

“Is It Good to Be Rich?”

Some Answers of Philo in His *Exposition of the Law*

Martina Böhm

A. Not a New Issue, But a New Question and the General Historical Context for It

The discussion regarding Philo's views of wealth and poverty is nothing new.¹ What is new, however, is the question posed to the great Alexandrian Jewish scholar and commentator on the Pentateuch “Is it good to be rich?”

Philo lived in the first half of the first century CE as an inhabitant of the second-largest city in the ancient Mediterranean world marked by economic strength and prosperity due to a prudent investment policy by the Ptolemaic kings, an important harbor, and an unique infrastructure.² Alexandria was the most powerful Eastern Mediterranean center of trade and manufacturing at that time and attracted a wide variety of immigrants: skilled and unskilled workers, craftsmen, artificers, and scientists. But only the Greek residents enjoyed full citizen rights and thus benefited from numerous economic privileges.³ The Jewish population under Ptolemaic rule was numbered among the group of Hellenes also enjoyed tax privileges and of the consequence also a higher economic status.⁴ But the Egyptians – numerically the most significant part of the city's population – were socially and politically marginalized and the great majority was fully taxable.⁵ Seen from a socio-historical perspective, political and ethnic status and the associated economic privileges were a decisive factor in the unequal distribution of wealth between the different social and ethnic groups of the city.⁶

¹ See MEALAND, “Attitude to Riches,” 258–64; MEALAND, “Paradox,” 111–15; SCHMIDT, “Hostility to Wealth,” 85–97; DOWNING, “Philo on Wealth,” 116–18; PHILLIPS, “Revisiting Philo,” 111–21; STERLING, “Obligations of Wealth,” 199–217.

² See RÜGGEMEIER, “Introduction,” XIII–L, XIII–XVII.

³ See RÜGGEMEIER, “Introduction,” XXXIII–XXXIV.

⁴ See RÜGGEMEIER, “Introduction,” XXVI–XXIX.

⁵ See RÜGGEMEIER, “Introduction,” XXIX.

⁶ See RÜGGEMEIER, “Introduction,” XVII–XVIII.XXVI–XXXV.

At the beginning of the Roman rule (30 BCE), the circumstances changed. The Greek elite lost not only their own royalty but also some of their benefits and rights. The Egyptians remained marginalized, but the Jews suffered the loss of some of their most important privileges, including those concerning taxes.⁷ Still, there were exceptions like Philo and members of his rich and politically influential family and several other Jews who succeeded in acquiring Alexandrian citizenship, thereby belonging to the urban Hellenized Jewish elite.⁸ Philo himself might have been acquainted with both great personal wealth of some individuals (accumulated and enduring as well as quick and fleeting wealth) and bitter poverty of the lower classes from his own observations in both the Jewish and non-Jewish communities of his hometown, contrasts that one could experience in every ancient metropolis. But he also had a vivid impression of how quickly circumstances could change even for privileged and wealthy Jews. In 38 CE events took a fateful turn for the worse. Terrible riots broke out against the Jewish population of Alexandria that were tolerated by the Roman prefect Flaccus.⁹ In *Legat.* 123 Philo mentions the collective plundering, lamenting the rich became poor, the well-to-do destitute, suddenly through no fault of their own rendered heartless and homeless, outcasts and exiles from their own houses, to dwell night and day under the open sky, and sent to their death by the burning heat of the sun or the freezing cold of the night.¹⁰

B. Scholarship on Philo's Statements on Wealth and the Aim of the Present Contribution

Because much is known about Alexandria in Hellenistic-Roman times and because Philo left behind an extensive oeuvre with many remarks about wealth and poverty, there has been a relevant but controversial research discussion on Philo's ethical discourse about the issues since the 1970s and 1980s.¹¹

The older contributions debated primarily the question of the intellectual-historical influences on Philo's critical statements on wealth, their pragmatics and, in this context, the discrepancies with his own socio-economically comfortable position. It was particularly discussed whether or not Philo's writings even contain a single coherent view. An attempt was made to provide at least an overview of all passages in the Corpus Philonicum that refer to wealth and to categorize them.¹² However, this attempt to categorize and systematize more than 200

⁷ See RÜGGEMEIER, „Introduction,“ XXXV–XXXVII; BÖHM, *Rezeption*, 47–54.

⁸ See BREMMER, „Pogrom?,“ 245–59, 248–49.

⁹ See BREMMER, „Pogrom?,“ 245, 250–59.

¹⁰ Translation COLSON, PLCL X, 61–62. Cf. *Flacc.* 55–58.

¹¹ The discussion is presented by STERLING, „Obligations of Wealth,“ 200–1.

¹² See SCHMIDT, „Hostility to Wealth,“ 85–97.

textual references, some of which were very divergent, inevitably took place at the expense of the larger contexts in which the passages on wealth were embedded.¹³ The special features of the individual series of writings, their different periods of origin, and their specific addressees could also not be given sufficient consideration in this way. Even Philo's system of thought as a whole could not be adequately brought into view in this manner.

More recently, the discussion has returned in the context of some specific and important essays.¹⁴ The latest contribution, by G. E. Sterling, reexamines Philo's views on wealth with a critical and precise look first at the evidence for Philo's own wealth and then by considering two exemplary sets of key texts from the Exposition of the Law that are explicitly devoted to the use of wealth. Sterling's aim was to better answer the question of inconsistencies in Philo's understanding of wealth.¹⁵

The present contribution follows this most recent work in a number of points. Here, too, not all the writings of the Corpus Philonicum are taken into consideration to investigate Philo's views on wealth and poverty. The focus lies on one commentary series on the Pentateuch, for Philo saw himself primarily as an interpreter of the Torah.¹⁶ As Sterling also preferred, here, too, the Exposition of the Law is taken as an exemplary source basis.¹⁷ However, the present article attempts to look (cf. section E.) at the entire Exposition even if this cannot be done with complete thoroughness within this framework of this essay. Staying with one commentary series has the advantage of focusing on what was intended for a certain target audience¹⁸ and thus being able to presuppose at least a certain systematization. Above all, however, it is not only specific texts on the topic of wealth per se that are to be dealt with, or texts in which Philo used Greek terms

¹³ Compare the critical remarks by PHILLIPS, "Revisiting Philo," 113.

¹⁴ See PHILLIPS, "Revisiting Philo," 111–21. Phillips argues that "desire for wealth, not ownership of wealth, is the key to the observable pattern in Philo's ethical discourse regarding wealth and poverty. Philo does not idealize poverty; rather, he extols the virtues of overcoming the passions and of controlling desire" (121). The danger posed by wealth is the desire for possessions and not mere the ownership of possessions.

