CHAPTER NINE

BIBLICAL VIRGINS (II): SARAH AND REBECCA

Introduction

In *Cher.*42-48 Philo expresses in a most formal and solemn way the sacred teaching regarding the marriages of the patriarchs. The men are allegorized as minds or souls, the women as virtues that belong to those souls. The virtues open the souls to God's fertilizing power, and thus, in a manner similar to human reproduction, bring forth benefits to their husbands. But in these marriages the wives remain virgins, and therefore, according to Philo's understanding of the word, not women at all. For a woman is one who has been defiled and corrupted by a man, but God's consorts suffer no such pollution.

Men and women receive unbalanced treatment in this kind of allegory. We see that the Biblical men, on the one hand, have been allegorized into soul types. Philo intends that a man should identify each of these within himself (*QG* 4.138, 206). The women, on the other hand, have become only constituent parts of their husbands. It is clearly not Philo's intention here that Jewish women should, in parallel fashion to the men, identify the patriarchs within themselves. This is made even more explicit by the fact that, although they are wives of the patriarchs, they are rendered by Philo as perpetual virgins, thus representing an impossible dream for Jewish women, destined by biology and custom to a life of "defilement" and "corruption."

That is Philo's central teaching about the matriarchs. In this chapter and the next I shall round out the picture he presents by looking at his overall treatment of the women allegorically designated as virgins.
When a literary text is treated allegorically, two planes or levels of meaning run concurrently throughout. They are not necessarily of equal importance to the author. For Philo, the literal meaning usually pales in the light of the allegorical. This is the case in his treatment of some of the "virgins" of scripture—Leah, Zipporah, Tamar and Hagar, whose human personalities hardly emerge. But with Sarah and Rebecca it is different. In the Hebrew tradition these two are firmly established as folk-heroines. The well-known Biblical accounts paint them vividly as self-determining women. For example, Sarah gave orders to Abraham, and Rebecca hoodwinked Isaac. Philo cannot completely ignore the humanity of these women, who probably come closest of their kind to being role models for women in his day.\(^1\) It will be informative for our understanding of Philo’s perception of women to examine how closely his treatment of this pair tallies with the Biblical accounts.

The sheer amount of material Philo devotes to Sarah and Rebecca in *Questiones in Genesin* suggests that he is fully aware of their popularity as folk-heroines. Sarah appears fairly regularly from *QG* 3.18 to 4.73, and Rebecca from *QG* 4.88 to 4.239. By contrast, Leah is not mentioned in that work at all. Philo ends his commentary on Genesis before the story of Jacob’s marriages. As a result, the overall picture of Leah that emerges from Philo’s writing is far less colourful than that of the other two.

It is not enough, then, for Philo to treat Rebecca and Sarah as types, or for him to present them solely in allegory. Accordingly, we shall find that his treatment of them is multi-faceted. But we shall also find that when Philo treats of them on the human level, he downplays their initiative and moulds them into submissive help-mates, similar to the acceptable women we discussed in chapter seven.

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\(^1\) Louis Ginzberg, in the Index to *The Legends of the Jews*, lists 40 entries under "Sarah," and 37 under "Rebekka." Sarah is "the only woman with whom God spoke," and Rebecca is "the counterpart of Sarah."
Sarah

We can divide Philo's treatment of Sarah into two general sections, the literal and the allegorical. But we must bear in mind that Philo does not maintain neat distinctions. The two threads, instead of running parallel to one another, occasionally become entangled together, as can be seen in this passage from *LA* 3.244:

Quite a different woman [from Potiphar's wife] claims our compliance, a woman [or wife] such as Sarah is seen to have been, even paramount virtue. The wise Abraham complies with her when she recommends the course to follow.

Here Philo alludes to the well-known story of Sarah's planning and regulating Abraham's encounters with Hagar (Gen.16:1-6), including the fact that the Bible depicts Abraham as following Sarah's advice. But by using the term "paramount virtue," Philo elevates the woman Sarah, temporarily at least, to the allegorical level.

