



Transforming the Self through Music:
Musicking as a Spiritual Exercise in Philo of Alexandria

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Preface

This thesis brings together two disciplines which, at first sight, appear to have little to do with one another: musicology and religious studies. The distance between these fields of research, however, is smaller than we may initially think. Musical practices and practices of worship and meditation, religious rituals, and mystical teachings are often found in close proximity. From the religious compositions of Johann Sebastian Bach and the mystical works of Hildegard of Bingen to the whirling dervishes of the Sufi Mawlawiyya order and ancient Hindu traditions on the relationship between musical notes and deities, music and worship have been closely connected in religious traditions of all times and places.

The Jewish philosopher Philo of Alexandria, who wrote in Greek in the first century CE, offers unique insights into the connections between music and Judaism within the ancient Alexandrian diaspora. This is a segment of music history about which we have little knowledge, so that authors like Philo are a priceless source of information for those attempting to understand what the Alexandrian Jews thought about and did with music in relation to their religion, and for students of ancient musical practices in general. While some studies on Philo and music have appeared over the years, there is still much research to be done, especially when it comes to connecting the author's ideas about music to his broader Jewish philosophy. This thesis fulfills a small part of that task.

With a background in both musicology and religious studies, I was able to draw from both these disciplines to shed light on Philo's ideas about musical practice as a source of self-transformation within a Jewish framework. I have employed Pierre Hadot's model of ancient philosophy as a way of life in my approach of Philo as a religious philosopher. This model allowed me to broaden my definition of philosophy to include more than just thinking about difficult questions: according to Hadot's model, practical activities are an integral part of ancient philosophy, as they help students to align their way of living with whatever school of thought they subscribe to. By extension, practical activities are integral to a religious philosophy like that of Philo. I hope this case study convinces the reader that a model like Hadot's, which integrates practical and spiritual life, can help us understand the deep connection between music and religion in other contexts, too.

A word of thanks goes to my supervisor dr. Arjen Bakker at the University of Groningen, without whose help, advice, and patience the completion of this thesis would not have been possible. I also want to thank all the other teachers and students at the University of Groningen who have helped and inspired me along the way. Special thanks go to all those who were present at the 2023 Groningen-Leuven-Oxford Encounter on the Dead Sea Scrolls, for giving me the opportunity to share some of my research with them and, more importantly, to learn from their work. Finally, I want to thank the friends and family who stood by me throughout the process of completing this thesis.

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List of Abbreviations

Works by Philo

Abr.	De Abrahamo (<i>On Abraham</i>)
Congr.	De congressu eruditionis gratia (<i>On Mating with the Preliminary Studies</i>)
Contempl.	De vita contemplativa (<i>On the Contemplative Life</i>)
Migr.	De migratione Abrahami (<i>On the Migration of Abraham</i>)
Mos.	De vita Mosis (<i>On the Life of Moses</i>)
Opif.	De opificio mundi (<i>On the Creation</i>)
Plant.	De plantatione (<i>Concerning Noah's Work as a Planter</i>)
Prob.	Quid omnis probus liber sit (<i>Every Good Man is Free</i>)
Prov.	De providentia (<i>On Providence</i>)
Sacr.	De sacrificiis Abelis et Caini (<i>On the Birth of Abel</i>)
Spec.	De specialibus legibus (<i>On the Special Laws</i>)
Virt.	De virtutibus (<i>On the Virtues</i>)

Other

NETS	New English Translation of the Septuagint
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Introduction

This thesis focuses on musicking as a form of spiritual exercise in the writings of the Jewish philosopher Philo of Alexandria. I will demonstrate that musicking serves as a spiritual exercise for Philo and describe four dimensions of musical practice as a source of self-transformation: the shaping of character through musical education, the application of music theory as an object of contemplation, the composition of hymns, and communal singing. Each of these four dimensions works in its own unique way to bring about a transformation of the self, as I will make clear in the following pages.

I will examine three areas of musicking discussed by Philo: musical education, the composition and performance of hymns, and choral singing. One chapter of this thesis will be dedicated to each of these three topics. The first of these topics covers the first two dimensions of musicking as a spiritual exercise, while the second and third cover one dimension each. Although I believe that analyzing these three topics gives rise to a reasonably thorough picture of Philo's views on musicking, this account will inevitably not be exhaustive. Some areas of musical practice will be left out of the discussion, along with much of what Philo writes about theoretical aspects of music (e.g., its relationship to numerology and cosmology), and the philosopher's use of musical metaphors. An exploration of these topics will be left to another occasion.¹

The term "musicking" was coined by musicologist Christopher Small in the 1990s.² It reflects a broadening of scope within the discipline of musicology which has its roots in cultural musicology: instead of focusing only on (written or recorded) pieces of music, the term musicking encompasses any music-related practice, from performing to composing to instrument building. This broadening of

¹ Some of these topics have already been explored by other scholars; see, for instance, on the relationship between music and theology Carlos Lévy, "The *Scala Naturae* and Music: Two Models in Philo's Thought," in *Music and Philosophy in the Roman Empire*, ed. by Francesco Pelosi and Federico M. Petrucci, 21-37 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press); on Philo's use of music as a rhetorical device David Creese, "Rhetorical Uses of Mathematical Harmonics in Philo and Plutarch," *Studies in History and Philosophy of Science* 43 (2012): 258-269; and on music in relation to the praise of God Everett Ferguson, "The Art of Praise: Philo and Philodemus on Music," in *Early Christianity and Classical Culture: Comparative Studies in Honor of Abraham J. Malherbe*, ed. by John Fitzgerald, Thomas Olbricht, and Michael L. White, 391-426 (Leiden: Brill, 2003).

² Christopher Small, *Musicking: The Meaning of Performing and Listening* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1998).

scope allows the entire spectrum of music-related activities to enter the researcher's field of vision. This is especially useful in the case of Philo and many other ancient authors because they tend to write about musical activities, rather than about music theory or pieces of music.

a. Philo: his city, his work, and his readers

The Jewish philosopher Philo of Alexandria (c. 15 BCE – c. 45 CE), alternatively known as Philo Judaeus, is responsible for the first known attestation of the word *kosmopolitēs*, and while he did not use the term in its present connotation, in certain ways he was akin to a modern cosmopolite.³ He lived as a Hellenized Jew in the Roman province of Egypt; he paid visits to both Rome and Jerusalem; and after his death, his work came to be well read by the Christian church fathers. In short, Adam Kamesar was right to state that Philo stood “at the crossroads of three great civilizations of antiquity: the Judaic, the Greek, and the Christian”.⁴ We should always keep the diversity of Philo's cultural and intellectual background in mind as we attempt to understand this complex and fascinating figure from antiquity.

Alexandria was founded in 331 BCE by Alexander the Great at a strategic point by the mouth of the western Nile delta.⁵ After Alexander's death, a series of Ptolemaic rulers governed Egypt, turning Alexandria into a hub of science and culture and building its famous library, among other imposing public works. The city was populated by Greeks, Jews, and native Egyptians, with each group living in their own quarters. They continued to do so after the Roman conquest of Egypt in 30 BCE. Alexandria remained an important intellectual and commercial center within the Roman Empire, and its population numbers were likely second only to

³ *Opif.* 3, 142. While Philo is the first author in whose work the term has been found, others had probably used it before him. See David T. Runia, “The Idea and the Reality of the City in the Thought of Philo of Alexandria,” *Journal of the History of Ideas* 61, no. 3 (July 2000): 361-379.

⁴ Adam Kamesar, introduction to *The Cambridge Companion to Philo* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 1. A fourth “great civilization” to which Philo stood in close proximity is of course the Roman; the significance of Philo's Roman context has recently received more attention, for instance in Maren R. Niehoff, *Philo of Alexandria: An Intellectual Biography* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2018).

⁵ For this brief historical overview, I have referred to *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Ancient Greece and Rome*, ed. Michael Gagarin (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), s.v. “Alexandria,” by Prudence J. Jones. For a more in-depth perspective, see Benjamin Schliesser et al. (eds.), *Alexandria: Hub of the Hellenistic World* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2021). On the demographics of ancient Alexandria, see Alan Bowman, “Ptolemaic and Roman Egypt: Population and Settlement,” in *Settlement, Urbanization, and Population*, ed. Alan Bowman and Andrew Wilson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 317-358.

those of Rome itself during the Early Imperial Period. It was in this multicultural metropolis that Philo was born around 15 BCE, roughly a decade-and-a-half into Roman rule.⁶

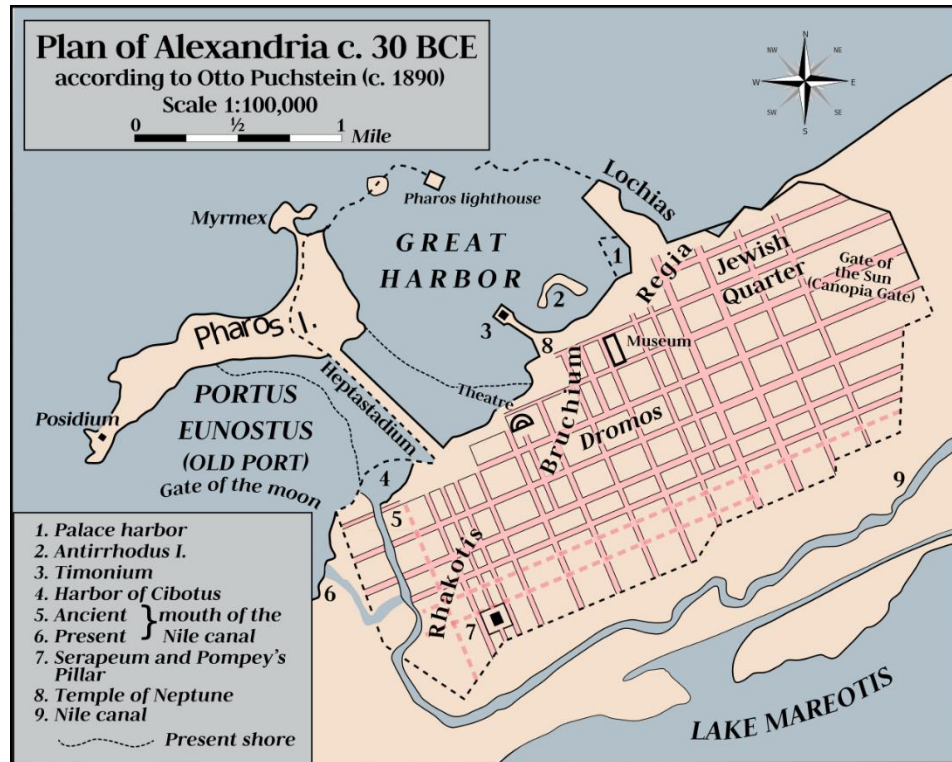


Image 1: Reproduction of a map of ancient Alexandria by Otto Puchstein (c. 1890), with the Jewish Quarter in the northeast and Lake Mareotis in the south. Source: Wikimedia Commons.

Not everything in Alexandria remained the same, however, after the Romans had seized power. The intercultural equilibrium was beginning to shift: whereas the Jewish community had been able to live peacefully alongside its Greek and Egyptian neighbors under Ptolemaic rule, the Roman conquest ushered in a period of growing anti-Jewish sentiments, especially among the Greek Alexandrians.⁷ The city witnessed several eruptions of violence in the first and second centuries CE: anti-Jewish pogroms in 38, a Jewish rebellion against Roman rule in 66, and again widespread rebellions in 115-117, which affected not only Alexandria, but also many other regions of the Jewish diaspora. The continuous conflicts ultimately led

⁶ Daniel R. Schwartz, "Philo, His Family, and His Times," in Kamesar, *The Cambridge Companion*, 11.

⁷ Schwartz, "Philo," 19; cf. David T. Runia, "Philo, Alexandrian and Jew," chap. 1 in *Exegesis and Philosophy: Studies on Philo of Alexandria* (Aldershot: Variorum, 1990), 2-3.

to a decimation of Alexandria's Jewish population, though Philo only lived to witness the beginning of these developments.⁸

All this constitutes the backdrop against which Philo lived, thought, and wrote. In his life, his thought, and his writings, Philo's primary loyalty was to his Jewish heritage, but he was also highly knowledgeable and fond of Greek culture and philosophy. His family was wealthy and Philo must have enjoyed a thorough education.⁹ Like his fellow Alexandrian Jews he spoke Greek rather than Hebrew and read the Torah in the Septuagint translation, which had been produced a couple of centuries earlier in Ptolemaic Alexandria.¹⁰ Like most Jews of his day, he considered Moses the author of the Pentateuch and believed that these five books contained the highest wisdom attainable to humanity.¹¹ Philo believed, moreover, that in order to fully extract the wisdom encapsulated in Moses's writings one needs to interpret them allegorically.¹² Allegory is Philo's key to the ultimate wisdom contained in the Pentateuch, and one of the philosopher's chief occupations.

Philo's appreciation for his Greek colleagues and predecessors, particularly Plato and the stoics, lay in the correspondence he saw between the wisdom that these thinkers had obtained, and the ultimate wisdom contained in the Pentateuch. This correspondence resulted, according to Philo, from the identity between the Law of Moses and the Law of Nature.¹³ Wisdom could therefore be attained through

⁸ Schwartz, "Philo," 19. Philo describes the pogroms of 38 CE and the events surrounding them in his treatises *In Flaccum* and *Legatio ad Gaium*.

⁹ On Philo's family, see Schwartz, "Philo," 12-14; Alan Applebaum, "A Fresh Look at Philo's Family," *The Studia Philonica Annual* 30 (2018): 93-114; and Runia, "Philo," 3. On his education, see *Congr.* 74 ff.

¹⁰ Runia, "Philo," 2. The Septuagint (from the Latin *septuaginta*, "seventy," referring to the seventy translators who are said to have produced the text), was the first translation of the Hebrew bible into Greek. Philo recounts the production of the Septuagint, which he considered equally authoritative as the Hebrew original, in *Mos.* 2.28-44. Another important ancient source is the letter of Aristeas (see Benjamin Wright (ed.), *The Letter of Aristeas: 'Aristeas to Philocrates' or 'On the Translation of the Law of the Jews'* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2015) and Erich S. Gruen, "The Letter of Aristeas and the Cultural Context of the Septuagint," in *The Construct of Identity in Hellenistic Judaism: Essays on Early Jewish Literature and History* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2016)). Where I give biblical citations in this study, I will refer to the Septuagint text of the Hellenic Bible Society edition for the Greek (<https://www.septuagint.bible/>), and to the *New English Translation of the Septuagint* (NETS) published under the editorship of Albert Pietersma and Benjamin G. Wright (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007) for the English.

¹¹ Runia, "Philo," 5, 7.

¹² Runia, "Philo," 8. Cf. *Plant.* 36-37. This is not to say that Philo disregarded the literal message of the Torah; he considered both its allegorical and its literal meaning necessary each in its own way (*Migr.* 93).

¹³ *Mos.* 2.12-14. See also Hindy Najman, *Past Renewals: Interpretative Authority, Renewed Revelation and the Quest for Perfection in Jewish Antiquity* (Leiden: Brill, 2010), esp. chaps. 4, "The Law of Nature and the Authority of Mosaic Law," and 5, "A Written Copy of the Law of Nature: An Unthinkable Paradox?"

philosophy as well as through the (allegorical) study of the Torah. The identity between the Law of Moses and the Law of Nature moreover allowed the patriarchs to live fully in line with the Law even before it was written down; these men were, for Philo, embodiments of the Law and, consequently, exemplary figures. Much of Philo's work can be read as not so much an attempt to reconcile Greek philosophy with the Jewish tradition, but rather a demonstration of the concordance between the two. Greek philosophical concepts, especially Platonic ones, are interwoven throughout Philo's allegorical interpretations of the Pentateuch.¹⁴

Most of Philo's oeuvre is devoted to his allegorical explanation of the Torah. These exegetical writings are contained in three series: the *Allegorical Commentary*, the *Exposition of the Law* and the *Questions and Answers on Genesis and Exodus*.¹⁵ In addition to these works, we have four historical-apologetic works, including the much-read *De vita contemplativa*, and five philosophical works not directly related to the Torah.¹⁶ Philo scholar David Runia identifies two main audiences for Philo's writings: the first are educated Jews, some of whom might have been tempted, in an increasingly tense multicultural climate, to abandon their religion and acculturate into the Hellenistic mainstream, with Philo attempting to dissuade them from apostasy, while others simply wished to deepen their understanding of scripture through allegorical exegesis. The second group Runia identifies are non-Jewish Greek and Roman intellectuals who were interested to learn more about the traditions of the Jewish communities with whom they shared their cities.¹⁷ These readers may not have been personally invested in the Jewish religion per se, but could nevertheless take interest in the age-old wisdom handed down in the Jewish scriptures, especially when that wisdom was presented in a way that resonated with familiar philosophical concepts.

¹⁴ The extent of Philo's "huge debt to Plato" is demonstrated, for instance, by Runia's study on Philo's reading of the platonic dialogue *Timaeus* (David T. Runia, *Philo of Alexandria and the Timaeus* (Leiden: Brill, 1986)).

