

MOSES IN HISTORIOGRAPHY FROM HELLENISTIC ALEXANDRIA TO JOSEPHUS

by

GREGORY T. JOHNSTON

(Under the Direction of Erika T. Hermanowicz)

ABSTRACT

In Greek and Roman historiography various presentations of Moses have emerged from different political and cultural environments. Hellenistic Jewish authors demonstrate a willingness to stray from the traditional story in pursuit of their polemic objective: to convince Greek speakers of the significance of the Jewish nation in the history of culture. In these stories, Moses is Kulturbringer, responsible for the cultural greatness of Egypt and, in turn, of Greece. Universal historians of the late first century BCE used the story of Moses to shed light on a region and its people which had recently become significant in the struggle for power in the Mediterranean world. Josephus argues instead that Moses was a great legislator on the basis of the greatness of his deeds and that he exceeded Lycurgus, Solon, and Zaleucus in antiquity. Despite Jewish arguments, Greeks and Romans found ways of undermining Jewish claims without denying their reality.

INDEX WORDS: Moses, lawgiver, hellenistic Jewish historians, Artapanus, Demetrius, Eupolemus, Diodorus, Hecataeus of Abdera, Strabo, Josephus

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INTRODUCTION

Et est conditoribus urbium infame contraxisse aliquam perniciosam ceteris gentem, qualis est primus Iudaicae superstitionis auctor.

It is scandalous for the founders of cities to assemble a nation that is destructive to others, such as the originator of the of the Jewish superstition.

Quintilian, *Institutio Oratoria* 3.7.21

“That [Muhammad] was made ‘victorious with terror’ is undeniable, given the tumultuous history of his prophetic career, with its raids, wars, and assassinations.”

Robert Spencer, *The Truth about Muhammad*¹

The narratives of founders and originators are often told within the winds of contemporary events. The *Institutio Oratoria* (published before the death of Domitian in 96 CE) employs a rhetoric of clear importance to a dynasty that rose to power after a victory over rebellious Judaea in 70 CE. To categorize the Jews as *perniciosa* brought glory to Vespasian and his sons for delivering the empire from that danger, emphasizing the importance of their victory to the Roman empire. Thus Moses—unnamed but clearly the person to blame—is derided as *auctor superstitionis*. While this depiction of Moses had clear relevance in Flavian Rome, Quintilian and the rhetoricians in his circle would not be the first or the only ones to use it. According to Diodorus Siculus an earlier dynasty to conquer Judaea viewed Moses in a very similar way. The Seleucid Antiochus Epiphanes was inflamed when he saw a statue in the temple in Jerusalem of Moses riding on an ass and carrying a book. Angered by the lawless customs of that nation, Epiphanes decimated the

¹ *The Truth About Muhammad: Founder of the World's Most Intolerant Religion* (Washington, DC: Regnery Pub, 2006), 166.

Jewish city. Battle in Judaea, whether it be the Seleucid army c. 170 BCE, Ptolemy's army c. 320 BCE, or Titus and Vespasian in 70 CE, affects the way in which the Jewish nation interacts with the other nations of the Mediterranean, and for that reason Moses' story is repeatedly retold.

In this thesis I examine the portrayal of Moses in historical narratives from hellenistic Alexandria to Flavian Rome. Each chapter corresponds to an historical period (hellenistic in chapter one, first century BCE in chapter two, and first century CE in chapter three). I consider the depictions of Moses in light of the times in which they were written. Some elements in descriptions of Moses are constant from author to author. Where possible, I evaluate the sources for these historians, whether biblical or other. Through this study I seek to understand the way in which Jews and non-Jews presented themselves and each other in ancient historiography.

The image of Moses is not fixed from author to author. Rather, the historians took special interest in Moses' cultural achievements, his laws, and his antiquity. Moses is identified as the founder of the Jewish religion throughout the histories that I examine. For many historians his cultural importance extends beyond his own nation. Pompeius Trogus' says that the art of interpreting dreams was passed down to Moses from his father (Joseph, according to Trogus), the inventor of that art. Thus Moses is an important figure in the history of divination, a position of broad influence. Similarly Artapanus, a Jew writing in second century BCE Alexandria, makes Moses responsible for numerous technological advances—the invention of boats, equipment for drawing water, and instruments of war. Perhaps Moses' most striking innovation is the development of Egyptian religion.

Moses' influence is broad in this author's presentation, making him responsible not only for leading the Israelites out of Egypt but also for giving Egypt its distinctive features: its use of the Nile and its cult practices. Moses is a founder for many people, an international *Kulturbringer*.

His most important moment in the biblical narrative—receiving the law on mount Sinai—made it natural for Greek and Roman authors to portray Moses as νομοθέτης. The rabbis in the Mishnah (c. 200 CE) would shy away from such a presentation, asserting that only God can be said to give the law and referring to Moses instead as “our teacher.”² Josephus commends Moses by putting him in the ranks of famous Greek lawgivers; as Solon, Lycurgus, and Zaleucus did, so did Moses (CA 2.154). For Josephus Moses is the paradigmatic example of a lawgiver; in the *Antiquitates* Josephus can refer to Moses simply as “the lawgiver” (without stating his name).³ Not all lawgivers, however, are good lawgivers: Diodorus considered Moses to have legislated misanthropy and hatred of other races (1.28.1-29.5). Moses brought law, whether good or bad.

For many of these authors it mattered not only who Moses was, but also when Moses was. We see this most clearly in the case of Demetrius the Chronographer. Writing in hellenistic Alexandria, he systematized Jewish history using the Greek genre of chronology. He tried to resolve apparent inconsistencies in the dating of Moses and Raguel (*apud* Euseb. *Praep. evang.* 9.29.1-3). By assigning Moses a fixed date, he added to his historical importance. Josephus finds the dating of Moses important as well, but to a very dif-

² This point was first observed by Heinrich Bloch: *Die Quellen des Flavius Josephus in seiner Archäologie* (Wiesbaden: M. Sändig, 1968), 139-140.

³ Louis H. Feldman, “Josephus' Portrait of Moses: Part Two,” *Jewish Quarterly Review*, Vol. 83, (Jul., 1992), 9.

ferent end. He emphasizes the fact that, although Moses was like Solon and Lycurgus, he preceded them (CA 2.154). Although the historian does not say it in so many words, his argument clearly has an element of '*post hoc ergo propter hoc*'. For Eupolemus the fact that Moses was the first was essential. His achievement, writing the laws, eventually led to all Mediterranean cultures possessing the ability of writing (*apud* Euseb. *Praep. evang.* 9.26.1). Moses set the standard and all other nations followed suit.

Through these themes Jews used presentations of Moses to define themselves to the Greek and Roman peoples around them. To a certain extent, also, the Greeks and Romans accepted this image of Moses, even while undermining the claim that Moses was a founder for all nations.

CHAPTER ONE

MOSES IN HELLENISTIC JEWISH HISTORIOGRAPHY

During the reign of Alexander's successors, Jewish historians in Egypt and Palestine began to compose their narratives in Greek. Their subject matter was distinctly Jewish, often echoing words and phrasing employed in the recently translated *Septuagint*. The literary mode, on the other hand, was Greek historiography. Such a blending of Jewish and Greek occurred in other genres as well. In epic, Philo the Poet (third to second century BCE) composed *On Jerusalem*, a work that described, as far as can be seen in the extant fragments, the city and its history in a style reminiscent of Apollonius of Rhodes.¹ Ezekiel wrote a tragedy retelling the exodus of the Israelites from Egypt.² The surviving fragments suggest that the play was divided into five acts and show the influence of Euripides and Aeschylus in style and meter.³ The Jewish writers Demetrius, Artapanus, and Eupolemus chose Greek historiography to present Judaism to the world. The most prominent story in the preserved fragments of these authors is that of Moses in Egypt.⁴ Although the basic

¹ Some twenty four hexameters of Philo are preserved in six short fragments (Euseb. *Praep. evang.* 9.20.1; 24.1; 37.1). On Philo, see H. Attridge, "Philo the Epic Poet: A New Translation and Introduction," in *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, ed. James H. Charlesworth (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1983). Fragments of Jewish authors can generally be found in Felix Jacoby's *Die Fragmente Der Griechischen Historiker* (Leiden: Brill, 1923). For the sake of clarity, I cite the authors quoted in later authors by their book and chapter numbers in those later works, rather than by Jacoby's numbering.

² Euseb. *Praep. evang.* 9.28.1-29.16. On Ezekiel, see Howard Jacobson, *The Exagoge of Ezekiel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), R. G. Robertson, "Ezekiel the Tragedian: A New Translation and Introduction," in *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1983).

³ Jörg Wagner, "Ezechiel [2]," *Brill's New Pauly Encyclopaedia of the Ancient World: Antiquity*, ed. Hubert Cancik et al. (Leiden: Brill, 2002).

⁴ Other figures, such as Abraham (Pseudo-Eupolemus [Euseb. *Praep. evang.* 9.18.2] and Artapanus [Euseb. *Praep. evang.* 9.18.1]) and Joseph (Artapanus [Euseb. *Praep. evang.* 9.23.1-4]), also appear in these histories.

framework of these histories follows the biblical narratives, the authors demonstrate a willingness to stray from the traditional story in pursuit of their polemic objective: to convince Greek speakers of the significance of the Jewish nation in the history of culture. In these stories, Moses is the *Kulturbringer*, responsible for the cultural greatness of Egypt and, in turn, of Greece.

The argument made by these historians was one of greater antiquity. The Jews held that their culture existed before the Egyptian—and Greek—culture, and that Egyptian and Greek cultures were derived from Jewish culture. The Greeks had long recognized eastern cultures as older than their own.⁵ Both Plato and Herodotus ascribed great antiquity to Egyptian culture (Hdt. 2.143; Pl. *Ti.* 22a).⁶ Aristotle believed Egyptian culture was older than Greek, but noted that the Persian Magi and their teaching were “even older than the Egyptians” (πρεσβυτέρους εἶναι τῶν Αἰγυπτίων).⁷ The Jews used beliefs about the antiquity of eastern peoples to their own advantage, arguing for the greater glory of their own nation.

Early Contact Between Greece and Palestine

While the Greeks regularly mentioned Egypt and Persia when describing the history of culture, they did not mention the Jews. Greek contact with eastern peoples before Alexan-

⁵ Arthur J. Droge, *Homer or Moses? Early Christian Interpretations of the History of Culture*, Hermeneutische Untersuchungen Zur Theologie (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1989), 4-5.

⁶ Both texts are discussed in greater detail below.

⁷ Aristotle, *Fragmenta Selecta*, ed. W. D. Ross, Scriptorum Classicorum Bibliotheca Oxoniensis (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1955), 74-75, fragment 6 (attributed to Περὶ φιλοσοφίας).

der was largely limited to the Persians and the Egyptians. Several obstacles stood in the way of the Greeks becoming acquainted with the Jews.⁸ The Greeks' travel by sea did not give them occasion to encounter Jews in large numbers, as the Jewish capitol lay inland.⁹ The Jews were bilingual before Alexander, but their second language, Aramaic, connected them with the east (Persia and Egypt) rather than the west. Indeed, even without this language barrier, the Jewish nation, as Momigliano points out, was likely too small and insignificant to gain much attention from the Greeks at this time. "As far as we know, the Greeks lived happily in their classical age without recognizing the existence of the Jews."¹⁰ The Jews, however, knew at least a little about the Greeks. They were on trade routes to receive Greek goods. Greek coins were found at Gaza and Greek earthenware at Shechem, dating from the sixth and fifth centuries, respectively.¹¹ The Greek people even made an appearance, small though it was, in the Hebrew scriptures. Yavan (Hebrew יָוָן),¹² who appears in *Genesis* 10.2 (late seventh century),¹³ appears to have been the eponymous ancestor of the Ionians in the eyes of the Jews.¹⁴ That first appearance contains only the name of the figure, which corresponds to the Greek Ἴων. As he appears in later texts Yavan had a solely commercial role. Both Ezekiel and Joel mention Yavan as one of the merchants in

⁸ Gregory E. Sterling, *Historiography and Self-Definition: Josephos, Luke-Acts, and Apologetic Historiography* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1992), 140.

⁹ Arnaldo Momigliano, *Alien Wisdom: The Limits of Hellenization* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1975), 81-82.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 78.

¹¹ Sterling, *Historiography and Self-Definition*, 139.

¹² This and subsequent Hebrew references are from the *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia*, Karl Elliger, W. Rudolph, and Adrian Schenker, eds. (4th ed. Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1990).

¹³ So Momigliano, *Alien Wisdom*, 78.

¹⁴ Emil G. Hirsch, "Javan," *Jewish Encyclopedia* (New York: Funk and Wagnalls, 1903).

the slave trade in Tyre and Sidon (*Ezek.* 27.13-19; *Joel* 3.6). Although this suggests trade contact between the Jews and the Greeks, there is no evidence on the part of the Jews of a deeper understanding of the Greeks. No cultural or intellectual characteristics are given for Yavan. There is no consciousness of the identity of Athens or other city states. “The Greeks are known, but they appear rather remote and insignificant.”¹⁵

The Macedonian conquest, with its influx of new language and new political figures, changed the scene. The Jews now found themselves surrounded by a Greek-speaking hegemony.¹⁶ In addition, more Jews emigrated to Egypt, largely to serve as mercenaries. Immigration from Palestine into Egypt was constant during the reign of the first two Ptolemies. The culture of Alexandria seems to have been attractive to them. Evidence from inscriptions and papyri demonstrates that Jewish immigrants to Alexandria quickly gave up Aramaic for Greek.¹⁷ The Jewish community there enjoyed economic success, with some of its members serving as officials in the court of Ptolemy Soter and his son Philadelphus.¹⁸ One of the great effects of early hellenization of the Alexandrian Jews was the translation of the Jewish Law into Greek. We are told in the so-called *Letter of Aristeas* that the *Septuagint* was commissioned by Philadelphus at the request of his librarian, Demetrius of Phaleron. The translation of smaller sections of the Law likely appeared before that time.¹⁹

¹⁵ Momigliano, *Alien Wisdom*, 79.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ Martin Hengel, *Jews, Greeks, and Barbarians: Aspects of the Hellenization of Judaism in the Pre-Christian Period* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1980), 93-95.

¹⁸ John M. G. Barclay, *Jews in the Mediterranean Diaspora from Alexander to Trajan* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1996), 30.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 30-5.

Hecataeus and National Historiography

The Jewish literary community in Alexandria had the opportunity to observe the greater trends in hellenistic historiography. One of these was introduced during the reign of Ptolemy I Soter by the historian Hecataeus of Abdera. Hecataeus had been Ptolemy's advisor during his military campaign in Palestine c. 320 BCE. Sometime between 320 and 315 BCE he wrote the *Aegyptiaca*, a history of the culture and religion of the Egyptians.²⁰ The original form of this work is now lost, although it became the chief source for the history of Egypt in Diodorus Siculus' *Bibliothēkē* (1.10-98). Hecataeus emphasizes the antiquity of Egypt, asserting that the other Mediterranean cultures proceeded from that nation. Diodorus says this most explicitly at the end of the first section of his work. There, all the other great nations are said to have originated as Egyptian colonies:

[Φασι] ἀποικίας πλείστας ἐξ Αἰγύπτου κατὰ πᾶσαν διασπαρῆναι τὴν οἰκουμένην. εἰς Βαβυλῶνα μὲν γὰρ ἀγαγεῖν ἀποίκους Βῆλον τὸν νομιζόμενον Ποσειδῶνος εἶναι καὶ Λιβύης· ὃν παρὰ τὸν Εὐφράτην ποταμὸν καθιδρυθέντα τοὺς τε ἱερεῖς καταστήσασθαι... οὗς Βαβυλώνιοι καλοῦσι Χαλδαίους, τὰς τε παρατηρήσεις τῶν ἄστρον τούτους ποιεῖσθαι, μιμουμένους τοὺς παρ' Αἰγυπτίοις ἱερεῖς καὶ φυσικούς, ἔτι δὲ ἀστρολόγους. Λέγουσι δὲ καὶ τοὺς περὶ τὸν Δαναὸν ὀρμηθέντας ὁμοίως ἐκεῖθεν συνοικίσαι τὴν ἀρχαιοτάτην σχεδὸν τῶν παρ' Ἑλλήσι πόλεων Ἄργος, τὸ τε τῶν Κόλχων ἔθνος ἐν τῷ Πόντῳ καὶ τὸ τῶν Ἰουδαίων ἀνὰ μέσον Ἀραβίας καὶ Συρίας οἰκίσαι τινὰς ὀρμηθέντας παρ' ἑαυτῶν... καὶ τοὺς Ἀθηναίους δὲ φασιν ἀποίκους εἶναι Σαῖτῶν τῶν ἐξ Αἰγύπτου... καθόλου δὲ πλείστας ἀποικίας Αἰγυπτιοὶ φασιν ἐκπέμψαι τοὺς ἑαυτῶν προγόνους ἐπὶ πολλὰ μέρη τῆς οἰκουμένης διὰ τε τὴν ὑπεροχὴν τῶν βασιλευσάντων παρ' αὐτοῖς καὶ διὰ τὴν ὑπερβολὴν τῆς πολυανθρωπίας.

A great number of colonies were spread from Egypt over all the inhabited world. To Babylon, for instance, colonists were led by Belus, who was held to be the son of Poseidon and Libya. After establishing himself on the Euphrates river he appointed priests, called Chaldaeans by the Babylonians... They also make observation of the

²⁰ On the dating of Hecataeus, see Oswyn Murray, "Hecataeus of Abdera and Pharaonic Kingship," *Journal of Egyptian Archaeology* 56 (1970), Momigliano, *Alien Wisdom*, 84.

stars, following the example of the Egyptian priests, physicists, and astrologers. They say also that those who set forth with Danaus, likewise from Egypt, settled what is practically the oldest city of Greece, Argos, and that the nation of the Colchi in Pontus and that of the Jews, which lies between Arabia and Syria, were founded as colonies by certain emigrants from their country... Even the Athenians, they say, are colonists from Sais in Egypt... In general, the Egyptians say that their ancestors sent forth numerous colonies to many parts of the inhabited world, by reason of the pre-eminence of their former kings and their excessive population. (Diod. 1.28.1-29.5)

Hecataeus thus asserts that all other cultures are born out of Egyptian culture. The greatness of any one nation, like the ability to observe the stars claimed by the Chaldaeans, is ultimately attributed to the Egyptians. Hecataeus' enthusiasm led Jacoby to remark that the author bordered on "Egyptomania."²¹ But it is not mere obsession that brings Hecataeus to praise Egypt in this manner. The laudatory account of Egyptian antiquity had a significant political message at the time in which Hecataeus lived. It played into the cultural policy of Ptolemy, who faced the daunting task of holding together a rather diverse society.²² His rule risked looking like a harsh Macedonian occupation. The Egyptian locals would have been resistant to such an occupation, as the recent occupation by the Persians was not welcomed by the locals, and had even spawned revolts.²³ The success of Ptolemy's reign depended on currying local support. Supporting local myth and fostering pride in Egypt helped him achieve that objective.

