

Article

“Not as the Gentiles”: Sexual Issues at the Interface between Judaism and its Greco-Roman World

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Abstract: Sexual Issues played a significant role in Judaism’s engagement with its Greco-Roman world. This paper will examine that engagement in the Hellenistic Greco-Roman era to the end of the first century CE. In part sexual issues were a key element of demarcation between Jews and the wider community, alongside such matters as circumcision, food laws, sabbath keeping and idolatry. Jewish writers, such as Philo of Alexandria, make much of the alleged sexual profligacy of their Gentile contemporaries, not least in association with wild drunken parties, same-sex relations and pederasty. Jews, including the emerging Christian movement, claimed the moral high ground. In part, however, matters of sexuality were also areas where intercultural influence is evident, such as in the shift in Jewish tradition from polygyny to monogyny, but also in the way Jewish and Christian writers adapted the suspicion and sometimes rejection of passions characteristic of some popular philosophies of their day, seeing them as allies in their moral crusade.

Keywords: sexuality; Judaism; Greco-Roman

1. Introduction

When the apostle Paul wrote to his recently founded community of believers that they were to behave “not as the Gentiles” in relation to sexual matters (1 Thess 4:5), he was standing in a long tradition of Jews demarcating themselves from their world over sexual issues. Already in Leviticus 18, some centuries before the emergence of the Greco-Roman empires, we read: “You shall not do as they do in the land of Egypt, where you lived, and you shall not do as they do in the land of Canaan, to which I am bringing you. You shall not follow their statutes” (18:3). Their doings, which the chapter goes on to forbid, include incestuous marriage, intercourse during menstruation, same-sex relations, and bestiality (18:6-23). It becomes a feature of Jewish and early Christian writings during the Greco-Roman period that one of the main ways that writers differentiate their communities from their pagan world is by deploring what they see as sexual immorality as well as idolatry.

2. Encounters in the Jewish Homeland

2.1. *The Book of the Watchers*

One of the earliest traces of engagement with the Hellenistic world comes in the earlier sections of the Book of the Watchers (1 Enoch 1 – 36), now preserved in the collection of writings associated with the ancient figure, Enoch, and known as 1 Enoch. In 1 Enoch 6 – 11 we have a rendering of the myth of the watchers, angels, who lusted after women, who conceived and gave birth to giants. The giants fought one another, wreaking devastation in their environment, and finally killed one another. The authors appear to have applied the myth to the phenomenon of Alexander the Great and the wars among his generals after his death, which then continued over successive generations especially between the Ptolemies and the Seleucids during the third

century BCE, bringing devastation in their wake (Collins 1998, p. 50; Bedenbender, pp. 184-86; Tigchelaar, pp. 172-73; Nickelsburg, pp. 166-71). Sexual adventure contrary to nature, namely heavenly beings with human beings, created chaos. The author makes the watchers also responsible for the passing on of expertise to smelt iron and make weapons, but also ornaments and cosmetics which then allegedly corrupted women to become seducers of men (Loader 2007, pp. 18-19, 46-48). Collins sees in 1 Enoch 8-9 an “expression of the author’s reaction to the novelties of the Hellenistic age, which was marked by technological progress, on the one hand, and exposure to Greek attitudes to the human body and sexuality, on the other” (2002, p. 60). Blaming foreign women in particular for carrying secrets of sorcery is ground for forbidding intermarriage between Jewish men and non-Jewish women. The prohibition of intermarriage reached back long before the Hellenistic period, but remained current.

2.2. The Hellenistic Crisis, the Maccabean Revolt and the Hasmoneans

The Hellenistic crisis which led to the revolt of the Maccabees in the early second century BCE, had a complex background which included competing political and economic forces as the Seleucids wrested control of the Jewish homeland from the Ptolemies at the end of the third century BCE. Underlying it was also a religious crisis as Hellenism’s cultural imperialism swayed elites to adopt Hellenistic fashion and will inevitably have raised the issue of intermarriage, though only indirectly attested. 2 Maccabees records how the brother of the high priest, Onias III, Jason, corruptly paid Antiochus to enable him to usurp his brother as high priest and then “at once shifted his compatriots over to the Greek way of life” (4:10), setting Jewish laws aside and establishing institutions typical of a Hellenistic city, including a gymnasium. Collins discusses their actual motivation, concluding that “there is little evidence that their deeper motives were cultural or religious” (2001, p. 46). 1 Maccabees tells us that Antiochus, himself, “authorized them to observe the ordinances of the Gentiles ... So they built a gymnasium in Jerusalem, according to Gentile custom” (1:14). A gymnasium was a centre not only for sports but also for education, an *ephebeum* (2 Macc 4:9), bringing together peoples of different language and ethnic backgrounds (Bolyki, p. 136).

The practice of naked sports then led to attempts by Jewish men to conceal their circumcision to avoid potential embarrassment: they “removed the marks of circumcision” (1 Macc 1:15) (VanderKam, p. 21). They did so by what is described as *epispasm*, stretching the skin of the penis to create the appearance of having a foreskin, a practice which “prevailed throughout the Hellenistic and Roman ages and attained a plateau in popularity in the first century” (Hall, p. 71; Collins 1973, p. 22). The Hellenistic gymnasium was also not far from the temple complex which opened the possibility that priests might attend. Such nakedness in the context of holy space was considered a serious offence before God (Satlow 1997, p. 449-51).

The writing, Jubilees (Loader 2007, pp. 113-306), which retells stories of Genesis with glosses and expansions to address issues of its day, appears to have its origins in this period. It retells the account of Adam and Eve, their sin, and their need to cover their nakedness, with pointed emphasis on the issue:

But of all the animals and cattle he permitted Adam alone to cover his shame. For this reason it has been commanded in the tablets regarding all those who know the judgment of the law that they cover their shame and not uncover themselves as the nations uncover themselves (3:30-31).

There are also indications that some began to neglect circumcision or do it only partially (Jub. 15:33-34). Similarly, the story of Ham's son seeing the genitals of his father (Jub. 7:6-12; cf. Gen 9:20-27) belongs in the realm of such concerns (Loader 2007, pp. 146-49). The concern with nakedness is reflected also in the Testament of Moses according to which Moses predicts that "their young sons will be cut by physicians to bring forward their foreskins" (8:3).