¹⁵ STERLING, "Obligations of Wealth," 201. Sterling's conclusion is that Philo was not critical of wealth per se but of the misuse of wealth and the neglect of the poor (199).

¹⁶ Cf. SCHIMANOWSKI, *Juden*, 119; BÖHM, *Rezeption*, 83.

¹⁷ The Exposition of the Law is a commentary series on the Pentateuch that is more thematic and less concerned with the wording of the biblical texts. See ROYSE, "Works," 32–64, 33.45–50; BÖHM, *Rezeption*, 117–22. Twelve of its writings are still extant, if one includes the two books of *De vita Mosis*. The association of these two books with the Exposition has not been conclusively clarified (for discussion see BÖHM, *Rezeption*, 25). Many researchers consider them part of the apologetical and historical works (see ROYSE, "Works," 47).

¹⁸ The question of the addressees of this commentary series is controversial. Presumably Philo was writing here for "assimilated Jews or non-Jews unfamiliar with Jewish beliefs and practices" (BIRNBAUM, *Place of Judaism*, 144). Cf. ROYSE, "Works," 33.

to denote possessions and wealth.¹⁹ Rather, the main exegetical context of Philo's statements can be taken into account when analyzing his statements and specific attention will be paid to circumstantial evidence of how Philo would have answered the major framing question of the conference: "Is it good to be rich?"

C. Philo's Own Possible Questions on the Topic and His Possible First Answers

Philo himself might have asked two questions as prerequisites: What actually is wealth? – and above all, what is true wealth? In any case, the highest and most important goods for Philo were not of a material kind – silver, gold, robes, houses, properties, a number large servants, or similar.²⁰ These goods are referred to by him as "blind wealth," following Plato.²¹ True wealth for him lay in spiritual or intellectual things – first of all in the recognition of the one Creator and Leader of the world,²² who alone is to be trusted,²³ then in classical immaterial goods such as education and instruction (παιδεία), sound sense and thoughtfulness (φρόνησις), courage even in the face of difficult life circumstances such as illness and poverty (ἀνδρεία),²⁴ piety (εὐσέβεια),²⁵ self-control (ἐγκράτεια)²⁶ and simplicity (ἀτυφία), for "what wealth is equal in worth to these?"²⁷ For Philo, these virtues are, in contrast to blind wealth, "the wealth which is not blind but sharp-sighted"²⁸. Neither does this wealth cause people's downfall.²⁹

As a philosophically educated thinker, Philo shared the doctrine of the virtues in principle with various philosophical schools of his time. In particular, Platonic,

¹⁹ For the general designation of possession Philo uses, among others, the terms πλοῦτος (*Abr.* 24–25.252), οὐσία (*Abr.* 252), περιουσία (*Jos.* 72), χρήματα (*Mos.* 1.293), πολυχρήματος (*Jos.* 76). All passages are listed at BORGÉN/FUGLSETH/SKARSTEN, *Philo Index*.

²⁰ See the enumeration of the material goods that count as wealth for Philo in the Exposition of the Law e.g., in *Abr.* 220. Cf. also *Spec.* 1.23–26 and COHN, *Werke I*, 140–41, n. 1: "Philo unterscheidet wie Aristoteles drei verschiedene Güterklassen: Seelische Güter (τὰ περι ψυχῆν), körperliche Güter (τὰ περι σῶμα, Gesundheit, Schönheit, Stärke) und die äusseren Güter (τὰ ἐκτός, Reichtum, Ehre, Ruhm und edle Abstammung)."

²¹ *Abr.* 25: τυφλὸς (...) πλοῦτος. Cf. *Spec.* 1.25; 2.23; *Virt.* 5–7; and Plato, *Leg.* 1.631c.

²² See in the Exposition of the Law *Opif.* 7–11; *Decal.* 52–65.81. Cf. in the Allegorical Commentary *Agr.* 54.

²³ See *Abr.* 268–269.

²⁴ On Philo's specific understanding of ἀνδρεία see *Spec.* 4.145; *Virt.* 1–5. Cf. KAISER, *Philo von Alexandria*, 221.

²⁵ Cf. *Spec.* 4.147 (trans. COLSON, PLCL VIII, 101): "queen of virtues."

²⁶ Cf. *Spec.* 1.173–176.

²⁷ *Abr.* 24: ὦν τίς ἢ πλοῦτος ἐπάξιος ...; Compare also the allegorical interpretation of the Abraham-Lot narrative of Gen 13 in *Abr.* 217–224. Cf. *Virt.* 8.

²⁸ *Abr.* 25: ὁ μὴ τυφλὸς ἀλλ' ὄξυ βλέπων πλοῦτος. English translation BIRNBAUM/DILLON, *On the Life of Abraham*, 170. Cf. *Virt.* 5; *Virt.* 85 (τὸν βλέποντα πλοῦτον); *Agr.* 54; *Sobr.* 40; *Her.* 48, and Plato, *Leg.* 1.631c.

²⁹ See *Virt.* 7.

Aristotelian, and Stoic influences can be seen in his work.³⁰ He was also, like the Stoics, vehemently convinced that the passion of covetousness (ἐπιθυμία)³¹ was inherent in everyone. It expresses itself in the pursuit of good and money among other things and must be conquered at all costs.³² The pursuit of material possessions and wealth, the striving to become rich from external things, held considerable destructive potential in Philo's view, for it led (and leads) to division, hatred, and war.³³ When desire is directed towards money, it turns people into thieves, robbers, and burglars. They become corruptible and mendacious.³⁴ Those who love virtue therefore necessarily bid farewell to the admiration of external goods³⁵ and trust that the Creator of the world, in His forward-thinking care for humanity, would provide everything that he needs for physical and spiritual life.³⁶ So is it good to be rich? One first answer from Philo would be this: It is not good to want to get rich, because the desire to be rich corrupts a person.³⁷

So much for Philo's attitude towards the pursuit of wealth, which he equates with greed and rejects because of the destructive consequences associated with it. But what did he think about someone who was already rich and who was not focused on acquiring possessions but on dealing with possessions he already had? In my opinion, this question cannot be separated from the question of Philo's own socio-economic life situation.

