



JEW^S IN THE HELLENISTIC
AND ROMAN CITIES

Edited by
JOHN R. BARTLETT

WHAT WAS LIFE LIKE FOR JEWS IN A GRECO-ROMAN CITY?
HOW DID JEWISH RELIGIOUS PRACTICE IN THE DIASPORA DIFFER
FROM THAT IN JUDAEA AND JERUSALEM?

Written by a distinguished team of international experts, this collection of essays provides a stimulating study of the Jewish presence in the Classical world.

Beginning with the Hellenistic city of Jerusalem itself, *Jews in the Hellenistic and Roman Cities* goes on to study the Jewish communities and synagogues that emerged from the Mediterranean diaspora, as reflected in the writings of Luke, Josephus and Philo. The chapters cover fundamental questions of social identity, everyday life and religious practice, together with a valuable discussion of the size of the Jewish population in the ancient world, a topic which has given rise to much exaggerated speculation in the past.

The volume will be of interest to students of Roman history, biblical studies, ancient Judaism and Hellenistic history.

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There has been substantial and continuing interest in the study of Judaism in late antiquity, which has been derived at least in part from the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls, and from archaeology carried out in Israel, particularly of synagogues. However, this meant that Jewish communities in the diaspora did not receive the attention they deserved.

Jews in the Hellenistic and Roman Cities fills the gap in this area of scholarship. Beginning with the Hellenistic city of Jerusalem itself, the book goes on to study the Jewish communities and synagogues that emerged from the Mediterranean diaspora, as reflected in the writings of Luke, Josephus and Philo. Fundamental questions of social identity, everyday life and religious practice are covered, along with valuable discussion of the size of the Jewish population in the ancient world – a topic which has given rise to much exaggerated speculation in the past.

Written by a team of experts, this study will be of interest not only to students of ancient Judaism and biblical studies, but will also be valuable for classical scholars exploring the social, political and religious aspects of life in Greco-Roman cities.

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The synagogue at Sardis, photo: R. Stoneman.

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ABBREVIATIONS

- AAWG = Abhandlung der Akademie der Wissenschaften in Göttingen
 ABD = *Anchor Bible Dictionary*
 AGAJU = Arbeiten zur Geschichte des antiken Judentums und des Urchristentums
 ANRW = *Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt*
 ASOR = The American Schools of Oriental Research
 BASOR = *The Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research*
 BCH = *Bulletin de correspondance hellénique*
 CBQ = *Catholic Biblical Quarterly*
 CIJ = *Corpus Inscriptionum Judaicarum*, vols I–II, Rome
 CJZC = Lüderitz, G. with Reynolds, J. M. (1983) *Corpus jüdischer Zeugnisse aus der Cyrenaika, Beibefte zum Tübinger Atlas des Vorderen Orients*, B. 53, Wiesbaden
 CQ = *Classical Quarterly*
 CRAIBL = Comptes rendus des séances de l'Académie des inscriptions et belles lettres
 CRINT = *Compendia rerum iudaicarum ad novum testamentum*
 CPJ = Tcherikover, V., Fuks, A. and Stern, M., *Corpus Papyrorum Judaicarum* (3 vols), Cambridge, Mass.
 EPRO = Etudes préliminaires aux religions orientales dans l'Empire romain
 HTR = *Harvard Theological Review*
 HUCA = *Hebrew Union College Annual*
 IEJ = *Israel Exploration Journal*
 JBL = *Journal of Biblical Literature*
 JIGRE = Horbury, W. and Noy, D. (1992) *Jewish Inscriptions of Greco-Roman Egypt*
 JJS = *Journal of Jewish Studies*
 JRS = *Journal of Roman Studies*
 JSJ = *Journal for the Study of Judaism*
 JSNT = *Journal for the Study of the New Testament*
 JSNTSS = *Journal for the Study of the New Testament Supplement Series*
 JTS = *Journal of Theological Studies*
 RB = *Revue biblique*
 Lifshitz = Lifshitz, B. (1967), *Donateurs et fondateurs dans les synagogues juives*, Cahiers de la Revue biblique, 7, Paris

ABBREVIATIONS

- MEFR = Mélanges d'archéologie et d'histoire de l'école française de Rome
 NTS = *New Testament Studies*
 OEANE = *Oxford Encyclopedia of Archaeology in the Near East*
 OLA = *Orientalia Lovaniensia Analecta*
 PCPS = *Proceedings of the Cambridge Philological Society*
 RevQ = *Revue de Qumran*
 PEQ = *Palestine Exploration Quarterly*
 PIBA = *Proceedings of the Irish Biblical Association*
 REJ = *Revue des Etudes Juives*
 SBL = Society of Biblical Literature
 SBLMS = Society of Biblical Literature Monograph Series
 SJLA = *Studies in Judaism in Late Antiquity*
 SNTSMS = Society for New Testament Studies Monograph Series
 TAPA = *Transactions of the American Philological Association*
 TDNT = *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*
 TSAJ = *Texte und Studien zum Antiken Judentum*
 WBC = *Word Biblical Commentary*
 WUNT = *Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament*
 ZNTW = *Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft*
 ZPE = *Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik*

INTRODUCTION

Studying the Jewish Diaspora in antiquity

Sean Freyne

The essays collected here seek to make a contribution to the study of the Jewish Diaspora in the ancient world, a topic that is of interest to scholars in many fields – historians of Judaism and early Christianity, archaeologists, epigraphists, Greek and Roman historians and historical sociologists interested in issues of ethnicity and identity. These papers were first delivered in spring 1997 at a conference organised under the auspices of the Consultative Committee for the Bible and the Ancient Near East in the Royal Irish Academy. The long delay since the conference would normally disqualify its papers from publication. Yet the conference committee is of the considered opinion – one happily shared by very understanding publishers – that the papers can still make an important contribution to an area that has not received the attention it deserves from students of Second Temple Judaism.

There are many factors that contribute to this relative neglect of Jewish Diaspora studies in antiquity, not least the scarcity of literary sources other than for Egypt. Yet one suspects this is not the only reason for their subordinate position within the burgeoning field of studies of Second Temple Judaism. These have been concentrated largely on the homeland, because of political reasons to do with the modern state of Israel, but also because of the amount and nature of the data that have been amassed within that milieu over the past half-century. The excitement generated by the Dead Sea Scrolls and their publication, and the intense interest in the archaeological data from Galilee, are just two examples of particular interests, important though they may be, setting, and to an extent skewing, the scholarly agenda. By contrast, the new data for the Diaspora have received much less attention, confined as they are for the most part to inscriptions and some limited archaeological evidence.

Perhaps also the very idea of the Diaspora as representing a painful experience for Jews of later centuries, felt most keenly in our own time because of the attempted extermination of European Jewry in the Holocaust, has cast a dark shadow over our perceptions of the Diaspora in earlier times also. As a topic for research, therefore, it inevitably had much less appeal for Jewish scholars. Studies such as those of Salo Baron, and more recently, Louis

Feldman, have appeared to some critics to be overly apologetic, thus either indirectly subscribing to the 'lachrymose' view of Jewish history, or alternatively painting too rosy a picture of the attractiveness of Judaism to non-Jews. On the other hand, Christian scholars have been all too prone to adopt stereotypes of Judaism and Hellenism as opposing cultural forces. As a result, Christian origins have been interpreted in the context of the Graeco-Roman religious and cultural milieu rather than in that in of its parent Judaism, following a nineteenth-century History of Religions approach. The Hellenists and Paul were, until relatively recently, seen as having cut the umbilical cord with the Jewish matrix, and Luke's apologetic history of the spread of early Christianity at the expense of a recalcitrant Diaspora Judaism was uncritically adopted.

Many studies of Second Temple Judaism by both Jewish and Christian scholars today are critically aware of the biases of both the ancient sources and the personal ones that determine our scholarly constructs. It has become clear that in order to understand fully the phenomenon of Jewish emigration from the homeland in the ancient world more sophisticated models are called for than that conjured up by the single term 'the Diaspora'. The emergence of this term as the appropriate label for Jews living away from the homeland has its background in the Babylonian exile and the LXX translation of the Hebrew term *galuth* by such Greek words as *apoikia* and *aichmalosia* as well as *diaspora*, in the sense of forcible exile, or being lead into captivity. Thus the phenomenon of Jewish existence outside the homeland was in danger of retaining negative connotations, even though not all Jews returned from Babylon in the wake of Cyrus' decree. This picture was more appropriate for the Jews living in the ghettos of medieval Europe than for those of Hellenistic and Roman times, when the far-flung dispersion of the Jews could be interpreted positively by various apologists (1 Macc. 15: 16-24; Josephus, *Antiquities* XIV. vii.2 [110-15]; XV. i.2 [14]; *Jewish War* II. xvi. 4 [398]; 7. iii. 3 [43]). In all probability the reality lay somewhere between these two extremes, depending on circumstances of education, class and skills.

We are not well informed of the circumstances of Jewish emigration from the early Hellenistic period. Yet the existence of a self-confident Jewish community at Elephantine in Egypt from the fifth century BCE tells its own story. The Zenon papyri certainly suggest an active slave trade between Palestine and Egypt, but this was only for certain strata of the population. Toubias who achieved a high position in the Ptolemaic administration was at the other end of the spectrum and his career suggests other reasons for emigration than enforcement, political or economic, for such movement away from the homeland. Subsequently the possibilities of trade, military activity and other opportunities, of which the author of 1 Macc was only too well aware (1 Maccabees 1:11), must have meant that many Jews left freely and by choice, and in that sense were not different from other ethnic groups

whose movements are known to us from the Hellenistic age. Despite this backdrop the stereotype of Hellenism and Judaism as two implacably opposed forces continued to dominate many construals of the Diaspora existence of Jews. Within this scenario the figure of Philo of Alexandria stands out as the exception that proves the rule, even though a plausible understanding of his project suggests that he saw the positive possibilities of Greek philosophy in articulating his own Jewish tradition, and so embraced wholeheartedly a thoroughly Greek education, following in the tradition of other Graeco-Jewish writers before him like Aristobulus and Aristeas. At the same time Philo could also be a vigorous defender of the rights of his fellow Jews as both his *In Flaccum* and his *Ad Gaium* demonstrate. Despite this, Philo's importance has been minimal in more general studies of the Jewish Diaspora; he is of more interest to Middle Platonists than to historians of Judaism.

Philo's defence of the Jews of Alexandria raises a further issue with regard to the Jews that is often not fully appreciated in attempts to understand their situation in the Diaspora. Unlike conditions obtaining later in a Christian empire, when various restrictions against Jews begin to appear in the legislation from the late fourth and early fifth centuries CE, the legal status of the Jews in the Roman Diaspora in earlier times was much more favourable. This was graphically illustrated by Titus' refusal to take measures against the Jews in Antioch as he returned triumphantly to Rome at the end of the first revolt (*Jewish War* VII. iii.3 [43-62]; v.2 [100-11]). The Seleucid king, Antiochus III (*Antiquities* XIV, iii.4 [147-53]), gave special recognition to the Jews in the eastern Diaspora. Almost two hundred years later, Claudius' letter to the Alexandrians shows that while citizenship was denied to the Jews, he wanted to respect their special status in law, which had previously been established. Nor is there any evidence of special measures taken against the Jews of North Africa or Cyprus in the wake of the disturbances in the reign of Trajan, and a similar situation seems to have obtained also after the Bar Kochba revolt, with the exception of Judean Jews.

Once the notion of a single Diaspora sharing in the conditions of exile and captivity is deconstructed it becomes more difficult to propose a suitable model that will embrace all aspects of Jewish existence outside the homeland in a meaningful manner. The sheer geographic spread of Jewish communities under the various ruling dynasties, Hellenistic and Roman, meant that Jews, like other ethnic minorities, had to adapt to quite varied circumstances. Perhaps that explains why the more important studies have been focused on individual locations such as Egypt or Rome, about which we are relatively well informed. Yet there are highly significant issues that call for maintaining the wider perspective, no matter how complex the situation may have been.

These have to do firstly with questions of acculturation, enculturation, assimilation and strategies of ethnic-identity maintenance that are particularly acute in the case of the Jews, given the strong attachment to

their homeland and in particular to Jerusalem, their metropolis. How was it possible for them to dwell in cities 'not their own' and what were the strategies for coping, accepting and being accepted, and participating that were open to them? Did these vary from place to place and from regime to regime? Did their official legal status within the Roman world differ from that of other ethnic minorities, and if so, how did this affect their relations with those groups? What, if any were the differences in this regard for Jews living in the eastern rather than the western part of the empire, and in particular for those living outside the *limes* in Persia? Secondly, the inter-relationships, especially with Jerusalem, need to be explored more thoroughly, not simply idealised as in many accounts. Was the only difference in being a Jew in Sardis rather than Scythopolis proximity to the mother city? Were there strategies for networking between Jewish communities throughout the Mediterranean and Near Eastern worlds, or was it the connection with Jerusalem and its immediate territory enshrined in the designation *Ioudaios* that controlled all relationships? Was living in Galilee, for example, a form of Diaspora existence for a Jew, given the particular symbolic significance of Jerusalem, or did the territorial boundaries of the land of Israel still play an important role for Jews everywhere? A third set of questions has to do with the perceived clash between Jewishness and the Hellenistic *zeitgeist*. Did the cosmopolitan spirit touch Jews as much as other ethnic groups abroad, and does this explain their non-participation in the two revolts? What particular crafts and patterns of trading did Jews pursue? What levels of participation in the public life of cities or municipalities were tolerated and expected and how did these differ for Jews and for other ethnic groups?

It is far easier to ask than to answer questions such as these, given the scattered nature of our evidence. Yet they would appear to be the kinds of questions that need to be explored if we are to make progress in our understanding of the phenomenon of the Jewish Diaspora in antiquity. In particular, there is a need to engage in comparative studies wherever possible with other groups who were also interested in maintaining their distinctive ethnic identity while living away from the homeland. However, when cross-cultural examples are introduced it is important to acknowledge difference of time and place before any conclusions can be drawn. This is particularly true when Jewish examples of Diaspora life are introduced from, for example, medieval or modern Europe or North America. To be sure, similar issues occur, but these are played out in very different political, cultural and social circumstances, and we cannot transpose Jewish responses to these from one period to another just because stereotypes of Jewish 'stubbornness' have been inherited from both pagan and Christian anti-Judaism over the centuries. Insofar as Jewish scholarship may have felt obliged to support these stereotypes for apologetic reasons, it does little service to the flexibility and creativity of the Jewish genius and its capacity to adapt without losing its true sense of self.

The idea that gave rise to the Dublin conference emerged for the present writer from an assignment to prepare an article for *The Oxford Encyclopaedia of Archaeology in the Near East* (ed. E. Meyers, 5 vols, 1997) on 'Cities of the Hellenistic and Roman periods' (vol. 2, 29–35). In the course of surveying the literature it became obvious that while this was considerable with regard to the architectural, economic and historical aspects of ancient cities, insufficient attention had been given to the notion of the city as 'symbolic universe', calling for allegiance not merely from its citizens but from all who were allowed to share its space, no matter how lowly their status. At the same time, I recalled the provocative title of an article by Jacob Neusner, 'The City as useless symbol in Late Antique Judaism'. Inevitably, this claim brought into sharper focus the question of the Diaspora and the problems it posed for Jews. How far did practice differ from ideology in the ancient world and what were the factors at work in adaptation and accommodation? Was it possible to re-conceptualise the Jewish Diaspora differently and what were the factors that gave rise to Neusner's challenging observation about rabbinic attitudes? Did similar considerations apply at an earlier period also?

As always happens, our theoretical outline for the conference was not fully matched by the responses we received to our 'call for papers'. Nevertheless, the framing of the topic in a certain way remained with the discussions, which were lively and informative. Re-reading the papers now as revised in the light of those discussions and developments in the interim, it seems clear to me that the elements of a possible new paradigm along the lines I have been suggesting for the study of the Jewish Diaspora in antiquity is contained here, even if the authors of the different articles would not necessarily express the matter in that way. They are presented now to a wider audience in the hope that they will contribute to an on-going debate as well as to other projects on issues that are of importance to all of us, not just in terms of ancient Mediterranean and Near Eastern history, but from the perspective of an emerging global culture that in the name of progress threatens to abolish all notions of ethnic identity and difference.

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THE HELLENISTIC CITY OF JERUSALEM¹

Lester L. Grabbe

The place of Jews in the various Hellenistic cities in the Greek and Roman world has been the focus of a variety of studies.² What is often overlooked is possibly the most important Hellenistic city for Jews in the ancient world: the Hellenistic city of Jerusalem itself. Here we have not just a city in which Jews lived as a minority population and semi-outsiders (except for the very few Jews who were citizens). Rather, we have a city which was created and run by Jews and in which the vast majority of citizens – if not every one – were themselves Jews.

The so-called Hellenistic reform which took place in the early part of Seleucid rule and led to the Hellenistic city of Jerusalem has generally been described by pens dipped in vitriol, beginning with the books of Maccabees. Our attitude to the ancient Greeks is strangely ambiguous. We admire Athens, we prefer the Greeks to the barbarians, we take the Greek side in many of the famous battles such as Marathon. Yet when it comes to Jewish history, the Greeks suddenly cease to be the cowboys and become the Indians – to use a phrase which would no doubt be very politically incorrect these days.

For this reason, it is very important that we read our sources carefully and critically and not be stampeded into believing simply what 'everyone knows'. Can we trust the books of Maccabees? This may seem a strange question to ask. If we want to know anything about the Maccabean period, where do we get this information? Apart from the books of Maccabees, there is very little other information. The few references in non-Jewish literature

¹ This paper was prepared specifically to be delivered orally; apart from some minor editings, I have not changed this style in the published form. A version of this paper was also delivered on 21 January 1997 as the second Maccabean Lecture, sponsored by the Society of Maccabees and King's College London Department of Theology and Religion. I thank the Maccabees and also Professor M.A. Knibb for the invitation to deliver the lecture there, as I thank the Royal Irish Academy for inviting me give this paper in the present context.

² For recent studies, see Barclay 1996, Leon 1960; Trebilco 1991; Rutgers 1995.

are very brief. Josephus gives a somewhat independent account, which most scholars dismiss as confused, but then in the *Antiquities* he gives a close paraphrase of 1 Maccabees. So if we want to know about the Maccabean revolt and events which led up to it, we must use 1 and 2 Maccabees.

Yet it is a common proclivity of historians to take their best sources and proceed to tear them to shreds. This is called the historical method. However much we depend on our sources, we cannot do so naively. Every source requires close and critical analysis. The writers of the literary accounts of history have their biases, their prejudices, their particular points of view, their lacks.

Understanding these characteristics of a particular writing or writer is a useful tool to interpreting what is said. It is also often important in evaluating what is *not* said. The 'argument from silence' can be abused, but it can be a powerful argument in some cases. It is Sherlock Holmes' dog which did not bark in the night. As I shall show later, there are some surprising omissions in 2 Maccabees' account of the events preceding the Maccabean revolt.

But there is a particular weakness which afflicts scholars. This is to read their theory instead of the text. That is, they read their theories into the text instead of reading the text for what it says. A word was invented for this many years ago. It is called 'eisegesis', though more recently it has been called 'reader response'. Unfortunately, the books of Maccabees have often been read very selectively for what might support a particular view rather than the entire text for what it says. Once having read the text in its fullness, a scholar might well feel that a particular statement is biased or incorrect or misinformed, but the reading of the text – the entire text – must precede this critical judgment.

So what I propose to do here is to read the text. The text of 1 Maccabees is generally the best source for much to do with the Maccabean revolt but not for the events immediately preceding the revolt and leading up to it; for this 2 Maccabees is better. Before looking at 2 Maccabees, some background would be useful.

When the Seleucid ruler Antiochus III or Antiochus the Great conquered Palestine in 200 BCE, things do not seem to have changed much for the Jews. Some have asserted that it did, but I see little evidence for it. According to Josephus (*Ant.* XII.iii.4 [145–6]), Antiochus issued a decree on behalf of the Jews.³ If genuine, it is an important document allowing the Jews to continue in their traditional customs and even giving some temporary relief from taxes so that war damage to the city could be repaired. Antiochus III died in 187 and was succeeded by his son Seleucus IV. According to 2 Maccabees 3, Seleucus attempted to confiscate the temple treasury. The exact situation

³ Bickerman 1980: vol. 2, 44–104.

behind this account is not certain, as will be noted below, but apart from this the Jews seem to have lived peacefully under Seleucus.

The change came about under Antiochus IV Epiphanes, though not in the way often presented in handbooks. Antiochus IV was a son of Antiochus III and brother to Seleucus IV. He had been a hostage in Rome but was returning home when news of Seleucus' death reached him. Seleucus had a son, also named Antiochus, but he was a minor. So uncle Antiochus took the opportunity to seize the throne. Although in name he ruled the first five years jointly with his nephew, you are not likely to be surprised when I tell you that this ended in the youth's assassination and Antiochus the uncle's sole rulership. It can be dangerous to be heir to the throne.

We know from a cuneiform tablet that Antiochus IV began his reign in September 175 BCE.⁴ When he took the throne, what did he do with regard to the Jews? The answer will be a surprise to many: he did nothing. We have no indication that Antiochus had any particular interest in the Jews. The first encounter with the Jews does seem to have come about fairly soon after he began his reign, but it was not initiated by him. On the contrary, Jason (brother of the Jerusalem high priest Onias III) approached Antiochus – and he brought him an offer he could not refuse. He offered to pay 360 talents of silver, plus another eighty from another source, a total of 440 talents of silver, to be given the high priesthood in place of his brother. What was Antiochus to do? The answer was obvious: it made no difference to him who was high priest in Jerusalem – in any case, the office was still in the family; Jason had at least showed some sign of having a bit of gumption, and he might turn out to be useful; above all he paid cash on the barrel head.

Antiochus was a ruler. What is it that rulers of that time – or perhaps any time – are interested in? Power and money. As an astute ruler, Antiochus had grand plans to extend his empire – his power – but to do that he needed money. Armies cost money. You have to feed and pay troops, even if they are conscripts, but Hellenistic rulers made a good deal of use of mercenary troops,⁵ and hiring mercenary troops could be like taking a viper into your bosom. If you want to keep your troops on your side, you had better pay them more than they could get from your enemies; otherwise, you might suddenly find yourself with an opposing army in your very heartland.⁶ So it was no problem at all for Antiochus to see the wisdom of giving Jason the high priesthood and accepting his money.

But Jason had more in mind than just the office held by his brother. He also had visions of making Jerusalem a city to be reckoned with in the

⁴ Sachs and Wiseman 1954: 202–11.

⁵ On mercenaries, see such works as Griffith 1935; 1976; Yalichev 1997.

⁶ It was common for the victorious general to enlist the opponent's troops in his own army. It was unusual for the troops to refuse (though this sometimes happened, e.g., with Antiochus VII's troops when the Parthians tried to use them; cf. Yalichev 1997: 198).

Hellenistic world. Therefore, in addition to the 440 talents of silver already offered, he added another 150 into the bargain 'to establish by his authority a gymnasium and a body of youth for it, and to enroll the people of Jerusalem as citizens of Antioch' (2 Macc. 4.9).⁷ Now a modern reader might well ask, 'What is wrong with a gymnasium? It would provide good healthy exercise, get the youth off the street, divert their energy so they wouldn't be so likely to mug little old ladies. Sounds like a good thing.'⁸ Whether it was a good thing or not, we shall come to. But the building of a gymnasium had greater implications than just providing a place for the young people to keep in shape. For some reason, the author of 2 Maccabees is not completely explicit about what Jason was asking for, but the reason is probably that to the ancient reader, as well as to the modern reader knowledgeable in Hellenistic culture, it would have been clear what was happening. Jason was bidding for the right to make Jerusalem into a *polis*, a city modelled on the Greek foundations.

The basic government of the ancient Greek mainland was the city-state, a main city with a small citizen population and large slave population, a territory with land worked by slaves, and a certain number of non-citizens ('metics'), foreigners and others. The government of the city-state varied considerably, but the citizens often had a hand in making the laws and governing their state. As Alexander conquered his way across the ancient Near East, he periodically set up cities modelled on the Greek city-state. The citizens were his Macedonian veterans and their families. A city was built, with a gymnasium, and land was confiscated and assigned to the veterans; however, it was not farmed directly by them but by slaves or, as was often the case in Asia, by serfs who were bound to the land.

The gymnasium was in many ways the centre of the city: it was 'architecturally and culturally the defining institution of Greek urban civilization, recognized as such alike by those who wished to exploit its opportunities and by those who saw in it a symbol of alien influence.'⁹ It also served as an important focus for social activities in the city. It was the training ground for the new citizens. The original aim was to introduce the ephebrates or trainee citizens to the skills needed in war.¹⁰ This was why

⁷ Quotations are generally from the NRSV.

⁸ One of the aims of the gymnasium seems indeed to have been to divert the energies of young men: 'And, not least, it was a means of containing the potential rowdiness of youth (see "Εργον 1984, 23 for an ephebic law of 24/3 requiring ephebes in the theatre "not to clap, nor hiss, but to watch silently and decorously")' (Hornblower and Spawforth 1996: 528).

⁹ Davies 1984: 308. See also Rostovtzeff 1941: 1058–61; Doran 1990: 99–109, especially p. 100.

¹⁰ The ephebate probably goes back at least to the fifth century BCE. The fact remains, however, that our clear documentation of it is no earlier than about 335 BCE; see Reinmuth 1948: 211–31.

physical exercises and contests were an important part of the gymnasium activity. But the gymnasium was much more than just a sports arena. It also provided education in writing, literature and rhetoric.¹¹ This is why in mainland Europe, a *gymnasium* is a grammar school.

Jason clearly had some sort of vision for the future of Judah. Did he also have a vision of the future for the *Jewish religion*? This has often been assumed, but let's not judge in advance. However, his vision for Jerusalem, at least, was to adopt the trappings of the old Greek city-state. The people would become citizens. This was a new concept. Up until this time the Jews identified themselves as members of an *ethnos*, a people. The idea of being a citizen of a city was something introduced into Judah for the first time. To be a citizen of a Greek city carried privileges and was jealously guarded. As noted above, many of those who lived in a *polis* were not actually citizens. We are not given details of who became citizens of the new *polis* of Jerusalem, but we can be sure that the wealthy and the aristocracy were among the first on the list. Jason himself had the task of drawing up the list of citizens; one would not be surprised if he charged for the privilege; in any case, he probably built up political credit with those of power and influence.¹²

What is the pronouncement of the books of Maccabees on Jason's enterprise? In a word, they were against it. The story is told in detail in 2 Maccabees 4. Jason 'set aside the existing royal concessions to the Jews, secured through John the father of Eupolemus' (4.11). This refers back to the initial conquest of Palestine by Antiochus III who confirmed the traditional Jewish observances.¹³ Evidently John had been crucial in negotiating with Antiochus that the Jews' traditional rights continued unhindered. 2 Maccabees then goes on to give its verdict on Jason's enterprise (4.10–15):

... he [Jason] destroyed the lawful ways of living and introduced new customs contrary to the law [*paranomos*]. He took delight in establishing a gymnasium right under the citadel There was such an extreme of Hellenization and increase in the adoption of foreign ways because of the surpassing wickedness [*anagneia*] of Jason, who was ungodly [*asebeis*] and no true high priest, that the priests were no longer intent upon their service at the altar. Despising the sanctuary and neglecting the sacrifices, they hurried to take part in

11 In the Hellenistic period, when cities were not generally involved in military activity, the gymnasia were more like secondary schools; however, athletics were still an important part of their endeavours. See Jones 1940: 220–26; also the references in n. 9 above.

12 Despite Doran's comment (1990: 103) that the 'requirement for citizenship remained birth as a Jew', it is not clear from the evidence that all Jews were citizens of Jerusalem. It is possible, but the fact that Jason had to draw up a list of citizens suggests that not everyone was included.

13 For a further discussion, see n. 3 above.

the unlawful [*paranomos*] proceedings in the wrestling arena after the signal for the discus-throwing, disdaining the honours prized by their ancestors and putting the highest value upon Greek forms of prestige.

Now, I want to ask a silly question at this point: what did Jason do that was wrong? 2 Maccabees thinks that Jason is a wicked man; he says so quite frequently in this passage. But what *specific act* of breaking the law does he name? I understand there is an old rule used by lawyers: if you have the law on your side, you pound the law; if the law is against you, you pound the table. The author of this passage is pounding the table; he is throwing up lots of adjectives and adverbs: 'wicked', 'unlawful', 'ungodly' – but he does not at any point tell us anything concrete.

We can probably all agree that Jason should not have taken the high priesthood from his brother Onias. But beyond that 2 Maccabees gives no specific examples of anything unlawful. The most he can say is that the priests were not as intent on their service of the altar as they should have been, but even this may be a matter of interpretation. We know the daily *tamid* offering did not cease because when it was stopped a few years later, it was an extremely traumatic experience.¹⁴ Were the people who brought their various sacrifices not being attended to? Were there long queues of tired people dragging along thirsty sheep and goats, bleating away, because the priests were not doing their job? As far as we can tell, the cult continued as normal. What is alleged is that priests left the altar at a certain time of day to attend the sports in the wrestling arena.

Priests were not required to be on duty twenty-four hours a day. There were more priests than were needed to take care of the sacrificial system, and eventually a system developed in which they were divided into twenty-four courses.¹⁵ They were on duty for a week twice a year and, in addition, all were on duty on the festivals. So who were the priests who went to the wrestling arena? Were they priests on duty? If so, no specific law would have been broken, though there was a greater danger that a priest might become ritually polluted if away from the temple. Or has the writer simply created a caricature? No details are given, so it is hard to evaluate, but the fact is that *all* the writer can say is that the priests were not as diligent as they should be. Considering the author's earnest desire to attack Jason, he is clearly praising by his faint damns.

The only possible example of a breach of the law is found in 2 Maccabees 4.18–20. This states:

14 The book of Daniel (9.27; 11.31; 12.11) sees the cessation of the daily offering and the setting up of the 'abomination of desolation' (*šiqqus [baš]šimôn*) as heralding the 'time of the end' (11.40) and the intervention of God. See especially Daniel 8.

15 Williamson 1979: 251–68; Talmon 1958: 162–99.

When the quadrennial games were being held at Tyre and the king was present, the vile [just in case you might have forgotten] Jason sent envoys, chosen as being Antiochian citizens from Jerusalem, to carry three hundred silver drachmas for the sacrifice to Hercules. Those who carried the money, however, thought best not to use it for sacrifice, because that was inappropriate, but to expend it for another purpose. So this money was intended by the sender for the sacrifice to Hercules, but by the decision of its carriers it was applied to the construction of triremes.

If we accept this at face value, as it often is, then Jason violated the law, though it would have been a violation outside the territory of Judah. However, let us look at this account carefully. First, if I were Jason and planned to send 300 silver drachmas to Tyre, I would pick my couriers very carefully. I would want men I could trust. There were an awful lot of bars, taverns and brothels between Jerusalem and Tyre. But if I chose trustworthy men, they would also be people who would not take the money for one purpose and then use it for something else when they got there. Second, it is easy to allege that it was intended for another purpose, but where is the evidence? The money was not in fact used for a pagan sacrifice but for warships. This all suggests to me that Jason really originally sent the 300 drachmas as a gift with the intent that the silver be used to buy warships. Someone, however – perhaps even the author of 2 Maccabees – simply put the worst possible interpretation on the act. I admit that there can be no certainty, but the account here seems to me to be problematic.

One other allegation is made in 1 Maccabees 1:14–15. This is that those who built the gymnasium 'removed the marks of circumcision' (ἐποίησαν ἑαυτοῖς ἀκροβυστίας). It is not easy to evaluate whether this is anything more than a wild allegation because it is mentioned by no independent sources. It is not in 2 Maccabees, for example. However, let us take it at face value and put the worst interpretation on it. There are still two points one should keep in mind. The first point concerns the operation itself. There is a description of 'uncircumcision' in an ancient medical text (Celsus 7.25.1). I shall not make you cringe by reciting the gory details, but I think I can say without fear of contradiction that it would have required a certain amount of motivation to undergo the operation in a time before anaesthetics were available. I am confident they were not queuing up at the surgeon's door.

If some did go through with this, it would have been to compete in athletic contests in other cities. We have no evidence that exercises were done in the nude in Jerusalem. 2 Maccabees does not suggest that they were, and Thucydides (1.6.5–6) shows that it was not necessarily always the custom:

They [the Spartans], too, were the first to play games naked, to take off their clothes openly, and to rub themselves down with olive oil

after their exercise. In ancient times even at the Olympic Games the athletes used to wear coverings for their loins, and indeed this practice was still in existence not very many years ago. Even today many foreigners, especially in Asia, wear these loincloths for boxing matches and wrestling bouts.¹⁶

Some have seen a condemnation of nudity in the Jerusalem gymnasium in Jubilees 3:30–31 which states:

But from all the beasts and all the cattle he granted to Adam alone that he might cover his shame. Therefore it is commanded in the heavenly tablets to all who will know the judgment of the Law that they should cover their shame and they should not be uncovered as the gentiles are uncovered.

This does not strike one as a polemic against fellow Jews, but as a general comment on the practices of the Gentiles and an admonition not to imitate them. It is not even clearly a reference to exercises in the arena.¹⁷

My second point is that there is no reason to think that if some young men did remove the signs of circumcision, Jason was responsible. If you have boys, you know they sometimes they do things you do not approve of. Youth are known in every age for kicking over the traces. All we can say is that it may well have happened – and all the author of 1 Maccabees needed was one example, or even a rumour – but it would have been a very few at the most, and there is no evidence that it was a deliberate policy on the part of Jason.

What was the reaction of the people to all this? In handbooks one often reads that 'the orthodox Jews in Jerusalem were incensed at these things.'¹⁸ There are two problems with such statements. First, the question of who is 'orthodox' is begged. Who determines who is orthodox; who are we to say who was considered pious at the time and who was not? The second problem is closely related: it concerns the reaction of the people. And what was their reaction? The answer is, *we are not told there was any reaction*. We can assume, I think with some confidence, that there was a variety of reaction. Some of those living in the country were no doubt displeased with what was happening, or at least sceptical about it. This is the natural reaction of country people to the wicked 'big city'. But this is speculation because we do not know for sure. What we *do* know is that there were no riots and demonstrations against Jason's plan; on the contrary, we also know that many

¹⁶ Thucydides, *History of the Peloponnesian War* (trans. Rex Warner) Penguin Classics, London: Penguin: 1954: 38 (italics mine).

¹⁷ Knibb 1989: 16–17) assumes that this passage in Jubilees has a reference to athletics in the nude in the Jerusalem gymnasium, though he does not really argue the point.

¹⁸ Russell 1967: 37; see a similar statement in Russell 1960: 27.

people embraced it because they became a part of the new Hellenistic city, which may have been called Antioch, or perhaps Antioch-at-Jerusalem, since the citizens were called 'Antiochenes' (Ἀντιοχεῖς: 4:9, 19).¹⁹ They even welcomed Antiochus in magnificent fashion when he visited Jerusalem on his way to Egypt (2 Macc. 4:21–22).

Jason's Hellenistic foundation lasted only about three years (2 Macc. 4:23–26). Jason had in essence double-crossed his brother. There is no reason why others could not play that game, and an individual named Menelaus did precisely that. He went to Antiochus and offered him even more money to hold the office of high priest. In fact, he offered a much greater sum, adding a further 300 talents to the amount being paid by Jason. This was a large sum by any standards, and if it was meant to be an annual contribution as some have suggested, it was an impossible sum. We know it was impossible because Menelaus did not pay it!

Who was this Menelaus? According to Josephus, who has an account independent of the book of Maccabees (*Ant.* XII.v.1 [237–40]), he was the brother of Onias and Jason and was actually named Onias as well – Onias-Menelaus. Most scholars have rejected this account, and I think rightly, though some other points in Josephus' version need more attention than they have hitherto been given.

According to 2 Maccabees, Menelaus was one of three brothers. Simon was a captain of the temple and had had a disagreement with Onias over the running of the city market. As a result of this, he had gone to Apollonius, the Seleucid governor for this part of the Seleucid empire, with some sort of tale. As a result, the king Seleucus IV had sent his minister Heliodorus to confiscate the temple treasury. This is all described in 2 Maccabees 3 and ended happily in that Heliodorus did not in the end take the temple money, though whether we should credit the reason given depends on one's credulity: 2 Maccabees says an angel on a fiery steed with two companions drove Heliodorus off with a heavenly flogging.

Simon was one brother, then, and another was Lysimachus to whom we shall come in a minute. It has often been asserted that these brothers were simply lay Jews, which would mean that Menelaus would have been become high priest without being even a Levite, much less an Aaronite. This conclusion is based on the statement in 2 Maccabees 3:4 that Simon was 'of the tribe of Benjamin'. This statement is indeed made in the majority of Greek manuscripts, but it is scarcely credible. Simon was captain of the temple, a priestly office (2 Macc. 3:4). When Menelaus became high priest, there is no evidence of opposition from the people, which there surely would have been if he had not been of priestly descent (as subsequent events show). However, instead of 'tribe of Benjamin' the Old Latin and Armenian versions

have 'tribe of Balgea', which was evidently a priestly family known as Bilgah in Nehemiah. 12:5, 18.²⁰

Therefore, what we see is another example of the struggle over the priesthood which seems to have a long history. Most of this is probably lost to us, but there are hints in the Hebrew Bible which in various passages has Levitical priests, Aaronite priests, Zadokite priests, and even a Moses priest according to Judges 17:30. So although even the author of 2 Maccabees sees Menelaus' crime as worse than Jason's (4:25), since Jason was at least from the traditional high priestly family, Menelaus was probably a priest.

Menelaus soon got into trouble because he was not paying the money he had promised to Antiochus. He was summoned to appear before the king, but when he arrived, the king was away dealing with a revolt. Menelaus had to appear before another high minister named Andronicus. Here was a chance to gain time, so Menelaus stole some of the golden temple vessels, giving some to Andronicus and selling others in the area of Tyre. In this way, he not only gained a breathing space with regard to his debt but also bribed Andronicus into murdering Onias the original high priest. Onias had taken refuge in a temple near Antioch – a pagan temple no less – but it did not save him.

Meanwhile, back in Jerusalem rumours had begun to spread about the stolen temple vessels. We now have a crucial piece of information. What was the people's reaction to the theft of the temple vessels? They rioted in the streets. Lysimachus, who was governing while Menelaus was away, came out with a large band of armed soldiers to attack the crowd. But this was no ordinary mob. They were out in such numbers and so agitated by the rumours of the temple desecration that they drove off the soldiers and even killed Lysimachus. This fact puts a number of the previous events in perspective. The people of Jerusalem were not indifferent to matters of religion. They had the same regard for the temple and its cult as their ancestors had. It was a most sacred place and not to be treated lightly. Selling off temple vessels was a breach of its holiness and a serious affront to the religious susceptibilities of the people.

You will now see why I put so much store in the earlier silence of 2 Maccabees. If the people react so strongly to selling off the temple vessels, they would have reacted equally strongly to a breach of the law on the part of Jason. His Hellenistic reform clearly did not affect Jewish worship; it only

²⁰ See the data in Hanhart 1976: 55. This seems to me the simplest and, therefore, the most likely explanation; however, others are possible. For example, it may be that Simon was indeed from the tribe of Benjamin but that he was not really the brother of Menelaus; rather, the writer made the connection to suggest Menelaus's illegitimacy (cf. van Henten 1997: 32, n. 44).

¹⁹ Tcherikover 1959: 161, 404–9.

concerned matters in what we would call the 'secular' realm.²¹ It also indicates that Menelaus must have been of a priestly family because his occupying the high priestly office would not have been tolerated otherwise. Keep in the mind that those who rioted were the citizens of Jerusalem, not some 'pious' gathering from the countryside. They seem to have been Jason's people, as is indicated by the immediately following event.

As soon as the riot was over, the *gerousia* or 'senate' or 'governing council' sent a delegation to complain to the king. What was this *gerousia*? The name implies a 'council of elders' (from *gerōn* 'elder, old man') just as does 'senate' (from Latin *senex*). The indications are that this was a traditional feature of Jerusalem government.²² It had evidently been incorporated into the city government set up by Jason. Furthermore, it was made up of those who went along with Jason's reforms. Yet they were the leaders in fighting a threat to the temple and the law.

This brings us to the year 170 BCE. At this point, events in Jerusalem were overtaken by wider events in the world. Antiochus was attacked by Ptolemy VI, providing an opportunity to invade Egypt. He was successful and, apparently on his way back, visited Jerusalem. I say 'apparently' because the account in 2 Maccabees (5.1, 15–21) associates it with the second invasion of Antiochus in 168. However, 1 Maccabees also mentions what seems to be the same event but describes it as taking place after the first invasion (1 Macc. 1.16–24). It makes most sense to me that this visit to Jerusalem took place after the first invasion because Antiochus came to Jerusalem peacefully, which was not the case after the second invasion. Antiochus was taken on a tour of the temple by Menelaus (2 Macc. 5.15–16) – a clear breach of the law – and then appropriated much of the temple treasury before going on his way back to Antioch.

Antiochus' arrangements in Egypt did not last; two years later in the spring of 168 he invaded Egypt again. This time the Romans intervened. The story as told by Polybius is an interesting one (29.27.1–7). The Senate had passed a motion requiring Antiochus to withdraw, but it was to be delivered only if the Romans won the battle of Pydna. When the Roman commander Popilius Laenas approached Antiochus, he greeted him from a

²¹ As is often said these days, the ancients did not make the distinction between 'sacred' and 'secular' that we do. That is true; on the other hand, they had no trouble distinguishing that which had to do with the temple and the deity from what was confined to ordinary profane life. They would normally have had no trouble deciding whether something was a violation of traditional religious law or not.

²² A *gerousia* is mentioned in the decree of Antiochus III as quoted by Josephus, *Ant.* XII.iii.3–4 (138–46): 'And all the members of the nation shall have a form of government in accordance with the laws of their country, and the senate [*gerousia*], the priests, the scribes of the temple and the temple-singers shall be relieved from the poll-tax' (§142), translation from H. St J. Thackeray (1926–65), *Josephus*, LCL, London: Heinemann; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, pp. 73, 75.

distance but refused to shake hands. Instead he handed him the *senatus consultum*. After reading it, Antiochus said he would need to consult with his friends. Popilius took a stick he was carrying and drew a circle around Antiochus. He then said the Seleucid king had to make his decision before stepping outside the circle. Antiochus, after a few minutes' hesitation, agreed to the Senate's demands, at which point Popilius shook his hand warmly.

This was a rather humiliating experience for Antiochus, but he knew he could not buck Rome. He had no choice but to withdraw from Egypt even though he could have taken it with ease. However, a rumour had reached Jason in Transjordan, where he had taken refuge, that Antiochus had been killed. This seemed a wonderful opportunity to try to take back the high priesthood which he thought was rightfully his – after all, he had stolen it fair and square. Jason's troops retook Jerusalem, but Menelaus holed up in the citadel and could not be dislodged. In the meantime, Antiochus heard of the fight going on between Jason and Menelaus and naturally thought a revolt was underway. He immediately sent an army to put down the assumed rebellion. What happened next is not completely clear in either 1 or 2 Maccabees. In the six months between when Antiochus withdrew from Egypt in July 168 and the cessation of the temple cult in December 168,²³ our sources relate a number of puzzling events which led up to the suppression of Judaism, but not enough data are given to make clear precisely what was happening. Especially baffling is the reason that Judaism was forbidden. The subject has been much discussed but cannot be dealt with here.²⁴

It is with Antiochus' decree forbidding the practice of Judaism that the Jewish revolt against the Seleucid empire really begins. This story – the story of the Maccabees – is a story in its own right, a very interesting saga of courage, heroism and daring – but also one of internecine warfare and the struggle between different ideologies within Judaism. However, this is a story for another day, unfortunately, and cannot be taken up here.

Instead, I want now to go back to Jason's Hellenistic city. The detailed description that we would like to have of this institution has probably been lost forever, but this chapter has already considered a number of hints and arguments. From these we can now infer several things.

From the time of Alexander, Greek culture became a new element within the ancient Near East. It did not replace the native cultures; on the contrary, the Greeks were not interested in cultural imperialism.²⁵ They regarded themselves as superior and looked down on the natives. It was the natives, especially those of the upper classes, who saw that it could be useful to learn

²³ See Grabbe 1991: 59–74.

²⁴ For a thorough discussion see Grabbe 1992: 247–56, 281–85 (pagination is continuous).

²⁵ See ch. 3 of Grabbe 1992.

Greek, gain a Greek education, and adopt some of the Greek ways of doing things. It was also natural that Greek influence of some sort permeated the entire society, especially as time went on. The entity created by this mixing of the Greek and the native was a new creation, Hellenization. The Hellenistic world owed as much to the old Near Eastern cultures as it did to the Greek; it was not Greek but *sui generis*. The Greek and the native formed a new synthesis; however, it was not a melting together of the different cultures (*Verschmelzung* in German) but more like a suspension, with elements of both cultures existing side by side.

The Jews were a part of this Hellenistic world, just like all the other native peoples. We have no evidence that they reacted to Hellenization any differently from other Near Eastern peoples. Greek influence made inroads but the old way of life also continued much as it had for most people. There were new overlords to take taxes and to impose their will, and they spoke a different language. But to the peasant man following his ox down the furrow or the peasant woman grinding grain or drawing water, life continued much as it had for thousands of years. To those with education, however, Greek culture no doubt had its attractions. The upper classes, many of them priests, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem would have come into greater direct contact with the Greek administration, the Greek language and Greek customs.

'How you gonna keep 'em down on the farm after they've seen Patee' – or Loadicea or Antioch? After almost a century and a half of Greek rule it would be hardly surprising if there were not those who thought that it could be good for the Jews as a whole if Jerusalem became a *polis*. This did not have to involve a change in the Jewish religion. We know of many 'Hellenized' Jews who lived in Greek cities, spoke Greek and participated in various aspects of Greek culture without compromising their religion. A good example is Philo of Alexandria whose first language – and possibly only language – was Greek (he seems to have known little or no Hebrew²⁶), who was indeed an Alexandrian citizen – which most Jews of the city were not – and yet who defends all aspects of the traditional Jewish law in his many biblical commentaries.

We must also not forget the indication of Hellenistic influence in the books of Maccabees themselves. First of all, they are written in Greek. 1 Maccabees was initially written in Hebrew, but this has not survived. In any case, it was soon translated into Greek which became the main version. 2 Maccabees was written in a good Greek style from the start. An important leader and diplomat in Maccabean circles was Eupolemus. His father John had negotiated the continuation of traditional Jewish customs with Antiochus III, yet Eupolemus is a Greek name, he wrote in Greek and was

no doubt chosen for his diplomatic roles because of his knowledge of the Greek language.²⁷

Jason's aims in his Hellenistic reform are those that, in another context such as the present day, many of us would applaud (unless perhaps you are a 'Euro-sceptic'). Evidently, he wished to open up Judah in general and Jerusalem in particular to all the advantages that might accrue from having their capital city a Greek *polis*. This no doubt included the benefits of trade and commerce which would come from throwing open Jerusalem to the outside world in a much more conducive way. The more cultural aspects of the change may not have represented immediate financial gains, but these clearly had an intellectual and recreational appeal to many of the inhabitants of Jerusalem. There would now be something for the yuppies to do on a Saturday night. Instead of a provincial backwater they would be living in swinging Jerusalem.

Some have expressed Jason's aims in religious terms using, for example, the analogy of the founding of Reform Judaism in the early nineteenth century, when the desire was to 'update' the traditional liturgy.²⁸ However, I would prefer to use a political analogy because Jason does not seem to have been out to make changes in the Jewish religion. Apart from Jason's act of taking the high priesthood itself, there is little evidence of a breach of the Torah. Indeed, Jason's powerbase continued to be that traditional to the high priest: the temple and cult and the leadership opportunities which this gave in the absence of a formal native political office.²⁹ We see no reason to think that Jason did not think himself anything but a loyal and law-abiding Jew and a credit to the office he held. The real issue might be roughly analogous to the UK's joining of the European Community in the past quarter of a century or so.

There may have been a variety of reactions on the part of the Jewish people to Jason's constitutional changes, but we are not told this by any of the extant sources. We can infer that many of those in Jerusalem welcomed the *polis* because they participated in it. We also know that the Jews would not tolerate a violation of the law or a defilement of the temple or cult. We know this because when it was rumoured that Menelaus had sold some of the temple vessels, the population rioted, and the council of elders – the council set up by Jason – sent an embassy to Antiochus to accuse Menelaus. The Jews were not indifferent to their religion, and they were not afraid to defend it when necessary.

This is probably why the charges of lawbreaking by 1 and 2 Maccabees are generally so unspecific. The laws were not broken at the time. But writing

27 He is generally identified with the Eupolemus who wrote a history of Israelite-kings in Greek, now preserved only in fragments; see Holladay 1983: 93–156.

28 Bickerman 1979: 87.

29 Bringmann 1983: 72–84.

26 Grabbe 1988: 63, 233–5.

many years later, in the aftermath of Antiochus' suppression of Judaism, the authors of the two books naturally saw Jason's reform as the start of the problem. He was wicked in their eyes, so they asserted this. But since they had no evidence to go on, they talked generally or used stereotyped language much as Job's friends had. The sin is not described so much as implied. Just as Job 'must have' done some dastardly things to suffer as he did, so Jason 'must have' done wicked things which brought God's wrath on the city and people.

Things do seem to have been different once Menelaus took over. The distinction in approach and attitude between Menelaus and Jason has often been overlooked. Even the seminal work by E. J. Bickerman, *Der Gott der Makkabäer*,³⁰ lumps Jason and Menelaus together as 'Hellenizers', just as 1 and 2 Maccabees do. I grant that the bias of our sources is such that perhaps no study has done justice to Menelaus up to the present time. But in trying to read carefully the sources in the light of their prejudices, I find a clear difference between Jason and Menelaus. My interpretation is that Jason was an ideologue, perhaps to some extent a dreamer, who admired Greek culture and who saw the adoption of some aspects of it as beneficial to his people.

But I see Menelaus as a wholly opportunistic person whose actions are those of a man out to gain whatever he can for himself without regard for the consequences to the Jewish people. I readily admit that this may not, in the end, be fair to Menelaus, but it is the picture I am left with after a thorough analysis of the sources. The most telling proof is that no evidence is given for any opposition to Jason's reforms from the Jewish people. The more conservative people of the countryside may have grumbled in their beards about the 'new-fangled' goings on in Jerusalem, but no overt opposition is mentioned. Menelaus very quickly attracted not just passive opposition but riots in the streets by the citizens of Jerusalem, evidently the very people who had welcomed the Hellenistic reforms of Jason. Their motivation in resisting Menelaus was purely religious, from all we can tell. The so-called 'Hellenizers' of the Jason faction took the temple, the cult and the Jewish religion very seriously, and they were willing to put their lives on the line to defend it.

* * *

I have covered a fair amount of ground, so let me summarize what I have said or implied about the Hellenistic reform:

- 1 Jason was an idealist in some sense, with a vision of how Judah should go forward. To make Jerusalem into a Greek *polis* would, in his opinion, be beneficial for the inhabitants of Jerusalem and the Jews as a whole.

³⁰ Bickerman 1937.

- His precise reasons are not given, though one expects economics to be a part of them. Yet it is also probably true that Jason found many aspects of Greek culture attractive and felt that the Jews were being left behind.
- 2 Jason's reform was a cultural and political one. On the religious side, he considered himself a loyal Jew and made no significant alterations to the practice of the Jewish religion or the operation of the temple cult. This comes through, despite the bias of our major sources.
 - 3 Menelaus seems to have been a rather different character. He strikes one as an opportunist and as one without much of a wider vision beyond self-interest. This picture may simply be due to the bias of the sources, but even the prejudiced sources we possess suggest a clear differentiation between Menelaus and Jason.
 - 4 The books of Maccabees are valuable sources. Without them we would know little about the Maccabean revolt or what led up to the Hasmonean state. In the past, 2 Maccabees was sometimes slighted because it is more blatantly theological and pietistic. Yet for the crucial events preceding the attempt to suppress Judaism, it is 2 Maccabees which gives the most details, showing that 2 Maccabees can also be an extremely important source. If we had to rely on the other accounts available to us, even 1 Maccabees, we would have only a bare outline of what happened and none of the vital detail.³¹
 - 5 Despite their importance – or *because* of their importance – we have to approach these two books critically, noting their biases, their confusions, their omissions, their deafening silences. It is this failure to read the books – and to read them critically – which has led to a superficial interpretation which in fact overlooks much that is in the text itself. We must read them for what they say and also for what they do not say.

In Arthur Conan Doyle's short story, 'Silver Blaze', in the *Memoirs of Sherlock Holmes*, Inspector Gregory asks Holmes:

'Is there any point to which you would wish to draw my attention?'

'To the curious incident of the dog in the night-time.'

'The dog did nothing in the night-time.'

'That was the curious incident' . . .

Or as Simon and Garfunkel put it, we must listen to the 'sound of silence'.

³¹ The account in 1 Maccabees 1, in contrast to some other episodes, strikes one as stereotyped, propagandistic and indifferent to careful recitation of the events. Despite its bias, 2 Maccabees 4–5 seems concerned to lay out events with some care and attention to detail.

SYNAGOGUE AND COMMUNITY IN THE GRAECO-ROMAN DIASPORA

Tessa Rajak

If any single notion about the Jews of the Graeco-Roman Diaspora commands general agreement, it is the idea that their lives centred on their synagogues.¹ Especially in reconstructions of the post-70 era, Jews and their synagogues are virtually inseparable. The ancient synagogue has been studied with remarkable intensity in recent years,² absorbing archaeologists and theologians, art historians and philologists, New Testament scholars and students of Judaism alike. There are also distinguished antecedents, among which Samuel Krauss's acute and learned survey (1922) takes pride of place. To add another synthesis to the ever-growing literature would be scarcely useful. Nor do I propose to adjudicate between interpretations of how and why synagogues emerged, in Palestine or in the Diaspora, or how the characteristic architectural forms evolved. However, there remains, to my mind, one large and central historical question which has failed to attract the attention it deserves, and that is about the functioning of the synagogue in Jewish life. To address this, I shall engage with both broader issues and narrower linguistic considerations, in the hope of deepening our understanding of Diaspora Jewish society during the Graeco-Roman period.

The synagogue has been declared central. Known synagogues have been catalogued and various of their functions listed many times. But the implications and meaning of the claim of centrality itself have scarcely been considered. A range of different scenarios might in fact be envisaged, a range broadened by the very nature of the Greek word *synagogue* with its various

¹ For a selection of statements, see Juster 1914: I, 456; Kraabel 1987; Rutgers 1998: 126; Levine 2000: 124–5, 271–2, 350 ff. The same opinion was once espoused by the present author (Rajak 1992: 9–28).

² See now the massive studies by Hachlili 1998 and Levine 2000, as well as Fine 1996 and 1998; Binder 1999 and the collections of papers edited by Guttman 1975, Kasher *et al.* 1987, Levine 1987, Urman and Flesher 1995, Fine 1999, Kee and Cohick 1999.

senses. Thus, for some scholars the main point appears to be that the principal public activities of Jewish communities in the Diaspora were carried out in buildings described as 'synagogues', places which operated, it is held, as particularly effective and highly developed community centres. Others will foreground the religious life of the Jews – reading of Torah and prophets, prayer, the singing of psalms – in essence suggesting that it was the evolution of these practices which defined the post-biblical Jewish world. Thus too the leading role played by Torah (or in Greek terms *nomos*) in Jewish existence may be automatically transferred by historians to the synagogue as the place where the scrolls of the Law were housed. On the other hand, some commentators might be considering rather the commitment of the individual Jew, in the belief that the major part of this individual's life in society will have been mediated through the synagogue – or at the very least his life as a Jew. Yet again, the synagogue might leap to the fore when it is a case of identifying the administrative structures of the Jews, and especially for those who bear in mind that, where a Jewish population was not large, synagogue officials clearly served as the community's leaders. By contrast, the statement might concern essentially the post-destruction synagogue itself rather than its members; this might then amount to identifying the institution as the prime religious innovation of the day; or even, to going further – as certain scholars have done – and highlighting the synagogue as a distinctive and unique Jewish creation.

Often enough, a strong claim seems intended, encompassing several of the above points, including the last. In other words, it is widely believed that, precisely in the Graeco-Roman Diaspora, the synagogue as an institution became – and indeed stayed – the focus of both individual and collective commitment for Jews, a primary affiliation and a basis for a definition of identity. A common pattern is thought to have existed, in which communities established unified locations for their political, social and cultic activities together. The result, it is either implied or explicitly asserted, was something new and truly special. For a recent instance of such a totalizing description, we may turn to Burtchaell, who speaks of the 'synagogal way of life' as something 'so integrated, so omniscient, so communitarian that our distinctions between public and private, or between sacred and secular, or between the person and the community . . . are largely inapplicable'. Synagogal structure, according to Burtchaell, is not Greek but 'inveterately Jewish'.³

It is not unfair to say that such judgments are based as much on impression as on argument, and so it is worth giving some attention to their basis. One starting point, without doubt, is the vivid depiction in the *Acts of the Apostles* of Paul's turbulent involvement – for whatever purpose – with the

³ Burtchaell 1992: 205, 208.

synagogues of several cities in Greece and Asia Minor. No amount of scepticism about the historicity of the account can destroy the powerful impression evoked in these episodes. Confirmation seems to emerge from the epigraphic record at Rome, where post-holders are ascribed to some dozen named associations, called, in every case, 'synagogues'.⁴ Since the corpus of inscriptions from the Roman Jewish catacombs (of the third to fourth centuries) constitutes approaching half the surviving Jewish material in Greek and Latin, that corpus readily dominates the scene, for all its evident geographical, chronological and thematic limitation. The title of the most prominent Jewish official of later antiquity, *archisynagogos* (synagogue head), appears to offer further support.⁵ The picture might then be fleshed out with the aid of evidently fanciful rabbinic recollections of the great and glorious basilica synagogue of Alexandria, with its seventy-one gold chairs for seventy-one elders, and with proportions so vast that a flag-waving *hazzan* was employed to signal to the congregants.⁶ Yet again, imprecisely conceived parallels from more recent Jewish life may have made their contribution.

Equally influential, I would suggest, is the model of the early Church, which adopted the highly distinctive word, *ekklesia* (assembly), for what might be regarded as an alternative version, a kind of sub-species of the same institution, and at the same time enhanced the significance of the concept immeasurably by introducing the important second sense, of the Church as an overarching entity seen as encompassing the Christian world in its entirety. Burtchaell's study, indeed, is designed as an exploration of those similarities with the aim of demonstrating a direct indebtedness of the Christian institution to the Jewish, which in turn serves to reinforce the author's principal preoccupation with the existence of formal structures from the very beginning of the history of the Church. So far could the two institutions, Church and Synagogue, be pulled into parallelism, that Ernest Renan⁷ was able to deem it a matter of sheer chance that the Jews had not settled on *ekklesia*, a familiar Septuagintal word,⁸ for their own purposes, rather than *synagoge*. It is really only in the realm of theology that we find *ekklesia* firmly distinguished from *synagoge* and elevated above it. Thus, for Augustine, from an assertively Christian perspective, a synagogue could be described as a *congregatio*, a collective which, he says (following etymology),

⁴ Williams 1994.

⁵ On the name of this official and his relationship to the synagogue, see Rajak and Noy 1993: 78–84; Levine 1998a.

⁶ For an attempt to reconstruct part of the physical reality from the description in T Sukkah 4.6 and its parallels, see Levine 2000: 84–9.

⁷ As cited by Krauss 1922: 13.

⁸ This is the word used in the Septuagint to translate the Hebrew *kahal*, as well as sometimes *edah*.

might equally well be made up of animals, while a church was a *convocatio*, something higher and necessarily composed of people.⁹ The line on the matter taken by Schürer and Harnack was not so very different from Augustine's. Such rivalry continued to be important for Christian self-definition. The point is, that such views tend to make church and synagogue functionally identical.¹⁰

Finally, we have archaeology. The remains of some fifteen excavated buildings or building complexes from Italy and around the Roman empire identified with varying degrees of certainty as synagogues, along with the traces of over a score more,¹¹ are our most vivid and evocative evidence for the life of dimly understood communities, from the third century AD onwards. The number of known synagogue-related inscriptions has been estimated as above three hundred,¹² while it is epigraphic evidence alone that reveals to us the existence of eleven synagogues in the city of Rome during late antiquity, interestingly named after individuals, districts, groups or trades. Elsewhere, the archaeological remains attest to units of some scale, and in the case of the best known of them, Sardis, of quite grand proportions. These edifices had sizeable main halls, as well as, often, surrounding rooms which must have served various functions, including (in at least two known cases) the preparation of food.¹³ While some have commented upon the architectural diversity of these synagogues, the case for a 'common architectural language' has been persuasively argued.¹⁴ One decisive feature emerges, for the main halls of the complexes are characterized by the presence of an apse, alcove or niche of some sort, evidently designed to house scrolls.¹⁵ If the remains of what appears to be a first-century synagogue on Delos are to be connected with the two inscriptions of the Samaritan Israelite community found nearby, then the absence in this divergent group of this key element may be telling.¹⁶ Among other archaeological features commonly found in Graeco-Roman synagogue sites were mosaic floors (in ten known cases), often depicting a *menorah* with perhaps other Jewish symbols, and sometimes associated with decorated walls; a reading platform (*bimah*); and the so-called Seat of Moses. Some synagogues also had courtyards

⁹ *Enarr. in Ps.* 81.1; Krauss, 1922.

¹⁰ By contrast note the sharp disjunction proposed in the pathbreaking study by Meeks 1983.

¹¹ See Hachlili 1998; Rutgers 1998: 125–35, with checklist; Levine 2000: 232–66.

¹² Levine 2000: 233.

¹³ Kraabel (1987: 503–4) treats the space for community facilities as a universal feature.

¹⁴ Rutgers 1998: 104–13.

¹⁵ See Hachlili 1998: 68–79 and Meyers 1999a, who puts the emergence of the 'Torah shrine' not before the mid-second century CE.

¹⁶ It is preferable to associate texts with building rather than to take the synagogue as Jewish and the texts as lacking any context: discussion in Levine 2000: 100–5, with citation of earlier literature.

containing a fountain or a cistern, indispensable perhaps in the absence of a neighbouring seashore or spring, such as the sites at Aegina, Hammam Lif, Delos and Ostia possessed.¹⁷ The position of the synagogues might make them highly visible within their urban environments, as Rutgers suggests, although they are in fact as likely to be found in residential zones or on the outskirts as in any civic centre.¹⁸ Taking archaeological and literary evidence together, attestation for over one hundred Diaspora synagogues has been found by one reckoning.¹⁹ All in all, Rutgers finds himself able to say that 'the synagogue was among the most notable institutions that helped shape the face of the ancient city'.²⁰

Fuller publication and new exploration would no doubt make significant additions to this dossier. Nevertheless, even the possession of such treasures should not shield us from the harsh reality that the actual functioning of the Graeco-Roman synagogue remains desperately elusive. The beginnings continue to be debated: pre-exilic, Babylonian, post-exilic, Egyptian Hellenistic, all these contexts have been earnestly advocated. It is perhaps unsurprising that this, like so many questions about the genesis of time-honoured institutions, is not susceptible of resolution.²¹ But we can scarcely give up so readily on the quest to gain some idea of what the developed synagogue of Graeco-Roman antiquity actually was.

The temptation to make direct deductions from terminology has been hard to resist, for 'synagogue' is indeed a special term. While the word is normally used in Greek for any gathering, assembly or association, it comes in the Roman period to be largely associated with Jews and with the practice of Judaism. Unequivocal pagan occurrences in the sense of 'association' are at any time few and far between, and they are strikingly localized in northern Greece.²² At the same time, the 'synagogues' of the Marcionites, an early Christian group whose purpose was decisively to sever Christianity from Judaism through the abandonment of the Old Testament, may be seen as reinforcing the Jewish association by an act of appropriation. A specialized Jewish word, the argument runs, betokens a unique, multi-purpose Jewish institution.

The multivalence of the word itself has also seemed particularly impressive, carrying as it does a triple sense, not only connoting either 'building' or 'community' but retaining also the root meaning, which is simply 'assembly' or 'gathering'. The combination is taken to be extraordinary; the very language appears to endorse the indispensability of the synagogue to Jewish

17 Hachlili 1998: 89; Pucci ben Zeev: 215–6 and n. 22.

18 Hachlili 1998: 89.

19 Rutgers 1998: 127.

20 *Ibid.*: 118.

21 For a summary of the many discussions, see Hachlili 1998: 4–22.

22 Poland 1909: 155; *TDNT* VII, 801; Rajak and Noy 1993: 78–9.

life. However, if any argument may be drawn from the terminology, it is in fact closer to the opposite. For a brief search reveals such multivalence to be not uncommon; indeed, the combination of the last two senses, 'building' and 'gathering', can be said to be routine in Greek usage and an obvious example of double meaning is offered by a comparable Greek word, *synodos*, literally a 'coming together'. The functioning of one and the same word in the first sense as well as the last two, that is to say to describe also the location where a group meets, is admittedly a rarer phenomenon in Graeco-Roman practice; but that need not surprise us. Greek and Roman cult places were named after the deity inhabiting them: only in the case of the ineffable name of the Jewish God was this option excluded, necessitating, therefore, a different kind of name. Again, in a Greek city, the meeting place of a council, *boule*, was a *bouleuterion*, while an assembly, *ekklesia* (in the Athenian sense) could as a matter of principle come together in all sorts of places. Philosophical schools might of course be designated by the name of their location – Academy, Garden, Stoa – which in effect represents the reverse of our process. Even so, an interesting later Greek parallel for our pattern can be found: from a well-known report of the younger Pliny's (*Ep.* 10.33) about a fire in Nicomedia in Bithynia, we learn that the city possessed, at least before this was burned down, an edifice referred to as the *gerousia*, which must have been named for the body which held meetings inside it.²³

We may allow, for all this, that the particular Jewish usage of the 'synagogue' remains broad in scope, in spite of the partial parallels. Yet closer investigation shows the difficulty of using this phenomenon as a basis for wider conclusions about the nature of the Graeco-Roman synagogue. For one thing, it soon emerges that *synagoge* presents itself as far from the only term in use in Graeco-Roman antiquity in relation to any one of the three meanings under discussion. Rather, what strikes us is that descriptions remain remarkably unsettled during our period. It is of course conceivable that the institution known in different places by different names was in reality identical. But at first sight, the variety of terms in operation among Jews suggests, instead, a diversity of institutional arrangements and of religious perceptions across different regions, different times and different local situations. This flexibility in vocabulary is what calls for comment and study. Thus, the keyword 'synagogue' must be set within the range of similar terms used by in Jewish and Judaizing circles. The terms have often been listed, but without discussion of their implications. Thus, a brief review will suffice.²⁴

To describe a building devoted to the practice of Judaism the earlier designation, and the only visible one in Hellenistic Egypt, comes from a word which means literally, 'prayer', *proseuche*. Other cults scarcely if ever use

23 Poland 1909: 468.

24 See Krauss 1922: 2–29; Juster 1914: I, 56–8; Binder 1999: 91–151.

the word in this sense.²⁵ Two Egyptian synagogues of the third quarter of the third century BC are the first attested under this name.²⁶ Martin Hengel has suggested that the alternative term, *synagoge*, first took root in Palestine and travelled thence in stages to the Diaspora. The necessity for this other term arose, he conjectures, because in Palestine the Temple, as long as it lasted, was the cult centre and locus of worship, while synagogues were venues less for prayer than for coming together, for studying, and for reading the law, and could not therefore be described as *proseuchai*.²⁷ The next stage, according to Hengel, was when Palestinian influence on the Diaspora led to the transfer of *synagoge* as the term for the building where a congregation met, even though the Diaspora communities will of course have needed also to pray in these buildings. As evidence for Palestinian beginnings, Hengel adduces the congruity of the literal meaning of the Greek word *synagoge* with the Hebrew *beth kneseth* (which means 'house of meeting'). He draws support from the New Testament and from the wording of a famous pre-70 synagogue dedication from Jerusalem, the inscription of Theodotus.²⁸

A drawback for Hengel is that, as far as the Diaspora goes, the older term, *proseuche*, does not disappear, as he himself admits. The *Third Book of Maccabees* (7.20), Philo²⁹ and Josephus (*Apion* 2.10) all attest to its continued dominance in Alexandria. Philo also produces the cognate *proseukterion* (*VM* 3.27), while the Egyptian papyrological evidence once offers the alternative form *eucheion* (*CPJ* 432, l.60), *proseuche* 7 times at least.³⁰ Outside Alexandria, the name 'prayer house' is known to Acts (16.13) where it describes a place of prayer beside the water at Philippi. Josephus interestingly applies *proseuche* rather than *synagoge* to a certain large structure in the Jewish *polis* of Tiberias, which he regards as the obvious place in the town to hold a mass political meeting (Josephus, *Life* 277).³¹ One of the two Samaritan honorific inscriptions from Delos refers to the construction and dedication of the *proseuche*.³² The designation *proseuche* lingered at Rome, where it appears in Juvenal as a throw-away allusion which he expects his readers to understand (*Sat.* 3.296), and in an epitaph, as a landmark to explain where a deceased fruit-seller's shop was located (*CIJ* 531; *JIVE* II, 602). Elsewhere in the West, we find that

²⁵ Hengel 1971: 161.

²⁶ *JIGRE* nos. 22 and 117 and for discussion, p.14.

²⁷ Hengel 1975: 176.

²⁸ Kloppenborg 2000 argues against Kee's post-70 dating.

²⁹ See especially *Flacc* 53. The word has altogether eighteen appearances in Philo (Hachlili 1998: 18).

³⁰ Krauss 1922: 16; *CPJ* I, 8; Hengel 1971: 28–9.

³¹ Huttenmeister 1993 suggests the choice of word was here necessitated by the presence of numerous synagogues in Tiberias, yet offers one sole attestation to these synagogues and that from the Babylonian Talmud, in relation to a later period.