The quotation from *LA* 3.244 illustrates a second matter. We have already seen that Philo believes the proper order of things is overturned when men listen to women's advice. Yet the Bible depicts Abraham doing just that. We shall note a number of devices Philo employs to account for this element in the story.

With these preliminary remarks made, I shall begin Philo's depiction of Sarah by examining the passages where he appears to concentrate on the literal story.

There are two treatises devoted to Abraham, *De Migratione Abrahami* and *De Abrahamo*. The first belongs to the Allegory and the second to the Exposition. Treatises in the former category follow the Biblical texts closely. *De Migratione Abrahami* covers the first six verses of Genesis 12. But there is a significant omission. Verse 5, the only place where Sarah is mentioned, is omitted: "And Abram took Sarai his wife, and Lot his brother's son, and all their possessions which they had gathered, and the persons that they had gotten

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*ch.6 above, n.7.*
in Haran; and they set forth to the land of Canaan." In the whole treatise, Sarah is mentioned in only three sections (Mig.126, 140, 142). Philo evinces no intention of presenting her as Abraham's partner in the great migration. In De Abrahamo the emphasis again is on Abraham's solitary decision, a point not made in the Biblical account: "But Abraham, the moment he was bidden, departed with a few or even alone . . ." (66).³ In this treatise, Sarah does not enter the story until section 93, the incident in Egypt (Gen.12:11).

By way of contrast to the earlier omission, in Abr.245 Philo alludes to Sarah's having accompanied Abraham throughout his journeys. Here, significantly, the emphasis is on her wifely love, philandria. Philo does call Sarah a partner, koinōnos, but the context argues against our reading any suggestion of equality into the term:

She showed her wifely love by numberless proofs, by sharing with him the severance from his kinsfolk, by bearing without hesitation the departure from her homeland, the continual and unceasing wanderings on a foreign soil and privation in famine, and by the campaigns in which she accompanied him. Everywhere and always she was at his side, no place or occasion omitted, his true partner in life and life's events, resolved to share alike the good and ill (Abr.245f.; cf. Spec.1.138).

In fact, the ensuing statement reveals Philo's real purpose here: to cast the literal Sarah in the role of model helpmeet: "She did not, like some other women, run away from mishaps and lie ready to pounce on pieces of good luck, but accepted her portion of both with all alacrity as the fit and proper test of a wedded wife" (Abr.246).

Sarah is presented on the literal plane when she is first mentioned in De Abrahamo, in section 93: "He had a wife distinguished greatly for her goodness of soul and beauty of body, in

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³ "The Scriptural patriarch who moved with family and flocks is replaced by the Sage who makes a journey of soul not to a new land, but home." Sandmel, Philo's Place, p.111.
which she surpassed all the women of her time." Again, in 255, when he is concluding his discussion of Sarah's merits, Philo still speaks of her on the human level. Here he makes the point of ranking Sarah against her husband. Since the direct comparison is without Biblical authority, it appears to be another deliberate attempt by Philo to establish the proper order of things. That is, even a meritorious wife has a husband who is yet more deserving: "We need give no further proofs of the merits of the wife. More numerous are those of the Sage . . . ."

Still on the human, literal level, in De Abrahamo, the action for which Sarah merits Philo's highest praise is her offering Hagar to Abraham to bear his child. It is curious that Philo introduces the section (Abr.247-254) by calling Sarah anthrōpos: "Many a story could I relate in praise of this woman (tēs anthrōpou)."4

Philo alters the story of Sarah's taking the initiative and giving commands to Abraham in the matter of Hagar. The Biblical account clearly attributes the scheme to Sarah. Her motive is to obtain children for herself using her maid to bear the child:

Now Sarai, Abram's wife, bore him no children. She had an Egyptian maid whose name was Hagar; and Sarai said to Abram, "Behold now, the Lord has prevented me from bearing children; go in to my maid; it may be that I shall obtain children (teknopoiēsōmai) by her." And Abram hearkened (hypēkouse) to the voice of Sarai (Gen.16:1f., RSV; the Greek verbs are from the LXX).

