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Philo's treatise on the Confusion of Tongues and the Migration of Abraham.

Philo Judaeus of Alexandria identifies Moses and writes about the role of Moses task ('Life of Moses'). The account of his birth parallels the legendary story of Akkad, who deposited in a basket boat and rescued, achieved great prominence. Shelter to the powerless infant who will one day reveal its extraordinary achievement and deliverance, and its Levite ancestry.

The building of a tower to reach heaven, resembles the Homeric myth of Aloeidae, who according to Homer planned to pile the three loftiest mountains (Olympus, Ossa, Pelion) on each other in one heap, hoping that when they were raised to the height of the upper sky they would allow those who wished to ascend to climb to heaven, where an interpretation of heaven means 'Mind' and an attempt to exalt sense above mind, an absence of the illuminating influence of the mind. Secondly that the story of the confusion of tongues is similar to the fable that all living things originally understood each others language, and that the multiplication of language would serve to prevent sin. Moses 'a man of war' by 'one lip and one voice' working in a symphony, met the Pharaoh on the 'lip' of the river. Israel would 'do and hear' God's will even before they had heard the commandments. We now come to the building of the city and tower, "Come let us make brick and bake with fire" means shaping of the mind and thoughts, and the divine judgement "before we are scattered abroad". When a single commanding voice bears down at the same moment upon their lone victims, a single item is enough to upset and overthrow even the very stoutest, if it brings its force to bear upon him where the weakness of the body and the external world unite obedient. When the guards fall of the body, the mind falls, who keep it erect and lift it on high and give it a sense of pride, and brings its foes crashing to the ground. Again the guard of the soul are the powers of hearing and sight and smell and taste, and the whole company of senses provides strength of the body and mind. They serve as a fortress well-walled on a firm foundation, houses within can hinder the mind from following urges of its personality, with free passage everywhere on an open road. Working against these guards are hostile forces, which may violate the senses. One soul having parts assigned to the mind and reason, and one to the appetite, with mischief working in all

of them, each in relation to the other. Desires which light as chance directs on things, like a ships crew, passengers, and steermen had conspired through some madness to sink it. The first to sink with the boat are those who planned its destruction. This cooperation of all the parts of the soul stands alone with the wild commotion eddied and swirled continually through the whole region of the soul which formed their meeting place. "All these joined their voices to come to the salt ravine; this is the salt of the sea". Observe further those who were barren of wisdom and blind in the understanding which should naturally be sharp of sight, their qualities veiled under. Moses the prophet of God shall meet and stem the strong current of their boldness, they come wishing and their tide is the tide of a river. Behold he says, the king of Egypt comes to the water and Moses shall stand meeting him at the 'lip' of the river. The rushing flood of a strong current of emotions, iniquities, and passions, which Moses likens to a river. In his paradox - he meets - for "thou shall stand meeting" where meet involves the idea of motion and 'stand' calls up the thought of rest. The two things spoken are not in conflict but in a natural sequence to each other. Forward then Senators let us carefully consider how we may succeed. The firm foundation for such a success will be to give form to the formless by assigning them definite shapes and figures and to distinguish them from each other. Moses describes the workmen taking two substances of earth and water, one solid the other liquid, and by mixing them has produced a third, called clay, which he divided up into portions and without interruption gives each of the sections its proper shape. He wishes this to make them firmed and secure, the completion of the building. This process is copied from nature, when we mix the unreasoning and impulse of passion with vices and then divide the mixture into its kinds, sense of sight, and hearing, and again into taste and smell and touch, passion and pleasure, and lust and fear and grief, the material which molded and shaped by their builders will form the fort which towers aloft to menace the soul. Now there are those who went to a further extreme, and not only worked up their own souls to do thus, and have violently forced others, their children, to make bricks and build strong cities. They wish to show that prudence and every virtue is subject to folly and vice and is obedient to every command of the despotic power. Behold, the eye whose name is Israel, imprisoned in the gross material nets of Egypt and submits to the betting of an iron tyranny, to work at brick and every earthy substance unremittingly. When the wisely-minded sees the tasks which many men endure cries aloud