The account in 1 Maccabees suggests indirectly that something more than nakedness was the concern. The words with which 1:15 concludes, "They joined with the Gentiles and sold themselves to do evil" appear to use biblical phraseology alluding to 2 Kgs 17:17 ("they sold themselves to do evil"), concerned with sorcery, and Num 25:3 (Israel yoked itself [τῷ εὐεργίσθῃ; cf. LXX ἐτελέσθῃ] to the Baal of Peor"), an allusion to forbidden intermarriage with non-Jews, and linked with the exploits of Phinehas who executed God's judgement on perpetrators (25:6-10) (Doran, p. 107; Kugel, p. 79). The imagery of yoking, in particular, was frequently used to depict marriage (e.g. Sir 26:7; 2 Cor 6:14), including in the Hellenistic world by Musonius and Hierocles and in an inscription from Mantinea (Deming, p. 143). An allusion to intermarriage is therefore likely. "Not only did they build a gymnasium and remove their circumcision, thus abandoning the holy covenant, they also joined the nations sexually by way of intermarriage" (Lange, p. 208; similarly, Loader 2011, pp. 245-48). Concern with sorcery might echo the particular warnings of the Book of Watchers about foreign women's influence (cf. also Jub. 11:7-8, 14-17; 22:16-17).

Appropriating Hellenistic fashions would have touched many areas of life and come into conflict with Jewish law at a number of points beyond just circumcision and intermarriage. These would include food laws, prostitution, male same-sex relations, and generally sexual promiscuity associated with symposia. The period prior to Antiochus intervention is to be distinguished from the period when he sought to impose changes, such as forbidding circumcision, sabbath, and cult, erecting the offensive altar, and probably introducing forbidden acts of revelry into the temple.

In contrast to the implied reference to intermarriage in 1 Macc 1:14-15, in Jubilees we find extensive warnings about intermarriage. While these were applicable to the period of the Hellenistic crisis, they would also have had currency after the Maccabean revolt in the Hasmonean period, where some prefer to date the final form of the work.

It portrays Abraham as warning Jacob about the dangers which Gentiles pose:

Separate from the nations, and do not eat with them. Do not act as they do, and do not become their companion, for their actions are something that is impure, and all their ways are defiled and something abominable and detestable (22:16).

While the allusion could be to pagan cultic meals generally, it is more likely targeting symposia. Shimoff notes the influence of the Hellenistic banquet among Jews, pointing to Aristaeas and Ben Sira 31:12-19; 32:1-13 (p. 445). The actions are about more than eating forbidden food, such as food containing blood. They doubtless include the sexual profligacy frequently associated with symposia. Jubilees uses the story of the abduction of Jacob's daughter, Dinah, by Shechem of Samaria, as the basis for an extrapolation attacking intermarriage with Gentiles by both women and men and demanding dissolution of existing mixed marriages (30:7-23; as in Ezra 9 - 10) (Loader 2007, pp. 165-76; Frevel, pp. 239-42). There can be no intermarriage with foreigners, not even

with converts (proselytes) (Hayes, p. 77), because Israel's sacred seed is to be preserved. As Halpern-Amaru observes, Jubilees thus makes all people "adjuncts to the priestly class" (p. 154).

The issue, however, is also the sexual depravity which the author sees in the non-Jewish world. Thus, Rebecca warns Jacob that "Canaanite women are evil" (27:8); "Everything that they do (consists of) sexual impurity and lewdness" (25:1), statements the author's hearers would know applies just as much to foreign nations in their Hellenistic context. Failure to heed such warnings, it claims, leads to disaster, citing Judah's marriage to the Canaanite Bedsuel, which eventually traps him into engaging unwittingly in incest (41:1-21). The author employs such warnings within the narrative world of the text which it extrapolates, but occasionally refers to his own as in the mention of the Kittim, probably referring to the coastal cities of Phoenicia and Philistia, which were significant channels of Hellenistic influence (24:24-30) (Anderson, p. 66).

The theme of intermarriage is also significant in the Aramaic Levi Document, upon which Jubilees appears to draw, but it lacks any reference to Hellenism (Drahn, p. 65; Loader 2007, pp. 87-112). Hultgård locates the Aramaic Levi Document in the pre-Maccabean conflicts in the context of anti-Hellenistic movements (pp. 94-95). Objections to intermarriage in times of local conquest by the Hasmonean rulers who emerged in the aftermath of the Maccabean revolt may have been more to do with enslavement of women prisoners, deplored, it seems, in one of the earliest documents produced by the group who settled by the Dead Sea, 4QMMT (Loader 2009, pp. 53-90; Sharp, p. 220), than with encounter with foreign culture, for such women would still have been seen as sources of corruption. Documents of that sect are sometimes more concerned with whom priests marry, though the broader concern remains (Loader 2009, pp. 356-59).

3. Encounters in the Jewish Diaspora

3.1 *The Wisdom of Solomon*

Concern with what was seen as the sexual depravity of the Greco-Roman world was more acute where Jews found themselves part of the very large diaspora found throughout the Hellenistic cultural empire. It was often found in association with rejection of idolatry, often to the extent of attributing moral depravity to failure to acknowledge the true nature of God. The *Wisdom of Solomon* is typical in highlighting the connection (13:1 – 14:31) (Loader 2011a, pp. 420-22). The connection it makes between idolatry and sexual depravity foreshadows the arguments of Paul in *Romans* 1. Its author appears to be conversant with Middle Platonic and Stoic thought, probably more through general education than through direct encounter (Gilbert, p. 312). Its author adopts a common stance of assuming that the good in Hellenistic culture is something to be embraced and so is quite happy to employ its language (Winston 1979, p. 14-28; Grabbe, pp. 32, 35) and ideas (Collins 2000, p. 201), such as the notion of laws of nature and the ways of wisdom and justice (Collins 2000, pp. 199-200; Winston 2001b, pp. 91), although Barclay sees the work rather as "an educated and deeply Hellenized exercise in cultural aggression" (p. 184). Sophisticated Greek and Roman critics could also deplore the excesses of idolatry. This author can also employ erotic imagery in speaking of wisdom and the pursuit of knowledge (Kloppenborg, pp. 76-78), reflecting Greco-Roman imagery. Winston notes "Greek models for the personification of Virtue/Wisdom as a beautiful maiden. In the famous parable known as the 'Choice of Heracles' and later adapted by Philo (*Sacr.* 21-29), the Sophist Prodicus of Ceos had personified virtue as a fair

maiden of high bearing who invited Heracles to choose her (Xenophon *Mem.* 2:1:21-33)” (2001a, p. 105), pointing also to a eulogy of Aristotle (2001a, p. 105) and also to Philo’s use of erotic imagery in speaking of the relationship between the sage and Wisdom in *Congr.* 74; *Contempl.* 68; and *Spec.* 4.14 (2001a, pp. 102, 106). Collins draws attention to the influence of Isis tradition and Middle Platonic and Stoic thought in Wisdom (2000, p. 196) and in detail: Stoicism (Collins 1997, pp. 197-99), Middle Platonism (Collins 1997, pp. 200-202); and Isis (Collins 1997, pp. 203-204). There are also strong Jewish precedents for erotic wisdom imagery in Proverbs 8 and Ben Sira 24.