As the story proceeds, Sarah again takes command:

And God said to Abraham, "Be not displeased because of the lad and because of your slave woman; whatever Sarah says to you, do as she tells you, for through Isaac shall your descendants be named" (Gen.21:12).

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4 This is the Loeb translation, which takes no note of the peculiarity of the Greek wording. In PA it is translated der Frau.

See also ch.4, n.7, above.
These Biblical verses present Philo with a dilemma. The wording of Gen.16:2b is reminiscent of that in Gen.3:18 (the expulsion from Eden), "Because you have listened to the voice of your wife . . . ." (The slight difference is that the verb in Gen.16:2 is hypēkouse instead of ēkousas, as in 3:18.) In LA 3.222-224 that story (of Adam's obeying Eve) inspires a lengthy discussion about such a "violation of the right principle," that is, about the disasters that ensue when a man hearkens to his wife. Therefore, we can expect some subtle changes in Philo's version of the story of Abraham's obeying Sarah.

In the encomium on Sarah in De Abrahamo, Philo stresses her wifely forethought and philandria (252) and does not mention that she devises her scheme in order to relieve herself of childlessness. He emphasizes rather that the child will enhance Abraham. Further, in this account, he does not refer to Abraham's obedience to Sarah, as recorded in 16:2 and 21:12 of Genesis. In De Congressu Philo actually changes the earlier verb of 16:2, teknopoïēsōmai, rendering it: "Go in, then, to my handmaid . . . that first you may have children by her (teknopoïēsē)." The overall effect is to make Sarah more self-effacing than she appears in the Bible. But by this altered behaviour she also conforms more closely to Philo's ideal of a wife.

The story receives fuller treatment in Legum Allegoriae 3, and the matter of Abraham's obeying Sarah on both occasions is met directly. Part of Philo's explanation has been quoted earlier but bears repeating. He brings an allegorical interpretation to the story, by referring to Sarah three times as "virtue":

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5 Josephus also appears to have been uncomfortable with the Biblical account, for he introduces similar changes. In his retelling of the story in Antiquities 1.10, he tempers Sarah's initiative by having her take action "at God's command." This transfers the first move from Sarah to God. Josephus ignores the matter of Abraham's obedience to Sarah in Gen.21:12, saying of it only that Abraham "resigned" Hagar to Sarah's hand.

Josephus, like Philo, believes that it is the role of the wife to obey: "Scripture says, 'A woman is inferior to her husband in all things.' Let her, therefore, be obedient (hypakoueto) to him . . . ." (Contra Apionem 2.24.201).
Quite a different woman claims our compliance, a woman such as Sarah is seen to have been, even paramount virtue. The wise Abraham complies with her when she recommends the course to follow . . . he shall be brought to compliance by an oracle of God bidding him, 'In all that Sarah saith to thee listen to her voice.' Let that which seems good to virtue be law for each one of us; for if we choose to hearken to all that virtue recommends, we shall be happy (LA 3.244f.).

One of the ways, then, in which Philo deals with the problem of Abraham's obeying Sarah's commands is this semi-allegorical way in which, since she is virtue, she is a "different woman" (heterai gynaiki).

In the treatise *De Congressu Eruditionis Causa*, the literal thread is practically indiscernible, and Philo treats the story of Abraham's compliance with Sarah almost exclusively on the allegorical level. In this elaborate allegory, which we already examined in our study of Hagar, Sarah has become wisdom, which a man takes unto himself after he has passed through the stage of the lower learning, i.e., Hagar. In sections 1 through 70 Philo comments on Gen.16:1f., with no hesitation about the correctness of Abraham's obedience: " . . . he is represented not as hearing, but as hearkening, a word which exactly expresses assent and obedience" (Cong.68). Philo can do this because Abraham and Sarah are no longer real people.

