκαστος τὸ ἄρεστόν ἐνώπιον αὐτοῦ)»,⁸⁷ which is as much to say: «let no one indulge his own lust» (ἐπιθυμία). Let a man be well pleasing (εὐαρεστείτω)⁸⁸ to the universe, to nature, to laws, to wise men and disregard self love (ἰλαυτία).⁸⁹ So only will he attain true excellence.⁹⁰

In *Spec.* 4.126-131, Philo, in accordance with the theme, i.e. «covetness» in its various manifestation, of the wider segment, 4.78-131 (see above), basically confines his utilization of Numbers 11 to that chapter's vv. 31-34, whose content he reproduces, with considerable embellishment, in 4.128-130b.⁹¹ As a framework to this biblically-based presentation, he composes, (essentially) on his own, a preface (4.126-127)⁹² and a postscript (4.130 *in fine*-131) which draw out the theological and moral lessons implicit in the scriptural narrative.

How then does Philo's expanded retelling of Num 11,31-34 compare with its biblical prototype? Most obviously, that retelling aims to make explicit the morale(s) the Numbers story is content simply to suggest and to offer editorial commentary upon the people's behavior both in asking for meat and their reac-

85. Compare his anticipatory reference to this site in his (interjected) mention of the people's «spurring on their lusts (ἐπιθυμίαν) more than before» in 4.129a. As a *Leitwort* of the segment *Spec.* 4.126-131, the noun ἐπιθυμία likewise echoes the verb used in Philo's citation (οὐκ ἐπιθυμήσεις of the Decalogue's prohibition of covetness at the start of the larger unit (4.78-131) that revolves around the topic of covetness; see above.

86. This is one of Philo's designations for the Book of Deuteronomy —from which he is about to quote in the continuation of 4.130— used by him also in *Agr.* 84; see COLSON, *Philo* VIII, p. 90, n. a.

87. Philo here quotes (in modified form) Deut 12,8 which in the LXX rendition reads: οὐ ποιήσετε πάντα, ἃ ἡμεῖς ποιούμεν ὄδε σήμερον, ἕκαστος τὸ ἄρεστόν ἐνώπιον αὐτοῦ.

88. This form constitutes a wordplay with the term (τὸ) ἄρεστόν in Philo's foregoing quotation of Deut 12,8. Philo uses the verb εὐαρεστείω a total of 37 times in his corpus. For the references, see BORGES *et al.*, *Philo Index*, s.v.

89. Philo uses the noun φιλαυτία a total of 17 times in his corpus. For the references, see BORGES *et al.*, *Philo Index*, s.v.

90. The above exhortation brings to a conclusion, not only the segment *Spec.* 4.126-134, but also the entire unit 4.78-131, which begins at the end of 4.78 with Philo's citation of the Decalogue's prohibition of coveting.

91. Elsewhere in his corpus Philo, of course, does make use of other portions of Numbers 11 (the seventy elders, the manna, Moses' «bold» speech to the Lord) that he finds relevant to his purposes in the given context; see n. 60.

92. In this section, Philo does incorporate brief allusions to Num 11,4b-5 (4.126b; see n. 65) and 11,18b-20 (4.127a; see n. 68).

tion to its arrival. His rendering further accentuates the psychological and dramatic aspects of the episode with its inserted references (see 4.126, 129a) to the people's inner states that prompt their words and actions and its *Ausmalung* of the notice (Num 11,32) on the collection of the incoming quail in 4.129b. Of the three characters of the source account (the people, Moses, and God), Philo, in fact, concentrates on the first of these, notably expatiating on the words and actions attributed to the people in his source. By contrast, in his retelling of the story, he leaves aside Numbers' references to the words spoken by Moses, restricting his mentions of the leader to his preface (see 4.126) and postscript (see 4.131). Likewise God himself undergoes a (literary) diminution in Philo's rewriting, wherein the Deity's speaking role —so prominent in Numbers 11 itself— disappears, being replaced by the parenthetical editorial comment of 4.127b about the two reasons why God opted to give the people what they asked for, albeit to their undoing.⁹³ With its focus then on the portrayal of the operation of covetness on an entire people, the disastrous consequences of this, and the admonitory lessons to be drawn from their experience, Philo's version offers a treatment of the quail story quite different from the biblical one, which, e.g., revolves around the three-way interplay between the people, Moses, and God.