3.2. The Sentences of Phocylides

While the Wisdom of Solomon is pseudonymously attributed to king Solomon of the 10th century BCE, the poetic work of 231 hexameter lines, Sentences of Phocylides, masquerades as the words of 6th or 7th century BCE Miletian philosopher, while giving voice to the views of a sophisticated Greek-speaking Jewish author writing around the turn of the millennia, mid first century BCE to mid first century CE. Following the pattern of adopting the persona of a significant figure of Hellenistic culture to attack its abuses, the author deplores the sexual misconduct of the Gentile world (3-8, 175-194, and parts of 195-227) (Loader 2011a, 457-76). This is about offering guidance to Jews to remain faithful to their tradition and its teachings (Wilson, pp. 11-12; similarly, Weber 2000, p. 292) as they engage Hellenistic culture. As Wilson observed, “Demonstrating the indebtedness of the founders of Greek culture to Mosaic wisdom in this way would have facilitated for Jews the task of reconciling their pride in Judaism with their engagement in Hellenistic civilization” (Wilson, p. 4; similarly, Oegema 2002, p. 68; Weber 2000, p. 290; van der Horst, pp. 15-16). The author draws on both Jewish sources, in particular the Greek translation of the Old Testament, the Septuagint (LXX) (Küchler, pp. 280-81), but also non-Jewish sources (Wilson, pp. 14-17; Derron, pp. 35-54 with an extensive list), Thomas noting dependence on Homer and Theognis (pp. 195-97, 201-204). These influences were probably already well merged within the framework of the tradition of teaching (Niebuhr, pp. 8, 20; Weber 2000, pp. 286-87).

It elaborates what was a standard pattern of instructions about household order, the roles of parents, children and slaves (Balch 1988, pp. 25-50; Crouch, on Stoic lists: pp. 37-73, their use in Hellenistic Judaism: pp. 74-101, in Colossians: pp. 103-145 and in *Pseudo-Phocylides*: p. 76), by relating it to the substance of the prohibitions of Leviticus 18, without alluding to them directly, perhaps deliberately (Thomas, pp. 59, 64-71), and supporting them with arguments found in wisdom discourse, including those typical Hellenistic ethical discourse, such as Stoic arguments from nature (176, 190, 191), and discussions about Eros (“Be not inclined to utterly unrestrained lust for a woman. For *Erōs* is no god, but a passion destructive of all”) (193-194) (Thomas, 87).

The inclusion of not just the act but also the attitude is typical of Hellenistic moral philosophy (Nussbaum, p. 485; Thomas, p.81), and is applied not just to women generally but also to men’s wives, recalling Seneca’s disapproval of men who treat their wives like mistresses (*Matr.* 85; similarly, Philo *Spec.* 3.9; cf. 3.79, 113) (Wilson, p. 195). Moderation and control are fundamental values for the author. Failure to exercise such control, to master Eros, leads to disaster, especially in relation to sexual appetites (Wilson, p. 199). The author thus reflects the values of the Hellenistic philosophy of his time. The prohibition of adultery (184, and already in the

decatalogue summary foreshadowed in the summary, 3-8) and also of incest and bestiality, was also consistent with values of the Greco-Roman world. Wilson draws attention to Plato *Leg.* 838A-B; Euripides *Andr.* 173-175; Plutarch *Cic.* 29.4-5; Cicero *Pis.* 28; *Mil.* 73 and also notes Philo's deploring where incest is tolerated (pp. 192) and notes the high value put on marital harmony (pp. 202-203).

The author's arguments against homosexual relations, that they do not occur in the animal kingdom and are contrary to nature, reflect those of critics in the wider world (e.g. Plutarch *Brut. an.* 990D; Ovid *Metam.* 9.733-734 on relations among females; and earlier Plato *Leg.* 836C) (van der Horst, p. 239; Wilson, p. 197), as does his disapproval of lesbian relations where one woman usurps a male role, something shameful as was a man's taking a female role (Wilson, p. 198), and his warning to parents not to let their pubescent boys wear long and plaited hair rendering them vulnerable to the gaze of male predators (210-214). In other areas the author parts company with his Hellenistic world, such as in prohibiting abortion, exposure of infants, and doing violence to a pregnant wife (184-186; cf. Exod 21:22-23), abuses frequently addressed by Jewish authors (e.g. Philo *Hypoth.* 7.7; Josephus *Ap.* 2.202). Van der Horst comments that "very probably the verse simply means: treat a pregnant woman gently, do not beat her (so as to prevent a miscarriage?)" (p. 235; similarly, Wilson, p. 194; Thomas, p. 71). For procreation was paramount, a value held in common, but not so applied in his world.

3.3. The Sibylline Oracles

Another example of the pseudonymous ploy of directing famous figures of Hellenistic culture against their own culture comes in the form of a body of 14 books of poetic literature written in hexameters which appeared over some centuries, from the second century BCE to the 7th century CE, identified as the words of the ancient pagan Erithrean Sibyl, called the Sibylline Oracles (Loader 2011a, pp. 56-73). In the earliest section of these in Book 3 (97-349, 489-829), the Sibyl deplores Rome: "Male will have intercourse with male and they will set up boys in houses of ill-fame (αἰσχροῖς ἐν τεγέεσσιν) and in those days there will be a great affliction among men" (3:185-187). That theme returns when the Sibyl hails the high moral standards of the Jews:

Greatly, surpassing all men, 595 they are mindful of holy wedlock, 596 and they do not engage in impious (or: impure, immoral) intercourse with male children, 597 as do Phoenicians, Egyptians, and Romans, 598, spacious Greece and many nations of others, 599 Persians and Galatians and all Asia, transgressing, 599 the holy law of immortal God, which they transgressed (3:594-600).

While alluding to the prohibitions of Leviticus the Sibyl portrays God's law as applicable to all humankind: "common to all" (3:248). The Sibyl warns of impending judgment: Avoid adultery and indiscriminate intercourse with males" (3:764). That exhortation continues: "rear your own offspring and do not kill it, for the Immortal is angry at whoever commits these sins (3:765-766). A later section of Book 3, probably to be dated to the late first century BCE or early first century CE, attacks Romans as "a crafty and evil race of impious and false double-tongued men and immoral adulterous idol worshippers" (3:36-38). "They will have no fidelity at all. Many widowed women will love other men secretly for gain; and those who have husbands will not keep hold of the rope of life" (3:43-45).