Another way in which Philo justifies Sarah's superiority is by emphasizing the meaning of her name, both before and after it is changed (Cher.3-10, Cong.1-13, Mut.61, 77-80, 130). In Mut.62 Philo reveals how important he considers names and their changes, by citing supposed divine retribution that befell someone of his acquaintance who had ridiculed their significance. Sarah's original name means "my sovereignty," a specific virtue, and when it changes it becomes generic virtue (Mut.78, cf. Cher.5). A similar point is made by implication in Cher.51, where generic virginity is contrasted with

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6 Several times he states that the story is not to be understood literally: Cong.12, 54, 180.
specific virginity. The generic form is secure and unchanging, and therefore superior, just as generic virtue or wisdom is superior to the specific: "... the oracle makes itself safe by speaking of God as the husband not of a virgin, but of virginity, the idea which is unchangeable and eternal" (Cher.51). Sarah is generic sovereignty or virtue.

Wisdom in the good man is a sovereignty vested in himself alone, and its possessor will not err if he says, "The wisdom in me is my sovereignty." But in the wisdom which is its archetype, the generic wisdom, we cease to have the sovereignty of the particular individual, but sovereignty its very self (Mut.79).

We have seen several ways in which Philo deals with Sarah's giving orders to Abraham. He ignores it, combines allegorical and literal interpretation, or completely allegorizes the story. He also stresses the significance of Sarah's name "sovereignty." It is only right for a man to obey his sovereign.

When she is allegorized, Sarah is absorbed into Abraham as a quality of his character. He is the wise man; she is his wisdom (Cher.10, LA 2.82, Mut.264). He is the virtuous man; she is his virtue (Det.59, Post.62, LA 3.217f., Heres 258, Abr.99).

Why does He again say in the singular, "Where is Sarah, thy wife, and he answered, In the tent"? ... To this question he replies, "Behold, virtue is not only in my mind but also in an empty and safe tent, in my body, extending itself and spreading as far as the senses and the other functional parts (of the body). For in accordance with virtue I see and hear and smell and taste and touch, and I make other movements in accordance with wisdom, health, fortitude and justice." (QG 4.11).

The effect of the allegory thus is both to elevate and to dissolve her.

Philo uses more than one means to minimize Sarah's womanhood. In chapter eight we concentrated on the theory behind his transforming Sarah and the other matriarchs into virgins. Other
passages dealing with Sarah's sexuality speak of her abandoning femininity for masculinity and being distanced even from female parentage:

"Sarah was quit of her experience of what belongs to women" (Gen.xviii.11); and the passions are by nature feminine, and we must practise the quitting of these for the masculine traits that mark the noble affections (Det.28, emphasis mine).

. . . Sarah, who is Virtue, "forsakes the ways of women" (Gen. xviii.11), those ways on which we toil who follow after the unmanly and really feminine life (Fug.128, emphasis mine).

She is declared, too, to be without a mother, and to have inherited her kinship only on the father's side and not on the mother's, and thus to have no part in female parentage. (Ebr.61, emphasis mine).

. . . male descent is the sole claim of her, who is the motherless ruling principle of things, begotten of her father alone, even God the Father of all (Heres 62).

Sarah occasionally is presented as functionally male. In Cong.7 she both sows (spermatôn) and engenders. And in Abr.100f. we find a long and convoluted explanation of the reversal of sex roles:

Now in a marriage where the union is brought about by pleasure, the partnership is between body and body, but in the marriage made by wisdom it is between thoughts which seek purification and perfect virtues. Now the two kinds of marriage are directly opposed to each other. For in the bodily marriage the male sows the seed and the female receives it; on the other hand in the matings within the soul, though virtue seemingly ranks as wife, her natural function is to sow good counsels and excellent words and to inculcate tenets truly profitable to life, while thought, though held to take the place of the husband, receives the holy and divine sowings.
Philo goes on to claim that it is a mistake in language that the Greek word for virtue is feminine and the word for mind masculine, on the grounds that the opposite should be true, since Sarah (virtue) impregnates Abraham (mind). Thus Sarah is completely relieved of female characteristics.