²¹ Felix Jacoby, *FGrH*, F 1-6.

²² As Susan A. Stephens points out, the diversity of Alexandria during the hellenistic age can be observed in the tensions over regional dialects between Praxinoa and the stranger in Theocritus 15.87-93: *Seeing Double: Intercultural Poetics in Ptolemaic Alexandria* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 242-43.

²³ Momigliano, *Alien Wisdom*, 83, Stephens, *Seeing Double*, 238-40.

Unlike the Persians before them, whose domain stretched over many countries, the rule of Ptolemy I and his successors was limited to the land of Egypt. Though a foreigner, Ptolemy wisely chose to locate the mythological backing for his rule within Egypt. As Stephens has pointed out, this is seen clearly in the importation and creation of festivals.²⁴ The *Basileia*, a sort of coronation event that blended elements from the cult of Zeus Basileus with elements of the Egyptian cult of Apis, allowed Ptolemy I to establish himself in terms that locals and Greek immigrants could comprehend.²⁵ The activities at the *Basileia* incorporated both cultures as well. The celebration of the coronation and the birthday of the king as simultaneous events was borrowed from pharaonic practice; traditional Greek athletic contests also took place.²⁶ Ptolemy II founded the *Ptolemaia* in honor of his father.²⁷ A connection between the Ptolemies, Alexander, and Dionysus seems to have been central to the event. Dionysus' importance went beyond his role as the divine ancestor of the Ptolemies; he was also the Greek equivalent of the Egyptian god Osiris.²⁸ The appearance of the festival was Egyptian, complete with tent and canopy erected in Egyptian style.²⁹ The incorporation of Egyptian elements in these festivals demonstrates that the first two Ptolemies reinforced their position by embracing local tradition. Alexandria remained heterogeneous in culture and language. But Hecataeus' praise of Egypt, as seen

²⁴ For the following account of the blending of Greek and Egyptian in festivals, see Stephens, *Seeing Double*, 244-47.

²⁵ On the *Basileia*, see P. M. Fraser, *Ptolemaic Alexandria* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972), 232.

²⁶ To strengthen the ties between his reign and that Egyptian deity, Ptolemy I Soter made Memphis, an important location for Apis worship, his place of residence in the early part of his reign.

²⁷ On the *Ptolemaia*, see Fraser, *Ptolemaic Alexandria*, 230-32.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 206.

²⁹ The tent and canopy are described by Athenaeus (5.196-97) and interpreted as Egyptian by Stephens, *Seeing Double*, 246.

in the colonization narrative above, was relevant to the stability of Ptolemy's reign. From the great access Hecataeus seems to have to the priests of Egypt, it is likely that Ptolemy commissioned Hecataeus, allowing the historian to travel about his kingdom and conduct research with greater freedom than the average Greek traveler.³⁰ Patronage allowed Ptolemy to appear as a great supporter of Egyptian culture and history; it provided his kingdom with a venerable national history that could unite Egyptian, Greek, and Macedonian alike.³¹

This was the first history written in Greek to focus on a single barbarian nation. It was not the last.³² Parallel to Hecataeus' work on Egypt was Megasthenes' work on India. Megasthenes served on an embassy to India for Seleucus I (302-291 BCE), and he used his time traveling to collect information for his history of that land (*Indica*).³³ Like Herodotus, Megasthenes refers to first-hand observations of the natives he was describing; like Hecataeus, the focus of Megasthenes' work was one barbarian kingdom now controlled by a successor of Alexander. But it was not just Greeks who took up the writing of barbarian history. Barbarians began to write their own histories in the Greek language. Berossus, a priest of Marduk in Babylonia, blended Mesopotamian and Hellenistic historiography to

³⁰ Murray, "Hecataeus of Abdera and Pharaonic Kingship," 166. Supported by Droge, *Homer or Moses?*, 7.

³¹ To be sure, the residents of Alexandria who could read Greek were few in number. But Hecataeus' work fit into the larger cultural policy of the Ptolemies, which included elements (such as festivals) which were meant to surpass language barriers. The achievement of the Ptolemies was not unification of culture or language, but unification of political power despite cultural differences.

³² For this historiographic trend, see Albin Lesky, *A History of Greek Literature* (New York: Crowell, 1966), 770-71.

³³ *FGrHist* 715.

write a history of his nation in Greek (early third century BCE).³⁴ Manetho—also a priest—wrote the histories of his country, Egypt, apparently using native priestly writings as his main source.³⁵ The fragments of these authors suggest that they followed Hecataeus' model in two respects. First, they gave ethnographic and historical accounts of a particular people. Second, they asserted the superiority of the nation they were describing by demonstrating its antiquity.³⁶

Jews and National Historiography

Jews were not wholly absent from these hellenistic national histories. Both Manetho and Berossus seem to have made brief mention of the Jews, and Hecataeus presents Moses as the οἰκιστής who left Egypt to colonize Jerusalem.³⁷ Evidence suggests, however, that hellenized Jews living in Egypt during this time longed for their own native history in Greek. The so-called *Letter of Aristeas* (second century BCE), which relates an embellished tale of the translation of the Torah into Greek during the reign of Ptolemy II Philadelphus, includes an explanation that arose in the Jewish community in Egypt for the absence of a Jewish history in Greek:

³⁴ On Berossus, see Gerald Verbrugghe and John M. Wickersham, *Berossos and Manetho, Introduced and Translated: Native Traditions in Ancient Mesopotamia and Egypt* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1996), 13-34; Amélie Kuhrt, "Berossus' Babyloniaka and Seleucid Rule in Babylonia," in *Hellenism in the East*, ed. Amélie Kuhrt and Susan M. Sherwin-White (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987).

³⁵ On Manetho, see Verbrugghe and Wickersham, *Berossos and Manetho*, 95-120. Josephus names the priestly writings as Manetho's source at *Ap.* 1.73.

³⁶ As Hecataeus had in the quote concerning Egyptian colonization above. Droge, *Homer or Moses?*, 4-7.

³⁷ Menahem Stern, *Greek and Latin Authors on Jews and Judaism* (Jerusalem: Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities, 1974), 21.

Παρανεγνώσθη δὲ αὐτῷ καὶ πάντα, καὶ λίαν ἐξεθαύμασε τὴν τοῦ νομοθέτου διάνοιαν. Καὶ πρὸς τὸν Δημήτριον εἶπε· Πῶς τηλικούτων συντετελεσμένων οὐδεὶς ἐπεβάλετο τῶν ἱστορικῶν ἢ ποιητῶν ἐπιμνησθῆναι; Ἐκεῖνος δὲ ἔφη Διὰ τὸ σεμνὴν εἶναι τὴν νομοθεσίαν καὶ διὰ θεοῦ γεγονέναι· καὶ τῶν ἐπιβαλλομένων τινὲς ὑπὸ τοῦ θεοῦ πληγέντες τῆς ἐπιβολῆς ἀπέστησαν.

The whole book [the translation of the Torah into Greek] was read through to [Philadelphus] and he was greatly astonished at the spirit of the lawgiver. And he said to Demetrius [of Phaleron, Philadelphus' librarian], 'How is it that none of the historians or poets ever thought of mentioning such great achievements?' And he said, 'Because the Law is holy and has been given by God; and some of those who did essay to do so were smitten of God and desisted from their attempt.' (*Letter of Aristeas* 312-313)³⁸

The assertion of a divine reason for the lack of a Jewish history in Greek seems to predate the Jewish historians, and likely represents a belief that existed in Egypt prior to the writing of the *Letter of Aristeas*.³⁹ The explanation given here for the absence of a Jewish history in Greek—namely, that the Jewish narrative was so sacred that imperfect tellings incurred divine wrath—is an effort for Jews to reinvent their identity in the Greek-speaking world. Rather than being a nation whose history was too insignificant to be told, they were a nation with a history too sacred for Greek historians and poets.

The void was soon filled. In the third and second centuries BCE, Jewish national histories in Greek came out of the Jewish communities in Egypt and Palestine. Only fragments remain of the original works, preserved in Eusebius of Caesarea's *Praeparatio evangelica* and Clement of Alexandria's *Stromateis*.⁴⁰ These authors did not have direct access

³⁸ Translation by H. St J. Thackeray, *The Letter of Aristeas*, Translations of Early Documents, 3 (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1917). A similar sentiment is expressed at *Letter of Aristeas* 31.

³⁹ Momigliano, *Alien Wisdom*, 77.

⁴⁰ Most of book nine of *Praep. evang.* is a collection of excerpts from Jewish historians.

to the Jewish histories,⁴¹ but knew them through an important intermediary; *On the Jews* by Cornelius Alexander, surnamed Polyhistor.⁴² Polyhistor lived during the first century BCE in Rome, and over twenty-five titles have been ascribed to him. In the words of Gregory Sterling, he seems to have been “a compiler rather than a critical thinker.”⁴³ He demonstrated great fidelity in quoting the original sources; it appears that his compilation process involved shortening the narrative and transforming it into *oratio obliqua*, with no intentional interpolation.⁴⁴ The hellenistic Jewish historians are difficult to date. Their apparent familiarity with the *Septuagint* provides 300 BCE as a *terminus post quem*,⁴⁵ the *terminus ante quem* is Polyhistor (c. 50 BCE).⁴⁶

As I have said, Moses and the exodus is a common theme for these authors. This choice of subject matter seems sensible enough. In a time when other historians (notably Manetho and Berossus) had reached into their priestly annals to find stories to retell, the

⁴¹ With the exception of Aristobulus, whom they quote directly. On Eusebius' quotation of Jewish historians, see Sabrina Inowlocki, *Eusebius and the Jewish Authors* (Boston: Brill, 2006), 21.

⁴² On Alexander Polyhistor, see Jacob Freudenthal, *Hellenistische Studien* (Breslau: Druck von Grass, Barth und Comp. (W. Friedrich), 1874), 16-35, J. Strugnell, "General Introduction, with a Note on Alexander Polyhistor," in *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, ed. James H. Charlesworth (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1983), 777-78, Sterling, *Historiography and Self-Definition*, 144-52, Ben Zion Wacholder, *Eupolemus: A Study of Judaeo-Greek Literature* (Cincinnati: Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion, 1975), 44-52.

⁴³ Sterling, *Historiography and Self-Definition*, 145.

⁴⁴ On the accuracy of Polyhistor as an intermediary, see Freudenthal, *Hellenistische Studien*, 24, 28, Jacoby, *FGrHist*, 3a:251, 55. Their assertions are followed by Sterling, *Historiography and Self-Definition*, 152. On Demetrius, see H. Hanson, "Demetrius the Chronographer: A New Translation and Introduction," in *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, ed. James H. Charlesworth (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1983), 843-54.

⁴⁵ The *Septuagint* is generally believed to have been composed during the reign of Ptolemy II Philadelphus (309-246): Karl-Ludwig Elvers, "Septuaginta," *Der neue Pauly Enzyklopädie der Antike*, ed. Herbert Cancik et al. (Leiden: Brill, 1996).

⁴⁶ Inowlocki, *Eusebius and the Jewish Authors*, 22.

stories in the second book of the Torah seem appropriate for a Jewish history.⁴⁷ A story that took place in Egypt had a natural appeal for these authors. Several of them (Demetrius, Artapanus, and Aristobulus) seem to have resided there, and Egypt's prominent role in the politics and literature of that time no doubt was obvious to those authors dwelling in nearby Palestine (Eupolemus and Pseudo-Eupolemus). While the starting point of the exodus was clearly a favorable one for hellenistic historiography, the narrative itself, as Gruen points out, likely would not have been pleasing to those in power in Egypt at the time. Indeed the Ptolemies traced their own rule to the Pharaohs. The exodus was the story of the victory of a small nation of slaves over oppressive Egypt. "The heartless Pharaohs, the hostile populace, and the royal army as an agent of evil hardly supplied models for imitation."⁴⁸ The historians, however, do not have a pressing reason to reproduce the unflattering depiction of the Egyptians found in the original Hebrew narrative. In this way they follow the example of the *Septuagint* translators, who prudently emended the text in places that might undermine Egyptian history—a narrative that, as I have already been noted, the ruling Macedonians employed to their own political advantage.⁴⁹ The Jewish historians creatively reshape the tale into a less dissonant one.⁵⁰

⁴⁷ So Elias J. Bickerman, *The Jews in the Greek Age* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1988), 203. There is an element of circularity in this argument. Modern scholars often use Jewish subject matter to identify the nationality of the historians; e.g. Droge, *Homer or Moses?*, 24-25. If a Jewish historian did write history about a story that is not distinctly Jewish, one might wonder how modern historians would detect it.

⁴⁸ Gruen, "Exodus Story," 93.

⁴⁹ So Barclay, *Jews in the Mediterranean Diaspora*, 126, n. 2. He notes the political sensitivity of the translators when they avoided naming the hare (λάγος) in the list of unclean animals at Lev. 11.6 and Deut. 14.7: "The Ptolemaic kings were descended from a man so named!"

⁵⁰ Gruen, "Exodus Story," 113.

Demetrius the Chronographer

The first Jewish historian to mention Moses seems to have been Demetrius, commonly dated to the last quarter of the third century BCE.⁵¹ Demetrius' extensive knowledge of Greek literature and the *Septuagint* suggest Alexandrian provenance.⁵² Although his comments about Moses (*Praep. evang.* 9.29.1-3) demonstrate his interest in questions of biblical exegesis, they also show an interest (akin to that of Hecataeus) in demonstrating the antiquity of his people. The exegetical point that concerns Demetrius in this passage is the age of Zipporah. It seems evident from Demetrius' argument that the question had arisen of how Zipporah and Moses, who are married in the biblical narrative (*Exod.* 3.1), could have been contemporaries, since Moses was in the seventh generation from Abraham and Zipporah the sixth:

ἐκ δὲ τοῦ Ἰεζάν γενέσθαι Λαδάν, ἐκ δὲ Λαδάν Ῥαγουήλ, ἐκ δὲ Ῥαγουήλ Ἰοθὼρ καὶ Ὀβάβ, ἐκ δὲ τοῦ Ἰοθὼρ Σεπφώραν, ἣν γῆμαι Μωσῆν. καὶ τὰς γενεὰς δὲ συμφωνεῖν· τὸν γὰρ Μωσῆν εἶναι ἀπὸ Ἀβραὰμ ἑβδομον, τὴν δὲ Σεπφώραν ἑκτην. συνοικοῦντος γὰρ ἤδη τοῦ Ἰσαάκ, ἀφ' οὗ Μωσῆν εἶναι, γῆμαι Ἀβραὰμ τὴν Χεττούραν ὄντα ἐτῶν ρμ' καὶ γεννηθῆναι Ἰσαὰρ ἐξ αὐτῆς δεύτερον· τὸν δὲ Ἰσαὰκ ὄντα ἐτῶν ἑκατὸν γεννηθῆναι. ὥστε μὲν ἐτῶν ὕστερον γεγονέναι τὸν Ἰσαὰρ, ἀφ' οὗ τὴν Σεπφώραν γεγενεαλογῆσθαι. οὐδὲν οὖν ἀντιπίπτει τὸν Μωσῆν καὶ τὴν Σεπφώραν κατὰ τοὺς αὐτοὺς γεγονέναι χρόνους.

And from Jokshan was born Dedan, and from Dedan Reuel, and from Reuel, Jethro and Hobab, and from Jethro, Zipporah, whom Moses married. The generations do agree, for Moses was seventh from Abraham, and Zipporah sixth. For Isaac, from whom Moses descended, was already married when Abraham, at the age of 140, married Keturah, and begot by her a second son, [Jokshan]. But he be-

⁵¹ Bickerman and Sterling put his *floruit* during the reign of Ptolemy IV Philopater (221-204) (Bickerman, *The Jews in the Greek Age*, 221; Sterling, *Historiography and Self-Definition*, 153). Their opinion is in accordance with Clement (*Strom.* 121.141.2). Inolowki and Fraser put him in the latter quarter and the latter third of the third century, respectively (Inowlocki, *Eusebius and the Jewish Authors*, 23; Fraser, *Ptolemaic Alexandria*, vol. 1, p. 692).

⁵² Freudenthal, *Hellenistische Studien*, 40-44, Sterling, *Historiography and Self-Definition*, 153..

got Isaac when he was 100 years old; so that [Jokshan], from whom Zipporah derived her descent, was born 42 years later. There is, therefore, no inconsistency in Moses and Zipporah having lived at the same time. (*Praep. evang.* 9.29.1-3)⁵³

The “inconsistency” that Demetrius seeks to resolve is internal to Judaism. It seems unlikely that a non-Jew would be interested in such an argument. But a desire to provide a systematic chronology of the Jewish people is evident in this and other fragments. In form, Demetrius’ work falls into the genre of chronology, a genre that would be familiar to a non-Jewish audience. In Demetrius’ own time chronology had been used by Eratosthenes (c. 285-194 BCE) to fix dates in the political and literary history of the Greeks. Demetrius’ work in the same genre seems to be a reply on behalf of the Jews.⁵⁴

What did Demetrius hope to achieve in systematizing Jewish history? A clear genealogy for the Jews would have been a powerful tool for arguing antiquity. Eastern peoples had used established genealogies to prove their antiquity over the Greeks for centuries. Herodotus records the story of Hecataeus of Miletus visiting Egyptian Thebes and comparing the antiquity of his people with the antiquity of the Egyptians (Hdt. 2.143). The number of generations in one’s genealogy is the deciding factor; the Egyptians’ 345 generations clearly trumps Hecataeus’ sixteen.⁵⁵ The claim of greater antiquity, as Sterling points out, had been used as a “defense mechanism” by eastern peoples faced with the high claims of hellenism.⁵⁶ Plato tells a story in which Solon learns this fact firsthand (Pl.

⁵³ Translation by Hanson, “Demetrius the Chronographer: A New Translation and Introduction.”

⁵⁴ For more on the work of Eratosthenes (FGrHist 241), see Fraser, *Ptolemaic Alexandria*, v. 1, 456-58. The similarity in method between Eratosthenes and Demetrius has been noted by Sterling, *Historiography and Self-Definition*, 162, Fraser, *Ptolemaic Alexandria*, v. 1, 692.

⁵⁵ So Droge, *Homer or Moses?*, 4.

⁵⁶ Sterling, *Historiography and Self-Definition*, 163-64.