In the Jewish revision of Book 4, made probably some time after the fall of Jerusalem 70 CE (4:116) and probably shortly after the eruption of Vesuvius in 79 C.E. (4:130-35), the Sibyl hails the righteous as those who

“commit no wicked murder, nor deal in dishonest gain, which are most horrible things. Neither have they disgraceful desire for another’s spouse or for hateful and repulsive abuse of a male” (4:31-33). Book 5, deriving from the early second century CE, depicts Nero as one who “destroyed many men and laid hands on the womb. He sinned against spouses, and was sprung from abominable people”. The reference may be to his killing his mother or possibly his wife, Poppaea, by kicking her when she was pregnant (Suetonius, *Nero*, 35) (van Henten, p. 67) and so reversing the claims about his divine birth. It goes on to condemn Rome: With you are found adulteries and illicit intercourse with boys. 167 Effeminate and unjust, evil city, ill-fated above all. 168 Alas, city of the Latin land, unclean in all things (5:166-168). Similarly:

Matricides, desist from boldness and evil daring, 387 you who formerly impiously catered for pederasty 388 and set up in houses prostitutes who were pure before, 389 with insults and punishment and toilsome disgrace. 390 For in you mother had intercourse with child unlawfully, 391 and daughter was joined to her begetter as bride. 392 In you also kings defiled their ill-fated mouths. 393 In you also evil men practiced bestiality. 394 Be silent, most lamentable evil city, which indulges in revelry. 395 For no longer in you will virgin maidens tend the divine fire of sacred nourishing wood (5:386-96).

This catalogue of sexual wrongdoing as seen by the Jewish author of this book thus includes pederasty, prostitution, incest with mother and daughter (similarly *Pss. Sol.* 8:9), fellatio, bestiality, and possibly violation of vestal virgins.

3.4. 2 Enoch

In 2 Enoch, a pseudonymous writing within a Jewish tradition of compositions attributed to the ancient figure of authority, Enoch, and penned around the turn of the millennia (Loader 2011a, pp. 37-45), we find condemnation of what it called unnatural intercourse, namely anal sex and sex between mutual consenting adults, targeting one of the standard abuses which Jews saw in the Hellenistic world. Thus, MS P, arguably preserving text of the original version, later expunged by church editors (Böttrich 1995, p. 789; Böttrich 1992, p. 187), speaks of those “who practice on the earth the sin which is against nature, which is child corruption in the anus in the manner of Sodom” (10:4), setting it at the head of a list of sins. In 34:2 it refers to “abominable fornications that is, friend with friend in the anus, and every other kind of wicked uncleanness which it is disgusting to report”. It also condemns bestiality (58:6).

3.5. Aristeas

Another pseudonymous work is the Letter of Aristeas, allegedly written by Aristeas (Loader 2011a, pp. 337-71; Murray, pp. 337-71), the envoy of Ptolemy II Philadelphus (283-246 B.C.E.) to Eleazar, the high priest of Jerusalem, but probably composed in the latter third of the second century BCE during the reign of Ptolemy VIII Euergetes II (Physcon) 145-125 BCE (Collins 2000, pp. 88-101; Bickerman 1976, pp. 108-36). It purports to record a conversation between Ptolemy and 72 Jews (187-294). The author’s goal, it appears, is to show the superiority of Jewish wisdom, mainly on topics of governance. As Gruen observes, for the author “Jews have not only digested Hellenic culture, they have also surmounted it. The *Letter* plainly addresses itself, first and foremost, at Jews” (p. 221). It also alleges sexual abuse as typical of non-Jewish men:

The majority of other men defile themselves in their relationships, thereby committing a serious offense, and lands and whole cities take pride in it: they not only procure the males, they also defile mothers and daughters. We are quite separated from these practices (152).

3.6 *The Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs*

The Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs, in their current form a work edited by Christians in the second century CE, preserves much earlier material which belongs to the period under review (Loader 2011b, pp. 368-435). As Collins puts it, “Ultimately the ethics of the *Testaments* cannot be pinpointed as the product of a specific situation. They are of interest for our purpose as material which seems to have accumulated and circulated in Hellenized Jewish circles over two hundred years and which was eventually taken over by Christianity” (2000, p. 177). It depicts each of the twelve patriarchs offering parting words to their descendants and within this framework offering teaching, much of it as ethical discourse. In it we find typically Jewish abhorrence of same sex relations (T. Levi 14:6; T. Naph. 4:1; T. Benj. 9:1; T. Naph. 3:4-5) depicted as disorder and unnatural and the result of a perverted understanding of God’s nature (T. Naph. 2:2 – 3:5), and condemnations of prostitution (T. Levi 14:5-6; T. Jud. 23:2); pederasty (T. Levi 17:11); bestiality (T. Levi 17:11), adultery (T. Levi 14:6 T. Ash. 2:8; 3:3; T. Jos. 4:4-7), rape and incest (T. Reub. 1:6-10; 3:11-15; 4:2-4; (T. Levi 5:3-4; 6:3 – 7:4). It is also remarkable, however, for its emphasis on passions and in this respect appears to be strongly influenced by Stoic philosophy (Kee 1983, pp. 778-90; Kee 1978, p. 263; Kugler, pp. 17-18, 21-25). Divine law is expounded less through specific commandments and not in relation to Jewish cultic requirements, but rather in relation to universal law as developed by Stoics (Kee 1978, p. 262; Collins 2000, pp. 178, 183; de Jonge 2003, p. 148; Hollander and de Jonge 1985, p. 43). Biblical stories serve ethical teaching. Reuben on incest; Judah on intermarriage, drunkenness, and incest; Joseph on resisting seduction, in each case focusing on the role of passions, but also associated with warnings about alcohol and women as essentially inferior and dangerous (T. Reub. 5:5; T. Benj. 8:2) and showing that passions uncontrolled produce disaster.

3.7. *Philo of Alexandria*

The first century CE Jewish philosopher, Philo of Alexandria (ca. 20 BCE – 50 CE), is a major resource for observing the attitudes of Jews to their Hellenistic world (Loader 2011b, pp. 2-258). He wrote extensively. A large body of his works has survived. He was a deeply committed Jew, highly educated in both Jewish tradition and Hellenistic philosophy, and in addition well connected in elite circles both of Jews and Roman authorities, family members holding significant commercial and also political positions (Schwartz, pp. 9-31; Schenk, pp. 9-14, 29-48; Borgen, pp. 14-45). He used his wealth of knowledge to advocate for his Jewish faith, primarily, it seems, to boost the confidence of his fellow Jews in the midst of foreign culture, as not only holding to a tradition which deserved respect, but which was also superior to the religions and philosophies of the world around them. To this end he employed the arguments of contemporary Hellenistic philosophy to showcase that superiority through expositions of the laws and heroes of the Jewish scriptures, primarily its first five books, Genesis to Deuteronomy. It is not possible to review all his expositions and their relevance for how he viewed

sexual attitudes and behaviour in his world. What follows focuses on those sections where he expounds Jewish law (see also Loader 2011b, pp. 188-224).

