

**Philo Study Questions:
Jewish Literature from the Roman Empire
Hum 110, Reed College
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These materials constitute a bridge between the earlier Hebrew writings that we have read and the Roman materials from before Spring Break. Here we see Jews writing as “alien members” of the Roman empire. Philo (c. 20 B.C.E.-40 A.C.E.) writes slightly before Josephus. He lived in Alexandria (and wrote in Greek), but in 40 A.D.E. he was part of a delegation to Caligula's court in Rome to protest the harassment of Jews by Greek citizens. Here, for the first time this semester, is an example of the writings of a colonized or "marginal" group from within the Empire. How do you see these works sharing the concerns both of the colonizing culture and of their own subculture?

"The Creation of the World," Philo

As a Greek, Philo is heavily influenced by Greek philosophy. What elements of Platonic and Stoic doctrines do you see at work in Philo's rendition of the "Creation of the World"? You should pay careful attention to Philo's understanding of God, the material world, mankind, and the soul. If you have not done so already, you will want to look up the "soul" in a Bible dictionary to get a grasp on the differences between the Greek and Hebrew conceptions of the soul.

What differences do you notice between the content and style of Philo's biblical analysis and Genesis? How has Greek philosophy influenced Philo's style of argumentation? This question will become crucial when we examine the *Tractate Avot*.