D. Philo Was a Materially Secure Thinker Who Reflected on Wealth

The connection between Philo's own socio-economic life situation and his views of wealth has repeatedly played a role in research.³⁸ Although little is known about Philo biographically,³⁹ the question "Is it good to be rich?" is likely to be answered by someone who was himself wealthy, for he came from one of the most prestigious and richest Jewish families in Alexandria in the last half of the first century BCE and the first half of the first century CE. Although more is known about Philo's brother Alexander, the Alabarch,⁴⁰ and about his nephew Tiberius

³⁰ Cf. MEALAND, "Attitude to Riches," 259–63; KAISER, *Philo von Alexandria*, 213–47.

³¹ See *Decal.* 142; *Spec.* 4,80–85.

³² See *Spec.* 4,95, and in the Allegorical Commentary *Gig.* 35.

³³ See *Decal.* 151–153.

³⁴ See *Spec.* 4,85–87.

³⁵ See *Abr.* 223.

³⁶ See *Opif.* 77.

³⁷ Cf. PHILLIPS, "Revisiting Philo," 117.121.

³⁸ Cf. MEALAND, "Attitude to Riches," 258–59; MEALAND, "Paradox," 112–13; SCHMIDT, "Hostility to Wealth," 85–86; STERLING, "Obligations of Wealth," 201–5. Sterling offers not only the most recent but also a very complex analysis.

³⁹ See NIEHOFF, *Biographie*, 1; STERLING, "Obligations of Wealth," 201.

⁴⁰ What exactly the title "Alabarch" meant is uncertain. See EVANS, "Alexander," 576–94, 590.

Julius Alexander than about Philo himself, a telling light is also shed on his own person through his two relatives.

Josephus wrote that Philo's brother Alexander had distinguished himself by origin and wealth before all the inhabitants of the city⁴¹ and thus belonged among the richest men of Alexandria.⁴² He was so wealthy that he was able to donate the immensely valuable gold and silver plate jewelry for nine gates of the inner areal of the Jerusalem Temple.⁴³ In addition, he was financially able to lend Agrippa I's wife, who had large debts to the Romans, five talents of silver in 35 CE to benefit her husband.⁴⁴ Alexander was thus exceptionally wealthy, but he was also generous with his wealth.⁴⁵ Moreover, he had such good relations with the Herodian royal house that his son Marcus Julius Alexander married the Judae-an princess Berenice,⁴⁶ Agrippa II's sister in 41 CE – a connection that can be explained mainly by Alexander's prominence and wealth.⁴⁷ Alexander also had closer and even friendly connections with the Roman imperial house,⁴⁸ and he may have possessed Roman citizenship (as possibly did his father).⁴⁹

This also applies to his other son and Philo's nephew Tiberius Julius Alexander. He was first (42 CE) in the Roman military and administrative service as *epistratege* in Thebes.⁵⁰ Then, between 46 and 48 CE, he was procurator in Judea⁵¹ and later Roman prefect of Egypt (66–69 CE).⁵² Moreover, he claimed to be a friend of Vespasian and Titus.⁵³ Tiberius Julius Alexander was probably not only an extremely influential and privileged man, but also a very wealthy one. Thus, Philo was familiar from his own family with the highest political

⁴¹ Josephus, *Ant.* 20.100: ... γένει τε καὶ πλούτῳ πρωτεύσαντος τῶν ἐκεῖ καθ' αὐτόν. EVANS, "Alexander," 591, considers it possible that he was of Hasmonean descent: "it is very possible that he was descended from the Hasmonians and was related to the ruling class and priesthood of Judea." This would fit the much later note of Jerome, who mentions that Philo was descended from priests (*De Viris Illustribus* II: "de genere sacerdotum"). See SCHWARTZ, "Philo," 9–31, 11.

⁴² For further details compare the source analysis on Alexander by STERLING, "Obligations of Wealth," 201–3.

⁴³ Cf. Josephus, *Bell.* 5.205.

⁴⁴ Cf. Josephus, *Ant.* 18.160. See EVANS, "Alexander," 578–79.

⁴⁵ Cf. STERLING, "Obligations of Wealth," 203.

⁴⁶ Cf. Josephus, *Ant.* 19.276.

⁴⁷ See EVANS, "Alexander," 580–81.

⁴⁸ Cf. Josephus, *Ant.* 19.276: Here he is mentioned as an old friend of Claudius and administrator for his mother Antonia. This probably means that he was responsible as procurator for Antonia's extensive property in Egypt (see EVANS, "Alexander," 580).

⁴⁹ See EVANS, "Alexander," 582–84.

⁵⁰ Tacitus, *Ann.* 15,28,3: "Tiberius Alexander, inlustris eques Romanus (...)." See EVANS, "Alexander," 582; SCHIMANOWSKI, *Juden*, 126, with reference to OGIS 663,1,1.

⁵¹ See EVANS, "Alexander," 578; SCHIMANOWSKI, *Juden*, 126, with reference to Josephus, *Bell.* 2.220.

⁵² Cf. Josephus, *Bell.* 2.309; 2.335.

⁵³ For further details and the sources, see SCHIMANOWSKI, *Juden*, 128–29. Tiberius Julius Alexander then also took part in the siege and conquest of Jerusalem.

influence, privileges, and great wealth, as well as various options for dealing with this wealth. He saw within his own family traits of generosity and willingness to donate – advantages that one only has if one is rich. But Philo could also see directly how wealth affects a person and to what extent it was good to be rich or not.

On the other hand, hardly anything more concrete is known about his own living conditions and his own financial resources. In his works, however, there are at least a few hints. Philo was probably born between 20–10 BCE⁵⁴ and lived until about 45–50 CE.⁵⁵ In *De Abrahamo*, which belongs to the *Exposition of the Law*, there are several passages that can be understood as allusions to his own origins and situation in Alexandria. In *Abr.* 252, Philo, in interpreting Gen 16, has Abraham's wife Sarah refer to the unusually significant possessions and great wealth of the arch-parent couple for metoics. It is a wealth with which they surpass even the autochthonous population living in splendid financial circumstances.⁵⁶ This remark, inserted above the text of Genesis, very likely reflects Philo's own experience in Alexandria.⁵⁷ The little sentence in *Abr.* 265 is also likely to take up his own situation: "As for wealth and high birth, they attach themselves even to the most worthless of men, and even if they were confined to the virtuous they would be a compliment not to the actual possessors but to their ancestors and to fortune."⁵⁸ Philo thus understood himself as the son of a rich family who knew that he did not owe his possessions to his own efforts.