He was on common ground with his Hellenistic world when condemning adultery. He sees it as “the greatest of crimes” (*Decal.* 123), a claim repeated in Joseph’s rejection of Potiphar’s wife (*Ios.* 44a). He sees this confirmed in the fact that in the biblical tradition as he knew it from the Septuagint translation it comes as the first commandment on the second table of the decalogue and buttressed later (*Decal.* 131, similarly 168; *Spec.* 3.8), though this is not the case in most manuscripts of the original Hebrew (*Exod* 20:14; *Deut* 5:18), where it comes second after murder (Loader 2004, pp. 5-8). His supporting arguments, however, are typical of Hellenistic philosophy of his time. Adultery is the result of excessive uncontrolled passion. The dangers of desire are a constant theme in his writings. Thus, he writes:

For in the first place it has its source in the love of pleasure which enervates the bodies of those who entertain it, relaxes the sinews of the soul and wastes away the means of subsistence, consuming like an unquenchable fire all that it touches and leaving nothing wholesome in human life (*Decal.* 122).

He goes on to note how the adulterer leads another into the act, and also has major family and social consequences. Such excess is also out of place in marriage:

Now even natural pleasure is often greatly to blame when the craving for it is immoderate and insatiable, as for instance when it takes the form of voracious gluttony, even though none of the food taken is of the forbidden kind, or again the passionate desire for women shewn by those who in their craze for sexual intercourse behave unchastely, not with the wives of others, but with their own. (*Spec.* 3.9)

Similarly, Philo stood on common ground in condemning incest, which he cites as a Persian custom (*Spec.* 3.13), though Jewish restrictions were tighter than those of his world, and he is critical of Solon’s law permitting marriage to half-sisters and Spartans for allowing it with sisters but not half-sisters, and the Egyptian lawgiver who allowed both (*Spec.* 3.22-25). Of Solon he writes: “With a lavish hand he bestowed on bodies and souls the poisonous bane of incontinence and gave full liberty to marry sisters of every degree whether they belonged to one of their brother’s parents or to both” (*Spec.* 3.23).

On intermarriage Philo parts company with his non-Jewish world: “Do not enter into the partnership of marriage with a member of a foreign nation, lest some day conquered by the forces of opposing customs you surrender and stray unawares from the path that leads to piety and turn aside into a pathless wild” (*Spec.* 3.29). Similarly, he parts company on the prohibition of sexual intercourse during menstruation: “Whenever the menstrual issue occurs, a man must not touch a woman, but must during the period refrain from intercourse and respect the law of nature” (*Spec.* 3.32). The rationale, however, reflects a common concern: “He must also remember the lesson that the generative seeds should not be wasted fruitlessly for the sake of a gross and untimely pleasure” (*Spec.* 3.32). The rationale for condemning sex with sterile women is similar: “They too must be branded with reproach, who plough the hard and stony land ... For in the quest of mere licentious pleasure like the most lecherous of men they destroy the procreative germs with deliberate purpose” (*Spec.* 3.34).

Philo reserves some of his strongest condemnations for homosexual relations. “Much graver than the above is another evil, which has ramped its way into the cities, namely pederasty ... In former days the very

mention of it was a great disgrace” (*Spec.* 3.37). Many of his objections he would have in common with critics from his world, like wasting semen, female disease, males becoming passive, losing their virility, so important in the Roman world (*Spec.* 3.37), and even impotence as a result (*Abr.* 135), and depopulation of cities (*Spec.* 3.32-33, 39; *Abr.* 135-36).

Those of them who by way of heightening still further their youthful beauty have desired to be completely changed into women and gone on to mutilate their genital organs, are clad in purple like signal benefactors of their native lands, and march in front escorted by a bodyguard, attracting the attention of those who meet them (*Spec.* 3.41).

Like the author of Pseudo-Phocylides, he cites the dangers of hairstyles which seduce: “Mark how conspicuously they braid and adorn the hair of their heads, and how they scrub and paint their faces with cosmetics and pigments and the like, and smother themselves with fragrant unguents” (*Spec.* 3.37). Like Plato he depicts such behaviour as contrary to nature.

And the lover of such may be assured that he is the subject of the same penalty. He pursues an unnatural pleasure and does his best to render cities desolate and uninhabited by destroying the means of procreation ... like a bad husbandman he lets the deep-soiled and fruitful fields lie sterile, by taking steps to keep them from bearing, while he spends his labour night and day on soil from which no growth at all can be expected (*Spec.* 3.39).

But beyond that, Philo appeals to his tradition, citing the death penalty in Lev 20:13, but urging that it be immediate (*Spec.* 3.38). Philo also addresses what he sees as the causes of such depravity:

The reason is, I think, to be found in the prizes awarded in many nations to licentiousness and effeminacy. Certainly, you may see these hybrids of man and woman continually strutting about through the thick of the market, heading the processions at the feasts, appointed to serve as unholy ministers of holy things, leading the mysteries and initiations and celebrating the rites of Demeter (*Spec.* 3.40).

Philo’s grounds for objection are also reflected in his depiction of the men of Sodom: “The land of the Sodomites ... was brimful of innumerable iniquities, particularly such as arise from gluttony and lewdness, and multiplied and enlarged every other possible pleasure with so formidable a menace that it had at last been consumed by the Judge of All” (*Abr.* 133). Philo cites Menander with approval: “the chief beginning of evils, as one has aptly said, is goods in excess” (*Abr.* 134). Excess includes excessive drinking:

incapable of bearing such satiety, plunging like cattle, they threw off from their necks the law of nature and applied themselves to deep drinking of strong liquor and dainty feeding and forbidden forms of intercourse ... Not only in their mad lust for women did they violate the marriages of their neighbours, but also men mounted males without respect for the sex nature which the active partner shares with the passive (*Abr.* 135) ... Then, as little by little they accustomed those who were by nature men to submit to play the part of women, they saddled them with the formidable curse of a female disease. For not only did they emasculate their bodies by luxury and voluptuousness, but they worked a further degeneration in their souls and, as far as in them lay, were corrupting the whole of mankind. (*Abr.* 136)

In *Contempl.* Philo contrasts the holy meals of the Therapeutae with the drunken banquets in his world:

For waiting there are slaves of the utmost comeliness and beauty, giving the idea that they have come not so much to render service as to give pleasure to the eyes of the beholders by appearing on the scene ... [some] who are still boys” ... [and others] full-grown lads fresh from the bath and smooth shaven, with their faces smeared with cosmetics and paint under the eyelids and the hair of the head prettily plaited and tightly bound (*Contempl.* 50).

He continues: “In the background are others, grown lads newly bearded with the down just blooming on their cheeks, recently pets of the pederasts, elaborately dressed up for the heavier services, a proof of the opulence of the hosts as those who employ them know, but in reality of their bad taste” (*Contempl.* 52). He then turns his attention to the two accounts of banquets in which Socrates participated, as depicted in Xenophon and Plato (*Contempl.* 57). On Plato’s *Symposium* he observes: “the talk is almost entirely concerned with love, not merely with love-sickness of men for women, or women for men, passions recognized by the laws of nature, but of men for other males differing from them only in age” (*Contempl.* 59). In this context he cites Aristophanes’ aetiological myth explaining the origins of homosexual and heterosexual attraction on the basis of bodies male, female and androgynous being sliced in half by Zeus for their arrogance and so ever since seeking their other half: “double-bodied men who were originally brought by unifying forces into cohesion with each other and afterwards came asunder, as an assemblage of separate parts might do when the bond of union which brought them together was loosened”, which he declares as “seductive enough, calculated by the novelty of the notion to beguile the ear”, but to be treated by “the disciples of Moses trained from their earliest years to love the truth ... with supreme contempt” (*Contempl.* 63).