¹⁵ The exegetical writings may have originally comprised up to sixty individual books, with approximately forty of those surviving today. On questions of the organization and division of the exegetical works, see David T. Runia, "The Structure of Philo's Allegorical Treatises," chap. 4 in *Exegesis and Philosophy*; James R. Royse, "The Works of Philo," in Kamesar, *The Cambridge Companion*, 32-64; and Sarah Pearce, "Philo and the Septuagint," in *The Oxford Handbook of the Septuagint*, ed. Alison G. Salvesen and Timothy Michael Law (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021), 406-410.

¹⁶ Runia, "Philo," 5-7.

¹⁷ Runia, "Philo," 5; and Runia, "How to Read Philo," chap. 2 in *Exegesis and Philosophy*, 192.

Some scholars have attempted to discern which particular works Philo wrote for which particular audiences. Erwin Goodenough, for example, believed that Philo intended the *Exposition of the Law* for a non-Jewish audience and hoped to gain their acceptance or even their conversion through this series, while he addressed the *Allegorical Commentary* to “initiated” Jews.¹⁸ Others are more hesitant to connect Philo’s texts to specific audiences with any degree of certainty.¹⁹ In the course of my own reading of Philo I have found Runia’s suggestion convincing: that Philo often wrote primarily for himself (at least in the case of the exegetical works), i.e., in order to deepen his own faith and understanding of the scriptures, while others’ perusal of the fruits of this labor was only secondary to that primary purpose.²⁰ Without a doubt, over the past two millennia his readership has expanded beyond anything Philo could have imagined.²¹

b. Selection and interpretation of source material

As Philo rarely treats a single topic in one unified treatise, approaching his work thematically involves selecting passages dealing with a particular subject from a variety of texts. I will therefore support my argument by presenting and analyzing citations from across Philo’s oeuvre. In selecting my source material, I have been guided by several scholars’ work on Philo and music.²² The result, as will become clear throughout this thesis, is a mosaic of fragments from which a picture of Philo’s views on musicking will emerge.

It is crucial to understand which traditions and discourses influenced the formation of Philo’s ideas about any given theme. Of utmost importance is, of

¹⁸ Erwin R. Goodenough, *An Introduction to Philo Judaeus*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1962), 30-51.

¹⁹ E.g., Runia, “How to Read Philo”; and Royse, “The Works of Philo,” 33-34.

²⁰ Runia, “How to Read Philo,” 192.

²¹ Of course, I could not do full justice to the complexity of Philo’s life, context, and ideas in this brief introduction. For more in-depth analyses I refer to the foundational though somewhat dated studies by Harry A. Wolfson, *Philo: Foundations of Religious Philosophy in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam*, rev. ed. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1962) and Erwin R. Goodenough, *An Introduction to Philo Judaeus*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1962). More recent titles include Adam Kamesar (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Philo* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009) and Maren R. Niehoff, *Philo of Alexandria: An Intellectual Biography* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2018). Another invaluable source of information is the *Studia Philonica Annual*, which has appeared yearly since 1989.

²² Particularly useful were the references to music collected and discussed in Louis H. Feldman, “Philo’s Views on Music,” in *Studies in Hellenistic Judaism* (Leiden: Brill, 1996), 504-528; and Siegmund Levarie, “Philo on Music,” *The Journal of Musicology* 9, no. 1 (Winter 1991): 124-130.

course, the Septuagint. Philo's entire oeuvre is permeated by allusions to and citations of the Hebrew bible in its Greek translation.²³ While this is most readily apparent in the exegetical works, copious biblical allusions can also be identified in Philo's non-exegetical works.²⁴ In addition to the unmistakable importance of the Septuagint, several scholars have pointed to the influence of Jewish exegetical traditions and of synagogal reading practices on Philo's work and method.²⁵ Philo's own account tells us that a lively culture of reading and studying existed in Alexandria's synagogues.²⁶ These practices will surely have impacted Philo's interpretation of scripture, even if it is difficult to reconstruct the precise lines of influence.

Notwithstanding the primacy of the Septuagint and its associated traditions in Philo's thought world, the significance of Greek philosophical discourse in his work is also unmistakable. Greek philosophical concepts informed his reading and interpretation of the Septuagint and are paramount to understanding his work as a whole. First and foremost among the philosophical influences is that of Plato.²⁷ Philo's interpretation of Platonic concepts has been described as typical of the interpretations circulating among Alexandrian intellectuals of his day, even if he nuanced his use of those concepts to align with his monotheistic religion.²⁸ Other major influences are those of Stoicism and Pythagoreanism, while the influence of Aristotelianism has been described as identifiable in Philo's thought, but much less prominent.²⁹ Philo consistently puts all these influences at the service of his primary loyalty to his Jewish heritage.³⁰ For him, the ideas and concepts he adopts from Greek philosophy support and confirm his faith in the teachings of Moses.

²³ Pearce, "Philo and the Septuagint," 410.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 406.

²⁵ On the influence of synagogal reading practices on Philo's exegetical method, see Runia, "Structure of Philo's Allegorical Treatises," 230. An important early advocate for this theory was the French scholar Valentin Nikiprowetsky.

²⁶ *Mos.* 2.216.

²⁷ On the influence of Platonism and other Greek philosophical traditions on Philo, see for instance John Dillon, *The Middle Platonists: 80 B.C. to A.D. 220*, rev. ed. (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1996), esp. chap. 3 "Platonism at Alexandria: Eudorus and Philo," and more recently Carlos Lévy, "Philo of Alexandria," in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Fall 2022 ed., ed. Edward N. Zalta and Uri Nodelman, <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2022/entries/philo/>, sections 2 and 3.

²⁸ Lévy, "Philo of Alexandria," section 3.3.

²⁹ See Lévy, "Philo of Alexandria," section 3.1 on Aristotelianism, section 3.2 on Stoicism, and section 3.3 on Platonism and Pythagoreanism in relation to Philo.

³⁰ Runia, "Philo," 4.

It is, in short, imperative to be aware of both the Jewish and the Greek influences on Philo. At the same time, it is not always possible or even desirable to make clearcut distinctions between the two traditions within Philo's thought. His Jewishness is shaped by his Greekness, and vice versa.³¹ This is true also when it comes to his ideas about music. In the case of music, matters are complicated further by the fact that there are many gaps in our knowledge of ancient music history, so that identifying which ideas Philo might have gotten from where is nearly impossible. Philo's musical world was shaped by a harmony of voices that cannot readily be isolated from each other. Throughout this thesis, I will therefore point to resonances between Philo's ideas and other musical traditions, or traditions of thinking about music, without attempting to pinpoint exactly from where he took which idea. In so doing, I hope to do justice both to the richness of Philo's intellectual pedigree and to the singularity of his own voice.

c. Theoretical framework: philosophy as a way of life

This thesis centers around the question whether and how musicking can serve as a spiritual exercise according to Philo. The term "spiritual exercise", in the way I use it here, derives from the work of French philosopher and historian of philosophy Pierre Hadot (1922 – 2010).³² Hadot argued that the primary function of ancient philosophy was not so much to generate systems of dogmas and ideas, but rather to provide guidance in daily life. His view is summarized in his statement that "more than theses, [ancient philosophy] teaches ways, methods, spiritual exercises ...".³³ According to Hadot's theory, ancient philosophical texts are best understood in light of their purpose of teaching the students of philosophy a particular way of

³¹ On the interplay between Judaism and Hellenism in Philo, see for example Erich S. Gruen, "Philo and Jewish Ethnicity," in *Ethnicity in the Ancient World – Did It Matter?* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2020) and from the same author *Constructs of Identity in Hellenistic Judaism: Essays on Early Jewish Literature and History* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2016). Of course, the introductory works cited earlier (see footnote 19) also discuss the various aspects of this topic.

³² A succinct introduction to the work and thought of Hadot can be found in Arnold I. Davidson's introduction to Pierre Hadot, *Philosophy as a Way of Life*, ed. Arnold I. Davidson, trans. Michael Chase (Oxford: Blackwell, 1995). On the notion of philosophy as a way of life in the work of different thinkers throughout the history of Western philosophy, see Matthew Sharpe and Michael Ure, *Philosophy as a Way of Life: History, Dimensions, Directions* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2021).

³³ Pierre Hadot, "Jeux de langage et philosophie," *Revue de Métaphysique et de Morale* 64 (1960): 341; quoted in Davidson, introduction to Hadot, 18.

life.³⁴ While different philosophers and philosophical schools may have taught different life practices, they shared a primary interest in elevating and transforming their readers' and pupils' everyday lives by aligning them with whatever that particular school or philosopher perceived as "the good life". In all cases (and Philo is no exception), self-transformation was grounded in overcoming the passions of unrestrained fear and desire; Hadot therefore defines (ancient) philosophy as a "therapeutic of the passions".³⁵ Overcoming the passions might involve practices such as tempering or controlling one's emotions, correcting misguided judgments about the nature of the universe, and reflecting on the impact of one's actions on others, among many other examples.

Hadot focused mainly on pagan and Christian thinkers, although Philo also received his attention. The broader applicability of Hadot's model to ancient Judaism has been explored by Hindy Najman, who refers to Philo extensively in this context.³⁶ Najman summarizes Philo's conception of the aim of human life as "[becoming] soul alone or mind alone".³⁷ In other words, the good life is a life in service of the mind and Philo's philosophy teaches a way of life to achieve or at least approach that goal through the overcoming of the passions. For Philo, Abraham and Moses serve as exemplary figures, both of whom were able to achieve a perfect life without external instruction – they were self-taught sages.³⁸ Following their example is one way to aspire to the good life, and Philo's work guides his readers in doing so. Alternatively, or additionally, perfect virtue can be approached through the study of the written version of the law: the Torah.³⁹ Again, Philo's allegorical explanations aid his readers in following the guidelines of the written

³⁴ In addition to written texts, oral teachings were an indispensable part of ancient philosophical education; see also Davidson, introduction to Hadot, 19-20.

³⁵ Hadot, *Philosophy as a Way of Life*, 83.

³⁶ Najman, *Past Renewals*, see esp. chaps. 9, "Philosophical Contemplation and Revelatory Inspiration in Ancient Judean Traditions"; 12, "The Quest for Perfection in Ancient Judaism"; and 14, "Text and Figure in Ancient Jewish *paideia*". In addition to Hadot's model of philosophy as a way of life, Najman also includes Stanley Cavell's similar notion of moral perfectionism in her discussion, as does Arnold Davidson in his application of Hadot's model to music, discussed further on in this introduction. For this thesis I chose to focus solely on Hadot's model and leave Cavell's theory aside, but it deserves to be mentioned as another angle from which Philo's work can be fruitfully approached.

³⁷ Najman, *Past Renewals*, 246; see also *Mos.* 2.288 and *Contempl.* 90. This aim, according to Najman, is deeply rooted in the Platonism and reveals once more Philo's profound indebtedness to that tradition.

³⁸ E.g., *Abr.* 5, 16, 275-276; *Mos.* 1.1, 2.6; see Najman, *Past Renewals*, 222-228; 249-250.

³⁹ Najman, *Past Renewals*, 252-255.

Law. In short, the imitation of sages and the study of scripture form the two pillars of Philo's philosophy-as-a-way-of-life.

I will build on Najman's work by looking at a specific area of Philo's thought – his ideas about musicking –, and a specific aspect of Hadot's model – spiritual exercise. The notion of spiritual exercises plays a central part in Hadot's conception of philosophy as a way of life. These exercises are all the activities that philosophers employ to bring about a transformation of the self and its position in the world. Hadot defines spiritual exercises as “practices which could be physical, as in dietary regimes, or discursive, as in dialogue and meditation, or intuitive, as in contemplation, but which were all intended to effect a modification and transformation in the subject who practiced them”.⁴⁰ The common denominator among all spiritual exercises is their purpose: to bring about the self-transformation of the person practicing them through overcoming the passions.

Music, too, is among the activities that can serve as spiritual exercises, although Hadot mentions it only once and then briefly.⁴¹ The topic has been explored further by Arnold Davidson, who focused on jazz improvisation as a spiritual exercise. The musicians Davidson discusses are saxophonists Sonny Rollins (in relation to stoicism), John Coltrane (in relation to cynicism), and Steve Lacy (in relation to Plotinus), bassist Charlie Haden, and guitarist Jim Hall (both in relation to Epicureanism).⁴² Davidson's case studies show, among other things, how musical improvisation as spiritual exercise requires consistent and repeated practice, just as in Hadot's conception of the spiritual exercise as something to be practiced regularly.⁴³ Whereas Davidson has transposed Hadot's model from an ancient to a modern context in applying it to jazz music, with this thesis I will attempt to complete the circle by taking Davidson's concept of music as a spiritual exercise and applying it to the original context of Hadot's spiritual exercises: antiquity.

⁴⁰ Pierre Hadot, *What is Ancient Philosophy?* trans. Michael Chase (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press, 2004), 5.

⁴¹ Hadot cites Beethoven, who “referred to the exercises of musical composition that he required of his students, and that were meant to allow them to attain a form of wisdom – one that might be called aesthetic – spiritual exercises.” Pierre Hadot, *The Present Alone is Our Happiness: Conversations with Jeannie Carlier and Arnold I. Davidson*, 2nd ed., trans. Marc Djaballah and Michael Chase (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2011), page 92.

⁴² Arnold I. Davidson, “Spiritual Exercises, Improvisation, and Moral Perfectionism: With Special Reference to Sonny Rollins,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Critical Improvisation Studies, Volume 1*, ed. George E. Lewis and Benjamin Piecut (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 535.

⁴³ Davidson, “Spiritual Exercises,” 525-526.

d. Objectives

With this thesis, I hope to make contributions to three areas of scholarship. Firstly, to Philonic studies, by shedding more light on a theme in Philo's work which deserves more attention than it has received thus far: musical practice. Philo's ideas about musicking do not stand in isolation from his broader philosophical and theological thought. They are intertwined with his educational philosophy, his conceptions of virtue and piety, and his vision of a good human life, to name just a few connections. This study aims to illuminate those connections by viewing Philo's musical philosophy in light of his broader oeuvre. I hope to thereby further our understanding of Philo's thought as a whole, rather than just of his philosophy of music.

The second field of research to which this thesis can be of interest is that of ancient music history, and particularly the music history of ancient Judaism. The scarcity of source materials makes this a largely uncharted terrain in the landscape of ancient music history. Philo is a very interesting source of information. Like most educated people in the Hellenistic world, Philo received musical training during his childhood and adolescence.⁴⁴ By consequence, he was able to describe musical practices he observed in some detail and to develop sophisticated ideas about the functions of music, to which the passages quoted in this study will testify. While it is unclear to what degree Philo's ideas about music were typical for his day or rather exceptional, we are certainly dealing with a significant musical thinker. While a limited number of studies on Philo and music have appeared scattered over the years, there is still much room for exploration, to which the present study hopes to contribute.

Finally, this thesis aims to build on, nuance, and expand Hadot's model of ancient philosophy as a way of life. The work of scholars like Hindy Najman has already demonstrated that Hadot's model and concepts can be applied to ancient Judaism. Arnold Davidson's work, moreover, has explored the potential of music to serve as spiritual exercise in a modern context. I expand on both those notions by exploring the position of musicking as a spiritual exercise within Philo's synthesis of Judaism and philosophy-as-a-way-of-life, demonstrating that in antiquity, too, creative practices like musicking could be integrated in a religious-

⁴⁴ *Congr.* 76.

philosophical way of life. This requires a broadening of our understanding of spiritual exercises to include musical practices, also in antiquity. In the following chapters, I will describe the four dimensions of music as a spiritual exercise in Philo which I introduced earlier, starting with the musical education of children, and continuing all the way through to the pinnacles of adult religious worship, represented for Philo by the Therapeutae, who practice both composition and communal singing.

Chapter 1

Musical Education as a Spiritual Exercise

My exploration of musicking as a spiritual exercise begins in childhood, with Philo's ideas about musical education. Education or *paideia* has been called "one of Philo's most consistent preoccupations".⁴⁵ And, as was typical for an educated man of his time, music was an integral part of Philo's conception of *paideia*, which he viewed as a thoroughly spiritual endeavor meant to prepare the child and adolescent for a virtuous adult life.⁴⁶ Hindy Najman likewise demonstrated the key role *paideia* plays in Philo's ideas about soul formation and spiritual development.⁴⁷ In this chapter, I will demonstrate how Philo presents musical education as a preliminary spiritual exercise for children, which also offered possibilities for further spiritual exercises in adulthood.

a. Musical education in the Hellenistic world

Paideia was an integral part of ancient Greek civilization.⁴⁸ This is also true for period in which Philo lived. In fact, historian Henri Marrou argued that *paideia* reached its zenith and definitive form during the Hellenistic period, and that an understanding of educational culture is paramount to understanding that era of Greek history.⁴⁹ Of course, ancient education was not the same as modern education: state-sponsored, general schooling as we know it today did not exist in antiquity. Instead, ancient schools often centered around individual founder-teachers and were not seldomly discontinued after the death of their founder, while much education also took place in informal settings.⁵⁰ From the available evidence

⁴⁵ Jason M. Zurawski, "Mosaic *paideia*: The Law of Moses within Philo of Alexandria's Model of Jewish Education," *Journal for the Study of Judaism* 48 (2017): 480. On Philo and *paideia*, see also Najman, "Text and Figure."