Ti. 22a). While in Egypt, Solon has the opportunity to speak to priests. After Solon narrates Greek ancient history (including Phoroneus, Niobe, and the deluge), the Egyptian priests belittle the Greeks (calling them παῖδες) and assert their own greater antiquity:

ὦ Σόλων, Σόλων, Ἕλληνες ἀεὶ παῖδές ἐστε, γέρων δὲ Ἕλληνα οὐκ ἔστιν. Ἀκούσας οὖν, Πῶς τί τοῦτο λέγεις; φάναι. Νέοι ἐστέ, εἰπεῖν, τὰς ψυχὰς πάντες· οὐδεμίαν γὰρ ἐν αὐταῖς ἔχετε δι' ἀρχαίαν ἀκοήν παλαιὰν δόξαν οὐδὲ μάθημα χρόνῳ πολὺν οὐδέν.

O Solon, Solon, you Hellenes are never anything but children, and there is not an old man among you. Solon in return asked him what he meant. I mean to say, he replied, that in mind you are all young; there is no old opinion handed down among you by ancient tradition, nor any science which is hoary with age.

The eastern peoples “out-rank” the Greeks in this sense. The type of systematic genealogy mentioned by Herodotus was even more important in hellenistic Alexandria, where many cultures converged and nations vied for primacy in the history of culture.

We do not have any evidence concerning the identity of Demetrius’ audience.⁵⁷ It seems unlikely that non-Jews would find anything of interest in his work. He could have been trying to reach them; the language would have been accessible to a non-Jew, even if the subject matter was foreign. But the fact that he attempts to resolve problems internal to Jewish scripture suggests a Jewish audience. The clear chronographic form of his work suggests he was writing for readers who had an awareness of contemporary literary genres and had heard some of the claims that other authors (such as Eratosthenes) had made on behalf of their own people. The audience was probably Jewish; but these Jews were outward-minded, interested in hearing Demetrius grant them a systematic chronology

⁵⁷ The next author to show awareness of Demetrius is Polyhistor.

like the ones that other peoples had received (Greeks by Eratosthenes, Egyptians by Manetho).

Artapanus

Another Jewish author to take up the challenge of composing a national history was Artapanus. His work, also preserved in Eusebius via Polyhistor, is known to us in three fragments.⁵⁸ In each fragment we encounter a different ancestor, each with his own accomplishments in Egypt. In the first, Artapanus describes how Abraham visited Egypt and taught astrology to the Egyptian king Pharethothes.⁵⁹ He remained in Egypt for twenty years and then returned to Palestine. The second fragment tells the story of Joseph, who travels to Egypt after his brothers plotted against him.⁶⁰ Once there, he becomes the administrator of the entire land. Joseph uses his position to divide the land to increase its productivity and discovers measurements.

The third and longest fragment is a description of the career and significance of Moses. The fragment begins with the birth and adoption of Moses in a fashion very similar to that in the biblical narrative. The Egyptians have “treated the Jews badly” (τοῖς Ἰουδαίοις φαύλως προσφέρεσθαι, 9.27.2). The Pharaoh’s daughter (here called Merris) adopts a child from among the Jews and names him Moses. Artapanus then connects Moses with the mythic singer Musaeus (here said to be the teacher of Orpheus).⁶¹ Artapa-

⁵⁸ *Praep. evang.* 9.18.1; 9.23.1-4; 9.27.1-37.

⁵⁹ *Praep. evang.* 9.18.1.

⁶⁰ *Praep. evang.* 9.23.1-4.

⁶¹ τοῦτο δὲ Μῶϋσον ὀνομάσαι· ὑπὸ δὲ τῶν Ἑλλήνων αὐτὸν ἀνδρωθέντα Μουσαῖον προσαγορευθῆναι. γενέσθαι δὲ τὸν Μῶϋσον τοῦτον Ὀρφέως διδάσκαλον (9.27.3-4).

nus then attributes a number of administrative and religious improvements to Moses, including the establishment of animal cult in Egypt:

ἀνδρωθέντα δ' αὐτὸν πολλὰ τοῖς ἀνθρώποις εὗχρηστα παραδοῦναι· καὶ γὰρ πλοῖα καὶ μηχανὰς πρὸς τὰς λιθοθεσίας καὶ τὰ Αἰγύπτια ὄπλα καὶ τὰ ὄργανα τὰ ὑδρευτικά καὶ πολεμικά καὶ τὴν φιλοσοφίαν ἐξευρεῖν· ἔτι δὲ τὴν πόλιν εἰς λς' νομοὺς διελεῖν καὶ ἐκάστῳ τῶν νομῶν ἀποτάξαι τὸν θεὸν σεφθήσεσθαι τὰ τε ἱερὰ γράμματα τοῖς ἱερεῦσιν, εἶναι δὲ καὶ αἰλούρους καὶ κύνας καὶ ἴβεις· ἀπονεῖμαι δὲ καὶ τοῖς ἱερεῦσιν ἐξαίρετον χώραν... ἰὰ ταῦτα οὖν τὸν Μώυσον ὑπὸ τῶν ὄχλων ἀγαπηθῆναι καὶ ὑπὸ τῶν ἱερέων ἰσοθέου τιμῆς καταξιοθέντα προσαγορευθῆναι Ἑρμῆν, διὰ τὴν τῶν ἱερῶν γραμμάτων ἐρμηνείαν.

As a grown man he bestowed many useful benefits on mankind, for he invented boats and devices for stone construction and the Egyptian arms and the implements for drawing water and for warfare, and philosophy. Further he divided the state into 36 nomes and appointed for each of the nomes the god to be worshiped, and for the priests the sacred letters, and that they should be cats and dogs and ibises. He also allotted a choice area to the priests... On account of these things then Moses was loved by the masses, and was deemed worthy of godlike honor by the priests and called Hermes, on account of the interpretation of the sacred letters (*Praep. evang.* 9.27.4-6).⁶²

Artapanus goes on to describe the career of Moses, including a successful military campaign in Ethiopia (9.27.7-10) and a dispute with the Pharaoh (9.27.11-16). The Pharaoh plots against Moses' life, but Moses kills the would be assassin in self defense and flees into Arabia (9.27.17-18). There he meets Raguel⁶³ (9.27.19-21). After hearing a voice in a burning bush Moses returns to Egypt and pleads for the freedom of the Israelites (9.27.22-26). The fragment concludes with a description of the plagues that afflicted the Egyptians prior to the Jewish exodus.

While the episode is clearly analogous to the story of Moses in *Exodus* 2-7, this passage demonstrates a willingness to depart from the biblical version. Taken from the

⁶² Translation by John Joseph Collins.

⁶³ Called Jethro in the Hebrew narrative.

biblical story are Moses' adoption, his murder of an Egyptian and subsequent flight from Egypt, and his appeal to Pharaoh on behalf of the Israelites. But the list of accomplishments assigned to Moses, as well as some of the turns in the narrative (*e.g.*, Moses' expedition in Ethiopia) are creative innovations on the part of Artapanus. What drove Artapanus to make such innovations? Innovation upon traditional myth was an important feature of hellenistic literature.⁶⁴ That Artapanus retold the Moses story in an artful way, and so produced a work that demonstrated creativity and literary prowess is something that cannot be ruled out. The value of these innovations as creative acts is difficult for the modern scholar to assess, however, given the transmission of his text. Alexander seems to have abbreviated Artapanus' text significantly, making it difficult to see the rhythm of the narrative.⁶⁵ Even so, creativity is clearly a key element in Artapanus' style. Recognizing this fact, Gruen insightfully remarks: "what stands out is not so much polemics as inventive imagination."⁶⁶ Gruen's reading achieves much in moving us away from reading Artapanus as strictly an interpreter of scripture involved in ideological battle. The hellenistic author shows a unique willingness to improvise on a biblical story.

Creativity, however, is not the only motive discernible in Artapanus' innovations. Certain features of his narrative suggest a desire to promote the Jewish nation. The narrative affirms the greater antiquity of Judaism. This is especially clear in the list of contributions Moses made to Egypt. Artapanus attributes to him the very things that made Egypt

⁶⁴ For more on this, see Marco Fantuzzi and R. L. Hunter, *Tradition and Innovation in Hellenistic Poetry* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004). See also Erich Gruen, *Heritage and Hellenism*, (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1998), 160 n. 97.

⁶⁵ So Barclay, *Jews in the Mediterranean Diaspora*, 127.

⁶⁶ *Heritage and Hellenism*, 160.

great. Moses is responsible for their use of the Nile (he invented boats [πλοῖα] and implements for drawing water [τὰ ὄργανα τὰ ὑδρευτικά]); he is responsible for the technological achievement of stone construction, and so is to be credited with making possible the building of the pyramids. Writing is also his invention. Egypt had long been considered the birthplace of writing. Hecataeus of Miletus describes how writing originated in Egypt, and Danaus took it from there to Greece (*FGrHist*1 F 20).⁶⁷ Hermes plays a role in other stories of the invention of the alphabet; Pliny tells us that “some have held that [the alphabet] was invented in Egypt by Mercury” (*alii litteras fuisse apud Aegyptios a Mercurio*, *NH* 7.193). Artapanus does not deny this tradition, but rather tells us that Moses and Hermes are one and the same (*Praep. evang.* 9.27.6).

This identification between Moses and Hermes—as well as the identification between Moses and Musaeus—corresponds to a Greek practice that occurs often in Greek historiography. The Greeks often made sense of foreign gods by identifying them with a Greek god.⁶⁸ In this view, there is a fixed number of gods, and those gods have different

⁶⁷ Droge, *Homer or Moses?* See also Tac. *Ann.* 11.14: *Primi per figuras animalium Aegyptii sensus mentis effingebant (ea antiquissima monimenta memoriae humanae impressa saxis cernuntur), et litterarum semet inventores perhibent; inde Phoenicas, quia mari praepollebant, intulisse Graeciae gloriamque adeptos, tamquam reppererint quae acceperant. quippe fama est Cadmum classe Phoenicum vectum rudibus adhuc Graecorum populis artis eius auctorem fuisse* (“The Egyptians, in their animal pictures, were the first people to represent thought by symbols: these, the earliest documents of human history, are visible to-day, impressed upon stone. They describe themselves as the inventors of the alphabet: from Egypt, they consider, the Phoenicians, who were predominant at sea, imported the knowledge into Greece, and gained the credit of discovering what they had borrowed.”) Translation by John Jackson, *Tacitus: Annals*, The Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1931).

⁶⁸ Gerard Mussies, “The Interpretatio Judaica of Thot-Hermes,” *Studies in the History of Religions* XLIII (1982), 90.

names in different cultures.⁶⁹ Foreign gods can, it seems, be “translated” into the Greek pantheon.⁷⁰ Herodotus thus makes sense of the Assyrian Mylitta, the Arabian Alittat, and the Persian Mitra by saying that these are simply different names for Aphrodite: καλέουσι δὲ Ἀσσύριοι τὴν Ἀφροδίτην Μύλιττα, Ἀράβιοι δὲ Ἀλιλάτ, Πέρσαι δὲ Μίτραν (Hdt. 1.131). By the hellenistic age, after centuries of contact, identifications between Egyptian and Greek gods were likely well established. The identifications tend to be supported by some sort of coincidence in myth or ritual.⁷¹ The Persian sky god Ahura-Mazda is identified with Zeus, both worshiped on mountain-tops (Hdt. 1.131.2). The Egyptian god Mendes is identified with Pan because Mendes is worshiped together with goats (Hdt. 46).⁷² Similar coincidences hold together Artapanus’ arguments.⁷³ The Musaeus-Moses connection is obviously suggested by similarity in name (Greek Μουσαῖος / Μώϋσος). Beneath the sur-

⁶⁹ Cf. Hdt. 2.3.2: οὐκ εἰμι πρόθυμος ἐξηγέσθαι, ἔξω ἢ τὰ οὐνόματα αὐτῶν μούνον, νομίζων πάντας ἀνθρώπους ἴσον περὶ αὐτῶν ἐπίστασθαι· (“I have no desire to relate what I heard about matters concerning the gods, other than their names alone, since all people understand these things equally.”) Translation by Andrea L. Purvis, *The Landmark Herodotus* (New York: Pantheon Books, 2007).

⁷⁰ The similarity in approach between the translation of words from one language to another and the identification of foreign and Greek gods has been noted: “Herodotus, of course, tends to suppose that Greek and foreign gods can be translated into one another, like Greek and foreign words. Indeed it seems that for him the gods themselves are the same everywhere” (Robert Parker, *Athenian Religion a History* [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996], 159; so also Thomas Harrison, *Divinity and History; the Religion of Herodotus*, Oxford Classical Monographs [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2000], 209.) The theological “translation” can be seen clearly at 2.59.2: Ἴσις δὲ ἐστὶ κατὰ τὴν Ἑλλήνων γλῶσσαν Δημήτηρ (“Isis in the Greek language is Demeter.”)

⁷¹ Harrison, *Divinity and History; the Religion of Herodotus*, 213.

⁷² Sometimes an explanation of diffusion is given, to answer the question of how numerous nations came to worship the same god. So at 1.131.3 Herodotus tells us that the Persians learned to revere Aphrodite from the Assyrians (Cf. Hdt. 2.50). At other points the explanation is omitted (cf. the Scythian worship practices at Hdt. 4.108.2). Harrison, *Divinity and History; the Religion of Herodotus*, 213.

⁷³ Similar to the identification of Moses with Musaeus (*Praep. evang.* 9.27.4) and Hermes (*Praep. evang.* 9.27.6) is Eupolemus’ identification of Atlas with Enoch (*Praep. evang.* 9.17.9).

face are parallel traditions about the origin of music.⁷⁴ The fact that Moses is the first figure mentioned in the Law who composes songs (Exod. 15.1-18 and Deut. 32.1-43) gave rise to the belief that he had discovered music. In Greek myth, Musaeus is an epic singer and sometimes is said to have invented the hexameter. That both are foundational musicians brings strength to Artapanus' claim.

Equating Moses and Hermes is in keeping with the hellenic tradition of "translating" foreign gods. This particular instance, however, is more complex than the equation of Ahura-Mazda and Zeus or Aphrodite and Mitra. Herodotus is drawing parallels between two polytheistic religions. Artapanus is "translating" a god from a polytheistic religion—Hermes, who in Greece is one of many gods—into a monotheistic religion. Moses is no ordinary mortal man. There is some evidence that Jews in the hellenistic period considered Moses to be deified, a belief that likely had roots in passages in Hebrew scriptures that refer to him as "god" (אלהים; *Exod.* 4.16, 7.1). Philo of Alexandria (first century CE) says that "[Moses] was called god and king of the whole people" (ὠνομάσθη γὰρ ὅλου τοῦ ἔθνους θεὸς καὶ βασιλεύς, *Life of Moses* 1.158). Whether or not the Jews of Artapanus' time ascribed to the deification of Moses, it seems unlikely that he would have the status of a full god. Artapanus' assertion is bold. He is equating one of the twelve Olympian gods from the Greek pantheon to a figure who was more than mortal but less than fully

⁷⁴ Noted by Mussies, "The Interpretatio Judaica of Thot-Hermes," 95-96; followed by Droge, *Homer or Moses?*, 26.

divine.⁷⁵ This equation has the effect of devaluing the Greek Hermes; at the same time it has the effect of promoting Moses by associating him with a god.⁷⁶

Since the Greeks believed that writing was invented in Egypt by Hermes and then was transported to Greece, Artapanus' claim that Moses-Hermes invented writing in Egypt makes a Jew the *Kulturbringer* for both Egypt and Greece. Artapanus' account magnifies the Jewish people by attributing significant achievements and identities to Moses. Although the two shorter fragments focus on other foundational Jewish figures, their aim seems to be the same. In the Abraham fragment, Artapanus has the Egyptian king learn astrology from Abraham—a statement that clearly rivals Egyptian claims for the discovery of astrology.⁷⁷ Artapanus' fragments demonstrate an awareness of the claims of other nations. This hellenistic Jew had an interest in grafting the Jewish narrative into the beginning of the history of culture. He presented the Jewish nation as foundational for all nations, an argument parallel to Hecataeus' argument on behalf of the Egyptians.

Eupolemus

Another Jewish history from this time period was Eupolemus' *On the Kings of Judaea*.⁷⁸ More is known about his identity than Artapanus or Demetrius, as Eupolemus

⁷⁵ Sterling, *Historiography and Self-Definition*, 179-80. This practice of equating gods with mortal men is commonly known as euhemerism. Mussies correctly points out that what Artapanus is doing with Moses is not strict euhemerism as Moses was already deified even on the Jewish side (91).

⁷⁶ Mussies, "The Interpretatio Judaica of Thot-Hermes," 91.

⁷⁷ Cf. Hecataeus' claim that the Chaldaeans learned to observe the stars from Egyptian priests (Diod. 1.28.1 quoted above).

⁷⁸ Eupolemus' work is given different titles by Eusebius and Clement of Alexandria. Both quote the Jewish historian from Alexander Polyhistor. *On the Kings of Judaea*, provided by Clement at *Strom.* 1.153.4, is to be preferred to *On the Prophecy of Elijah*, given by Eusebius at *Praep. evang.* 9.30.1, as the fragment provided by Eusebius does not match the title (Freudenthal, *Hellenistische Studien*, 105, n. 9).

finds mention outside his own work. In *I Maccabees* 8.17 the priest “Eupolemus son of John” (along with “Jason son of Eleazar”) represents the Jewish people on an embassy to Rome. It seems highly probable that this figure is the same as the author of our work. Eupolemus is an uncommon name and his fragments show an awareness of the temple congruent with priestly authorship.⁷⁹ If this identification is correct, Eupolemus had experience arguing on behalf of the Jews in the political sphere that ran parallel to his literary work. In his national history we find claims concerning Moses that are germane to those of Artapanus. Eusebius quotes the following via Alexander Polyhistor:

Εὐπόλεμος δέ φησι τὸν Μωσῆν πρῶτον σοφὸν γενέσθαι καὶ γράμματα παραδοῦναι τοῖς Ἰουδαίοις πρῶτον, παρὰ δὲ Ἰουδαίων Φοίνικας παραλαβεῖν, Ἕλληνας δὲ παρὰ Φοινίκων, νόμους τε πρῶτον γράψαι Μωσῆν τοῖς Ἰουδαίοις

And Eupolemus says Moses was the first wise man, that he first taught the alphabet to the Jews, and the Phoenicians received it from the Jews, and the Greeks received it from the Phoenicians, and that Moses first wrote laws for the Jews (*Praep. evang.* 9.26.1).⁸⁰

This fragment contains three claims concerning Moses, each important to the history of culture. In all three claims the author grafts the Jewish figure onto the very beginning of culture, naming him πρῶτος in each.

Prominent in this fragment is Eupolemus’ account of the transmission of the alphabet. Eupolemus has Moses teach the alphabet to the Jews, who in turn taught it to the Phoenicians, who in turn taught it to the Greeks. The Phoenicians found their way into

⁷⁹ Sterling, *Historiography and Self-Definition*, 207. Cf. the description of the temple, *Praep. evang.* 9.34. Wacholder observes that, “Excepting the Holy of Holies..., Eupolemus’ abbreviated blueprint omits nothing of significance... Eupolemus appears to be a master of the technical subject matter.” Wacholder, *Eupolemus*, 174.