Thus, Philo knows of the view that homosexual is a natural state for some, but like other Jews rejects it on the basis not only of the prohibitions of Leviticus but also of the account of creation in Gen 1:27 according to which God made humans male and female, by implication only male and female (Gen 1:27). Philo condemns same sex relations between men and also between women (see also Szesnat, pp. 140-47). Thus of life after Noah’s flood he writes: “But after (the flood) had ceased and come to an end and they had been saved from the evil, he again instructed them through the order (of their leaving the ark) to hasten to procreate, by specifying not that men (should go out) with men nor women with women but females with males” (*QG* 2.49). He warns of “the mannish-woman as much as the womanish-man” (*Virt.* 20-21) and deplores the “hybrid, man-woman or woman-man” (*Her.* 274) (Szesnat, pp. 143).

Men engaging their lusts towards other men might also be engaging their lusts towards women as well, especially in the context of drunken parties. Thus, he writes that such a man “not only attacks in his fury the marriage-bed of others, but even plays the pederast and forces the male type of nature to debase and convert itself into the feminine form, just to indulge a polluted and accursed passion” (*Spec.* 2.50). He knows the trade in slave boys bought for pederasty and reports of one such slave: “It is said, for instance, that looking at one of the purchasers, an addict of effeminacy, whose face showed that he had nothing of the male about him, he went up to him and said, ‘You should buy me, for you seem to me to need a husband’” (*Prob.* 124). While much of the time he is condemning pederasty, his censure also applies to consenting adults, male and female (Ellis 2003, p. 316). The truly masculine man is “not lured by any of them to embrace like some hybrid, man-woman or

woman-man, the pleasant-seeming evils, but holding to its own nature of true manhood has the strength to be victor instead of victim in the wrestling-bout (*Her.* 274).

Of bestiality in contrast to homosexual behaviour, Philo writes:

Even worse than this is the conduct of some who have emulated the lusts of the Sybarites and those of others even more lascivious than they ... These persons begin with making themselves experts in dainty feeding, wine-bibbing and the other pleasures of the belly and the parts below it ... Sated with these they reach such a pitch of wantonness, the natural offspring of satiety, that losing their senses they conceive a frantic passion, no longer for human beings male or female, but even for brute beasts (*Spec.* 3.43).

He points to the cultural tradition of his world in citing the myth of Pasiphaë wife of King Minos of Crete who mated with a bull, as a result of which the half-beast Minotaur was born (*Spec.* 3.44) and comments: “Probably, if passions are suffered to go unbridled, there will be other Pasiphaës, and not only women but also men will be frantically in love with wild beasts, which will produce unnatural monsters to serve as monuments of the disgusting excesses of mankind” (*Spec.* 3.45). The Testament of Solomon similarly alludes to the legend of Onoskelis, the half-human half-donkey offspring of the sodomising of a donkey by Aristonymos of Ephesus (4:1-5) (Busch, p. 111). He makes however no references to bestiality in contemporary society.

He sees prostitute as “a pest, a scourge, a plague-spot – she who has corrupted the graces bestowed by nature, instead of making them, as she should, the ornament of noble conduct” (*Spec.* 3.51) and differentiates Jewish law on such matters from the what he claims are the norms of his world.

Other nations are permitted after the fourteenth year to deal without interference with harlots and strumpets and all those who make a traffic of their bodies, but with us a courtesan is not even permitted to live, and death is the penalty appointed for women who ply this trade (*Ios.* 43).

3.7. Josephus

The Jewish historian, Josephus, writing in Rome in the late first century CE, is a major source for our history of the Jewish people in the period under review (on sexuality see Loader 2011b, pp. 258-367). Like Philo he is concerned to present the credentials of his Jewish faith and demonstrate its superiority to all else, while at the same time being sensitive to his Roman hearers. Some of his comments about the sexual behaviour of his world are related directly to key figures in his account. His educated Roman hearers who would have applauded his depiction of the depravity of Cleopatra’s Antony who sought without success to lay both Mariamme, the wife of Herod the Great (37 – 4 BCE), Rome’s puppet king in Jerusalem, and her brother (*A.J.* 15.25, 30). He reports that in his latter days Herod was inappropriately fond of his eunuchs (*A.J.* 16.229) and deeply offended when his son Alexander in an act of subversion paid them for sex (*A.J.* 16.229-234; *B.J.* 1.488-492). He does not hesitate to report sexual abuses, such as when John Hyrcanus bought 100 boys and 100 virgins and gave them as a gift to the Egyptian king and Cleopatra (*A.J.* 12.209, 218).

His accounts portray the many and varied marriages among elites, often political and sometimes involving key Roman figures, such as when Vespasian arranged a wife for Josephus (*Vit.* 414-415), Caesar arranged marriage for Herod’s daughter on his death (*B.J.* 2.99), and Agrippa I’s daughter, Drusilla, married Felix (*A.J.* 20.142), though generally he disapproved of intermarriage with foreigners and appears to have seen the death

of her son and his wife with the eruption of Vesuvius in 79 CE as divine judgement for the act (*A.J.* 20.144). He supports the biblical prohibition of same-sex intercourse with the common arguments about its being unnatural, wasteful of procreative seed, a symptom of mindless pursuit of pleasure and excess, and leading to the shameful of effeminacy. Typically, he shares with Roman critics of homosexual relations that it is a Greek habit (*Ap.* 2.269) and depicted it as one of the vices of the peoples of Sparta, Elis and Thebes (*Ap.* 2.273-275). Rome declared such behaviour as *stuprum* between citizens, though allowed it with those of lower status, like foreigners and slaves (Skinner, pp. 199-200; Williams, pp. 96-104; Treggiari, p. 172; Loader 2012. Pp. 83-91). Greeks countered the charge of its being a Greek disease by deploring Roman homosexual practices because they went on way past the age of around 30 when according to Greek norms, such relationships should cease, and men marry to beget children (Skinner, pp. 213, 266).