⁴⁶ Alan Mendelson, *Secular Education in Philo of Alexandria* (Cincinnati: Hebrew Union College Press, 1982).

⁴⁷ Jason M. Zurawski, "Jewish *paideia* in the Hellenistic Diaspora: Discussing Education, Shaping Identity" (PhD diss., University of Michigan, 2016); Najman, *Past Renewals*, 243.

⁴⁸ This long history, reaching from Homeric times through to the Romans' adaptation of Greek educational models, is well-documented in the academic literature. See for instance Werner Jaeger, *Paideia: The Ideals of Greek Culture*, 2nd ed., trans. Gilbert Highet (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1945); Henri. I. Marrou, *A History of Education in Antiquity*, trans. George Lamb (New York: The New American Library, 1956); and more recently W. Martin Bloomer, ed., *A Companion to Ancient Education* (Chichester: John Wiley & Sons, 2015).

⁴⁹ Marrou, *A History of Education*, 140.

⁵⁰ Raffaella Cribiore, "School Structures, Apparatus, and Materials," in Bloomer, *Ancient Education*, 149.

it appears that in Greek and Roman Egypt, education took place both in dedicated school buildings and in private homes, and probably also in the open air.⁵¹ Alexandria, as noted in the introduction, had become a cultural and intellectual hub under the rule of the Ptolemies, and it was an important center of higher education well into late antiquity.⁵² It is no wonder, then, that education would have taken a prominent place in Philo's mind.

Hellenistic *paideia* was holistic. It aimed to shape pupils' bodies as well as their minds and thereby prepare them for citizenship. Boys⁵³ in the Hellenistic world typically went to school at age seven and completed their education around age 20.⁵⁴ Their curriculum included an intellectual and a physical component, although the relative weight of the intellectual component had increased by the beginning of the Hellenistic era.⁵⁵ Nevertheless, *paideia* maintained its holistic character, as its aim was to raise well-rounded citizens rather than to produce mastery in one particular subject or trade. This holistic approach is reflected in the term ἐγκύκλιος παιδεία, perhaps best translated as "general education". The encyclical curriculum had become canonized by the middle of the first century BCE.⁵⁶ It consisted of seven "liberal arts": three literary subjects (grammar, rhetoric, and dialectic) and four mathematical subjects (geometry, arithmetic, astronomy, and music theory).⁵⁷ When Philo writes about education it is most often the ἐγκύκλιος παιδεία that he discusses.

As an integral part of the encyclical curriculum, musical education was a constant throughout Greek history, even if its precise nature and purpose shifted over the centuries. In Archaic Greece, the main reason to include musical training in the education of both boys and girls had been to prepare them for participation

⁵¹ Ibid., 154.

⁵² Ibid., 157.

⁵³ The classical *paideia* trajectory was not accessible to girls, who generally received more informal types of education. See also Aleksander Wolicki, "The Education of Women in Ancient Greece," in Bloomer, *Ancient Education*, 305-320. Although girls' education, especially among wealthier circles, may well have included musical instruction, these are not the educational settings to which Philo refers, so I will not discuss them here. For ancient authors who do discuss women's musical education, see Massimo Raffa, "Music in Greek and Roman Education," in *A Companion to Greek and Roman Music*, ed. Tosca A.C. Lynch and Eleonora Rocconi (Chichester: John Wiley & Sons, 2020), 315.

⁵⁴ Marrou, *A History of Education*, 147. It should be noted that only those privileged with sufficient material means would be able to complete the whole trajectory and many would not embark on it at all.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 138.

⁵⁶ Marrou, *A History of Education*, 244.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 244-245.

in civic musical performances such as religious celebrations, as well as for the entertainment guests at banquets and similar occasions.⁵⁸ By the Classical period, both Plato and Aristotle emphasized the moral component of musical education.⁵⁹ These philosophers believed that music had the power to shape people's character and influence their behavior for better or for worse; it consequently had to be treated with caution and precision, especially when it came to children.

The notion that purely musical elements like scales and rhythms (rather than, for example, the texts of songs or contextual factors like dancing) could affect people's character and behavior seems to have originated with Pythagoras.⁶⁰ It gained wider traction through the influence of Plato, but lost favor among later thinkers, especially from the Epicurean and skeptic schools, who did not believe that music had far-reaching powers.⁶¹ One remark by Philo, however, which will be discussed shortly, suggests that Philo, too, embraced the Platonic-Pythagorean paradigm of music's moral powers.

As noted above, music theory was part of the encyclical curriculum of Hellenistic Greece. Does this mean that the musical education of Philo and his contemporaries was only theoretical? While musical education today is clearly divided into a theoretical and a practical branch, it is difficult to ascertain how this dichotomy played out in antiquity. While in Philo's time there was a growing emphasis on abstract knowledge at the expense of practical skill, this does not warrant the conclusion that musical education consisted only of studying treatises on music theory. It is difficult to imagine how a child would learn the intricate Greek systems of harmony and rhythm without reference to vocal or instrumental practice, just as it would be difficult today to teach someone scales without singing or playing them, or rhythms without tapping them. It seems likely that some instrumental and vocal work must have been part of the musical curriculum. Sources about the practical reality of musical education in the Hellenistic era are scarce, but we shall shortly see that Philo offers clues which suggest that instrumental practice was indeed part of the musical curriculum.

⁵⁸ Massimo Raffa, "Music in Greek and Roman Education," in Lynch and Rocconi, *Greek and Roman Music*, 315.

⁵⁹ Thomas J. Mathiesen, ed. "Greek Views of Music," in *Source Readings in Music History*, ed. Leo Treitler (New York: W. W. Norton, 1998): 5.

⁶⁰ Stefan Hagel and Tosca Lynch, "Musical Education in Greece and Rome," in Bloomer, *Ancient Education*, 405-406.

⁶¹ Mathiesen, "Greek Views," 5.

b. Music and encyclical education in De congressu eruditionis gratia

The first Philonic text I will discuss is *De congressu eruditionis gratia*, a treatise from the *Allegorical Commentary* discussing Gen. 16:1-6. Philo's allegorical interpretation of this biblical passage is exemplary of his ability to incorporate elements of Greek culture into a Jewish framework and demonstrates his desire to unite the two strands of his heritage. *De congressu* also illustrates Philo's ability to expand from his source material and branch out into many subjects. Although he formally restricts himself to a discussion of the book of Genesis in a verse-by-verse manner, Philo diverges in many directions and finds occasion to discuss a multitude of different subjects tangential to the biblical text.⁶² As a result, *De congressu*, although spanning only six biblical verses which have seemingly little to do with education, is a long treatise in which Philo presents his educational philosophy.⁶³

The link between the story of Abraham, Sarah, and Hagar, and *paideia* may not be readily apparent. They are connected, however, through Philo's allegorical interpretation of these three figures. He identifies Abraham with the human mind; Sarah with virtue; and Hagar with encyclical *paideia*.⁶⁴ Throughout the text, Philo presents education (Hagar) as a preparation for wisdom or virtue (Sarah): just as Abraham had to first have a child with Hagar and only then with Sarah, the developing mind must first be trained in the encyclical subjects before it can move on to studying philosophy and acquiring virtue or wisdom.⁶⁵ The educational content Philo has in mind seems to coincide with the encyclical curriculum, as he mentions five of the liberal arts explicitly (grammar, geometry, astronomy, rhetoric, and music), while the remaining two (dialectic and arithmetic) may safely be assumed to fall under what Philo refers to as "all the other branches of intellectual study".⁶⁶ By putting it to the service of the ultimate goal of virtue, Philo has already

⁶² The manner in which Philo construes his webs of topics is discussed in David T. Runia, "The Structure of Philo's Allegorical Treatises," chap. 4 in *Exegesis and Philosophy*.

⁶³ An annotated edition of this text was published in French by Monique Alexandre (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1967). I have relied on the Loeb edition and English translation for this thesis. A new English commentary by Sean Adams is currently in preparation and will be published as part of the *Philo of Alexandria Commentary Series* (Leiden: Brill, expected).

⁶⁴ *Congr.* 23.

⁶⁵ The full trajectory goes from the encyclical studies, through philosophy, and then onto virtue (*Congr.* 79-80). Philo uses the terms "virtue" (ἀρετή) and "wisdom" (σοφία) interchangeably, further confirming that his ideal for human life is centered on the virtues of the mind, rather than on the body.

⁶⁶ *Congr.* 11.

made the first step towards turning (musical) education into a spiritual exercise. It is aimed, after all, at forming the pupil's mind in such a way that it can become a vessel of wisdom.

Philo goes on to discuss the individual merits of some of the encyclical subjects. He mentions grammar, music, geometry, rhetoric, and dialectic, in each case connecting the subject to a broader educational purpose.⁶⁷ About music he writes:

Music will charm away the unrhythmic by its rhythm, the inharmonious by its harmony, the unmelodious and tuneless by its melody, and thus reduce discord to concord.⁶⁸

Philo clearly connects musical education to the broader project of soul formation, subscribing to the Pythagorean-Platonic notion that music has a direct influence on character. The “unrhythmic,” “inharmonious,” and “unmelodious” are descriptions of character deficits rather than failures in musical performance. Music can “sing away” (κατεπάδω) those deficits and create harmony within the soul. Vice versa, Philo elsewhere expresses the idea that one who is of perfect character will be able to sing perfectly.⁶⁹ All this points towards Philo's adoption of Pythagorean-Platonic ideas about music, even when the major philosophical schools had left those ideas behind. Whether Philo was unique in this regard or represents a broader trend is difficult to tell. In any case, Philo's belief in the moral powers of music once more confirms his indebtedness to Plato.

Further on in the same text, Philo discusses his own experiences with some of the school subjects: grammar, geometry, and music. About the latter he writes:

Again my ardour moved me to keep company with a third; rich in rhythm, harmony and melody was she, and her name was Music, and from her I begat diatonics, chromatics and enharmonics, conjunct and disjunct melodies, conforming with the consonance of the fourth, fifth or octave intervals...⁷⁰

In keeping with his allegorization of the story of Abraham, Sarah, and Hagar, Philo uses the language of mating and procreation (συνελθεῖν, ἐγέννησα) to describe his

⁶⁷ *Congr.* 15-18.

⁶⁸ *Congr.* 16. Appendix 1 for the original Greek of all Philonic citations in this thesis. The translations from *De congressu eruditionis gratia* are taken from the Loeb edition: *Philo, On the Confusion of Tongues. On the Migration of Abraham. Who Is the Heir of Divine Things? On Mating with the Preliminary Studies*, trans. F. H. Colson and G. H. Whitaker, Loeb Classical Library 261 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1932).

⁶⁹ *Virt.* 72-76.

⁷⁰ *Congr.* 76.

musical education. It is striking that Philo uses technical vocabulary in this passage, as if he wants to show that he has indeed studied music thoroughly enough to know technical terms. Philo does not describe grammar and geometry in such detailed technical terms.⁷¹ Without overtly prioritizing music among the encyclical subjects, Philo's presentation of his own education does suggest some favoritism.

Nevertheless, music is not exempt from Philo's admonitions against lingering too long on the encyclical studies. They are, after all, only preparations for virtue. Take, for instance, the following passage:

For some have been ensnared by the love lures of the handmaids and spurned the mistress, and have grown old, some dotting on poetry, some on geometrical figures, some on the blending of musical "colours," and a host of other things, and have never been able to soar to the winning of the lawful wife. For each art has its charms, its powers of attraction, and some beguiled by these stay with them and forget their pledges to Philosophy.⁷²

Clearly, encyclical *paideia* remains an auxiliary to attaining the higher end of philosophy, which in turn Philo describes as the "servant of wisdom" (δούλη σοφίας).⁷³

To summarize, *De congressu* represents the basic premise of Philo's educational philosophy: that encyclical *paideia* serves the higher end of attaining virtue. Musical education is no exception: through mastering music theory, students are prepared for virtue, especially as Philo ascribes powers of character formation to music, in line with Pythagorean-Platonic musical philosophies. I will now turn to Philo's biography of Moses, which provides further insight into the spiritual significance Philo ascribes to education in general and to musical education in particular, while also giving some clues of what such musical education would have looked like in practice.

⁷¹ *Congr.* 74-75.

⁷² *Congr.* 77-78.

⁷³ "And therefore just as the culture of the schools is the bond-servant of philosophy, so must philosophy be the servant of wisdom." (*Congr.* 80)

c. *The musical education of Moses*

Philo's biography⁷⁴ of Moses, *De vita Mosis* or *The Life of Moses*, is a two-volume work usually counted among Philo's historical-apologetic works, although it is sometimes classed under the *Exposition of the Law*.⁷⁵ In this work, Philo gives a full account of the prophet's life based on the biblical sources and on oral traditions.⁷⁶ He observes that although Moses's laws have become quite famous throughout the world, the life story of the prophet is less known. In recounting Moses's biography, Philo intends to change this and "bring the story of this greatest and most perfect of men to the knowledge of such as deserve not to remain in ignorance of it."⁷⁷ Philo writes that Moses embodied four faculties: that of philosopher-king, lawgiver, high priest, and prophet.⁷⁸ While the first volume of *De vita Mosis* deals with Moses as philosopher-king, the second deals with his deeds in as lawgiver, high priest, and prophet. Philo's descriptions of Moses's musical education are all found in the first volume, while the second volume contains some other musical episodes which I will discuss in chapter 4.

Philo's account of Moses's childhood is more elaborate and detailed than the biblical version. The brevity of the narration of Moses's childhood in Exodus allows Philo the liberty to add details. The choices he makes in filling in those details reveal his dual heritage and color the story with Greek cultural elements. Moses's education in Philo's account is a case in point, as it displays many features of the traditional Hellenistic *paideia* program. Having been adopted by the princess of Egypt, the young boy is entitled to the "nurture and service due to a prince":

⁷⁴ The biography or *bios* was a popular genre in the Hellenistic world of Philo's day. Its most famous representative was Plutarch (c. 46 – 120 CE), who is best known for his *Parallel Lives* in which he juxtaposes biographies of historical figures in pairs. Philo repeatedly refers to his biographies of Moses, Abraham, and Joseph as *bioi*, but whether he uses the term technically to align with a specific literary tradition is difficult to ascertain. According to Sean Adams, Philo does use the term *bios* and other literary devices in *De vita Mosis* intentionally to "encourage the reader to understand that this work is participating in the genre of biography" (*Greek Genres and Jewish Authors: Negotiating Literary Culture in the Graeco-Roman Era* (Waco: Baylor University Press, 2020): 278). Given that Philo was an intellectual with access to a wide range of literature, it seems plausible that he would have been aware of the trend of biographical writing and indeed made a conscious decision to align his own biographical work with that tradition. For more on this theme, see Koen de Temmerman (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Ancient Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020), esp. chap. 5 "Jewish Biography," by Joseph Geiger.

⁷⁵ Royse, "The Works of Philo," 47.

⁷⁶ *Mos.* 1.4.

⁷⁷ *Mos.* 1.1.

⁷⁸ *Mos.* 2.2.

So now he received as his right the nurture and service due to a prince. Yet he did not bear himself like the mere infant that he was, nor delight in fun and laughter and sport, though those who had the charge of him did not grudge him relaxation or shew him any strictness; but with a modest and serious bearing he applied himself to hearing and seeing what was sure to profit the soul.⁷⁹

Again, we find the notion, that education contributes to the student's character formation. Philo's statements are in line with his educational philosophy as expressed in *De congressu*: the ultimate purpose of *paideia* is to profit the soul, so that it can attain virtue.

Teachers are summoned from Egypt, Greece, and other nations to provide Moses with education in various subjects. They find the boy quickly outgrowing their capacities and asking questions beyond their level of knowledge, seeming to recollect preexisting knowledge rather than learn new things.⁸⁰ Philo then gives a more detailed description of Moses's educational program. First, the subjects in which he was instructed by Egyptian teachers:

Arithmetic, geometry, the lore of metre, rhythm and harmony, and the whole subject of music as shown by the use of instruments or in textbooks and treatises of a more special character, were imparted to him by learned Egyptians. These further instructed him in the philosophy conveyed in symbols, as displayed in the so-called holy inscriptions and in the regard paid to animals, to which they even pay divine honours.⁸¹

A few things are striking about this passage. First, the fact that Moses learns three of the subjects included in the traditional *paideia* program (arithmetic, geometry, and music) not from Greek but from Egyptian teachers. Philo has the other four encyclical subjects imparted to Moses by Greek teachers (see citation below). Could this be a reflection of Philo's own educational experience, having learned some subjects from native Egyptian teachers and others from Greeks? It is impossible to tell from this passage alone, but an interesting possibility nonetheless.

Also striking is the fact that Philo again uses technical terminology to describe the musical subjects that are part of young Moses's curriculum. As in *De congressu*, he splits music theory into "metre, rhythm and harmony". Philo now juxtaposes

⁷⁹ *Mos.* 1.20.

⁸⁰ The notion of learning as a recollection of existing knowledge is, again, indicative of Platonic influence.

⁸¹ *Mos.* 1.23.