³² Levine 2000: 102, with the publication history in n. 154.

proseuche is the word used to describe what was most probably a synagogue at Elche in south-eastern Spain.³³ The older term for the cult place also coexisted with *synagoge* as the name of the community in the Jewish or Judaizing inscriptions of the northern Black Sea Coast.³⁴ None the less, Hengel's reconstruction is in general terms plausible, even if there remain too many lost threads and missing links for proof to be attainable.³⁵

A short but interesting list of various designations, all apparently in use concurrently, emerges from the epigraphic record from Jewish buildings, backed by a scattering of literary allusions. Some of these designations carry what we might call a cultic content. Thus, the name 'sabbath house' might tell us something of how the building was used.³⁶ But the evidence for the name is not extensive. It has even been suggested that this graphic term represents no more than the way in which outsiders talked about synagogues; yet the absence of further examples may equally well be attributed to the hazards of survival.

The word *topos*, 'place', is more opaque. A striking instance figures in the allocation of an area of their own to the Jews of Sardis for the conduct of their business, by a Roman decree of the Augustan age cited in Josephus. The designated place was most likely used for religious as well as civic purposes and a phrase in the decree about meeting in accordance with 'ancestral laws' (*sunodon hexein idian kata tous patrious nomous*) seems intended to include the former. However, whether a synagogue, a plain civic building or even just an outdoor area were in question cannot be determined.³⁷

The word *oikos* meaning either 'house' or 'room',³⁸ appears a number of times in Jewish inscriptions from Asia Minor. At first sight, we might conclude that, once again, the choice has fallen on a convenient generic word with a neutral flavour. For this term too was in common use among the guilds and clubs of the pagan world.³⁹ Yet something more may be hinted at. For readers of the Greek Bible, *oikos* carried reverberations, for it operated

³³ *JIVE* I, 180. But note the risk of circularity in that ascription of the remains to a synagogue depends largely on the appearance of this term.

³⁴ Schürer 1979: II, 136–8; Levinskaya 1990; Gibson 1999.

³⁵ Among other difficulties in Hengel's reconstruction is that *synagoge* tends at first not to stand baldly on its own but to come with a qualification designating a group of users, as we see clearly in the case of the various synagogues of groups of Jews in Acts 6.9, described as Libertines, Cyrenaeans, Alexandrians, Cilicians and Asians.

³⁶ *Sabbateion* in a decree in Josephus, *AJ* 16.164; *CIJ* 752 – the tomb of Fabius Zosimos from Thyateira in Lydia, where the form is *sambatbeion*. See Schürer 1979: III.1, 19. Note that the Thyateira inscription has no further Jewish features: it is a text attached to the side of a tomb, announcing penalties for violators, and locating the tomb itself 'near the *sambatbeion* in the Chaldaean quarter'.

³⁷ *AJ* 14.235 and 260; Pucci Ben Zeev 1998, nos. 14 and 16, with no firm conclusion about the nature of the building.

³⁸ Rajak 1999: 161–2.

³⁹ Poland 1909: 152, 459–60.

as the normal translation of the Hebrew *bayit*, a ubiquitous designation for the post-exilic Temple.

More unexpectedly, at Berenice in Cyrenaica, Jewish meetings appear to have been at one stage conducted in a building which was referred to as the 'amphitheatre'. Commentators have wavered between understanding this as a civic space or taking it as the name of a Jewish communal edifice of distinctive shape. We remain uncertain, but the arguments weigh somewhat in favour of the second interpretation.⁴⁰

Exactly how, in theoretical terms, pious Jews understood matters to have changed after AD 70, that is to say, to what degree and in what sense synagogue replaced Temple, is an elusive question. Fine documents rabbinic references to the synagogue as an *imitatio templi*, and he brings forward other evidence too which suggests that the tendency to ascribe sanctity to matters connected with synagogue ritual is to be put down to the loss of the Jerusalem sacrificial cult.⁴¹ The development is reflected in the combination *bagios topos*, holy place, which becomes extremely common in late antiquity. The best way of making sense of the idea is probably by appreciating that the sanctity of the space derived from the holiness of the holy Torah in the scrolls within the space,⁴² so that the precise reference of *topos* was originally to the shrine in which the scrolls were housed, and only thence, by extension, to any wider location. This reconstruction may be supported by the description of the ark donated to the Ostia synagogue by the donor Mindis Faustos, as a receptacle 'for the Holy Law' (*nomō(i) bagiō(i)*). At the same time, we should note that a sacred enclosure, *hieros peribolos*, has been attributed to a synagogue in Ptolemaic Egypt in the restoration of a fragmentary inscription from Alexandria.⁴³ And again, in assessing the emergence of this conception of sanctity, we should also consider that pagan associations too were regularly described as 'sacred' (*hieros*) or 'most sacred' (*hierotatos*), or by comparable terms such as *semnotatos* ('most reverent') and *sebastos* ('august').⁴⁴ Thus, the factor of external influence here at the heart of Jewish practice is not to be excluded.⁴⁵ On the other hand, we can once again observe Jewish society demonstrating here a capacity to differentiate itself from its surroundings through the evolution of a specialized vocabulary. Thus, the epithet *bagios* is not current in this same sense in non-

⁴⁰ For discussion of the inscription and a survey of opposing views, see Levine 2000: 91–2.

⁴¹ On the relation of Temple to synagogue, see also Safrai in Kasher *et al.* 1987; Branham 1995; Cohen 1999. Binder 1999 by contrast sets out to prove that the pre-70 synagogue was understood as an extension of the Temple.

⁴² Goodman 1990; Fine 1998: 13–14, 137–40.

⁴³ *CIJ* 1433; *JIGRE* 9; Lifshitz 87.

⁴⁴ Poland 1909: 168.

⁴⁵ See Poland 1909: 168 ff.; de Robertis 1934: 574–5. A case for decisive pagan influence is argued in Goodman 1996.

Jewish contexts; it was entirely familiar to its users as the Septuagint's standard rendering of *kadosh* ('holy').

At some time, in the course of the third century, a 'father of the synagogue' named Polycharmus, and nicknamed (it would seem) Achyrius, who lived all his life as a good Jew in the town of Stobi in Macedonia, set forth, in a relatively lengthy inscription (*CIJ* 694; Lifshitz 10), his donation of rooms, *oikous*, for what is called here *bagios topos*, a 'holy place'. The connection between rooms and 'place' is somewhat opaquely described, and translators have rendered it variously, but without discussion. The interpretation given here is faithful to the Greek wording: that is, the rooms were intended to become a sacred space.⁴⁶ In a record of a complex transaction, the inscription reveals that the upstairs of the house remained under the ownership of the donor, his family and heirs. A basilica-style building was in due course constructed out of the area made available by Polycharmus and the report of discoveries in excavation of graffiti from the walls bearing Polycharmus' name alongside the word *euchen* (vow), and of mosaic floor fragments which appear to have made up his name, render it probable that this development occurred in his lifetime. This basilica, then, was the 'holy place'.

We even find a Jewish meeting-house referred to by the ordinary noun generally employed for a pagan shrine or temple, *hieron*. In fact, the word, again, means simply 'sacred place'. It is once more noteworthy that Graeco-Roman guilds and associations also often had a private cult centre, similarly described as *hieron*.⁴⁷ The shape of the building was naturally dictated by the kind of cult practised there: and so too in the Jewish case, where the reading of the Law was the central activity and the architecture reflects just that. As in some synagogues, a dining room and other facilities might be attached to the pagan cult buildings of the clubs. Yet one more word, *temenos*, appears regularly in the inscriptions of pagan associations, referring presumably to a sacred area or open enclosure, but in this case the pagan vocabulary is conspicuously absent from the surviving Jewish record.

Whatever its roots, the process of sanctification of the synagogue was probably gradual and diffuse. And whatever its consequences, we may not assume a direct impact on the conduct of life. Holiness, in Judaism, is conceived of as defiling and therefore as distancing.⁴⁸ Thus it is helpful to consider that the most Holy Place of all, the Holy of Holies in the Temple, when it still stood, was a place of dread which the High Priest alone entered and that on highly circumscribed occasions.

⁴⁶ For elucidation of this inscription I am indebted to the comments of Dr Ephrat Habas. On the inscription, see Hengel 1996.

⁴⁷ Poland 1909: 453.

⁴⁸ Goodman 1990.

The word *synagoge* in unequivocal reference to a building takes its place among the various other terms. This usage is already to be found in texts which must be dated to before 70 CE, notably the Theodotus synagogue dedication from Jerusalem⁴⁹ and the last of the three public inscriptions from Berenike (CJZC 72; Lifshitz 100). The latter is interesting in featuring the two senses of *synagoge* in close proximity in its opening phrases, first as the community responsible for the resolution which is being recorded and then in connection with the furnishings donated by the honorands (*episkeutes sunagoges*). Later occurrences display a systematic opacity: even where a dedication is in question, it is hard for us to determine whether the recipient is envisaged in concrete terms, as the building, or rather as the community that owns it, or both together. Such cases include the dedication of a porch at Mantinea in Greece (CIJ 1447; Lifshitz 9); a dedication for the 'most holy synagogue' at Hyllarima in Caria (Lifshitz 32); the blessing formula 'peace on the synagogue' in mosaic at Gerasa (CIJ 867; Lifshitz 78), and the damaged recording of the gift of a basin by a god-fearer at Philadelphia in Lydia (CIJ 754; Lifshitz 28).

We come now to the crucial discussion of terms used to describe Jewish communities, whether it be the collectivity in any particular area, or rather an organized and cohesive sub-group within the whole, such as, to take an obvious example, the synagogues of Rome. Here the picture is even more revealing. Not only do we see that a wide range of descriptions is current for these groups, but *synagoge* takes a modest position among them. Thus Jewish communities regularly call themselves, or are called, in a normal Greek formation, *hoi ioudaioi*, or sometimes *hoi hebraioi* – in both cases simply 'the Jews'. We have instances of the former from Phocaea, Apamea and Ephesus, of the latter from Corinth, Portus and Rome.

The most frequent collective term in surviving texts for epigraphic communities is the interesting old Greek word *laos*, 'people', either in the combination *laos ton ioudaion*, for example to name the group to whom a fine is to be paid (CIJ 776, Hierapolis in Phrygia), or else standing alone, as in the title *pater laou* (father of the people) at Mantinea (CIJ 720; Lifshitz 9), or at Larisa where a certain Secundus greets the community (CIJ 708). To a Greek, the Homeric flavour stood out; to a Jew, this somewhat unexpected term, regularly used by the Septuagint translators to describe the people of Israel, may have felt biblical. We should notice that the Hierapolis community is described by a second name too, as *katoikia*, a colony, this time drawing upon what originated as a Hellenistic technical term for an official settlement of an outside group within a citizen body, especially an ethnic minority. There are similar, though probably less formal implications in a case where *ethnos* is used to describe a community, as it is by Rufina, the

⁴⁹ CIJ 1404; Lifshitz 79. See Kloppenborg 2000 for a refutation of Kee's various attempts to establish a post-70 dating.

female head of a synagogue, announcing the construction of a tomb for her household and dependants at Smyrna (CIJ 741).⁵⁰

Greek political vocabulary is once again the source for the plain designation *plethos*, which connotes the mass or the people, as an assembly or, indeed, as a mob. In this choice, the Jews were not alone: especially in Rhodes and Egypt, but also in Asia Minor, a club or association could call itself *plethos* – yet not, as we observe, *laos*.⁵¹ In the Jewish world, a late antique dedication of an entrance hall mosaic by a prominent archisynagogal family from Syrian Antioch refers to the *plethos* at Apamea, to which the family has made a large donation, in an elegant and individual concluding formula that extends 'peace and blessing to the whole of your sanctified community'.⁵² The dedicator, Ilasios, names and honours members of his family and shows that he comes from the world outside by the explicit epithet 'yours'. Perhaps there is also a hint of superiority here. We have further information on how the 'international' horizons of this grand dynasty transcended the local environment from the burials of some of them in the Galilean necropolis of Beth She'arim.

At Berenice, in Cyrenaica, today Libya, there was an important and well-integrated Jewish community already in the first century AD, an offshoot, probably, of the Jewish population of Alexandria to its west which was the largest in the Mediterranean world and one of the oldest in the Greek sphere. The Jews of Berenice call themselves not only *synagoge* (as we have already seen), but also the '*politeuma* of the Jews'. And we learn that this *politeuma* has its archons and a quasi-official standing (CJZC 71). An established Greek word for 'constitution', this term functioned also on a wide front for a sub-group within a *polis*, and among the Jews it appears in the context of Alexandria. While a strong political connotation to the term was at one time attributed to any *politeuma*, it is now clear that the term may but need not refer to a formally semi-autonomous body; it could be used loosely. Nor are there sufficient grounds to claim, as scholars have sought to do, that this designation was regularly adopted by Jewish communities elsewhere and that it served as a formal definition of Jewish status within the *polis*. The modern search for juridical structures may well have been to a degree influenced by inappropriate models.⁵³ Still, the existence of a collective designated as a *politeuma* is a significant phenomenon in its local contexts. We have no evidence for the relationship between any such *politeuma* and its synagogues, but we need to acknowledge the clear signs that not all communal functions were scooped up by the latter and to allow that the first point of reference for some Diaspora Jews may have been their lay leadership.

⁵⁰ On this range of terms, see Schürer 1979: III.1, 82–106.

⁵¹ Poland 1909: 168.

⁵² Williams 1998: III, 84; Lifshitz 38; CIJ 803 with notes and family tree.

⁵³ Lüderitz 1983; Zuckerman 1985–8.

For the application of distinctively Greek political language to a Jewish community we may compare the description of the activities of the father of the Stobi synagogue, Polycharmus, whom we have already encountered. Polycharmus founded his synagogue, we are told in the inscription, only after a career of wholly 'political' activity in the Jewish mould: *politeusamenos pasan ten politeian kata ton ioudaismon* (ll.6-7). The ambiguity in the Greek, perhaps not wholly unwelcome to the subject of the text, could allow the reader to see here a reference to the politics of the city at large, the real sphere where politics was conducted. But had Polycharmus really served as a civic magistrate, councillor or any other kind of official, he surely would have been keen to put this on the record. The interpretation of his activity as lying in the sphere of Jewish rather than civic politics is, as Martin Hengel pointed out,⁵⁴ given some support from a Roman epitaph unearthed at Porto (CIJ 537), where we find, albeit without the connotation of public service, a similar use of *Ioudaïsmos* and comparable approbation accorded to a certain Katia Ammia for the way she had conducted her life.

In Latin, there is some attestation for the designation 'universitas' for the collectivity. While we should note that *universitas* in the inscription found at Castel Porziano is pure conjecture,⁵⁵ we do find an unequivocal instance of this collective noun formally applied by the authorities, in a rescript of Caracalla about a legacy to the Antioch Jewish community (Justinian, *Cod.* 1.9.1).⁵⁶

Nor should we forget that smaller units within the larger body of all the Jews in a locality may have commanded more loyalty and generated more activity than the body as a whole. Numerous small synagogue-based groups undoubtedly existed. On the other hand, at Hierapolis in Phrygia, we find the guilds of the purple dyers and the carpet weavers as beneficiaries of a legacy mentioned in a grave inscription. Since according to the legacy the grave is to be decorated at Passover (ἐν τῇ ἑορτῇ τῶν ἀζύμων) we must take the guilds to have been Jewish.⁵⁷ Yet again, there were associations, about whose role and significance in any broader structure we cannot even make well-founded guesses. Thus it is notable that, in the paired Aphrodisias texts, the Jewish dedicators on the first face of the stone belong to a special club: we read that the *dekania* of lovers of knowledge and of all-praisers is dedicating a memorial for the *plethos*. At the same time, there is no mention on the stone of any synagogue, even if architectural fragments suggest that there was at least one in the city.⁵⁸ This *dekania* thus may, but need not, have operated from within the synagogue.

⁵⁴ Hengel 1966: 178.

⁵⁵ CIJ 533. Noy's text, *JJWE* 18, follows Lanciani in reading 'synagoga'.

⁵⁶ Linder 1987, no. 3.

⁵⁷ CIJ 777; Schürer 1979: III,1, 27-8; For other guilds, see Juster 1914: I, 485-7.

⁵⁸ Reynolds and Tannenbaum 1987: 133-4.

The simple fact is that *synagoge* is not the preferred designation either of the overarching or the smaller community in the Jewish record. Samuel Krauss (1922) was actually driven to suggest that the word which was to become so vital cannot be shown to have been used at all by Jews with the connotation of 'community' (Gemeinde) during our period, or at least until very near its end. *Synagoge*, Krauss observed, meant 'Versammlung', that is, specific meetings of the collectivity, a meaning closer to the root sense of the Greek word. Krauss hazarded the assertion that all known occurrences could be explained in this way. While so sweeping a judgment cannot, in fact, be sustained, Krauss's perception is suggestive and potentially fruitful. First, he is right to signal the ambiguity of many of the relevant occurrences. Thus there are dedications where possible reference to a community can just as easily be read as applying to the synagogue building itself. In other cases a special gathering, rather than the permanent community, may well be at issue.

Furthermore, Krauss's emphasis on meetings draws attention to the extent to which Jewish life was defined on the public level by a repertoire of actions, rather than by the continuity of permanent structures. It may be added that this too is characteristic of Graeco-Roman associations, many of which were in being only for the regular celebration of certain occasions or the performance of certain recurring cultic or other acts. Activity was their essence, in contexts which were carefully defined. The epigraphic record reveals a number of important things which Jews come together to do when they meet as an assembled group, a *syllagos* (Berenice, *CJZC* 71), a *synodos*, indeed, a synagogue (*CJZC* 72). There was a striking conflation of communal and religious activities.⁵⁹ Thus, we find meetings for public worship serving also as political assemblies at Berenice in Cyrenaica: in the inscription honouring M. Tittius Sextus, we read of a Tabernacles assembly (*CJZC* 71) and, in a second text, of the New Moon meeting (*CJZC* 72). There is also the intriguing text we have already mentioned, from Hierapolis in Phrygia, where crowns are to be offered by the guilds at Passover and Tabernacles (*CIJ* 777). Honoured donors who could well be Gentile were given, among their awards, pride of place, *proedria*, in the synagogue, and thus they were presumably paraded at its services.⁶⁰

It is not hard to surmise the role and functions of Jewish synagogal communities. At the same time, given the limitations of this evidence, we cannot expect a wholly distinct picture to emerge.⁶¹ Educational, charitable, hospitable and adjudicatory functions have some attestation. But manage-

⁵⁹ McLean 1996.

⁶⁰ Rajak 1999.

⁶¹ See Levine 2000: 357-86 for a survey which considers rabbinic evidence relating to Israel together with the Graeco-Roman Diaspora. Burtchaell's claim (1992: 220-4) to sum up the 'programme of a synagogue' in the Diaspora context is perhaps over-ambitious.

ment of the religious routine of the Jewish year and the Jewish lifecycle should probably be put at the head of the list, with responsibility for weekly or annual observances falling perhaps on the community as a whole or perhaps on cultic or other private groups within the community – synagogues possibly, or entities like the Aphrodisias *dekania* or, again, certain craft or trade guilds. For just as groupings of all sizes proliferated in the ancient city, so they seem to have done among the Jews. The venues for observance, both for worship and assembly – and the names of these venues – were also, as we have seen, various, ranging from private houses to ‘amphitheatres’. It must be deemed significant that this fragmentary evidence includes a sizeable collection of cases where these groups are visibly preoccupied, like so many other ancient associations, with the standing of their members and are seen busily reinforcing their own internal hierarchies by publicly acknowledging patrons with expressions of esteem encompassing both insiders and outsiders.⁶² At the same time, it is worth reiterating here that, from the Berenice decrees and the Hierapolis inscription, we gain precious insight into the precise occasions on which they chose to do so, revealing the close intermeshing of festival rituals with these other activities.

Synagogal groups interacted with the wider society not least when the members were threatened. What was at stake was the protection of traditional practices – *nomima*, whose continued practice depended upon concessions from civic authorities as well as the central government.⁶³ Of these, the first and foremost were, precisely, the right to assemble, to resolve private disputes, to control land for tombs and property for gatherings, and (most visibly in the case of the Temple tax before 70) to collect money. Also demanded were access to suitable food, a supply of fresh water for purification and freedom from public obligations on the sabbath. For the defence and implementation of these rights, communities saw fit to store records⁶⁴ and to hold funds at least on a temporary basis.⁶⁵ The northern Black Sea synagogues held rights over the services of slaves whose freedom was acquired by a formal act of liberation at the *proseuche*.⁶⁶ Once again, there is an inside face and an outside face to these activities. Thus, community

⁶² See further Rajak 1996 and 1999.

⁶³ Rajak 1983; Pucci Ben Zeev 1998.

⁶⁴ *CPJ* 143 refers to the record-office, *archeion*, of the Jews in Alexandria, in connection with a legacy.

⁶⁵ A standing fund, as well as *ad hoc* collections, are seemingly attested in a pair of texts from Aegina (*CIJ* 722–3). Note also the complex financial relationship involved in the donation by Polycharmus of one part of his house to the community, along with a grant, without drawing on ‘sacred funds’, as set out in the inscription from Stobi (*CIJ* 694, ll.10–16).

⁶⁶ For an in-depth study of this phenomenon, see Gibson 1999.

treasuries were designated as the recipients of fines, at least in respect of violations of Jewish tombs, from all and sundry.⁶⁷

And so, of course, Jewish groups adapted, or constructed, premises – be it *proseuchai* (not just for prayer), *synagogai* or, in the late Roman empire, ‘holy places’. Like other clubs, they needed meeting places. If they began by using private houses, these had to be fitted out for the observance of the cult, just as, for example, Mithraea were, for their own very different rituals.⁶⁸ We should probably envisage a growing ‘monumentalization’, though it is noteworthy that we have evidence already from an early date of a complex in Jerusalem fitted out for both religious and social purposes, in the shape of the Theodotus inscription.⁶⁹

It is misleading to describe Diaspora Jewish life in the first few centuries of the Common Era as fully or exclusively synagogue-based in any of the senses defined in my introduction. What is noteworthy throughout this period is, first, a structural variety, which suggests adaptation and experimentation and, second, the Jews’ ability to work within the broad framework of a spectrum of types of Graeco-Roman associations.⁷⁰ The Jewish heritage and the people’s needs were expressed within the available models, whether primarily pious associations, trade guilds, emigrant ethnic groups or philosophical schools.⁷¹ All had their own cult and a religious dimension. On the whole these were classified in Roman law as *collegia*. Jewish associations, including synagogues, had something in common with each of these types of community – as indeed did the first Christian fellowships.⁷² Yet it is unwarranted to think in terms of a unitary Graeco-Roman model, as scholars have sometimes been over-inclined to do.

Creativity in this Diaspora (as in many others) was expressed, I would suggest, less in the achievement of compact and cohesive holy communities than in the finding of appropriate forms of existence – and through these of co-existence. We might say that these Jews were rather good at making communities. Josephus’ definition of Judaism in *Against Apion* centres on the concept of *koinonia*, community. A reflection of this process of community-building was the emergence of a terminology in which Greek words were used in senses particular to themselves. These in time came to be associated almost exclusively with Judaism, no doubt spreading by transference and migration. This special vocabulary took its place alongside standard Greek

⁶⁷ See, for example, *CIJ* 741, and *CIJ* 775–9 (all tomb-violation texts from Thyateira in Lydia) and *CIJ* 786 (from Corycus, Cilicia). On these and similar texts, see Strubbe 1994.

⁶⁸ White 1990.

⁶⁹ See above, p. 32, and n. 49.

⁷⁰ Wilson 1996; Baumgarten 1998.

⁷¹ The material is laid out and analysed in a succession of monumental studies: Ziebarth (1896), Waltzing (1895–1900), Poland (1909) and de Robertis (1934).

⁷² Meeks 1983.

terms and descriptions which Jews also adopted to describe their groupings and activities. Among the specialized terms was *proseuche*, dating back to the Hellenistic period, and the even more distinctive *synagoge*. The distinctive language offered points of contact with the world of the pagan *polis* and the Roman administration, to whom it became familiar, but at the same time it drew together to an extent Jews from different places in a context of regional and local variety and in the absence of the Jerusalem Temple. Our grasp of the chronology is far from secure, but it does seem to be the case that the term *synagoge* scoops up functions and gains ground as time goes on.

At the same time comes the progress of 'monumentalization', with the acquisition or construction of buildings and the visibility of common features. This development required on the one hand the means and legal possibility of acquiring or leasing land, that is to say civic standing. On the other hand, as far as the communities themselves went, it could not have happened without their having a certain sense of being at home in a place and accepted at least to a degree, together with a general intention on their part of staying put. Naturally, these processes were not uni-directional: many Diaspora communities simply disappeared. But others became rooted. Many endured. During the centuries of the Graeco-Roman Diaspora, we can begin to trace the evolution of patterns which would be consolidated in Jewry in subsequent periods. There would indeed come a time when, within a world of Christians and Muslim, the ubiquity of the synagogue would mark Jewish communities out worldwide as sharing a common affiliation, and when, moreover, the synagogue might rightly be judged a prime contributor to the self-identity of individual Jews, and even to the survival of Judaism. But that is to look far ahead.

THE JEWS IN THE HELLENISTIC CITIES OF ACTS

Fearghus Ó Fearghail

Introduction

A topic such as the Jews in the Hellenistic cities of Acts presents many difficulties for the historian of Judaism and early Christianity. Undoubtedly there is historical information present in Acts,¹ but given Luke's skill as a writer and the obvious impact on the narrative of his concerns and theology, it is no easy task to assess the information provided in the quest for authentic information on the period covered by Acts (c.27–63 CE) or on the situation at the time of its composition. The task becomes more complex when account is taken of issues such as the extent and quality of the material gathered by the writer, the particular audience he had in mind, the aim or aims he set himself to fulfil and apologetic motives that consciously or unconsciously may have influenced his composition.² It is further complicated by the fact that Luke's narrative deals with Jewish communities spread over a wide geographic area, communities that may have differed quite significantly in their religious views and practices.³ The diversity that existed within early Christianity, evident from Acts itself (cf. 6.1–6; 15.1–2; 20.30; 21.20b–25), must also be borne in mind.⁴ Ostensibly, it would seem a less arduous task to ascertain the writer's attitude towards the Jews in his two-volume work, but that this is far from the case is suggested by the variety of opinions on the subject.⁵

In this contribution the focus is initially on Luke's presentation of the Jews in the Hellenistic cities of Acts, their attitude towards the preaching of the followers of Christ, especially that of Paul, and their relationship to the non-

¹ See, for example, Fitzmyer 1998: 124–7; Barrett 1998: II, xxxiii–lxi, cxi–cxviii.

² Cf. Alexander 1999: 13–44; Walaskay 1983.

³ See the comments of Kraabel 1987: 49–60; 1994: 87; Overman 1992: 63, 77–8; Goodman 1997: 303.

⁴ See, for example, Paget 1999: 741.

⁵ For some of the numerous publications on the topic see Wolter 1999: 307–24; Brawley 1987: 69–173; Setzer 1994: 44–82; Ó Fearghail 1987: 23–5.

Jews in these cities.⁶ The issue of how much of this reflects the situation of Luke's own time and his concerns and aims and how much of it reflects the historical situation of the period in which the narrative is set is then discussed, and an attempt is made to situate Luke's presentation in a broader context.

The Lucan picture

Damascus, a city which Josephus describes (*War* II. 561) as having a large Jewish population, is the scene of the beginning of Paul's preaching. He was on his way there to persecute any 'followers of the way' who frequented the synagogues, armed with the authority of the Jerusalem High Priest (9.1–2, 14; 26.10).⁷ His call/conversion experience along the way, however, leads to him appearing in the 'synagogues' of Damascus not as a persecutor but as a preacher of Jesus as 'Son of God' and Messiah (9.20, 22), and for a considerable period of time (*bēmerai bikanai*, cf. 9.23).⁸ The abrupt ending to his stay (9.24b–25) is attributed to a Jewish plot (cf. 2 Cor. 11.32–33). He reappears preaching and disputing in Jerusalem until the hostile attitude of Greek-speaking Jews leads to his departure for Caesarea and Tarsus (9.28–30; cf. Gal. 1.16–24).

The next scene of Paul's labours is Antioch in Syria, the third city of the Roman Empire with a large, well-organized Jewish population present in all classes (Jos., *War* VII. 43, 47). Here, according to Luke, the word was already being preached successfully to Jews and to Greek-speaking Gentiles (cf. 11.19–20).⁹ There is no hint of opposition in either case. Nor is there any indication that the preaching to the Jews took place in the synagogue, not even when Paul is introduced (11.26). Antioch is presented as a tolerant city at this time, a city where Barnabas and Paul can preach their message for 'a whole year' (11.26). Here, too, the disciples are said to have been given the distinctive name of Christians for the first time (11.26). The name was probably applied by others,¹⁰ and suggests that they were seen as a clearly distinguishable group in the city.

⁶ Mindful, of course, of the possible impact of his own concerns and agenda and of the many differences between the portrait of Paul in Acts and that of the authentic Pauline letters; see Fitzmyer's review of the debate on the 'Paulinism' of Acts in 1998: 145–7.

⁷ There is no indication in Luke's account as to the reason for this course of action; the implication is that the synagogue authorities in Damascus would oblige. Did Luke believe that the religious authorities in Jerusalem exercised some control over the diaspora synagogues? The reference in 9.1–2 need not require this, but the implication in Acts 9.14 and 26.10 is that he did; see the discussion in Barrett 1994: I, 446–8.

⁸ Even though Paul after his call/conversion is introduced to the reader as first and foremost a missionary to the Gentiles (9.15), it is among the Jews that the beginning of his ministry is set.

⁹ On the Greek text of 11.20 see the discussion in Fitzmyer 1998: 476; Barrett 1994: I, 550–1.

¹⁰ By Jews, Gentiles or Romans (although it could also have been self-applied); cf. Fitzmyer 1998: 478; Barrett 1994: I, 556–7; Wander 1997: 193–4.

The missionary activity of Paul which begins in chapter 13 is organized in three journeys, a literary arrangement that broadly reflects the sequence of events in Paul's life as indicated by his letters.¹¹ Cyprus, reputed to have had a large Jewish population,¹² was the first port of call of Paul and Barnabas. In the port town of Salamis Paul is said to have preached 'in the synagogues of the Jews' (13.5). In Pamphylia which both Acts (2.10) and Philo (*Leg. ad Gaium* 281) indicate as having a Jewish population, Paul is said to have visited Perga, but there is no mention of him preaching there (13.13) as there will be on the return journey (14.25). In the Roman city of Antioch-in-Pisidia, with its large Jewish population (cf. Jos., *Ant.* XII. 147–53), Paul and Barnabas are said to have found a synagogue and many proselytes (13.43) and well-disposed *archisynagōgoi* who invited them to preach (13.15).¹³ Paul is portrayed as preaching in a standing position, unlike the gospel description of Jesus' visit to the synagogue in Nazareth (Luke 4.20).¹⁴ The elements of the service mentioned – the reading of the Torah and the prophets and the 'word of exhortation' (cf. Luke 4.16–21) – suggest that in Luke's day at least the service had a well-defined structure, and probably well before that.¹⁵

Here, on the lips of Paul and in a synagogal context, we meet the term 'God-fearer' (*hoi phoboumenoi ton theon*), a term about which there has been a great deal of discussion. Already in Acts 10 the description had been applied to Cornelius, a centurion living in the mainly Gentile city of Caesarea, which had a considerable Jewish population (cf. Jos., *War* III. 409). In passages replete with Lucanisms, Cornelius is described as a devout or pious, righteous and God-fearing man who gave alms liberally to the people and who prayed constantly to God (vv. 2, 22).¹⁶ It is not said that he frequented the synagogue, but his prayers and almsgiving would have been very acceptable to Jews and did earn him their respect (cf. 10.22). In the present context it is the piety of Cornelius as such that is important to the story, since it prepares for the scene that follows in which Cornelius is depicted at prayer in the privacy of his own house (10.3, 30).

In Acts 10.35, on the lips of Peter, the description 'God-fearer' can apply to Jew, proselyte or Gentile (*en panti ethnei ho phoboumenos auton kai ergazomenos dikaiosynēn dektos autō(i) estin*). Luke had already used it positively of the pious in Israel in Luke 1.50¹⁷ and negatively in relation to the unjust

¹¹ Cf. Fitzmyer 1998: 133ff.

¹² Cf. 1 Macc. 15.23; Philo, *Leg. ad Gaium* 282; Jos., *Ant.* XIII. 284.

¹³ On the office of synagogue leader, see Barrett 1994: I, 628–9.

¹⁴ The picture in Philo, *De Spec. Leg.* II, 62, agrees with that of Acts; cf. Schürer *et al.* (eds) 1979: II, 453. Barrett 1994: I, 629 suggests that diaspora synagogues may have picked up Greek customs.

¹⁵ On the synagogue service, see Schürer 1979: II, 447–54.

¹⁶ Cf. 10.2 (*eusebēs kai phoboumenos ton theon*) and 22 (*anēr dikaios kai phoboumenos ton theon*).

¹⁷ Cf. M. Wilcox 1981: 104.

judge in the parable of Luke 18.2–5 (*ton theon me phoboumenos*). One can hardly speak of a technical use of the term 'God-fearer' in any of these cases.

In 13.16 Paul addresses his audience thus: *Andres Israelitai kai boi phoboumenoi ton theon, akousate*. The reference to 'God-fearers' is ambiguous. It could refer to all in the synagogue and thus qualify 'men, Israelites', or to a second group that differs from these. Such a group might be the 'worshipping proselytes' who are mentioned in 13.43.¹⁸ It seems more likely, though, that it refers to the former. Paul is seeking here in the proemium of his speech to win the goodwill of all his hearers. This is one of the functions of the proemium.¹⁹ The qualification of his hearers as God-fearing persons is intended as a *captatio benevolentiae* in order to win their goodwill.

This appears to be true also of his second call for attention in 13.26: *Andres adelphoi, huiōi genous Abraam kai boi en humin phoboumenoi ton theon*.²⁰ Here he addresses his hearers as brothers and sons of the race of Abraham. The vital element in his second 'call for attention' is his reference to their God-fearing nature, not to their physical relationship to Abraham. Descent from Abraham is no longer crucial from the point of view of the word of God (cf. Luke 3.8). It is hardly a coincidence that Abraham himself is described as one who fears God in the LXX – the first to be described as such in the Greek bible – having obeyed God's command to sacrifice Isaac (Gen. 22.12).²¹ It is likely that the speaker, rather than applying this to a particular part of his congregation, is applying it to all, Jews and 'worshipping proselytes' alike. He is calling on them to respond to the message of salvation that is destined for all of them.²² At the conclusion of the speech he addresses all his listeners again, this time simply as 'brothers' (13.38).

What is striking about the scene that Luke has depicted is the positive reaction to Paul's preaching. The accusations levelled against the Jews in Jerusalem and their leaders (13.27–28), the apparent slight on the Jewish law (13.39) and the harsh warning of 13.40–41 are met, not with hostility (cf. Luke 4.28–29), but with requests to continue preaching 'these things' on the following Sabbath (13.42). According to Luke many of the Jews and

18 Barrett 1994: I, 630–1, 639, takes the reference here and in 13.26 to be to proselytes, although he concedes that the author may, in 13.16, be defining Jews; cf. K. Lake, 'Proselytes and God-fearers', in Lake 1933: 87 ('Greeks who worship in the Synagogue but are not proselytes'); Esler 1987: 39 ('Gentile God-fearers'); Fitzmyer 1998: 510 ('Gentile sympathizers'); de Boer 1995: 52 ('a different group').

19 Cf. Arist., *Rhet.* III. 14.7.1415a; Quint., *Inst. Or.* IV. 1.5; Cic., *De Inv.* I.15.20–22; *Rhet. ad Her.* I. 4.6–5.8.

20 Cf. Arist., *Rhet.* III. 14.9.1415b, who asserts that enjoining the hearers' attention is common to all parts of the speech, if necessary.

21 *egnōn hoti phobē ton theon su kai ouk epheisō tou buiou sou tou agapētou di' eme.*

22 Others who are said to fear God include Joseph (Gen. 42.18), the midwives of Egypt (Exod. 1.17, 21), David (1 Chr. 13.12) and Hananiah (Neh. 7.2).

'worshipping proselytes' (13.43) accepted Paul's preaching.²³ The opposition when it comes is attributed neither to blasphemy nor to political motives but to the popularity of the preachers who are said to have attracted 'almost the whole city' the following Sabbath (13.44).²⁴ Jews 'filled with jealousy' are said to have incited the 'devout' women of high standing and the chief men of the city (13.45, 50). Luke may be implying that they feared the growing influence in their synagogue of those Jews who believed that the Messiah had already come in the person of Jesus.²⁵ The women who show sympathy with the 'jealous Jews' are not said to frequent the synagogue, nor are they identified as Jews or proselytes, but their description as *sebomenoi* (unlike the leading men of the city) would seem to imply religious motives for their actions.²⁶

Despite the reactions of Paul and Barnabas in Antioch (cf. 13.46–47, 51), it is in the synagogue of Iconium that they next appear. Here Paul is positively received, and 'a great host of both Jews and Greeks' is said to have believed (14.1). These Greeks are described neither as 'devout' (cf. Acts 17.4) nor as 'proselytes', but since Luke does not depict Paul as teaching other than in the synagogue the reader may be meant to conclude that they either frequented the synagogue or were drawn there by news of Paul's preaching.²⁷

The pattern of Antioch is repeated in Iconium – Jews who disbelieve Paul stir up the Gentiles (*ethnē*). Despite this, or because of this, Paul and Barnabas are said to have stayed for a considerable time (14.3: *bikanon chronon*), speaking boldly for the Lord, though whether in the synagogue or not is not stated. Eventually the 'unbelieving Jews' who oppose them are said to have won over the Gentiles and their rulers and the two missionaries are forced to leave. Luke's account has Paul continuing to preach in Asia Minor. Jews from Antioch and Iconium are said to have disrupted the mission in Lystra (Timothy's birthplace) and to have incited the people against the missionaries. Paul is treated violently, stoned, dragged out of the city, and left for dead. He makes a swift recovery, however, and goes on to preach in Derbe, where he is said to have made many disciples. Despite the events in Lystra and the opposition of Jews in Iconium and Antioch, Luke

23 The reference to pious or worshipping proselytes has led occasionally to emendation of the text, but there is no reason why one cannot take it to refer to proselytes who worshipped regularly in the synagogue; cf. Barrett 1994: I, 654; Fitzmyer 1998: 520; Haenchen 1971: 413, n. 5; differently, Overman 1988: 20, 25, n. 24.

24 The implication here is that there were many more Gentiles present who had heard about Paul's teaching by word of mouth.

25 Trebilco 1991: 21, mentions a perceived threat to their own privileged position.

26 Siegert 1973: 136, identifies them as 'God-fearers', but Wilcox 1981: 110, points with justification to the inconclusive nature of the reference; for Wander 1998: 191, they are secret sympathizers.

27 Haenchen 1971: 419, identifies the Greeks as 'worshippers', drawing on the use of *Hellen* in v.1 and *ethne* in v.2; but see Barrett 1994: I, 668.

narrates how Paul later returned to organize their communities (cf. 14.21; 16.1) and to preach and teach (15.35). It is during this missionary journey that the report and justification of the circumcision of Timothy belongs (16.3). The attribution to Paul of this action has given rise to much controversy in the light of Paul's own comments in Galatians 5.2 and 1 Corinthians 7.18, for instance (but see Galatians 5.11). What is clear is that Luke depicts Paul as sensitive to Jewish feelings (16.3).²⁸

In the city of Philippi (note the 'we' passage), Paul and Silas are said to have gone on the Sabbath to a place of prayer (*proseuchē*) situated outside the gate at the riverside (16.12–13). It is possible, as Hengel suggests, that the reference here is to a synagogue building.²⁹ But if so, one would have expected Luke to give more of a sense of entering or being in a building as he does elsewhere in Luke-Acts. The figure of Lydia is introduced here as a native of Thyatira in Lydia, a dealer in purple, and a 'worshipper of God' (*sebomenē ton theon*). Her name is not Jewish and she is not described as a proselyte. The reference to her being devout is important in the context of the story, since it prepares for what follows (the Lord opening her heart to heed Paul's preaching), but she is depicted as having a close association with the religious life of Judaism.³⁰ Paul and Silas are said to have continued to go to the place of prayer 'for many days' (16.18).

Luke's description of the end of their stay in Philippi is colourful. It has nothing to do with the Jews but with Paul's cure of a possessed girl and the resentment of her Gentile masters. Hauled before the magistrates, the missionaries are presented as Jews and are accused of causing a disturbance and of advocating customs contrary to Roman law.³¹ Beaten and thrown into prison, they regain their liberty in the wake of an earthquake, turn the tables on the magistrates and leave in their own time.

Their reception in the thriving city of Thessalonica is portrayed as positive. No less a personage than the leader of the synagogue, Jason, is said to have given them lodgings. Paul was permitted to preach in the synagogue on successive Sabbaths. The upshot, according to Luke, is that some of his listeners were convinced (*epeisthēsan*) and joined Paul and Silas and also 'a

28 Is Luke portraying it as a case of Paul 'becoming as a Jew in order to win Jews', becoming as one under the law to win those under the law (1 Cor. 9.20)? See the discussion in Trebilco 1991: 23; also Fee 1987: 428; Barrett 1998: II, 761–2; Fitzmyer 1998: 145–7, 573–4.

29 See Hengel in Gutmann 1975: 175 ('ein wirkliches Gebäude'); he argues that the term *proseuchē* was the normal designation in the diaspora for Jewish places of worship in the first century (pp. 175–8); see Jos., *Life* 277, 280, 293 on the placing of such buildings near rivers; Jos., *Ant.* XIV. 258.

30 Wilcox 1981: 111, feels that Paul would have been less likely to stay with her were she not a full member of the synagogue – but Paul only goes to stay with her after she has been baptized (16.15).

31 See the discussion in Barrett 1998: II, 790; Fitzmyer 1998: 587: 'the magistrates in Philippi at that time would scarcely have known the difference between Judaism and Christianity'.

great host of devout or devout Greeks' (17.4: *sebomenōn Hēllēnōn*) and not a few of the 'leading women'.³² Luke does not specify the character of the first group, but probably implies that they included Jews and proselytes.³³ It is less clear how one is intended to view the relationship of the second and third groups to the synagogue. It is not said that either group frequented it. Is Luke leaving open the possibility that the 'devout' Greek-speaking Gentiles initially heard about Paul's preaching from their fellow citizens and then came to hear him? If he wanted the reader to think of the leading women of the city in a similar vein, hearing of Paul's preaching through their social contacts with the Jews, for instance, why did he not describe them also as 'devout'? He does present them as closely associated with their Jewish fellow citizens, but it is not clear how this is to be interpreted.

Again, as earlier, opposition to the two missionaries and their host is attributed by Luke to jealousy on the part of those Jews who did not accept Paul's teaching. Is the implication present that they were afraid of losing control of the synagogue?³⁴ These Jews are said to have set the city 'in an uproar'. Jason and some of the Christian brethren are dragged before the city magistrates (politarchs) and accused basically of disturbing the peace and sedition.³⁵ The local magistrates merely take security for their good conduct and let them go (17.9).

In Beroea, where the missionaries are sent, their reception in the synagogue is described as positive (17.10–12). In comparison with their brethren in Thessalonica the Jews here, according to Luke, are *eugenesteroi*. While the term literally signifies well-born, it may also mean noble-minded, generous, liberal, free from prejudice.³⁶ The meaning of the term is clarified by the context. They are said to have received the word with all eagerness and to have examined the scriptures daily to see if the things Paul was preaching were so (17.11). Luke is describing them as being more open to Paul's preaching – better disposed than the Jews of Thessalonica to accepting a new interpretation of their scriptures.

Many of the Jews of Beroea are said to have believed, with not a few 'Greek women of high standing' as well as men. Luke's account does not clearly suggest that the latter two groups of people frequented the synagogue – they may be thought of as having initially heard of Paul's preaching by word of mouth and as having come to hear him preach. In this city, as in Lystra, it is outside involvement that is said to have caused opposition, Paul's Jewish critics in nearby Thessalonica coming and inciting the crowds against

32 1 Thess. suggests that Paul's converts in Thessalonica seem to have been mainly Gentiles.

33 Cf. Barrett 1998: II, 811.

34 Cf. Barrett 1998: II, 812.

35 Causing trouble by acting in defiance of Caesar's decrees and proclaiming another king besides Caesar.

36 Cf. Jacquier 1926: 517.

them (17.13). But Luke hardly intends to describe strong opposition since only Paul leaves while Silas and Timothy remain.

The description of Paul's association with the Jewish community of Athens is brief (17.17). It is said that he argued in the synagogue with the Jews and the *sebomenoi* – on the Sabbath, presumably – and daily in the agora with whoever happened to be there. Here there is a reference to a group other than Jews who are to be found worshipping in the synagogue. If Luke intends the reader to see them as proselytes, he would presumably have said so. He gives no indication of how Paul's preaching fared in the synagogue, but he does attribute some success to his preaching in the Areopagus (17.34).

In the thoroughly Hellenized city of Corinth Luke introduces a Jewish community that numbers among its members Aquila and Priscilla, and mentions a synagogue that was next door to the house of one Titius Justus (cf. 18.7).³⁷ As elsewhere, Luke portrays an initial positive response to Paul's preaching. He is allowed to preach in the synagogue 'every Sabbath', arguing that Jesus is the Christ, and seeking to persuade both Jews and Greeks (18.4).³⁸ Luke does not describe the 'Greeks' as proselytes or devout, as in 17.4, but the logic of the narrative suggests that they are to be thought of as regular visitors to the synagogue. The description of Titius Justus as a 'worshipper of God' (18.7: *sebomenou ton theon*) may indicate that these Greeks are to be seen in a similar light.

The strong verbal opposition to Paul's preaching that eventually comes (*antitassomenōn de autōn kai blasphemountōn*) causes him to leave the synagogue in rather a temper (18.6). But despite his statement about going to the Gentiles, he goes no further than next door to the house of Titius Justus. Although Luke has described what appears to be a break with this particular synagogue, he hardly intends the reader to see it as a dramatic break with the Jews of Corinth, since in his new abode, next door to the synagogue, Paul is described as carrying on his work successfully; indeed, no less a figure than Crispus, the ruler of the synagogue (*archisynagōgos*), is said to believe in the Lord, together with all his household. Luke's narrative implies that the many Corinthians who heard Paul and believed also included Gentiles (18.8). The opposition that Paul encounters does not force him to leave, for according to Luke he stayed for a year and six months continuing his ministry.

Jewish opposition is said to resurface when the proconsul Gallio arrives. Paul is brought before him and accused of influencing not just Jews but Greeks and Romans to worship God contrary to the law. Gallio, who is presented as an impartial judge, refuses to be drawn into what he sees as an internal issue for the Jews, and the situation is quickly defused (18.15). Paul continues to stay in Corinth – for a considerable period (*eti prosmeinas*

³⁷ On the Jewish community here, see Philo, *Leg. ad Gaium* 281.

³⁸ On the conative use of the imperfect, see Barrett 1998: II, 864; NRSV; differently RSV.

bēmeras hikanas) – and leaves in his own time. Apollos is later said to preach there (18.27–19.1).

Luke narrates a brief visit to Ephesus towards the end of this missionary journey in which Paul preaches in the synagogue. There is no mention of Gentiles here. The Ephesian Jews are presented as responding positively to Paul's preaching, and as in Antioch of Pisidia he is asked to remain longer (18.19–20). In between Paul's visits to Ephesus, Luke narrates how Apollos, an eloquent man well-versed in the scriptures, arrives and preaches in the synagogue. But this 'Jew', as Luke describes him, teaches 'accurately the things concerning Jesus although knowing only the baptism of John' (18.24–26a). Paul's co-workers, Priscilla and Aquila, who continue to attend the synagogue, take him in hand and expound to him more accurately the 'Way' (cf. 18.18, 26a). On his return to Ephesus, Paul is said to have preached in the synagogue for 'three months', speaking boldly, arguing and pleading about the kingdom of God (19.1–8). A verbal protest in the synagogue itself (19.9a) is said to have caused Paul and his followers to leave the synagogue. Paul takes up a new base in the hall (*scholē*) of Tyrannus where he is said to have argued daily (19.9b). The break with the synagogue which Luke describes here is more pronounced than that at Corinth, but he hardly intends it to be seen as a break with the Jews of the city since he goes on to describe how Paul continued to preach in Ephesus for two years so that 'all the inhabitants of Asia, Jews as well as Greeks, heard the word of God' (19.10). When a problem arises in the city it is said to come from the Gentiles, but it is made clear that Paul's preaching does not contravene any of the city's laws (cf. 19.35–41). One striking feature of the description of Paul's visit to Ephesus is that there is no mention of Gentiles in the synagogue or them having any association with it (cf. 18.19; 19.8). Non-Jews are mentioned only in connection with the Hall of Tyrannus (18.9–10).

The situation that Luke portrays in Rome is quite different from the other cities Paul visited. Here he is under house arrest, and was not free, one presumes, to visit synagogues. He is a man of such repute, though, that he can call to himself the leaders of the Jews to explain his situation to them (28.17). Their reaction is described in positive terms despite what they have heard of the Christian sect (28.21–23), and subsequently 'great numbers' are said to have come to hear him preach. The response is divided (28.24), as elsewhere in Luke-Acts, and as elsewhere the situation calls forth a sharp warning from Paul. But Luke's account does not give any hint of active opposition towards him. Instead, the narrative ends on a positive note (28.30–31) with Paul preaching boldly and without hindrance to all-comers, Jew and Greek alike.

Luke paints a picture then of Jews in various cities of the diaspora who show a tolerance towards Christian missionaries that is surprising given the lack of tolerance on the part of the Jewish religious leaders in Jerusalem. These missionaries are allowed to preach in their synagogues repeatedly and



often over an extended period. On occasions they are invited to preach by the synagogue leaders. This tolerance is shown them despite the content of their message – that the promised Messiah had come in the person of Jesus of Nazareth, in whose death the Jews in Jerusalem and their leaders were involved; that this Jesus was raised by God from the dead and exalted at his right hand; that through him forgiveness of sins comes that could not come through the law of Moses (cf. 13.26–38); and that in him everyone who believes is ‘justified’ (cf. 13.39). Some, such as the Jews of Beroea (17.11–12) and Ephesus (18.19–20; 19.10, 17–20), are portrayed as more open to the preaching of the followers of Jesus than others (cf. 17.13; 18.6, 12), while those of Ephesus are prepared to give a hearing also to the somewhat different version of Apollos (cf. 19.25–6). In Rome Jewish leaders respond positively to Paul’s invitation to hear him, and some Jews respond positively to his preaching. Followers of Jesus continue to be accepted in synagogues (cf. 18.26) and in the temple (21.26). This general picture contrasts sharply with Luke’s portrayal of the reaction to Jesus’ words in the Nazareth synagogue, and the opposition to the preaching of the Christian message especially on the part of the Jewish leadership in Jerusalem (cf. 4.17, 21; 5.33; 7.54, 57–60; 9.1–2; 23.12–21; 25.2–3).

Luke’s narrative also portrays an openness on the part of the Jews to the Gentiles in the cities of Asia Minor, Macedonia and Greece. Lydia is said to worship with the Jews of Philippi on the Sabbath, while Gentiles in Athens and Corinth are said to frequent the synagogue. The situation is not as clear in Antioch, Iconium, Thessalonica and Beroea. The word may be presented as spreading to the Gentiles through the rumour mill of the crowded cities—Paul first preaching to the Jews and they in turn exciting the curiosity of their fellow-townspersons who then come to hear him. In the case of the latter two cities, it is possible that a situation similar to that of Philippi, Athens and Corinth is being described. Ephesus is an exception, since Luke gives no indication that the synagogue there welcomed Gentiles. On occasions Luke describes how Gentiles join Jews in actions against the Christian missionaries – not just in Antioch (13.50), but also in Iconium (14.2, 5), Lystra (14.19; cf. 2 Cor. 11.25), Thessalonica (17.5) and Beroea (17.13).

The nature of the association that Luke portrays between non-Jews and the synagogue is a matter of much debate. In Acts, at any rate, one should distinguish between those described as ‘God-fearers’ (*phoboumenoi ton theon*) and those described as ‘devout’ or ‘worshippers of God’ (*sebomenoi ton theon*).³⁹ The former, on the basis of later evidence, has become an accepted term for

³⁹ Cf. Lake 1933: I.V. 74–96; Wilcox 1981: 102–22; Kraabel 1981: 113–26; Finn 1985: 75–84; Gager 1986: 91–9; Cohen 1987: 409–30; Williams 1988: 97–111; Overman 1988: 17–26; Hemer 1989: 444–7; Levinskaya 1996: 118–26; Trebilco 1991: 145–66; Reynolds and Tannenbaum 1987.

Gentiles who frequented the Jewish synagogue and adopted Jewish customs. As suggested above, it is not used in a technical sense either in the case of Cornelius or in Paul’s speech in the synagogue of Antioch in Pisidia. The latter is a different matter. The participle *sebomenos* may have the sense of pious, devout or worshipping, but the level of involvement with the Jews varies. The devout women of Antioch are portrayed as sympathetic to the Jews who opposed Paul. Whether or not the devout or ‘worshipping’ Greeks of Thessalonica are to be seen as frequenting the synagogue is not clear. Acts does not say they did. Lydia falls into a different category since she is depicted as joining the Jews of Philippi at their place of prayer on the Sabbath; likewise the ‘worshippers’ in the synagogue at Athens who are probably to be seen as non-Jews. The ‘Greeks’ in the synagogues of Iconium and Corinth are probably also intended to be seen as ‘God-worshippers’. Artemis is the focus of attention of the Ephesian ‘worshippers’. Were such people essential for Luke’s purpose?

There is another issue that must be taken up, namely, their theological significance for Luke. Kraabel has frequently argued that the ‘God-fearers’ or ‘God-worshippers’ were essential for Luke’s purpose, that they are ‘a symbol to help Luke show how Christianity had become a Gentile religion *legitimately* and without losing its Old Testament roots’.⁴⁰ But in terms of his own account Luke hardly needs such people to legitimize the early missionaries’ outreach to the Gentiles. He already makes clear in the introduction to his work (cf. Luke 3.6, 23–38) that the Gentile mission was part of God’s plan enunciated in the scriptures, and it is presented in these terms in Acts 13.47 (cf. Isa 49.6) and 15.16–18 (cf. Am. 9.11–12, LXX). The Gentile mission is legitimized by the scriptures, and by divine word and deed (Acts 9.15; 10.1–11.18; 22.21).⁴¹ The presence of non-Jews in and around the diaspora synagogues or attracted there by Paul’s preaching may have facilitated the Gentile mission, as presented by Luke, but their presence can hardly be said to be essential for his purpose.

Historical questions

While Luke paints a picture that is probably much more consistent than it actually was, his representation of the Jews in the diaspora as on the whole more tolerant towards ‘messianic’ Jews than their counterparts in Jerusalem may well reflect the original situation in which the word was preached. Some are described as more tolerant than others, and the differences portrayed in the reception of the preachers in various cities of the diaspora (e.g. Thessalonica, Beroea, Ephesus) probably reflect the varied nature of Judaism

⁴⁰ Kraabel 1981: 120; also Gager 1986: 98–9. Kraabel (1991: 280) accepts that Luke sees the Gentile mission as part of the divine plan.

⁴¹ Cf. Squires 1998: 608–17.

in that period.⁴² It seems likely that different communities had different expectations which were able to accommodate for many the preaching of Jesus as the promised Messiah. This was presumably true both of the period of the early missionaries and of the period in which Luke was writing.⁴³

The existence of Gentiles who 'sympathized' with Judaism to varying degrees but did not become full converts is, as has often been noted, attested outside the New Testament both in Jewish and non-Jewish sources. Philo mentions Gentiles who worshipped the one true God (*Quaestiones in Exodum* 2.2). Josephus refers to Gentiles in Antioch who were constantly attracted to the Jewish religious ceremonies (*thrēskeiais*) but who were incorporated only 'in some measure' (*tropō tini*) with the Jews themselves (*War* VII. 45), to Greeks who adopted Jewish laws (*Apion* II. 123) and to 'God-worshippers' from Asia and Europe who contributed to the temple in Jerusalem (*Ant.* XIV. 110). Epictetus refers to a person who was not a Jew but who acted the part of a Jew.⁴⁴ Juvenal satirizes a father who reveres the Sabbath and abstains from swine's flesh and whose children under his influence take to circumcision and learn and practise the Jewish law (*Sat.* 14,96–106).⁴⁵ Feldman's wide-ranging survey adds further possible examples from Suetonius and Seneca,⁴⁶ Philo and Josephus,⁴⁷ and from later Jewish, Christian and other sources.⁴⁸ Observation of the Sabbath seems to have been popular among many non-Jews⁴⁹ some of whom also observed dietary laws.⁵⁰ Luke's picture, then, of Gentiles attending the synagogue, observing the Sabbath and joining in prayer, and even having a synagogue built for the Jews has independent support. How numerous such people were in the first century, though, is a difficult question and answers vary greatly.⁵¹ But A.T. Kraabel's view that Luke describes such people as coming into Christianity in greater numbers than Jews is not the overall view of Acts.⁵² This may be true in the case of Thessalonica (17.4), which incidentally would fit in with

⁴² See n. 3 above.

⁴³ See the comment of Davies (1999: 704) that 'Judaism was hospitably tolerant of Messianic claimants'.

⁴⁴ Cf. Stern 1974: I, 543–4; Levinskaya 1996: 118–20.

⁴⁵ Cf. Stern 1981: II, 102–3.

⁴⁶ Suetonius, *Tiberius* 32.2; 36; *Domitian* 12.2; Seneca, cited in Augustine, *De Civitate* I. 6.11; cf. Feldman 1993: 345–8, 570.

⁴⁷ *Jos.*, *War* II. 454, 463; *Ant.* XX. 38–43, 195; III. 318; *Apion* I. 166–7; II. 282; Philo, *De Vita Mos.* II. 4.17–24; *De Spec Leg.* II. 12 (cf. Feldman 1993: 348–9, 571).

⁴⁸ Feldman 1993: 352–69, 571–6.

⁴⁹ Suetonius, *Tiberius* 32.2; Seneca, in Augustine, *De Civitate* I. 6.11; Juvenal, *Sat.* 14.96, 105–6; *Jos.*, *Apion* II. 282; *Shabbath* 118b; *Sanhedrin* 58b; Justin Martyr, *Trypho* 10.2; Tertullian, *Ad Nationes* 1.13.

⁵⁰ Cf. *Jos.*, *Apion* II. 282.

⁵¹ Feldman 1993: 344–69, 569–80, finds them in great numbers; also Schürer 1986: III/1, 162, 165–9; Trebilco 1991: 145–66; Levinskaya 1996: 118–26; for examples from rabbinic literature, see Stern 1980: II, 104.

⁵² Kraabel 1981: 120.

the evidence of 1 Thessalonians, but not in any of the other cities, not even, it would seem, in Iconium and Beroea. In Antioch the women of high standing who are described as devout or worshipping are found on the side of the Jewish opposition to Paul and Barnabas (13.50).

How involved such people were with their Jewish neighbours is also difficult to establish. Evidently there were various degrees of association short of becoming a proselyte. This is illustrated by the well-known third-century CE Aphrodisias inscription which though much later is instructive in this regard.⁵³ Here one meets the term *theosebēs* which may be translated as pious or 'God-worshipping' and is used here in relation to non-Jews.⁵⁴ Among the members of the *decania* of the learned persons, also known as 'those who continually praise God', found on side 'a' of the inscribed stele is a list of names that includes thirteen Jews, three proselytes and two *theosebeis* with Gentile names who are formally distinguished from the proselytes.⁵⁵ The list is continued on side 'b'. Separated from this on side 'b' is a list of fifty-two persons introduced by the heading 'and such as are God-worshippers' (*kai bosoi theosebis [=theosebeis]*). Almost all the people in this list are Gentiles.⁵⁶ Each of the first nine is described as a 'town councillor' (*bouleitēs*). The two *theosebeis* in the first group, who are members of the *decania*, seem to have belonged to a Jewish group that met for study and prayer.⁵⁷ The second group, which is listed separately, seems to have a different relationship with the synagogue. The term 'sympathizer' seems broad enough to include such varying relationships.⁵⁸ Such a broad term may also be needed in relation to Luke-Acts where various degrees of association are also indicated (cf. Luke 7.5; Acts 16.13–14). Cornelius, whom Luke does not explicitly associate with the synagogue, could be included in this category.

The synagogue itself is an issue in all this debate. While synagogue preaching is not presented as central to the preaching of Peter, Philip and others, and does not feature prominently in Paul's visits to Athens (17.17), Corinth (18.11, 28) and Ephesus (19.9–10; cf. 11.19; 14.6–7, 25; 16.1–4), it is portrayed as having had an important role in his mission. The synagogue ministry in Acts begins, in fact, with Paul and is pre-eminently associated with him – first in Damascus and then in the various cities he visits during his missionary journeys. Luke's presentation could be part of an

⁵³ In Reynolds and Tannenbaum 1987; see the discussion and bibliographical indications in Levinskaya 1996: 70–4; Murphy O'Connor 1992: 418–24; Trebilco 1991: 152–5; Barrett 1994: I, 500. Finn 1985: 79–80; Schürer 1986: III/1, 25–6; Overman 1988: 17–26.

⁵⁴ Also used of Jewish converts and proselytes; cf. Spicq 1994: II, 196–9.

⁵⁵ Murphy O'Connor 1992: 423.

⁵⁶ Cf. Levinskaya 1996: 73; Schürer 1986: III.1, 25–6, 166; Murphy O'Connor 1992: 418–24.

⁵⁷ Cf. Murphy O'Connor 1992: 423.

⁵⁸ The town councillors, for instance, would still have to participate in public sacrifices. Cf. Cohen 1989: 13–33; Rajak 1992: 19–21; Levinskaya 1996: 78.

apologetic purpose – portraying how the word was first preached to the Jews. But this point is already made clear at the beginning of Acts (2.14–36, 39; 3.12–26), and it is difficult to see why he should need to insist on it so regularly unless he had information that Paul did indeed frequent synagogues in his ministry to the Jews. Paul himself in 2 Corinthians 11.24 indicates that he did retain his contact with the synagogue despite its occasionally painful repercussions.

The lack of substantial archaeological evidence for first-century synagogues has given rise to an animated debate in recent years.⁵⁹ According to Luke-Acts there were synagogues throughout Palestine and the diaspora in the first century of the Christian era. Many of the references to synagogues in the gospel and Acts suggest that Luke is thinking of a particular building that was well known and regularly used for religious purposes at least on the Sabbath.⁶⁰ In Luke 7.5 the evangelist specifically states that a Roman centurion 'built' a synagogue for the people of Capernaum. The contrast between the 'house' of Titius Justus and the synagogue in Acts 18.7, the 'hall of Tyrannus' and the synagogue at Ephesus in 19.8–9, the agora and synagogue in 17.17 and the temple and synagogues in 24.12 points towards a building. Clear references to diaspora synagogues are to be found in Philo and Josephus, whether designated by *proseuchē* or *synagōgē*,⁶¹ and in inscriptions.⁶² It seems likely that the lack of firm evidence for synagogues is due to the fact that they were probably located in private houses and thus lacked architectural features that later became characteristic of synagogues.⁶³

The parting of the ways

Finally, the question of where Luke's narrative fits in to the 'parting of the ways' may be asked. The 'parting' between Judaism and Christianity was a complex phenomenon which probably occurred in different places at different times and over varying periods of time. Given the diversity within

⁵⁹ Animated in particular by the writings of Kee 1990: 1–24; 1995: 481–500; cf. Oster 1993: 178–208; see Meyers 1992a: 251–60; 2178–208; Hachlili 1992: 260–3; Hachlili 1997: 34–47; Schürer 1979: II, 424–7; Riesner 1995: 180, n. 2; Safrai 1976: 1.2, 908–44.

⁶⁰ Cf. Luke 4.16, 33, 38; 13.10; Acts 13.14; 14.1; 17.1, 10; 18.7; 24.12; also Matt. 12.9, Mark 1.29; John 6.59; 9.22; 12.42; 18.20. Kee 1990: 8, is of the view that most references are not to buildings. The term *synagōgē* can be used of a building or a congregation, as in Acts 13 (vv. 14–15, 43) and the Berenice inscription of 55/6 CE. According to Matthew and Mark, Jesus preached only in the synagogues of Galilee; the general summary of Luke 4.44 states that he preached in the synagogues of Palestine.

⁶¹ Cf. Philo, *Quod Omnis Probus* 81; *De Vita Mos.* II. 215–6; *Leg. ad Gaium* 156, 311–12; *De Spec. Leg.* II. 62; *Jos., Ant.* XIV. 258; XIX. 300, 305; *Life* I. 277, 280, 293; *War* II. 285–9; VII. 44.

⁶² Cf. Barclay 1996: 279–80; Trebilco 1991: 58–60.

⁶³ Cf. Hvalvik 1996: 314–15; on the controversy surrounding the dating of the Theodotian inscription long held to be pre-70 CE, see Riesner 1995: 192–200; Nolland 1989: 316.

both Judaism and early Christianity it is very difficult to assess the situation as it was. Paul's own letters indicate how his attitude towards the Jews changed in the course of his ministry (cf. 1 Thess. 2.14–16; Philem. 3.2, 8–9; 2 Cor. 3.6–18; Rom. 9–11),⁶⁴ and Acts provides a portrait of an even more 'accommodating' Paul.

What can one say about Luke's presentation? Already in the early chapters of Acts the followers of Jesus in Jerusalem are portrayed as forming a distinct group (2.44–45; 4.32) with their own prayer and ritual (2.42), worshipping together in the temple (2.46a; 3.1), meeting regularly in their homes for the breaking of bread (2.46b), sharing things in common (2.44; 4.32), and professing their faith in Jesus as the only way to salvation (4.11–12). But there is no indication that they are not part of Judaism, for they still observe the Sabbath, visit the temple where the apostles also preach, and are disciplined by the Jewish authorities (4.1–21; 5.17–42). Stephen's temple critique (7.48) can hardly be regarded as decisive in the light of later events in Acts (cf. 21.26).

The conversion of the Gentile Cornelius marks a new development which receives divine sanction (10.1–11.18) but is one that Peter has to defend (11.1–18). The Gentile mission (11.20; 13.46–9; 14.1, 27; 15.3) leads inevitably to the problems of food laws and circumcision (cf. 15.1, 5) but these, according to Luke, are resolved by compromise (cf. 15.19–20, 28–9) and unity is maintained. In Antioch, Corinth and Ephesus there are 'partings', but none too radical. Although the incident in Ephesus where Paul leaves the synagogue with his disciples for the school of Tyrannus (19.9) suggests a more serious break in that city, the narrative goes on to describe Paul's continued preaching to Jews in the area (19.10). Moreover, while Luke has Paul reporting on his mission to the Gentiles at the conclusion of his missionary journeys (21.19), he also portrays him as one who is well within the Jewish fold (21.26, 39), protesting his Jewishness in public (22.3; 23.6; 24.14–15; 26.5, 22), affirming that the Messiah's 'light' was for 'our people' and the Gentiles (26.23), and professing that it was 'according to the Way' that he worshipped the God of his ancestors (24.14).⁶⁵ In Rome he is still preaching 'the hope of Israel' (28.20).

Luke does portray a pattern of Jewish opposition to the Christian message in various cities of the diaspora,⁶⁶ but it is not as widespread or as acute as

⁶⁴ See the comments of Penna 1996: 290–321.

⁶⁵ *homologō de touto soi boti kata tēn bodon hēn legousin bairesin, houtōs latreuō toi patrōō theōi pisteuōn pasi tois kata ton nomon kai tois en tois prophētais gegrammenois.*

⁶⁶ In Antioch where it leads Paul to make his initial statement about turning to the Gentiles (13.46), Iconium where the city is divided (cf. 14.2–5), Lystra and Beroea where trouble is caused by outsiders (cf. 14.19; 13.50; 17.13), Corinth where Paul again speaks of turning to the Gentiles (cf. 18.6) and where the Gallio incident is situated (cf. 18.12–16), and in Ephesus where it causes him to leave the synagogue (cf. 19.9). The 'Jews from Asia' who are said to have initiated the attack on Paul in Jerusalem that led to his trials (21.27; 24.19) are identified by Trebilco (1991: 26), as coming in the main from Ephesus.

one might have expected given the opposition in Jerusalem. The opposition that Luke describes is local and partial and is not intended to be representative of the Jews as a whole. And it is not as pronounced as the opposition of Paul himself before his conversion (cf. 22.20; 26.9–11).⁶⁷

It is difficult to place Luke-Acts in the process of the parting of the ways. Although coming well after Paul's ministry Luke's presentation is less polemical than texts such as 1 Thessalonians 2.14–16, 2 Corinthians 3.6–18 or Philippians 3.2, 8–9, nor does one find here the sharpness of tone that one finds on occasions in Matthew (cf. Matt. 23; 27.25), nor the tensions to be found in the Johannine community (cf. John 9.22; 12.42; 16.2). While there may be elements foreshadowing the end of temple and cult in Luke 23.45 and 24.50–53, there is nothing in Luke-Acts quite like the replacement theme so prominent in John's gospel,⁶⁸ or the comparison of Hebrews 10.11–18. And it is certainly a far cry from the negative attitude of Ignatius towards Christians who had close links with Judaism (cf. *Magn.* 8.3). So where does Luke's work fit into the process of the 'parting'?

The general atmosphere of Luke's composition seems still quite a way from any final parting of Jews and Christians in the geographical areas covered by Luke. There were surely tensions in various cities of the diaspora generated by the increase in the number of Gentile converts, and Luke's picture suggests that such tensions were not new. But while Luke emphasizes that Christianity is still part of Judaism, he also makes the point that there is something new here. Paul, for example, worships the God of his ancestors according to the 'Way', and Jesus Christ of Nazareth is presented as 'the way to salvation' (4.11–12). At the same time, however, Luke appears anxious to stress the continuity between the old and the new, not just for his readers in Jerusalem and Rome, although these are clearly important to him (cf. 21.17–26; 28.17–31), but for his readers everywhere. Taking cognisance of the fact that he is writing for Jewish and Gentile Christians, striving to build up their faith, Luke may well be hoping through his two-volume work to smooth over the inevitable problems that have arisen in various communities between Christians (Gentile and Jewish) and non-messianic Jews who frequent the synagogue. His project may be seen as part of a strategy to contain the rifts between such people, rifts that were threatening to widen and were probably much more serious in some communities than in others.