It seems likely that Philo was not as wealthy as his brother and his nephew,⁵⁹ but from *De Providentia* 2,115 one can conclude that Philo was financially secure enough that he could devote a large part of his time to his studies.⁶⁰ Philo himself can be heard here speaking in a fictional dialogue with his nephew Tiberius Julius Alexander: "I always have time to do philosophy, to which I have consecrated my life devoted to study, though many things, as fickle as they are tempting, which must not be despised, distract."⁶¹ Thus, from today's perspective, one can certainly also say about him that it was good *for him* to be rich, otherwise he

⁵⁴ See SCHWARTZ, "Philo," 10.

⁵⁵ An allusion in *Leg.* 206 points to the fact that Philo lived to see Caligula's death and Claudius' accession as emperor in 41 CE. See SCHWARTZ, "Philo," 10.

⁵⁶ *Abr.* 252: ἔστι μὲν ἡμῖν οὐσία πολλὴ καὶ ἄφθονος πλοῦτος, οὐχ ὡς μετοίκους – ἤδη γὰρ τῶν αὐτοχθόνων τοὺς ἐν εὐτυχίαις λαμπραῖς ὑπερβάλλομεν ...

⁵⁷ So BIRNBAUM/DILLON, *On the Life of Abraham*, 379, as an explanation to *Abr.* 252.

⁵⁸ Translation COLSON, PLCL VI, 129. *Abr.* 265: πλοῦτοι δὲ καὶ εὐγένεια προσορίζονται μὲν καὶ τοῖς φαυλοτάτοις· εἰ δὲ καὶ μόνοις σπουδαίοις, ἐγκώμια προγόνων καὶ τύχης ἀλλ' οὐ τῶν ἐχόντων εἰσὶν. Cf. for reference to Philo's own situation, see BIRNBAUM/DILLON, *On the Life of Abraham*, 400.

⁵⁹ Cf. STERLING, "Obligations of Wealth," 203, 205.

⁶⁰ See also *Spec.* 3,1–6.

⁶¹ My own translation of the German translation of PCH VII,382. *De Providentia* is preserved in its entirety only in Armenian translation, and the Greek source text of this passage has not been preserved.

would hardly have had the opportunities to write the wealth of treatises that he did.⁶² He devoted his life to his studies and later, of necessity, to politics, but not to business for the acquisition of wealth.⁶³

It is very likely that Philo also possessed Roman citizenship.⁶⁴ In his advanced age he enjoyed such high esteem that he led a legation to Rome from 38/39 CE. He did so to represent the interests of the Jewish population of Alexandria to the Emperor and to lodge a complaint with Gaius Caligula against the anti-Jewish riots in Alexandria tolerated by the provincial governor Flaccus.⁶⁵ Josephus justifies Philo's leadership role by saying that he was honored in everything, brother of the alabarch Alexander, and experienced in philosophy.⁶⁶ This information reveals that not only his own qualities, but also the influence of his family were important for his role. Ultimately, it was good for him as an educated thinker to have this influence and wealth behind him so that he was in a position to represent his community politically. And it was good for the suffering Jewish population of the city to be able to send such a representative to Rome.

So Philo knew what he was talking about from the internal perspective of a rich man. The question of whether it is good to be (already) rich is a question that he thus also had to answer for himself. As a law-observant Jew and an extremely productive exegete, he sought and found answers to these questions in the Pentateuch. For him, these answers had a universal character.

E. The Pentateuch as a Basis for Philo's Reflection on How to Deal with Wealth as a Rich Person

I. Hermeneutical Foundations

According to Philo, the Pentateuch was written by Moses, who was a prophet legitimized by God and inspired by divine wisdom.⁶⁷ The Mosaic scriptures therefore reflect the hidden divine wisdom and the eternal, unchanging, and universally valid natural and universal law through which God governs his creation.⁶⁸ Those who strive for wisdom and try to reveal the divine wisdom

⁶² Philo left an extensive body of works. He wrote more than 70 treatises, but not all are preserved. For all details see ROYSE, "Works," 32–64.

⁶³ Cf. STERLING, "Obligations of Wealth," 203.

⁶⁴ On the arguments, cf. EVANS, "Alexander," 592; SCHIMANOWSKI, *Juden*, 121; STERLING, "Obligations of Wealth," 205.

⁶⁵ See Josephus, *Ant.* 18,259. In *Leg.* 1 Philo counts himself among the old men on this occasion: ἡμεῖς οἱ γέροντες. Otherwise, all that is known about him is that he was able to facilitate (at least) one pilgrimage to Jerusalem (*Prov* 2,107).

⁶⁶ Josephus, *Ant.* 18,259: Φίλων ὁ προεστὼς τῶν Ἰουδαίων τῆς πρεσβείας, ἀνὴρ τὰ πάντα ἔνδοξος Ἀλεξάνδρου τε τοῦ ἀλαβάρχου ἀδελφὸς ὦν καὶ φιλοσοφίας οὐκ ἄπειρος.

⁶⁷ Cf. *Mos.* 2,11; *Praem.* 55.

⁶⁸ Cf. *Abr.* 258; *Mos.* 2,14.48.

through interpretation can thus also find the forces of ethical renewal hidden in the Mosaic writings,⁶⁹ i. e., the highest ethical commands and prohibitions.⁷⁰ However, no interpreter or exegete is able to decipher the hidden meaning of Scripture fully because of the limitations of the human intellect.⁷¹ Biblical exegesis was an ongoing process, which meant that interpretive possibilities had to be repeatedly studied and considered.⁷² This probably also explains some (though not all) inconsistencies with regard to Philonic thinking about wealth (and poverty).

From his understanding of the Pentateuch, Philo derives the claim that the writings of Moses not only apply to the Jewish people, but to all people and in principle can lead everyone to the knowledge of God and thus to the attainment of virtue, perfection, and supreme happiness.⁷³ In accordance with the wisdom tradition, Philo reads the Pentateuch less as a historical document with significance for the Jewish people, but as universal Scripture that could educate every human being toward virtue and appropriate behavior.⁷⁴ Thus the Pentateuch also offered Philo a complete foundation from which to derive universal philosophical (or in a more modern view: theological)⁷⁵ guidelines for understanding and dealing with property and wealth (see section E.II.). Secondly, the Mosaic writings offered concrete examples of wealthy individuals, which Philo could use to think through and illustrate the attitude to possessions and the handling of wealth. Here he found ideal examples of attitudes towards wealth and possessions such as Abraham, Joseph, and Moses, which he repeatedly contrasted with the prevailing realities of his own time and which must have provided guides for himself (see section E.III.). In the Pentateuch, however, Philo also came across some examples of the appropriation of other people's property in the context of conflict and war. These included texts like Exod 12:35–36 (the Israelites taking rich booty with them when they left Egypt) or Num 21:1–3 (the conquest of the cities of Arad). Both texts inevitably raised questions among the reading public about the norms that applied among the Israelites in dealing with the possession of enemies (see section E.IV.).⁷⁶

In the *Exposition of the Law*, Philo takes up all these essential aspects. Therefore, it also serves as an example in the context of this contribution, even though the individual aspects can only be briefly sketched in this limited framework.