“τὴν τε ῥυθμικὴν καὶ ἀρμονικὴν καὶ μετρικὴν θεωρίαν” to “μουσικὴν τὴν σύμπασαν,” suggesting that he uses the term θεωρία in a technical manner to distinguish the theoretical branch of musical education from its practical branch. Both are part of Moses’s education, but the theoretical comes first and seems to take precedence in Philo’s estimation, in line with the general tendency of Hellenistic musical education.

Philo continues his description of Moses’s curriculum with the Greek and other teachers:

He had Greeks to teach him the rest of the regular school course, and the inhabitants of the neighbouring countries for Assyrian letters and the Chaldean science of the heavenly bodies. This he also acquired from Egyptians, who give special attention to astrology.⁸²

This brings us to an overall picture of Moses’s curriculum as a diverse program comprising, but not limited to the encyclical subjects of traditional Hellenistic *paideia* (see Table 1 below).

Teachers’ nationality:	Egyptian	Greek	Other ⁸³
Subjects taught:	Arithmetic Geometry Music theory Music as a whole “Philosophy conveyed in symbols” Astrology	Grammar/literature Rhetoric Logic Astronomy?	Assyrian letters Astrology

Table 1. Overview of Moses’s curriculum and teachers as presented by Philo.

Philo does not point overtly to a spiritual purpose of Moses’s education. The association between encyclical *paideia* and virtue, so central to Philo’s educational philosophy as set out in *De congressu*, is not made explicit in *De vita Mosis*. This makes sense insofar as Moses, “the greatest and most perfect of men,” was, in Philo’s eyes, such an extraordinary being that he would hardly need to take any

⁸² *Mos.* 1.23.

⁸³ The “inhabitants of the neighbouring countries” may well have included Assyrian, Babylonian, and perhaps also Hebrew teachers. Philo does not specify further, but given the teaching of “Assyrian letters”, which may refer to cuneiform or to the Hebrew alphabet (which Moses must have learned at some point anyway) and “astrology”, Assyrians, Babylonians and/or Hebrews seem to be the most likely candidates. That Philo’s use of ethnical terminology is quite loose is exemplified by the fact that he calls Moses “by race a Chaldean” (*Mos.* 1.5).

preliminary steps towards virtue.⁸⁴ Nevertheless, Philo still included a detailed description of Moses's educational experiences in his biography of the prophet, perhaps mostly as an example for those who aspire to live like Moses, but are not equally perfect from birth. Combining Philo's discussion of education in *De congressu* with the one in *De vita Mosis*, we find a compelling case for the application of *paideia*: not only is it a necessary preparation for virtue, but it was also undertaken by Philo, and even by the most perfect of human beings, Moses. Music takes a special place within this framework, as it has unique abilities to shape the student's character.

d. Musical education in relation to spiritual progress

How do these findings tie in with existing scholarship on Philo's educational philosophy, especially where it relates to spiritual progress? Alan Mendelson has demonstrated that Philo's unique position as a Jewish thinker impacted his educational philosophy in at least two major ways. Firstly, he recommended the study of the seven encyclical subjects to be undertaken alongside the religious education offered in the Synagogues, apparently envisioning the former to be studied on weekdays and the latter on the Sabbath.⁸⁵ In this scheme, the Sabbath education takes precedence insofar as every member of the Jewish community would be expected to follow it, while the weekday encyclical studies were only relevant and available to the select few who had the means and motivation to invest in them.⁸⁶ This is not to say that Sabbath education encompassed all religious matters while the purposes of encyclical education were purely secular. In fact, the second and most noteworthy way in which Philo's Jewish outlook shaped his educational philosophy according to Mendelson, is that he imbued the encyclical curriculum itself with spiritual significance. This aspect of Philo's educational philosophy was clearly brought to the fore by the passages from *De congressu* discussed above: encyclical education serves as a steppingstone to a higher end, virtue, which in Philo's case is equated with wisdom.

⁸⁴ For discussions of the question of Moses's status as a perfect, or even divine being, see for example Najman, *Past Renewals*, 224-226; Ian W. Scott, "Is Philo's Moses a Divine Man?", *The Studia Philonica Annual* 14 (2002): 87-111; and M. David Litwa, "Moses Angelified in Philo of Alexandria," in *Posthuman Transformation in Ancient Mediterranean Thought: Becoming Angels and Demons*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021), 74-93.

⁸⁵ *Mos.* 2.212; cf. *Spec.* 2.63. See also Mendelson, *Secular Education*, 32-33.

⁸⁶ Mendelson, *Secular Education*, 32-33.

But how exactly does *paideia* prepare the student for virtue? To better understand how Philo assigns spiritual meaning to *paideia*, we must understand his views on the human possibilities for spiritual progress. In Mendelson's scheme, the encyclical studies play a crucial role in the ordinary person's pursuit of spiritual progress by providing a pathway to knowledge of God. Through each of the seven encyclical subjects, the pupil comes to grasp the underlying order behind particular sensory phenomena. For Philo, this order originates in divine providence, so that studying the material world through the encyclical subjects leads to an understanding of God as the creator of that world. Moreover, once this insight is obtained, the infinite scope of each individual subject – the fact that one can never be quite finished with studying it – provides endless opportunities for contemplation of God and His works.⁸⁷ In this way the encyclical subjects maintain their spiritual significance even beyond the childhood years. The intricate system of Greek music theory is a prime example of an encyclical subject that can provide the student with insight into the underlying order behind appearances and thereby lead towards knowledge of God.

Contemplation is mentioned by Hadot as a spiritual exercise practiced throughout ancient philosophical schools, even if different schools chose different objects of contemplation.⁸⁸ He discusses, for instance, Epicureans' contemplation of the "genesis of worlds in the infinite void" and the Stoics' contemplation of the "rational and necessary unfolding of cosmic events".⁸⁹ Philo is no exception to the rule. He writes, for example, that those who practice wisdom (ὅσοι ἀσκηταὶ σοφίας) are excellent contemplators of nature (θεωροὶ τῆς φύσεως).⁹⁰ This contemplation allows them to reach with their souls to the powers dwelling in heaven:

While their bodies are firmly planted on the land they provide their souls with wings, so that they may traverse the upper air and gain full contemplation of the powers which dwell there...⁹¹

For Philo, the object of contemplation is the natural world created by God, and its purpose is to come closer to God. Knowledge of the natural world, obtained through the encyclical studies, facilitates the contemplative flights of the soul described in

⁸⁷ Ibid., 79.

⁸⁸ Hadot, *Philosophy as a Way of Life*, 101.

⁸⁹ Mendelson, *Secular Education*, 59.

⁹⁰ *Spec.* 2.44.

⁹¹ *Spec.* 2.45.

the passage above. Musical education provides insight into one aspect of the phenomenal world and thereby also has the potential of bringing its student closer to God.

Alternatively, Hindy Najman employs a model of three “paths of perfection” in Philo’s work, each aimed at the goal of becoming mind alone. Figures like Abraham, Isaac, and Moses stand out as self-taught sages, who achieved perfection without external education.⁹² Most people, however, require guidance on their path towards perfection. This guidance comes in two forms: first, the example set by the sages, and second, the written laws of Moses.⁹³ Of course, these two sources of guidance are wholly in line with one another in Philo’s view, as emulating the lives of the sages (who embodied natural law) equals obeying the Law of Moses (which Philo considered identical to natural law). Vice versa, to live according to the written law automatically leads towards a life in imitation of Abraham, Moses, and the other sages.⁹⁴

Najman’s model also assigns an important place to *paideia*. The sages, although they do not require external instruction per se, do undergo (self-)education and learn, rather than being in an unchanging state of perfection from birth.⁹⁵ In fact, Philo associates both Abraham and Moses with the encyclical studies particularly, as we have seen earlier. So, *paideia* plays a role in spiritual progress even for the self-taught sages, if only to set the right example for those who walk the path of emulating those sages. Philo considers the study of the Torah, although obviously not part of the Greek encyclical studies, a necessary and natural complement to them, as we also saw in Mendelson’s model. Najman points out, therefore, that in his conception of *paideia*, Philo not only “Hellenizes Judaism”, but also “Judaizes Hellenism”: on the one hand, Greek notions of *paideia* are fitted into the lives of the sages and of those who emulate the sages, and the Platonic notion of “becoming mind alone” is embraced as the aim of human life. At the same time, the purpose of *paideia* is transformed from a primarily civic to a primarily spiritual one, while

⁹² Najman, *Past Renewals*, 249. See *Abr.* 6 for Abraham; *Sacr.* 6 for Isaac; and *Mos.* 1.48 for Moses.

⁹³ Najman, *Past Renewals*, 250-255.

⁹⁴ E.g., *Abr.* 5.

⁹⁵ Najman, *Past Renewals*, 250.

studying the Torah and living in accordance with its laws become an integral part of *paideia* and the best preparation for “becoming mind alone”.⁹⁶

e. Conclusion

Two ways in which musicking can serve as a spiritual exercise in Philo have come to the fore in this chapter: it functions as a therapeutic of the passions by curing the “unrhythmic”, “unharmonious”, and “unmelodious”, thus shaping its student’s character in preparation for a life of virtue, and it offers a source of contemplation that allows the student to achieve or approximate knowledge of God. The first of these occurs during childhood, in the forming years of the soul, while the latter is a fruit of childhood education reaped during adulthood.

The latter of these two ways in which musicking serves as a spiritual exercise is in line with Hadot’s description of contemplation as a commonly practiced exercise of many philosophical schools. Focused on knowledge of music theory rather than instrumental or vocal practice, it is most similar to what we might typically imagine to be the work of a philosopher: contemplating nature. Nevertheless, the practical musical training of childhood is a crucial preparation for participation in this type of spiritual exercise during adulthood. Unfortunately, Philo does not discuss examples of adults contemplating music theory directly. He does, however, refer to the relationships between cosmology, numerology, and music throughout his oeuvre, suggesting that music theory was for him indeed an important aspect of his contemplations of the created world.

The other dimension of musical education as a spiritual exercise – its ability to shape the student’s character in preparation for virtue – shows interesting parallels with the Platonic-Pythagorean paradigm of music’s moral powers. Moreover, including this dimension in our understanding of musicking as a spiritual exercise also means an extension of Hadot’s concept of philosophy-as-a-way of life into the childhood years. From a young age, the child can already begin to live a philosophical life through education in general, but especially through musical education.

⁹⁶ Ibid., 255.

Chapter 2

The Hymns of the Therapeutae

We now leave the childhood years behind as we turn to Philo's ideas about musicking during adulthood. With the continuation of musical practice into the adult years, Philo diverges from a cultural mainstream that reserved adult music making for professionals and perhaps some wealthy women who could pursue poetry and music as hobbies.⁹⁷ For Philo, the spiritual significance of musicking extended into adulthood, although the types of musical practice Philo describes for adults and its functions differ from the types of practices encountered during childhood. We no longer find mention of instrumental practice, but instead a focus on vocal music.

For the musical practice discussed in this chapter we take a look at one of Philo's most read texts, *De vita contemplativa*. In this treatise Philo describes a community he refers to as the "Therapeutae" (θεραπευταί).⁹⁸ This appears to have been a group of Jewish men and women living on a hill near Lake Mareotis, just south of Alexandria.⁹⁹ The treatise was apparently preceded by a now lost text of a similar nature but describing an Essenic community living what Philo calls "the active life" (τὸν πρακτικὸν βίον), while the Therapeutae live a life of contemplation (θεωρία).¹⁰⁰ The Therapeutae's days are filled with studying the Jewish scriptures and their allegorical interpretations, praying, and participating in Sabbath gatherings and religious festivals, combined with a sober lifestyle of vegetarianism and abstinence from alcohol.

Philo's account of the community's way of life can be divided into three levels: their activities on a regular, non-festive day, their Sabbath gatherings, and their religious festival celebrated every seven weeks. The Sabbath gatherings as described by Philo do not include any type of musical practice and will therefore be left out of this discussion. The Therapeutae's daily lives and their festival, by contrast, are permeated by musical activities: the community members occupy

⁹⁷ Raffa, "Music in Greek and Roman Education," 314-315.

⁹⁸ Philo uses the masculine θεραπευταί to refer to the male members of the community and refers to the female members by the feminine θεραπευτρίδες. For the sake of brevity and in line with most scholarly literature I will use the term Therapeutae to refer to members of the community of both genders throughout this thesis.

⁹⁹ *Contempl.* 22. See also the map in the introduction.

¹⁰⁰ *Contempl.* 1.

themselves with the composition of hymns daily and participate in elaborate musical performances during their seven-weekly festival. In this chapter I will first present a brief discussion of the Therapeutae's way of life, before moving on to their hymns as they are composed daily and performed soloistically at the festival by members of the community.

a. The Therapeutae's way of life

To understand how the hymns of the Therapeutae, as well as their other musical activities, serve as spiritual exercises, these practices must be understood in the context of the community's way of life. This way of life centered around the prioritization of spiritual existence over bodily existence, overcoming the passions, and achieving virtue. The Therapeutae's way of life begins with the abandonment of property: future members of the community leave all their possessions or "blind wealth" (τὸν τυφλὸν [πλοῦτον]) to friends and family, as they exchange it for the "seeing wealth" (τὸν βλέποντα πλοῦτον) of the life of the mind.¹⁰¹ They then leave their hometowns and relatives behind to join the community at Lake Mareotis (*Contempl.* 18), where they live a sober life filled with the study, interpretation, and, as we shall see momentarily, production of scripture.¹⁰²

All the Therapeutae's activities reflect their prioritization of mind over body. Their days are spent in spiritual *askēsis* and filled with mental work, while they fulfill bodily needs like eating, drinking, and sleeping only during the night and through the simplest of means.¹⁰³ Their festival is no exception to this rule. In contrast with the Greek symposia, where food, drink and other bodily pleasures take center stage, the Therapeutae's festival includes only a simple meal served with water, while all other parts of the program (prayer, study, singing) are aimed at the mind rather than the body.

The relationship between the festival and the Therapeutae's aim of "becoming mind alone" will be discussed in more detail in the next chapter. In this chapter we will see how the composition and performance of hymns contribute to the

¹⁰¹ *Contempl.* 13.

¹⁰² *Contempl.* 18. Philo does not consider this unique to the Therapeutae. He writes that there are many similar communities throughout the Greek and non-Greek world, to which people who wish to live the life of the mind are drawn (*Contempl.* 21). The community at Lake Mareotis, however, is home (according to Philo) to the best of these pilgrims (οἱ πανταχόθεν ἄριστοι, *Contempl.* 22).

¹⁰³ E.g., *Contempl.* 34, 37.

Therapeutae's lifestyle. Musical composition is an important aspect of their daily spiritual *askēsis*. Through this activity they move beyond the mere study and interpretation of biblical and other texts and become inspired authors. In a sense, composition is the culmination of their efforts of studying and allegorically interpreting the bible, flowing naturally from their intensive immersion in the scriptures. Through the (mostly) individual performance of the newly composed material at the festival they are able to share their work with their peers.

The question whether the community described by Philo really existed has been debated by scholars for decades, with some claiming that the Therapeutae were entirely a figment of Philo's imagination and others arguing that the community did exist, even if Philo's portrayal of it is at times embellished.¹⁰⁴ For this study, the question of the reality of the Therapeutae will be allowed to remain unanswered. Without doubt, Philo's account in *De vita contemplativa* reflects what the author considered a highly commendable way of life, whether he actually witnessed the realization of that ideal on a lakeside hill by Alexandria, or merely envisioned it in his own mind. It can safely be assumed that any musical practices described in *De vita contemplativa* were viewed by Philo in the most positive light, either as imagined ideals or as real-life examples.

b. Composition as a daily spiritual exercise

A regular day in the Therapeutae's lives is demarcated by two moments of prayer, one at sunrise and one at sunset.¹⁰⁵ These moments mark off the daytime period, which is devoted to the mind, from the nighttime period, which is devoted to the body.¹⁰⁶ The community members spend the day in solitary rooms, bringing with them only "laws, and oracles delivered through prophets, and hymns [ᾠμῶν], and other things by which understanding and piety are fostered and perfected".¹⁰⁷ Philo appears to be referring to a tripartite division of the Hebrew Bible, the "laws"

¹⁰⁴ See Joan E. Taylor, introduction to *Philo of Alexandria: On the Contemplative Life*, by Joan E. Taylor and David M. Hay (Leiden: Brill, 2020), 23-25, for a discussion of the different viewpoints on this matter. See also Ross S. Kraemer, "Spouses of Wisdom: Philo's Therapeutae, reconsidered," chap. 3 in *Unreliable Witnesses: Gender, Religion, and History in the Greco-Roman Mediterranean* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010).

¹⁰⁵ *Contempl.* 27.

¹⁰⁶ *Contempl.* 34. Some community members are so advanced that they require food only every three or every six days (*Contempl.* 35).