To sum up what we have discovered about Philo’s treatment of Sarah, we see that when he treats her on the human level, he alters the Biblical account to make her into the ideal, but subservient, wife. When he accepts the vigorously independent Sarah of Scripture, he robs her of both her womanhood and her humanity, through allegory. The person Sarah whom Philo allows to emerge is thus only a shadow of the Biblical Sarah.

Rebecca

Rebecca is another folk-heroine who is followed in the Biblical account from her girlhood (in Genesis 24) well into marriage and parenthood (in Genesis 27). I have already mentioned the lengthy treatment Philo gives her in Questiones in Genesin 4. Sections 88 to the end are a verse by verse commentary on Genesis 24 to 27. Philo refers to Rebecca in a total of twelve treatises. Extended passages occur in De Posteritate Caini and De Fuga et Inventione. Like Sarah, Rebecca is presented on the human, as well as on the allegorical level.

Questiones in Genesin paints a vivid and literal picture of Rebecca the person. For example, Philo says that Rebecca had two virginities, of body and of soul, and beauty surpassing the mere

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7 The same alteration of the stories of Abraham and Sarah is indicated in the wording of 1 Pet.3:1-6: "Likewise you wives be submissive to your husbands, so that some, though they do not obey the word, may be won without a word by the behavior of their wives . . . as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord."

fairness of form that harlots have, for her soul shone through her
countenance (*QG* 4.99). She was far more beautiful than the virgins
of Philo's day (*QG* 4.143). She hastened to tend to the need of
Abraham's servant because "excellent and good people perform their
good works without delay" (*QG* 4.124). Furthermore, in *Questiones*
in *Genesin* the virginity motif is frequently left behind:

Why was Isaac forty years old when he took Rebekah to
wife? The fortieth year is the right time for the marriage of
the wise man . . . . It is necessary to receive enjoyment in
love and affection from a wife and to fulfil the law concern-
ing the rearing of children . . . . For . . . it was not for the
sake of irrational sensual pleasure or with eagerness that he
had intercourse with his wife but for the sake of begettin
g legitimate children (*QG* 4.154).

Philo puts both a literal and an allegorical interpretation upon
the simple Biblical account of the first meeting of Rebecca and
Isaac: " . . . and when she saw Isaac, she alighted from the camel . . . ." (*Gen*.24:64):

In the literal sense, it was because of modesty and venera-
tion. But as for the deeper meaning, it was because of the
humility and submissiveness and perception of virtue (found)
in a genuine and sincere lover (*QG* 4.142).

The motives of modesty and veneration on which the literal Rebecca
acted are characteristics of Philo's model wife, and are his own
addition to Scripture.

In the treatises in the *Allegory*, Philo does not so clearly
distinguish between allegory and story. Usually Rebecca is presented
allegorically, but sometimes the real woman is there too. This is
most evident in another account of her first meeting with Isaac, in
*Quod Deterius Potiori Insidiari Soleat*. Isaac has come out into the
plain to converse with God. His self-taught wisdom enables him, like
Moses and Abraham, to see God. Rebecca comes upon him as he is
thus engaged:
... and when she saw Isaac, she alighted from the camel and said to the servant, "Who is the man yonder, walking in the field to meet us?" (Gen.24:64f.)

The wording of the Scriptural account indicates that Rebecca saw only one man, Isaac. This means to Philo that she did not see God. But Isaac did. In this account Philo hovers between the literal and the allegorical; Rebecca is a separate individual, but she is also persistence, just as Isaac, the man, is also wisdom:

... Rebecca, who is persistence, will presently inquire of the servant as seeing one and receiving an impression of one only, "Who is this man who is coming to meet us?" For the soul that persists in noble courses is indeed capable of apprehending self-taught wisdom, which is represented by the title "Isaac," but is unable as yet to see God the Ruler of wisdom (Det.30).