⁶⁷ Paul himself mentions the opposition of conservative Jews in Galatia and Philippi.

⁶⁸ See, for example, Dunn 1991: 93–5.

SYNAGOGUE COMMUNITIES IN THE GRAECO-ROMAN CITIES

Anne Fitzpatrick-McKinley

This people has already made its way into every city; and it is not easy to find any place in the habitable world which has not received this nation and in which it has not made its power felt

(*Jos., Ant.* 14.115)

Jews were found in practically every city of the Hellenistic period: in the cities of the Dekapolis, in Asia Minor, in the cities of Egypt and in Rome itself. It is usually assumed that the Jews in the cities of the Graeco-Roman Diaspora were organized on the basis of two institutions, the *politeuma* and the synagogue. The *politeuma* was a political body which was headed by a *gerousia* and was relatively independent of the Greek citizen body.¹ It held administrative and political powers over the Jews of the city. A similar kind of organization on the basis of a *politeuma* seems to have characterized the organization of the Idumeans of Memphis who also held assemblies (*synagogai*) in the temple of their god Qos.² The Jews of Alexandria, Sardis, Heracleopolis, Berenice and Antioch formed *politeumata*.³ It cannot be assumed, however, that all Jewish communities in all cities of the Diaspora were organised on the basis of a *politeuma*. Trebilco notes that organization on the basis of this model seems to have been characteristic of Jewish communities in the longer established and larger centres of Diaspora Judaism.⁴ Jewish populations elsewhere were probably ordered on the basis of 'ad hoc local decisions'.⁵ The notion, however, that the Jewish communities of the cities were organized as *politeumata* has been questioned and completely dismissed by some.⁶ There

¹ Cf. Smallwood 1976: 139ff.

² Collins 2000: 114. The term *politeuma* can also refer to a cult society, an ethnic community, clubs of soldiers, communities of citizens from the same city living in another city and festival associations of women, *ibid.*: 115.

³ Trebilco 1991.

⁴ Trebilco 1991.

⁵ Trebilco 1991: 171. For detailed discussion of *politeuma*, see Schürer 1973–1987, vol. 3.1.

⁶ Cf. Rajak 1991: 161–73.

was no Jewish charter until the time of Claudius, when in 41/42 CE, he issued a decree demanding tolerance for the Jews, most likely in a response to Greek-Jewish tensions in Palestine, Alexandria and perhaps also in Antioch (Jos. *Ant.* 19.286-91). Thus, the form of Jewish association in the various cities of the Graeco-Roman world must have varied. Indeed, this, as we shall see, is reflected in the second institution of the Jews, that of the synagogue. It is the place of this institution within the Graeco-Roman city which I shall examine in this chapter.

Within the worldview of the Jews of the Diaspora the temple city of Jerusalem was of extreme symbolic and religious significance (cf. Jos., *Ant.* 17.213-18, Jos., *War* 2.10-13, 6.329, Philo, *Flacc.* 46, Sib. Or. iii, 281). No doubt pilgrimage to Jerusalem by Diaspora Jews led to outbursts of enthusiasm for the mother city, but on an everyday level, there was probably a strong socio-psychological need for Jews to assemble, a need which grew greater during periods when their status in the city deteriorated. In 41 CE Claudius described the Jews as living in a city 'not their own' (CPJ 153).⁷ As we shall see, it was the pattern of life experienced in the cities of Diaspora, the embeddedness of Judaism in the cities, and the model of institutions of the *polis* which contributed to the shape of Jewish assembly.

The earliest term used for an assembly of the Jews is *proseuche* which is short for 'house of prayer'.⁸ It was a term commonly used in non-Jewish contexts and was adopted by the Jews from these contexts, eventually becoming associated primarily with the Jews.⁹ While the earliest synagogue inscription goes back to third-century BCE Egypt, remains of synagogues which can be dated to the pre-70 period are rare. This has prompted Kee to argue that the physical building of the synagogue did not exist until after 70 CE and that the term *proseuche* or *synagogē* referred not to a special building where Jews assembled, but to gatherings of Jews in private houses.¹⁰ His arguments, however, have been widely refuted, most notably by Sanders and by van der Horst.¹¹ A number of inscriptions, as well as the evidence of Philo and Josephus, clearly indicate that at least some Jewish communities in the cities of the Diaspora owned or rented buildings which were used for the purpose of the Jews assembling.¹² Two inscriptions from Egypt, dating to the middle of the third century BCE, clearly indicate that the Jews had special buildings for assembly. The first inscription relates to a synagogue in Schedia, south east of Alexandria. Josephus refers to this place as a customs

⁷ CPJ = *Corpus Papyrorum Judaicarum*, edited by V. Tcherikover and A. Fuks, 1957-64, hereafter CPJ.

⁸ For detailed discussion on the meaning of *proseuche*, see Griffiths 1995: 1:6 and Hengel 1971: 157-84.

⁹ Levine 1998b: 142ff.

¹⁰ Kee 1990: 1-24.

¹¹ Sanders 1990 and Van der Horst 1999.

¹² Van der Horst 1999.

post managed by Jews (*Apion* 2.64).¹³ The second inscription is worded in more or less the same way as the first and comes from Krokodilopolis, a large township which was the capital of the Arsinoite district:

On behalf of King Ptolemy and Queen Berenice his sister and wife and their children, the Jews (dedicated) this house of prayer.
(CIJ II, no.1440)¹⁴

On behalf of King Ptolemy, son of Ptolemy, and of Queen Berenice his wife and sister and their children, the Jews in Krokodilopolis (dedicated) this house of prayer.

(CPJ III, Appendix I, no.1532A)¹⁵

Modrzejewski thinks that this synagogue was not the only one in Krokodilopolis; CPJ I, 138 refers to two synagogues at this location.¹⁶ We are also in possession of a bill for the supply of water to a synagogue in the town, dating to 115-117 CE.¹⁷

An inscription from Berenike in Cyrenaica (about the middle of the first century CE) speaks of a decision made by the *synagoge* (community) of the local Jews to honour those who had helped to repair the *synagoge* (*viz.* the building).¹⁸ On the other hand, CPJ I, 138, dating from the end of the first century BCE, records a meeting (*synagoge*) of Jews in the house of prayer (*proseuche*). Josephus clearly points to the fact that the term *proseuche* referred, not just to the community assembled, but also to the building: '... the people assembled in the synagogue (*proseuche*), a very large building' (*Life* 277). The Theodotus inscription, from the middle of the first century CE, says that the *synagoge* was built for the purpose of reading the law and housing travellers (cf. Acts 13.13-15). The LXX translates the Hebrew terms *kehal* and *edab* (meaning congregation or assembly) with the Greek *synagoge*. Van der Horst concludes that the terms *proseuche* and *synagoge* referred to the same institutions and/or assemblies of Jews. The different terminology reflects different periods and locales.¹⁹ This conclusion best reflects the evidence.

¹³ Modrzejewski 1995: 88.

¹⁴ CIJ = J.B. Frey, *Corpus Inscriptionum Judaicarum*: 1936, 1952, hereafter CIJ.

¹⁵ What is striking of course, is that the synagogue is under Ptolemaic patronage; see further below on the importance of Gentile patronage.

¹⁶ Modrzejewski 1995: 89.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ Van der Horst 1999: 21. For the inscription see Lüderitz 1983: no. 72. Modrzejewski thinks that *synagoge* referred only to the community itself (1995: 93).

¹⁹ Van der Horst 1999: 32. Van der Horst points to the variety of terms which are used to describe the place where the Jews meet. These include *synagoge*, *proseuche*, *topos*, *amphitheatron*, *oikema*, *sabbateion*. The word *oikos* does not appear but *proseuche* means house of prayer and some synagogues were established in converted houses: Delos, Priene and Stobi. See also Levine 1998b.

The origins of the synagogue

While Levine points out that the origins of the synagogue are 'shrouded in mystery',²⁰ we can, nonetheless, attempt to explore the general context which might have contributed to its status in later centuries, when it became central to all Jewish communities, both in Palestine and in the Diaspora. Rajak may be right in suggesting that it was the model of the *polis* and its institutions which, more than anything, contributed to the shape of the synagogue,²¹ but we should first examine the reason why the Jews of the cities of Diaspora assembled and in what setting. In any given city where Jews lived, it is reasonable to suggest that the newer and smaller the community, the more likely it is that it met in the informal setting of houses; just as the early Christian communities first assembled in houses before the establishment of churches.²²

What is the wider context of the household in the Graeco-Roman city? Many of the Graeco-Roman cities were densely populated and while we do not have much information about the quarters, or on a smaller scale the neighbourhoods, of these cities, crowding was probably quite common.²³ As a result of this, much of an individual's day was probably spent on the streets, in the squares and porticoes and other public places. The house itself had a public aspect, as floor plans of houses at Pompeii and Delos indicate.²⁴ There were private rooms, offices for the household head, accommodation for slaves, rooms which were rented out, on occasion shops, and sometimes a tavern or a hotel which connected with the atrium. Much of the activity spilled out onto the streets.²⁵ Meetings of Jews in houses may not always have been private, and certainly not as private as meetings held in synagogue buildings, which probably came to be increasingly concerned with privacy, purity and the maintenance of boundaries. Many Mediterranean towns were divided into quarters on the basis of trade or ethnicity.²⁶ The city of Alexandria also contained 'communal enclaves' such as those of the Lycians and Phrygians.²⁷ The Jews lived in separate quarters but they were certainly not ghettoized before the pogrom of 38 CE. Philo reports that two out of the five quarters of Alexandria were Jewish (*Flacc.* 55; cf. *Jos. Apion* 2.33-7). Crafts and trades also tended to gather in the same quarter and we hear of

²⁰ Levine 1998b: 135.

²¹ Rajak 1999.

²² Meeks 1983.

²³ Seland 1996: 110-127.

²⁴ Meeks 1983.

²⁵ Given that the Jews were located at every socio-economic level, the size of Jewish houses in the cities must have varied from the very small (with some Jews living in tenement style buildings) to the very large.

²⁶ Haas 1997: 49.

²⁷ *Ibid.*

the 'Linenworkers' Quarter', 'Leatherworkers' Street' and 'Portico of the Perfumers'.²⁸

The meetings of Jews in neighbour's houses were probably intended to encourage solidarity and to discuss common interests and concerns. The term *proseuche* may indicate that communal prayers were recited; prayer in the home is attested in some Diaspora literature (*Dan.* 6.11, *Tobit* 2.1-3; and in Palestine in *Acts* 1.13-14). On the other hand, Modrzejewski thinks that communal prayer was not central to the synagogue until after 70 CE. He points out that the Theodotus inscription does not mention prayer as a function of the synagogue.²⁹ On the other hand, Jerusalem is the provenance of this inscription and the situation may have been different in the Diaspora synagogues.³⁰ Organized prayer was a common component of pagan temple worship in the Graeco-Roman period, as was instrumental music and choirs.³¹ A number of scholars have seen the development of Jewish prayer as having been influenced by this context.³² From a psychological point of view, however, no such impetus may have been required; one can well imagine the sense of solidarity which communal prayer would provide for the Jews of the cities of Diaspora. Moreover, Josephus mentions the interruption of the communal prayer at the synagogue at Tiberias (*Life* 295).³³ Most evidence for Jewish prayer is late but it may have been practised in at least some synagogues of the Diaspora.

The division of the Cairo Scroll of Deuteronomy, which probably belonged to a synagogue in the Faiyum (Papyri Fouad, 266, from the first century BCE), points to the practice of a triennial reading cycle.³⁴ Reading of Torah scrolls was also practised in the pre-70 period as attested by both Philo and Josephus.³⁵ Josephus indicates that this public reading was educational and not ritualistic (*Apion* 2.175). In *Antiquities* he indicates that the purpose of such reading is to inform the Jews of their law so that they 'avoid committing sins' (*Jos., Ant.* 16.43). In the *De Legatione ad Gaium* Philo also refers to reading of torah in the 'houses of prayer':

He (Augustus) knew therefore that they have houses of prayer (*proseuche*) and meet together in them, particularly on the sacred Sabbaths when they receive as a body a training in their ancestral philosophy.

(*Leg. Gai.* 156)

²⁸ Meeks 1983: 29; cf. MacMullen 1973: 70-73, 129-137.

²⁹ Modrzejewski 1995.

³⁰ Levine does not think that communal prayer was important in Palestine until after the destruction (1998b: 165).

³¹ *Ibid.*

³² *Ibid.* Cf. Smith 1987.

³³ Van der Horst 1999.

³⁴ Modrzejewski 1995: 95.

³⁵ Schiffmann thinks that 4Q267.5 iii:3-5 testifies to public reading of torah at Qumran (Schiffmann 1999: 44-50).

Philo also indicates that torah was studied and discussed in the synagogue (*Somn.* 2.127; *Omn. Probus Lib.* 81; cf. Acts 13.13–16, Luke 4.16–22). Meyers concludes that scripture, and the association of scripture with Jerusalem, was 'the centrifugal force around which the ancient synagogue originated, grew and flourished'.³⁶

The Judaism of the synagogue was irreversibly influenced by the context of the Graeco-Roman city.³⁷ Such influence, however, will have varied from one Graeco-Roman city to another and, while it is suggested that assembly of Jews first took place in households, it is not suggested that every Jewish community went through a kind of evolutionary process from household organization to synagogue building. The size of the community, the spread of the Jews within a city (whether or not they were spread through a number of quarters or concentrated in one or two), and the length of time the Jewish community had resided there, will all have influenced the shape which assembly took. Thus, the large Jewish community of Alexandria had a 'Great Synagogue' as well as smaller ones in various parts of the city.³⁸ The local, cultural context will also have played an important role, as evidenced by the variety of forms which synagogue buildings of the Byzantine period display.³⁹ Levine has pointed out that there is really no Jewish architecture; thus, borrowing from local contexts was inevitable.⁴⁰

No synagogue better illustrates the point that synagogue buildings were subject to local customs and conditions than that at Dura Europos which uses patterns from nearby shrines and temples.⁴¹ Dura is the most distant synagogue from Rome so far discovered. The earliest phase of the synagogue was located in a private house⁴² but by the end of the second century it included a large complex of nine rooms. Most indicative of its context and setting are the paintings which cover the walls: they include depictions of biblical stories, but the symbolism is unusual and difficult to interpret; for example, the symbol of the open temple and the closed temple. The figures are represented wearing multicultural dress: Persian caftan and trousers, Greek chiton and himation and perhaps a Jewish prayer shawl. The imagery is biblical, mythological, apotropaic and astrological.⁴³ Legends and graffiti are in Aramaic, Parthian, Middle Persian and Greek. The symbolism has attracted the attention of many scholars but whatever its meaning, it

³⁶ Meyers 1999a: 201–23.

³⁷ Rajak 1999.

³⁸ Haas 1997.

³⁹ Levine 1998b.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*: 142. A later text (*b. Shabbat* 72b) tells of a Jew passing a pagan temple and bowing, confusing it with synagogues he had seen.

⁴¹ Levine 1998b: 143.

⁴² Kraabel 1979: 477–511.

⁴³ *Ibid.*: 482–4.

illustrates the impact of local culture on Judaism and the variety of local, Jewish identities which characterised Diaspora Judaism.⁴⁴

Some synagogues appear to have been located in converted houses: for example those at Delos, Priene and Stobi.⁴⁵ The synagogue at Priene is small and rectangular in shape, measuring 10 m by 14 m. The city of Priene itself was small and Kraabel thinks that there may have been a small Jewish community there even before Roman times;⁴⁶ thus, Priene may represent one of the earliest synagogues remains. Located in a converted house, it displays little of the symbolism associated with later synagogues.

The synagogue at Stobi was overlaid by a fifth-century Christian church. Hengel concluded that the earlier building had belonged to a man called Polycharmos (*CIJ* 694) who had donated it to the Jewish community. A provision of his gift was that he be allowed to continue to live in rooms over the synagogue.⁴⁷ The synagogue at Krokodilopolis may be the synagogue listed in an inscription as having a garden which was rented out to an Egyptian who cultivated it.⁴⁸ It was located in a suburb of the large township, rather than at its centre, and other sources would seem to imply that the synagogue was often located at the edge of the Graeco-Roman city.⁴⁹ It has been suggested that this location was deliberately chosen to distance the Jewish association from the impurity of Gentiles. This may provide part of the explanation in some cases, but it is well to bear in mind that the synagogue at Gamla was also located at the city walls.⁵⁰ Perhaps the location at the edge of a city had something to do with access to water supply for *miqvoth*. At Delos the synagogue was located near the seashore and Modrzejewski suggests that the synagogue at Alexandria was also on the seashore; a location which would have made water supply for ritual baths easy to access.⁵¹ In Krokodilopolis one synagogue was located on the banks of a canal (*CPJ* I, 134), while the other synagogue of the town may have received its water supply from a water distribution company. Modrzejewski points to a papyrus which preserves a huge bill owed by the Jews for water, roughly twice what an average bath house paid (*CPJ* II, 432).⁵² Was the large amount of water used for *miqvoth*? While this is possible, it is by no

⁴⁴ For a variety of explanations of the symbolism at Dura, see Kraeling 1956, who sees in it rabbinic Judaism of Palestine and Babylonia, and Goodenough 1953–68, who sees reflected a hellenized, mystic, Diaspora Judaism. On the art of Dura Europos, see Perkins 1973.

⁴⁵ Levine 1998b: 148 and Kraabel 1970: 492ff.

⁴⁶ Kraabel 1979: 490–9.

⁴⁷ Hengel 1966: 173–6; cf. Kraabel 1979: 495.

⁴⁸ Tebtunis papyri I, 86, *CPJ* I, 134; cf. Modrzejewski 1995: 89.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

⁵¹ Modrzejewski 1995: 96ff.

⁵² *Ibid.*

means certain that these synagogues had *miqvoth* attached to them. The nature of our evidence for *miqvoth* is difficult and often ambiguous. Since the other synagogue of Krokodilopolis had a garden (watered presumably by the adjacent canal), it is also possible that this synagogue's high water bill was due to the upkeep of a vegetable garden.

While some synagogues were located on the outskirts of the city or town, it is clear that some were found more centrally, perhaps indicating the integration and acceptance of Jews in the city. Philo seems to indicate that some Alexandrian synagogues were situated in densely, as well as in less densely populated areas. In *De Legatione ad Gaium* 134, he reports that during the pogrom of 38 CE, some synagogues could not be burned because they were located in densely populated areas.⁵³ Presumably these houses close to the synagogues of the Jews were not inhabited solely by Jews, for damage done to Jewish houses would certainly not have inhibited those who attacked the Jews. On the other hand, perhaps the risk of burning synagogues which were located centrally in the city, was that of the possibility of the spread of fire beyond the Jewish quarter.

Another centrally located synagogue was that at Sardis which was integrated into the civic centre buildings, although that location was probably not given to the Jews until the third century CE.⁵⁴ It is clear that prior to this there was a synagogue in Sardis (Jos., *Ant.* 14.235)⁵⁵ but after the earthquake of 17 CE the city was rebuilt. Part of that rebuilding included the erection of a new civic centre in Roman basilica style on the main street. Eventually, probably in the third century, part of this complex would be given to the Jews to hold assemblies.⁵⁶ We should not assume, however, that all Jewish communities were given such fine premises; the Jews of Sardis seem to have been particularly well integrated into the city. The donation of part of a complex of the civic centre may indicate that the synagogue was viewed by Jews as fulfilling a civic task for the Jews, and recognized by the Romans as having the authority to do so. Josephus preserves a decree which Trebilco thinks is to be dated to 49 BCE wherein the Roman procurator points out that:

Jewish citizens of ours have come to me and pointed out that . . . from the earliest times they had an association (*synodos*) of their own in accordance with their native laws and a place (*topos*) of their own in which they decide their affairs and controversies with one another.

(Jos., *Ant.* 14.235)⁵⁷

⁵³ Schäfer 1997: 143.

⁵⁴ Kraabel 1979.

⁵⁵ Trebilco 1981: 38.

⁵⁶ Kraabel 1979.

⁵⁷ For discussion, see Trebilco 1991: 38ff.

The fact that the basilica synagogue of Sardis was first used by the authorities of Sardis for some civic purpose and only then given to the Jews should not be overlooked.⁵⁸ The Jews of Sardis had not designed and built the basilica, it was donated to them. Josephus also records how earlier, in the first century CE, the city council of Sardis confirmed the right of the Jews to meet, settle disputes and stated that 'a place be given them in which they may offer their ancestral prayers and sacrifices' (Jos., *Ant.* 14.259–61).⁵⁹ Thus, rather than illustrating the wealth and the deliberate adoption of Roman architectural styles by Jews, the use of the basilica illustrates the level of integration of the Jews in Sardis. The nature of our evidence, however, precludes us from generalizations. In other Diaspora contexts, the basilica form may have been the form for which the Jews opted, contributing to the building costs themselves. This may well have been the case at Alexandria where the Jewish community was very large and where the great synagogue is recorded as having been built in basilica form (cf. Jerusalem Talmud, *Sukkah* 5:1). On the other hand, our sources for Alexandria, Philo and Josephus, are biased, and the synagogue of Alexandria may have occupied only a large hall and some rooms within the basilica building rather than the entire building.

The decree recorded by Josephus shows that the Jews of Sardis sought protection from the Roman authorities and were granted privileges by the Romans and by the city (Jos., *Ant.* 14.259–61). Apart from the right to be given a place to assemble (*topos*), the market officials are to ensure that food is brought in for purchase by the Jews. Allocation of such privileges (although we do need to bear in mind the apologetic nature of Josephus' evidence) indicates recognition and some degree of acceptance of Jewish associations such as the synagogue. It also implies that the synagogue was sometimes viewed by the Roman authorities as an institution which was not at odds with the aims and concerns of the civic authorities.⁶⁰

The association of the Jews within the city

Rajak and Seland think that the synagogue was viewed by Jews and non-Jews as one of many clubs or associations which characterized Graeco-Roman cities.⁶¹ The term used by Josephus for association of the Jews is *synodos*, (Jos., *Ant.* 14.235), a term commonly used for the clubs, associations and guilds of the Graeco-Roman cities.⁶² Broadly speaking, these clubs and

⁵⁸ Kraabel 1979.

⁵⁹ Trebilco (1991) suggests that the rights granted here are precisely those of the *politenum*.

⁶⁰ Rajak 1999.

⁶¹ Ibid; Seland 1996; and cf. Meeks 1983: 77–80.

⁶² Meeks 1957: 35.

associations were miniatures of the *polis* and represented 'wheels-within-wheels'.⁶³ Like the *polis* they had structured leadership, responsibilities which attached to membership and rules. The features of these associations, all of which are to some degree shared with the synagogue, may be outlined as follows:

- 1 They had a fixed purpose for their existence which may have had to do with a shared trade or a cult belief (a feature of the synagogue). There were associations of linenworkers, athletes, prostitutes and carpenters as well as many other groups, each with their own representative leader or chairman.⁶⁴ It is interesting to note that the later text of the Jerusalem Talmud records that seats in the synagogue at Alexandria were reserved for carpenters, silversmiths and other professions and trades (*t.Sukkah* 4.6). Josephus records that guilds of the cities of Phrygia and Cilicia (presumably composed of Jews) were also connected with the synagogue (*Jos., Ant.* 18.160)⁶⁵ and Modrzejewski thinks that guilds of Jewish workers and Jewish clubs (*synodos*) may have used the synagogue as a venue for meetings.⁶⁶

They did not sit in a jumble, but each craft sat by itself, so that when a traveler came, he could join his fellow craftsmen, and on that basis his livelihood was provided.

(Jerusalem Talmud, *Sukkah* 5:1, 55, A-B)

- 2 There were rules for admission and exclusion which were sometimes inscribed on plaques. Membership usually involved the payment of dues. Philo, the Jewish writer from the densely populated, bustling city of Alexandria, debates the value of payment of these when so many clubs/associations simply involve licentiousness and debauchery, failings which he claims will not be found in the Jewish association of the synagogue (*Leg. Gai.* 312ff.).⁶⁷
- 3 The associations and clubs of the Graeco-Roman cities showed a strong social dimension: feasts, communal meals and gatherings were common. Within the synagogue complex at Stobi a *triclinium* was found, and at Ostia, an oven.⁶⁸ Membership of clubs and associations established a sense of belonging within an institution, which, while modelled on the *polis*, was more 'localized', sociable and personal; a kind of fictive kinship operated. Many clubs straddled socio-economic boundaries, a feature

⁶³ Rajak 1999: 165.

⁶⁴ Haas 1997: 57.

⁶⁵ Meeks 1983: 39.

⁶⁶ Modrzejewski 1995: 97.

⁶⁷ Seland 1996.

⁶⁸ Rutgers 1996: 67-95.

which the synagogue shared where membership was defined by ethno-religious identity and not by socio-economic status. The bonds of the clubs and associations could be strong enough to 'create a quasi-autonomous form of social organization'⁶⁹ which was granted rights and privileges.

- 4 Clubs and associations often provided for the burial of members. This feature may also have characterized some Jewish associations. *CPJ* 138 may refer to a Jewish burial society which was a part of a synagogue in Alexandria.⁷⁰
- 5 These Graeco-Roman associations were usually a part of the patron/client relationship.⁷¹ Members would owe a certain allegiance to the patron as is illustrated in Philo who records how the members of Graeco-Roman associations can be seen to respond instantly to the favours requested by the patron (*Flacc.* 136, 140-2).⁷² Rajak has argued that, like the associations of the cities, the synagogues of the Jews also existed on the basis of this Graeco-Roman client/patron relationship structure which was at the heart of the functioning of the *polis*.⁷³

It seems unlikely that anyone should have objected to the Jews forming their own association and extending it beyond the private house through purchase or rental of a building. Meeks takes note of an inscription which records how masters of households, especially those of larger households, could encourage the formation of a club.⁷⁴ The establishment of an association or club out of more general meetings would have involved the drawing up of a constitution (rules for membership, payment of dues and general rules), the acquisition of a place to meet and the declaration that the group formed an association (*synados*, *thiasos*, *eranos*, *collegia* are used among other terms). Thus, the Graeco-Roman household and the association or club both contributed to the shape of the synagogue. The Jewish associations were probably seen as immigrant clubs⁷⁵ and there were clubs formed by other immigrant groups.⁷⁶ Immigrant clubs in the Graeco-Roman city probably met to

⁶⁹ Haas 1997: 58f.

⁷⁰ Meeks 1987: 207, n.162.

⁷¹ Rajak 1999: 162.

⁷² Seland 1996. See further below where the anti-Jewish attitude of Isidorus ('chairman of the clubs') as the basis of Philo's strong polemics is discussed.

⁷³ Rajak 1999. The client-patron relationship was also a feature of Israel's monarchic system, for discussion see Lemche 1994: 119-32.

⁷⁴ *CIL* 6.9148 records how this occurred in the '*collegium quod est in domu Sergiae Paullinae*' a burial society in Rome; cf. Meeks 1983.

⁷⁵ Later Roman officials and opponents of the Jewish movement of Jesus identified Christian groups with such clubs and associations, accusing them of immoral behaviour and of fostering anti-Roman sentiments (cf. Pliny, *Ep.* 10.96).

⁷⁶ Meeks 1983.

express solidarity, to share a common heritage, and perhaps, like the Jews, to settle internal disputes.⁷⁷ The formation of associations probably provided these immigrant groups with a platform to agitate for rights (as the Jews probably did) and to complain of unfair treatment to the Roman officials who were sometimes the patrons of these associations.⁷⁸ In the synagogues of Alexandria and Sardis there seems to have been a central body which would represent the community's concerns to the authorities (Philo, *Flacc.* 74, 80; *Jos., War* 7.412).⁷⁹ If such immigrant associations did exist, they, and their members, must have become completely assimilated for they leave no record, disappearing into the melting pot of the cities of the Graeco-Roman world.⁸⁰ The Lycians, Phrygians and possibly also the Thracians, once had their own neighbourhoods in Alexandria but eventually disappear without trace.⁸¹ On the face of it, the Jewish religion, with its demand for exclusive sacrifice in the temple at Jerusalem would seem to be the least mobile religion imaginable. We know that people moving into the Graeco-Roman cities would meet fellow natives and establish sanctuaries for local, native gods. Sanctuaries to the Syrian and Egyptian gods are found at Delos, but they appear to have become part of the city's religious establishment and their native characteristics disappear into the melting pot.⁸²

The dependency of the Jewish communities on the patron client system which characterized life in the cities of the Graeco-Roman world is evident in some donor inscriptions as early as Ptolemaic times. The inscriptions of the synagogues of Schedia and Krokodilopolis existed under the patronage of the Ptolemies (*CIJ* II, no. 1440 and *CPJ* III appendix, no. 1532A). Other second or first-century BCE synagogues in Egypt had individuals or families as patrons (*CIJ* II, nos. 1443, 1444).⁸³

The later synagogue at Sardis appears to have had at least three donor inscriptions associated with a man called Leontius.⁸⁴ The synagogue in the town of Acmonia in Phrygia had a number of patrons, three of whom were male and one of whom was female. Rajak concludes that the three men were Greek-speaking Romans who were part of the local bourgeoisie. In return for their patronage they are given titles (as is the custom with donors everywhere). The titles are standard honorific titles known to have been bestowed by Jews on individuals who supported them elsewhere.⁸⁵ One is

77 Ibid.

78 See further below on patronage.

79 See Tcherikover 1959.

80 Millar 1993 and Goudriaan 1992: 74–99.

81 Haas 1997; Goudriaan 1992.

82 Meeks 1983.

83 Modrzejewski 1995: 94. Whether or not these patrons were Jewish or Gentile is debated; cf. Modrzejewski 1995: 94 and Collins 2000: 66.

84 Rajak 1999: 162.

85 Ibid.: 163; cf. Rajak and Noy 1993: 75–93.

called *archisynagogos*, which Rajak interprets to imply that the holder of the title was synagogue head for life, the other, *archisynagogos*, head for a limited period, and the last title is *archon*.⁸⁶ These three individuals were probably not Jews, although they may have been. An individual called Cladus received the title 'synagogue head for life' and his profile appears on coins from the period of Nero's reign. Perhaps these Gentiles were 'god-fearers', or perhaps the reason for their patronage lies in more mundane explanations which would include an expectation of support from the members of the synagogue, in line with what the club benefactor normally expected of his clients.⁸⁷ Rajak assumes that the relationship must have been mutually beneficial.⁸⁸

The fourth donor of Acmonia is a woman, Julia Severa, whose profile appears on coins from the middle of the first century CE, during Nero's reign, sometimes along with the profile of Cadmus.⁸⁹ She appears in other inscriptions, amongst the most elite of the region, and is named in another inscription as the high priestess of the house of the divine emperors.⁹⁰ Given the latter honour, Julia Severa can hardly have been a Jewess. On the other hand she may have been a god-fearer like so many women in the eastern Roman empire.⁹¹ Is it possible that the Jews permitted a priestess of the house of the divine emperors to enter the synagogue?⁹² Rajak thinks that the synagogue was a municipal centre as well as a place for prayer and study, and whilst Julia Severa may not have been allowed to participate in prayer, she was probably a part of the other activities which went on in the synagogue.⁹³

86 Rajak 1999.

87 In 1 Cor. 16.15–18 Paul warns the Christians at Corinth to show respect for Stephanas, perhaps, indicating that at times clients failed to show respect for their patrons, thus, threatening the relationship; cf. Meeks 1983: 78.

88 Rajak 1999: 166.

89 *CIJ* 1,738 records the generosity of another female donor to the synagogue in Phocaea, a Greek colony in Ionia. A certain Tation donates a house to the Jewish community (Rajak 1999: 163).

90 Rajak 1999: 166.

91 Ibid. On 'God-fearers', see Cohen 1999 and Feldman 1993: 326ff., and Collins 2000: 264ff.

92 The Aphrodisias inscription names two groups of benefactors of the synagogue building, Jews and God-fearers; cf. Reynolds and Tannenbaum 1987 and Fine 1999: 224–42 and Feldman 1989: 265–305. In the theatre of Miletus in Asia Minor, a section is reserved 'For the Jews and the godfearers'; cf. Fine 1999: 230. At Sardis a section of the mosaic floor was the gift of 'a godfearer', *ibid.*

93 Rajak 1999. On the other hand, in its earliest stages, the synagogue did not have the religious element of sanctity which it would receive after the destruction of the Temple. Therefore, Jews of some communities may not have had any difficulty in including non-Jews who were patrons. Nonetheless, it is possible that the religious dimension of the synagogue emerged in the Diaspora earlier than the destruction of the temple, see further below. In *Omn. Prob. Lib.* 85 Philo says that the Jews open their doors to visitors from elsewhere who 'share their convictions'. Presumably he means 'doors' in the symbolic sense and not necessarily synagogues. But whom does he have in mind here? Visiting Jews from outside Alexandria or 'god-fearers'?

It has already been noted that guilds of Jewish workers and Jewish clubs may have used the synagogue as a venue for assembly. A further activity of the synagogue may be indicated in a first-century Jewish inscription which reports Jews honouring a vow by granting freedom to a Jewish slave in the local synagogue. A condition of freedom was that the slave swore to remain attached to the synagogue (*CIJ* I, no. 683).⁹⁴ Modrzejewski thinks that some synagogues were given the royal grant to be allowed to provide asylum, a right known to have been fairly commonly granted to temples and shrines by the Ptolemies.⁹⁵ Thus, activities that were not religious took place in the synagogue but the nature of our evidence precludes us from saying anything certain about the role of the Gentile donor in synagogue affairs. From the evidence of Josephus, and from Claudius' declaration that Jews lived in cities which were 'not their own' (*CPJ* 153), it seems likely that some Jewish communities found it necessary to cultivate patronage amongst Roman elites in order to protect their rights, possibly also to express their sense of belonging to the city and sometimes to ensure their safety. Patronage by Roman elites, such as Julia Severa, must have been particularly desirable in locations where the Jews felt insecure. At Sardis (*Jos. Ant.* 14.235) and Alexandria (*Philo, Leg. Gai.*) the Jews appeal to Rome for protection from the non-Jewish populations of the cities. In 67 CE, in the city of Antioch, an apostate Jew accuses the Jews of planning to burn the city. When a fire occurred three or four years later, it is again the Roman governor, Gnaeus Collega, who protects the Jews, declaring them innocent. Later Titus intervenes on their behalf.⁹⁶ No doubt such intervention was, by and large, due to the concern of these Roman rulers to ensure the stability of the cities.

Thus, the Jews of many Graeco-Roman cities were familiar enough and comfortable enough in these settings to view their synagogue as an association which was, in form, like many of the associations in the cities they inhabited, and to utilize the Graeco-Roman practice of patronage. As Rajak has noted: '... only a highly acculturated Jewry, well established in a particular milieu' could achieve this mimicry of institutions of the Graeco-Roman city.⁹⁷ The synagogue then, modelled on the associations of the *polis*, was 'the interface between the Jews and their city'.⁹⁸ Did the Jews consciously adopt this feature of the Graeco-Roman city in order to acquire certain benefits and recognition?⁹⁹ The synagogue developed, not as a result

⁹⁴ Van der Horst 1999: 33. Later in the reign of Diocletian (c. 291 CE) a Jewish woman and her children are redeemed by the synagogue at Oxyrhynchos (*Oxyrhynchos Papyrus IX* 1205, *CPJ* III 473). For discussion, see Modrzejewski 1995: 93.

⁹⁵ Modrzejewski 1995.

⁹⁶ Smallwood 1976: 361–4.

⁹⁷ Rajak 1999: 165.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*: 165–6.

⁹⁹ On the importance of distinguishing between conscious and sub-conscious borrowing see Levine 1998b.

of the intended adoption for apologetic reasons of what they viewed as a non-Jewish institution, but as a result of the embeddedness of Jewish communities within the political and social context of the Graeco-Roman cities which, in many cases, they had occupied for centuries before the Roman period.¹⁰⁰

Despite the integration of the synagogue into the civic institutions of the Graeco-Roman polis, there were a number of differences between the Graeco-Roman clubs and the synagogues of the Jews. To the non-Jewish population of the city, compared to the free associations of the cities, the Jewish associations must have appeared exclusivist. First, they were based largely on an ethno-religious identity (although god-fearers and converts may have been admitted),¹⁰¹ and second, whereas Roman associations were normally characterized by fellowship and conviviality, the purpose of the Jewish association may have seemed a little too intense, as Meeks notes of the later Christian associations. Moreover, one possible function of these meetings would have included the maintenance of boundaries between Jew and Gentile, although to varying degrees.¹⁰² Josephus records that the Ptolemies gave the Jews of Alexandria a quarter in the city, so that '... they might observe a purer way of life, mixing less with peoples of other races' (*Jos., War* 2.488).¹⁰³ This, however, is not unparalleled in the Hellenistic world and we know that in Egypt 'aliens' such as Greeks, bedouins and Phoenicians were not allowed into certain local temple precincts.¹⁰⁴ While there is no doubt that most Jews were comfortably accommodated in the cities of the Diaspora, some, such as Philo, even exhibiting a local patriotism,¹⁰⁵ the sense of belonging expressed in the synagogue may have been

¹⁰⁰ Meeks points out that while Christian groups were modelled on the Roman clubs, there is a lack of common terminology of clubs and associations. This is certainly true of the Pauline letters (Meeks 1983: 79) but later texts use terms such as *thiasos*, *factio*, *curia* and *corpus* (cf. Eusebius, *HE* 10.8, Tertullian *Apol.* 38–9, cit. Meeks 1983: 222). While in *Romans* 16.1 and *Phil.* 1.1 titles common to Roman associations and clubs, such as such as *episkopos* and *diakonos* are used the function of these officers is different in the Christian context (Meeks 1983: 79).

¹⁰¹ On this question, see Cohen 1999. It is difficult to say anything certain about the boundaries of Jewishness in this period, viz. before 70 CE. Certainly the initiation of a Jewish tax under Vespasian made the identity of Jews a pressing problem for the Romans. On the other hand, the desire to differentiate themselves from Christians would, later on, make it a pressing problem for Jews.

¹⁰² The extent to which Jews remained separate from Gentiles will have varied with location and torah interpretation. For discussion, see Rajak 1995: 1–14, Cohen 1999 and Feldman 1993.

¹⁰³ The motivation of the Ptolemies had probably to do, not so much with the Jews' religious sensitivities, as with Ptolemaic desire to order cities in ways which were easier to administrate, cf. Barclay 1996.

¹⁰⁴ Levine 1998b: 72.

¹⁰⁵ Pearce 1998: 79–105.

different from that expressed in other associations of the cities. The Jewish sense of belonging included the ideal of belonging not just to the *polis* of their residence, but to Israel. Thus, their eyes were often fixed on that land and its temple city. Only this can account for pilgrimage to Jerusalem and the sending of payment to the mother temple-city.

The importance of Jerusalem for Diaspora Jews

The common symbolic tie of Diasporan Jews remained the homeland, for the most part elevated to biblical mythical status; it was the centre of the world even though most Diaspora Jews would not return and despite the fact that many, such as Philo, displayed both a kind of local patriotism for their native Graeco-Roman cities as well as a love for the temple city of Jerusalem. The Jews of Smyrna in Asia Minor may have donated money to the city for public works sometime early in the second century CE (*CIJ* 742). They are designated as either 'former Judeans' or 'former Jews'. Trebilco favours the former, indicating that they were being designated as a group whose origins lay in Judea but who were now loyal to the city of their residence, even contributing to public projects.¹⁰⁶ The Jews of Acmonia made donations to the city of Acmonia and referred to the city as their *patris*, their 'home city' or 'native town'.¹⁰⁷ Philo says that while the Diaspora Jews hold Jerusalem to be their mother city, the city of their birth and residence is described as their fatherland:

... they hold the Holy City where stands the sacred Temple of the most high God¹⁰⁸ to be their mother city, yet those which are an inheritance from their fathers, grandfathers, and ancestors even farther back, are in each case, accounted by them to be their fatherland in which they were born are reared.

(*Flacc.* 46)¹⁰⁹

We also have ample evidence of Diaspora Jews paying the temple dues. Herod seems to have encouraged the involvement of Diaspora Jews in the affairs of Jerusalem.¹¹⁰ He brought certain priestly families from Egypt and Babylon in order, Levine suggests, to replace the Hasmonian priests with people who might be more open to his plans for the city. Herod's temple was

¹⁰⁶ Trebilco 1991: 175.

¹⁰⁷ The inscription, however, is not dated, for discussion see Trebilco 1991: ch.3.

¹⁰⁸ For discussion of 'the most high God', see Modrzejewski 1995: 95.

¹⁰⁹ It is interesting that two works which are otherwise quite different, viz. the Letter of Aristeas and 3 Maccabees, agree on the centrality of the temple (Barclay 1996: 138-49, 192-203). Cf. *Sib. Or.* iii, 5, 281, *Wisdom of Solomon*, 12.3, 7.

¹¹⁰ Levine 1998b: 51.

larger than any of the earlier structures, inspiring Jews everywhere to visit their mother city.¹¹¹ This had two advantages for Herod: first, it increased the revenues of his city through temple payment and through the generation of an economy centred around pilgrimage.¹¹² Second, he became a king who could claim that his subjects lived in every civilized country of the world. Philo informs us that the Jews of Rome made the Temple payment (*Leg. Gai.* 157, 291) as well as noting its importance to the Jews of Egypt (*Spec. Leg.* 1.76-8). At times, it seems that some Jewish communities had to struggle to ensure that they could pay the temple dues; Josephus records the difficulties which the Jews of Cyrenaica and the Jews of Asia encountered (*Jos., Ant.* 16.169-70, 162-68, 171-3).

Acts 2.9-11 records the number of languages which could be heard spoken in Jerusalem, evidence of the presence of Diaspora Jews in the city from both the eastern and western Diasporas. These Jews also donated gifts to the temple: Nicanor of Alexandria donated Corinthian, bronze doors and a stone pavement in the temple area was a gift from a Jew from Rhodes.¹¹³ Queen Helena of Adiabene also contributed lavish temple ornaments and her family built a number of palaces in the city of David as well as a tomb in Jerusalem.¹¹⁴ During a famine in the forties of the first century CE, Helena sent grain from Alexandria and figs from Cyprus while her son sent money (*Jos., Ant.* 20.49-55).¹¹⁵ Acts also records the collection of gifts for the community of the saints in Jerusalem. Philo records how some Jews believed that payments to the temple could guarantee them good health and safety (*Spec. Leg.* 1.77-8), a notion probably based on the idea expressed in Exodus 30:12, where the payment is a 'ransom' for the soul. Even more indicative of the tie of Diaspora Jews to the mother city is the presence of resettled Diasporan Jews in Jerusalem. A later text, *t. megillab* 2.17, mentions a synagogue of Alexandrians in Jerusalem. The Theodotus inscription also refers to a post-70 synagogue in Jerusalem which was founded by Jews from Rome. Acts 6.9 speaks of synagogues of the Diaspora established by Jews from Alexandria, Asia, Cilicia, Cyrene and a synagogue founded by freedmen (viz. Jews from Rome).

What factors contributed to the loyalty of Diaspora Jews to Jerusalem? Clearly the location of the temple in the city was an obvious reason to regard Jerusalem as the Holy City, the mother city of Jews everywhere. The temple was the dwelling place of *Yhwh*, the place from where his voice roared and uttered torah (Amos 2.1), the place from which the creation of the entire world and its nations had emanated (Ps. 48). But even after its destruction,

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*: 52, 68-72.

¹¹² On pilgrimage, see Jeremias 1969: 62-71 and Barclay 1996.

¹¹³ Levine 1998b: 54.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*: 62.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*: 54.

when *Yhwh's* presence at the temple could no longer be assured, the Jews of the Diaspora continued to make pilgrimage to the city and continued to regard it as the ideal burial place¹¹⁶ setting up new communities from at least the first century on. What sociological conditions of the Jews in the cities of the Diaspora might have contributed to this ongoing loyalty to Jerusalem? It is clear that many of the Jews of the Graeco-Roman cities were comfortably accommodated in their cities of birth and residence, often expressing a kind of local patriotism as evidenced by Philo, but seen also in the fact of their contribution to public works in their cities of residence. The change from Ptolemaic to Roman rule changed the situation of the Jews in at least some of the Graeco-Roman cities. As we shall see, this was clearly the case at Alexandria. When there are difficulties for the Jews they appeal, as we have seen, to the Roman authorities for protection of their rights. Having considered the appeal of the Jews of Alexandria, Claudius concludes that they are fortunate to have as many rights as they do living in a city which is 'not their own' (*CPJ* 153): their status has become that of resident aliens. A letter of an Alexandrian Jew illustrates the insecurity which, from time to time, was a factor in the lives of Alexandrian Jews. During the reign of Augustus, in approximately 5–4 BCE, a Jew named Hellenos made an appeal by letter to the Roman prefect, Gaius Turranius (*CPJ*, II,151). He begins his letter by describing himself as an 'Alexandrian' but then crosses out this designation (if the correction was in fact made by Hellenos), substituting the designation 'one of the Jews from Alexandria' (*Ioudaios*). While he feels that he can refer to the city of Alexandria as his 'homeland' (*idia patris*), he is, nonetheless, nervous about designating himself an Alexandrian, lest, it can be assumed, he anger Gaius by seeming to claim citizenship.¹¹⁷ As we shall see, the new Roman tax regulations left the Jews and those native Egyptians who were not citizens, in more or less the same position. But Hellenos can hardly hide his indignation; his father had been an Alexandrian citizen, why should this suddenly come to an end? Thus, for all of their local patriotism, the Jews were sometimes seen as, and made to feel as, resident aliens in cities they had settled for centuries. It is no wonder then, that even after the destruction of the temple, Jerusalem remained a symbolic centre. Such designations created a need for compensation: not fully belonging in the city of their birth, and often that of the birth of distant ancestors, they compensated for this limited participation and sense of belonging by focusing on the mother city, the city of all Jews, Jerusalem. This sense of limited participation in the cities of their residence cannot be said to be characteristic of the experience of all Jews but it certainly, for a time anyway, was a feature of the lives of the Jews at Alexandria and probably ensured that their loyalty and devotion to Jerusalem was accentuated.

¹¹⁶ Gafni 1997.

¹¹⁷ Modrzejewski 1995: 164.

It was perhaps this continued focus of Diaspora Jews on Jerusalem, even more than torah observance, which ensured that the Judaism of the Diaspora cities did not disappear into the melting pot of Hellenism.¹¹⁸ Bohak points out that loyalty to a mother city was not all that unusual in the Graeco-Roman world.¹¹⁹ In the case of a Phoenician who was a native of Tyre, however, his civic, Tyrian identity seems to have been more important than his Phoenician identity. During certain military crises (for example, Alexander's siege of Tyre), other Phoenician cities came to the Tyrians' aid. *Diodorus Siculus* (XX.14:2–20) records that the Carthaginians routinely sent offerings to Herakles in his sanctuary at Tyre. From time to time, however, especially during periods of affluence, they neglected this duty, sometimes sending only meagre offerings. When misfortune befell them, they attributed it to their neglect of Herakles and promptly sent large offerings to the god in their mother city. But the sanctuary of Tyre did not have the national impact which the sanctuary at Jerusalem appears to have had. When abroad Phoenicians were identified by their city and not by their nationality; they were Tyrians or Sidonians while the Jews were Judeans.¹²⁰ In Egypt local identities dominated and when outside their native land, some Egyptians introduced themselves by the *nome* from which they came.¹²¹ Egyptians who had become citizens of Alexandria often abjured their Egyptian identity, describing themselves as Alexandrians; Apion is an example.

Yet in common with the Jews, the Egyptians often displayed a national/religious fervour which, from time to time, especially during the Ptolemaic period, manifested itself in a series of minor, largely unsuccessful revolts.¹²² Egyptian revolts, however, were generally localized, and often centred around a charismatic, nationalistic figure, such as Harsiesis.¹²³ Contrasting the impact of the Jewish revolts on Rome with the lesser impact of Egyptian revolts against the Ptolemies, Bohak says of the situation in Egypt:

With each region boasting its own temple, gods, traditions and customs, it was far from natural for the residents of one district to join those of another in any concerted effort.¹²⁴

Bohak's explanation for the failure of the Egyptian revolts is probably correct to a large extent, but it should also be borne in mind that the roots of

¹¹⁸ It is difficult to assess the degree to which the Jews of the Diaspora cities observed torah. Torah was fluid in this period and open to a variety of interpretations. The evidence of papyri of Jews from Egypt indicates that at least some Jews attended Gentile courts, cf. Modrzejewski 1996: 75–99.

¹¹⁹ Bohak 1999: 3–20.

¹²⁰ Ibid.

¹²¹ Ibid.

¹²² McGing 1997: 272–314.

¹²³ For discussion of this revolt, see McGing 1997.

¹²⁴ Bohak 1999: 9.

Egyptian dissatisfaction with Ptolemaic rule were not grounded simply in a desire for independence. In some cases nationalism does not seem to have featured at all. The causes varied from one uprising to the next and were often based on socio-economic pressures rather than on any nationalistic fervour; although in some cases, the two causes combined.¹²⁵ The success of the Maccabean revolt, and the pressure which the two Jewish revolts put on the Romans, was rooted in the peculiarity that Jewish nationalistic fervour was focused, not on a person, but on a single city with a temple which was the only legitimate temple for most Diaspora and Palestinian Jews (cf. *Apion* 2, 193).¹²⁶ The two revolts, which began in 66 CE and 167 CE, began outside Jerusalem but immediately became focused on the city.¹²⁷ The Romans perceived even Jewish holidays as a threat because during these times Jerusalem was filled with pilgrims full of nationalistic and religious fervour for the city (cf. *Jos.*, *War* 2.10–13, *Jos.*, *Ant.* 17.213–18, 11.323). The legend on some of the Bar Kochba coins reads: 'For the freedom of Jerusalem'.¹²⁸ Josephus informs us that Titus (or his advisers) concluded that the only way for the empire to finally become free of the troublesome Jews was to destroy their temple in Jerusalem (*Jos.*, *War* 6.329). Yet the Romans did not destroy the temple lightly; Josephus records how Titus carried out the destruction only after he had warned the Jews and urged them to spare their sanctuary (*Jos.*, *War* 6.345–50).¹²⁹ Overall, they displayed a tolerance and even encouraged local religions; Herod had been a faithful ally of Rome. The revolt, however, was seen as rooted less in religious sensitivities than in anti-Roman sentiment. The temple was seen as the rallying point for such anti-Romanism. Only the destruction of the temple could finally demonstrate to the Judeans that 'Judaea was captive'; the slogan stamped on Roman coins of the period which commemorated the victory over the Jews.

¹²⁵ McGing 1997.

¹²⁶ Bohak 1999. The alternative temples of Elephantine, Mount Gerizim and Leontopolis represent alternative Jewish identities which clearly either did not accept the Deuteronomic ruling that sacrifice could only be made in the temple in Jerusalem (probably the case with the temple on Mount Gerizim), established rival temples in spite of this ruling (Onias's temple at Leontopolis) or, either pre-dated the Deuteronomic ruling or ignored it (Elephantine). The writings of the Qumran communities also question the authorities of the Jerusalem temple but they remain centred on the notion of a temple where *Yhwh* will dwell. Ultimately some Qumran literature can envisage only an eschatological temple. The alternative calendar proposed in the Qumran literature and in 1 Enoch and Jubilees may also reflect an abandonment of the present temple because its authorities are corrupt and misinformed about the correct times for sacrifice and celebration of feasts. 4QMMT may indicate that at the heart of these sectarian disputes are issues relating to the interpretation of torah (for discussion, see Bernstein 1996: 29–51).

¹²⁷ Bohak 1999: 7.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*: 9.

¹²⁹ We should of course bear in mind the apologetic nature of Josephus' writing.

The temple tax was redirected to the sanctuary of Jupiter in Rome; a gesture which would symbolize where Jewish loyalty must now be directed.

Thus, as the Romans recognized, the city of Jerusalem was a central symbol for most Diaspora Jews. It provided them with an inspiring and universal symbol of an alternative *polis*, a symbol which they turned to especially when their situation in the cities of Diaspora deteriorated.¹³⁰

Attachment reflected in Diaspora synagogues

Pummer points out that within the synagogue, we can see a development from 'communal to religious communal' building.¹³¹ This fact makes early synagogue remains more difficult to identify. They were primarily communal centres, with perhaps an ever-increasing degree of sanctity (achieved through reverence toward torah scrolls which were regularly read). Unlike synagogues from about the fourth century CE, no torah shrine is present and in some cases (such as Delos) no specifically Jewish symbolism is present.¹³² The most difficult obstacle facing archaeologists attempting to identify synagogue remains is the fact that Diaspora synagogues are not built to any single design. Some, as we have seen, were located in converted houses, some modelled on local, pagan altars and temples, and others built in the fashion of the Roman basilica. It remains uncertain, however, whether the basilica form was by design or by accident; in some cases it was the building which the civic authorities chose to give to the Jews for their *topos*, not a building design which the Jews had chosen for their synagogue.

The transition from communal to religious-communal building owes much to the destruction of the temple in 70 CE, but in the Diaspora the process had already begun, set in place by the psychological need for a religious and social centre¹³³ as well as, as Rajak has argued, by the need of Jews to have an association resembling the Roman clubs and associations in order to get the recognition that membership of such institutions entailed.¹³⁴ The adoption of the association/club model also expressed their sense of being a part of the city of their birth and residence.

There is some indication that the torah scroll itself came to be seen as a holy relic. From around the fourth century CE, in both Palestine and in the Diaspora, more elaborate niches are found in synagogues, used probably for housing torah scrolls.¹³⁵ In Graeco-Roman cults such portals signified that

¹³⁰ For a detailed study of Jerusalem and its significance for Diaspora Jews, see Hengel 1979.

¹³¹ Pummer 1999: 142.

¹³² Levine 1998; Kraabel 1979.

¹³³ Levine 1996: 425–48, especially 444–8.

¹³⁴ Rajak 1999.

¹³⁵ Kraabel 1979; Levine 1998b.

one faced the entrance to the realm of the deity. If torah scrolls did indeed occupy these portals, then perhaps here too, in torah, Jews saw a link between heaven and earth, and torah scrolls became a sacred object rendering the synagogue a holy place.¹³⁶ The Diaspora synagogues seem to indicate a devotion to scriptures long before the destruction of the temple¹³⁷ and these texts would make a good focus for worship in the absence of the physical presence of the temple.¹³⁸ Meyers notes that scripture and the association of scripture with Jerusalem was the central force around which the ancient synagogue flourished.¹³⁹ Levine suggests that the later torah niche might have been the result and not the cause of synagogal sanctity.¹⁴⁰ Kraabel notes that it is not unlikely that the development from communal to religious communal centre took place earlier in the Diaspora synagogues, since these communities had learned to live without the temple long before its destruction.¹⁴¹ Philo describes the synagogues as *hieroi topoi*, holy places, where Jews assemble and sit down in rows for reading and explaining torah (*Omn. Prob. Lib.* 81).¹⁴² It is tempting to suggest that the torah niche may have been a feature of Diaspora synagogues before 70 CE, but thus far, there is no evidence to support such a suggestion.¹⁴³

No doubt, the loss of the temple was the primary impetus towards the increased sanctity of the synagogue, but other factors might also have played a role. Levine points out that 'holiness' as a religious category characterizing place, people and objects was becoming of great interest in many diverse religious circles at around the time when Christianity emerges.¹⁴⁴ Certainly, by the Byzantine period, the synagogue and its features shows clear signs of influence from the categories of holiness seen in Christian churches. The synagogue had almost become a miniature temple (*b. Megillah* 29a), elaborately decorated and furnished and usually featuring a torah shrine; those in the Diaspora oriented towards the land of Israel, and those in Palestine oriented towards the temple.¹⁴⁵ Kraabel suggests that Christian liturgical practices might also have influenced the form of synagogue service¹⁴⁶ but it

¹³⁶ Lightstone 1988.

¹³⁷ Meyers 1999a: 201–23, and Van der Horst 1999.

¹³⁸ Kraabel 1979: 15.

¹³⁹ Meyers 1999a: 218.

¹⁴⁰ Levine 1998b: 168.

¹⁴¹ Kraabel 1979: 502.

¹⁴² Cf. Van der Horst 1999: 20.

¹⁴³ The synagogue at Sardis displays the unique feature of a table supported by eagles and flanked by two pairs of lions (Levine 1998b: 172, fig.29). The use to which this table was put is unknown but it is not beyond the bounds of possibility that it was used as a sacrificial table.

¹⁴⁴ Levine 1998b: 168.

¹⁴⁵ Exceptions to this orientation are found at Bet Shean and at Sepphoris and of course, excavations may uncover more exceptions.

¹⁴⁶ Kraabel 1979: 502.

is more likely that Jewish, synagogal practices influenced emerging Christian practice, and indeed, that the adoption of the basilica form for early churches was modelled on the basilica-style synagogues.¹⁴⁷

Ethnic tensions at Alexandria

For all of the suggested integration of the Jewish association of the synagogue into the Graeco-Roman polis, and for all of the compatibility of the monotheistic faith with other Graeco-Roman cultic associations suggested by Rajak,¹⁴⁸ the Jews of Alexandria experienced violent attacks from other ethnic groups in the city.¹⁴⁹ While Alexandria may not represent the typical experience of Jews in the cities of the western Diaspora, it serves as a case study for which we have plenty of evidence and thus it is to the Jews of Alexandria that I now turn.

As is well known, the city of Alexandria was one of the great cities of the Hellenistic age, renowned for its intellectual and philosophical traditions.¹⁵⁰ Its population has been estimated at between two and three hundred thousand.¹⁵¹ It produced some of the greatest poets and philosophers of the age, boasting an immense library¹⁵² and renowned educational institutions.¹⁵³ It was also renowned for its places of entertainment, theatres where the crowds were known to become unruly, for its gladiator shows and its horse-racing and also, like every other Graeco-Roman city, for its clubs, associations and bath houses.¹⁵⁴ The population from Ptolemaic to early Roman times was multi-national, comprising Greeks, Italians, Phrygians, Thracians, native Egyptians and a large Jewish population as well as many other ethnic groups. This multi-racial context probably, as we shall see, led to social competition between some of these groups.¹⁵⁵ The city was divided into five quarters (*grammata*) with subdivisions in each and, like most Mediterranean

¹⁴⁷ Kraabel has suggested that in some cases, the take-over of a synagogue by Christians may have been a deliberate act of anti-semitism (for example Stobi), Kraabel 1979.

¹⁴⁸ Rajak 1999.

¹⁴⁹ We know of other conflicts between Jews and other groups in the cities, most indicated by Josephus. For example, there seems to have been a good deal of tension between Jewish and non-Jewish groups in Sardis between 49 BCE and 2 CE (*Jos., Ant.* 12: 125–6) even though for most of the time the Jewish community at Sardis seems to have fitted well into the city (for discussion, see Trebilco 1991: 168ff.). The causes of these incidents have to be treated separately from the outbreak of violence at Alexandria.

¹⁵⁰ Fraser 1972; Haas 1997.

¹⁵¹ Fraser 1972; Haas 1997.

¹⁵² Fraser 1972: 305–35.

¹⁵³ Haas 1997: 41ff.

¹⁵⁴ Fraser 1972; Haas 1997.

¹⁵⁵ Goudriaan 1992; Borgen 1992: 122–38; Haas 1997: 60ff.; Fraser 1972: 38–92.

cities of the Graeco-Roman world, groups of common interest, both professional and ethnic, tended to live in the same neighbourhood.¹⁵⁶

In Egypt voluntary immigration (going back as early as the Persian period) was by and large the principal way in which Jews arrived in Egypt (cf. *Ep. Arist.* 4).¹⁵⁷ While they had settled all over Egypt, the largest Jewish community was found at Alexandria where settlement of Jews from the third to second centuries is reflected in the large number of Jewish tombs in the eastern suburbs of the city.¹⁵⁸ The Jews of Alexandria were found at every economic level, from wealthy merchant to urban poor.¹⁵⁹ Some of them may have been involved in shipping and a Jewish neighbourhood may have been located in the area of the eastern harbour.¹⁶⁰ They were also employed as craftsmen, silversmiths and carpenters¹⁶¹ and in earlier Ptolemaic times they had held high positions in the Ptolemaic army.¹⁶² Philo reports that the Jews lived in two of the five quarters but they were not ghettoized and could be found in other regions of the city also (*Flacc.* 55). For most of their existence in the city they appear to have been quite an influential group who had their own large main synagogue in basilica form.¹⁶³

In an interesting series of passages in Philo's *De Legatione ad Gaium* and *In Flaccum*, we get a glimpse of the social world within which the Judaism of Alexandria flourished. From these passages, it seems probable that non-Jewish residents made reference to the well-known Graeco-Roman institutions of associations and clubs when trying to understand exactly what went on in the Jewish synagogue. Such interest was either the result of intellectual curiosity, and perhaps suspicion, about the buildings and the rituals which they probably thought were practised inside. The insistence of the Jews that no sacrifices could be made in the synagogues, nor any statue of either emperor or 'club patron' erected, must have struck some observers as rather strange, despite the modelling of the synagogue on the institutions of the *polis*, and may have been the basis for rumours that the Jews worshipped an ass's head in their temple in Jerusalem (cf. *Apion* 2.80, cf. 2.112-14).¹⁶⁴

¹⁵⁶ Haas 1997: 48ff.

¹⁵⁷ For detailed accounts of the Jews in Egypt, see Horbury and Noy 1992; Kasher 1985; Modrzejewski 1995.

¹⁵⁸ Haas 1997: 95.

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.* Cf. Smallwood 1976: 258.

¹⁶⁰ Haas 1997.

¹⁶¹ The later third-century text of the Talmud reports that the Great Synagogue of Alexandria had seats reserved for guilds of silversmiths, blacksmiths, weavers and carpenters (*t. Sukkah* 4.6).

¹⁶² Haas 1997; Fraser 1972. For a discussion of the wide variety of occupations of the Jews in the Graeco-Roman cities, see Applebaum 1976: 701-27.

¹⁶³ Borgen 1992; Kraabel 1992.

¹⁶⁴ References to *Apion* can be found in Stern 1974: 412-13.

In principle, Philo acknowledges that, like the Graeco-Roman associations and clubs known to him from his native city, the synagogue also mirrored the constitution of the *polis*. At the same time, Philo is aware that the categorization of the synagogue as an association brought some risks. Josephus and Philo record how on occasion the civic authorities closed down clubs and associations because they were seen as causing unrest, perhaps the kind which Philo describes as characteristic of those in Alexandria: drunkenness and debauchery (*Leg. Gai.* 312ff., *Flacc.* 4) but also political unrest.¹⁶⁵ In other words, sometimes these associations were perceived as having a little too much independence and lack of regard for the *pax Romana*. Indeed, some associations became semi-autonomous political institutions.¹⁶⁶ We know for instance that a chairman of many Alexandrian clubs and an enemy of the Jews, Isidorus, was also an enemy of Flaccus (*Flacc.* 135-45).¹⁶⁷ Aware of this, and perhaps already aware of the tension between the Jews of Alexandria and other ethnic groups, Philo seeks to distance the Jewish association from the Graeco-Roman associations of Alexandria. Having accused them of drunkenness and intrigue, he describes the Jewish association of the synagogue as 'a school of temperance and justice where men practice virtue' (*Leg. Gai.* 312f.). In this apologetic, Philo indicates the degree of insecurity within which the Jewish community of Alexandria lived in certain periods. On the one hand, he can be seen to be encouraging his fellow Jews to seek out only worthy associations in the city, but on the other hand, he is also assuring his Graeco-Roman and Egyptian audience of the soundness, virtue and peaceful nature of the Jewish synagogal meetings. This can surely only have been necessary in a context where its virtues and loyalty had been put in doubt.¹⁶⁸ Apion claimed that the Jews took an oath of hostility towards the Greeks (*Apion* 2.91-6, 121);¹⁶⁹ although, according to Philo, it was not the Greeks but the Egyptians who were the subject of Jewish enmity.¹⁷⁰ Josephus reports that when the *collegia* were banned in certain periods, the synagogues were not included (*Jos., Ant.* 14, 215ff.; *Flacc.* 4).¹⁷¹ This in itself may have led to resentment of the Jewish associations from some quarters and may partly explain Isidorus' incitement of violence against the Jews (*Flacc.* 136ff.). Does this account for Philo's critical attitude to the clubs and associations of Alexandria? Philo reports that when a club patron, such as Isidorus, wants to have a useless project carried out, the club members follow him blindly (*Flacc.* 137). Bergmann and Hoffmann have suggested

¹⁶⁵ Smallwood 1976: 33-5.

¹⁶⁶ Haas 1997: 58ff.

¹⁶⁷ Schäfer 1997: 142.

¹⁶⁸ Seland 1996.

¹⁶⁹ Stern 1974: I, 410-12, 413-14.

¹⁷⁰ Goudriaan 1992: 88.

¹⁷¹ Meeks 1983: 35; Smallwood 1976: 33-5.

that 'anti-semitic' clubs incited violence against the Jews and were centres of Greek anti-semitism.¹⁷² Schäfer, however, suggests that these clubs also included Egyptians; Apion himself was said to be of Egyptian extraction, and we should therefore not view Greeks and Egyptians as two mutually exclusive groups.¹⁷³ It is possible that the Jewish association was resented by some other associations and this may have been one of, as we shall see, many possible factors which led to the violence of 38 CE.

But what was it about the Jewish association of the synagogue which might have attracted such resentment? It is generally assumed that the Jews agitated for rights and even citizenship from the synagogue. A comparison of the concerns of the synagogue association and more typical associations of the *polis* has already been made. In summary, it was suggested that the synagogue was based on an ethno-religious identity and thereby automatically excluded non-Jews. Moreover, the teaching of torah in the synagogue was, according to Josephus, to help the Jews 'avoid sinning' (Jos., *Ant.* 16.43) and this must surely have included the maintenance of boundaries between Jews and Gentiles (cf. Jos., *War* 2.488). It was also suggested that compared to the convivial nature of many of the city's associations, the purpose of the Jewish association was far more intense and this intensity might have led to resentment and ridicule. Above all, the sense of belonging expressed by the Jews differed from that expressed by members of other associations. Despite the local patriotism so evident in Philo, his vision, like those of most Diaspora Jews, remained fixed on another *polis*, Jerusalem (*Flacc.* 46; cf. *Leg. Gai.* 281).

Surely, such division of loyalties must have raised suspicion in the non-Jewish population of Alexandria. A passage from Philo may give some indication of the kind of charges or rumours which were spread about the Jews of Alexandria:¹⁷⁴

... it astonishes me to see that some people venture to accuse of inhumanity the nation which has shown so profound a sense of fellowship and goodwill to all men everywhere, by using its prayers and festivals and first-fruit offerings as a means of supplication for the human race in general and of making its homage to the truly existent God in the name of those who have evaded the service which it was their duty to give, as well as of itself.

(*Spec. Leg.* 2. 167)

In this passage, Philo attempts to counter the charges of inhumanity made by some Gentile writers. What might have led to such charges of inhumanity?

¹⁷² Bergmann and Hoffmann 1987.

¹⁷³ Schäfer 1997: 158.

¹⁷⁴ Cf. Borgen 1992: 126.

Goodman suggests that such charges may have been the result of Gentile knowledge of the forced conversion of the Idumeans and Itureans by the Hasmoneans and their destruction of all non-Jewish altars.¹⁷⁵ Certainly, anti-Jewish sentiment first appears in the sources after the Hasmonean conquests.¹⁷⁶ It is difficult to imagine, however, that the mob which set upon the Jews had such knowledge of the history of Judea and it is well to bear in mind that most racist attacks have no grounding other than resentment which comes to a head during periods of uncertainty or economic crisis. On the other hand, Josephus reports that the Egyptian Jews aided the Romans during their campaign in Egypt (Jos., *Ant.* 14.127ff.). Given that the Greek and Egyptian population were extremely anti-Roman, it is likely that Jewish aid to the Romans was a factor in the tensions at Alexandria. It must not be forgotten that while the Egyptians never successfully revolted against their Greek rulers, local revolts were numerous. Their causes were probably multifaceted but the revolt of Harsiesis was certainly built on the dream of restoring the greatness of Egypt.¹⁷⁷

Nonetheless, more often than he appeals to real political circumstances, Philo attributes the attacks on the Jews to the jealous nature of the Egyptians (*Flacc.* 29). This aspect of their nature was revealed, he informs us, during the visit of the Jewish king Agrippa to Alexandria in 38 CE. Schäfer sees this visit as an event which triggered the outbreak of violence.¹⁷⁸ So jealous were the Egyptians 'by nature' that:

... any good luck to others was misfortune to themselves, and in their ancient, and we might say innate hostility to the Jews, they resented a Jew having been made a king just as much as if each of them had therefore been deprived of an ancestral throne.

(*Flacc.* 29–30)¹⁷⁹

It is significant that here Philo blames the Egyptians because elsewhere he attributes most of the blame for the violence to Flaccus: it was with Flaccus' consent that the crowds mocked and parodied the Jewish king (*Flacc.* 40ff.).

From Philo's tone, it is clear that the Jews considered themselves to be an important part of the political constellation of the Roman world and this too, may have led to resentment.¹⁸⁰ The reasons behind the outbreak of

¹⁷⁵ Goodman 1987, 97ff.

¹⁷⁶ Grabbe 2000; 310ff. Although Schäfer convincingly argues that anti-Jewish sentiment emerged earlier in the fifth century at Elephantine when the Egyptians, with the permission of the Persians, destroyed the temple there (Schäfer 1997: 121–35).

¹⁷⁷ McGing 1997.

¹⁷⁸ Schäfer 1997: 136.

¹⁷⁹ Josephus also reports that the high rank which some Jews attained in the Ptolemaic army led to resentment from non-Jews, Jos., *Ant.* 13.10.4.

¹⁸⁰ Schäfer 1997: 142.

violence against the Jews are clearly complex and given the biased nature of Philo, our primary source, it is impossible to be precise. Furthermore, the texts of Gentile authors are also problematic; *Manetho* (third century BCE) and *Apion* are polemical texts; representations of inscribed ethnicity which may bear little relation to what most Egyptians thought about Jews or to what Jews thought about Egyptians.¹⁸¹ These texts represent abstract, conceptual representations of Jewishness and should be distinguished not just from the general population's perception of the 'other' but also from the praxis of Judaism.