¹⁰⁷ *Contempl.* 25.

referring to the Pentateuch, the “oracles delivered through prophets” to the Prophets, and the “hymns” to the Psalms.¹⁰⁸ Food and drink are not brought into the rooms, as the Therapeutae spend the daylight hours entirely focused on nourishing the mind rather than the body.¹⁰⁹

Philo describes the Therapeutae’s activities inside the solitary rooms as follows:

The entire period from morning until evening is for them an exercise, because they philosophize by reading the sacred scriptures, allegorizing the ancestral philosophy, since they consider aspects of the literal interpretation as symbols, when its nature is hidden away within deeper meanings. They have also works of men of old who were the founders of the school of thought, who left behind many reminders of the form [used] in allegorized writings, by which, using them as certain prototypes, they imitate the method of the practice...¹¹⁰

From this passage we learn that the Therapeutae participate actively in the tradition of reading the scriptures allegorically. They do not merely study the original texts and the interpretations provided by their ancestors but continue the process of allegorical interpretation themselves. Philo describes these activities with the term *askèsis* (“exercise”). Originally referring to athletic training, the word *askèsis* was adopted by ancient philosophers to refer to spiritual exercises.¹¹¹ This is how Philo is using the term here: the Therapeutae are engaging not in *askèsis* of the body like athletes would, but in *askèsis* of the mind like a philosopher would. Indeed, Philo refers to the Therapeutae as “philosophers” (φιλόσοφοι) and to their activities as “philosophizing” (φιλοσοφείν).¹¹²

Philo’s use of the term *askèsis* to describe the Therapeutae’s daily activities points to the fact that these activities constitute a form of spiritual training. This training is not limited to reading alone but involves musical creativity and singing. Philo continues his account as follows:

¹⁰⁸ Joan E. Taylor and David M. Hay, *Philo of Alexandria: On the Contemplative Life* (Leiden: Brill, 2020), 178. The “other things” are not explicated further, though Taylor and Hay argue convincingly that Philo’s subsequent mention of writings by previous interpreters (*Contempl.* 29) suggests that these writings may be among what Philo is referring to here.

¹⁰⁹ *Contempl.* 25.

¹¹⁰ *Contempl.* 28-29.

¹¹¹ Hadot, *Philosophy as a Way of Life*, 128. Cf. Epictetus, *Discourses* 3.12. Philo himself uses similar language elsewhere, referring to the “athletes of virtue” (ἀθληταὶ ἀρετῆς) practicing philosophy’s exercises (γυμνάσματα) (*Prob.* 88). His use of the phrase ἀσκηταὶ σοφίας (“those who practice wisdom”) (*Spec.* 2.44) was already discussed in chapter 1.

¹¹² *Contempl.* 2, 30.

So they do not only contemplate, but also compose songs and hymns for God by means of all kinds of metres and melodies, songs which they necessarily record with very reverent rhythms.¹¹³

This passage attests to the fact that Philo saw certain musical practices as spiritual exercises, as musical composition is part of the Therapeutae's daily spiritual *askēsis*. Philo does not state it explicitly, but it seems that the Therapeutae wrote original texts and fitted those with "metres", "melodies", and "reverent rhythms." There is no reason to believe that any instrumental accompaniment was part of the Therapeutae's compositional work, as Philo never mentions musical instruments in relation to the Therapeutae. The hymns they composed most likely consisted of text, rhythm, and melody.

Philo does not explicate if and how the composition of "songs and hymns" relates to the community's occupation with allegorical interpretation. Does the practice contribute in some way to the Therapeutae's allegorical work, perhaps by offering some additional pathway of interpretation? Philo's phrasing suggests that the compositional work stands on its own: "οὐ θεωροῦσι μόνον, ἀλλὰ καὶ ποιοῦσιν..." ("they do not only contemplate, but also compose..."). This line of interpretation is taken up by Judith Newman, who writes that "isolated immersion in the holy writings also generates the [Therapeutae's] own authorship."¹¹⁴ In other words, through their compositional work the Therapeutae become inspired authors rather than just interpreters of scripture. At the same time, this type of authorship is generated by the very studying and interpreting of scripture that the community members engage in on a daily basis. Newman argues that the unfortunately lost repertoire of hymns produced by the Therapeutae should itself be considered "holy writ," i.e., a continuation of scripture.¹¹⁵ In this view, the purpose of composing hymns is not so much the interpretation of existing scripture, but rather the

¹¹³ *Contempl.* 29. I follow the interpretation of Taylor and Hay, who understand the verb *χαράτουσσι* (literally meaning "to sharpen" or "to whet", also used figuratively to refer to writing and translated here as "record") to imply that the Therapeutae physically wrote their compositions down in such a way that others would be able to understand them (Taylor and Hay, *Philo of Alexandria*, 188).

¹¹⁴ Judith H. Newman, "The Composition of Prayers and Songs in Philo's *De vita contemplativa*," in *Empsychoi Logoi – Religious Innovations in Antiquity: Studies in Honour of Pieter Willem van der Horst*, ed. Alberdina Houtman, Albert de Jong and Magda Misset-van de Weg (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 461.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 467. This line of reasoning is based on the notion that in Philo's day, the canon of the Hebrew Bible was not yet fixed, and scripture was still "open". That is to say, new authoritative writings could still be added. For further discussion of continued revelation during the Second Temple period, see Hindy Najman, "Philosophical Contemplation," chap. 9 in *Past Renewals*.

production of new scripture. Philo does not mention the Therapeutae producing texts in any other context, suggesting that if they were indeed engaging in a continuation of scripture, that (at least in their community) doing so was inextricably linked with musical composition.

Although Philo reports that the Therapeutae wrote their compositions down, no trace of these documents has been found. The question rises how exactly the Therapeutae-composers notated their work. Did they use Greek musical notation? If so, they must have all been highly educated. Taylor and Hay indeed conclude from this among other passages that the Therapeutae were educated people, and that musical education in Alexandria included learning to read and write musical notation.¹¹⁶ Philo's account certainly suggests that this was the case.

c. The performance of hymns at the festival

Philo's report of the Therapeutae's compositional activities raises the question what was done with the hymns once they had been written down. It appears that at least some of them were performed at the seven-weekly festival. The description of this festival comprises roughly the final third of *De vita contemplativa*. It is preceded by a lengthy description of a typical Greek *symposion*, at which wine flows abundantly and guests indulge in lavish banquets, all culminating in a drunken frenzy.¹¹⁷ Philo contrasts this with the Therapeutae's festival, which involves no alcohol and only simple foods, while its participants become intoxicated by their worship of God, rather than by wine. The festival consists of the following elements:

1. Assembling of the community (66)¹¹⁸
2. Communal prayer (66)
3. Reclining (67 – 69)
4. Lecture by the *prohedros* (75 – 78)
5. Applause (79)
6. **Hymn performed by the *prohedros* (80)**
7. **Hymns performed by individual members of the community (80)**
8. Vegetarian meal served with water (81 – 82)

¹¹⁶ Taylor and Hay, *Philo of Alexandria*, 189.

¹¹⁷ *Contempl.* 40-63.

¹¹⁸ The numbers behind each item indicate the section of *De vita contemplativa* where Philo describes that part of the festival. Some sections are skipped, as these contain digressions wherein the Therapeutae's festival is not discussed directly.

9. Formation of male and female choruses (83)
10. Hymns performed by two choruses (84)
11. Fusion of the choruses (85)
12. Hymns performed by mixed chorus until dawn (88 – 89)
13. Communal prayer at sunrise (89)
14. Departure and return to private rooms (89)

I will now focus on numbers 6 and 7 from this list: the performance of hymns by the community leader and other individual members of the community.¹¹⁹ Although Philo does not say so explicitly, it seems that (some of) the hymns composed by the Therapeutae as part of their daily *askèsis* are among the repertoire performed at the festival. As indicated in the scheme above, the first singer is the community's leader, whom Philo designates as the *prohedros* (ὁ πρόεδρος):

So then, after standing up, he sings a hymn composed for God: either a new one he has composed himself or an old one, some hymn of the poets of ancient times—for they have left behind many metres and melodies of epic songs, trimetres, processional hymns, libation-songs, altar-songs, choral standing pieces well-measured with beats and counter-beats...¹²⁰

Whereas the *prohedros* had delivered his initial lecture from a seated position, he now stands up to begin his singing performance. Not only composition, but also vocal performance was apparently part of the Therapeutae's musical activities. As Philo writes, the *prohedros* could sing both existing repertoire and newly composed hymns. It is safe to assume that the latter would have been chosen from the material composed during daily *askèsis*.¹²¹ The interchangeability of newly composed hymns and “hymns of the poets of ancient times” (which would surely include at least the Psalms and possibly other biblical poetry) further attests to the inspired nature of the Therapeutae's hymns, which served as a continuation of scripture rather than just a commentary or interpretation.

We already saw that such inspired authorship was not restricted to the *prohedros* or to a select group of elders among the Therapeutae. All community members participated in the composition of hymns, and all got the opportunity to share their work with their peers during the festival, as Philo continues:

¹¹⁹ On the hierarchical structure of the community, see Taylor and Hay, *Philo of Alexandria*, 278–280. Philo distinguishes between regular members of the community and “elders” (πρεσβύτεροι). The latter are not necessarily of older age, but rather more advanced in philosophy (*Contempl.* 67).

¹²⁰ *Contempl.* 80.

¹²¹ This is also the assumption of Taylor and Hay (*Philo of Alexandria*, 322).

... and after him also the others, according to grades, in order, take turns, everyone listening in total silence except when they need to sing the closing lines and refrains. For then all men and all women sing aloud.¹²²

Although Philo does not make it explicit, it seems that the others' performance could likewise include either existing or newly composed songs. In contrast with his description of the *prohedros*'s singing, Philo now makes mention of the community members joining in to sing "closing lines and refrains" (τὰ ἀκροτελεύτια καὶ ἐφύμνια) together with the main performer. More elaborate communal singing will play an important role later during the festival and will be discussed in the next chapter. In both cases, Philo makes explicit that both men and women participate in the communal singing of refrains. Whether women were also among the soloists remains unclear. Philo's use of the masculine οἱ ἄλλοι suggests that only men sing individually in this manner, which would raise the question if and how hymns composed by female community members during their daily *askèsis* were used. The possibility cannot be excluded, however, that female members also sang soloistically at the festival.

Other questions, too, remain unanswered: did the community members only perform their own compositions and those of previous generations, or did they also sing each other's hymns? Were the performances rehearsed in any way? What role did musical notation play in the performances? Philo, unfortunately, does not provide answers to these questions. What is clear is that the Therapeutae's compositional endeavors were not merely individual, nor merely theoretical exercises: the fruits of their musical labors were put to practice and shared among the community during the festival. The many hours spent in solitary contemplation and composition were thus counterbalanced by this communal feast of worship, in which musicking played a crucial part.

d. The hymns of the Therapeutae and their musical education

How do the hymns of the Therapeutae relate to musical education as discussed in the previous chapter? As pointed out above, the Therapeutae's ability to write down their musical compositions in some system of musical notation supports the idea that they were educated people who had some knowledge of music theory and

¹²² *Contempl.* 80.

systems of notation. The notion that these idealized people would have been highly educated fits into Philo's general educational philosophy, which is built on the idea that *paideia* serves as a preparation for an adult life of virtue. If Philo's ideas about education as presented in *De congressu eruditionis gratia* and the idealized upbringing he describes in *De vita Mosis* paint a picture of the perfect childhood, *De vita contemplativa* continues that story by sketching one realization of the ideal adulthood: a group of educated people living a life of contemplation, centered around the study of scripture and the production of inspired hymns.

Musicking thus plays a role in each life stage, but the nature of musical activities changes. Whereas instrumental practice can be part of the educational program, there is no place for it in adulthood, when vocal music takes center stage. That the Therapeutae may have benefited from the character shaping powers of music during their childhood, which would have optimally prepared them for a life devoted to philosophy in adulthood, is something we might deduce from the fact that they were able to write musical notation. The other aspect of musical education discussed in the previous chapter—its ability to serve as an object for contemplation later in life—is not apparent among the Therapeutae. Philo does not describe them contemplating nature, but only scripture.

e. Conclusion

The production of scripture by means of the composition of hymns can be added to our inventory of ways in which musicking can serve as a spiritual exercise for Philo. It is the only instance in which Philo explicitly equates a musical activity to *askèsis*. Contrary to the dimensions of musical education as spiritual exercise discussed in the previous chapter, we are now dealing with a truly creative exercise in which the participants produce their own musical works, which they later share amongst each other at the festival. A parallel may be drawn with the writing exercises discussed by Hadot, which, although not musical in nature, also incorporate creative productivity into the philosopher's work. Similar to the daily writing exercises described by Hadot, the Therapeutae's writing activities are also structured, repetitive, and almost ritualized, as they participate in them daily in the same manner. Composition is the culmination of their intensive immersion in scripture and allegorical interpretation. The ability to produce scripture is a testimony to their

piety and their devotion to the aim of becoming mind alone. We shall see in the next chapter that an even more exalted climax on the path to perfection is achieved during the Therapeutae's seven-weekly festival, in which music again plays a key part.

Chapter 3

Communal Singing in *De vita Mosis* and *De vita contemplativa*

In this chapter, I will discuss a third musical practice described by Philo and the final one investigated in this thesis: communal singing. Contrary to the practices discussed so far, this is a musical activity practiced in a group setting. We encounter it in Philo's description of the Therapeutae's festival, but also at several points in his description of the life of Moses. In this chapter I will first zoom out from Philo's texts again to consider both Graeco-Roman and ancient Jewish traditions of communal singing and consider how they might have colored the philosopher's ideas about the practice. I will then discuss three instances of communal singing from the life of Moses, including the Song of the Sea and Philo's allegorical interpretation of it. This interpretation is crucial to understanding the Therapeutae's communal singing at the festival and its significance as a spiritual exercise, to which I return in the third section of this chapter.

a. Choral traditions of Philo's world: Greek and Jewish

When it comes to reconstructing the musical traditions of ancient times, historians have to rely largely on indirect forms of evidence. In the case of the Graeco-Roman world we have a few dozen fragments of musical notation, a much larger number of archaeological findings (including countless depictions of musicians on vases), and a number of technical treatises on music, although the latter date mostly from late antiquity.¹²³ Our most abundant source of evidence for ancient musical practices are literary works describing musical events. These sources tend to offer much contextual information: where, when, and why did musical performances take place, who were the performers and who were their audiences, what were the functions of these musical events? Less information is found about the music itself, or the intricacies of its execution, as most authors and audiences lacked the language needed to understand and describe such details. As a result, we often know more

¹²³ A notable exception is the philosopher and music theorist Aristoxenus (c. 360 BCE – c. 300 BCE), whose works on musical treatises form the foundation of our present knowledge of ancient music theory prior to the common era.

about how and why ancient musical performances took place, than we do about how the music would have sounded.¹²⁴

One thing that is clear from the available evidence is that music permeated the Graeco-Roman world in many of its facets, including religious and spiritual life. Certain musical instruments were associated with specific gods, such as the *lyra* with Apollo and the *aulos* with Dionysus or Bacchus.¹²⁵ Religious musical genres such as hymns, paeans, and dithyrambs emerged as early as the Archaic period and remained popular throughout antiquity.¹²⁶ In the Classical period, music (including dance) played a central role in the tragedies performed at civic-religious festivals like the yearly City Dionysia in Athens.¹²⁷ Music was indeed so intertwined with all aspects of social life that the late antique author Aristides Quintilianus (fl. 3rd – 4th century CE) wrote that “there is certainly no action among men that is carried out without music”, giving the musical accompaniment of “sacred hymns and offerings” as one example.¹²⁸

A central element in many musical performances, especially in the Archaic and Classical periods, was the *choros*, a group of singer-dancers. In *choreia* music, dance, poetry, and sometimes costumes all came together to create a unified whole, usually accompanied on the *aulos*.¹²⁹ Plato mentions *choros* training as a key element of education, even equating an uneducated person (ἀπαίδευτος) to someone without *choros* training (ἀχόρευτος).¹³⁰ Although the choruses of Classical drama

¹²⁴ For an introduction into (the study of) ancient music, see Peter Burkholder, Donald Jay Grout, and Claude V. Palisca, *A History of Western Music*, 9th ed. (New York: W.W. Norton, 2014), esp. pp. 8-21.

¹²⁵ The *lyra* was a string instrument typically consisting of seven strings spanned over a soundboard of tortoise shell or wood, highly suitable for accompanying one’s own or another performer’s singing. Other types of string instruments such as the *kithara*, the forerunner of the modern lute and guitar, were also widely used. The *aulos* was a double reed wind instrument comparable to the modern clarinet.

¹²⁶ Katy Romanou et al., “Greece,” in *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, ed. Stanley Sadie and John Tyrell (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), 9.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.* On the chorus in Greek tragedy and its legacy beyond the ancient world, see for example Joshua H. Billings, Felix Budelmann, and Fiona Macintosh (eds.), *Choruses, Ancient and Modern* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).

¹²⁸ Aristides Quintilianus, *On Music*, book 2, quoted in Romanou et al., “Greece,” 4.

¹²⁹ Naomi A. Weiss, “Ancient Greek *Choreia*,” in *A Companion to Greek and Roman Music*, ed. Tosca A.C. Lynch and Eleonora Rocconi (Chichester: John Wiley & Sons, 2020), 161. Ancient *choreia* inspired the nineteenth-century German composer Richard Wagner to develop his concept which came to be known as the *Gesamtkunstwerk* (‘total artwork’): a performance in which text, drama, music, costumes, and décor all come together to form a unified whole, offering the spectator a highly immersive artistic experience.