⁸⁰ Translation by F. Fallon, “Eupolemus: A New Translation and Introduction,” in *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, ed. James H. Charlesworth (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1983), 164 ff.

Greek accounts of the transmission of the alphabet (cf. Hdt. 5.58). Striking here is the absence of Egypt, whose hieroglyphic “animal pictures” figured prominently in other accounts, notably that of Artapanus.⁸¹ But Eupolemus, residing in Palestine, would not have the local connection to Egypt that Artapanus did and apparently did not have a pressing reason to reproduce the story of Egyptian origin of the alphabet. Other versions of the transmission of the alphabet did exist. The transmission of the alphabet directly from Phoenicia to Greece is attested in Herodotus (*op. cit.*): οἱ δὲ Φοίνικες... ἐσήγαγον... ἐς τοὺς Ἕλληνας... γράμματα, οὐκ ἔόντα πρὶν Ἑλλήσι ὡς ἐμοὶ δοκέειν, πρῶτα μὲν τοῖσι καὶ ἅπαντες χρέωνται Φοίνικες (“The Phoenicians... taught the Hellenes the alphabet which, I believe, the Hellenes did not have previously, but was originally used by the Phoenicians.”) Eupolemus supplants the Phoenician claim of originality (πρῶτα) with a Jewish claim.

With the third claim Eupolemus cleverly made a standard Jewish claim relevant to Greek cultural history. Moses is clearly a lawgiver in the canonical text. But the Hebrew text refers to Moses giving the law (in the singular). The Greek translation follows that singular form. When the Greeks spoke of the several lawgivers they knew, they referred to the giving of *laws* (cf. Hdt. 1.29.1). In speaking about Moses in words that echo descriptions of Solon, Eupolemus puts Moses on the same playing field as the Greek lawgivers.⁸²

⁸¹ Cf. Artapanus at *Praep. evang.* 9.27.6, Hecataeus at *FGrHist* 1 F 20, Pliny *NH.* 7.192-193, Tac. *Ann.* 11.14.

⁸² Fallon, "Eupolemus: A New Translation and Introduction," 864 n. f.

At a time when different nations within the hellenistic kingdoms were arguing for the significance of their own nations by writing their own histories in the Greek language, the Jewish historians argued on behalf of their own people by writing histories that showed the importance of their people in the history of culture. In this enterprise, following Hecataeus of Abdera's example, they aimed to bring prestige to their own people. There is no evidence, however, that any Greek or Egyptian ever took notice of these efforts. Demetrius' chronology leaves no legacy in later Greek historiography. Artapanus' innovations on the Moses story have no discernible impact on the popular understanding of Moses. We are left to conclude that the only readers of these authors in their own time were Jewish. There is a discrepancy between the apparent outward-looking aim of these authors (convincing other nations of the importance of the Jews) and the strong likelihood of a predominantly Jewish audience. We do not have any evidence that any non-Jewish Alexandrians read these histories. But within a century, in Rome rather than in Alexandria, Alexander Polyhistor was reading them. It stands to reason that some non-Jewish audience must have taken notice of these histories in order for them to reach Polyhistor.

To explain the reception of these histories, Sterling suggests distinguishing between levels of audience in the case of Artapanus: one "imaginary" audience, i.e. people to whom the author directed his arguments (non-Jews), and one "real-world" audience, i.e. the people who actually read the text (Jews). "The Jews who read this would have to deal with the fragments' imaginary audience in the real world."⁸³ This distinction expresses some of

⁸³ Sterling, *Historiography and Self-Definition*, 183-84.

the complexity in the question of authorship, and shows that those arguing for a pagan audience and those arguing for a Jewish audience are both correct in a sense.⁸⁴ Asserting that Greeks and other non-Jews were an imaginary audience, however, implies that the Jewish historians never intended for their histories to reach non-Jews. A similar argument exists concerning the performance nature of Seneca's tragedies. It has been argued, based on the fact that the tragedies seem to have never been performed, that Seneca never *meant* them to be performed, but rather meant them to be solely written pieces. Others have argued that Seneca wrote the plays as functional dramas even if they never made it to the stage. Hecataeus was employed by Ptolemy to compose his history of the Egyptians; Berossus presented his *Babylaca* to Antiochus. The Jewish authors very likely intended to reach a high level non-Jewish audience with their histories.

⁸⁴ For a pagan audience, see Freudenthal, *Hellenistische Studien*, 144. For Jewish audience, see David Lenz Tiede, *The Charismatic Figure as Miracle Worker* (Missoula, MT: Society of Biblical Literature, 1972), 176.

CHAPTER TWO

MOSES IN FIRST CENTURY HISTORIES

Before *c.* 50 BCE, discussion of Moses in Greek was limited to the east, specifically to Alexandria and Judaea. In the second half of the first century BCE, however, Moses received attention from historians from both sides of the Roman empire. From the east came historians Alexander Polyhistor and Strabo; from the west came Pompeius Trogus and Diodorus Siculus. Each of these historians included an account of Moses and the exodus. Recent political developments probably inspired their interest. Shifting spheres of influence made the region around Judaea volatile. The Macedonians had control of the region from the time of the *Diadochi* onward. The first Greek to march on Jerusalem was Ptolemy I, who besieged the city in 312 BCE. The Seleucids took control of the region at the beginning of the second century BCE. Both Seleucus IV and Antiochus IV Epiphanes attempted to hellenize the region. But resistance to these attempts, especially after Antiochus Epiphanes' failed attempt to hellenize the Jewish temple in 167 BCE, provided an opportunity for powerful Jewish families to expand their domain. The Hasmonean dynasty emerged as a Jewish power base, cutting away at the Greek kingdoms in and around Judaea until quelled by Pompey in his eastern campaign of 63 BCE.¹ Jewish conceptions of religious identity, a pivotal element in Antiochus Epiphanes' failure to bring the region into full submission to Greek rule, and the basis of support for the Hasmoneans, now be-

¹ For this history, see Johannes Niehoff, "Judaism," *Brill's New Pauly: Encyclopaedia of the Ancient World: Antiquity*, ed. Hubert Cancik, et al. (Boston: Brill, 2002). See also the discussion of historical background given in Jürgen Malitz, *Die Historien Des Poseidonios* (München: C.H. Beck, 1983), 302-03.

came important in understanding eastern politics. Moses was widely known as founder and figurehead of the Jews.²

Perhaps because of these historical developments, the Moses who appears in these histories is noticeably different from the one in the Alexandrian Jewish histories. Moses is no longer a sage responsible for cultural achievements, but rather a foundational figure representing the Jewish people as a whole. This chapter does not consider in full the question of the sources for these first-century historians; Posidonius is a likely source for Strabo and Diodorus, while the limited preservation of Pompeius Trogus (in an epitome by Justinus) makes source theories precarious at best. This chapter instead shows that recent events in Judaea, which affected the empires of the Seleucids and the Romans, provided an occasion for discussion of Jewish history and antiquity. The historians presented the antiquity of the Jews in general, and the story of Moses in particular, with a view to contemporary political relations among Hasmoneans, Seleucids, and Romans. While the Alexandrian Jewish historians used the Moses narrative to demonstrate the significance of the Jewish race in the history of culture, the universal historians of the late first century BCE used the story of Moses to shed light on a region and its people that had recently become significant in the struggle for power in the Mediterranean world.

² “Moses was by far the best known figure of Jewish history in the pagan world” (Gager, *Moses in Greco-Roman Paganism*, 18). Alexandrian Jews in previous centuries had praised Joseph, Abraham, and others as foundational figures, yet these receive far less attention in non-Jewish literature than does Moses. Perhaps it is the fitting of Moses into the well known *nomothetes* paradigm that makes him more recognizable to non-Jews.

Diodorus Siculus

The first universal historian to mention Moses, Diodorus Siculus, demonstrates this point rather clearly. Diodorus composed his history of the world, entitled the *Bibliothēkē*, in 40 books, of which only 15 remain. The history spans from mythological times up to 60 BCE. Almost every passage in Diodorus raises questions of source, as Diodorus seems to transmit other historians, changing their words little, rather than writing his own history. Diodorus acknowledges the fact that the Jews emigrated from Egypt. So much is told in the first book of his work—which, as we have already noted, Diodorus seems to have extracted directly from Hecataeus of Abdera (Diod. 1.28.1-3). We encounter Moses in a later section of Diodorus' work, in a discussion of the Seleucid dominion in Judaea. Antiochus VII Sidetes has taken Jerusalem by siege, and his advisors are suggesting that he completely destroy the people of the city. They describe the Jewish people as impious and misanthropic, pointing to their expulsion from Egypt due to leprosy and their isolationism.³ They emphasize this point with the following description of the siege of Jerusalem under Antiochus IV Epiphanes, suggesting that Sidetes act in a similar manner to his predecessor. In the mouth of Sidetes' advisors we encounter (quite physically) the figure Moses:

ὑπέμνησαν δὲ αὐτὸν καὶ περὶ τοῦ προγενομένου μίσους τοῖς προγόνοις πρὸς τοῦτο τὸ ἔθνος. Ἀντίοχος γὰρ ὁ προσαγορευθεὶς Ἐπιφανὴς καταπολεμήσας τοὺς Ἰουδαίους εἰσῆλθεν εἰς τὸν ἄδυτον τοῦ θεοῦ σηκόν, οἱ νόμιμον εἰσιέναι μόνον τὸν ἱερέα· εὐρῶν δὲ ἐν αὐτῷ λίθινον ἄγαλμα ἀνδρὸς βαθυπώγωνος καθήμενον ἐπ' ὄνου, μετὰ χειρὸς ἔχον βιβλίον, τοῦτο μὲν ὑπέλαβε Μωυσέως εἶναι τοῦ κτίσαντος τὰ Ἱεροσόλυμα καὶ συστησαμένου τὸ ἔθνος, πρὸς δὲ τούτοις νομοθετήσαντος τὰ μισάνθρωπα καὶ παράνομα ἔθη τοῖς Ἰουδαίοις· αὐτὸς δὲ στυγήσας τὴν

³ These are typical criticisms of the Jews in Greek literature (Peter Schäfer, *Judeophobia: Attitudes toward the Jews in the Ancient World* [Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997].)

μισανθρωπίαν πάντων ἐθνῶν ἐφιλοτιμήθη καταλῦσαι τὰ νόμιμα. διὸ τῷ ἀγάλματι τοῦ κτίστου καὶ τῷ ὑπαίθρῳ βωμῷ τοῦ θεοῦ μεγάλην ὕν θύσας, τό τε αἷμα προσέχεεν αὐτοῖς, καὶ τὰ κρέα σκευάσας προσέταξε τῷ μὲν ἀπὸ τούτων ζωμῷ τὰς ἱερὰς αὐτῶν βίβλους καὶ περιεχούσας τὰ μισόξενα νόμιμα καταρρᾶναι, τὸν δὲ ἀθάνατον λεγόμενον παρ' αὐτοῖς λύχνον καὶ καιόμενον ἀδιαλείπτως ἐν τῷ ναῷ κατασβέσαι, τῶν τε κρεῶν ἀναγκάσαι προσενέγκασθαι τὸν ἀρχιερέα καὶ τοὺς ἄλλους Ἰουδαίους. Ταῦτα δὴ διεξιόντες οἱ φίλοι τὸν Ἀντίοχον παρεκάλουν μάλιστα μὲν ἄρδην ἀνελεῖν τὸ ἔθνος, εἰ δὲ μή, καταλῦσαι τὰ νόμιμα καὶ συναναγκάσαι τὰς ἀγωγὰς μεταθέσθαι.

His friends reminded Antiochus [Sidetes] also of the enmity that in times past his ancestors had felt for this people. Antiochus, called Epiphanes, on defeating the Jews had entered the innermost sanctuary of the god's temple, where it was lawful for the priest alone to enter. Finding there a marble statue of a heavily bearded man seated on an ass, with a book in his hands, he supposed it to be an image of Moses the founder of Jerusalem and organizer of the nation, the man, moreover, who had ordained for the Jews their misanthropic and lawless customs. And since Epiphanes was shocked by such hatred directed against all mankind, he had set himself to break down their practices. Rehearsing all these events, his friends strongly urged Antiochus to make an end of the race completely, or, failing that, to abolish their laws and force them to change their ways. (Diodorus 34.1.3-4 = Photius, cod. 244, p. 379—Bekker = *FGrHist* II A87 F109)⁴

The image of Moses in the temple serves as the catalyst for Epiphanes' infamous attempt at hellenization of the Jewish religion, including the sacrifice of a sow in the temple which incited the Maccabean revolt (2 Maccabees 5 ff.).⁵ Despite the suggestions of his advisors, the siege ends with Antiochus Sidetes "being a magnanimous and mild-mannered person" (μεγαλόψυχος ὢν καὶ τὸ ἦθος ἥμερος): he takes prisoners and exacts a fee from the people, but chooses not to destroy Judaism (Diod. 34.1.5).

⁴ Translation from Diodorus, "Diodorus of Sicily in Twelve Volumes," in *The Loeb Classical Library*, ed. Francis R. Walton (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1950).

⁵ The image is recognized as Moses because the innermost sanctuary of a temple is the appropriate place for a founder. For more on images of founders and the appropriateness (in the Greek mindset) of such in the Jewish temple, see E. J. Bickerman, "Ritualmord Und Eselskult: Ein Beitrag Zur Geschichte Antiker Publizistik," in *Studies in Jewish and Christian History* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1976), 260.

Many scholars have argued that Diodorus borrowed this passage from Posidonius of Apamea.⁶ A Stoic philosopher from Syria who later settled in Rhodes, Posidonius was an important figure in the first half of the first century BCE, receiving visits from Cicero, Pompey, and many notable intellectuals.⁷ The greater part of Diodorus' thirty-fourth book seems to follow Posidonius quite closely.⁸ A passage in Josephus' *Contra Apionem* seems to point to Posidonius as the source of the slanderous claim that the temple in Jerusalem contains a statue of an ass (2.79-80). Josephus includes this detail in a section concerning calumnies by Greeks and Romans about Jewish temple ritual: *Ammiror autem etiam eos, qui ei huiusmodi fomitem praebuerunt id est Posidonium et Apollonium Molonis...in hoc enim sacrario Apion praesumpsit edicere asini caput collocasse Iudaeos* ("I am no less amazed at the authors who supplied him [the anti-Jewish Apion] with his materials, I mean Posidonius and Apollonius Molon... Within this sanctuary Apion has the effrontery to assert that the Jews kept an ass' head.") It is difficult to know what exactly in this passage goes back to Posidonius, a situation made worse by the fact that *Contra Apionem* 2.52-113 is not extant in its original Greek form but must be understood from a translation made by Cassiodorus (c. 490- c. 585 CE). The temple statue we encounter in Diodo-

⁶ Supporting this view are: Eduard Schwartz, "Diodoros," in *Paulys Real-encyclopaedie der classischen Altertumswissenschaft* (Stuttgart: J.B. Metzler, 1903), 690-91, Jacoby, *Fgrhist*, IIIC, f. 157, I. G. Kidd, *Posidonius* (Cambridge: University Press, 1972), vol. II, p. 949, Stern, *Greek and Latin Authors on Jews and Judaism*, 1.142-43, 68, Bickerman, "Eselskult," 260, Malitz, *Die Historien des Poseidonios*, 302-23, Katell Berthelot, "Poseidonios D'apamée Et Les Juifs," *Journal for the Study of Judaism* XXXIV, no. 2 (2003). While these authors represent a scholarly consensus, most iterate that, as Diodorus' source is not mentioned, the Posidonius source theory is not proven.

⁷ For information on Posidonius, see Karl Reinhardt, *Poseidonios* (München: C.H. Beck, 1921) and *Kosmos Und Sympathie* (München: C.H. Beck, 1926). See also his extensive article in *RE* 41 (1953), as well as Kidd, *Posidonius*; Malitz, *Die Historien Des Poseidonios*.

⁸ Stern, *Greek and Latin Authors on Jews and Judaism*, v. 1, pp. 167-68.

rus is the heavily bearded Moses riding an ass, while Josephus describes an image of the head of an ass (evidently described by Apion following Posidonius or Apollonius Molon). The story exists in other forms in other authors, including Tacitus and Plutarch (Tac. *Hist.* 5.4; Plut. *Quaest. conv.* 4.5.2).⁹ Bickermann concludes that Posidonius (as represented here in Diodorus) has mollified an earlier, cruder view that the Jews worship an ass—a view that appears in stark form in Tacitus (*Hist.* 5.4).¹⁰ Regardless of how the motif of the ass in the temple developed, it seems evident that Josephus saw both Apollonius Molon and Posidonius as the source for Apion on this point.¹¹ Josephus' comment thus supports the theory of a Posidonian source.

Besides the mention of the statue, Diodorus mentions the customs that Moses had come to symbolize. The words used to describe these customs (μισάνθρωπα and μισόξενα) are central to the critique of Judaism among Greeks of the time.¹² In the minds of the Greeks, the Jewish refusal to share a table with other peoples, as well as their reported expulsion from Egypt, supported such charges.¹³ The passage, however, is much more complex than simply expressing anti-Jewish sentiment, for Sidetes in the end does not follow the advice given to him. Why? The text does not suggest that he had any special admiration for the Jews. Indeed, the historian's attitude toward the Jews in this passage is obscure: the image of the donkey is clearly negative, but the book in the hands of the rider Moses seems positive. In the end Sidetes is praised for not taking the advice, making clear

⁹ See also Mnaseas *apud* Joseph *Ap.* 2.112-114; Suidas, s.v. "Damocritus."

¹⁰ Bickerman, "Eselskult," 260.

¹¹ As it did to Stern, *Greek and Latin Authors on Jews and Judaism*, vol. I, p. 141.

¹² Schäfer, *Judeophobia*.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 170-77.

that the views of the advisors cannot be directly understood as the views of the historian. In any case, it seems that Sidetes was practicing the sort of moderation appropriate for a ruler and was praised for it.¹⁴ Posidonius' Stoic beliefs (if he indeed is the source for Diodorus here), as represented in other fragments attributed to him, dictated that rulers should exercise moderation in dealing with conquered peoples.¹⁵

Indeed Posidonius was in a position to be well-informed about the views of hellenistic kings (like Sidetes and Epiphanes) towards the Jews. Growing up in Apamea and as a member of what seems to have been one of the most powerful families in the region, he would have had contact with Jews and likely have heard the discussions of Jews among powerful Greeks in his area.¹⁶ He would certainly have come in contact with the Seleucid court's view on Judaeian politics, which he puts in the mouth of the advisors here. Thus, the image of Moses and the passions it elicits in Antiochus Epiphanes stand as a commentary on Seleucid politics: Posidonius' narrative praises the magnanimity and mild-mannered character of Sidetes, indicating that the ruler who acts with moderation toward conquered peoples (like the Jews) is a better ruler. The discussion of Moses in this narrative gives the background of a newly important people, one that the readers cannot be expected to know much about, yet one that the author feels is important enough to warrant a short description. While the author mentions Moses and the antiquity of the Jewish race,

¹⁴ Most recently Berthelot, who supports this claim with evidence in Strabo: "Poseidonios d'Apamée et les Juifs," 160-98. See also Stern, *Greek and Latin Authors on Jews and Judaism*, vol. I, p. 142.

