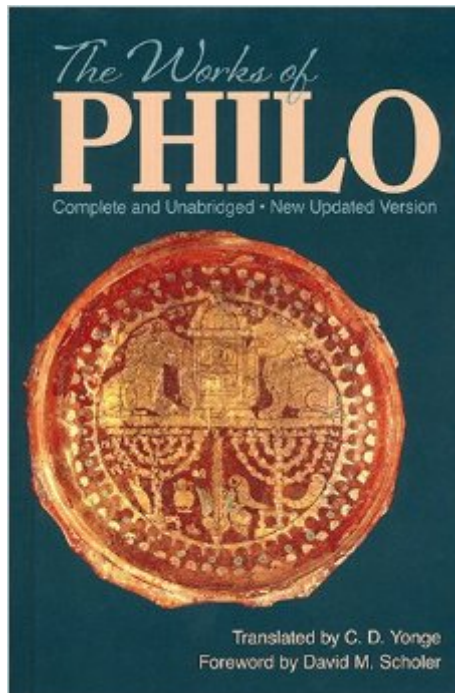


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The Works Of Philo: Complete And Unabridged, New Updated Edition



Synopsis

While it would not be correct to say that Philo's works have been "lost"--scholars have always known and used Philo--they have essentially been "misplaced" as far as the average student of the Bible is concerned. Now the translation of the eminent classicist C. D. Yonge is available in an affordable, easy-to-read edition, with a new foreword and newly translated passages, and containing supposed fragments of Philo's writings from ancient authors such as John of Damascus. The title and arrangement of the writings have been standardized according to scholarly conventions. A contemporary of Paul and Jesus, Philo Judaeus, of Alexandria, Egypt, is unquestionably among the most important writers for historians and students of Hellenistic Judaism and early Christianity. Although Philo does not explicitly mention Jesus, or Paul, or any of the followers of Jesus, Philo lived in their world. It is from Philo, for example, that we learn about how, like the Gospel of John, Jews (and Greeks) in the Greco-Roman world spoke of the creative force of God as God's "Logos." Philo, too, employs interpretive strategies that parallel those of the author of Hebrews. Most scholars would agree that Philo and the author of Hebrews are drawing from the same, or at least similar, traditions of Hellenistic Judaism. With these kind of connections to the world of Judaism and early Christianity, Philo cannot be ignored.

Book Information

Hardcover: 944 pages

Publisher: Hendrickson Publishers (August 1, 1993)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0943575931

ISBN-13: 978-0943575933

Product Dimensions: 6.4 x 1.8 x 9.3 inches

Shipping Weight: 2.8 pounds (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.4 out of 5 stars [See all reviews](#) (43 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #52,189 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #52 in [Books > Biographies & Memoirs > Ethnic & National > Jewish](#) #52 in [Books > Reference > Encyclopedias & Subject Guides > Religion](#) #153 in [Books > Religion & Spirituality > Judaism](#)

Customer Reviews

Philo Judaeus, the great Jewish exegete and philosopher, was a contemporary of Josephus and the Apostles Paul and Peter during the 1st century A.D. This volume of his complete works must be one of the most, if not the most, exhaustive commentaries on the five books of the Old Testament (the

Pentateuch) in existence. In true rabbinic fashion, Philo discourses on the letter and spirit of the Pentateuch, from all the major characters of the five books of the Old Testament to the creation of the world. His prose style is a combination of stream-of-consciousness, meditation, and textual exposition. Philo's works are not merely a collection of essays on the Pentateuch, but a window into the rich allegorical and contemplative mind of a great rabbi--the Pentateuch interpreted by a rabbi within the context of first century Hellenism buttressed by nearly 2000 years of a tradition personally handed down from God. Philo addresses the reader in 2nd person; it is almost as if the reader was a student sitting and listening at the feet of the rabbi. It is, however, easy to lose one's place in the text. Philo divides his essays topically: e.g., The Creation of the World, Abel, Cain, Noah's Drunkenness, Abraham's Exodus from Ur, The Tower of Babel, Moses, etc. Within each essay, however, Philo waxes upon the topic and upon anything tangentially related to it in a great stream-of-consciousness. Moreover, the text is invariably printed in two columns, justified, separated with a line in 10 point font on every page, front and back. If it were not for the consecutive paragraph numbering, the text would seem like a great jumbled mass of impenetrable rabbinic commentary. But Philo writes some true gems, and it is worth culling the dense text for them.

The writings of Philo Judaeus (Philo of Alexandria, c20 BC - c50 AD) are important to the historical examination of late Second Temple Judaism, the religious 'world' into which Christ came. A prominent scholar and exegete, Philo's writings are considered the most thorough and most representative documents illuminating Hellenistic Judaism. Philo is interesting to Christians because, like Saul of Tarsus (Paul the Apostle), he was a Pharisee, a student and interpreter of Hebrew Scripture. (The Pharisees were a scholarly rabbinical sect particularly known for their studies of the Pentateuch. Their exegetic work was esteemed such that they were held by many to be the spiritual "rulers" of Judaism. The Torah commentators who wrote the Talmud were Pharisees. They are generally criticized by Christians but it should be noted that they shared some important beliefs with Christians, namely the priority of the immaterial to the material, the promise of the Messiah, the existence of angelic beings, and of the Divine gift of eternal existence for those who enter a right relationship with God. The Pharisees famously opposed Jesus, but it is also known that a number of them became Christians. Philo however, who spent most of his life in Alexandria, and died c.50 AD, likely had little or no contact with Jesus' followers.) Not only a Hebrew scholar but a noted scholar within Alexandrian academe, Philo is an interesting expositor of Greek philosophy and mathematics of the period, showing a great fondness for Euclidean geometry and number theory. However, the exegesis of the scriptural Creation account and of the special laws

and the Decalogue is the author's central focus. This complete and unabridged volume is no trivial work, perhaps only approached by the most serious-minded student.

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