4. Conclusion

I conclude this essay with some brief comparative remarks on Josephus and Philo's respective rewritings of Numbers 11. Their versions, first of all do evidence some features in common. Both authors —at least in this instance— present a highly abridged rendering of the biblical chapter, one which, moreover, essentially limits itself to the quail story related there, while leaving aside, *inter alia*, the accompanying Taberah incident (Num 11,1-3), the interwoven «spirit conferral material» of 11,11-12.14-16.17.24-30, and the concluding itinerary notice of 11,35. They further largely accord in the particular elements of the quail story they do take over from the source: the Israelites' complaint (Num 11,4b-6) the coming of the quail (11,31), the people's gathering of the birds (11,32), the disaster that befalls them upon their doing so (11,33), and the place name «graves of lust» that commemorates the happening (11,34). Josephus and Philo likewise go together in their accentuation of the people's verbal assault on their leader, just as both introduce wording concerning this that

93. With this comment Philo provides an answer to the «real» question, which, according to Jewish tradition elsewhere (see n. 22), Moses was posing to God with his seemingly skeptical queries in Num 11,21-22, i.e. why should God bother to give the people meat if his intention was thereafter to destroy them?

expresses their disapproval of the people's initiative (see *Ant.* 3.296-297 and *Spec.* 4.127). Conversely, the two writers eliminate the speaking role attributed to God in Num 11,18-20.23, making only third person references to the Deity's involvement (see 4.298b,299b and 4.127b,131) in the proceedings. Finally, as a negative commonality between them, we may note that in both their presentations the problematic biblical portrait of a querulous, skeptical Moses (see Num 11,11-14.21-22) disappears.

At the same time, the two *relectures* are marked by noteworthy differences as well. Josephus' rendition lacks, e.g., the explicit moralizing and theologizing commentary that Philo weaves around the incident itself. He likewise assigns Moses a much more prominent role as the refractory people's positive counterpart than does the Alexandrian, in whose presentation Moses is not depicted as speaking in the course of the affair and is only referred to in the preface (4.126) and postscript (4.131). Philo, for his part, differs from Josephus in elaborating (rather than compressing) the content of Num 11,31-32 (the coming and capture of the quail), even as he turns the biblical narrative into a story not of the interaction between people and leader (as Josephus does), but rather into a depiction of collective covetness and its nefarious effects. Similarly, the Alexandrian's version, with its collective focus, makes no mention of the nameless figures who, in Josephus' rewriting advocate one behalf of Moses (3.297) and express incredulity at Moses' promise of meat (3.298), respectively.

Philo and Josephus were near contemporaries, with the former being mentioned by and apparently exercising a certain influence on the former.⁹⁴ Accordingly, a detailed comparison of the pair's rewritings of biblical episodes, such as I have attempted in this essay, is an enterprise that can help to bring into clearer focus what is distinctive about each's author's approach to Scripture's story.

Christopher BEGG
Catholic University
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20064
U.S.A.

94. Josephus' mention of Philo comes in *Ant.* 18.259-260. On the topic of the latter's influence on the former, see FELDMAN, *Josephus's Interpretation*, pp. 52-54.

Summary

Numbers 11 tells of various happenings that transpire once the Israelites leave Mount Sinai (see Num 10,11-12), these including a story of God's sending quail to the refractory people that ends up badly for them. This essay provides a detailed comparative reading of two ancient retellings of the biblical quail story, i.e. those of Josephus (*Ant.* 3.295-299) and Philo (*Spec.* 4.126-131). From this comparative investigation, it emerges that both authors, e.g., accentuate the reprehensibility of the people's behavior and eliminate the speaking role attributed to God himself in the biblical account. At the same time, Josephus' rendering is distinctive in its highlighting of the interaction between Moses and the people, an interaction into which the historian introduces mention of two nameless individuals who, respectively, support and challenge Moses in his exchange with the people. Philo, on the other hand, focuses all attention on the covetous people, the punishment that comes upon them, and the moral lessons to be drawn from the happening, even while he confines mention of Moses to the opening and closing reflections with which he «frames» his reproduction of the data of Num 11,31-34.

Sumari

Nombres 11 teixeix històries sobre la provisió de Déu al poble amb menjar en el desert i el seu suport provident a Moisès que profetitza el pecat d'un moment a l'altre, com li ha encarregat Déu. Aquest article examina dos antics relats dels materials de Nombres 11, que són Josefus a *Ant.* 3.295-299 i Filò al seu *Spec.* 4.126-129. De l'anàlisi comparativa dels dos fragments es desprèn que tots dos es mantenen molt allunyats de l'assumpte bíblic que relata l'encàrrec a Moisès, ja que cap dels dos li atorga un paper d'interlocutor de la Divinitat, com trobem en el text de la font. Al mateix temps, les seves respectives versions evidencien diferències significatives. Josefus, per exemple, destaca la talla de Moisès en el tracte amb el poble obstinat, mentre Filò, per la seva part, lamenta el paper dels seus actes, inclosiu quan ell pronuncia una variada llista de reflexions morals i teològiques sobre els fets en qüestió, cosa que Josefus ho refereix.