¹⁵ E.g. Diod. 33.15.1, where the king of Pergamum Attalus II is praised for his humanity in dealing with Thracian captives, and is contrasted with a certain Diégylis, "hated by his subjects because of his rapacity and his extreme cruelty."

¹⁶ Malitz, *Die Historien des Poseidonios*, 303.

recent political developments remain the focus. Moses is mentioned, but the passions of the Seleucid kings are really the story.

Strabo of Amasia

The historian Strabo of Amasia gives an account of the founder of the Jews, his achievements, and his successors, in a passage that culminates with the Roman victory over Jerusalem under Pompey (63 BCE). This passage on Moses is an ethnographic excursus, consistent with Greek historiographical style from Herodotus onwards. The excursus introduces information about a lesser-known people—one significant in the immediate politics of the region, here a nation conquered by Pompey. As in Diodorus, the figure of Moses is the starting point for a discussion of the Jewish people. The passage tells of the Egyptian origin of the Jews, describing Moses as an Egyptian priest. Here Moses is presented as a wise theologian—decrying anthropomorphism and theriomorphism in a seemingly Stoic manner:

Μωσῆς γάρ τις τῶν Αἰγυπτίων ἱερέων ἔχων τι μέρος τῆς [κάτω] καλουμένης χώρας, ἀπῆρεν ἐκεῖσε ἐνθένδε δυσχεράνας τὰ καθεστῶτα, καὶ συνεξῆραν αὐτῷ πολλοὶ τιμῶντες τὸ θεῖον. ἔφη γὰρ ἐκεῖνος καὶ ἐδίδασκεν, ὥς οὐκ ὀρθῶς φρονοῖεν οἱ Αἰγύπτιοι θηρίοις εἰκάζοντες καὶ βοσκήμασι τὸ θεῖον, οὐδ' οἱ Λίβυες· οὐκ εὖ δὲ οὐδ' οἱ Ἕλληνες ἀνθρωπομόρφους τυποῦντες· εἴη γὰρ ἐν τοῦτο μόνον θεὸς τὸ περιέχον ἡμᾶς ἅπαντας καὶ γῆν καὶ θάλατταν, ὃ καλοῦμεν οὐρανὸν καὶ κόσμον καὶ τὴν τῶν ὄντων φύσιν. τούτου δὴ τίς ἂν εἰκόνα πλάττειν θαρρήσειε νοῦν ἔχων ὁμοίαν τινὶ τῶν παρ' ἡμῖν; ἀλλ' ἐὰν δεῖν πᾶσαν ξοανοποιίαν, τέμενος [δ'] ἀφορίσαντας καὶ σηκὸν ἀξιόλογον τιμᾶν ἔδους χωρίς.

Moses, namely, was one of the Aegyptian priests, and held a part of Lower Aegypt, as it is called, but he went away from there to Judaea, since he was displeased with the state of affairs there, and was accompanied by many people who worshipped the Divine Being. For he says, and taught, that the Aegyptians were mistaken in

representing the Divine Being by the images of beasts and cattle, as were also the Libyans; and that the Greeks were also wrong in modeling gods in human form; for, according to him, God is this one thing alone that encompasses us all and encompasses land and sea—the thing which we call heaven, or universe, or the nature of all that exists. What man, then, if he has sense, could be bold enough to fabricate an image of God resembling any creature amongst us? Nay, people should leave off all image-carving, and, setting apart a sacred precinct and a worthy sanctuary, should worship God without an image... (Strabo 16.2.35)¹⁷

Moses' theological position thus stands in stark contrast with the well-known Greek and Egyptian portrayals of gods. Having thus described Moses' objection to Egyptian cult practices, Strabo tells of Moses leading his people out of Egypt. Moses and his followers left Egypt of their own accord.¹⁸ He chose an unenviable location—rocky and dry Jerusalem—to establish his city. Taking the region without a serious fight, Moses focused his people on making well-proportioned sacrifices. He was a successful leader and enjoyed the favor of his nation and its neighbors:

Ἐκεῖνος μὲν οὖν τοιαῦτα λέγων ἔπεισεν εὐγνώμονας ἄνδρας οὐκ ὀλίγους καὶ ἀπήγαγεν ἐπὶ τὸν τόπον τοῦτον, ὅπου νῦν ἐστὶ τὸ ἐν τοῖς Ἱεροσολύμοις κτίσμα. κατέσχε δὲ ῥαδίως οὐκ ἐπίφθονον ὃν τὸ χωρίον οὐδ' ὑπὲρ οὗ ἂν τις ἐσπουδασμένως μαχέσαιο· ἔστι γὰρ πετρῶδες, αὐτὸ μὲν εὐνδρον τὴν δὲ κύκλῳ χώραν ἔχον λυπρὰν καὶ ἄνυδρον, τὴν δ' ἐντὸς ἐξήκοντα σταδίων καὶ ὑπόπετρον. ἅμα δ' ἀντὶ τῶν ὀπλῶν τὰ ἱερὰ προὔβάλλετο καὶ τὸ θεῖον, ἱδρυσιν τούτου ζητεῖν ἀξιῶν, καὶ παραδώσειν ὑπισχνούμενος τοιοῦτον σεβασμὸν καὶ τοιαύτην ἱεροποιίαν ἣτις οὔτε δαπάναις ὀχλήσει τοὺς χρωμένους οὔτε θεοφορίαις οὔτε ἄλλαις πραγματείαις ἀτόποις. οὗτος μὲν οὖν εὐδοκμήσας τούτοις συνεστήσατο ἀρχὴν οὐ τὴν τυχοῦσαν, ἀπάντων προσχωρησάντων ῥαδίως τῶν κύκλῳ διὰ τὴν ὁμιλίαν καὶ τὰ προτεινόμενα.

Now Moses, saying things of this kind, persuaded not a few thoughtful men and led them away to this place where the settlement of Jerusalem now is; and he easily

¹⁷ Translation of Strabo by H. L. Jones: *The geography*, Loeb Classical Library (London: Heinemann, 1928).

¹⁸ The majority of Egyptian, Greek, and Roman accounts, beginning with Hecataeus of Abdera, describe the departure of the Jews from Egypt as an expulsion due to plague or dislike rather than a willing exodus on the part of the Jews: Gager, *Moses in Greco-Roman Paganism*, 113, Schäfer, *Judeophobia*, 15.

took possession of the place, since it was not a place that would be looked on with envy, nor yet one for which anyone would make a serious fight; for it is rocky, and, although it itself is well-supplied with water, its surrounding territory is barren and waterless, and the part of the territory within a radius of sixty stadia is also rocky beneath the surface. At the same time Moses, instead of using arms, put forward as defense his sacrifices and his Divine Being, being resolved to seek a seat of worship for Him and promising to deliver to the people a kind of worship and a kind of ritual which would not oppress those who adopted them either with expenses or with divine obsessions or with other absurd troubles. Now Moses enjoyed fair repute with these people, and organized no ordinary kind of government, since the peoples all round, one and all, came over to him, because of his dealings with them and of the prospects he held out to them. (Strabo 16.2.36)

Moses may have been successful in founding a pious nation and ruling justly. But in Strabo's narrative the successors of Moses do not follow in his footsteps. They soon descend into superstition and tyranny, causing havoc in the region:

Οἱ δὲ διαδεξάμενοι χρόνους μὲν τινὰς ἐν τοῖς αὐτοῖς διέμενον δικαιοπραγοῦντες καὶ θεοσεβεῖς ὡς ἀληθῶς ὄντες, ἔπειτ' ἐφισταμένων ἐπὶ τὴν ἱερωσύνην τὸ μὲν πρῶτον δεισιδαιμόνων, ἔπειτα τυραννικῶν ἀνθρώπων, ἐκ μὲν τῆς δεισιδαιμονίας αἱ τῶν βρωμάτων ἀποσχέσεις, ὥνπερ καὶ νῦν ἔθος ἐστὶν αὐτοῖς ἀπέχεσθαι, καὶ [αἱ] περιτομαὶ καὶ αἱ ἐκτομαὶ καὶ εἴ τινα τοιαῦτα ἐνομίσθη, ἐκ δὲ τῶν τυραννίδων τὰ ληστήρια. οἱ μὲν γὰρ ἀφιστάμενοι τὴν χώραν ἐκάκουν καὶ αὐτὴν καὶ τὴν γειτονιώσαν, οἱ δὲ συμπράττοντες τοῖς ἄρχουσι καθήρπαζον τὰ ἀλλότρια καὶ τῆς Συρίας κατεστρέφοντο καὶ τῆς Φοινίκης πολλήν.

His successors for some time abided by the same course, acting righteously and being truly pious towards God; but afterwards, in the first place, superstitious men were appointed to the priesthood, and then tyrannical people; and from superstition arose abstinence from flesh, from which it is their custom to abstain even to-day, and circumcisions and excisions and other observances of the kind. And from the tyrannies arose the bands of robbers; for some revolted and harassed the country, both their own country and that of their neighbors, whereas others, cooperating with the rulers, seized the property of others and subdued much of Syria and Phoenicia. (Strabo 16.2.37)

Several elements prominent in presentations of Moses during the Hellenistic period in Alexandria recur in this passage. The idea that Moses was an Egyptian priest seems to have

appeared first in Manetho—himself an Egyptian priest—who said that Moses was “a native to Heliopolis,” “a priest who framed their constitution” (*apud* Joseph C.A. 1.250 = *FGrHist* III C609 F10). The Jewish Artapanus tells us that Moses was highly esteemed among the priests (*apud* Eusebius *Praep. evang.* 9.27.6).¹⁹ Likewise the command to leave off image-making was already attributed to Moses in the hellenistic period. Hecataeus of Abdera mentions that Moses commanded that no images be made for the Israelites because God does not have human form (*apud* Diod. 40.3 = *FGrHist* III A364.F6).²⁰ The argument that we see here in Strabo seems more detailed and developed than that in Hecataeus. Hecataeus simply describes an aversion on Moses’ part to representations of gods in human form; Moses in Strabo takes a stand against both anthropomorphism and theriomorphism, the latter of which is more significant in Egyptian religion.

Scholars have generally ascribed this passage, like the passage in Diodorus, to Posidonius. Although this attribution, popular since the early twentieth century, has received occasional critiques, it has remained the scholarly consensus. Menahem Stern’s 1974 commentary on this passage includes a superb summary of modern scholarship on the issue.²¹ To his discussion we can add the more recent voices of Jürgen Malitz (1983), Katell Berthelot (2003), and René Bloch (2004), each of whom argues for Posidonius as a

¹⁹ Berthelot, “Poseidonios d’Apamée et les Juifs,” 169.

²⁰ ἄγαλμα δὲ θεῶν τὸ σύνολον οὐ κατεσκεύασε διὰ τὸ μὴ νομίζειν ἀνθρωπόμορφον εἶναι τὸν θεόν (“But he had no images whatsoever of the gods made for them [the Jews], being of the opinion that God is not of human form.”)

²¹ Stern, *Greek and Latin Authors on Jews and Judaism*, v. 1, p. 261–315. Gager argues that the passage is of Jewish origin: *Moses in Greco-Roman Paganism*, 38 ff.

source.²² Strabo cites Posidonius explicitly at 16.2.43 in reference to asphalt in the area of the Dead Sea. While most scholars would agree that this citation is for geographical information only and does not refer to the excursus on Moses, the citation shows that Strabo did consult Posidonius on the land of the Jews. For now we will accept the prevailing belief that Posidonius influenced or was the source for both passages, keeping in mind that a discussion of how the two passages relate regardless of authorship is important for the understanding of Moses at that time.

While the story of Moses here is rather unsurprising in its structure (departing little from the biblical narrative), the author gives special attention to two elements. The first is Mosaic theology, which shuns cult image, particularly in the form of men or beasts. While Moses' objection to anthropomorphic representations of god appears in Hecataeus (*apud* Diod. 90.3.4), here it appears in an expanded form. The subject takes up the first half of the story, and is the substance of Moses message to his people. The special weight that the author gives to this element is distinctive.²³ The second element is the structural form of a markedly positive, idealized period of time followed by decline. First is the idealized description of Moses and the peaceful society that he leads (16.2.35-36). Change comes with his successors, who eventually turn away from his directives. Superstition and tyranny follow. The development in Strabo of the story of Moses is congruent with a Senecan passage that describes Posidonius' view of the golden age (*Ep.* 90.5-6). Posidonius is

²² Malitz, *Die Historien des Poseidonios*, 302-23, Berthelot, "Poseidonios d'Apamée et les Juifs.", René Bloch, "Posidonian Thoughts—Ancient and Modern," *Journal for the Study of Judaism* 35, no. 3 (2004). B. Bar-Kochva also argues for a Posidonian source: "Mosaic Judaism and Judaism of the Second Temple Period—the Jewish Ethnography of Strabo (in Hebrew)," *Tarbiz* 66, no. 3 (1997), 330 ff.

²³ For a discussion of these Stoic beliefs see Berthelot, "Poseidonios d'Apamée et les Juifs," 166-68 and works cited there.

said to believe that “in that age which is maintained to be the golden age... the government was under the jurisdiction of the wise” (*illo ergo saeculo, quod aureum perhibent, penes sapientes fuisse regnum Posidonius iudicat*).²⁴ *Prudentia*, *fortitudo*, and *beneficentia* distinguish this wise golden age ruler, much like Moses during his rule as described in Strabo (*cp.* οὐτε... ὁχλήσει [Strabo 16.2.36]). This idealized age in Seneca ends with the introduction of tyranny: “vice stole in and kingdoms were transformed into tyrannies” (*subrepentibus vitiis in tyrannidem regna conversa sunt* [Ep. 90.6]). Likewise, tyranny marks the end of the idealized Mosaic age in Strabo, as the successors of Moses turn away from his directives (16.2.37). The description in Seneca (which is attributed to Posidonius in the text) mentions ‘golden,’ while that in Strabo (attributed to Posidonius by modern scholars) does not; but it seems that there is a common conception in both texts of an initial idealized phase, followed by tyranny and rapid decline.²⁵

This *topos* is best detected, as Davies rightly points out, by the presence of negation in description of the ‘golden’ age; such negation implies that a degradation is to follow, one which the reader could use as a contrast.²⁶ Davies says that such characterization of a pre-fall state is common in Greek descriptions of the Elysian Fields, Jewish and Christian descriptions of the Garden of Eden, and descriptions of the golden age, a phenomenon he

²⁴ Translation of Seneca from Richard M. Gummere, *Ad Lucilium Epistulae Morales* (London: W. Heinemann) 1917.

²⁵ For the idea of ‘golden’ age in Seneca and Strabo, see Bloch, “Posidonian Thoughts,” 287: “The parallels between Posidonius’ developmental history as summarized by Seneca and Strabo’s interpretation of Jewish history are striking: wise leadership is replaced by tyranny.”

²⁶ Davies cites a variety of sources to show that ancient authors often used negation in describing “Blissful Life”, a catch-all term he uses for the Elysian Fields, the Garden of Eden, or the Golden Age: Malcolm Davies, “Description by Negation: History of a Thought-Pattern in Ancient Accounts of Blissful Life,” *Prometheus Twelve* (1987), 265-84.

calls ‘contrast by negation.’ Use of negation is detectable in Strabo’s text, and examining these negations gives us a better understanding of the overall message of his narrative. Three negative statements in the first stage (the ‘golden’ age) are particularly noteworthy (16.2.36). The first concerns the location where Moses decided to settle: he chose “*not* a place that would be looked on with envy, *nor* yet one for which anyone would make a serious fight,” but rocky Jerusalem. Then, when defending that place, he chooses to use *not* arms, but “sacrifices and his Divine Being.” Last, Moses enacted the kind of religious practices that would “*not* oppress those who adopted them either with expenses or with divine obsessions or with other absurd troubles.” Not surprisingly, each one of these practices is reversed in the age of the tyrannical successors. They fought over land in Syria and Phoenicia. They subdued that land, presumably with arms. And they instituted a series of oppressive and troubling customs, including abstinence from flesh and circumcision. The text at the transition between the two ages (16.2.37) does not specify who these “successors” are. Presumably, they could be anyone living between the time of Moses and the time of Posidonius. But the series of degradations that Strabo (using Posidonius) describes makes it almost certain that he is speaking of the Hasmonean dynasty. The Hasmoneans had taken advantage of instability in the Macedonian kingdoms in Judaea and Syria to carve out an empire of their own. They were constantly fighting and expanding borders, practicing forced Judaization in Idumaea and Samaria.²⁷ The negating categorization of ‘golden’ age Mosaic Judaism—not oppressive, not using weapons, not fighting over territo-

²⁷ Nock pointed out in his 1959 article that Posidonius would have been, due to his nativity and upbringing in the region, keenly aware of the practices of the Hasmoneans: “A man born at Apamea could have had his reasons for drawing a bitter contrast between ideal and contemporary Judaism: once upon a time neighboring peoples flocked to join the Jewish state, now circumcision or exile is imposed upon Idumaeans and Ituraeans” (Arthur Darby Nock, “Posidonius,” *The Journal of Roman Studies* 49 (1959), 6).

ry—is clearly a criticism of contemporary Hasmonean Judaism.²⁸ If there were any doubt in section 16.2.37 about the identity of the tyrannical successors, Strabo dispels it in 16.2.40, by naming Alexander Jannaeus as one of the tyrants who succeeded Moses.²⁹

While the generally accepted common authorship of the passages about Moses in Strabo and in Diodorus makes a comparison logical, one issue at first seems to prevent such a comparison: the differing evaluations of Moses. Strabo's excursus presents Moses as a wise prophet and leader, in keeping with Posidonius' philosophical views. The image of the bearded Moses seated on an ass in the temple, and the response it elicits from Antiochus Epiphanes in Diodorus' text, appear at first to be anti-Jewish.³⁰ The narrative context, however, as I have noted, makes clear that the historian Diodorus could not have been of the same persuasion as the advisors to Antiochus Sidetes—who is praised for sparing the city of Jerusalem—and Posidonius' own view of moderation precludes that he was of such a persuasion. The difference in tone in the description of Moses in the two passages, there-

²⁸ On this, see Bloch, "Posidonian Thoughts," 287-88.