⁶⁹ For further details see BÖHM, *Rezeption*, 60–61, 67–68.

⁷⁰ Cf. *Jos.* 29.

⁷¹ Cf. *Opif.* 90; *Decal.* 18.

⁷² See BÖHM, *Rezeption*, 84–89.

⁷³ Cf. *Virt.* 119.175.206.

⁷⁴ See BÖHM, *Rezeption*, 69.

⁷⁵ Philo himself speaks of philosophy in „study of God and Universe“ (*Spec.* 3,191). Θεόλογος was only Moses (cf. *Mos.* 2,115; *Praem.* 53).

⁷⁶ Cf. *Mos.* 1,141.251.

II. Philosophical Foundations for the Understanding of Being Rich

Because creation is the source of divine law and the world carries this law within itself, all reflection on the foundations for Philo starts with the Creator and his creation. While upholding justice, the Creator provides for all people.⁷⁷ Like a father, he intends the preservation of his children and seeks to bring about that which is useful and beneficial in every way,⁷⁸ for he wanted humans to have everything necessary for bodily life and spiritual life.⁷⁹ However, God confers benefits on people in proportion to their capacities and appropriately weighs and measures out to each individual their due.⁸⁰ But the Creator has endowed every human being with a rational soul,⁸¹ which produces seeds of hope in various forms – including instincts such as hope of gain or hope of glory, but also the hope of happiness (which can be achieved through piety and fear of God). This latter instinct of hope must be especially cultivated, since it can determine all action in such a way that it leads to happiness.⁸² To seek hope in God alone and to give up the innate greed is a challenge, but it is a challenge that confronts every human.⁸³ This task is a contest for which rewards are also offered.⁸⁴ Obeying the divine commandments written down by Moses and following God also entails blessings. These blessings include “wealth which necessarily follows peace and settled authority.”⁸⁵ Philo means here first of all the wealth of nature available to every human being.⁸⁶ Whoever respects this natural richness and does not chase after excessive and superfluous luxury, and thus the blind wealth that causes his downfall, will be granted further things.⁸⁷ A key passage for the understanding of wealth and the question of whether it is good to be rich follows in *Praem.* 100–108:

Yet those who pursue the above-named wealth, who welcome the gifts of nature and not those of empty seeming, who practice frugality and self-restraint, will possess also abundance and more than abundance of another wealth in the shape of delectable food, and that without effort on their part. For it will spring to meet them as best fitted to receive it and as men of serious purpose who will know how to use it aright, and it will gladly flee from association with men of profligacy and violence, lest it should minister its boons to those who live to harm their neighbours and pass by those who serve the common weal.⁸⁸

⁷⁷ Cf. *Opif.* 10–11.171; *Mos.* 1.328; *Spec.* 1.209; *Praem.* 42.

⁷⁸ Cf. *Opif.* 10–11; *Praem.* 13.34.

⁷⁹ Cf. *Opif.* 77.

⁸⁰ Cf. *Opif.* 23; *Spec.* 1.43.

⁸¹ Cf. *Praem.* 10.

⁸² Cf. *Praem.* 11–13.

⁸³ Cf. *Praem.* 15.62–64.

⁸⁴ Cf. *Praem.* 13–15.

⁸⁵ *Praem.* 98 (trans. COLSON, PLCL VIII, 373).

⁸⁶ Cf. *Praem.* 99–100; *Virt.* 6.

⁸⁷ Cf. *Virt.* 7.

⁸⁸ *Praem.* 100 (trans. COLSON, PLCL VIII, 373).

... For those who possess stored up in Heaven the true wealth whose adornment is wisdom and godliness have also wealth of earthly riches in abundance. For under the providence and good care of God their store-houses are ever filled, because the impulses of their minds and the undertakings of their hands are never hindered in carrying out successfully the purposes which they ever zealously pursue.⁸⁹

Wealth arises here in the sense of an act- consequence connection, and can therefore be a sign of a virtuous person who cultivates the good instinct of hope and rejects innate greed and unrighteousness,⁹⁰ who faithfully respects the laws and is therefore blessed by God. In this case, wealth is God-given blessing (εὐλογία, δωρεά) for piety and virtue.⁹¹ That is, wealth is related to God's work of justice, rewarding virtue and punishing vice. Thus, for Philo, man bears some responsibility for whether and in what way he finds himself as rich in the world, whereby wealth is by no means to be understood only in material terms. Consistent material wealth, however, was for Philo a way that God rewards virtue. And in this case, being rich was very good.

What is important, however, is that wealth given by God demands gratitude and also brings about an obligation and task for humanity (φιλανθρωπία).⁹² Therefore, it is also good for others when the virtuous and pious person is rich, for he will seek to imitate his divine benefactor and act toward others as God has acted toward him.⁹³ Thus, he will put his wealth to use for the common good and not regard it as his own possession, "but as something to be shared by those who are in need."⁹⁴ Neither should the rich hide his wealth.⁹⁵ He will have such abundant provisions for the future that other people can also use them,⁹⁶ but he himself will live modestly.⁹⁷ From his abundance he will be able to lend a lot of money (without interest) to many other people, and in response to his actions on behalf of the wider public, he will also receive recognition and honor himself.⁹⁸ Philo found this line of thought anchored in various passages in the book of Deuteronomy.⁹⁹ Thus a law-abiding rich person (like Philo was) did not need to have a bad conscience because of his material resources. Nevertheless, wealth was also something that could discourage the pursuit of spiritual things.¹⁰⁰

⁸⁹ *Praem.* 104 (trans. COLSON, PLCL VIII, 375–76).

⁹⁰ Cf. *Praem.* 15.

⁹¹ Cf. *Praem.* 98.

⁹² Cf. *Spec.* 1,224–225.311; 2,71–109; *Virt.* 168–170; *Decal.* 108–109.

⁹³ Cf. *Virt.* 168; *Spec.* 2, 174; 4,73–74.