to God to provide a price for the souls salvation to redeem it into liberty. What then is liberty. It is the service of a wise being, “send forth the people that they may serve me” setting before them Moses. Then they shall behold the ‘Word’ the never changing where God stands and “what lies under his feet like the work of brick of sapphire, like the form of the firmament of heaven...even the world of our senses which he reveals in this mystery”. For those who have entered into comradeship with knowledge to desire to see the work of our senses, the earnest desire to see things exactly the way they are. When our sight comes in contact with it, its movement is exceedingly swift, outstripping all particular movement. To our eyes the sun and the moon, by night and day, appear to stand still. Yet the rapidity of their transverse across the heavens is visibly only to the eye of the understanding. The mind called Moses, when he is imprisoned in the ‘ark of the body’ the ‘tar-pitch’ that may insulate all that is presented to the senses. He weeps for the mind of the multitude, erring, vanity-ridden, miserable – their minds that cling to false opinions. He calls upon the sight and the hearing and invokes every sense, without delay, each bringing all the instruments that are needed. It is not well that many lords should rule be there only one, one kind that will enable them to achieve with ease all that madness and savagery of theirs minds conceive. Moses says in the words that follow: “They ceased building the city and the tower (Gen. XI 8.) obviously not because they had finished it, but because they were prevented from completing it by the confusion that fell upon them”. The enterprise was planned and they were unable to escape the guilt which would attend its accomplishment. What is meant by confusion? Philo describes ‘mechanical mixtures’, ‘chemical mixtures’ and their means of separation and how a chemical mixture can be resolved into the different qualities out of which it was composed. With some compounds when formed it is impossible to separate the properties which went into it. If the interpretation that different languages then results in confusion, separation would be a more correct term. Things divided are not confused ‘they are separated’. Philo points out that seeing is higher than hearing, and believing points to the thought. Hearing in the ordinary sense is even less than the other senses capable of being connected with sight. God begins carrying out his will “I will make thee a great nation”. He begins by giving out a starting point for the salvation of the soul and removal of three localities, in the sense perceptions, and speech. First ‘Land’ or ‘country’, ‘kindred’ and ‘fathers house’ of speech. Moses is a witness to this, sense perception

is of one family of understanding and these are part of ones soul. ‘Father’s house’, because mind is our father, being in charge of the house. House because mind has speech for its house – or living room, secluded from the rest of the house. It is there that mind reveals in orderly form itself. Moses gives to speech the title of ‘Mind’s’ house in man. He employs this as his instrument, that the fabric of his handy-work might be without reproach. He urges man to escape from all that may cause them despair – to depart from the sense perception of thy kin. We find that when the mind begins to know itself it separates itself from the former. For being well qualified to train men and equipped to and capable of admonition and correctness, he contemplates the task of taking out all the population of the soul out of Egypt. When they do this God instructs his prophet regarding coming out, and his prophet delivers them, he says “I will be with thee”.

At this point Philo writes about himself. *“I feel no shame in recording my own experience, a thing I know from its having happened to me a thousand times. On some occasions, after making up my mind to follow the usual course of writing on philosophical tenets, and knowing definitely the substance of what I was to set down. I have found my understanding incapable of giving birth to a single idea, and have given it up without accomplishing anything, reviling my understanding for its self-conceit, and filled with amazement of the might of Him that is to Whom is due the opening and closing of the soul-wombs. On other occasions, I have approached my work empty and suddenly become full, the ideas falling in a shower from above and being sown invisibly, so that under the influence of the Divine possession I have been filled with corybantic frenzy and been unconscious of anything, place, persons present, myself, words spoken, lines written. For I obtained language, ideas an enjoyment of light, keenest vision, pellucid distinctiveness of objects, such as might be received through the eyes as the result of clearest shewing”* The current coin of learning is brilliant beyond those gained by the ears, and insight the source and fountain-head of science and knowledge. It is not nature of voice to be visible whether we regard it as something audible. The properties of these two are invisible mind and speech. The truth is that what sound produces is not similar to the divine organ of voice, for ours mingles with air and is akin to the ears. The divine is pure and unalloyed speech, too subtle for the hearing to catch it, however visible to the soul, which is single in virtue of its keenness of sight. Some exceeding all bounds in the

determination to kindle into activity all the erasures, errant points of view of the soul, and destroy the mind, wander a fools course through every moment of his journey depending on the controlling guide of the Divine word. Still, Moses, best beloved of God, the war-like spirit in its completeness, will exercise its truly free and noble impulses towards the beautiful, with nothing pulling against it any longer and dragging it in another direction. In these circumstances they will succeed. He says 'And I will endow thee with excellent reason and speech, utterances being under the guide of the right training "And thou shall suggest to him the thoughts" for "thoughts" are nothing else than Gods 'words' or speech that carries forth the thoughts with it. Moses had not the readiness of speech, therefore the 'interpreter of thought' Aaron was called.. Further on he will also bear the name of the 'prophet', "I will make thy name great". Aaron had called up frogs over the entire land of Egypt. Aaron's rod swallowed up their rods. (This is likely what the Egyptians did in the famous battle between Moses and Aaron. The viper was put into a state of cataleptic rigidity, it then resembles a staff. When it was thrown to the ground, the shock rouses it, and breaks the hypnotic state.)