For Philo, more important than the ethnic distinctions between Greek and Jew are those between Egyptian and Jew,¹⁸² and most lowly of the inhabitants of Alexandria are the native Egyptians who have:

... advanced to divine honours irrational animals, bulls and rams and goats. . . . What could be more ridiculous than all this? Indeed, strangers on their first arrival in Egypt...are likely to die laughing at it, while anyone who knows the flavour of right instruction, horrified at this veneration of things so much the reverse of venerable, pities those who render it and regards them with good reason as more miserable than the creatures they honour, as men with souls transformed into the nature of these creatures. . . .

(*Dec.* 76–80)

Behind this polemic lies a dispute which is probably reflected in the already mentioned fragments of *Apion*, a citizen of Alexandria, possibly of Egyptian descent. *Apion* talks about the closeness between Jews and Egyptians (something which Philo would not have liked) and the natural enmity between Jews and Greeks (Philo had claimed precisely the opposite). *Apion* believed the Jews to be descended from the Egyptians, which Josephus denies (cf. *Apion* 2.8)¹⁸³ and tells how the Jews worshipped an ass's head in their temple in Jerusalem (*Apion* 2.79–80).¹⁸⁴ *Apion's* account of donkey worship is intended to point to the credulousness of the Jews.¹⁸⁵ Like most Egyptians, the Alexandrians were very keen on animal worship, and presumably most Jews of Alexandria refused to participate in this worship; a fact which made this particular accusation of the worship of an ass's head all the more offensive to the Jews.

What was at the root of this enmity between Jews and Egyptians in Roman Alexandria in the first century? One obvious cause was the actual

181 On the view that the texts of ethnicity are distinct from the praxis of ethnicity, see Pearce 1998.

182 Borgen 1992: 130ff.

183 Stern 1974: I, 392–5.

184 *Ibid.*: I, 409–10.

185 Goudriaan 1992: 88.

similarity which outsiders perceived between the Jews and the Egyptians; a perception which necessitated each group accentuating its differences. As Philo himself notes, both Jew and Egyptian practise circumcision (*Spec. Leg.* 1.2), and as already noted, both groups displayed a nationalistic-religious zeal.¹⁸⁶ More important still, during the Roman period the majority of neither group enjoyed citizenship. In *Acta Isodori*, anti-Semites observe that the Jews 'are not of the same temperament as the Alexandrians, but live rather after the fashion of the Egyptians'.¹⁸⁷ *Apion* himself may have been of Egyptian descent but conceals this and accuses the Jews of being of Egyptian ancestry; the accusation is intended to indicate that the Jews are base and worthless.¹⁸⁸ Josephus returns the insult (*Apion* 2.29). Philo is acutely aware of what he regards as a confusion of Jews with Egyptians: 'They call Moses an Egyptian, he that is not only a Hebrew, but a Hebrew of the purest kind' (*Mut. Nom.* 117).¹⁸⁹

While Philo spent a great deal of time demonstrating the distinction between Jew and Egyptian, he also devoted himself to showing that Jewish culture was more ancient than any of the Greek philosophers who had in fact derived their ideas from Moses (*Quaest. in Gen.* 4,152). Such claims, he must have hoped, would elevate the status of the Jews to a higher rung of the ethnic, social ladder in the multi-racial context of his native Alexandria. Ultimately, of course it was desirable to be seen as Hellenic. Josephus records how the 'Greeks' accused the Jews of attempting to break into the *gymnasia* in an attempt to acquire citizenship. Whether or not this account is historical is extremely difficult to say, but at least it tells us that Josephus was aware of the ethnic competitiveness between groups. We have already looked at the letter of Hellenos (*CPJ* II,151) where the petitioning Jew begins his letter by describing himself as an 'Alexandrian', but then this designation was changed (by Hellenos or by someone else) and the phrase 'one of the Jews of Alexandria', i.e. not a citizen, substituted. What is interesting is that Hellenos' father seems to have been a citizen¹⁹⁰ but now, under the rule of the Romans, it appears that the right is not to pass to his son. From the tone of the letter (which is fragmentary) it appears that Hellenos is hoping to convince the Romans that he should not have to pay the personal tax. The basis for appeal seems to have been his Greek education and his father's Greek citizenship. But within Roman classification Hellenos is now on the same footing as an Egyptian who is not a citizen. Indeed, it may have been the hand of a Roman official which changed Hellenos' self-

186 Bohak 1999.

187 Text cited in Goudriaan 1992: 87–8.

188 *Ibid.*

189 *Ibid.*: 89.

190 Generally, the period of Ptolemaic rule is regarded favourably in Jewish literature, cf. Letter of Aristeas

designation; having read the contents of the letter he decided to deny the appeal for exemptions, thus designating Hellenos a Jew of Alexandria, and not an Alexandrian.

This new classification had serious repercussions for Hellenos. In their organization of taxes, Goudriaan suggests that the Romans introduced a new principle, that of descent.¹⁹¹ An individual's 'tax bracket', so to speak, depended on the ethnic group to which he belonged. The Romans distinguished between groups living in Egypt. All Egyptian males between the ages of fourteen and sixty-two became subject to payment of a personal tax. Descendants of Hellenes received a reduced rate provided they owned land, had Greek education and resided in a city rather than in the countryside. The Greeks of Egypt were regarded as notables. Amongst the lists of all of those entitled to tax reduction, Modrzejewski points out that not a single Jewish name appears.¹⁹² In a sense, the Jews, once so successful under Ptolemaic rule, were now being viewed as Egyptians. This recategorization of persons for taxation involved the appearance that the Romans favoured one descent group over another, thereby increasing tension between ethnic groups, especially between Egyptians and Jews, who for all their claims to be different were actually politically and economically in the same boat. To be classed together yet again was surely galling. The only way to deny such classification was to denigrate the other, thereby creating a kind of 'ethnic pecking-order'; we may be barbarians but we are the most virtuous of them, claims the Jew Philo. Apion regards the Jews as a derivative of the great Egyptian past, claiming that they migrated from Egypt to Palestine. Philo goes even further in his demonstration of the primacy of Judaism, claiming that Greek philosophy, law and custom had all been given to the Greeks by the Jews (*Quaest. in Gen.* 4,152). At the same time, he claims that the Romans had no learning of their own but took it all from the Greeks.

Unfortunately, the Roman's lack of interest in the ethnic sensitivities of their new subjects, and a pre-existing situation of ethnic tension in Alexandria, came to a head in 38 CE. But the Romans were not entirely responsible for the tension in Alexandria. As we have seen, even prior to Roman rule and as early as *Manetho* (c. 300 BCE), there seems to have been some tension between non-Jews and Jews in Alexandria. *Manetho* had accused the Jews of atheism because they would not participate in the worship of the gods around them (*Apion* 1.238-9, 250, 2.145-8). While Rajak may be right that the monotheism of the Jews did not attract as much attention as often assumed (ensconced as it was in the Graeco-Roman styled synagogue),¹⁹³ Gentile writers often comment on the Jews' abstention from the cults of the

¹⁹¹ Goudriaan 1992: 93.

¹⁹² Modrzejewski 1995: 163. It should be borne in mind that in this period Jews often had Greek names, although the second century BCE did see a revival of Hebrew names.

¹⁹³ Rajak 1999.

cities. The abstention of the Jews from the cult of the Roman emperor must surely have outraged the Egyptians who deeply resented the Roman presence: if the Egyptians, with their own religious sensitivities, had to participate in the cult of the conquerors, why should the Jews be exempted?

Philo reports that there were circles in Alexandria where anti-Jewish sentiments were taught. Philo addresses the emperor Gaius Caligula's slave in the following way:

You have the false charges made against the Jews and Jewish customs, charges among which you grew up, you learnt them right from your cradle, not from a single individual but from the most garrulous section of the Alexandrian population. Show off your learning.

(*Leg. Gai.* 170)

While it may well have been the Egyptians of the city who incited against the Jews, Philo places a lot of responsibility on the Emperor Gaius: '... we, prosperous though we had once been, were brought to ruin ... for it was only of the Jews that Gaius was suspicious' (*Leg. Gai.* 114ff.). Speaking about Flaccus, the Roman prefect of the city, Philo says: 'he knew that the city contained two kinds of population, *us* and *them*, and Egypt likewise' (*Flacc.* 43). He 'edited a decree in which he proclaimed *us* to be strangers and immigrants' (*Flacc.* 54). The city was no longer the *idia patris* of the Alexandrian Jews. Describing the conflict between the population of Alexandria and the Jews, Philo says of the women, '... wherever they were found to be of a different race, they were released ... but if they appeared to belong to us they were compelled to eat pork' (*Flacc.* 96). It appears that the non-Jewish Alexandrian population, or perhaps it was only the mob, was acutely aware of the Jewish dietary laws and regarded the eating of pork as a defining practice of Judaism. It appears too that the mob mistakenly identified some women as Jewish and later released them. The proof that they had seized a Jewish woman would emerge with the refusal to eat pork. Presumably, Jewish men could be distinguished because they were circumcised and perhaps also because Jewish males were registered in synagogue lists. If the Jews had lived in segregated areas entirely, then surely no such test of these unidentifiable women would have been necessary; they could all have been proven to be Jewish because they resided in an exclusively Jewish quarter.

The Alexandrian mob attacked the synagogues, placing portraits of the emperor Gaius in them. What was the ethnic constitution of this mob? Whether he is right or not we cannot tell, but Philo clearly sees them as Egyptians. Philo, in fact, never denigrated Greek culture but really only compared the virtue of the Jews to the baseness of the Egyptians, just as Egyptian writers compare themselves to the Jews. Josephus identifies those behind the anti-Jewish attacks as Greeks (*Jos., Ant.* 18.257), although

elsewhere he calls a certain 'Apion', who was a member of the embassy to Gaius, an Egyptian.¹⁹⁴ The members of the embassy, however, may have regarded themselves as Hellenes.¹⁹⁵ For Philo, the native of Alexandria, it would seem that the most serious attack on the Jews comes from an ethnic group whose status within the Roman social world is more or less the same as that of his own group; the indigenous Egyptians now reclassified by the Romans as barbarians and subject to the newly introduced personal tax. This reconstruction of ethnical strategies and tensions makes a good deal of sense, although we should bear in mind Philo's overall reluctance to criticize the Greeks. Did this contribute to his identification of the opponents of the Jews as Egyptians, otherwise identified by Josephus as Greeks? While Philo could admit open conflict and the ridiculing of Judaism by Egyptians, perhaps he could not bear to present the conflict at Alexandria as rooted in Greek disregard for Jewish religion and culture. The question of the identification of the opponents of the Jews at Alexandria remains open, but it should be borne in mind that on occasion, and in some contexts (perhaps such as in the associations and clubs of Alexandria) the distinction between native Egyptian and Greek was a rather blurred one.¹⁹⁶

For all of its apparent compatibility with the Graeco-Roman city, the Jewish community and its synagogues at Alexandria were vilified in the Egyptian city of Alexandria. Boats and houses owned by Jews were burned, Flaccus ordered that the Jewish elders (magistrates?) were to be flogged before an Alexandrian mob, to be treated like Egyptians 'of the meanest rank and the greatest iniquities' (*Flacc.* 80). This particular means of punishment really outraged the Jewish writer Philo because up until this time the punishment of flogging was reserved for Egyptians.¹⁹⁷ Were the Jews now being seen as Egyptians, not even being given a separate identity within the classification of Barbarians? The Jews were probably ghettoized in the city and the Jewish community, for a time anyway, was portrayed as the enemy within.¹⁹⁸

Conclusion

In the Graeco-Roman city most ethnic groups failed to maintain their identity and disappeared into the background of the wider Graeco-Roman environment. Goudriaan has illustrated that this was the case with the Thracians¹⁹⁹ and Millar has pointed to the disappearance of the Nabateans

¹⁹⁴ Goudriaan 1992: 87.

¹⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁶ Schäfer 1997.

¹⁹⁷ Goudriaan 1992: 88; Schäfer 1997.

¹⁹⁸ Goudriaan 1992: 92.

¹⁹⁹ *Ibid.*: 77ff.

who had produced their own legal texts.²⁰⁰ The Jews maintained their identity by centering themselves around the association of the synagogue, an institution which, in form and function, owed much to the context and institutions of the Graeco-Roman city. The synagogue may well have been modelled on the Graeco-Roman *polis* and have operated within its patron-client system but Jews seem, by and large, to have abstained from participation in the cults of the Greek and Roman gods of the cities. Moreover, the ongoing payment of dues to the temple and pilgrimage to that city ensured that Jerusalem remained a focal point for all Jews despite the variety of local identities evident in the architecture of synagogues. The *Letter of Claudius* ruling that the Jews lived in cities 'not their own' served to accentuate and ensure the loyalty of Jews to the temple-city, even after its destruction. Limited participation in cities to which the Jews had often expressed a local patriotism, was compensated for by the expression of belonging to a *polis* which was at the centre of the world, the distant and glorious city of Jerusalem (cf. *Sib. Or.* iii, 715–20, *Ps.* 9.7–8, 11–12, 47: 8–9, 48).

²⁰⁰ Millar 1993: 507–17.

POPULATION AND PROSELYTISM

How many Jews were there
in the ancient world?

Brian McGing

Counting numbers of people in the ancient world has, to a certain extent at least, gone out of scholarly fashion. When we need a sensible estimate of the population of a city or area, the best recourse is, and has been for the last hundred years, to refer to Beloch's hugely influential study of 1886, *Die Bevölkerung der griechisch-römischen Welt*. In a most interesting analysis of Beloch's work Elio Lo Cascio says, 'estimating the size of an ancient population is thought of as an almost impossible exercise, given the uncertainties in the source material. It is considered much more interesting and indeed more rewarding to try to extract from our sources information on what the normal patterns of mortality or fertility were, or the age at marriage for women and men, or the extent of exposure and infanticide, or the customs of breast-feeding and their effect on fertility'.¹ This sentiment is echoed by many scholars, and, from the point of view of social and economic history, quite rightly: one need only contemplate the fascinating material and results of, for instance, Bagnall and Frier's study of the census returns from Roman Egypt to appreciate the value of modern demographic interests and techniques.² Taken to its extreme, this approach abandons all attempts at exact figures. 'At this point we do not have exact information regarding the population of Provincia Judaea during the Roman period'. So writes Ze'ev Safrai in his recent work on Roman Palestine; he suggests, without argumentation, that the population of Palestine was larger than the 1 million proposed by Broshi, but that is just about all we hear of exact numbers.³ Of

¹ Lo Cascio 1994: 40. Lo Cascio's attempt to refute Beloch represents well the old and continuing dispute between positivist believers in big numbers (e.g. Lo Cascio himself, Frank 1940 and Beloch in his later work) and more sceptical proponents of low numbers (e.g. Beloch 1886, Brunt 1971 and Rathbone 1990).

² Bagnall and Frier 1994. A helpful introduction to the study of ancient populations is Parkin 1992.

³ Safrai 1994: 103 (he does make a passing, but unsupported reference to 2.1 million residents in Palestine - p. 131); Broshi 1979: 1-10.

course numbers play an important role in helping us to visualize a society: was Jerusalem in the first century CE a city of 30,000 or was it a city of 200,000?⁴ Unless we despair of an answer altogether - and there are good grounds for despair - our estimate is certainly going to have some considerable bearing on how we view Jewish society at this time. Numbers affect our views. Or rather, and unfortunately, it appears that the truth is often the other way round: how we view things has a bearing on the numbers we come up with. In a valuable study of the population of Capernaum in Galilee, Jonathan Reed points out how estimates of its population have grown from about 1,000 to as much as 25,000 in line with an increasing tendency of scholars to regard Galilee as urban and cosmopolitan, rather than 'a rustic cluster of peasant villages': a substantial population of Capernaum suits this picture much better than a small one.⁵ It is perhaps an obvious point, but none the less a crucial one: so many of the figures that we deal with - population, size of armies, casualty figures - are tendentious, not only in what the ancient sources record, but also in the estimates made by modern analysts.

A useful starting point for investigating the population of Jews in the ancient world is the thesis, propounded by, among others, Louis Feldman, that the huge increase in the number of Jews in Roman times (an increase which Feldman only assumes, but makes no serious effort to prove) is at least largely due to Jewish success in winning converts.⁶ He does propose other arguments, but at the root of his book lies the conviction that the number of Jews in the ancient world increased massively - 150,000 in 586 BCE, 8 million in 66 CE - so massively that only conversion can explain the scale. We are not now dealing with general statistical data, how many people lived in Rome or Italy or North Africa: assumptions about the number of Jews are being used to draw a conclusion of fundamental importance - that Judaism was a missionary religion with a record of considerable success in attracting converts among the societies of the Greco-Roman world. Feldman is by no means the first to do this:⁷ I use him simply to draw attention to the fact that in estimating the population of Jews in the ancient world there is more at stake than is usually the case in counting numbers. The one brief foray into demography that Feldman makes - surely an inadequate attempt to establish his underlying premise - is instructive.⁸ He relies almost entirely on the figures of Salo Baron presented in his book *A Social and Religious History*

⁴ Both figures (and many more) have been suggested; for discussion, see below pp. 99-101.

⁵ Reed 1992: 2-3.

⁶ Feldman 1993: 293; 435-6; 555-6, n. 20.

⁷ See, for instance, Avon Harnack 1924: 6-13; Baron 1952: 167-79; and most recently Wasserstein 1996: 315-17. For the most robust opposition to the notion of Judaism as a missionary religion, see Goodman 1994.

⁸ Feldman 1993: 555-6, n. 20.

of the Jews, and on Baron's 1971 article on 'Population' in the *Encyclopaedia Judaica*.⁹

Some of Feldman's underlying principles can be seen from the following quotation:

Moreover, although Baron . . . is careful to stress that his population estimates are based on scattered documentary evidence, often very dubious in itself, a series of hypotheses, supplementing this evidence, support one another in their convergence. In particular, we may cite the statement of Bar-Hebraeus, a 13th century Christian writer, who reports that there were 6,944,000 Jews, according to the census taken by the emperor Claudius in the middle of the 1st century, to which Baron, despite Bar-Hebraeus' late date, gives credence. Such a figure is supported by statements of Josephus, who, as general in Galilee, must have had an awareness of the population of the area where he was commander. His figures, which cannot be total figments of imagination, indicate that there were 204 villages in Galilee (*Life* 235), of which the smallest had 15,000 inhabitants (*War* 3.587-88), making a total of 3,060,000. Furthermore, on the basis of the number of lambs consumed at Passover in the year 66, he states that there were 2,700,000 (actually 2,556,000) Jews in Jerusalem (*War* 6.425 . . .) and that 1,100,000 Jews perished during the siege of Jerusalem (*War* 6.420). . . . Furthermore, Philo, who as head of the Alexandrian Jewish community must have had considerable knowledge as to the number of Jews in Egypt, explicitly states (*Flacc.* 6.43) that the governor of Egypt knew that in Egypt there were no fewer than a million Jews.

I take these authorities in order, Baron/Feldman, Bar-Hebraeus, Josephus, Philo, as they serve to introduce important issues, which must be at the centre of any discussion of the number of Jews. First, Baron. 'Preexilic Judaea . . . according to Baron's calculations, based on biblical and archaeological data, had no more than 150,000 Jews'.¹⁰ In fact Baron gives absolutely no indication of how he arrives at the figure of 150,000 – which is the vital starting place for the notion of a massive increase in the population later on. He mentions the number of Jews reported in Jeremiah 52.28-30 (4,600) and 2 Kings 24.14-16 (10,000) as being deported by Nebuchadnezzar, but the numbers bear no obvious relationship with 150,000: as presented, this seems to be an entirely unsupported figure, a guess pure and simple, and quite unsatisfactory as a starting point for serious discussion. For his other

⁹ Baron 1952: 167-79; Baron 1971, vol. 13: 866-903.

¹⁰ Feldman 1993: 293. Baron's estimates for ancient Israel will be found in Baron 1971, vol. 13: 867-70.

estimates of early Jewish times – 1.8 million in 1000 BCE, between 1.1 and 1.35 million at the end of the eighth century – he discusses the large numbers given in 2 Samuel 24.9 and 1 Chronicles 21.5, but as both record over 1 million fighting men, necessitating, as he admits, an overall population of more than 5 million, it is difficult to see exactly how he arrives at his estimates. More generally it is fairly clear that most of the time he proceeds by making 'sensible' adjustments to the figures reported in the ancient texts, which he evidently regards as roughly correct. This is well illustrated by his treatment of Sennacherib's claim to have deported 200,150 people from Jerusalem in 701: 'while Sennacherib's grandiloquent inscription may indeed have exaggerated considerably the number of prisoners taken back to Assyria, it must to some extent have approximated reality' (my italics). This is a large assumption indeed. It seems to me very far from necessary that Sennacherib's claim *must* have approximated reality: it may have, but it, and similar figures from the ancient sources, may also be totally notional.

Of course this is a crucial matter: should we believe the ancient sources all, some or none of the time; and if so why? It is one of the central problems facing demographers. There can be no easy or general answer. Each time they arise ancient figures need to be considered on their own merits, and in relation to any other relevant factors – particularly vested interests in consciously falsifying figures, or guessing, subconsciously even, in an exaggerated or underestimating fashion. Patriotism, nationalism, personal biases, religious fervour – these are relevant and likely distorting factors. And before going on to examine them in relation to ancient authors, we may note their relevance to modern commentators. 'As a result of this stupendous expansion,' Baron writes, 'every tenth Roman was a Jew. Inasmuch as the overwhelming majority of Jews lived east of Italy, that part of the empire, including the most advanced regions, had almost 20% Jews. In other words, every fifth "Hellenistic" inhabitant of the eastern Mediterranean world was a Jew.'¹¹ The suspicion must be that patriotic enthusiasm has formed Baron's figures, rather than the other way round. Baron perhaps proceeded unconsciously, but Feldman sets out in his book avowedly to oppose what he calls the 'lachrymose' conception of Jewish history, which sees the Jews as permanent and helpless victims.¹² Figures are grist to his mill. There is nothing suspicious about 3 million inhabitants in Galilee, or 2.7 million in Jerusalem at the Passover in CE 66: there were a great many Jews in the world, as it was a strong and vibrant religion. The high figures are accepted without demur.¹³ Huge casualty figures cut both ways, lachrymose or positive. If over a million Jews were supposed to have died at the siege of Jerusalem,

¹¹ Baron 1971: 171.

¹² Feldman 1993: Preface.

¹³ Feldman 1993: 555-6.

it only shows that they were a determined and resilient people; or, it can serve as an example of the brutality the rest of the world always displays towards Jews. We should observe, however, that this sort of strategic treatment of numbers is almost certainly to be found anywhere, and at any time, large figures are reported. In Ireland, for instance, time and again over the last thirty years marches in the North have provided a good example: depending on the political contingency, the police report a small crowd, the paramilitary organizations a large crowd, and the press and broadcasting services something in between, reflecting a wish to agree precisely with neither of the other two sources, but at the same time not to distance themselves too far from either. It is at least often clear that no-one has the slightest idea of how many people there were, and that the estimates reflect a political point.¹⁴

What do we make of Bar-Hebraeus and his report of a census of Jews ordered by Claudius? 'At the same time Claudius Caesar ordered the Jews who were in his domain to be counted, and their number was 6,944,000 men. Furthermore on the day of holy Passover, the Jews, falling into confusion, pressed against each other to such an extent that 30,000 men died from crushing.'¹⁵ The preceding chronological reference is to the second year of Claudius' principate, when an Egyptian appeared in Judaea claiming to be a prophet, and a certain Cerinthus also appeared stating that there was eating, drinking and marriage in the kingdom of God. Bar-Hebraeus' statement that Claudius' census of Jews happened 'at the same time' cannot be pressed into precise chronological service: it is only the most vague of chronological indicators.¹⁶ The incident of the 30,000 being crushed certainly seems to come, by whatever route, from Josephus (*War* 2.227; *Ant.* 20.112), but not the census figure. It must be asked just how reliable is this thirteenth-century Syriac Christian writer?

¹⁴ On 'Bloody Sunday', 30 January 1972, when fourteen people were shot dead by British soldiers in the city of Londonderry, Lord Widgery estimated the crowd at between 3,000 and 5,000, the organizers of the march said 30,000; a recent media report estimates 15,000 (the *Irish Times*, Saturday March 22, 1997, p. 8). This was a critical day in the recent history of Northern Ireland, and yet it is quite clear that we do not have the remotest notion of which of these figures (if any) is right.

¹⁵ *Eodem tempore numerari iussit Claudius Caesar Judaeos qui in regno ipsius essent fuitque numerus ipsorum sexcenti nonaginta quatuor myriades, et quatuor hominum millia. Porro die festi Paschatis incidentes in confusionem Judaei se invicem truserunt, adeo ut prae compressione morerentur triginta hominum millia.* E. Pococke, *Bar-Hebraeus, Historia Compendiosa Dynastiarum*, Oxford, 1663, p. 73. Pococke's edition provides a Latin translation of the Arabic version which Bar-Hebraeus himself made of his Syriac *Chronography*: the best analysis is now Wasserstein 1996: 309–13.

¹⁶ Baron 1971: 372, n. 7 takes it to refer approximately to the second year of Claudius' reign, but Bar-Hebraeus is not nearly accurate enough to take so literally: there would be no difficulty in assuming that he was referring to the census of 47–8.

His coverage of Jewish history in the immediate vicinity of the report on Claudius' census does not inspire confidence. For instance, his entry under the fourteenth year of Tiberius records the following: 'Pilate was made iudex over the Jews, and put up an effigy of Caesar in the temple, thus disturbing the Jews' (Pococke, p. 71).¹⁷ This is perhaps a confusion with the incident in Pilate's governorship reported by Philo (*Leg.* 299–305) in which Pilate dedicated golden shields in Herod's palace in Jerusalem. Although there might be doubt about the incident,¹⁸ Pilate certainly did not put up anything in the temple, whatever else he did.

We are also told that in the first year of Gaius, 'Herod Agrippa was put in charge of the Jews and ruled for seven years. In the same year Pontius Pilate committed suicide and Felix was sent to Jerusalem as iudex. When he had filled the holy places of the Jews with statues, they sent two wise men, the Hebrews Philo and Josephus, as envoys to Caesar, to complain about the action of the governor. Having set out they persuaded him to order the removal of that which displeased the Jews. In the fourth year Petronius came from Rome to Jerusalem as governor and set up a statue of Iupiter in the Temple of the Lord, and so was fulfilled the prophecy of the prophet Daniel, when he spoke of the sign of abomination standing where it should not' (Pococke, p. 73).¹⁹ There follows immediately the reference to the second year of Claudius, and then the census of Jews.

Bar-Hebraeus seems to have an obsession with statues, resulting in a bizarre, garbled and almost worthless version of events. Pilate sets up a statue of Caesar in the temple; Felix fills the sacred places of the Jews with statues, resulting in a joint embassy to the emperor of Philo and Josephus; and Petronius, who appears to be regarded as governor of Judaea, finally erects the statue of Iupiter in the temple – which is precisely what he did not do, and misses the whole point of the Petronius story (at least as recorded in Philo and Josephus). Bar-Hebraeus may have a low reliability rating, but has he by chance picked up an accurate figure for a census of Jews?²⁰ Baron

¹⁷ *Anno decimo quarto Pilatus, Iudex super Judaeos constitutus, effigiem Caesaris in templo statuit, quo commoti sunt Judaei.*

¹⁸ McGing 1991: 430–3; Bond 1998: 36–48.

¹⁹ *Caius Caesar. Imperavit quatuor annos. Anno primo imperii ipsius praefectus est Herodes Agrippa Judaeis, (qui regnavit) septem annos. Eodem anno mortem sibi conscivit Pontius Pilatus, missusque est Felix Iudex Hierosolyma: qui cum sacraria Judaeorum statuisset implevisset, miserunt illi Legatos duos sapientes, viz. Philonem et Josephum Hebraeos, ad Caesarem, ut de facto Praesidis conquirerentur; qui profecti ipsi suaserunt ut amoveri juberet illud quod aegre tulerunt Judaei. Anno quarto Petronius Praeses Roma Hierosolyma perveniens Statuam Jovis in Templo Domini posuit, et completum est vaticinium Danielis Prophetiae dicentis, Signum abominationis stans ubi non oporteret.*

²⁰ If Bar Hebraeus is considered reliable on the Claudian census, it is curious that Feldman has nothing to say about his Jewish casualty figures at the siege of Jerusalem (Pococke 1663: 74): more than 60,000 killed (an indefinite number died of hunger), against the 1.1 million of Josephus.

maintains that 'Bar-Hebraeus did not confuse this census with one of the Roman citizens in the empire, as timidly suggested by Tcherikover . . . and accepted as "proved" by J. Rosenthal . . . Bar-Hebraeus probably knew of the census of Roman citizens taken by Claudius in 48 and recorded by Tacitus in his *Annales* XI, 25, but he mentioned both an earlier date . . . and a figure of almost 1 million more than the 5,984,072 recorded by Tacitus.'²¹ It must be supposed that Baron (and Feldman) simply did not know of the Jerome version of Eusebius' report on Claudius' census of Roman citizens: 'a *descriptio* of Rome having been made under Claudius, there were found to be of Roman citizens 6,944,000'.²² This is of course exactly Bar-Hebraeus' figure for the number of Jews. As long ago as 1954 Judah Rosenthal had pointed this out; and Abraham Wasserstein, in an article written shortly before his death, repeats the argument with even greater clarity, adding the important observation that the number is also found in the *Syriac Epitome* of Eusebius' *Chronography*.²³ Eusebius' figure may well be problematic, but the notion that Claudius would order a census specifically of Jews is extremely improbable, and there can be no good reason whatever to prefer Bar-Hebraeus to Eusebius on the matter of who was being counted: it is now incontestably clear that somehow or other he has picked up and transmitted Eusebius' figure, mistakenly attributing it to the number of Jews. In any reasonable scale of probability Baron's and Feldman's trust in Bar-Hebraeus is entirely misplaced, and the figure recorded there completely irrelevant to our subject. It is high time that the evidence of Bar-Hebraeus was given decent burial and removed from our considerations.

There remains the large and in some ways more important matter of how we treat the figures reported by Josephus, overwhelmingly our most important ancient source. It is really only the very large-scale numbers that can help us in the present investigation: even if we could establish a pattern of realistic reporting in relation to relatively small groups, it does not mean we could transfer the pattern automatically to Josephus' reporting of large numbers. It is worth noting that in the *Life* there are frequent small numbers. Josephus marches to Tiberias with 200 men (90); John sends the most trustworthy of his 1,000 men (95); Aebutius sets off against Josephus with 100 cavalry, 200 infantry and auxiliaries, loses three in an engagement with Josephus who pursues him with 2,000 infantry (115–18); 600 men proceed against Josephus' house to set it on fire (145); John sends his brother with about 100 men to have Josephus removed (190); Jesus the Galilean is in Jerusalem with 600 men (200–202); Josephus orders 5,000 Galileans to join him in arms – he sets out with them, 80 horse and the 3,000 infantry he

²¹ Baron 1971: 372 n. 7.

²² *Descriptione Romae facta sub Claudio inventa sunt civium Romanorum LXVIII centena et XLIII milia*: Helm 1956: 180.

²³ Rosenthal 1954: 267–8; Wasserstein 1996: 309–13.

already has (213); John has 3,000 men at Gabara (233); Josephus sets out from Chabolo with 3,000 men (234). And so on. Should we believe these numbers because they are small and automatically distrust huge numbers? The answer is probably 'yes' – unless it can be shown that Josephus has a vested interest in falsifying particular small numbers downwards – for the obvious reason that you can count them; whereas to all intents and purposes you cannot count hundreds of thousands and millions. Even with smallish numbers, however, Josephus can be highly suspect. For instance, when he went to Rome he was shipwrecked and the whole ship's company, 600 people, had to swim all night (*Life* 15). Can there possibly have been 600 people on board? By ancient standards this would have been a huge ship.²⁴ When St Paul suffered the same fate, there were 276 on the ship, or perhaps just 76, according to which manuscript you read (*Acts* 27:37). And the number 3,000 occurs suspiciously often in Josephus, on some 50 separate occasions. In the early books of the *Antiquities* Josephus often just reproduces the biblical figure, but even here there are strange discrepancies. For instance, in *Antiquities* 5.199 Jabin king of the Canaanites has 10,000 cavalry, 300,000 infantry and 3,000 chariots; in the parallel passage in Judges (4.1) the only number given is 900 chariots. And when Josephus cuts loose from the Bible and the Books of Maccabees, 3,000 still keeps occurring: Demetrius has 3,000 cavalry (*Ant.* 13.377; *War* 1.93); Gabinius kills 3,000 of Alexander's men and captures 3,000 (*Ant.* 14.85); Antipater arrives in Egypt with 3,000 men (*Ant.* 14.128); Herod departs from Samaria with 3,000 infantry (*Ant.* 14.432); Herod hears that Hyrcanus had opened David's tomb and taken 3,000 talents (*Ant.* 16.179); Herod settles 3,000 Idumaeans in Trachonitis (*Ant.* 16.285); Archelaus' cavalry kill 3,000 Jews (*Ant.* 17.218); Rufus and Gratus have 3,000 of the best fighters in Herod's army (*Ant.* 17.266); and as we saw above, John has 3,000 men at Gabara (*Life* 233); Josephus sets out from Chabolo with 3,000 men (*Life* 234); and Josephus orders 5,000 Galileans to join the 3,000 infantry he already has (*Life* 213). It is difficult to know what exactly to make of this, but it is a cause of distrust, if we are expecting Josephus to communicate accurate figures: it looks as if he has a formulaic rather than literal approach to numbers, at least some of the time.²⁵

When it comes to the huge numbers Josephus gives us, the limits of credibility are broken time and again. In Jerusalem in the time of Cumanus there was a panic in the Temple area at Passover and 30,000 were crushed to death. This is in *War* 2.227. 'Nor is this number unreasonable,' claims Byatt, thinking of the number of people who went to Jerusalem for the Passover –

²⁴ Casson 1995: 172 does not question Josephus' figure, but uses it as an upper limit: 'when it came to passengers, vessels could take as many as 600 on long voyages'.

²⁵ As Dominic Rathbone points out to me, Diodorus also seems to have a '3' fixation: Egypt has 3,000 villages and a population of 3 million; Alexandria has 300,000 inhabitants.

although why his suggestion of 1 million for this event should be regarded as feasible and Josephus' figure of over 2.5 million 'must be rejected as an unreasonable number', he does not say.²⁶ Leaving aside the circularity, how do 30,000 people end up being crushed to death? How large a crowd do you need for 30,000 of them to get crushed? The logistics of this sort of disaster are, fortunately, little known. At Hillsborough football ground in England on 15 April 1989 some ninety six people were killed, crushed up against an immovable barrier by a crowd of, probably, over 4,000 behind them.²⁷ The same proportion of casualties to crowd size would require there to have been 1.2 million people in the Temple precinct for 30,000 to die. Even if the comparative data are far from reliable it looks as though we are dealing with almost impossible numbers. There are two points to make here. First, from the purely practical point of view 30,000 is an inherently improbable figure: it is very difficult to envisage it as falling within the bounds of the possible. Second, 30,000 is the figure happily accepted by Byatt, but in *Antiquities* 20.112 Josephus reports 20,000 killed in the incident; and in the *War* passage, the majority of manuscripts give the number as 10,000. The truth is we do not even know how many casualties Josephus reported; and almost certainly he did not know himself how many died, because nobody counted the corpses. Whatever number he gave he was merely indicating that a large number of people were killed. Similarly when he says that 20,000 Jews were killed at Caesarea within one hour (*War* 2.457), quite apart from the physical impossibility of killing 20,000 people in one hour, with the mechanisms of destruction available in antiquity, it is difficult to believe that he has even the remotest notion of how many died: he is simply saying that many people were killed in a short space of time. This can be illustrated by the same situation at Damascus, where 10,500 Jews were killed in one hour according to *War* 2.561; by the time we get to *War* 7.368 Josephus now tells us that 18,000 Jews were slaughtered at Damascus. In all probability he simply did not know how many died.

This brings us to the only reason for placing any particular trust in Josephus: he lived in Palestine and took a leading part in the events he describes. He must, therefore, have known what he was talking about; so his numbers, as Feldman maintains, 'cannot be total figments of imagination'. The two underlying assumptions here, that Josephus necessarily knew exact numbers just because he was commander in Galilee, and that he would not exaggerate them, are quite unprovable, and in my opinion, improbable. It is not altogether clear how many people Josephus thinks were besieged in

²⁶ Byatt 1973: 57.

²⁷ The people who died were on the west terrace in pens 3 and 4, which had a supposed capacity of 2,200. Ten minutes before kick-off these pens were already full, or more than full, when a further 2,000 people suddenly gained entry to the west terrace, most of whom went directly into pens 3 and 4, precipitating the tragedy. For the details see HMSO 1989.

Jerusalem, or where he gets his figures: were they his own estimate, or did he take them from, for instance, Vespasian's *Commentarii*?²⁸ Either way, there seems little cause for confidence. Of those escaping during the siege Titus allowed 40,000 to go where they chose, but he sold a countless (*apeiron*) number into slavery (*War* 6.386); there were 97,000 captives taken in the whole war, some or most of them, perhaps, from Jerusalem, and of course 1.1 million died in the siege (*War* 6.420). Most of the latter had been at the Passover and, overtaken by events, had been trapped in Jerusalem. At the Passover of 65 (probably) Josephus reports a crowd of not less than 3 million Jews beseeching Cestius Gallus the governor of Syria when he came to Jerusalem (*War* 2.280). And we have the famous counting of the population of Jerusalem ordered by Cestius. His purpose was not to satisfy some natural curiosity about the number of Jews, but to persuade Nero of the city's strength (*War* 6.421-5): in other words he had a strategic interest in the number being as large as possible. The alleged and unreliable method used was to count not people, but Passover sacrificial victims (255,600) and multiply by a factor of ten, giving us arithmetically 2,556,000, but 2.7 million according to Josephus. While theoretically the Temple authorities might have been able to keep track of how many animals had been slaughtered, multiplication by ten looks quite arbitrary. Perhaps the war had kept the numbers down at the Passover of 70, but even if Josephus estimated there were only 1.2 or 1.3 million besieged in the city for five months, I can see no reason to believe this any more or less than, for instance, Tacitus' figure of 600,000 (*Hist.* 5.13): they are almost certainly both complete guesses, and, if we are looking for 'real' numbers, all but worthless. Mostly, Josephus does not know how many people died, or were at this or that Passover, or lived in Galilee (or anywhere else): his numbers are simply a patriotic estimate reflecting his sense of national pride rather than actual and known, but exaggerated, figures.

And, before we move on to modern techniques, we should note that the same applies to Philo, and his estimate of 1 million for the number of Jews in Egypt. Feldman calls him the head of the Alexandrian community, and therefore someone who must have had considerable knowledge of the number of Jews. Actually there is no particular reason to think that Philo was head of the Alexandrian Jewish community, even if he did lead the famous embassy to Gaius which he himself described.²⁹ To be sure, he was born into a prominent Alexandrian Jewish family, brother of Alexander the Alabarch. The Alabarch (=Arabarch) was a high official controlling collection

²⁸ See Rajak 1983: 215-16. For the Roman habit of boasting with precise figures, see Wiseman 1985: 3-19.

²⁹ Josephus, *Ant.* 18.259 and Eusebius, *Hist. Eccl.* 2.5 call him the leader of this embassy, but I wonder if their statements are not just an assumption based on their reading of Philo's own account, where in fact he gives no indication that he is in charge.

of customs dues in Egypt,³⁰ but we have no reason to think that he, or anyone else, would know how many Jews there were in Egypt. The only way I can think of calculating this, short of a Jewish-run census, would be an estimate based on the amount of money collected for the half-shekel tax paid by all male Jews between the ages of twenty and fifty. But we hear of neither, and it is much more likely, as Rathbone argues, that Philo's figure is a Jewish exaggeration, necessary to keep pace with the rhetorical figure of 7 million, traditionally accepted in Egypt as the population of the whole country.³¹

Analysis of the literary sources is a highly subjective matter: I believe there are grounds for regarding them as extremely unreliable, while others are prepared to place more trust in them. Although the figures may often seem downright impossible, it is difficult to demonstrate incontrovertibly, apart from one or two exceptions, that they are wrong. Clearly we must turn to modern techniques of estimating population numbers. For all practical purposes water supply is not going to help us:³² where we have very extensive excavation, we may be able to estimate the carrying capacity of piped systems and aqueducts, but we cannot tell how much water was needed, or socially acceptable, for bathing, sanitation, drinking, cooking. Basing any estimate on comparisons with modern water supplies, as Wilkinson tried to do in the case of Jerusalem, is clearly no help.³³ The seating capacity of theatres is also now discredited, for the obvious reasons that we do not know what proportion of a population was to be accommodated on any given occasion; and because local wealth and rivalries might have just as much to do with the size of a theatre as demographic needs.³⁴ Inscriptions recording public gifts of money for feasts, festivals or distribution have been used to good effect, particularly by Duncan-Jones;³⁵ but we have no such evidence for Jewish cities and towns, and, even with apparently firm information, we can be left struggling for any meaningful accuracy. For instance, an inscription from the town of Siagu in Tunisia presents interestingly explicit figures (*CIL* VIII, 967+12448): a public benefactor donates money towards the foundation of games and bequeaths the remaining 1,000 denarii to be distributed to 'all citizens' (*omnibus civibus*) at the rate of a sestertius per person, i.e. he envisages 4,000 recipients. But what does 'all citizens' mean? When he first dealt with the inscription, Duncan-Jones assumed, on comparative data pointing in that direction, that it meant adult males over

³⁰ See Lesquier 1918: 421-7; and for more recent references Raschke 1978: 848, n. 806; 868, n. 899.

³¹ Rathbone 1990: 103-7.

³² Attempts to use water supply include Grimal 1937: 108-41; Rosenan 1978: 14. For interesting discussion of the social aspects of water supply, see Bruun 1997: 121-55.

³³ Wilkinson 1974: 33-51.

³⁴ See Duncan-Jones 1982: 262. The same objections apply to the size of synagogues: see Reed 1992: 8-9.

³⁵ Duncan-Jones 1982: 262-77.

the age of eighteen.³⁶ Mortality patterns based on what are assumed to be comparable modern data suggest that this group would constitute just over a third of the total, giving approximately 14,000 citizens altogether; add perhaps 3,000 slaves and Siagu would have had a population in the vicinity of 17,000. This looks good, but is actually fraught with uncertainty in everything but the 4,000 intended recipients. When he returned to the inscription at a later date, Duncan-Jones was worried about the resulting density per km² of Siagu's territory, estimated very roughly at 60-70 km²;³⁷ this gives a density of somewhere between 250 and 300 per km², which he regards as high even by modern standards. Having maintained earlier that 'at the lowest, the population of Siagu cannot have been much less than 14,000, while it may well have been above this figure', Duncan-Jones now reduced his estimate of the population to between 4,000 and 7,000 free inhabitants, but without new calculations. Was Siagu a town of 7,000 inhabitants or 17,000? We do not really seem to have got anywhere.

Mention of population density – how many people inhabited a given unit of area – does bring us onto potentially more solid ground.³⁸ The inevitable drawback of estimating the population of ancient settlements in this way is that it depends on comparative material from more recent times – medieval towns, for instance, or, in the case of Palestine, nineteenth- and twentieth-century cities such as Aleppo, Damascus, Jerusalem; and the amount of space needed by, or allowed to, an individual varies widely from period to period and society to society. The method also needs secure archaeological data as to the area of a settlement (incidentally the fullest possible excavation is also necessary to Narroll's influential formula of one inhabitant to each 10 m² of enclosed and roofed living space³⁹). But in spite of disagreement about the density coefficient to be applied, it does seem to offer guidance at least to maximum possibilities. It is difficult to accept a population density for an urban settlement of more than the 400-500 per hectare argued by Broshi.⁴⁰ This has been disputed, but ineffectively in my opinion. In a recent article on the population of Jerusalem, Reinhardt points out that in the modern old city of Jerusalem there are residential areas with far greater densities: 1,400 per hectare, for instance, in the centre of the Muslim quarter in 1988; over 1,500 per hectare in the Jewish quarter of the old city in 1895 (if we can

³⁶ Duncan-Jones 1963: 85-90.

³⁷ Duncan-Jones 1982: 265.

³⁸ This method of estimating population certainly goes back as far as Beloch 1886: 26-9. For its more recent application see, for instance, Pounds 1969: 135-57; Read 1978: 312-17; Broshi 1979: 1-10; Shiloh 1980: 25-35; Broshi and Gophna 1984: 41-53. Comparative material from well excavated sites is very important, nowhere more so than Pompeii and Ostia: see, for instance, Jongman 1991: 108-12; Packer 1967: 80-9; Packer 1971: 70.

³⁹ Narroll 1962: 587-9. See also Kolb 1985: 581-99, who allows a smaller area per person.

⁴⁰ Broshi 1979: 1.

believe the figure of 15,000 said to be living there at the time).⁴¹ Although he is right to emphasize how much densities can vary within a given settlement,⁴² Reinhardt's procedure is surely methodologically unacceptable in that it selects as representative of the whole a tiny part of one quarter; in spite of intense crowding in one area, the overall density of the Muslim quarter in 1988 was only just over 400 per hectare. We cannot proceed to argue from one tiny area of the city that the figure represents a possible density for the entire settlement. The difference between gross density for a whole settlement and spot densities within the settlement can be dramatic. United Nations figures published in 1980 show, for instance, that in Port-au-Prince, Haiti, the gross density for the city as a whole was ten per hectare, while the highest spot density was 1,390 per hectare; in Bombay the highest spot density recorded was 1,169 per hectare, but the gross density for the city (as opposed to the greater Bombay area) was 452 per hectare (this was the largest gross density in the tables); similarly in Calcutta there was a highest spot density of 1,018 per hectare, but a gross density of 295 per hectare.⁴³ There will always be the insuperable problem of arguing back from modern cities to ancient, but neither archaeology nor the literary sources give us any strong reason to suppose that ancient settlements were invariably more crowded than modern.

Certain estimates of ancient Jerusalem's population fly in the face of what is possible on these comparative data.⁴⁴ Schick argued in 1881 (and Reinhardt gives him some credence) for a population of 200–250,000, based on an estimated area of 194 hectares, i.e. roughly between 1,100 and 1,300 per hectare! But even more recent attempts suggest a massive overall density: Har-El posits a population of 200,000 in 66 CE and 1,100 per hectare; Ben-David 80–110,000 in Herod's time, giving a density of over the 1,000 per hectare; Scheckenhofer's 120,000 in an area of 82 hectares assumes a density of nearly 1,500 per hectare. Some scholars try to calculate the public areas and subtract these from the density calculation, but this too is distorting, as modern comparative figures do not seem to take this into account. Jeremias' influential estimate, for instance, of some 25–30,000 inhabitants allowed an overall area of only 83 hectares for the city in Jesus' time, but he calculated his figure on the basis of 66 hectares, the rest being uninhabited public areas. Broshi too

⁴¹ Reinhardt 1995: 249–57.

⁴² The reasons for these variations are in some ways far more interesting than any norm we might be able to establish: see Wallace-Hadrill 1994: 95–6.

⁴³ United Nations 1980: table IV.6. Other high spot densities include Hong Kong, 1,656 per hectare (gross 350); Kanpur, 1,061 (gross 105); Morocco, 770 (gross 133); Aleppo, 750 (gross 100). I have not been able to find more recent United Nations material on density of settlement.

⁴⁴ See Reinhardt 1995: 240–5 for a helpful summary of the modern estimates discussed below.

subtracts the Temple Mount from his calculations: 170.5 hectares minus 14.5 for the Temple, leaving 156 inhabitable hectares. As the calculation of Jerusalem's area varies and we do not know the density, probably the best we can do is apply the maximum coefficients. The largest area estimate is that of Har-El at 200 hectares: multiply this by 500, and it would be very hard to argue that the population of Jerusalem was more than 100,000 at the time of the great revolt. Most estimates of its area are smaller.⁴⁵ Broshi's 175 hectares would be in line with a number of others, giving a maximum of 87,500 on our 500 per hectare coefficient. But it has to be said that 500 is very much a maximum. Packer's estimate of Ostia's population, 27,000, gives a density of less than 400 per hectare.⁴⁶ And we know it was extremely densely inhabited. Jerusalem was also very crowded, but there is no obvious reason to think that it was more crowded than Ostia. On a coefficient of 400, we are at a population of 70,000, and the range 70–100,000 seems to me the most convincing maximum – it might well have been smaller.

Broshi attempts to take the calculation of population density a step further by adding up the areas of all the twenty six towns known in the Roman-Byzantine period. He counts 1,240 hectares, subtracts a quarter to allow for public and open spaces and multiplies by a factor of 400 – giving 372,000 as the total of the urban population of Palestine. He then multiplies by three on the assumption that the urban population was about a third of the total, which would be not much more than 1 million.⁴⁷ It must be said that this whole procedure is extremely inexact. The margin of error in assessing the area of each individual town is very large – as we saw, estimates of Jerusalem's area varied from 83 to 200 hectares – and indeed some estimates are clearly little more than the roughest of guesses. This inexactitude is now multiplied by a factor of twenty-six. Subtracting a quarter for open spaces seems to me methodologically unsound, not to mention quite arbitrary. Applying a density coefficient of 400 per hectare is also arbitrary and probably far too high: many of the smaller towns cannot possibly have reached anywhere near the density of Jerusalem, and in all likelihood were much more along the lines of Pompeii, where current thinking posits a density of under 150 per hectare.⁴⁸ And putting the urban population at a third of the total may be right, but it too is a guess. The procedure is so speculative that the results can scarcely be of substantial value. You could easily and convincingly change any one of the elements involved, resulting in a totally different conclusion. For instance, a density coefficient of say 200

⁴⁵ Jeremias' 83 hectares perversely ignores the expansion into the suburbs that Josephus talks about (*War* 5.148).

⁴⁶ Packer 1971: 70. Meiggs 1973: 597–8 thinks that Packer's figure is too low, but calls his own estimate of the population, 50–60,000, 'little more than a guess' (p. 533).

⁴⁷ Broshi 1979: 3–5.

⁴⁸ For discussion, see Reed 1992: 13–14.

is more likely, it could be argued, as an average maximum over the whole of Palestine: this would halve Broshi's calculation.

Egypt was a particularly important area of the Diaspora, and, apart from the figure of one million Jews reported by Philo (*Flac.* 43), the ancient sources do have rather more to say about the overall population than for many parts of the ancient world, as Egypt was supposed to be far more populous than anywhere else (Diodorus 1.36.6). Josephus (*War* 2.385) counts a total population in the first century CE, excluding Alexandria, of 7.5 million (apparently basing the number on poll tax figures); in Alexandria he states that 50,000 Jews were killed in 61 CE (*War* 2.494–8); Diodorus (1.31.6–9) says that while in the past there were said to have been about 7 million inhabitants, by his own time (the mid first century BCE) the number was not less than 3 million, including more than 300,000 in Alexandria (17.52.6). In spite of criticism from Lo Cascio, Rathbone provides by far the most careful and convincing critical analysis of these figures.⁴⁹ In his dismissal of Josephus he points out how the figure of 7.5 million comes in a speech of Agrippa, 'an encomium of the size and strength of the Roman empire, surely borrowed and adapted from an earlier example of the genre', which will have provided Josephus with the figure and the respectability of a reference to the poll tax. Rathbone might have made a further point about the rhetorical strategy of Agrippa's speech: for in it, Agrippa, while trying to dissuade the Jews from revolt, sets out to show how huge native populations in the imperial provinces are controlled by a very small number of Romans: his own rhetoric requires population numbers as big as possible. Rathbone maintains that only Diodorus is outside a tradition that since earliest times had accepted a rhetorical figure of 7 million for Egypt, but once again the ancient sources are problematic and unreliable.

Rathbone also employs a combination of two other modern techniques that could be helpful to us – the carrying capacity of the land, and the density, not of the urban centres, but of the land in general. It is true that estimating carrying capacity is more effective for primitive prehistoric times, than for a period of some industrial enterprise, agricultural surpluses and trade.⁵⁰ But allowing for such factors as massive exports of grain, fallowing, people living above subsistence level and agricultural production not contributing to human nutrition, the 25,000 km² of cultivable land in Egypt cannot, in Rathbone's opinion, have sustained more than 5 million, and probably fewer: the evidence we have on density per km² – and certainly in

⁴⁹ Rathbone 1990: 103–7, who surely correctly criticizes editors for emending the text of Diodorus to replace the figure he reports in his own day of three million, a reading which the majority of manuscripts favour, with the number seven million, in order to bring it into line with the figure he reports for the past. For Lo Cascio's criticisms, see Lo Cascio 1999: 425–47.

⁵⁰ See Shiloh 1980: n. 36, pp. 26–7.

the Fayum it is impressively precise – would indicate a maximum throughout Egypt of 120, thus giving an agricultural population of not more than 3 million, and an overall total of 3.75 million including Alexandria and the metropoleis. Delia's careful estimate of the area of Alexandria is 825 hectares, but she calculates a population for the city of 500–600,000, which results in a density of 600 to over 700 per hectare.⁵¹ The maximum density coefficient we postulated earlier, 400–500 per hectare, allows a maximum population of between 330,000 and just over 410,000. In a total Egyptian population of say 3.5 million, can we possibly give credence to Philo's figure of 1 million Jews? Delia also suggests that the figure of 180,000 which appears in a fragmentary papyrus of the *Acta Alexandrinorum* might refer to the number of Jews in Alexandria (*P. Giss. Univ.* V, 46).⁵² While possible, this is the sort of dangerous guess that can gain currency as something more than a guess, and it must be emphasized that we have absolutely no idea what the figure refers to. Delia's further attempt to take Josephus' figure of 50,000 Jews killed in Alexandria in 61 (*War* 2.498) as some sort of support for an overall Jewish population of 180,000 in the city, founders on the rock of Josephus' rhetoric. It comes in a passage of high and heart-rending drama, with the Jews suffering death in all forms, some dying in the open, some driven into their houses which were then set on fire, the Romans showing no pity for children or respect for the aged, but pursuing their murderous career until the whole place was deluged with blood and five myriads of corpses were piled up. This is patriotic propaganda: Josephus has either made up the casualty figure, or has willingly accepted the exaggerated guess he found in his source. But even supposing for a moment we accept Delia's guess of 180,000 as the number of Jews in Alexandria, where can we possibly find Philo's remaining 820,000 in the rest of Egypt?

The carrying capacity of Palestine is difficult to estimate, because the cultivable area is much less clear than that of Egypt. Hoehner, for instance, after careful consideration, puts the area of Galilee at 750 square miles – just under 2,000 km² – but Beloch at 3,200 km².⁵³ From the point of view of density per km², both make a nonsense of Josephus' 3 million inhabitants, a simply inconceivable density of close to or over 1,000 per km².⁵⁴ McCown in 1947 estimated the cultivable area of ancient Palestine at just over 9,300 km²

⁵¹ Delia 1989: 275–92. Sly 1996: 44–8 accepts Delia's estimate, but for a more conservative calculation (200,000), see Haas 1997: 46–7 with notes 3–7.

⁵² Delia 1989: 288–9.

⁵³ Hoehner 1972: 43–51; 277–97; Beloch 1886: 243.

⁵⁴ The density of the modern State of Israel is 236 per km², according to United Nations 1995: 88; but this is a figure reached by a simple division of the land area by the population, thus taking no account of the distorting effect of city population – see United Nations 1996: table 7, p. 238 reports the urban population of Israel as 4,723,000, against a rural population of 539,300.

(2,315,000 acres), while more recently an estimate of 7,630 km² has been suggested:⁵⁵ such a calculation is indeed, as Byatt maintains, 'a speculative venture'.⁵⁶ If we take 8,300 km² (3 million arouras), and a yield similar to Egypt's (10 artabas per aroura),⁵⁷ this would theoretically give an annual crop, after deducting seed-corn, equivalent to 27 million artabas of wheat, enough to support at subsistence level a population of about 3.25 million (assuming 250 kg of wheat per person per year; or a daily subsistence requirement of 13,250 calories per family of six and 3,200 calories per kg).⁵⁸ But this is an unrealistic estimate in that it assumes every hectare of land was used for growing wheat, and it takes no account of taxes, fallowing, fodder crops or luxury living above subsistence level. Allowing for these, it would be hard to imagine that the carrying capacity of the land was much more than about 2 million people. But the incompleteness of our data – we do not even know the cultivable area under consideration – and the complexity of the Palestinian economy, even assuming with Safrai that in the first century CE it was still largely self-sufficient,⁵⁹ make all such calculations so crude as to be of doubtful value. Perhaps more useful is an estimate of the population density of the land. Rathbone's calculations for Egypt are based on far more substantial evidence than can be mustered for Palestine, and his arguments for a maximum of 120 per km² would be difficult to dispute.⁶⁰ We also have no particular reason to think that Palestine was any more densely populated than Egypt. If we apply the coefficient of 120 to an area of somewhat over 8,000 km², we get a maximum agricultural population of about 1 million. With the urban centres included, we might have 1.3 or 1.4 million altogether, but I very much doubt the total population of Palestine can have been much larger. And of course we must remember that by no means all who lived there were Jews.

I have been very negative about ancient sources and only marginally more positive about modern techniques of calculating the number of Jews in the ancient world. Baron's figure of 8 million Jews in the first century CE was based on Bar-Hebraeus' 7 million within the Roman empire, and another estimated million outside the empire. Philo's million for Egypt is accepted,

55 McCown 1947: 425–36; 7,630 km² is cited in Reed 1992: 7, n. 18. Cultivable land in modern Israel is calculated to be 12,560 km²; United Nations 1991: table II.

56 Byatt 1973: 59.

57 Rathbone 1990: 139 n. 18; Rathbone 1991: 242–4.

58 On crop yields etc., see Ben-David 1974: 106; Evans 1981: 432ff.; Foxhall and Forbes 1982: 41–90; Oakman 1986: 28; Garnsey and Saller 1987: 78–82.

59 Safrai 1994: 222.

60 Although the evidence comes almost entirely from the Arsinoite nome, his generalization for the rest of Egypt seems justified: Rathbone 1990: 108–9; 130–4. It might be well to emphasize just how precise the evidence for the Egyptian countryside provided by papyri can be: in certain years we know almost exactly the size of the territory and population of villages like Karanis, Kerkeosiris or Theadelphia.

and the major Jewish settlements in Syria, Asia Minor and Babylonia are assumed to have had more than a million each; and Palestine 2.5 million. But Bar-Hebraeus' figure is a mangling of Eusebius' report of a census of Roman citizens and does not refer to the number of Jews; there is no good reason to think that Philo knew how many Jews there were in Egypt; there are absolutely no grounds at all for positing a million Jews in Asia Minor or Babylonia, as we simply do not have a clue;⁶¹ and 2.5 million for Palestine is just a 'sensibly' adjusted acceptance of Josephus. The ancient sources are so tendentious and unreliable as to be virtually without value, in much the same way as Baron's patriotic guess of 8 million. That this figure, or indeed any precise figure, should be used as the main plank, or even one of the main planks, in an argument presenting Judaism as a hugely successful missionary religion in the first century CE is unacceptable.⁶² The number of settlements in Palestine increases substantially in the Roman period, and thus an increase in the population in this area is to be deduced; but we do not have the data that would enable us to estimate the scale of that increase and the exact numbers involved.⁶³

Do modern techniques offer any hopes of greater accuracy? The carrying capacity of Judaea is almost impossible to assess, it seems to me, as there are so many variables. On the other hand density of population both on the land and in urban settlements gives food for thought. Josephus says that Galilee was very populous (*War* 3.43), although there can scarcely be grounds for regarding Palestine as more densely populated than the massively fertile and populous land of Egypt. Using Egyptian figures as a guide – and Palestine, like Egypt, seems to have been typically a land of villages – we might estimate an agricultural Palestinian population of up to about 1 million, although, of course, not all of them Jews. Probably our best chance of assessing the population of an ancient settlement is by applying a suitable density coefficient to its area. We can proceed only by hypothesis, but comparative

61 If we could identify as the half-shekel tax contributions of a known period the 800 talents of Jewish money that Mithradates Eupator took from the island of Cos (Josephus, *Ant.* 14.110–13 citing a report of Strabo), and the various quantities of Jewish gold (e.g. 100 lbs at Apamea) which Flaccus seized in 62 BCE (Cicero, *Flacc.* 68) we would have helpful data indeed for assessing the Jewish population of Asia. The truth is we simply do not know what the sums represent, although it seems probable that they are made up of a mixture of Temple tax contributions (perhaps accrued over a number of years), other gifts to the Temple, personal funds of individual Jews and public funds of particular communities. For discussion see, for example, Reinach 1888: 204–10; Marshall 1975: 146–8; Sherwin-White 1981: 138; Trebilco 1991: 14; 196, n. 45; Barclay 1996: 266–7.

62 Curiously Wasserstein (1996: 314–17), having successfully demolished the grounds for making any precise estimate of the number of Jews in the Greco-Roman world, proceeds to argue that only large-scale proselytizing can explain what must have been the very substantial Jewish population in Alexandria. But unless we know what sort of numbers we are talking about, it is difficult to see how this can be anything more than a hunch.

63 On the increase in the number of settlements, see Safrai 1994: 436–40.

data make a good case for positing a maximum density of 400–500 people per hectare. On this basis I have suggested a maximum population for Alexandria of between 330,000 and 410,000; for Jerusalem 70,000 to 100,000. If Broshi is right that Caesarea, for instance, covered 95 hectares, then it is unlikely to have had a population larger than 38,000–47,500.⁶⁴ Theoretically, careful archaeological excavation of all urban sites should, in due course, give us a guide to the urban population of Palestine; in practice this is far from the case, because although archaeology is undoubtedly the only obvious way forward, even with careful investigation it is very tricky estimating the area of many ancient sites. And the method can really only offer maximum possibilities. If Reed is right that the area of first-century Capernaum was not more than 17 hectares, any estimate of its population much over 8,500 is improbable (using a maximum coefficient of 500). But while it would be quite unjustified to apply the same coefficient to Capernaum as to Jerusalem, whether Reed's calculation of 150 persons per hectare is right or not is unfortunately another matter. There is a great deal of circular arguing in this subject. Reed uses comparative figures from Pompeii produced by, among others, Jongman. But when you look at Jongman's work you find that his estimate for Pompeii's population is based on Beloch's; Beloch's estimate was dictated by his own view of the population of Italy, which in turn relied on his interpretation of the Augustan census figures; and Lo Cascio now makes a strong case that Beloch was wrong about the Augustan census figures.⁶⁵ This is an extremely fragile chain of argument.

I do not believe we have the first notion of how many Jews there were in the ancient world, even roughly speaking, nor do we have the means to discover it. This may sound like a counsel of despair, but pretending otherwise and basing important theories on wishful thinking, will get us nowhere.

⁶⁴ Broshi 1979: 5. Other maxima would be Ascalon (52 hectares) 20,800–26,000; Sepphoris (60 hectares) 24,000–30,000; Beth-shan (110 hectares) 44,000–55,000.

⁶⁵ Lo Cascio 1994.

JEWISH CALENDAR RECKONING IN THE GRAECO-ROMAN CITIES

Sacha Stern

It is reasonably well attested that Jewish communities, all over the Roman empire, observed the Sabbath and the Jewish or Biblical festivals.¹ If so, they must have had ways of reckoning their dates. In some cases, it may have been sufficient for them to establish the *individual* dates of annual festivals: for instance, that Passover would occur on the first full moon in the spring. But the celebration of new months, *noumeniae*, is also well attested in a number of Diaspora communities, and this implies a *continuous* calendar, running from month to month through the whole year. This suggests that Jewish communities reckoned their own calendars, of which the main function was to determine the dates of Jewish *noumeniae*, *fasts*, and *festivals*.

Evidence, however, of Jewish calendar reckoning in the Graeco-Roman diaspora is relatively slim – which explains why modern scholarship has so far neglected its study. Jewish dates hardly appear in inscriptions and documents from the entire Hellenistic and Roman periods (with the only exception of Judaea in the first two centuries of this era). In Egypt and Cyrenaica, in particular, Egyptian dates are consistently used in all Jewish inscriptions and papyri.² This may reflect, of course, the demands of public life or the conventions of the 'epigraphic habit'. But we are entitled to wonder whether the absence of Jewish dates does not indicate, instead, that they were simply never reckoned. The question arises, indeed, whether we should always assume that the Jews reckoned a calendar that was different from the official calendars of the Graeco-Roman cities.

In the context of this chapter I will *not* present a comprehensive or detailed analysis of the evidence relating to Jewish calendar reckoning in

¹ Schürer 1973–87: vol. III.1, 144–5, nn. 26, 28–9.

² For inscriptions generally, see Frey 1936–52. For inscriptions from Egypt, see Horbury and Noy 1992. For inscriptions from Cyrenaica, see Lüderitz 1983. For papyri, see Tcherikover, Fuks and Stern 1957–64 (principally from Egypt) and Cotton, Cockle and Millar 1955: 214–35.

Judaea/Palestine, Babylonia, Egypt, and the rest of the Diaspora. Nor will I engage in the analysis of how exactly Jewish calendars may have been reckoned. The question I wish to address is merely whether calendar reckoning contributed towards Jewish distinctiveness in the Graeco-Roman world. I will examine the attitudes of Philo and Josephus, and epigraphic and documentary evidence from Berenike, the province of Arabia, Antioch and other cities and regions of the Roman empire. This chapter also forms part of a more detailed history of the Jewish calendar in the Roman and early medieval period (see Stern 2001).

Although I will concentrate on the Roman period (from the first century CE onwards), it is essential that we consider first the historical background of the Persian and Hellenistic periods. By the time of the arrival of the Romans in the first century BCE, all calendars in the Near East were modelled on the Babylonian or Macedonian *lunar* calendars.³ This was the result of a succession of empires that had adopted these calendars for their official use. The Babylonian lunar calendar had been taken over by the Persian Achaemenids and disseminated throughout their empire.⁴ This calendar was also adopted by the Jews. The equivalence made in the book of Esther between Biblical numbered months and Babylonian names of months⁵ suggests at least the possibility that the Jews reckoned the dates of their new months and festivals according to the Babylonian lunar calendar, without resort to a distinctive calendar of their own. At Elephantine, indeed, the Jews appear not to have used any calendar but the Babylonian.⁶

The Macedonian calendar of the early Hellenistic rulers happened also to be lunar, and thus was soon assimilated with the Babylonian,⁷ although, as Greek speakers, Seleucid rulers continued using Macedonian names of months. The Babylonian calendar was thus maintained in the Near East, and eventually outlived the disintegration of the Seleucid empire. It became the official calendar of the Parthian empire,⁸ of Nabataea (see below), and of other kingdoms of the former Seleucid empire. In Judaea, likewise, it was adopted by the Hasmonaean dynasty (hence the Babylonian datings in the books of Maccabees, again equated with numbered biblical months).⁹ Whether the Jewish calendar in Judaea corresponded exactly to the Babylonian reckoning is difficult to know. The Hasmonaean may have set the lunar months themselves, empirically, as described in later rabbinic sources. They may also have intercalated the year at different times from the

³ See Samuel 1972: ch.6, and especially p.182, n.1.

⁴ See Bickerman 1968: 24; Parker and Dubberstein 1956; Sachs and Hunger 1988–96.

⁵ Esther 3.13, etc.; also Zechariah 1.7, 7.1.

⁶ Porten 1990: 13–32.

⁷ Samuel 1992: 139–41; also Bickerman 1968: 20.

⁸ Samuel 1992: 179–80, 187; Bickerman 1968: 25.

⁹ For references, albeit incomplete, see Schürer 1973–87: vol. I, 18 and 588.

Babylonians.¹⁰ Even so, the Jewish calendar would not have been particularly distinctive.¹¹

In Ptolemaic Egypt, on the other hand, the situation was entirely different. For some millennia already, the civil calendar in Egypt had been not lunar but solar (or nearly solar, based on a 365-day year); and this calendar was maintained unchanged until the Roman period.¹² Alongside this calendar, the Ptolemies at first employed a lunar, Macedonian calendar. But by the end of the third century, the Ptolemaic calendar was assimilated with the Egyptian civil calendar and thus become completely solar.¹³

It so happens, however, that from the same time (201/200 BCE) Judaea was no longer under Ptolemaic rule. As a result, throughout the Hellenistic period the rulers of Judaea, whether Ptolemaic or (after 201/200 BCE) Seleucid, employed official calendars that were lunar. But in Egypt itself, the Jews of Greek cities such as Alexandria would have been exposed at the end of the third century to a significant change. Whereas the Greeks of Alexandria, as well as the Ptolemaic rulers, adopted the Egyptian solar calendar, the Jews of Egypt appear to have maintained for religious purposes a lunar calendar: this at least is suggested by Aristobulus, an Alexandrian Jewish philosopher of the mid-second century BCE, to whom is attributed the comment that the day of Passover occurs on the 14th of the month after evening at the full moon.¹⁴ It is just possible, therefore, that after the reform of the Ptolemaic calendar the Jews of Egypt were faced for the first time in their history with the responsibility of setting and reckoning their own, distinctive lunar calendar.

The exceptional circumstances of later Ptolemaic Egypt – as opposed to the rest of the Hellenistic world, where the Babylonian lunar calendar was maintained throughout – explain the keen awareness Philo would have had, by the first century CE, of the distinctiveness of the Jewish calendar. Besides stating at length, in the *Special Laws*, that this calendar is lunar, Philo makes its distinctiveness the main theme of a passage in the *Quaestiones*:

But not all (peoples) treat the months and years alike, but some in one way and some in another. Some reckon by the sun, others by the moon. And because of this the initiators of the divine festivals have

¹⁰ Bickerman 1968: 25–6.

¹¹ In the same period solar calendars were being promoted in the books of Enoch, Jubilees, and some of the Qumran literature; but the polemical tone of these works suggests that use of the solar calendar, in the last two centuries before the Common Era, would have been sectarian and only marginal.

¹² See Parker 1950: 51–4.

¹³ Samuel 1992: 146–50; Bickerman 1968: 38–40.