²⁹ Strabo again makes a clear contrast at 16.2.40 between the 'golden' age and the degraded age: τοιοῦτος δέ τις ἦν καὶ ὁ Μωσῆς καὶ οἱ διαδεξάμενοι ἐκεῖνον, τὰς μὲν ἀρχὰς λαβόντες οὐ φαύλας ἐκτραπόμενοι δ' ἐπὶ τὸ χεῖρον. Ἦδη δ' οὖν φανερώς τυραννουμένης τῆς Ἰουδαίας πρῶτος ἀνθ' ἱερέως ἀνέδειξεν ἑαυτὸν βασιλέα Ἀλέξανδρος ("Moses was such a person, as also his successors, who, with no bad beginning, turned out for the worse. At any rate, when now Judaea was under the rule of tyrants, Alexander [Jannaeus] was the first to declare himself king instead of priest").

³⁰ Indeed, some modern scholars have gone so far as to identify the Diodorus passage as western society's first expression of anti-Semitism: Schäfer, *Judeophobia*, 26. But Schäfer points out that it is anachronistic to speak of "anti-Semitism"—a term first used in the late nineteenth century—in the ancient world. There was a standard set of critiques of Judaism in the ancient world, but those critiques were not the same as those that arose in the modern world (for instance, in early twentieth century Germany). Furthermore, the categorization of ancient authors as either pro-Jewish or anti-Jewish, or sympathetic to Judaism or anti-Semitic, tends to obscure the complexity of the critiques of Judaism. In Strabo in particular, we encounter praise of Mosaic Judaism coupled with disparaging remarks on Hasmonean Judaism, a view that defies either 'pro' or 'anti' categorization.

fore, does not necessarily indicate that the two passages came from different sources, or that the two represent different historical viewpoints.

Rather, the two passages represent critiques of different aspects of contemporary politics. The Diodorus passage, as I have noted, critiques the immoderate cruelty of Antiochus Epiphanes, contrasting his behavior with that of Sidetes. The passage in Strabo, on the other hand, can be read as a critique of Hasmonean politics.

Pompeius Trogus

During the early part of Augustus' reign, a historian from Gaul named Pompeius Trogus composed a universal history called *Historiae Philippicae*. From the Vocontii, Trogus' family received citizenship from Pompey after Trogus' grandfather had served in his army in Spain in the 70s BCE. Julius Caesar employed Trogus' father to manage his correspondence.³¹ A third-generation Roman from the west and the son of a literary man, Trogus composed his history in Latin rather than in Greek. We know Trogus only from a series of anonymous *Prologi* and an epitome by the late antique historian Justinus.³² From Justinus' epitome we know the general structure of the original text, even if much of the

³¹ Much of the biographical information on Trogus is known from Justinus' *Epitome*, at the end of Book 43.

³² The date of Justinus' work has been variously assigned, from the second century to the fifth century CE. On the reception of Pompeius Trogus in late antiquity and the dating of Justinus, see Ronald Syme, "The Date of Justin and the Discovery of Trogus," in *Roman Papers*, ed. Anthony Richard Birley (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1979). In reality, Justinus' work is not a true epitome. He himself calls it a "*florum corpusculum*" of the original, implying, as has been observed, that the end product is more of an anthology or collection than a epitome: J. M. Alonso-Núñez, "An Augustan World History: The 'Historiae Philippicae' of Pompeius Trogus," *Greece & Rome* 34, no. 1 (1987), 59, R. Develin, "Introduction," in *Epitome of the Philippic History of Pompeius Trogus* (Atlanta, Ga.: Scholars Press, 1994), 3-4.

style has been lost. In that epitome is an excursus on the origin of the Jews which includes a discussion of Moses. Trogus' placement of this excursus (as we see it in Justinus) is similar to that of Diodorus; it comes during the narration of the Seleucid dynasty's contact with Judaea. Trogus begins his description of the Jews in Damascus:

Namque Iudaeis origo Damascena, Syriae nobilissima civitas... Nomen urbi a Damasco rege inditum... Post Damascum Azelus, mox Adores et Abrahames et Israhel reges fuere.

The origin of the Jews was from Damascus, the most illustrious city of Syria... The name of the city was given by King Damascus... After Damascus, Azelus, and then Adores, Abraham, and Israhel were their kings.³³ (*apud Justinus Historiae Philippi-cae* 36 Epitoma 2.1-3)

This description is followed by a short account of Abraham dividing his land among his sons (here ten rather than twelve). One son, Joseph is then described in more detail:

Minimus aetate inter fratres Ioseph fuit, cuius excellens ingenium fratres veriti clam interceptum peregrinis mercatoribus vendiderunt. A quibus deportatus in Aegyptum, cum magicas ibi artes sollerti ingenio percepisset, brevi ipsi regi percarus fuit. Nam et prodigiorum sagacissimus erat et somniorum primus intellegentiam condidit... Filius eius Moyses fuit, quem praeter paternae scientiae hereditatem etiam formae pulchritudo commendabat. Sed Aegyptii, cum scabiem et vitiliginem paterentur, responso moniti eum cum aegris, ne pestis ad plures serperet, terminis Aegypti pellunt. Dux igitur exulum factus sacra Aegyptiorum furto abstulit, quae repetentes armis Aegyptii domum redire tempestatibus compulsi sunt. Itaque Moyses Damascena, antiqua patria, repetita montem Sinam occupat, in quo septem dierum ieiunio per deserta Arabiae cum populo suo fatigatus cum tandem uenisset, septimum diem more gentis Sabbata appellatum in omne aeuum ieiunio sacrauit, quoniam illa dies famem illis erroremque finierat.

The youngest of the brothers [sons of Abraham] was Joseph, whom the others, fearing his extraordinary abilities, secretly made prisoner and sold to some foreign merchants. Being carried by them into Egypt, and having there, by his shrewd nature, made himself master of the arts of magic, he found great favor with the king; for he was eminently skilled in prodigies, and was the first to establish the science of interpreting dreams... His son was Moyses, whom, besides the inheritance of his

³³ Translated by J. S. Watson (1902).

father's knowledge, the comeliness of his person also recommended. But the Egyptians, being troubled with scabies and leprosy, and moved by some oracular prediction, expelled him, with those who had the disease, out of Egypt, that the distemper might not spread among a greater number. Becoming leader, accordingly, of the exiles, he carried off by stealth the sacred utensils of the Egyptians, who, endeavoring to recover them by force of arms, were obliged by tempests to return home; and Moses, having reached Damascus, the birth-place of his forefathers, took possession of mount Sinai, on his arrival at which, after having suffered, together with his followers, from a seven days' fast in the deserts of Arabia, he consecrated every seventh day (according to the present custom of the nation) for a fast-day, and to be perpetually called a sabbath, because that day had ended at once their hunger and their wanderings (*apud Justinus, Historiae Philippicae*, 36 Epitoma, 2.6-14).

Trogus' excursus on the origin of the Jews clearly combines several versions: one Damascene, one Jewish, and one that seems to originate in hellenistic Alexandria.³⁴ The Damascene version says that the Jews were originally from Damascus (*Iudaeis origo Damascena...fuit* 34.2.1) and the Jewish patriarchs (specifically Abraham and Israhel) were in fact kings of that city. With so many hellenistic sources for Egyptian origin of the Jews, it is surprising to find Trogus arguing for an origin in the opposite geographical direction.

Trogus is not the only author to assert Damascene origin. We learn from Josephus that Nicolaus of Damascus identifies Abraham as king of Damascus: Ἀβράμης ἐβασίλευσεν ἔπηλυσ σὺν στρατῷ ἀφιγμένος ἐκ τῆς γῆς τῆς ὑπὲρ Βαβυλῶνος Χαλδαίων λεγομένης ("Abrames reigned in Damascus, a foreigner who had come with an army from the country beyond Babylon called the land of the Chaldees," Joseph *AJ* 1.159 =

³⁴ For these versions, see Gager, Stern, and Schäfer. Gager identifies three: the biblical account of the exodus or, as seems more likely, a later Jewish account of the same; a Damascene tradition which placed the origin of the Jews in Damascus; and a modified Egyptian account of the exodus similar to the versions of the Alexandrians and Tacitus (Gager, *Moses in Greco-Roman Paganism*, 55). Stern is similar: "a biblical version, a Damascene version, and the hostile Graeco-Egyptian version" Stern, *Greek and Latin Authors on Jews and Judaism*, vol. 1, p. 332. Schäfer, however, describes just two sources: the Damascene and the "Egyptian Exodus tradition" Schäfer, *Judeophobia*, 26. It is worthy of note that Trogus, a historian from the west, includes details in his history that so clearly fall in line with the biblical text.

Euseb. *PE* 9.16 = *FGrHist* II A90 F19). Nicolaus' comment is more significant than Trogus'; while Trogus wrote about Damascus as a distant city, Nicolaus was a native, albeit a hellenized one, of Damascus. He was born there c. 64 BCE to a distinguished family. Even after becoming a Peripatetic philosopher and later a tutor for the children of Marcus Antonius and Cleopatra VII, as well as an advisor to Herod I, he retained his citizenship in that eastern city. The practice of philosophers at the time was to abandon the citizenship of non-Greek cities in favor of citizenship in famous Greek cities.³⁵ It is not evident whether Nicolaus chose to portray himself as a descendant of the Greek-speaking population of that city or the native Aramaic Syrians, but it is clear that he was not ashamed of his place of origin. It seems likely, as Wacholder has pointed out, that Nicolaus' aim in telling (or retelling) the story of Damascene origin was to express pride in his own native city.³⁶ Whether the Damascene origin of the Jews, which Trogus and Nicolaus have in common, comes from a common source is uncertain. But it is clear that there was a Damascene account of the origin of the Jews, of which both authors are aware. Nicolaus' presence in the court of Herod would have made him more aware of the Jewish historical narrative; Abraham in his account therefore naturally comes from the land of the Chaldees. Trogus, on the other hand, shows his awareness of the Jewish tradition by giving Mount Sinai an important role in the *origo*, even while betraying his ignorance of Judaeon geography when mentioning Sinai (34.2.14).

³⁵ Stern, *Greek and Latin Authors on Jews and Judaism*, v. 1, 231, Ben Zion Wacholder, *Nicolaus of Damascus* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1962), 15.

³⁶ Wacholder, *Nicolaus*, 55.

This Jewish tradition is the second version that we find in the Trogus narrative. Several elements indicate Trogus' familiarity (or the familiarity of Trogus' source) with the biblical account. The division of Israel's land among his sons is one such element—even if there is some uncertainty about the number of sons (36.2.4-5). So also the tale of Joseph sold to merchants and kidnapped to Egypt matches the account in *Exodus* (36.2.7). The physical description of Moses suggests some knowledge of the *Septuagint*; Trogus remarks on Moses' physical beauty (*formae pulchritudo*, 36.2.11), while at *Exodus* 2.2 Moses is called ἀστειός.³⁷ The furtive theft of the Egyptian *sacra* and the subsequent attempt on the part of the Egyptians to recover them seem at first to be departures from the biblical narrative. Both, however, have roots in the narrative in *Exodus* (whether from the Hebrew original or the *Septuagint*). *Exodus* 12.35-36 relates that the departing Jews took with them silver objects from the Egyptians and engaged in plundering.³⁸ The Egyptians do pursue the Jews in the biblical account, but simply to prevent them from leaving; Trogus' narrative suggests that the Egyptians wanted the Jews (infected by disease) to emigrate, but to do so without their *sacra*. A natural impediment cuts short the pursuit in both accounts—although the miraculous splitting and refilling of the Red Sea is absent in Trogus' narrative. This seems to be an attempt to demythologize the biblical account,³⁹ although we cannot say whether Trogus is the originator of the detail. In each of these instances the

³⁷ Gager, *Moses in Greco-Roman Paganism*, 50, Stern, *Greek and Latin Authors on Jews and Judaism*, v. 1, 340.

³⁸ Gager, *Moses in Greco-Roman Paganism*, 55.

³⁹ Ibid.

story narrated is clearly the same between the two accounts, although the details have been at times adjusted by the historian.⁴⁰

The third version that we hear echoed in Trogus is from the Alexandrian historiographic tradition, characterized by an interest in national histories and the transmission of culture. As I have shown, some of these accounts of the transmission of culture and national history come in Jewish authors. But what makes this version different from the Jewish version is its clear affinity for the Alexandrian view of history. The focus on the characters of Joseph and Moses (commenting much more briefly on Abraham) shows this affinity. As we have seen, the Alexandrian Jewish sources showed special interest in the part of their history that had ties to Egypt, and therefore, Joseph and Moses received more attention. Artapanus in particular presented Joseph and Moses as strikingly similar foundational figures; both had close relations with the king of Egypt, both were politically powerful, and both were said to be responsible for dividing the land of Egypt.⁴¹ Trogus mentions other Jewish patriarchs, but only briefly: Abraham is mentioned by name, but without a word about his achievements. Trogus says more about Israhel (that is, Israel or Jacob), using 38 words in his description of him, but mentioning only Israhel's division of his land among his sons. Joseph, on the other hand, a much less significant figure in the Jewish narrative (four chapters as opposed to Jacob's ten) is described in 88 words. Trogus makes

⁴⁰ As Bickerman notes, this is often the practice of Greek and Roman authors when dealing with barbarian sources: "The duty of a historian was to rectify the barbarian account or to substitute a scientific hypothesis for it. In both cases, the beginnings of a barbarian race were integrated into the system of Greek pre-history. A Greek inquirer in a foreign land did not feel himself bound by the question of what his informant actually meant. The construction he put upon the barbarian account was rather faithful to the historical reality of his own system" (Elias J. Bickerman, "Origines Gentium," *Classical Philology* 47, no. 2 [1952]: 68.)

⁴¹ Artapanus on Joseph: Euseb. *P.E.* 9.23.1-4. Artapanus on Moses: Euseb. *P.E.* 9.27.1-37.

a direct link between these two ‘Egyptian’ patriarchs; Moses is Joseph’s son, and the actions of the two of them in Egypt comprise part of the excursus. This emphasis on the ‘Egyptian’ patriarchs is probably due to the influence of literature of Alexandrian provenance concerning the antiquity of the Jews.

In the description of Joseph and his son occurs a phrase that clearly echoes the Alexandrian historiographic discussion concerning the transmission of culture. Trogus says that Joseph *somniorum primus intellegentiam condidit*, “was the first to establish the science of interpreting dreams” (*apud* Justinus, *Historiae Philippicae*, 36 Epitoma, 1.8). With this comment Trogus continues a pivotal discussion in Alexandria: which people was the first to introduce to the world different cultural or technological advances?⁴² Such a comment has little bearing on Trogus’ larger goal here (the discussion of the history of Seleucid kingdoms), but seems to be something that Trogus took from his sources on Joseph and Moses and wove into his narrative. Trogus or his source probably had come into contact with the Alexandrian Jewish histories, as Polyhistor had shortly before.

Diodorus, Strabo, and Trogus were authors in the same tradition, that of universal historiography. This genre shows a particular interest in describing the succession of empires, with a temporal scope from the earliest time to the present and a spatial scope of all peoples and lands. Discussion of the Jewish people tends to occur at times when they came into contact with major empires, the Seleucids (Diodorus, Trogus) and the Romans (Strabo). The politics of the region and how it affects the succession of empires tend to be

⁴² Cf. the three “firsts” that Eupolemus assigns to Moses at *P.E.* 9.26.1.

the focus of these narratives. Seleucid and Hasmonean politics affect the presentation of Moses. Even with such recent political developments affecting the narrative, the national histories of the third and second centuries BCE are not far removed from these histories; the length and scope of these histories mean that the historians borrowed heavily from earlier sources. Diodorus, for example, uses the text of an Alexandrian historian (Hecataeus of Abdera) for most of his first book. The story of the founding figure of the Jews, which Jewish historians promoted in Alexandria a century earlier, became a key point of discussion as Seleucids, Hasmoneans, and Romans succeeded one another in control of Judea.

CHAPTER THREE

MOSES IN THE *CONTRA APIONEM* OF JOSEPHUS

One of the most significant historical presentations of Moses in the ancient world is found in the two volume contrapolemic of the Jewish historian Josephus, the *Contra Apionem*.¹ In this work, written sometime after 94 CE, Josephus tries to dispel doubts about the antiquity of the Jews, invoking the figure of Moses at the climax of his argument. He begins by challenging the claims made by the “best-known Greek historians” (παρὰ τοῖς ἐπιφανέσι τῶν Ἑλληνικῶν ἱστοριογράφων) for the accuracy of their own histories. These best-known historians, unnamed here, would certainly include Herodotus and Thucydides, who receive critical comments from Josephus in subsequent sections.² Confronting misconceptions about the silence of Greek historians about Jews, Josephus asserts that this silence does not mean that the Jews are not ancient (1.6-59). In short order Josephus addresses the silence in Greek histories by presenting several reasons why the Greeks might logically be ignorant of the Jews (the Jews are landlocked, not keen on mixing with other nations, and were satisfied with their own land: 1.60); he counters the silence by providing excerpts from several non-Jewish historians (Egyptian, Phoenician, and Chaldean) which he argues make reference to the Jews and prove their antiquity (1.69-218). Josephus then turns to “proving false the libels and insults” which he claims have been made against his people, beginning with Manetho and his presentation of the exodus narrative, then moving through Chaeremon, Lysimachus, and Apion. Josephus dedicates the

¹ Henceforth referred to as *Apionem*.

² 1.16 and 1.18, respectively.

second half of the second volume (2.145-286) to a refutation of the claims of Apollonius Molon, Lysimachus, and “certain others” (τινες ἄλλοι) that Moses was a charlatan and cheat (γόητα καὶ ἀπατεῶνα: 2.145). Josephus argues instead that Moses was a great legislator on the basis of the greatness of his deeds (2.157) and the fact that he exceeded Lycurgus, Solon, and Zaleucus in antiquity (2.154). In this chapter I examine Josephus’ argument about Moses, investigating the significance of the charges against Moses and the claims of Josephus.