⁹⁴ *Spec.* 4,72 (trans. COLSON, PLCL VIII, 53). Cf. *Spec.* 4,74.

⁹⁵ Cf. *Spec.* 1,321.

⁹⁶ Cf. *Praem.* 103.

⁹⁷ Cf. *Mos.* 1,185; *Spec.* 2,20–22.

⁹⁸ Cf. *Praem.* 107; *Virt.* 82–84.

⁹⁹ Cf. *Dtn.* 15:4–6; 28:2–12 (among others).

¹⁰⁰ The famous passage in *Spec.* 3,1–2 can also be understood in this way.

Philo, however, could not overlook the fact that there were also rich people who disregarded the divine laws or that they were rich (or newly rich), even though they neglected the laws. He relativizes and discredits this wealth as well as its owners:

The newly rich ... have been wafted into opulence by a freak of fortune. They know nothing, have never even dreamt, of the true wealth which has eyes to see, whose substance is the perfect virtues and the actions which conform with them.¹⁰¹

Such wealth is neither fulfilling nor enduring, nor does it bring lasting pleasure:

But those who through injustice and impiety have no heavenly portion cannot prosper in acquiring earthly goods either, and if any such acquisition comes their way it speedily springs away as if its coming at all were not to benefit its possessor but to make the distress which necessarily follows on lack of means weigh more heavily upon him.¹⁰²

Both passages show that the discrediting of such wealth took place in response to the ignorance and lawlessness of its owners. Such lawlessness then manifests itself, among other things, concretely in violations of the prohibition of interest and other commandments given by Moses that were intended in support of the poor such that the rich keep their goods for themselves.¹⁰³ Even neglect of the law affects the well-being of others.¹⁰⁴ Elsewhere, Philo aims at the effects of ingratitude of those who have received wealth as weak characters: "They become rich and make others poor."¹⁰⁵ For such characters, wealth poses danger to its owners: it can corrupt character and lead to pride and arrogance.¹⁰⁶ Thus, it is not so much the wealth itself (although it also carries danger) that is to be viewed critically, but rather its owner. And so for Philo, wealth is not something to be evaluated superficially, nor is it easy to answer concisely and clearly whether or not it is good to be rich. It depends substantially on the formation of virtue, on the observance of the law and love of God by the one who is rich. Each case can be judged externally on the basis of the person's character, the way of life, and the way they handle wealth. The pious and virtuously educated character obeys the divine commandments, is frugal, and keeps his distance from profligate and violent company.¹⁰⁷ The resulting blessing in the form of wealth enables him not to store up his own goods but to share them and to fulfill the commandments

¹⁰¹ *Spec.* 2,23 (trans. COLSON, PLCL VII, 321).

¹⁰² *Praem.* 105 (trans. COLSON, PLCL VIII, 377).

¹⁰³ Cf. *Virt.* 86–89,92–94; *Spec.* 2,74–75.

¹⁰⁴ Philo cites this observation in *Spec.* 1,154 using the example of the undersupply of priests.

¹⁰⁵ *Virt.* 166: πλουτήσαντες πενίαν ἄλλοις κατασκευάζουσιν (trans. COLSON, PLCL VIII, 267). Especially on minds of little sense wealth has a harmful effect (cf. *Jos.* 254) and leads to lawlessness. Cf. *Mos.* 2,13; *Abr.* 134–135; and *Mos.* 2,184 (trans. COLSON, PLCL VI, 539): „For in the voluptuous livers, whose souls are emasculated and whose bodies run to waste with ceaseless luxury prolonged from day to day, virtue cannot make its lodging.”

¹⁰⁶ Cf. *Virt.* 161–162.

¹⁰⁷ Cf. *Praem.* 100.

to help the poor and needy:¹⁰⁸ “You have abundance of wealth, give a share to others, for the excellence of wealth consists not in a full purse but in succouring the needy.”¹⁰⁹ The impious person, on the other hand, fails to recognize that his own wealth is a gift and keeps everything for himself.¹¹⁰ He gets intoxicated by possessions, becomes haughty and puffed up, and makes others suffer.¹¹¹ It is also the excess of wealth and possessions that causes these dangers.¹¹² In the end, it is not good to be too rich.

III. Ideal Examples of Attitudes towards Wealth: Abraham – Joseph – Moses

For Philo, the persons whom the Pentateuch offers as models of piety and virtue and therefore as ideal examples of the possession of true, immaterial wealth and the disciplined handling of material possessions include above all Abraham, Joseph, and Moses.¹¹³ These persons concretize, the pentateuchal foundations for dealing with wealth. Nevertheless, the topic of wealth only comes up in each case such that reflections and aphorisms on dealing with goods and possessions flow into the interpretive portrayals of the characters and the narratives associated with them. Since the three men belong to the type of the wise and virtuous, each of them also depicts aspects for the ideal handling of property and wealth. True to his portrayal in the book of Genesis, however, only Abraham is more clearly recognizable as a relatively wealthy private man,¹¹⁴ although he too – like Joseph and Moses – remains frugal and modest.

Abraham

Abraham forms the model of the wealthy, noble-minded stranger,¹¹⁵ the settler highly respected by his neighborhood. He also serves as the model for a proselyte who now trusts in the Creator and true God alone¹¹⁶ and leads a law-abiding and

¹⁰⁸ Cf. *Virt.* 90–91.97–98.140.

¹⁰⁹ *Jos.* 144: περιουσιάζεις, μεταδίδου· πλούτου γὰρ τὸ κάλλος οὐκ ἐν βαλαντίοις, ἀλλ’ ἐν τῇ τῶν χρηζόντων ἐπικουρίᾳ· (trans. COLSON, PLCL VI, 209).

¹¹⁰ Cf. *Virt.* 94.

¹¹¹ Cf. *Virt.* 161–163.

¹¹² Cf. *Virt.* 163: οἰκιῶν καὶ κτημάτων καὶ θερμημάτων ἀφρόνου περιουσίας (having regard to Dtn. 8:11–14).

¹¹³ Within the *Exposition of the Law*, Philo dedicated a treatise to each of these men, and to Moses even two treatises. Examples of men’s virtue are also offered in other treatises: cf. *Virt.* 51–79 (Moses).

¹¹⁴ Cf. *Virt.* 216: ιδιώτης γὰρ ἦν.

¹¹⁵ See *Abr.* 231: ξένος ὢν καὶ μέτοικος. Cf. *Virt.* 216–219.