¹⁴ In Eusebius, *Hist. Eccl.* 7, 32, 17–8, cited in the canons of Anatolius. On Aristobulus see Schürer 1973–87: vol. III.1, 579–87.

expressed divergent views about the beginnings of the year, setting divergent beginnings to the revolutions of the seasons suitable to the beginnings of the cycles. Wherefore (Scripture) has added, 'This month (shall be) to you the beginning', making clear a determined and distinct number of seasons, lest they follow the Egyptians, with whom they are mixed, and be seduced by the customs of the land in which they dwell.¹⁵

By 'Egyptians' he means, no doubt, the Egyptians of his own day as much as those of the biblical narrative. The emphasis in this passage is, admittedly, on when the year begins: according to Exodus it begins in the spring – whereas in the Alexandrian calendar, the year began on the 29th of August.¹⁶ But Philo's reference in the same passage to solar and lunar reckonings suggests, in addition, awareness on his part of the significance that a distinctive, lunar calendar must have had for the Jewish identity of the Alexandrian community.¹⁷

The evidence of Philo warns us, moreover, against taking the exclusive use of Egyptian dates on Jewish papyri and inscriptions as evidence that the Jews of Egypt did not have a distinctive calendar of their own. It is likely, indeed, that the lunar calendar described by Philo in the *Special Laws* was widely used by Egyptian Jews, even if only for the purpose of establishing the dates of their new moons and festivals. Confirmation of this may at least be found in one of the inscriptions from Berenike, Cyrenaica, where the Egyptian calendar was also in use. This inscription, put up by the Jewish community of Berenike around the year 24 CE, is dated as everywhere according to the Egyptian calendar, i.e. 25th of Phaoph, but also according to the Jewish calendar, 'at the assembly of Tabernacles'.¹⁸ If the Jews had followed the Egyptian calendar for the dates of their festivals, and if Phaoph had been taken as equivalent to the biblical seventh month, then the festival of Tabernacles could not have coincided with the 25th of this month: for Tabernacles occur from the 15th to the 22nd of the seventh month. Evidently, therefore, a *different* calendar was used to establish the date of this festival, which as I have demonstrated elsewhere, was most probably lunar.

In the period when Philo was writing, however, Egypt was no longer the only part of the Eastern Mediterranean where a solar calendar was reckoned.

¹⁵ *Quaestiones ad Ex.* i. 1, trans. R. Marcus, Loeb Classical Library, 1953, pp. 4–5.

¹⁶ Bickerman 1968: 50; Samuel 1992: 177.

¹⁷ The Egyptians did reckon a cultic lunar calendar alongside the civil solar calendar: see Parker 1950: esp. 13–23, 26–9, 54. But because its function was exclusively cultic, the Jews are unlikely to have identified with it or used it. Philo's point is that the civil solar calendar, which was most in use, was distinctly Egyptian, whereas the only identifiable Jewish calendar was lunar.

¹⁸ *CIG* III no. 5361; *IGR* I, no. 1024; Roux and Roux 1949: 281–96; Reynolds 1981: no. 17; Lüderitz 1983: no. 71; Boffo 1994: no. 24, pp. 204–16.

Already in the late first century BCE, under the influence of the Roman, Julian calendar, the cities of Asia Minor, Northern Syria and Phoenicia had converted their Macedonian calendars into solar calendars.¹⁹

The Jews, by contrast, appear to have retained their lunar calendar: thus Josephus stresses in a number of places in the *Antiquities* that the Jewish (or biblical) calendar is lunar.²⁰ But surprisingly, and unlike Philo, Josephus does not present the Jewish calendar as particularly distinctive from that of the non-Jews. Whereas Philo interprets Exodus 12.2 as enshrining the distinctiveness of the Jewish lunar calendar (as seen above), Josephus simply ignores the verse in his *Antiquities* and states, quite on the contrary, that Nisan is *equivalent* to the Macedonian Xanthikos and to the Egyptian Pharmuthi (ii. 14.6 [311]); only later in the narrative does he bother to mention, as an afterthought, that this month is lunar (ii. 15.2 [318]). His assimilation of Macedonian and Jewish (or Babylonian) names of months, in these passages as well as throughout the *Antiquities*, is particularly confusing, inasmuch as his Jewish calendar is lunar, whereas the Macedonian calendar in this period was solar – hence totally incompatible.

There are, besides, notorious uncertainties in many of Josephus' datings. In the *Jewish War*, in particular, it is widely agreed that Josephus must have used more than one calendar and dating system, and that this resulted from the variety of historical sources that he must have used.²¹

Josephus' lack of clarity in calendrical matters, and especially his confusion of Jewish lunar with Macedonian solar months, must be regarded as itself significant. Equivalences between Babylonian and Macedonian names of months were of course not new: they had been made under the Seleucids, in a period when the Macedonian calendar was still lunar (as mentioned above).²² In a sense, therefore, Josephus was only perpetuating an old calendrical tradition, even though it had become obsolete in his period, since Macedonian calendars had become solar and no longer compatible with the Jewish lunar calendar. But Josephus' failure to distinguish the Jewish calendar from that of contemporary non-Jews, together with the remarkable confusion inherent in his datings, was symptomatic perhaps of a failure to adjust to a rapidly changing situation, where from a dominantly lunar calendar the non-Jews of the Roman Near East had suddenly switched, around the turn of the first century CE, to a variety of solar calendars.²³

¹⁹ Samuel 1992: ch. vi, 171–89; Bickerman 1968: 48–9.

²⁰ *Antiquities* ii. 15, 2 (318); iii. 10, 3 (240); *ibid.* 5 (248); iv. 4, 6 (78); *ibid.* 7 (84).

²¹ See Schürer 1973–87: vol. I, 596–9.

²² Except that in the Seleucid period, Nisan was equated with Artemisios, i.e. one month behind Josephus: see Bickerman 1968: 25; Samuel 1992: 143 and 179.

²³ In the case of Philo, by contrast, the Jewish calendar had been distinctive from the Egyptian civil calendar for already over two centuries: to him, therefore, this distinctiveness was clear.

The consequences of such a rapid change were also to be felt, although in a completely different way, among the Jews of the province of Arabia. Before the creation of the Roman province in 106 CE, documents and inscriptions from the Nabataean kingdom use exclusively Babylonian names of months.²⁴ This legacy from the Persian and Seleucid periods suggests, in all likelihood, that the Babylonian lunar calendar was maintained in Nabataea until the end of the kingdom in 106 CE.²⁵ The documents of the Babatha archive reveal, however, that after this date the calendar of the province was completely transformed. Bearing in mind the radical changes that occurred in Provincia Arabia soon after 106 CE, in terms not only of official language but also, more generally, of political and of legal structures,²⁶ it is in this period that a change of calendar is most likely to have taken place.

The Greek documents of the Babatha archive,²⁷ all from after 106 CE, are dated by Julian and Macedonian dates, the latter introduced with the standard formula: 'according to the compute of the province of Arabia'. The correspondence between these two dating systems, almost always consistent, reveals beyond doubt that the Macedonian calendar of the province of Arabia was now solar. In the Aramaic and Nabataean documents, on the other hand, 'Babylonian' names of months are still in use after 106 CE. But in one bilingual, Greek and Aramaic document, *P. Yadin* 27, Macedonian and 'Babylonian' names of months are correlated and hence implicitly equivalent: Panemos and Gorpaïos in the Greek section are rendered as Tammuz and (Elul) in the Aramaic. Furthermore, in one Greek document (a summons to the governor's court at Petra) Hyperberetaios is explicitly equated with Tishre (*P. Yad.* 14–15). These equivalences are the same as in Josephus; except that in Josephus, they refer as we have seen to lunar months, whereas here the months referred to are solar.

These documents imply, therefore, that the Babylonian names of months that were used by Aramaic and Nabataean speakers in the province of Arabia were also, by now, solar months, and that they were equivalent to the Macedonian months of this province. Whether Julian, Macedonian, or Babylonian, all calendars in Provincia Arabia were now solar.

²⁴ E.g. *Av*, in *CIS* vol.ii(i) (Paris 1889), nos. 211 (dated 34 CE, but reading of 'Av' doubtful) and 219 (dated 42 CE); *Tevet*, in Negev 1971: 50–2 (dated 17 CE; and see footnotes for further references); *Elul*, *Kislev* and *Tevet* in *P. Yad.* 1–3, see Yadin 1962: 227–57, 239: 22 Elul 94 CE, 3 Kislev 99 CE, and 2 Tevet 99 CE.

²⁵ Pace Cotton and Greenfield 1994: 214, nn.19 and 24, who convert the date of *P. Yad.* 3 (2nd Tevet 99 CE) into Macedonian and Julian dates on the basis of *P. Yad.* 27 (on which see below), thus apparently assuming that the synchronization of the Nabataean and Macedonian calendars of the Roman Province of Arabia was already in force before 106 CE.

²⁶ On which see Millar 1993: 407 and 414–18.

²⁷ Published by Yadin 1989; referred to as *P. Yad.*

Yet as I have shown above from the Berenike inscription, the apparent absence of any lunar dating in these documents should not mislead us into believing that the Jews of Arabia had no distinctive calendar of their own, but followed, for the dating of their festivals, the local, solar calendar of the non-Jews. Fortunately for us, one of the documents – *P. Yadin* 18, a Jewish marriage contract – confirms that the Jews must have maintained a distinctive calendar. It was written in Maoza on the 5th of April 128 CE which corresponded, 'according to the compute of the province of Arabia', with the 15th of Xandicos. Although the Aramaic subscription is not dated, the month of Xandicos would have been rendered in Aramaic as 'Nisan'; and yet, a Jewish marriage contract could not have possibly been written on the (Jewish) 15th of Nisan (at least it is most unlikely), for that is the first day of the festival of Unleavened Bread. Therefore, the 'Nisan' of these official documents could not have the same as the Jewish 'Nisan'. This indicates that besides the solar calendar employed in all official documents, the Jews must have reckoned a separate, presumably lunar, calendar, for the observance of their festivals.

This assumption is all the more likely, moreover, if we consider the close connections that existed between the Jews of Arabia, of Idumaea and of Judaea, particularly around the area of the Dead Sea (thus Babatha herself married a man from En Gedi, at the southern edge of Judaea, and ended her days near that locality²⁸). For the celebration of their festivals, these Jews are likely to have ignored political boundaries and to have shared the same or at least similar calendrical practices.

Thus we find that when the province of Arabia was created and, under the influence of the Roman Julian calendar, its official calendar became solar, the Jewish inhabitants of this region maintained their own lunar calendar. Whereas until then, the Jews *could* have simply relied on the Nabataean lunar calendar, it is possible that they were now faced for the first time – just as in the case of the Jews of Ptolemaic Egypt, three centuries earlier – with the responsibility of reckoning their own, distinctive calendar. In this case, however, unlike the Jews of Egypt, they would have simply looked across the border to Judaea and followed the lunar calendar that was still in practice there.

The spread of solar calendars among non-Jews was conterminous with the expansion of the Roman empire in the Near East. After western Asia Minor and the eastern Mediterranean coast in the late first century BCE, and after Arabia in 106 CE, the solar calendar spread further east to Dura-Europos at the turn of the third century, just as the city was being incorporated into the Roman empire.²⁹ This process – which Fergus Millar *could* have mentioned

²⁸ See Yadin 1962: 247–8.

²⁹ Welles *et al.* 1959: 10.

in his *Roman Near East* – was so consistent that by the later second century CE Galen could write that 'Roman, Macedonians, Asiatics, and many other nations' all followed a solar calendar.³⁰ It is difficult, indeed, to find evidence of any lunar calendar within the boundaries of the Roman empire.³¹

The Jews, in this respect, were remarkably exceptional, as Galen himself, in the same passage, does not fail to indicate: they alone, in the Roman empire, had maintained a lunar calendar. All our evidence from the first century CE onwards concurs with this observation. Philo, Josephus, rabbinic sources, Christian sources, as well as documents and inscriptions, all suggest that the Jewish calendar in the Roman period was everywhere exclusively lunar.

Conversely, from the first century CE references to the Jewish solar calendars of *Jubilees* and Qumran writings disappear completely from our sources.³² One cannot help wondering whether the apparent demise of the solar calendar among the Jews, at precisely the same time as when the solar calendar was being adopted by the non-Jews, was not the result of some deliberate attempt by Jews to achieve social and cultural distinctiveness within the Graeco-Roman world. It remains, at least, an undeniable fact that by the end of the first century CE the lunar calendar had become among Jews a marker of their distinct identity.

In certain cases, however, the notion of distinctiveness requires qualification. I would like to refer to a most interesting document, discovered and published by Eduard Schwartz in 1905, that was drafted at the Council of Sardica in 343 CE.³³ This document provides a list of dates of the Christian Easter, alongside the dates when the Jews, presumably at Antioch,³⁴ had celebrated Passover between 328 and 342 CE. It is immediately evident that the dates of Passover in this document are all in the month of March. The Jews of Antioch appear to have followed a rule that Passover would always occur at the full moon in the month of March; and hence, that the month of March was used as the sole criterion for the frequency of intercalation (i.e. intercalation of a thirteenth month, so as to keep up with the solar cycle).³⁵

Elsewhere, however, the Jews are known to have observed Passover at different times. Another Christian source, the fragment of a letter of Peter of Alexandria (early fourth century), suggests that the Jews of Alexandria (or

³⁰ Galen, *In Hippocratis Epidemiarum Libros Commentarius* 1,1, ed. Kuhn vol. 17.1, p.23; partially cited in M. Stern, *GLAJJ* vol. 2 no. 394.

³¹ See Bickerman 1968: 48, but most of his evidence is actually either erroneous (regarding Sardis) or inconclusive (regarding other Asian cities). Cf. Samuel 1992: 115, 123, and 174–6, and see in more detail, Stern 2001.

³² For further details, see Stern 2001.

³³ Schwartz 1905: 122–3.

³⁴ As convincingly argued by Schwartz 1905: 123–6.

³⁵ See Schwartz, *ibid.*

elsewhere in Egypt?) in the same period celebrated Passover twice in Phamenoth and once in Pharmuthi, i.e. approximately between the 11th of Phamenoth (7th of March) and the 10th of Pharmuthi (5th of April) – which is not quite the same as the month of March.³⁶

The difference between Alexandria and Antioch is easy to explain. Because the Julian calendar was hardly used in Roman Egypt, the month of March could not have been used at Alexandria as a criterion for the intercalation; instead, Egyptian dates were used. At Antioch, by contrast, the local Macedonian calendar corresponded exactly with the Julian calendar;³⁷ hence the month of March, or Dystros in Macedonian, could be used by the Jews for regulating the intercalation.³⁸

Not only does this evidence point to the diversity that existed between the calendars of different Jewish communities (for which there is evidence otherwise), but it also qualifies the notion of Jewish calendrical distinctiveness within the Graeco-Roman world. Indeed, although the Jewish calendar of Antioch remained essentially distinctive, as a lunar calendar, from the official solar calendar of the city, it comprised nevertheless an element of this solar calendar by setting Passover in the month of Dystros–March. This element, moreover, was specific to the city of Antioch and to its calendar; in this respect, this Jewish calendar could have been viewed by Jews as distinctly 'Antiochene'.

Before concluding, attention must be drawn to the fact that surprisingly little is made in Jewish sources of the distinctiveness of the Jewish calendar, even well into the Roman period. It is implicit perhaps in an inscription from Catania (Sicily) dated 383 CE, where we first find a Jewish lunar date alongside the Julian date ('*luna octava*').³⁹ More explicit are two traditions in rabbinic sources:

Israel reckons by the moon and the nations by the sun ... and when the sun is eclipsed it is a bad omen for the nations since they reckon by the sun, and when the moon is eclipsed it is a bad omen for the enemies of Israel [euphemism] since they reckon by the moon.⁴⁰

³⁶ This letter, preserved in the preface of the *Chronikon Paschale*, was published separately by Migne, PG 18, 512B–520B, following Galland, *Ex Chron. Pasch.*, Venice 1729, itself following Du Cange's first edition of the *Chronikon Paschale*, Paris 1688; on which was based the English translation by Hawkins, in *Anti-Nicene Christian Library* (ANCL) vol.14, Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1869: 325–32. However, a better edition of this text, based on ms.Vatican 1941, is to be found in L. Dindorf, *Chronicon Paschale, Corpus Scriptorum Historiae Byzantinae*, part 9, vol.1, Bonn 1832; and following it, Migne, PG 92, 73B–C. For a discussion of this passage, see Schwartz 1905: 127; Grumel 1960: 166.

³⁷ See Samuel 1992: 174–7.

³⁸ Schwartz 1905: 126–7.

³⁹ *CJ* vol.1 no. 650; Noy 1993: no. 145.

⁴⁰ *Mekhilta de R. Yishmael* 1, ed. Horowitz-Rabin p. 7; *Tosefta Sukka* 2,6, ed. Lieberman, p. 263 (my translation).

Esau reckons by the sun which is large, Jacob reckons by the moon which is small.⁴¹

These traditions are Palestinian; but the former is also recorded in the Babylonian Talmud. In Babylonia, however, the situation would have been quite different: for the solar calendar only spread as far as did the Roman empire. The lunar, Babylonian calendar was consistently maintained in the Parthian empire,⁴² and although the Sassanians, from the early third century, adopted for official purposes a Persian calendar that was solar,⁴³ in Babylonia itself the calendar appears to have remained unchanged until the Muslim conquest. In this context, the Jewish calendar would hardly have been distinctive. Whether Babylonian rabbinic attitudes to their calendar would have differed, as a result, from that of their Palestinian counterparts, is a question which remains as yet to be answered.

41 *Bereshit Rabba* 6,3, ed. Theodor-Albeck p. 42 (my translation).

42 See references cited above, n. 4; also Samuel 1992: 179–80, 187.

43 Bickerman 1968: 43.

THE ESSENES IN GREEK SOURCES

Some reflections

John Dillon

This is a subject that I approach with some trepidation, aware as I am that there is a long history of controversy on the interpretation of the Greek sources for the Essene sect, especially the evidence of Philo and Josephus, and in particular the relevance of their evidence to what we know of the Qumran community, and, despite a long-standing interest in Philo, I cannot claim to be an expert in this field.¹

Nevertheless, a record of my impressions as an Hellenic outsider may be of some interest. What I propose to do is, first of all, to examine briefly the personal backgrounds of Philo and Josephus, in order to isolate factors that may have a bearing on their objectivity or competence as witnesses, and then to consider the various aspects of their accounts, with a view to establishing how far the variations between them, and between them and the evidence we seem to have from Qumran (both the documents and the archaeological evidence) are of any real significance.

The chief Graeco-Roman sources

Philo

Philo, whose dates may be taken as being approximately 30 BCE to 45 CE, is the earlier of the two, and on the whole the less well informed. A member of a very prominent and affluent Jewish family in Alexandria, his education appears to have been solidly Greek and his knowledge of Hebrew minimal,² though he plainly suffered a most remarkable conversion to his ancestral traditions at some stage in his life, which produced the unique amalgam of Greek culture and Jewish patriotism which we observe in his writings. It is

1 In fact, since this essay was originally composed, I have come upon an excellent survey by Todd S. Beall (1988), which seems to me to settle satisfactorily the basic accuracy of Josephus' account. In this revised version, I am much indebted to Beall.

2 On Philo's knowledge of Hebrew, I am glad to have the support of such authorities as Valentin Nikiprowetsky (e.g. 1977), and David Rokeah (e.g. 1968: 70–82), as well as of my friend David Winston, for my view that Philo knew little or nothing of the language.

not even certain, though not, I suppose, improbable, that he visited Palestine, but, though he certainly, in that case, would have visited Jerusalem, it is less likely that he would have gone on to call on any of the Essene communities of the time, or that he would have been welcome if he had.

On the other hand, he did have contact with a monastic group in the hinterland of Alexandria who were certainly Essenes of some sort, whom he calls *Therapeutai* – a term which, on the most credible explanation of the name 'Essene',³ is actually an accurate enough rendering of it into Greek, though Philo does not recognize this fact.⁴

Philo actually contrasts these *Therapeutai* in his own back yard with the *Essaioi* of Palestine, by presenting the former as practitioners of the contemplative life (*bios theôrêtikos*) as opposed to the latter, who are shining examples of the perfection of the practical life (*bios praktikos*), but that should not be allowed to mislead us. Philo is simply establishing Procrustean beds for these groups to suit his exegetical convenience. The contrast between the contemplative and practical modes of life was a well-established *topos* in Greek philosophical discourse by his time, and it pleases him to show that the Jewish nation exhibits outstanding examples of both modes. It is also doubtless true that the *Therapeutai* of Alexandria practised a more retired mode of life than their brethren in Palestine, who seem to have involved themselves pretty actively in the life of the community at large, holding down various jobs and earning wages, very much as a sect such as the Amish might do in modern America.⁵

Philo may then be taken as a primary source on the *Therapeutai*, and a secondary source on the Essenes of Palestine, though even in the former case

³ That is to say, the Aramaic *'asayya*, 'healers', as proposed by Geza Vermes, (1961–2: 427–43). The difference between the two forms of the name in Greek, Ἐσσαῖοι (which Philo himself favours) and Ἐσσηνοί (that favoured by Josephus) is explained through the association of the former to the emphatic and the latter to the absolute form of the Aramaic plural. Some objections have been made to this etymology, but they do not seem to me to be substantial. More serious, perhaps, is the fact the sectaries of Qumran do not refer to themselves as *'asayya*, or anything such, but rather as the *yahbad*, or 'community', but all one can say to that is that it would by no means be the only case of a sect not calling itself by the name by which the rest of the world knows it, e.g. the Quakers or the Mormons.

⁴ Philo actually proposes a fanciful etymology which connects Ἐσσαῖοι with the Greek word for 'holy', ὅσιος, a notion to which he may have been stimulated by a comparable etymology which occurs in Plato's *Cratylus* (401C), where Socrates points to the Doric for ὀσία, ἔσσια, as support for his explanation of the name of the goddess Hestia.

⁵ Certainly Josephus declares (*War II*, viii, 4 [124]) that 'they are not in one town only, but in every town several of them form a colony.' Philo, on the other hand, speaks of them (*Prob.* 76) as 'fleeing the cities because of the ungodliness customary among town-dwellers', and living in villages (κωμηδόν), but he is not a first-hand authority, as is Josephus. In any case, he does declare that they work in the fields and practise various crafts, 'and in this way they are useful to themselves and to their neighbours', implying a degree of interaction, such as would be characteristic also of the Amish.

needing to be approached with some caution, by reason of the idealized and hellenized perspective from which he views his subject matter.

Josephus

Josephus, on the other hand, who was born around 38 CE, constitutes a primary source for the Essenes of Palestine, in at least some of their manifestations. Indeed, he claims in his *Life* (10) to have, at about the age of sixteen, sampled their way of life (along with those of the other two sects among the Jews which he identifies, the Pharisees and the Sadducees), before settling down to be a Pharisee. This claim has, admittedly, been doubted, since, by his own assertion, the initiation period for the Essenes lasts fully three years (*War II*, viii, 7 [137–8]), and he is only allowing himself approximately this period for his whole process of spiritual shopping around,⁶ but one cannot be sure that he did not enrol as an initiate for at least a short time. Certainly, he seems to know their regimen well, and undoubtedly came up against many adherents of the sect in his time.

Josephus was, of course, a member of the Jewish ruling class in the latter part of the first century, and took part as a general in the revolt against Rome in 66–70 CE. Having been captured by the Romans, and then having gone over to their side, he became quite a celebrity in Roman society, and undertook in a number of works, composed in Greek, to explain to the Roman world who the Jews were, and how they came to be the way they were. In both of his major works, *The Jewish War* and *The Antiquities of the Jews*, he has occasion to speak of the Essenes, giving a particularly extended account of their way of life at *War II*, viii, 2–13 (119–61).

Although Josephus can be seen as having an axe to grind in many aspects of his account of his nation and of the war, there is no obvious indication that his account of the Essenes is in any important way distorted by these concerns of his, and so it may be treated as reasonably unbiassed and authoritative. Where he and Philo are at odds, it seems reasonable that Josephus should prevail, and where his account appears to be at odds with evidence of the Qumran documents, then careful consideration should be given to all other possibilities before concluding either that Josephus is mistaken or that he is talking about a different sect.

Apart from our two main authorities, I should not neglect here to mention the very useful piece of information provided by the Roman antiquarian and polymath Pliny the Elder (CE 23–79), who mentions what is surely the Essene settlement at Qumran in Book 5 of his *Natural History* (5.

⁶ This period has also to find space for a further three years in the desert with an individual ascetic called Bannous (12), so the data presented to us by Josephus simply do not add up. He claims to have been back in Jerusalem, ready to become a Pharisee, by the age of 19.

17, 4, 73). Pliny's value lies chiefly in providing this geographical evidence, but he also mentions briefly three features of the Essene way of life which occur in our two main sources, the accuracy of which we shall have to discuss next, (1) their celibacy and general rejection of sex, (2) their renunciation of personal property, and (3) their rejection of city living ('their only companions', he remarks satirically, 'are the palm-trees').⁷

The chief characteristic features of Essenism, according to the Graeco-Roman sources

Asceticism and rejection of marriage

A notable feature of the Graeco-Roman evidence, which has caused more difficulty perhaps than any other, is their emphasis on the Essenes' rejection of sex and marriage. Philo is particularly strong on this point:

On the other hand, shrewdly providing against the sole or principal object threatening to dissolve the bonds of communal life, they banned marriage at the same time as they ordered the practice of perfect continence. Indeed, no Essene takes a wife, because women are selfish, excessively jealous, skilful in ensnaring the morals of a spouse and in seducing him by endless charms.

He then proceeds to expatiate on this theme for a further ten lines or so, thereby, I think, showing his hand pretty clearly. Philo himself, unusually for a Jew, was celibate, and clearly approves of the position he is describing. Interestingly, on his account, the Therapeutai comprise both men and women, but Philo is careful to specify that they live separately and observe continence, the majority of the ladies being 'aged virgins' (*Vit. Cont.* 32-3; 68).

As for Josephus, he tells us at *War* II. viii. 2 (120-1) that

the Essenes renounce pleasure as an evil, and regard continence [ἐγκράτεια] and resistance to the passions as a virtue. They disdain marriage for themselves, but take on the children of others at a tender age in order to instruct them; they regard them as belonging

⁷ Our other Greek source, the Church Father Hippolytus of Rome (*Ref.* 9, 18-28), despite some interesting additions and variations of detail, seems to be essentially dependent upon Josephus' account in the *War*. He seems concerned not to repeat Josephus verbatim, but there are nevertheless frequent close verbal echoes. Suggestions that Hippolytus and Josephus go back to a common original seem to me unrealistic, since Josephus, despite his limited personal acquaintance with the sect, hardly needed to resort to handbooks to describe them, though it is possible that Hippolytus is not himself quoting from Josephus, but from some intermediary source.

to them by kinship, and condition them to conform to their own customs. It is not that they abolish marriage, or the propagation of the species resulting from it, but they are on their guard against the licentiousness of women, and are convinced that none of them is faithful to one man.⁸

There are a number of interesting and knotty points in this passage, and we may consider them in turn. First of all, there is the question of the 'taking on'⁹ of the children of others. This report conflicts with a remark of Philo in the *Hypothetica* (11, 3) to the effect that 'there are no children of tender years among the Essaeans, nor even adolescents or young men, since at this age the character, because of immaturity, is inconstant and attracted to novelty', but the contradiction may be more apparent than real, even if we grant Philo the status of a reliable witness. Our two authorities may in fact be talking of different things. There is no question, after all, that there was a fairly rigorous period of postulancy and initiation, stretching over three years,¹⁰ and beginning not before the age of twenty (*Manual of Discipline*, col. 1), before one was admitted as a full member of the sect. Philo can be taken as substantially correct, therefore, in declaring that no one young and flighty would be admitted as a full member.

But were there children about in the community? It seems clear from the Qumran evidence that there were. Apart from the eloquent evidence of children's graves, we have significant statements in both the *Manual of Discipline* (1QS I: 4-6) and the *Damascus Document* (CD 15: 5-6) that seem to presuppose the presence of both women and children. At the beginning of the Rule, we have the prescription: 'When they come (sc. the men of the Council), they shall summon them all, *the little children and the women also*, and they shall read into their ears the precepts of the Covenant, and shall expound to them all their statutes that they may no longer stray in their errors.' The Rule goes on to specify that 'every man born in Israel' shall be taught 'according to his age the precepts of the Covenant. He shall be educated in their statutes for ten years . . .', and that, at the age of twenty, he shall be enrolled in the congregation.

Now one might say that all this refers, properly speaking, to the 'last days', but we have also the evidence of the *Damascus Document* (loc. cit.) that 'when the children of all those who have entered the Covenant, granted

⁸ Pliny confirms this account: *sine ulla femina, omni venere abdicata* ('without women, and renouncing sex entirely'), *NH* 5.17, 4, 73.

⁹ The verb used by Josephus, ἐκλαμβάνω, may refer to either peaceable or forcible removal (abduction), but I think we may assume the former here.

¹⁰ That is, one year at least of external postulancy, and two years of internal probation, as attested in the *Manual of Discipline* (1QS 6: 13-23). This corresponds well with Josephus' evidence (*War* II. viii. 7 [137-8]).

to all Israel for ever, reach the age of enrolment, they shall swear with an oath of the Covenant'. It seems fairly plain, in fact, that these documents envisage, at least on the periphery of the community, the presence of women and children. Some people, at least, attached to the community were married, and the resulting children were given schooling within the community, without being a part of it in the full sense. If at the age of twenty the young men were adjudged worthy, or if they were themselves so inclined, they could be formally inducted, at least as postulants of the Order. From a passage just below in the *Manual of Discipline* ('at the age of twenty-five he may take his place among the foundations' – presumably, at the lowest rank – 'of the holy congregation to work in the service of the congregation'), it would seem that a further considerable period must elapse before one becomes a full member, even at the lowest rank.

The other curious remark in this passage of Josephus is that concerning marriage. He says that on the one hand there is among the Essenes a 'disdaining' (ὑπεροψία) of marriage, but that 'they do not eliminate it' (οὐκ ἀναίρουσιν), or the propagation of the species resulting from it (*War II. viii. [120–21]*). There seems something of a contradiction here: either one practises marriage, as a matter of policy, or one does not, one would think. But a further passage of Josephus (*War II. viii. 13 [160]*) goes some way to unravelling the confusion: 'There exists another order [ἕτερον τάγμα] of Essenes who, although, in agreement with the others on the way of life, usages, and customs, are separated from them on the subject of marriage. Indeed, they believe that people who do not marry cut off a very important part of life, namely, the propagation of the species [τὴν διαδοχὴν – using the same word as above]; and indeed they would go so far as to say that if everyone adopted the same opinion the race would very quickly disappear.' Josephus does not make clear, and perhaps is not himself clear, whether this heterodox group coexists with the other Essenes or not. We are at liberty, I think, to suppose that they did, and that they constituted just such an element of married 'fellow-travellers' as we seem to observe in the Qumran documents and archaeological evidence.

That there were at least married fellow-travellers at Qumran is indicated both by the pieces of evidence quoted above, and by the interesting provision a little further on in the Messianic Rule that the young postulant 'shall not approach a woman to know her by lying with her before he is fully twenty years old, when he shall know good and evil'. This would seem to betoken something more like the normal attitude to marriage within Judaism, and that seems to be confirmed by references in the same document to 'families' and 'heads of families'. It may be, as some scholars have pointed out, that the provisions of the *Manual of Discipline* are intended only for some time in the future, 'in the last days' (which is indeed the period to which it explicitly refers), and that at the time of which Philo and Josephus are speaking the community felt itself to be to some degree on a war footing, during which

time warriors would abstain from sexual intercourse, but it is strange that no mention is made of the option of celibacy anywhere in the document. On the other hand, the evidence of burials at Qumran, with its vast preponderance of males, would seem to indicate that most sectaries were indeed unmarried.

Community of life and property

The other notable feature of the Essenes for both Philo and Josephus (and indeed Pliny, in his brief account – *sine pecunia*) is the sectaries' renunciation of private property, and adoption of a life in community.

Philo, in his *Hypothetica* (11,4–5), tells us:

None of them can endure to possess anything of his own – neither house, slave, field, nor flocks, nor anything which feeds and procures wealth; but they set down everything in a heap in the midst [πάντα δ' εἰς μέσον ἀθρόα καταθέντες], and enjoy in common the resources of them all. They live together in brotherhoods [κατὰ θιάσους], having adopted the form of associations and the custom of communal meals [ἑταιρίας καὶ συσσίτια πεποιημένοι], and they employ their whole activity for the common good.

However, Philo speaks a little further down (9–10) of their engaging in various trades and occupations, for which they receive pay (μισθός), which they hand over to one of them who has been appointed steward (ταμίας). This necessarily implies, I think, that at least some of them worked outside the commune, and thus earned income for the group. This would especially apply, presumably, to those small 'camps' which were scattered about most of the towns of Palestine (cf. *Jos., War II. viii. 4 [124]*), but it could also be true of Qumran. Basically, though, we have a picture of a group which has entirely renounced private property.¹¹

Josephus in turn reports, of his Essenes, at *War II. viii. 3 (122–3)*:

They despise riches, and practise to a remarkable degree community of living. In vain would one search among them for one man with a greater fortune than another. Indeed, it is a law that those who enter the sect shall surrender their property to the order; so neither the humiliation of poverty nor the pride of wealth is to be seen anywhere among them. Since their possessions are mingled, there exists for them all, as for brothers, one single property.

¹¹ The Therapeutai, we may note, by contrast are said by Philo (*VC 13*) to leave their possessions 'to their sons or daughters, or, in default of them, to other kinsmen, of their own free will leaving to these their heritage in advance; but if they have no kinsmen, to their comrades and friends' – a procedure not very useful to the community, one would think!

This practice of communism seems to be broadly confirmed by the *Manual of Discipline*. In col. 1: 12–17 it is stated:

All those who freely devote themselves to God's truth shall bring all their knowledge, powers, and possessions into the Community of God, that they may purify their knowledge in the truth of God's precepts and order their powers according to His ways of perfection, and all their possessions according to His righteous counsel.¹²

It emerges from a later passage (6: 17–20) that the property of the individual initiate is not actually merged with that of the commune until he is confirmed as a member after his second year of probation, but that is only reasonable, and does not modify the basic principle of community of property.

However, as we know, there are serious complications in the indigenous evidence. In the *Damascus Rule* (col. IX), a series of regulations are laid down about the stealing and returning of property, which certainly imply the possession of at least some personal property by members of the community. One explanation which would preserve the integrity of the Greek evidence might, I suppose, be something like the following: the basic principle of community of property might not have precluded the retention of certain personal possessions. At the very least, one might have some clothes of one's own, or a few tools (such as the hatchet or pick with which one is issued when one enters), and these things could be subject of stealing or unauthorized 'borrowing', on the head of which disputes might arise.

Nevertheless, it must be admitted that the *Damascus Rule* seems to be legislating for a system in which private property and personal incomes are recognized. There is also, after all, a provision in col. X against making any loan to one's companion, or any decision in matters of money or gain, *on the Sabbath*, clearly implying that such activities may be indulged in during the rest of the week. Again, at the end of the document (col. XIV), we find a provision that 'they shall place the earnings of at least two days out of every month into the hands of the Guardian and the Judges, and from it they shall give to the fatherless, and from it they shall succour the poor and needy, the aged sick and the homeless, the captive taken by a foreign people, the virgin with no near kin, and the maiden for whom no man cares . . .' This would seem to imply that one paid into a central fund, not *all* one's wages (as Philo asserts), but just a tithe (two days' wages), to be devoted to the maintenance of a welfare system (the presence, by the way, of virgins and maidens in distress among the recipients of welfare is rather puzzling!). It is possible, of course, that these regulations were intended to apply rather to the 'camps' – that is, small settlements of Essenes – in various cities, rather than to a

¹² As to communal dining, on which Josephus dwells at length (*War* II. viii. 4–5 [126–33]), cf. e.g. *Community Rule* 6, 2–3, and Delcor 1967: 401–25.

remote establishment like Qumran, but that still leaves a lot of explaining to do. Copies of this document were after all preserved at Qumran!

On the whole, it seems to me that the absolute assertions by Philo and Josephus as to the Essenes' utter contempt for wealth and their adoption of complete community of property are considerable over-simplifications and idealizations of the true situation. At most they apply to the core elite of priests and Levites even in a community like Qumran, while the smaller 'camps' seem to have lived merely a purified form of ordinary life, marrying and producing children, holding on to their property (though doubtless paying generous tithes), possessing manservants and maidservants (presumably slaves), and making animal sacrifices when appropriate.

Various provisions

Apart from these two main features of Essene life, there are a number of other details mentioned by Philo or Josephus which find varying degrees of confirmation in the Scrolls.

First of all, as to the total number of members of the sect. Both Philo (*Prob.* 75) and Josephus (*Ant.* XVIII. i. 5 [21]) assert that this amounted to 'more than 4000'. We have no means of checking this figure, since it presumably includes also those Essenes scattered throughout the towns of Palestine as well as at Qumran, but it seems not unreasonable. The Qumran community was symbolically grouped into twelve tribes, and each tribe consisted of units of thousands, hundreds, fifties and tens, as we learn in the *Manual of Discipline* (1QS 2: 21–2), but this really tells us little about total actual numbers. The Greek sources are at least not at variance with such indigenous evidence as there is.

On other details, such as the sectaries' aversion to anointing themselves with oil (*Jos.*, *War* II. viii. 3 [123]),¹³ or their wearing of white garments (*ibid.*, and Philo, *VC* 66), we have no clear evidence one way or the other from the native sources, though white linen garments are depicted as the battle gear of the priests in the *War Scroll* (1QM 7: 9–10), which is a positive indication.¹⁴ As to their preoccupation with bathing, however (*Jos.*, *ibid.*

¹³ This is a troublesome issue. There is a passage in the *Damascus Rule* (*CD* 12: 15–17) which either says that 'all wood and stones and dust defiled by the uncleanness of man, by virtue of the stains of *man* upon them, according to their uncleanness shall the one who touches them become unclean', or 'by virtue of the stains of *oil* upon them', depending on whether one reads *smw* or *smn*. The most accurate studies of the manuscript seem to favour the latter reading. See Baumgarten 1967–9: 183–92. Nevertheless, it seems an oddly perfunctory way to introduce a condemnation of oil. In any case, it only appears to refer to oil which has been contaminated through contact with unclean persons.

¹⁴ In the *War Rule* (VII: 9–10), the priests of Aaron are to be clothed 'in vestments of white cloth of flax, in a finer linen tunic and fine linen breeches', but these garments are to be embroidered with blue, purple and scarlet thread, which confuses the situation somewhat.

129), we have ample confirmation both in the *Manual of Discipline* (3: 8; 5: 13; 13: 6, etc.) and the *Damascus Rule* (X: 21ff.). In the latter, we find quite specific instructions as to the manner of bathing: 'No man shall bathe in dirty water or in an amount too shallow to cover a man. He shall not purify himself with water contained in a vessel. And as for the water of every rock-pool too shallow to cover a man, if an unclean man touches it he renders its water as water contained in a vessel.' Plainly the Essenes were serious bathers.¹⁵

The prohibition against swearing an oath, reported by both Philo (*Prob.* 84) and Josephus (*War* II. viii. 6 [135]; *Ant.* XV. x, 4 [371]), is also amply confirmed by the *Damascus Rule* (cols. IX, XV).¹⁶ In the passage from the *Antiquities of the Jews*, Josephus reports that Herod recognized the principles of the Essenes in this matter by excusing them from the oath of loyalty which he made all his other subjects swear.

The fact that Josephus here compares the Essenes to the Pythagoreans, who also rejected oaths, might have led one to suspect Hellenizing distortion here, if we did not have the indigenous evidence. In general, the comparisons between the Essenes and the Pythagoreans, which are made by both Philo and Josephus, are of interest and significance, since a number of them are confirmed by the Qumran documents.¹⁷ This, after all, is no less than one would expect, since something must have put the comparison into their heads in the first place, but once the connexion had been made, there was always the danger that it would take over, and lead Philo, in particular, to view the Essenes, and especially the local Therapeutae, through philosophically tinted spectacles. Such features as community of property, asceticism as regards sex, and the avoidance of oaths are well enough attested, at least for Qumran itself, but avoidance of animal sacrifice (asserted by Philo, *Prob.* 75) does not seem to have been total, if we may judge from the talk of 'holocausts' in col. II of the *War Scroll*, where the twenty-six leaders of the priestly divisions are designated as those 'who shall attend at holocausts and sacrifices to prepare sweet-smelling incense for the good pleasure of God'. On the other hand, the normal food of the Qumran congregation seems to have been just bread and wine, with no mention of meat (though there is a reference in the *Damascus Rule* (col. XII) to the eating of fish, providing it shall have been cut open alive and its blood spilled). The Pythagorean

¹⁵ Another detail, on which Josephus is this time thoroughly confirmed by the documents, is the prohibition against spitting in public (*War* II. viii. 9 [147]). In the *Manual of Discipline* (1QS 7: 13), we learn that the penalty for 'spitting into the midst of the Assembly' is thirty days (of unspecified punishment, presumably isolation of some sort).

¹⁶ That is to say, oaths administered by external authorities. They do swear oaths within the Community, *Jos.*, *War* II. viii. 7 [139-42]; cf. *Community Rule* 5, 8-10. The only divergence here is that Josephus presents this oath as being sworn on the completion of the novitiate, whereas the Rule prescribes it at the first entrance of the postulant.

¹⁷ On this see Cumont 1930: 99-112, and the critique of Beall 1988: 131-2.

analogy, then, possesses a certain validity, the nature of which is interesting, but it can be a source of distortions, especially since Philo has persuaded himself both that Pythagoras had learned his philosophy, and presumably his rules for communal living, from the followers of Moses on Mount Carmel, and that the Essenes had been around from time immemorial – this being an aspect of his general policy of intellectual one-upmanship as regards the Greeks.

Josephus does not have so comprehensive a theory of Jewish intellectual superiority as Philo, but in his treatise *Against Apion* (1. 14) he makes the assertion that the Greeks derived their philosophy ultimately from 'the Egyptians and the Chaldaeans', by which latter he means the Jews, and he is disposed to see Jewish religious sects, Pharisees, Sadducees and Essenes, in terms of Greek philosophy (e.g. *War* II. viii. 2 [119], 14 [162-6]; *Ant.* XIII. v. 9 [171-73]), particularly in respect of their attitude to fate and free will.¹⁸ In this connexion, the Essenes are declared to be strict determinists (*Ant.* XIII. v. 9 [172]): 'The race of the Essenes, by contrast [to the Pharisees], makes Fate mistress of all, and says that nothing comes to pass for humans unless Fate has so voted.'

There is in fact ample evidence from the indigenous sources that the Essenes were determinists (e.g. the doctrine of the two spirits in *Manual of Discipline* III-IV), but it is quite misleading to present this essentially religious doctrine of 'divine election' as a philosophical tenet.

Indeed, this presentation of the Essene doctrine of God's providence in terms of Greek philosophy is a good topic on which to end these reflections, as it constitutes a particularly good example of the problem of our Greek (or more exactly, Hellenized Jewish) sources. The problem is one of what I understand is termed, both by phenomenologists such as Dilthey and Husserl, and by social anthropologists influenced by them, *Verstehen* – that is, the ability to comprehend a given society or social phenomenon *from the inside*, as its practitioners would view it, rather than from the point of view of an outside observer, however benevolent. Now the Greeks tended to view other societies and social phenomena from an unashamedly Hellenocentric (and generally intolerant and sceptical) perspective, and even when they were disposed to be tolerant, as is generally the case with Herodotus, or with Plato, perhaps, when speaking of the wisdom of the Egyptians, they are still firmly rooted in the perspective of their own societal outlook. The odd thing is that they manage to transmit this blithely chauvinistic attitude even to

¹⁸ Remarkably, though he describes the Pharisees at *Ant.* XIII. v. 9 (172) as saying 'that some things but not everything are the work of fate, while some things either happen or do not because of the actions of individuals', which would be an attitude most proper to the Platonist or Aristotelian schools, in *Life* 12, where he describes his own adherence to the Pharisees, he characterizes them as 'a sect having points of resemblance to that which the Greeks call the Stoic school'.

patriotic Jews like Philo and Josephus, who are trying to explain the traditions of their nation to the Graeco-Roman world. Try as they may, once they start writing in Greek, they must look at things from a Hellenized perspective. *Verstehen* goes out the window.

It seems to me, then, to be overhasty of scholars in Jewish studies to cast radical doubts on whether the Essenes whom Philo or Josephus are describing are actually to be identified at all with the sectaries of Qumran, on the basis of a number of discrepancies between their accounts and what we seem to observe from the internal evidence. Neither Philo nor Josephus (despite his assertions about his period of discipleship) can count as first-hand witnesses, and they are both contaminated by their Hellenized, philosophical and apologetic mind-sets. The fact is that even when a man like Philo comes face to face with a group like the Therapeutae, he cannot see them except through Hellenized and idealized spectacles, and he will interpret all phenomena presented to him as far as possible in Hellenic terms, conveniently ignoring aspects of the situation that do not quite fit. A good instance of this, I think, is his account of the Therapeutic allegorizing of the Bible at their meetings (VC 75-9). Philo presents this as being very much the sort of allegorical interpretation in which Greek philosophers of his own day indulged in respect of the poems of Homer or Hesiod, and which he himself was involved in practising on the books of Moses, but in fact we can see from the numerous examples of biblical exegesis which we find in Qumran that the sort of allegory practised by the sectaries exhibits no trace of the 'physical' (that is, *metaphysical*) interpretation of the text practised by Greek philosophers and by Philo, but is rather analogous to the 'typology' familiar to us from early Christianity, where figures and objects in the Pentateuch and in the prophetic books are seen to foreshadow situations and individuals in their own day. It is highly unlikely that the allegory practised by the Therapeutae was any different from this. Whether Philo grasped this one cannot know, but he gives no sign of recognizing that Essene allegorizing is of a very different nature from his own.¹⁹

My view is, then, in a word, that the evidence of our Graeco-Roman sources remains extremely useful, and very probably refers to the same group as is depicted in the Scrolls, but that we must not expect from them a greater degree of accuracy or insight than is generally characteristic of Greek accounts of alien civilizations or customs, even when these are being viewed at close hand, and with the liveliest sympathy.

¹⁹ A good example may be found in the *Damascus Rule*, cols. VII-VIII, but also, of course, in the fragments of their Bible commentaries, such as those on Hosea, Nahum, Micah or Habakkuk. Philo recognizes Essene allegorizing at *Prob.* 82 (τὰ πλείστα διὰ συμβόλων ... φιλοσοφεῖται). He is not specific as to what sort of σύμβολα are discerned in the text, and his account is certainly compatible with the facts, but I suspect that he is thinking here in primarily Pythagorean terms.

APOLOGETICS IN THE JEWISH DIASPORA

John Barclay

The problem of apologetics

Let us begin with a deceptively simple, terminological question: what do we mean by 'apologetics'? A survey of literature on the topic of 'Jewish apologetics' would reveal wide discrepancies in the use of this term, whose capacity to create confusion is correspondingly large. Moreover, careful attention to these varied uses would indicate that within such diversity there lurk different perceptions of the character and conditions of Jewish dialogue with the non-Jewish world. To discuss 'Jewish apologetics' in the Graeco-Roman world is to reveal how we perceive the problems and ambitions of Jews in antiquity.

A comparison between the old and the revised Schürer will serve to illustrate such differences in perception. In the old Schürer¹ the discussion of 'Graeco-Jewish literature' contained a special section entitled 'Apologetics' (1886: 248-70) and another with the heading 'Jewish Propaganda under a Heathen Mask' (1886: 270-320). 'Apologetics' is understood as a defensive strategy. Hellenistic Judaism, according to Schürer, found itself 'continually at war with the rest of the Hellenistic world', and so 'had ever to draw the sword in its own defence. Hence a large share of the entire Graeco-Jewish literature subserves apologetic purposes' (1886: 248). In this section Schürer discussed those works which 'sought in a systematic manner to refute the reproaches with which Judaism was assailed' (1886: 248), outlining first the 'literary opponents', then giving close attention to Josephus' *Against Apion*. However, he also indicated that much other 'historic and philosophic literature' (discussed in other sections of his work) was designed to show that 'the Jewish nation was, by reason of the greatness of its history and the purity

¹ I cite from the English translation of the definitive second edition, *Geschichte des jüdischen Volkes im Zeitalter Jesu Christi* (1886-90); the work originated in 1874, was much expanded for the second edition and went through a further enlarged third/fourth edition in 1901-9. The translation here cited is from E. Schürer, *A History of the Jewish People in the Time of Jesus Christ*, division 2, volume 3; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1886; the German second edition has not been available to me.

of its teaching, if not superior, at least equal to others' (1886: 248). Such literature Schürer labelled 'indirectly apologetic', since it does not directly confront accusations against the Jews but presupposes such criticisms and 'seeks to show that the Jewish nation need in no respect shrink from a comparison with other nations' (1886: 262).

In the section on 'Jewish Propaganda under a Heathen Mask', Schürer treated Jewish works written under a Gentile pseudonym. He considered these to be examples of a tendency 'which is peculiar to a large portion of the Graeco-Jewish literature in general, viz. the tendency to influence non-Jewish readers' (1886: 270). Such 'propagation of Judaism among the heathen' could, however, take two forms. The first, 'propaganda properly so called', is designed 'to win adherents to the Jewish faith in the midst of the heathen world': it has a direct 'missionary purpose' to win 'believers' (1886: 271; the Sibylline Oracles are cited as an example). The second type of literature has a different end in view: 'their purpose is not so much to propagate the faith as the honour and credit of the Jews' (1886: 271, e.g. *The Letter of Aristaeus*). These latter works might contain panegyric on the law and wisdom of the Jews (1886: 306), but their goal is not 'directly missionary'; their purpose is rather 'to create a favourable disposition towards Judaism and the Jewish law' (1886: 271).

In these carefully composed sentences Schürer drew a distinction between 'apologetic' and 'propaganda', the former being defensive in character.² He also indicated the possibility of indirect apologetic, in the sense that apologetic factors might be merely implicit. The distinction which Schürer drew between communication designed to win 'believers' and that aiming only to create a 'favourable disposition towards Judaism' should also be noted; we shall have reason in due course to call this distinction into question.

In the Schürer revision the relevant sections were revised by Martin Goodman, with some significant additions and corrections.³ Goodman retained Schürer's title 'Jewish Apologetics', keeping the same stress on

² However, the distinction is not quite consistently maintained, at one point the terms appearing to overlap (1886: 295). The introduction to the discussion of 'Graeco-Jewish literature' describes its aims as:

not only strengthening its co-religionists and making them acquainted with their great past, but also ... convincing non-Jewish readers of the folly of heathenism and ... persuading them of the greatness of Israel's history and of the futility of all attacks upon that nation. Great part of it is therefore in the most comprehensive sense apologetic (1886: 158).

But it is not clear which of the listed purposes Schürer would place under this 'comprehensive' label.

³ E. Schürer, *The History of the Jewish People in the Age of Jesus Christ*, revised and edited by G. Vermes, F. Millar, M. Black and M. Goodman, vols. I, II, III.1, III.2, Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1973-87, Volume III.1, section 33A, here cited as Schürer 1986.

'defence against gentile attacks', the same distinction between direct and indirect apologetic and the same focus on the 'literary opponents' rebuffed by Josephus' *Against Apion*. However, in repeating Schürer's description of the apologetic aims of Hellenistic-Jewish literature, Goodman has added the clause 'even when the prime purpose of a particular work lies in the edification of a Jewish audience' (Schürer 1986: 594). This addition is later expanded with a new sentence on the 'indirectly apologetic' aims of much historical and philosophical literature in Hellenistic Judaism: 'Much of this apologetic, though not all, was directed towards strengthening the confidence of a Jewish audience in their own heritage, and it is doubtful whether a gentile audience was ever intended to read it' (Schürer 1986: 609). A footnote at this point refers to V. Tcherikover's seminal article, 'Jewish apologetic literature reconsidered',⁴ to which we shall shortly return.

Schürer's section on 'Jewish Propaganda under a Heathen Mask' has been retitled 'Jewish Writings under Gentile Pseudonyms', although the term 'propaganda' is sometimes retained in the text. In this case too, Goodman has inserted reference to a probable Jewish audience: while some of these works were intended for non-Jewish readers (e.g. the *Sibylline Oracles*), 'among hellenized Jews also, the ascription of Jewish ideas to prestigious gentile authors might be expected to confirm them in their Judaism and to prevent apostasy' (Schürer 1986: 617). Goodman also retains Schürer's distinction between two forms of 'propagating' Judaism, but reformulates it in his own words: 'It is necessary to distinguish within the literature aimed at gentiles between missionary literature intended to attract converts, and apologetic and general propaganda literature about Jewish ethics and theology' (Schürer 1986: 617). Parts of the *Sibylline Oracles* are still, it appears, fitted into the former category, although some ambiguity arises here since Goodman maintains (against Schürer) that 'missionary literature would be unlikely to succeed in a gentile guise', but nonetheless suggests that the Jewish *Sibylline Oracles* 'certainly set out to exert religious persuasion, trying to make adherents to the Jewish understanding of God' (Schürer 1986: 617). The other category of literature aims 'at a different, apologetic effect, to draw attention not so much to the faith as to the honour and esteem of the Jewish name' (a rewording of Schürer). The *Letter of Aristaeus* is retained as an illustration of this second type, even though (Goodman adds) 'his prime intended audience was almost certainly Jewish' (Schürer 1986: 618).

These differences between the old and the revised Schürer are important in illustrating wider trends in the interpretation of Jewish 'apologetics'. We may note in particular the following points:

¹ Under the influence of Tcherikover, Goodman has shifted the emphasis from a Gentile to a (primarily) Jewish audience for most 'apologetic'

⁴ Tcherikover 1956: 169-93.

literature. Although Tcherikover's conclusions have been contested,⁵ the majority of scholars are now cautious about the claims for Gentile readerships made by Schürer and his contemporaries in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.⁶ Tcherikover's 1956 article on this topic is much cited in this connection.

- 2 Despite this shift from Gentile to Jewish readership, Goodman retains the label 'apologetic' in connection with such literature, thus expanding its semantic range beyond the fulfilment of a narrowly-conceived 'defensive' agenda. Goodman's usage, signifying the edification and encouragement of Jewish readers, is now widely employed.⁷ When he 'reconsidered' the question of 'Jewish apologetic literature', Tcherikover intended to show that most Alexandrian Jewish literature was directed inwards (to fellow Jews) and not outwards (to Gentiles), and thus was *not* apologetic. His successors have accepted his main point, but chosen to expand rather than to discard the term 'apologetic'. That may be considered a legitimate option, but it has injected some confusion into the discussion, causing scholars to argue at cross-purposes.⁸
- 3 Goodman's revision of Schürer also illustrates the particular difficulties surrounding the notion of 'missionary literature'. As he notes (Schürer 1986: 609, n.132), Dalbert and others regarded as 'Missionsliteratur' almost all Jewish literature which they considered to be directed to Gentiles; but, since Tcherikover, most of their examples would now be excluded from this category. Even in works directed to Gentiles, the question arises as to what constitutes a 'missionary' purpose. Here Goodman himself has made a significant contribution, analysing four distinct types of 'mission', which he names 'informative', 'educational',

⁵ See, e.g., Feldman 1993: 288–324, discussed below. Georgi, even in revising his 1964 thesis, maintains and expands older theories of an extensive Jewish missionary effort, illustrated and supported by a body of Jewish 'apologetic' literature, aimed at Gentiles, he dismisses Tcherikover's work summarily as 'unsubstantiated' and 'ideological' 1987: 384, n. 45).

⁶ Earlier scholarship is exemplified in Friedländer, 1903 and Dalbert, 1954. Nowadays, the influence of Tcherikover is evident in standard works such as Collins, 1986: 8–10 and in many discussions of particular texts; see, e.g., Chesnutt 1995: 256–65.

⁷ See, e.g., Sterling's definition of the genre 'apologetic historiography': 'the story of a subgroup of people ... [which] follows the group's own traditions but Hellenizes them in an effort to establish the identity of the group within the setting of the larger world' (1992: 17). Balch designated both Dionysius' *Roman Antiquities* and Josephus' *Against Apion* as 'apologetic encomia', with the accent falling on their encomiastic character (1982: 102–22).

⁸ The term 'propaganda' is similarly used in a bewildering variety of ways, and perhaps now carries too many pejorative overtones to be usable; see McKnight 1991: 49. McKnight also observes that 'the scholarly classification, definition, and explanation, along with the appropriate historical scenario, of Jewish-Hellenistic apologetics have not yet been delineated with sufficient rigor' (p. 58).

'apologetic' and 'proselytizing'.⁹ This is relevant to our enquiry not only because Goodman here uses the term 'apologetic' in a special sense,¹⁰ but also because he reinforces the impression that a proselytizing mission is to be clearly distinguished from general Jewish apologetics.¹¹ We shall return to the debate which Goodman has entered and enlarged, though our focus will not be the general (indeed, over-generalized) debate whether Judaism was a 'missionary religion', but more specifically the question whether it is reasonable to assume that Jewish communication with Gentiles adopted a distinct character in a 'proselytizing' mode. Since the discussion of Jewish 'mission' has generally been influenced by a particular Christian construal of the topic,¹² there is a tendency to map its characteristics with lines drawn from Christian practice and theology; we may recall, for instance, Schürer's references to 'the Jewish faith' and to Jewish efforts to win 'believers'. At the end of our discussion I will suggest that implicitly Christian categories should be deconstructed if we are to appreciate the more subtle range of Jewish apologetics.

An attempt at clarification

The root meaning of 'apologetics', derived from ἀπολογέομαι, is of course 'speech in one's defence'; thus the simplest and most natural use of the term is with reference to Jewish response to anti-Jewish opinion. Our fullest literary example of this phenomenon from the Diaspora is Josephus' *Against Apion*, about half of which (1.219–2.144) consists of direct reply to accusations and slanders by anti-Jewish authors. In the second half of Book Two, however, Josephus changes tack and offers a positive depiction of Judaism (2.145–286). It is largely only in the opening comments (2.145–50, cf. 255, 258, 270) that Josephus makes explicit that this encomium is intended to refute Apollonius Molon and the like. When Josephus comes to describe the contents of the laws, this apologetic motive has become remote and one could appreciate the value of such laws without knowing that they serve to

⁹ Goodman 1994; the typology is defined, pp. 3–7.

¹⁰ 'Apologetic' mission is defined as requesting 'recognition by others of the power of a particular divinity without expecting their audience to devote themselves to his or her worship ... its aim was to protect the cult and beliefs of the missionary', 1994: 4; cf. pp. 60–61: 'the desire to encourage admiration of the Jewish way of life or respect for the Jewish God'; p. 86: 'active Jewish enthusiasm for gentile recognition of the power of the Jewish God.'

¹¹ Goodman 1994: 88: 'This partial mission to win gentile adherents to the Jewish cult is far from [a] universal proselytizing mission.' See further below, note 39.

¹² Note the full title of M. Friedländer's book (*Geschichte der jüdischen Apologetik als Vorgeschichte des Christentums*) and the implications built into the title of the influential article by Axenfeld, 'Die jüdische Propaganda als Vorläuferin und Wegbereiterin der urchristlichen Mission' (1904: 1–80), and the monograph by Derwacter, *Preparing the Way for Paul. The Proselyte Movement in Later Judaism* (1930).

counter anti-Jewish prejudice. In this case, Josephus makes his apologetic purpose clear enough, but in many other texts Jewish history, Jewish heroes and the Jewish way of life are positively portrayed without explicit reference to critical opinions or open denial of a contrary account. When Josephus' laudatory version of Moses' life omits mention of the incident of the leprous hand (Exod. 4:6-7), or when Ezekiel insists that the Egyptians donated their goods to the departing Israelites (*Exagoge* 162-6), should we read these as apologetic moves, designed to silence or circumvent anti-Jewish stories, or would that be to read too much between the lines?

We here encounter the problem of *implicit* apologetic, where the reader is left to infer a remote apologetic purpose not clearly signalled in the text. In the two cases just mentioned, we can be moderately confident in detecting apologetic motives, since we can make direct connections to defamatory stories about Moses and the Jews at the Exodus. Elsewhere, we may guess at the defensive strategies of a text, but are unable to judge whether these constitute a primary or secondary role in the composition of the text. In some cases, such as the *Letter of Aristeas*, the primary purpose of the text seems to be a panegyric of Judaism, and any specifically *defensive* element is small (e.g. *Aristeas* 144). In such a case, one might wish to withhold the epithet 'apologetic', on the basis that it should be used only in relation to works whose defensive purposes are primary and explicit.

However, if we define the term 'apologetic' more broadly, to mean 'response to the challenge of an outgroup', its use could be defended in such a case as this. In this looser sense, although an 'apologetic' strategy entails some perceived weakness in relation to outsiders, its response could take a variety of forms, including unpolemical encomia of the native culture. In the competitive environment of the Hellenistic world, Jews might wish to bolster their ethnic and cultural pride without any explicitly identified 'opponent'. It is apparently in this broader sense that Goodman, Sterling and others currently employ the term 'apologetic' – a legitimate option so long as it is made clear that this is to be placed on the spectrum at some distance from the 'apologetics' which offers direct response to some form of anti-Judaism.

But is the epithet applicable even if the target audience for such discourse is not outsiders, but fellow Jews?¹³ As we have noted, this reconstrual of target is the consistent modification made by Goodman in his revision of Schürer, and it can be argued that in this case the term 'apologetic' has been stretched too far. Perhaps the use may be defended if it could be argued that in such cases the apologetic is *indirect*, not only in the sense that it is *implicit*, but also that, in bolstering Jewish confidence, Jewish authors could

¹³ As is often remarked, the alternative 'either Jewish or Gentile readers' may be over-sharply drawn. But the question is of value if it forces us to consider whether 'apologetic' can be used even in relation to communication directed entirely inwards.

equip their Jewish readers themselves to engage directly in dialogue with critical or enquiring outsiders.¹⁴ Some Christian 'apologetic' literature is actually read widely by insiders (e.g. C.S. Lewis' *Mere Christianity*), but then utilized in their dialogue, oral or literary, with outsiders. It is certainly possible that literature apparently designed for internal consumption might have had this further effect, and might have been intended to have it. Perhaps Jewish readers/viewers of Ezekiel's play gained from it a sanitized version of their history, and thereby the confidence to counteract scurrilous accounts of the Exodus which circulated in their Egyptian environment.

Thus 'apologetic', which in its narrow sense is purely defensive, might be stretched in meaning to cover: (a) discourse whose response to the challenge of outsiders is primarily encomiastic and only remotely or secondarily defensive in tone or form; and (b) discourse whose internal address nonetheless has an outside audience as its indirect target. Use of the term in these expanded senses need not cause confusion if it is consistently employed and properly clarified.

The main drawback in this semantic expansion is that the term 'apologetic', by becoming practically all-encompassing, serves to encourage the view that Jews in the Graeco-Roman world were always, at least indirectly or implicitly, on the defensive. Erich Gruen has recently argued, by contrast, that the bold playfulness of much Jewish literature in the Hellenistic age suggests a confident literary creativity far removed in tone from a defensive 'Diaspora mentality'.¹⁵ He concludes:

The surviving products do not present a struggle for identity in an alien world, an apologia for strange customs and beliefs, or propaganda meant to persuade the Gentile. The texts instead display a positive quality, bold and inventive, sometimes startling, often light-hearted and engaging, and throughout directed internally to Jews conversant with or altogether inseparable from the culture of the Greeks.

(1998: 292-3)

If he is right, the retention of the label 'apologetic', even in an expanded sense, would indeed be misleading. But if the Jewish texts are still judged to reflect a context of Gentile-Jewish interchange, near or far, direct or indirect, and if that interchange is felt by our authors as, to some degree, a challenge,

¹⁴ Cf. Carleton Paget 1996: 83: 'Even if we believe that most of it is directed to an internal audience, it may be providing Jewish readers with fodder for their conversations with curious or sceptical pagans.' Niebuhr 1987: 67-70 discusses this possibility with reference to Ps.-Phocylides and indeed considers much Hellenistic Jewish literature to be such 'Apologetik nach innen'.

¹⁵ Gruen 1998.

a case might still be made for employing the epithet 'apologetic'. However, Gruen's provocative re-reading of the relevant texts looks set to open up this debate in a new way.

Judgment on such issues will require careful assessment of the nuances of each text, with some attempt to reconstruct its historical context and intentions. It was his careful attention to such matters which ensured Tcherikover's influence on scholarship in the middle of this century and it is to his argumentation that we now turn.

Tcherikover on 'Jewish apologetic literature'

As we have observed, Viktor Tcherikover's contribution to the debate on our topic represents a watershed in scholarship. In his seminal essay of 1956 he criticized most previous scholars for following a *theological* (implicitly Protestant) agenda, which presented Judaism as the precursor to Christianity and analysed Jewish literature in abstract terms in relation to its 'universalizing' tendencies. He described his own approach, by contrast, as *historical* and defined its aim as 'to understand Alexandrian literature as a mirror reflecting various opinions within Jewish Alexandrian society, opinions which, in their turn, were influenced by continuously changing political, economic and social factors' (1956: 170). He here outlined an agenda, effectively pursued in his other writings, which attempted to place Jewish Alexandrian literature as far as possible within its social and historical context.¹⁶ This was undoubtedly a huge analytical advance. When one compares the dubious generalizations concerning 'the Apologists' and 'Apologetics' still offered by Georgi in the recent revision of his monograph,¹⁷ one can only be grateful that Tcherikover directed the majority of scholars away from such abstractions into the attempt to place individual texts in specific historical, political and social contexts.¹⁸

Since his interests focused on the historical development of Alexandrian Jews, in their varied responses to the changing Ptolemaic and Roman environment, Tcherikover angled his 'mirror' onto the Jewish community itself.¹⁹ This approach was justified by the argument that the literature he analysed

¹⁶ Tcherikover 1956: 183-93; cf. Tcherikover 1958: 59-85; 1959; Tcherikover and Fuks 1957-64.

¹⁷ Georgi 1987: 87: 'the Hellenistic Apologists regarded and proclaimed Judaism as the universal religion'; p.120: 'The introduction to the *Epistle of Aristaeus*, as well as the first chapters of the *Antiquities* of Josephus, exemplify for all Apologetics that the Jewish mission saw itself as an enlightenment movement.'

¹⁸ I regard my own work (Barclay 1996) as carrying forward Tcherikover's programme, though with differences of judgment at individual points.

¹⁹ Parallel developments occurred at this time in scholarship on the gospels, where 'redaction criticism' used the early Christian texts to yield evidence on the interests and ideologies of their generating communities.

was part of an internal, not an external dialogue. To establish this point he brought forward evidence to suggest that the Ptolemaic Alexandrian texts²⁰ could not have been directed to Greek readers. His thesis contains two principal points:

- 1 Widespread Jewish literary propaganda was not a practical possibility.
- 2 The texts themselves were unsuitable for such a purpose.

On the first point, Tcherikover highlighted the difficulty in getting any literature widely known, in an age before mass production of books. Texts were given to friends and further copies made only if the book was highly valued or the author famous. In general, Tcherikover insisted:

... the main condition for the distribution of a book within a society was, that the author should be rooted in that society. Be the Jewish Hellenization as it may, there is no doubt that the Jewish authors belonged to Jewish, not to Greek society.²¹

Moreover, Tcherikover considered the use of Gentile pseudonyms no evidence for 'Jewish propaganda under a heathen mask' (Schürer), since the pseudonyms chosen were hardly illustrious and the technique a mere literary convention. Thus the conditions simply did not exist in which any 'widespread propaganda' could take place.

Tcherikover's second contention was that the content of the so-called 'apologetic' literature was quite unsuitable for a Gentile audience. Commentaries on the Scriptures, for instance, would be incomprehensible to Greeks: the evidence shows that the LXX 'made no impression whatever in the Greek world, since in the whole of Greek literature there is no indication that the Greeks read the Bible before the Christian period' (1956: 177). And if the biblical commentaries made no sense, neither would elaborate explanations of biblical texts, like that of Eleazar in the

²⁰ Both opponents and proponents of Tcherikover's thesis tend to generalize his point to apply it to practically all Jewish literature. But he makes clear that he is discussing only those Alexandrian Jewish texts which come from the Ptolemaic period; he specifically excludes works from the Roman period (e.g. Philo) and makes clear that his conclusions do not apply to Josephus (1956: 182-3).

²¹ 1956: 173-4. Tcherikover adds that 'the important point, concerning the circulation of Jewish books among Greeks, was, of course, the attitude of Greeks towards Jews'; and this he characterizes as 'definitely hostile in the Roman period and probably already unfavourable at the end of the Ptolemaic period' (1956: 174). He allows only the reign of Ptolemy VI Philometor (180-145 BCE) as a period when the Greeks were 'quite favourably inclined towards the Jews', but asserts that 'at that period Jewish Alexandrian literature was still trying its first steps, and the question of its circulation among the Greeks hardly existed at all' (1956: 174).

Letter of Aristeas.²² Other Jewish literature which imitated Greek styles can easily be explained by inner Jewish needs and 'as to the Greek reader, he would certainly have laughed at those feeble attempts to create a Jewish literature in the style of Homer or Euripides, especially since the Jewish writers lacked any talent to accomplish such a daring literary enterprise' (1956: 179–80). Panegyric on the Jewish way of life is easily explicable as directed towards a Jewish community under cultural or political pressure, while Jewish polemics against idolatry could be directed against Jews tempted to assimilate in their religious practice. 'Educated Greeks were well aware that it was not wood and stone they worshipped . . . Polemics in the style of the prophets could not, therefore, be used against Greeks, and it is very doubtful whether it would have made any impression upon them' (1956: 182).

While Tcherikover's conclusions have been widely accepted, his arguments have rarely been reviewed. Feldman's response unfortunately misfires at almost every level.²³ His discussion of the levels of literacy and numbers of libraries in antiquity is irrelevant unless there is some evidence that Jews wanted and were able to get their works read by non-Jews.²⁴ Feldman gathers a curious mixture of evidence for written propaganda in antiquity, much of which is irrelevant (1993: 307–8).²⁵ Moreover, his analysis of the aims of Jewish literature in Greek (1993: 314–22) is made up largely of assertion or unsupported speculation.²⁶ The only point at which some solid evidence is offered concerns the circulation of the LXX, a point to which we will return below.