This passage in the *Apionem* is not the first time Josephus wrote about Moses. A much longer section concerning Moses appears in the *Antiquitates Judaicae*, a work Josephus had composed sometime earlier. Josephus’ most substantial historical work (twenty books), it traces the history of the Jewish people from the earliest times until the time of Nero. Josephus mentions this work at the very beginning of the *Apionem*, stating that he “composed in the Greek language a history covering five thousand years, on the basis of our sacred books”³ (Πεντακισχιλίων ἐτῶν ἀριθμὸν ἱστορίαν περιέχουσιν ἐκ τῶν παρ’ ἡμῶν βιβλίων διὰ τῆς Ἑλληνικῆς φωνῆς συνεγραψάμην: 1.1). As this statement suggests, the Jewish bible (both the Hebrew version and the *Septuagint*) is his principal source, although he does draw from Greek historians (Nicolaus of Damascus among others) for the last nine books of the work, which cover the period from Alexander the Great onward. As in the biblical narrative, Moses is a central figure in the early books of Josephus’ *Antiqui-*

³ Greek translation of the *Apionem*, unless otherwise noted, is from John M. G. Barclay, *Against Apion: Translation and Commentary* (Leiden: Brill, 2007).

tates; the telling of his story comprises two whole books (*AJ* 2.201-4.331) and Josephus mentions him among the four topics he wishes to address in the work.⁴

The story of Moses as found in the *Antiquitates* is largely an expanded translation. The historian claims to have translated the Hebrew records: ἐκ τῶν Ἑβραϊκῶν μεθρμηνευμένην γραμμάτων (*AJ* 1.5). This is not to say that Josephus' Greek is translated verbatim from the Hebrew original; alterations and additions are found on almost every page. The work would not be able to pass as a 'translation' in the modern sense of the word, but Josephus' method falls within the bounds of the concept of μεθρμηνευεῖν, as the historian is *rewriting* the history of the Jews. The sentence structure and syntax are different, but the story-line is essentially the same. The concept of rewritten-translation was known in the Roman world,⁵ but models within the Jewish tradition could have inspired Josephus as well, models that perhaps were specific to the material of the canon such as targumim. Recent studies on the date of the *Targum Neofiti* and the *Targum Onkelos* make it likely that such a model would have been available at the time of Josephus.⁶ Prior to the targumim the literary practice of rewriting religious history had manifested itself within the Jewish canon; the book of *Deuteronomy* is, to a large degree, a rewriting of *Exodus* and *Numbers*, while *Chronicles* comprises a rewritten version of *Samuel* and

⁴ Those four topics are "the origin of the Jews, the fortunes that befell them, the great lawgiver under whom they were trained in piety and the exercise of the other virtues, and all those wars waged by them through long ages before this last" (τίνες ὄντες ἐξ ἀρχῆς Ἰουδαῖοι καὶ τίσι χρησάμενοι τύχαις ὑφ' οἷω τε παιδευθέντες νομοθέτη τὰ πρὸς εὐσέβειαν καὶ τὴν ἄλλην ἄσκησιν ἀρετῆς πόσους τε πολέμους ἐν μακροῖς πολεμήσαντες χρόνοις εἰς τὸν τελευταῖον, *AJ* 1.6). (English translation of the *Antiquitates* from H. St J. Thackeray, *Jewish Antiquities* [Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1961].)

⁵ See Droge, *Homer or Moses?*, 35-36.

⁶ For Josephus' relationship to the tradition of Targumim, see Louis H. Feldman, *Josephus's Interpretation of the Bible* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 17.

Kings.⁷ Each of these was in the native languages of the Jews (the targumim in Aramaic and *Chronicles* and *Deutoronomy* in Hebrew)⁸; Josephus, while writing in Greek, clearly is interacting with these Jewish traditions.

The Greek title of the work (τῆς Ἰουδαϊκῆς ἀρχαιολογία), which appears to have been given by Josephus himself, indicates that Josephus also had a Greek historiographical model in mind: the archaeology. This genre was a famous one from classical Greek historians onward. Among the most notable examples is Thucydides' archaeology of Sicily at the beginning of book six of his *Histories*. In that passage the mythic origins and early history of that island are given; the historian describes the activities of the Sicani and the Sikels before the arrival of the Greek inhabitants of the island. Thucydides' archaeology appears in the text as a digression, delaying the narration of the Athenians' campaign on the island. Closer to Josephus' time Dionysius of Halicarnassus wrote an archaeology that comprised an entire work: Ῥωμαϊκὴ ἀρχαιολογία. This work, which was designed to be an introduction to Polybius, narrates the history of Rome from mythic times to the start of the first Punic War. Some members of Josephus' audience would naturally have thought of these models when he called his work an ἀρχαιολογία. Both earlier models incorporate mythic beginnings, so the early stories of *Genesis* would not have been judged an inappropriate way to start. What would have appeared inappropriate is Josephus' reliance on one source and one source only. Thucydides shows an awareness of many sources and traditions, even if he exercises the right to call certain traditions correct and others incorrect.⁹

⁷ Ibid., 16-18.

⁸ Cf. also the second century *Book of Jubilees*, written in Hebrew, as a rewriting of *Genesis*.

⁹ Cf. the claim by the Sicani to be aboriginal, 6.2.2.

Dionysius describes in his preface the importance of consulting the many reports of historians, assessing them, and compiling only the best.¹⁰ Josephus bypasses this historiographical practice, consulting only one source, that of his native priests. The title of Dionysius' work is parallel with Josephus', even if the methodology is not.¹¹

Josephus hoped that the history given in the Jewish bible could find an audience in the Greek-speaking world of his time: ταύτην δὲ τὴν ἐνεστῶσαν ἐγκεχεῖρισμαι πραγματείαν νομίζων ἅπασιν φανεῖσθαι τοῖς Ἑλλήσιν ἀξίαν σπουδῆς ("I have undertaken this present work in the belief that the whole Greek-speaking world will find it worthy of attention," 1.1.5). As Tessa Rajak points out, however, he wanted his Greek-speaking audience to understand him solely on Jewish terms. How effective could such a history be? Assuming non-Jews were interested in his subject matter enough to read the work, would any find his story compelling?

The Flavian Court, Greek Language, and the Publication of the Antiquitates

By most estimates, Josephus had been a resident of Rome for a quarter century by the time he wrote *Apionem*.¹² His connections to the imperial court stretched back to the

¹⁰ AR 1.1.4: "Those, on the other hand, who, while making choice of the best subjects, are careless and indolent in compiling their narratives out of such reports as chance to come to their ears gain no praise by reason of that choice; for we do not deem it fitting that the histories of renowned cities and of men who have held supreme power should be written in an offhand or negligent manner." (Translation from E. Cary, *Dionysius of Halicarnassus: Roman Antiquities*, Loeb Classical Library [London: Heinemann, 1937].)

¹¹ Tessa Rajak, "Josephus and the 'Archaeology' of the Jews," in *The Jewish Dialogue with Greece and Rome: Studies in Cultural and Social Interaction* (Leiden: Brill, 2001), 241-55.

¹² So Barclay, *Against Apion: Translation and Commentary*, XXVI-XXVIII. For an outline of the various theories of dating, see Jonathan J. Price, "The Provincial Historian in Rome," in *Josephus and Jewish History in Flavian Rome and Beyond* (edited by Joseph Sievers and Gaia Lembi, Leiden: Brill, 2005), 101.

reign of Nero; during the delegation to Rome in 64 he had gained the attention of Nero's consort Poppea. Josephus seems to have been a client in the imperial court under all three Flavian emperors, as well as Domitia, the wife of Domitian (*Life*, 428-9). With such connections, the literary élite in Rome must have known about him. A silence exists, however, on both sides: other literary figures in Rome at the time of Josephus (Tacitus, Quintilian, Martial) make no mention of him, and Josephus makes no mention of any substantial contact aside from the imperial family.¹³ What are we to make of this silence? The absence of any mention of Josephus in the surviving texts from his time does not, of course, mean that he was shunned by literary circles. There are other writers for whom we lack contemporary witnesses. Living at the same time were Statius and Martial, both important literary figures, and mentioned by other authors as well as mentioning their contemporaries, yet not mentioning each other. Likewise, although the indication of literary connections in most cases enhances verisimilitude, Josephus may have had reasons for not speaking of it in his works—as did Juvenal, writing shortly after him—other than simply having no connections at all. Perhaps he thought his connection to the imperial court, which must have been well known, sufficient to secure a prestigious social position, and saw no need to mention relations with persons of lesser import. In any case, the silence in the literature concerning Josephus' relationships in Rome need not indicate an absence of such relationships.

¹³ "Aside from the emperors, the only other figures in Rome with whom Josephus was, on his own evidence, in contact, were his literary patron Epaphroditus, a freed slave of Caligula named Thaumastus, and the Jewish actor Aliturus, who introduced Josephus to Nero's wife Popaea during his visit there in 64/65. Not exactly a constellation of stars" (Price, "The Provincial Historian in Rome," 105-06).

It has been suggested that Josephus' linguistic difficulties and apparent accentual imperfections precluded participation in *recitationes* and thus his full integration into the literary élite. Indeed, Josephus appears to be aware of some inadequacy in his accent, which he attributes to his 'habituation' (συνήθεια) with his native Aramaic in the closing sentences of the *Antiquitates*: τῶν Ἑλληνικῶν δὲ γραμμάτων ἐσπούδασα μετασχεῖν τὴν γραμματικὴν ἐμπειρίαν ἀναλαβὼν, τὴν δὲ περὶ τὴν προφορὰν ἀκρίβειαν πατριος ἐκώλυσεν συνήθεια ("I have taken great pains to take part in Greek literature, after gaining knowledge of [Greek] grammar, but my habituation with my native tongue has prevented accuracy in pronunciation," *AJ* 20.263).¹⁴ Price connects this passage with Quintilian's stern disapproval of Roman sons who speak Latin with a hint of Greek inflection (*Institutio Oratoria* 1.1.13), commenting that "proper diction and technical proficiency were essential for public oratorical performance."¹⁵ Josephus would be unlikely to hazard *recitationes* of his own works, Price concludes; "we can imagine the prejudice Romans would have felt against Aramaic 'distortions of the mouth.'"¹⁶ We must be careful, however, in linking Josephus' situation too closely to the passage in the *Institutio Oratoria*. Quintilian was criticizing Greek inflection in the *Latin* language¹⁷; he suggested that a child not speak *too much* Greek—making speaking Greek into a *superstitio*—lest his Latin be tainted by that

¹⁴ English translation here is mine.

¹⁵ Price, "The Provincial Historian in Rome," 105.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ Speaking Latin with a Greek accent was apparently still condemned in Jerome's time (Cf. *Epistulae* 107.9).

foreign tongue.¹⁸ Josephus, however, wrote and spoke in Greek, the other *sermo noster* of Rome.¹⁹ Romans of the senatorial class were completely bilingual. Presumably Josephus knew some Latin, likely beginning to learn the language when he visited Rome in 64 CE. His writing and interactions in the city need not have involved any Latin. This being the case, Quintilian's comment is only indirectly relevant to Josephus' situation, and only on the assumptions that foreign accents are damning in both Latin and Greek, and that a Semitic or Judaeian accent in Greek was as intolerable as a Greek accent in Latin. But this seems unlikely. It makes sense that the only acceptable accent in Latin in Rome would be a Roman accent; any deviation from this (Greek, Semitic, Gallic or otherwise) would be considered 'foreign' to the Roman tongue. In contrast, Rome during the time of the Flavian emperors hosted Greek speakers of many origins—Phrygia (Epictetus), Bithynia (Dio Chrysostom), Boeotia (Plutarch), Ephesus (Artemidorus), Smyrna (Scopelian)—each of whom presumably brought to Rome his own accent.²⁰ While the Attic accent was the standard and likely the most common,²¹ Josephus would not have been alone in having some regional elements in his Greek diction.

¹⁸ *Institutio Oratoria* 1.1.12-13: *A sermone Graeco puerum incipere malo, quia Latinum, qui pluribus in usu est, vel nobis nolentibus perbibet, simul quia disciplinis quoque Graecis prius instituendus est, unde et nostrae fluxerunt. Non tamen hoc adeo superstitiose fieri velim ut diu tantum Graece loquatur aut discat, sicut plerisque moris est. Hoc enim accidunt et oris plurima vitia in peregrinum sonum corrupti et sermonis, cui cum Graecae figurae adsidua consuetudine haeserunt, in diversa quoque loquendi ratione pertinacissime durant.*

¹⁹ Cf. Claudius' famous words recorded by Suetonius: *Cuidam barbaro Graece ac Latine disserenti: "Cum utroque," inquit, "sermone nostro sis paratus"* (Claud. 42).

²⁰ The previous generation had seen a Greek-speaker from Syria, Nicolaus of Damascus.

²¹ Cf. the comment made much earlier by Cicero about a *sonus Athenarum*, which must still have held true (Cicero, *Brutus* 172).

To write what he did, he must have been more fluent in Greek than most Greeks. Our evidence suggests that Josephus had access to Greek in the first decades of his life, before his arrival in Rome. He must have acquired a level of proficiency by age 26 when he participated in the delegation to Rome. He likely would not have been considered a candidate for this enterprise had he been ignorant of the language of political discourse in the East, and his connection to Aliturus (the actor and protégé of Nero) as well as the assistance he gained from Poppea seem scarcely possible without a common language.²² Josephus tells us that he passed messages between Titus and the people of Jerusalem (*BJ* 4.96; 5.361). The language that Titus used to address Josephus was almost certainly Greek; Josephus presumably translated the message into Aramaic.²³ He seems to have felt quite confident in Greek before his arrival in Rome with Titus. This learning happened in Judaea. Josephus' comments immediately following the self-critique of his accent make clear that Greek study was available in his native land—not only available, but common (*AJ* 20.264). His countrymen, however, choose to focus their education on monolingual studies of their holy writings:

παρ' ἡμῖν γὰρ οὐκ ἐκείνους ἀποδέχονται τοὺς πολλῶν ἔθνῶν διάλεκτον
ἐκμαθόντας διὰ τὸ κοινὸν εἶναι νομίζειν τὸ ἐπιτήδευμα τοῦτο μόνον οὐκ
ἐλευθέροις τοῖς τυχοῦσιν ἀλλὰ καὶ τῶν οἰκετῶν τοῖς θέλουσι, μόνοις δὲ σοφίαν
μαρτυροῦσιν τοῖς τὰ νόμιμα σαφῶς ἐπισταμένοις καὶ τὴν τῶν ἱερῶν γραμμάτων
δύναμιν ἐρμηνεῦσαι δυναμένοις.

²² On these points, see Jan Nicolaas Sevenster, *Do You Know Greek? How Much Greek Could the First Jewish Christian Have Known?* (Leiden: Brill, 1968), 70-71. See also Josephus, *Vita* 13-16.

²³ Aramaic is almost certainly indicated by τῇ πατρίῳ γλώσσῃ at 5.361, as Sevenster noted (*Do You Know Greek?*, 61-2). But ἐβραϊζῶν at 4.96 is perhaps more ambiguous, but could refer to either Hebrew or Aramaic, and likely the latter. For further discussion of Josephus' native language, see Tessa Rajak, *Josephus: the Historian and his Society* (2nd edition, London: Duckworth, 2002), 130-132.

For our people do not favor those persons who have mastered the speech of many nations because they consider that not only is such a skill common to ordinary freeman but that even slaves who so choose may acquire it. But they give credit for wisdom to those alone who have an exact knowledge of the law and who are capable of interpreting the meaning of the Holy Scriptures.²⁴

The Jews do not consider the ability to speak and write many languages (in particular here, Greek) to be a matter of wisdom, but rather something anybody can learn.

What, then, could Josephus have meant by τὴν δὲ περὶ τὴν προφορὰν ἀκρίβειαν πατριος ἐκώλυσεν συνήθεια? The closing of a work seems an odd place for an author to draw attention to glaring ineptitude. In fact Josephus is doing just the opposite. He has just completed his greatest literary achievement, a book of twenty volumes, complete with Sophoclean and Thucydidean literary flourishes. The reader (or hearer) who has reached this point in the work could hardly cast doubts on Josephus' mastery of the Greek language—perhaps his sources, or his subject matter, but not his command of the language. By mentioning his native language Aramaic, he is saying, “Greek isn’t even my native language, and I wrote this work of twenty books.” The following comment about the Jewish conception of wisdom lying in understanding of the scriptures, rather than in the comprehension of many languages, expresses a contrast between cultures: in Rome, to compile a great history in Greek was laudable, while in Jerusalem, to know the law and understand the Scriptures was laudable. Josephus takes the prize in both cultures, or so he says.

²⁴ Translation from Louis H. Feldman, *Josephus: Jewish Antiquities* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1981).

Claims of Antiquity and Moses

Some information about how the *Antiquitates* were received can be seen in the comments made by Josephus in his later work *Apionem*. From the tone of the opening chapter, it does not seem to have been received well. A certain amount of innocence has left the historian. At the outset of the *Antiquitates* he believed that the lawgiver of the Jews would be worth the notice of Greek-speaking world; he begins the *Apionem* by speaking of opponents. From the first mention, it is clear that the antiquity of the Jews is the first issue for these opponents. Josephus says that they point to the silence of the classical Greek historians as proof that the Jews cannot be ancient. How could the Jews be ancient if the major Greek historians do not even mention them?

ἐπεὶ δὲ συχνοὺς ὁρῶ ταῖς ὑπὸ δυσμενείας ὑπὸ τινων εἰρημέναις προσέχοντας βλασφημίαις καὶ τοῖς περὶ τὴν ἀρχαιολογίαν ὑπ' ἐμοῦ γεγραμμένοις ἀπιστοῦντας τεκμήριόν τε ποιουμένους τοῦ νεώτερον εἶναι τὸ γένος ἡμῶν τὸ μηδεμιᾶς παρὰ τοῖς ἐπιφανέσι τῶν Ἑλληνικῶν ἱστοριογράφων μνήμης ἡξιῶσθαι.

Since I see that a considerable number of people pay attention to the slanders spread by some out of malice, and disbelieve what I have written on ancient history, but adduce as proof that our people is of more recent origin that it was not thought worthy of any mention by the most renowned Greek historians (CA 1.2).

Josephus is constructing a 'straw-man' here.²⁵ While Romans did scorn innovation, the typical Roman complaints about the Jews—concerning observation of the Sabbath, food laws, atheism, and the like—did not involve innovation.²⁶ The most famous passage concerning the Jews to come from Romans at this time period (Tac. *Hist.* 5.2-3; 5.5.1) con-

²⁵ Barclay, *Against Apion: Translation and Commentary, ad locum*; Martin D. Goodman, "Josephus' Treatise against Apion," in *Apologetics in the Roman Empire*, ed. Mark Julian Edwards (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 51-53.

²⁶ For anti-Jewish rhetoric at this time cf. especially Quintilian (*Inst.* 3.7.21) and Juvenal (*Sat.* 14.100-104).

cedes that the Jews are ancient. Herodotus and Thucydides cannot be expected to be experts on all nations.

Rather than simply constructing a 'straw-man,' Josephus may be reviving an argument from a different time and place. Some three centuries earlier the Alexandrian Jews were aware that their nation enjoyed no mention in the Greek histories, and a response to that argument was woven into the pseudepigraphic *Letter of Aristeas*.²⁷ This was, of course, an important issue for the Alexandrian Jews. They had the task of maintaining their cultural identity in a city where Egyptian and Greek cultures dominated. Greece and Egypt were discussed at length by Herodotus; the Jewish nation's absence from that work would be conspicuous in such a context. One can picture Herodotus' silence concerning the Jews being used as a convenient cudgel to dismiss Jewish arguments of primacy. But what would the Romans make of such an argument? It is unlikely that they would have made much of Herodotus' silence about the Jews, as he is silent about the Romans as well. Dionysius of Halicarnassus recognized this fact a century earlier, and sought to explain the Greek ignorance of the Romans as anti-Roman prejudice.²⁸ The argument of Herodotus' silence was a problem at Alexandria, but not at Rome. Josephus was bringing up an issue that had been resolved already, but in doing so he introduced perhaps his most important theme in the work: the great antiquity of the Jews.