Just as Sarah, though meritorious, is not so meritorious as Abraham, so Rebecca, though spiritually advanced, is not so advanced as Isaac.

Once Rebecca and Isaac are married, Philo is at pains to emphasize their complete harmony, even at the expense of the natural sense of Scripture. Gen.25:28 reads, ἐγάπησε δε Isaak ton Ἡσαυ ... Rebekka de ἐγάπα ton Ἰακὼβ (And Isaac loved Esau ... but Rebecca loved Jacob). Philo builds on the difference between the meanings of the aorist and imperfect verb forms and ignores the movement of the subject from Isaac to Rebecca. The verse means, then, that the parents' love of Esau was brief, but their love of Jacob was lasting. As parents they were really of one mind:

For the admission of evil and weakness, if it does sometimes occur, is shortlived and ephemeral, but that of virtue is, in a certain sense, immortal ... (QG 4.166).

Again, in their actions towards their sons, the disharmony is only superficial. Together the parents are working towards a single goal, that the better should rule the worse:
The wishes and characters of the parents do not fight and contend with one another, as some are accustomed, but without division and separation the couple (are) in harmony, for they are eager to reach one end although they are motivated by different thoughts (\textit{QG} 4.200).

In the treatise \textit{De Virtutibus} (although not in the \textit{QG} treatment of the same text), Philo alters the Scriptural account of Isaac's blessing on his sons in Gen.27:27-29 and 39f., in order to include Rebecca:

Therefore, for the younger they prayed that he should be blessed above all others, all which prayers God confirmed and would not that any of them should be left unfulfilled. But to the elder in compassion they granted an inferior station to serve his brother, rightly thinking that it is not good for the fool to be his own master (\textit{Virt.209}).

We detect a deliberate effort on Philo's part to pass over the familiar stories of Rebecca's helping Jacob to trick Isaac. Instead he presents the married Rebecca as a person whose thoughts and actions completely harmonize with her husband's.

Allegorically, Isaac and Rebecca together symbolize the soul wedded to goodness, or virtue and its possessor (\textit{Post.62}). Rebecca is an aspect of Isaac's character, usually constancy, steadfastness or patience.\(^9\) As such she adds an element of permanence to her husband's wisdom: she effects a "great work" which "is the divine, holy and consecrated marriage of the soul, the harmony of the self-taught reason. Wherefore he will be unchangeable who is wise by nature without teaching" (\textit{QG} 4.91). Philo sees in her a certain similarity to, or continuity with, Sarah, who is motherless wisdom:

Isaac and Moses take wives indeed, but they do not take them purely of themselves, but Isaac is said to have taken

\(^9\) She is \textit{epimonē} (\textit{Cong.111}, \textit{Cher.47}, \textit{Fug.45}, etc.), \textit{hypomen} (\textit{Det.30}, \textit{Som.1.46}, \textit{Cong.37}, etc.), the "queen and mistress virtue" (\textit{Cong.37}), \textit{hē hypomonētikē psychē} (\textit{LA} 3.88).
one when he entered into his mother's dwelling (Gen.24:67) (Post.77).

... since the mother of the self-taught person was motherless wisdom, whose right reason is symbolically called "house," it was changed into a bridal-chamber for him so as to be a unity of betrothal and a partnership of the self-taught kind with ever-virginal Constancy, from the love of whom may it never come about that I cease (QG 4.145).

Thus, as well as symbolizing constancy, Rebecca sometimes represents reason or wisdom itself.