A more careful critique of Tcherikover's arguments is overdue but cannot be offered in full here. However, the following observations indicate that his case is less watertight than is often supposed.

1 Tcherikover is right to question the practicalities of mass circulation of Jewish texts, but one may doubt his categorical conviction that Jews

22 'What interest could they find in the detailed exposition of the High Priest Eleazar (*Letter of Aristeas* 153) on beasts "what soever parteth the hoof and cheweth the cud..." (Lev., XI, 3), if they were unfamiliar with even the most important biblical prescriptions? All these details clearly testify to a purely Jewish atmosphere' (1956: 179).

23 Feldman 1993: 305–22.

24 Without supporting evidence, Feldman asserts: 'Surely there is a relationship between the increase in the rate of conversion to Judaism between 250 BCE and the first centuries CE and the simultaneous and definite rise in literacy among the inhabitants of the Roman Republic' (1993: 307).

25 It includes, for instance, inscriptions in the temple of Asclepius at Epidaurus (hardly parallel to Jewish literature!), Paul's letters (hardly propaganda to outsiders) and summaries of philosophical doctrines (a parallel of possible relevance).

26 These pages are notable for their undisciplined use of dogmatic adverbs ('certainly', 'clearly'), while the frequency of 'we may guess', 'may well have been', 'might presumably' and such like compromises the argument in its entirety.

were not sufficiently integrated in Hellenistic society to have their works read by non-Jews. In fact, some Jews became highly acculturated and interacted with their literate social peers to a degree that would question Tcherikover's assumption that 'Jewish authors belonged to Jewish, not to Greek society' (see above). Of course, the social and cultural location of Diaspora Jews varied enormously, but our (admittedly meagre) evidence could be taken to suggest that, for instance, 'Aristeas' and Aristobulus were integrated into Alexandrian literary circles to the extent that they could entertain hopes that their works would be read by non-Jews. Whether they did in fact hope for that readership, and whether such hopes were in fact fulfilled are another matter. But Tcherikover's case seems overstated in its claim that this was an utterly impractical notion. If we reckon on some mingling in Jewish and Gentile literate circles, the assumption of a sealed 'Jewish society' of texts looks overdramatic.²⁷

2 Assessing what was suitable for a Gentile readership – what they would find impressive, reasonable and interesting – is a subjective matter, in which Tcherikover's generalizations about 'educated Greeks' are questionable. When we recall the popularity of Greek novels, with their frequently 'incredible' tales, it becomes difficult to know what to rule out as 'laughable' for a Greek readership. And when we make allowance for natural curiosity in peculiar ethnic customs, it is difficult to see why non-Jews should *not* be interested in explanations of Jewish customs, such as Eleazar's rationale for the well-known Jewish dietary taboos (*Letter of Aristeas* 128–71). Again, this is not to say that it *was* the intention of the author of that text to address himself to non-Jews: that has to be decided on other grounds, if it can be decided at all. It is only to urge caution in presupposing what was interesting or convincing to Gentile readers. Even the crudity of much Jewish polemic against 'idols' might have made some impression on Gentiles, as Paul's letters (or at least his missionary preaching) suggest. The psychology and social level of ancient readers/hearers is not easily defined.

Underlying Tcherikover's discussion of this matter, and the wider scholarly debate, are a number of complex questions. In what ways can we deduce the intentions of ancient authors concerning their readerships, and to what extent can we decide this matter with confidence? Moreover, were their intentions necessarily matched by reality? Perhaps in assessing the phenomenon of

27 Tcherikover also unduly minimizes the extent of Gentile friendliness to Jews (see above, note 21) both within and beyond the Ptolemaic court. Philo indicates that, even in the Roman period, numbers of Gentiles joined in the Septuagint-festival on Pharos (*Mos.* 2.41–43), and the papyri often demonstrate close interaction between Jews and non-Jews at many points along the social spectrum; see Barclay 1996: part I.

Jewish literary apologetics, our focus should be as much on actual as on intended readers. We may briefly consider these questions in a little more depth.

Actual and implied readers of Jewish texts

With regard to an ancient text, we have access to an author's intention only through the text, and then somewhat uncertainly. That intention may be more or less clearly expressed in the form and substance of the text. It may also be more or less realistic in its expectations. Thus, when considering the readership of such texts, we would have to distinguish between two kinds: (a) empirical readers – the people who actually read the text, either in accordance with or despite the author's intentions; and (b) implied (or 'encoded') readers – the audience which the text itself constructs. There is a particular subtlety in this latter case, since the text may *explicitly* imply one kind of reader, but *implicitly* encode another.²⁸ A text explicitly encodes a reader when it employs some form of direct address, or when it openly refers to the readers it anticipates. Implicitly it encodes its readership by the assumptions, references and wider knowledge that it takes for granted, without which one would hardly understand the text at all; it thus constructs an 'ideal', competent reader. Normally, the explicit encoding matches the implicit, but some rhetorical strategies might create a disjuncture between the two and 'apologetic' could certainly be one such example. In the case of early Christian apologetics, although the apologists sometimes addressed the emperor, the expectation that he read their work was not only unrealistic but also incongruent with the content of the material, which presupposed knowledge of Christian texts and conventions.²⁹ A similar phenomenon is undoubtedly present in some Jewish texts. The *Wisdom of Solomon*, for instance, is explicitly addressed to Gentile 'kings' and 'rulers of the earth' (1.1–15; 6.1–11), but its allusive reference to biblical figures and stories renders it incomprehensible to other than a biblically literate reader.

With regard to apologetic works, we are uncertain how far to believe the explicit encoding and how to measure the degree of familiarity with Jewish conventions which the text requires from its readers. The *Letter of Aristaeus* explicitly implies a Gentile readership, being written from 'Aristaeus' to 'Philocrates'. But since the authorship is clearly pseudonymous and Jewish, should the same be said of the intended readership? Is the Gentile addressee a purely literary device, indicating to a Jewish readership what Gentiles might, or should, think about them? Or is it congruent with the texture of the whole work, indicating a straightforwardly encoded Gentile readership?

²⁸ See Stowers 1994: 21–2, drawing on a range of (more complex) literary theory.

²⁹ Tertullian, *De Testimonio Animae* 1 indicates that 'no-one comes to our writings for guidance unless he is already a Christian'. This may, or may not, apply to Christian apologetics.

If an author like this presupposes some knowledge of Jewish traditions and scriptures, does this necessarily suggest that the implicitly encoded readership is entirely Jewish? What levels of interest and knowledge could be presupposed among Gentiles in the penumbra of the Jewish community? If Jewish and Gentile society were not neatly separable, it would not be legitimate to force the alternative: either a Jewish or a Gentile readership. But then it becomes all the more difficult to assess what our authors hoped or expected. Evidently, the less securely we can place them in time, location and social level, the less we can attain any confidence in this matter.

From a pragmatic point of view, it could be argued that the only readership that mattered in the communication between Jews and Gentiles was the actual, empirical readership. Whatever the audience implied by the text, and whatever the author's intentions, the text might have functioned in unexpected ways. So who actually read Jewish texts in antiquity?

The evidence here is so meagre that it is possible to give this question a minimalist answer: so far as we know, only Jews themselves. As concerns the Septuagint, Momigliano remarked: 'there is no sign that the Gentiles at large ever became acquainted with the Bible: it was bad Greek.'³⁰ One may agree with this conclusion for 'the Gentiles at large', but still note some signs of Gentile acquaintance. In a clear citation, Ps.-Longinus (first century CE) quotes parts of Genesis 1, referring to 'the lawgiver of the Jews . . . at the very beginning of his laws'.³¹ We cannot tell how extensive was his knowledge of these laws, but the fact that he merely alludes to them suggests an expectation that his readers would at least have heard about them. Hecataeus (*apud* Diodorus 40.6) refers to a statement in those laws concerning Moses' reception of the law from God: his language so closely matches the LXX that it is possible that he had access to the Jewish Scriptures, at least in part. We are not entitled to speculate with Feldman that everyone in antiquity who wrote monographs on the Jews 'presumably used the Septuagint',³² but a careful reading of Apion, as cited by Josephus (*Against Apion* 2.25), suggests that he, at least, knew the biblical story of Moses' forty days on Sinai.³³ Thus

³⁰ Momigliano 1975: 91. Cf. Hadas 1950: 257 and Nock 1933: 79: 'Certainly there is no indication of substantial knowledge of the Septuagint except as heard by those who frequented the synagogues or were concerned to write polemical treatises against Christianity: as a book it was bulky, expensive, and inaccessible.'

³¹ See Stern 1974–84: I.361–5.

³² Feldman 1993: 312.

³³ On the other hand, the allusions which Feldman detects in Ocellus Lucanus and Ps.-Ephraim (1993: 312) are far from certain, while the use of the LXX by Celsus derives from a special factor: the rise of Christianity. The statement that 'many fragments of the Septuagint have been found on papyri, to be sure dating from various periods' (1993: 313) curiously indicates only in a footnote that, in almost all cases, those periods are early Christian; moreover, the papyri indicate nothing about the use and knowledge of the text outside Jewish or Christian circles (the subject under debate)!

a special factor like ethnographic interest or political hostility might introduce Gentiles to the Jewish Scriptures,³⁴ as might also, of course, the friendship of Gentiles who supported the Jewish community in one form or another. Josephus portrays the interest of the royal house of Adiabene extending to the reading of the law of Moses (*Ant.* 20. ii. 4 [44]), while, if we may allow an early Christian example, the Galatian Christians appear to have received instruction in the Scriptures from Paul's Jewish-Christian rivals. Philo goes so far as to suggest that the LXX translation arose out of a sense of shame that the Jewish laws should be accessible only to the 'barbarian' half of the human race and not also to the Greeks (*Mos.* 2.27; cf. 2.36). His claim almost certainly misconstrues the intentions of the translators, who probably worked primarily, if not exclusively, for the benefit of Alexandrian Jews. But Philo's comment may arise from the fact that, in his context and time, some 'Greeks' did in fact read the text. His claim (probably credible) that many non-Jews joined in celebrating the annual festival of the translation on the island of Pharos (*Mos.* 2.41-2) would support this notion that the text was accessible on the margins of Jewish communities and was not unknown to interested and supportive Gentiles.

That a text which was probably *not* intended for apologetics could nonetheless function to communicate Judaism to outsiders might mean that, even if we cannot identify a directly apologetic purpose in other Jewish writings, they too might have acquired empirical Gentile readers. Again, however, our evidence is extremely meagre and an argument from silence is dangerous either way. As Nock pointed out, 'there is no evidence that the Judaizing redaction of the Sibylline oracles and of certain Orphic texts exercised any influence outside Judaism and Christianity'; and if any of Philo's writings were aimed at a Gentile readership, only later Gentile Christians and Heliodorus (third century CE) prove success.³⁵ Unfortunately, our knowledge of anyone's reading in antiquity is sparse, dependent as we are on later choices in text preservation and on the accidents of papyrus discovery. Against the inclination to presume Gentile ignorance and indifference, we must recall the evidence of the polymath Alexander Polyhistor. When he wrote in Rome his work on the Jews (first century BCE), Alexander could draw on a wide range of Jewish texts: Demetrius, Eupolemus, Artapanus, Malchus/Cleodemus, Philo the epic poet and Ezekiel the tragedian. Probably none of these were composed in Rome, but Alexander's extensive citations suggest their availability to an interested non-Jew. Moreover, the fact that Alexander's work survived up to the time of Eusebius indicates that his subject matter was of more than purely individual or temporary interest. Josephus' vigorous literary

³⁴ Juvenal's reference to Moses' 'arcanum volumen' (*Satire* 14.102) suggests both that Juvenal was aware of the text but also that he knew the, perhaps common, perception that it was a difficult text to access.

³⁵ Nock 1933: 79.

activity after the Jewish War shows how political circumstances could make the Jewish nation and their peculiar beliefs of wide public interest. 'Habent sua fata libelli' ('little books have a fate of their own'). Little did the Septuagint translators anticipate that their work would serve to introduce Judaism to the Gentiles who joined the early Christian churches, and little did Artapanus expect to be read by a Greek-reading public in Rome. Alexander Polyhistor was not the only person in antiquity to find the Jews intriguing, and his case reminds us that Jewish texts could turn up in unexpected hands. Thus, where Jewish communities drew interest, sympathy and support from literate Gentiles, Jewish texts might fulfil unintended 'apologetic' functions.

Oral apologetics

Thus far, in common with most of the debate on apologetics, we have focused our discussion on its possible *literary* forms, and it is important now to broaden our field of vision. Given ancient literacy rates, far more people were capable of hearing about Judaism than were able to read about it.³⁶ It is notoriously difficult to assess ancient literacy rates, and assessments depend on varying definitions of 'literacy'; but if we are enquiring into the capacity to read, for instance, the *Letter of Aristeas* or the *Sibylline Oracles*, we are examining only a small coterie of the literary elite. Harris' study of ancient literacy has concluded that, even in Italy (the most literate part of the Empire), literacy 'is likely to have been below 15%' and in the provinces, and especially among women, much lower than that.³⁷ Further, to be able to read and write is one thing: it is quite another to be able to read with appreciation the Jewish texts known to us. Even the famous Pompeian graffiti and the ubiquitous inscriptions suggest only basic levels of literacy in part of the population, not the education needed to grasp the meaning of Ezekiel the tragedian or Aristobulus the philosopher. Thus, like other religious and cultural traditions in antiquity, we should consider the impact of Judaism as primarily oral and visual. We should even give priority to oral apologetics for those who, while capable of reading about Judaism, lacked the commitment to do so.

We are moderately well informed about formal apologetic occasions, when Jewish speakers offered a legal defence of their rights or gave political explanations of their special cultural characteristics. Unfortunately, such information usually comes from literature whose authors (pre-eminently

³⁶ Orality and literacy are not, of course, mutually exclusive: ancient literature was commonly read aloud to a listening audience, while formal speeches were often read from written texts. Moreover, our evidence for oral exchanges in antiquity usually derives from literature, whose tendency to stylize can distort the material.

³⁷ Harris 1989: 267.

Josephus and Philo) probably shaped the account of these speeches to match their own agendas. For instance, Josephus' account of the Ionians' representations before Marcus Agrippa (*Ant.* 16. ii. 4 [31–57]) is clearly moulded by his wider apologetic purposes in the *Antiquities*. It is possible that the *Acta Alexandrinorum* give us a better picture of the realities of legal wrangling, though these too are partial (as well as fragmentary). The theme we find repeatedly in this material is the defence of Jewish ancestral customs. In Egypt Philo defends the Jewish right to observe the Sabbath before an unsympathetic governor (*Somm.* 2.123–32) and he later joins other elders in feverish negotiations with Flaccus following the Alexandrian pogrom (*Flacc.* 76). From Cyrene we know about oral appeals to Augustus and Agrippa concerning the confiscation of Jerusalem money (Josephus, *Ant.* 16. vi. 1, 5 [160–1, 169–70]), while in Syria we find prolonged negotiations with Petronius (e.g. Josephus, *Ant.* 18. viii. 1–2 [261–8]). On many occasions such negotiations can only be inferred, but inferred with some confidence: how else did the Jews in Antioch gain their concession for special oil-supplies (*Ant.* 12. iii. 1 [119–24])? We may doubt that Jewish speakers used explanations of Jewish customs as elaborate or philosophical as Eleazar's allegories in the *Letter of Aristeas*, and we should not assume that our literature matches oral apologetics either in form or in content. Nonetheless, some 'literary' topics such as the antiquity of the Jews and their customs, the question of their 'antisocial' character or 'impious' religious practice, were probably of significance in the complex field of cultural self-defence in which Jews, like other nations in the Graeco-Roman world, were orally engaged.

But Jewish apologetics was equally if not more significant on an *informal* level. Philo was probably right to depict Gentile interest in Judaism beginning in connection with Jewish customs, observed and admired or criticized (*Mos.* 2.25–7). Since Diaspora Jews were ghettoized in only the rarest and most extreme conditions, we must imagine all sorts of dialogue concerning Jewish particularities in diet, calendar and religious practice. The Egyptian labourer on the estate of Apollonius whose work record notes the seventh day as Sabbath (*CPJ* 10) must have given some explanation of his unwillingness to work on that day. Ordinary friendships and commercial interaction no doubt gave occasion for similar apologetics at all points on the social scale. Plutarch's account of dinner-table conversation on the dietary peculiarities of the Jews (*Quaest. Conviv.* 4.5) may be somewhat stylized, but Philo's encounter with Gaius, when the emperor enquired about Jewish abstention from pork (*Leg. Gai.* 361–2), suggests that the topic was common.

Intellectual encounters, such as that between Aristotle and a Hellenized Jew (depicted by Clearchus, *apud* Josephus, *Against Apion* 1.177–82) may have been rare. More common, and perhaps more socially significant, was such interchange as that depicted by Juvenal between a Jewish 'interpreter of dreams' and her clients (*Satire* 6.542–7); she is easily located in the extensive world of fortune-tellers and purveyors of magic, where we sense (from the

content of the magic incantations) considerable Jewish influence. Judaism clearly intrigued some Gentiles at varying levels, and those who joined in Jewish festivals or pilgrimages, like those in Antioch whom the Jewish community made 'in some measure part of themselves' (Josephus, *War* 7. iii. 3 [45]), must have been told something about Jewish tradition. To what extent this took place in synagogues is unclear, since we do not know how common it was for Gentiles to attend synagogue meetings.³⁸ But whatever the context, Diaspora Jews appear to have been willing and able to explain Judaism to Gentile hearers, in some cases with the result that the latter became proselytes. The 'interpreter of laws of Moses' who influenced Fulvia in Rome (Josephus, *Ant.* 18. iii. 5 [81–4]) was clearly a persuasive advocate for Judaism, while the merchants in the court of Adiabene were apparently skilled in presenting its merits to the royal family (*Ant.* 20. ii. 3 [34–7]).

These last examples raise an important question: are we to think of Jewish apologetics taking a different form in relation to would-be proselytes? Should we imagine a distinct species of mission attuned to winning 'converts'? The assumption that 'proselytizing' mission would be clearly distinct from more general apologetics appears to lie behind the conviction both of those who affirm and of those who deny such a phenomenon. By considering this issue we will complete our study and return to some questions raised at the outset of our enquiry.

Apologetics and proselytism

Schürer, we may recall, considered that a distinction could be drawn between Jewish literature with a 'missionary purpose' (aimed at winning converts) and that attempting merely to create a 'favourable impression' among Gentiles. Goodman also emphasizes that not all communication with Gentiles was connected to proselytism, but his thesis requires him to maintain a sharp distinction between forms of address to Gentiles. For instance, while recognizing that Jews in many circumstances needed Gentile 'sympathisers' and 'adherents', he insists that 'this partial mission to win gentile adherents to the Jewish cult is far from the universal proselytizing mission' which has often been attributed to Judaism.³⁹ Indeed, he suggests that the one

³⁸ Luke presents this as a normal phenomenon (e.g. Acts 14.1; 17.4, etc.), but other evidence is sparse. Georgi's arguments (1987: 83–151) that the synagogue was the site of Jewish mission, and the interpretation of Scripture its chief means, nearly all dissolve on close inspection. For instance, Philo's claim that the synagogues are open schools of learning (*Spec. Leg.* 2.62–3; *Mos.* 2.209–10) does *not* imply that Gentiles flocked to them, only that they were frequented by ordinary (not just philosophical) Jews.

³⁹ Goodman 1994: 88. The sentence contains two contrasts, one between a partial and a universal mission and a second between a mission to win adherents and a mission to win converts. It appears that Goodman takes the two contrasts to belong together. I will here suggest that the latter contrast, between seeking 'adherents' and seeking 'converts', is overdrawn, but I accept that this common search was partial, not universal.

undermines the other: 'to the extent . . . that Jews apparently openly through the synagogues in this period offered a hope of God's blessing to gentiles who did not convert, they undermined any effort they might wish to make to win converts' (1994: 88). This appears to me an unnatural and unnecessary contrast, and I will suggest that Jewish apologetics may in fact have few if any distinguishing characteristics in connection with proselytism.

There is good evidence that Jews in antiquity considered proselytes to enjoy a distinct status; they are given a special label in literature and in inscriptions, and several texts indicate the special characteristics of the proselyte to be complete abandonment of 'idolatry', integration into the Jewish community and full commitment to the Jewish laws (including, for men, circumcision).⁴⁰ There were apparently grey areas where the borders were less precisely defined (e.g. for women) or where extensive 'Judaizing' could be differently viewed by different parties; moreover, where the rhetoric of our literature precludes legal precision, the status of Gentiles vis-à-vis the Jewish community is sometimes left unclear (e.g. in eschatological scenarios). Nonetheless, we may take it from Josephus that the Jewish community could generally distinguish between those Gentiles who 'honoured God' and those who were 'definitely Jewish' (*Ant.* 20. ii. 4 [38]), between 'casual visitors' and those who committed themselves to live under Jewish laws (*Against Apion* 2.210). For certain purposes, such as intermarriage, the distinction seems to have been of great significance.

From one point of view, the proselyte could be conceived as standing in a quite different category from other Gentiles. Proselytes have come from 'death' to life' (so *Joseph and Aseneth*, passim), from 'idle fables' to 'a clear vision of the truth' (Philo, *Virt.* 102-3; *Spec. Leg.* 1.51-2). But from another perspective, their commitment to Judaism is simply more complete than that of other Gentile admirers and imitators, different *in degree* but not *in kind*. The neat categories which Philo creates are in fact blurred by his own appreciation of Gentile supporters of Judaism: Petronius, for instance, though clearly not a proselyte, had 'some rudiments of Jewish philosophy and piety' either from his education or from his soul's own disposition towards virtue (*Leg. Gai.* 245).⁴¹ In fact, figures like Petronius figure quite prominently in Jewish literature and inscriptions: Gentiles who, for a variety of reasons and in a wide variety of ways, gave the Jewish community their support or approbation. The range of forms such Gentile 'sympathy' could take has been well documented by others; we may simply remind ourselves here that Jews had a variety of reasons (political and economic, as well as 'religious')

⁴⁰ See Cohen 1989: 13-33 (here at 26-33) and the recent discussion in Donaldson 1997: 54-60.

⁴¹ Even in the narrative world of *Joseph and Aseneth* there are Gentiles who, while not undergoing Aseneth's conversion, possess wisdom and gentleness (1.3) and give glory to God (20.7); see Barclay 1996: 209-11.

for appealing to Gentiles for their interest, appreciation, toleration and favour and for urging them towards imitation and adoption of aspects of Jewish culture.⁴²

For all such purposes, it was important to present Judaism in the best possible light, as a reasonable, natural, moral and supremely pious way of life. To address Gentiles in these terms would encourage them at least to tolerate Jews in maintaining their customs, but it might also induce Gentiles to adopt those practices themselves. Our sources indicate that such 'Judaizing' could take many different forms, including worship at the Temple, Sabbath rest, pork abstention and celebration of Jewish festivals (see Cohen 1989 and Josephus, *Against Apion* 2.282). Between such limited adoption of Jewish customs and the full commitment inherent in becoming a proselyte, there is a clear difference in degree, but not in kind. Metilius offered to 'Judaize as far as circumcision' (Josephus, *War* 2. xvii. 10 [454]) and the son in Juvenal's satire goes some steps further than his Sabbath-observant father (*Satire* 14.96-104), but these are, in phenomenological terms, movements along a continuum. To become a proselyte meant to adopt the laws, customs and practices of the Jews (Josephus, *Ant.* 16. vii. 6 [225]; 18.iii.5 [82]; *Life* 149).⁴³ That comprehensive cultural change was only a more far-reaching expression of the participation in Judaism which other Gentiles practised to a more limited extent.

If this is so, one would not expect any substantial difference between an address to Gentiles urging them to appreciate Jewish customs and an address bidding them to become proselytes. From a Christian perspective (which may influence scholars more than is generally acknowledged), missionary address is a different form of communication from all others: here one urges the outsider to convert, to take a step of faith quite different from mere interest in or support of the religious community. But for Jews who encouraged Gentile 'sympathy' in a range of different forms, there were many reasons for speaking to Gentiles in a winsome manner. Perhaps Jews who instructed would-be proselytes offered specific instructions about the steps required to gain recognition by the local Jewish community, but otherwise an attractive packaging of Judaism might look just the same if intended to win Gentile admiration as if intended to induce proselytism.

If this suggestion is correct, it cuts two ways in the current debate about mission and apologetics. On the one hand it undermines the case of those who are inclined to assume that a winsome presentation of Judaism addressed to Gentiles *necessarily* implies some appeal to become a proselyte, either as an immediate or as a distant objective. For instance, even if Feldman is right (following Jacobson) in claiming that Ezekiel's *Exagoge* was directed at

⁴² Besides Cohen (1989), see the recent discussions of the phenomenon of 'sympathizing' Gentiles by Levinskaya (1996) and Wander (1998).

⁴³ On Josephus' terminology, cf. Cohen 1987: 409-30 (here at 420-1).

Gentiles, it is not necessary to conclude that its glorification of Moses and its panegyric on the Jewish people 'would make for excellent propaganda in seeking converts.'⁴⁴ This is illegitimately to turn all apologetics into the service of proselytism.⁴⁵ On the other hand, our argument tends to blur the boundary which Goodman draws between 'apologetic' and 'proselytic' mission. If becoming a proselyte is only one (extreme) form of respect for Judaism, attempts to gain Gentile understanding, appreciation and support might well issue in a Gentile's decision to become a Jew. It is a moot point whether any of our extant literature has this specific outcome in its near or farthest sights,⁴⁶ but the possibility cannot be rejected on the grounds that eliciting Gentile 'sympathy' is categorically different from (and even contrary to) encouraging Gentile conversion. If both lie on a single continuum, apologetics could serve both ends, and only specific historical and personal circumstances might determine the actual outcome.

Thus, to employ the label 'missionary preaching' may skew the discussion by importing a Christian framework of thought. Jews clearly learned how to communicate their culture to non-Jews, and their apologetics, oral and literary, could effect a range of possible results. If we decline to demarcate proselytism as a separate phenomenon, we may attribute to the success of Jewish apologetics the full range of positive responses to Judaism – from toleration, interest and partial imitation through to full proselytism. While we cannot quantify the results, the cumulative evidence suggests that apologetics was of critical importance in ensuring the survival and flourishing of Judaism throughout the Graeco-Roman Diaspora.⁴⁷

⁴⁴ Feldman 1993: 317–18.

⁴⁵ Although his case is far more nuanced, I would also question Carleton Paget's opinion (in his response to Goodman) that the welcome of Jewish sympathizers 'could indicate a subtle proselytic tendency' (1996: 93) or should be taken 'as evidence of proselytic mission in the sense that it may have been hoped by those conducting the mission that the God-fearer would eventually convert' (1996: 79). This suggests a presumption that proselytization was always the favoured ultimate outcome, whereas in some cases it may have been not only unimaginable but even undesirable (see, e.g., Ananias' disapproval of Izates' plan to get circumcised, Josephus, *Ant.* 20.ii.4 [38–42]).

⁴⁶ Such a case has recently been mounted for Josephus' *Against Apion* (Mason 1996: 187–228); but I find it somewhat exaggerated (see Barclay 1998: 152–79, here at 156–8).

⁴⁷ Since the composition of this essay, M. Goodman, M. Edwards and S. Price have edited an important new collection of essays on *Apologetics in the Roman Empire: Pagans, Jews and Christians*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999. A recent publication by S. Matthews, *First Converts: Rich Pagan Women and the Rhetoric of Mission in early Judaism and Christianity*, Stanford University Press, 2001, has made a further contribution to the topic of 'mission', substantially in agreement with the last part of this chapter. Developments in my own thinking on the position of Diaspora Jews in relation to Graeco-Roman culture may be seen in my extended review of J. J. Collins, *Between Athens and Jerusalem* (2nd edition) in *Journal of Jewish Studies* 52 (2001): 363–8.

PHILO, ALEXANDRIA AND EMPIRE

The politics of allegorical interpretation

Jonathan Dyck

I first became interested in Philo in the process of teaching an undergraduate course on Diaspora Judaism. What interested me about Philo was not the individual, the Jewish philosopher par excellence, nor the philosophical tradition of which he was a part – all important areas of inquiry in their own right – but rather what his work might tell us about the formation, maintenance and transformation of the cultural identity of Jews in the Diaspora. In other words, the questions I put to Philo were not necessarily his own, nor were they oriented, in the first instance, to understanding his individual achievement. My questions were and are the questions of a cultural historian for whom the Alexandrian Jewish community provides a striking example of the political and cultural tensions with which the Diaspora communities had to contend.

One of the more interesting dimensions of the cultural interaction between Judaism and Hellenism (broadly understood) is the tradition of allegorical interpretation that emerged in the Hellenistic period and that reached its culmination with Philo. My aim here is to explore the cultural and political dimensions of this interpretative tradition. Specifically, I want to explore the way in which allegorical interpretation as practised by Philo is embedded in the cultural politics of Alexandria on the one side and the imperial politics of Rome on the other.

This essay takes the form of critical reflections on David Dawson's cultural critical reading of Philo, using Daniel Boyarin as a third dialogue partner. Both scholars approach Philo from a cultural critical point of view but reach very different conclusions about Philo's aims.

In a chapter entitled 'Philo: The Reinscription of Reality', Dawson presents a quite astonishing thesis.¹ In contrast to more conventional understandings,² Dawson casts Philo in the role of the cultural revisionist whose

¹ Dawson 1994: 73–126.

² The conventional view that Philo universalizes Judaism is found, for example, in Tcherikover 1957–64: 55–78; and Collins 1986.

aim it was to subordinate Hellenism to Judaism by means of allegorical interpretation. His allegorical interpretation of scripture is not to be construed as a universalization of Judaism nor an accommodation of Judaism to Hellenism. It is not an interpretative subordination of Jewish culture to Greek culture – an attempt to dissolve Jewish identity into Greek culture – but rather a hermeneutic usurpation of Greek culture – an attempt to make Greek culture Jewish. In short, Dawson argues that Philo uses the methods of Hellenism against Hellenism.

Boyarin, on the other hand, takes a less novel line in his post-modern critique of Philo (and Paul).³ According to Boyarin, Philo (as well as other Hellenistic Jews like Paul) is motivated by 'a Hellenistic desire for the One, which among other things produced an ideal of universal human essence, beyond difference and hierarchy'.⁴ This desire for the One, for univocity, is the driving force behind allegorical interpretation and finds expression in the binary opposition of the universal and the particular, the spiritual and the physical. Philo's allegorical interpretation of scripture is thus aimed at 'generating meanings of universal applicability' and seeks to overcome the problem of the particularity of Israel's history and ritual.

Before going on to look at Dawson's and Boyarin's proposals in detail, it might be helpful to locate these proposals in relation to Barclay's 'analytical tools'. Barclay analyses the interaction between Diaspora Judaism and Hellenism under the following labels: association, acculturation and accommodation. Assimilation refers to social integration via 'social contacts, social interaction, and social practices'. Acculturation refers to 'the linguistic, educational and ideological aspects of a given cultural matrix'.⁵ Accommodation refers to 'the use to which acculturation is put'.⁶ Each of these analytical concepts can be visualized in terms of three continua as applied to the complex relationship that obtained between Diaspora Judaism and Hellenism. Philo's position on all three continua, according to Dawson and Boyarin, is indicated by 'D' and 'B' respectively in Figure 10.1.

The key issue separating Dawson and Boyarin is Philo's position on the last continuum: Accommodation. Dawson moves Philo to the right hand side of this continuum in the direction of cultural opposition, whilst Boyarin places Philo on the left hand side in the direction cultural submersion.

My aim in the following sections will be to examine how Dawson (and, to a lesser degree, Boyarin) reconstructs the cultural and political force of allegorical interpretation. Dawson tackles the issue from a number of perspectives, beginning with a discourse theoretical approach.

³ Boyarin 1994. Boyarin's discussion of Philo, the 'other Hellenistic Jew', is scattered throughout the book.

⁴ Ibid.: 7.

⁵ Barclay 1996: 92.

⁶ Ibid.: 96.

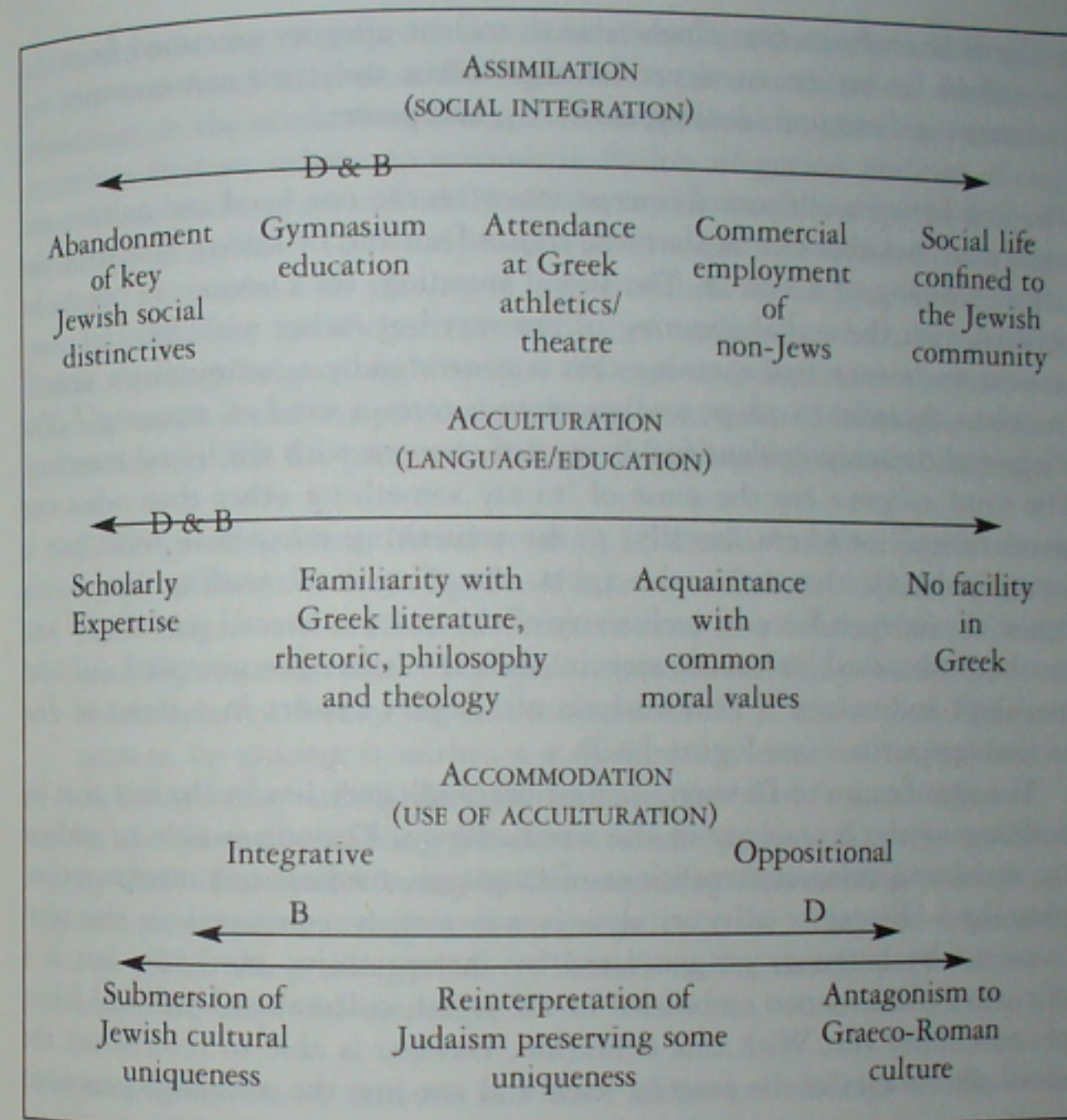


Figure 10.1 The interaction between Diaspora Judaism and Hellenism.

Allegory from the perspective of discourse theory

Dawson's book as a whole is about the revisionary power of allegory as expressed in the work of three allegorical readers from ancient Alexandria: Philo, Valentinus and Clement. Thus, he approaches Philo from the point of view of a general theory of allegory as revisionary practice. For Dawson, allegory is not only a way of reading texts but a way of using that reading to reinterpret culture and society. It is part of a larger strategy of cultural engagement the aim of which is to affirm the distinctive identity of a minority culture (Jewish/Christian) over against a dominant culture (Graeco-Roman).

Ancient allegorical compositions and interpretations constituted fields on which struggles between competing proposals for thought and action took place. The very tensions between literal and alle-

gorical readings that characterized ancient allegory stemmed from efforts by readers to secure for themselves and their communities social and cultural identity, authority, and power.⁷

The link between allegorical interpretation on the one hand and culture and society on the other can be clarified, argues Dawson, by asking first what the literal meaning of a text is. The literal meaning, for Dawson, is not to be equated with the verbal meaning of the text but rather with the common-sensical or conventional meaning that is generated by a community's 'unself-conscious decision to adopt and promote a certain kind of meaning'.⁸ The allegorical meaning is identified by way of contrast with the literal meaning. The word *allêgoria* has the sense of 'to say something other than what one seems to say'⁹ or (more literally) to say something other than what one is saying publicly, that is, in the agora. An allegorical reading 'implicitly denies the independence or exclusivity of the first [or literal] meaning'¹⁰ and can be understood as revisionary in that it challenges accepted cultural meanings and values.¹¹ This analysis of allegory results in a series of dialectical oppositions (see Figure 10.2).

The significance of Dawson's definition of allegory lies in the fact that by building on the etymology of the word *allêgoria* Dawson is able to address the social and cultural dimensions of language, reading and interpretation. Meaning – literal or allegorical – is not simply contained in the text, conveyed by language or generated by interpretative methods, but is a discursive phenomenon embedded in the social, cultural and political fabric of community life. With this definition, Dawson is able to reconstruct the social significance of the practice itself and not just the meanings generated by it.

Philo's case is not, however, a straightforward dialectic between the literal and the allegorical but a double dialectic between the literal and the allegorical and between Judaism and Hellenism. It is not an inner-Jewish debate

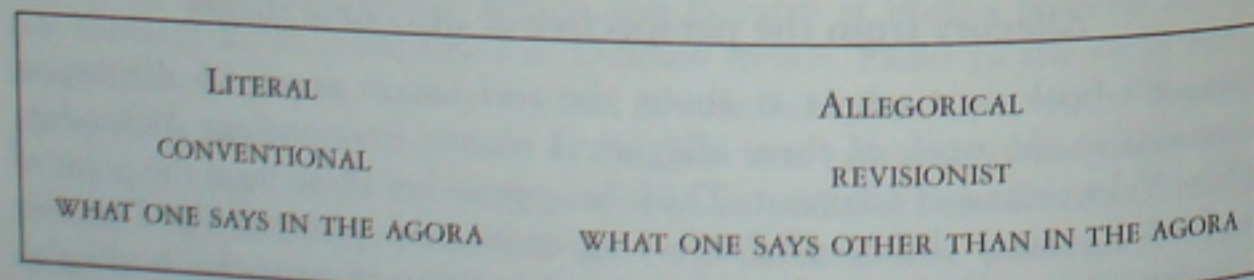


Figure 10.2 The dialectical opposition of allegory.

7 Dawson 1994: 2.

8 Ibid.: 8.

9 Ibid.: 3. See Heraclitus, *Homeric Questiones* 5.2.

10 Dawson 1994: 8.

11 Ibid.: 9.

about the meaning of scripture but an interplay between scriptural meanings on the one hand (literal and allegorical) and non-scriptural Hellenistic meanings on the other. According to Dawson, it is the latter non-scriptural meanings that are subject to revision in Philo's allegorical readings of scripture. These readings are culturally revisionary in that formerly non-scriptural meanings are placed in a scriptural context and associated with a literal reading of the text. This placing of non-scriptural meanings into scripture is accomplished via an allegorical reading of scripture which suspends the literal meaning long enough to join the non-scriptural with the scriptural. The end result is that scripture absorbs and reinterprets Hellenistic culture.¹² Dawson clarifies his proposal with the following hypothetical example:

[T]he preallegorical, literal reading of Exodus might concern the escape of Hebrews from Egypt. If I draw on Platonic theories of the soul's origin and destiny in order to read this biblical story allegorically as an account of the soul's ascent from bodily distraction to mental purity, I may do so because I want to reinterpret Plato's account by placing it within a scriptural framework. But in doing so, I may in fact subtly alter the meaning that Plato's account has on its own terms by making the once-eternal soul now directly created by God. When functioning in this way, allegorical readings can subvert previously nonscriptural meanings . . . ; the allegorical reading can enable the preallegorical or 'literal' reading to critique or revise those nonscriptural meanings.¹³

The revisionary moves at work in Philo's allegorical readings are illustrated in Figure 10.3 (moving from left to right).

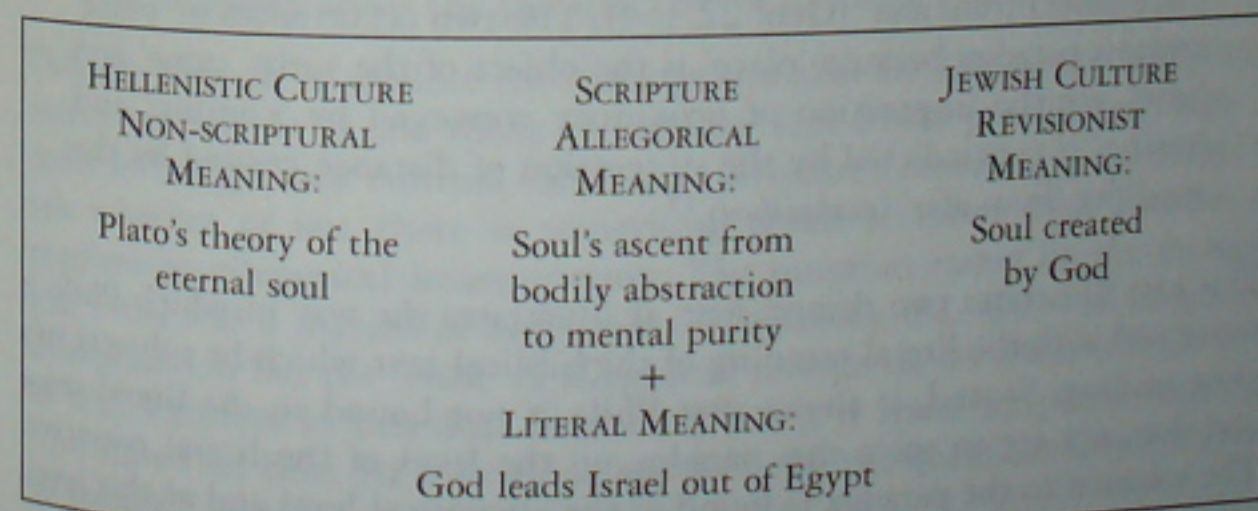


Figure 10.3 Revisionary moves in Philo's allegorical readings.

12 Ibid.: 10.

13 Ibid.: 11.

The important thing to note about this particular stratagem is that it operates indirectly (if not obliquely) by allowing for the literal and the allegorical meanings of scripture to be read together. In other words, Philo's subversive tendencies are only apparent to those who attend to the fact that he has a dual commitment to the literal and the allegorical meaning of scripture. His allegorical readings are but one element in an interpretative practice and should not be treated as a separate concern.

So much for the basic thrust of Dawson's thesis. What about the evidence which supports this thesis? It must be said at the start that the evidence for his thesis is not straightforward insofar as the case he is trying to make involves discerning the cultural-critical *implications* of the close association of non-scriptural allegorical meanings and literal scriptural meanings. There are, of course, more direct statements by Philo about the superiority of Mosaic wisdom (to be discussed below) but these do not illustrate the supposedly revisionary power of allegory. This may account for the fact that Dawson's analysis of Philo's allegorical readings is not concerned primarily with showing how Philo's allegorical interpretations revise or subvert this or that Hellenistic meaning but rather with highlighting the close attention Philo pays to both the literal and allegorical meaning of the text. Dawson's primary concern, as I see it, is to demonstrate that 'Philo tenaciously guards the specific lexical details or shape of a text whose constraints he otherwise seems ready to evade'.¹⁴ In other words, no example is cited which conforms directly to the hypothetical example of allegorical revision discussed above.

Dawson begins his analysis of specific texts with Philo's account of the story of Abraham and Isaac. In *Somn.* 1.61ff,

Philo is perplexed when Moses says that Abraham 'came to the place [*topos*] of which God had told him: and lifting up his eyes he saw the place [*topos*] from afar' (Gen. 22.3-4). The two occurrences of 'place' create a paradox because 'place' is the object of the verbs 'came' and 'saw,' yet the impression of proximity conveyed by 'coming' and 'seeing' is contradicted by the suggestion of distance created by the modifier 'from afar' (*makrothen*).¹⁵

This text illustrates two things: first, it illustrates the way in which Philo is concerned with the literal meaning of the biblical text which he subjects to a close reading. Second, it shows that Philo is not bound to the literal sense and does not try to solve this paradox on the level of the literal narrative. The solution to the paradox is found at the allegorical level and at this level, continues Dawson, Philo suggests two other possibilities:

¹⁴ *Ibid.*: 106.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*: 83.

- (a) 'Place' is a homonym (*homonymia*) with the two meanings of 'Word' (*logos*) and 'God.'
- (b) Although used twice, 'place' has the single meaning of 'Word' (*logos*).

When 'place' is given these meanings, the verse now reads one of two ways (with the meaning of the modifier *makrothen* italicized):

- (a) He came to the Word of which God had told him; and raising his eyes, he saw God *from afar* (i.e. raising his eyes, from afar, saw God).
- (b) He came to the Word of which God had told him; and raising his eyes, he saw the Word *far away* (i.e. he saw that the Word was far away from God).¹⁶

The end result of resolving the paradox in this way is that

both interpretations have the same underlying or allegorical meaning: despite his spiritual progress, Abraham has not reached unmediated knowledge of the remote God but only the 'place' of the mediating Word.¹⁷

It is my view that this example does not in itself support the 'cultural subversion' thesis. It only illustrates the fact that Philo produced close readings of the biblical text, literal and allegorical. Or, to state it differently, I do not think one would reach the conclusion that Philo was trying to subvert Greek culture if one restricted one's investigation to close readings of Philo's allegorical interpretations.

Allegory from the perspective of its theory of language

Dawson goes on to explore the assumptions that lie behind this allegorical interpretation. It is one thing to surmise that Philo practises allegory in order to bring Greek cultural values into scripture's domain, quite another to ask whether or not there is something about scripture that justifies or requires an allegorical interpretation. The question raised by the example just cited and a myriad of other texts is not only the 'Why' of allegorical interpretation but the 'How' of allegorical interpretation. How is Philo able to read scripture in this dual fashion? What is it about scriptural language that allows for this? At least these appear to be the questions Dawson seeks to answer.

As Dawson sees it, Philo's allegorical method is grounded in a particular philosophy of scriptural language, namely, 'the paradoxical capacity of scrip-

¹⁶ *Ibid.*: 83.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*: 84.

tural language to be simultaneously representational and nonrepresentational'.¹⁸ It is Philo's sense of the uniqueness of biblical language in its two aspects, representational and nonrepresentational, that allows him to hold the literal and the allegorical together. In other words, there is something intrinsic to scriptural language that requires both a literal and an allegorical interpretation; a point not covered by Dawson's model.

The capacity of scriptural language for representation goes back to Adam's success in giving the right names to the animals.

According to Philo, God wants to test Adam's ability to confer names that would 'bring out clearly the peculiar natures [*idiotêtai*] of the things [*hypokeimena*] which bore them' (*Op. Mund.* 149). Prelapsarian man passes this test easily, matching names (*klêseis*) to bodies (*sômata*) and things (*pragmata*) through his accurate perception of their essential natures (*physeis*) (*Op. Mund.* 150).¹⁹

As a result 'Adamic names are . . . perfect linguistic representations of non-linguistic realities'.²⁰ The perfect correlation of the essences of things and Adamic names is preserved by Moses who wrote the Hebrew scriptures under inspiration and by the inspired translators of the Septuagint. This results in the following chain: Essences of things > Adamic names > Hebrew language > Inspired Moses > Hebrew Scriptures > Inspired translators > Septuagint > Essences of things.²¹

The other aspect of scriptural language, its non-representational dimension, is also rooted in the Adam's use of language.

In contrast to his depiction of language's representative power in Eden and in the individual cells of the seventy Septuagint translators, Philo's comments on the Genesis scenes of creation, temptation and fall reveal a failure of linguistic representation and suggest that the origin of that failure lies in the necessary deficiency of human knowledge.²²

This 'failure of linguistic representation' has to do, first and foremost, with the inadequacy of language to represent God. According to Dawson,

Philo finds Mosaic representation problematic because he believes that the human capacity to know God and the world is limited. . . .

18 Ibid.: 84.

19 Ibid.: 84.

20 Ibid.: 85.

21 Ibid.: 87.

22 Ibid.: 88.

When scripture appears to offer such descriptions, it does so merely as a pedagogical concession. Anthropomorphic or anthropopathic representations of God are aimed at spiritually deficient readers who are unable to approach God in any other way.²³

An important implication of the non-representational nature of scriptural language is that

Moses cannot use language in a literal or proper sense (*kyriôs*) to represent the divine. If it is to be applied to God, language must be 'abused' by the trope that Philo, following Greek grammarians and rhetoricians, calls 'catachresis' (*katachrêsis*).²⁴

Allegorical interpretation involves getting around 'the ordinary constraints of time, space and identity' that operate at the level of the literal sense.²⁵

Consequently, in order to describe Moses' hidden wisdom about the soul and the cosmos, Philo must reduce the attraction of the literal reading of scripture precisely by evading these constraints.²⁶

One example of this is Philo's allegorical interpretation of the Exodus as found in *Spec.* 147. This is the same story Dawson uses in his hypothetical example of allegorical revisionism. It is interesting to note, therefore, that this story serves to illustrate a different point entirely, namely, that allegorical interpretation is an inner Jewish necessity – necessary, that is, for attaining a correct understanding of God.

Having introduced the historical background of this the fourth festival of the Jews, Philo states that:

those who are in the habit of turning plain stories into allegory, argue that the passover figuratively represents the purification of the soul; for they say that the lover of wisdom is never practising anything else except a passing over from the body and the passions.

(*Spec. Leg.* 2.147)

For Dawson, this text illustrates the way in which allegorical readings evade the temporal and spatial constraints of the literal sense of scripture. He comments:

Philo evades the temporal character of historical events in order to interpret both the exodus and its annual remembrance at Passover as

23 Ibid.: 90–1.

24 Ibid.: 92.

25 Ibid.: 98.

26 Ibid.: 98.

an ever-present process of the sanctification of the human soul. Pass-over, of course, emphasizes the contemporary significance of the past historical event of the exodus. Philo's literal reading of that historical event relates the contemporary liturgical practice to its historical prototype while preserving the unique temporal aspects of both (*Spec. Leg.* 2.146). But Philo also agrees with other allegorical readers of scripture who claim that the scriptural account of the historical exodus (though it occurred 'at that time' and is celebrated 'once in every year') has another, underlying meaning concerning soul's progress in virtue at any time: 'the Crossing-festival hints at the purification of the soul' (*Spec. Leg.* 2.147). Philo's literal reading connects the historical event and the contemporary liturgical remembrance while preserving the specific character of each. But his allegorical reading momentarily suspends the temporality of the past historical exodus (which happened once) and the present-day liturgical celebration (which happens once a year) in order to point out the ever-present possibilities for human existence that they imply.²⁷

And just in case the final point about 'the ever-present possibilities for human existence' may be taken to suggest that Philo has abandoned the literal meaning entirely, Dawson adds (in a footnote) that the

suspension is only momentary because while Philo's non-literal reading is a perspective from which he reads the literal account of historical and contemporary events, that reading does not replace the literal-historical account. In this instance, Philo has inserted his non-literal reading (*Spec. Leg.* 2.147) between the literal-historical reading (*Spec. Leg.* 2.146) and a literal description of the present-day festival (*Spec. Leg.* 2.148–49).²⁸

In other words, while it is true that Philo is drawing on the Platonic theory of the soul, Dawson might as well have added that Philo's reading revises and subverts the Platonic theory of the immortality of the soul 'by making the once-eternal soul now directly created by God' (to quote Dawson's own hypothetical example of allegorical revision cited above). Whether or not this is the correct inference to draw is, of course, another matter.

Boyarin on Philo's theory of language

Let me state from the outset that Boyarin's understanding of Philo is not worked out in the same sort of detail as is Dawson's. It is, after all, a study of Paul. He does, however, provide a suitable point of contrast.

²⁷ *Ibid.*: 98–9.

²⁸ *Ibid.*: 274.

Boyarin situates Paul among Hellenistic Jews who, like Philo, were 'motivated by a Hellenistic desire for the One'. What Boyarin means by this is the desire of Hellenistic Jewish philosophers to articulate (in line with their pagan counterparts) a 'universal human essence, beyond difference and hierarchy'.²⁹ Fundamental to this project was an anthropological dualism that privileged the spirit over the flesh, the universal over the particular.

This 'Hellenistic Jewish cultural koinē' – the prioritizing of the spirit over the body – created considerable difficulty for observant Jews who were marked off as a distinct community by the circumcision of the flesh. One way out of this 'scandal' was to interpret scripture, and the practices enjoined by scripture, spiritually in accordance with this 'desire for the One'. Thus, an anthropological dualism gave rise to a hermeneutical dualism. To demonstrate this point, Boyarin cites a text from Paul's Epistle to the Romans and another from Philo's *De Abrahamo* as equivalent though independent expressions of the hermeneutical privileging of the spirit.

For when we were still in the flesh, our sinful passions, stirred up by the law, were at work on our members to bear fruit for death. But now we are fully freed from the law, dead to that in which we lay captive. We can thus serve in the new being of the Spirit and not the old one of the letter.

(Romans 7:5–6)

Such is the natural and obvious rendering of the story [of Sodom and Gomorra] as suited for the multitude. We will proceed at once to the hidden and inward meaning which appeals to the few who study soul characteristics rather than bodily forms.

(Abr. 147)

According to Boyarin, the allegorical hermeneutic of Paul and Philo 'is founded on a binary opposition in which the meaning as a disembodied substance exists prior to its incarnation in language – that is, in a dualistic system in which spirit precedes and is primary over body'.³⁰

In this tradition, language is representation in two senses; in its 'content' it represents the higher world, while in its form it represents the structure of world as outer form and inner actuality.³¹

This account of allegorical interpretation calls for a revision of the standard view that allegorical interpretation stems from the need to update texts

²⁹ Boyarin 1994: 7.

³⁰ *Ibid.*: 14.

³¹ *Ibid.*: 15.

when their mythological contents are no longer applicable or appropriate.³² Rather, allegorical interpretation stems from

a profound yearning for univocity, a univocity which is only guaranteed by the positing of a spiritual meaning for language prior to its expression in embodied speech. In this sense, allegorical interpretation is only a species of general European phallogocentric notions of meaning, including Saussure's dualism of the signifier and the signified; any notion of interpretation that depends on a prior and privileged pairing of signifiers and signifieds is allegorical.³³

Philo's dualistic anthropology can be seen, argues Boyarin, mostly clearly in his allegorical treatment of the Creation story. Philo's interpretation builds on the fact that the Creation story is told twice in Genesis (*Op. Mund.* 16). The first account of creation (Gen. 1.1–2:3) is the story of the creation of the ideal model on the basis of which God then creates the physical world in the second account (Gen. 2.4). Humanity is also the object of a double creation. In Genesis 1 Adam is an androgynous being made in the image of God as 'an idea or type or seal, an object of thought (only), incorporeal, neither male nor female, by nature incorruptible (*Op. Mund.* 134).³⁴ In the second creation account, on the other hand, man is formed out the clay of the earth and 'is an object of sense perception, partaking already of such or such quality, consisting of body and soul, man or woman, by nature mortal' (*Op. Mund.* 134). This Adam is a physical being, a male from whom the female is then formed.

The creation of woman is a secondary creative act of God. Philo begins his account of it as follows:

But since no created thing is constant, and things mortal are necessarily liable to changes and reverses, it could not but be that the first man too should experience some ill fortune. And woman becomes for him the beginning of blameworthy life.

(*Op. Mund.* 151)

In his allegorical interpretation of this same biblical text Philo gets to the heart of the matter, according to Boyarin. Here 'Philo interprets Adam as the mind and Eve as the senses, the supplement, the "helper of the soul".³⁵

³² *Ibid.*: 15.

³³ *Ibid.*: 16.

³⁴ This 'myth of primal androgyny, a pre-lapsarian state before difference, was very widespread in late antiquity, particularly among platonists in the Jewish (and then Christian) tradition' (*ibid.*: 19).

³⁵ *Ibid.*: 19–20.

For it was requisite that the creation of the mind should be followed immediately by that of sense-perception, to be a helper and ally to it. . . . How is it, then produced? As the prophet himself again says, it is when the mind has fallen asleep. As a matter of fact it is when the mind has gone to sleep that perception begins, for conversely when the mind wakes up perception is quenched.

(*Leg. All.* II, 24–5)³⁶

Boyarin draws the following conclusions from this:

It is easy to see here how for Philo the theory of the body and the theory of language coincide. . . . His allegorical method, which privileges the spiritual sense ('the soul'), is exactly parallel to his anthropological doctrine, which privileges mind over the corporeal. The very necessity for humans to have senses is that which also generates the necessity 'to make ideas visible' through the production of myth-like allegories.³⁷

Preliminary reflections

Some preliminary reflections on the ideas presented so far are in order. The first thing to note is the similarity between Dawson and Boyarin's account of the philosophy of language that undergirds Philo's interpretative practice. Both make the point that for Philo language is a vehicle for meanings that exist prior to linguistic expression and that it refers to other more essential realities, spiritual and divine. It is only when you move out from a narrower consideration of the character of biblical language that calls for allegorical interpretation that you find the two proposals in conflict. And here I am thinking of their accounts of the 'cultural project' of which allegorical interpretation was supposedly a part.

Boyarin sees allegorical interpretation as a sort of cultural necessity for Hellenistic Jews and the means by which scripture is made to speak of universal human essences. As he sees it, the basic problem for Jews was the tension between narrow ethnocentrism and universal monotheism.³⁸ The exclusiveness of Judaism was unacceptable to Greeks and in response to this Hellenistic Jews sought to demonstrate, via allegorical interpretation, how the particular side of Judaism symbolised the universal.³⁹

³⁶ Boyarin leaves out 'with a view to the completeness of the soul' when he quotes *Leg. All.* 24–5, but I still think his basic thesis of the dualistic privileging of the spirit over the body is sound.

³⁷ *Ibid.*: 21.

³⁸ *Ibid.*: 52.

³⁹ *Ibid.*: 57–8.

As Jewish culture, both in Palestine and in the Diaspora, came into contact with other cultures in the Hellenistic and Roman periods, it was faced with the issue of how the biblical religion fits in a world in which Jews live among other peoples. The dualism of Hellenized Judaism provides one answer to this question by allegorizing such signifiers as 'Israel,' 'history,' and the practices of Judaism. Thus Philo interprets these signifiers as having meanings of universal applicability.⁴⁰

Although he grants that Philo is still faithful to the literal meaning of scripture, and the practices it enjoins, he nevertheless treats allegorical interpretation as a relatively independent phenomenon that arises out of the cultural tensions between Judaism and Hellenism.

Dawson also sees allegory as part of a broader strategy of cultural interaction between Judaism and Hellenism but in his view allegory is a pragmatic thing, a 'hook' by which Greek cultural meanings are dragged into the biblical world. Viewed on its own allegorical interpretation might very well look like a 'universalizing discourse' but on balance, so argues Dawson, it is quite the opposite. His case really rests on making the most of Philo's on-going commitment to the literal sense. The whole issue, therefore, comes down to how one reads Philo's two-fold commitment to the literal and the allegorical. For Dawson, allegorical interpretation is not an independent phenomenon. As Dawson sees it, Philo has been falsely accused of attempting to 'internationalize Judaism by eliminating all its distinctive features'.⁴¹ And indeed, had Philo abandoned the literal sense altogether, his 'allegorical correlation of Hellenistic meanings with the text of scripture might be read as a way of Hellenizing scripture, accommodating the particularities of the Pentateuch to the demands of culture'.⁴² This is not the case, however, because for Philo, scripture is not just to be read allegorically, it is to be enacted, practised, 'engraved in the souls of those active in a sociopolitical practice or *politeia*'.⁴³ In other words, the literal sense is to be enacted, practised and engraved in the souls of Jews who want to maintain their distinct identity in the context of Diaspora. Dawson, therefore, argues that 'when the connection between literary revision and social practice is kept in view, it becomes unmistakably clear that for Philo allegorical interpretation is an effort to make Greek culture Jewish rather than to dissolve Jewish identity into Greek culture'.⁴⁴

The main problem with Dawson's thesis, as I see it, is that it does not do justice to what Philo does best, that is, interpret scripture allegorically. It is

⁴⁰ Ibid.: 25.

⁴¹ Dawson 1994: 113.

⁴² Ibid.: 111.

⁴³ Ibid.: 111.

⁴⁴ Ibid.: 74.

difficult to see this as subversive when, in Dawson's own words, his allegorical interpretations point to 'the ever-present possibilities for human existence'.⁴⁵ Or again, what does one make of the fact that Philo privileges the allegorical over the literal? The literal is for the simple-minded, the allegorical for the soul-minded. These questions cannot, of course, be answered without reference to Philo's context (to be discussed below), but it is important to note the significant tensions within Dawson's proposal even at this stage.

Allegorical interpretation in the context of other 'subversive' practices

Another angle of approach taken by Dawson is to read Philo's allegorical interpretation in light of instances of more or less direct subordination of Hellenistic culture. What I mean by 'instances of more or less direct subordination' are examples of subordination that do not involve allegorical interpretation. According to Dawson, Philo directly subordinates Greek culture to Judaism in the following ways:

- 1 'having scripture directly proclaim [i.e. not via allegory] Hellenistic philosophical wisdom, particularly Stoic ethical teaching';⁴⁶
- 2 subordinating the classical sources themselves (though anonymously) by making them 'echo scriptural meanings';⁴⁷
- 3 forcing 'classical texts to corroborate or bear witness directly to the meaning of scripture'.⁴⁸

This line of thought is, of course, reinforced by Philo's direct statements regarding the superiority of Mosaic wisdom. As Dawson puts it,

The subordination of classical sources to scripture receives a decisive turn when Philo underscores Moses' temporal priority and spiritual authority, explicitly asserting that Moses, as author of scripture,

⁴⁵ Ibid.: 99.

⁴⁶ Ibid.: 107. Examples cited include *Poster. C.* 138: 'only the wise man is free and a ruler, though he may have ten thousand masters of his body'; *Migr. Abr.* 128: 'to live according to nature' is 'the aim extolled by the best philosophers'; 'whenever the mind, having entered on virtue's path, walks in the track of right reason and follows God, mindful of his injunctions, and always and in all places recognizing them all as valid both in action and in speech'; and *Migr. Abr.* 129: 'the actions of wise men are nothing else than the words of God'.

⁴⁷ Dawson 1994: 108. An example of this is found in *Praem. Poem.* 9: 'learning is recollection'; i.e. Plato agrees with Philo against Ovid.

⁴⁸ Dawson 1994: 108. Examples of this are *Fug.* 61–61 where the pre-Socratic Heraclitus and Plato are 'cited as witnesses to the meaning of Genesis 4.5 [re: Cain]'; and *Vit. Cont.* 17: 'The same idea [as the one presented in scripture] is suggested I think by Homer in the Iliad at the beginning of the thirteenth book [13.5–6]'.

precedes the classical authors in time and surpasses them in wisdom (see *Vit. Mos.* 1.21).⁴⁹

This claim to superiority is a standard claim made by Jews in Alexandria since the days of Aristobolus⁵⁰ and has often been interpreted as apologetic in intent. Dawson follows more recent scholarship⁵¹ in arguing that this sort of claim is really addressed to a Jewish audience with the intent of defending the unique identity of the Jewish community.

Allegorical (and literal) interpretation in the context of Alexandrian politics

In Dawson's view, Philo's on-going commitment to the literal sense is also a political necessity arising out of the unique circumstances of the Alexandrian Jewish community. And it is here, at the intersection of interpretative and political interests, that a case for 'subversion' has to be made. On Dawson's reading of the situation, literal and allegorical interpretation constitute a two-pronged response to the position the Jewish community found itself in the mid-first century CE.

The Jewish community in Alexandria enjoyed the constitutional right to self-government under the Ptolemies and Romans. While the Jewish community considered their constitutional rights to be on par with those of the Greek polis (and indeed Jews such as Philo were probably full citizens), from the Greek perspective these rights were seen to be in conflict with the constitutional status and political interests of the polis. Under the Romans, the tension between the Greeks and Jews was compounded by the introduction of the poll tax (*laographia*) for all non-citizens (including most Jews) and the extension of citizen-like privileges to Greek-speaking, educated Egyptians. In other words, alongside the tension between the Greek and Jewish communities there arose an intense intra-Greek rivalry over who was authentically Greek.⁵²

⁴⁹ Dawson 1994: 109. Other examples are found in *Quaest. in G.* 3.5, 4.152; *Omn. Prob.* 53, 57, 160; *Aet. Mund.* 18–19; *Somn.* 1.58; and *Spec. Leg.* 1.44.

⁵⁰ Aristobolus asserts that 'the Greeks begin from the philosophy of the Hebrews' for '[i]t is evident that Plato imitated our legislation and that he had investigated thoroughly each of the elements in it. For it had been translated by others before Demetrius Phalereus, before the conquests of Alexander and the Persians. The parts concerning the exodus of the Hebrews, our fellow countrymen, out of Egypt, the fame of all the things that happened to them, the conquest of the land, and the detailed account of the entire legislation (were translated). So it is very clear that the philosopher mentioned above took many things (from it). For he was very learned, as was Pythagoras, who transferred many of our doctrines and integrated them into his own system of beliefs' (Eusebius, *Praef. Ev.* 13.12.1; as translated in Charlesworth 1985: 839).

⁵¹ I.e. since Tcherikover 1956: 169–93.

⁵² Dawson 1994: 116.

Dawson sees Philo's commitment to the literal interpretation of scripture as an intrinsic part of this political struggle. Opponents of the Jewish community such as Apion put forward their own competing accounts of the 'biblical' origins of Judaism (in keeping with his Ptolemaic predecessor Manetho).⁵³ According to Apion, the Jews were aliens and barbaric atheists and were seeking rights they should not have (*Apion* II.6 [71]). They had been justly expelled from Egypt in Moses's day and, by implication, should not expect anything better in the current situation (*Apion* II.2 [8]). If Philo was to respond to these charges and defend Jewish rights, reasons Dawson, he would have to counter Apion on the literal level.⁵⁴ Hence, Philo's criticism of 'extreme allegorists' who, in Philo's opinion, treat the literal sense of the law 'with easy-going neglect' (*Migr. Abr.* 89). What this text goes on to say, argues Dawson, is that the extreme allegorists are dangerously apolitical, living 'as though they were . . . alone by themselves in a wilderness' (*Migr. Abr.* 90). Thus, Philo's concern for the literal meaning as expressed in this text is to be interpreted as a concern for preserving the correct level of political engagement; one which will secure the place of the Jewish community in Alexandria.

In the *De Vita Mosis* Philo presents his own counter-counter reading of Israel's origins. Moses's situation of oppression is presented as a prototype of the contemporary situation (*Vit. Mos.* 1.36). Jews, then and now, are 'settlers and friends anxious to obtain equal rights' (*Vit. Mos.* 1.35). In fact (and now moving on to the offensive), Moses and his laws 'most perfectly embody the ideals of Greek culture'.⁵⁵ Philo elevates Moses to the status of true philosopher-king, supreme law-giver, and founder of a perfect polity (*Vit. Mos.* 1.21–24, 32, 60–62, 148; 2.2, 12).

Thus, what has previously been understood as a defensive stance, either in terms of an apologetic or in terms of shoring up sagging Jewish belief in the plausibility of its religious tradition, is actually an offensive stance. If the *De Vita Mosis* is addressed to Jews, and Dawson thinks it is, they are 'being told that the most authentic way to be Greek is to be authentically Jewish—which means, at a minimum, obeying Jewish law'.⁵⁶ In other words 'Greek culture is best understood as deficient Judaism'.⁵⁷ According to Dawson, Philo's motive in all this – indeed the main motive behind his entire corpus of biblical interpretation – is to persuade fellow Hellenized Jews that 'the pinnacle of Greco-Roman religious culture was now available in the form of their own Jewish scripture'.⁵⁸

⁵³ Both Manetho and Apion were Egyptians.

⁵⁴ Dawson 1994: 118.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*: 117.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*: 118.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*: 121.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*: 121.

Critical reflections

Before I go on to outline an alternative account of the politics of allegorical interpretation, I want to offer some critical remarks on the way in which Dawson reconstructs Philo's 'purpose'. The overall aim of *Allegorical Readers* is to 'describe how ancient pagan, Jewish, and Christian interpreters used allegory to endorse, revise, and subvert competing world views and forms of life'.⁵⁹ According to Dawson, pagan interpreters such as Heraclitus the grammarian used allegory 'to reinforce cultural ideals' whereas Philo used it to revise and/or subvert the dominant culture and way of life.