3.8. *Joseph and Aseneth*

We have noted above the adoption of Hellenistic literary models in works such as Pseudo-Phocylides. Hellenistic romances such as the *Metamorphosis* of Apuleius, discussed in Sanger (1980, pp. 117-47), found their emulation in stories such as that of Joseph and Aseneth, a work both entertaining and seriously educational in making the case for the legitimacy of accepting converts into the Jewish community and as marriage partners (Loader 2011a, pp. 300-33). Oegema sees it as comparable especially to “Amor and Psyche” (Apuleius *Metam.* 4:28 – 6:24), as well as to Ruth, Esther, Tobit, and Judith (2005, 97-98)

3.9 *Paul and the early Christians*

As to be expected, the common Jewish attitudes towards what was seen as the depravity of the pagan world are echoed in the writings of the emerging Jewish movement which would evolve into Christianity. When Paul, for instance, plans to visit Rome, and seeks to clear the path of obstacles created by critics of the way he presented the gospel, he begins with common ground, namely a condemnation of same-sex relations, a depravity he will know his Roman recipients will join him in condemning, not least because such depravity was known in the Roman imperial household in relation to Nero (Jewett, p. 171) and Caligula (Elliott, pp. 79-82; Brownson, p. 157) and was condemned, though Paul’s focus is universal in scope (Loader 2017; Loader 2012, pp. 293-338).

In a manner typical of his ethical discourses elsewhere his focus is not so much the act as the attitude which he traces to a perversion of mind resulting from a perverted understanding of God typical of pagan idolatry. In this follows a pattern already present in Wisdom of seeing theological perversion leading to states and behaviours which are perverse (13:1 – 14:31). Like Philo and others Paul draws upon what he would have seen as the best of Hellenistic ethical philosophy to undergird what he denounces on the basis of the prohibitions in Leviticus and the assumption implied in Gen 1:27 that there are only male and female people and anything else is a distortion. As Nolland puts it, “We should not think of Paul drawing his views on homosexuality from his understanding of nature, but rather from revelation, in particular from Lev 18 and 20 in connection with Gen 1” (p. 54; cf. Nissenen, p. 107). The focus is not only pederasty but also mutual consenting same-sex relations (ἐξεκαύθησαν ἐν τῇ ὀρέξει αὐτῶν εἰς ἀλλήλους “they burned in their passion for one another”). As Mark Smith

observes, it is “much more probable that Paul was following the lead of his Jewish forebears, condemning homosexual activity, not because of its potential for dehumanizing relationships, but because males engaged in sexual activity with other males” (p. 232). Thus, Paul’s warning include reference to the danger of excessive passions (ἐν ταῖς ἐπιθυμίαις τῶν καρδιῶν αὐτῶν “in the passions of the their minds” 1:24, πάθη ἀτιμίας “shameful passions” 26, ἐξεκαύθησαν ἐν τῇ ὀρέξει αὐτῶν “they burned in the passion” 27) (Loader 2017, pp. 131-35; Loader 2012, pp. 93-97; Fredrickson 2000, pp. 199–204; Swancutt 2003, p. 204). Paul’s objection is not to passions themselves but to their misdirection (Ellis 2007, pp. 168-69; Gagnon, p. 178; cf. Martin, p. 59; Fredrickson 2000, p. 205). He also employs the argument of shame associated with taking a female role or making others do so (τοῦ ἀτιμάζεσθαι τὰ σώματα αὐτῶν ἐν αὐτοῖς “to dishonour their bodies in among themselves” 1:24; εἰς πάθη ἀτιμίας “to shameful passions” 26; τὴν ἀσχημοσύνην κατεργαζόμενοι “committing what is shameful” 27) (Loader 2017, pp. 135-37), a major concern in his world (Mayordomo-Marin, pp. 99–115; Skinner, pp. 212, 249-51). Malherbe draws attention to the importance of issues of honour and shame in discussions of marriage in honour as a topic in Hellenistic discussions of marriage in Plutarch *Mor.* 143B, 754, 769A; Aristotle *Eth. nic.* 8.14 1163B, 1-5; Xenophon *Hier.* 3.4; *Oec.* 7.42; Pseudo-Aristotle *Oec.* 3.23-25 (pp. 229). Paul also appeals to arguments from nature, employed also in 2 Enoch 10:2 and the *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs* (T. Naph 3:4–5; 4:1; cf. also T. Levi 14:6; T. Benj 9:1): (μετήλλαξαν τὴν φυσικὴν χρῆσιν εἰς τὴν παρὰ φύσιν “they exchanged natural intercourse for unnatural” 1:26, τὴν φυσικὴν χρῆσιν τῆς θηλείας “natural intercourse with the female” 27) (Loader 2017, pp. 137-40; du Toit, pp. 100-101; Sayler, pp. 85-86; Martin, p. 59; Jewett, 175-76), but unlike Philo (and Plato), not in relation to wasted seed and failure to procreate.

Similarly, the text which gives the title to this essay reads in full:

For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you abstain from sexual immorality; ⁴that each one of you knows how to control your own body (or manage your own wife) in holiness and honour, ⁵not with lustful passion, like the Gentiles who do not know God (1 Thess 4:3-5)

They did not go so far as condemn passions, a difficult step for those who saw them as nevertheless part of how God made human beings, but we find under the influence of popular philosophy a much greater emphasis on moderation and temperance, especially from the first century CE onwards, including in emerging Christian literature. A dualism which deemed passions and the body something evil in itself as either created by an errant heavenly being or as a dirty aspect of creation to be discarded in the future if not *de facto* in the present does not clearly arise in the first century CE, but infected the early Christian movement early in the second, where Jesus becomes the one who saves the soul from its bodily cage. Early Jewish traditions which envisaged an ideal future as one where gender differentiation ceased and human life left sex behind and took angelic form (Loader 2014; Loader 2012, pp. 66-73, 430-90). This influenced the hopes of the first followers of Jesus, including Paul, which inevitably led some to embrace celibacy and live now as they would then, and others to denigrate human sexuality in an unholy alliance with Greek moral philosophers which deemed a passionless state as the ideal. We also see signs of resistance against those who wanted to impose celibacy as a norm (so 1 Cor 7:7; Matt 19:10-12).

4. The Impacts of Engagement

In their engagement with Hellenistic philosophy Jews like Philo and Josephus were able to identify what they saw as affirming of their own religious tradition. The Stoic notion of order or the laws of nature seemed close to what they as Jews believed was God's law. Hays, for instance, notes the widespread tendency of Hellenistic Jewish writers to connect nature with law, citing Josephus *Ap.* 2.199, 273, 275 and Philo *Spec.* 3.37-42; *Abr.* 133-141 (p. 405). We noted the same above in *Sib. Or.* 3:248. The notion of living in harmony with God's law made much sense. The rich ethical resources of Hellenistic philosophy, especially when seen as an ally rather than a threat, opened new possibilities for Jewish thinkers. Even when they claimed that Greek philosophy derived ultimately from Moses, as many did (e.g. Aristobulus; Philo *Leg.* 1.108; *QG* 4.167; *Prob.* 57; *Spec.* 4.60-61), there was much to be learned. Orderliness and rightness or righteousness appeared to belong together. The focus not only on act but attitudes and motivation, a strand of thought already embedded in the decalogue prohibition of coveting (Exod 20:17; Deut 5:21), meant that Jewish ethicists could now address also the underlying feelings which needed control. This is a trait attributed also to the Jew, Jesus, whose teaching as depicted in the Sermon on the Mount shifts the focus from murder to hate and adultery to adulterous attitudes (Matt 5:21-30). Their understanding of passion as part of God's creation meant that denying or denigrating passion was not an option, so that they found their closest allies in those philosophies which urged restraint and moderation to a degree which went far beyond what was housed in Jewish tradition.