¹³⁰ Plato, *Laws* 2.654. In the same section, Plato has Clinias and his collocutor define *choreia* as dance and song combined (ὄρχησις τε καὶ ᾠδή).

are perhaps the best known examples of *choreia*, the artform was certainly not limited to the context of tragedy and comedy, and choruses performed independently of larger dramatic structures at many occasions.¹³¹

Choral performances like the ones at the Greek theatre festivals were simultaneously religious and civic in nature: public performance and religious service went hand in hand, and together shaped and affirmed communal identity.¹³² As Plato's aforementioned remark about *choros* education suggests, choral training was undertaken by all educated members of society, and those participating in the *choroi* during festivals were regular citizens rather than professionals. Generally, the *choroi* at these occasions were either all-male or all-female, while non-religious settings also saw *choroi* of mixed gender.¹³³ The genre of poetry generally determined what type of *choros* was required: *partheneia*, for example, were performed by female adolescents while paeans were performed by men.



Image 2: Vase depicting a male chorus, Athens, 6th century BCE.
Photograph by Remi Mathis (2011). Source: Wikimedia Commons.

¹³¹ In fact, *choreia* predated the emergence of tragedy and was a key element of the musical performances of Archaic Greece, with poets like Pindar, Alcman, Stesichorus and others writing choral songs. See Deborah Tarn Steiner, *Choral Constructions in Greek Culture: The Idea of the Chorus in the Poetry, Art and Social Practices of the Archaic and Early Classical Period* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021).

¹³² Weiss, "Ancient Greek *Choreia*," 164.

¹³³ *Ibid.*, 162.

By the first century CE, the *choros* had become a familiar literary trope, and Philo was undoubtedly acquainted with it.¹³⁴ If he witnessed any choral performances, and what those performances would have looked like is unclear, but the *choreia* tradition most likely shaped his own views of choral singing. We already saw evidence of this in the terminology Philo uses to describe the poetry handed over to the Therapeutae (see chapter 2, section *c*), which includes the *στάσιμον χορικόν* (“standing song for chorus”).¹³⁵

It is also known, however, that Philo visited Jerusalem at least once during his lifetime, and that choral singing was part of the daily sacrificial rites performed at the Temple there.¹³⁶ Moreover, diasporic Jewish communities most likely had their own traditions of communal singing.¹³⁷ It is quite probable that Philo was familiar with these musical traditions. At the Temple, the priests of the Levite tribe performed the daily sacrificial rites and other rituals. Performance of the rituals seems to have included both instrumental and vocal musicking by a group of Levite singers and musicians.¹³⁸ Instead of regular citizens, trained Levite musicians performed the psalms at the Temple. The instruments used in this ritual, the cymbals and the trumpet, are not known to have been used for the accompaniment of Greek *choreia*. Nor seems the Levite performance to have included bodily movements, as these are not described in the Mishnah. In short, it seems that the choral performance at the Temple in Jerusalem would have been quite a novel experience for an onlooker accustomed to the Graeco-Roman *choreia* tradition.

¹³⁴ Helen B. Bacon, “The Chorus in Greek Life and Drama,” *Arion* 3, no. 1 (Fall 1994): 6; cf. Lauren Curtis, *Imagining the Chorus in Augustan Poetry* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), esp. chap. 1.

¹³⁵ In classical drama, the *stasimon* was a choral song placed between two episodes of a tragedy.

¹³⁶ On Philo’s visit to Jerusalem, see *Prov.* 2.64.

¹³⁷ Authoritative handbooks on Jewish music history include ethnomusicologist Abraham Z. Idelsohn’s *Jewish Music: Its Historical Development* (New York: Dover, 1992) and Joachim Braun’s *Music in Ancient Israel/Palestine: Archaeological, Written and Comparative Sources* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2002). The former focuses mostly on Jewish music after the destruction of the Second Temple while the latter takes a comparative approach to the music of the Levant from the Stone Age till the Graeco-Roman period.

¹³⁸ Our knowledge of these practices is based mainly on the descriptions in the Bible and the Mishnah. In Mishnah Tamid 7:3 we read that two priests stand by the high priest as he performs the libation, with “two silver trumpets in their hands”. On these trumpets, they first sound a sustained blast (the *tekia*), followed by a series of short notes (the *terua*), and then another long blast. After this, the libation by the high priest and the performance of a psalm by Levite singers and musicians takes place (Mishnah Tamid 7:3, William Davidson digital edition, https://www.sefaria.org/Mishnah_Tamid.7.3). For an overview of the sources describing musical practices at the Second Temple, see chaps. 3 and 4 in John Arthur Smith, *Music in Ancient Judaism and Early Christianity* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2011).

A third musical practice which may have shaped Philo's views of communal singing are the songs of celebration sung in diasporic communities at moments of celebration. Philo offers evidence of this tradition, which seems to have involved both men and women singing together.¹³⁹ A comparable practice is described in 3 Maccabees 6:32. Of course, such spontaneous songs of celebration would have taken place in a much less formalized setting than the psalm recitations accompanying the sacrificial rites at the Temple. The details of the practice may well have varied from one occasion to another, but Philo's account demonstrates that this type of communal singing took place in the Alexandrian community, that it involved mixed choruses, and that Philo witnessed it.

b. Three examples of communal singing in De vita Mosis

In addition to young Moses's musical education, discussed in chapter 2 above, Philo describes three musical episodes from the prophet's adulthood. In each case, we are dealing with moments of religious significance, and in each case with communal singing. Surprisingly, the Song of Moses, sung by Mosis just before his death, is not included in Philo's account, although he does discuss it in his treatise *De virtutibus*. There he emphasizes the perfection of Moses's musical performance, which he considers a reflection of the perfect virtue embodied by the prophet.¹⁴⁰ In a sense, this is the flipside of the Pythagorean-Platonic notion of the moral powers of music which we encountered in Philo before: just as perfect music can foster a virtuous character, a person who is of perfect character will be able to sing perfectly.

The first musical episode we find described in *De vita Mosis* is the Song of the Sea, sung by Moses and the Israelites after escaping Egypt. Philo describes how Moses and the Israelites' escape from Egypt is accomplished through the splitting of the Red Sea, which subsequently closes in on the Egyptians and submerges them "horses, chariots and all" (*Mos.* 1.179).¹⁴¹ This feat is celebrated with a hymn known as the Song of the Sea, described as follows in the Septuagint:

¹³⁹ *Flacc.* 121.

¹⁴⁰ *Virt.* 72-76.

¹⁴¹ *Mos.* 1.179.

Then Moyses and the sons of Israel sang this song to God and spoke, saying, “Let us sing to the Lord, for gloriously he has glorified himself; horse and rider he threw into the sea. Helper and defender he has become to me, for deliverance...”¹⁴²

The lyrics of the song continue with descriptions of the events that have just transpired, as well as general praise for God and the protection He provides (Ex. 15:1-18).¹⁴³ A second hymn follows immediately, which is known as the Song of Miriam. Moses’s sister Miriam sings the hymn while the other women of Israel accompany her with tambourines and dancing:

Then Mariam, the prophetess, the sister of Aaron, took the tambourine in her hand, and all the women went out after her with tambourines and dances. And Mariam took their lead, saying: “Let us sing to the Lord, for gloriously he has glorified himself. Horse and rider he threw into the sea.”¹⁴⁴

Compared with the hymn sung by the men, the women’s hymn is shorter in lyrics and accompanied by dancing and playing the tambourine. In Philo’s version, the two hymns are merged into one, in which Moses, Miriam, and all the Israelites (male and female) participate. In *De vita Mosi* 1 he portrays the scene as follows:

This great and marvellous work struck the Hebrews with amazement, and, finding themselves unexpectedly victorious in a bloodless conflict, and seeing their enemies, one and all, destroyed in a moment, they set up two choirs, one of men and one of women, on the beach, and sang hymns of thanksgiving to God. Over these choirs Moses and his sister presided, and led the hymns, the former for the men and the latter for the women.¹⁴⁵

Philo is describing a musical practice of two choruses, one male and one female, singing hymns of thanksgiving together. He diverges from the biblical account, in which the men and women perform separately and in which the women’s singing is accompanied by dancing and tambourine-playing.

The same episode recurs with more details *De vita Mosi* 2.253-257. The recurrence suggests that Philo considered it an important event among Moses’s works as a king (the topic of the first treatise), but also among his works as a priest,

¹⁴² Ex. 15:1-2. See Appendix 2 for the original Greek of all Septuagint citations included in this thesis. The precise nature of the musical performance described here was later debated in the rabbinic literature, which identifies five possible methods of responsive singing by which the hymn might have been rendered. See Smith, *Music in Ancient Judaism*, 98-99.

¹⁴³ Ex. 15:1-18.

¹⁴⁴ Ex. 15:20-21.

¹⁴⁵ *Mos.* 1.180.

lawgiver, and prophet (the topic of the second treatise). Philo begins his second description of the musical episode in a similar way to the first:

After this, what should Moses do but honour the Benefactor with hymns of thanksgiving? He divides the nation into two choirs, one of men, the other of women, and himself leads the men while he appoints his sister to lead the women, that the two in concert might sing hymns to the Father and Creator in tuneful response...¹⁴⁶

Again, men and women perform together rather than separately. In both Philo's versions Moses serves as the leader of the male chorus and Miriam as the leader of the female chorus, and both descriptions lack any mention of either instrumental accompaniment or dancing. It appears that the first of the two biblical hymns, the Song of the Sea, serves as Philo's example in the construction of his own version of the event, in which both genders participate in that original hymn.

It is interesting to note that in the passage quoted last, Philo uses both the terms "sounding together" (συνηχοῦντες) and "in answering harmonies" (ἀντιφθόγγοις ἀρμονίαις) to describe the manner in which the two choruses sing. The former term suggests simultaneous singing by the male and female choruses, while the latter suggests responsive singing, with the two choruses alternating. Philo uses additional technical terms as the passage continues, which further elucidate the manner of singing he imagines the Israelites to engage in:

... with a blending both of temperaments and melody – temperaments eager to render to each other like for like; melody produced by the concord of treble and bass; for the voices of men are bass and the women's treble, and when they are blended in due proportion the resulting melody is of the fullest and sweetest harmony. All these myriads were persuaded by Moses to sing with hearts in accord the same song, telling of those mighty and marvellous works which I have recorded just above. And the prophet, rejoicing at this, seeing the people also overjoyed, and himself no longer able to contain his delight, led off the song, and his hearers massed in two choirs sang with him the story of these same deeds.¹⁴⁷

The term "blending" (κρᾶσις) supports the idea that the two choruses are singing simultaneously, as does Philo's further description of the scene. We have already encountered mixed-gender communal singing in the previous chapter, when the Therapeutae sang the refrains of their hymns "πάντες τε καὶ πᾶσαι". It is also in line

¹⁴⁶ *Mos.* 2.256.

¹⁴⁷ *Mos.* 2.256-257.

with the practice of spontaneous and communal celebratory singing as described by Philo among the Alexandrian Jews. As we shall see later on in this chapter, some of the elements that distinguish Philo's account from the biblical version –the blending of the choruses, the emphasis on vocal rather than instrumental performance– recur in the choral performances of the Therapeutae.

First, however, I will discuss the two other musical episodes from *De vita Mosis*. The first of these is the performance of the Song of the Well, which occurs after the wandering Israelites have entered Canaan and found a well there. Philo describes the scene as follows:

Shortly afterwards they also found a spring of good water in a well situated on the borders of the land. This supplied the whole multitude with drink, and their spirits were enlivened thereby, as though the draught were strong wine rather than water. In their joy and gladness, the people of God's choice set up choirs around the well, and sang a new song to the Deity, Who gave them the land as their portion and had, in truth, led them in their migration.¹⁴⁸

Philo adds that the Israelites, having found abundant water after entering Canaan, “judged it fitting not to leave the well uncelebrated” (“μὴ ἀσημεῖωτον τὴν πηγὴν παρελθεῖν”).¹⁴⁹ The situation is quite similar, albeit on a smaller scale, to what happened at the Red Sea. God has granted a favor to the Israelites, and they respond by forming choruses and singing a celebratory hymn.

Once again, the detail of the people setting up multiple choruses (the number, and whether any gender division occurred, is not specified here, but a male and female chorus seem probable) is added by Philo. The biblical account in Numbers 21 simply reads:

Then Israel sang this song over the well: “Take the lead for it! O Well – rulers dug it...”¹⁵⁰

Philo's addition of the detail of the multiple choruses brings the Song of the Well into closer semblance with his version of the Song of the Sea. By bringing the two musical episodes in line with each other, Philo creates an image of a consistent musical tradition of singing hymns in double choruses to celebrate divine favor, in line with the real-life practices he describes in *In Flaccum*.

¹⁴⁸ *Mos.* 1.255.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁰ *Num.* 21:17-18.

The third and final musical episode described in *De vita Mosis* is of a somewhat different nature. It occurs during the episode with the golden calf, when the Israelites worship a statue of a golden calf in Moses's absence, as he ascends Mount Sinai to receive the Ten Commandments. In the biblical account, no musicking is mentioned.¹⁵¹ By contrast, Philo describes the episode in the following way in *De vita Mosis*:

Then, having fashioned a golden bull, in imitation of the animal held most sacred in that country [Egypt], they offered sacrifices which were no sacrifices, set up choirs which were no choirs, sang hymns which were very funeral chants, and, filled with strong drink, were overcome by the twofold intoxication of wine and folly...¹⁵²

Musicking takes a prominent place among the Israelites' transgressions. Once again, choruses are formed and hymns are sung, but this time they constitute a reversal of proper celebratory singing: the choruses are not actually choruses (χοροὺς ἀχορεύτους), and the hymns differ in nothing from dirges (ὕμνους θρήνων οὐδὲν διαφέροντας). The scene ties in further to the tradition Philo has described before of performing choral hymns at moments of celebration, although in this case, of course, the Israelites are misguided in their celebratory mood.¹⁵³

When taken at face value, the three musical episodes from Philo's biography of Moses paint a picture of a tradition of spontaneous celebratory singing in thanksgiving to God (or, in the case of the last example, in misguided worship) performed by the Israelites. This is in line with the musical practices Philo observed among his fellow Alexandrian Jews. As is often the case with Philo, however, there may be more to the story than is directly apparent. This becomes apparent when we take into consideration Philo's allegorical interpretation of the Song of the Sea. Philo presents this interpretation in *De agricultura*, another text from the *Allegorical Commentary*. As in *De vita Mosis*, Philo writes that it was fitting for

¹⁵¹ Ex. 32:2-6.

¹⁵² *Mos.* 2.162.

¹⁵³ René Bloch writes about this passage and Philo's attitude towards dance: Tanz steht hier keineswegs im Widerspruch zum Glauben. Vielmehr ist es umgekehrt: Es ist der Tanz, der zum Glauben an das Göttliche führt. "Choreia" (...), der Chortanz, den der kontemplative Theologe und Philosoph betrachten kann, scheint der kosmische Gegenpol zu sein zum ausgelassenen Tanz der Bühne, den Philon verurteilt" ("»Tänze, die keine Tänze waren«: Widersprüchliches über den Tanz bei Philon von Alexandrien," in *Aspects of Roman Dance Culture: Religious Cults, Theatrical Entertainments, Metaphorical Appropriations*, ed. Karin Schlapbach (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 2022), 101-115). It is not dancing and music per se that Philo condemns. On the contrary, it is precisely because these activities belong in proper religious worship that it is so terrible to see the Israelites engaging in them in the context of their worship of the golden calf.

the Israelites to form two choruses and sing a celebratory song after the defeat of the Egyptians.¹⁵⁴ But he then goes on to reveal what he believes to be the deeper meaning behind the division into two choruses:

The choir of men has as its leader Moses, perfect intellect; the choir of women has as its leader Miriam, purified sense-perception. For it is right both intellectually and sense-perceptibly to make hymns and benedictions without delay to the Deity, and to let each of the instruments, both of the intellect and of sense-perception, sound forth harmoniously in thanksgiving and praise to Him who alone is Saviour.¹⁵⁵

The male and female choruses apparently symbolize two aspects of the human being: the intellect and sense-perception. Singing is not just an activity perceived by the senses, but also an activity of the intellect.¹⁵⁶ The idea that singing is an activity of the mind as well as of the senses, ties in directly with the notion of musicking as a spiritual exercise; if it were a purely sensory activity, after all, it could hardly be considered beneficial for a philosophical way of life that aims at “becoming mind alone”. Philo’s remark here confirms that singing and by extension musicking is an activity with spiritual significance.