One could, of course, quibble about the options presented. The word 'subvert' is too loaded a term and one cannot, in my view, realistically say that Philo was seeking to subvert Hellenistic culture, let alone Roman rule. In my preliminary reflections I made the point that Dawson seems to have lost sight of the fact that, despite his 'dual-commitment', Philo privileges the allegorical over the literal. It is, therefore, difficult to see how his fascination with 'things spiritual' is but a stratagem in the service of a project of subversion. 'Subordinate' is a better term in that one could well imagine Philo himself using this term to describe his views on the superiority of Judaism. Dawson may very well have captured an aspect of what Philo thought he was doing when he brings Greek cultural meanings and Jewish scripture into such close contact. But the problem with this assessment – and it is a serious problem – is the lack of sensitivity to what I would call the 'discursive weight' of Philo's interpretative practice. In assessing the politics of allegorical interpretation one has to recognize that what Philo thought he was doing was not necessarily coextensive with what Philo in fact did. In this regard, Boyarin seems more on target when he notes that:

As loyal a Jew as Philo was, he could not entirely escape the consequences of his allegorizing in a devaluing of the physical practices and genealogy of Israel. Where physical history and physical ritual exist only to point to spiritual meanings, the possibility of transcending both is always there.⁶⁰

The point I am making is a social theoretical one: Dawson does not adequately distinguish between intention and social consequences. The issue of social consequences has to do with an issue already raised earlier, namely, the question of the relative independence of Philo's allegorical interpretation over against the literal. Let us reflect again on what Philo does a thousand times over when he associates Greek meanings with scripture. His allegorical commentary cumulatively restates Judaism in a Hellenistic idiom, and on a massive scale. Why might this be an important thing to do? If Philo is

⁵⁹ Ibid.: 1.

⁶⁰ Boyarin 1994: 25.

concerned with preserving the identity of his community then why practise allegorical interpretation in the first place, and on this scale? And why would a Jew want to be 'most authentically Greek' anyway? Is not 'fidelity to the religious practices enjoined as law by scripture'⁶¹ – fidelity to the literal sense of the laws – enough to maintain Jewish identity? Why then the allegorical method? What these questions are driving at is this: full assessment of a cultural activity or social practice requires a view of the way in which the symbolic order of the community is constructed and maintained over time. Individual human activity is always meaningful activity and can be approached from the point of view of individual intentions and motives. But meaningful human activity can also be approached from the point of view of the social conventions (and attendant conventional meanings) of which it is a part. No single individual creates these patterns and conventions nor do individuals control the consequences of their actions. In other words, meaningful action exists within the dialectical movement between individual intentions and motives on the one hand and social conventions and unintended consequences on the other.

Dawson is on the right track in his introductory chapter when he defines the literal meaning as the commonsensical or conventional meaning that is generated by a community's 'unselfconscious decision to adopt and promote a certain kind of meaning'.⁶² The allegorical meaning is said to challenge the conventional meaning and is therefore (potentially) revisionary. Dawson does recognize the possibility that the allegorical meaning is the conventional meaning (and in that sense the 'literal meaning' for the group that accepts it as commonsensical) but he doesn't seem to consider this a real possibility in Philo's case. My question therefore is this: Was allegorical interpretation the conventional meaning for Philo and the social group of which he was a part? What about the possibility that Philo's allegorical readings functioned to maintain the status of Philo's immediate social group? Could it be that one of the consequences, intentional or unintentional, of the allegorical tradition of which Philo was a part was to maintain the cultural supremacy of Greece and the political authority of Rome? It may not be possible to work out the intentions, motives and social consequences of such a vast corpus of material and I certainly will not attempt it here. I will, however, attempt to outline an alternative reading, one which takes seriously the 'conventional' aspect of Philo's interpretative practices.

The politics of allegorical interpretation: an alternative reading

My alternative account of the politics of allegorical interpretation centres on Philo's statements concerning rival interpretative traditions. A full-blown

⁶¹ Dawson 1994: 74.

⁶² Ibid.: 8.

thesis would, of course, require a much broader base of support but this is the best place to start. Philo's comments on the 'extreme allegorists' and 'literalists' are, in the first instance, statements about what he is not doing. But in the course of differentiating his own interpretative agenda from the extreme allegorists and literalists Philo himself raises the issue of the politics of interpretation. That is to say, in the course of defining these other interpretative traditions he draws on the language of politics.

In line with my reservations about Dawson's thesis, the question I seek to answer is this: To what extent was Philo's allegorical interpretation an interpretative convention or tradition that generated 'conventional' (as in socially-endorsed) meanings for his immediate social group? I answer this question by placing Philo and his comments about rival traditions in the context of the politics of Alexandria and in the context of the Jewish tradition of allegorical interpretation.⁶³

Extreme allegorists and literalists

I begin with the extreme allegorists. We noted above that Philo is critical of those who treat 'the laws in their literal sense . . . with easy-going neglect' (*Migr. Abr.* 89). To be sure, continues Philo, the laws do teach us spiritual things (as appropriated via allegorical interpretation): the Sabbath teaches us 'the power of the Unoriginate'; the festivals the 'gladness of soul'; and circumcision 'the excision of pleasure and all passions' (*Migr. Abr.* 91–92). But one should not neglect keeping these laws in their literal sense in the same way as one should not neglect the body which is the 'abode of the soul' (*Migr. Abr.* 93). This body-soul dualism, connecting body to law and allegorical meaning to soul, also embraces the social sphere. Neglecting the law – the practices that embody what it means to be Jewish – is tantamount to neglecting the Jewish community itself. This is, at any rate, the implication of his argument against the practice of allegorical interpretation alone. Living as disembodied souls, as if knowing 'neither city nor village nor household nor any company of human beings at all' is not a socially or politically neutral act but rather an act of neglect, the neglect of one's city, village, household and human company in general. If we accept that there were such extreme allegorists within the Jewish community, then it would appear that they no longer concerned themselves with maintaining the distinct identity of the Jewish community.

In the light of Philo's overwhelming interest in allegorical interpretation and indeed for the life of contemplation (with the *Therapeutae*), this text

⁶³ I recognize the fragmentary nature of the evidence for such a tradition – i.e. Aristobolus and *Ps.-Aristeas* – but it is my view that the similarities that exist point to some sort of connection. This connection may be direct but it may also simply be a feature of a common political and cultural environment.

amounts to more of a rearguard action than anything else. Just because Philo defends the literal meaning of scripture does not mean that he has elevated it to the status of the allegorical. In the larger scheme of things it is still the lesser of the two. According to Philo, intentionally abandoning Jewish distinctives is dangerous for the person involved and indeed for the community itself. If there were those within the Jewish community who consciously contemplated abandoning the distinctive practices of Judaism, Philo's point is to encourage them not to do so. I do not believe, however, that the main motive lying behind Philo's work was the defence of the unique practices (or history) of Judaism. If that is what he wanted to do, why practice allegorical interpretation at all?

My argument that this text is a rearguard action and not a statement of Philo's fundamental motive is supported by his comments about the literalists. It is these comments that provide a real opening on the politics of allegorical interpretation at the level of both conscious motives and unintended consequences.

It would appear that there were those within the Jewish community who were not at all interested in allegorical meanings. Far from admiring them for not selling out like the extreme allegorists, Philo belittles them as follows:

It may be that men of narrow citizenship will suppose that the lawgiver delivers this very full discourse about digging wells, but those who are on the roll of a greater country, even this whole world, men of higher thought and feeling, will be quite sure that the four things propounded as a subject of inquiry to the open-eyed lovers of contemplation are not four wells, but the four parts of this universe, land, water, air, heavens.

(*Somm.* 1.39)

The particular text under discussion, Genesis 26.32, is not in itself significant. What is significant for Philo is the fact that by limiting themselves to the literal meaning of the texts the literalists do not have access to higher conceptions of God and reality. Recall Dawson's discussion of Philo's philosophy of language, that it is both representational and non-representational. The latter aspect has to do with the limitations of human language to adequately speak of divine reality: hence the need for Moses to 'abuse' language and speak of God in anthropomorphic terms. It is a concession to the unsophisticated masses. Literalists have an inadequate hermeneutic which leads to an inadequate concept of God. This prioritization of the allegorical over the literal is found repeatedly in Philo's work.

But what really interests me about the literalists is what Philo calls them: they are 'men of narrow citizenship', literally 'micropolitans' [*mikropolitai*]. Allegorists, on the other hand, 'are on the roll of a greater country, even this

whole world'; in other words, allegorists are cosmopolitans. I would argue that the choice of words does not simply tell us something about the relative cultural standing of literalists and allegorists – the unsophisticated versus the sophisticated, the uneducated versus the educated. The use of political terminology tells us something about the way in which Philo positions himself as an allegorist (though not an extreme one) over against others within the Jewish community who, among other things, practise only literal interpretation.

The word *mikropolitês* is a relatively rare word in classical sources. It is used in a literal sense by Xenophon in his description of the siege of Athens (405 BCE). Athens was now suffering the same pain they had inflicted upon 'the people of small states'.⁶⁴ A few decades later Aeschines uses it with reference to the lesser allies of Athens who 'were afraid of the secret diplomacy of the greater [city-states such as Athens]'.⁶⁵

Philo's usage is closer to Aristophanes's use of the term in describing the politics of Cleon in his play *Knights*. The play is an allegory about the politics of Athens after the death of Pericles. Cleon, the leader of the 'hawks', advocates an aggressive policy in their conflict with the Spartans. In the play he is represented by the tanner Paphlagon who takes over the house of Mr Demos (Athens) by demagogic means. His rival is Sausage Seller. Sausage Seller out-manoeuvres Paphlagon at his own game and frees Mr Demos from this tyranny. In the course of the debate between these two rivals Sausage Seller offers this comparison: unlike Themosthenes, who filled Athens's cup, Paphlagon 'tried to turn the Athenians into tiny-townies [*mikropolitai*] by building partitions and chanting oracles'.⁶⁶ In other words, Cleon's politics is characterized by appealing to the less noble instincts and impulses of the populace: it is rash, short-sighted, rabble-rousing, corrupt and dangerous.

Dio Chrysostom, a near contemporary of Philo's, takes a similar line in his discourse to the citizens of Tarsus. He cites Athens and Sparta as examples of the fate reserved for arrogance and greed. Tarsus was the leading city of Cilicia and had prospered greatly under the reign of Augustus. But her prosperity was threatened by short-sighted policies. One of the problems was the so-called 'linen-workers' who were sometimes treated as common rabble and at other times regarded as 'part of the city'. Dio Chrysostom argues that since they are long-standing residents of the city they should be treated 'as being in some measure citizens', for the ambiguity regarding their status is 'conducive to strife and disagreement'.⁶⁷ Another problem is a territorial dispute with the people of Mallus, a small neighbouring town. Dio Chrysostom exhorts the citizens of Tarsus to rise above the Mallusians. It is beneath them

⁶⁴ Xenophon, *Hellenica* 2.2.10.

⁶⁵ Aeschines, *Epistulae* 2.210.

⁶⁶ Aristophanes, *Knights* 817.

⁶⁷ Dio Chrysostom, *Discourses* 34.21–22.

'to be unduly excited and to have recourse immediately to the assertion of authority and to feel excited is rather to be expected of small-town folk [*mikropolitai*]'.⁶⁸

This evidence suggests that Philo had more in mind in calling literalists micropolitans than simply their level of philosophical sophistication. It is true, of course, that Philo's language and conceptuality draws on the Stoic tradition which was cosmopolitan in orientation. As Koester says, 'Its point of reference is not the political community [as in the polis], but the universe; not the gods of the polis, but the divine power of the entire world of nature'.⁶⁹ And it is true that Philo calls fellow allegorists cosmopolitans in this text and elsewhere.⁷⁰ But this should not be taken to mean that such a 'cosmopolitan' perspective was without political implications.

Before looking more closely at the political implications of the micropolitan/literalist versus cosmopolitan/allegorist taxonomy, it is important to note that Philo's remarks are in keeping with his Jewish allegorical predecessor Aristobolus. Aristobolus, writing perhaps in the second century BCE, was critical of the literalists as well;

And I wish to exhort you to receive the interpretations according to the laws of nature and to grasp the fitting conception of God and not to fall into the mythical and human way of thinking about God. For our lawgiver Moses proclaimed arrangements of nature and preparations for great events by expressing that which he wishes to say in many ways, by using words that refer to other matters (I mean matters relating to outward appearances). Therefore, those who are able to think well marvel at his wisdom and at the divine spirit in accordance with which he has been proclaimed as a prophet also. . . . But to those who have no power of understanding, but who are devoted to the letter alone, he does not seem to explain anything elevated.

(*Praep. Ev.* 8.10.2–5)

This text also distinguishes between two interpretative approaches and indeed the Stoic tradition is also in evidence in phrases such as 'according to the laws of nature'. Note also the same concern for anthropomorphic language.⁷¹ All this suggests to me that Philo was part of a long tradition of Jewish allegorical interpretation in Alexandria.⁷² If this is the case (and more

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*: 34.46.

⁶⁹ Koester 1995: 143.

⁷⁰ Notable among his fellow allegorists in this regard are the Therapeutae who are described as 'citizens of heaven and of the world' (*Vit. Cont.* 90).

⁷¹ See *Somm.* 1.157–9 and 2.221–2.

⁷² The similarities between the allegorical interpretations of Ps.-Aristeas and Philo point in this direction as well: cf. *Ep. Arist.* 143–71 with *Rev. Div.* 234 and *Spec. Leg.* 4.116–18.

evidence is necessary to really establish this point), then one must also reckon with the conventional meanings generated by this tradition. In other words, if we think of Philo as one of a long line of participants in a long-established discourse then we need to ask about the meanings generated by the discursive tradition itself and not simply Philo's own individual contribution. I would also argue that the conventional meanings of this tradition were bound up from the beginning with Alexandrian politics.

The Alexandrian context (again)

It is necessary at this point to go over the political situation of the Alexandrian Jews again, but this time in more detail. As we saw earlier, the political constitution of the Alexandria was flawed with respect to the Jews. Members of the Jewish community as a whole were probably classified as 'privileged residents' (*epitimoí katoikoi*) enjoying the right to self-government and to live according to their ancestral laws. These rights were granted by the Ptolemaic emperors and reaffirmed by imperial Rome. A three point relationship obtained between the Jewish community, the Alexandrian polis and the empire (Ptolemaic and Roman). Because their constitutional position was established and maintained by the empire, the Jewish community had a vested interest in maintaining favourable relations with the emperor on the one side, and in fostering peaceful coexistence with the Greek citizens of Alexandria on the other.

A key problem with regard to the status of the Jewish community involved the meanings of the key terms themselves in that they are now used in a broader sense and now in a narrower sense.⁷³ *Politês* generally means 'enfranchised citizen' but it can simply mean 'resident'.⁷⁴ *Politeia* can denote 'citizenship', 'constitution', 'civic rights' or even 'way of life'. *Alexandrês* can refer to 'Alexandrian citizen' or 'resident of Alexandria'. Individuals such as Philo probably enjoyed the status of full citizenship but the community as a whole had to make do with something less precise, though they probably thought of it in terms of *isê politeia* (the term is used by Josephus) or equal rights. Philo uses the term *isotimia* ('equality of privilege'):

For strangers, in my judgement, must be regarded as suppliants of those who receive them, and not only as suppliants but settlers and friends who are anxious to obtain equal rights (*isotimia*) with the burgesses and are near to being citizens because they differ little from the original inhabitants.

(*Vit. Mos.* 1.35)

⁷³ I am following Barclay 1996: 60–71.

⁷⁴ Lüderitz has recently demonstrated that the word *politês* would not be used to designate a member of a *politeuma* or 'ethnic association'. See Lüderitz 1994.

The Jewish community as a whole was probably happy with the ambiguity of the terms as long as they were able to interpret them as being on par with the Greek Alexandrians or at least on the right side of the line dividing the 'Alexandrians' (again, a slippery term) from foreigners (*xenoi*) and Egyptians. From the Greek perspective, on the other hand, the most important distinction would be between citizens of the polis and all other residents of Alexandria including the Jews.

But what about the literalists and allegorists? What sort of political interests do these modes of interpretation represent? The literalists too would have had an interest in the right of the Jewish community to conduct its own internal affairs. Like the community as a whole they too would have been interested in keeping the imperial government 'on side'. Philo's social class would also have had the same interest but much more was at stake for them in all of this. Because the wealthy Jewish aristocracy benefited the most from close co-operation with the Romans and close association with the upper classes in Alexandria they also had the most to lose if the political status of the community as a whole took a turn for the worse. A narrowly partisan micropolitical politics was the last thing they needed.

Those who had Alexandrian citizenship or aspired to Alexandrian citizenship were particularly vulnerable to the Apion's charge that Jews were not or could not be authentic Greeks. At the centre of his charge, as preserved by Josephus, is the question of God. 'But besides this, Apion objects to us thus: "If the Jews (says he) be citizens of Alexandria, why do not they worship the same gods with the Alexandrians?"' (*Apion* II.6 [71]). Apion contends that if Jews are in fact citizens they would also worship the gods of the Alexandrians. Worship of the gods was, of course, a central civic activity even if one was sceptical as to their existence.

What this attack represents, therefore, is an attempt to define political citizenship in unambiguous cultural terms.⁷⁵ Philo's *political* response to situation under Gaius is to appeal to the historical privileges granted to the Jewish community. His *cultural* response (and indeed the response of his predecessors Aristobolus and Ps.-Aristeas) to the charge that they were not on par, culturally-speaking, with the Greeks was to reinterpret Jewish identity in a cosmopolitan fashion. What Philo is saying to the Greeks (or, more accurately, what he is saying to other highly acculturated Jews who insist on viewing themselves in the mirror of their significant others) is 'Oh yes, we are authentically Greek'. It is my view that the majority of less acculturated Jews could not be bothered with positive accommodation of this sort.

Thus, it is not a coincidence that Philo (as Aristobolus and Ps.-Aristeas before him) stresses the universal dimension of Judaism beginning of course with the doctrine of God. The line that separated Jews and Greeks in

⁷⁵ Gaius also charges that Jews are 'God-haters' (*Spec. Leg.* 353).

Alexandria must not be interpreted as a unambiguous delineation of full citizens from all the rest, and especially with regard to Philo's social class. The question as to the doctrine of God and all that flows from that must not be understood as an impediment to Jews wanting to participate fully in Alexandrian society. I would, therefore, describe allegorical interpretation as a universalizing discourse of empire. The tradition of allegorical interpretation from Aristobolus to Philo demonstrates to what extent certain groups within Judaism were actively participating in political and cultural discourses of empire. I do not mean this in an abstract sense but with reference to the particular situation of the Jews in Alexandria and in the Ptolemaic and Roman empires. It is my view that the universal approach or viewpoint taken by Jewish allegorists from Aristobolus to Philo was a view of things, a type of thinking or consciousness, a way of seeing the world that was shaped by the cultural and political imperialism of Greece and Rome. In other words, it was a type of social consciousness with very specific political implications. What allegorical interpretation seeks to demonstrate is that Jews are not just equal partners in Alexandria as guaranteed by the empire but are in fact ideal world citizens (*cosmopolitai*) – or should we say imperial citizens?⁷⁶

Conclusion

I come back, by way of conclusion, to the task that Dawson sets himself which is to 'describe how ancient pagan, Jewish, and Christian interpreters used allegory to endorse, revise, and subvert competing world views and forms of life'.⁷⁷ It is my view that, far from revising (let alone subverting) Greek culture and imperial rule, Philo was endorsing it. Not necessarily in a conscious way but rather by participating in a discursive tradition that sought to recast Judaism in a form appropriate to its imperial and cosmopolitan environment. Philo represents a form of Judaism which had come to terms with a high degree of socio-cultural and political assimilation and acculturation. Furthermore it accommodated Judaism to the dominant culture via practices such as allegorical interpretation without abandoning its distinctive traditions and practices.

⁷⁶ Philo's desire to participate imaginatively on both the political and cultural fronts in the discourses of empire comes out clearly in *Spec. Leg.* 8–10 and 47–50.

⁷⁷ Dawson 1994: 1.

ETHNIC CONTINUITY IN THE JEWISH DIASPORA IN ANTIQUITY

Gideon Bobak

One of the commonest assumptions underlying the academic study of the Jewish communities of the Graeco-Roman world is the certainty of Jewish ethnic continuity in diaspora settings. Ancient Jews, according to this line of thought, were committed to an ancestral heritage that ensured their separation from non-Jews and, with a few minor exceptions, secured the continuity of Jewish existence even outside the Jewish homeland.¹ This model, which is clearly based on the experiences of the *mediaeval* Jewish diaspora, often determines the ways in which the fragmentary evidence for the *ancient* Jewish diaspora is collected, analysed, and presented. The purpose of this chapter is to challenge this model, based as it is on a diachronic analysis of Jewish history, by positing an alternative model, based on a synchronic examination of the diasporic experiences of some of the Jews' closest neighbours. Given the limitations of time and space, the examination of the evidence will be far from complete, and will focus mainly on the Jews of the Egyptian *chora*. But even this brief sketch should suffice to demonstrate that Jewish continuity in diaspora settings cannot be taken for granted, and that in some cases it may have been the exception, not the rule.

* * *

Our first stop is Thessalian Demetrias, founded by Demetrius Poliorcetes c. 290 BCE as a synoecism of several townlets. As its epigraphic remains reveal, this 'urbs valida et ad omnia opportuna' (Livy, 39.23.12) attracted many foreigners, including people from all over the Greek world and from various northern and western nations, as well as numerous Orientals – from the Phoenician cities, from Apollonia (Arsuf), Ascalon, and Gaza, from Carthage,

¹ For different formulations of this assumption in recent scholarship see, e.g., Goudriaan 1988: 12; Feldman 1993: 66; Méléze Modrzejewski 1995: 87. A similar assumption pervades the study of ancient Jewish demography, for which see Brian McGing's chapter in this volume.

and even from Egypt.² This wide distribution of the new immigrants' countries of origins immediately raises two questions for the student of the Jewish diaspora. The first concerns the possible presence of Jews in Hellenistic Demetrias, the second, the fate of such Oriental newcomers in the Greek city they chose as their new home.

The first of these questions calls for a relatively simple answer. Certainly, the lack of epigraphic attestation for Demetrian Jews is no conclusive evidence for their absence from that city, but its very location would make us doubt that many Jews ever settled there. Being a coastal city, and a centre of maritime trade, Demetrias had much to offer to Phoenicians and to the other dwellers of the Palestinian coast. The Jews, however, dwelling in the hinterland and practised mainly in agriculture (Josephus, *Apion* I.60), would have had few reasons to go there in the first place.³ They, in fact, were far more likely to emigrate to Egypt, where their agricultural (and military) skills could be put to good use. In the Egyptian *chora*, where experts in international trade were not in high demand, Phoenician settlers indeed were few and far between, far fewer than the Jews.⁴ One cannot say, with John Grainger, that 'the Phoenicians in the Hellenistic world went where one would expect them to go, where everyone else went,' nor can this statement be made of the Jews.⁵ In antiquity, as in our own world, migration patterns were far from random, and members of different ethnic groups often displayed distinct migrational preferences.

The second issue raised by Demetrias' foreign settlers is more difficult: what happened to them after their settlement there? They disappear from our epigraphic screen toward the end of the third century BCE, though the city itself continued to exist and prosper. The most natural explanation for the absence of Orientals in late-Hellenistic Demetrias would be that new immigrants ceased to arrive, for various political or economic reasons, and that the descendants of the old immigrants either left Demetrias or assimilated into their neighbouring society in a way that made them non-distinguishable from any of their neighbours. It is on the latter process, of assimilation and naturalization, that I wish to focus here.

To track this process, we may begin with a few examples of Phoenician immigrants as depicted in Greek and Latin works of fiction and as emerging

² For Demetrias, see Marzloff 1997; for its foreigner residents, see Arbanitopoulos 1928: 91–2. For the Phoenicians, see also Masson 1969.

³ For another example, note Osborne and Byrne 1996, with only 3 Jews in Athens (nos. 2607, 2620–1) as against 62 Sidonians (nos. 6648–709), 18 Tyrians (nos. 7189–206), etc.

⁴ Láda 1996: vol. 2, 27–8 and 85–6, lists 34 individuals designated as 'Ιουδαίος/α and 26 individuals designated as 'Ιουδαίος τῆς ἐπιγονῆς in the Egyptian papyri and inscriptions of the Hellenistic period (cf. Appendix 1, below), as against 3 Sidonians and 2 Tyrians (I am most grateful to Láda for a copy of this important work). For Phoenicians in Egypt, see also Lemaire 1987, and below, n. 67.

⁵ Grainger 1991: 205. Cf. the detailed review by MacAdam 1993: 321–44.

from our scattered historical records.⁶ Let us take, for example, the opening lines of Euripides' lost play, the *Phrixus*, describing how Cadmus son of Agenor had once left Sidon and settled in (what was to become) Thebes, and 'having been born a Phoenician, he changed his *genos* into Greek' (Φοῖνιξ πεφυκώς, ἐκ δ' ἀμείβεται γένος / Ἑλληνικόν).⁷ Such a quick change of one's identity is, of course, not to be expected in real-life situations, but the possibility of such a change clearly was taken for granted by Euripides. Nor was it much different some eight centuries later, when the Phoenician Heliiodorus was writing his *Aethiopica*, for his protagonists too could undergo similar transformations. Upon seeing Charicleia's beauty, a Tyrian merchant wishes to marry her, and extols his noble birth, his riches, and his recent athletic victory at the Pythian games to her presumed father, the Egyptian priest Calasiris. When the latter objects that he and his 'daughter' are poor, and that he would never give her to a man who lives outside Egypt and in an *ethnos* so different from the Egyptians' (τῶ χώραν ἄλλην οἰκοῦντι καὶ ἔθνος ὁ τοσοῦτον κεχώρισται τῆς Αἰγυπτίων), the Tyrian quickly stops him, saying that he would gladly forgo a dowry, give up his business, and even exchange his *ethnos* and *patris* and follow Calasiris wherever he might go (ἔθνος δὲ καὶ πατρίδα τὴν ὑμετέραν ἀλλάξομαι . . . ὑμῖν δὲ σύμπλους οὐ δὴ καὶ βούλεσθε γενόμενος), if only he could wed the girl.⁸ The scene is doubly instructive: first, we must note the Egyptians' unwillingness to leave their own country, an attitude recorded in other sources as well (especially, but not exclusively, for Egyptian priests), and yet another contribution to the study of migration patterns in the ancient world.⁹ Second, here is another Phoenician who is ready to change his *ethnos* and *patris*, all for the girl who caught his fancy.¹⁰

While Euripides' Cadmus and Heliiodorus' Tyrian merchant were willing to leave behind not only their homeland but their identity as well, other Phoenicians depicted in Greek and Latin literature provide us with different, and more realistic, scenarios. In Euripides' *Phoenissae*, for example, the Chorus describes how they 'left the Tyrian swell and came as an offering to Apollo, from the Phoenician island as a servant in Phoebus' temple' (202–5). But instead of Delphi they end up in Thebes, where they make good use of their ethnic origin and its Theban connections. They repeatedly stress how

⁶ Leaving aside the establishment of Phoenician colonies, a process that belongs to an earlier period than the one discussed here, and for which see Bunnens 1979, and Aubet 1993.

⁷ Euripides, fr. 819 Nauck. Note that Plutarch, *De exilio* 17 (*Mor.* 607b), has ὀρίζεται for ἀμείβεται.

⁸ Heliiodorus, *Aeth.* 5.19. For Heliiodorus' own identity, see *ibid.* 10.41.

⁹ See, e.g., Chaeremon, fr. 10 van der Horst; Diodorus 1.18.3; Bresciani 1991. I hope to explore this issue at greater length elsewhere.

¹⁰ A comparison of this scene with Ruth 1.16 or Josephus, *Ant.* xx.vii.1 (139); vii. 3 (145–6), etc. would be quite illuminating, but cannot be undertaken here.

they 'came to the land of Cadmus' children, of the noble sons of Agenor, to Laius' kindred (ὁμογενεῖς) towers' (216–19). They recount at some length how their ancient ancestor, Cadmus, founded Thebes (638–89), and express their great anxiety at the fate of the Thebans, their distant relatives through Cadmus' line, 'for the pains of friends are common, and common, if she shall suffer, is this seven-towered land with the land of the Phoenicians. Alas, alas, a common blood, common offspring, sprang from horn-bearing Io' (243–8). In real life, such cases must have been rare – not many cities in the Greek world claimed Phoenician ancestors – but the famous inscription of Diotimus, the Sidonian charioteer who stressed Thebes' pride in his Nemean victory (c. 200 BCE) shows that real Phoenicians, at least from the Hellenistic period onwards, could use precisely the same kind of language.¹¹ Moreover, the Phoenician origin of Euripides' chorus is manifest not only in their explicit references to their Tyrian homeland, or in their self-depiction as non-Greeks (497), but also in Jocasta's reference to their 'Phoenician cry' (301–2; cf. 679–80, 1301).¹² It might even emerge from the *parallelismus membrorum* in the above-quoted passage (202–5: Τύριον οἶδμα λιποῦσ' ἔβαν / ἄκροθίνια λοξία / Φοινίσσας ἀπὸ νόσου / Φοίβω δούλα μελάθρω), the most typical feature of Semitic poetry from Ugaritic literature through the Hebrew Bible and all the way to the Neo-Punic inscriptions.¹³ A Phoenician abroad, in other words, was not likely to shed his sense of self-identity as quickly as Euripides' Cadmus or Heliodorus' Tyrian merchant, and many immigrants indeed did not. As an example, we may return to Demetrias, to the tombstone of Abdes the Tyrian and of his Argive wife, Dorcas (c. 250 BCE).¹⁴ As noted already by Masson, Dorcas may have been a Greek translation of a good Semitic name, Tabitha (cf. Acts 9.36), and so it is not impossible that Dorcas herself came from Phoenician stock. But regardless of whether this is a Phoenico-Greek marriage, or the marriage of a new immigrant from Phoenicia with a compatriot who already was naturalized in Argos, Abdes was still very much aware of his Tyrian origin, and his name still clearly identified him as a non-Greek. But this Phoenician already was on his way to full assimilation, and his descendants, if he had any, would have proceeded on the same route.¹⁵

Examples such as this could easily be multiplied, but they should not distract us from another aspect of Euripides' Phoenician women, namely, the fact that foreign immigrants could expect their host society too to note their

11 Bickerman 1939.

12 Cf. Bacon 1961: 116–17; Hall 1989: 119.

13 For *paral. memb.*, see Kugel 1989: 1–58; Baumgarten 1981: 102, n. 26; Krahmalkov 1994.

14 Masson 1969: 689.

15 For a thorough examination of the legal aspects of naturalization, at least in one Greek polis, see Osborne 1981–3, including one example of a naturalized Tyrian family (vol. 3, 106–7).

peculiar appearances, customs and accents, and to remind them of their 'barbarian' origins. We may recall, for example, Dio Chrysostom's reference to a man who criticized Athens for conferring the title of 'Olympian' on someone who was not an Athenian by birth, 'but a Phoenician guy, one who came not from Tyre or Sidon, but from some village in the hinterland, a man who has his arms dilapidated and wears περιδήματα'.¹⁶ A Phoenician abroad (just like any other immigrant, past and present) was likely to be reminded of his foreign origins even when he was generally well received in his new environment. Nor would the descendants of a newcomer be spared the reminder, for, as Plutarch disapprovingly notes, some people spend much time sticking their noses into other people's business and finding out that this or that neighbour had foreign grandparents. Such information would easily be seized upon by one's opponents, who would gleefully point to his 'un-Greek' origins.¹⁷

In light of such difficulties, and of the natural human longing for one's country, family, and friends, it is not surprising that many Phoenicians chose to make their way back home. In Antonius Diogenes' *The Wonders Beyond Thule* – of which we possess only Photius' abridgment and a few papyrus fragments – the two Phoenician protagonists, Dercyllis and her brother, Mantinias, travel through much of the *oikoumene* and beyond and undergo countless adventures, only to return to their Tyrian homeland.¹⁸ A more elaborate scenario is furnished by Achilles Tatius' *Leucippe and Cleitophon*, when Cleitophon relates (1.3) that his Tyrian grandfather had two wives – a Byzantine woman and a Tyrian one – each of whom bore him one son. After their parents' death, Sostratos, the son of the Byzantine woman, inherited his mother's estate, settled in her native town, and bore a beautiful daughter, Leucippe, while his half-brother, Hippias, remained in Tyre and bore Cleitophon himself. This sequence of events calls for several comments: first, we have yet another example of a Phoenician who marries a non-Phoenician woman, though in this case they settle, as would have been the norm, in his ancestral homeland, not in hers (as Heliodorus' Tyrian agrees to do). Second, they give their son a good Greek name, Sostratos, which happens to be very common in the onomasticon of Hellenized Phoenicians, who often chose '-strat-' names, which sounded like their own native names ending with עֶשְׂתֵּרָה.¹⁹ Third, this Phoenico-Byzantine individual has no qualms

16 Dio Chrysostom, 31.116 with Jones 1978: 222–3, who notes that this Phoenician cannot be identified, and discusses the possible meaning of the *hapax* περιδήματα.

17 Plutarch, *De curiositate* 2 (*Mor.* 516b); I hope to discuss this issue at greater length elsewhere.

18 Photius, *Bibliotheca* 166 (ed. Henry, vol. 2, pp. 140–9). See Stephens and Winkler 1995: 101–57. For a similar case, cf. Plautus' Carthaginian, who probably had no intention of returning home (*Poen.* 1084–5), but in the end decides to go (*ibid.*: 1419–21).

19 Masson 1969: 692. Similar onomastic processes are well known among Hellenized Jews, among whom Greek names like Σίμων and Ἰάσων were popular because of their phonetic resemblance to the native names שמעון and ישוע.

about moving to Byzantium and settling there himself, once the occasion arises. But the most interesting bit of information is the one provided by Cleitophon in the subsequent passage – when a war broke out between Byzantium and the Thracians, Sostratos quickly sent his wife and daughter to his half-brother in Tyre, where they would be safely out of harm's way. Settling abroad, in other words, was not the end of Hippias' contacts with his Tyrian family and with Tyre itself. In times of trouble, and perhaps in other times as well, the contacts could be maintained, utilized and renewed.

To summarize what we have seen thus far, we may note that Greek and Latin writers depict a whole range of Phoenician immigrants, whose diasporic behaviour may roughly be divided in three main paradigms. Some, like Cadmus or Heliodoros' Tyrian merchant, chose (or were forced) to sever all their ties with their Phoenician past, and quickly assimilated into the surrounding environment. Others, like Dercyllis and Mantinias, made it a point to return home even after their extensive travels.²⁰ A third paradigm is afforded by those Phoenicians who settled in distant lands but maintained some elements of their ancestral identity – some, like Euripides' Phoenician women, proudly asserted their ethnic identity, and/or were noted by others as foreigners; others, like Sostratos and his family, maintained their contacts with their relatives and their ancestral homeland. We also noted that such scenarios (excluding, perhaps, the possibility of instantaneous assimilation), are not mere literary inventions, for they can easily be corroborated with real-life examples. Our analysis could be extended much further, given the numerous examples of Phoenician immigrants who figure so prominently in the annals of Hellenistic and Roman history, philosophy, literature, sport, law, and the arts. It could also be expanded to include the numerous Phoenician immigrants attested in the papyrological and especially the epigraphical evidence, as well as the evidence for the *stationes*, temples and ethnic communities (κοινόν, **נספת** etc.) established by Phoenician immigrants in the Graeco-Roman period.²¹ Such a survey, however, will not change the basic picture we have seen thus far – when Phoenician immigrants settled in towns that were not their own, they usually blended into the surrounding environment within a few generations. How long the process took depended in part on their own behaviour, in part on that of their host-society, but in spite of numerous variations, the general direction was almost always the same.²²

One might claim that this was a uniquely Phoenician quality, as the Phoenicians, a nation of mariners and traders, were notorious even in antiquity for their readiness to give up their ancestral customs.²³ But the

20 Or, we may add, settled in one of the Phoenician colonies abroad – see, e.g., Ferjaoui 1993: 175–8, for Phoenician immigrants in Carthage.

21 For an excellent survey, see Ameling 1990.

22 For an exception, cf. the Φοινικαῖοι, discussed below p. 190.

23 Cf. the explicit statement of Herodotus 2.104, with Millar 1983.

pattern of assimilation into the local environment is evident in every other ancient diaspora, and in every ancient discussion of emigration to foreign lands. In Ptolemaic Egypt, for example, we can trace the various mechanisms which slowed down the assimilation of various groups of immigrants, such as settling in closely-knit groups, forming ethnically-based communities, and building shrines to the ancestral gods.²⁴ Yet it is precisely in Ptolemaic Egypt that we can also get a sense of how ineffective all these mechanisms were in the long run. We can, for example, trace the gradual decline of the use of foreign ethnic designations in the Greek and Demotic papyri and inscriptions, from a peak in the third century BCE to an almost total decline in the first century BCE and beyond – a sure sign that new immigration was increasingly rare and that the earlier immigrants were successfully assimilating into their Graeco-Egyptian environment.²⁵ Even the Greek settlers themselves were not immune to such processes, for regardless of whether they settled in the remotest part of Asia or in the Egyptian or Syrian coasts, they often were regarded in subsequent generations as ἐκβεβαρωμένοι, as *degeneres* and *mixti*, having forfeited the purity of their original culture and their ancestral blood as a result of their long stay among 'barbarians.'²⁶ Finally, it is this implicit assumption that enabled ancient writers to use any set of resemblances between two nations as a claim that the one owed its origins to settlers from the other, be it Herodotus' claim that the Colchians were Egyptians in origin or Dionysius of Halicarnassus' claim that the Romans originally were Greek.²⁷ In all such claims, the assumption that settlers dwelling away from their homeland would assimilate into their new environment and preserve only some (or none at all) of their ancestral traits – language, customs, laws, physical features, and so on – was virtually taken for granted.

* * *

This, then, was the fate of most ancient emigrés, including some of the Jews' closest neighbours – under normal circumstances, some quickly assimilated into the surrounding environment, while others prolonged the process in various ways, or simply went back home. But how do the Jews fit into this model? At first sight, one cannot help being struck by the Jews' own

24 See, e.g., Thompson-Crawford 1984; Clarysse 1998.

25 For a convincing demonstration of this trend, see Lada 1996: vol. 1, 88–92.

26 See, e.g., Gnaeus Manlius' famous speech in Livy 38.17.9–13, Quintus Curtius' description of the Gortuae (4.12.11) or the Branchidae (7.5.29), or Ovid's repeated references to the 'barbarized' Greeks of Tomis (*Trist.* 5.10.33–34, etc.). For a fuller discussion, see Dubuisson 1982, and Bowersock 1992.

27 Herodotus 2.104–5; Dion. Hal. 1.89.3–4.

confidence that they could maintain their separate identity over many generations of diasporic existence:

For because of the Jews' great numbers, one land does not suffice them, and therefore they inhabit many of the most prosperous lands of Europe and Asia both in the islands and on the mainland; they think of the holy city (where stands the sacred temple of the Most High God) as their mother-city, while those cities that they obtained (ἔλαχον) from their fathers and grandfathers and their ancestors further back to dwell in (οἰκεῖν), they all consider their homelands (πατρίδας), in which they were born and raised. To some of these they even came at the time of their foundation, sent as a colony and obliging the cities' founders.²⁸

Philo's statement, which has often been accepted at face value, calls for several comments. First, it is clear that Philo is using here a model of diasporic emigration that would be well known to his readers, namely, the departure of a group of settlers from its overcrowded homeland and the creation of a new colony (ἀποικία) elsewhere, a colony that would maintain its ties with the original mother-city (μητρόπολις). But the use of this basic pattern of Greek and Phoenician expansion throughout the Mediterranean basin and beyond is quite misleading here, for Philo deliberately obscures the most important point – the communities of the Jewish diaspora were not independent colonies, but were established within existing civic units.²⁹ Diaspora Jews, in other words, did not 'inherit' their 'homelands' in any legal sense, they merely were born there (ἔλαχον ... οἰκεῖν), and enjoyed whatever status their direct biological ancestors had been granted – a fact that Philo tries to obfuscate.³⁰

A second issue raised by this Philonic passage involves the claim, which he nowhere substantiates, that the Jews of a given community indeed were the descendants of the original Jewish settlers who had come there. In Philo's own community, we may add, the issue of the Jews' ancestral rights was deeply contested, and Philo himself seems to have had little success in convincing the imperial authorities in Rome that the Jews of Alexandria had a strong collective claim to ancestral rights in the city.³¹ In fact, given what

²⁸ Philo, *In Flaccum* 45–6. Cf. *Leg. ad Gaium* 281–2, and Kasher 1979 (Heb.).

²⁹ Cf. the perceptive comments of Amir 1980 (Heb.).

³⁰ And which Colson's translation in the LCL Edition (Philo, vol. IX, p. 329) further obfuscates by translating ὅς ἔλαχον as 'those which are theirs by inheritance' and failing to translate the infinitive οἰκεῖν.

³¹ Cf. Claudius' letter to the Alexandrians (*CPJ* II, 153; 41 CE), lines 83–4: 'Ιουδαίους τοῖς τὴν αὐτὴν πόλιν ἐκ πολλῶν χρόνων οἰκοῦσι, and esp. 95, where the Jews are said to live ἐν ἀλλοτρίᾳ πόλει. *CPJ* II, 151 (5/4 BCE) provides an interesting example of one Jew's attempt to (re)claim Alexandrian citizenship.

we know about successive waves of emigration from Judea in the Hellenistic and Roman periods, the vast majority of Alexandria's Jews in the late 30s CE are likely *not* to have been the biological descendants of the city's original Jewish settlers – who probably were few and far between, to judge from the example of Demetrias – but of later Jewish immigrants.³²

There is, finally, a third point that Philo takes for granted in this passage, namely, that the descendants of any Jewish community in a foreign land would maintain their allegiance to Jerusalem, and their Jewish identity, for many generations to come. Or, as Philo himself puts it elsewhere, in an expansion of Numbers 23.9, '[the Jewish people] shall dwell alone, not reckoned among other nations . . . because of the singularity of their special customs they do not mix with others to depart from their ancestral laws'.³³ Such statements, coupled with some of the descriptions of Jews by non-Jews ('separati epulis, discreti cubilibus . . . alienarum concubitu abstinent'),³⁴ often provide modern scholars with clear evidence that a model we know so well from the mediaeval Jewish communities, where community boundaries were high and firm and long-term ethnic continuity generally was the norm, indeed is readily applicable in antiquity as well. With such a model at hand, the few glaring exceptions – Dositheos son of Drimylos, the Jewish courtier who 'changed his customs and was alienated from the ancestral beliefs' (μεταβαλὼν τὰ νόμιμα καὶ τῶν πατρίων δογμάτων ἀπηλλοτριωμένος) in the third century BCE, or Tiberius Julius Alexander, Philo's nephew who 'did not cling to the ancestral customs' (τοῖς γὰρ πατρίοις οὐκ ἐνέμεινεν οὗτος ἔθουσιν) – easily are dismissed out of court. They are seen as 'upper-class assimilationists', the precursors of those mediaeval or modern Jews who, for the sake of a secure position in the Church or state, abandoned their Jewish brethren and their Jewish religious identity.³⁵ The same pattern seems to emerge from our evidence for Jewish intermarriages, since most of the examples found in the literary sources are limited to the Herodian family alone, and these too often are interpreted as the exceptions that prove the rule.³⁶ Yet given our analysis of ethnic continuity in other oriental diasporas, this optimistic model seems highly unusual, and worthy of a second look. This is especially so because one can easily point to the relevance of the Phoenician model for diaspora Jews, some

³² Note also that Claudius' letter, lines 96–7, explicitly forbids the Alexandrian Jews to 'import' more Jews from Egypt (i.e. the *chora*) or Syria (i.e. Judea).

³³ Philo, *Vit. Mos.* 1.278.

³⁴ Tacitus, *Hist.* 5.5.2 (=GLAJJ 281). Stern's notes *ad loc.* (vol. 2, 39–40) list the relevant parallels from other Greek and Roman writers.

³⁵ Dositheos: 3 *Macc.* 1.3; Alexander: Josephus, *Ant.* xx.v. 2 (100). For the assumption that such cases were exceptional, see, e.g., Modrzejewski 1995: 56 and 190, and Kasher 1989 (Heb.).

³⁶ For a list of the Jewish intermarriages attested in the literary sources, see Juster 1914: vol. 2, 45–6, n. 5. For the evidence of the Egyptian papyri, see below, n. 47.

of whom clearly assimilated into their surrounding environment, and some of whom chose to go back home.³⁷ One can also show that the statements of some Greek and Roman writers about the Jews' dietetical, sexual and marital exclusivity are flatly contradicted by other writers, who either were unaware of these stereotypes or were familiar with Jews who behaved very differently.³⁸ Finally, even Philo's apparent faith in the Jews' steadfastness in their adherence to their ancestral customs is far from absolute, for in numerous other passages he displays an acute awareness of the dangers of assimilation that lay at the door of every diaspora Jew.³⁹

This, then, is the problem: unlike the Phoenicians, who never developed a strong ideology of adherence to their ancestral customs or of shunning intermarriage with non-Phoenicians, or the Egyptians, who viewed migration with disdain and never developed a sustained discourse of diasporic existence, the Jews did create what one scholar aptly called 'a life-style for diaspora'.⁴⁰ Among them, the initial shock of the Babylonian exile – 'How shall we sing the Lord's song in a strange land?' – soon was replaced by detailed blueprints for how one could and should remain Jewish even in very strange lands.⁴¹ No reader of the extensive literature of the Second Temple period can fail to note the repeated stress on observing God's commandments and marrying within the fold even in the most adverse conditions, and the recurrent emphasis on one's ability to remain fully Jewish even in distant, Gentile lands. And yet, while this ideological structure definitely is impressive, we often cannot tell how widespread it actually was, and how effective in reversing the normal forces of diasporic decay and assimilation into one's host society. On a general level, it might even be claimed that some aspects of this ideology – for example, the adoption of Greek and the total neglect of Hebrew and Aramaic – actually made the Jews more vulnerable to Hellenization and assimilation than some of their Phoenician fellow-immigrants, whose inscriptions reveal a much greater adherence to their ancestral language.⁴² On a more particular level, a region-by-region examination of

37 For Jewish assimilation, see, e.g., *CIJ* II, 711 (Delphi, 119 BCE), where a Jewish freedman, who received from the slave-dealer or from his master a typical 'ethnic' slave-name, Ἰουδαῖος (cf. *CIJ* II, 710, Delphi, 162 BCE) is fully 'paganized', or Acts 16.1–3 (Lystra), where a Jewish woman marries a Greek and leaves their son uncircumcised. For Jews returning to Judea, cf. Rappaport 1995, esp. 281 and nn. 32–3.

38 See, e.g., Tacitus' contemporary, Martial, who sees nothing improbable in a Jew sleeping with a Roman girl (7.30; *GLAJJ* 240), or plagiarizing Latin verses and sleeping with Martial's favourite boy (11.94; *GLAJJ* 245).

39 E.g., *Vit. Mos.* 1.31; *Virt.* 182; *Migr. Abr.* 89–90; *De Iosepho* 254.

40 Humphreys 1973. Cf. Goudriaan 1992; Gafni 1997.

41 For (some) Jews' maintenance of their separate identity in Babylonia, see Eph'al 1978, and especially 1989 (Heb.).

42 For the correlation between cultural choices and diasporic survival, see the interesting study by Katz 1995.

the various patterns of diaspora Jewish continuity is called for, to see the actual fruits of the Jews' diasporic ideology. As a full survey is out of the question here, the following discussion will focus on the Egyptian *chora*, whose Jews are relatively well documented.⁴³ For reasons that will soon become apparent, the evidence will be divided along geographic lines – first comes the *chora* in general, then the Land of Onias.

The Egyptian *chora*

The presence of Jews throughout much of Graeco-Roman Egypt is well attested in our epigraphic and papyrological evidence, with occasional bits of additional data in the literary sources.⁴⁴ Yet in spite of this relative abundance, little can be said about the ethnic continuity of the Jewish settlers in Egypt, for in no case can we trace a single Jewish family over several generations, and examine the 'Jewishness' of its various branches.⁴⁵ Thus, while the lack of conclusive evidence for intermarriages among Egyptian Jews (excluding the earlier community at Elephantine) has often been adduced as evidence for their avoidance of this practice,⁴⁶ one must not forget the paucity of evidence for Jews who *did* marry Jews – a sobering reminder that we are really in the dark when it comes to the marital preferences of Egyptian Jews.⁴⁷ For while we know of numerous Jewish individuals in ancient Egypt, we know very little about the degree to which these individuals maintained their ancestral identity; occasionally, we can see them adhering to their ancestral way of life, but on other occasions we find them flouting many of its precepts.⁴⁸ How strict they were when it came to choosing their spouses, we simply cannot say.

43 Alexandrian Jewry, on the other hand, is known to us mainly from literary sources, whose statements often cannot be compared with any reliable documentary evidence.

44 Although, due to the almost-total lack of papyri from the Delta region, we are better informed about such areas as the Fayum or Upper Egypt.

45 For the best 'family-trees' we have, see *CPJ* II, 117. In other cases, such as Clarysse 1994, the identification of many individuals as Jews is far from certain.

46 Modrzejewski 1995: 71–2 and 76–7. Note Feldman 1993: 79: '... among the by now many thousands of papyri we have there is only one unambiguous mention, dating from the second century BCE, of an intermarriage between a Jew and a non-Jew.' But the document in question ('Berlin Papyrus no. 11641 (unpublished), cited by Wilhelm Schubart, *Einführung in die Papyruskunde*, 330'), is none other than *CPJ* I, 46, and has nothing to do with intermarriage.

47 The relevant documents are *CPJ* I, 19, where a Jewish woman appears in court with an Athenian guardian; *BGU* XIV, 2381, where a Jewish woman has a Jewish guardian; *CPJ* I, 128, where a Jew, Jonathan, married Helladote, d. of Philonides, in accordance with the law of the Jews (but was *she* Jewish?); *CPJ* II, 144, where the ethnic identity of both husband and wife is uncertain, and it is quite possible that neither was Jewish. The only unambiguous evidence for inner-Jewish marriages is found in *CPR* XVIII, 8 and 9. Cf. above, n. 45.

48 See Bohak 1997.

If the fate of individual Jews eludes us, the fate of Jewish communities and institutions poses similar problems. To be sure, there is some evidence for Jewish communal structures – both social and physical – in the Egyptian *chora*, but this does not necessarily imply any long-term Jewish continuity. When we learn that the Jews of Xenephyris or Nitriai, for example, dedicated a *proseuche* in honour of Ptolemy VIII Euergetes II, we cannot say for how many subsequent generations these *proseuchae* served the Jewish descendants of their founders.⁴⁹ And when we hear of a Jewish *presbyteros* or *politarches*, or even of a Jewish *politeuma*, we cannot tell for how many generations such social functions and structures remained active, and for whom.⁵⁰ Yet some evidence exists even for the *continued* functioning of some communities or the continued use of some architectural structures. For example, an inscription of unknown provenance preserves a copy, probably done by order of Cleopatra VII and a co-ruler, of an asylum granted to a (probably Jewish) *proseuche* by Ptolemy Euergetes (either the First, 246–221 BCE, or, more likely, the Second, 145–116 BCE).⁵¹ This *proseuche*, at least, must have remained active for at least a century, and it may be assumed that some Jews were there to make sure that it did. How many they were, and even who they were, remains an insoluble puzzle.⁵²

How, then, shall we judge the rate of ethnic continuity of Egyptian Jews? As noted above, the Egyptian papyri and inscriptions clearly demonstrate a gradual decline in the use of foreign ethnic designations, from a peak in the third century BCE to an almost total absence in the first century BCE and beyond.⁵³ What has not been noted, however, is that we now possess enough evidence to attempt a similar tabulation of individuals referred to as Ἰουδαῖος/-αία and Ἰουδαῖος τῆς ἐπιγονῆς, and that such a table points to the exact same trend (see Appendix 1).⁵⁴ There were many Jews in Egypt

49 JIGRE 24 (Xenephyris; 140–116 BCE) and 25 (Nitriai; 140–116); cf. 22 (Schedia; 246–221); 27–28 (Athribis; second or first century BCE); 117 (Crocodilopolis; 246–221); 126 (n.p.; n.d.); CPJ I, 129 (Alexandrou Nesos; 218 BCE); 134 (Arsinoe; late-second century BCE); 138 (n.p.; late-first century BCE); CPJ II, 432 (Arsinoe; 113 CE).

50 JIGRE 39; P. Mon. III, 49.

51 JIGRE 125 (n.p.), with the editors' notes.

52 For a parallel example, cf. Apollo's temple in Hermopolis Magna, whose founders (to judge from their names, in SB I, 4206 and SB V, 8066) were Idumeans and other Semites, and whose continued existence is demonstrated by P. Giss. 99. Cf. Zucker 1938: 58–62, and Bohak 1997: 108, n. 12.

53 Excluding, of course, such fictitious ethnic designations as Μακεδών, or Πέρσης τῆς ἐπιγονῆς, which remained quite common even in later times – see Láda 1996: vol. 1, 92–154.

54 While the table does not include all the known Jews of Ptolemaic Egypt, it has the advantage of excluding the numerous persons in CPJ, JIGRE, and later publications who had been identified as Jews on very shaky grounds – cf. Bohak 1997. It seems likely, however, that were one to include all the securely-identified Jews, the overall chronological pattern would remain the same.

in the third century BCE, and their number was equally great in the first half of the second century, after the Seleucid conquest of Palestine. In subsequent periods, however, their numbers dwindled at a surprisingly rapid pace, so that from the 130s to 30 BCE not even a single example is recorded.⁵⁵ This decline in the number of Jews identified as such is due in part to wider trends in our evidence, such as the relative dearth of papyri from the first century BCE. But a comparison of the table in Appendix 1 with the overall evidence for ethnic markers in general⁵⁶ highlights two interesting points: first, while ethnic markers commonly appear in the papyri as early as the 280s BCE, Jews make their first appearance only in 260 BCE; second, the last occurrences of Ἰουδαῖοι date to the 130s BCE, while other ethnic markers migrated to Egypt in the late second-century, the height of Hasmonean prosperity (and a period of massive flow of Idumean refugees to Egypt), and the descendants of the earlier migrants rarely were identified as 'Jews' – either because they migrated back to Judea or because they assimilated into their surrounding environment.⁵⁷ In light of such a trend, it seems wrong to interpret the occurrence of the few individuals identified as Ἰουδαῖος in Roman-period documents (when ethnic designations in general became very rare) as a sign of Jewish separatedness, or of the religious meanings supposedly acquired by the term itself.⁵⁸ Rather, the presence of Jews in the papyri of the Roman period (including such individuals who paid the 'Jewish tax' from the early 70s CE), might serve as vivid testimony to the new waves of Jewish immigration to Egypt with every new turbulence in their war-torn homeland. Unlike most other foreign ethnic groups in Egypt, which virtually disappeared by the Roman period, the Jews – living so close to Egypt and long accustomed to migrating there – simply kept on coming.

The Land of Onias

In the foregoing discussion, the one place in the Egyptian *chora* where Jewish ethnic continuity is easier to demonstrate was left aside, namely, the so-called 'Land of Onias', the history of whose settlement can be reconstructed from literary and epigraphic sources.⁵⁹ From the former, we can reconstruct the arrival in the Heliopolite nome of Onias IV and his followers some time in the 160s (or 150s) BCE, as well as the activities of Onias himself, and of his

55 For the Roman period, see Tcherikover 1963 and Modrzejewski 1995: 161–231.

56 As compiled by Láda 1996: vol. 1, 89–90.

57 For the Idumean migration, see Rappaport 1969, to which may now be added PSI XXI Cong., 6.

58 For these interpretations, see, respectively, Hanson 1992, esp. 139, and Honigman 1993, esp. 98.

59 For the Land of Onias, see Noy 1994; Modrzejewski 1995: 121–33; Bohak 1996.

two sons, in the period up to c. 100 BCE. We can also document the presence in the Land of Onias of the descendants of the original settlers, at least as far as 47 BCE, and probably all the way up to 73/4 CE, when their Heliopolitan temple finally was destroyed by the Roman authorities. This literary evidence is supplemented by abundant epigraphical finds – by far the largest corpus of Jewish inscriptions from Graeco-Roman Egypt comes from the Land of Onias (even after we omit all the inscriptions whose Jewishness is in doubt) – which spans the time from the second century BCE to the imperial period.⁶⁰ Thus, both the literary and the epigraphical evidence converge in portraying a Jewish community which remained distinct from its surrounding environment for more than two centuries.⁶¹

At first sight, this might seem like the best confirmation of the Jewish-continuity model, but such an impression could be very misleading, given the special nature of the Jewish settlement in the Land of Onias. 'In Egypt', says Strabo, as quoted by Josephus, 'there is a Jewish settlement which is assigned to them alone (ἐν γούν Αἰγύπτῳ κατοικία τῶν Ἰουδαίων ἐστὶν ἀποδεδειγμένη χωρὶς)'. Elsewhere, I suggested that the Jewish κατοικία mentioned by Strabo must be the one near Heliopolis, the only place in the Egyptian *chora* where Jews settled as a separate ethnic group with its own territorial base.⁶² Strabo, then, provides us with our first piece of evidence on the uniqueness of the Land of Onias, a territory set aside for the Jews' exclusive settlement and benefit. A second piece of evidence also comes from Josephus, in a remark whose full significance seems to have been noted by none of its many readers (myself included). In a passage probably based on Nicolaus of Damascus, Josephus recounts how, in 47 BCE, Mithridates and Antipater were marching through Egypt to relieve Julius Caesar in Alexandria (*War* I ix. 4 [190]). On their way they encountered 'those who occupied the so-called Land of Onias (οἱ τὴν Ὀνίου προσαγορευομένην χώραν κατέχοντες)', to which an explicatory statement is added – 'these were Egyptian Jews (ἦσαν δὲ Ἰουδαῖοι Αἰγύπτιοι)'. As can be seen from Niese's *apparatus*, the designation Ἰουδαῖοι Αἰγύπτιοι has caused quite some trouble to Josephus' copyists and editors. Several manuscripts

60 The earliest dateable inscription is JIGRE 30 (117 BCE); JIGRE 129 is not much later; for the latest dateable inscriptions, see, e.g., JIGRE 84 (γ Καίσαρ(ος), i.e. 27 BCE), and the editors' index, pp. 254–5; see also CPJ II, 417 (59 CE), with the editors' comments and Bohak 1996: 37, n. 76.

61 And, as I have argued elsewhere, even our papyrological evidence for anti-Jewish sentiments in the *chora* (CPJ III, 520, CPJ I, 141, and an unpublished Demotic text) probably is directly connected with the Jews of the Land of Onias; cf. Bohak 1995.

62 Josephus, *Ant.* XIV.vii.2 (117) (for Strabo's interest in the region, cf. *Ant.* XIII.x.4 (286–7)), and Bohak 1996: 27. Cf. Schwartz 1997 (Heb.), who also notes that the adverbial use of *χωρὶς* is extremely rare in Josephus. It is, however, very common in Strabo himself (*Geog.* 4.4.6; 5.3.4; 8.1.1 (*χωρὶς ἀποδείξαντες*); 8.6.19; 12.4.4, etc.), which supports the accuracy of Josephus' quotation.

(M L V R C) offer a different reading – Ἰουδαῖοι καὶ Αἰγύπτιοι, 'Jews and Egyptians,' though the context of the whole passage makes it clear that the settlers were Jews. And in the parallel passage in Josephus' *Antiquities*, it was Niese himself who chose to follow the single manuscript P in reading οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι οἱ τὴν Ὀνίου [χώραν] λεγομένην κατοικοῦντες, when all the other textual witnesses refer to οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι Αἰγύπτιοι οἱ κτλ. (*Ant.* XIV.viii.1 [131]). Textually speaking, neither the copyists' emendation in the *War* nor Niese's in the *Antiquities* is in any way justified; rather, the two passages corroborate each other in relating to the Jews of the Land of Onias as Ἰουδαῖοι Αἰγύπτιοι. But the urge to 'correct' the text is quite natural, given the obscurity of a designation that would make the settlers of the Land of Onias both 'Egyptians' and 'Jews' at the very same time, a designation which, as far as I know, is unparalleled in any other ancient source.⁶³

Before analysing the possible meaning of such an expression, one pitfall must be marked, in order to be avoided. In a series of recent articles, Shaye Cohen develops the hypothesis, adopted by other scholars as well, that some time in the Hellenistic period, and mainly as a result of the Hasmonean policy of forcibly Judaizing some of their non-Jewish subjects, the term Ἰουδαῖος ceased to be solely an ethnic designation and acquired an independent religious dimension, because any person who joined the Jewish religion became a Ἰουδαῖος, regardless of his ethnic identity.⁶⁴ Leaving aside the veracity of this hypothesis, it should be clear that the Ἰουδαῖοι Αἰγύπτιοι of the Land of Onias cannot be explained in this manner. That they were all converts (Egyptian by ethnicity, Jews by religion) is simply out of the question, for some of them, at the very least, must have been the biological descendants of the original Oniad settlers. That they were Jews who were called 'Egyptians' simply by virtue of having been born in Egypt is not impossible, but then we must assume that all the Jews of Graeco-Roman Egypt, except for first-generation immigrants, were known as Ἰουδαῖοι Αἰγύπτιοι – an assumption for which we have not even a shred of evidence, and which contradicts all that we know about ethnic designations in the ancient world.⁶⁵

What, then, are we to make of these Ἰουδαῖοι Αἰγύπτιοι? As I do not wish to embark here upon a full survey of all double or 'mixed' ethnic designations in ancient literature – from the Ἑλληνοσκύθαι, the Λιβυφοῖνικοι, and the Συροφοῖνικοι to the *Gallograeci*, the *Celtiberi*, and so forth – let me briefly mention some of the Oniad Jews' closest neighbours, namely, the

63 Cf. Ray 1992: 273: 'Ionians and Phoenicians turned into *Ionomemphites* [sic] and *Phoinikaigyptioi*, but the Jews never became anything other than *Ioudaioi*.'

64 Cohen 1990 and 1994; as far as I can see, Cohen never discusses Josephus' Ἰουδαῖοι Αἰγύπτιοι.

65 As the case of Tiberius Julius Alexander so eloquently demonstrates, a Jew could be thought of as an Egyptian by people who were unaware of his Jewish identity, which he himself chose to ignore (see Tacitus, *Hist.* 1.11.1: 'eiusdem nationis', i.e. Egyptian). Such a person might be considered a Jew by some, an Egyptian by others – but neither side would call him an 'Egyptian Jew'.

Ἑλληνομεμφίται, the Καρομεμφίται, and the Φοινικαιγύπτιοι.⁶⁶ In all three cases, we find a group of foreigners to whom a special site was allocated in which to build their temple, the centre of their ethnic enclave – the Greeks had their *Hellenion*, the Carians their *Karikon*, and the Phoenicians their temple of Astarte, mentioned already by Herodotus (2.112). In all three cases, we find ethnic groups whose continued existence as separate communities, in spite of their evident Hellenization and Egyptianization, can be documented over several centuries. It was their special status, their long-term survival as distinct social groups, and, perhaps, their intermarriage with the local population, that turned them into both 'Carians' or 'Hellenes' and 'Memphites' or both 'Phoenicians' and 'Egyptians'.⁶⁷

The relevance of these communities for our study hardly needs stressing. Just like the Ἑλληνομεμφίται, the Καρομεμφίται, and the Φοινικαιγύπτιοι, the Jews of the Land of Onias came to Egypt, received some land and the permission to build a temple there, and maintained their separate identity for a period of several centuries. As one of their tomb-inscriptions so eloquently testifies, they saw the Land of Onias as their ancestral homeland – of them, one could really say that they inherited it from their forefathers.⁶⁸ A century after their settlement there, they already were seen by outsiders, and perhaps even by themselves, as Ἰουδαῖοι Αἰγύπτιοι, that is, as Jews who had been permanently established in Egypt, and therefore were 'Egyptians', yet never forgot that they also were 'Jews'. Whether they intermarried with their neighbours we simply cannot tell, though I am tempted to note that if, as I suggested elsewhere, the Jewish novel of *Joseph and Aseneth* was written among them, it would seem likely that they were open to the idea of marrying any Egyptian who repented of her or his idolatry.⁶⁹ This, however, need not detain us here.

To sum up this discussion, we may note that the Land of Onias provides us with the one example from the entire Egyptian *chora* of a Jewish community whose ethnic continuity can securely be documented over a long

⁶⁶ To which one might add the Λιβυαἰγύπτιοι (Cl. Ptolemy 4.5.12), the Ἀραβιαἰγύπτιοι (ibid.), one Συραἰγύπτιος (P. Tebt. III, 814), and, perhaps, one Περσαἰγύπτιος (P. Hib. I, 70; but note that Πέρσης probably is a pseudo-ethnic here). For the spelling Ἰουδαῖοι Αἰγύπτιοι, instead of *Ἰουδαἰγύπτιοι, cf. Ptolemy's Λιβυαἰγύπτιοι, with, e.g., Pliny's *Libyes Aegyptii* (NH 5.8.43), or the *variae lectiones* in Ptolemy's reference to Ἀραβιαἰγύπτιοι (Müller, p. 694) or in Herodotus 4.17.1 (Rosén: Ἑλληνοσκύθαι DRSV; Ἑλληνες Σκύθαι ABCMPT).

⁶⁷ For the Ἑλληνομ., the Καρομ., and the Φοινικαιγ., see Thompson 1988: 88–97. For intermarriage as a possible factor, see Steph. Byz., s.v. Καρικόν: τόπος ἰδιάζων ἐν Μέμφιδι, ἐνθα Κάρης οἰκήσαντες, ἐπιγαμίας πρὸς Μεμφίτας ποιησάμενοι, Καρομεμφίται ἐκλήθησαν.

⁶⁸ JIGRE 38: τίς . . . / κείσαι; καὶ πάτραν καὶ γενέτην ἔνεπε. / Ἀρσινόα, . . . / φαιμισθὰ δ' ὄνιου γὰ τροφὸς ἀμετέρα. κτλ.

⁶⁹ Cf. Bohak 1996: 101–4.

period of time. Like the Carians, the Phoenicians, and the 'old-Greeks' of neighbouring Memphis, the Jews of the Land of Onias had their own temple and their own communal institutions; even more important, they had a territorial base, royal support, and sufficiently large numbers to sustain their ethnic enclave for many years to come. In other words, when we examine the ethnic continuity of the Jews of the Egyptian *chora*, the remarkable survival of the Ἰουδαῖοι Αἰγύπτιοι of the Land of Onias may well be the exception, not the rule.

* * *

What, then, are we to conclude from this survey of ethnic continuity among the Jews of Graeco-Roman Egypt, partial and tentative as it is? While there is no need to downplay the Jews' unique achievement in developing a 'lifestyle for diaspora', it should be noted that many ancient Jews may have been quite ignorant of the intricate blueprints developed by some of their leading intellectuals (and the almost total absence of Judaeo-Greek literature from the papyri of the Egyptian *chora* is quite instructive here). It should also be borne in mind that those Jews who tried to maintain their separate identity in non-Jewish environments, and to transmit it to their children and their children's children, often were facing enormous odds – not because of the hostility of their neighbours, but because of their indifference. In a world where the assimilation (or degeneration, depending on one's perspective) of immigrants into natives was virtually taken for granted, those Jews who tried to avoid such 'natural' forces were facing an uphill battle. It is not for me to say whether the task of creating an alternative Greek culture that would sustain the Jews as a distinct ethnic group in Greek-speaking environments was *a priori* doomed to fail, as it eventually did. Nor do I wish to claim that the rise of Jewish groups that stressed missionary activity instead of ethnic and cultural continuity – and in so doing changed the course of human history – was in any way inevitable. What I can say, however, with at least some degree of confidence, is that the implicit assumption that the communities of the Jewish diaspora thrived from one generation to the next, always there and always Jewish, flies in the face of what we know about the fate of immigrants in the ancient world – and of some of the Jewish evidence as well.⁷⁰

⁷⁰ I am grateful to Willy Clarysse, Csaba Lada, and Daniel R. Schwartz for their invaluable comments on earlier drafts of this paper. Unfortunately, I was unable to incorporate sources and studies published after 1998.

Appendix 1
Individuals Identified as Jews in Ptolemaic Papyri
and Inscriptions.⁷¹

The following table lists all the securely-dated⁷² individuals in published⁷³ Greek⁷⁴ papyri⁷⁵ from Hellenistic Egypt (330–30 BCE) who are specifically identified as Ἰουδαῖος, Ἰουδαῖος τῆς ἐπιγονῆς, and Ἰουδαία.

Decade	Number of documents	Individuals identified as			Sources
		Ἰ-ῖος	Ἰ. τ. ἐ.	Ἰ-αία	
330–260:					
260–250:	5	3	1	1	CPJ I, 8; 9a+b; 18; 19
250–240:					
240–230:	4		10	2	CPR XVIII, 7; 8; 9; 11
230–220:	1		2		CPJ I, 20
220–210:	2	1	3		CPJ I, 21; 38
210–200:	1	6			CPJ I, 22
200–190:					
190–180:	3	4	2		CPJ I, 23; 130; P. Mich. XVIII 781
180–170:	5	6	8	1	CPJ I, 24; 25; 26; 125; BGU XIV, 2381
170–160:					
160–150:	2	2			P. Köln III, 144; P. Gen. III, 128 ⁷⁶
150–140:	1	1			CPJ I, 133 ⁷⁷
140–130:					
130–30:					
Total:	24	23	26	4	

71 The table is based on Csaba Lada 1996: vol. 2, 27–8 and 85–6, to which I added the recently published P. Gen. III, 128.

72 The undated documents would add 5 Jews in CPJ I, 30 (mid-second century), 1 in CPJ I, 43 (second century), and 2 in CPJ I, 46 (second or first century). Cf. CPJ I, 135 (second century), for a complaint against an unnamed Jew, and P. Lond. VII, 2184 (Zenon Archive), for a fragmentary list of several Jews.

73 The unpublished documents known to me would add several Jews in P. Monac. 344 col. ix (late-third century BCE) and perhaps several more in P. Dublin ined. 37a (late-third century BCE); I am grateful to Willy Clarysse for information on their contents. The publication of the Jewish archive from Herakleopolis would add more Jews in the 130s BCE.

74 To date, the ethnicon 'Jew' is attested only once in the Demotic papyri, in an unpublished text mentioned by Ray 1978, no. 4. The text refers to 'the Jews', not to an individual Jew.

75 Unfortunately, only two individuals are identified as Jews in the Greek inscriptions from Graeco-Roman Egypt (JIGRE 121–2, both undated).