Hellenistic influence had already helped shape the Greek translation of their scripture, the Septuagint (LXX), especially the way it portrayed creation in Genesis (Loader 2008a, 2008b, 2004, pp. 27-58). There are parallels with Plato's *Timaeus*. The LXX allows readings which we find assumed in Philo and Paul, for instance, that women are God's creation, but created in the image of man as man is created in the image of God, a hierarchy of being. The Greek also allowed an interpretation of the snake's leading Eve to sin as sexual seduction (εἶπεν ἡ γυνὴ Ὁ ὄφις ἠπάτησέν με "the woman said, 'The snake seduced/deceived me'") (Gen 3:13; read as "seduced in 2 Cor 11:2-3), implicating human sexuality in sin.

Even those who most vehemently opposed Hellenistic influence could at times nevertheless adopt very Hellenistic practices, such as the symposia norms now reflected in the Community Rule of the Qumran sect which has its members sit at meals in a sequence reflecting their status in the hierarchy (1QS 6.4-10) (Shimoff, p. 450), also echoed in Jesus' parable poking fun at the practice in his context (Luke 14:7-10).

Writings from within the emerging Christian movement share much in common with their Jewish counterparts in what they rejected (same sex relations, prostitution, incest, bestiality), in what they shared as values with the Hellenistic world in relation to marriage and adultery, and in what they were willing to adopt and adapt from their environment. Thus they, too, embraced what they saw as the best in the surrounding cultures. Love, loyalty and mutuality in marriage were norms they could embrace, as reflected both in the discussion of marriage in Mark (Berger, p. 575) and in Paul's emphases on mutuality in 1 Cor 7:3-4 (Deming, pp. 114-150), though he can also express himself in ways that parallel Cynic and Stoic reserve about marriage as an impediment to philosophy, as in 1 Cor 7:32-35 (Deming, p. 195; Balch 1983). At other times it appears that Paul is deliberately countering Stoic positions as in his rejection of the freedom slogan, "All things are

lawful”, in 1 Cor 6:12 at the beginning of his warnings about illicit sexual relations, probably targeting prostitution (Loader 2012, pp. 166-82; Murphy-O'Connor, p. 393; J. Smith, pp. 65, 76).

Households become important as the movement became sedentary, so that we find in writings like Colossians and Ephesians, written in Paul's name but probably a generation later, and 1 Peter, teachings about proper relations between husbands and wives, children and parents, and slaves and masters, consistent with Hellenistic norms for household of the time (Loader 2012, pp. 401-18). The norm for marriages, which were arranged between families in most cultures of the time, was that these should be restricted to members of the movement (as 1 Cor 7:39 assumes), a continuation of Jewish rejection of intermarriage. With the cultures of the time they shared the abhorrence of adultery, a threat to household stability and so to the welfare of the family, and the assumption, implied in Jewish law and reasserted by Augustus in the *Lex Iulia* 18 B.C.E., updated in the *Lex Papia Poppaea* 9 C.E., that adultery mandated divorce (implied also in Deut 24:1-4) (Treggiari, pp. 167-68; Loader 2015, 69). That law even required prosecution of men who failed to divorce adulterous wives.

The issue of divorce has a history which was shaped by Hellenistic influence on Jewish tradition. Under that influence the norm of polygyny came to be questioned. The Damascus Document, probably written in the second century BCE, and found both in the library of documents hidden in caves by the Dead Sea by the sect which had buildings there, and in the ancient Cairo *genizah*, demands monogyny, not only of kings, a requirement enunciated in the Temple Scroll (47.15-19) (Loader 2009, pp. 40-44), but also of all Jews (CD 4.20 – 5.2) (Loader 2009, pp. 107-25). The move away from monogyny to, in this case, the more enlightened ways of the Hellenistic world inevitably created a new problem. For where marital disharmony occurred, the option of taking another wife was ruled out. Divorce became the main option (Loader 2015, pp. 68-71).

This, in turn, would lead to controversy over what might justify such a divorce, usually a man's decision. We have rabbinic traditions which preserve some of the ancient arguments between the schools of Shammai and Hillel, a narrow and a broad interpretation of what might be a satisfactory justification (*m. Git* 9.10; *b. Git* 90a; *Sifre* Deut 269) (Meier, p. 95), though caution is to be exercised in using such traditions and their attributions to recover history (Jackson, pp. 194, 205-207; Meier, pp. 4, 121, 126; Sigal, pp. 111-12). It is not so surprising that we also have a report of a discussion on the matter by Jesus of Nazareth in which he took the idealistic stance of declaring it contrary to God's intention (Mark 10:2-12), though probably not calling into question the mandating of divorce for adultery (Loader 2015, pp. 71-41). It is likely also that Roman norms of divorce shaped early Christian approaches, such as we see in Mark (10:11-12), which assumes that women could divorce as much as men, not normally the case in Jewish tradition, though increasing women could initiate divorce. Many of the principles and practices relating to households and marriage were widely shared between Jews and the surrounding culture, reflecting the fact that survival and well-being depended so heavily on the stability of the household (Loader 2012, 74-82). “Socially Hellenistic Jews, for the most part, did not choose marriage as a ‘boundary marker’: when Philo and Josephus try to delineate what is distinctive about Jews, they rarely raise the issue of marriage” (Satlow 2001, p. 201).

We have been looking at sexuality in the Greco-Roman world through the windows of Jewish and early Christian writings. Much of what is written is designed to differentiate the authors' community and faith from

the world around them, to assert superiority and to warn of dangers. Despite the probable distortions which arise from such an endeavour, the contrast sensed would have matched reality in many respects. Jewish norms were generally stricter and much less tolerant of deviation than were many of the cultures of the Hellenistic world where prostitution was generally accepted and same-sex relations more likely to be tolerated though not without dissenting voices. Otherwise many norms were held in common, including some which to twenty first century ears sound strange if not appalling, including that male household heads would have sexual access to all within the household except where it would entail incest, that adultery would mandate divorce, that women were to be subordinate to men with only rare outstanding exceptions which nevertheless proved the rule, and that men arranged marriages of their sons and daughters. At another level the cross-fertilisation which cultural engagement made possible moved Jewish ethics away from affirming polygyny and deepened it through the very significant achievements of Hellenistic philosophy in broadening sensitivity and understanding in relation to motivation and the management of the passions, desires and appetites which uncontrolled and wrongly directed wreak havoc and produce the actions which commandments sought to forbid but on their own addressed therefore only the symptoms not the cause.

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