The lyrics of the Song of the Sea are also explained allegorically by Philo:

The same hymn is sung by both choirs and it has a really marvelous refrain, which is fine to repeat. It goes as follows: *Let us sing to the Lord, for gloriously he has been glorified. Horse and rider he threw into the sea.* No one could search for and find a better and more perfect victory than the one by which the four-footed, skittish, arrogant and highly redoubtable company of both passions and vices has been defeated (the vices of course are four in kind and the passions are the same in number). Moreover their rider, the excellence-hating and passion-loving intellect, tumbles down and dies, the one who had found its delight in pleasures and desires, unjust and wicked deeds, and also in plundering, greediness and beasts of a similar kind.¹⁵⁷

Philo equates the Egyptian horse-rider to the intellect that is enslaved by the passions, which are symbolized by the horse with its four feet. Israel’s escape from Egypt thus becomes more than a physical escape from a hostile land: it is the escape

¹⁵⁴ *Agr.* 79.

¹⁵⁵ *Agr.* 80. English translation from Philo of Alexandria, *On Cultivation*, ed. Gregory E. Sterling and David T. Runia, trans. Albert C. Geljon and David T. Runia, Philo of Alexandria Commentary Series Volume 4 (Leiden: Brill, 2013).

¹⁵⁶ Cf. *Plant.* 126.

¹⁵⁷ *Agr.* 82-83.

of the human mind from enslavement to the passions.¹⁵⁸ It now becomes an enormously momentous event: overcoming the passions was, after all, a primary aim of human life for Philo and the biggest hurdle on the way towards the ultimate aim of becoming mind alone. Philo's allegorical interpretation of the Song of the Sea explains the centrality of the Therapeutae's reenactment of this scene within their festival, to which we will now turn.

c. The choruses of the Therapeutae

I have already discussed the Therapeutae's soloistic performance of hymns in the previous chapter. The most important of their musical activities, however, is the nightlong singing that takes place after they have eaten their meal. I will now focus on points 9-12 from the scheme presented earlier:

9. Formation of male and female choruses (83)
10. Hymns performed by two choruses (84)
11. Fusion of the choruses (85)
12. Hymns performed by blended chorus until dawn (88 – 89)

These points coincide with the moments during the festival in which communal singing takes place. In terms of duration this constitutes the bulk of the festival, as the Therapeutae spend the entire night from their mealtime until sunrise singing. It appears that their singing conduces a trance-like state which allows them to stay up all night without feeling sleeping.¹⁵⁹ Directly after the consumption of their simple meal and water, the Therapeutae go on to form two choruses:

After the supper they hold the sacred vigil which is conducted in the following way. They rise up all together and standing in the middle of the refectory form themselves first into two choirs, one of men and one of women, the leader and precentor chosen for each being the most honoured amongst them and also the most musical.¹⁶⁰

This procedure is almost the same as the one followed by Moses and the Israelites after the crossing of the Red Sea, with the “most honored” (ἐντιμώτατος) and “most

¹⁵⁸ Philo interprets Egypt as a symbol for the body, as discussed in Sarah J.K. Pearce, *The Land of the Body: Studies in Philo's Representation of Egypt* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2007).

¹⁵⁹ This is reminiscent of Philo's description in *Flacc.* 121, where the people also stay up all night singing.

¹⁶⁰ *Contempl.* 83.

musical” (ἐμμελέστατος) of the men and women fulfilling the conducting role of Moses and Miriam respectively.

After the formation of the two choirs, Philo continues his account as follows:

Then they sing hymns to God composed of many measures and set to many melodies, sometimes chanting together, sometimes taking up the harmony antiphonally, hands and feet keeping time in accompaniment, and rapt with enthusiasm reproduce sometimes the lyrics of the procession, sometimes of the halt and of the wheeling and counter-wheeling of a choric dance.¹⁶¹

Here, the male and female choirs sing both simultaneously (συνηχοῦντες) and antiphonally (ἀντιφώνοις ἀρμονίαις), two singing techniques Philo also described in his account of the Song of the Sea in *De vita Mosis*. Contrary to that story, however, Philo now makes explicit mention of bodily movements and dancing in addition to singing. While the dancing occurring in Exodus 15:20 was glossed over in Philo’s version of that moment in *De vita Mosis*, it is present in the Therapeutae’s reenactment of the scene, with both men and women participating in the dancing.

d. Conclusion

If we take Philo’s allegorical interpretation of the Song of the Sea into consideration, the relationship between the Therapeutae’s way of life and their practice of choral singing at the festival becomes readily apparent. As discussed in the previous chapter, all the activities of the Therapeutae are aimed at their goal of becoming mind alone and overcoming the passions. If Philo considers the Israelites’ escape from Egypt to symbolize the victory of the mind over the body, it makes sense that he would present the Therapeutae reenacting that scene at the climax of their festival. The question rises whether the real Therapeutae, if they existed at all, shared Philo’s allegorical interpretation of the Song of the Sea and assigned the same significance to their choral singing. In any case it is clear that for Philo, the singing celebrates the Therapeutae’s overcoming of the passions.

At the same time, it is through singing that the Therapeutae are able to stay up all night and quite literally overcome their bodies’ need for sleep. Philo describes the altered state into which the Therapeutae enter by means of their singing as a

¹⁶¹ *Contempl.* 84.

“beautiful intoxication” (τὴν καλὴν ταύτην μέθην). Whereas for Moses and the Israelites, the singing was merely a celebration of their victory over Egypt, c.q. the passions, for the Therapeutae it appears to be something more: it is by means of the singing itself that they are able to (temporarily) overcome their bodily limitations and become mind alone. This is precisely what makes the Therapeutae’s singing a spiritual exercise: it is an activity that brings about a transformation of their state of being. Singing is, in other words, two things at once: a celebration of the overcoming of the passions, and the spiritual exercise which brings it about.

Conclusion

In this thesis I have investigated how musical activities can serve as spiritual exercises for Philo, building on Hadot's model of ancient philosophy as a way of life and on the work of scholars who have applied this model to Philo. Like many ancient philosophers, Philo did not consider philosophy to be limited to thinking and contemplation alone. He carried many practical activities in his philosophical toolbox, and one of those was music.

I have investigated several ways in which Philo presents musicking as a spiritual exercise. Four dimensions of musicking as a source of self-transformation have come to the fore:

- 1) The shaping of character through musical education
- 2) The contemplation of music theory
- 3) The production of scripture through musical composition
- 4) Communal singing as an enactment and celebration of overcoming the body

Diverse as these musical activities may be, they are all means towards the same end: overcoming the passions and becoming mind alone. This is for Philo the purpose of a philosophical way of life. Through becoming mind alone, the student of philosophy obtains wisdom and knowledge of God, which is the highest aim for Philo.

The first of these four dimensions, the shaping of character through musical education, demonstrates Philo's deep connection to his Greek colleagues and predecessors Plato and Pythagoras. These philosophers had emphasized the moral powers of music and its ability to shape character for better or worse, an idea which Philo holds on to even if it had lost favor among his contemporaries like the stoic philosophers. In *De congressu*, Philo places musical education directly at the service of philosophy and virtue, thereby giving reason to consider it a spiritual exercise. This inclusion constitutes an expansion of the model of Hadot, who only described spiritual exercises for adults. Whether we choose to consider musical education a truly independent spiritual exercise, or perhaps rather a preparatory one, Philo's work demonstrates that a philosophical way of life starts in childhood.

Another way in which musical (and other) education prepares for virtue is by providing the student with theoretical knowledge –in this case of music theory– which can later be employed for contemplation of the natural world. In Philo's case,

this type of contemplation is aimed at obtaining knowledge of God as the creator of the world. Music theory is an apt example of the principle, as its relationship to numerology and thereby (according to Philo) to cosmology allows for grandiose flights of the mind from the perceptible world of music to the deepest order of the universe. While Philo nowhere expresses this function of musical education as a spiritual exercise explicitly, his digressions on numerology and cosmology, many of which include references to music, suggest that music theory was integral to his contemplation of nature. In this thesis I have only touched upon the connections between numerology, cosmology, and music theory briefly, but it is a theme within Philonic studies which warrants much more research in the future.¹⁶²

The types of musical activities *qua* spiritual exercises Philo discusses most extensively are those practiced by the Therapeutae. He explicitly classifies their daily compositional work under their spiritual *askèsis*. Through the composition of hymns the Therapeutae become inspired authors of scripture, as demonstrated by Judith Newman. Like contemplation, writing is a typical spiritual exercise of which Hadot discusses many examples. Remarkably, however, Philo discusses only musical “writing” (i.e., composition) in this context. The production of hymns is the culmination of the Therapeutae’s intensive study of the Torah and its allegorical interpretations.

The ultimate musical-spiritual exercise of the Therapeutae, however, is not their compositional work, but their communal singing. To understand the significance of this musical practice we have had to look beyond *De vita contemplativa* and include Philo’s remarks in *De vita Mosis*, which describes the original performance of the Song of the Sea after which the Therapeutae’s practice is modeled, as well as his allegorical interpretation of the scene as found in *De agricultura*. Philo views the Song of the Sea as a symbol for the overcoming of the body and its passions and becoming “mind alone”. The Therapeutae’s choral performance at the seven-weekly festival is not only a symbol for and celebration of the overcoming of the passions, but it is through this very activity that they are able to transcend their bodily needs and become “mind alone”.

¹⁶² Another musical motif in Philo’s work which I have largely left out of my discussion is his use of musical metaphors. This, too, is a large and relatively uncharted area of research in which much work is still to be done.

Each of the four dimensions of musicking as a spiritual exercise which I have identified appears to stand rather independently from the others. While the *Therapeutae*, for instance, seems to have been (musically) educated, Philo makes no explicit remark about their education, let alone about how musical education might have shaped their character, or how encyclical education might have contributed to their contemplative life. Neither does he connect their compositional activities to the climactic choral performance of their festival. The different strands appear rather fragmented in Philo's descriptions, and it is up to us to connect the dots while trying to avoid seeing connections that Philo would never have made. What emerges when we connect the various aspects of musicking as a spiritual exercise is a deeply spiritual philosophy of music, in which each stage of life knows an intimate connection between musicality and the philosophical way of life.

The notion that musicking can be a spiritual exercise was already demonstrated by Davidson's work on jazz improvisation. One question I set out to answer when I began this thesis, was if Davidson's findings could be transposed to antiquity. In other words: could musicking be a spiritual exercise for ancient philosophers, too? In the case of Philo, the answer quickly turned out to be "yes". The obvious follow-up question was *how* exactly musicking served as a spiritual exercise for Philo. Through what mechanisms do musical activities contribute to a transformation of the self and to the overcoming of the passions? The four dimensions of musicking as a spiritual exercise I described in this thesis show the diversity of powers which Philo attributed to music and its relevance in all stages of life. Music, in short, was not a trivial interest for Philo, but an indispensable aspect of spiritual life.

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Appendix 1
Overview of Philonic Citations

In order of appearance in the text.

Source	Greek ¹⁶³	English translation ¹⁶³	Cited on p.
<i>Congr.</i> 16	μουσική δὲ τὸ μὲν ἄρρυθμον [ἐν] ῥυθμοῖς, τὸ δ' ἀνάρμοστον ἀρμονία, τὸ δ' ἀπῳδὸν καὶ ἐκμελὲς μέλει κατεπάδουσα τὸ ἀσύμφωνον εἰς συμφωνίαν ἄξει.	Music will charm away the unrhythmic by its rhythm, the inharmonic by its harmony, the unmelodious and tuneless by its melody, and thus reduce discord to concord.	21
<i>Congr.</i> 76	ἐσπούδασα καὶ τρίτη συνελθεῖν – ἦν δὲ εὐρυθμος, εὐάρμοστος, ἐμμελής, μουσική δὲ ἐκαλεῖτο – καὶ ἐγέννησα ἐξ αὐτῆς διατονικὰ χρώματα καὶ ἐναρμόνια, συνημμένα, διεζευγμένα μέλη, τῆς διὰ τεττάρων, τῆς διὰ πέντε, τῆς διὰ πασῶν συμφωνίας ἐχόμενα...	Again my ardour moved me to keep company with a third; rich in rhythm, harmony and melody was she, and her name was Music, and from her I begat diatonics, chromatics and enharmonics, conjunct and disjunct melodies, conforming with the consonance of the fourth, fifth or octave intervals...	21
<i>Congr.</i> 77-78	τινὲς γὰρ τοῖς φίλτροις τῶν θεραπειῶν δαλεασθέντες ὀλιγόρησαν τῆς δεσποίνης, φιλοσοφίας, καὶ κατεγήρασαν οἱ μὲν ἐν ποιήμασιν, οἱ δὲ ἐν γραμμαῖς, οἱ δὲ ἐν χρωμάτων κράσεσιν, οἱ δὲ ἐν ἄλλοις μυρίοις, οὐ δυνηθέντες ἐπὶ τὴν ἀσπὴν ἀναδραμεῖν. ἔχει γὰρ ἐκάστη τέχνη γλαφυρότητας, ὀλκούς τινες δυνάμεις, ὅφ' ὧν ἔνιοι ψυχαγωγούμενοι καταμένουσιν, ἐκλελησμένοι τῶν πρὸς φιλοσοφίαν ὁμολογιῶν.	For some have been ensnared by the love lures of the handmaids and spurned the mistress, and have grown old, some dotting on poetry, some on geometrical figures, some on the blending of musical “colours,” and a host of other things, and have never been able to soar to the winning of the lawful wife. For each art has its charms, its powers of attraction, and some beguiled by these stay with them and forget their pledges to Philosophy.	22
<i>Mos.</i> 1.20	τροφῆς οὖν ἤδη βασιλικῆς καὶ θεραπείας ἀξιούμενος οὐχ οἷα	So now he received as his right the nurture and service due to a	24

¹⁶³ For *De congressu*, *De vita Mosis*, and *De specialibus legibus* I have relied on the Loeb edition for both the Greek and the English translations. For *De vita contemplativa* and *De plantatione* I have relied on the *Philo of Alexandria Commentary Series* for the English translations and on the Loeb edition for the Greek text. See bibliography for full citations.

	<p>κομιδῇ νήπιος ἦδετο τωθασμοῖς καὶ γέλωσι καὶ παιδιαῖς, καίτοι τῶν τὴν ἐπιμέλειαν αὐτοῦ παρειληφόντων ἀνέσεις ἔχειν ἐπιτρεπόντων καὶ μηδὲν ἐπιδεικνυμένων σκυθρωπόν, ἀλλ' αἰδῶ καὶ σεμνότητα παραφαίνων ἀκούσασιν καὶ θεάσασιν, ἃ τὴν ψυχὴν ἔμελλεν ὠφελήσειν, προσεῖχε.</p>	<p>prince. Yet he did not bear himself like the mere infant that he was, nor delight in fun and laughter and sport, though those who had the charge of him did not grudge him relaxation or shew him any strictness; but with a modest and serious bearing he applied himself to hearing and seeing what was sure to profit the soul.</p>	
<i>Mos.</i> 1.23	<p>ἀριθμοὺς μὲν οὖν καὶ γεωμετρίαν τὴν τε ῥυθμικὴν καὶ ἀρμονικὴν καὶ μετρικὴν θεωρίαν καὶ μουσικὴν τὴν σύμπασαν διὰ τε χρήσεως ὀργάνων καὶ λόγων τῶν ἐν ταῖς τέχναις καὶ διεξόδοις τοπικωτέραις Αἰγυπτίων οἱ λόγιοι παρεδίδοσαν καὶ προσέτι τὴν διὰ συμβόλων φιλοσοφίαν, ἣν ἐν τοῖς λεγομένοις ἱεροῖς γράμμασιν ἐπιδείκνυνται καὶ διὰ τῆς τῶν ζώων ἀποδοχῆς, ἃ καὶ θεῶν τιμαῖς γεραίρουσι· τὴν δ' ἄλλην ἐγκύκλιον παιδείαν Ἕλληνας ἐδίδασκον, οἱ δ' ἐκ τῶν πλησιοχώρων τὰ τε Ἀσσύρια γράμματα καὶ τὴν τῶν οὐρανίων Χαλδαϊκὴν ἐπιστήμην. ταύτην καὶ παρ' Αἰγυπτίων ἀνελάμβανε μαθηματικὴν ἐν τοῖς μάλιστα ἐπιτηδεύοντων·</p>	<p>Arithmetic, geometry, the lore of metre, rhythm and harmony, and the whole subject of music as shown by the use of instruments or in textbooks and treatises of a more special character, were imparted to him by learned Egyptians. These further instructed him in the philosophy conveyed in symbols, as displayed in the so-called holy inscriptions and in the regard paid to animals, to which they even pay divine honours. He had Greeks to teach him the rest of the regular school course, and the inhabitants of the neighbouring countries for Assyrian letters and the Chaldean science of the heavenly bodies. This he also acquired from Egyptians, who give special attention to astrology.</p>	24, 25
<i>Spec.</i> 2.45	<p>τὰ μὲν σώματα κάτω πρὸς χέρσον ἰδρυμένοι, τὰς δὲ ψυχὰς ὑποπτέρους κατασκευάζοντες, ὅπως αἰθεροβατοῦντες τὰς ἐκεῖ δυνάμεις περιθρῶσιν...</p>	<p>While their bodies are firmly planted on the land they provide their souls with wings, so that they may traverse the upper air and gain full contemplation of the powers which dwell there...</p>	27