76 Dated 163–156? BCE. I have arbitrarily opted for the later date.

77 Dated either 153 or 142 BCE. I have arbitrarily opted for the later date.

ASPECTS OF EVERYDAY LIFE IN
ROMAN PALESTINE WITH SPECIAL
REFERENCE TO PRIVATE
DOMICILES AND RITUAL BATHS¹

Eric M. Meyers

Introduction

The subject of everyday life in Roman-period Palestine would seem, on the face of it, to be a topic of genuine interest to all sorts of scholars and laypeople: to archaeologists, New Testament scholars, to scholars in classical studies or in rabbinics or Jewish studies. Ancient lifeways conjured up all sorts of thoughts about breaking down the barriers between yesterday and today, while at the same time suggesting a hopeful avenue of investigation that might make the distant past more palatable to the present. But the high-technological present, so long after the dawn of the industrial era in the mid-nineteenth century, in fact makes it more difficult than ever before to come to grips with some of the harsher realities of the Roman-period past, whether in Palestine or elsewhere. But whether we want to accept it or not, ancient Palestine was at a further remove than many of us would want to accept when it came to many of the technological advances we know of further west or in some of the great eastern cities like Aphrodisias or Ephesus.

So for example, while we have a very sophisticated water system in Israel at Roman Sepphoris,¹ we have thus far found only one toilet in a city that c. 200 CE must have had a population of 15,000–18,000.² One possible inference to be drawn is that families used chamber pots; another possibility would be that outhouses or latrines were wooden and have not survived. While the great mansion with the Dionysos mosaic resembles the great villas

¹ This paper was originally delivered as a special conference lecture to a combined audience of laypeople, faculty, students, and conference participants at Trinity College, Dublin. I have attempted to keep the general outline of that presentation in this written form.

² For a convenient and up-to-date summary see Tsuk 1996: 45–51 and the final report on the water system in, Tsuk *et al.* 1996 (in Hebrew).

of the west in respect to some aspects of its design, especially the peristyle courtyard, its size of 300 square metres³ (c. 3,100 square feet) means that it is tiny in comparison to Piazza Armerina in Sicily or some of the great villas of the west.⁴ What is more, such peristyle villas are rarely found in Palestine, and when they are they tend to get smaller and smaller the later they are to be dated.⁵ The most characteristic feature of this type house is that it has an inner courtyard surrounded by columns. Over time the arrangement of columns changed also. Yizhar Hirschfeld draws the following conclusion from this: 'The fact that relatively few peristyle houses have been found in Palestine to date may indicate that Hellenistic-Roman architectural traditions had limited influence in the country, at least in private construction.'⁶

The 'courtyard house', of which the villa or mansion in the western acropolis at Sepphoris (84.1) is an example,⁷ would seem to be a local variant of the Roman villa, adapted to local construction techniques and customs – even the Dionysos villa is an adaptation of the Roman villa.⁸ Like the 'complex' house, these are domiciles that have been enlarged over time to accommodate the needs of the extended family, as married sons and their families stayed on with their families, living no doubt around the courtyard.⁹ Along with various extended family members – a grandparent, an aunt or uncle – these domiciles were forced to absorb more and more individuals over time.

Other general observations on such dwellings are worth mentioning in advance:

- 1 the improvement of construction techniques over time suggests the rise of an affluent class of farmers;¹⁰
- 2 terms and techniques were learned from non-Jewish neighbours – note Talmudic loan words such as *kiton*=bedroom; *traklin*=entertaining room; *exedra*=portico; or *dimos*=course, as in course of stones;¹¹
- 3 The toilet and bath are found in the two northwest corner rooms of the Dionysos House where running water was available (see Figure 12.11). A small and simple mosaic inscription in Greek *hegeia* (health) serves as a reminder, apparently, that cleanliness is next to godliness. It is hard to imagine residents of the city running outside in a cold winter's night to go to the latrine. We assume, then, that the use of chamber-pots was widespread. A privy in a house was considered the ultimate sign of luxury: 'Who is wealthy? ... R. Jose said: he who has a privy near his table' (Tal. Bab. Shabbat 25b).
- 4 For a brief survey of villas in the East, see Rossiter 1997: vol. 5, 300–1.
- 5 Hirschfeld 1995: 85–97.
- 6 *Ibid.*: 102.
- 7 See Hoglund and Meyers 1996: 39–43, but especially fig. 17. See also Meyers *et al.* 1995: 68–71, figs 1, 2.
- 8 Hirschfeld 1995: 92–3 and Rossiter 1997.
- 9 See Guijarro 1997: 57–61 and Baker 1996: 391–418. See also Hirschfeld 1995: 272.
- 10 Hirschfeld 1995: 23–4 and Safrai 1994: 322ff., and *passim*.
- 11 Hirschfeld 1995: 289.

- 3 several types of houses adopted the Roman practice of incorporating shops and businesses within them and facing the courtyard or street (e.g. Khirbet Shema^c and Meiron);¹²
- 4 the Palestinian or Roman-period Jewish house also reflects aspects of rabbinic attitudes toward gender.¹³ Domestic space, moreover, is a context in which both Jewish men and women interacted as they moved about inside and outside it.¹⁴ The location of certain gender-specific activities within it is crucial to understanding everyday life;
- 5 the location of *miqva'ot* within the domicile is indication of religious practice and preference.¹⁵ At Sepphoris, both the frequency of immersion pools as well as their diversity suggest a genuine piety if not priestly strain in both the domestic, western areas as well as the areas near the civic centre in the eastern, lower city. The presence of at least one *miqveh* in the Dionysos villa suggests its use by Jews if not the identity of its owners. The Hebrew University team's suggestion that even in Christian areas ritual baths were used must await final publication and greater public scrutiny.¹⁶

In addition to focusing on aspects of domestic architecture, its typology and water installations within them, I will also bring attention to a series of artifacts and small objects that suggest that Graeco-Roman iconography and Jewish orthopraxy did not necessarily clash. That is to say, within many of these domiciles I will also draw attention to objects with pagan decoration or design, some of them even erotic, which were clearly found in Jewish contexts. *Miqva'ot*, erotica, Helios, Pan and Prometheus, and Dionysos, all seem quite at home in the Jewish city and setting of Sepphoris.

This leads naturally to a consideration of the larger question of Hellenization. Unlike some of my European colleagues, especially those who follow Martin Hengel,¹⁷ I do not see Graeco-Roman culture as constituting a challenge or opposition to nascent classical Judaism in Palestine.¹⁸ Hengel and

- 12 For the examples from these two sites see their final publications: Meyers *et al.* 1976, and 1981.
- 13 For a groundbreaking study of this subject, utilizing rabbinic rhetoric, archaeological realia and cultural theory in her evaluation, see Peskowitz 1997a. For an equally exciting and pioneering work, see the unpublished Duke doctoral dissertation of Baker 1997.
- 14 Baker 1997: 155ff.
- 15 The identification of plastered stepped pools as *miqva'ot* is a matter of some controversy and is discussed in the text below.
- 16 This statement was made in an oral communication to the author by Zeev Weiss while visiting the Sepphoris exhibition in Raleigh in 1997. To the best of my knowledge neither Weiss nor E. Netzer has made such a claim in print. It may have been something like a 'trial balloon'.
- 17 Hengel's influential and pioneering work in English is *Judaism and Hellenism*, 1974.
- 18 See my critique of this approach in 'The challenge of Hellenism for Early Judaism and Christianity', 1992b: 84–94 and 'Archaeology of the Second Temple Period', 1994: 25–42, pt. I.

many of his followers saw the clash between Judaism and Hellenism coming early in the Second Temple period, with various aspects and components of Hellenistic civilization taking over or absorbing or overwhelming their Palestinian counterparts and precursors. Hengel's elements of Hellenistic culture would include: social and economic infrastructures and Greek language and culture, especially education and philosophy.¹⁹ In respect to Hebrew wisdom literature, for example, Hengel sees Greek philosophy encouraging the anti-nomian tendencies of the priestly elite and lay nobility, as reflected in the work on Ben Sira (but Ben Sira is a very Semitic, conservative document!).²⁰ So great is the influence of Greek culture in 300–150 BCE that Hengel views the term 'Palestinian Judaism' as inappropriate and favors the term 'Hellenistic Judaism' to describe both the situation in the Diaspora and the scene in Eretz Israel. He also understands Jewish eschatology as resulting from the clash with Hellenism – Judaism in the early Hellenistic period is well on its way to becoming a 'world' religion, he argues. Pharisaism, as well as Jewish nationalism emerged in manifest opposition to this tendency to the universal represented by Hellenistic Judaism.²¹

Hengel's influence on so much of contemporary scholarship has meant that a significant number of scholars accepts as historically accurate that 'Hellenistic Judaism' was firmly implanted in Second Temple Judaism, a notion that also has great implications for the study of early Christianity. I have suggested an alternative way of understanding Hellenization, namely, as a cultural force that enabled local culture to develop in ways that would not have been possible but for the introduction of certain aspects of Hellenistic culture.²² In this respect I am indebted to the work of Glenn Bowersock of Princeton who traces the viability and vibrancy of late antique forms of indigenous pagan art and culture, which in the East blend easily into Hellenistic art and architectural forms.²³ In a way the introduction of classical culture into the eastern Mediterranean ca. 300 BCE was akin to the impact of the Industrial Revolution in the mid-nineteenth century: what came after would never be the same, but the diverse ways that technology influenced indigenous cultures could not and did not cause them to homogenize into a series of common cultures in the way that electronic and computer technology in the last decade has created a global civilization on the information highway.

I think it is important for me to stress this alternative view of Hellenization at the outset so that both the unique aspects of Jewish life in ancient

Palestine can be observed, while at the same time one can point out an increasing level of comfort in the Jewish community with the more and more explicit trappings of Hellenistic culture (e.g. Dionysos mosaics, erotica, etc.). The words I would use to describe the Jewish attitude to Roman culture, c. 200 CE would be synergy and syncretism. Hellenistic culture was adapted to serve the ultimate aims and objectives of the people borrowing it. By examining the private domicile in Roman-period Palestine we will have the opportunity to observe both the conservative and liberal tendencies of Jews as they confronted a dynamic and cosmopolitan world. The contents of those domiciles provide especially fertile territory for testing our thesis as do the existence of *miqua'ot* in so many of them. The emergence of many new aspects of Hellenistic culture within domestic Jewish context in Roman antiquity need not obscure the even stronger reality that Jewish domestic life in so many respects was designed to preserve continuity with the past and loyalty to traditional forms of Jewish religious practice. I should point out here that a full treatment of the Domestic Area on the western acropolis at Sepphoris in our final publication series will include details of all finds in their precise domestic contexts. This essay is a kind of preview of some of the important items to come.

Private domiciles

Before examining some of the specific types of domiciles found in Roman-period Palestine, let us consider a few matters of methodological concern. Miriam Peskowitz has pointed out that unless an archaeologist or cultural historian can point to the faces of individuals who actually inhabited those ancient spaces s/he is in danger of missing the true meaning and significance of both the space such a scholar may be considering for study and analysis as well as the society in which it is located.²⁴ This is especially pertinent in determining gender and even then it is very easy to presume a certain negative situation for women based on a few rabbinic texts that suggest a strict segregation of the sexes, inferring that seclusion of women was a way of preserving a set standard of Jewish modesty in Roman Palestine.²⁵ Indeed, Leonie Archer draws on a common interpretive framework when she reconstructs ancient space by assuming a dichotomy of public (male)/private or interior (female).²⁶ This is true of many others also.²⁷ By taking notice of new ways of understanding ancient space and its concomitant gender associ-

¹⁹ Hengel 1974: vol. I, 58–78.

²⁰ *Ibid.*: 131–153.

²¹ *Ibid.*: 310–14.

²² Meyers 1992b: *passim*.

²³ Bowersock 1990.

²⁴ See Peskowitz 1997a: 130–51.

²⁵ This is a point made by Baker 1997: 4–5, when she draws upon several key authors for key rabbinic texts that have served such a purpose.

²⁶ See Archer 1990: 116. See also in this connection David Small's essay: 'Initial study of the structure of women's seclusion in the archaeological past', 1991: 336–42.

²⁷ See Baker 1997: 6.

ations I hope to at least assist and direct further studies into the built environment of antiquity to new modes of critical inquiry. It seems to me that it is only with the help of these new approaches that one will be freed to view the evidence in a more gender-neutral way.

Recent attempts have also been made in inferring from house-types in Roman Palestine the social stratification of the family.²⁸ One of the problems with such an approach as Guijarro's recent study of this kind is that he presupposes that the majority of peasants in first century Palestine lived in mudbrick houses that have not survived through the centuries.²⁹ It is difficult enough to infer gender from built structures, though with a critical assessment of the relevant rabbinic literature it is possible. But to assume that the larger and more complex houses represent the 'elites' of the country and a community and that the inhabitants of them are the most Hellenized of all groups in society, while the smallest domiciles of stone or mudbrick were made for peasants and craftsmen is really a case of over-interpretation.³⁰ Let us not assume that we may deduce so much from such limited evidence.

Let us now consider the three main types of houses in the Roman period: the simple house, the complex house, and the courtyard house. In addition we will refer to houses with shops that fall into one of these three categories.³¹

The simple house

The most commonly found domicile in Roman-period Palestine is the single-roomed structure. The best preserved examples of this type house are from the Hauran, south and east of Mt. Hermon in the Golan.³² These buildings may be situated either with a courtyard behind or in front of them and have been found in the vast majority of excavations; it is assumed that the majority of the population lived in such houses also.³³ The general size of such domiciles varied from 20 to 200 square metres; though most were on the smaller side. The example from Khirbet Shema^c represents the low end of that range, 40 square metres, including the upper storey.³⁴ An outer staircase there led directly to the second storey, while a direct ground-level door opened into the main floor, which space served as a workshop or store. A street or alleyway ran alongside it. A baking oven and remains of other domestic (?) installations were found nearby to the west. The house is preserved in its last, Byzantine phase of use, 4th–5th centuries CE, attested to

28 Guijarro 1997: 55 and chart on p. 58.

29 Ibid: 51. Guijarro infers this from an old ethnographic study of Palestine.

30 Ibid.: 55–60.

31 For this classification we are indebted entirely to Hirschfeld 1995: 21–103.

32 Ibid.: 24.

33 Ibid.: 21; Guijarro 1997: 58.

34 See Meyers *et al.* 1997: 107–13; Hirschfeld 1995: 34.

by the sherds and coins found on the tamped earth surface of the ground-level shop. Hirschfeld identifies this house as one of the smallest ever found in Palestine. Because of its size the number of individuals residing in it was relatively few: 6–8 individuals, parents, children and some relatives. A *miqveh* for this southeast sector of town is located nearby and doubtless served a number of families and households in this sector (see below).³⁵

Another small example of the simple house type comes from nearby Meiron, and was called by the excavators the 'Lintel House'.³⁶ Its size is at least 80 square metres but it is apparently only part of a larger complex, and is therefore incomplete. If it is to be related to the 'Patrician House' that stands alongside it (see Figures 12.1 and 12.2), even sharing the common space of a roof terrace,³⁷ both are comparable in size to the largest houses of this type. Hirschfeld describes this type as a 'two-wing' house, the two wings being perpendicular to one another, as is the case in the lower city of Meiron also.³⁸ Considering the relatively large size of these units, and keeping in mind that their full context was not uncovered, the inhabitants enjoyed a good economic situation, and I would be hesitant to call them 'peasants' as do Hirschfeld and Guijarro;³⁹ well-to-do farmer or agriculturalist describes the situation better for me and eliminates the implication of low social status. Often the term peasant also carries the connotation of being uneducated. Because of the nature of the finds in the Patrician House and their religious significance such a connotation would be quite unjustified.⁴⁰ Another example of the double-wing simple house type is found on the lower terrace at Meiron, which includes shops and workshops on the ground floor and a private *miqveh* that could serve the individuals in this unit, MI (see Figures 12.3 and 12.4).⁴¹ Its size, 180 square metres, puts it on the larger end of the type. The finds associated with this area and the elegantly carved doorposts strongly suggest that the occupants of this large house were well-to-do craftsmen or artisans, terms I would not equate with peasants.

There are many variations to the plan of the simple house; indeed one of the best examples from the Golan, Kafr Nassej, has a broad building with a portico running in front of it.⁴² I have only described several of the types I

35 Meyers *et al.* 1997: 113–17.

36 Meyers *et al.* 1981: 50–77.

37 Ibid.: 53, fig. 3.16.

38 Hirschfeld 1995: 29, 31.

39 Ibid.: 29; Guijarro 1997: 58.

40 Note especially the storage vessels with charred foodstuffs in Room F and their religious significance, so M. Goodman, 'The Purpose of Room F' (1981: 71–2).

41 Meyers *et al.* 1981: 23ff. Note the cooperage in photo 21 and photos 26 and 27 and plans of the *miqveh* there on pp. 41–4. The Meiron *miqveh* is similar to the one at Khirbet Shema^c and to the earliest examples at Sepphoris. For our discussion of *miqva'ot* see below.

42 Hirschfeld 1995: 24.



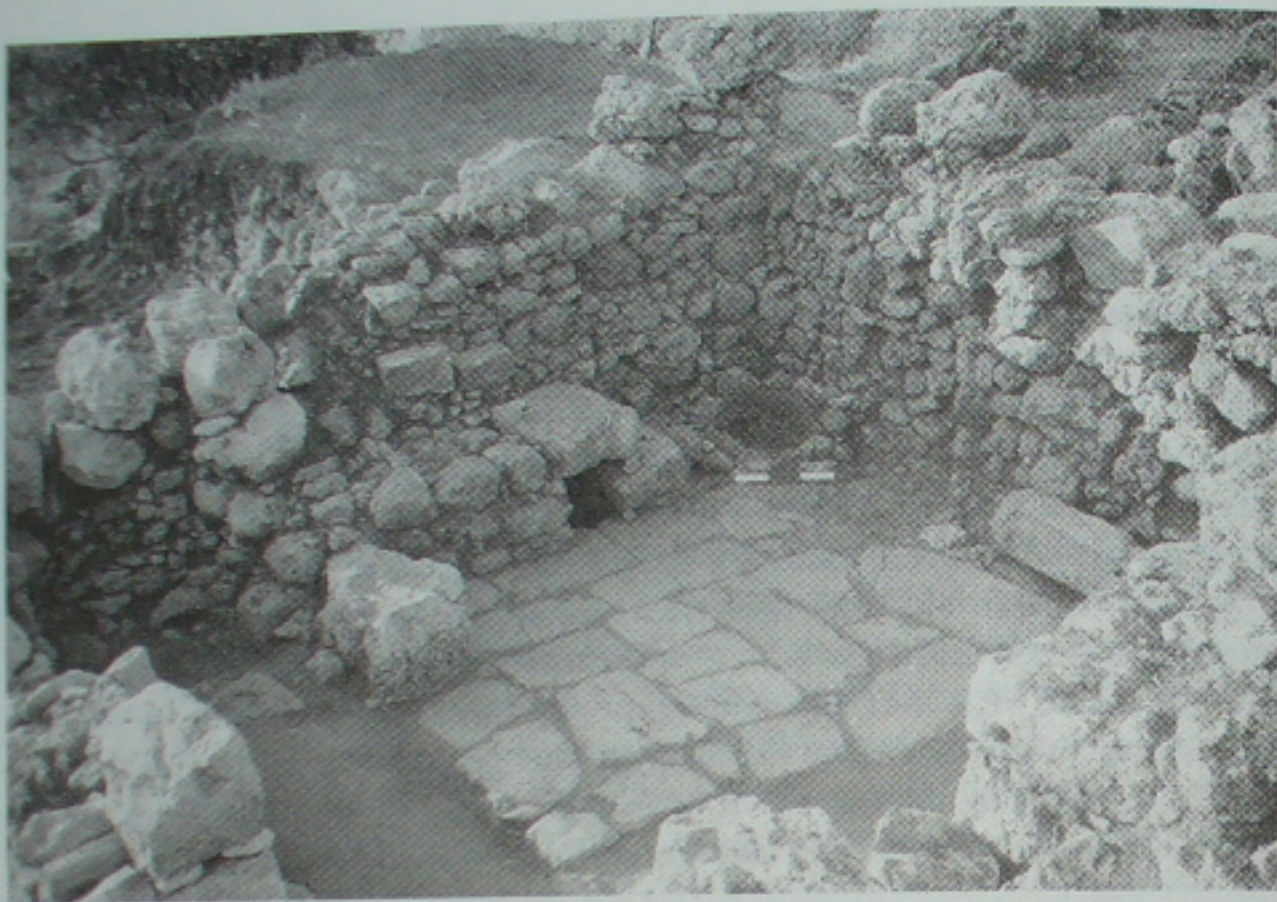


Figure 12.1. Central courtyard of Patrician House, Meiron.

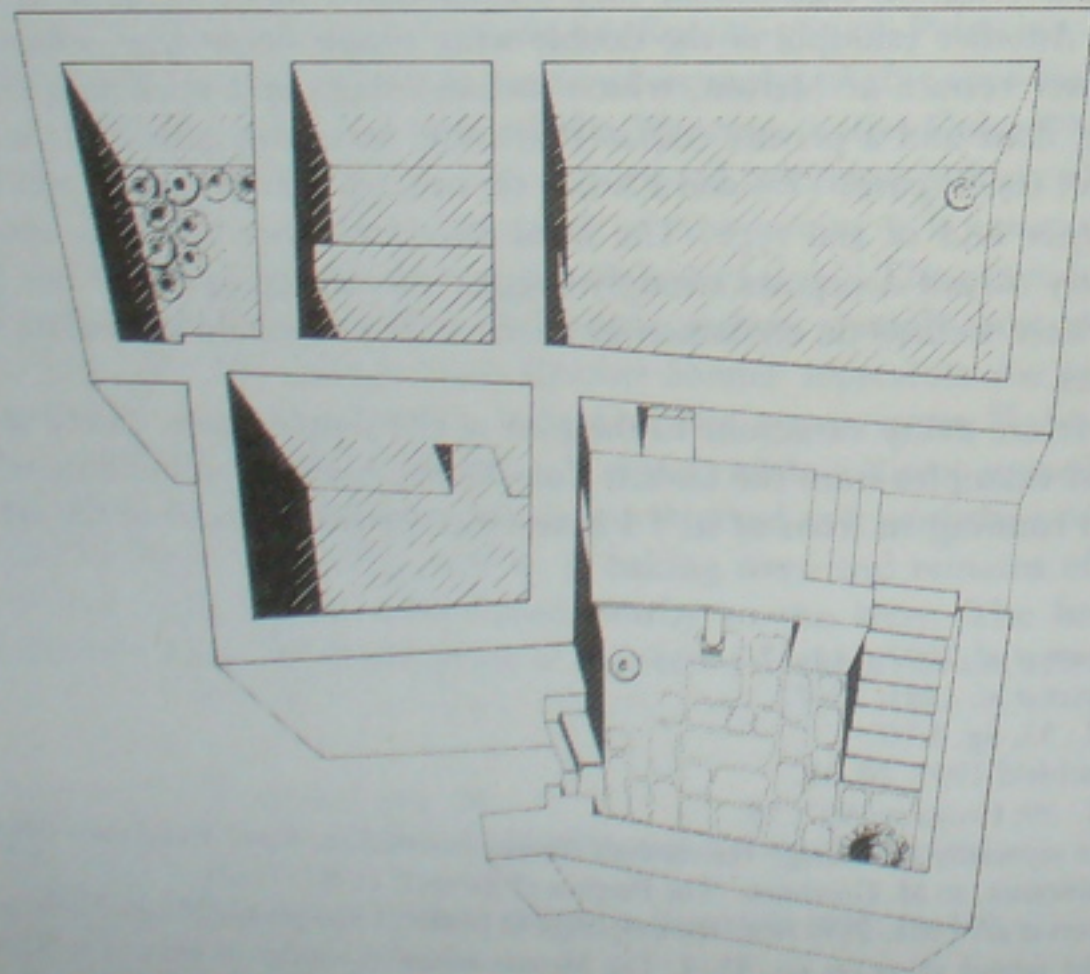


Figure 12.2. Isometric drawing of Patrician House, Meiron.



Figure 12.3. Complex of rooms and shops off courtyard, Lower City, Meiron.

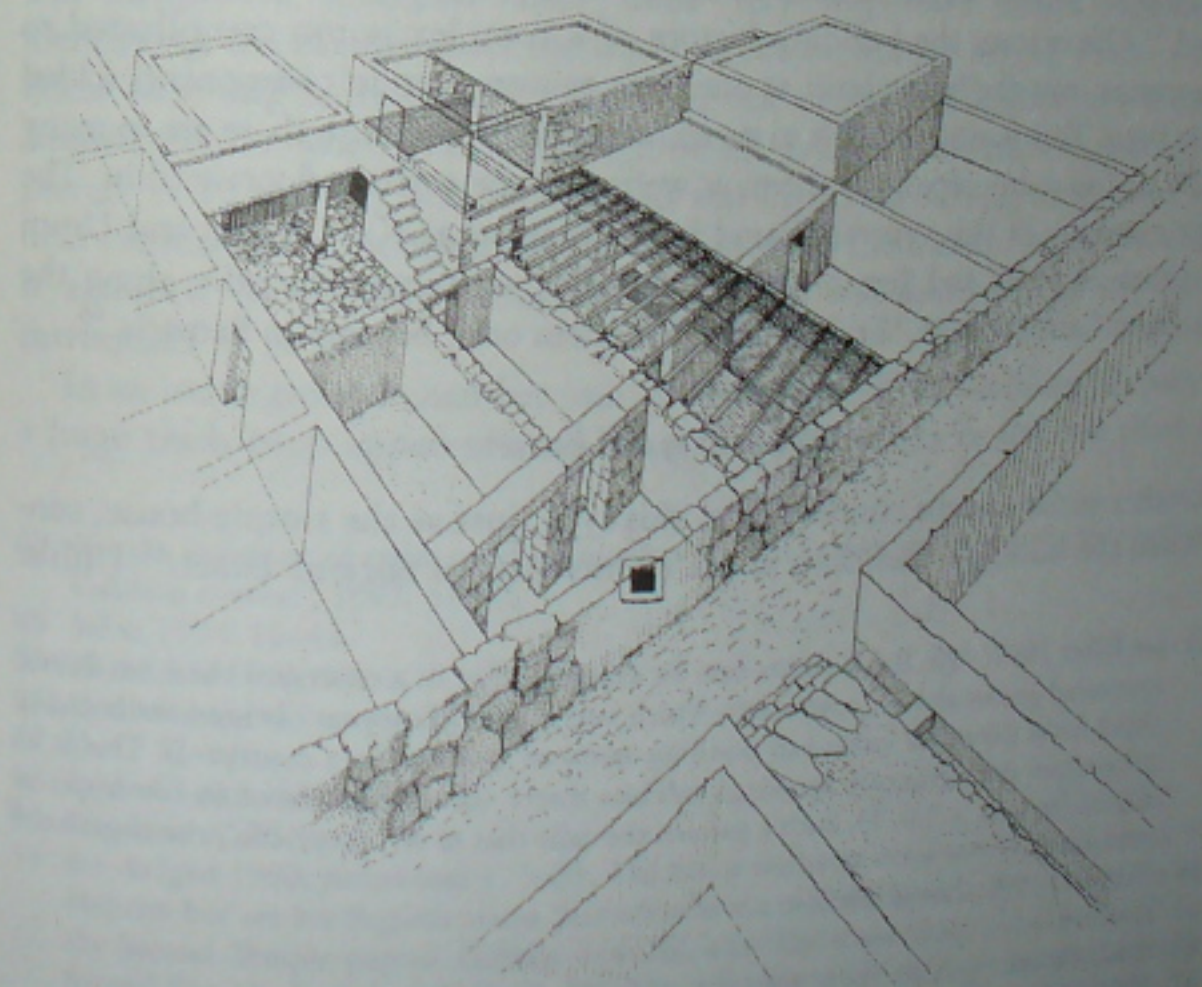


Figure 12.4. Reconstruction based on the excavations shown in Figure 12.3.

have excavated and hence refer the reader to Hirschfeld for further elaboration. It should be clear already from the variety of houses within the first category that it is very difficult to generalize about the organization of space and how it relates to the movement of individuals within that space. It is also nearly impossible to identify individual spaces within these houses as task-specific. And yet as I have already pointed out, certain spaces are very often interpreted in gender-specific ways that would place the female and her limited activities most often in closed internal space, or in space that is invisible to those without.⁴³ The obverse would be true for males: they would mostly conduct their activities in public spaces outdoors.

The complex house

Hirschfeld's second house type is an elaboration of the simple house, its construction accomplished through the addition of new wings or housing units built on three sides of the outer courtyard.⁴⁴ Such an enlargement of property was undertaken due to the increase in numbers of the extended family, or represented an expression of prosperity. It also offered a greater degree of privacy for individuals working in the courtyard, though it should be emphasized it offered more direct access to the adjoining public areas. These building types are to be found in an urban (?) apartment complex or rural farmhouse, which might consist of several dwellings around a central courtyard.⁴⁵ Oftentimes the building history of a complex is too complicated to determine: was the house built at one time or were certain components added over time. This is very difficult to do archaeologically because there are so many walls and so many repairs to them, as well as to the earthen floors within. The best examples of this type are found in the Hauran at Kafr Nassej and Umm el-Jimal, in Pella and Jerash of the Decapolis, at Ramat Hanadiv along the southern Carmel range, 'En Yael near Jerusalem or at Sebaste in Samaria.⁴⁶

The courtyard house

Another variant of the simple house, this type, just as the simple house, continued the building traditions of the architecture of ancient Israel.⁴⁷ Unlike

43 See Baker 1997: 72ff. Baker points out, for example, that in a courtyard there are shared, communal spaces and '... spaces into which one might "disappear" behind walls and/or closed doors (rooms of individual dwelling units or "houses" in a courtyard). This is an architecture that, generally speaking, inhibits direct surveillance; it often interrupts or deflects the gaze ...', p. 73. Such a pattern she calls that of an 'anopticon', the negative of 'panopticon'.

44 Hirschfeld 1995: 22 and 44ff.

45 Ibid.: 44.

46 Ibid.: 44-56.

47 Hirschfeld and Guijarro take this point from Stager's programmatic essay, 'The archaeology of the family in Ancient Israel', 1985: 1-35.

the Simple House that was more frequent in rural areas the Courtyard House was more common in urban contexts though the example from Meiron's lower city had a courtyard as did the example of the Patrician House. This leads us to urge caution in defining categories too rigidly. Also, while in Roman-period Galilee there are only two cities, Sepphoris and Tiberias,⁴⁸ Meiron is a 'town', an intermediate stage between 'village' and 'city'.⁴⁹ There is no reason why we might not find such a type in a prospering village as well, though it is less likely. Hirschfeld points out two variants of this type: a house with an inner courtyard without columns, an ancient local tradition, and a house with an inner courtyard with columns, an innovation taken from classical culture.⁵⁰ Such houses are also found in the Hellenistic period as is the case at Marisa.⁵¹ The best examples of this type come from Jerusalem and date to the first century CE, most notably the Great Mansion (600 square metres), the Burnt House, the Herodian House of the Upper City (200 square metres).⁵² The Triple Courtyard House at Capernaum, the courtyard houses at Korazin,⁵³ and the large house on the western acropolis at Sepphoris (84.1 - see Figure 12.5) offer the best examples from Galilee.⁵⁴ It is significant to note the presence of *miqva'ot* in the Jerusalem and Sepphoris context.

Examination of the contents of the Jerusalem houses leaves no doubt as to their identification as being Jewish homes, especially the presence of ritual baths and stone vessels.⁵⁵ But the Jerusalem houses are all destroyed in 70 CE. The Sepphoris example raises some very important issues regarding identifying the occupants of the building in the Roman period. Parts of the house were originally built in the Hellenistic period and utilized in the early Roman period when the first stage of the house's construction was completed, c. 50 CE.⁵⁶ It was remodelled and expanded several times over the next centuries but especially at the beginning of the fourth century CE when it assumed its present configuration, which was destroyed in the great earthquake of 363 CE.

In an underground chamber near the south end of the building in room I, a huge trash heap apparently closed up by renovations in the late third or

48 For the influence of cities on the areas that surround them, see my article 'Jesus and his Galilean context', 1997: 57-67.

49 Safrai 1994: 19-82.

50 Hirschfeld 1995: 57.

51 Ibid.: 66, fig. 40.

52 Ibid.: 57-61.

53 Ibid.: 68-9 and fig. 43.

54 See above n. 78.

55 See Avigad 1980, *passim* and 175-83. The major works on stone vessels by Magen are in Hebrew but see his English essays 'Jerusalem as the center of stone vessel industry during the Second Temple period' (1994a: 244-56), and 'The stone vessel industry during the Second Temple Period' (1994b: 7-28). The definitive study on these vessels in light of rabbinic laws of purity is by Deines (1993).

56 See references above in n. 7.

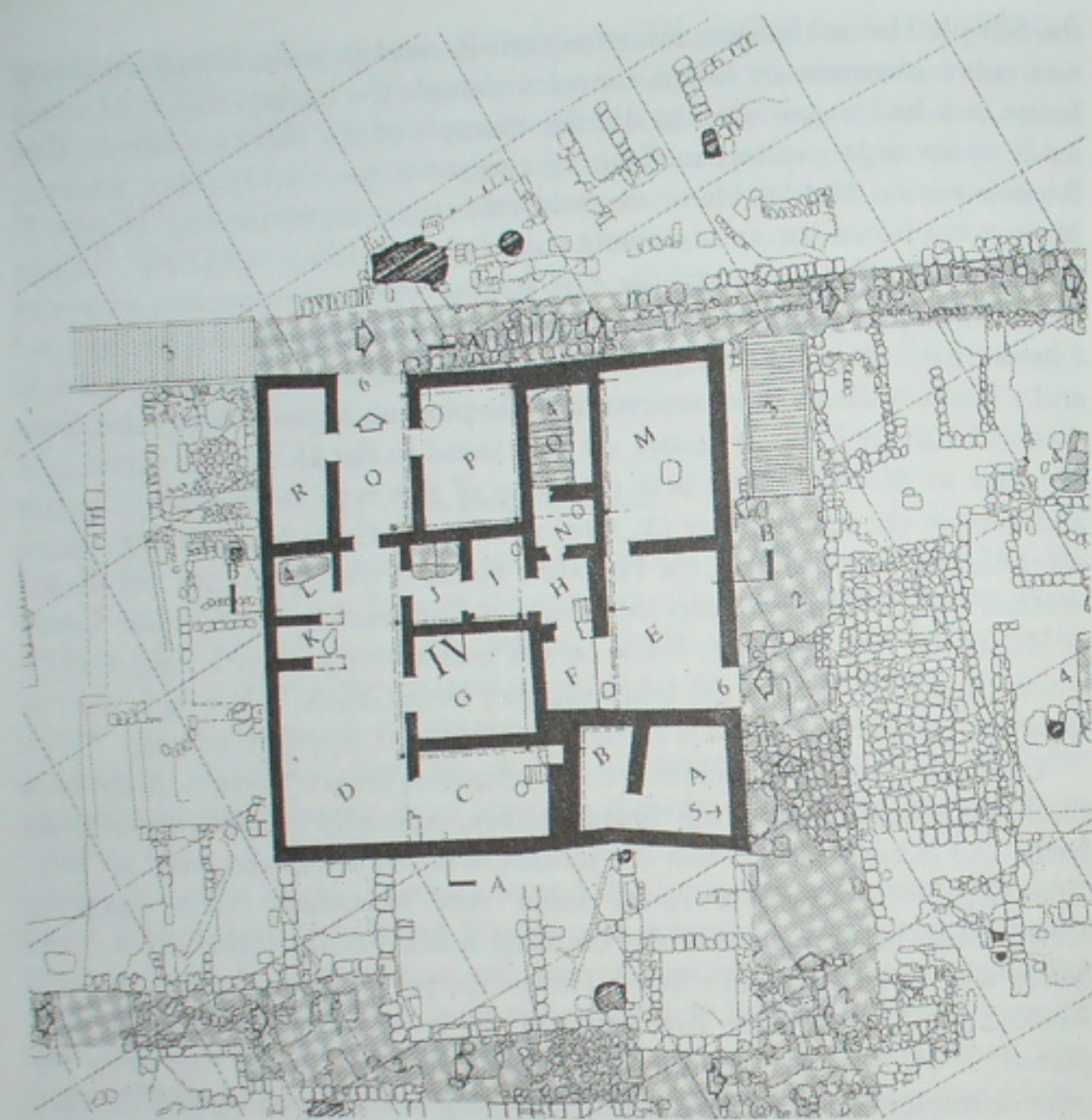


Figure 12.5. Drawing of large house, 84.1, Sepphoris.

beginning of the fourth century CE, a treasure trove of discarded objects were found. They included the bronze miniatures of Pan and Prometheus, and many third century discus lamps that featured erotica on the central disc (see Figure 12.6). However, among the pottery fragments of lamps there was also one with a Torah Shrine, clearly Jewish.⁵⁷ And from the area that was Hellenistic in date and subsequently incorporated into the courtyard house in the Roman period came an ostrakon with the earliest mention of a Jewish functionary at Sepphoris.⁵⁸ In addition, there are at least three *miqva'ot* in the

⁵⁷ See the examples published by Lapp (1996: 217–24). A much broader sampling of lamp iconography is available in his 1998 Duke doctoral dissertation, 'The archaeology of light: the cultural significance of the oil lamp from Roman Palestine'.

⁵⁸ See Naveh's treatment of this artifact in Meyers *et al.* 1996: 170.



Figure 12.6. Erotic discus lamp found in 84.1 (third century CE).

building, though only two in use at the same time. Among the faunal remains from this building and the entire western summit, there are no pig bones whatever to be found in the Roman period.⁵⁹ By the Byzantine era when we find terra sigillata bowls stamped with crosses and even ostraca of a Christian character, and when the area is reconfigured architecturally after 363 CE, the faunal remains produce 18–20 per cent pig bones in all areas. The evidence, thus, in favour of seeing a Christian population move in during the Byzantine period is most convincing.

The location of this courtyard house with room D and adjoining areas serving as the enclosed open space within the 200 square metres structure is noteworthy. A narrow but elegantly paved roadway runs along its northern end and the third–fourth century structure is entered from it to room Q (see Figure 12.7). In the early Roman period access was from the north–south roadway into the entryway designated 6 on the plan. The expanded house not only provides ample place for extended family living, possibly as many as twenty-five if we take into account a second storey, but it also offers easy access to two neighbourhood roadways or alleys as well as a high degree of privacy within the large house. Household chores were doubtless carried out

⁵⁹ The faunalist for the Sepphoris Regional Project, Billy J. Grantham, studied the bone profile of Sepphoris and wrote his 1996 Northwestern PhD dissertation on the subject: 'A zooarchaeological model for the study of ethnic complexity at Sepphoris'.



Figure 12.7. East-west roadway with underground drainage visible, western summit.

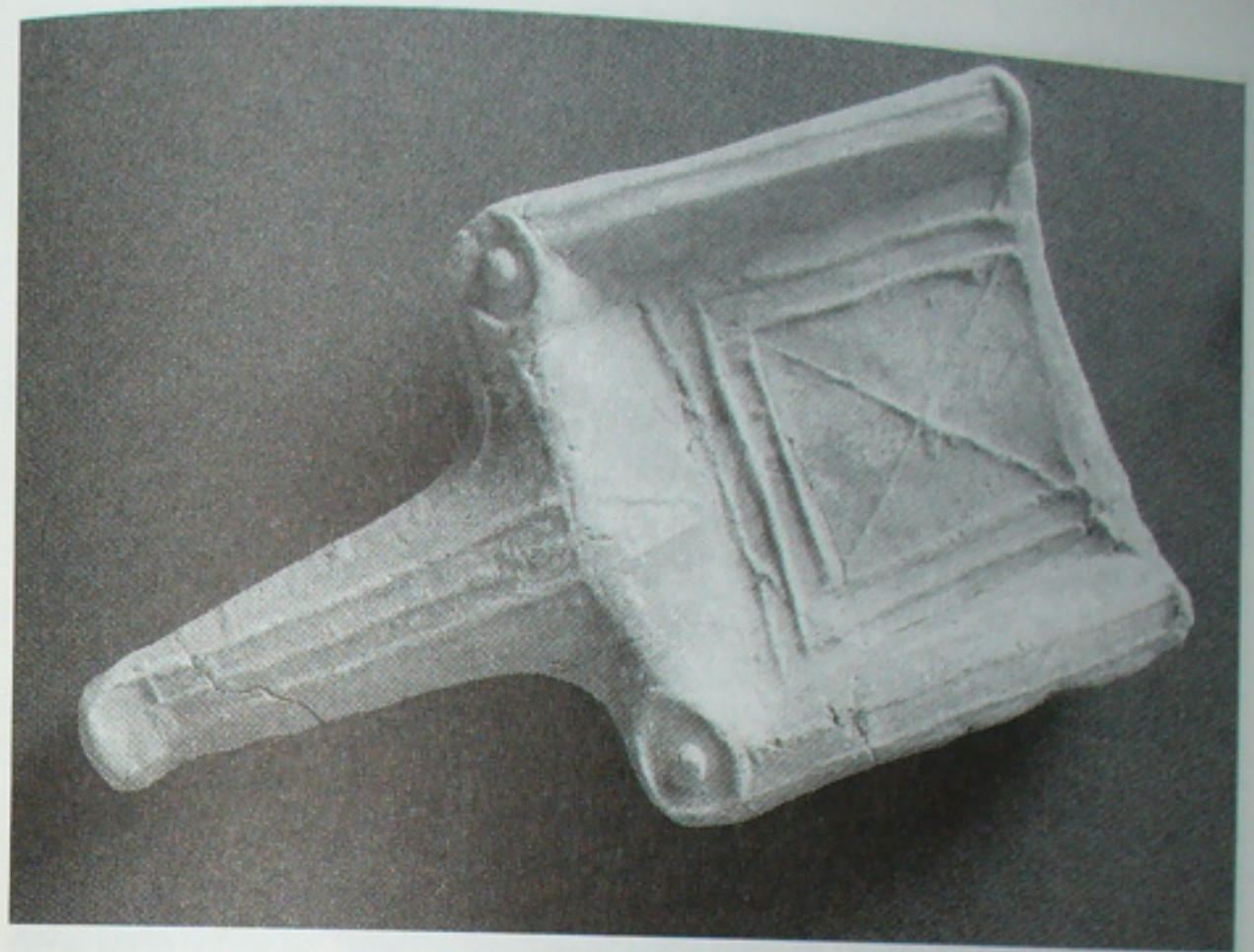


Figure 12.8. Incense shovel found in 84.1 (third century CE).

in the open space (D) along with spinning and other crafts.⁶⁰ Guijarro may be closer to the truth in pointing to prominent landowners or clergy occupying such a household,⁶¹ and the presence of a large cache of ceramic incense shovels as well as many fragments of stone vessels dating to the early Roman period support such an interpretation in this case (see Figure 12.8).⁶² To infer any more than this, namely, that some priestly families lived here and that they had considerable resources, would be going too far. We have no indication whatever that the occupants of this lovely mansion were tax collectors or leaders of the city. That they were very much at home with Hellenistic *objets d'art*, lamps, statues, etc. is obvious enough. The evidence of the *miqva'ot*, stone vessels, Jewish symbols on lamps, ostracum, the absence of pig bones, etc., clearly indicate that the household was Jewish in character.⁶³

⁶⁰ Peskowitz 1997a, especially pp. 117–18.

⁶¹ Guijarro 1997: 58.

⁶² See Meyers (ed.) 1999b, in which Leonard V. Rutgers explores the significance of ceramic incense shovels found at Sepphoris, and Jonathan Reed, among other items the chalk or stone vessels (pp. 81–108).

⁶³ Peskowitz offers a cogent and trenchant argument in favour of such a Jewish character for Sepphoris defending such a stance against critics in 'Empty fields and the romance of the Holy Land: a response to Marianne Sawicki's archaeology of Judaism, gender, and class', 1997b: 259–82. See also Meyers and Meyers 1997: 527–36.

The peristyle house

This type of house, a variant of the courtyard house, represents the clearest example of borrowing from the Graeco-Roman architectural tradition.⁶⁴ The palaces at Herodian Jericho from the late Hellenistic and early Roman periods are built in the peristyle plan and also illustrate the influence of the Roman villa.⁶⁵ Notable examples from the Hellenistic and Roman periods besides the Dionysos Mansion at Sepphoris include Tel Anafa, Samaria, Tell Judeidah and Khirbet el-Murag, Aphek and Jerusalem.⁶⁶ The distribution of this type house is very limited in Palestine, suggesting that such an overtly classical construction style had limited influence. However, I would not be surprised to find further examples of this at Sepphoris, Beth Shean, or similar locations.

Let us briefly consider the significance of the Dionysos Mansion at Sepphoris in this context.⁶⁷ About 300 square metres of internal space and commanding a unique and commanding position on the acropolis adjacent to the theatre, the building was constructed in the first third of the third century CE and was destroyed in 363 CE by the great earthquake. By the time the building was completed, in the time of Rabbi Judah the Patriarch, Sepphoris was becoming a multi-cultural city with Jews, Jewish-Christians, and pagans occupying various parts of the city. Rabbi Judah is also known to have been favourably disposed to Greek as a language (Tal. Bab. Bava Qama 82b,c). Site selection for construction of the Dionysos Mansion nearly tells us as much about the purpose and owners of the building as do the wonderful mosaic panels on the floor of the triclinium or banquet hall with their Greek labels (see Figures 12.9 and 12.10). The single toilet and bath in the northwest corner rooms reveal something about the high level of support necessary to support such a facility (see Figure 12.11). Several pools, a *miqveh*, and garden in the courtyard to the south of the triclinium point to a lavish lifestyle, great wealth, or public support. In view of the fact that Sepphoris was administered internally by a *boule* or municipal council, the mansion could be the place where it met, or where the Patriarch welcomed guests, or where actors, performers, or distinguished visitors were hosted and housed. Meshorer believes that the famous Caracalla coin that commemorates a treaty between Rome and the Sepphoris Council (*boule*) supports the idea that the *boule* was actually the Sanhedrin of the Jewish community, which at the time was at Sepphoris.⁶⁸ There is no reason why the leadership of the Jewish community should not feel

⁶⁴ Hirschfeld 1995: 85–97.

⁶⁵ Rossiter 1997: 300–1.

⁶⁶ Hirschfeld 1995: 103, n. 6 and charts on pp. 100–1.

⁶⁷ See Nagy *et al.* 111–15; Meyers 1997; Meyers *et al.* 1992b: 38–59.

⁶⁸ See Meshorer in Meyers *et al.* 1996: 198 and his essay 'Sepphoris and Rome' (1997: 159–71).



Figure 12.9. Scene from the Dionysos Mansion: drunken Herakles (third century CE).



Figure 12.10. Dionysos procession scene from same.

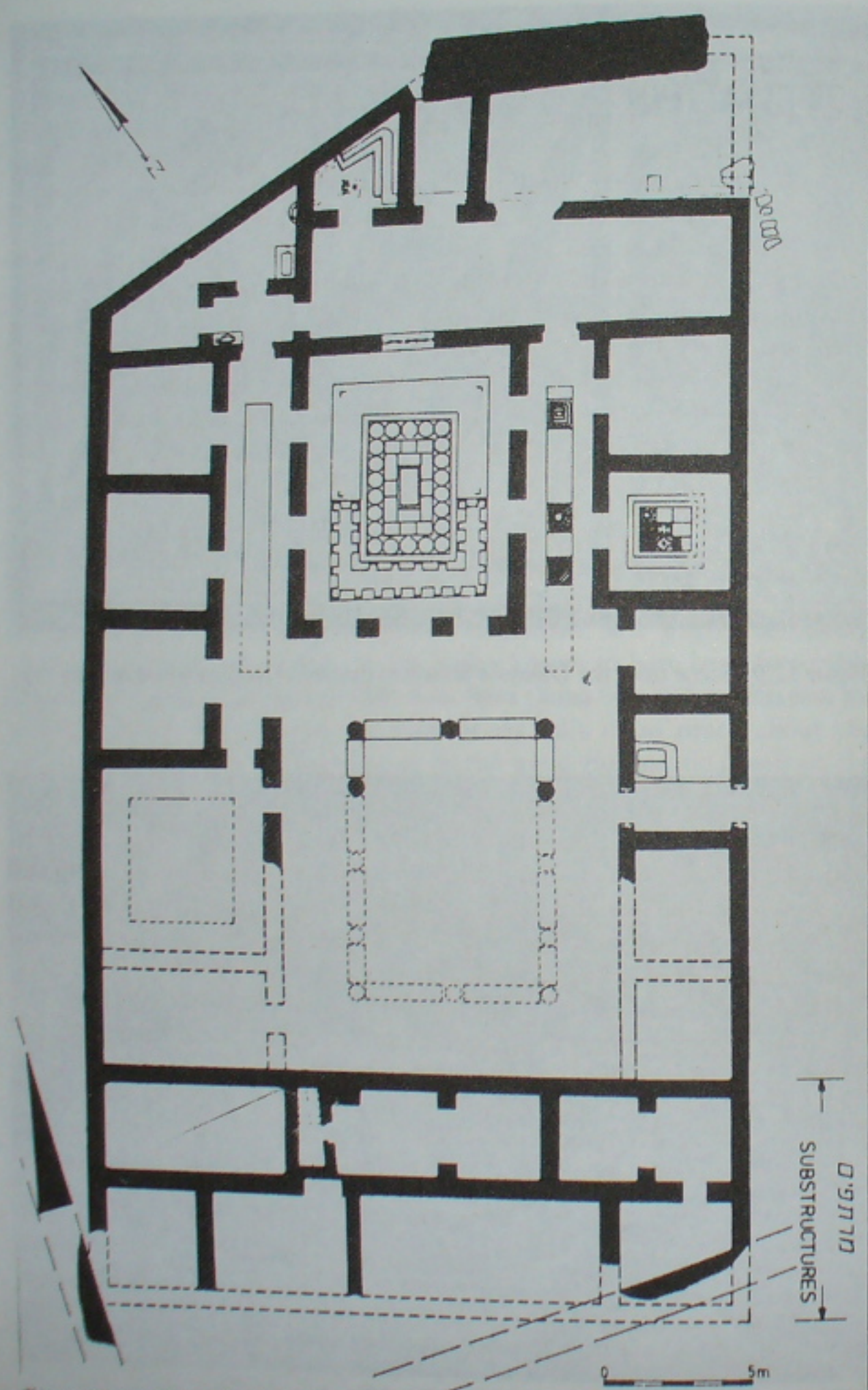


Figure 12.11. Ground plan of Dionysos villa.

right at home among these trappings of Hellenistic culture. Indeed, Rabbi Judah himself, redactor or editor of the Mishnah, according to rabbinic traditions and legends, is supposed to have been friendly with the Roman emperor Caracalla (Antoninus).⁶⁹ The presence of a *mikveh* on the eastern side of the courtyard suggests at the very least a period of Jewish usage. It is also possible that the municipal council had members of each community – by the fourth century also Christians – but with a Jewish majority. In any event, it is quite clear that this elegant mansion was sited in a very special way, decorated in the most elaborate style with Hellenistic mosaic art, with beautiful frescoes, and constructed in the classical architectural mode. Located so close to what is surely an upscale Jewish quarter or neighbourhood in the Roman period, it seems reasonable to conclude that its use was in the Jewish community. The lower city on the east, along the great *cardo*, no doubt housed many of the non-Jews and their buildings, though the presence of *miqua'ot* there also suggests a large Jewish presence.⁷⁰ Thus far no inscriptional evidence has been found that would help us to understand who planned the city's major expansion and classical character from c. 100–250 CE. Whoever made such plans, at least in the Roman period, it was the Jewish community first that enjoyed the structures and ornaments of the city.⁷¹

Ritual baths

A recent article by Hanan Eshel claimed that none of the so-called *miqua'ot* discovered at Sepphoris qualifies as a ritual bath according to rabbinic law and parallels from other sites and hence must be considered as simple baths.⁷² Despite the fact that the Hebrew University excavations have recently excavated two bathhouses in the lower city along the *cardo*,⁷³ Eshel wants to call all *mikveh*-like installations at Sepphoris 'stepped pools'. Without going into a detailed treatment concerning the halakhic acceptability of *miqua'ot* let me offer a few words of explanation regarding their use.

In biblical times, already, immersion in water was prescribed (Lev. 15: 16–18) in regard to impurities acquired during intercourse or in regard to a woman's discharge of blood during menstruation (Lev 15: 19–30). Immersion pools or ritual baths (*miqua'ot*) are not positively identified in excavation until the late Second Temple period (late Hellenistic times) at Qumran and Jericho,⁷⁴ when an elaborate system of regulations concerning bodily purity

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ See Strange 1996: 117–21 and Weiss and Netzer 1997: 117–30.

⁷¹ Weiss and Netzer 1997: 128; see also their mention of *miqua'ot* there along with several bathhouses separate from them on p. 121. On the general point of Jewish use of pagan forms of entertainment and culture, see Weiss 1995: 1–19.

⁷² Eshel 1997: 131–3.

⁷³ Weiss and Netzer 1997: 121.

⁷⁴ See Reich 1997: 430–1 and Wood 1984: 45–60.

was developed.⁷⁵ Many ritual baths from the early Roman period have been found in the Jerusalem excavations.⁷⁶ The elaboration of the laws of ritual purity thus evolved between c. 100 BCE and 50 CE, reflecting the concerns of priests, Pharisees, and Essenes in matters of bodily purity. They are preserved in the Mishnah tractate *Miqva'ot* and the Tosefta of the same name. There is no Talmudic tractate on *Miqva'ot*.

No doubt at the early stages of practice of immersion, even in biblical times, purification was achieved after immersion in a body of natural water, a lake or river or spring. Ultimately the ritual bath was introduced. The name *miqveh* means a literal gathering of something, in the context of Leviticus 15 or Mishnah *Miqva'ot*, 'a gathering of water'. The difference between ordinary washing and ritual bathing lies in the definition of water that could be used in ritual bathing: only waters that were 'in the hands of heaven', 'living waters', could be used in a *miqveh*. No human contact could interfere with the filling of the *miqveh* that required a minimum of 40 *seab* of water, less than a cubic metre; hence, human efforts to fill a *miqveh* were not permissible. There are no requirements regarding the shape of a ritual bath or instructions regarding the process of descending into the pool. Waterproof plaster is required to seal the porous limestone of bedrock. In Jerusalem as in Sepphoris the *miqva'ot* are cut into the bedrock on the ground floor or basement of a house.

Reich's major study of ritual baths is based almost exclusively on the examples uncovered in the Jerusalem excavation.⁷⁷ Though he and many others tend to use the Judean model in judging examples in Galilee, Reich has found the examples in Sepphoris acceptable for ritual use. Eshel's reservations about the Sepphoris examples arise because of these issues: they are smaller than the Jerusalem examples; they mostly do not have a separating line or door for entering and leaving; they mostly do not have an adjoining reservoir of pure water ('*otsar*'); and in the houses in which such installations were found no 'normal' bathing facility was found.

First let me say that I do not feel it is necessary that Galilean building traditions need to be the same as those in Jerusalem. The fact that most examples from Sepphoris are smaller should have no bearing on the case because in no instance is it not possible to fill the immersion space with 40 *seab* of water. The absence of an '*otsar*' is only a problem if one thinks about a ground-level model, and there are several examples of a *miqveh* with an '*otsar*' at Sepphoris, though Eshel admits only one.⁷⁸ My position is this: in all cases

⁷⁵ See Reich 1997 and 1988: 102–7.

⁷⁶ See Avigad 1980: 139–43.

⁷⁷ This is the subject of Reich's unpublished Hebrew University PhD dissertation in which he is overly influenced by the Jerusalem evidence: 'Miqva'ot (Jewish Ritual Immersion Baths) in Eretz-Israel in the Second Temple and Mishnah and Talmud Periods', 1990 (in Hebrew with English abstract).

⁷⁸ Eshel 1997: n. 10.

at Sepphoris one can hypothetically reconstruct a situation of collection and storage of rain water on roofs and transference to the *miqveh* by ceramic drainage pipe – nearby cisterns also store ample rainwater. It also should be said that the laws are sufficiently vague to allow considerable ingenuity in the matter of transferring 'pure water' if indeed this law was scrupulously followed. It is at least theoretically possible that pure water was siphoned from the nearby cistern or transported by individuals in large water storage jars filled from a cistern by lowering the jar with a rope to be filled – no bodily contact would occur with the 'pure water'. But if there always were 40 *seab* of pure water it would not be a problem in any case. As for size, we have had all types of people descend into our *miqva'ot* and except for the late Hellenistic-early Roman ones in 85.3, the tower area, the pools are quite comfortable for all individuals around 5 feet or so, up to perhaps 5 feet 6 inches tall. But it is a snug fit and the pools are very awkward from a hygienic point of view since there is no easy way to dispose of the dirty, soapy water. All of them are very appropriate for simple immersion. As for the absence of public bathing facilities at Sepphoris, we have already noted two in the lower city. On the western summit the Florida excavations have excavated several areas that must certainly be understood as baths. As for the absence of the double line, it should certainly not be regarded a halakhic in nature; its absence need not be taken as a serious problem for proper identification of a *miqveh*.⁷⁹

In selecting illustrations for this section I have organized them in a typological sequence: the oldest are those that constituted the entire basement of a very small house or those cut like caves into the bedrock and have a very small entryway (see Figures 12.12 and 12.13). These date to the late Hellenistic and early Roman period. The large example from 85.3 does not adhere to this pattern possibly because it was used by soldiers who were housed in barracks there. The smaller early types may be associated with our earliest domestic units.

The middle Roman examples (Figures 12.14 and 12.15) are quite elaborate and reflect the growth and stability of Sepphoris in its heyday; they are built structures with ample room to disrobe and change clothes and hint at vaulted ceilings at the entryway in some cases within carefully delineated space but flat roofs were utilized to cover the entire house. The roof was a workplace in good weather and had a small parapet around so that water could collect and drain into the appropriate spot. The Late Roman examples are often the same as the middle Roman ones, though modification occurred when the house was renovated. The Hebrew University team has uncovered numerous Byzantine-period *miqva'ot* (see, e.g., Figure 12.16).

⁷⁹ A very fine summary on the general issue of immersion pools in relation to laws of purity is found in Sanders 1990: 214–27. He is quite convinced that the *miqveh* plus reservoir ('*otsar*') system was Pharisaic in origin and use. From the perspective of the evidence of archaeology the situation is much more complicated.

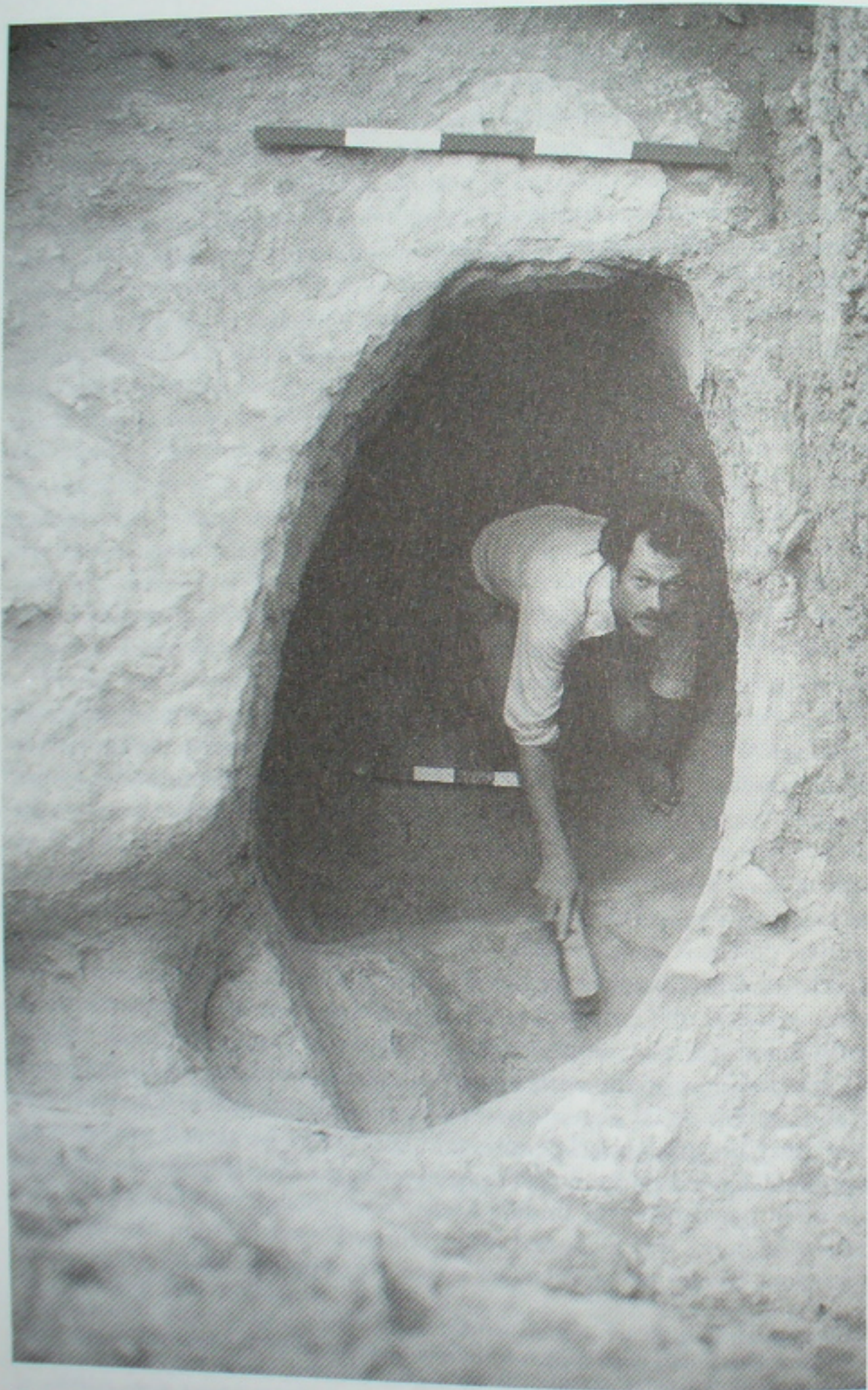


Figure 12.12. Early Roman *miqveh*, Sepphoris.



Figure 12.13. Early Roman *miqveh*, 85.3, tower area, Sepphoris (possibly late Hellenistic).

The presence of so many ritual baths at Sepphoris in domestic contexts as well as civic spaces including the Dionysos Mansion and in virtually all periods demonstrates that Jewish residents were committed to practise their Jewish traditions while at the same time were becoming more and more comfortable with the trappings of Hellenistic culture. Indeed, they saw no conflict between the two. The practice of ritual immersion may also have extended to objects of metal and glass, and several houses have small pools where such vessels could be dipped if they were not dipped into the larger *miqva'ot* (see Figure 12.17). More than any other artifact or built structure the ritual baths at Sepphoris provide clear evidence of the evolution of ritual bathing from the Hasmonean era to the late Byzantine period. Such concerns for bodily purity alongside definitive evidence in the Roman period that pig was not eaten in Jewish homes suggests a very high level of observance of Jewish law in one of Galilee's two cities. No doubt these types of observance allowed individuals to keep sharp and clear boundaries between themselves and other groups.

Conclusions

One should not be surprised to find great variety in the kinds of houses the ancients built in Roman-period Palestine. The form of some of those houses



Figure 12.14. Middle Roman *miqveh*, 85.1, Sepphoris.



Figure 12.15. Middle-Late Roman *miqveh*, 84.2, Sepphoris.

harks back to the Israelite period (the simple house), while the peristyle or atrium house is clearly borrowed from the classical world. In determining the lines of development of ancient houses we are also forced to look at their contents and the organizing principles that determined the use of domestic space. Such an effort leads us directly into matters of everyday life, foodways, gender, etc. Some of the houses we have looked at fit in rather well to the changing shape of domestic architecture in the classical world (the Dionysos Mansion at Sepphoris). Were we to examine the Dionysos house without reference to its larger context in Roman Sepphoris of the third and fourth centuries CE, we would be hard pressed to evaluate its beautiful mosaics or its other contents. By contextualizing it, however, we are able to theorize reliably about its usage in the wider community of Sepphoris that included Jews, pagans, and Christians at different moments in its history.

Mosaics alone do not allow us to reconstruct the ambience of the wide city and its culture. To be sure the use of Greek language and classical mythology in them shows that the city was very much at home in the Hellenistic culture of the late Roman period. But so too does the surprisingly broad repertoire of symbols and images used in decorating middle Roman discus lamps in Jewish homes of Upper Galilee, and Lower Galilee, which had no mosaics. Those images include erotic scenes, Helios, and other representations of pagan society. The homes in which those items were found in Upper Galilee were more traditional in terms of origin, some of the models



Figure 12.16. Khirbet Shema', *miqveh*, Roman-Byzantine.

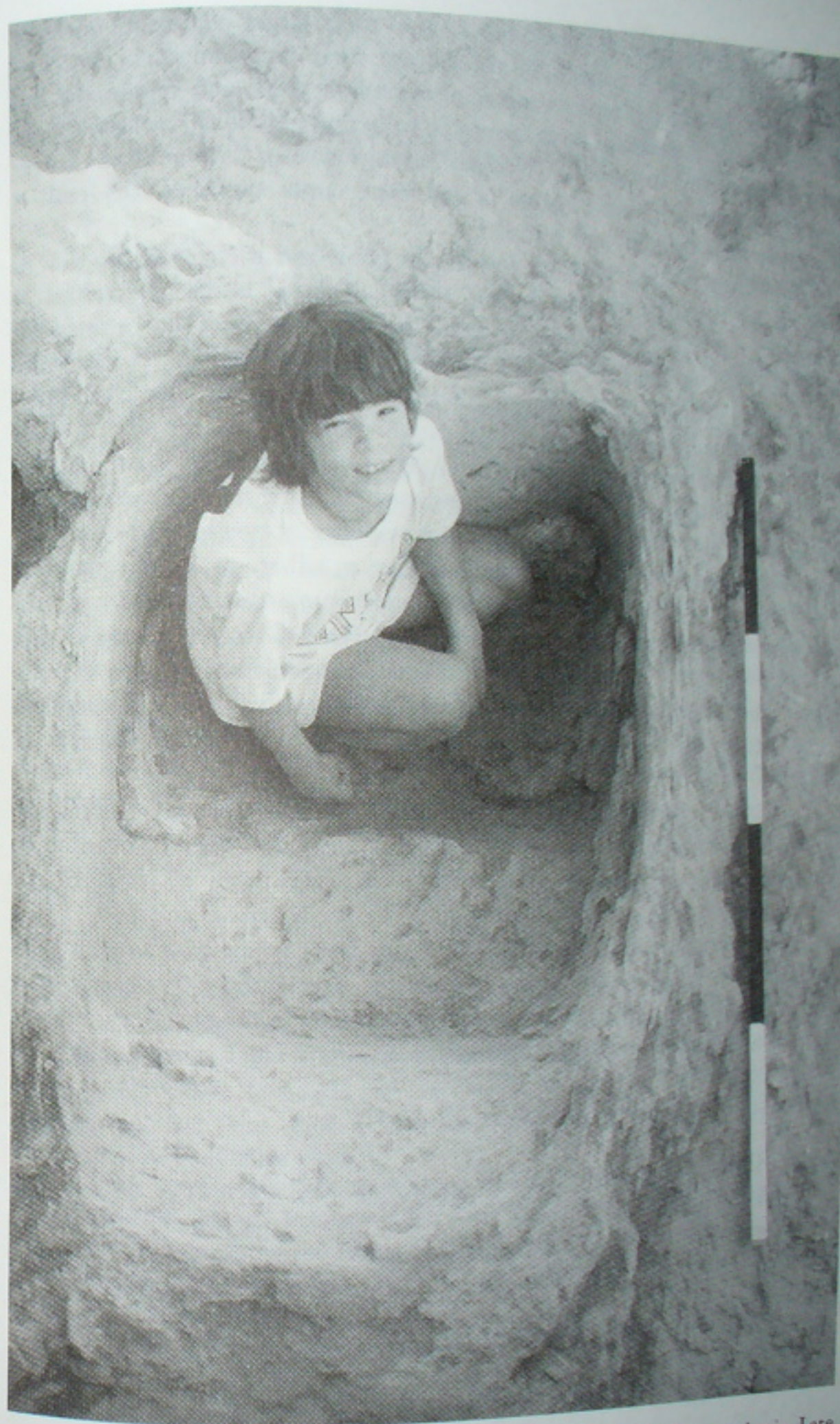


Figure 12.17. Immersion pool for glass and metal objects (?), 84.2, Sepphoris, Late Roman-Early Byzantine.



descending from biblical times, but it is in their larger context of town or village life that we are best able to evaluate their type and their contents. Without assessing the larger context of the whole town and region the full significance of these small finds cannot be fully understood. I have attempted to do some of this in my essays on Galilean regionalism.⁸⁰ In a city in Lower Galilee, where so many streams of influence come together, the task is obviously more difficult and complex.

This brings me once again to immersion pools and their identification as *miqva'ot*, or ritual baths. The Judean model of ritual baths as attested in Jerusalem need not be the only standard by which we evaluate immersion pools in either the Upper or Lower Galilee. I have pointed out that despite the apparent absence of an *'otsar* or reservoir it is quite possible that 'pure' water was added from a drainage pipe on the roof or from a nearby cistern where rain water or spring water was stored. Certainly these small stepped pools make for awkward and odd bathing areas as Eshel wants to claim. The overall context of the site and city and the evidence of everyday life suggests that a large proportion of the population chose to adhere to certain practices of ritual purity that were made possible through immersion in pure water. In view of the extensive literary traditions associated with Sepphoris in the rabbinic literature this is not an unlikely supposition. Moreover, the archaeology of domestic space is very complicated and it may not be possible to reconstruct fully every aspect of the architecture of the house and its immersion pools.

The dynamic world of Roman-period Palestine led to many changes in the landscape of ancient Judaism. The prospering of the Jewish community after the loss of the Jerusalem Temple in CE 70 is testimony to its ability to adapt to new conditions and circumstances. Domestic space and how it was utilized is certainly one of the most important ways we have of understanding Jewish life from a non-literary perspective. Hopefully this chapter will lead others to assess a growing body of data that is essential to a more nuanced understanding of Judaism and Jewish life in the Roman period.

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