²⁷ Their answer was that the subject matter of the Jewish history was too holy to be recorded by pagans; those who attempted were smitten of God (*Letter of Aristeas* §312-313).

²⁸ The similarity between Dionysius' argument at 1.4.2 and Josephus' in the *Apionem* was of course noted by Bickerman over half a century ago, though without mentioning the connection to the Alexandrian argument in the *Letter of Aristeas*.

Josephus' argument in this section was sparked by the charge he repeated at 2.161, that Moses was a charlatan and a cheat. The antiquity theme is very prominent in the passage concerning Moses. Josephus makes the claim that the Jews have in Moses something similar to what the Greeks have in their lawgivers. Here Josephus provides a list of νομοθέται and places Moses in their ranks. He then proceeds to make the argument, based partially on evidence from Homeric vocabulary, that Moses preceded the Greek lawgivers:

φημι τοίνυν τὸν ἡμέτερον νομοθέτην τῶν ὅπουδηποτοῦν μνημονευομένων νομοθετῶν προάγειν ἀρχαιότητι: Λυκοῦργοι γὰρ καὶ Σόλωνες καὶ Ζάλευκος ὁ τῶν Λοκρῶν καὶ πάντες οἱ θαυμαζόμενοι παρὰ τοῖς Ἑλλήσιν ἐχθὲς δὴ καὶ πρῶην ὡς πρὸς ἐκείνον παραβαλλόμενοι φαίνονται γεγονότες, ὅπου γε μὴδ' αὐτὸ τοῦνομα πάλαι ἐγινώσκετο τοῦ νόμου παρὰ τοῖς Ἑλλήσι. καὶ μάρτυς Ὅμηρος οὐδαμοῦ τῆς ποιήσεως αὐτῷ χρησάμενος: οὐδὲ γὰρ ἦν κατὰ τοῦτον, ἀλλὰ γνώμαις ἀορίστοις τὰ πλήθη διωκεῖτο καὶ προστάγμασι τῶν βασιλέων, ἀφ' οὗ καὶ μέχρι πολλοῦ διέμειναν ἔθεςιν ἀγράφοις χρώμενοι καὶ πολλὰ τούτων αἰεὶ πρὸς τὸ συντυγχάνον μετατιθέντες.

I maintain that our legislator exceeds in antiquity the legislators referred to anywhere else. Lycurguses, and Solons, and Zaleucus, the legislator of the Lorcrians, and all those admired by the Greeks seem to have been but yesterday or the day before compared to him, which is why not even the term "law" was known among the Greeks of old. Homer is witness to this, since he nowhere uses the term in his poem. For there was no such thing in his day; the masses were governed by imprecise maxims and the dictates of kings, and continued thereafter for a long period employing unwritten customs, and altered many of these continuously according to circumstance (*Ap.* 2.154-155).

The statement about Homeric vocabulary is true, but Josephus' point hangs narrowly on the word "νόμος". Homer indeed does not use that word, but, as Thackeray points out, he does speak of "θέμιστες".²⁹ Josephus cannot be concerned with vocabulary alone here, as the Jews knew their law as *ἡτορ* from the earliest times. Josephus is not making a claim

²⁹ H. St J. Thackeray, *The Life; Against Apion* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1926), *ad locum*.

about who coined the term first, but rather makes a claim about who developed the concept first. The Greek political system at the time of Homer lacked law, he asserts, as they followed maxims that were unwritten and changeable; implicit is the contrast that the Mosaic law was fixed in written form and so unchanged throughout the centuries. So what the Greeks lacked in Homer's time, the Jews already possessed in Moses' time. This argument is clear enough, but it is clear that Josephus has elided one element in his claim of priority. How do we know that Moses preceded Homer? Such a question could easily be answered with a chronology such as the one that Demetrius had produced centuries before. Josephus may have had such a work (a Jewish chronology) on hand; perhaps he failed to mention the fact on the assumption that it was common knowledge. In any case, Josephus would have his readers believe that by the time of Solon, the Jews had had law for centuries.

The Charge of γόης and the Divine Source

The claim made here is an integral part of Josephus' response to the charge he repeats at 2.145: that Moses was a charlatan and a cheat. When Josephus repeats this charge again at 2.161, he makes very clear his counter argument: not a γόης, but a νομοθέτης.

τοιοῦτος μὲν δὴ τις αὐτὸς ἡμῶν ὁ νομοθέτης, οὐ γόης οὐδ' ἀπατεῶν, ἅπερ
λοιδοροῦντες λέγουσιν ἀδίκως, ἀλλ' οἷους παρὰ τοῖς Ἕλλησιν αὐχοῦσιν τὸν Μίνω
γεγονέναι καὶ μετὰ ταῦτα τοὺς ἄλλους νομοθέτας.

Such was our legislator; no charlatan or impostor, as slanderers unjustly call him, but one such as the Greeks boast of having had in Minos and later legislators.³⁰

³⁰ Translation from *The Life; Against Apion* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1926).

Josephus repeatedly gives lists of the lawgivers, putting Moses in a list with the typical lawgivers. This is not necessarily something new: Moses' name had appeared in such lists before Josephus, notably in Diodorus (1.94.1-2). The repetition has the effect (or could have the effect) of putting Moses on the same level with such lawgivers. But what of the charge? What weight is behind the word γόης? The term has magical connotations. The connection between Moses and magic had been noted by Pompeius Trogus (*apud* Justinus, *Historicae Philippicae* 36.2.9-12), who, as we have seen, believed Moses to be the son of a master of magic, Joseph. Joseph used his knowledge to interpret dreams, even the dreams of the king. The knowledge of the father was entrusted to the son, a *paternae scientiae hereditas* (Trogus' words). The elder Pliny also mentions the magical abilities of Moses.³¹ Such references to Moses seem rather benign; indeed Trogus' is one of the more favorable (if less conventional) passages concerning Moses. Pliny, Trogus, and those who hold to their view of Moses can hardly be the ones that Josephus chides as slanderous.

The charge that Moses was a magician could be a serious one because, in Rome, some magic practices were illegal. Servius was right, though perhaps over-simplistic, when he said that the Romans *semper magica damnarunt* (ad *Aen.* 4.493). We also know (idem ad *Ecl.* 8.99) that one specific type of magic was condemned by the earliest Roman legal document, the Twelve Tables, specifically, the practice of singing the crop yield of another's field onto one's own field. This hardly could have constituted a ban on all magic, but it demonstrates a relationship between law and magic from the beginning. A more

³¹ So NH 30.2.11: *est et alia magices factio a Mose et Janne et Lotape ac Iudaeis pendens, sed multis milibus annorum post Zoroastrem.* Writing half a century after Josephus, Apuleius also knows of Moses the magician: *ego ille sim Carmendas vel Damigeron vel † his † Moses vel Iohannes vel Apollobex vel ipse Dardanus vel quicumque alius post Zoroastren et Hostanen inter magos celebratus est* (Apology 90.6, p. 107 Vallette).

comprehensive legal prohibition of magic developed out of the *Lex Cornelia de sicariis et veneficiis*, passed in 81 BCE. The law, not extant in its original form, can be reconstructed to a certain degree from later sources. It contained six sections, each having to do with the clandestine practices of assassins; one of these, the section on *veneficium*, came to be seen as a law against magic. Due to the ambiguity of the term *venena* (magic potion/ poison), it is difficult to tell whether the original law concerned magic at all. But it is clear, from texts such as Apuleius' *Apology*³² that this law eventually had a wide application, and could be used to try magicians in general.

The γόης, however, is more than simply a magician. Indeed, while γόης/γοητεία was nearly synonymous with μάγος/μαγεία, the former had negative undertones related to deception and trickery. The γόης was not just one who altered the natural order by coercive or manipulative means (“magic”), but was a charlatan, a trickster, a hack magician. As theurgy developed, the practices of a theurgist were considered a higher form of magic.³³ The term γόης was often one of derision. Both Jesus and Apollonius of Tyana³⁴ were accused of being γόηται centuries after their death by figures outside their following.³⁵ Although these examples are later, and likely neither figure was known to Josephus, they give important insight into the meaning of this accusation. The accuser did not necessarily be-

³² Apuleius defends himself against the accusation of being a magician, being tried on the basis of the *Lex Cornelia de sicariis et veneficiis* for procuring a shellfish that was allegedly to be used for a magic potion (a charge of murder having been dropped).

³³ Georg Luck, *Arcana Mundi: Magic and the Occult in the Greek and Roman Worlds: A Collection of Ancient Texts* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1985), 21.

³⁴ For the accusation against Jesus, see Celsus *True Doctrine* 1.71, 2.32, and 2.49. For the accusation against Apollonius, see Philostratus, *Life of Apollonius of Tyana* 1.2.1.

³⁵ Cf. also the emperor Julian, who says that Paul was a γόης and surpassed all others at that trade (*Against the Galilaeans* 100A).

lieve that the γόης had no power at all; at least in Celsus' case, he believes (along with Egyptian critics) that Moses performed powerful miracles, but that those miracles were done by sorcery and not divine power (*True Doctrine* 3.5). The power is real, but it is shady and illegal. The conception of magic here conforms to what Rives calls the 'nominalist' approach, that magic is used to describe religious deviance.³⁶ The accusation has the effect of undermining the authority of the Mosaic laws—laws that have their basis on Moses' connection and communication with the divine. Josephus describes that connection most explicitly at 2.162-3:

οἱ μὲν γὰρ αὐτῶν τοὺς νόμους ὑποτίθενται Δί, οἱ δ' εἰς τὸν Ἀπόλλω καὶ τὸ Δελφικὸν αὐτοῦ μαντεῖον ἀνέφερον, ἥτοι τὰληθὲς οὕτως ἔχειν νομίζοντες ἢ πείσειν ῥᾶον ὑπολαμβάνοντες.

For some of [the Greek legislators] attribute their laws to Zeus, while others traced them to Apollo and his Delphic Oracle, whether they thought this was the truth or supposed that it would be easier to win their acceptance.

The Jewish lawgiver, Josephus argues, was different. He established his laws after “attaining the most correct belief in God” (τῆς δικαιοτάτης περὶ θεοῦ πίστεως ἐπιτυχόν).

The Mosaic Law and the Twelve Tables

While Josephus clearly is using the Greek legal model for comparison here, the Roman legal model would have been most present in the minds of his audience.³⁷ While

³⁶ James B. Rives, "Magic in Roman Law: The Reconstruction of a Crime," *Classical Antiquity* 22, no. 2 (2003), 313-5.

³⁷ Josephus' unique critical vantage point is evident in this passage: while he provides many critiques of Roman historiography and claims of priority, he does not engage directly with Roman historiography. For more on this, see Barclay, "Appendix 6: Judaism in Roman Dress?" (In *Against Apion: Translation and Commentary*. Leiden: Brill, 2007), 362-370.

Jewish law was founded and codified by Moses, Roman law was composed by two colleges of *decemviri* in 451/0 BCE. Cicero, Livy, and Dionysius of Halicarnassus preserve similar versions of the story.³⁸ The appointment of the *decemviri legibus scribundis* was a response to the Conflict of Orders. The patricians and plebeians had been opposed to each other and agreed that the election of a committee might secure equal liberty for all by composing laws. The plebeians made concessions—most notably, only patricians could be in the college—with the understanding that the *decemviri* would control the government for one year only. Within this group was one Appius Claudius, a known enemy of the plebs, who carried the favor of the patricians during his tenure. The *decemviri* did their job. After sending a delegation to consult with Solon in Athens, they composed ten tables. Their actions were considered successful, marked by moderation and justice. But it was agreed that two more tables were needed for a complete legal codification. Due to the good conduct of these men, the plebeians agreed to elect a second college of *decemviri* to compose the remaining two tables. It is at this point that problems arose in a previously harmonious course of events. Despite the custom of not holding an office twice in succession, Appius Claudius put himself in the contest for the second college. After securing his reelection, he packed the college with nine other men who supported him. Their tenure was a failure. They tyrannically refused to give up office after the allotted year. Eventually the last two tables were completed, but they remained unratified until the second decemvirate was deposed, following the rape of the plebeian girl Verginia. The Twelve Tables formed the foundation for succeeding eras of Roman law. No complete text of these laws survives,

³⁸ Livy, *AUC* 3.32ff; Cicero *de Rep.* 2.37ff; Dionysius *AR* 10.52ff. These passages do not agree in all respects. The details in the following discussion I draw largely from Livy's version.

although they can be reconstructed from quotations and references in later authors. They were of great interest to the jurists, many of whom wrote commentaries on them. The explanations of these Twelve Tables by commentaries helped to explain and expand on the meaning of the laws for the courts. The fact that the jurist Gaius wrote a commentary on the Twelve Tables in the second half of the second century CE, dealing with them not as the stuff of antiquarians but as useful law, demonstrates that they still must have carried weight in Josephus' day.

There are numerous parallels between the history of law in Rome and that of the Jews. Both put great weight on an original written document. The foundation narratives of both cultures stress the written nature of their laws, and Josephus himself argues for the trustworthiness of written documents at *Apionem* 1.6. Both peoples had a tradition of memorizing the law. Cicero speaks of how he and his brother Quintus memorized the Tables as adolescents (*discebamus enim pueri duodecim ut carmen necessarium* [Leg. 2.59]); the *Torah* describes how the written law should be committed to memory (e.g. *Deuteronomy* 6.5). The similarities between the two legal systems are even more striking in the century after Josephus wrote, when the *Mishnah*, the initial foundation of Rabbinic Judaism, was composed. While it contained both legal (*Hallakhah*) and non-legal (*Aggadah*), details, it gained a reputation as the Jewish body of law. The collection of legal opinions played a role in the Jewish tradition similar to the commentaries on the Twelve Tables in Rome: the views of the rabbis concerning issues of Mosaic law were there preserved, just as the views of the Jurists were preserved in the commentaries.³⁹

³⁹ For more on the comparison between the Jewish legal system and the Roman legal system, see Anthony Grafton and Megan Hale Williams, *Christianity and the Transformation of the Book: Origen, Eusebius, and the Library of Caesarea* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006), 230-32.

There is one strong contrast between Roman law and Judaic law: Roman law claimed no divine source, as preserved in the accounts of Livy and Dionysius. Divine sources were named in the Greek legal tradition. Josephus alludes to the fact that Minos consulted Zeus at Dodona and Lycurgus consulted the Pythian priestess (2.162).⁴⁰ Yet Minos' and Lycurgus' connection to the divine is contrasted to Moses' standard—the law-giver with the “truest conception of god”, who “placed all sovereignty and authority in the hands of God. To Him he persuaded all to look, as the author of all blessings.” Such was Moses: not a recent arrival in the ranks of lawgivers, nor a magician dabbling in sorcery and teaching his followers the same, but a νομοθέτης with a real connection to the divine. Josephus does not say exactly who made these charges against Moses, but it is clear that it will become an important device for anti-Christians in undermining legitimacy: they may have power, but it is the wrong kind of power.⁴¹

In addressing both the charge of recentness and the charge that Moses was a γόης, Josephus introduces evidence that he thinks will clear up any doubts. But the points that he brings up are ones that the anti-Jewish Roman authors are willing to concede. The fact that they are ancient does not mean that they are good; Moses cannot be said to have a divine source simply because he performed miracles. Juvenal recognizes that Moses was a legislator—even mentioning that certain Romans had chosen the Jewish laws over the laws of Rome—and in the same breath dismisses the Mosaic text by insinuating that it was a book of magic (*arcano...volumine Moyses*).⁴² Tacitus admits that the Jews were ancient

⁴⁰ Cf., for example, Strabo 16.2.38.

⁴¹ Celsus accuses both Jesus and Moses of this in his diatribe against the Christians (1.23; 1.71).

⁴² Sat. 14.100-2: *Romanas autem soliti contemnere leges / Iudaicum ediscunt et seruant ac metuunt ius, / tradidit arcano quodcumque uolumine Moyses.*

even while deriding them: *Hi ritus quoquo modo inducti antiquitate defenduntur: cetera instituta, sinistra foeda, pravitate valere* (Hist. 5.5). The Romans found ways of undermining Jewish claims without denying their reality.

CONCLUSION

While perceptions of the Jews and the political status of Judaea changed substantially between the second century BCE and the time of Josephus, many of the talking points about Moses remained the same. The act of giving the laws is the most consistent element. This is perhaps of little surprise to a modern audience, most familiar with the canonical version (in which Moses receiving the law at Mount Sinai is a central image). But both for Eupolemus in hellenistic Alexandria and Josephus in Rome, Moses is more than simply the first νομοθέτης. He is the first νομογράφος. This is the strand that ties together Moses' three "firsts" as presented by Eupolemus (apud Eusebius, Praep. evang. 9.26.1): Moses was the first wise man, the first to teach writing, and "the first to write the laws" (νόμους τε πρῶτον γράψαι Μωσῆν). Centuries later in Flavian Rome, written language and law are key elements of Josephus' presentation of Moses. That image has a particular relevance in Rome, as we saw in chapter three. It was important to Josephus to establish the authority of Moses as an ancient and noble lawgiver whose law is preserved in the priestly writings which he translated in his work, the *Antiquitates Iudaicae*. The great laws of Moses are still accessible in Josephus' time because they were written, and thus preserved through the ages, he seems to be arguing. This idea of the permanence of Mosaic law can be seen as a reply to the type of Mosaic teaching recorded in Strabo (16.2.35). There the teachings of Moses are praised for theological accuracy and political moderation, but their goodness has no lasting effect. Moses' successors turn to tyranny, bringing

to naught the wisdom of his teachings. But Strabo, in contrast to Josephus, says nothing of Moses writing his laws down.

This same investigation—namely, investigating the development of narratives about foundational figures—could be performed for many ancient Mediterranean cultures (Egyptians, Babylonians, Scythians, Etruscans, Persians, Indians). Similar dialogues of culture must surely have existed between each of these cultures themselves and the Greeks and Romans. Investigating how other foundational figures were portrayed would shed a similar light on the way cultures perceived one another in the ancient world. The accident of preservation, however, makes Moses and Judaism a particularly good topic for discussion. The writings on Egyptian beginnings by Manetho have been less fortunate, and his views are more difficult to reconstruct, because we must rely heavily on quotations in highly charged polemic arguments of Josephus.¹ More has survived about the lawgiver Moses due to the interests of Christian authors. Take, for instance, the preservation of Alexandrian Jewish authors through Eusebius *via* Alexander Polyhistor. Eusebius had reason to present accurate versions of the story of Moses, and for that reason we have access to the dialogue of cultures in hellenistic Alexandria. Presentations of Moses are important in literature right up into the Christian age, when writers such as Origen took on the claims of Jewish historians, claiming Moses as the first founder in the Christian tradition as well.

¹ For the problem of reconstructing Manetho, called at times the most difficult problem in classics, see Verbrugghe, *Berosos and Manetho*, 116.

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