¹¹⁶ Cf. *Abr.* 60–67. See *Abr.* 268 (trans. COLSON, PLCL VI, 131): “Faith in God, then, is the one sure and infallible good, consolation of life, fulfilment of bright hopes, dearth of ills, harvest of goods, inacquaintance with misery, acquaintance with piety, heritage of happiness, all-round betterment of the soul which is firmly stayed on Him Who is the cause of all things and can do all things yet only wills the best.”

peaceful life.¹¹⁷ Therefore, neither did Abraham put his trust in external things like wealth,¹¹⁸ which cannot be relied upon.¹¹⁹ Furthermore, he even despised wealth.¹²⁰ But in fact Abraham was rich – rich in silver, gold, herds of cattle, and a company of servants numbering in the hundreds.¹²¹ Not only could he be generous, but he also showed abundant hospitality.¹²² Although he had become richer in wealth than immigrants usually are, he was never censured by those who had received him into their midst. He was always highly praised by all who became acquainted with him.¹²³ Philo, however, shapes the presentation of Abraham's wealth in such a way that the wealth is not highlighted, but mentioned in passing at the appropriate opportunity. It is also not Abraham himself, but Sarah who explicitly mentions wealth.¹²⁴

Philo's portrayal of Abraham in *De Abrahamo* leaves it to his readership to make connections between Abraham's great virtue and his considerable wealth. Only in the last treatise of the *Exposition of the Law* does Philo explicitly establish the connection, though he leaves it more general and not specifically related to Abraham.¹²⁵ From Philo's interpretation of Lev 26:5 in *Praem.* 101–103 one could deduce that Philo views his own wealth similarly: The virtuous man, i. e., in the Philo's world of thought, the one who trusts God first (and not wealth), finds himself in fact a blessed man and finally also a man who consistently enjoys material riches. The wealth thus created or existing is good wealth. Because a good person possesses it, for Philo, at least in Abraham's case (and presumably in an analogous way for himself), the question of whether it is good to be rich does not arise at all: Abraham was good, therefore he was also rich.

Joseph

In the portrayal of Joseph, Philo focuses on different aspects than in his portrayal of Abraham. In the interpretation of Gen 37–50, Philo understands Joseph as the ideal statesman and, as such, an example for the handling of

¹¹⁷ See *Abr.* 60 (trans. COLSON, PLCL VI, 35): "Abraham, then, filled with zeal for piety, the highest and greatest of virtues, was eager to follow God and to be obedient to His commands."

¹¹⁸ Cf. *Abr.* 263.268–269.

¹¹⁹ Cf. *Praem.* 28.

¹²⁰ See *Praem.* 24 (about Abraham, Isaac, and Jakob; trans. COLSON, PLCL VIII, 327): "All that the multitudes admire, glory, wealth and pleasure, they despised."

¹²¹ See *Abr.* 209: πολυάργυρος καὶ πολύχρυσος ἐν τοῖς μάλιστα ὦν καὶ θερμμάτων πολυζῶους ἔχων ἀγέλας. Abraham had a large number of servants (cf. *Abr.* 170) and could even divide them into military divisions of hundreds (cf. *Abr.* 232). Gen 12:16; 13:2; 14:14–15; 24:35 was the corresponding textual basis.

¹²² Cf. *Abr.* 107–109 (interpretation of Gen 18:1–8).

¹²³ Cf. *Abr.* 209.

¹²⁴ *Abr.* 252 (in the context of a reflection on their childlessness; trans. COLSON, PLCL VI, 123): "We have much substance and abundance of wealth, not on the usual scale of immigrants, for in this we now outshine those of the native inhabitants who are noted for their prosperity."

¹²⁵ See *Praem.* 79.98–104.

entrusted wealth.¹²⁶ As the administrator appointed by Pharaoh over Egypt, Joseph demonstrated faithful stewardship¹²⁷

though the times and state of affairs gave him very numerous opportunities for gaining wealth, and he might have soon become the richest of his contemporaries, his reverence for the truly genuine riches rather than the spurious, the seeing rather than the blind, led him to store up in the king's treasuries all the silver and gold, which he collected from the sale of corn and refuse to appropriate to himself a single drachma, contented with nothing more than the gifts which the king repaid his services.¹²⁸

Joseph resists all temptations to enrich himself personally; he does not exploit his office and remains humble.¹²⁹ As a statesman, he ensures through foresighted economic management that Egypt remains rich enough to help those in need during the famine.¹³⁰ This also includes his brothers. Therefore, it is good when a whole state is rich (thanks to Providence and people heeding it) so that it can support others. In analogy to the wealth of an individual private citizen, the wealth of a state is also understood as a possibility, ultimately given by God, to help those in need.¹³¹

Moses

Moses' life was archetypal.¹³² He possessed the virtue of piety to a special degree¹³³ and lived frugality and without need.¹³⁴ Moses, contrary to all other examples of rulers and leaders of people, did not accumulate riches such as silver, gold, houses, landed estates, cattle, or slaves, although he could have had them all in abundance. He instead contributed in word and deed with all his strength to the common good.¹³⁵ He even despised material wealth "as blind," because he understood the enjoyment of it as "poverty of the soul."¹³⁶ For Philo there is another aspect to Moses: Leaders serve as role models and "when a ruler begins to shew profligacy and turn to a life of luxury, the whole body almost of his subjects gives full vent to the appetites of belly and sex beyond their actual needs."¹³⁷ The really

¹²⁶ Cf. *Jos.* 1.

¹²⁷ Cf. *Jos.* 119.

¹²⁸ *Jos.* 258 (trans. COLSON, PLCL VI, 265).

¹²⁹ Moreover, his own fate shows the volatility and impermanence of wealth: life can change quickly and rich and poor circumstances can turn into the opposite (cf. *Jos.* 131.144). Philo also cites Dionysus of Corinth and Croisus as examples (*Jos.* 132–133).

¹³⁰ Cf. *Jos.* 241–243.

¹³¹ Cf. *Jos.* 198.

¹³² *Virt.* 51: παράδειγμα καλὸν ὡςπερ γραφὴν ἀρχέτυπον στηλιτεύσας τὸν ἴδιον βίον.

¹³³ Cf. *Praem.* 53

¹³⁴ Cf. *Mos.* 1,29.153.

¹³⁵ Cf. *Mos.* 1,151–152.

¹³⁶ *Mos.* 1,153 (trans. COLSON, PLCL VI, 355). Cf. *Mos.* 1,155: Material wealth combines with a desire for profit and an unpleasant influence on people.