For other characteristics, Philo relies on his readers' knowledge of the main events of the Biblical story—how Abraham's servant went to Mesopotamia to choose Rebecca, how she returned with him and met Isaac, how she conceived and bore twins, how she manipulated them so that Jacob would gain the upper hand. Each event shows a quality that Rebecca adds to Isaac's soul. The virgin Rebecca meeting the servant at the well represents pure intention, wisdom and knowledge, coupled with eagerness and ability to teach in accordance with the learner's needs. As mother of Jacob and Esau she is the ability to discriminate between good and evil within oneself:

The souls then whose pregnancy is accompanied with wisdom, though they labour, do bring their children to the birth, for they distinguish and separate what is in confusion within them, just as Rebecca, receiving in her womb the knowledge of the two nations of the mind, virtue and vice, distinguished the nature of the two and found therein a happy delivery (Cong.129; cf. QG 4.158, Sac.4).

Philo justifies her disguising Jacob as his brother by explaining it in this way:

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10 Philo deals at length with Rebecca the good teacher in Post.140-150.
And the physician who is skilled in worldly matters does foolish things for a time (but) wisely, and unascissiously and moderately does lecherous things, and bravely does cowardly things, and righteously does unrighteous things. And sometimes he will speak falsehoods, not being a liar, and he will deceive, not being a deceiver, and he will insult, not being an insulter (QG 4.204).

In this type of action Rebecca shows the quality of "judicious patience" (Fug.24), or of advocating the middle way "of precaution that nothing unforeseen and irremediable be experienced" (QG 4.239). It is a form of practical wisdom or even expediency. Philo downplays the questionable morality of Rebecca's action; he emphasizes rather that she enriches her husband's soul with her astuteness. The part of the story Philo uses most frequently to illustrate this quality is Rebecca's advice to Jacob to go away and visit Laban until Esau's anger (at her deceitful action) has abated. Over and over he draws the moral that the spiritual man must be able to navigate the waters of the practical life:

Yet sometimes even running away is serviceable, when a man does it not out of hatred for the better, but that he may not be exposed to the designs of the worse. What, then, is the advice of Patience? A most marvellous and valuable one! If ever, she says, thou seest stirred up to savagery in thyself or some other person the passion of wrath and anger, one of the stock bred and reared by our irrational and untamed nature, beware of whetting its fierceness and yet more rousing the beast in it, when its bites may be incurable, but cool down its excessive heat and perfervid temper and quiet it, for should it become tame and manageable it will inflict but little hurt. What, then, is the method of bringing it to a quiet and subdued state? Adapt and transform yourself in outward appearance and follow for the moment whatever it pleases . . . (Mig.209; cf. QG 4.239, Fug.26, 43, 45, 49, Som.1.46).

A final but important observation is that allegorically, Philo actually attributes to Rebecca, in her role as co-parent with Isaac, spiritual development equal to her husband's. Rebecca advises Jacob
to behave such that "thou mayest obtain the very prize obtained by thy parents: and the prize is the unflattering and untiring ministry to the only wise Being" (Fug.47).

In summarizing Philo's treatment of Rebecca, we find that he treats her as a traditional heroine, as he does Sarah. He changes the Biblical picture, however, so as to make her conform to his own ideal: Rebecca the maiden shows modesty and veneration to her bridegroom, and Rebecca the wife acts in harmony with her husband. She is spiritually mature, but not so advanced as Isaac.

Allegorically, Rebecca, like Sarah, is absorbed into her husband. She adds to his character the virtue constancy which is in keeping with the meaning of her name, as sovereignty was in keeping with Sarah's. On this level she is treated as Isaac's spiritual equal.

Conclusion

While maintaining his basic allegory, in which Sarah and Rebecca are the virgin wives who bring forth virtues through God's intervention, Philo takes advantage of their popular images to mold them into the likeness of his ideal wife, obedient and deferential to her husband.

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11 Like Sarah, she is reduced to one aspect of a man who is a role-model for Everyman. So Philo can speak of Sarah and Rebecca with reference to himself: "So Sarah, the virtue which rules my soul, was a mother, but not a mother for me. . ." (Cong.6); "... ever-virginal Constancy [Rebecca], from the love of whom may it never come about that I cease" (QG 4.145).