<p><i>Contempl.</i> 28-29</p>	<p>τὸ δὲ ἐξ ἑωθινοῦ μέχρις ἑσπέρας διάστημα σύμπαν αὐτοῖς ἔστιν ἄσκησις· ἐντυγχάνοντες γὰρ τοῖς ἱεροῖς γράμμασι φιλοσοφοῦσι τὴν πατριον φιλοσοφίαν ἀλληγοροῦντες, ἐπειδὴ σύμβολα τὰ τῆς ῥητῆς ἐρμηνείας νομίζουσιν ἀποκεκρυμμένης φύσεως ἐν ὑπονοίαις δηλουμένης. ἔστι δὲ αὐτοῖς καὶ συγγράμματα παλαιῶν ἀνδρῶν, οἱ τῆς αἰρέσεως ἀρχηγέται γενόμενοι πολλὰ μνημεῖα τῆς ἐν τοῖς ἀλληγορουμένοις ιδέας ἀπέλιπον, οἷς καθάπερ τισὶν ἀρχετύποις χρώμενοι μιμοῦνται τῆς προαιρέσεως τὸν τρόπον· ὥστε οὐ θεωροῦσι μόνον, ἀλλὰ καὶ ποιοῦσιν ἄσματα καὶ ὕμνους εἰς τὸν θεὸν διὰ παντοίων μέτρων καὶ μελῶν, ἃ ῥυθμοῖς σεμνοτέροις ἀναγκαίως χαράττουσι.</p>	<p>The entire period from morning until evening is for them an exercise, because they philosophize by reading the sacred scriptures, allegorizing the ancestral philosophy, since they consider aspects of the literal interpretation as symbols, when its nature is hidden away within deeper meanings. They have also works of men of old who were the founders of the school of thought, who left behind many reminders of the form [used] in allegorized writings, by which, using them as certain prototypes, they imitate the method of the practice. So they do not only contemplate, but also compose songs and hymns for God by means of all kinds of metres and melodies, songs which they necessarily record with very reverent rhythms.</p>	<p>33, 34</p>
<p><i>Contempl.</i> 80</p>	<p>καὶ ἔπειτα ὁ μὲν ἀναστὰς ὕμνον ἄδει πεποιημένον εἰς τὸν θεόν, ἢ καινὸν αὐτὸς πεποιηκὸς ἢ ἀρχαῖόν τινα τῶν πάλαι ποιητῶν—μέτρα γὰρ καὶ μέλη καταλελοίπασιν πολλὰ ἐπῶν, τριμέτρων, προσοδίων ὕμνων, παρασπονδίων, παραβωμίων, στασίμων χορικῶν στροφαῖς πολυστρόφοις εὖ διαμετρημένων. μεθ' ὧν καὶ οἱ ἄλλοι κατὰ τάξεις ἐν κόσμῳ προσήκοντι, πάντων κατὰ πολλὴν ἡσυχίαν ἀκροωμένων, πλὴν ὅποτε τὰ ἀκροτελεύτια καὶ ἐφύμνια ἄδειν δεοί· τότε</p>	<p>So then, after standing up, he sings a hymn composed for God: either a new one he has composed himself or an old one, some hymn of the poets of ancient times—for they have left behind many metres and melodies of epic songs, trimetres, processional hymns, libation-songs, altar-songs, choral standing pieces well-measured with beats and counter-beats, and after him also the others, according to grades, in order, take turns, everyone listening in total silence except when they need to sing the closing lines and</p>	<p>36, 37</p>

	γὰρ ἐξηγοῦσι πάντες τε καὶ πᾶσαι.	refrains. For then all men and all women sing aloud.	
<i>Mos.</i> <i>1.180</i>	τὸ μέγα τοῦτο καὶ θαυμαστὸν ἔργον Ἑβραῖοι καταπλαγέντες ἀναιμωτὶ νίκην οὐκ ἐλπισθεῖσαν ἦσαντο καὶ κατιδόντες ἐν ἀκαρεῖ φθορὰν ἀθρόαν πολεμίων δύο χορούς, τὸν μὲν ἀνδρῶν, τὸν δὲ γυναικῶν, ἐπὶ τῆς ἡϊόνος στήσαντες εὐχαριστικούς ὕμνους εἰς τὸν θεὸν ἦδον, ἐξάρχοντος Μωσέως μὲν τοῖς ἀνδράσιν, ἀδελφῆς δὲ τούτου ταῖς γυναιξίν· ἡγεμόνες γὰρ οὗτοι τῶν χορῶν ἐγεγένητο.	This great and marvellous work struck the Hebrews with amazement, and, finding themselves unexpectedly victorious in a bloodless conflict, and seeing their enemies, one and all, destroyed in a moment, they set up two choirs, one of men and one of women, on the beach, and sang hymns of thanksgiving to God. Over these choirs Moses and his sister presided, and led the hymns, the former for the men and the latter for the women.	45
<i>Mos.</i> <i>2.256</i>	διόπερ εἰκότως εὐχαρίστοις ὕμνοις γεραίρει τὸν εὐεργέτην· εἰς γὰρ δύο χοροὺς διανείμας τὸ ἔθνος, τὸν μὲν ἀνδρῶν, τὸν δὲ γυναικῶν, ἐξάρχει μὲν αὐτὸς τοῖς ἀνδράσιν, ἐξάρχον δὲ καὶ τῶν γυναικῶν καθίστησι τὴν ἀδελφήν, ἵν' ἄδωσιν ὕμνους εἰς τὸν πατέρα καὶ ποιητὴν ἀντιφθόγγις ἀρμονίαις συνηχοῦντες, διὰ τε κράσεως ἡθῶν καὶ μέλους, τῶν μὲν ἐπὶ τὴν αὐτὴν σπευδόντων ἀμοιβήν, τοῦ δὲ συνισταμένου κατὰ τὴν βαρύτητος πρὸς ὀξύτητα συμφωνίαν· φθόγγοι γὰρ οἱ μὲν ἀνδρῶν βαρεῖς, ὀξεῖς δ' οἱ γυναικῶν, ἐξ ὧν, ὅταν ἡ κρᾶσις γένηται σύμμετρος, ἡδιστον καὶ παναρμόνιον ἀποτελεῖται μέλος. τὰς δὲ τοσαύτας μυριάδας ἐπεισεν ὁμογνωμονῆσαι καὶ τὸν αὐτὸν ὕμνον ἐν ταῦτῳ συνάδειν τὰ	After this, what should Moses do but honour the Benefactor with hymns of thanksgiving? He divides the nation into two choirs, one of men, the other of women, and himself leads the men while he appoints his sister to lead the women, that the two in concert might sing hymns to the Father and Creator in tuneful response with a blending both of temperaments and melody – temperaments eager to render to each other like for like; melody produced by the concord of treble and bass; for the voices of men are bass and the women's treble, and when they are blended in due proportion the resulting melody is of the fullest and sweetest harmony. All these myriads were persuaded by Moses to sing with hearts in accord the same song, telling	46

	<p>τεράστια ἐκεῖνα μεγαλουργήματα, περι ὧν ὀλίγω πρότερον διεξήλθον· ἐφ' οἷς ὁ προφήτης γεγηθῶς, ὄρων καὶ τὴν τοῦ ἔθνους περιχάρειαν, οὐδ' αὐτὸς ἔτι χωρῶν τὴν ἡδονὴν, κατήρχε τῆς ᾠδῆς· οἱ δ' ἀκούοντες εἰς δύο χοροὺς ἀλισθέντες τὰ λεχθέντα συνῆδον</p>	<p>of those mighty and marvellous works which I have recorded just above. And the prophet, rejoicing at this, seeing the people also overjoyed, and himself no longer able to contain his delight, led off the song, and his hearers massed in two choirs sang with him the story of these same deeds.</p>	
<p><i>Mos.</i> 1.255</p>	<p>Μικρὸν δ' ὕστερον καὶ πηγὴν εὐδρον ἀνευρόντες, ἢ παντὶ τῷ πλήθει ποτὸν ἐχορήγησεν—ἐν φρέατι δ' ἦν ἡ πηγὴ καὶ ἐπὶ τῶν τῆς χώρας ὄρων—, ὥσπερ οὐχ ὕδατος ἀλλ' ἀκράτου σπάσαντες τὰς ψυχὰς ἀνεχύθησαν· ὑπὸ τε εὐφροσύνης καὶ χαρᾶς ἄσμα καινὸν οἱ θεοφιλεῖς χοροὺς περὶ τὸ φρέαρ ἐν κύκλῳ στήσαντες ἦδον εἰς τὸν κληροῦχον θεὸν καὶ τὸν ἀληθῶς ἡγεμόνα τῆς ἀποικίας...</p>	<p>Shortly afterwards they also found a spring of good water in a well situated on the borders of the land. This supplied the whole multitude with drink, and their spirits were enlivened thereby, as though the draught were strong wine rather than water. In their joy and gladness, the people of God's choice set up choirs around the well, and sang a new song to the Deity, Who gave them the land as their portion and had, in truth, led them in their migration.</p>	<p>47</p>
<p><i>Mos.</i> 2.162</p>	<p>εἶτα χρυσοῦν ταῦρον κατασκευασάμενοι, μίμημα τοῦ κατὰ τὴν χώραν ιερωτάτου ζώου δοκοῦντος εἶναι, θυσίας ἀθύτους ἀνήγον καὶ χοροὺς ἀχορεύτους ἴστασαν ὕμνους τε ἦδον θρήνων οὐδὲν διαφέροντας καὶ ἐμφορηθέντες ἀκράτου διπλῆ μέθη κατίσχοντο, τῇ μὲν ἐξ οἴνου, τῇ δὲ καὶ ἀφροσύνης...</p>	<p>Then, having fashioned a golden bull, in imitation of the animal held most sacred in that country, they offered sacrifices which were no sacrifices, set up choirs which were no choirs, sang hymns which were very funeral chants, and, filled with strong drink, were overcome by the twofold intoxication of wine and folly...</p>	<p>48</p>
<p><i>Agr.</i> 80</p>	<p>χρήσεται δ' ὁ μὲν τῶν ἀνδρῶν χορὸς ἡγεμόνι Μωυσεῖ, νῶ τελείῳ, ὁ δὲ τῶν γυναικῶν Μαριάμ, αἰσθήσει κεκαθαρμένη· δίκαιον γὰρ καὶ</p>	<p>The choir of men has as its leader Moses, perfect intellect; the choir of women has as its leader Miriam, purified sense- perception. For it is right both</p>	<p>49</p>

	<p>νοητῶς καὶ αἰσθητῶς τοὺς εἰς τὸ θεῖον ὕμνους καὶ εὐδαιμονισμοὺς ἀνυπερθέτως ποιεῖσθαι καὶ τῶν ὀργάνων ἐμμελῶς κρούειν ἑκάτερον, τό τε νοῦ καὶ αἰσθήσεως, ἐπὶ 81τῇ τοῦ μόνου σωτῆρος εὐχαριστία καὶ τιμῇ.</p>	<p>intellectually and sense-perceptibly to make hymns and benedictions without delay to the Deity, and to let each of the instruments, both of the intellect and of sense-perception, sound forth harmoniously in thanksgiving and praise to Him who alone is Saviour.</p>	
<p><i>Agr.</i> 82-82</p>	<p>ὕμνος δὲ ὁ αὐτὸς ἀμφοτέροις ἄδεται τοῖς χοροῖς ἐπωδὸν ἔχων θαυμασιώτατον, ὃν ἐφρυνεῖσθαι καλόν· ἔστι δὲ τοιόσδε· “ἄσωμεν τῷ κυρίῳ, ἐνδόξως γὰρ δεδόξασται ἵππον καὶ ἄναβάτην ἔρριψεν εἰς θάλασσαν·” ἀμείνονα γὰρ καὶ τελειότεραν οὐκ ἄν τις εὖροι σκοπῶν νίκην ἢ καθ’ ἣν τὸ τετράπουν καὶ σκιρτητικὸν καὶ ὑπέραυχον ἡττηται παθῶν τε καὶ κακιῶν ἀλκιμώτατον στίφος—καὶ γὰρ κακία τῷ γένει τέτταρες καὶ πάθη ταύταις ἰσάριθμα—, πρὸς δὲ καὶ ὁ ἐπιβάτης αὐτῶν μισάρετος καὶ φιλοπαθῆς νοῦς καταπεσὼν οἴχεται, ὃς ἡδοναῖς καὶ ἐπιθυμίαις, ἀδικίαις τε καὶ πανουργίαις, ἔτι δὲ ἀρπαγαῖς καὶ πλεονεξίαις καὶ τοῖς παραπλησίοις θρέμμασιν ἐγεγήθει.</p>	<p>The same hymn is sung by both choirs and it has a really marvelous refrain, which is fine to repeat. It goes as follows: Let us sing to the Lord, for gloriously he has been glorified. Horse and rider he threw into the sea. No one could search for and find a better and more perfect victory than the one by which the four-footed, skittish, arrogant and highly redoubtable company of both passions and vices has been defeated (the vices of course are four in kind and the passions are the same in number). Moreover their rider, the excellence-hating and passion-loving intellect, tumbles down and dies, the one who had found its delight in pleasures and desires, unjust and wicked deeds, and also in plundering, greediness and beasts of a similar kind.</p>	<p>49</p>
<p><i>Contempl.</i> 83-84</p>	<p>Μετὰ δὲ τὸ δεῖπνον τὴν ἱερὰν ἄγουσι παννυχίδα. ἄγεται δὲ ἡ παννυχὶς τὸν τρόπον τοῦτον· ἀνίστανται πάντες ἄθροοι, καὶ κατὰ μέσον τὸ συμπόσιον δύο γίνονται τὸ πρῶτον χοροί, ὁ μὲν ἀνδρῶν, ὁ δὲ γυναικῶν·</p>	<p>After the supper they hold the sacred vigil which is conducted in the following way. They rise up all together and standing in the middle of the refectory form themselves first into two choirs, one of men and one of</p>	<p>50, 51</p>

	<p>ἡγεμῶν δὲ καὶ ἕξαρχος αἰρεῖται καθ' ἑκάτερον ἐντιμότερος τε καὶ ἐμμελέστατος. εἶτα ᾄδουσι πεπονημένους ὕμνους εἰς τὸν θεὸν πολλοῖς μέτροις καὶ μέλεσι, τῇ μὲν συνηχοῦντες, τῇ δὲ καὶ ἀντιφώνοις ἀρμονίαις ἐπιχειρονοοῦντες καὶ ἐπορχοῦμενοι, καὶ ἐπιθειάζοντες τότε μὲν τὰ προσόδια, τότε δὲ τὰ στάσιμα, στροφάς τε τὰς ἐν χορείᾳ καὶ ἀντιστροφάς ποιοῦμενοι.</p>	<p>women, the leader and precentor chosen for each being the most honoured amongst them and also the most musical. Then they sing hymns to God composed of many measures and set to many melodies, sometimes chanting together, sometimes taking up the harmony antiphonally, hands and feet keeping time in accompaniment, and rapt with enthusiasm reproduce sometimes the lyrics of the procession, sometimes of the halt and of the wheeling and counter-wheeling of a choric dance.</p>	
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Appendix 2
Overview of Biblical Citations

In order of appearance in the text.

Passage	Greek	NETS translation	Cited on p.
Ex. 15:1-2	Τότε ἤσε Μωυσῆς καὶ οἱ υἱοὶ Ἰσραὴλ τὴν ᾠδὴν ταύτην τῷ Θεῷ καὶ εἶπαν λέγοντες· ἄσωμεν τῷ Κυρίῳ, ἐνδόξως γὰρ δεδόξασται· ἵππον καὶ ἀναβάτην ἔρριψεν εἰς θάλασσαν. βοηθὸς καὶ σκεπαστὴς ἐγένετό μοι εἰς σωτηρίαν...	Then Moses and the sons of Israel sang this song to God and spoke, saying, “Let us sing to the Lord, for gloriously he has glorified himself; horse and rider he threw into the sea. Helper and defender he has become to me, for deliverance...”	45
Ex. 15:20-21	Λαβοῦσα δὲ Μαριάμ, ἡ προφητις, ἡ ἀδελφὴ Ἀαρών, τὸ τύμπανον ἐν τῇ χειρὶ αὐτῆς, καὶ ἐξήλθοσαν πᾶσαι αἱ γυναῖκες ὀπίσω αὐτῆς μετὰ τυμπάνων καὶ χορῶν, ἐξῆρχε δὲ αὐτῶν Μαριάμ λέγουσα· ἄσωμεν τῷ Κυρίῳ, ἐνδόξως γὰρ δεδόξασται· ἵππον καὶ ἀναβάτην ἔρριψεν εἰς θάλασσαν.	Then Mariam, the prophetess, the sister of Aaron, took the tambourine in her hand, and all the women went out after her with tambourines and dances. And Mariam took their lead, saying: “Let us sing to the Lord, for gloriously he has glorified himself. Horse and rider he threw into the sea.”	45
Num. 21:17-18	τότε ἤσεν Ἰσραὴλ τὸ ᾄσμα τοῦτο ἐπὶ τοῦ φρέατος· ἐξάρχετε αὐτῷ· φρέαρ, ὠρυξαν αὐτὸ ἄρχοντες...	Then Israel sang this song over the well: “Take the lead for it! O Well – rulers dug it...”	47