¹³⁷ *Mos.* 1,160 (trans. COLSON, PLCL VI, 359).

valuable goods were also of a spiritual nature for Moses and consisted for him of virtues such as self-restraint, continence, temperance, good sense, justice, etc.¹³⁸ God rewarded them with a share in his own goods.¹³⁹ The decisive question, then, in Moses' account is also the nature of the wealth to be sought: It is desirable to be rich in spiritual goods, but the pursuit of material goods changes people for the worse. It prevents the wealth of one's own soul and – insofar as it is a ruler – also the wealth of the souls of his subordinates.¹⁴⁰

IV. Getting Rich through Conflict, War, and Raids?

The Pentateuch also offered Philo some examples of enrichment through appropriation of other people's property in the context of conflict and war. The examples chosen here are Philo's account of Exod 12:35–36 (the Israelites taking rich booty with them on their exodus from Egypt) and Num 21:1–3 (conquest of the cities of Arad) in *De Vita Mosis* 1.¹⁴¹ Such narratives in the Mosaic writings could raise questions among the addressees about the norms that applied to the Israelites in dealing with the property of strangers – especially in the case of conflict and war.¹⁴² Philo uses considerable interpretative art here to avert the suspicion of greed from his people.¹⁴³ In any case, getting rich through conflict and war was not good. Thus, Philo comments on Exod 12:35–36 as follows: The booty taken from the Egyptians was by no means greed for profit and desire for foreign goods, but just, though still inadequate compensation for long denied wages, servitude, and deprivation of freedom.¹⁴⁴

Philo also finds a solution in the case of Num 21:1–3 (conquest of the cities of Arad).¹⁴⁵ This solution was also laid out for him in the Pentateuch itself: First, he has the Israelites, acting in self-defense, encourage each other to fight with words that would have been expected in warlike confrontations as well: “Here, at the entrance of the land, let us strike terror into the inhabitants, and feel that ours is the wealth of their cities, theirs the lack of necessities which we bring with us from the desert and have given them in exchange.”¹⁴⁶ Philo, however, now

¹³⁸ Cf. *Mos.* 1,154.

¹³⁹ Cf. *Mos.* 1,155–157.

¹⁴⁰ Cf. *Mos.* 1,160–161.

¹⁴¹ See also *Spec.* 4,220–223.

¹⁴² Cf. *Mos.* 1,141.251.

¹⁴³ Philo elsewhere refers to the gain of foreign property as the main motive for struggle and warfare (cf. *Mos.* 1,307).

¹⁴⁴ Cf. *Mos.* 1,141–142.

¹⁴⁵ Num 21:1–3 (LXX): (1) Καὶ ἤκουσεν ὁ Χανανὶς βασιλεὺς Ἀραδ ὁ κατοικῶν κατὰ τὴν ἔρημον – ἦλθεν γὰρ Ἰσραὴλ ὁδὸν Ἀθαριν – καὶ ἐπολέμησεν πρὸς Ἰσραὴλ καὶ κατεπρονόμεισεν ἐξ αὐτῶν αἰχμαλωσίαν. (2) καὶ ἠῤῥατο Ἰσραὴλ εὐχὴν κυρίῳ καὶ εἶπεν ᾿Εάν μοι παραδῶς τὸν λαὸν τοῦτον ὑποχείριον, ἀναθεματιῶ αὐτὸν καὶ τὰς πόλεις αὐτοῦ. (3) καὶ εἰσήκουσεν κύριος τῆς φωνῆς Ἰσραὴλ καὶ παρέδωκεν τὸν Χανανὶν ὑποχείριον αὐτοῦ, καὶ ἀνεθεμάτισεν αὐτὸν καὶ τὰς πόλεις αὐτοῦ· καὶ ἐπέκάλεισεν τὸ ὄνομα τοῦ τόπου ἐκείνου ᾿Ανάθεμα.

¹⁴⁶ *Mos.* 1,251 (trans. COLSON, PLCL VI, 407).

takes up the vow given by the textual pattern in Num 21:2–3^{LXX} for the case of a victory, but uses the semantics of ἀνάθεμα, the intention of which is unclear in Greek, in such a way that he employs the more positive meaning possibility “consecration gift” and not the negative “cursing”. Moreover, he connects the vow (against the wording of the LXX at this point) with the biblical prescription of the first fruits (ἀπαρχή), which he also explains here at once.¹⁴⁷ He could derive this connection from Num (LXX) 31:25–54 (certain portions of the war spoils are designated as offerings to God).¹⁴⁸ The victorious Israelites thus appear in Philo’s account, even in Num 21, in a far better light than the biblical text itself would suggest. They expressly take nothing for themselves from the booty, but consecrate cities, inhabitants, and their valuables to God.¹⁴⁹

In both cases, one can see how Philo, on the one hand, tried to apply the ideal norms for understanding and dealing with the property of others laid down in the Pentateuch – especially in the case of conflict and war – to concrete narratives, and on the other hand, not to damage the image of the Israelites as θεοφιλείς¹⁵⁰ even when they enrich themselves with other people’s property.¹⁵¹ So it is perhaps not good, but at least not bad either, to have become rich in this way.

F. Is It Good to Be Rich? Conclusions

At the end of the study, there is a clear, albeit differentiated, answer: It is good to be rich, but only if the rich person is also pious, law-abiding, and virtuous. In this case, wealth is a gift from God and also a blessing for others. However, it is also not good to be too rich, because wealth corrupts. Even the pursuit of wealth is dangerous. The corresponding antithesis can be formulated as follows: It is not good to be rich in the case where the rich person disregards the divine laws. Then wealth becomes an evil for himself and for others.

One can debate whether Philo had an ambivalent relationship to wealth. In my opinion, the question must be answered in the affirmative. Even more important, however, is his critical relationship to the person of the rich man: Ultimately, it depends on a person’s basic attitude and the resulting behavior whether it is good to be rich – or not.

¹⁴⁷ Cf. Gen 4:3–5; Exod 22:28; 23:19; Lev 23:9–14.

¹⁴⁸ Philo explicitly uses the term ἀπαρχή again here (*Mos.* 1,316–318).

¹⁴⁹ Cf. *Mos.* 1,252–254.

¹⁵⁰ *Mos.* 1,255.

¹⁵¹ They continue to be courageous and successful conquerors of their enemies. Philo, however, moves once more beyond the text of the Book of Numbers and argues that they did not touch the booty as the first fruits of their battles, but consecrated it to God (*Mos.* 1,259; cf. also *Mos.* 1,307.317).

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